

WOMEN'S WORK AND RURAL TRANSFORMATION IN INDIA

A STUDY FROM GUJARAT

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I, Uma Kothari, declare that this thesis has been composed by myself and that the work is entirely my own.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is based on fieldwork carried out in 1986-1988 in Sera, a village in south Gujarat, India. The research considers women's work and focuses on differentiation; that is, which women carry out which tasks.

This is a rural area which has recently undergone substantial agricultural change with a shift from cotton to sugar cane production. It is characterised by high in-migration of seasonal labourers and out-migration of women at the time of marriage and of upper caste members migrating abroad.

In order to examine women's work and position within this context, a framework has been constructed which distinguishes between forms of work and between women from different socio-economic positions. This theoretical classification, utilised empirically, is based on distinctions between women and between tasks. As far as tasks are concerned, divisions are made between those which are paid and unpaid and those which are agricultural and domestic. In addition, differences are made between women from households of different caste and class position, the organisation and structure of their household and life-cycle changes of individual women.

Women from the Patidar landholding caste are seen to face very different experiences from those of the predominantly landless Halpati caste. Beyond the study of these two polarised groups, the thesis further considers class distinctions within each caste in order to understand the rationale behind household strategies in their allocation of labour. Furthermore, the work that women are required to perform and their relationship with other members of their household are also seen as partly determined by the stage in a woman's life-cycle and the composition of her household.

When looking at the kinds of work undertaken by different categories of women, a variety of forms of control emerge. Thus, the nature of individual women's involvement in work activities condition and are conditioned by their position within their households and outside the home. The sources of their oppression and the extent to which women have control over their own lives is examined through their work activities.

The theoretical framework and empirical data presented in this thesis are brought together to show how the different conditions of subordination experienced by Patidar and Halpati women are constructed and what implications they have on their present and future position.

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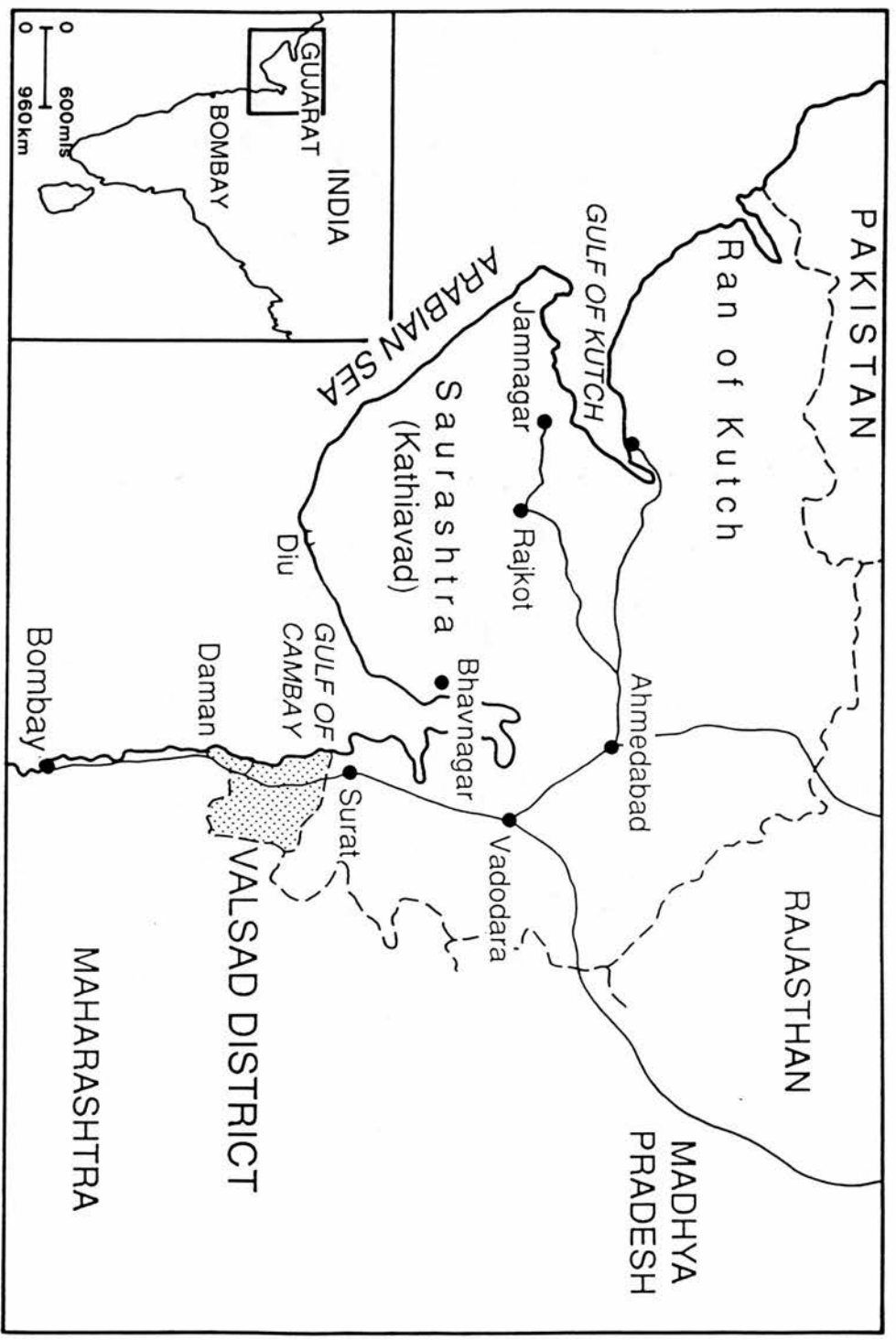
GLOSSARY

Bahargam	from outside the village, from abroad
Banevi	sister's husband
Ben	sister
Bhai	brother
Bhabi	brother's wife
Bhage	sharecrop, refers to a system in which cattle are farmed out
Bidi	cigarette
Bigha	Land measurement; varies regionally but is approximately 1 bigha = 0.75 acres
Biji jaat	another caste
Chaan	dung
Chaana	dung cakes used as cooking fuel
Chaani/Vasedi	female labourer who collects dung
Channa	chickpeas
Chapra	a small hut usually made of a mixture of dung and mud or sheets of bamboo
Chikhu	a fruit
Choota mujoor	a casual, temporary agricultural labourer
Chori	black-eyed beans
Chulla	cooking stove; a household
Daal	cooked pulses
Dada	grand-father; old man
Dai	midwife, traditionally the barber's wife
Daru	alcohol made from gur/jaggery
Derani	husband's younger brother's wife
Dhaniamo	traditional name for master of bonded labourers, farmer who employs labourers
Diwali	Hindu festival
Diyar	husband's younger brother
Dubla	local term for tribal caste also known as Halpati, can be derogatory
Dubli	female Halpati; female domestic labourer
Ekli	alone; a woman without a husband
Falia	village street or square
Ghar Jamai	a man who lives in his wife's natal village
Gharni mujoor	lit. a labourer who belongs to the employer's house, a female domestic labourer whose wedding was paid for by her current or past employer
Ghar nu kam	housework, work for household members
Ghee	clarified butter
Gorat	loamy soil
Govario	cowherd
Gunti	grain mill
Gur	unrefined sugar
Hal	plough
Hali	farm servant; traditionally bonded to a landlord

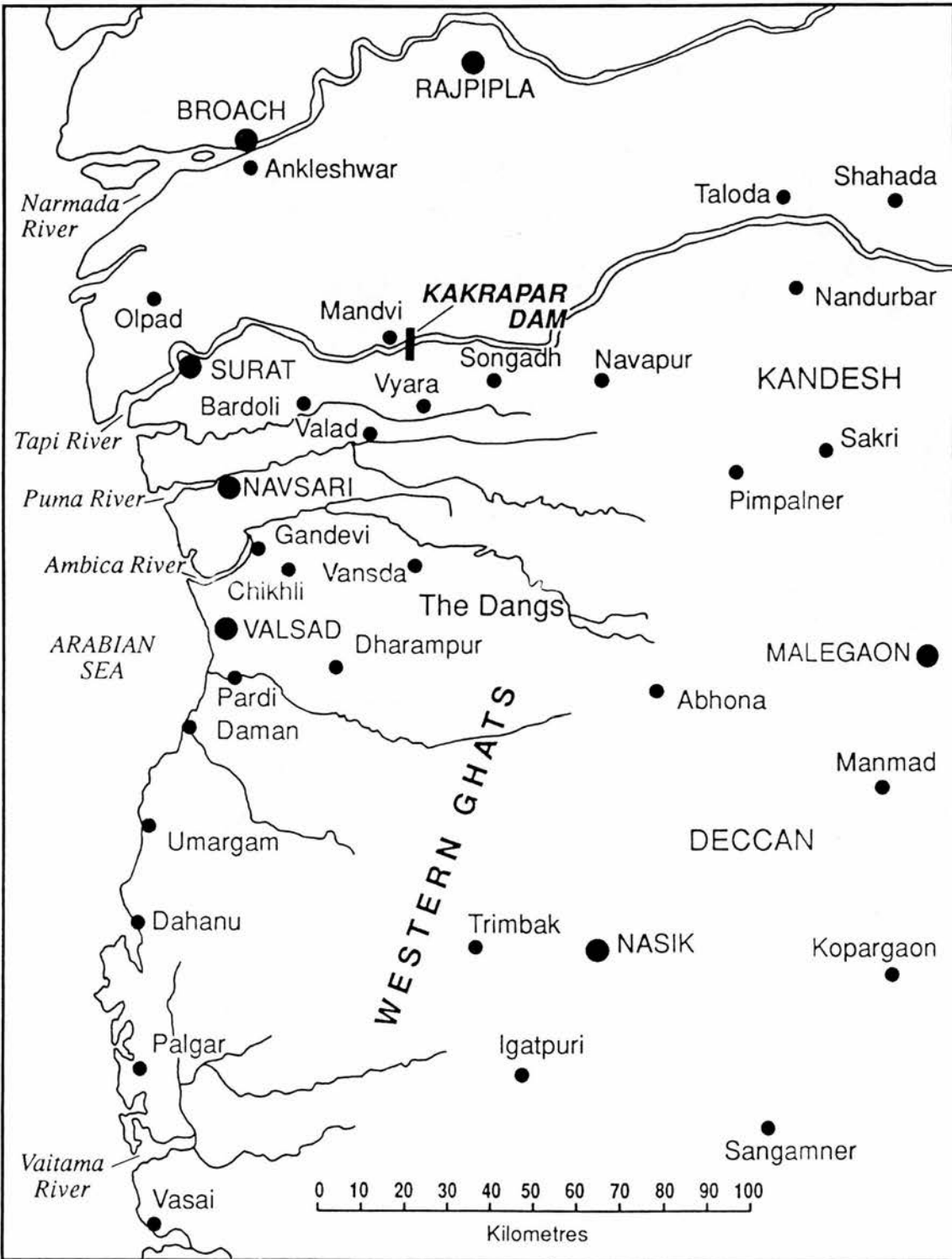
Halipratha	system of indebted bonded labour
Haveli	large house
Jeth	husband's older brother
Jethani	husband's older brother's wife
Jowa	brown/red millet
Kaccha	impure, inferior, makeshift
Kada	variety of rice
Kaka	father's brother; respectful form of address for older man or employer
Kaki	father's brother's wife; respectful form of address for an older woman or female employer
Kali jamin	rich, fertile black soil
Kam	work
Kanbi	sub-caste of Patidars, local term for Patidars
Kari	salty
Kayam mujoor	a daily agricultural labourer employed by a farmer
Khandeshi	people from the Khandesh region in Maharashtra
Khandsari	small scale sugar refineries
Kheti	farm; land
Kheti nu kam	farm work
Khuddi	spiced buttermilk
Kutoom	kinsfolk
Kyari	plot of land surrounded by embankments, used for rice cultivation
Larriwala	grocery stallholder
Ma	grand-mother; older woman
Mama	mother's brother
Mami	mother's brother's wife
Matla/Matli	water pot
Messuri	new high yield variety of rice
Mug	mung beans
Mujoor	labourer
Mun	a unit of measurement, 1 mun = 20 kilogrammes
Nanand	husband's sister
Nandoi	husband's sister's husband
Nokri	service, paid non-agricultural employment
Otla	raised platform outside a house
Panchayat	village council
Papad	dough rolled very thin, dried and cooked
Papri	green vegetable
Piyar	a woman's natal village/natal kin
Puri	small bundle of cut grass
Rotla	unleavened bread made from millet
Sarpanch	head of the panchayat
Sasra	father-in-law
Sasru	in-law's household, home or village

Sasu	mother-in-law
Sava maino	one month and one week, period of confinement for women after giving birth
Sharam	shy, embarrassment, modesty
Shreemant	ceremony in the seventh month of pregnancy
Sundhio	cattlefeed
Suvavad	end of pregnancy/post-partum
Suvavadi	a woman who has just given birth
Talathi	village accountant
Tempo	small van used to transport labourers and produce
Topla	wicker basket; steel bowl
Tur	a pulse; pigeon pea
Udhar	a loan
Udhad	work on contractual basis
Urud	a pulse
Vaal	haricot beans
Vaat	conversation or goosip
Vadi	orchard, field
Vado	backyard
Vahu	daughter-in-law
Vepari	trader
Veyti	land given to lower castes by the British as payment for services

MAP 1. GUJARAT, INDIA



MAP 2 : WESTERN INDIAN REGION



SOURCE : HARDIMAN 1987

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For Bafai

1 INTRODUCTION

The central theme in this thesis is the examination of women's work in the context of a rural society undergoing capitalist transformation. The focus is on explaining differentiation among women and the various tasks that they perform. Thus, the study provides a contribution to the understanding not only of gender divisions but also of differences in the social position of particular women.

The thesis addresses two important questions:

What types of work do women carry out on a daily, seasonal and generational basis?

In what ways are individual women differentiated; which women are involved in which tasks?

This thesis links these two overarching questions in an attempt to understand the basis of different women's subordination and of their control and power within their paid and unpaid work activities, in the context of Sera¹ village in south Gujarat, India.

I THESIS OUTLINE

In order to examine these issues, the thesis is organised in the following way:

This chapter introduces the literature and theory which informed this study. The following chapter examines the choice of the ethnographic method in data collection and the specific problems and situations I encountered. It also sets the scene in terms of the geographic location of the study village.

¹I have changed the name of the village and of the people in order to protect their anonymity.

Chapter Three examines the ways in which the village population is stratified according to caste and class categories and explains the criteria used in making these divisions.

Chapter Four discusses in more detail the specific form of commercialisation and changing labour relations that have occurred in the district in general, and the talukha (sub-district) in particular.

Chapter Five categorises between different spheres of work and individual women, providing a basis for the examination of particular women's work responsibilities. The categorisations developed in this chapter form the framework for the structuring of the following four empirical chapters. These empirical chapters should be seen as case studies of the theoretical conceptualisations developed earlier.

Chapters Six to Nine consider women's work in areas of paid agriculture, paid domestic, unpaid agriculture and unpaid domestic tasks. They also look at issues of power and control. Each chapter is divided according to factors which differentiate women, namely the caste and class position of their household, the organisation and structure of their household and an individual woman's stage in her life-cycle.

Chapter Ten concludes this thesis by bringing together the different components considered in the previous chapters. It describes women's overall work patterns though it warns against the assumption that these are the only considerations which determine the form and site of women's oppression. The likely implications of further agrarian change on women and their work are subsequently considered. With the case studies in mind, the chapter returns to the theoretical and methodological perspectives analysed earlier.

II LITERATURE AND THEORY: AN OVERVIEW

In this introductory chapter, I outline the major theories and debates that have informed my research and refer to developments that have focused attention on the development of capitalistic relations of agricultural production and on the role of rural women.

The following sections of this chapter highlight the strengths of the relevant theories and literature and outline the weaknesses and omissions which limit the ability of these accounts to deal fully with the great variety of individual women's work experiences.

Even before these can be considered however, it is important to situate the literature and theory within the context in which they have been formulated. These have often, though not always explicitly, reflected a fundamental problem of the relationship between Western models and interpretations and Third World reality, and of the relationship between white and Black feminists. Issues such as the 'place and mode of enunciation (who speaks and how) and that of its reception (how it is interpreted and why)' (Mani 1990, 25) are very important in any form of research or academic study. These issues of ethnocentrism, more specifically Eurocentrism², in the social sciences and of the perpetuation of racism within the feminist movement³ (Bhavnani and Coulson 1986; Davis 1982, 1985; Hooks 1982, 1989; Parmar 1982) have a widespread influence on the study of the situations of rural women in the Third World.⁴ These problems are entrenched in many theoretical and empirical studies and their roots lie in the colonial past (Cutrufelli 1983; Fanon 1959). Although I will not expand on these issues explicitly it is important to be aware of the partial vision reflected in some of the literature discussed here.⁵

² Joseph *et al* (1990), use the term 'European' to refer primarily to Britain and North America. I use their definition of ethnocentrism in which, 'Ethnocentrism, of which Eurocentrism, is a special case, refer to the tendency to view one's own ethnic group and its social standards as the basis for evaluative judgements concerning the practices of others - with the implication that one views one's own standards as superior', and that Eurocentrism in the social science disciplines 'grew out of the historical process of Western colonial and economic dominance and has, in turn, provided an ideological justification for that dominance' (Joseph *et al* 1990, 1).

³Here I am referring to the feminist movements in Britain and North America. Some white feminists have attempted to reconsider their analyses because of criticism from Black feminists (Barrett and McIntosh 1985; Walby 1986). However, in their article 'Ethnocentrism and Socialist Feminist Theory', Barrett and McIntosh 'lose sight of the central issue in the challenge which has been made - which is racism -... and end up with their own previous conceptual categories intact' (Bhavnani and Coulson 1986, 81). Furthermore, Black women are 'merely added on' to their analysis.

⁴Third World academics also use Western models and theories to interpret their own societies thus reflecting the 'colonisation' of their own minds as a legacy of their colonial history and experiences (see Gates 1984; Ngugi 1986).

⁵My intent is not to imply that people from the Third World are the only ones in a position to study the Third World, nor that it is only Black women who can relate the situation of Black women. Rather, that their understanding, articulation and interpretations of processes and situations will be different and, I would argue, in most cases more

The first section discusses briefly theories of the development of capitalism in agriculture and identifies the gender bias within these analyses. This is followed by an examination of the more recent feminist literature in which gender divisions in work have been identified but in which the complexities of 'work' have not been specified and in particular there is the problem of failing to distinguish between agricultural/domestic, paid/unpaid spheres. Furthermore, there are differences between women derived from the class and caste position of their household, the structure and organisation of the household and their stage of the life-cycle, which are often ignored in theoretical and empirical studies alike.

1 Theories of the Development of Capitalism in Agriculture

The process of the development of capitalism in agriculture has received increased attention since the 1960s. Much of the literature that has accompanied this has concentrated on the history of the development of capitalism (Breman 1990a; Ghosh and Dutt 1977; Hamid 1982; Stoler 1985), theories of underdevelopment and colonialism (Amin 1977; Baran 1957; Chilcote 1974; Frank 1969)⁶ and the forms that capitalist development has taken in rural societies (Raj *et al*, 1985). The discussion has partly focused on an attempt to define which forms of production existed in pre- and post-colonial India and other Third World countries (Alavi 1975; Banerjee 1985).⁷

Studies that have concentrated on rural transformation resulting from the development of capitalism in agriculture demonstrate the process of proletarianisation whereby peasants lose control over the means of production and increasingly rely on a combination of on- and off-farm waged activities in order to survive (Cohen *et al* 1979; Harvey 1978, 1982; de Janvry 1981; Lenin 1971; Luxemburg 1971; Marx 1967). The consummation of this process

legitimate. However, the interpretations of others are interesting and no doubt valuable in providing an alternative view, and one which is presented from a different perspective. Thus, ethnocentrism and racism are important issues of which we should be aware when carrying out research in order to recognise the limitations and biases of our analysis and interpretations.

⁶For comprehensive reviews of the theories of underdevelopment see Roxborough (1979); Chilcote (1974).

⁷For a review of the modes of production debate in India see Thorner (1982).

results in the total separation of the direct producers from the means of production. The semi-proletariat household has insufficient access to the means of production to procure an existence through farming alone and the proletariat household must subsist solely by selling their wage-labour on the labour market.

De Janvry suggests that such capitalist development leads to an increasing concentration of the land in fewer hands, specialisation of production and intensification of land use (de Janvry 1981). Furthermore, he argues that these trends result in proletarianisation since some households require more labourers to work on the family farm than are available within their own households, while the majority have an over-supply of labour power in relation to their household's access to land and other resources. Other studies have also identified the existence of this general process while recognising variations in the specific form that it takes, depending on the particular social and economic context (Bhalla 1977; Deere and Leon de Leal 1981; Gough 1977, 1982)

This creation of household surplus labour leads to a combination of processes including migration (Wolf 1966), increased and varied forms of labour mobility (Breman 1985a, 1990a), and changing divisions of labour by sex (Deere 1976, 1978) which articulate with the wider economy (Harvey 1978, Mies 1986). These processes do not necessarily occur simultaneously and again, the specific context is important in determining the exact form of their articulation.

Many studies of the economic and political significance of peasantries in the Third World treat 'peasants' as an homogeneous category (see Ennew *et al* 1977). However, it is important to identify and analyse the process of social and economic differentiation within the peasantry to show the uneven development of capitalism. Central to Lenin's thesis in 'The Development of Capitalism in Russia' (1971) is what he sees as the 'uninterrupted and increasing differentiation' of the peasantry (Lenin 1971, 185). For Lenin, this is part of the larger process of capitalist development, brought on by capitalistic transformation of the market and competition in agriculture through commercial farming (Lenin 1971, 38).⁸ Extending this discussion, Deere and Leon de Leal

⁸In contrast to Lenin's view of the social differentiation of the peasantry with capitalist development, Chayanov believed that family life-cycle, the formation and dissolution of farms, explained peasant stratification. He argued that peasant

argue that social differentiation among direct producers can be characterised in terms of their unequal access to the means of production and the extent to which they engage in wage-labour (Deere and Leon de Leal 1982, 79).

Deere and de Janvry contend that the analysis of peasantries 'must be based on the specification of relations of production in which peasants participate' (Deere and de Janvry 1979, 601), and that one of the essential characteristics of contemporary rural economies is that the specific form of production is invariably found to articulate with and be subordinate to the dominant capitalist economy (Alavi 1975; Patnaik 1987; Thorner 1982).

However, it is important to point out that the process of transformation to more capitalistic forms of agricultural production takes varied forms and affects different ethnographic regions in different ways. The Green Revolution in India provides a particular case of rapid rural transformation. It began in the 1960s with the introduction of high yield varieties, easily accessible credit facilities, extension of irrigation, improved technology and mechanisation, and chemical fertilisers and pesticides in an attempt to expand agricultural output particularly of food grains.⁹ The effects of this form of rural development have been studied extensively.¹⁰ In particular geographic locations, the local reality yields interesting variations to the general theory and patterns of development. In south Gujarat, the location of this fieldwork, the specific form of commercialisation that has occurred has led to the gradual breakdown of the bonded

differentiation is based on demographic differentiation as opposed to social differentiation and further suggests that farm size will automatically adjust to family size. In doing this, Chayanov denies the basis for class differentiation thus ignoring unequal distribution of the means of production and socio-economic relations (Chayanov 1966).

⁹For detailed literature on the form of the Green Revolution see Bhalla (1976); Byres and Crow (1985); Das Gupta (1977); Farmer (1977); Gough (1977).

¹⁰There have been a considerable number of studies and debates on the Green Revolution and its affect on agrarian capitalism. Patnaik suggests that there has been 'a sharp increase in the proportion of agricultural labourers in the rural labour force' (Patnaik 1987, 159) and that income gains have been concentrated in the hands of middle and large farmers. Others argue that economic class differences have increased (Frankel 1971; Mencher 1974). These analyses have been criticised by those who suggest that economic and class differentiation are not new phenomena but existed prior to the implementation of new agricultural policies (Harriss 1977, 35).

labour system known as *halipratha*, greater polarisation between landholders and landless labourers, and a high proportion of migrant labourers being brought into the area from surrounding districts. Breman found that

'where small landowners or even agricultural labourers previously made their appearance as share croppers on land belonging to bigger farmers, now the phenomenon is reversed' (Breman 1985a, 55),

whereby, marginal landowners,

'because of implements, capital or lack of time, were in general no longer in a position to cultivate their lands themselves ceded the use of their plots to bigger farmers' (Breman 1985a, 55),

to whom they were generally already indebted.

Not all areas undergoing a process of commercialisation can be suitably analysed with sole reference to Marxist theories of proletarianisation. They have, often wrongly, identified proletarianisation as being inextricably linked with the introduction of more capitalistic forms of agricultural production. Breman contends that,

'the presence of an extensive landless proletariat in Bardoli Vibagh (in south Gujarat) several generations ago indicates a property structure, and, in line with this, labour relations which crystallised long before the process of firstly, commercialisation in the nineteenth century and secondly, modernisation of the agricultural economy in the twentieth century were set in motion' (Breman 1985a, 73).

Therefore, in this area, proletarianisation of the labour force predated recent commercialisation since,

'landlessness in the plains was probably a phenomenon that could not be separated from the manner in which the land was originally brought under cultivation many years ago' (Breman 1985a, 73).

Furthermore, capitalist development is uneven and this can be exemplified by the fact that in Navsari Talukha, where the study village is located, the shift in production to sugar cane, the major cash crop, has been much slower and more recent than in the neighbouring talukha of Bardoli to which Breman refers.

While broadly accepting these theories of the forms and effects of processes of rural transformation, this very 'unevenness' of the development of capitalism identified by

Lenin (1971) means that it is essential to look at variations within specific geographic locations. The particular socio-economic context results in very particular and often localised situations. Although proletarianisation has not been a recent phenomena in this area, the population has become increasingly polarised as commercialisation of agriculture proceeds. Furthermore, there has been an intensification of land-use and specialisation of production. Changing production processes have had implications for migration patterns, the division of labour in productive and reproductive activities and the form of articulation with the wider economy. In this area there have been a number of forces responsible for the changing rural scene; government policy, the Green Revolution and the introduction of technological innovations have been very important forces of change. However, these forces have been introduced into an area already divided by caste and class which provide additional socio-economic and historical factors which influence the form of change. Furthermore, the process of the development of capitalism in agriculture is continually changing and expanding as specific areas articulate with the wider economy through marketing and migration and as initial capital accumulation allows reinvestment and further accumulation to occur. For example, in-migrant seasonal labour working in south Gujarat arrive in the plains because of processes occurring within their home areas and upper caste out-migrants return with capital accrued elsewhere because of the particular economic opportunities and situation in the area to which they migrated; they are then in a position to take advantage of new opportunities available within their home area. Consequently, the presence of in-migrants and returning out-migrants affect the agrarian system in Gujarat. Thus, regions experiencing commercialisation of agriculture cannot be seen in isolation and it is difficult to speak of transformations taking place in one area without an understanding of processes occurring in other areas.

Many studies of rural change concentrate on the economic features of a given society or community yet ignore the obvious effects of capitalism on the production and maintenance of social organisations.

'Capital and capitalism signify a specific relationship of production that is indeed an economic organisation (productive forces, technology etc.), but which at the same time is also a social organisation ...' (Quaini 1982, 13).

It is argued here, that it is essential to see 'capitalism' as a system which pervades all aspects of a society and all social relations, and not as an external system imposed from

above which leaves intact existing organisational structures. The introduction of capitalist relations of production changes social, economic and political aspects of a society including dominant ideologies and values and is not confined solely to market relations. Rather, it permeates the household, women's work and the spheres of production and reproduction.

2 Gender Divisions

Although theories of the development of capitalism in agriculture do not actively create a gender bias, by not taking into account the effect on gender relations of these processes, they are implicitly perpetuating the invisibility of women. Both, the study of the form of capitalistic development i.e. the theoretical construct, and its effects i.e. the empirical reality, tend to focus on a particular set of issues which are androcentric. For example, when looking at the effects of the Green Revolution, polarisation between landholders and landless labourers and the effects of increased mechanisation on agricultural productivity and farmers' economic status are often identified but only in terms of men. As Whitehead argues, the effects of technological change on rural women are seldom studied and development programmes tend to focus on men. Furthermore, the relative positions of men and women regarding the benefits of 'development' have an institutionalised basis from which forms of sexual hierarchy are derived (Whitehead 1985, 28).¹¹

Since the early 1970s, discussions about the sexual division of labour in Third World rural economies have increasingly given rise to a number of theoretical perspectives on the form and value of women's work and how it is differentiated from the work carried out by men (Beneria 1982). These studies have encompassed analyses of work patterns within the household and outside the home. Initially, the debate focused on women's work in agricultural production (Boserup 1970, 1974) but more recently it has concentrated on the contribution of the unpaid work carried out by women.

¹¹See Agarwal, *Structures of Patriarchy* (1988a), in which the authors challenge the notion that State directed development is gender neutral. The articles presented in this volume identify ways in which the State, the community and the household in Asia have upheld 'patriarchal interests' by focusing on gender implications of agricultural development and other forms of development and government policies.

In most non-feminist explanations of the origins of the sexual division of labour and of the unequal relationship between men and women,

'whether they stem from an evolutionist, a positivist, functionalist, or even a Marxist approach, the problem that needs explanation is, in the last analysis, seen as biologically determined and hence beyond the scope of social change' (Mies 1982, 1).

This biological determinism, according to Mies, is the most deeply rooted obstacle to a full analysis of the causes of women's oppression and exploitation since it obfuscates the influence of socio-historical factors (Mies 1982, 2).

Most Marxist analyses provide an example of this oversight since they have neglected the question of gender divisions in their accounts of the origins of the development of capitalism (Barrett 1980, 37). Marxist analyses marginalise women firstly, by considering only women's work in productive paid labour as important and secondly,

'in insisting on economic determinism they saw women's oppression as merely an (unimportant) ideological effect' (Barrett 1980, 33).

Engels' study on the 'Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State' (1972) points out that a relationship exists between forms of property and the structure of production on the one hand and the condition of women on the other. However, as Beneria argues, this link is simplistic since the transmission of private property is only one factor among many affecting the condition of women (Beneria 1979). Engels attributed the origins of the family and the origin of male dominance over women to the emergence of private property (Engels 1972, 121), arguing that women would not be emancipated as long as they are excluded from what he calls 'socially productive work'. This idea has often been disputed by those who identify the unpaid work that women carry out within and outside the home as being socially productive (Beneria, Mies), and by those who argue that women will only be further exploited if they enter into this 'socially productive work'. Although it is necessary to highlight women's domestic work contribution to the wider economy in order to identify the roots of their oppression (Dalla Costa 1972; Prescod 1986), these analyses also perpetuate the assumption that gender relations are primarily and fundamentally economic in nature.

Much of the feminist literature concerned with the origins of women's subordination and the sexual division of labour argue against these attempts to locate the origins of women's

subordination in exploitative class relations that evolved with the development of capitalism. They contend that male dominance pre-dates private property and class societies (Reiter 1975; Mies *et al* 1988) and therefore, since the sexual division of labour cannot be explained solely in terms of the demands of the productive system, the central problem of analysis should be the relation of women to men and not to capital or other economic forces (Mackintosh 1984, 9).

Much Marxist analyses of the development of capitalistic relations is distorted by what Bennholdt-Thomsen calls, 'the ideology of male chauvinist Marxism', which has ignored the production and reproduction of the human capacity of labour (Bennholdt-Thomsen 1981). It also became evident using Marxist frameworks, that the

'relations of production, grounded as they are in a deeply ideological division of labour, cannot be integrated through the use of economic categories alone' (Barrett 1980, 40).

Mies argues that the sexual division of labour within the household is linked to the sexual division outside the home and to the overall division of labour in the national and international context (Mies 1982). She emphasises that capitalism is necessarily patriarchal and therefore, that the origins of the sexual division of labour in society arise from the interaction of two sets of social forces; capitalism and patriarchy. The sexual division of labour is then not simply a division of tasks between two equal partners but an 'asymmetric, hierarchical and exploitative relationship' (Mies 1986, 45). Moreover, it is argued that the development of capitalist relations of production takes advantage of and reproduces the continuing subordination of women (Beneria 1979), and that

'most societies have developed a variety of forms of control over female sexuality and of women's activities and this control is at the root of women's subordination' (Beneria 1979, XXXIII).

Some feminists have attempted to combine Marxism and Feminism while also identifying the problems of integrating the two (Barrett 1980; Hartmann 1979)¹². Those who conceive of one system of capitalist patriarchy, a unitary theory, to explain gender inequality

¹²See Sargent (1981), in which a number of articles question the relationship between Marxism and Feminism in response to Hartmann's article on 'The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism', Hartmann (1979). See also Young (1981) for criticism of Hartmann's dualist approach and Walby (1986) for a summary of these debates.

(Eisenstein 1979) often underestimate the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy (see Walby 1986). Furthermore, these approaches tend to focus more on women's relation to capitalism rather than on gender relations. In contrast, Hartmann argues for a dual theory in which patriarchy and capitalism are two separate but interacting social structures. Following Hartmann (1979) and Walby (1986) I argue that,

'this conceptualisation of patriarchy as analytically independent yet co-existing with capitalism... captures the autonomy of patriarchal relations whilst not ignoring the significance of capitalist relations' (Walby 1986, 33).

Furthermore, it is possible to assess the form of connection between the two, capitalism and patriarchy, and the effect of this relationship on women's subordination. Others have discussed the need for a combined class and gender analysis (Caplan 1985; Coulson 1975; Deere and Leon de Leal 1982). I argue for the need to see patriarchy and capitalism as two distinct sets of social relations which are interrelated. Thus,

'patriarchy is distinctive in being a system of interrelated structures through which men exploit women whilst capitalism is a system in which capital expropriates wage-labour' (Walby 1986, 46).

There are however, limitations to this understanding of gender inequality. Here again, as in much feminist analyses developed in the West, ethnocentric bias in theory formulation is articulated. Unless racism as a form of inequality and the history of colonialism are taken into account, it is impossible to analyse or fully understand the diverse experiences of individual women and the form and extent of their oppression. In fact, in many situations, the basis of oppression are different for white women and Black women, European and North American women and women from the Third World. Thus, what may be considered the main cause or site of oppression for one woman may not be considered or identified as such by another.

Debates about the origins of the sexual division of labour continue, yet much of the more recent literature accepts that the sexual division of labour did not 'originate' with the development of capitalism although its nature changes with processes of surplus extraction and capital accumulation. This relationship between the development of capitalism and the changing division of labour by sex is important;

'sex related differentiation is one of the most pervasive forms of human exploitation, rooted in the personal interaction between the sexes and in basic social institutions, such as the family , and supported by economic and political

structures. Its manifestations are manifold and extend into all levels of society' (Beneria 1979, 205).

Beneria suggests that this changing nature of the sexual division of labour is a result of the strong influence of the permeation of capitalism into local economies and the effects of the development of national and international markets on women's activities (Beneria 1982, XV).

Following Deere, I argue that the structure of the household and the sexual division of labour are essential to surplus extraction from a non-capitalist mode of production in which the basic unit of production is the household and production and consumption are not completely divorced from each other. She contends that since women and children produce the means of subsistence for the production and reproduction of labour power for the market, only by studying

'the way in which surplus labour (labour in excess of that needed for their own survival) is extracted from peasant households can we understand familial strategies of production and reproduction. Only then can we understand the relationship between women's subordination and social change' (Deere 1982, 92).

However, in order to do this, we have to look at all forms of surplus extraction within the paid and unpaid sphere and within and outside the home in order to understand the sexual division of labour in all households and to inform us of the form and extent of subordination of individual women.

Several empirical studies have identified a division of tasks between men and women, the areas of work in which women are involved and the time-allocation of different activities.¹³ These studies have made visible the economic significance of women's work and identified the sexual division of labour within and outside the home and the ways in which this is affected by changes in the overall economy. However, an over-emphasis on, for example, time-allocation fails to consider the implications of work loads on, for example, issues of control. Debates about the origins and form of the sexual division of labour have led to some important developments, but there are a number of limitations. For

¹³For studies on work time-allocation see Sen I. (1988), also Jain and Chand (1985) who carried out research on women's domestic work in Rajasthan and West Bengal, and Bhati and Singh (1987) on women's work tending animals.

instance, the identification of differences between men's and women's work and time spent on different activities is useful but, when no other factors of differentiation are taken into account, these types of analyses homogenise women (and men) and their work experiences. Because of these omissions, these theoretical frameworks of gender divisions appear to imply that individual women and their work patterns occupy a similar position *vis a vis* the development of capitalism and, class and gender relations.

This thesis focuses more on the differences and relations between women within this broader gender difference and sexual division of labour in order to identify the ways in which individual women and the work that they carry out articulate with capitalist and patriarchal relations and processes of social change. In many empirical studies, distinctions between the form and extent of women's agricultural and domestic work are often ignored, and differences between paid and unpaid work are rarely identified or considered important. This thesis considers these distinctions and, in addition, the diversity of women in terms of household caste and class position, household organisation and structure and life-cycle changes. The omission of these factors of differentiation may be partly attributed to ethnocentric conceptions. Without an analysis of caste, the structure of particular households and implications of certain life-cycle changes as well as the specific variety of forms of work in which women are involved, it is not appropriate to apply general theoretical frameworks to particular ethnographic situations; in this case, rural India. It is necessary to consider these forms of differentiation in order to assess women's differentiated work experiences and differences in the form and extent of controls over their lives.

The following two sections briefly illustrate the way in which much of the 'gender and development' literature and empirical studies do not explicitly differentiate between types of work. The basis for making such divisions is examined in more detail, in Chapter Five.

3 Agricultural Work: Paid and Unpaid

In an early and influential study on women in agriculture, 'Women and Economic Development', Boserup examined the relationship between agrarian structures and women's role in rural societies (Boserup 1970). She showed how the sexual division of labour in agricultural production was modified by changes in factors such as the type of

cultivation system, forms of property and the introduction of new crops and technology (Boserup 1970).¹⁴ Young carried out a study in Mexico on different work processes and the level of command and control of the women involved. She found that women control the quantity and pace of work when they weave cotton in their own homes, (although long hours of work are characteristic of home working which means that ineffect women do lose some aspect of control when involved in this area of work), whereas their role in coffee harvesting, which is an activity that must be carried out at a particular time and in amounts determined by the landowner, is completely out of their control (Young 1978). Young points out the contrast between agricultural activities which are carried out within the home and those carried out in the fields. Although these differences are not necessarily gender specific, it is usually landholding men who control the agricultural production system and it is rare for landless men to be involved in performing agricultural tasks within their own homes. Thus, it is more often that women are involved in agricultural activities which are carried out both in the fields and at home. Recently there have been a number of other studies which focus on women's agricultural work in India (Agarwal 1985; Bhati and Singh 1987; Chen 1989; Mencher and Saradamoni 1982).¹⁵

Much of this literature makes reference to, but does not always explicitly differentiate between, the paid and unpaid work of women and the way in which these two spheres allow women different levels of control. It is essential to identify the nature of the relationship between the two areas of work and how this influences individual women's daily, seasonal and annual work patterns within and outside the home. It is only by differentiating between forms of work that we can identify and understand the full extent of women's contribution in all areas of productive and reproductive activities.

Boserup's study of women in agriculture identifies the relationship between women's agricultural work contribution as it varies with different cultivation patterns and women's

¹⁴Goody (1976) also identifies differences based on the type of cultivation system. He suggests that plough agriculture leads to a more stratified society and hoe agriculture to a more egalitarian society on the basis of variations in the surplus produced in the two types of agricultural system.

¹⁵See Duvvury (1989) for a review of Indian literature on women in agriculture.

marginalised status,¹⁶ but the work described is not identified as being waged work or unpaid household labour. Similarly, when looking at unpaid work, the usual assumption is that this is purely household or domestic labour despite the fact that much of women's work in the agricultural sector is also unpaid. Young (1978) identifies differences in levels of control over women in paid agricultural work as they vary according to the geographic location in which the task is being carried out. However, she does not contrast this with controls over women as they carry out unpaid agricultural work within the home and in the fields.

A more careful and extensive system of differentiation in agricultural activities identifies individual women's relation to the form of capitalist transformation occurring within the specific context and their economic and social status within their households and outside their homes. Furthermore, this differentiation shows how each separate sphere, paid agricultural and unpaid agricultural, affects other areas of women's work responsibilities.

4 Domestic Work: Paid and Unpaid

Although there have been an increasing number of studies focusing on women's work, domestic labour still tends to be treated as a marginal activity. However, this area of work is crucial since, not only is it the primary responsibility of most women, it is also 'productive' labour and therefore, economically, politically and socially important.

Many analyses which concentrate on women's access to, and participation in, the labour market tend to locate women's oppression in the sphere of paid production ignoring the contribution of unpaid agricultural and unpaid domestic work, which are commonly considered to be part and parcel of a woman's responsibilities as a wife and mother (Whitehead 1985; Sharma 1986). Therefore, much of women's work is regarded as theoretically insignificant. These sorts of analyses perpetuate the political, social and economic invisibility of women's unpaid domestic work.

This is in part due to the narrowness of conventional definitions and concepts of 'work' and 'economic productivity' which usually focus on activities which produce surplus value

¹⁶See Beneria and Sen (1981) for a critique of Boserup (1970).

(Mies 1982), and thus exclude the labour that women carry out primarily for members of their own households, including childcare (Fox 1980). Furthermore,

'The real relations between the part of the production and reproduction of society that occurs in the household and that productive sphere known as the economy are hidden and mystified' (Fox 1980, 10).

Shiva argues against narrow conceptualisations suggesting that,

'since poor Third World women provide water, fodder, wood from the free commons that nature provides, collecting them is not considered work in reductionist economics. A gendered dichotomy is created between 'productive' and 'non-productive' work, on the basis of money and price as the only measure of economic wealth' (Shiva 1988, 220).

Furthermore, Fox contends that

'It is not surprising that labour occurring in the home, creating no clear product, drawing no obvious payment and performed in a society where wage work dominates, appears to be non-work and confers on the worker little social recognition' (Fox 1980, 12-13).

Much Marxist analyses while recognising that labour within the household, domestic female labour, subsidises capitalism, moves on to consider capitalism and the sphere of paid production rather than focusing on the domestic labour itself. Therefore, there is a need for analyses to

'clarify the particular nature of domestic labour and thus women's oppression under capitalism' (Fox 1980, 10).

New theoretical perspectives have emerged that have shifted attention onto the economic value and significance of women's unpaid domestic work. A major challenge to the idea that housework is non-productive came from Dalla Costa in 'Women and the Subversion of the Community' (1972), in which she analysed the relation between women's domestic labour and capitalist production. She argued that the 'housewife' produces not simply use-value but the commodity 'labour power' which men within the household can then sell as free wage-labour in the labour market. In fact, she suggests that, 'domestic work is essential to the production of surplus value' (Dalla Costa 1972, 31) since it provides

the foundation upon which the process of the capitalist development can emerge and reproduce itself.¹⁷

I argue that domestic labour produces both use and labour value and thus, although much of women's unpaid domestic work, including childbearing and childrearing, is not conventionally considered as 'work' or 'labour', it is economically, socially and politically important. It is also theoretically significant and, in order to understand the relationship between women's subordination and the organisation of production, it is necessary to analyse domestic work and to identify the links between women's unpaid domestic work and waged-work.

Burton emphasised the importance of making a distinction between the relation of the household to the wider capitalist system and between the relation of women to capitalism (Burton 1985, 57; see Elson and Pearson 1980).

'If unpaid work in the home can be demonstrated to be an essential component of the capitalist system, attention needs to be addressed to the work itself. The fact that women have been culturally assigned to this work can then be assessed with regard first, to the ways in which women's domestic labour contributes to capital accumulation, and second, to the ways in which it is connected to patriarchal ideology as a legitimising aspect of capitalist social relations' (Burton 1985, 59).

Benston and others have argued that women and children constitute a separate class (Benston 1969) and that only by remunerating currently unpaid work will women acquire the autonomy that the wage and the struggle for the wage can bring about (Spare Rib 1989, 11). However, Fox argues that women do not have a separate class position since,

'there is no personal necessity for the individual woman to reproduce or to do housework for others in order to survive, and since dependence on a man's wage is also not strictly necessary for women under capitalism, women's position cannot be seen as a class position' (Fox 1980, 19).

Although I do not agree that women in India are 'free' to avoid housework or confound the expectations of their husbands and in-laws, women clearly do not constitute a separate,

¹⁷Early debates focussed on the value of domestic labour. Harrison maintained that household production is a mode of production of use-value (Harrison 1973) while Secombe presented a theory of domestic labour as independent commodity production (Secombe 1974). For a critique of Secombe see Coulson, Magas and Wainwright (1975).

homogeneous class. Not all women are similarly oppressed since they belong to households which vary in their structure and in their class position. Thus,

'Even though domestic labour is overwhelmingly women's work, the degree to which it is oppressive and the ways in which it is burdensome differ greatly and must be taken into account' (Harris 1981, 149).

In fact, much of women's unpaid domestic work particularly amongst the upper classes, perpetuates and reinforces the class position of the household and relations between households. Furthermore, as Dalla Costa argues, unpaid domestic work also involves the reproduction of the social relations of capitalist production.

The domestic labour debate has made a vital contribution to the study of the basis and forms of women's subordination through their unpaid work activities.¹⁸ Women's work within the 'domestic sphere' has been made visible and the economic value of such labour to capitalist development has been shown to be significant. More recently, however, there has been much criticism of an extension of the domestic labour debate supported, for instance, by James (1986), who argues that for women to achieve 'liberation' and autonomy they should receive wages for the housework that they perform.

'Since Marx, it has been clear that capital rules and develops through the wage, that is that the foundation of capitalist society was the wage labourer and his or her direct exploitation... precisely through the wage has the exploitation of the non-wage labourer been organised. This exploitation has been even more effective because the lack of a wage hid it. Where women are concerned, their labour appears to be a personal service outside of capital' (James 1986, 2).

Burton criticises those who follow this line of argument on the grounds that they falsely assume that,

'the position of women as housewives is more important than either the class position of their families or the question of whether they are employed in paid labour' (Burton 1985, 64).¹⁹

¹⁸For an analysis of women's economic contribution through unpaid domestic labour see also Oakley (1974); Malos (1980); Mies *et al* (1988).

¹⁹Davis (1982) also criticises this argument using as an example South African workers.

I too disagree with James, and argue that, much of this debate has been developed by feminists in the West. By focusing on the assumption that gender relations are fundamentally economic in nature their proposals for the 'emancipation' of women ignore specific socio-historical factors and are not necessarily relevant to the lives of many Third World rural women.

There have recently been a number of studies which identify a process whereby women are 'pushed back' into a 'housewife' role by which they are increasingly defined. Mies calls this process 'housewifisation'. She argues that,

'the policy of defining women everywhere as dependent housewives, or the process of housewifisation, is identified as the main strategy of international capital to integrate women worldwide into the accumulation process' (Mies 1986, 4).

Sharma also suggests that we can see the trend for women to be withdrawn from more manual and agricultural work on the household's own land as part of the process of raising the status and prestige level of the household (Sharma 1980, 119).

This process of 'housewifisation' applies mainly to women from upper class households and is much more complex than Mies suggests since individual women's different positions within the structure of their households and not simply the household class position must be taken into account. Furthermore, it is not the case that 'housewifisation' results in increased leisure time for these women. Instead, they are being moved from one area of work only to be increasingly involved in others; in activities Papanek identifies as 'status production work' (Papanek 1979). Status production work is carried out predominantly by middle and upper class women in order to raise the class position and status of their households. These activities are often less visible than other unpaid domestic work activities and less publicly recognisable as being 'economically productive'.

Within these general theoretical debates, some of which focus predominantly on an economic analysis, individual women's oppression is affected by other factors and processes at the level of the household. Thus, it is also important to analyse the domestic economy, the sexual division of labour within the household and the social relations

between household members that it generates.²⁰ An important contribution of the sexual division of labour debate has been to identify the importance of looking at the division of labour within the domestic sphere since,

'In 'developing countries, the effects of capitalist relations of production are penetrating the household and transforming relations between men and women' (Sharma 1984, 73).²¹

More recently, there has been a move towards investigating the

'relationship, character of articulation, between domestic and non-domestic spheres of action', since, 'women are rarely domestic labourers and nothing else. They are often found combining their reproductive roles with more directly productive activities but with their primary anchorage in domestic labour' (Bujra 1978, 21).

Young emphasises the significance of the way in which reproductive and productive work increase as commercialisation proceeds, leading to an intensification of women's work, while Beneria emphasises the importance of focusing on the interaction between production and reproduction, since,

'women's role in reproduction lies at the root of their subordination, the extent and nature of their participation in production, and the division of labour by sex' (Beneria 1979, 222).

However, she is also aware of the problems of differentiating activities,

'the inter-relationship between productive and reproductive activities at the domestic level makes it very difficult to draw a clear cut line between the two when examining the composition of women's work activities and the sexual division of labour' (Beneria 1979. 209).

²⁰Sen suggests that in order to understand the effects of agrarian change on rural women, it is necessary to take into account that 'their own survival is bound up with that of the household to which they belong, but they are subject to subordination within the household as well' (Sen G. 1982, 30).

²¹Gender connotations of some of the language is interesting. 'Penetration', is loaded with (hetero)sexual imagery and the notion of 'capitalist penetration' works in a way that reinforces the masculinity of capital and the 'otherness'/femininity of what is not capitalist. Therefore, in this particular quote, the 'household' is implicitly positioned as feminine.

Several studies consider these issues employing an empirical approach. For example, Safa looks at the way in which women combine their paid work responsibilities with their domestic responsibilities as mothers and wives in Brazil and in the U.S.A. She suggests that

'through the allocation of labour at the household level we can see how larger economic forces impinge on women's productive and reproductive role' (Safa 1986, 300).

Although unpaid domestic work is most women's primary responsibility, it does not always condition the nature of their paid work opportunities. On the contrary, for many women, the experiences of paid and unpaid work are quite different. Out of economic necessity they are required to carry out an increasing amount of paid work, often combining paid agricultural with paid domestic work. In some of these tasks women can be required to work long and unregulated hours, with the result that they have less time in which to perform their unpaid domestic work. In this situation, their paid work conditions the amount of time available for unpaid work rather than the reverse.²² Therefore, the households' class position, in determining the work requirements of household members, is another important category that must be considered in order to assess women's differentiated work experiences. Furthermore, there are still few studies which look at women's paid domestic work and the social and economic position of women who engage in this form of paid employment.²³

5 Caste and Class Differences

Many studies now emphasise the need for a theoretical framework which combines class, (and in the Indian case, caste), and gender analysis, and the importance of looking at the social relations under which women's work is performed. They suggest that women's work

²²See Siltanen (1986), who argues that it is women's unpaid domestic labour that conditions their paid work contributions.

²³For a detailed analysis of women's paid domestic work see Cock (1989) on domestic workers in South Africa.

is affected by changes in relations of production and that it varies according to the class position of different groups of women (Deere 1977, Stoler 1977, Young 1978).²⁴

Deere argues that the division of labour is closely related to the household's position in the class structure since,

'access to the means of production largely determines the range of income-generating activities available to different households. The range of activities then influences the sexual division of labour within the household' (Deere 1982, 101).

Therefore, the sexual division of labour is responsive to the material conditions of production (Deere 1982; Stoler 1977). Furthermore, any analysis of production and reproduction within the household must take account of the household's access to the means of production.

Class differences, of varying access to land and other resources, between households have been identified as an important criteria for analysing differences between men's and women's work within households (Bardhan 1985). However, few studies have presented any detailed comparisons between the sexual division of labour in landless households and landed households. Those that do, concentrate on generalised male/female differences assuming that men and women are differentiated in the same way.

To gain a better understanding of women's work experiences it is important to look further to identify ways in which women are differentiated and subsequently recognise the diversity of tasks that they are required to perform. Unless this is carried out in a detailed way, any resulting study will simply generalise about women's experiences if it only relates them to those of men and does not detail different women's individual experiences. Furthermore, where class variations have been taken into account, studies have tended to look at a group of households belonging to one particular class rather than

²⁴There are still only a few studies which combine a three way analysis of gender, class and caste. See Liddle and Joshi (1985).

comparing households of different classes.²⁵ Chapter Three examines the class and caste stratification of Sera and the criteria used for making such divisions.

The following section identifies further differences between women besides their households' position within the class hierarchy. These include variations in household structure and at different stages in a woman's life-cycle.

6 Household Composition

The definition of the rural household with its inevitable changing boundaries with in- and out-migration is a problematic one. Members of a household could be defined as co-residents at one *chulla* (hearth) and therefore seen as a consumption unit, or as co-workers on joint land, a productive unit. The former however, does not take into account members who are seasonal migrants, and the latter does not include landless households nor does it allow for variations in land tenure such as sharecropping and tenant households. Another difficulty is the allocation or location of young domestic servants who live with their employers. In this study, I adopt Wadley and Derr's definition in which a household is defined as those members who share a cooking hearth although joint property such as land and tools may remain undivided between households (Wadley and Derr 1985). Young domestic servants who live-in belong to a separate household from that of their employer's because in reality they do not share the same *chulla*; their food is prepared and cooked separately using different utensils and often a different *chulla* from the one used to cook food for members of the employer's household.

It is necessary to extend our analysis further to incorporate variations between and within households. I argue that it is necessary to look at the household as a unit but also to disaggregate the household to identify an individual member's position within it.

²⁵Sen looked at the effects of the Green Revolution on women agricultural workers but while acknowledging that 'the particular form that subordination takes vary among different classes of rural households', her analysis is limited to the study of only those women from poor peasant and agricultural labourer households (Sen G. 1982, 29).

It is necessary to look at the household as a unit in terms of its social and class position and the ways in which it is connected to wider processes of social and economic transformation. Brydon and Chant emphasise that the household is an important unit of analysis since,

'it is both the point of origin and destination for the labour and resources of its component members, the household is the point at which reproductive and productive meet' (Brydon and Chant 1989, 10).

Furthermore, the household and the domestic sphere often represent the primary site where the structuring of gender relations and gender subordination is produced and re-enacted (Harris 1981, 152), and is the site where women's specific experiences are defined.

'Women are members of a household which has a combined status and class position in the society but individual women within the household are also subordinated so they are faced with a great many factors which affect their lives as particular members within the household structure, hierarchy, caste and class position but also as representatives and members of that household and the way in which it enters into the social/economic system' (Sen 1982, 29).

Therefore, it is also essential to analyse the organisation and structure of the household, including male/female relations, and its implications for women's work.

'One of the most pervasive themes of the present feminist movement has been the emphasis placed on the role of reproduction and women's reproductive activities as a determinant of women's work, the sexual division of labour and the dominance/subordination relationship between the sexes. This emphasis had resulted in a penetration of analysis into the household in order to understand the nature of the domestic economy, of domestic work, and of the relations between the sexes within the household' (Beneria 1982, XII).

We cannot assume that all members of the household are equal since there are 'considerable disparities in terms of the inputs, benefits and activities of various household members' (Brydon and Chant 1989, 9).

The household is an internally structured institution within which women are subordinate to men with some women also subordinate to other women.

'two main principles underlie the structure of authority in most households, those of seniority and of gender' (Sharma 1984, 63).

Therefore, individual members within the household have differing levels of access to resources, different degrees of power and control over other members and are variously involved in making different types of decisions from the specific production system that

should be followed on the household's own land to the ways in which family members should be employed within and outside the household.

However,

'Leaving women to control each other, as inevitably happens when they are rigidly segregated from men leads to the creation of positions of control and authority among the women, but not the kinds of control that they can use to challenge their position as women' (Sharma 1978, 265).

Therefore, it is important not to see the household as a single unit. The rights of some of its members can be determined by others since individuals within the household have different interests, controls and wishes (Whitehead 1985, 56). The internal structuring of the household enables us to analyse differences between individual members' experiences and the way in which these change along with the organisation of the household.

'Far from viewing the household as a static unit and the division of labour as 'natural' or 'given', we must view them as being subject to change and responding to dynamic forces generated by an economy in the process of transformation' (Beneria 1979, 222).

There are also cyclical changes within the household as its structure and organisation change over time with in- and out-migration and as individual members go through various stages in their life-cycle. The section on 'Household Organisation and Structure' in Chapter Five explains the ways in which women's experiences can be differentiated on the basis of their position within the household and the composition and organisation of the household; for instance, whether it is joint or nuclear.

Another factor which is often ignored but will be addressed in this thesis is the way in which life-cycle changes influence the types of work women carry out as they move from pre-pubescent girls to menstruating women, marriage, childbearing and through other stages in their life-cycle. In rural India there is a prescribed life-cycle which women are expected to follow and there are limited opportunities for women to veer from this path. Therefore, for example, this study assumes that most women marry and follow a particular life-cycle.

Important insights have been gained by using the sexual division of labour as a framework within which to study different work patterns for men and women and the way in which these differences are affected by processes of economic transformation. However, an

analysis of the sexual division of labour that looks at class differences may fail to differentiate women within the household. It may also fail to recognise differences in the variety of tasks that women perform.

CONCLUSION

This thesis goes beyond an analysis of the sexual division of labour and focuses on the different experiences of individual women.

Above, through an examination of some of the relevant literature and theory, I have identified some of the issues that I will be addressing. Theories of development have often perpetuated a gender bias rendering women invisible. I argue that those studies that look at women's work often fail to distinguish between the agricultural and the domestic, and between paid and unpaid labour. There are difficulties in defining activities and spheres of work but unless we make these distinctions, we are unable to reflect accurately what women do 'day-in and day-out to provide for their families' (Mukhopadhyay 1984, 56) or, identify the ways in which women's work is affected by processes of rural transformation.

I argue that, besides differentiating tasks, we cannot ignore issues of class differences, household composition and life-cycle changes which differentiate women and therefore their experiences. Using this framework, we can assess the implications of rural transformation on women's access to resources, controls over their own lives and their relation to labour.

However, there are other important factors which influence women's lives that are beyond the scope of this study. These factors include systems of control which affect all women in a highly stratified and patriarchal society.²⁶ These forms of control operate through rules and customs which regulate women's access to resources and their marriage opportunities and control their sexuality, often through forms of violence. Some of these

²⁶For controls over women see Hirschon (1985); Jain (1980); Mandelbaum (1987); Mazumdar (1979).

issues are mentioned insofar as they relate to the work that women carry out but cannot be dealt with separately.

I became familiar with a number of studies focusing on rural transformation processes in south Gujarat while carrying out background research for this study (Bremner 1974, 1979; Pocock 1972; Pillai and Baks 1979; Van der Veen 1972). These studies analyse rural and urban transformation processes but do not look specifically at the changing situation for women in areas of paid and unpaid work. In an attempt to correct this bias, I decided to carry out research in the same geographical area but extend analysis to focus on women's work activities in the context of a region undergoing rural transformation. However, because it is inappropriate simply to 'add the women question' (Mies 1986), to previous studies, it became necessary to formulate a new framework and method of analysis to enable a study on gender relations, which was not characterised by a male bias. The basis and form of this framework is examined and explained in Chapter Five.

Having outlined the key issues that will be addressed in this study through the use of a framework which emphasises diversity and differentiation, the following chapter deals with issues regarding methodology and the collection of data.

2 METHODS OF RESEARCH

Having outlined the topic of my research, namely women's different work experiences and processes of rural transformation, I was faced with the problem of how to collect specific types of information from the field. I not only had to select a region and a village but also the way in which to carry out the fieldwork. There were a number of methodological issues that I was faced with which related to the adoption of ethnographic and participant observation methods and more personally to my own position as an Indian woman from Britain working within the rural Indian context.

In this chapter, the first section examines the choice of the ethnographic method as it relates to the research topic. The next section explains the selection of south Gujarat and more specifically, Navsari Talukha as the area of research. The following section outlines some of the problems I faced in the field and how I attempted to overcome them, and reasons for gaps in the data collected. The final section deals with practical considerations regarding the selection and presentation of the fieldwork material.

I THE RESEARCH TOPIC AND ETHNOGRAPHIC METHOD

The main focus of this thesis is to identify particular women's work experiences in a region characterised by rural transformation along capitalistic lines. Changes in the agrarian system are analysed to provide the context within which women's work is affected differentially according to the caste and class position of their households and the organisation and structure of their households. There were other socio-economic implications of change in the rural economy and field research inevitably extended into areas such as migration patterns since migration of both men and women provides an indicator of the socio-economic situation of marriage arrangements and of changes in economic processes to which households are forced to adapt. In order to attempt a comprehensive study, it was necessary to combine three main levels of analysis: first, an analysis of the historical development of agrarian structures was undertaken in order to

describe the process of rural transformation and the form of capitalism in agriculture; secondly, there was an examination of the caste and class position of different groups of households and a study of the organisation and structure of households; thirdly, the division of labour in both productive and reproductive activities was investigated.

It is essential to account for, and describe, variations in the material conditions of households and the dynamics involved in their transformation since access to resources is important in understanding the ways in which household labour is employed and in explaining the precise nature of the sexual division of labour (Deere and de Janvry 1979). It is also important to identify the conditions under which households become integrated into markets as suppliers of products, as wage-labourers and as purchasers and consumers. I needed to look at the various relations of production within and outside the home and in paid and unpaid work to gain a better understanding of households' strategies of production and reproduction, and thereby, the relationship between women's subordination and social change.

A number of studies on rural transformation processes have focussed on issues for which much of the relevant information is perhaps more readily available. These include examinations of changes in acreage, numbers of in- and out-migrants or changes in the use of tools and machinery. However, in order to look at what these changes mean for the household and the sexual division of labour it is essential to go below the surface and spend a considerable amount of time in the field.

On the basis of these concerns with social processes and social relations, the ethnographic approach appeared to be the most useful method of data collection to adopt. However, quantitative information on such issues as land use, land ownership, agricultural production cycles and demography were also necessary in order to provide a description and understanding of the context within which these social processes and social relations take place. Therefore, the ethnographic method was founded upon more quantitative types of information.

Ethnography is one social science method which can be used in conjunction with other methods in order to carry out research.

'The ethnographer participates overtly or covertly in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, (in fact, intensive fieldwork and participant observation are seen as being synonymous) watching what happens, listening to what is said,

asking questions; in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she are concerned' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, 2).

However, biases emanate from the influences exerted by the society from which we come, from our personal involvement in what we are studying and the tendency to apply approaches and concepts with which we are familiar to situations that are very different (Myrdal 1967, 18).

Ethnography has sometimes been criticised for being inappropriate to the social sciences on the grounds that the data collected simply constitutes 'subjective' impressions. However, the researcher must of necessity have already made a number of subjective decisions before arriving in the field. Therefore, no research can be totally objective or value-free. We can only hope that the values and methods we adopt provide insights into our chosen field of study and that we retain an awareness of our own limitations in obtaining a clear picture of the empirical reality.

Even the process of transforming and presenting collected data goes beyond

'the mere application of formal observations and analytical procedures. It also involves rendering explicit the personal and intellectual bias of the observer' (Gould 1975, 68).

I was constantly reminded of the fact that I too was part and parcel of the village society as was appropriate to the research methodology which incorporated participation and observation. Hammersley and Atkinson suggest that the decision about the role to adopt depends on the purpose of the research and the nature of the setting (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, 101). However, I was limited in this, as are other researchers albeit differently, by my particular position which defined my role both as observer and participant. Hammersley and Atkinson also suggest that the researcher needs to maintain a degree of social and intellectual distance as it is in that 'space' that the analytical work of the ethnographer gets done. This was sometimes very difficult to create. Not only was physical space limited but there were expectations of me some of which I had to fulfil in order to avoid arousing suspicion, alienating certain sections of the village population and disappointing others.

Although I had formulated a conceptual framework on which to base field research, it was important to be flexible. Often, through the course of the fieldwork, I became aware of

questions that I was neglecting to ask and was required to take into account other factors that I had previously considered unimportant.

As Breman notes, fieldwork starts with problems and hypotheses but,

'in the light of the data gradually collected it is possible however to arrive at new insights in rejecting assumptions or clues which had originally occupied an important place in the map of study..... instead of being able to remain content with a rather mechanical amplification of a theory constructed at a distance, the fieldworker is forced to abandon previous certainty in order to take a critical look at the empirical material he or she is bringing together, and try to discover new lines which can ultimately lead to a change in direction of the research or eventually allow for unforeseen conclusions' (Breman 1985b, 26).

I was, to some extent, prepared for the field situation to inform and direct my research but there were a number of surprises for which I was not prepared. Some of these had to be incorporated into the study and subsequently came to form an important part of it. However, it was equally important not to allow myself to stray too far from the original research topic when faced with interesting issues that were however, unconnected with my main focus.

I was unprepared for the high numbers of out-migrants and the high levels of divorce and remarriage amongst the Patidar caste. I also became aware of the politics involved in access to water and the fragility of an economy based on sugar production when it relies so heavily on irrigation. Besides these, there were other factors that I could not have foreseen. For example, there had been three years of drought in the area and the water shortage continued during the period of fieldwork. Therefore, some of the phenomena I observed were the result of the failure of the monsoon for four consecutive years.

The effective employment of participant observation means that it is important not to concentrate solely on testing the hypothesis that the researcher brings to the field from outside but also to incorporate the values of the people among whom one carries out research. Such flexibility is essential, since a

'rigid plan of investigations takes away much that is of interest in a study of this kind, and a good investigator is the person who is able to use to advantage all that is fresh, novel and unforeseen in the field situation' (Beteille 1975, 100).

Since I spent an extended period of time in the study village I was able to become familiar with the environment and to assess issues in the context of the village and rural society.

As Hammersley and Atkinson suggest, it is very difficult for a fieldworker to maintain preconceptions 'in the face of extended first-hand contact with the people and settings concerned' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, 23).

In order to carry out a detailed ethnographic study it was necessary for me to spend sufficient time in the field to collect the relevant quantitative material and to build up a relationship with people in the area. Therefore, an important decision I had to make having chosen the research topic and method of research was the size of the study area. Before arriving in India I had debated whether to carry out research in one or two villages. The practicalities of research raised two important considerations; how large a geographical area could realistically be covered in the fifteen month research period and how much one person could accomplish with regard to data collection and analysis? It was necessary for me to be in the field for at least one full agricultural cycle in order to encompass the varying work patterns, labour requirements and migration patterns that occur throughout the year. To take in these seasonal variations and gather comprehensive responses at all times of the year, questions had to be asked periodically.

A study of two villages would have enabled a useful comparative approach to be taken with regard to differing socio-historical developments but, given the time available, this was not practical. Establishing a relationship based on trust and confidence with members of one village, particularly with key informants, is difficult and time-consuming but for two villages would have been impractical. Moreover, having allegiances to two villages would have meant carefully dividing time between them so as not to disappoint, or even worse, give rise to suspicion if I spent longer in one village than in another. I would also have been expected to attend various ceremonies, weddings and festivals in both villages and maintaining a timetable for data collection would have been almost impossible. Of course, there are processes such as marriage and labour migration that transcend village boundaries and carrying out research in one village meant that it was sometimes difficult to observe activities outside the village.

On the basis of these considerations, I decided to select only one village but to make visits to other villages in order to understand the regional context.

1 Methods of Data Collection

Participant observation, interviews with key informants, a land and household census and oral histories constituted the main form of data collection that I employed. I also made additional use of public records, including census data and land settlement reports, and other national and regional surveys.

The village household and land control censuses followed the form of a structured questionnaire (Appendix 1) and were taken towards the beginning of the fieldwork period because, as Srinivas points out,

'Censuses and genealogies are not only means of collecting data, they are among the easiest ways of establishing social bonds with the people' (Srinivas 1976, 24).

Moreover, the household census gave me some idea of the size of households and the areas of work of individual members, and enabled me to gain a basic idea of the distribution of land and resources among the different caste groups.

It was on the basis of information collected from the household census that I was able to select a number of key informants from whom I gathered more detailed information through interviews, conversations and observations. The key informants were chosen from answers mostly given to me by men of the household whom I was expected to approach when visiting for the first time. The key households were then primarily selected on the basis of their organisation and structure and on their class and caste position. However, it was with the women of these households that I had greater contact subsequently.

The household census was taken after five weeks in the field, but all other data were collected periodically throughout the year.

2 Methodological Problems: Class and Gender

Necessarily, there are subjective biases in research starting with the choice of research topic, the framing of the problem and outlining of the hypotheses, and these biases are carried into the field situation (Breman 1985b, 29). In the field I was faced with a highly stratified society and often very oppressive relationships between men and women and between upper and lower classes. Thus, it was essential to be aware of issues surrounding 'objectivity' and 'partiality'.

As fieldworkers, we are often told not to take sides, not to get involved and to remain objective. In this way we are supposed to obtain a complete and holistic picture of the research subject and in writing up, we can 'emphasise the totality of the setting' (Breman 1985b). Along with Breman, I am doubtful of this approach not only in terms of whether it is at all possible to achieve, but also whether it is in fact desirable (Breman 1985b, 7).

It was problematic for me to deal with class and gender based inequalities. I was very aware of caste and class differences and found myself sympathising with the landless. However, I found it harder to deal with gender inequalities, which cut across these caste and class lines, perhaps because these affected me more directly. I was living in a society where the sexual division of labour is wide and entrenched and was articulated in the oppression and subordination of women. Thus, I too found it difficult to maintain the 'bearing of a neutral observer when in a local arena of cumulative inequality' (Breman 1985b, 6).

There were many tensions and personal conflicts involved in the collection and presentation of data.¹ Although the area of research focused on women and their work, there were also issues of class and labour relations between men and women and between landed and landless. To understand women's status and role I had to collect information from both women *and* men. Similarly, to understand agrarian relations I had to talk to both the landless *and* the landed. Although my personal political sympathies lay with women and with landless labourers, I needed the co-operation of men in general as well as the dominant landholding elite. Alienating this elite group would have caused problems in the field since they had the power to prevent me talking to certain people and as an ultimate sanction could remove me from the village if they had so desired. Thus, I had to keep communications open at all levels within the village.

'The members of the dominant caste, especially, behave rather as the owners of this region - as in fact they are - and take it for granted that visitors come to them first of all, if not to them alone' (Breman 1985b, 20).

Indeed, when asking upper caste members about who had voted for panchayat (village council) members or who had been invited to a wedding, they would always answer *ako*

¹For similar problems in collection of data see Jeffery *et al* (1989) Appendix 1.

gam meaning, the 'whole village'. It was obvious that they considered themselves the only true inhabitants of the village. This meant that I had to approach the major landholders and dominant caste members first, and that in some ways I was responsible and answerable to them. As a result of my particular status they often took over the role of watching out for my well-being, some of the upper caste men taking it upon themselves to 'protect' me and in so doing, controlling my mobility. Not only was I seen as a 'daughter of the village' who could be asked to run errands, I was also their responsibility. I realised that I either had to subtly negotiate to remove myself from their controls or be associated only with the upper classes and therefore unable to carry out fieldwork effectively.

Although my sympathies rested with the women and the local landless, I had to enter the village through the local male elite. Most of the time I found this difficult but adopting a position of ignoring the dominant groups would have created more problems. It was often demoralising to hear farmers expressing their hatred of lower caste members or men expressing their views of women. This is a problem that other researchers have been faced with as it is

'hard to be fully at ease with men who openly admitted to wife-beating and exerting sexual power over their wives. We were all depressed by hearing men and women alike devaluing women's work or commenting that women cannot live together without fighting' (Jeffery 1989, 231).

By failing to respond to these sorts of statements, I gave the impression of condoning their views, yet to challenge and question their ideas would confirm their opinion that women are unintelligent. When I did raise doubts or questions about some of their ideas, they would respond, 'you just don't understand' or, 'it's not like that'. However, when an upper caste farmer expressed negative views of labourers in the presence of a domestic or agricultural labourer I made sure that I made comments which showed that I did not entirely agree.

Eventually, I began to realise just how threatened many of the 'dominant' people felt. I too discovered that,

'the main propertied class really do feel threatened. The well-to-do farmers who are a minority have lost control over the landless masses and react, probably for this reason, with great harshness to manifestations of disrespect and resistance' (Breman 1985b, 35).

They were threatened by processes that were occurring within their own society such as changing labour relations and inter-caste marriages. Changes in male/female relations have not been as extensive as those between landholders and landless, but the large numbers of upper caste landholding members migrating abroad have introduced certain new ideas.

Upper caste men were also surprised that talking to them was not enough for my research. 'We can tell you what the women do', they would say, or 'what can you ask the labourers, they just drink *daru* (alcohol made from jaggery) and sit around all day'. These interpretations were useful in informing me of the views of the dominant elite. I was also told by men and women from this elite group that there was no need for me to go to the *Dublavad* (lower caste section) and I would only be hot and uncomfortable there. These comments were often made lightly but there were times when I felt that they were said quite forcefully.

These problems emerged repeatedly throughout the period of fieldwork. At the beginning I was asked my reasons for coming to live in the village and what my work involved. I had to decide to what extent I would tell different members of the village the subject and aims of my research. It would have been foolhardy to give people different answers to their questions as this would arouse suspicion. These questions were easier to answer in general terms at the beginning of the fieldwork period than later on when they entailed giving more detailed and specific answers. This problem has often been documented;

'The problem that the ethnographer often faces... is deciding how much self-disclosure is appropriate and fruitful. It is hard to expect 'honesty' and 'frankness' on the part of participants and informants whilst never being frank and honest about oneself. Nevertheless, just as in many every day situations, one often has to play down one's own personal beliefs, commitments and political sympathies' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, 83).

However, most of the currently dominant views of social relations are those of a minority yet, the expression of opinions contrary to these views means that the researcher is immediately 'stamped with the reputation for partiality' (Breman 1985b, 29). Furthermore, it seems contradictory that the convention of 'objectivity' should be applied even when such views are only those of a minority, albeit a dominant and powerful minority. Therefore, when researchers become identified with controversial behaviour

(i.e. expressing personal beliefs and political sympathies), this identification is made according to dominant but minority norms. As Breman rightly points out,

'from a different perspective, the behaviour of researchers who go out of their way to adjust themselves to the life style, conventions and claims of what is often no more than a top layer'(Breman 1985b, 9),

could be seen as being even more controversial.

Srinivas admits that in the course of building up rapport he often gave expression to certain views and ideas which he thought the villagers would like to hear but he also says that,

'I started doing this with such ease and 'spontaneity' that I became concerned. Did one have to become a hypocrite to do fieldwork? Did I have no convictions of my own? (Srinivas 1976, 25).

Occasionally, Srinivas wondered whether his desire to be a successful fieldworker had eliminated all his 'naturalness' and he had become an actor playing a role (Srinivas 1976, 25). I too felt uneasy when expressing ideas that I did not hold, and it was a constant struggle to play the role.

Srinivas also writes that although villagers may be 'flattered' at the idea that their lives are important enough to be researched, if his answers to their questions were not always uniform or appeared to be evasive they became suspicious (Srinivas 1976, 28). Eventually, he realised that he was not a ruthless enough anthropologist to sacrifice good relations for better fieldwork (Srinivas 1976, 48). It was probably easier for me to be evasive and vary my answers to questions with men as they were generally not threatened by a woman's presence and rarely took much notice of what I had to say.

Class and caste differences caused continual problems for me in the field. I had to find, and maintain, a balance between keeping all levels of communication open and refraining from alienating the dominant elite. In my view, it is necessary to move away from 'uncritical' empirical research rather than reinforcing and perpetuating the views of the most powerful dominant minority. As Breman argues, 'there is a need for more research to be undertaken from this 'biased perspective" (Breman 1985b, 35).

This section has identified the reasons for the choice of the ethnographic method as it relates to the research topic, and the particular problems I faced in using this approach.

Having formulated the method of data collection, I had to decide on the geographic area, size and location, in which to carry out this study.

II CHOOSING A VILLAGE

Since my family originally come from Gujarat, it seemed the obvious area to choose when carrying out research for an undergraduate dissertation, focusing on the general area of 'rural development'. I was familiar with the geographical area, the language and, to some extent, with cultural codes and regulations. While studying for a Masters degree in South Asian History, I returned to Gujarat to carry out research on the history of *Inam* (land 'alienated' from government control) land tenure systems in Gujarat and on female participation in formal rural political structures such as Panchayati Raj (a system of village councils). These studies were undertaken in the southern talukhas, administrative sub-districts, of Valsad District in south Gujarat.

Bardoli Talukha in Surat District has been the focus of recent studies on labour migration and sugar cane production (Breman 1979, 1985a). This area has experienced rapid and extensive agricultural transformation since the 1960s. I thought it would be interesting to study an area which was not on the main irrigation canal and, therefore, where transformation has been much slower, more recent and not as extensive as was evident in Bardoli. Valsad District, situated nearby, provided such a context whereby I could examine women's work in an area which has very recently undergone agrarian change from cotton to sugar cane production and which is therefore still very much in the process of transformation.

I wanted to study a region with small scale industries which provide employment for landless wage-labourers nearby and it was also important that this was an area where labour relations had been characterised through *halipratha*, the system of debt bondage, the gradual breakdown of which had resulted in changing labour relations. This process of 'freeing' labourers to sell their wage-labour wherever they find a market leads to migration, a changing sexual division of labour and an articulation with the wider economy.

For these reasons, I decided to select a study village in Navsari Talukha where there has been a gradual shift in agricultural production although substantial changes have occurred

only since the late 1970s. The main town, Navsari, provides employment for local labourers and there are a number of recently established agricultural co-operatives which have been the major initiative of local farmers in order to increase and change the form of their agricultural output.

Having selected the talukha, the choice of a village was much easier. I had certain criteria on which to base the choice of a village including, a population stratified on the basis of caste and class so that I could look at women's differentiated work experiences and a population that was not more than 1500 so that it would be physically possible to carry out land and household censuses and gain a full picture of the village.

I spent a few weeks at the Centre for Social Studies in Surat studying the Navsari Talukha village census data and after having eliminated villages that did not fulfil the basic criteria, I was left with eleven villages. Out of these, five were not suitable, either because they were not easily accessible by public transport, were far from the sugar factory or were ones from which most of the upper caste farmers had already migrated abroad.

I visited the remaining six villages to obtain a general idea of the agrarian system and the village population. At this stage, the most important factor was a practical one; finding accommodation. In some of the villages there were no houses available to rent and in others those that were available were in the centre of the upper caste and upper class sections. I had to select a village where it would be possible for me to find accommodation in a section of the village which would not associate me too strongly with one particular caste. On the other hand, I could not afford to alienate the village elite.

Sera village fitted my criteria in being a multi-caste village which has recently undergone substantial change in the form of agricultural production. It is easily accessible from Navsari where there is a large diamond polishing industry employing landless labourers from Sera and other surrounding villages. Of the total population, 50% belong to landless households and therefore, must exist through working as paid domestic or paid agricultural labourers, or in local industries. The majority of these households belong to the Halpati caste and present a clear contrast to the landholding households who, through wealth and status, are able to hire labourers to farm their land and carry out domestic work. Most of these are of the Patidar caste.

1 Accommodation

Many researchers in rural India, after choosing their study village, have rented a house in upper caste sections of the village where houses are usually available for renting and are in better condition thus providing a more comfortable living situation. Problematically, these fieldworkers are then associated with the village elite which leads to difficulties in communicating with lower caste and lower class people who are suspicious of outsiders locating themselves among the local elite.

When carrying out research in a Mysore village, Srinivas rented one of the headman's houses and this inevitably restricted his movements and his contacts with other members of the village. He recognised the numerous problems of custom and ritual but also discovered how easy it was to offend people without knowing it. As far as the villagers were concerned, he was primarily a Brahman and expected to behave like one, but his indifference to certain rules regarding purity and pollution in the course of collecting data alienated much of the village population (Srinivas 1976).

Being of Indian origin, I was often expected to be aware of customs and traditions in situations where non-Indian fieldworkers would be excused for inappropriate behaviour. Like Madan, I experienced the situation whereby,

'The people among whom I lived expected me to abide by the basic rules of social, moral and intellectual conduct prevalent among them' (Madan 1975, 150).

Therefore, it would have been considered to be a contradiction of social norms if I, as an outsider, had not located myself amongst the dominant groups, and this view would have been held by upper and lower caste people alike.

There were also other practical considerations that had to be taken into account when choosing accommodation. I felt that my living situation needed to be amenable to the process of carrying out fieldwork since the social environment was so radically different to the one from which I had come. I also needed a home base which provided the privacy to write up field notes.

The location of my house meant that this problem was partly overcome. In the village, the physical layout of the *falias* (sections of the village divided by caste) serves to retain caste identity and to separate different social groups. It was important that I set up a

home base in an area where I would be least likely to alienate any group. However, this ideal can rarely be achieved. In Sera, there was no 'neutral' accommodation available such as a medical dispensary or school building. Eventually, I was able to rent a small Patidar house which had been empty since the owners migrated to Britain in 1961. The advantage of this particular house was that it stood on the edge of the *falia* so some of my neighbours were lower caste Hajams, (barbers), and Durjis, (tailors), and I shared the well and a small courtyard at the back of the house with an in-migrant Dhodiya tribal household. The back of the house looked out upon one of the Halpati, lower caste, *falias*. By living in this particular house, I could generally avoid questions by Patidars when going to the Halpati areas and suspicion from Halpatis when going to the higher caste Anaval Brahman and Patidar households. With the front door of the house facing the Patidar *falia* closed, and the back door open I was in a different world.

I did feel that my physical mobility was restricted on occasion particularly when I wanted to visit another *falia* in the evening. This generally had more to do with the fact that I am a woman, than with caste rules. In the evenings I was sometimes asked where I was going and where I had been and if I answered that I had been to the Harijan or Halpati sections, this was met with disapproval by my Patidar neighbours.

Accommodation was not something that I had considered before leaving to carry out fieldwork but I realised the symbolic implications that my choice of accommodation had for the people among whom I lived, and the extent to which it influenced their views of me.

The above section discusses certain criteria and factors that influenced the choice of village in which to carry out this ethnographic study. The choices and decisions I made along the way, although by no means arbitrary, were sometimes based on factors that can not be explained by academic reasons. I could perhaps have selected another region or another village which would have been equally suitable, but the ultimate decision rested on practical considerations. The following section sets the scene in terms of the geographic location of the village.

III VILLAGE LOCATION

Sera is a multi-caste village in Navsari Talukha, Valsad District, Gujarat. This area has undergone substantial agricultural change since the early 1970s with a shift from cotton as the main cash crop as well as subsidiary reliance on rice and other grains, to greater emphasis on food cash crop production, particularly sugar cane. This is also an area of high out-migration and is therefore characterised by a continually changing population composition and an economy that is partially based on remittances.

In 1960, when State boundaries were redrawn, Gujarat and Maharashtra, formerly parts of Bombay State, became two separate States. According to the 1981 provisional census, Gujarat has a total population of 33,960,905 with an urban population of 10,556,431 (31%) and a rural population of 23,404,474 (69%) (Gujarat Population Census 1981). The total area of Gujarat is 195,984 sq. kms., with a population density of 1.74 people/sq. km. (Gujarat Population Census 1981). The administrative capital of the State is now at Gandhinagar, although Ahmedabad is still the main industrial and commercial city.

1 Valsad District

In 1964, what was formerly Surat District was divided, the southern part of which forms the present Valsad District covering a total area of 5238 sq. kms. The total population of Valsad District is 1,429,000. Within the District there are 14 towns, with Valsad, Bilimora and Navsari being the main municipal centres. The administrative centre of the District is at Valsad but Navsari is the largest town and main commercial and industrial centre with a total population of 38,217 (Census of Gujarat, Valsad District, 1981).

There are almost 800 working factories in Valsad District employing a total of 34,584 workers on a daily basis (Chief Inspector of Factories, Gujarat State, 1979). However, the majority of the population live in rural areas and are primarily employed in agriculture or agriculture related industries situated in the towns. The landholdings in the District cover an area of 2,943,690 sq. kms. The net cultivated area, including fallow land and pasture, is 94% of the total area of agricultural land with only 6% uncultivated (Government of Gujarat, Revenue Department, 1981), this latter being used for house and other building sites and roads.

Valsad District is further divided into eight talukhas of which six are in the eastern region and two, Navsari and Gandevi, are in the southern plains. Navsari Talukha lies in the fertile central plain with the Tapi river and Surat District to the north, the Gulf of Cambay and the Arabian Sea in the west, the Western Ghats and Maharashtra in the east, and Daman and Bombay State to the south. The Purna river flows through the talukha from the foothills of the Ghats to the sea.

The climate in this area is characteristically hot and humid. Summer temperatures often rise above 40 C in April and May with a minimum of around 9 C in winter. The average annual rainfall is 180 cms., falling exclusively during the monsoon from mid-June to the end of September. In 1983, a third of the annual rainfall fell in August (Valsad District Panchayat, Valsad, 1983-84). However, for four years from 1984-1987, the monsoon rains arrived late, were infrequent and well below the annual average. This drought, which was particularly bad in northern Gujarat, affected both agricultural production and migration patterns.

The central plain possesses the fertile *kali jamin*, a very rich black, clay soil and with this advantage, yields the greater part of agricultural production in south Gujarat. There is some *kakara* (stony) soil in other areas which, although not particularly fertile can be used for growing *jowar*, a red/brown millet, and other grains, while relatively infertile, salty soil is located near rivers. However, proximity to a river makes the boring of wells much easier and therefore this land is generally well irrigated. Much of the area is covered by *gorat* (loamy) soil which is especially good for the growing of garden crops. The types of soil, although still important in determining the type of crops grown, are now less significant with the increase in the use of chemical pesticides, irrigation, and the new varieties and strains of crops making farming more flexible. However, these inputs represent an increased intensification of production, and have sometimes had undesirable consequences; some of the land has become less fertile and unable to support any of the major crops and therefore has to be left fallow.

2 Navsari Talukha

Navsari Talukha has a population of 359,797 of which 224,704 live in the rural areas and 135,093 in urban areas (Valsad District Census 1981). There are a number of industries, the main ones being diamond cutting and polishing, iron and steel and agriculture related

industries, chiefly sugar and fruit processing, marketing and distribution centres. However, since two-thirds of the population live in the rural areas, the main source of employment is still agriculture. Of the total population of the talukha, 13,205 are registered as farmers, 40,276 are agricultural labourers and a further 85,238 work in other agriculture related employment (Valsad District Panchayat, Valsad 1984-85). In the official census data, male heads of landholding households are registered as 'farmers' while most statistics of labourers include both male and female paid agricultural labourers.

In the centre of Navsari, there is a large fruit and vegetable market and fruit co-operatives which distribute crops to other areas in India. Most of these co-operatives have only recently been established and until the 1970s, most of the fruit crops had to be taken to Surat, 75 kms. away, to be marketed. There is still a rice mill in Navsari, but the cotton ginning mill is almost completely closed down. The main sugar cane factory in the talukha is in Maroli and was set up in 1976 with the old machinery from the very successful and recently modernised Bardoli factory which was established in 1957.

The area used to receive water from the Kakrapar dam which has been in operation since 1953 but the very large dam project at Ukai now supplies water to the area. Maroli sugar cane co-operative was set up a year after the completion of the Ukai project and other co-operatives in surrounding areas were subsequently established.

Navsari is well situated for transport. There is a regular train service between Bombay and Ahmedabad that passes through Navsari, and several daily trains linking Navsari to Surat. From the main bus station there are services to other towns in south Gujarat and to Rajasthan and Maharashtra and the main Bombay/Ahmedabad highway goes through Navsari with smaller roads providing easy access to Bardoli, Valsad and the coastal region.

3 Sera Village

At the time I carried out a household census in 1987, the total population of Sera was 1156.²

Sera is situated 12 kms. from Navsari town and is connected to both the Navsari/Bardoli road and the main Navsari/Surat highway. Almost 4 kms. from the village along a *kaccha* (makeshift) road are the crossroads at Bhutt Bangla on the Navsari/Bardoli road, and 8 kms. past the villages of Pinsad and Sarona is Dholla Pipla junction on the Navsari/Surat highway. At Dholla Pipla there is an iron factory and five kilometres from Sera is the main electricity grid for the area where a number of factories are situated. The seasonal migrant labourers from Khandesh set up their labour camps in Bardoli, a town about twenty-five kilometres from Sera, which makes it convenient for farmers to employ them at peak agricultural times.

The three daily buses from Sera to Navsari are used mainly by upper caste school children and wealthier men who work in the town, and occasionally by women who shop in Navsari markets. As the bus is expensive, most of the poorer, lower caste men who work in the factories in Navsari use bicycles bought with government loans. However, the road is made of crushed rock and broken stones which is often washed away during the monsoon making Sera almost inaccessible except by foot for three months of the year.

The total area of the village land covers 5583.20 sq. kms. of which 2760 sq. kms. are irrigated by a combination of tube wells, tanks and government irrigation canals (Village Census 1987). One side of the village is near the Purna river where the level of the water table makes the boring of wells easy and inexpensive and the irrigation canal, installed in the late 1960s, serves the other side of the village which was previously unirrigated.

There is no government shop or co-operative farming society in Sera but there is a government *mandal* (co-operative) and farm society at Supa, 4 kms. away. Here farmers

²This figure is below the Gujarat Census (1981) figure of 1492. The government census includes in its population statistics people living at Bhutt Bangla and along roads leading out of Sera who are not included in my census.

can obtain loans and buy fertilisers and other inputs on a credit basis and lower castes and tribal groups can buy certain basic foods at subsidised prices.

There is a village panchayat (council), a temple, a branch Post Office and a government dispensary in Sera, all located in the centre of the village near the upper caste *falias* and away from the Halpati sections. There are also two privately owned electric flour mills, and three small stores run by in-migrants from Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The primary school provides education up to 7th standard and is attended by 156 children, some of whom will go on to study at Bardoli boarding school or in Navsari. In Sera, 40% of the population are literate compared with a Gujarat State figure of 44% and an all India percentage of 36% (Gujarat Census Handbook 1981). There have been attempts by Gandhian groups to set up evening classes but since Halpatis have little time due to the demands of their work, particularly the women who spend most evenings cooking and carrying out other domestic tasks, interest was negligible.

4 Village Context

It is important to analyse a local area within its national and international context and focus on how individuals and local communities operate in a village such as Sera within this wider socio-economic context.

One of the main industries in Surat and Navsari is diamond polishing and cutting. The diamonds are brought to Gujarat to be cut and polished in industrial centres and are then sent back for sale to Western Europe. Many of these workshops are based in Navsari and provide employment opportunities for men from surrounding villages, including Sera. Sugar cane grown in Sera is sold throughout India, (as was cotton in the past), and farmers and agricultural and non-agricultural labourers cannot be isolated from these wider systems of production.

The changes in agriculture and the rural production structure have resulted in labour migration to and from other rural areas in Gujarat and from the neighbouring States of Rajasthan and Maharashtra. Migrant labourers from Khandesh in western Maharashtra come to south Gujarat to cut cane which is then sent to crushing factories within the State and finally distributed throughout the country. They arrive at the beginning of the cane harvesting season in November and return to Khandesh in May before the monsoon. This

form of rural migration in search for agricultural employment is not a new phenomenon although Khandeshis have only recently come to Gujarat to work in the cane harvest. There is also other seasonal in-migration. *Veparis* (traders) from Uttar Pradesh have recently arrived in villages in south Gujarat and taken over labour recruitment and marketing of the mango crop from local farmers. They bring with them their own groups of labourers to carry out the harvesting and the fruit is then transported to markets in north India and Bombay. Other forms of in-migration include Ahirs and Rubbaris who come from drought prone areas of northern Gujarat and Rajasthan to graze their cattle, returning home only during the monsoon.

South Gujarat in general, and Valsad District in particular, continue to be characterised by the high international out-migration of certain castes. Since the early 1950s, when this trend started, the population and make-up of the village and individual households have been subject to continual change. Some of those who migrated abroad, mainly to East and South Africa, Britain and the United States, have returned to Sera, bringing with them new ideas, a different life-style and, more importantly, increased financial security which has boosted investment in agriculture and occasionally in industrial and other business enterprises. Remittances sent from abroad have stimulated the rapid process of the commercialisation of some sectors of agricultural production. Money from abroad, for instance, has enabled farmers to pay for the high cost of inputs required for sugar cane production. This has resulted in increased status and wealth for a small proportion of the population.

Due to changes in the economy and in labour requirements, some villagers have been forced to take up employment in non-agricultural activities outside the village. For example, Harijan men migrated to Bombay in the 1950s as the land they owned could not produce enough to subsist on.

Sera is situated in an area with a highly mobile population and a constantly changing demographic structure and is linked to other areas through these processes and patterns of labour circulation (Breman 1990; Teerink 1989). Some migrations are 'permanent' while others are more seasonal. Therefore, the composition of the population does not only change gradually over an extended period of time but there are also sudden inflows and outflows of people within a single year.

The following sections look at the connection between myself, (as an Indian, a woman and a researcher), and the data collected. These sections also outline the various problems I encountered in the fieldwork situation.

IV DATA COLLECTION - Issues of Class and Gender

In this section I outline some of the issues involved in data collection and discuss the way in which class and gender bias in research are a reflection of biases that exist within societies and cannot be totally attributed to 'practicalities of research'. Thus, many approaches have found it difficult to find a place for women and for sex differences in their conceptual framework (Whitehead 1985, 62).

1 Making Contacts

In the field situation it soon became evident that certain sections of the population were difficult to approach (Halpati labourers), while others were reluctant or unable to give certain types of information (women). On the other hand, a small group of people (Patidar men), wanted to 'guide' and 'direct' me. They did not necessarily give me the information I wanted but could prevent me from collecting it from others.

I frequently doubted the information I was given by Patidar farmers but felt that what they said, however inaccurate, illustrated their perception of relationships within the village and provided testimony to the relationship between men and women and between the landed and the landless.

Farmers were often around when I wanted to talk with labourers and men were around when I wanted to talk with women; farmers often spoke for labourers, as men spoke for women, older women for younger women and upper caste for lower caste. It was only later on in the fieldwork period that I was able to have private conversations.

Initially, it was difficult to approach landless labourers but I soon benefited from introductions through paid domestic labourers whom I had opportunities to meet either at the well or when they came to work in the centre of the village. Although I could then ask questions without the presence of upper caste farmers, I still had to be cautious as there were some labourers who would report back to their employers. Halpati labourers are still

tied to farmers through employment and sometimes credit which means that it is not always easy for them to say anything that may be considered disloyal or disrespectful. Those who work outside the village and have no work relations with farmers tended to be more outspoken about their own personal opinions and situations.

I was immediately made aware of class stratification, and class solidarity particularly amongst the upper classes. At the beginning of the research period I asked farmers what agricultural expenditure they incurred, including labourers' wages. They all said that they paid labourers Rs.5, well below the minimum wage, and gave many reasons why they did not need to pay more. Another researcher who came to the village said that by asking farmers about the sensitive issue of wages, I would arouse suspicion as to my motives and once I had received a reply to my question from one large farmer that would suffice. Farmers hold common views of the lower classes. By asking some of the same questions to all farmers I risked creating tension between them and myself and since class solidarity amongst them is so strong, besides being unlikely to receive different answers, I could have alienated myself from their whole group.

Lower class Halpati men were surprised that I was interested in their lives and, having suffered so much at the hands of government officials, were initially suspicious of me. Rarely had they been paid so much attention or been taken so seriously. Lower caste Halpatis and Harijans often spoke of the way the dominant elite ignored them:

'the *sarpanch* has only come to our *chapra* and sat on our floor once and that was just before the election. We haven't seen him since' (Ramesh Harijan).

Access to women turned out to be easier than I had anticipated. I could go to specifically women's areas such as the well, the kitchen, or the store where Halpati women bought daily provisions at the end of the day. Halpati *chapras* are very small and when I visited particular women, male members of their household would leave as soon as I entered. However, they often hovered around outside which prevented me from asking more private questions relating to marriage and childbirth. But, as a woman, I also had to carry out daily domestic chores and this provided me with a good opportunity to meet women away from men on a regular basis. However, women, like lower class Halpatis, are not used to talking about themselves and have little time to do so.

It was difficult for men and women to comprehend the fact that I was interested in women's lives. This, in fact, made it easier for me to carry out my research, for when I joined women as they cooked or carried out other domestic chores they would say, 'Now your work for the day is finished come and keep me company'. They did not realise that sitting with them was in fact my 'work'. In this way, I fulfilled my role as a woman, namely being in the company of women and carrying out 'women's' work, while carrying out my research without alienating or threatening men.

Some women were initially very reluctant to talk to me since, 'in traditional Indian households, girls are raised to believe that they should not speak out or make themselves noticed' (N.I May 1988). They would often say, 'Why don't you wait until *bhai* (brother or male head of household) comes home. He will be angry if I talk with you'. One woman once spoke to me about her relationship with her husband. The next time I visited her, she was unwilling to answer any of my questions and appeared uncomfortable with me. She later said that her husband had been angry that she had spoken to me. It took a while for women to be assured that I was genuinely interested. Later on in the fieldwork period, I took pen and paper with me but only when talking to people with whom I had built up a good rapport and trust. Many people enjoyed my visits and would even encourage me to write down what they told me. However, people sometimes became nervous and reticent when I was recording what they said and there were occasions when I took a notebook with me when I should not have done.

Some fieldworkers have said that they wrote fieldnotes as soon after a conversation had taken place as possible and divided their time accordingly. I also tried to do this but found that carrying out research into women's paid and unpaid work activities meant that I, along with most other women in the village, was always 'working'. Although agricultural work is carried out during different periods of the day and the year, unpaid domestic work is carried out throughout every day. For example, when Halpati women finish paid work they carry out unpaid domestic work or when Patidar women return from the fields they carry out domestic tasks. Many of the men could sleep in the afternoon but for Halpati women this was the time when they could catch up on domestic responsibilities. These were convenient times for me to visit women without men being around but it meant that there was little time during the day to write up field notes.



2 Personal Position within the Village

My gender and status inevitably affected the type and amount of information that I was able to collect. In this section, I explain how my own personal position was an advantage in data collection, and the reasons for some of the gaps in the data I collected.

Issues of class and caste status are important but I found that for me, the gender issue was far stronger in affecting my fieldwork (see Easterday 1977; Golde 1970; Papanek 1964). The advantages and disadvantages of being a female fieldworker often paralleled the research topic. It is because of this that I was able to gain additional insight into the position of women through having personally experienced some of the forms of oppression of women in the village and through being expected to fit into the existing sexual division of labour. Although in no way as extensively, the problems I faced personally seemed to parallel the position of women generally.

I often felt quite powerless in the face of men's and women's expectations of me. Making a stand against this would have meant angering men and isolating myself from women even if they silently respected or 'admired' my refusal to follow norms. I had to make daily decisions as to how to carry out fieldwork and am sure that I did not always make the best choice.

I am aware that the research does not cover all angles. For example, although I was able to collect some information on wife-beating from women, I was unable to talk to men about the same subject. I did not collect information only from women but they were my main informants. I was able to gather a large amount of in-depth material not only on the work that women carry out and how they value it but also about other areas of their lives. I gained insight into the position of women and of the relationships between women and differences in their experiences. Women have for long been ignored by social scientists in their analysis of rural transformation processes and the focus of this research was to gain an understanding of women's position. Some researchers have,

'expressed in unequivocal terms, their concern over the undesirable possibility of developing a female bias and producing distorted pictures of a different kind by an exclusive focus on women and by a reliance on them as the principle or the only source of data' (Dube *et al* 1986, XII; see Rosaldo 1980).

Although it was often difficult to collect information from men, since the society in which women live is male-dominated and patriarchal, it is impossible not to be aware of men's opinions and actions (see Ardener 1975; Harding 1990).

To focus my personal experiences in the field around the question of gender alone would be ignoring the impact of my background and personal history which not only affected the way that I was treated in the village but also my own interpretations of the field situation. I was seen as an Indian woman who had come from *bhargam* (abroad) and although I knew I would be faced with particular problems in the field, I was unprepared for some of the issues that arose.

Although I could act and dress in the appropriate manner I could not ignore the implications of gender, nor the extent to which age and marital status affected gender related issues. I was twenty-six, unmarried and of Gujarati origin and had arrived in the village on my own, which for a woman of any status would have been unusual.

After the initial surprise that I had arrived in their village alone, people remarked on the fact that at twenty-six I was still unmarried. Either there was something wrong with me or I had come to Sera to look for a husband amongst the eligible Patidar boys. Later, the villagers realised that I could not be looking for a husband because not only was I too old, but it is assumed that everyone knows that marrying someone from *biji jaat* (another caste) is not acceptable among Patidars.

Being *ekli* (alone) I was often asked how my father permitted me to be there and how I expected to find a husband if I had spent fifteen months living in a house on my own. *Ekli*, although literally meaning 'alone', also refers to a woman, or women, who are not in the company of a man, either a father, brother, husband or son.

I soon discovered that there is a vast difference in the level of respect and status accorded to married and unmarried women irrespective of age. Marriage gives a woman higher status as wife and mother. Unmarried women are seen as being immature and my status within the village was initially that of a young woman who needed protecting. Married women, even those much younger than myself, often took the role of elder sister and men tried to control my mobility in my own 'interest' although this was true more of the upper caste Patidar and Anaval Brahman men than of the lower caste Halpatis.

Many women were curious, even fascinated by me, but I was not as threatening to them as I was to Patidar men. However, some older women were worried that I might subvert their daughters and daughters-in-law, so I worked hard initially in building up their trust in me. Often, the only way to do this was to behave as a daughter or daughter-in-law would.

It was only after a few months in the field, during which time I built up relationships with some women, that I was able to talk about more sensitive and private issues such as marital relations, use of contraceptives and problems within the household. This would have been much easier had I been married. These issues were harder to raise amongst the upper caste and class women, although some women felt they could trust me *because* I was an outsider with no apparent vested interest.

As I spent more time in Sera, I became less of a curiosity and a guest. Women no longer stopped talking but continued with what they were doing when I was in their presence. I felt much better about this, not only because I could witness their conversations and their work activities but also because it proved that they now trusted me. It also stopped me feeling guilty about interrupting them or keeping them away from their work which I knew took up so much of their time. Often when a group of women were talking, I could be a silent listener and observer.

It was not possible for me to gather data on such issues as finance, credit facilities and landholdings from women as they are so often kept in the dark about economic issues. However, as a woman it was not always easy to talk to men in the village. I managed to collect some of this information from older men who spoke more readily and openly to me than younger men who were often embarrassed in my company. Certain wealthy Patidar farmers, many of whom had returned from abroad, were over enthusiastic to talk to me. They had a vested interest in giving their version of relationships in the village and presenting it as though it was the view held by everyone.

However, to the men I was a mere woman and they generally took neither me nor my questions seriously. For example, three months into the fieldwork period I wanted to meet the *talathi* (village accountant). I visited his house a number of times and left messages but he continued to avoid me. When I did bump into him he dismissed me saying he was too busy to answer my questions. Eventually, I went to visit a Patidar farmer when I knew

the *talathi* would be there. He could no longer ignore or be rude to me in front of one of the few Patidar men who showed some respect towards me.

I was often frustrated and angered by the men's attitude towards me but in many ways it proved to be an advantage. Men's and women's stock of common cultural stereotypes include the view of women as powerless and insignificant. Therefore, I was sometimes given information or allowed access to material which would not have been made so readily available to a male researcher although, when I did ask men questions they often responded in an off-hand manner and gave vague answers. This was not necessarily a conscious attempt to hide the truth from me but more because they could not be bothered to answer the questions of a woman. This attitude proved to be advantageous as they carried on conversations in my presence, assuming my disinterest in 'men's talk' or convinced that I would not understand anyway (see Jeffery 1979).

Although there were advantages, I found Patidar men's control over me very difficult throughout the fieldwork period. On one occasion, four months after arriving in Sera, a group of Patidar men prevented me going with my neighbour, the *dai* (midwife) to attend a delivery. I had asked her to call me when she went to deliver a baby but the Patidar men showed how they could exert control over me and the *dai* and her husband. At that time I wrote in my fieldwork diary,

June 7th 1987

Washing the clothes with Lilaben this morning she told me Munju's daughter-in-law had given birth late last night. I was surprised that Narmada (*dai*) had not come to fetch me for the delivery as we had arranged only two days earlier. When Narmada came to wash her clothes I asked her how the delivery went and also why she had not come to fetch me. She said, 'I did come but when I got to your *otla* (porch). Natunana (Patidar) told me to go on my own and not call you. He said that a delivery was not a good thing for a young girl to see and was curious as to why you want to go anyway'. This is the first time that the Patidars have directly prevented me from going somewhere. I told Narmada that it was not only important for my work to go with her but also that it was up to me to decide where I go. Mohan (Narmada's husband) was also there and seemed pleased that I was prepared to make a stand against Natunana.

No one commented when a few weeks later I went with Narmada to a delivery in the Ahir *falia*. I had indicated to the Patidar men that I was not willing to totally abide by their rules and regulations while continuing to emphasise that I was only going with the *dai* as part of my research work.

A few months after this incident I had signed up to go to the farmers' rally being held in Baroda. I had heard that female participation in the struggle for better access to resources and improved prices for agricultural produce had increased substantially over the past couple of years so I was particularly interested in going along. The night before the rally, some of the more dominant upper class farmers sent a middle class Patidar man to inform me that I could not attend the rally. Their reasons were that I would not be comfortable in the van, that it would be too hot and crowded and that the other women who had wanted to go were no longer going so I would be the only woman on the trip.

Patidar men therefore controlled my mobility and I generally felt more comfortable with Halpati men and women; they were less intimidating and did not attempt to control me. This was partly because they knew that Patidar men saw me as their responsibility but also because the hierarchy and the divisions between Halpati men and women are not as rigid as they are among the higher classes. I could talk to Halpati men and women together whereas these occasions rarely arose among the Patidars. Patidar houses are much larger and divided into separate rooms facilitating male/female segregation which is not possible in Halpati *chapras* (huts). When going to Patidar houses, I was expected to walk straight through the front room and go to the kitchen, whereas Halpati men and women spent much of their time together outside their *chapras*.

Although I knew of the expectations surrounding my behaviour, there were times when I had to make a stand against them and adopt different roles at different times. It was possible but difficult to shift roles during the course of fieldwork. If I followed the role of the 'good researcher' and did not express strongly my personal views or opinions I fulfilled the stereotype of women being unintelligent and gullible and risked being taken even less seriously or being given vague and often inaccurate answers to my questions.

Early on in the fieldwork period a male researcher came to Sera on a short visit and it was only then that I became fully aware of the extent to which Patidar men dismissed me. They responded to him with enthusiasm and interest, and rich farmers suddenly had time to spare to talk to us. However, as I became more familiar with the environment and with the agricultural system, my relationship with the Patidar men improved. I was able to ask them very specific questions and they realised that I had learnt a lot about their village. They also saw me talking to lots of different people and standing up to them when necessary.

I cannot separate the research topic from my experiences in the field and being a woman was an obvious advantage for studying women's work. From the first day, I was able to join women as I carried out my own domestic work, collected water from the well, bought vegetables from the *larriwala* (grocery stallholder) and sat outside in the evenings with other women. It was easy for me to be in the company of women as I fulfilled this role. These meetings formed the basis of initial introductions and a starting point for conversations and discussions on women's work. Patidar women could not understand why I did not hire a domestic labourer but my decision made it possible for me to establish and maintain a relationship with Halpatis which was never one of employer/employee.

In the field there were different levels of exclusion. I had access to certain material that a male researcher would not necessarily have had and vice versa. I am aware of gaps in the data I collected regarding men's views but, given the patriarchal context in which I was living it was not always necessary to *talk* with men to find out their opinions. It is women's lives that are less visible and I was able to collect information from women about their work and their relationships which have for long been ignored or considered insignificant and unimportant.

However, there are other problems in being privy to women's lives. I felt guilty about building up trust between myself and other women to the point where they could confide in me as, in recording these conversations, I felt that I was somehow breaching confidentiality and betraying their trust. Since they never considered our conversations as part of my work, they never thought that what they told me about their personal lives would be written down and recorded. I did provide them with an outlet to discuss their problems but I am still unsure as to whether this justifies my role as researcher.

Carrying out fieldwork in such a society without any solidarity for the people I was studying would have been a very alienating process. Although I had no feelings of empathy with Patidar men, I did have solidarity with the women. In a patriarchal society systems of control over women cut across all class and caste boundaries. When I discussed this point with another researcher, he said that he had to adopt a completely different life-style and approach in order to carry out research amongst Patidars in Kheda District. He said he felt no solidarity with the people amongst whom he lived and

worked, (although he did establish friendships with individuals), and envied my position.³

Being of Indian origin also affected the way I was viewed in the village and the way I interpreted the fieldwork situation. In some ways coming from Britain was an advantage as people in the village did not have a stereotypical image of an Indian women from Britain. I was therefore in a position to create my own stereotype.

Of his fieldwork experiences, Breman writes,

'My identity as a foreigner does not work to my disadvantage in all circumstances; my freedom of action, for instance is greater than that of most of my colleagues' (Breman 1985b, 19), and, '....I was able to profit from my position....as foreign researcher who was not sufficiently conversant with the rules of social intercourse' (Breman 1985b, 23).

Although this may have been advantageous, I think it is important to know something of the rules and customs so as to avoid always being seen as an outsider and a visitor. I found that due to my position as an Indian woman aware of certain customs, I was not treated as a guest for long and was readily accepted by most people in the village. However, it was sometimes falsely assumed that I was aware of certain rituals, festivals and customs of which I knew nothing or alternatively, given lengthy explanations of Indian 'traditions' with which I had, in fact, been brought up. I was also never treated as an 'honorary man' as white women researchers sometimes are, and this enabled me to live among the women more easily.

Although I feel that being Indian was more of an advantage than a disadvantage there were times when conflicts arose. I carried with me Western interpretations of the way in which I should behave as a researcher while also being aware of what was expected of me as an Indian woman. This conflict existed throughout the fieldwork period. For example, I did not maintain much contact with relatives who are government officials living in the neighbouring district, since I knew this would raise suspicion of me amongst the villagers.

³During the fieldwork, conversations with Mario Rutten who was carrying out research amongst Patidars in Kheda District helped place our individual situations and experiences into perspective. They enabled me to differentiate between those experiences that were specific to my situation and those likely to be faced by other researchers.

When a few members of the village heard that I had a relative living nearby they interpreted my distance from them as being 'un-Indian' on the basis of the importance placed on familial ties in the Indian context. Maintaining this balance between 'good researcher' and 'good Indian' was difficult and I am not sure that I always made the best decisions. Other researchers with whom I discussed this problem commented that it would have been less suspicious had I maintained contact with these relatives, despite the fact that they are government officials, than appear to reject familial ties.⁴

Carrying out research alone also had its disadvantages and advantages. On the one hand, there was no one to give physical and psychological support. Fieldwork could be a lonely experience and there was no one with whom to exchange and share findings. I not only dressed differently from usual, but spoke a language in which I am not fluent, adding to my feelings of isolation. People in the village knew nothing of me or my personal history, knowing only what I chose to present to them over a period of fifteen months. Also, if I had been part of a team with male researchers, other material could have been collected adding to the information I obtained (see Jeffery 1989, Appendix 1). On the other hand, it is much easier for people to trust and build up rapport with one person than with a group of people since in a group there is a danger that divisions between 'us', the researchers, and 'them', the villagers, can be established.

All researchers are faced with different problems in the field situation and in this section I have discussed some issues which affected the collection of data for this study. I found that my personal situation and experiences in the field not only reflects the type and extent of the data collected but also paralleled the issues being researched. The following section moves away from methodological issues in the field, to problems involved in the selection and presentation of the empirical data.

⁴Van der Veen illustrates and contrasts Indian and Dutch views of human relationships. He describes the extent to which 'culturally-based disparities' influence human relationships and communication and co-operation between Indian and Dutch sociologists working together on a research project in south Gujarat; Van der Veen (1976). On the basis of his research, Van der Veen argued that I should have maintained contact with relatives living nearby to avoid alienating the people in the village. At the time, my head full of Western approaches and debates about the form of research method, I disagreed.

V THESIS CONTENT AND FORMAT

The choice and narrowing down of the research topic was a relatively easy task compared to the collection of 'relevant' information from the field. There were many fascinating and interesting aspects of village life which made a unidirectional approach to data collection almost impossible. I was constantly aware of being diverted from the main subject under study to covering issues which although interesting, were not directly pertinent to the current study. I allowed for some flexibility particularly because what was considered important by the villagers and what they identified as their problems and areas of interest were also important to me. However, I was constantly having to step back and stop collecting information on *everything*; time was limited and I did not want to end up with minute bits of information about a myriad of events and situations. I managed a considerable amount of restraint but still returned to Edinburgh with over a thousand pages of field notes.

The next step was to extract the specific material which I thought should be presented here. This meant that many incidents and people's stories had to be omitted thus producing a piece of written work which cannot fully illustrate the richness and variety of the village people and their lives. It was this process of selecting which information to present and which to omit that proved to be the most difficult. To strip the material down to the bare bones would have resulted in a superficial study which does not say very much, or which makes only one point when in fact there are so many to be made. More importantly, it has been necessary to make constant allusions to other issues in order to demonstrate the interconnectedness of every day happenings. If the interaction of different forces operating and the background in which they occur were not explained adequately, this would produce a skeletal and somewhat reductionist picture. I was also wary of presenting the picture of the village as a snapshot, captured at one particular moment in time. Instead, I wanted to show the processes of change and identify some of the factors that inculcate this change.

Another problem in the selection of material to present in this study was making the choice between including those stories, situations and incidents that were considered the 'norm' and those that were the exception. People tend not to highlight the norm but, verbalise and explain in detail the exceptional in order to justify their 'unusual' behaviour i.e. to explain when they breach 'normality' and adopt exceptional solutions to particular

situations. Thus, exceptions are often over emphasised. These exceptions provide fascinating accounts but have to be included carefully so as not to give the erroneous impression of their universality or generality. However, exceptions enlighten us of the norm, when properly identified as being exceptions, whereas the norm cannot show the limits of the norm nor how exceptions are created or carried out. It is also interesting and informative to identify the different choices and solutions that people adopt to deal with particular situations; some resolutions to dilemmas may not be expected while others may be typical. Therefore, some of the examples used in this thesis are idiosyncratic while others identify a pattern followed by a majority of individuals or households. In this study, where I use examples which explain the situation of a minority, I have attempted to explain their particular relevance and thus, the reasons for their inclusion.

Village life is not made up of separate chapters, neatly organised into sub-sections and therefore, the presentation of empirical data into a written format often creates a false sense of a divided and ordered reality. The context has to be explained *before* specific situations can be described giving the impression that the background and the context are rigid and static. Formatting the thesis in such a way does not always show the interaction between the context and the activities that take place within it. I have attempted to show that the context does not remain unaffected by processes that occur within it.

I am aware of the fact that I have created many divisions; in the village structure and between men and women, individual women and different tasks. These divisions form the foundation upon which and within which daily experiences operate and interact. Yet, it is important that the reader is reminded of underlying themes; the social, economic and historical context. It is integral to women's experiences that they are involved in any number of activities on a generational, seasonal and daily basis. My aim is not to compartmentalise individual women and their experiences since there are so many overlaps. I have created these divisions as a step towards unravelling, or rather differentiating, the experiences of individual women which are often shown as being homogeneous. The aim is to understand the different components and forces that together make up individuals women's work experiences in the rural context within a wider system which operates controls over all women and governs gender relations.

All women are oppressed but in different ways and to make generalisations about women and the forces of their oppression tells us little of the form and extent of an individual's

experiences of subordination. Despite the divisions made here between women and their tasks, I hope that their interconnectedness emerges as processes and activities transcend these boundaries.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have attempted to identify the ways in which methods of research, data collection and presentation affect the final analysis. It is also evident that as researchers we should not aim to be totally objective nor can we be because of our own personal histories and judgements.

I was aware of certain methodological issues before I carried out the fieldwork and knew that my personal position would inevitably affect the type of data that I was able to collect. However, the society in which, and the people among whom I carried out research also had their opinions and ideas of me about which I could generally do very little.

The following chapter lays out the context of Sera describing the population structure and locating households within the caste and class hierarchy thus providing the socio-economic and historical context within which individuals carry out their daily work activities.

3 VILLAGE STRUCTURE

The village is not a homogeneous society which operates collectively. There are differences between households in terms of caste and class position and between individuals in terms of the organisation and structure of their household and their position within it.

In common with most other villages in this area, Sera is a highly stratified village. In order to gain a fuller understanding of village organisation and structure, and to see how households and individuals fit into this system, it is important that caste and class positions are recognised and examined. Caste is a primary factor that differentiates households but further differences of class position and household organisation and structure exist within each caste. This chapter identifies how women's positions in society vary according to processes of social and economic differentiation among households while Chapter Five focuses on the implications of the class position of households and household organisation and structure on women's work on the basis of this examination.

Within caste stratification differences exist that are based on distribution of land and other resources, distribution of power, income and the type and amount of work that households and their members are required to perform. There are also differences in status aspirations and life-styles, interests and ideas.

It must be emphasised that caste and class are not static, rigid structures.¹ On the contrary, they are constantly changing and, as social and economic changes occur, relations between classes and castes are also transformed. In order to understand women's differential work experiences and status positions, it is important to define households and individuals according to their different caste and class positions. I will deal first with caste in Sera, detailing the position of each major group. This is followed by a discussion of the factors

¹ Patnaik suggests that changes in the caste system are related to the transitions from one mode of production to another and that caste hierarchy has survived and adapted itself to new functions (Patnaik 1987, 4-5).

that determine the class position of households within the broader caste categories. Using this framework for class differentiation, households in Sera are allocated different positions within the class structure in the final section of this chapter.

I CASTE COMPOSITION

Many early anthropological studies of Indian society were concerned primarily with caste. In an early and influential study, Dumont (1966) argued that the caste system in India is a holistic and functional system. Since then, there have been a number of studies which have explored ways in which local social systems articulate with wider social systems (Beteille 1974; Kothari 1970). Others identified the origins and the changing nature of the caste system within a structural functionalist perspective (Kolenda 1986). It has since been recognised that the caste system is not the only form of social and economic differentiation in a particular community/society/region. It is clear that other bases of differentiation exist. However, Patnaik argues that the institution of caste is still important since,

'caste is not coterminous with social class and may be more important than class in explaining the existing social structure and its dynamics' (Patnaik 1987, 1),

But, neither caste nor class

'can be understood in isolation or in abstraction from an application of the primacy of production relations' (Patnaik 1987, 3).

In Sera, there are caste-specific historical experiences in terms of access to land (the type and amount of land) and other resources, employment, migration patterns, traditions, customs and life-styles which justify the use of 'caste' as one main analytical category. However, I argue that it is essential to use caste and class as analytical categories as they are both integral to an examination of social structures and social relations.

Sera has a population of 1156; Table 1 below shows the distribution of population by caste.²

² There used to be a community of Mistris in Sera but they migrated in the 1940s and 1950s to Uganda and Kenya and later to Britain.

TABLE 1
DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION BY CASTE IN SERA 1987

CASTE	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	POPULATION	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
PATIDAR	28	156	13.50
HARIJAN	18	73	6.30
ANAVAL	9	36	3.10
AHIR	24	151	13.10
KOLI	12	65	5.60
HALPATI	122	581	50.30
DURGI	3	17	1.50
HAJAM	3	19	1.60
LUHAR	4	15	1.30
IN-MIGRANT	10	43	3.70
TOTAL	233	1156	100.00

Sera Village Household Census 1987

1 Leva Patidars

The major landholders in Sera are the Leva Patidars, also known as Kanbis, who own or control through renting 59.6% of the total amount of farm land in the village. In the nineteenth century, Patidars,

'enjoyed the reputation of being hardworking peasant farmers....mainly dependent on family labour. Still, already at the beginning of the nineteenth century Kanbis were specifically mentioned as masters of Halpati servants' (Breman 1985a, 131).

Many Patidars lived in large joint households until the 1950s and 1960s and although they had enough land to subsist, they could not make enough from the land to allow them the type of life-style to which they aspired. They wished to follow the example of Leva Patidars in Surat District and other neighbouring talukhas by successfully raising their

status.³

In order to increase their wealth and raise their status, they needed to take up some form of non-agricultural employment. However, since they were uneducated, the type of employment opportunities open to them in India were lower caste, poorly paid jobs which were not commensurate with their plans. Thus, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, many Patidars migrated abroad. Because migrating abroad is highly valued socially, simply by leaving India Patidars were able to raise their status. Remittances were sent back to remaining kinsfolk enabling them to raise their status and further opportunities to increase their income.

As this coincided with the installation of the irrigation canals and the establishment of the sugar co-ops in the late 1960s and 1970s, these remittances enabled many Patidar farmers to increase their landholdings and engage in sugar cane cash crop production. These developments encouraged the return of some Patidars who had migrated abroad. Magan Dhyer Patel, for instance, returned to India from Kenya in 1964. He had run a wholesale liquor store while in Kenya and had been able to save enough money to buy sugar cane shares in the co-operative, increase his landholdings and afford the costly inputs necessary for cane production. On his return to Sera, he set up a cement factory in Valsad but subsequently closed it in order to concentrate on operating his landholdings.

Other Patidars returning from abroad felt that their new status was not compatible with farming, as it is considered by other upper castes to be a low status occupation. Magan Gela migrated to Britain in 1954 and returned to Sera in 1981 for his daughter's wedding. His parents were getting old and he decided to stay on in Sera but did not want to take up agricultural production again. While Magan was in Britain, his father had rented-out their land as his other sons had emigrated to New Zealand leaving no one to work it. Magan Gela now buys and sells land in Navsari and lives off the savings that he and his wife, Shanta, earned through factory work while they were in Britain and their British pension. They would not have chosen such employment had they stayed in India as it would have been below their status and Shanta could not have taken up waged employment which is unacceptable for Patidar women. Since they were abroad they were

³ See Pocock (1972) for a study of the Patidar community in Gujarat.

3: Village Structure

impelled to drop these caste regulations through economic necessity and because they were required by Magan's parents to send money home every month.

Most Patidars who left to go abroad, rented-out their land to other Patidars although some rented land to Ahirs (goatherders). Because recent legislation has allowed tenants to claim ownership of land they have rented-in for a specific number of years, many Patidars were afraid to rent-out land to Halpatis or other lower castes who they did not trust. Therefore, land became increasingly concentrated in the hands of the Patidar households that remained in Sera thereby enabling them to increase their agricultural outputs and subsequently their incomes from the land. Since they are doing the migrating Patidar farmers a favour by looking after their land, they pay minimal rent. Migrating Patidars do not want to sell their land which they see as a form of security if they ever decide to return to the village. Those Patidar households from which only a few members migrated prospered because they not only received remittances from abroad but were also operating an increasing number of *bighas*.⁴

Patidars still migrate abroad but no longer purely for economic reasons. Current out-migration of Patidars is partly based on a desire to increase their social status and is encouraged by the popular belief that 'foreign' is better. However, they no longer go to Britain, preferring instead to go to America or New Zealand where they own shops or run motels. In fact, members of all Patidar households in Sera have applied for visas to emigrate.

Patidars are involved in sugar cane production, the main cash crop, and grow vegetables and fruits which are sold in the markets in Navsari. They also grow rice and other grains for sale and for home use. The amount of each crop grown and the proportion for home use and for sale depends on a number of factors including the amount of land held, financial ability to employ labourers, number of household labourers available and whether other forms of income are available to enable the purchase of agricultural inputs. In all Patidar households there is a combination of cash crops and subsistence crops grown but the ratio varies from one household to another. In some joint households it has become common for one son to take up non-agricultural employment while the others operate the land. Thus,

⁴One *bigha* is approximately 0.7 acres but varies from region to region.

3: Village Structure

there are often different sources of income for one household, with many younger Patidar men becoming increasingly interested in non-agricultural employment.

While some household members went abroad, others attempted to set up diamond polishing and cutting industries in Sera. Five Patidars set up factories in the mid 1960s but because of their inexperience in business management they were soon forced to close them down. In addition, the polishing and cutting machines were operated electrically but frequent power cuts in the area meant that many of the factories could not keep up with their contracts. These Patidars could have found work as diamond cutters in Navsari but thought that working for someone else was below their status.

Patidars are very status conscious and expropriate many of the upper caste Anaval Brahman customs in an attempt to raise their status. Indeed, they often demand dowries as high as the Anavals, and their weddings are much more extravagant and costly than previously. However, Patidars

'have, it is true, succeeded in gradually working their way up to gentleman-farmer status, but even in this way they still remain more farmers than gentlemen' (Breman 1985a, 132).

Previously, household members, men and women alike, worked on the land alongside Halpati bonded labourers. Besides working on the land, Patidar women were expected to carry out domestic activities and were never educated beyond primary level. Subsequently,

'the transition to a different behaviour pattern among the Patidars as dominant caste...prescribed liberation from menial labour, first for the women and after that for the men' (Breman 1985a, 132).

Although some Patidar women may now study further, they rarely finish a college degree. They are still not allowed to take up waged employment and their physical mobility is severely restricted.

2 Halpatis

Halpatis, also known as Dublas, at 50% of the total population are the largest caste group in the village, and are for the most part landless, owning only 1% of the total village landholdings. Formerly they were bonded labourers in the *Halipratha* system (see Lal

1977).

'Only the largest landowners could afford to take agricultural labourers into permanent service and were obliged by caste status to do so. The upper section of the Anaval Brahmans especially - predominantly landlords in south Gujarat - made use of farm servants and in several early colonial reports they were the only landlords to be mentioned specifically. *Halipratha* as a feudal institution is linked much more with them than with the Kanbi Patidars' (Breman 1985a, 131).

Halpatis now work as agricultural labourers for Patidar and Anaval Brahman farmers. Although, some Halpatis from other talukhas work in the salt pans and brick yards of Bombay, Sera Halpatis have always worked as agricultural labourers. By way of explanation, they say that they could not go to work in Bombay because at the end of the salt panning season Sera Patidars refused to hire them when they returned to Sera. One Halpati man told me that,

'the *Kanbis* said that if we preferred to work in Bombay then we should move out of Sera because they were not going to hire us only when we were unable to get other work. They said they can always find other agricultural labourers to take our place (Chibo Halpati).

These Halpatis were formerly indebted to landowners after borrowing money for weddings, but were never able to accumulate enough to pay back the original loan. In fact, it was in the interest of neither the landholder nor the *Hali* for the debt to be repaid. The landholder needed workers throughout the year and when labour shortages occurred, the *Hali* system of indebted labour guaranteed that labour would be available. For the *Hali*, the relationship meant that he and his household would be provided with shelter, food and clothes as the *Dhaniamo*, (landholder) also had to fulfil his obligation to provide his *Hali* with these basic requirements (see Breman 1974). Vestiges of this relationship still exist.

Over the past forty years, with the breakdown and gradual dissolution of the bonded labour system, Patidars began to hire one or two daily wage labourers, known as *kayam mujoor*, to work on their land, as well as their wives and daughters as domestic labourers. Other agricultural labourers are only hired at certain times. This has meant that many Halpatis have had to find other forms of employment. Many of them now work in nearby factories, tree planting for the government afforestation scheme or in sugar cane co-operatives. Halpati labourers are still required by farmers as *kayam mujoor* and in peak agricultural seasons but have been excluded from working in the production of the two main

cash crops, sugar cane and mangoes. Khandeshi migrant workers have now taken on the role of harvesting and also occasionally planting sugar cane and *veparis* (traders) are responsible for hiring labourers for the mango harvest. (The position of agricultural labourers in Sera is detailed in Chapter Four.)

Most Halpati households do not have enough income for accumulation, only earning enough for daily subsistence. Some households, however, do not even earn enough to subsist and are constantly forced to borrow, either from their old *Dhaniama* or from their current employer. Many Farmers no longer feel an obligation to lend money to Halpatis, generally holding the belief that they will never get the money back.

3 Servicing Castes

'Servicing' castes such as Hajams (barbers) and Dhurjis (tailors) were leased small plots of land by the British to provide them with the means to carry out their caste-specific occupational services. Known as *veyti* land, this was formally transferred into their ownership after independence. *Veyti* land cannot legally be sold, yet many Hajams and Durjis lack the resources to make adequate use of it. Some, however, grow rice during the monsoon for home use and afterwards, using the water remaining in the *kyari* (field for rice cultivation), they plant pulses. Only at peak agricultural periods do they hire-in labourers.

Many have now taken up waged employment as diamond polishers, teachers and clerks in Navsari, and carry out their caste occupations only to supplement their income. They refuse to work as paid agricultural labourers or domestic labourers which they consider to be the work of Halpatis and Harijans and therefore, below their status.

Hajams and Durjis have a history of out-migration although not to the same extent as Patidars. Members of these castes left to go abroad in the 1950s and 1960s as they could no longer make a living from their caste occupation or from their small landholdings and being uneducated they were unable to find alternative employment locally. Like the Patidars, they preferred to go abroad than try to find employment in Bombay or other urban centres. Due to their proximity and interaction with their Patidar neighbours in the village, when the time came to go abroad they were able to make contacts through Patidars who had already migrated.

It is worth mentioning that the earliest out-migrants from the village were the Mistrys (carpenters) who left Sera in the 1940s and 1950s. There were formerly twelve Mistry households in Sera but their houses are now empty or have been rented to in-migrants. They held very little land and were unable to subsist from their caste occupation since other carpenters had started to set up businesses in nearby towns. Mistrys were encouraged to migrate to East Africa by the British. This typical colonial strategy of sending people from one colony to look after British interests in another, led to the carpenters migrating to work on railway construction in Kenya and Uganda. After these countries gained independence, most Mistrys moved to Britain.

4 Harijans

There are 18 Harijan households in Sera. Eight own land, although these holdings are all less than 5 acres. Harijan men received *veyti* land which was transferred into their own names after Independence. Since it is generally of poor quality, most Harijans have lacked the resources to make use of the land until recently. Immediately after Independence, most Harijan men migrated from Sera to find work in Bombay. Some of them had educational qualifications and took up employment as clerks in government offices and as teachers, but most of them worked as domestic servants. This resulted in the situation of there being many female-headed households in Sera. Many Harijan women did not receive regular and adequate remittances from their menfolk and had to take up paid agricultural work. For some women left in Sera, renting out *veyti* land was the only alternative. However, with the recent growth of Navsari as an industrial centre, Harijan men are now able to find employment as clerks in offices or in factories in the town and can live in Sera and commute daily. There are now fewer female-headed households and the demographic make up of the Harijan household has changed substantially since the mid 1970s besides which, household incomes have increased as household members no longer have to depend on infrequent remittances. Furthermore, some Harijans are now able to make use of their *veyti* land by investing their income from non-agricultural employment in water, seeds, fertilisers and other agricultural inputs. They grow monsoon rice and *jowar* for home use and some are even able to afford the inputs and the saplings for the growing of mangoes which they plan to sell in Navsari and use the income accrued thereby to buy more and better quality land. It is likely that in the next ten years, the economic status of some Harijans will have risen considerably. However, there are still several very poor Harijan

households which are sustained by the irregular work of female agricultural labourers.

5 Anaval Brahmans

Anaval Brahmans used to be the major landholders and farmers in the village but in an attempt to increase their status they have removed themselves from farming and become increasingly involved in *nokri* (service), for example, as accountants in the tax office, clerks in government offices and teachers. They now see farming as a degrading occupation and some have left Sera to live and work in nearby towns where they have adopted a more urban life-style. Anavals consider themselves superior to Patidars, who 'are after all just small peasants' (Mohan Desai), to quote an Anaval man and they look down on Patidar men's habits such as eating chicken and drinking whisky. However, there is now a degree of competitiveness between Anavals and Patidars in terms of who wields the most power within the village. Anaval men used to be economically and politically dominant and their high educational level meant that they were always elected on village councils and other administrative posts. More recently, with rising incomes from sugar cane production, Patidars have become economically powerful. Their political power has also increased because the majority of landless labourers in Sera rely on Patidar farmers for employment and are no longer dependent on Anavals.

Those Anavals who remain in Sera often continue to farm their land but most of them no longer carry out farming as the main income generating activity. For instance, Narendra Desai works in a travel agency in Navsari while his father looks after the farm and Magan Naik works in the tax office in Navsari while also farming his land.

Anaval Brahmans still own 18% of the total amount of land in Sera but a proportion remains uncultivated and only two Anaval households grow sugar cane. Ganga Desai is the only person from her kinsfolk still living in Sera since her relatives moved abroad or to towns nearby. Her nephews own 100 *bighas* of land but none of it is cultivated because no members of the household are interested in living in Sera and looking after the farm. Since other Anavals are not interested in increasing their operational holding, they have not been able to rent it out. Because the owning of land is still very important socially and economically, whether it is cultivated or not, Anavals refuse to sell it. It is important that land remains 'in the family', and ownership of land takes on an historical importance. Khundu Desai said, 'I could never sell my land because it belonged to my

grandfather and his father before that'. When Khundu divided his land between his two sons, one of them was not interested in farming his share which he sold when he was in debt. Since then, Khundu has not spoken to his son and will not give him the rest of his share of the inheritance.

Anaval women are well educated and many of them take up office jobs which they are required to give up when they marry. Girls' parents will often only sanction a marriage under the condition that the husband will not take up farming since they believe it to be below their status for their daughters to become farmer's wives. Nonetheless, after marriage, several Anaval men return to Sera from the towns where they had been working and take over the operation of the farm from their parents. Jyoti and Bhavna married their husbands under the impression that they would be non-agricultural workers. However, soon after their marriage, their husbands returned to Sera and although they continued with their non-agricultural employment, they also took up farming. These women are now involved in some unpaid agricultural activity since daily agricultural labourers are not employed by all Anaval households, although they employ paid domestic labourers.

6 Ahirs

Ahirs are a goatherding caste whose principal occupation is goat rearing. They constitute 13% of the total population and have recently become economically and socially important because of their association with Patidars as farmers. Although, they do not cultivate large areas of land, they are keen to take up farming and reduce their livestock. Some Patidars have rented land to Ahirs on which they are able to plant monsoon rice. Two Ahir men have recently obtained shares in the sugar factory but have as yet to receive access to irrigation water. One of these Ahirs was negotiating with a Patidar farmer to allow him access to water if he gave the Patidar farmer the right to grow cane on some of his shares.

In the 1968 flood, Ahirs lost much of their livestock and were forced to move to another area within the village. With the help of government grants and loans, many of them bought goats while some used the finances made available to them to buy or rent land. Few Ahirs take up non-agricultural employment but with the decline in demand for goats milk, they have had to shift their attention to cultivating their land much of which

however, is covered by poor, unirrigated soil.

Since Ahir men are becoming increasingly involved in farming it is women of the household who are now involved in animal care tasks and carrying out unpaid agricultural work on the newly aquired land.

There are therefore, certain caste-specific historical experiences which affect separate castes as a whole. This thesis concentrates specifically on Patidars and Halpatis in view of the fact that numerically and politically they are the castes most directly affected by the capitalisation of agriculture.

7 Distribution Of Power

There are important differences in the distribution of power and authority within the village. Anaval Brahmans are well educated and tend to hold official positions such as those on the Village Committee and panchayat (village council). However, Patidar men are very influential in making decisions regarding the land and the organisation of the village, although they lack the electoral sanction to be the most dominant. Their power also stems from their employment of the majority of Halpatis and thus the control of the livelihoods of a large percentage of the villagers. Other caste groups have their own councils where decisions are made but these tend to be dominated by people who are in the employ of the Patidars or the Anaval Brahmans, extending the power of these groups over others. Rich Patidar men also have unofficial control over the running of the temple, the school and the dispensary. Although they do not work in any of these areas, the decisions they make affect the operation of these institutions. Within this distribution of power, women have little influence and are not allowed to be members of the panchayat or attend its meetings despite recent legislation requiring women's participation on such committees.

II CLASS POSITION OF HOUSEHOLDS IN SERA

It is important to make some sort of division between households along class lines in order to make sense of women's differentiated experiences since they live within households which adopt different methods of production and strategies for survival.

Allocating households to various class positions means examining a variety of overlapping

and interrelated factors. The main criteria to be taken into account are the quantity and quality of land held by the household, the availability of other resources to make use of the land, the amount of household and hired labour required and available to the household, and the agricultural and non-agricultural work and income of members of the household. Differences in social and economic aspirations also differentiate households and their members.

1 Control and Ownership of Land and Cattle

The study of agrarian systems centres around the problem of land and the utilisation of that land for productive purposes (Beteille 1974, 25). In order to understand agrarian stratification in Sera I will take as a starting point the amount of land held and controlled by each household. This includes both land owned and that which is rented-in, although the degree of control over land under tenancy obviously varies according to the power relations between landowner and tenant. However, it is generally people who already own land who are in a position to rent additional land.

A preliminary division can be made between households that own land and those that are landless. Within the landholding group, however, there are differences in amount of land held. I have divided landholders into three main groups on the basis that the size of landholdings can potentially affect land productivity and consequently the income and life-style of the household. These groups are marginal and small peasants with less than five acres of land, middle peasants with 5-15 acres and rich peasants with larger landholdings of over 15 acres.

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Table 2 below shows the number of households within each of these groups and Table 3 shows the distribution of size of landholdings by caste.

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS BY SIZE OF LANDHOLDING IN SERA

SIZE OF LANDHOLDING	TOTAL NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS	PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS
LANDLESS	142	61.4
< 5 ACRES	41	16.7
5-15 ACRES	26	11.4
> 15 ACRES	24	10.5

Sera Village Household Census 1987

TABLE 3
DISTRIBUTION OF LANDHOLDINGS BY CASTE IN SERA

CASTE	No. of Households by Landholding Size			
	0 acres	<5 acres	5-15 acres	15 acres
PATIDAR	0	2	10	16
ANAVAL BRAHMAN	0	1	3	5
HARIJAN	8	10	0	0
KOLI	6	4	1	0
HALPATI	117	4	1	0
AHIR	2	9	11	2
DURJI	0	3	0	0
HAJAM	0	3	0	0
LUHAR	1	3	0	0
IN-MIGRANT	8	1	0	1

Sera Village Household Census 1987

From the table above it would appear that Ahirs control a large amount of land. However, the land that they own tends to be of poor quality which is only suitable for grazing.

Although the Land Ceiling Act fixed the maximum amount of irrigated land to 10 acres,

there are many ways in which landholding statistics can be altered to allow farmers to hold more than this. It is important, therefore, to be cautious when using official government records. From my own land census in Sera I found that there were 19 Patidar households with landholdings well above the legal maximum.⁵

This four-way division, shown in Table 2, considers land that is *operated* by the household, but does not indicate the form of control over that land. The different forms of land tenure affect the control over land as well as the productivity. For instance, some Ahirs rent land from Patidars and pay annual rent while others rent land on a share-cropping basis. Since, for most Ahirs, the land that they rent is the only land that they cultivate, this puts them in a very insecure and dependent position. Ahirs are beginning to cultivate land but as Patidars feel that Ahirs are not good farmers and only know how to graze goats, since the late 1970s, they have taken back much of this land. Because a tenant can claim ownership of the land after a number of years, Patidars are wary of renting land for an extended period of time to non-Patidars. There are, in fact, several Halpati households, one Koli household and one in-migrant Dhodiya household who have rented-in land from Patidars and Harijans. These households have much less security of tenure as the landowners are concerned that they may claim ownership. Some of this land is only rented-out for a year in which case most cash crops cannot be grown on the land as they have a longer cultivation cycle. For instance, Gulab Dhodiya was able to rent 17 *bighas* of land from Harijans and Patidars although a proportion was only rented to him for a year, effectively limiting the type of crops that he could grow. It also meant that he would have to spend much time clearing the land in order to produce only one annual harvest. Furthermore, a number of *bighas* were rented to him for an initial period of five years on an unofficial basis. After Gulab and his household members had spent six months clearing this land and preparing it for cultivation, the owner demanded his land back.

However, tenancy relations are not always characterised by such insecurity and exploitation. Patidars, for instance, despite owning a lot of land themselves, may be asked by their migrating fellow caste members to rent-in their land which constitutes a tenancy clearly not based on insecurity or dependence. In fact, these Patidars pay very low

⁵Table 2 identifies 16 households operating more than 15 acres of land. In fact, 10 of these households own more than 40 acres.

rates and in effect, usually have *de facto* control over the land for many years and almost complete security of tenure.

If control over land is a criterion for differentiating households, the actual size of the household is also a crucial factor in determining class. One household may control a total area of 30 *bighas* but its actual economic and social position depends on the number of male members who operate and own the land. For instance, in one household there may only be one male member which means that a landholding size of 30 *bighas* is quite high whereas in another household the same amount of land may be divided between, and operated by three male members.

A household's agricultural productivity from the same amount of land may also depend on their access to other resources, soil type and availability of hired or household labour power. Some people are registered as landowners but do not have sufficient resources to make use of their land. A Harijan household with 5 *bighas* may not be in the same position as another household owning the same amount of land if they cannot afford agricultural inputs and do not have access to water and credit facilities. Likewise, households which own 30 *bighas* of land do not necessarily employ the same division of labour within the household, follow the same agricultural pattern or have the same labour requirements. It is important to stress that the exclusive use of a statistical division to form the basis of class stratification does not inform us of the social relations between members of the household and between households.

It is generally only men who hold and control land as women do not inherit productive property: 'Customarily, access to land has been largely confined to male household members' (Agarwal 1988b; 1989). However, women live within households that may or may not own land (Sharma 1980, 16). Some women who do hold land tend to have ownership only temporarily; a typical example is the widow who must wait until her son comes of age so that the land can be transferred into his name. Usually, land is not officially transferred into a woman's name even though her husband may no longer be alive. In exceptional circumstances, women have been able to buy land with money they have received from divorce settlements but although this land is in their name, if a woman remarries, the land is transferred to the control of her husband and her in-laws. For example, Manju Muni Patel bought land in her *piyar* after she received money from her ex-husband. However, as soon as she remarried she lost *control* of that land despite the fact

that her husband did not insist that she transfer her land over to him. Another way in which women may 'own' land without controlling it is when men officially register land in the name of women in their household to avoid an 'excess' being appropriated by the government under the Land Ceilings Act. There are also cases of women having short-term control over land. For example, Ganga Patel was left to look after her household's land when her nephews emigrated to New Zealand. One nephew went to visit relatives abroad and Ganga had semi-control over the land for the two years he was away. However, she did not have the authority to buy or sell land and when major decisions had to be made concerning the land, she had to write to her nephew for instructions.

Most of the larger farmers own cattle and are able to accrue additional income from milk sales. They are also in a position to farm out cattle to Halpatis, therefore eliminating the expense of employing a *govario* (cowherd) to graze, feed and milk the cattle. Middle farmers also own cattle but are often not in a position to hire labourers and therefore, household members feed and milk cattle. Landless and small and marginal farmers rarely own cattle but may take them on *bhage* (sharing of cattle tending) system whereby they look after other farmers' cattle for a period of nine months during which time they can sell the dung. At the beginning of the monsoon when they return the cattle to the owner, they also receive cash payment or payment in kind. As Table 4 below shows, there are some Halpatis who own cattle. As payment for looking after cattle, Halpatis are often given young calves. This is a much better deal than a cash payment, as cattle are productive preoperty and will produce dung and milk.

TABLE 4
DISTRIBUTION OF OWNERSHIP OF COWS, GOATS AND BUFFALOES BY CASTE

	COWS OWNED	BUFFALOES OWNED	GOATS OWNED
PATIDAR	23	73	0
HARIJAN	4	4	0
ANAVAL	21	4	0
AHIR	7	42	213
KOLI	10	24	0
HALPATI	33	24	52
DURJI	0	0	0
HAJAM	0	0	0
LUHAR	0	0	0
IN-MIGRANT	1	11	0
TOTAL	99	182	265

Sera Village Household Census 1987

2 Land Productivity and Access to Resources

The agricultural productivity of the land is the second criterion that needs to be considered as a determinant of household class position

'given the great variation in access to land, soil fertility, intensity of cropping, availability of labour power and other factors of an agronomic or socio-economic nature which influence farming productivity' (Breman 1985a, 49).

These factors are not necessarily caste-specific.

Large landholders are able to make the most use of new and improved technology and irrigation facilities because of their power within the area and because their land tends to be located near the irrigation canal. They also have access to markets through the sugar cane co-operatives and fruit and vegetable markets in town, and to credit facilities which have been made increasingly accessible particularly to large landholders. They are in a position to make optimum use of all financial incentives and other benefits offered by the government. Breman suggests that a landholding of 15 acres 'marks the transition to a type of agrarian proprietor who forms the vanguard of a capitalist mode of production which

has gained dominance', (Breman 1985a, 50). He suggests that these large farmers provide the initiative for technological and organisational transformation and that

'they are the first to make use of the infrastructural and institutional provisions offered on such a generous scale by the government and, as is evident from their cumulative economic capacity, they also derive the most advantage from the modernising of the rural order', (Breman 1985a, 50).

These landholders are able to grow crops throughout the year. In addition to sugar cane and mangoes, they are also able to grow rice and other grains during and immediately after the monsoon. Those that have large numbers of cattle often keep 5-10 *bighas* of their land for grazing.

Middle farmers also have sufficient land to make use of the new technology available for the intensive cultivation of cash crops. Agriculture is still the chief source of livelihood for households in this category. The main difference between middle and large peasants is in their use of household labour. Middle peasants use more household labour for manual agricultural work although some household members may also be required to carry out non-agricultural work on a daily basis.

Marginal and small farmers with less than 5 acres are usually unable to make use of improved technology and other resources. Instead, they must engage in wage-labour in agricultural and non-agricultural spheres in order to provide sufficient income for the production and reproduction of their households. These landholders are restricted to growing monsoon crops for home use, and then only when they have the resources.

The cultivation of different crops requires the application of particular technologies. However, access to these technologies varies between households. Much depends on the finances available to households; there are, for instance, clear differences in the use of technology between households receiving remittances from members abroad and those who rely solely on income from their land.

Besides income, the use of household assets may vary according to particular vested interests. The way in which income is spent often shows the capitalistic character of the productive process adopted by the household. Some farmers could afford to buy a tractor but feel that it is more economical to rent a tractor on the days that it is needed while others may choose to hire more labourers than introduce labour saving technologies. With

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the increase in the availability of credit even to small landholders, the differences between large, middle and small farmers have to some extent been reduced, although landholders with larger farms are in a position to obtain more on credit. It is now possible for the owner of 10 *bighas* to buy fertilisers and seeds on credit. However, credit is not available to those who rent-in land causing difficulties for some farmers. To obtain technological and other agricultural tools and inputs, these landholders must take personal loans at high interest rates from other farmers in the village. The result is that poorer farmers tend to adopt more labour intensive methods of agricultural production. In contrast, landholders with kinsfolk in other households living within the village can share the purchase of labour saving devices and benefit from economies of scale.

Another factor is a household's access to irrigation which has become increasingly important since most of the crops now grown require a regular supply of water. Rich, upper caste farmers have greater control over irrigation because of their greater familiarity with the law and officialdom. They are also in a better financial position to bribe officials into allowing them greater access to water throughout the year (Gorter 1989).

The land belonging to landholders can be differentiated by its quantity and quality. Anaval Brahmans, having been the major landholders in the past, own land near the Purna river where the boring of wells was much cheaper and they therefore, had the advantage of easily available irrigation. Patidars, on the other hand, had no source of irrigation and held less land, yet most was covered by *kali jamin* (fertile black soil). These factors determined the type and quantity of crop production adopted by different farmers. However, when the irrigation canal was installed, it passed through Patidar land and dramatically changed their economic situation. At the same time, Anaval Brahmans were reducing their input into agricultural production and increasingly taking up non-agricultural employment.

Veyti land held by Harijans, Durjis and Hajams consists of poor soil and is hilly, which makes it almost impossible to irrigate and causes severe top soil erosion in the monsoon. There is little that can be grown on this land without available resources to level the land and improve productivity through the use of fertilisers. These castes are limited to the planting of rice, *jowar* (brown/red millet) and other pulses.

After the flood in 1968, Ahirs had to move to another part of the village. They were sold

some land by a Patidar farmer and were able to buy more cattle and land with money from the government's Flood Relief Fund. Subsequently, other Patidars decided to sell their land near the Ahir section because it was impossible to grow anything with the grazing goats nearby tending to wander across the cultivated fields. Most of the Ahirs' land is unirrigated and of very low quality and can only be used for grazing livestock.

3 Labour Requirements and Work Patterns

The amount of land owned and rented-in, and the productivity of the land, determine the agricultural cycle adopted by the household and affect the amount of labour required by the household at different times of the year.

Larger farmers, who have access to land and resources and grow crops throughout the year, require a large, regular supply of agricultural labour. Most of these farmers sell mangoes to *veparis* and sugar cane to co-operatives. Thus, although large numbers of labourers are required for the harvesting of these crops, farmers are not responsible for organising the hiring of labour. This responsibility is only called upon during the production of rice.

These large farmers tend to hire two agricultural labourers to look after the farm on a daily basis and carry out tasks such as ploughing, channelling irrigation water and putting fertilisers and pesticides onto the fields. At other times of the year, particularly at planting and harvesting, additional labourers are called in.

Members of these households are rarely involved in strenuous manual work on the land. In an attempt to raise their status they refrain from physical work and remove female members of their household from manual agricultural activities. The men carry out organisational and supervisory tasks and may also be involved in the marketing of crops, whereas women from these households are responsible for the supervision of female labourers as well as occasionally picking vegetables for home use and cooking for field hands.

Middle farmers also carry out agricultural production, including the growing of cash crops, throughout the year but have limited land and resources to grow large amounts of produce. Like large farmers, their labour requirements for cane and mangoes are controlled by traders and co-operatives. However, for rice, which is the main crop for most of these

farmers, seasonal intensive labour is required. Some of these farmers can afford to hire daily agricultural labourers and *choota mujoor* (casual labourers) at busy agricultural periods while others can only afford the latter.

The labour requirements of these farmers vary throughout the year and are met by a combination of hired and household labour. Some male members of the household may be involved in non-agricultural paid employment and although they are often able to take annual leave during planting and harvesting, women of the household carry out the daily agricultural tasks.

Between June and November, poor farmers are engaged in monsoon agricultural production for home consumption, which does not provide enough for subsistence. This, therefore, compels men to work in non-agricultural waged employment and both men and women to work in agricultural employment. These households utilise only household labour on their land since they cannot afford to hire labourers although many Harijans work on one another's land during particularly busy periods.

Those Ahirs who own little land and few goats also employ only household labour. Furthermore, as they cannot afford to give their cattle to Halpatis to look after during the grazing period, they often rely on the young children of the household to carry out this task.

Within this broad categorisation, it is pertinent to look at more specific work patterns and relations between and within households. The fact that some people work harder and for longer than others cannot solely be explained by caste differences. Among farmers, there are those who carry out manual work on their farms and others who carry out purely managerial and supervisory tasks. In fact, these differences cannot always be assigned purely to class differences either since some individuals are in a position to make choices regarding the work that they carry out and that they require others to perform. Thus, a farmer's choice to hire-in labourers or use household labour is not necessarily only restricted by his caste and class status.

The division of labour varies between and within households. For example, it would not be accurate to say that members of landholding households do not work in the fields and those who work on the land are landless. The type and amount of work carried out by individuals is highly differentiated besides which, work patterns also differ throughout

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the year and through the stages in an individual's life-cycle. The size of the household also determines the type and amount of work that male and female members are required to perform. (The organisation and structure of the household is dealt with in more detail in Chapter Five.)

In order to look at women's relationship to agricultural work, it is important to identify,

'the way in which a woman's own labour power becomes a form of familial property which can only be alienated with the consent of the family group' (Sharma 1980, 15).

Within some households, women are removed from physical and manual agriculture work not only because the household can afford to hire labourers but also because keeping women out of these activities reflects the status and class position of the household.

The ratio of the employment of hired agricultural labourers to the use of household labour is very important in forming class distinctions. This 'labour:exploitation ratio' (Patnaik 1987, 202) can be utilised over a wide spectrum which extends between two poles. At one extreme stands the large landholder who does not participate in any manual work and does not allow women from his household to carry out agricultural activities. At the other extreme is the landless labourer who does not engage household labour because he does not own land. Instead, he and his household members depend on working for others who do own land. Between these two poles lie the majority of households which use a combination of household and hired labour. However, difficulties arise in using this ratio as an indication of class position because it may vary throughout the year depending on the agricultural cycle and the stages in individual household members' life-cycle. Furthermore, hired labourers may perform different tasks to household members as well as spending differing amounts of time on the farm.

The make-up of the household is also important. For instance, a small landholder from a nuclear household may have to hire-in labourers to work on his farm at particular times of the year to work alongside members of the household. This raises the question as to which class group such a household belongs and the extent to which the hiring of labourers reflects an exploitative class position.

Landless labourers are also differentiated by class. Amongst Halpatis, the different types of work they perform are characterised by particular economic and social status. The

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majority of men and women work as agricultural labourers. However, they are differentiated by size of income and form of contract. Some male labourers are 'permanent' daily labourers for one household and have security of employment and additional benefits of payment in kind as well as a regular cash income. In addition to this, their employers usually take on their wives/daughters as domestic servants and may employ their sons as *govarios*.

Other Halpati labourers, both men and women, work as *choota mujoor*. *Choota mujoor* are called to work whenever required but are not guaranteed regular employment or income. The word '*choota*' implies that they are 'free' to choose when and where they work but in reality this is not the case since their inability to demand work when they need it means that many of them live constantly in an insecure financial position. Therefore at certain times of the year they may have more work than at others.

Some labourers work on a contract basis known as *udhad*. They are paid per *kyari* (field used for rice cultivation) of rice that is cut and threshed. Farmers prefer this form of employment as it encourages labourers to work faster to complete the planting or harvesting so they can move on to another field. Other Halpatis, both men and women, make up a 'gang' of labourers. If the whole gang are not employed then none of the individual members will agree to work, forcing farmers to hire more labourers than they necessarily require. The labourers acquired some bargaining power through these work gangs but this has been eroded by the arrival of readily available migrant labourers; if a farmer does not need to hire a full gang of 30 Halpati labourers, he can employ as many Khandeshi in-migrant labourers as he requires.

Some Halpatis have taken up non-agricultural employment and have higher incomes and status, and more security than *choota mujoor*. A few work in the sugar factories at Maroli and Bardoli while most work in factories at Dholla Pipla or at the electricity grid near Navsari.

4 Income

Household income is another factor to consider when attempting to understand the class structure. Since many households depend on multiple sources of income,

'the class position of individuals can be defined, but households are harder to

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characterise, since their members may participate in more than one mode of production either simultaneously or serially', (Sharma 1980, 81).

Similarly, social relations vary according to how different areas of paid work operate. This places individual household members in different positions in terms of their relationship to production, and they can be both employee and employer. For example, Bhula Patel works for someone else as a diamond polisher in Navsari while his wife works on their farm but during important periods he employs agricultural labourers.

Household incomes vary according to the proportion of agricultural produce that is sold on the market. This depends on whether the household can satisfy all its consumption needs. A combination of sale and home use is the norm but there are a number of factors which affect decisions regarding the use of the produce. For instance, Lila and Gulab Dhodiya would ideally prefer to keep some milk for home use but are forced to sell it because the income received is valued more highly than having milk for home consumption. In other cases, some farmers are forced to sell nearly all their produce at harvest time because of the immediate need for cash although later on in the year they have to buy in the same food at a much higher price.

Large landholders receive most household income from cash crop production of mangoes and sugarcane. They are able to reinvest this money in agricultural production, achieving capital accumulation. Many of these households can also grow rice for sale and keep enough of the harvest to last until the next harvest thereby reducing their annual expenditure on food for the household.

In many Patidar households, one male operates the landholding while others take up non-agricultural paid employment. For example, Thakur Muni Patel works as a civil servant in Bilimora while his brother, Chagan, organises work on the farm. Similarly, Subodh Patel owns a diamond cutting factory in Navsari while his father looks after the farm. In this way, many large farming households have a regular, additional non-agricultural income. Others have increased income from the remittances sent from abroad which enable them to buy new agricultural tools and machinery and thereby increase their productivity.

Middle landholders receive some income from the sale of cash crops but most of them have taken up waged employment in order to supplement this. Again, some less wealthy Patidars receive remittances from abroad which allow them to invest in their current

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landholdings, but rarely is this sufficient to buy more land. Although the income of these households is less than that of larger farmers, they benefit from reinvestment into agriculture through borrowing of machinery and tools from wealthier caste members.

The main income of Anaval Brahman households is that accrued from non-agricultural employment with the relegation of farming to a subsidiary activity. Conversely, Ahirs are unable to take up non-agricultural employment since they have land to cultivate in the monsoon, and own goats which must be grazed and milked daily. They receive an income from the sale of goats and milk whereas the produce they grow is only for home use.

Durjis and Hajams plant monsoon rice for home use but all the men are involved in non-agricultural work, some also carrying out their caste occupation for a small additional income.

Households with small and marginal landholdings receive no cash income from the land and a limited amount as agricultural labourers, whereas those who find non-agricultural work are guaranteed a regular but small income.

Other poor households receive most of their cash income from agricultural work on other farms and non-agricultural employment. Harijan men who have migrated to Bombay do not always send remittances to family members in Sera, and women of these households are forced to take up agricultural work in order to subsist. Since most of them are unable to make use of their land they have no agricultural income.

Landless labourers are unable to accumulate capital. Most of them are Halpatis who work as agricultural labourers although many of them cannot find regular work. Within most Halpati households, men and women work as paid agricultural labourers while some women work as paid domestic labourers. The income of the household is barely sufficient for their daily maintenance, and Halpatis are often forced to take out loans from farmers, creating a situation of perpetual indebtedness. Agricultural labourers are paid Rs.5/day for most of the year but can earn Rs.7 and a mid-day meal during rice transplanting and harvesting whereas women domestic labourers are paid in a combination of cash and kind, receiving Rs.10/month and two meals a day in addition sometimes to a yearly gift of clothes and the payment of their children's education.

Several landless workers have been able to find non-agricultural waged employment.

Some Halpati men work in sugar cane factories and in the iron factories near Sera. It has become possible for members of these households to live above subsistence level since women of the household still work as agricultural labourers and domestic servants.

Among the different landholding groups there are differences in source and amount of cash income. Some households are able to accumulate capital and reinvest in agricultural production as well as buy luxury consumer items such as televisions thereby increasing their status position while others live barely at subsistence level and are often indebted to landholders and employers. In some cases, additional employment is necessary to supplement income from the land and is a strategy for survival whereas in others, households can afford to hire labourers and maximise their income earning opportunities by taking up other employment. Indeed, there are few landholding households that depend solely on the income from their own farms.

There are other forms of income besides that which is earned in cash and kind from waged agricultural and non-agricultural work or the sale of produce. Within a household there may be a number of sons who marry and bring their wives to live as part of the household. These women are often seen as a form of property and as workers, but amongst the landed caste they also bring in a dowry. Some Patidar and Anaval Brahman households would not have as much land nor as large an agricultural income had it not been for the amount of cash and jewellery brought into their households by a daughter-in-law. Equally, a household with a number of daughters can be impelled to pay out a dowry which may necessitate the sale of land, or for instance, a 'gift' of the following year's sugar cane income is given to the daughter's in-laws. There is also the cost of the wedding itself. Such costs show not only the way in which incomes can be decreased or increased over a period of time, but also that class position can sometimes change quite dramatically once a son or daughter gets married. This phenomenon is particularly pertinent with regard to Anaval Brahmans and Patidars who customarily give a very large 'gift' at the time of a marriage (see Van der Veen 1972).

III CLASS COMPOSITION OF SERA

Table 5 below shows the way in which the village population is stratified according to caste and class on the basis of the criteria I have identified above.

TABLE 5
CLASS COMPOSITION OF HOUSEHOLDS IN SERA

CASTE	CLASS POSITION			
	Rich Peasant	Middle Peasant	Poor Peasant	Landless
PATIDAR	12	16	0	0
HARIJAN	0	0	8	10
ANAVAL	3	6	0	0
AHIR	0	9	13	2
KOLI	0	1	5	6
HALPATI	0	0	5	117
DURJI	0	0	3	0
HAJAM	0	0	3	0
LUHAR	0	0	2	2
IN-MIGRANTS	0	0	2	8
TOTAL	15	32	41	145

Sera Village Household Census 1987

This clearly shows that the population of Sera is highly stratified; the majority of rich peasants are Patidars while the majority of Halpatis are in the landless class. The higher caste Patidars and Anavals also hold upper and middle class positions within the village, while Halpatis and Harijans occupy the lowest positions in the class hierarchy.

This is only a picture of household class position in Sera at one particular time, but by incorporating all the determining factors mentioned above, it is clear that class position is not static but changes over time. The future class position of each household may change as they lose or acquire land, and as other household circumstances change.

The class position of households in Sera has implications for women's work which will be dealt with in Chapter Five. The following chapter discusses the form of commercialisation of agricultural production that has occurred in this area and the different types of work activities in which individuals from different caste and class positions are engaged.

4 COMMERCIALISATION OF AGRICULTURE

Since the late 1960s and early 1970s there have been enormous changes in the forms of agricultural production and agrarian systems in south Gujarat. These changes, in the types of crops grown, methods of production, marketing of crops and labour requirements, have greatly affected women's work experiences within and outside the home. The development of capitalism in south Gujarat has led to an increasing concentration of land, increasing specialisation of production and a changing division of labour as household members adapt to these changes.

The changing nature of the sexual division of labour is primarily a result of changes in the overall economy specifically increasing capital accumulation for a minority. It is necessary to outline these developments in more detail in order to comprehend the basis upon which individual women's work patterns have been, and continue to be changed and the production context in which they work.

Many studies of rural economies have focused on agricultural change involving a shift in production from subsistence crops to cash crops; that is, a shift from production for mainly household consumption to more market orientated production (Ghosh and Dutt 1977¹). Some studies have also identified how such agricultural transformation varies from region to region and also between and within villages (Deere and Leon de Leal 1982). In south Gujarat the transition has been from an agricultural economy based on the production of cotton as the main cash crop alongside grains, pulses and cereals as subsistence food crops, to an economy heavily reliant on the production of sugar cane as the main cash crop.² In

¹Ghosh and Dutt suggest that in the mid-1950s, West Bengal was 'typically a small farmers economy characterised by small farmers as well as small farms' where, 'cultivation was more a means of living than a business' (Ghosh and Dutt 1977, 173).

²See Pandey (1986) for details of the economics of sugar cane cultivation in south Gujarat.

Gujarat, sugar cane production has increased from 1,490 metric tons in 1967-68, 2,717 in 1976-77 to 6,490 metric tons in 1985-86 (Breman 1990b). Mangoes, rice and other fruits and vegetables are also grown, mainly for sale, while the production of some grains and pulses, primarily for home use, is still maintained.

Table 1 below shows the cropping pattern in the south Gujarat region in 1984-85.

TABLE 1
CROPPING PATTERN IN SOUTH GUJARAT 1984-85

<u>CROP</u>	<u>AREA IN HECTARES</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL</u>
SUGAR CANE	503.80	41.23
PADDY	203.04	16.62
WHEAT	20.24	1.66
JOWAR	24.86	2.03
TUR	59.83	4.89
COTTON	36.42	2.98
FRUIT AND VEG.	28.32	2.32
ORCHARD	94.32	7.72
MISC.	32.72	2.68
FALLOW/GRASS	218.36	17.87
GROSS CROPPED AREA	1221.91	100.00

Source: Pandey 1986

Breman discusses the implications of these changes:

'The transformation that has come about is due to the combination of modern agricultural techniques - not only the extension of the irrigated land surface, but also the application of new agricultural methods and implements - and the financing of production as well as organisation of market sales under farmers' control. These changes of an infrastructural, technological and organisational nature - which meant the persistence of forces already active earlier have resulted in a style of farm management which is conspicuously different from the conditions existing before the transition - different as much in the use of capital as in the employment of labour' (Breman 1985a, 42).

This chapter outlines the features of this change in agricultural production including irrigation, new technology and the development of co-operatives. This is followed by a

focus on livestock rearing and patterns of crop production. Finally, I discuss the agricultural cycles that have evolved with these changes and importantly, the way in which labour requirements have been transformed.

I IRRIGATION

The introduction of canal and surface irrigation has been the greatest factor in promoting changes in agricultural production. Table 2 below shows the increase in acreage of land under irrigation.

TABLE 2
AREA IRRIGATED BY SOURCE, GUJARAT (IN '00 HECTARES)

SOURCE	1960-61	1970-71	1973-74	1974-75
Government canal	652	2358	2425	2266
Private canals	6	6	0	0
Wells	5677	10831	11192	10909
Tanks	128	372	254	198
Other sources	366	141	145	126
Total area irrigated	6829	13708	14016	13499

Source: Directorate of Agriculture, Gujarat State 1979

The Kakrapar Dam on the Tapi river was completed in 1953 but only covered a limited area. Besides this, the supply of water was seasonal and usually unreliable so most cropping patterns were unaffected and jowar, wheat and monsoon rice continued to be the main food crops. Cotton was the only non-food crop being grown in the area but its acreage began to decline steadily from 1971. As cotton production declined³ sugar cane production increased because,

'in many places the land had become too wet for the improved seed varieties which are being used in cotton cultivation. It would appear further that the production of 'status' food grains has gained in significance', (Breman 1985a, 29).

³Although the area under cotton was decreasing, production of cotton initially increased, chiefly because of the introduction of high yield varieties and the adoption of better cultivation practices.

The second stage of the Ukai reservoir project, completed in 1973, dramatically altered agricultural production. Water was now available throughout the year and covered much of the south Gujarat plain with a total catchment area of 338,000 sq. kms. Main and subsidiary canals were installed to promote distribution and the government further constructed field canals so every area could have access to the new water supply. This enormous extension of irrigation has led to radical changes in agricultural production patterns.

Despite the large irrigation scheme, there are still problems created by the inadequacy and unreliability of water supply. Many Sera farmers complained about this. One farmer said,

'we are at the tail end of the State, the tail end of the Talukha and now even at the tail end of the irrigation works' (Bhikha Patel).

They are, therefore, dependent on water use further up the irrigation canal. Blockages by other farmers further up the canal frequently allow only a small flow of water to reach Sera and the surrounding villages.⁴ Furthermore, the benefits of irrigation are not equally available to all farmers. It is not feasible for every landholder to change to sugar cane production since it requires a large and constant supply of water and other costly inputs. Some Patidar farmers who have access to irrigation can grow rice in the summer months as well as in the monsoon besides planting cane. Ahirs, on the other hand, have limited access to irrigation due to financial limitations and are only able to cultivate rice.

Since Sera rarely receives a sufficient and dependable supply of water, some of the more economically powerful farmers resort to bribing irrigation officials and other corrupt methods to ensure that they receive a sufficient supply for their cane production (see Gorter 1989, Wade 1978). During periods when much irrigation is required, disputes arise between farmers regarding whose turn it is to take the water and how much each farmer can use. The government irrigation department at Vesma has now sent an inspection officer to live in Sera for five years to investigate the availability and use of water as well as complaints that some farmers have been taking water without paying for it.

⁴Farmers in neighbouring villages, such as Pinsad, have already reduced dramatically the acreage under sugar cane because of problems of water supply.

In 1987, the local sugar cane factory at Maroli warned that if the drought that had plagued the region for four years continued, the quota of cane production given to each farmer would have to be drastically reduced. This alarm emphasised the instability and risks involved in cane production. Despite the fact that the monsoon rains of 1988 were on time and were sufficient to refill the reservoir, farmers had become wary of depending on a single crop which requires such a large and constant water supply particularly since drought increasingly plagues the area and lasts for such lengthy spells. However, although some farmers complain about the lack of water, they receive more money from sugar cane than they have ever been able to accumulate in the past and seeing the increased wealth of their Bardoli neighbours, where the shift to sugar cane production has been more extensive, they are encouraged to carry on planting sugar cane despite the difficulties.

II INTRODUCTION OF NEW TECHNOLOGY

Besides the introduction of canal irrigation, other areas of production have undergone modernisation that have enabled this agricultural transformation to take place.

In the early 1960s, with the introduction of the Green Revolution, the government launched a new agrarian strategy with the aim of increasing agricultural production. The Intensive Area District Programme was introduced in certain districts and agricultural extension services were widened to cover larger areas. The main priority was to introduce new and better forms of cultivation and the planting of high yield varieties for most major crops was encouraged and were made readily available to farmers. From 1968 to 1974, the area of agricultural land under high yielding varieties in Valsad District had increased: from 1400 hectares to 20900 hectares of rice, from 140 hectares to 1890 hectares of jowar and from 1750 hectares to 13600 of wheat. The high yielding variety of cotton also increased from 280 hectares in 1969 to 23560 hectares in 1974 (Valsad District Census 1981). However, newly irrigated land was not suitable for all high yield varieties and in Sera there has been no cotton production since 1985, with most of the land previously used for cotton now being planted with cane.⁵

⁵For further details of the reasons for, and process of the shift to sugar cane production, see Breman (1985a).

Farmers are encouraged to use chemical fertilisers and pesticides available in the newly established Government Societies which also give credit and agricultural inputs at subsidised rates. The quantity of fertilisers used per hectare is highest for sugar cane followed by wheat and rice. Many studies on agricultural production and changes in cropping cycles have shown that there is a direct link between the increased use of fertilisers and greater productivity.⁶ The long term advantages of this rapid increase in the use of chemical fertilisers are, however, questionable. Dung was previously used as a fertiliser and would work effectively for a number of years without changing the acidity of the soil. The use of chemical fertilisers, on the other hand, seems to be somewhat of a false economy since it changes the composition of the soil and requires at least one annual application. Thus, government encouragement in the use of these chemical fertilisers appears to be a short-sighted policy in order to rapidly increase agricultural production (see Agarwal 1989; Shiva 1988).

Many high yield varieties and other weaker hybrid strains are more susceptible to pests and diseases. Since sugar cane is the least resistant crop, it has to be sprayed regularly by the sugar factories at a high cost which is subsequently deducted from farmers' profits. Plant protection methods are increasingly necessary for the newer strains of seeds and the cost of this has risen ten fold since the late 1970s (Breman 1985a). The government has introduced schemes for seed treatment and aerial spraying and subsidises the use of pesticides. Again, the introduction of new methods of cultivation have wider and more harmful ecological effects which reduce their long term advantages. For some farmers, the disadvantages of these additional inputs to production are reducing the profits accrued from growing these crops.

Farmers are also encouraged to use more modern implements and adopt other technological initiatives. Tractors can be hired at very low rates for the initial ploughing and levelling of land and loans are given to those farmers who want to buy their own tractors and other mechanised implements. In Sera, three of the largest Patidar landholders have been able to buy tractors. These farmers are further able to increase their income by renting them out to other farmers in the village. There has also been a great increase in the use of iron

⁶Navsari Agricultural college has carried out research into these effects of changes in agricultural production.

ploughs, as opposed to wooden ones, and a growth of electric and oil engine motors on water pumps and wells.

It must be remembered, however, that these new methods of agrarian modernisation are not available to all landholders. Upper and middle landholding groups who are able to engage in agricultural production throughout the year and particularly those who grow sugar cane, mangoes, and vegetables are most likely to benefit. In fact,

'the attempt to modernise agriculture has indeed been directed principally towards crops which are wholly or partly dependent upon irrigation' (Breman 1985a, 37).

This reduces the chances of small farmers without irrigation obtaining any of these new agricultural initiatives. This has led to an uneven development in rural areas with certain households being able to engage in cash crop production and reap the benefits of government policies which are directed towards them in an attempt to increase agricultural production, while others who have limited access to land are unable to increase the yield from their farms.

Smaller farmers can sometimes make use of new technology through their relationship with larger farmers in the village but they have little direct control over their own agricultural production. Much of their land has no access to irrigation canals and they must rely on wealthier farmers to provide access to tools and machinery and water from pumps and wells. Most of these small landholders who own land of poor quality cannot afford the new technology which would enable them to increase production.

III FARMING CO-OPERATIVES

One of the most important farming initiatives to have taken place in the study area has been the establishment of farming co-operatives which have been set up by groups of wealthy farmers, generally in an attempt to escape the grip of cotton and rice merchants. Individual farmers are now able to sell their produce to co-operatives in which they hold shares and no longer have to deal with traders and middlemen.

The first sugar cane factory in south Gujarat was set up in Bardoli in 1957 and was followed by one in Madhi in 1964. These co-operatives are highly technical and efficient and have led to a massive transformation of the agricultural scene in the area. Co-

operatives in Valsad District have been set up more recently with most farmers in Sera being served by the Maroli factory which was established in 1975. The factory not only provides a market for sugar cane but also enables farmers to gain easy access to tractors and other tools, acquire credit and receive other inputs on loan or at subsidised rates. The co-operatives also organise the hiring of labourers for the harvesting season.

The shift to sugar cane in Navsari Talukha has been much more recent and not as extensive as in the neighbouring talukha of Bardoli. It is still only the larger farmers who can afford the high cost of inputs and in Sera, it has only been since the early 1980s that they have begun to grow cane and been able to take advantage of canal irrigation and other facilities offered by the factory.

This shift to sugar cane production has been limited not only by the number of farmers who can afford it but also by the amount of cane farmers are allowed to grow. The quotas given to individual farmers depend on the number of shares they hold as well as the crushing capacity of the local factory. The sugar cane farmers in Sera are served primarily by Maroli sugar co-operative and there is a representative of the factory in each village to make sure that farmers do not grow more than their prescribed quota. The table below shows the crushing capacity of the various sugar cane factories in south Gujarat.

TABLE 3
SOUTH GUJARAT SUGAR FACTORIES
IN THE CO-OPERATIVE SECTOR

LOCATION OF ENTERPRISE	FIRST YEAR OF OPERATION	CRUSHING CAPACITY 1985-1986 (TONS)
BARDOLI	1956-1957	7000
CHALTHAN	1970-1971	3500
MADHI	1968-1969	3500
SAYAN	1978-1979	3250
MAHUWA	1980-1981	2000
GANDEVI	1961-1962	2000
MAROLI	1976-1977	1250
VALSAD	1978-1979	1250
VYARA	1985-1986	1250

Source: Breman 1990b

Bardoli factory is very large and efficient and has a much larger crushing capacity than the more recently established Maroli factory which is less efficient partly due to the use of old machinery. Irrigation facilities in Bardoli Talukha are also much more efficient than in Navsari Talukha.

IV LIVESTOCK

Although cattle are still kept by most farmers, animal rearing has been reduced substantially over the past ten years with a consequent decrease in milk production. According to the Valsad District census of 1981, there were 426 cows and buffaloes in Sera, owned almost exclusively by Patidars and Anaval Brahmans, as well as 125 goats owned by Ahirs (Valsad District Census 1981) but these numbers have declined further as other forms of agricultural production have become more important and profitable.⁷ According to the household census I carried out in 1987, the number of goats had increased to 255 but that

⁷Previously, most milk production was for household consumption or made into *ghee* (clarified butter) which was sold in nearby markets.

of cows and buffaloes had decreased to 263. The number of draught animals in Sera has only slightly decreased as tractor hire remains very expensive and is relatively inaccessible to most farmers. There has also been a shift in ownership patterns as fewer Patidars but more Halpatis are now owning cows and buffaloes (see Table 4, Chapter Three).

To try and counteract this reduction in livestock and milk production, Operation Flood was introduced in 1970.⁸ The Vasuda Dairy was set up in Allipore and a branch in Sera was established in 1984 in an attempt to encourage not only farmers but also landless labourers to buy cattle and sell milk to the dairy. The co-operative sells cattle on credit and provides loans to buy cattle, with particularly favourable rates given to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.⁹

The decline in milch cattle may be reversed now that the co-operative has been set up and farmers are being encouraged to buy more cattle. However, so far, few large farmers have been interested in buying new livestock as crop production is considered more important and economically advantageous. There are a number of reasons why livestock numbers have further declined. Cotton seeds were previously used to feed cattle but since sugar cane leaves are a poor substitute, owners are now forced to buy expensive fodder. This cost induces those farmers who can afford it, to leave a significant proportion of their land for grazing. In Sera, almost 40% of agricultural land is used for grazing or growing cattle feed to store during the monsoon (Sera Village Household Census 1987), but as sugar cane and rice become more important, farmers are keen to use all their land for cultivation and reduce the amount of land left for grazing.

⁸Operation Flood was introduced in 1970 by the National Dairy Development Board (N.D.D.B.) in order to increase milk production by integrating milk producers into dairy co-operatives. The milk is then marketed extensively throughout India. This project has been developed in Kheda District in Gujarat, following an organisational structure generally known as the 'Anand Pattern'. See George, S. (1985); Patel, S. (1986); Rajaram, M. (1986).

⁹Certain castes and tribes were classified as 'scheduled' in the Indian Constitution and refer to those of lower caste who are particularly 'disadvantaged'.

It is too soon to realise the effect the Dairy will have on the number of cattle within the village but it is clear that many of the landless population are taking advantage of the Dairy's offer to sell them cattle on loan which can be paid off once the cattle give milk. The milk must be sold to the Dairy and the repayment of the loan is taken from this income. The main problem for the Halpatis is that they do not have access to grazing land throughout the year and cannot afford to buy cattle feed from the co-operative, which has forced many of them to return their cattle to the Dairy. Despite the fact that they are not shareholders, the Dairy has tried to encourage Halpatis by agreeing to buy their milk although they do not receive a share of the annual profit. Small and marginal farmers regard livestock as a means by which they can increase their income to facilitate the purchase of more land and therefore, they have taken advantage of the incentives offered by the dairy co-operative.

V LAND USE AND CROPPING PATTERNS IN SERA

In order to understand the basis upon which women's work has changed, it is necessary to outline the production cycles and input requirements for each major crop grown in Sera to understand the factors that influence the choices of individual farmers regarding land use and in what ways these choices affect the labour requirements and seasonal variations in agricultural production.

1 Land Use

Due to restrictions on cane production, because of quotas and farmers' realisation that they would be wise not to depend on a perpetual supply of water, agricultural production in Sera has not transformed into a monoculture. Farmers continue to grow rice in the monsoon, jowar, and other grains and pulses. Mangoes, a 'status' food, are grown as another cash crop while some farmers grow fruits such as *chikhus*, bananas and guava as well as vegetables, including aubergines and cauliflowers. Local marketing networks developed as fruit and vegetable co-operatives were set up in Navsari. These co-operatives lend tractors to plough the land and transport crops from fields to collection centres. Loans and credit are readily available but only to those farmers with large landholdings who hold shares in the co-operative.

4: Commercialisation of Agriculture

Farmers in Sera continue to grow a variety of crops. Additionally, because of the agricultural cycle of pulses and grains, they can be planted alongside major cash crops. Alternatively, two crops can be grown in one field, one after the other, within the same year. Although there has not been a complete transformation to the production of cane in Sera, much of the land has been converted to cane production and provides the main cash income to those farmers who can afford to grow it.

Table 4 shows the land use pattern in Sera in 1982-83 and 1985-86.

TABLE 4
 AREA UNDER MAJOR CROPS IN SERA (in acres),
 1982-3 and 1985-86

	1982-1983	1985-1986
RICE	127.50	118.30
JOWAR	175.00	187.05
WHEAT	37.50	30.10
TOTAL GRAINS	340.00	335.45
TUR	88.75	80.15
CHOLI	19.40	19.10
MUG	2.50	2.15
VAAL	51.25	32.10
CHANNA	5.25	3.15
TOTAL PULSES	167.15	136.65
AUBERGINE	10.25	10.10
TOMATO	0.00	3.15
OTHER VEG.	5.60	9.30
TOTAL VEGS.	15.85	22.55
BANANA	21.60	25.00
MANGO	39.00	30.15
CHIKHU	30.00	20.00
PAPAYA	5.25	0.00
TOTAL FRUITS	95.85	75.15
SUGARCANE	238.50	236.15
CASTOR	6.00	6.90
GRASS	475.00	478.20
COTTON	0.00	8.15

Source: Sera Village Agricultural Census 1982-3, 1985-86

The total amount of land under cultivation in the village is 1250 acres. This appears to be less than the total acreage under each crop recorded in the table above but is because two crops are often sown on the same land in one agricultural year. The greatest proportion of

land is used for grazing, whilst cane, the major single crop in the village, covers approximately 19% of all cultivated land.

2 Cropping Patterns

The following sections look at the cultivation cycle and inputs for the different crops grown in the village.

i Sugar Cane

Sugar cane is now the most important cash crop in the region and those farmers who can afford to, plant as much sugar cane as their quota allows. This quota, however, is rarely more than four acres in the case of an individual farmer who holds shares for the co-operative. Most Patidar farmers are given quotas of between one and two acres while those Ahirs who plant cane are only given a third of an acre on the grounds that they have less land, fewer shares and limited access to irrigation water (Sera Sugar Cane Records 1987). The Maroli Sugarcane Planting Register has 38 farmers from Sera registered as sugarcane producers, comprising 21 Patidars, 12 Ahirs, 3 Desais and 2 Mistrays (Maroli Co-operative Register 1987). Several individuals on this register belong to one household and operate their farm jointly but they have registered as individual farmers in an attempt to be granted a higher quota. For example, Muni Patel's three sons have registered separately although one son lives in Britain and another one in Bilimora. The third son farms all their land jointly and because of the separate registration of his brothers, is able to plant a total of 8.2 acres of cane. There are also names on the register of people who no longer live in Sera but have rented their land out and allowed other farmers to grow cane on their shares. For example, two Mistrays have not lived in Sera for many years but have rented their land to Patidars to farm. According to official statistics, Patidars plant a total of 30.8 acres of sugarcane, Ahirs 13.1 acres and Anaval Brahmans 8.7 acres (Sera Village Census 1987) Although it appears that Ahirs plant a lot of sugarcane this is not the case. Certain Patidar farmers have friends amongst the Ahirs who, because they are agriculturalists, share similar interests but are not considered socially or economically threatening to Patidars. In order to enable these Patidars to have control over more shares in the co-operative they have persuaded some Ahirs to allow them to use their names on the register.

Some Ahirs who are able to plant cane do not always have access to canal irrigation. This reduces their land productivity and their yield is likely to be much less than wealthier farmers who plant a similar acreage. Therefore, comparisons of acreage planted by individual farmers based on official statistics do not necessarily present an accurate account of the income of individual households.

Sugar cane is planted between early October and the first week of January and is harvested 13 months later. The cane fields have to be irrigated every month after planting until the monsoon period arrives. A minimum of 70 kilos of fertiliser per acre must be applied three times within the first four months and weeding is required until the beginning of February, although there is little to be done during the monsoon until the harvest season begins in November. The co-operative informs the farmer of the harvesting date one month before it is due from which time the cane field should not be watered. Water increases the weight of cane and since the farmer is paid per tonne of cane, the factory has to be careful that they are not overpaying the farmer.

Although sugar cane is considered a capital intensive rather than a labour intensive cash crop, the introduction of modern agricultural farming methods has not greatly reduced labour requirements. Much of the work has, however, been given over to migrant labourers which has resulted in the removal of local Halpati labourers from this area of work.

Work in the sugar cane fields is required periodically throughout the year. Twenty-five to thirty labourers are required per acre to plant the cane and two agricultural labourers irrigate and apply fertilisers every month. These two labourers are generally *kayam mujoor* (daily agricultural labourers) and thus, no extra labourers are hired. Weeding takes place at regular intervals from November to February requiring at least 15-20 female labourers/acre to be employed.

At harvest time, the co-operative organises migrant Khandeshi labourers to take over cane cutting. This means that farmers do not have to be concerned with finding labour at this time of the year since the co-operative deals with all labour requirements and wages are deducted from farmers' profits at the end of the cane crushing season. Farmers are responsible solely for providing labourers with firewood for cooking.

ii Rice

Since little work is required in the cane fields during the monsoon, farmers can turn their attention to rice planting in other fields. Smaller landholders who do not grow cane but only monsoon rice begin their agricultural year after the first rainfall. Only a few farmers are able to afford the irrigation required to grow rice in the summer which involves planting seeds in January and harvesting in May/June. This is risky since the rains may arrive after cutting but before threshing, three days later, and can spoil the whole crop.

Monsoon rice is planted after the first rainfall in mid-June and is then harvested in October or November depending on the seed variety. The old varieties of rice such as *Kada* and I.R 22 are harvested before Divali in October but the newer varieties such as *Messur* are not harvested until the end of November. Many farmers who can afford irrigation and fertilisers (30 kilos per acre in July and then another 100 kilos per acre in August) prefer to grow high yield variety rice which is highly priced. *Kada* rice yields about 28 *muns/bigha* whereas *Messur* and I.R 22 yield at least 70-90 *muns/bigha*. However, since the new varieties harvest so much later, there is no time to prepare the same land to plant cane. Farmers then use the *kyaris* (rice fields) to plant wheat, *channa* (chickpeas) or *vaal* (pulses) which can be planted in November and do not need any more water than remains in the fields after the monsoon.

Rice production requires large numbers of labourers and often farmers have to compete with one another to be guaranteed labour at certain times of the year. During the planting of seeds, at least 10 labourers per *kyari* are hired. The farmer or a labourer then puts fertiliser and water into the *kyari* at regular intervals. In July many more labourers are required to transplant the rice. Most farmers hire at least 25-30 labourers for this task and are required to provide them with a mid-day meal but labour shortages have occurred recently with so many farmers planting rice and local Halpati labourers also being employed by farmers in neighbouring villages.

Rice is cut in October and November and threshed by hand. For threshing, farmers employ a minimum of 15 labourers and subsequently, 5 labourers for winnowing. In households which cannot afford to hire a sufficient number of labourers, female landholding household members work alongside labourers in the fields.

Many Khandeshi migrant labourers who cut sugar cane have been arriving in the south Gujarat plains earlier than usual due to severe drought conditions in their home area, and setting up labour camps in Bardoli. Sera farmers have been encouraged by the sugar co-operative to give these Khandeshis work while they wait for cane cutting to begin. With recent labour shortages for planting and harvesting of rice, coupled with the deteriorating relationship between Halpatis and Patidars, this situation has proved advantageous to Patidar farmers. Wealthier farmers now hire groups of labourers from Bardoli with whom they maintain contact for the following years rice harvest causing Halpatis to look for alternative forms of employment. During the 1987 rice harvesting period, Halpatis offered to harvest farmers' rice on a contract basis whereby farmers paid a fixed rate per *kyari* of rice, cut and threshed, rather than paying each individual labourer Rs.7 per day. Khandeshis subsequently also offered to work on a contract basis and forego a mid-day meal and were hired in preference to the Halpatis who still insisted on being provided with a meal.

iii Grains and Pulses

Farmers who cannot afford to grow rice often grow *jowar* (brown/red millet) solely for home use, grinding it into flour and using it to make *rotla* (unleavened bread), the staple diet for most people. *Jowar* is planted after the first rains and then harvested immediately before or after Diwali which means that grains and pulses which are harvested in November can be planted on the same land. Other pulses such as *tur*, *chori*, *mug* and *urud* are also planted after the first rains, have very short cultivation cycles and are harvested in November and December. Many of these grains are grown together in the same field, particularly by the more wealthy farmers who use them to feed their cattle rather than for household consumption. Gulab Dhodiya grows *urud* for sale in the market but most cattle owners in the village buy *urud* from him to use as cattle feed. Apart from wheat and rice, none of the other grains and pulses require water in addition to the monsoon rains nor do they require fertilisers or weeding.

Labour requirements are much less for pulses than for rice, sugar cane or mangoes. The fields planted with pulses tend to be much smaller and although agricultural labour is hired by wealthier farmers at harvest time, many smaller farmers employ household

labour exclusively, or in combination with hired labour. In addition, the cleaning of these grains is carried out by paid domestic labourers or women within the farming household.

iv Fruit

Fruit trees require much more water and fertilisers than most of the other crops and do not harvest in the same year in which they are planted. Mango saplings are planted in August and must be watered every month after November for the following three years. Fertilisers are not essential but most farmers put 5 kilos every year around the base of the tree. The first mango harvest arrives five years after the saplings have been planted and then every following year. Since the trees are small for the first three years, other crops such as aubergines, cauliflowers and pulses are usually planted in the same field and some of the larger farmers rent the same land to smaller farmers to grow vegetables or pulses, thereby ensuring that their mango trees are being watered at the expense of the renter. Fruits such as *Chikhus* have much the same production cycle as mangoes but are only grown by a few farmers because mango production has become so much easier.

Since the early 1980s, the harvesting and marketing of mangoes has contrasted sharply with that of other crops. In February when the trees flower, *veparis* (traders) from Uttar Pradesh arrive in south Gujarat and estimate the size of the harvest from the number of flowers on the trees. The *veparis* and the farmers then agree on a price for the projected size of the crop. The farmer is then able to leave the harvesting and marketing of the mangoes to the *vepari* who also brings with him labourers from Uttar Pradesh and has his own marketing outlets in Bombay and Delhi. In this way, farmers do not have to concern themselves with harvesting or marketing mangoes. Before the advent of the *veparis*, farmers used household and hired labour to pick the fruit and then take cart loads of mangoes to markets in Surat, a town 40 kms. away. Still, not all farmers have enough mango trees to sell to the *vepari* and others believe that they will make more if they harvest and market the mangoes themselves. In 1987, those farmers who did not sell to *veparis* made a loss when a particularly large mango harvest reduced the market price. On the other hand, in 1988 there were many flowers on the trees in February suggesting a large harvest, but many of these fell in heavy winds that followed in March. The *veparis* had offered the farmers more than they could recoup from the sale of the mangoes and many were forced into debt in order to pay the farmers the price originally agreed upon.

Papaya saplings have a shorter cultivation cycle of seven months, being planted in June and harvested in February. Although financially rewarding, the soil in Sera is not always suitable for this crop and only those farmers who are economically secure can afford to take the risk. Papayas also need a great deal of water after the monsoon and fertiliser and pesticides have to be sprayed every alternate month. Cultivation of bananas has also increased despite the tendency for large fluctuations in market prices. Bananas are planted in June and need watering every ten days except in the rainy season and from October, they also require large monthly doses of fertiliser.

v Vegetables

Not many vegetables are grown in this area as the main markets are in Surat which is too far to transport crops regularly.

Aubergines are a three monthly crop which are planted from November to June and need water every ten days and fertiliser and pesticides twice in each cycle. Cauliflowers have much the same cycle. Neither crop harvests during the monsoon enabling farmers who grow these vegetables to grow rice during the rainy season.

Aubergines are not an important income generating crop. Farmers produce enough for home use and sell small amounts within the village or to the market in Navsari where the price of aubergines is generally very low. Women of farming households or their domestic servants are generally responsible for harvesting the crop and are occasionally involved in marketing the crop in the village from their own homes, while farmers or their male agricultural labourers are involved in spreading fertilisers and channelling irrigation water into the fields.

Cauliflowers are a cash crop that is both capital and labour intensive. They require a lot of water, fertiliser and pesticides throughout the agricultural cycle and many labourers need to be employed during harvesting as cauliflowers do not harvest simultaneously but over a 2-3 week period. The only farmers growing a substantial quantity of cauliflowers are Gulab Dhodiya and Chaggan Patel. Gulab had rented land for a year. To make a good income from the land in such a short time he needed to grow a crop which, although costly to produce, would fetch a high price in the local market due to its scarcity. Agricultural labourers were employed but household labour was also used with women and children of

the household picking the cauliflowers and packing them for the market. Chaggan Patel, on the other hand, is a large landholder and can therefore afford to grow cauliflowers but is not financially dependent on income from their sale.

VI AGRICULTURAL CYCLES IN SERA

As mentioned earlier, not all classes of landholders or cattle owners have been able to make use of the new forms of agricultural production. Combined with the fact that there are differences in ownership of land and other resources, this has resulted in three different agricultural cycles operating within the village.

Firstly, middle and large-size farmers who are able to grow sugar cane along with other crops are involved in agricultural production throughout the year. Most of these farmers employ *kayam mujoor* (daily agricultural labourers).

Secondly, there are small and marginal farmers who are unable to make use of their land except during the monsoon season as they have no access to surface irrigation or other agricultural inputs. These farmers plant monsoon rice and subsequently vegetables and pulses such as *papri* and *tur*, or grains which do not require other inputs. Landholders who are engaged in only monsoon agriculture are often the lower caste and lower class Harijans, Kolis, Dhurjis and Hajams who hold less than 5 acres of land. Most of these farmers use household labour to carry out many of the agricultural tasks and their produce is generally only for home use.

Ahirs who have recently been able to buy buffaloes through the dairy co-operative in addition to their goats, follow a third agricultural cycle in Sera. Ahirs graze their cattle on their own land, most of which is unsuitable for cultivation. Until the mid 1960s, they grazed their cattle throughout the village and in the monsoon went into the hills for three months while farmers in the village were planting crops. They sell their goats milk to a dairy in Navsari because the Vasuda dairy in Sera only collects cow and buffalo milk. Before chemical fertilisers were introduced, Ahirs would charge farmers for leaving their goats on the farmers fields overnight so that the dung would fertilise the fields but the position is now reversed and Ahirs have to pay the village panchayat up to Rs.3000 a year to graze their cattle in the village. They have recently begun to rent good land from

migrating Patidars which they can use to cultivate monsoon rice and a few of them have been able to afford access to irrigation to grow sugar cane.

Although there are three agricultural systems operating within the village they are not separate, but connect at the level of the individual. Individuals, particularly those who are landless such as Halpatis, are involved in more than one system to varying degrees since they provide the labour for most agricultural activities with the notable exception of harvesting sugar cane and mangoes. Although these two crops are becoming pre-eminent, Halpatis are involved in the initial stages of cane production and are employed by all the farmers to guard mango trees prior to harvesting. They are also involved in grazing more than one farmer's cattle apart from during the monsoon period.

The three systems do not only connect at the level of labour employment but also in the renting-in and letting of land, the sharing or renting of agricultural tools and machinery and in the marketing of crops. Many farmers belong to the same co-operatives and those who sell in the markets in Navsari often share the cost of transporting the produce.

VII LABOUR REQUIREMENTS

The choices a farmer makes in the crops he grows depends not only on access to land and agricultural inputs but also on the labour required for the production of each crop. The availability of household labour and the ability of the farmer to hire agricultural labourers affects the form of agricultural cycle followed by the household. According to the 1981 census there were 102 farmers in Sera and 366 agricultural labourers (Valsad District Census 1981). However, it is clear that the work that women contribute to agriculture as unpaid workers has not been considered in these statistics. Furthermore, the figures do not take into account migrant labourers despite their recent importance to the agrarian system in this area.

Halpati labourers are now employed on a more formal and contractual basis than that which existed during the bonded labour system. Their work activities are paid either totally in cash or in a combination of cash and kind. Some Halpati men work as *kayam mujoor* (daily agricultural labourers) for one Patidar household while other Halpati men and women work as *choota mujoor* (casual labourers) who are hired only when required by

the farmer and therefore, have no guaranteed employment throughout the year. In addition, some Halpati women work as paid domestic servants.

Halpati agricultural labourers have been pushed out of the local labour market in the production of the two main cash crops, sugar cane and mangoes with the advent of Khandeshi migrant labourers and *veparis* (traders). Farmers and Co-operative officials expound the belief that Halpatis are lazy, unskilled and unreliable and therefore Khandeshi labourers are favoured. In fact, advantageously for their employers, Khandeshis can be paid a lower rate than local labourers. Unlike Halpatis, they are also unable to return home for births, marriages, deaths and festivals. Furthermore, Halpatis will no longer accept or tolerate the type of servitude demanded of them by Patidar farmers. Tellingly, similar reasons are used by employers in Khandesh to explain their own preference for migrant labourers from yet another area to work in their cane harvest which partly forces Khandeshi migrants to come to south Gujarat. Thus, there is an extensive movement of seasonal migrant labourers which extends beyond State boundaries.¹⁰

Mango production is another area where local labourers are not employed. Halpati labourers, together with members of the farming household, previously harvested and marketed the mango crop. Halpati labourers and Patidar farmers also travelled to Surat to sell mangoes. *Veparis* from Uttar Pradesh have now taken over these tasks.

In the study area there has been a reduction in local labour requirements not only because of increasing capital intensive agricultural production and mechanisation of production but also because much of the current labour requirements are being met by new participants to the south Gujarat agricultural scene (Breman 1985a); Khandeshi seasonal migrants and *veparis* and their labourers from Uttar Pradesh.

However, the impact of this change in labour requirements, although substantial, has not been as drastic in Sera as might be expected for a number of reasons. First, at least two

¹⁰For details of Khandeshi migration and sugar cane harvesting in south Gujarat see Breman (1985a). Also Teerink (1989) for a more detailed analysis of female participation in labour migration from Khandesh. See also Lielen, G.K. *et al* (1989).

kayam mujoor are still required for each large landholding household. The influence of historical relationships means that these tend to be Halpati men whose fathers or grandfathers worked as bonded labourers for the same household. Secondly, much of what has traditionally been women's work, such as rice transplanting, weeding and picking fruits and vegetables, has not been mechanised or taken over by male labourers. This has created a situation whereby there are times of the year when it is easier for women to find employment than it is for men. Thirdly, after the flood in 1968, Halpatis were moved out of nearby villages such as Pinsad, and relocated on the Navsari/Surat highway near local factories where they found employment. Halpatis in Sera, therefore, are in demand to work in neighbouring villages where no agricultural labourers are available. Halpatis say that they prefer to work for farmers outside Sera as they are paid more and treated better. Fourthly, another reason why Halpatis are still able to find agricultural employment is because as Patidars aspire to attain higher status, they remove members of their household from manual and agricultural work and increasingly rely on paid agricultural and paid domestic labourers.

Most of the population continue to work in agriculture, although an increasing number of landless men are taking up non-agricultural employment. According to the Navsari District Village records of 1986, there were 83 farmers of which only one was female, 236 male and 241 female agricultural labourers and 325 men and 477 women classified as 'not working'. These government statistics are based on information from those members of the village who are in full-time waged employment but they do not take into account domestic work, other non-wage labour or labour which may be remunerated but is only seasonal or occasional. These neglected areas of work particularly involve women and thus statistics demonstrate the severe lack of accurate information on women's work, both paid and unpaid.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that there have been very rapid changes in agricultural production in Valsad District. However, the effects of rural modernisation have not been the same for all classes and wider divisions have been created between landless households and marginal farmers at one extreme and landholders at the other due to unequal access to land and

other resources including new agricultural technology. Halpatis have been forced to adopt new strategies for survival as Patidars adopt new forms of agricultural production.

In this chapter, I have discussed the process of the commercialisation of agriculture in Sera and the surrounding area in order to illustrate the context of changing labour requirements and relations of production within which women's work experiences, within and outside the home, are defined. The following chapter discusses the different areas of work in which women are involved and the ways in which women and their work can be differentiated. The implications of these changes in agricultural production and labour requirements, on women's paid and unpaid work is dealt with subsequently in the four empirical chapters.

5 MARKING THE BOUNDARIES

The previous two chapters (Chapters Three and Four) described the structure of the village and the process of commercialisation of agriculture that has taken place in this area. It is now necessary to examine the implications of these changes on social processes and gender relations. This chapter looks at the ways in which this can be undertaken by constructing a framework which enables an analysis of individual women's work experiences.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first deals with theoretical and empirical problems of differentiating spheres of work. Important theoretical and ideological divisions of for example, consumption/production or public/private have been made to differentiate conceptually. This section presents an empirical framework which makes divisions between areas of women's work and examines the basis for such categorisations. Areas of work are divided according to whether they are agricultural or domestic, paid or unpaid. The following four empirical chapters are divided according to this classification.

The second section looks at the diversity of women's work experiences and their involvement in different types of activities. Since women are not homogeneous, it is vital to identify the factors that differentiate them. The first of the three main factors of differentiation, caste and class differences between households, has been dealt with in more detail in Chapter Three and is only mentioned here insofar as they have implications for women. Thus, this chapter concentrates primarily on the organisation and structure of the household and life-cycle of women.

The third section identifies the controls over and by women in their work activities stressing that there are not only *differences* between women but also *inequalities*. Furthermore, there are systems of control and power relations which affect all women irrespective of the caste and class position of their household, their household structure and their stage in the life-cycle.

I DIFFERENTIATING TASKS

Divisions between spheres of work are theoretically and empirically problematic but, the relationship between areas of work and,

'an analytical separation of the spheres can clarify the meaning of activities which take place in concrete situations' (Imray and Middleton 1983, 14).

This section outlines these problems in differentiating tasks. No classification can overcome all problems but such categorisation is important to create a structural framework within which we can analyse *all* areas of different women's work and to achieve clarity of presentation of the empirical data. It must be emphasised that these are not exclusive categories since women's experiences transcend these boundaries and therefore, divisions between areas of work must be made carefully.

Theoretical and ideological formulations of gender differences are important to differentiate conceptually between spheres of activity. Distinctions between spheres of activity have been made between for example, public/private, nature/culture and visible/invisible providing conceptual frameworks for the theorising of the sexual division of labour and gender relations.

Burton points out that these divisions are in no sense identical:

'These are not simply different categories of the same thing. Rather, the different ways in which these divisions are perceived must be placed in social and historical perspective. Even within a particular society, the meanings undergo transformation over time or in different social contexts' (Burton 1985, 33).

Despite the fact that these spheres take the form of paired concepts, they are not necessarily in opposition (Rosaldo 1974) and should not be seen in dichotomous terms. No sphere is exclusively 'male' or 'female', besides which not all women carry out the same activities.

However, as Imray and Middleton point out,

'Some area of activity is always seen as exclusively or predominantly male and, more importantly, this activity or group of activities has a meaning within the society which is associated with prestige. This observation has its corollary in the fact that everywhere men have some authority over women that they have a culturally legitimised right to their subordination and compliance. At the same time, women themselves are far from helpless. They can and do exert pressures on

the social life of the group whether or not their influence is acknowledged' (Imray and Middleton 1983, 12).

In the past, inherent in these theoretical distinctions that have been made between 'predominantly male' and 'predominantly female' spheres, there has been the view that one sphere is more important and significant than the other, or that one is 'productive' and the other 'non-productive'.

Rosaldo differentiates between what she calls the 'domestic' sphere and the 'public' sphere. Suggesting that the relation between these spheres provides a 'universal framework for conceptualising the activities of the sexes'.

"Domestic' as used here refers to those minimal institutions and modes of activity that are organised immediately around one or more mothers and their children; 'public' refers to activities, institutions and forms of association that link, rank, organise or subsume particular mother-child groups' (Rosaldo 1974, 23).

However, this equates public with the sphere of men and male control, and 'private' or 'domestic' with the household, specifically with women and children. The implication of this empirically is that, 'public' then comes to mean 'work' in the narrowest definition and 'private' is interpreted as 'home' which is oversimplistic and inaccurate.

As Burton points out,

'the association of males with public life and females with private life has led to the supposition that if women were in paid employment their subordination would be undermined' (Burton 1985, 130).¹

Imray and Middleton focus on economic and social boundaries to show that this is obviously not the case, since when women try and enter the so-called 'public sphere', men condition women's involvement and control their position (Imray and Middleton 1983).² Another

¹See James, S. (1986) for the argument against women becoming involved in paid employment as a means of obtaining 'independence'.

²See Siltanen and Stanworth (1984), in which they look at women's access to politics. They suggest that, 'On to the fundamental dichotomy of public and private is mapped the generic split (man-woman)...'and therefore, 'man=public public=political therefore, man=political' whereas, 'woman=private private=apolitical therefore, woman=apolitical' (Siltanen and Stanworth 1984 195). They argue that women and men are not exclusively located in, nor defined by, the private sphere and public

version of the distinction between 'private' and 'public' sees man as worker and woman as domestic worker. However, the domestic labour debate soon eroded this demarcation (See Dalla Costa 1972; Mies 1982; Seccombe 1973).

Another distinction that has been made is between work which is considered productive and that which is seen as for consumption. However, in the empirical situation, these spheres are not clearly differentiated. In rural societies, boundaries are usually blurred with most household members being involved in both productive and consumption activities on a daily basis. In rural India, the cycle of work activities involves production and consumption with a continuous activity between field and home. However, there has recently been a gradual separation of the two spheres with the employment of an increasing number of paid labourers by those who can afford them. In more developed capitalist economies and urban areas, the distinction between these two spheres of activity is more apparent, since most people do not always produce what they consume and production and consumption are generally linked via a monetary exchange.³

Narrow definitions of consumption regard the household as the consumption unit and the housewife as the main consumer implying that women's work within the home lies outside the production process. This simplistic model overlooks the fact that

'the reproduction of the process of production involves the reproduction, not only of the means of production, but of the wage labourer as well' (Burton 1985, 58).

The reproduction of labour power, carried out by women as part of their unpaid domestic responsibilities, is essential for production. Domestic work is also, 'part of the process of production more broadly understood as including its own reproduction' (Burton 1985, 59). This emphasises that housework must be analysed as productive labour and that narrow definitions of consumption and production do not give us a realistic picture of women's work contributions.

Although conceptual frameworks are theoretically, ideologically and symbolically important, there is a need to formulate a construct derived more empirically in order to

sphere.

³There are of course exceptions; certain tasks may or may not be undertaken for exchange from tending vegetable plots to breast feeding.

understand the pattern of men's and women's work.

In making divisions between areas of work, it is essential to recognise the importance of all areas of work and identify the connections between them in the course of an individual woman's life and in the wider economic and social context.

It is not possible to evaluate and make sense of the work that women do using conventional categories and definitions of 'work', 'economic activity', 'productivity' and 'work place' (Papanek 1979, Mukhopadhyay 1984). Traditional interpretations of these concepts are inappropriate and make large areas of women's work invisible. Furthermore,

'the idea of the 'economically inactive' woman is particularly inappropriate in nations where the distinction between home and work place are not clear cut but where women's work tends not to be very visible' (Papanek 1979, 780).

Traditional definitions of 'work' have often been synonymous with a job, or any form of remunerated employment (Gorz 1982) thus obfuscating women's contribution in all activities. Furthermore, definitions of work have rarely included the unremunerated labour that women carry out within and around their home for the production and reproduction of their households.

Moreover,

'A woman's economic role is further relegated by the social relations between men and women prevailing in the society' (Mukhopadhyay 1984, 43),

since, only a proportion of women's activity is directly related to the market economy and therefore, to use 'production for sale' as a definition of 'productive' excludes much of women's economic contribution. Besides, although women may be

'engaged in economic production this may not be paid for in cash or only some of it may be production for a market economy and some for domestic consumption. It may also form a marginal or subsidiary occupation. Moreover, there is a frequent change seasonally and even daily, in the mix of exchange and consumption' (Mukhopadhyay 1984, 55).

Census categories which only recognise as 'work' that which is directly 'productive' and waged, ignore large areas of women's work activities and fail to provide a clear picture of the day-to-day tasks in which women are involved. Statistics of female participation rates in censuses are inaccurate and misleading. Not only do they ignore women's unpaid work but

also areas of paid work, such as domestic labour which is seen as being outside the production process.⁴

An area of work which has for long been invisible and considered non-productive is women's role in childbearing and rearing.

'It is women rather than men who are anchored in domestic labour simply because of their innate link with biological reproduction. The consequences of this for women's position in general social terms will depend on the character of the mode of production within which domestic labour is embedded' (Caplan and Bujra 1978, 20).

However, women are rarely unpaid

'domestic labourers and nothing else. They are often found combining their reproductive roles with more directly productive activities, but with their primary anchorage in (unpaid) domestic labour' (Caplan and Bujra 1978, 20-21).

There is a wide range of activities in which women are involved which must be identified in order to make visible their work. In addition, it is necessary to analyse the relationship between different areas of work and the power relations that operate with regard to specific tasks. Only then can we assess women's contribution to capital accumulation, the relation of women to capitalism and how the work that they do is connected to the wider ideological and economic system. This also illuminates the way in which the sexual division of labour within the household is linked with divisions outside the household and to other activities (see Mies 1982).

There is a continuum of activities carried out by women. Some are occupied solely in unpaid domestic work while others are involved in a variety of different activities. As Deere suggests,

'While all women do appear to be charged with the daily maintenance activities required for the reproduction of the capacity to work there are striking differences in the range of other activities that women pursue' (Deere 1982, 102).

This creates problems in locating tasks since many individual women perform a number of

⁴See Nayyar, Rohini 'Female Participation Rates in Rural India' Economic and Political Weekly Vol.XXII No.51 Dec.19 1987 pp.2207-2216 for a more detailed breakdown of female participation rates.

activities simultaneously. Although we may be able to identify a number of separate spheres of work, there exist different mixes of activities being carried out by women.

II DIVIDING WOMEN'S WORK

In order to explore the full range of women's work without limiting the analysis to rigid categories, requires a framework which covers all areas of work while recognising their interconnectedness. I suggest a division applicable to the rural Indian context which distinguishes between those tasks which are paid/unpaid and those which are agricultural/domestic. Furthermore, within each area of work there is a division of labour by sex and by age which articulates the nature of social divisions.

In this thesis, women's work has been divided into four main categories namely, paid agriculture, unpaid agriculture, paid domestic and unpaid domestic since these are the areas of work applicable to women within this context. The following sections look firstly, at the agricultural/domestic distinction and secondly, within that broader categorisation, at the paid and unpaid distinction.

1 Agricultural and Domestic Work

One of the divisions that I make as a basis for differentiating women's work is between those activities which are domestic and those which are agricultural. Such a distinction is undoubtedly problematic but unless we distinguish between particular areas of women's work we are in danger of reinforcing the belief that women are solely housewives who carry out non-productive and unpaid domestic activities. However, differentiating between those tasks that are 'domestic' and those that are 'agricultural' should not imply that they necessarily exist as two distinct spheres of activity that operate separately. The main purpose of such a distinction is to show the full extent of women's work contributions within the household and outside the home and in productive and consumption activities.

Conventional definitions of domestic work, i.e. activities carried out for the production and reproduction of the household, are too broad. The way in which domestic labour has been conceived illustrates a bias, Eurocentric and urban, since little mention is made of the unpaid

agricultural work that women carry out, which is generally considered to be a part of their 'domestic responsibilities'.⁵ These definitions encompass many activities which are in fact primarily agricultural. I argue that these two areas of work, agricultural and domestic, must be considered separately. Unless this distinction is made, there is a danger of ignoring the specific implications of change, social and economic, on the carrying out of individual tasks and their articulation.

I define domestic work as that which is carried out by all women for the production and maintenance of their households or, in the case of paid domestic labourers, the same activities (apart from cooking), carried out for members of households other than their own and involving remuneration.⁶ Domestic activities include cooking, cleaning, washing and childbearing and childrearing.

Agricultural work is defined to include activities carried out for the production, processing and storing of crops whether for home use or for sale, and animal care tasks. This work is unremunerated for women from landholding households and some women from landless households, or is carried out for a wage by women from landless households who sell their labour to farmers in order to subsist.

Agricultural work may be located within the home and likewise, domestic work may be extended outside the home. Therefore, these tasks are not entirely location specific and may transcend the physical boundaries of 'private' and 'public' and of 'work place' and 'home'. An individual woman may be involved in agricultural and domestic work simultaneously or in a sequence of consecutive activities. Daily and seasonal changes in the mix of agricultural and domestic work carried out by women are frequent. Nearly all women, whether engaged in paid labour or not, carry out some form of agricultural work as part of their paid or unpaid

⁵Within the domestic labour debate, formulated by feminists in the West, Third World women's unpaid agricultural work contribution was rarely identified.

⁶Within the range of activities carried out by paid domestic labourers there are some which are primarily agricultural. This proved to be a theoretical and conceptual problem. Having divided areas of work into four categories, the agricultural work carried out as part of a paid domestic labourers' responsibilities did not fit neatly into any of these. I did not successfully resolve this problem but felt that it was most appropriate to include a description of these agricultural responsibilities in the chapter on paid domestic work.

domestic responsibilities.

The definition of tasks is particularly problematic when applied to unremunerated labour. For example, should cooking for field hands be considered a domestic or agricultural task for women from landholding households? On the basis of an economic definition, I would argue that this task is primarily an agricultural one since food is given to labourers as part payment of their labour. If they did not provide a mid-day meal, farmers would have to pay an additional sum of Rs.2/day to each labourer. Since Halpati labourers in Sera would refuse to come to work at all if a mid-day meal was not provided, women from landholding households, by cooking food for labourers, are carrying out a task which is directly related to production. Women's unpaid agricultural work therefore allows male and female wage-labour to work, and allows farmers to pay labourers a lower wage than is required for the reproduction of the labourer and the labourer's household. Women from landholding households are directly saving money and enabling male members of their household to obtain labourers during the peak agricultural season. More symbolically, the food cooked for labourers is prepared separately from food cooked for household members and is therefore an additional and separate responsibility from women's regular unpaid domestic work.

Similarly, I would define care of milch animals as an agricultural activity, whether it is paid or not, since it involves a process of direct production whether or not the milk is for home use or for sale. Women from landholding households, are directly involved in looking after animals which are used in the fields. They collect dung for use as fertiliser and in general are occupied in animal care which can increase the income of the household. Caring for milch animals also enables production of calves, some of whom may become draught animals on the household's land while others may be sold. Therefore, this unpaid agricultural work increases the household's productive resources and income.

Making this distinction between domestic and agricultural activities provides a basis on which we can assess the impact of rural transformation processes on women and their involvement in different tasks. However, it is not simply whether a task is domestic or agricultural that is important in defining women's position but also whether tasks are remunerated or unpaid. This distinction is important in assessing the controls placed on women and the level of control and power they have over their own lives.

2 Paid and Unpaid Work

Another difficult but important differentiation of tasks is whether an activity is remunerated or carried out as unpaid labour. Here, paid work is seen in terms of remuneration for work performed and not as income from sale of produce and therefore does not include for instance, Patidar women's involvement in processing of agricultural produce sold on the market. They are not paid for this work despite the fact that their work has contributed to the earnings of the household. Although this is undoubtedly agricultural work it is not perceived as paid work.

Paid work is often more complex than the simple exchange of labour for cash remuneration. Forms of payment vary but generally consist of a combination of payment in cash and kind. Women domestic labourers often receive a very small cash sum supplemented by payment in kind. Farmers argue that although they do not pay the minimum wage, they make up for the low cash income by providing food or clothes for labourers. However, the cash equivalent is still below the minimum wage. Furthermore, much female domestic work is carried out as part of the male *kayam mujoor* wage. Indeed, paid domestic labour in general is mainly remunerated in kind; food shared with labourers' children, clothes together with a small cash sum at the end of the month. Paid domestic labourers receive Rs.10/month and their income is considered only marginal to the total income of their households and supplementary to the male wage.⁷

There are many women, particularly those from landless and lower class households, who are involved in a combination of paid and unpaid labour on a seasonal or even daily basis. This includes working as a waged agricultural or domestic labourer and carrying out domestic work for their own households. However, since few households of this class own land, most are not involved in unpaid agricultural work.

Paid and unpaid work may be carried out at the same time and in the same place, and it is often difficult to locate tasks since there is little or no distinction between 'work place' and

⁷Children are never paid in cash except when they work as paid agricultural labourers (which is only during the rice transplanting and harvesting). Instead, their parents are helped out financially at the time of their children's marriage. This ensures that children continue to work for the farmer's household until they marry.

'home'. For example, when Halpati women are engaged in paid work, they also frequently carry out the unpaid domestic work of watching over their own children. Halpati women therefore have to combine paid employment with unpaid domestic responsibilities. In fact, their unpaid work is often conditioned by their paid work opportunities.⁸ Therefore, the mere fact that a woman is engaged in paid employment omits to inform us of the form or amount of remuneration or about the other activities in which she is involved.

There are demands on labour time that do not necessarily operate according to the principles of the labour market in rural economies (Whitehead 1985, 29), but which must be considered in terms of the underlying power structures. These areas are difficult to distinguish but are important in terms of how they illustrate differences in control within social relations as men and women carry out different activities. Each task is valued in terms of its contribution to the economy of the household. Since Patidar women do not carry out any form of paid employment, their contribution tends to be socially and economically invisible. Halpati women who carry out paid domestic work, are seen to contribute only a small and insignificant income to their households, since they receive low wages and much of their payment is in kind which is difficult to evaluate in monetary terms.

There are also differences in levels of independence for different women depending on the tasks that they perform and in this context the distinction between paid and unpaid work is important in terms of controls over women, women's potential for economic independence and the visibility/invisibility of women's work.

By looking at women's paid and unpaid work, we can see the differences in work experiences for individual women, the relationship between paid and unpaid work and the importance of both areas of work to the overall economy and changing production processes.

In making these distinctions, (agricultural/domestic; paid/unpaid), we can identify the ways in which women's work differs; what are the differences in the tasks carried out? Which women carry out which tasks? What are the differences in form and extent of women's control in individual activities?

⁸This is virtually the reverse of the type of argument made by Siltanen (1986).

3 Four Types of Women's Work

The following four chapters are divided according to the areas of women's work which have been identified above.

There are two spheres of paid work. Halpati women are involved in paid work either as domestic servants or agricultural labourers. These women combine their waged employment with unpaid domestic and agricultural responsibilities.

Wages are generally paid in cash for agricultural work and in a combination of cash and kind for domestic work and, therefore, a higher economic value is placed on paid agricultural work. However, this paid work is not available throughout the year and does not necessarily provide a regular income.

Within the sphere of paid work, some tasks have a higher status than others. For example, female *choota mujoor* (casual labourers) look down on women who are domestic labourers. This is not only a distinction based on wage differentials but also on differences in levels of 'independence'. A domestic labourer often works as part of a male wage and therefore her employment is tied to that of her husband's who may even be in receipt of a 'household wage'. Her duties and hours of work are not clearly defined and she can be called upon at any time to carry out a task.

On the contrary, a *choota mujoor* has clearly regulated hours of work and defined tasks. She also works in a group with other labourers which renders her less likely to be intimidated by her employer and she has a modicum of flexibility over her time and work. Furthermore, she is not tied to the employment of male members of her household nor to a farmer's household in the same way as a paid domestic labourer.

It is easier to distinguish between different types of paid work than areas of unpaid labour since, paid employment tasks tend to be more defined and tasks are carried out daily in a particular location. On a seasonal or annual basis however, a domestic labourer may perform agricultural tasks. For example, women who are primarily paid domestic labourers may be required to take food out to labourers on their employers' fields, collect fodder or help out during the rice harvesting.

There are two main areas of unpaid labour which are closely related. Firstly, there is the

unpaid labour contributing to agricultural production which includes not only manual labour on the household's farm, but also processing and storing of crops, supervising labourers, cooking for field hands and animal care. This work is carried out by women from landholding households. Some Halpati women may also take on certain agricultural tasks which are ostensibly the paid work responsibilities of male members of their households but which they are required to carry out as part of their unpaid household responsibilities.

Women from landholding households perform unremunerated tasks on their household's farms as part of their wifely responsibilities. Male members of the household reap the benefits of women's work as they market the crop, receive the income and maintain control over all resources, including the household and hired-in labour necessary for production. These women are increasingly defined as 'housewives' and 'dependents', although they play a crucial role in productive activities (Mies 1986).

Secondly, all women are involved in domestic work for their own households on a daily and generational basis. Unpaid domestic work is defined as those tasks undertaken to maintain household members and hence excludes activities involved in providing meals for field hands and animal care responsibilities which are defined as being agricultural. Definitions of 'work' have rarely included this unpaid domestic work, although it is the largest sphere of women's responsibilities, is socially, politically and economically important, and is carried out by all women, albeit to different degrees. Dominant ideologies have characterised unpaid domestic work as non-productive and therefore insignificant and unimportant.

Most Patidar women and some Halpati women are involved in a combination of unpaid domestic work and unpaid agricultural work. These women view their tasks within the household and on the household's land as a series of activities that must be performed on a daily basis and not as two separate areas of their work.

Although women carry out a combination of activities on a daily and seasonal basis, each area of work is viewed and valued very differently. The following chapters divide areas of women's work into four sections; unpaid agricultural work, unpaid domestic work, paid

agricultural work and paid domestic work.⁹ Within these four areas of activity, individual women have very different work experiences. The following section looks at the diversity of women and the basis for their work involvement.

III DIFFERENTIATION AMONGST WOMEN

'Women in India do not constitute a homogeneous group and thus the problems that they face in development vary in kind and degree' (Mukhopadyay 1984, 5).

In order to analyse individual women's work experiences and make visible the full extent of their involvement in different tasks, it is necessary to see in what ways women are themselves differentiated. Firstly, women are members of households which vary in caste and class position, in their access to resources and in their participation in production processes. Secondly, households also vary in organisation and structure which affects women's position within the household and their work participation. However, household composition can change over time with in- and out-migration. Thirdly, at different stages in a woman's life-cycle her position within her household, within the female hierarchy and her participation in productive and reproductive activities also changes. Therefore, women's experiences are neither homogeneous nor static.

Caste and class differences have been discussed in detail in Chapter Three; the following section focuses more specifically on the implications of these differences on women.

1 Caste and Class Differences

Although class differences have become increasingly important to differentiate rural households, it is still pertinent to discuss caste-specific historical rights of access to land and resources, experiences of migration and employment (Beteille 1969; Kothari 1970; Patnaik 1979). Caste is best conceived of as a structural, organising category of historical relevance that informs the behaviour and outlook of different village members and is currently highly influential in marriage arrangements.

⁹There are some women who are involved in paid work which is neither agricultural nor domestic, such as the schoolteacher and the *dai*, but they do not form a large part of the labour force.

Most Patidars are farmers and many of them now employ paid labourers and occasionally household labour instead of their former use of bonded labourers but, they are differentiated by class. More recently there has been a shift towards hiring labourers for manual work and removing household members from these tasks.

Ahirs are traditionally goatherders but have recently been able to acquire land with money from government loans. Few men work in non-agricultural activities and the majority look after their cattle and have begun to cultivate small plots of land with rice.

Harijan, Hajam and Durji men carry out non-agricultural paid work besides their caste occupations, although some of them own enough land to engage in subsistence monsoon crop production. Generally, they do not work as paid agricultural or paid domestic labourers although some Harijan unmarried girls are required to take up paid agricultural work during the peak seasons to subsist.

Most Halpatis have no access to land or other productive resources and do not hire labourers. They subsist through a variety of paid work activities but are able to earn enough only for subsistence and not for capital accumulation.

There are some households which straddle these caste-specific divides. Despite their historical experiences of access to land as members of a particular caste, their present lifestyle and occupation exceed these historical expectations. For example, Lila and Gulab Dhodiya are from a tribal group. However, Gulab trained as a doctor which has financed the recent renting-in of 30 *bighas* of land on which to grow cash crops.

The class position of the household to which a woman belongs, determines the type of agrarian system adopted and the labour demands of paid and unpaid workers.

'Access to the means of production largely determines the range of income-generating activities available to different households. The range of activities then influences the particular sexual division of labour within the household' (Deere 1982, 101).

Women belong to households which have differential access to land and other resources. Their work is affected by the class structure since the sexual division of labour in productive activities amongst different strata of rural society varies according to their access to land and other resources, and the availability of paid employment opportunities (Deere 1982, 104).

Although it is possible to assess the class position of each household by taking into account social, political, economic and historical factors (see Chapter Three), it would not be true to say that the class position designated to a particular household necessarily reflects the class position of the individuals within it although all members are affected by the household class position. There are major differences between men and women within the household in terms of access to resources and control over their own lives.

Women do not generally own or control land, although their names may appear on official land registers to enable the household to own more land than is allowed by the Land Ceiling Act. If the classical Marxist definitions of the ownership of means of production is used to define class position, and this is then applied to the level of the individual, all women are subsumed under a similar class position, namely, landless. This contention should not disguise the vital fact that women are affected by the class position of the household to which they belong. This study, while recognising class as an individual attribute, focuses more specifically on household class position.

Women from landless households are forced to take up paid employment for their households' survival. Halpati women contribute to the income of their households and are in the same position as men within the household with regard to access to land that is, they have none. However, employment opportunities available to women are very different, generally lower paid and more strenuous, and they are responsible for all unpaid domestic work in their own homes.

Women from landed households receive the benefits of a higher standard of living and many of them engage in 'status production work'; work carried out to maintain and raise the status of the household. The income of a landed household often allows women members to follow a life-style which other women cannot adopt. Moreover, if landholding men wish to raise their status, they are likely to remove women from more manual work and hire domestic and agricultural labourers to take over these tasks. Thus, it is also necessary to show how women's work reproduces and perpetuates the class position of the household and the overall class structure within the wider economic system.

Above, I have identified the ways in which the caste and class position of the household affects female members. The following section looks at the household organisation but this differentiating factor must not be seen in isolation since, caste and class factors can also

influence household size and composition and indeed, the work responsibilities of individual members.

2 Household Organisation and Structure

It is necessary to focus analysis on the internal structure of the household in order to understand the domestic economy, domestic work, male/female relationships and power structures, and the relationship between women within the household.

'First, women are members of households that differ in their access to land, other means of production, and wage incomes. Thus, the conditions of their work (as agricultural labourers for others or on the family farm, as field labourers or primarily in the home) are dependent on the survival strategies of households in specific relation to land and rural resources. Change in landholding patterns and in methods of agricultural production differentially affects different rural households and the work that women from these households do. Second, rural households are not harmonious, egalitarian social units, but hierarchical structures embodying relations of subordination and domination based on gender and age' (Sen 1982, 29).

General accounts of women's work within the framework of caste and class hierarchies do not fully take into account women's individual experiences of work and the 'choices' that are made within the household as work is delegated. It is the structure and organisation of the household combined with these other factors that condition the type and amount of agricultural and domestic work that individuals within the household are required to carry out.

The following sections identify major differences between joint and nuclear households and the implications of migration on household composition and work patterns.

A basic framework through which we can analyse and understand the diversity of women's work between and within households can be constructed by looking primarily at differences between households that are joint and those that are nuclear or fragmented.¹⁰ A nuclear

¹⁰For definitions of 'family' and 'household' see Wadley and Derr (1985).

Against the use of Eurocentric terminology, Joseph *et al* argue that terms such as 'extended' and 'nuclear' to describe household structure are Eurocentric and that, 'from an Indocentric perspective, for example, it may be more appropriate to distinguish 'joint' from 'fragmented' families' (Joseph *et al* 1990, 19). This is a valid argument, but I

household is made up of a husband, wife and their unmarried children. A particular form of nuclear household prevalent amongst Halpatis is made up of a *ghar jamai*, a man who comes to live in his wife's natal village, his wife and their unmarried children.¹¹ A joint household is one in which more than one unit of a husband, wife and children live together, sharing the same hearth. Within this context, the effects of women's life-cycle changes, the changing composition of households with in- and out-migration of men and women and different strategies for survival adopted by individual households can be recognised. Women are variously influenced by these factors which operate in combination creating a wide range of work experiences between women and within the span of an individual woman's life.

The number of members within a household, both men and women, conditions the way in which tasks can be distributed. Similarly, differences between women's work experiences are determined by the number of women who are available for work within the household.

Delegation and division of responsibilities is primarily based on the sexual division of labour and on the structure of the female hierarchy. However, the implications of this depends on whether the household is able to hire labourers to take over some of the responsibilities of household labour. Thus, class position and household composition are clearly related in this way.

i Women's Work in Nuclear and Joint Households

Nuclear households exist among all castes but are more prevalent amongst Halpatis where of 122 households, 31 are joint and the remaining 91 nuclear.

In nuclear households there is no hierarchical structure between women, unless it includes an

continue to use the term 'nuclear' which I consider to have less negative connotations than the term 'fragmented'.

¹¹*Ghar jamias* and their wives tend to live in nuclear households because a *ghar jamai* feels his power and authority as a man and as a husband could be undermined were they to live with his in-laws. However, there are two Halpati households in which a daughter and her husband live with one of her parents. This occurs when one parent is dead and the daughter, as an only child, is responsible for looking after the remaining parent. Lalu Kanji Halpati is sixty years old and his wife died in 1985. When his daughter Dai, married she brought her husband to live in Sera.

unmarried daughter old enough to work although there is still a clear hierarchy based on a sexual division. There may be older children who can help with some tasks but, the lack of other women with whom to share work inevitably means that a woman in a nuclear household will be required to carry out a greater number of tasks within and outside the home. Such women are often obliged to carry out more than one task simultaneously and will have to manage their time efficiently in order to complete all their responsibilities.

To a large extent, the class position of the household determines the effect of having no other women within the household with whom to share tasks. If Halpati women were not obliged to take on paid employment their work situation would be very different. Similarly, if Patidar households were unable to hire labourers, women from these households would be required to perform a greater number of unpaid domestic and unpaid agricultural tasks.

When there is only one working woman within the household, the effect of life-cycle changes on women's work capacity cannot be absorbed by other women. The household either ignores some of the customs and traditions regarding work carried out by menstruating and pregnant women, or they adopt other strategies to make sure that all tasks get done. These changes are physiological divisions in women's life-cycle, but they also have social and economic consequences. Thus, there are other divisions in terms of work performed by individuals, their position and relationship with other members of the household and in the way in which they affect household income.

Women from joint households are in a different position to those from nuclear households since they may be able to share tasks with other female household members and are affected by their particular position within the female hierarchy.

There are many types of joint households made up of a combination of members, ranging from a husband and wife living together with their sons, their sons' wives and their grandchildren, to a number of brothers living together with their wives and children. There are also joint households with some sons who are married and others who are not, and unmarried daughters who will leave the household once they marry. A joint household may also consist of a married couple living with either a widowed mother or father or unmarried brother or sister.

There are a number of joint households where women, separated from their husbands, have returned to their *piyar*, natal kin, and now live as part of their parents' household. This

occurs more amongst Halpatis, whereas Patidars consider it a burden and shameful to have a divorced daughter living within their household. In these cases, households have a different pattern of employment for their members from that of other joint households where a son brings his wife to live as part of his parents' household. These different structures and compositions of joint households affect the work patterns followed by individual members.

The greater the number of people within a household, both men and women, the greater the choice regarding the distribution of tasks. Decisions are inevitably based on a hierarchical division of labour by sex and age which creates an unequal distribution of tasks. The position of the new wife is low in the hierarchy since she must

'adjust to the existing organisation of the household and within the joint family has little power to demand reciprocal adjustments from the family' (Liddle and Joshi 1986, 143).

In households with more than one woman, women are differentiated by age, stage in the life-cycle and position within the household. Thus, women in joint households are not only controlled by male members but also by other women, depending on their position within the household hierarchy (see Harris 1981; Sen 1982; Sharma 1978). As Sharma points out,

'Women are also subordinate to other women for the household is internally structured according to seniority as well as to sex. A wife is expected to submit to the authority of her mother-in-law and to the wives of her husband's elder brothers' (Sharma 1978, 265).

But, as Bujra suggests, this power, 'is not intrinsic to women's relations but rather derivatory' (Bujra and Caplan 1978, 34).

The delegation of duties reflects individual women's positions within the household. However, the structure of this hierarchy is not static but changes over time as household members pass through different stages in their life-cycle.

The make-up of joint households determines the form of these hierarchical relationships. It is generally the wife of the youngest son who is at the bottom of the hierarchy and she is delegated the largest number of tasks, many of which are the most strenuous and physically demanding whereas, the mother-in-law wields most power and control over other women in the household although she is of course, in most affairs of the household under the direct control of her husband.

The stereotypical mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship is typified by tension and conflict as well as dominance and subordination.

'Traditionally, a young daughter-in-law came into the husband's house in a subordinate position with the mother-in-law having complete control over her' (Liddle and Joshi 1986, 145).

The implications of caste and class on the work responsibilities of women from joint households is similar to the situation of women living within nuclear households. Wealthier households are in a position to hire labourers and therefore women can delegate responsibilities to paid labourers. Thus, in these households, the number of female members available to work is not an important factor as far as household income is concerned. However, in joint households there are more women available to carry out activities which effect the status position of the household within the society.

In Halpati joint households there are more members available to engage in paid employment and thus, increase household income and change the economic class position of the household.

Halpati women are also able to share tasks with other women in the joint household but the female hierarchy is not as strong nor as rigid as it is amongst Patidars and there is greater flexibility in the sharing of responsibilities.

ii Changing Household Composition - Migration

The composition of the household changes over time with in- and out-migration which give rise to a changing division of labour.

A major event in the life-cycle of a household is marriage when sons generally bring their wives to live as part of their household and daughters leave their natal kin to move to their husband's village and even into their in-law's household.

Although this is predominantly a patrilocal society, in which women move to their *sasral* (in-law's) at the time of their marriage and generally live within the same household as their *sasra* (father-in-law) and *sasu* (mother-in-law), there are also a number of *ghar jamais* (men living in their wife's natal village) in Sera. Among most upper castes, *ghar jamais* are not acceptable and the status of the man and his household is lowered if he comes

to live at his wife's *piyar* as he is seen to be 'dependent' on his in-laws. It is mainly Halpatis who allow *ghar jamais* usually for economic reasons; when the husband's *piyar* is in an area where it is difficult to find employment and his wife has a permanent form of employment in Sera and can guarantee him a job working for her employer. The woman whose husband comes to live in her natal village is often in a better position of control than a woman who goes to live at her *sasral*. She is generally supported by her parents and relatives if her husband mistreats her and she is not under the direct control of her in-laws.

Besides marriage migration, purely economic migration affects household composition. Amongst Harijan men as well as Anaval Brahmans, a trend has evolved of migrating to towns and cities for employment. This resulted in many female headed households amongst Harijans and created households of ageing parents in the case of Anavals.

Patidars used to live in very large joint households but as some households were too large to operate efficiently and because of arguments between brothers (over land and income) households were gradually divided, often with the eldest brother looking after his parents. However, out-migration amongst Patidars has been the most important single cause for the reduction in household size. With increasing out-migration, parents now live with whichever son and daughter-in-law remain in Sera but there are a number of households in which all sons and daughters have migrated leaving parents living alone. In addition, there are Patidars who have returned from abroad who will not be leaving again, but most of their children have no intention of returning to Sera.

Every Patidar household in the village has kinsfolk living abroad and all remaining members have their names on registers to obtain visas for Britain or the United States. Within ten years the Patidar population in Sera will have drastically decreased. Due to their impending departure, some households have stopped dividing up their land between sons and continue to live in joint households. However, these are not as large as they were prior to international migration.

Many Patidar girls marry *boys* who live abroad and since Patidars follow the patrilocal marriage pattern, many daughters from Sera are now settled abroad with their in-laws. A consequence of this is that they are no longer able to return to their *piyar* at particularly busy times of the year to help during peak agricultural periods or when there is a wedding.

Household organisation and structure respond to migration patterns and given that

household size and composition varies through its' life-cycle, it is to be expected that the sexual division of labour also varies as the availability of household labour power changes over time. This section has identified the variety of household structures that exist in Sera and how they are changing and the way in which individual women's work experiences are influenced by these factors. It is also evident that class is a vital factor in determining the extent to which these factors affect the type and amount of work that women are required to perform.

Some Patidar joint households, despite having enough household labourers to carry out agricultural and domestic tasks, are financially able to hire labourers and do so as a demonstration of their social status and wealth. In fact, their class, caste and status position requires them to hire labourers rather than use household labour.

For some middle to large farming households, household size is of particular importance. A number of them do not make sufficient income from their land to hire labourers throughout the year, and so at particular times they are reliant on household labour. Since they depend on household members during these periods, important events such as marriages are timed according to the seasonal need for household labour.

In landless households, women must combine paid and unpaid employment and, since many are nuclear, there is a great burden on women to combine their responsibilities on a daily basis. Although inter-household ties are strong, all women have heavy work responsibilities and are therefore not always free to help out other women.

Life-cycle changes are also important in determining the tasks that individual women perform and the way in which these change over time. These are particularly pertinent within joint households in which the sharing of responsibilities and the delegation of tasks are determined by the specific form of the female hierarchy. In nuclear households there is less scope to be flexible to accommodate the implications of life-cycle changes on individual women's work.

IV SOURCES OF CONTROL AND WOMEN'S WORK

The diverse experiences of women not only reflect *differences* between them but also *inequalities* since controls over women and their work vary according to the particular type

of work that they carry out. Thus, there are clear differences in levels of control in areas of paid and unpaid work.

Some women have greater control over their time and work and over other women's time and work, than others. There are inequalities among women in terms of control over their own lives, work responsibilities and access to household resources. On a daily basis women can be controlled by different people at different times as they perform their various work responsibilities; by male employers, by female employers who supervise and organise female labourers, and by men and women of their own households since,

'Within any class society it is clear that some women are more oppressed than others, and indeed some women may themselves be engaged in oppression' (Caplan and Bujra 1978, 27).

It is essential to note that there are systems of control and power relations which affect all women irrespective of the households' class and caste position or its structure. However, women have different experiences of these wider systems. In general terms, all women are controlled by the dominant patriarchal ideology which restricts women's mobility, imposes rules and regulations which control women's lives including their education, fertility, and dowries, and sanctions more physical forms of control such as wife-beating.

CONCLUSION

By separating tasks and differentiating women we can look at the changing relationship between unpaid and paid work for women in different socio-economic positions, and identify the relationship between areas of women's work contribution, class position, household organisation and structure and the controls exercised over and by women. Furthermore,

'Women's paid and unpaid work need to be analysed in relation to historical shifts and variations in patriarchal ideology and how this informs the ways in which the capitalist system as a whole is reproduced' (Burton 1985, 84).

It is necessary, therefore, to see the relationship between women's paid and unpaid work, and agricultural and domestic work over time.

The following chapters are divided according to different spheres of activities. Within each chapter, individual women's experiences of a particular sphere of work are examined on the basis of caste and class differences and according to variations in household

composition. The controls over women and the social and economic value placed on each task are also elucidated.

Since,

'social structures are characterised by a lack of realisation and recognition of the quantum and value of women's work' (Dube 1986, XXII),

by differentiating tasks, and identifying the heterogeneity of women's experiences we can gain a better understanding of women's work and the subordination of women in a society undergoing rural transformation.

6 WOMEN'S PAID AGRICULTURAL WORK

This chapter deals with remunerated agricultural work carried out by wage-labourers on other people's farms. This paid work consists of male employment in the form of *kayam mujoor* (permanent, daily agricultural labourers), and women and men recruited as *choota mujoor* (casual, occasional labourers). The availability of opportunities for permanent and temporary employment change throughout the agricultural cycle. As far as female labourers are concerned, they tend to be involved in seasonal and temporary employment as *choota mujoor* and are never employed as *kayam mujoor*. Patidars never engage in paid agricultural work: in fact, men and women of landholding households in general rarely engage in this sphere of employment. In Sera, this work is carried out by Halpati men and women and some Harijan women. These labourers belong to landless or marginal farming households and must take up paid employment, usually involving agricultural production, in order to subsist.

In paid agricultural work, as in all areas of work, there is a sexual division of labour. Men are increasingly involved in those tasks which have become mechanised whereas female agricultural labourers tend to be involved in manual tasks which do not involve the use of tools or implements. They are assigned to weeding, transplanting of rice, harvesting of certain fruits and vegetables, and sugar cane planting.

There have been a number of studies in which women's paid agricultural work has been analysed in terms of the way in which it is affected by changes in the agrarian system (Agarwal 1986a; Chen 1989; Mencher and Saradmoni 1982). In a review of Indian literature on women in agriculture, Duvvury suggests that,

'technological change and its impact on female employment in agriculture has come to be an important area of study in the context of the Green Revolution strategy' (Duvvury 1989, 96).

But, she argues,

'no attempt has been made to evolve methods to measure the intensity and productivity of women's work, to assess the complementarity of women's work to men's work and to assess the relation of women's work to the production structure' (Duvvury 1989, 96).

Since Boserup's analysis of the role of women in agricultural production (Boserup 1970), there have been a number of studies which have elucidated upon her argument concerning women's work and the way in which it varies with different forms of agrarian systems. These studies have looked at the changes in demand for female labour which have accompanied changes in forms of agricultural production. Agarwal focused specifically on different agro-ecological zones and suggested that considerable variations exist in female labour participation rates between different regions. She concludes that these divergences are based on variations in the production cycle and that female participation rates are greater in areas of high productivity (Agarwal 1986a). Furthermore, she contends that,

'the dependence of rural women on agricultural wage work for a livelihood has been increasing rapidly and faster than for men' (Agarwal 1989, 81).

To put this into perspective, Chen identifies a further trend: although women's dependence on agricultural work is higher and rising faster than men's, the demand for labour as a whole has decreased (Chen 1989, 81). This is not the case in Sera where demand for labour is still high.

Agarwal and others have pointed to a development accompanying the introduction of tools and machinery whereby female labourers have been displaced which has led to increasing unemployment among landless women (Agarwal 1985). Furthermore, since machinery tends to be introduced in 'traditional male domains', women continue to carry out the more manual tasks. Where machinery has been applied to 'traditional female tasks', because women are generally excluded from using tools and machinery, this work has been taken over by men. Sharma contends that mechanisation displaces agricultural labourers but because women are at the lower end of the social hierarchy a reduction in work opportunities disproportionately displaces female agricultural labourers. Furthermore, men are often able to carry on as daily agricultural labourers (Sharma 1980, 121). However, my research suggests the contrary: that women are compelled to take on an increasing amount of paid agricultural work in order for their households to subsist because male members of the household have been displaced from the agricultural sector. Male agricultural labourers have tended to be replaced in the process of mechanisation and by

migrant labourers whereas areas of women's agricultural employment remain. Therefore, far from being unemployed, women are forced to carry out an increasing number of tasks. This is particularly the case at the beginning of the monsoon. However, as Sharma suggests, male labourers are still employed as *kayam mujoor*.

Further accounts discuss how pauperisation and the way in which they have lost control over land increases women's reliance on paid agricultural work (Mies 1984; Duvvury 1989). This either erroneously implies that women previously owned land or makes the assumption that women from landholding households exert control over their households' land. Furthermore, by not differentiating between women, this suggests that even those women from landholding households are moving into paid agricultural work (see Duvvury 1989, 98). Moreover,

'the proportion of agricultural labourers in the workforce/population not only reflects a set of people forced to wage employment but can also reflect, given the social organisation of production, the need for hired labour across crops and specific operations' (Duvvury 1989, 98).

There are a number of limitations within these analyses. Firstly, the process of proletarianisation inferred by this 'pauperisation' is not a recent phenomenon in this particular region. Secondly, women from most landholding households do not engage in paid employment. Thirdly, the female Halpati labour force has not increased substantially; instead, those women already engaged in paid agricultural work are working for longer hours and more intensely besides which seasonal migrant labour is increasingly utilised.

Although the commercialisation of agriculture has been extensively researched (Raj *et al.* 1985), few studies look at the implications for women's paid agricultural employment and the impact of such development on the social and economic position of women.¹

In this chapter, I will focus on the paid agricultural work that Halpati women carry out and the ways in which this has been affected by changes in agricultural production and in labour requirements. Differences in individual women's work experiences are due to factors

¹See Agarwal (1985) for study of implications of technological change on women's employment and status.

that include the effects of their household's class position, and the organisation and structure of the household. Moreover, individual women's agricultural work is conditioned by seasonal variations in the production cycle.

The first section identifies the way in which Halpati women's paid work responsibilities are conditioned and controlled by the class position of their households. The second section discusses the type of tasks that they perform as *choota mujoor*, how these change with seasonal variations in the agricultural production cycle and the way in which some women combine their paid agricultural work with paid domestic work. The final section identifies the ways in which Halpati women's paid agricultural work is affected by the composition and organisation of their households.

I CLASS DIFFERENCES

This section looks at the way in which women's paid agricultural work varies according to the class position of their household. Since most Halpati households are landless, forcing their members to take up waged employment, class differences between them are minimal. One factor which has recently led to a degree of differentiation is the ownership of cattle. Some Halpatis have recently been able to buy cattle through loans from the dairy or by buying cattle from Patidars that they had previously taken on *bhage*, a form of sharing the care of cattle. However, none of them have enough cattle to procure a sufficient income for subsistence and so must also take up paid work. They have no grazing land and cannot afford cattle feed, so milk production is often low, and there is not enough demand for dung to make sufficient income from sales. Halpati ownership of cattle does not raise income greatly thus class differences remain small.

Another factor determining class differences is the type of agricultural and non-agricultural work that Halpatis engage in. This varies, creating differences in the amount and regularity of cash income available to the household. Moreover, there are differences within households in the way in which household labour is employed in wage-labour activities.

Within Halpati households, men work either as *kayam mujoor* (daily agricultural labourers for one landholding household), as *choota mujoor* (casual labourers) or in non-agricultural employment. Employed women work either as *choota mujoor* or in paid

6: Paid Agricultural Work

domestic work. Many women, however, carry out a combination of these activities in any one day, seasonally or on an annual basis.

Women's paid agricultural work is generally conditioned by the employment of male members of the household which affects household income and therefore determines the form of work and the degree of necessity that exists to impel female members to engage in paid activities. In some cases, women of the household are contractually connected to the employment of men. For example, when a Halpati man is employed as a daily agricultural labourer by a particular landholding household, his wife is often expected to work as a domestic labourer for the same household. This reduces the amount of paid agricultural work she can carry out. Furthermore, a woman may be required to carry out agricultural tasks as part of her domestic work (see Chapter Seven) or, out of economic necessity, may be compelled to work as a *choota mujoor* in the afternoon after her morning employment as a domestic servant. For example, Gujjara Halpati works as a domestic labourer for Bhikha Patel, earns Rs.10/month and is given food twice a day. Her husband is unable to find regular employment and therefore, when work is available she works as a *choota mujoor* weeding other farmers' fields from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. for an additional Rs.3. On the other hand, if husbands are employed as *choota mujoor*, the only option for women is to work as agricultural labourers since they have no access to paid domestic work besides which social customs and traditions debar women from being employed in nearby industries.

The different areas of work in which men are involved affect the areas of work available to women and both factors influence the class position of the household. In households where men work in non-agricultural work either in local factories or in the diamond industry, the household is guaranteed a regular income, higher than that of those who work solely in agriculture. Women of these households are not necessarily required to find paid agricultural work every day.

The strategy of seeking paid work outside the village can improve a household's class position. For instance, some Halpati men trained as diamond polishers in Navsari but were required to borrow Rs.500 to pay for the course, having to pay this back once they started to work. This meant that women from these households had to work as paid agricultural labourers to provide for the household while the men were training. Eventually, however, these households became wealthier as men took up employment as

diamond polishers, thereby reducing the significance of women's role as wage earners. A larger, more regular income, made it possible to buy cattle and further increase the income of the household by selling milk and dung. Nana Lalu Halpati has been working as a diamond cutter in Navsari since 1972 and in 1980 was able to buy a buffalo for Rs.1500. He took the buffalo on *bhage* from a Patidar and was then able to pay the Patidar for his share. His wife Madhu, is no longer required to work as a paid agricultural labourer on a daily basis but instead, her agricultural work consists of looking after the buffalo besides which she carries out domestic work within the home. However, this situation is exceptional amongst Halpatis. Indeed, men from only 15 out of 122 households enrolled in these courses.

Another strategy for economic advancement adopted by many Halpati households is where men, and occasionally women, make *daru*, an alcoholic drink made from jaggery. The *daru* sells at Rs.2/litre and it is possible to make at least 3 litres in a day. This makes it less important for members of the household to take up paid agricultural work each day. Balu Halpati can only make *daru* when he is a watchman in the fields, away from the village centre, as production and consumption of *daru* is illegal. During these periods, his wife Munki, is not required to work as a *choota mujoor* although at other times both of them must find work as agricultural labourers.

Other households may rely on all members working as *choota mujoor*. Bhudio Bhana, his wife Dhanki, and their children have no choice but to work as *choota mujoor* since they have no connection with any farming household and thus are not in a position to be guaranteed regular employment. By contrast, in other households all members may be 'tied' to a particular landholding household whereby men work as daily agricultural labourers and women and children as domestic labourers. For example, Natu Kathod works as a daily agricultural labourer for Ishwar Muni Naik, where his wife and daughter also work as domestic servants and his son works as a *govario* (cattleherder).²

This pattern is changing. Younger Halpatis no longer want to be tied to one farming

²His wife and daughter are often sent to pick vegetables from the fields and clean grains produced on the employer's land. They are therefore also involved in agricultural work but only as part of their paid domestic work. This area of work is dealt with in Chapter Seven.

household and will no longer tolerate the servile relationship with the farmer that this patron/client relationship demands. Farmers are finding it increasingly difficult to find daily labourers and consequently, domestic labourers, because women can earn much more as *choota mujoor* than as domestic labourers tied to their husband's employment. In many Halpati households, parents work for one landholding household while sons and daughters-in-law work as *choota mujoor*. For example, Harish Govind and his wife Ambha work as daily labourers for Narendra Desai while their sons and daughters-in-law work as *choota mujoor* even though Narendra wants them to work for him. In fact, he *expects* them to work for him within the framework of the history of the *Halipratha* relationship between labourer and employer.

The income of many households and the work requirements of their members is not static. Although many women carry out paid agricultural work, their spheres of paid work are constantly changing. At some times of the year they may be required to work as agricultural labourers daily, while at other times they work as domestic labourers. For example, Summan Halpati leaves her paid domestic employment during the rice harvest when she can earn more as an agricultural labourer. Furthermore, since many landholding households employ more than one male agricultural labourer but only require one domestic servant, the wives of the labourers take it in turns to work for the household. Thus, every alternate year, one of them must work as a *choota* labourer.

Women's changing work patterns, daily, seasonally and annually, as agricultural labourers are often defined by the type of work carried out by their menfolk. For example, some of the factories in which the men are employed close down during the monsoon and, although women from these households may not have had to work as labourers for the rest of the year, in order to subsist they are required during the monsoon to transplant rice or go weeding.

Clearly, there are differences between Halpati households. These are not generally manifest in wide income differentials but in the way in which household labour is employed in paid work. Women's paid work involvements are very much conditioned by the paid work carried out by male members of the household, besides which it is affected by the unpaid domestic requirements of the household which themselves are partly determined by the household organisation and structure. However, due to economic necessity, it is generally women's paid work which conditions the amount of time

remaining for unpaid work. Thus, along with the agrarian system, demands on women's paid and unpaid labour condition the form and extent of their paid agricultural work involvement.

II AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The following sections look at the paid agricultural activities that women perform as *choota mujoor* and how these change over the agricultural cycle, examine the relationship between Patidar employers and Halpati labourers and the way in which Halpati women combine paid agricultural employment with other areas of paid work.

1 Women as Chooti Mujoor

For most upper class landholding households only one paid domestic servant is employed. Since this only accounts for women from 42 Halpati households, this means that most Halpati women work as *choota mujoor* wherever and whenever they can find it. Furthermore, domestic labourers frequently supplement their morning work with paid agricultural work in the afternoon. The amount and type of work available varies throughout the year although the paid agricultural work opportunities open to women who only work as *choota mujoor* are much greater than for women who also work as domestic labourers.

Women who have few domestic and childcare responsibilities, either because of the stage in their life-cycle or because some of their responsibilities have been taken over by other women, are free to take up a full day of agricultural work where they can earn up to Rs.7/day. Female paid agricultural labourers work either weeding, transplanting and harvesting rice, planting cane or cutting grass. In order to fulfil their own domestic tasks, women weed from 8 until noon and from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m. The employment opportunities for women in the neighbouring village of Pinsad, where they can earn Rs.7/day planting rice, are only realistically available to women with fewer domestic and childcare responsibilities who are able to stay away from their homes from 7 a.m. until 6 p.m. In times of financial pressure, it might seem more practical for the many Halpati men who are unable to find work at certain times of the year to take over the domestic tasks of their households in order to free female household members to work in the fields. However,

their reluctance to take over these domestic responsibilities forces many women to carry out their own domestic work late in the evening. However, childcare responsibilities are often taken over by older children, or by female kinsfolk not involved in paid work. The layout of the *falias* (sections of the village) and the more 'communal' approach to watching over children means that in reality this task is often carried out incidentally by other *falia* members who happen to be around.

Seasonal variations in labour demands affect women's agricultural employment opportunities. During the harvesting of *chikhus* in March, women must be available for the whole day as the fruits have to be harvested quickly. Women who obtain this employment are usually neighbours or kinsfolk of the farmer's daily labourers, who the farmer asks to find him additional field hands. In the *chikhu* fruit harvest women work from 8 a.m. until 12.30 when they can go home until the afternoon shift begins at 2 p.m. and lasts until 7 p.m. or 8 p.m. For this full day's work they receive Rs.7. Although it is always male labourers who wash the fruits in the water tank and take them to the market, more women than men are employed to pick fruits since at this time of the year most men are involved in channelling water from the irrigation canal.

During the summer months there are fewer agricultural employment opportunities. Only a few farmers plant summer rice which is harvested and threshed in June and involves men and women in different tasks. During the lunch break, women take their food home to share with their families while male labourers eat in the fields and then sleep until the afternoon work begins. It is also female labourers' responsibility to serve the food to male labourers and wash dishes after the meal. Thus, in agricultural activities, women are expected to take over certain tasks that are labelled 'domestic' and thereby defined as their responsibility.

Although sugar cane production is capital intensive, it nevertheless requires the employment of large numbers of labourers at particular times in the production cycle. One or two male labourers are required daily to prepare the land, irrigate the fields and generally look after the crops whilst women are hired to plant the cane and weed the fields. Regular weeding needs to be carried out after January and since numerous farmers have planted cane, *choota mujoor* can nearly always find agricultural work. In April and May, the sugar cane blades are high and sharp and women labourers find weeding particularly difficult at this time. They also come under the constant supervision of the

farmer or his wife. The cynical view put forward by one farmer declared that,

'The cane is so high and dense that you can't see the workers and you think they are busy weeding and working hard but in fact, they are sitting on the ground smoking *bidis* or have runaway unnoticed through the fields' (Kanti Patel).

With the use of irrigation water and chemical fertilisers weeds have increased yet few pesticides and herbicides are used as a means of control. Thus, women's main area of agricultural work, namely weeding, has increased. When plants are young and there is sufficient distance between the rows of *tur* (pulse) and sugar cane, oxen can be used in harrowing but around individual plants, weeding must be done by hand. This is a laborious and back-breaking task which labourers are sometimes required to take up for the whole day. Many farmers will not pay labourers half their wage after the morning session for fear that they will abandon the job for the remainder of the day.

Rice planting and harvesting provides employment opportunities for the greatest number of *choota mujoor*. In fact, a shortage of labour in Sera at harvesting time often exists as nearby villages with insufficient supplies of local labour offer incentives to Sera Halpatis to work for them. One Halpati described her own situation,

'They (Patidar farmers outside Sera) have to give us what we want because they have no one else to do their work for them. In Satem they (Patidars) give us Rs.6/day, three meals and tea. We stay in their village for a week or ten days and these Kanbis (Sera Patidars) get very angry. In Kutched our people (Halpatis) work in factories and do not want to do *kheti nu kam* (farm work) so we go to Kutched and work for them on *udhad* (contract basis) and they pay us Rs.175-250 for each *bigha* (field) of rice that and we cut and thresh. I do not stay in Sera when the rice harvest begins. I go to Kutched, Satem, and other surrounding villages where I can get more money' (Savita Halpati).

In neighbouring talukhas, the two main crops grown are sugar cane and rice, and both require female labour. During the rice harvest, because Sera has a high proportion of landless labourers, farmers from villages where there is an insufficient number of local labourers send *tempos* (small trucks) to Sera to pick up labourers and convey them home in the evening. This dependence on outside labourers has forced up the cost of wages angering Sera farmers who lose 'their' labourers at a critical time. One Sera farmer commented on this situation:

'These other Kanbis are spoiling our Halpatis. The Halpatis will start asking us for more food and more money. They now they think they are important because they are in demand' (Purbhu Patel).

In the middle of the rice harvesting season in 1987, the government, in an attempt to secure the vote of the so-called 'backward classes', gave each Halpati girl in 7th standard at school Rs.300, and each boy Rs.250 as a Divali 'present'. Patidars were furious about this. They felt that the money was given at an inappropriate time, namely when labourers were most needed on the farms. Since this gift provided many Halpatis with enough money to last them for a few months, they were no longer compelled to take up agricultural employment. Patidars spoke of their anger about government policies of affirmative action towards the scheduled castes and tribes. One farmer complained,

'they should never have given the Halpatis cash as they will only spend it on *daru* and will not come and work for us until the money runs out. They should have given them a buffalo each so that the money would not be wasted' (Purbhu Patel).

Tasks that the farmers feared would be neglected at this time of the year were mostly those carried out by women, such as rice harvesting and cleaning and storing grains. In fact, although some women did remain at home, others continued their paid agricultural work either because their husbands controlled the money or because they saw the 'gift' as a good investment for an impending marriage.

In September and October, Halpati women receive a yearly chance to make a larger sum of money than usual by cutting grass. A number of female labourers work together and are paid according to the number of *puris* (small bundles) of grass cut. In 1987 they were paid Rs.60 for every 1000 *puris*, an increase of Rs.10 from the previous year. Shanti and Vanita Halpati give up their paid domestic work to work as grass cutters from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. every day. They can earn up to Rs.15 in one day. Savita Halpati said,

'when I cut grass, it is the only time that I can earn a lot of money in one go. Then I can buy clothes for my family and other household things that we need' (Savita Halpati).

Some farmers pay the labourers daily whereas others only remunerate them after 1000 *puris* have been cut.

Immediately after the rice harvest there is little work to be done on the land and this is the time when *choota mujoor* face real hardship. Domestic labourers and *kayam mujoor* have the option of borrowing money from regular employers if household members cannot find work during this period but households that depend totally on income from *choota mujoor* have no means of taking out loans. Many farmers are no longer willing to lend money

even to permanent daily labourers. This is because unofficial moneylenders now have no legal mechanism available to them to demand repayment of loans (since the 1948 Debt Relief Act), although informal networks between Patidars can be used to ensure repayment. Some agricultural labourers who have left farmers' employment without paying their debts have found it very difficult to find employment with other farmers who close ranks to boycott any labourer who has outstanding debts. If a farmer wants to employ an indebted labourer, a convention has evolved whereby he must pay the creditor the money owed by the labourer concerned. Kinsfolk, including female labourers related to men with outstanding debts are not exempt from the boycott and may be reduced to collecting firewood and dung for sale.

2 The Relationship Between Halpatis and Patidars

Patidars have a very dismissive, even inhumane, attitude towards Halpatis. Magan Kaur Patel expressed a typical view:

'they are just lazy, ignorant people. The reason we have a 'labour problem' even though there are so many Halpatis in Sera, is because, if they have enough money for their *daru* and *bidis* for today, then they won't come to work - they never save, or think about tomorrow' (Magan Kaur).

There is little loyalty left amongst many Halpatis towards Patidars in Sera. Most younger Halpatis feel that they have no obligation to Patidars and no longer have to perpetuate the servile relationship which prevailed for so long within the *halipratha* system of bonded labourers. These changes in the attitude of Halpatis is partly due to the changing labour situation in the village.

As a rule, *choota mujoor* do not feel bound to one farmer although some older labourers still believe that farmers deserve respect and that Halpatis should not try and rise above their prescribed status and societal position. Younger Halpatis however, are indifferent and often arrogant towards Patidars. During rice planting and harvesting, young female labourers sing songs complaining of the hard work that Patidars demand of them and declaiming that they are always hungry and made to work for little reward. This is evidence of a move towards greater solidarity amongst labourers and away from the old obligations and allegiances characteristic of the *halipratha* system. There are more female than male *choota mujoor* and therefore women are foremost in leading this move

away from the previous servile relationship between Halpatis and Patidars.

In the Halpati *falias* recently set up by the government, most men and women work as *choota mujoor*. The inhabitants of these new *falias* tend to be younger, often newly married, whereas older Halpatis generally prefer to live in their original *chapas* (huts) near the centre of the village. The new *falias*, or Halpati Societies, are on the edge of the village and the physical distance between them and upper caste *falias* seems to have allowed them greater independence from Patidars and generated more internal solidarity amongst them.

Choota mujoor often form work gangs and thereby benefit from work given out on *udhad* (contract basis). Female labourers, tend to belong to the same work gang as male household members or kinsfolk and have not formed work gangs independently. They are a part of groups of labourers organised and led by men. In fact, there are no all-women work gangs for those areas of work which are exclusively carried out by women. A husband and wife generally belong to the same gang, and thus, clear power relations exist not only between gang leaders and members but also between husband and wife. Husbands make important decisions about when household members need to take up paid agricultural work, for how long and in what activity. The strategic decision to work in gangs means that labourers are often assured that if there is available work, they will all be employed. For instance, Vanmari Patel was forced to hire a whole gang of 50 labourers who refused to work individually, to plant two and a half *bighas* of cauliflowers. The Halpati labourers finished the planting in one hour yet Vanmari had to pay them all for a full day's work.

The changing relations between Halpatis and Patidars is highlighted by the way in which Patidars constantly complain about the laziness and arrogance of Halpati labourers. Gopal Patel laments that,

'Ten years ago, it would have taken only 7 labourers to plant one *bigha* of rice, now we have to employ 15 labourers to do the same amount of work'.

Although organising into gangs has helped Halpatis to gain a degree of bargaining power, this has been limited by the in-flow of seasonal migrant labour who are willing to take on any employment under any conditions.

Farmers in Sera have now begun to employ labourers from labour camps in Bardoli to take over certain agricultural tasks. Many Khandeshi cane cutters have been arriving in south

Gujarat earlier than required for the cane harvest because of severe drought conditions in Khandesh. Therefore, they are available to work in the rice harvest in south Gujarat. If farmers still planted the old variety of *Kada* rice which harvests in September/October, Khandeshis would not have been available for this task. However, the newer varieties of rice harvest shortly before the cane is cut which enables Khandeshis to obtain work in rice harvesting and threshing for farmers while they wait for the cane cutting to begin. For a minority of landholding Khandeshis, this may transpire to be only a temporary arrangement. Their arrival in Gujarat depends on when their own rice harvest is completed. Under normal conditions when the monsoon arrives on time in Khandesh, they will be unable to come to south Gujarat in time for the rice harvest. Furthermore, there are plans to extend irrigation facilities into Khandesh which will enable crop production throughout the year for those who can afford it. However, most migrant Khandeshis do not own land and every year they arrive in the plains earlier than the year before. Many are landless and if they can find employment in the rice harvest before cane cutting begins, they will continue to arrive early in south Gujarat thus further transforming the form of labour requirements and labour relations in the Gujarat rural scene.

When Magan Bhikha needed labourers for rice cutting many local Halpati labourers were unavailable because they were working in other villages or for other farmers in Sera. Magan then went to Bardoli and hired 20 migrant labourers from the labour camp. He could not afford to wait until Halpatis had finished their other paid work as he needed to cut the rice quickly in order to plant cane in the same fields. The migrant labourers charged him Rs.230/*kyari* on a contract basis to cut and thresh the rice.

Khandeshis have even less clearly defined and rigid sexual division of labour in agricultural activities than Halpatis so Patidars are able to hire both men and women from the Khandeshi labour camp. They form work groups made up of people who are related through kinship or who are members of the same village in their home areas.

3 Paid Agricultural Work and Paid Domestic Work

Paid domestic servants are often able to work in paid agricultural activities in the afternoon. The only such work available is weeding in the sugar cane fields and rice *kyaris* (plot of land used specifically for rice cultivation). Weeding, exclusively women's work, is one of the few agricultural activities required virtually throughout the year and

6: Paid Agricultural Work

is at its most important at certain periods during the monsoon when Halpati men are unable to find agricultural work. However, high income activities such as cane planting and rice transplanting require labourers to work a full day and therefore are unavailable to women who work as paid domestic servants.

Manju Halpati and Munki Halpati work as domestic labourers. In the peak weeding season they try and finish their domestic tasks early in order to earn an extra Rs.3 by weeding in the afternoon. At certain times of the year, however, there is extra domestic work to be carried out in the employer's household. For example, after the harvest, during the cleaning and storing of grains, or in the wedding season, women do not finish work in time to go weeding in the afternoon. Munki would rather work as a paid agricultural labourer throughout the day and earn more money but she has to prioritise paid domestic work because her husband borrowed money from their employer. Often she does not finish in time to join the afternoon shift in the fields:

'My employer always keep me so late and doesn't care that I need to work in the fields to earn extra money. On many occasions, I have to miss weeding work. But, if he needs workers on his own farm then I am able to finish my work early (Munki Halpati).

Some Halpatis leave their domestic work at particularly busy agricultural periods when they can earn more money in paid agricultural work. Gita and her mother Mungi stop working at Shanta Patel's during the rice transplanting in June and during the grass cutting period in September and October. Since so few Halpati women want to work as domestic labourers, employers have no choice but to accept that their own domestic labourers may not come to work in busy agricultural seasons and cannot threaten them with dismissal. Not all Halpati domestic labourers are able to do this, particularly if they are heavily indebted to their employer.

Sita can earn Rs.5/day weeding and cutting grass whereas she only receives Rs.10/month plus meals working as a domestic servant at Jayshree Patel's. Sita is twelve years old and although her parents place value on the security of her job at Jayshree's, they also stress the importance of her learning how to perform agricultural work as her future in-laws will want a wife who is able to work in the fields. When Halpati girls get married it is more likely that they will be required to work as farm labourers than domestic servants.

'All of us must learn how to do *kheti nu kam* (farm work) so that when we go to our *sasral* (in-laws) we will know how. On the first day that I went to work in the

fields I felt dizzy and nearly fainted because it was so hot and such hard work but after the first few days I got used to it. I prefer working on the farms with my friends. They all tease me because I work at Jayshreekaki's - they think I am weak and have become like a Patel girl' (Sita Halpati).

Some employers reward domestic labourers for carrying out extra agricultural work. At Mina Patel's house, Chandri Halpati, the domestic labourer, finishes work at 2 p.m. but if she is required to work on her employer's farm watching over the cauliflowers or cutting grass she is paid an extra Rs.2.5/day. When the cane was being planted, Mina asked the daily agricultural labourers and their wives including Chandri to carry out the task. Mina said,

'the Khandeshis would have done the work for us much quicker but then our regular Halpatis would have been angry and not come to work for us anymore' (Mina Patel).

A more probable explanation is that it is more convenient for a farmer to recruit labourers who are already in his employ to carry out additional tasks. He considers them more trustworthy, they are easily accessible and an established employer/employee relationship already exists between them. Moreover, since the basic needs of these labourers are met by the remuneration they receive in cash and kind for their work as daily labourers, farmers can justify paying them a low basic rate for any additional tasks they perform.

In addition to working in paid domestic and paid agricultural spheres these women have their own unpaid domestic responsibilities.

III HOUSEHOLD ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

The composition of their household and the stage in their life-cycle determine the areas of work that women are involved in and the periods for which they work in paid agricultural activities.

The paid agricultural work carried out by women from nuclear households is often different to those carried out by women from joint households. Tasks performed are also affected by seasonal variations in work availability as well as the class differences between households discussed earlier.

1 Nuclear Households

Of 122 Halpati households only 31 are joint while the remaining 91 are nuclear. Out-migration and seasonal variations affect the agricultural work carried out by women from nuclear households but the most important factors is menfolk's employment patterns and the domestic responsibilities of women. The most important of these latter concerns the care of young children since other tasks can be abandoned if necessary or carried out whenever women have the time, within certain limits.

Women whose husbands have relatively large, regular incomes and who have childcare responsibilities are not generally engaged in paid agricultural work on a daily basis. Raman Natu Halpati is a diamond cutter in Navsari. His wife Kumri, stays at home and looks after their three children. She considers herself to be much better off than those women who are forced to take up paid agricultural work whenever it is available. She says,

'I am lucky my husband has a good job and I don't have to go weeding for the Kanbis. But sometimes I have to do *choota mujoor*; when he is ill or when the factory closes down during the monsoon. This is difficult because my children are all under five and there is no one to look after them' (Kumri Halpati).

Women who belong to a nuclear household and are employed as domestic labourers can work as paid agricultural workers in the afternoon if they have no childcare responsibilities. Those who do are required to leave their offspring with older children from their *kutoom* or forego this extra work. Kamu Halpati who works as a domestic labourer for the same household where her husband is employed as an agricultural labourer has not been able to work as an agricultural labourer in the afternoon since the birth of her son. Similarly, Kokila Halpati cannot work as a paid agricultural labourer as her two children are three and two years old. Her husband Gunvant, works as a daily agricultural labourer but Kokila only works as a *choota mujoor* when the household is under severe economic pressure. At these times, she leaves the children with Gunvant's mother who lives next door.

In nuclear households in which children are older and do not need looking after, both husband and wife can work as *choota mujoor*. Mungi Babu Halpati was not able to carry out paid agricultural work until last year when her daughter became old enough to look after her younger children and to take on other domestic responsibilities. However, it is usually

young childless couples who work as *choota mujoor*. Once they have children, a husband may try to obtain daily agricultural work so that his wife can work as a paid domestic labourer in which case she can take her children with her. In households where this is not possible and men continue to work as *choota mujoor* while women carry out childcare and domestic responsibilities, household income is low and irregular. These households are often in debt, having been forced to borrow money in slack agricultural periods.

There are other times such as during pregnancy and post-partum, when women are unable to take on paid agricultural work. This is more problematic for women whose husbands are not in full-time paid employment than for those who have a regular income, since women's daily income from agricultural work is vital for the survival of the household. Paid agricultural workers can find themselves in a difficult position at such times as they do not have ties with any particular landholding household from whom they can obtain a loan. A woman can take on work only after *sava maina*, five weeks after she has given birth. Thus, careful planning is necessary. Furthermore, other household life-cycle events such as marriages are also timed according to labour needs.

2 Joint Households

Ideally, in joint households, where there is more than one woman, paid and unpaid responsibilities can be shared. Such a division of labour between women is characterised by older women being responsible for home based tasks and younger women carrying out paid employment. However, out of economic necessity, it is usual for all able household members to engage in paid employment thus making the sharing of tasks more difficult. Most women are required to carry out paid work and unpaid domestic work.

In some joint households there is a division of labour by age and seniority as well as by sex. Older women with greater power and control over other female household members require younger women to carry out paid agricultural work while they remain within the home. In fact, some young daughters-in-law say that they prefer working in the fields. A young daughter-in-law Rekha, said,

'I am happy to go and work in the fields as that means I can get away from being in the house with my in-laws. I feel lonely in the house but if I go to the fields, I can talk to the other girls' (Rekha Halpati).

Although only a minority of Halpati households are joint, kinsfolk tend to live near one another and despite not sharing the same hearth, there is some inter-household sharing of tasks. Thus, the effect of household structure is less pertinent to women's work amongst Halpatis.

CONCLUSION

Agricultural tasks such as weeding and rice transplanting are traditionally women's work. Since these areas of work have not been mechanised, there is still a substantial demand for female labour. During the monsoon period when Halpati men who work as *choota mujoor* find employment hard to come by, it is the responsibility of Halpati women to take up as much paid agricultural work as they are able to find to compensate for the loss of male earnings. Despite the fact that women's work is usually lower paid than men's work, Halpati households have become increasingly dependent on women's participation in agricultural work. Instead of women being displaced by men because of mechanisation they have been forced into working longer hours. Furthermore, and crucially as far as Halpati women are concerned, the amount of time available to carry out their unpaid domestic tasks continues to decrease as involvement in paid agricultural work becomes increasingly important and necessary. Despite the increasing importance of women's paid agricultural work, where employment opportunities are available for men they tend to be more permanent and regular than those available to women. Some men continue to be employed as *kayam mujoor* while others have been able to find alternative forms of employment in factories.

Many men and some women have lost employment opportunities because of the influx of seasonal migrant labour and changes in forms of production. Indeed, there is a danger as far as Halpatis are concerned, that as the agrarian system continues to change and shifts further into a monoculture of sugar cane production, most of the farmers' labour needs will be met by Khandeshi migrant labour. It is necessary to contextualise the changes in women's paid agricultural employment by looking at the specific socio-economic context and the form and extent of agricultural change in a particular ethnographic setting. In this area, migrant labourers have become major participants in the agrarian scene but there has not been a total transformation to sugar cane cash crop production and mechanisation has not been introduced to such an extent that it has displaced female

labourers. Demand for female labour has remained relatively static, although the demand for male labourers has declined. The impact of changes in the agrarian system are more acutely felt in paid agricultural work than in any other sphere. This is an area of work in which female labourers carry out strenuous manual tasks, are supervised by male and female members of landholding households and have an increased workload. However, it is also within the sphere of paid agricultural work that Halpati women have a sense of solidarity with other labourers unlike paid domestic labourers who work in isolation.

7 WOMEN'S PAID DOMESTIC WORK

This chapter examines the domestic work carried out by women in households other than their own, which is remunerated both in cash and kind.

In Sera, only Halpati women work as domestic labourers. In fact, the term commonly used for a domestic labourer is 'Dubli', a Halpati woman.¹ Men in Sera are never employed as domestic workers² although some daily male agricultural labourers are occasionally required to perform tasks which are conceived of as 'women's work', such as sweeping floors and collecting water. In 42 of the 122 Halpati households, women are involved in some form of remunerated domestic work. They are generally employed by Patidars and Anaval Brahmans who for many years have employed both agricultural and domestic labourers. Only recently have Durjis, Hajams and Ahirs begun to employ paid labourers. However, Halpatis will rarely work for the wealthy lower caste Harijans. One Harijan woman complained that,

'no Halpati will come and work for us because they think that they are superior and prefer to work for Kanbis (Patidars) and Desais (Anaval Brahmans). When my second child died, a girl, I asked Padma (Halpati) to come and get water from the well. For three weeks she got water for me and I gave her an old sari. Now she doesn't want to come anymore' (Vanita Harijan).

This chapter identifies the range of activities in which domestic servants are involved and how this employment affects other areas of their paid and unpaid work responsibilities.

¹'Dubla' is a local term used in the village for 'Halpati'. but not in the same way as the terms Kanbi and Bhatela are used for Patidars and Anavals respectively. Instead, the term Dubla has negative connotations, implying someone of lower caste and class who through economic circumstances has to carry out menial and degrading work.

²Harijan men who migrate to Bombay often take up employment as paid domestic servants.

The first section looks at differences between Halpati households in order to understand why some women work as domestic labourers while others do not. A Halpati woman's employment as a domestic worker reflects her household's position within the class hierarchy. This area of women's employment is closely linked to the paid employment of their male household members since women can only gain access to domestic work if a male member is employed as a *kayam mujoor* (daily agricultural labourer). In fact, where this is the case, women generally have no alternative but to work as domestic labourers for the same employer as their male relative. Likewise, the periods of work and conditions of employment are also related to the paid work of male members of Halpati women's households. Section one identifies these paid domestic work opportunities available to women as they relate to the class position of their household and the form of work undertaken by male members.

The second section identifies the different tasks that these women perform and the ways in which these activities are combined with other responsibilities.

The organisation and structure of the Halpati household and the employer's household affects the work opportunities and responsibilities of Halpati women particularly in this form of employment. Furthermore, the experiences of female domestic labourers are differentiated by changes in their work patterns that take place at different stages in their life-cycle, and as the availability of employment opportunities change in accordance with the changing employment of male members of their households. Thus, this chapter also focuses on domestic work experiences between members of joint and nuclear households and at different stages in individual women's life-cycle.

The final section examines the relationship between employer and employee within the context of paid domestic work and focuses on the social and economic value placed on this form of paid employment and the particular implication this has for the class and status position of Patidars.

I CLASS DIFFERENCES : Opportunities for Domestic Work

Class differences among Halpatis determined by the type of work that household members perform exist as part of the class hierarchy of the village as a whole within which some people must work as wage-labourers for others who have the means to

increase their status by employing paid labourers to perform the more physical and manual tasks. It is because of the low caste and class position of Halpatis within the village hierarchy that they are necessarily involved in paid employment. Furthermore, Halpati women enter into a particular class relation with women from Patidar households when they work as paid domestic labourers. The way this relationship operates as a system of control and reflects the class and status positions of both groups will be discussed subsequently.

Domestic labourers are usually wives, daughters or daughters-in-law of men who work as *kayam mujoor* (daily agricultural labourers). Since only some men work as *kayam mujoor* domestic employment opportunities are only available to certain women.

There are exceptional situations where Halpati women work as domestic labourers although male members of their household no longer work as *kayam mujoor* (daily agricultural labourers) for the same employer. For example, Magan Gela Patel rents out all his land so he has no need for agricultural labourers but because his class and caste status require him to remove his mother and wife from most domestic activities he employs a domestic labourer.³ But, this is difficult because he has no direct link to a *kayam mujoor* and thus, nor to a domestic labourer. However, Chibo Halpati used to work as an agricultural labourer for Magan's father and this historical relationship between Chibo's and Magan's households enabled Magan to ask Chibo's daughter Munki, and grand-daughter Gita, to work as domestic servants.

Men who work as *kayam mujoor* for a landholding household tend to be those whose parents worked for the same household. Although they are not bonded and are no longer part of a relationship with farmers based on coercion, subjugation and dominance, which was characteristic of the *halipratha* system, they have some 'obligation'⁴ through

³Although the term 'employer' usually applies to the male head of household who pays the labourers' wages, in the case of paid domestic work it is women of the employer's household who organise and supervise domestic labourers.

⁴Terms such as 'obliged', 'forced', 'required' are used to describe the working relationship between Halpatis and Patidars but are difficult to explain purely in terms of economic necessity or indebtedness. The general situation of entrenched class and caste hierarchies within the village and historical experiences of these have created an atmosphere in which Halpatis may feel obliged, forced or required to carry out a

household ties, to work for the same household. This 'obligation' is based on a number of factors which are considered to benefit both employer and employee. When *kayam mujoor* borrow money from their employer for their marriage, they are obliged to pay off the debt by continuing to work for the household and by bringing their wives to work as domestic labourers. Therefore, women married to men who are daily agricultural labourers often have no choice but to work as domestic servants. Besides, it is considered that there are benefits to be gained from both husband and wife working for the same employer since payment in kind is an important component of their remuneration enabling the labouring household to subsist. However, the relationship between employer and employee is one in which ultimate control and power rests with the employer and therefore, these benefits cannot be considered mutual or equal.

Women, who since the time of their marriage have worked as domestic labourers, through ties of obligation, are known as *gharni* Dubli. A *gharni* labourer is literally one who 'belongs' to the household; she is 'of the household' since her wedding was paid for by the employer. For example, Jagu Halpati's father and grandfather worked as daily agricultural labourers for Chagan Muni Patel's father. At the time of his marriage, Jagu borrowed money from Chagan for whom he was working as a *kayam mujoor*. Jagu's wife Kusum, was then employed as a domestic labourer. Neither Jagu nor Kusum are able to give up this form of employment or work for anyone else until their debt to Chagan of Rs.400 is paid off. This historical relationship only exists between Halpatis and Patidars, as other castes have only recently started to employ domestic labourers.

Not all *gharni* labourers continue to work as domestic labourers on a daily basis. Most landholding households employ more than one agricultural labourer and the wives of these labourers take turns to work as domestic servants. For example, Savita's and Manju's husbands both work as agricultural labourers for Purbhu Patel who only requires one domestic servant. The arrangement is for the women to each work in alternate years meaning that whoever is not employed must look for paid employment elsewhere.

Some women stop working as paid domestic labourers when their husbands no longer work as daily agricultural labourers. However, because of their past connection with the household through debt and servitude, these *gharni* labourers are often called back to

particular type of work for a particular household.

work for the household whenever their services are required. They are not directly 'forced' to work whenever called, but because there is still a beneficial relationship between employer and *gharni* it is often in their interest to be prepared to work for a Patidar household. Because of their continued financial instability, Halpatis often need to borrow money. If they have maintained a relationship with a particular landholding household, they have access to loans. If they refuse to work when they are called they may find that they have no means to obtain money in slack agricultural periods or for marriages. Furthermore, these domestic labourers are encouraged by male members of their household to work when asked by Patidars so that they maintain this access to loans and also possible employment opportunities for other members of their household. For example, when Succa worked for Ratan Patel, he borrowed money for his wedding. Succa's wife Summan, then came to work as a domestic labourer for the household. After a few years, when the debt was paid off, Succa decided not to work as a daily agricultural labourer and consequently his wife was also required to find some other form of employment since the newly employed *kayam mujoor* brought his wife to work as the domestic labourer. Succa and Summan now both work as *choota mujoor* but whenever Ratan requires Summan to help out either at wedding times or when grains need cleaning and grinding, he calls her to work. She gives up her agricultural work and returns to work as a domestic labourer for Ratan. He pays her Rs.2/day and a meal but she could be earning Rs.5/day as an agricultural labourer. The advantage was that at the time of their son's wedding, Succa, through Summan, was able to ask Ratan for a loan of Rs.300.

Thus, as in the case above, *gharni mujoor* have links with landholding households which benefit their own households but which also means that they may be called at any time to give up other paid work and reorganise their own unpaid domestic responsibilities. Because *gharni mujoor* have an historical relationship with their employer which is based on servitude and indebtedness, they again enter into a patron/client relationship. They are generally only employed for one or two days to perform one specific task but are paid less than their daily paid agricultural wage. There are several reasons why the employer considers it justifiable to pay less than the wage that the domestic labourer is temporarily giving up. There is no need for him to pay highly since there is no need to offer a financial incentive because the labourer's domestic work is guaranteed on the basis of past links between the two households. The employer praises the domestic labourer for her continued commitment and loyalty to his household and gives her the impression that

he considers her to be 'one of the family'. Although Halpatis are not taken in by this patronising attitude and the familiarity expressed by the employer, they recognise the value of adopting a strategy that may ensure their future economic survival. Similarly, the employer is aware of Halpati labourers' possible future need to borrow money.

Not all Halpati women have access to paid domestic work. Those that do are often 'obliged' to take up this work because of the form of employment of male members of their households. Furthermore, they are not paid a wage that is in itself sufficient for subsistence but combined with their husbands' wages, also paid in cash and kind, their household has sufficient means for survival.

Class differences between Halpatis are slight, yet the social values placed on various paid work activities differentiate them. Domestic labour is conceived of as the lowest form of work and thus reflects the status of the labourer's household. The criteria adopted to differentiate types of employment focus on the perceived status of the work performed and the amount of control labourers have over their own time and work. In these terms, differences exist between Halpati women who work as paid domestic labourers and those who are engaged in other areas of paid employment. Despite these status and class implications, they have access to benefits unavailable to other labourers who work in more formal and less permanent forms of employment. These include access to loans and additional non-cash payments such as food, clothing and money for medical expenses.

II DOMESTIC WORK ACTIVITIES

Paid domestic work is an area of paid employment that has been least defined in terms of the range of activities that domestic labourers are required to perform and their hours and terms of employment. Jacklyn Cock, writing about domestic servants in South Africa, suggests that there is a large difference in their situations when compared with other wage workers.

'Other wage workers sell their labour power as a commodity for a definite period of time in exchange for a money wage. Work relationships are impersonal and involve a clear separation between work place and home, in both temporal and spatial terms. The domestic servant by contrast frequently works irregular hours; she receives part of her payment in kind, and the 'live-in' domestic servant is accommodated in the work place' (Cock 1989, 3).

Domestic labourers are involved in a wide range of activities for their employer's household. The work carried out by paid domestic labourers is similar to that performed within their own household, although the specific tasks and ways of carrying them out may differ. For example, Patidar women are required to prepare more varied and elaborate dishes and therefore, food preparation involves quite different tasks to those necessary, or indeed possible, in Halpati households.

Another difference between paid domestic work and unpaid domestic responsibilities is that the former involves,

'following a work routine that is imposed by the employers orders rather than evolved for oneself' (Cock 1989 57).

This form of paid work is also more privatised and solitary as domestic labourers work in isolation and have little contact with other workers.

Domestic labourers are primarily responsible for carrying out tasks that are necessary for the day-to-day running of the employer's household. They carry out all cleaning tasks in and around the house, wash clothes and dishes and collect water from the well. Some domestic labourers are involved in childcare activities but these are carried out as a secondary responsibility, performed while the labourer carries out other tasks. For example, they may watch over their employer's young children playing in the courtyard as they wash the clothes or take these children with them when they fetch water from the well. Since childminding is considered more of a collective responsibility, domestic labourers are never *asked*, or employed specifically, to look after children, but it is expected that they watch over them and feed and clothe them in the morning if no one else is around. One domestic labourer complained,

'I have to wake up very early to cook food for my family and then be at work by 7 a.m. I leave my own children dirty and undressed so that I can arrive here and wash and dress the Patel's children' (Shanti Halpati).

In fact, many of these women are looking after two households but spend more time in, and do far more for their employer's than they do in their own (see Cock 1989). Gujjari describes her work day:

'I come to *Kaki's* at 7 a.m. most days but sometimes I am a little late as I have to cook and collect water for my own family before I come to work. When I arrive at the Kanbis house *Kaki* gives me a *rotla* and tea, and then I go immediately to

fetch water from the drinking-water well. The *matlas* are heavy and sometimes I have to make two or three trips but, I don't really mind this work; I can meet my friends at the well and we talk while we wait for our turn. *Kaki* always shouts at me, 'don't spend so much time at the well making *gupsup* (gossip) with the *Dublis*, there's lots of other work to do'. When I get back, I clean and sweep the house and courtyard and then wash the clothes. This is the job I least like. In the summer it is very hot and there are so many clothes to wash. I eat something at 11 a.m. and then clean the bathroom. After they have eaten, I wash the dishes and utensils before I have my own lunch. I don't eat there, I go home with my food and feed my children and *sasra*, who is not very well. Sometimes, *Kaki* asks me to come back in the afternoon and help with other jobs; grinding grains, clearing out the barn and any other work. On my way home, I collect firewood from the *vadi* and fetch water before going back to cook, and clean my own house' (Gujjari Halpati).

Domestic labourers carry out all domestic tasks except cooking. Patidars and Anavals say, '*Dublis* (domestic labourers) eat only *rotla* (unleavened bread) so they don't know how to cook our food'. It is generally thought that cooking involves some skill and expertise and therefore cannot be carried out effectively by a domestic servant. However, domestic labourers are always involved in food preparation; they collect fuel for the *chulla* (cooking hearth) and clean and peel vegetables for cooking. This division of tasks between employer and employee is based on rules of purity and pollution. Most upper caste and class members, although requiring domestic labourers to carry out tasks such as fetching water and cleaning grains and vegetables, would find it polluting to have a domestic servant cook their food or touch their *chulla*. There are also practical considerations. Most domestic labourers work only until noon and are not available to help cook the evening meal while the main meal is in the morning when domestic labourers are busy carrying out other tasks.

Domestic labourers are often required to perform tasks for other members of their employers' *kutoom*, particularly during weddings or when neighbours' daily domestic labourers are unable to work. Since domestic labourers have no control over the type of work that they are required to perform, they can be dispensed to other households whenever needed. There are many occasions when Gita Halpati has to collect drinking water for households other than her employer's, particularly in the rice harvesting season when other domestic labourers take up paid agricultural work. Gita is only eleven years old and therefore, unable to take up agricultural work in the fields.

During the wedding season, domestic labourers are 'pooled' together to carry out the necessary preparations. Although this involves a lot of work, many domestic labourers enjoy the change from the tedious daily tasks that they are required to perform, and it is

one of the few occasions when they can work together. Shanta Halpati once commented,

'we had great fun preparing for Bhavna's wedding. There was Munki, Gita, Manju, Dai, Lalita; all of us working together in the *vado* (courtyard). We stayed there all day laughing and joking as we watched the Kanbis arriving all dressed up' (Shanta Halpati).

A Patidar woman who allows her *Dubli* to help other Patidar women maintains or raises her position amongst them; she is seen as being a generous woman, willing to do others a favour.

Gharni mujoor who no longer work as daily paid domestic labourers are usually called back to carry out very specific non-daily tasks such as cleaning and storing grains after the harvest. In landholding households where grain is ground by hand, *gharni* are employed for three or four days to carry out this one task. It would not be possible for the daily domestic labourer to do the work as she already has a full workload with other responsibilities. However, there are occasions when daily labourers are required to stay on in the afternoon and work alongside these recalled *gharni mujoor*. For this, they are given an extra meal and a small cash sum but this does not compensate for any wage they may usually earn as paid agricultural labourers in the afternoon. However, they are generally not in a position to refuse this additional afternoon work.

Domestic labourers carry out other important tasks. They are often sent as messengers; to convey messages from one Patidar woman to another or to take gifts and food to other households since the physical mobility of many Patidar women is restricted. When a farmer out in the fields is needed in the village, a domestic labourer is sent to fetch him. Furthermore, when a farmer requires a number of agricultural labourers he is likely to send his domestic labourer to the *Dublawad* (Halpati quarters) to persuade her kinsfolk and friends to work for him. In this way, domestic labourers are used as a contact and a link with labourers in the Halpati *falias*.

The remuneration paid to women sometimes includes the labour of daughters so that young girls work as a component of their mother's wage in a similar way to which women work as part of their husband's wage. In most Patidar households, Halpati mothers and daughters work as domestic labourers. When asked how many domestic labourers a Patidar woman employs, she usually omits to mention daughters of domestic labourers despite the fact that they carry out a substantial amount of work. In many Halpati

households, although sons are sent to school for a few years, daughters rarely are.

Tasks that a domestic labourer is required to carry out are often divided between mother and daughter and change over time, with increasing responsibility being placed on the daughter. They are both clothed and fed but the daughter never receives a cash payment. Many daughters of domestic labourers like Succo and Gita, stay and work for the employer for the whole day whereas their mothers leave at noon, either to carry out their own domestic responsibilities or take on paid agricultural work. Some of these young girls stay overnight and, although they never become part of the employer's household, Patidar women have a responsibility for their daily well-being. In fact, Shanta Patel discussed how and when she should discuss menstruation with her young Halpati girl servant; interestingly, Shanta saw this as her responsibility rather than the girl's mother's.

Succo works at Jaya Patel's as does her mother Bhuli. Her mother works from 7 a.m. until noon, washing most of the clothes and collecting water from the well. Succo sweeps and cleans the house and yard and washes dishes and cooking utensils. Succo is also responsible for looking after Jaya's 18 month old son. Bhuli receives Rs.10/month, one meal per day and a sari once a year. Succo, on the other hand, receives 3 meals a day and clothes once a year but no cash payment. Bhuli's husband is physically violent towards her and she is sometimes unable or prevented from coming to work. On these days, Jaya asks another agricultural labourer's wife to wash the clothes or occasionally does them herself with Succo's help. Succo is 10 years old and has never been to school but although she receives no cash payment, her parents feel that since she gets clothed and fed they are better off. Girls of Succo's age, are too young to work as *choota mujoor*, which is the only other form of employment open to Halpati women, so for many parents, the financial burden of caring for children can be relieved if the mother works as a paid domestic labourer and takes her daughter with her. It is in the employers' interest to provide for their labourers' daughters since they will one day take over their mothers' tasks. Since Halpatis are not opposed to *ghar jamai* (husbands living in their wife's natal village), it is a good investment to look after labourers' daughters in the hope that this will guarantee their and their husbands' labour in adulthood.

Besides the work activities mentioned above, paid domestic labourers are required to carry

out agricultural tasks as part of their work responsibilities.⁵ These tasks involve some form of agricultural production or crop transformation, usually for the employer's home use but occasionally for sale.

These tasks include picking vegetables from the farms, helping with threshing of rice and cleaning and storing grains but are not conceived of as being agricultural, either by the domestic labourer or the employer. However, it is clear that not only do these activities often take place away from the house and its' immediate surroundings but involve production, harvesting and transforming of produce for home use or sometimes the market. These tasks are carried out as part of their domestic work responsibilities for their employer's household.⁶

Collecting dung has always been seen as a low status task. Until the mid-1970s, most households employed a female labourer whose job it was to collect dung and store it for use either as fertiliser or for gobar gas which many Patidars have recently been encouraged by the government to install in their homes. This task was formerly carried out by a female labourer known as a *vashedi* who was employed by a number of households. However, with the reduction in the numbers of cattle in Sera and an increase in the use of chemical fertilisers, the work of these women became obsolete and it became unnecessary to employ someone solely to carry out this task. Thus, domestic labourers' responsibilities have since been extended to include dung collection.

Although most cattle owning households employ a *govario*, it is paid domestic labourers who are responsible for dung collection. They also reapply floors within the employer's house and in the courtyard, with a mixture of dung and mud. This task takes up a lot of

⁵In this chapter, I have included agricultural tasks within the sphere of paid domestic work. These tasks are neither unpaid agricultural tasks, since they are being paid for, though indirectly, nor are they paid agricultural tasks because they are not remunerated separately from the domestic tasks that these women carry out. This problem provides an example of the difficulties of differentiating tasks and analysing women's involvement in different areas of work separately.

⁶It is easier to divide unpaid work responsibilities into domestic and agricultural, because none of the tasks performed are remunerated. Within the paid domestic sphere, individual tasks are not remunerated separately and the labourer is paid for her *time* irrespective of the tasks that she carries out.

time after the monsoon when all mud and dung floors and *chullas* have to be redone.

Patidar women rarely collect dung and would be embarrassed to be seen doing so. Collection of dung is considered the most unclean and menial of tasks and therefore, is done only by Halpati women. Bhani Halpati's status amongst other domestic labourers is high because she works for a household where there is no cattle. Therefore, she never has to perform the lowest status tasks of clearing the barn and collecting dung.

This task is not only considered defiling but is also strenuous work and young Halpati girls are unable to carry out this work. Many domestic labourers find it the most difficult task as the *toplas* (metal bowl or basket) of dung are heavy, and often have to be carried long distances. Every year, the panchayat (village council) holds an auction when the dung from public land is auctioned off. Whoever pays the highest price is responsible for the collection of this dung. Prior to the 1987 auction, a number of domestic labourers were discussing which of their employers was likely to bid the highest. They were all anxious that it should not be their employer as this would mean that included in their daily tasks would be the collection and transportation to the fields of all the dung from public places. Manju Halpati went as far as to wonder whether to threaten her employer with leaving his household and going to work for someone else if he bid the highest.

The type of tasks and the heavy work involved in paid domestic work have wider implications for Halpati households. Government family planning nurses encourage Halpati men, rather than women, to be sterilised. Were women to be sterilised, the recuperation period of two to three months would render them inactive for the purposes of lifting heavy *toplas* during this time. They would therefore be forced to give up their paid domestic work, thus lowering the income of their households. This is perhaps one of the main reasons why, among Halpatis, more men than women are sterilised.⁷

There are other activities which are primarily agricultural but are considered to be the responsibility of the domestic worker. All domestic labourers who work for landholding households collect vegetables from the farm for their employers' households' consumption. There are also seasons in the year when certain vegetables are sold within

⁷This does not happen amongst Patidars since the men would never agree to be sterilised.

the village. Aubergines harvest three times a year and the price in the market is often too low to make it worthwhile to sell them in Navsari. Farmers then sell them to other people in the village. Women of the household are responsible for organising the sale of the crop from home and although domestic labourers are never involved in handling cash, they sort out the aubergines by size and prepare *toplas* for sale.

Although domestic labourers never cook for their employer's household they are involved in the distribution of food to labourers. They serve lunch to daily agricultural labourers and take food out to the fields for *choota mujoor* during the rice planting season. After their employer divides the food into portions, the domestic labourer washes the dishes in the field before returning to her employer's house to carry out other domestic work. During this season, it is impossible for domestic labourers to finish work before 2 p.m.

All domestic labourers clean and sometimes manually grind grains after the harvest and many of them are involved in packing the grains in sacks ready to be taken to the market. Chandan Patel always employs additional female labourers to come and help clean grains and pays them a small cash sum. To her daily domestic labourer who also helps cleaning the grains, she gives no additional cash wage as these tasks are considered to be part of her paid domestic work even though she is required to work longer hours than usual in order to carry out this additional work.

Individual tasks are valued according to who performs them. Since cooking is carried out by female members of the employer's household, it is viewed as a high status task while those carried out by labourers are of lower status and reflect their low class and caste position.

Nearly all Patidar women said that cooking was the task they most enjoyed while women who did not employ domestic servants, such as Lila Dhodiya, complained more about cooking than any other task.

'I like being out in the fields and washing the clothes while I chat to my neighbours across the well, but cooking I don't enjoy. I have to sit in front of the *chulla* making food in the dark, hot kitchen and it takes so much time. Sometimes after I have cooked I am so tired that I don't feel like eating. I am glad that Jyotsna (her eldest daughter) does most of the cooking now' (Lila).

The division of tasks between employer and employee is based on the degree of physical exertion required to carry out the task and the extent to which the task is seen as being

complicated and requiring some skill and planning.

Paid domestic labourers are involved in a wide range of tasks on a daily basis. Most of these tasks, besides those relating to agricultural work, are similar to those they are required to perform for their own households. However, within paid domestic work, their time and responsibilities are controlled by their female employers. Thus, they have low status not only amongst other Halpatis but also in the village as a whole. However, it is the carrying out of these tasks which enables women from wealthy households to refrain from performing certain activities. In this respect, paid domestic labourers play an important role in the changing status position of upper class households.

1 Paid Domestic Work and Paid Agricultural Work

Nearly all domestic labourers, at one time or another, combine paid domestic work with paid agricultural work. They carry out both activities either on a daily basis or at different times of the year and combine paid domestic and paid agricultural work in different ways. Some domestic labourers finish work at noon, return home to carry out their own domestic responsibilities and then take up paid agricultural work in the afternoon. However, those women who are paid domestic labourers and *choota mujoor* have as their primary responsibility their paid domestic work. If employers need them to work longer hours on any particular day, they must forego working in the fields.

Domestic labourers also work as paid agricultural labourers on their employer's land as opposed to working as *choota mujoor* on other farmer's land. With changes in the agrarian system, there are periods of the year when all farmers are looking for labourers. During these periods, some farmers have to postpone harvesting their crops because they are unable to find sufficient labourers or must engage paid domestic labourers and other members of the labourer's household for agricultural work.

During the sugar cane planting there is a severe labour shortage in the village. Not only are agricultural labourers working in other villages but in late October and November, there is a lot of other work being carried out on the land. Similarly, during the rice planting and harvesting, due to the high demand for labourers in other villages and the higher wages being paid elsewhere, farmers in Sera are short of labourers. Therefore, most domestic labourers are employed for this task. They carry out their domestic work for

the farmer's household in the morning, and after a short break, plant cane or harvest rice in the afternoon. Meena Patel helps her domestic labourer wash clothes so that she can finish her paid domestic responsibilities early and then go to plant sugar cane. Farmers pay these domestic labourers Rs.2.5 or Rs.3 for an afternoon's agricultural work.

Meena Patel says,

'when we had to plant the cane, we employed our own labourers including the Dubli. The Khandeshi's could have done the work but we don't want to anger our own labourers by not giving them work and a chance to earn more money' (Meena).

However, it is more likely that it is beneficial for farmers to employ labourers who already work within their household. In this way, they are guaranteed labourers whenever required, particularly during these vital periods, and have greater control over their time and work. When carrying out paid agricultural work for her employer's household a domestic labourer is often relieved of some of her other paid domestic responsibilities and earns as much as she would earn as a *choota mujoor*.

The hours of work for domestic labourers i.e. 7 a.m.-noon, is ideal for Patidar households: their domestic work is done for them in the morning and they can still find sufficient numbers of available female labourers to work on their farms in the afternoon. Patidar men sometimes complain that their wives delegate too much work to domestic labourers making it impossible for them to start working in their fields by 2 p.m. This situation reflects the diverse interests of men and women within the employers' household and the way in which one labourer can be required to satisfy the demands of various members of her employer's household.

These women have particularly long working days, carrying out not only paid domestic and paid agricultural work but also their own unpaid domestic responsibilities. Some of these latter may be reduced by the part payment of cooked food at the end of the day which reduces the amount they need to cook for their household members.

Some women work as domestic labourers for most of the year but leave to take up agricultural employment in peak seasons. During the rice planting season many domestic labourers take on agricultural work in other villages for a few weeks and then return to their paid domestic work. These women can earn Rs.6/day plus a meal for at least three weeks during this season. Patidars try and prevent their domestic workers leaving with

the threat of losing their job, but Halpatis know how difficult it is for Patidars to get domestic labourers and few are intimidated by these threats. Besides, employers know that Halpatis will be back after the rice harvest.⁸

There are other women who work as paid domestic labourers every alternate year while the wife of another *kayam mujoor* takes her place in the employer's house. These women work as *choota mujoor* during the year they are not employed as daily domestic labourers.

Until the mid 1970s, female labourers carried out much more agricultural work than domestic work. They worked alongside female members of their employer's household on a daily basis. Although Halpati women certainly performed domestic work in the employer's house before, their area of work focused far more on the farm than in the home. This no longer occurs as spheres of work have become much more defined and clearly divided. Therefore, although domestic labourers still carry out tasks which are agricultural, either as part of their paid domestic responsibilities or remunerated separately, this is on a much smaller scale and more irregular than prior to the introduction of sugar cane production.

III HOUSEHOLD ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

Women's paid domestic work has changed in terms of tasks performed, hours of work and form of employment. This has been due to a number of reasons which include changes in the organisation and structure of households and changes in the agrarian system. Since the employment of male members affect the work opportunities of female members, the composition of the Halpati household and the way in which household labour is employed is important when examining which members are employed as domestic servants. The composition and organisation of the landholding household is also important in influencing changes in requirements for domestic labourers, deciding who carries out paid domestic work, and determining which tasks they are required to perform.

⁸The combination of paid domestic work and this form of paid agricultural employment has been dealt with in Chapter Six on women's paid agricultural work.

1 Joint Households

Women from joint households generally have more flexibility in the work that they carry out than women from nuclear households. Some of them are able to leave children with older female members who do not work in paid employment. It is also possible for paid domestic labourers to return to work soon after giving birth as they can leave their baby at home with their mother-in-law. This is not always ideal, since the mother must make time to return home to feed the baby but economic circumstances of the household may necessitate her return to paid work as soon as possible. This delegation of childcare responsibilities to other female household members is not always feasible because within most Halpati households, all members who are able are required to take up paid work.

Older women from joint households can continue to work as domestic labourers, for which they receive food and a small cash payment, yet they often give heavier tasks to their daughters or daughters-in-law to carry out. Bhanu is now too old to work as a domestic labourer but was unable to give up working until her son married and brought his wife to live as part of their household. Now her daughter-in-law works at Narmada Patel's house and Bhanu looks after her grandchildren. She also sometimes works alongside her daughter-in-law for a meal and clothing, but all strenuous tasks are delegated to the younger woman. The daughter-in-law is then under the control not only of her employer but also her mother-in-law.

Paid domestic labourers from joint households are often more easily able to work as paid agricultural labourers in the afternoon since they can share their own domestic responsibilities with other women within their household. However, they can also be asked by other members of their household or kinsfolk to take over their paid or unpaid work. Therefore, a woman's position within her own household is important in determining her work experiences. For example, a *jethani* (husband's older brother's wife) has control over a *derani* (husband's younger brother's wife) and can delegate her household responsibilities and her paid domestic tasks to her. However, this situation is rare since the female hierarchy within Halpati households is generally not rigid or strong.

It is always the responsibility of the paid domestic labourer to find a replacement worker if for some reason she cannot come to work. When a paid domestic labourer is pregnant she

will ask either her *derani* or *jethani* or another female relative to take over her employment. The women who take over this domestic work are usually from the same household or related through kinship. Employers encourage this since they are uneasy about 'outsiders' whom they do not know or trust coming to work for them. Halpati women also prefer to find a female relative to take over their work for fear that if a non-relative proved to be a better worker she will take over their job permanently.

2 Nuclear Households

Childminding is often a problem for women from nuclear households but if they take up paid domestic work they are able to take children with them who are fed and sometimes even clothed by the employer.

Most domestic labourers finish work at noon so they can return home to feed their children, and carry out other domestic tasks. Women from nuclear households are not able to be as flexible in their hours of work as women from joint households and are generally solely responsible for their household domestic work although the giving of cooked food by their employers reduces their own domestic burden.

Similarly, widows and divorcees who work as domestic labourers are looked after by their employer and can take children to work. They are provided with a cash payment of Rs.10/month, and their children are clothed and fed, with medical expenses paid for when necessary. If these women have no kinsfolk to help them out, permanent attachment to one employing household gives them some security.

As stated, because of the strong ties between kinship members despite the fact that many Halpati households are nuclear, a woman living within a nuclear household can often rely on a female relative to take over childcare responsibilities even though they may be living within a separate household unit. When a domestic labourer is ill, stops working during pregnancy or goes to her *piyar* (natal kin), it is her responsibility to find another woman to take over her paid work. This is more difficult for women from nuclear households but because of the strong kinship networks, it is possible to ask a sister or *bhabi* to help out.

If a woman has permanent work as a domestic labourer, it is likely that when she gets

married her husband will come and live in her *piyar* as he will also be guaranteed employment in his wife's employer's household. Although there are no *ghar jamais* living in joint households, domestic labourers from these households benefit from close ties with natal kin.⁹

The position of paid domestic labourers from nuclear and joint households is similar since inter-household networks between Halpatis is strong. Although kinsfolk may not share the same *chulla*, they maintain a responsibility towards one another. Whether a mother-in-law lives within the same household or not makes little difference when a daughter-in-law is looking for someone to take care of her children while she goes out to paid work. Similarly, a domestic labourer can ask a female relative living within another household to take over her paid domestic responsibilities in much the same way as she can ask a female relative living within the same household. Sons and daughters generally live next door to their parents or in-laws so physical distance is not a problem. Thus, the inter-household sharing of responsibilities is relatively easy.

3 Paid Domestic labourers and Landholding Households

Since the 1960s, many Patidar households have become much smaller because of high out-migration and the breaking up of joint households. Domestic labourers became more frequently hired when young Patidar women within the household who were responsible for domestic tasks began to leave the village because of emigration. More recently, higher caste aspirations to raise their status, thereby removing women from more manual work, has resulted in the increasing employment of domestic labourers.

Previously, Halpati households tied to a landholding household as bonded labourers carried out a wide range of tasks. With the breakdown of the *halipratha* system and changes in agricultural labour requirements, some Halpati men were employed as *kayam mujoor* and some women as daily domestic labourers to work primarily in and around the landholding house. They have now entered into a more formal contractual relationship

⁹Leena Halpati, who works as a paid domestic labourer for Mohan Patel, will have to leave Sera and move to her *sasral* when she gets married. Since Mohan does not farm his land there would be no opportunity for Leena's husband to find employment as a daily agricultural labourer working for the same household.

with their employer and the sphere of work for individual Halpatis has been defined to include more specific areas of work. Most Patidar households employ only one domestic labourer so many Halpati women work as *choota mujoor*. Today, there is generally only one domestic labourer, although there are often a number of daily agricultural labourers, attached to one landholding household.

Additional domestic labourers are required during harvesting or the wedding season, or during the different stages in the life-cycle of Patidar women. These variations in domestic labour requirements throughout the year are different for joint and nuclear Patidar households.

In joint Patidar households where there are more women available to share domestic tasks, it is easier for young daughters-in-law to return to their *piyar* (natal village/kin) during pregnancy and after delivery. While they are away an additional domestic labourer may be employed. These domestic labourers are usually the wives of daily agricultural labourers or *gharni mujoor*. For example, Madhu Halpati is a domestic labourer at the house of Gopal Patel, for whom her husband works as one of the agricultural labourers. When Gopal's daughter-in-law Nita, returned to her *piyar*, Sera, to give birth, the wife of the other daily agricultural labourer, who usually works as a *choota mujoor*, was asked to work as a domestic labourer for as long as Nita stayed. This hiring of additional domestic labourers used to occur much more often than it does now. Generally, Patidars no longer feel that it is important for daughters-in-law to return to their *piyar* to rest before giving birth: 'Our *vahu* (daughter-in-law) just sits around all day while the *Dubli* does all the work. Why does she need a rest?' is a typical comment from a Patidar man.

In nuclear households, it is more difficult for Patidar women to return to their *piyar* but when they do, another female relative is asked to take over the task of organising and managing the domestic work and to cook. Occasionally, if the household can afford it, additional domestic labourers are hired. This illustrates how the class position and composition of the Patidar households can be important in determining the numbers of domestic labourers hired and the tasks they are required to perform.

CONCLUSION

Domestic work in the paid sphere has a similar value to unpaid domestic work in that it is not conceived of as proper 'work'. It is a low status job with a low rate of remuneration. Paid domestic labourers operate in the invisible sector of the economy and 'the invisible parts are by definition excluded from the 'real economy' (Mies 1986). The low wages that reflect the status of the domestic labourer make it impossible for her to be anything other than a marginal earner within her own household. *Kayam mujoor* are paid a full daily wage and their wives work for part of this wage as well as for payment in kind. The fact that agricultural labourers are paid daily whereas paid domestic labourers only monthly indicates that the women's wage merely supplements the main male wage. In employing both husband and wife, the employer is able to pay the male labourer much less than the minimum wage since he also provides food and clothes for his wife and children. Although cash remuneration is minimal, paid domestic labourers are guaranteed employment throughout the year, have access to loans and are often given clothes and money for medical expenses, not only for themselves but also for other household members. However, they are not necessarily in a better position than women who work as *choota mujoor*. The vast differences in rates of pay for the two forms of employment mean that some domestic labourers would be better off working as agricultural labourers.

Paid domestic labourers can never earn enough to become financially independent. Financial security is not the only form of independence for women but it does allow them greater control over their own lives. A paid domestic labourer has less power within her own household than a paid agricultural labourer since her earnings are minimal and her terms of employment are totally dependent on, and tied to, the employment of male members of her household. Women's powerlessness is reinforced since for example, when a daily agricultural labourer loses his job or no longer wants to work, his wife must also leave her employment with the same household and hope that she can find work elsewhere.

Paid domestic work is seen as being the most menial of all paid and unpaid work not only because of the activities involved but because those employed in this way have little power and control over their time and work. For example, on local holidays, paid agricultural labourers, including *kayam mujoor*, have the day off whereas paid domestic labourers are still required to work. This is linked to the work carried out by upper class

women to maintain and raise the status of their household. Entertaining guests on holidays and festivals is an important part of an upper class woman's domestic responsibilities and therefore paid domestic labourers are particularly required to work on these days. Thus, domestic labourer's work is closely connected to the work and responsibilities of women from upper caste and class households for whom they work.

Paid domestic labourers are at the bottom of the hierarchy of women's work. They are controlled by their husbands and fathers in terms of employment opportunities and by men and women of the employer's household. If their mother-in-law or older sister-in-law also works for the same employer, they come under further control. If a domestic labourer's mother-in-law works for the same household, then she is responsible for dividing the tasks and delegating responsibilities and duties to her daughter-in-law. She generally gives her daughter-in-law the more strenuous and menial tasks, such as collecting dung and washing clothes. A young domestic labourer may, therefore, be under the control and authority of various women at different times of the day.

Although female agricultural labourers are required out of economic necessity to work on a daily basis, there is some degree of flexibility in their working hours. If necessary, they can take a whole day or an afternoon off. Domestic labourers do not have even this small amount of flexibility. They are required to turn up for work every day, and work an unspecified number of hours. If they are unable to come to work, it is their responsibility to find a replacement. Most Halpati women prefer to work as paid agricultural labourers but some have no option but to take up domestic work. For example, when Suman was pregnant and could no longer work as a domestic labourer, it was her responsibility to find a domestic labourer to take over her work until she returned. She asked her younger sister-in-law Shanti, to work in her place. Although Shanti did not want to work as a domestic labourer, she could not refuse because of familial obligations and the relationship between members of her household. Thus, although some Halpati women may feel they acquire a higher status through non-involvement in paid domestic work, few are completely free of this form of employment.

Older Halpati women are more willing to work as domestic labourers since they benefit from the more informal employer/employee relationship; employers have some responsibility towards employees who have worked for them for a number of years. They continue to employ older women, but often have to reduce their workload. Most employers

will then hire a second, younger domestic labourer, usually the daughter or daughter-in-law of the older labourer, to take on most of the heavy domestic tasks. Shanta Patel said:

'Although we don't need Jamna Halpati anymore, we feel that we should still let her come and work here. She can't wash any of the clothes or dishes but she sweeps the floor and courtyard. She is old and she cannot do any other work but she has worked here for many years. Gita really does most of the *ghar nu kam* (housework). We give Jamna some food and if she needs money, she can always borrow from us' (Shanta Patel).

In fact, it is necessary for Shanta to continue to employ Jamna in order to gain access to another younger domestic labourer. She expects one of Jamna's female relatives to take over. This process is often automatic since young female children of domestic labourers go to work with their mothers from an early age and as they get older start performing minor tasks gradually taking over more and more of the work from their mothers. With younger Halpatis no longer interested in working as domestic labourers, daughters often do not want to take over from their mothers or mothers-in-law and prefer paid agricultural work. One domestic labourer who worked for Narmada Patel's household complained,

'I can't do all this (domestic) work anymore but I have to come every day and still wash their clothes and dishes because my *vahu* won't come and work here. She prefers to do *kheti nu kam* (farm work). Our *vahu*'s never do what we tell them to do anymore. If she can't get *kheti nu kam*, she comes here to work but, sometimes she comes and sometimes she doesn't' (Manju Halpati).

Domestic work is also perceived as being *menat vagar nu kam* (work without effort). Romila is always teased by her friends for having such an easy job and being unused to heavy agricultural work. They say that she has 'become like the Kanbis eating *rotlas* with *ghee* (clarified butter) all day', and is becoming accustomed to their upper class lifestyle.

Romila is 12 years old and works with her mother as a domestic labourer for Usha Patel. Her mother Kashi became ill and could no longer work so Romila took on all the domestic tasks. She works from 7 a.m. until Usha and her family go to sleep at around 10 p.m. She would prefer not to stay overnight at Usha's because she is continuously asked to work until everyone goes to bed. When Romila started working, Usha told Romila's father not to come and collect her wages because she wasn't going to give her any money 'since it would only be spent on *daru* (drink)'. She said that she would feed and clothe Romila and when the time came for Romila's marriage, she would pay all the wedding expenses. In

this way, Usha hoped to guarantee that Romila would work for her until her marriage.

Patidars believe they have a right over the daughters of domestic labourers. In fact, Romila spends more time with Usha than she does with her own mother. Now that Romila wants to spend more time in the *Dublwad* with her friends and her parents feel that she should get some agricultural labouring experience, Usha feels that Romila's parents have abused her kindness. Since she has taken care of Romila's needs for the past two years, she feels that she has some sort of right over her labour and can make demands on her that override the wishes of her parents. When Romila wanted to leave her employment and start paid agricultural work, Usha demanded they pay back the loan they had taken from her two years previously. Romila's parents were in no position to do this and before long, Romila was back working for Usha.

Paid domestic labourers are required to carry out their work quietly, without making their presence known. They are organised and supervised by Patidar women who take the credit for some of the work that they carry out.¹⁰ Patidar women recount their days work including tasks which have only been supervised by themselves but in fact, performed by daily labourers. One Patidar woman listing her daily chores said,

'I spent the whole day cleaning out the barn and loft, and grinding grains. There is still washing and cleaning to be done' (Nina Patel).

In fact, Nina had not physically carried out any of these tasks but had been involved in organising and supervising her domestic labourer who carried out the manual work. Comments such as these reinforce the invisibility of paid domestic labourers and the work that they perform while Patidar women perpetuate the idea that they carry out a great deal of domestic work.¹¹ In making the work that paid domestic labourers perform invisible, or at least not attributable to their hard labour, Patidar women are caught in a

¹⁰In some ways, a Patidar daughter-in-law is in a similar position to a paid domestic labourer; they are both supervised and have little control over their time and labour. However, a young Patidar woman will, in the future, be in a position of relative control once she herself becomes a mother-in-law whereas a domestic labourer is always controlled by her employer.

¹¹In fact, Patidar women perform a number of tasks, but these are often even more invisible i.e. work carried out to maintain and raise the status of their households, and so they feel it is necessary to *show* that they are involved in other more concrete activities.

situation of contradictory motives. On one hand, in order to maintain the status of their household, they do not want to appear to be involved in manual work. On the other hand, they wish to take the credit for work carried out by paid domestic labourers in particular in order to show male members of their household that, they are not 'sitting around all day doing nothing', as many of the men suggest.

Halpati women who work as domestic servants hold a low status position within their own household because of their minimal economic contribution, within their own caste because they are seen as being under the total control of Patidars and other upper castes, and in the village as a whole since they perform the most menial tasks. However, since paid domestic labourers 'free' Patidar women from certain areas of work and allow them to engage in others, a system has developed whereby Patidar women have become increasingly dependent on these labourers. This has allowed domestic labourers to assume a modicum of power and control over their work conditions and hours of work and resulted in some change in power relations between employer and employee.

Although *Halipratha* no longer exists in the same form, Halpati women who work as domestic servants still work under conditions that are not totally dissimilar from those prevailing earlier. Of course, there are differences but these can be described as relating more to the form and extent of controls rather than implying any fundamental change such as the elimination of exploitative working relations between employer and employee. Halpati men control their wife's and daughters' work opportunities to a greater extent than when the *dhaniamo* (landholder) had control over the labour of all members of a Halpati household. Furthermore, domestic labourers are now under the immediate control of Patidar women whose work responsibilities are being increasingly restricted to those carried out within the home.

It is this relationship between Patidar women and Halpati domestic labourers, which has changed dramatically. Domestic servants play a crucial role in the reproduction of labour power but they also provide the means whereby Patidar households can raise their status by removing female household members from more manual and 'degrading' tasks. This role of the domestic servant has become increasingly important. Patidar and Halpati women no longer work alongside each other in the fields and their experiences have become increasingly divergent. It is particularly within this upper class female/lower class female relationship that we can see how some women oppress and control other

women albeit within a wider patriarchal system of control. But, more than that, in carrying out this form of employment Halpati women are caught in a class relation with their employers in a way that other paid labourers are not. More recently, the relationship has begun to change as Halpati women no longer want to carry out domestic work whereas Patidar women have become increasingly reliant on domestic servants to relieve them of manual work. Furthermore, although it is the case that Patidars determine the type of work opportunities available to Halpatis, it is evident that many Halpatis, especially the younger ones, refuse to perpetuate the servile relationship that characterised the employment of their parents and grandparents.

8 WOMEN'S UNPAID AGRICULTURAL WORK

This chapter focuses on women's unremunerated work in agricultural production. Such work consists of household labour on the land that the household owns or rents-in, or other agricultural tasks such as animal care, watching over crops and cooking for field hands which are carried out without remuneration.

Like other areas of work, women's contribution to unpaid agricultural production is conditioned by a number of factors including the household's class position, household organisation and structure and changes that occur in their life-cycle. The demand for household and hired labour differs according to seasonal variations throughout the year as well as over extended periods of time. New agricultural production strategies and the introduction of technological innovations has led to changes in the social relations under which work is performed, notably the transferral of activities into or out of the sphere of household or paid work (Whitehead 1985). These developments have affected household labour requirements along with cultural and ideological factors which condition the areas of work that are considered acceptable for women to perform.

Additionally, as is the case for those who perform paid agricultural and paid domestic tasks, women's unpaid agricultural work conditions, and is conditioned by, their unpaid domestic responsibilities. Although unpaid agricultural and unpaid domestic spheres are not conceived of as distinct and separate, and they are not necessarily carried out in different geographic locations or at different times, the women concerned are required to be responsible for both.

It is generally women from landholding households or from those households which rent-in land who are involved in unremunerated agricultural work. Patidars are the main landholding group within the village while Harijans, Durjis and Hajams are smaller landholders. Ahirs, although they own land, have only recently started farming and their main occupation remains goatherding. Anavals still own a large proportion of

village land but few farm the land themselves on a daily basis. Nearly all women from these landholding households are involved in unpaid agricultural production but they carry out different tasks, work at different times of the year and have differing levels of control over their time, labour, decision-making and resources.

It is difficult to separate unpaid domestic from unpaid agricultural work, since men and women see unpaid work as part and parcel of a woman's responsibilities as a wife/daughter. As Sharma points out,

'In almost any household where men are involved in cultivation the women will also contribute to agricultural production in some capacity, even if women themselves (and indeed the men) look on this contribution as part of "housework" (Sharma 1980, 32).

Statistical analyses of women's changing participation rates in agricultural work rarely consider much of the unpaid work that women carry out (Sen 1982, 38). Most of the unpaid agricultural work that women perform, particularly subsistence agricultural work, is not considered in statistics of production and income (Boserup 1970, 163). In government reports and census data many women are defined as 'housewives' and since they own neither land nor resources, they are not counted as farmers or agricultural workers. However, they are involved in agricultural labour in addition to household maintenance and childcare tasks (Moore 1988, 43). Without this contribution, production could not operate as it does (Mies 1986). Therefore, women work as farm labourers on household farms and thereby contribute to the income of their households although this 'contribution is rarely recognised or admitted' (Mukhopadhyay 1984, 50).

It is not only women from landholding households who engage in unpaid agricultural work. Recently, Halpati women have become involved in agricultural tasks for which they are not directly remunerated. The form of this work and the context in which it is carried out varies significantly from the unpaid agricultural work experiences of Patidar women. Halpati men often take up paid agricultural work but do not always carry out the tasks themselves. Instead, women from their households perform these tasks as part of their responsibilities as wives and, therefore, as an extension of their unpaid domestic responsibilities.

There are points of similarity between Patidar and Halpati women's experiences of, and involvement in, unpaid agricultural work. Male members of their households are required

or obliged to carry out agricultural work and because of their wifely responsibilities, women from these households help with certain of these tasks and take over others. It is their relationship to male household members that requires them to take over responsibility for these tasks. Furthermore, since these women have neither direct access or control over this work, nor receive remuneration for carrying it out, the activities in which they become involved, through their relationship to male members, are always considered as part of their unpaid domestic responsibilities.

In this chapter, I examine Patidar and Halpati women's unpaid agricultural work carried out as part of their domestic responsibilities: Patidar women work on their households' own or rented-in land and Halpati women work as part of the paid employment taken on by male members of their household.¹ There is generally no separation between 'work place' and 'home' for these women as they perform tasks both for production and consumption.

In agricultural work there is a sexual division of labour which varies between different castes and class groups. However, women are never involved in ploughing and rarely in sowing activities which are conceived of as men's work, or in those tasks that involve the use of machinery. Patidar women supervise labourers, carry out animal care tasks and process and store crops but are never involved in marketing activities outside the village. Halpati women's unpaid agricultural work consists of animal care and watching over farmers' fields. Halpati and Patidar men alike, gain from this work carried out by women in terms of increased income and access to resources.

This chapter looks at the extent to which female members of Patidar households have been removed from more manual agricultural tasks and have been allocated to other on- and off-farm activities. It also examines how Halpati women's daily work burden has increased as unpaid agricultural tasks have become a part of what is considered to be the range of their unpaid domestic activities. This relatively new area of work for women from landless households has arisen with the changing production systems that have been adopted by major landholders and as Halpati men have attempted to increase the income

¹In the two Halpati households which own land, female members are involved in forms of unpaid agricultural activity which is similar to that of middle class Patidars. However, these exceptional households are not dealt with here.

of their household by taking on additional paid employment.

PATIDAR WOMEN

Until the late 1960s, Patidar women performed a wide range of agricultural activities on their household's land which involved manual work. The extended household system enabled certain women to be primarily responsible for agricultural work on the household's land while other members, generally older women, took over household domestic duties.

Most Patidar women are now involved in activities such as feeding and milking cattle as well as supervisory tasks but they no longer carry out any manual, physically strenuous and publicly visible agricultural work. With demands from paid agricultural labourers to be provided with a mid-day meal, women have also become responsible for cooking for field hands. Processing and storing of crops is still carried out by Patidar women, usually with the help of paid domestic servants. As part of their duties, these Halpati employees are also responsible for carrying out certain agricultural tasks (see Chapter Seven).

The work that these women are involved in varies according to the class position of the household. In the majority of Patidar households, women have been withdrawn from certain areas of work and delegated to others. In some Patidar households, women continue to carry out a number of manual agricultural tasks. Finally, in the case of a household where all the land has been rented-out, women and men alike have been totally withdrawn from agricultural work. Although on the surface it appears that women are minimally engaged in agricultural production, in the majority of cases, they have, in fact, been removed from a specific set of activities and not from agricultural production as a whole.

I CLASS DIFFERENCES

Women's agricultural contribution varies substantially with the class position of the household, the sexual division of labour becoming increasingly rigid with increased social status. Since farming is considered to be a male activity, those men who can afford to will seldom allow women to participate in field work. In fact, the removal of women from

certain activities is a vehicle through which households can raise their status. In addition, women's contribution to agriculture is not only conditioned socio-culturally, but is determined economically since women are withdrawn from certain agricultural tasks only when it is economically viable to do so. This task differentiation is related to the household's ability to hire labourers:

'Access to sufficient means of production to employ wage labour may also influence the sexual division of labour within the household if replacements become available for family labour in the productive process' (Deere 1982, 101).

Therefore, women's labour is more crucial to daily maintenance and subsistence in households with less access to, and control over, their means of production.

The following sections look at the influence of the class position of their households on the variations in Patidar women's unpaid agricultural work experiences.

1 Upper Class Patidar Households

With an increase in their wealth through sugar cane production, upper class Patidar farmers have been able to raise their status further by employing labourers to carry out agricultural work in the fields, thereby removing all household members from field work. Women now only carry out those agricultural activities that can be performed within the home and are no longer involved in activities considered 'improper' or 'inappropriate' to the status to which they aspire. Many tasks, such as weeding and transplanting rice are still seen as 'women's tasks' but are now carried out by paid female labourers.

Returning migrant women are in a different situation regarding agricultural work than most other Patidar women. There are some Patidar families who have returned from abroad after as many as thirty years. Many of them returned to Sera to take up the new form of cash crop production once the irrigation canal had been installed. Most of them feel that by living abroad they have raised their status and therefore must refrain from any physical and strenuous manual labour not only in the fields but also within the home. They are able to fulfil these aspirations as they have the financial resources to hire as many labourers as they require. For example, Magan Dyer Patel returned from Kenya and set up a cement factory. When irrigation water became easily accessible, he closed down the factory and invested in new agricultural machinery. He now hires large numbers of

labourers and women from his household are only involved in very specific agricultural tasks at particular times of the year, such as cooking for field hands.

Women from two Patidar households are not involved in any form of agricultural production. Male members rented-out land when they went abroad and decided to continue to rent it out on their return. For instance, Magan Gela rented his land to other Patidar men when he left for Britain, as his father was old and unable to farm the land on his own. Before leaving, they did not have the resources to hire labourers and Magan's wife Shanta, spent most of her time working in the fields. When they returned to Sera, Magan believed that to take up farming again would lower his newly acquired status. He now receives money from other non-agricultural business and from his British pension.

However, the work situation of women from Magan Dyer's and Magan Gela's households is rare. Most Patidar women from upper class households are involved in some form of agricultural production. They work in both subsistence and cash crop production and their work schedule varies throughout the year. From the ploughing and planting season in June until the harvest of rice and other grains in October, they are busy supervising labourers and cooking for field hands. After the harvest they are involved in supervising the cleaning and storing of grains. They carry out subsistence agricultural production throughout the year, growing crops in the *vado* (courtyard) and picking vegetables for household consumption. They also milk cattle throughout the year and take the milk to the dairy in the village, this being the only occasion in which they are involved in marketing agricultural products.

i Supervisory Tasks

The increasing size of landholdings and levels of income among rich Patidars has led to their recruitment of more domestic and agricultural labourers. Combined with this, the fragmentation of extended households and the out-migration that has occurred, means that within many households there are not enough male members to oversee labourers in dispersed fields. Thus, Patidar women are increasingly required to supervise labourers in the field. This supervisory work is carried out almost throughout the year but particularly when large numbers of female labourers are employed for rice transplanting and harvesting, and for weeding. Because of rules regarding sex segregation, women generally oversee teams of female labourers and only occasionally teams of male and female

labourers. Earlier, many women of farming households worked alongside female labourers in the field in which capacity they acted as informal supervisors.

With changes in labour relations between Patidars and Halpatis, agricultural labourers have become less servile and will often no longer accept the degrading and patronising treatment they customarily received from landowners. On the other hand, some farmers feel that they can no longer trust even their daily agricultural labourers to oversee *choota mujoor*. One Patidar farmer expressed his views;

'We cannot trust the Dublas anymore. They don't work well and if we don't watch them, they spend the whole day sitting in the field smoking *bidis* and for that we pay them Rs.5/day' (Natu Patel).

Many Patidar women say that they now feel uncomfortable and even intimidated by labourers and often insist on their household's paid domestic labourer accompanying them to the field. However, in order to demonstrate their changed status position as non-agricultural workers, a few Patidar women still treat labourers harshly and I often heard them ordering labourers in the same derogatory manner used by their menfolk.

For some Patidar women this is the only time that they exert any power or authority over others, particularly if they are young and have limited control within their households, even over their own lives. However, supervisory tasks are generally performed by older women some of whom already have a certain amount of control and power over other women within their own households. Supervisory duties are seldom allocated to young, married women since these tasks are considered too important to be delegated to inexperienced women, and furthermore, the physical mobility of younger Patidar women is much more restricted than it is for older women. It is now not considered appropriate for a young Patidar woman to go alone to the fields. This is almost a reversal of the previous arrangement whereby young women from joint households were sent to work on the farm while older women remained within the home to carry out domestic work. The change reflects the position of individual women within the household female hierarchy. When fieldwork involved many manual tasks that were considered to be of lower status, this responsibility fell on younger women who held inferior positions within the household hierarchy. Now that fieldwork largely involves managerial and supervisory tasks, it is accorded higher status and has become the responsibility of older women.

Women who supervise labourers have a responsibility to themselves and their

households to reflect the high status position of their households to labourers and more importantly, to other people of their own caste and class. When they work outside the home in the particularly 'visible' area of agricultural supervision, they maintain a formal and authoritarian relationship with labourers. It is important that women overseeing labourers do not in anyway embarrass any male member of their household, and always maintain the honour of their households. One incident occurred where Chandan Patel teased her husband in front of his labourers. To him, this not only showed that he could not control his wife but also that she did not fully respect him. He felt that she had undermined his authority and thereby lessened the respect accorded him by his labourers. Chandan was subsequently reprimanded for this inappropriate behaviour.

Work within the household is again considered more dignifying and rewarding than any form of unpaid work in the field. Thus, although some Patidar women still oversee labourers in the field they are gradually being withdrawn from this task. The seclusion of women is seen by men and women to bring prestige and so Patidar women are increasingly being moved into the 'private' sphere. At the same time, farmers are employing more *kayam mujoor* (daily agricultural labourers) with whom they try to build up a relationship based on trust, so that they can employ them to oversee *choota mujoor* (casual agricultural labourers). Furthermore, with increasing amounts of land being used for mango and sugar cane production for which traders and factories organise labourers, supervisory responsibilities have recently declined for upper class Patidar women.

ii Animal Care Tasks

Most upper class Patidar women are still involved in looking after milch cattle despite the fact that it is considered a 'dirty' task. There are a number of reasons why they continue to carry out this task even though they have been removed from most other areas of activity that involve manual work. Firstly, production of milk has declined substantially since the introduction of sugar cane. The setting up of a dairy co-operative in the village has slowed down the process of reducing numbers of cattle per household, particularly for middle class Patidar households who are more dependent on income from milk sales. However, for upper class households, income from the sale of milk remains a small proportion of the main agricultural income of the household. Therefore, these particular animal care responsibilities are not considered important enough to warrant

the hiring of labourers to take them over. Secondly, control over upper class women's mobility means that they are increasingly confined to carrying out activities which take place inside and immediately surrounding the home. *Govarios* (cowherd) are employed to graze cattle, but women still milk cattle within the home or in the barn. In this way, the household's status can be maintained because such work remains physically invisible to non-household members. Upper class women continue to milk cattle but rarely take milk to the dairy since it would necessitate walking through the Patidar *falia* (village quarter). Thus, the marketing of the milk is usually carried out by the household's *kayam mujoor*. Thirdly, Halpati labourers are not accustomed to milking cattle and are not eager to learn in case this task is added on to their other work responsibilities.

Gradually, this area of upper class women's work may also disappear. One rich Patidar farmer said,

'we don't want to keep cattle anymore. I have to leave 7 *bighas* of my land uncultivated for cattle grazing. In the monsoon, we can't graze the cattle so we spend time and money cutting and storing grass. After all that, if the milk has a low fat content the dairy pays us very little. I don't want to waste my time looking after buffaloes when sugar cane production involves less work and profits are higher' (Kanti Patel).

Patidars are also beginning to see cattle rearing as a low status activity. One Patidar woman from a returning migrant household said,

'We don't keep buffaloes any more. They bring in flies, are dirty and need so much looking after - and what for? A little money and some milk. I still know how to milk buffaloes but I don't want to do that work anymore' (Madhu Patel).

Madhu thought that it would be below her status to milk buffaloes. Although Patidar men and women know that women are still involved in animal care tasks, as long as the activity is not carried out in public they can pretend that it is no longer being carried out by members of their household. Those who are able, make known the fact that they can afford the Rs.25/month it costs to hire a *Rubbari*.

iii Cooking for Field Hands

Patidar women from upper class households are particularly busy during the rice transplanting and harvesting season. Farmers are required to provide labourers with a mid-day meal of rice and *khuddi* (spiced buttermilk) and women from these households

have to cook for as many as thirty-five labourers a day for a period of up to ten days. Since food for household members is of higher quality and more varied, these women cannot cook labourers' food together with household member's food. It would also be considered polluting to use the same utensils used for household members food to prepare labourers' food. Patidar women are helped by paid domestic labourers in food preparation but not in the actual cooking over the *chulla*.

Food preparation for labourers takes an entire morning, after which Patidar women take the lunch out to labourers in the field and, with the assistance of domestic labourers and female agricultural labourers, they serve it out. During the monsoon it is often too wet for the labourers to eat out in the field so they come and eat their meal in the farmer's courtyard. Many women complained that cooking for field hands was the most time consuming task they faced and wished their husbands would offer labourers Rs.2/day more instead of this payment in kind. One said,

'I keep telling Gulab to pay them Rs.2 more but he says that the *mujoor* would rather have only Rs.5/day plus a meal. He says that if we don't give them that, they will go and work for someone else' (Pushpa Patel).

Besides cooking for large groups of labourers during the rice harvesting, all women cook for their households' *kayam mujoor* on a daily basis. Since cooking cannot be delegated to paid domestic labourers, Patidar women spend much of their time cooking for daily wage labourers as well as for household members. For as long as *mujoor* continue to demand a meal as part of their payment, Patidar women will be responsible for feeding them. In the neighbouring village of Sarona, *kayam* and *choota mujoor* prefer to be paid Rs.7 and not receive a meal but most Sera farmers are happier with paying labourers Rs.5/day and providing a mid-day meal. In this way, they maximise profits since the meal provided costs less than the extra Rs.2 which would have to be paid.²

²If agricultural labourers demanded Rs.7/day as opposed to Rs.5/day and a mid-day meal, although Patidar women's cooking responsibilities would decrease, farmers' profits would also be reduced. More importantly, labourers would have to be provided with a meal from somewhere and undoubtedly the responsibility for providing this meal would rest on the female members of their household thus increasing Halpati women's unpaid domestic work. This is the situation in the neighbouring village of Sarona where Halpati women work as paid domestic labourers in the morning, return home from noon-2 p.m. to cook for male household members, and carry out paid agricultural employment in the afternoon. These women rarely receive the extra Rs.2/day paid to

iv Other Agricultural Tasks

While taking food out to the fields or overseeing labourers, Patidar women also collect vegetables for home use. Indeed, most upper class Patidar households have a *vado* (backyard) where women grow vegetables. Most of these tasks are carried out by Patidar women with the help of their paid domestic labourers.

Another important task carried out by women from upper class households is cleaning and storing grains, or taking grains to the mill to be ground. This produce is usually for home use but is sometimes sold. If it is for sale, then additional domestic labourers are hired to prepare the crop for the market and Patidar women organise the cleaning and packing. These labourers often work through the night, particularly if the harvest is late, and Patidar women must stay with them to supervise.

Women from upper class Patidar households still carry out agricultural tasks but as households continue to raise their status, women's work activities become increasingly confined to the home. Therefore, the tasks that they carry out are not seen as agricultural but as an extension of their unpaid domestic responsibilities. This is why when milking her household's cattle, a Patidar woman was able to say,

'I don't have to do any agricultural work like some other Patidar women do. I only do housework' (Chandan Patel).

Patidars make little distinction between the *kheti nu kam* (farm work) and the *ghar nu kam* (housework) that these women carry out.

As an increasing amount of land is used for cash crop production, the involvement of women from upper class Patidar households in agricultural work outside the home declines. Capitalist farming of sugar cane and mangoes involves dealing with various organisations for the marketing of the crop, credit agencies, traders and irrigation officials, many of which are located outside the village. Furthermore, most activities involved in the harvesting and marketing of the mango and sugar cane crops are organised by *veparis* and sugar factories. Women are excluded from dealing in this wholly male sphere because of social norms and controls placed on their mobility.

their husbands to compensate for not being provided with a meal.

'Restrictions are placed upon women's use of implements and tools, on their participation in decisions relating to agricultural production and on their responsibilities and/or control over marketing or any other kind of commercialisation of commodities which they have aided in producing' (Youssef 1974, 184).

In the neighbouring talukha where most of the land is used for cane cultivation, women are rarely involved in any form of unpaid agricultural work. Jayshree Patel married Sunil Patel, the son of a rich farmer in Bardoli Talukha. She commented upon the major differences between her agricultural work contribution in her *piyar* (Sera) and in her *sasral*:

'It is so different in my *sasral* as there is no work for me to do. I do housework but we have so many *mujoor* on the farm that I never have to do anything. The Khandeshis cook for themselves and the co-operative organises everything. My *sas* doesn't grow any vegetables or grains, only sugar cane' (Jayshree Patel).

Whitehead suggests that there is a tendency for labour displacing innovations to occur in women's work activities which are performed as wage-labour but there is a relative absence of technological innovations applied to the same activities when they are performed as household labour. This is because household labour is conceived of as 'free' (Whitehead 1985) despite the fact that it takes time away from other tasks. However, in Sera, Patidar women have been removed from many manual tasks which instead of being taken over by machinery, have been replaced with hired local and migrant labourers.

2 Middle Class Patidar Households

Sen suggests that with increased technology, mechanisation and increased 'finance incentiveness', money incomes have become increasingly important, particularly for small farmers, and this has led to women being sent out to work as agricultural labourers while the men remain working on the farm (Sen 1982,42). This has not been the case in Sera where Patidar women from small landholding households do not engage in waged work. In these households, men have tended to take up non-agricultural paid employment to supplement their income from the land while women have become the main agriculturalists involved in the day-to-day running of the farm. These households do not only grow monsoon crops but are also involved in small scale cash crop production and therefore operate their land throughout the year. Therefore, women from middle class households are involved in a much wider range of unpaid agricultural activities, including

many manual tasks, than women from upper class households.

For example, Bhula Patel owns twelve *bighas* of land on which he grows sugar cane and subsistence grains in the monsoon. Since he owns five buffaloes, some of his land must be used for growing *sundhio* (cattle feed) and his main agricultural income comes from the sale of sugar cane and milk. Bhula's household could subsist from farming their land but could not afford to follow a life-style compatible with their caste status from agricultural income alone. Somewhat ironically, because he has chosen to work for someone else, in order to achieve this level of prestige, Bhula works as a diamond cutter in Navsari and delegates responsibility for the day-to-day running of the farm to his wife Sushila. This work includes carrying out such manual tasks as cutting grass and weeding. However, Bhula controls all household resources and continues to make all major decisions regarding the land and production.

Bhula cannot afford to hire daily labourers so Sushila is involved in most productive activities, with ploughing a notable exception. During the transplanting and harvesting of rice in the monsoon, Bhula takes annual leave and only at this time of year does he employ labourers. However, during this season Sushila not only has to carry out animal care tasks and other field work but she also has to supervise labourers and cook for them.

Middle class Patidar households are only able to achieve their aspirations of higher status through having sufficient income to employ labourers and remove themselves from field work. Bhula cannot afford to do this, so his household has a low status within their caste. Sushila is required to carry out some of the most 'degrading' and lower status tasks but she tries to avoid collecting dung from outside her house where other women would see her. Women such as Sushila are often teased and pitied by others who, because of the increased wealth and status position of their households, are no longer involved in manual work.

Patidar men generally control women's mobility but in order to complete their daily agricultural responsibilities, women from middle class Patidar households have greater mobility than women from upper class households. Bhula cannot afford to withdraw Sushila from going to the fields and therefore, the work that she carries out is physically visible. Despite their evident lack of status amongst Patidars, they maintain other social restrictions. For instance, Sushila does not work alongside male labourers; a woman alone

with male labourers is not only considered to be at risk but it 'looks bad' to be alone with men who are not household members or kinsfolk.

Before Bhula could afford to grow sugar cane, Sushila was not busy throughout the year as the household could only afford to cultivate monsoon crops. Recently, Bhula has further tried to increase the household income by taking advantage of loans offered by the dairy to buy cattle. This has further increased Sushila's unpaid agricultural workload as she is responsible for all animal care tasks including collecting fodder from the fields.

Patidar women from households of this class carry out similar supervisory and cooking tasks to upper class women in addition to manual work on their farms. Besides, they often cannot afford the help of paid domestic labourers.

II HOUSEHOLD ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

Women of a similar caste and class and from households with the same amount of land may carry out very different unpaid agricultural activities. Women's work in agricultural production is also affected to a varying degree by the organisation and structure of their household, their position within the household hierarchy and their unpaid domestic responsibilities including their role in reproductive activities.

Women from upper class households are least affected by the size and composition of their household since paid labourers can be hired. Thus, they have the resources to manage with fewer household labourers. For middle class households without much land who cannot afford either labour saving technology or to grow large amounts of cash crops, the number of household labourers available to work in agriculture is significant. Furthermore, the implications of migration vary for different classes of households.³

The following sections look at these differences in women's unpaid agricultural contribution.

³There is also a change in women's work during the school holidays and in the summer months when children go to school only from 7.30 a.m. until 11 a.m. In lower class Patidar households, young girls take cattle grazing while older daughters can take over some of their mother's domestic responsibilities to enable them to spend more time on agricultural work.

1 Joint Households

Bhikha and Magan Patel are two brothers who live with their wives Ratan and Madhu, their children Kirit, Nila and Jitu, Kirit's wife Usha, and their two young granddaughters. They farm 80 *bighas* of land and thus operate a large farming enterprise. Bhikha is the elder brother and his wife Ratan carries out most of the supervisory tasks in the fields, while their younger daughter-in-law remains within the home carrying out most of the domestic responsibilities. Magan, the younger brother, is married to Madhu who is ostensibly required to go to the farm but manages to avoid this by successfully arguing that her children are younger and she needs to stay at home to look after them, despite the fact that both are over thirteen. Magan runs the farm on a daily basis while Bhikha has a business in Navsari and therefore, Madhu feels further justified in not working on the farm since her husband contributes more of his time to the farm than his brother. She has no compunction in allowing Ratan to do most of the agricultural work. Usha never goes to the fields as it is considered inappropriate for a young married Patidar woman to be seen publicly by other men who are not household members. Because Magan and Bhikha grow many different types of cash crops, including *chikhus* and bananas, they require more household members to be available to supervise labourers in the different fields.

Chagan Muni Patel and his elder brother, Thakkur, also live in a joint household with their wives, and their children. They own a large amount of land and their farming operation is one of the most highly mechanised in Sera. Thakkur works in Bardoli but returns at weekends with his wife, Gulab and children. Chagan runs the farm on a day-to-day basis but Thakkur makes most of the major decisions regarding the land and production. The wives and daughters do not carry out any agricultural work in the fields since Chagan can afford to hire as many labourers as he requires. The women do not supervise labourers in the field but are involved in organising and supervising those agricultural labourers who are hired to clean and store grains within the home. During the busy agricultural season, because she is married to Thakkur and thus exercises more authority, Gulab stays in Sera and assumes the major responsibility for cooking for field hands although neither her nor Chagan's wife, Summan take food out to the fields. Instead, food is sent with a domestic labourer. Summan helps cook for labourers but as Chagan's wife, her primary responsibility is household domestic work.

Before the introduction of sugar cane production, younger Patidar women carried out manual work in the fields; now they are the ones to remain within the home. Besides the fact that it is considered improper for a young daughter-in-law from an upper class household to work outside the home, unpaid agricultural tasks have changed to involve more managerial tasks which are considered more suitable for older women of the household. In Bhikha Kuvar's household, older women work in the fields while younger women remain within the home. In Chagan Muni's household, neither women carry out any agricultural tasks on the farm. Summan, a divorcee, recently married Chagan whose first wife died. Because Summan is not young, it might be expected that she would be allowed greater mobility, but as she is a new wife and has a young son of four years old she maintains all the customs and restrictions which apply to young daughters-in-law and young wives who have recently become mothers. Her sister-in-law, Gulab is older but is also removed from publicly visible agricultural activities to show the household's increased status. Gulab has the additional responsibility of behaving in a manner appropriate to the wife of a man employed as a non-agricultural worker in Bardoli.

Jagu and Savita Patel live together with their children and Jagu's parents. They are small landholders, able to plant some sugar cane, vegetables and mangoes, but much of their land is used for grazing cattle. They also rent some land from Jagu's uncle who migrated to Britain, without which it would be impossible for them to live a high caste life-style from farming alone. Jagu's parents are old and cannot help out in any agricultural tasks outside the home yet Jagu cannot afford to hire labourers. Savita therefore, must work in the home and on the farm. They also have six buffaloes which she has to feed and milk. Since their daughter Anita got married, Savita has found it very difficult to combine all her agricultural and domestic responsibilities. Anita did not carry out many agricultural tasks but freed Savita from some work in the home. Moreover, they do not grow enough mangoes to sell to a *veparis* (trader) so they have to organise the harvesting and marketing of mangoes themselves. In 1987, during the mango harvest, *veparis* from Uttar Pradesh employed local labourers who were more willing to work for them than local farmers since the *veparis* offered higher wages. At this time, Savita could not find labourers. Eventually she persuaded labourers from a neighbouring village to come and work for her but had to pay them more and provide them with a mid-day meal which added to her agricultural work. As their son, Peus is only fifteen it will be at least six or seven years before he marries and brings his wife to live as part of the household. Only

then will Savita be relieved of some of her work load by a daughter-in-law.

Households in which there are a number of adult sons are much better off as sons marry and their wives add to the supply of household labour, although this is not so important for upper class households who are in a financial position to employ paid labourers. The season and year of marriage, the choice of marriage partner and the age at which daughters and sons marry are often conditioned by the household labour requirements. Weddings take place at very specific times of the year and the date chosen is closely linked with the agricultural cycle. The wedding season is from November to April when the 'Gods are awake'⁴ and coincides with the crop harvest when most money is available to spend on food and gifts. At other periods of the year there is too much work to be done on the farms and time cannot be spent organising a wedding.

In joint households, the female hierarchy is manifested in the way in which responsibilities are delegated. A young daughter-in-law's time and work is controlled not only by men of the household but also more immediately by her mother-in-law and *jethani* who delegate the more manual and menial tasks. This is more pertinent to middle class households where all women are responsible for carrying out agricultural tasks. For example, Bhuli Patel supervises labourers in the field and organises cleaning and storing of grains but delegates responsibility for collecting dung to her daughter-in-law. As a woman gets older she has greater control over her time and work and is able to delegate responsibilities to newer and younger members of the household. This division of responsibilities is determined by the value given to particular tasks. Those tasks which have greater social value are carried out by women who are higher up in the female hierarchy while younger, newer female members of the household are responsible for more work within the household.

⁴The people in the village believed that the Gods go to sleep at the beginning of the rainy season only to awaken after the monsoon has ended. This is convenient in terms of organising festivals and weddings which would not be able to take place during periods of the year when transport is difficult and, more importantly, when people have little money. It is only after the rice harvest, at the end of the monsoon, that most people, landed and landless, are financially better off.

2 Nuclear Households

Since sharing of tasks within nuclear households is limited, the financial ability of the household to hire labourers is particularly significant. Women from middle class nuclear households often have a wide range of agricultural tasks to perform. Because they do not have the resources to hire agricultural or domestic labourers, these women have an increased work load. Furthermore, the responsibility for the organisation of planting harvesting and marketing crops falls to household members since they are unable to grow cash crops such as mangoes and sugar cane on a large scale.

Sushila Patel is from a middle class nuclear household. She has numerous domestic responsibilities and is also required to work on the farm on a daily basis. Because she cannot delegate responsibilities to a paid labourer or other female household members she must divide her time between home and the fields, often carrying out different tasks simultaneously such as watching over children while weeding.

Some upper class nuclear households also require all members to carry out agricultural work despite their ability to hire labourers. For example, Natu Patel lives with his wife Chandan, but they have no children. He has a large farm and although he hires two daily agricultural labourers, because his landholdings are scattered, it is necessary for Chandan to perform supervisory tasks in the fields. He also grows a wide range of crops and must delegate some agricultural responsibilities to Chandan.

Chandan supervises labourers in the field, cooks and delivers food to field hands, and organises the harvesting and packing of some crops. She also milks the cattle, takes the milk to the dairy, and picks vegetables from the farm for home use. Natu could afford to hire more labourers to take over some of the tasks carried out by Chandan but feels that since they have no children, she has little other domestic work to carry out.

Natu has not mechanised production on his farm so requires many labourers throughout the year. He is also one of the few farmers who can afford to grow rice in the summer i.e. before the monsoon. Therefore, Chandan is not only busy during the planting and harvesting in the monsoon but also during the summer when she has to cook for field hands. Natu employs additional female labourers at this time and Chandan is responsible for supervising the cleaning and storing of grains. Threshing rice in the summer has to be carried out at night as it is too hot during the day so both Chandan and Natu have to stay

with the labourers until the task is completed. Although Chandan carries out a great many agricultural tasks, she does not see them as such and is prominent in teasing other women who carry out manual work in the fields.

Thus, there are a variety of criteria involved in making decisions about the use of household and hired labour.

III LIFE - CYCLE CHANGES

Household members' work patterns may be affected by changes in the household's class position or the composition of the household. These factors generally change gradually over an extended period of time but other changes occur more frequently and have more immediate implications for the daily contribution of household members to agricultural production. At different stages in their life-cycle, women's work responsibilities vary. Some of these processes of change, such as marriage, can be regulated and planned to fit in with seasonal variations in labour demands while other less predictable events such as illness cannot be planned in the same way. These changes in a woman's life must be accommodated in the delegation of duties, and households adopt different strategies to cope with these, sometimes daily, variations in labour supply.

Since a combination of activities are performed by individual women, changes in one area of work can affect their responsibilities in other areas. For women from some households, their unpaid domestic work is conditioned by other areas of work while for others, the opposite is true. This section looks at the ways in which women's unpaid agricultural contribution varies with menstruation, pregnancy and their unpaid domestic labour requirements.

1 Women's Menstrual Cycle

Menstruating women may be relieved from certain tasks in the fields, but most of these restrictions relate to customs of purity and pollution rather than being motivated by a desire to reduce women's work load in order to give them time to rest. For example, milking cattle and carrying pails of milk to the dairy are not necessarily considered strenuous tasks, but, according to purity/pollution regulations, ought not to be carried out by women who should not touch milch animals while menstruating. However, only certain

households can maintain these restrictions. For example, Sushila has to carry out all agricultural tasks most of the time since there is no one else to whom she can delegate responsibilities yet Summan and Usha, members of upper class, joint households, can delegate their tasks to other female household members or paid labourers at certain times. Cooking for field hands can be problematic since purity/pollution regulations rule that women should not light a *chulla* while menstruating. However, some nuclear households have little choice about delegating tasks since men will not take on these 'women's' tasks.

2 Pregnancy

When a woman is pregnant her agricultural work is affected but often this may not arise until the last few months of pregnancy when for example, it is believed to be dangerous for women to continue to milk cattle. When Jaya was pregnant, Raju employed a Rubbari (shepherd) and paid him Rs.25/month to milk their cattle twice a day. Raju was in a financial position to remove his wife from this task whereas women such as Sushila must carry on milking cattle until immediately before giving birth when a female relative, usually her *jethani*, takes over these responsibilities.

It is also considered improper for a pregnant woman to be seen publicly after the fifth month of pregnancy and the tasks that she performs are increasingly confined to the home. For upper class women this involves little change to their usual work activities, most of which are already carried out within the home, but middle class Patidar women must continue to carry out tasks in the fields for a longer period until they can call another female relative to come and help out.

Shreemant is a ceremony which takes place in the seventh month of pregnancy at which time women return to their *piyar* (natal village/kin) for a period of up to five months. The resulting loss of a household labourer is felt most acutely in middle class households where women are prevented from returning to their *piyar*, particularly during the planting and harvesting periods. Conveniently, it is considered 'inauspicious' to carry out *Shreemant* in June and October and adherence to this custom means that women are rarely away during the busiest periods of the agricultural cycle.

Some women are even called back early from their *piyar*, particularly in households where household labour is important for agricultural production. It is generally much

easier to ask a neighbour or female relative to take over domestic rather than agricultural tasks since assistance can be given whilst carrying out cooking and child care tasks for their own household. Conversely, agricultural activities involve going to the fields or to another house to milk and feed cattle requiring more of a disruption in their own domestic tasks.

3 Women's Unpaid Domestic Work

Women's agricultural activities are greatly affected by their unpaid domestic responsibilities and conditioned by their role in reproduction. Women's responsibilities in one sphere of work often limit the type and amount of work that they are able to perform in another sphere. The effect on women's responsibilities in one area by changing demands in another varies between women and between households.

Women from middle class households have to combine agricultural tasks in the field with looking after young children and carrying out other domestic tasks but they must prioritise their agricultural work. Household domestic tasks do not remain incomplete but are limited to the bare minimum for daily subsistence and are often performed very early in the morning or late at night. Therefore, although Beneria argues that,

'women's participation in non-domestic production is constrained by the requirements of their primary involvement in reproduction' (Beneria 1979, 215),

it is clear that this is not the experience of all women, particularly those from nuclear and middle class households. Furthermore, it is not simply that production is constrained, but that there is also a more complex process of negotiation taking place in the arrangement of time.

Young women from upper class households whose agricultural requirements are carried out predominantly within the home are in a position to combine their agricultural and domestic tasks more effectively. For instance, women can prepare food for field hands and cook their households' food simultaneously, using separate *chullas*. It is often, therefore, the geographical location of different tasks that affects the ability of women to effectively combine domestic and agricultural tasks.

In joint households there is a rigid division of labour whereby some women have primary

responsibility for domestic work while others carry out agricultural tasks. This is not possible in nuclear households or in households where it is necessary for all women to work on the land but since unpaid agricultural work is considered part of women's domestic responsibilities, they are expected to combine these different tasks on a daily basis in some way.

HALPATI WOMEN

Wives and children of Halpati men who work as paid agricultural labourers are often required to carry out unpaid agricultural tasks as part of their domestic responsibilities. With farmers increasing their landholdings and farming out cattle to them to look after, Halpati men are taking up new forms of paid agricultural work. However, the burden of carrying out these tasks often falls upon women from these labouring households.

These tasks fall into two main categories; those associated with animal care when cattle are taken on *bhage* (a system of sharing the tending of cattle on a temporary basis) and those involving watching over farmers' crops when Halpati men take up employment as watchmen. Both these areas of work were previously carried out by landholding household members but have now been delegated to Halpati men for which they receive cash remuneration.

I CLASS DIFFERENCES

Not all Halpati men have access to these forms of employment. Only those who work as *kayam mujoor* (daily agricultural labourers) are offered the opportunity of looking after their employers' cattle or watching over their farms. Since women whose husbands or fathers work as *kayam mujoor* are generally employed as paid domestic labourers for the same employer, these Halpati households have a regular income in cash and kind. They are then given further opportunities to increase their income by taking on additional agricultural tasks. These tasks are time consuming and must be carried out together with other paid and unpaid tasks which often involves a restructuring of the way in which household labour is employed within and outside the home.

Being in a position to increase their income, these households are able to raise their economic status within their own caste group. However, their social status remains that of

the 'tied' worker since the additional tasks continue to be given to them by their regular employer and in many cases, this relationship (employer/employee) is partly based on servitude. In fact, many of these Halpati men are forced to take up these additional tasks in order to repay debts to their employers.

The following sections look at Halpati women's contribution to men's paid agricultural responsibilities, and the way in which this is performed as unpaid agricultural labour. Most of these women work as paid domestic labourers in the morning and *choota mujoor* in the afternoon, while a few have no regular employment but work as *choota mujoor* when the opportunity arises.

II UNPAID AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Halpati men are employed as agricultural labourers for two areas of agricultural work, watching over crops and looking after cattle. However, the work for which they are responsible is generally carried out by female household members, only sometimes with the men's participation.

1 Watching Over Crops

Until the mid-1970s, Patidar children watched over the *jowar* (brown/red millet) fields to prevent crows from eating the seeds. At that time, Patidars had no fear of other people stealing their crops. Since then, the relationship between Halpatis and Patidars has deteriorated to such an extent that they no longer trust one another. Certain trusted Halpatis are now employed to watch over crops so that other Halpatis do not steal them. Furthermore, because Patidar households are now much smaller and their children are sent to school, labourers have to be employed to watch over crops.

Kayam mujoor are often required to set up their *chapras* (huts) in employer's fields to watch over the crops. They do this for a period of six to nine months of the year, for which they receive a lump sum in addition to their daily Rs.5 wage. Not all Halpatis are trusted with the task of watching over crops so Patidars tend to employ Halpatis who have worked for their household for a long time. When male labourers are needed to work as watchmen, their wives and children move out to the fields with them. They lock up their *chapra* in the Halpati section and move to makeshift huts in the fields. For example,

Gita's whole household move to live on her father's employer's mango *vadi* (orchard) where he is employed as a watchman by Raman Patel. Her father is required to watch the crop and water the field in addition to watching Jagu Patidar's nearby *papri* (vegetable) field. For this he receives Rs.200 for the nine month period. When men take up this form of employment they continue to work as daily agricultural labourers during the day and watch the field at night.

These labourers' homes are now on the farmer's land, and because much of women's unpaid domestic responsibilities are carried out within and surrounding the home area, they also become involved in watching the crop.

Most of these women work as paid domestic labourers in the morning for the same employer whose crops they are watching. However, they must return to their *chapra* in the afternoon to watch the crops and thus cannot take up paid agricultural work after finishing their paid domestic responsibilities unless they have children who are old enough to watch the crops.

While in the fields, women must often stay in or around the home because of their domestic and childcare responsibilities. Since the home is now in the farmer's fields, women are burdened with watching over the crops and carrying out unpaid domestic work at the same time. Moving out to live in the fields generally means additional work for women. Besides watching the crops and carrying out domestic work, they also need to walk further to collect water or go to the store. Furthermore, they are isolated from the potential assistance of kinsfolk and friends who remain in their *falia*. As Bhuli said,

'My husband took the job of watching over Kantibhai's field and we moved to this *vadi*. At night he can go and meet his friends but where can I go? I sit here with the children and because I am at home, I have to also watch the fields. While cooking and looking after the children I am around the *chapra* so of course, I am here to watch the fields all the time. There are no neighbours to help and I have to walk far to get water and food. In the *falia*, it is noisy but at least there are other women around to help' (Bhuli Halpati).

Only a few of the fields have wells from which these women can draw water, and most contain only *kari* (salty) water which cannot be used for drinking.

Being out in the fields does however have some advantages; the collecting of firewood is easier as branches and twigs for burning are readily available. Besides, many Halpatis

take up jobs as watchmen primarily so they have a safe place to make *daru* (alcoholic drink). One such household is that of Succa Halpati and his wife Bhuli, who move out to a Patidar's field in March specifically for the purpose of making *daru*.

Furthermore, one woman echoed the sentiments of some:

'we prefer to move out of the *falia* for a while as it is so noisy there and we need some quiet and privacy. In the Society, everyone drinks and there are always fights going on. Out here in the fields we are away from all that and do not need to get involved' (Nila Halpati).

However, others are frightened of being left alone in the fields, particularly in the evenings when Halpati men return to their *falia* to meet their friends.

'In the *falia* I can sit outside my *chapra* with other women. In the field, there is no one but I have to stay and look after the children - and the crops - so I am tied to the *chapra* ' (Summi Halpati).

Employing *kayam mujoor* as watchmen and requiring them to move their household out to the fields is beneficial to farmers. They believe that they can trust daily labourers more than *choota mujoor* and since all the labourer's household members move to the fields, the farmer can make use of their labour without being required to remunerate them.

2 Animal Care Tasks

Responsibility for cattle grazing used to be incumbent on young Patidar boys. Since the late 1970s cattle rearing has become a less important source of income and there are now fewer landholding household members who can take over animal rearing tasks besides which, grazing animals is not perceived as commensurate with the status of Patidar household members. Consequently, this task has been delegated to Halpati men.

When Halpati men take cattle on *bhage* they are required to look after young calves until they are returned to the farmer. They take these calves to their *chapras* where they keep them for up to a year. This physical relocation of cattle to the homes of Halpati labourers creates the perception that the care of these animals is another domestic task and therefore, the responsibility of women. Since much of women's household domestic work takes place in and around the home, animal care becomes an extension of these responsibilities.

If the household have moved out to live on a farmer's field, women graze and feed the cattle as they watch the crops. For example, Bhanna Halpati is employed as a daily agricultural labourer by Chottu Patel. He moves to Chottu's fields for nine months with his wife and daughter. Bhanna carries on working as an agricultural labourer while his wife Dai, spends her days on Chottu's *vadi* watching over the crops and in animal care tasks since she no longer works as a paid domestic labourer.

Since many of these women work as paid domestic labourers, looking after cattle is often left to young children. Lalita, is ten years old and is responsible for grazing three cows while her mother and elder sister work as domestic labourers. Some of these Halpati women can work as *choota mujoor* in the afternoon and earn an additional Rs.3 but this is not possible if they have no children old enough to look after the cattle while they are away. The household income, however, is not reduced since the income accrued from looking after cattle is equivalent to, and sometimes higher than, the amount earned as a *choota mujoor*. Besides, Halpati men return the cattle to their owners at the beginning of the monsoon when there is nowhere to graze them and this coincides with one of the peak agricultural seasons when Halpati women's labour is much in demand.

The responsibility for watching crops and looking after cattle has been delegated to Halpati men, thereby increasing their earning potential. However, many of these increased employment opportunities, although only available to men, are actually carried out by women as part of their unpaid domestic work responsibilities. This constitutes further control over women's time and work and although women's income has not directly increased, their work load has. Most Halpati women carry out paid agricultural and paid domestic work but they must now combine these areas of work with their unpaid domestic tasks as well as this relatively new area of unpaid agricultural work.

CONCLUSION

The work that women perform in unpaid agricultural work reflects the class position and status of the household. Amongst Halpatis, in only one class of household do men have access to certain types of paid agricultural work in which case women are required to carry out unpaid agricultural tasks. Amongst Patidars, almost all men are involved in agricultural production and therefore, so are Patidar women who are differentiated in terms of the type and amount of unpaid agricultural work they are required to carry out.

Middle class Patidar women, out of economic necessity, carry out a wider range of activities whereas upper class women, because of their household's relative prosperity, are able to follow certain cultural and social codes which restrict their mobility and determine which activities are 'proper' and 'suitable' for them to carry out. Thus, class differences are still obvious and important.

Tasks are valued differently by both men and women. Amongst Patidars, tasks which require less manual work and are less publicly visible are considered more prestigious, although they may be time consuming. Thus, tasks which are less visible because they are carried out within the home are valued higher than those tasks requiring manual work in the fields. Work performed on the farm is also valued differently; tasks which involve the control or supervision of others are more important than those which are carried out alongside paid labourers. Calling labourers to work, although it involves walking to the Halpati *falia*, is also considered important because it is conceived of as a 'managerial' task. Those tasks which are 'dirty' such as collecting manure, or more strenuous such as manual labour, and, amongst certain women, milking cattle, are considered less important. The *sharam*, or embarrassment, that is seen to accompany the carrying out of these tasks has led to the removal of upper class women from these spheres of work. If a household wants to raise its status, women whose work reflects the status of their households, must first be removed from these activities which consequently become the responsibility of paid labourers.

In Halpati households, arranging payment with the farmer is the responsibility of the men although most other tasks are carried out by men and women alike. Additionally, because it can be sold for cash, dung collection has become an important, economically significant task and thus, primarily men's responsibility. This is another illustration of the way in which the social and economic status of a task varies between castes and between men and women.

The unpaid agricultural tasks that women perform are carried out as part of their domestic responsibilities. Most women and men do not recognise much of this work as being agricultural. However, although the majority of women's work has become, over time, less manual and less visible, nearly all Patidar women are involved in agricultural production to some degree. Furthermore, these women are not confined solely to subsistence agricultural production but do, in fact, play a crucial role in both subsistence and cash crop

production and through these activities make a considerable contribution to household income (see Moore 1988). Similarly, Halpati women's unpaid work allows men to take up additional forms of paid employment thereby increasing their households' income.

There are many controls over women in the area of unpaid agricultural production. Since women's unpaid agricultural work is considered part of their wifely responsibilities and therefore, part of their domestic work, the work that they perform is under the control of other members of their households.

Different power relations exist within the sphere of unpaid agricultural work. There is the control and power of men over women and over the whole agricultural system; the control of women over other women and children within the household; and, for Patidar women, control over paid agricultural labourers is exercised by women whose role it is to supervise labourers.

Women generally do not own land and they have neither control over resources or incomes nor control over their own time and work. Additionally, Halpati women do not have access to the same sources of income via paid employment as men. Therefore, their unpaid agricultural work is controlled by male members of their households. Many of the tasks for which these women are responsible are the same ones carried out by paid labourers; the difference is that these women are unremunerated.

Some women have greater control over their time and work than others. Patidar men from middle class households working in non-agricultural employment leave most of the day-to-day running of their farm to women of the household. These women have a limited degree of control. For instance, they might decide when they will carry out a particular task but will not be able to make decisions about which tasks they must carry out. Furthermore, older upper class women are able to delegate responsibilities to younger women within their household and to paid labourers. Halpati women are also responsible for daily unpaid agricultural tasks but have little freedom to decide when they carry out particular tasks. For some of these Halpati women, their day is spent carrying out a combination of paid domestic, paid agricultural, unpaid agricultural and unpaid domestic activities. This minimises the opportunity for them to be flexible in reorganising their time. In Sera, my research found that approximately 70% of those women who work as paid domestic labourers also carry out unpaid agricultural tasks.

Thus, their daily workload has increased substantially with these additional income earning opportunities which have recently been made available to their menfolk.

Patidar and Halpati women are required to carry out unremunerated agricultural tasks because of their relationship to male members of their households and as an extension of their domestic responsibilities. Because male members are involved in agricultural work, so are female household members irrespective of whether they are from a landholding class (Patidars) or a landless class (Halpatis). Therefore, although the tasks that these women perform are quite different, their experience of the burden of the implicit responsibility of this unpaid agricultural work is a common denominator. However, differences exist in the sexual division of labour within each caste group. Amongst Patidars, men and women are generally responsible for different agricultural activities whereas Halpati men and women often carry out the same tasks but at different times. This seems to illustrate that the sexual division of labour in unpaid agricultural activities is less rigid amongst Halpatis thus further differentiating their experiences from those of Patidar women.

9 WOMEN'S UNPAID DOMESTIC WORK

Unpaid domestic work is almost exclusively women's work. Occasionally, Halpati men may be required to cook if no woman is available to carry out this task but among Patidars, a man would never be asked to carry out a 'woman's task'. Sharma writes of the caste group among whom she carried out research,

'Usually, women cook but there is no particular shame if a man cooks when no women of the household are available' (Sharma 1978, 269).

Although this is true for Halpatis, it does not apply to Patidars. Generally, 'it seems that the very thought of domestic work undermines their masculinity' (Liddle 1986, 148).¹

All women are involved in unpaid domestic work but the type and amount of work varies according to the class position of the household and the household organisation and structure. Moreover,

'We would not expect human reproduction strategies, family and structure and composition of the division of labour by sex to be the same for all peasant households' (Deere, Humphries and Leal 1982, 101).

It also varies over time with changing production systems and at different stages in a woman's life-cycle.

Within households, there is a sexual division of labour which delegates to women primary responsibility for activities required for the reproduction of the household. This division of labour is much less flexible in unpaid domestic work than in other areas of work.

¹Since Patidar men control household financial resources, they may shop for vegetables in Navsari but not on a regular basis.

Women's unpaid domestic work is always carried out as part and parcel of their responsibilities as daughters, wives and mothers. Thus, this work has for long been invisible and is generally seen as unimportant and insignificant to the overall economy and to processes of production.² However, unpaid work in the home is an essential component of the capitalist system (Burton 1985, 59), indeed, of any system, and therefore must be seen as part of the overall production process within the household and outside the home.

Beneria suggests that the core of domestic work involves,

'maintenance activities required to produce labour power on a daily basis which include the transformation of goods into use values for consumption. The content and nature of some of these functions such as those determined by family size and the type of production carried out at the domestic level depend on factors beyond the household, such as the degree of market penetration into the rural economy. Women's domestic work activities must therefore be analysed within the context of the dynamics of an economic system in a process of rural transformation' (Beneria 1979, 211).

In order to examine this relationship between women's domestic work and the wider economy, and therefore the relationship of women to capitalism, it is necessary to first look at the work itself (Burton 1985, 59) and focus on the interaction between areas of work.

In this chapter I examine the type of unpaid domestic work carried out by different women, concentrating on how work patterns vary according to individual households' access to means of production and household composition. Women's differential work experiences in the sphere of unpaid domestic work according to these factors indicate the ways in which overall production processes and economic systems affect women and their involvement in different areas of paid and unpaid work. However, it is not always women's unpaid domestic responsibilities that condition their contribution to other areas.

For each caste, Patidar and Halpati, I look firstly at the impact of household class position on women's domestic work. Since women's unpaid domestic work is not carried out in isolation from other areas of work, it is important to examine the relationships between this work and unpaid agricultural work, paid domestic work and paid agricultural work.

²Census records of female participation rates do not tell us about this area of work in which women are involved. See Mumtaz, Khawar 'The Housewife Myth - A Report from Pakistan', *Manushi* vol.3 No.5 1983 pp17-18.

These relationships depends on the class position of the household, since some women must combine unpaid domestic work with paid domestic work and/or paid agricultural work, while other women carry out unpaid domestic work while also carrying out unpaid agricultural work, or are in a position to delegate certain responsibilities to paid labourers.

Secondly, I examine the way in which the composition of the household and individual women's position within it determines the tasks they are required to perform. In joint households there is the possibility of sharing tasks and responsibilities between women. Besides the existence of a sexual division of labour and the general subordination of women to men within the household, age is an important factor and there is generally a subordination of junior to senior in most activities (Sharma 1980, 92). In nuclear households, where there is no other female adult, women's responsibilities can only be shared if there are older daughters within the household. These differences between joint and nuclear households, engender variations in women's unpaid domestic work. Furthermore, the structure of the household is not always the same because of life-cycle changes. There are also seasonal variations in the type and amount of unpaid domestic work women carry out. For example, Patidar women may have more work during the wedding season, while Halpati women must travel further to collect firewood during the planting season when public access to farmers' fields is limited.

In rural economies, there is a high degree of integration between domestic work and women's activities outside the home, such as agricultural work in the fields. These agricultural activities are identified as women's unpaid domestic responsibilities. I define unpaid domestic work as work carried out for the production and reproduction of the household on a daily and generational basis (Beneria, Burton, Deere, Mies). That is, tasks carried out for the maintenance of household members excluding those tasks which are primarily agricultural. Unpaid domestic work includes cooking, cleaning, washing, fuel and water collection, childbearing and childrearing, caring for elderly relatives and the fulfilling of social obligations including preparing for, and organising, weddings and festivals.

Many unpaid domestic work activities involve a series of processes. For example, Halpati women have to collect firewood before they can light their *chullas* for cooking, and Patidar women may be involved in the production and processing of food before preparing

food for household consumption. Thus, productive and reproductive tasks are interrelated and women carry out a wide range of different types of work throughout the day (Mies 1982, 17).

PATIDAR WOMEN

With the gradual dissolution of the *halipratha* system and increasing commercialisation of agriculture, work patterns within and outside the home have changed. Most Patidar households can afford to hire domestic labourers, but their availability, the work they carry out and the length of time they are willing to work have changed. They are no longer available twenty-four hours a day, or live near the farmer's house or on his land. In fact, most paid domestic labourers work from 7 or 8 a.m. until noon and live with other members of their own households with the Halpati *falias*.

Some Patidar households do not have daily, regular access to a paid domestic labourer while others are able to employ two domestic labourers. This means that Patidar women's unpaid domestic work within the household varies according to the ability of the household to hire domestic labourers and thus, the class position of the household.

Until the early 1960s, Patidar women were required to carry out agricultural and domestic work alongside their labourers. In fact, most female bonded labourers worked more on the farmer's fields than in his house. Since most Patidar households were made up of extended kinship members, one or two older women of the family were required to stay at home and take care of domestic responsibilities while other younger women, together with labourers, went to work on the household's farm. However, older women maintained control over younger women and often left much of the domestic work to be performed by younger women upon their return from the fields. After her marriage to Magan Patel, Shanta lived in a joint household where younger women were sent to the fields while older women were supposed to carry out all domestic chores.

'Ma sent me and my *jethani* and *derani* out to the *kheti* (farm) every morning at six. While we were away she would do a little work in the house but would leave most of the work, like washing the clothes and dishes, for us to do when we got back in the afternoon' (Shanta Patel).

Since then, work patterns for most Patidar women have changed substantially. Patidar women have been removed from certain manual tasks which have been taken over by paid

labourers. The fact that these women are no longer involved in the more manual and menial tasks, and that their households are able to hire labourers raises the status of the household. Their work has become increasingly concentrated within the home and their mobility outside the house reduced. They have also become more dependent on paid domestic labourers in the same way that Patidar men have become dependent on paid agricultural labourers.

Patidar women do not necessarily have an increasing amount of 'leisure' time. Instead, they are being removed from certain areas of work only to become involved in others. They are now involved in managerial and supervisory tasks and in status production work: that which enables the household to maintain its class and status position in the community (see Papanek 1979). Patidars share a common interest in increasing their wealth and status although for some this has been easier than for others.

I CLASS DIFFERENCES

Patidar women's unpaid domestic work varies according to the class position of their households. Those farmers who have greater access to land and other resources, and have profited from an early uptake of sugar cane growing have been able to hire agricultural and domestic labourers. They were the first to remove female household members from manual work. These are the households for whom raising their status and prestige has become important and increasingly possible.

Patidar households with less access to resources and lower incomes cannot always afford paid domestic labourers or, because they do not hire *kayam mujoor*, they have no access to a domestic labourer. These Patidars generally own enough land for subsistence but are unable to follow a similar life-style to upper class Patidars or raise their class position. The men from these households often take up paid non-agricultural work to supplement their income from the land which has implications for women's unpaid domestic work.

The following section looks at these differences in unpaid domestic work between women from upper class and middle class Patidar households.

1 Upper Class Patidar Households

All upper class Patidar households employ at least one domestic labourer. Women from these households are involved in a number of unpaid domestic work tasks; supervisory and managerial responsibilities within the home, cooking for household members and a series of activities aimed at maintaining and raising the status of their households.

Upper class women are responsible for the management and supervision of domestic labourers. They have greater control in this area of work than in any other, since they can make decisions on tasks that need to be carried out, organise the carrying out of tasks and delegate responsibilities.

Domestic work that is considered less dignified or *gundu* (dirty) is delegated to paid domestic labourers. For upper class Patidar women this means employing a labourer who cleans the house, washes dishes and clothes, carries out childcare activities and helps prepare food for cooking. In fact, paid domestic labourers carry out all daily domestic tasks for upper class households except cooking.

Within the range of domestic work activities, certain duties have greater social value assigned to them. For example, cooking is considered an important and dignified task. Patidar women declare that they do not want domestic labourers to cook for reasons of purity and pollution and Halpatis are of a lower, 'unclean' caste, and complain that Halpatis do not know how to cook. Munju complained that, 'Dublis don't know how to cook our food, all they can do is make thick *rotlas* (unleavened bread) and grind chillies' (Munju Patel). Cooking is also an area where expertise is involved, particularly in the preparation of elaborate food for special occasions through which a household can show its status position. Chandan Patel is renowned for her good food and her husband is able to entertain government and factory officials, impressing them with the food he offers. Through cooking, Patidar women can gain the praise of their household members and others within the community. Diet and consumption are a crucial way of showing the household's wealth and status. Many Patidar women commented on how much they enjoyed cooking. Perhaps their comments reflect the high social value placed on the task rather than the satisfaction of cooking.

The largest and most important area of work for these women is, however, status production and reproduction work.

i Status Production Work

Upper class Patidar women have been removed from many activities in an attempt to raise their household's status. This has been achieved through accruing sufficient income to allow rich farmers to employ labourers to take over domestic and agricultural tasks that used to be carried out by Patidar women. However, this does not mean that Patidar women are 'sitting around with nothing to do all day', to quote a Patidar farmer. They are in fact involved in maintaining and even raising the new status position of the household. Removal from certain areas of work is only part of the process of raising household status. It is also necessary to engage actively in activities which are performed specifically for this reason.

Papanek defines this 'status production work' as that which is carried out to maintain and enhance the household's social standing in relation to others in the community. But this does not necessarily enhance women's status within that household;

'Individual status within the family, defined in terms of access to resources and influence in decisions varies independently of family standing in the community' (Papanek 1979, 775).

Status can be achieved by the removal from manual work, the maintenance of a high standard of living and the giving of expensive gifts, high dowries and lavish weddings. Papanek suggests that once a household has access to enough means of production to employ labourers and remove household labour from certain tasks, these household members can then,

'be released to do something else. Often this "something else" has to do with the family's present or future status' (Papanek 1979, 776).

She identifies three areas of status production work: support work, childcare and training of children, and what she terms the 'politics of status production'.

Support work is generated by the demands that derive from income earning activities carried out by other household members. In Sera, these include for example, cooking for household members in the field or entertaining government officials. This type of work has no direct relationship with the household income.

Childcare and the training of children is important in maintaining and transmitting the household's status to the next generation. The responsibility of training young children invariably rests with the mother. In Sera, this area of work reflects the differential treatment of sons and daughters. The sexual division of labour applies to children from an early age. Daughters are required to help mothers in domestic work and later carry out this work for their husbands and his household while boys attend school and later help out in the fields, eventually taking over the running of the farm from their fathers. From the time girls begin to menstruate, playing together with boys is discouraged and girls are required to dress in the appropriate manner. Patidar mothers must ensure that their daughters know what will be expected of them in their future roles as wives, daughters-in-law and mothers.

Marriages are very important in raising a household's status and the way in which daughters are brought up shapes their marriage opportunities. The status of a household can effectively be lowered by what is considered to be a 'bad marriage'. For example, Patidars often commented that Jaya's mother had not brought her up well because she permitted Jaya to be seen in public when she was seven months pregnant and was staying at her *piyar*. Similar comments were made when Kusum Patel's son married a woman from a lower caste. In addition to the inculcation of wifely qualities, the girl's household must be able to afford a high dowry.

Parents also rely on their sons for their future status and to safeguard them in their old age. When sons return from abroad, to show others in the community that they have 'made it', they often buy their parents a refrigerator, a dining table or other such commodities that signify status.

The third area of status production work is what Papanek calls the 'politics of status maintenance'. This area of work includes arranging weddings and the exchange of gifts, planning festivals and feasts, and organising the running of such events. These are very important but time-consuming tasks which must be performed correctly if they are to effectively result in any increase in household status. Savita organised the wedding of her daughter but the food at the wedding feast was not as elaborate as at other upper class weddings. People spoke of her bad planning for many years after and when her second daughter married she had to spend a great deal of time (and money) to compensate for this lapse and make sure that the food was up to standard.

Many of these activities visibly reflect the income of the household and therefore its status position. However, the work carried out by women through this income expenditure is not usually recognised, unless, of course, a woman fails to do it.

Women are also involved in the transfer of information. This does not directly reflect the status of the household but can be a mechanism whereby opinions of an individual or household can be changed. When women meet without the presence of men; for example, when they roll *papad*, information about affairs, marriages, births and the like is exchanged. This *vaat* (talk or gossip) is sometimes taken back and shared with men of the household but because it is not taken seriously, it has little overall power to change the status of an individual or household within the community. There are occasions, however, when these conversations affect women's networks of co-operation.

Women are also involved in observing ritual and religious practices whereas men usually engage in these activities only in a marginal way. They appear to 'tolerate' women's religious observance but regard themselves as more 'modern' and 'rational'. In Sera, it is nearly always women who fast on particular days of the week or take vows not to eat certain foods until their child recovers from an illness or until a suitable husband is found for their daughter. Papanek says that ritual and religious observances,

'anchor the family in its relationship with God and gods, just as women's status production work more generally serves to anchor the family in the community' (Papanek 1979, 778).

There is also a link between household status and women's behaviour. Women must observe certain rules and regulations as to how they dress, talk and conduct themselves in public, and it is through their behaviour and activities that the status of their household is maintained. Such behaviour is integral to a household of high status although this alone is not sufficient to raise the household's status.

Women are engaged in all areas of status production work on a daily and generational basis. Therefore, for Patidar women, reproduction of the household also involves the production and perpetuation of the household's social standing within the community.

It is this status production work which is the most invisible of all work activities because it is not carried out at one particular time in one specific location. It is part of a life-style and espouses an attitude which relates to the daily running of the household, the

behaviour of individuals within the household and the way children are raised. Furthermore, it articulates the norms of the dominant ideology as to what is considered valuable and important.

Status amongst Patidars is construed as being able to afford a certain life-style, and the first step towards achieving this life-style is the removal of women from manual work. Therefore, Patidar men are dependent on domestic labourers. The fact that they can afford to hire labourers and remove their women from manual work demonstrates their wealth and gives them a higher social standing in the community.

Thus, a Patidar woman has less physical work to do with the employment of a domestic labourer and this not only raises the status of the household but also her own status among other Patidar women.

Patidar men boast to each other about how little work their wives are required to perform:

'Women's work is much easier now because they have Dublis to do everything. My wife doesn't have to do anything all day. She sits all day and then asks for new saris' (Bhikha Patel).

Despite the fact that some Patidar women claim for themselves the tasks that are carried out by paid labourers, one Patidar man said,

'All women have to do is cook twice a day and even then they complain if we don't get them a gas *chulla*. Men have a lot more work to do. Women only know how to sit, wear expensive saris and sing songs' (Jagu Patel).

Patidar women from upper class households are increasingly involved in an area of work which is less publicly visible and less easily defined, yet it is time-consuming and vital for the status of their households within the community.

ii The Relationship between Female Employers and Female Labourers

The relationship between upper class Patidar women and Halpati domestic labourers varies according to the type of work that they are involved in and the length of time that the domestic labourer has been employed by the household. Patidars value labourers who have worked for them for a long time and with whom they have been able to establish a

more informal, patron/client relationship since they feel that they can no longer trust newer and younger Halpati labourers.

Most Halpati women prefer to work as agricultural labourers (see Chapter Seven). There are periods of the year when regular domestic labourers do not arrive for work but instead take up agricultural work. This occurs when they are offered higher wages to transplant and harvest rice in surrounding villages. They are aware that Patidars are dependent on their labour and therefore, are secure in the knowledge that they will get their jobs back once the rice season is over. Patidar women often threaten domestic labourers with dismissal if they leave to work in agriculture, but they cannot afford to carry out these threats. Mungi Halpati works as a domestic labourer at Muni Patel's. Before the rice harvesting began, she told me,

'I won't be coming to work for the next few weeks. We can get Rs.7 a day planting rice in Sarbhon. I don't care what Muni says, she will want me back after. Kanbis can't do any work on their own; what would they do without us? Can you imagine Muni going to the well to get water! The *matla* (water pot) would fall from her head' (Mungi Halpati).

A relationship, then, has developed in which Patidars have become dependent on domestic labourers and have less control over their time. Muni Patel complained of Mungi Halpati,

'Mungi hasn't come for work again, I had to do all the work myself. Yesterday I sent Chandan's Dubli to fetch water for me. Mungi will be back, she needs us. What will she do if her children get sick? This time I will tell her to go, I will find another Dubli' (Muni Patel).

When Mungi returned to Muni's three weeks later, after being reprimanded for leaving and reminded of the benefits of working for Muni's household, Muni took Mungi back. She had tried to employ another domestic labourer but was unable to find one willing to work.

While Mungi was away, Muni did little domestic work herself. Patidar women never go to the village well to collect water and never carry pots on their heads. Instead, Muni asked her sister-in-law's domestic labourer to fetch water for her. She also asked the daughter of her neighbour's domestic labourer to wash clothes and dishes for which she gave her food.

Although some young Halpati girls live in the same household as their employers, most domestic labourers return home at noon so Patidar women have to carry out some physical domestic work in the afternoon and evening. However, as one Patidar woman said,

'I leave all the dirty dishes from the night before until the morning when the Dubli comes. Otherwise what work could I give her to do all day?' (Shanta Patel).

Since status and prestige are so important amongst this group, women cannot be seen to borrow food from other women. Therefore, domestic labourers are often sent to borrow milk or vegetables from other Patidar women unbeknown to the men of both households.³ Therefore, in many ways, Patidar women are dependent on domestic labourers: to enable their removal from manual work, thus raising the status of their households, and as messengers for Patidar women whose mobility is restricted.

2 Middle Class Patidar Households

In middle class Patidar households where paid domestic labourers are not affordable on a regular, daily basis, women carry out a different range of domestic work activities to those carried out by upper class Patidar women.⁴ In Sera, there are sixteen Patidar households that fall into this category. Male members from twelve of these households take up paid employment in Navsari while female members carry out household agricultural and domestic work on a daily basis. Since these households are not in a position to employ *kayam mujoor*, they also have limited access to female labourers. In slack agricultural periods, when Halpati women cannot find agricultural work, it is easier to hire domestic servants although rarely on a regular basis for an extended period of time. Therefore, combining *kheti nu kam* (farm work) and *ghar nu kam* (housework) effectively is more

³Since I was more mobile and had fewer domestic responsibilities than most Patidar women, domestic labourers often came to fetch me to 'drop-in' on a Patidar woman to keep her company.

⁴Women from middle class Patidar households are also responsible for agricultural work on the household's land on a daily basis. This area of work is discussed in detail in Chapter Eight.

problematic for women from middle class households than those from upper class households.

Sushila Patel comes from a middle class Patidar household. Her husband Bhula, works as a diamond cutter in Navsari and her three older children attend Sera school while the younger ones remain at home. Sushila is responsible for all household domestic and agricultural work on a daily basis as they cannot afford to hire labourers. Bhula's mother lives in the same household but she is old and, apart from childminding, is unable to carry out any other domestic task. In the peak agricultural season the household employs a domestic labourer to release Sushila to spend more time working on their farm where she supervises the temporarily employed farm labourers.

Sushila wakes up at 5 a.m. to milk the buffaloes and take the milk to the dairy. She then fetches water from the well in her neighbour's backyard (they have no well of their own), and lights the *chulla* to heat water for Bhula's bath. She cooks *rotla* and vegetables for him to take to work, and then gets the children ready for school. On the days when they employ a domestic labourer she is able to go to the fields earlier than usual. On other days she washes clothes and dishes before heading off to the farm. Often there is no space for her at the well and she cannot wash clothes until the afternoon. The household is now able to employ a *govario* but Sushila's afternoons are spent washing, cooking, cleaning, carrying out agricultural work in the fields and milking cattle.

Unpaid domestic tasks are these women's lowest priority as household agricultural work is considered more important. Thus, household maintenance activities are reduced, effectively limiting the potential for raising the household status. These middle class households are primarily concerned with the mere maintenance of their caste, class and status position, and women are not engaged in status production work to the same extent as upper class Patidar women. However, in comparison with lower caste women from households who are in a similar economic position to these middle class Patidars, a certain level of status must be maintained in order to identify them with the upper caste and distinguish them from lower castes. Yet, as they have neither the time nor the income, they are unable to entertain guests, offer high dowries or be involved in large gift exchanges. As Papanek says, although status production work is part of the process of social mobility by the household unit, it is not a necessity for survival, but an option that can be

'undertaken only at certain levels of income when these imply sufficient control over scarce resources to assure family survival' (Papanek 1979, 776).

Sushila and other women from the same class of household will be engaged in both agricultural and domestic activities until their households' income increases sufficiently to allow the hiring of labourers on a daily basis. With the increasing availability of access to loans for these households, some men are able to increase landholdings and cane production and employ labourers. Thus, they are now in a position to remove women from manual work, and thereby raise their status, gradually transforming the unpaid domestic work of these women into the type of work carried out by Patidar women from upper class households.

II HOUSEHOLD ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

The composition of the household is important in determining the range of activities in which Patidar women are involved. However, with in- and out-migration and life-cycle changes, the organisation and structure of the household is not static, and women's work is continually changing.

In joint households where there is more than one woman, domestic responsibilities can be 'shared'. This is particularly important as women go through different stages in their life-cycle. In nuclear households one woman may be responsible for carrying out all household tasks. The extent to which household composition affects individual households depends on the class position of that household. The number of adult female members or older children within middle class households makes a difference to the amount of work one woman is required to perform. By contrast, upper class women can rely on paid labourers and therefore, the implications of household size are reduced.

The following sections look at the ways in which the make-up of the household in terms of age, sex and relationship between members differentiates women's domestic work activities.

1 Joint Households

Joint households vary in composition but if there is more than one woman within the household, unless they are elderly and unable to carry out domestic activities, there can be

some sharing of responsibilities. Tasks are divided and delegated according to the female hierarchy. As women's position within the household changes so do their work patterns and their status and power within the household. Their domestic work varies as they move through the stages of being young unmarried daughters, young daughters-in-law, mothers, older daughters-in-law and, finally, mothers-in-law.

Mothers-in-law are generally involved in the management and supervision of other women and their work. However, as they get older the eldest daughter-in-law gradually takes over. Older women whose husbands are still alive tend to have more power within their households than if they are widowed. Their position as married women with a primary responsibility to their husband, who is generally recognised as the head of the household, allows them to maintain a powerful and dominant position. In most Patidar households, the youngest daughter-in-law is responsible for most of the manual domestic work. She is involved in the tasks that are considered more undignified and menial while her mother-in-law and older sister-in-law cook and pay social visits commensurate with their higher status.

The labour requirements of the household condition the areas of work for individual women within the joint household. In households where women are required to work in the fields, the youngest daughter-in-law remains at home with the mother-in-law while older sisters-in-law work in the fields.

The size of the household and the domestic responsibilities of the women within that household also determine when a woman can return to visit her *piyar*, the timing of marriages and choice of partner. In joint households it is possible for Patidar women to visit their *piyar* since there are other women who can take over their tasks. Older daughters-in-law generally take over their pregnant sisters-in-law's tasks although men and older women of the household no longer think that women carry out enough work to require a long period of rest before giving birth. The tradition of restricting menstruating women from cooking also continues in some households.

Those women who return to their *piyar* do have a rest, albeit for a short period. They have a status befitting a daughter visiting from her *sasru* but are an additional non-working member of their natal household. Therefore, women from their natal household, especially their *naland* (brother's wife), are responsible for additional domestic work

when pregnant women return to their *piyar*. Here, one woman's break from domestic work means an increase in another woman's workload.

During pregnancy, when a woman is unable to carry out her own domestic responsibilities, upper class households can hire additional domestic labourers whereas lower class households must distribute women's work to other female household members. One woman from a middle class joint household commented,

'I could refrain from manual, strenuous work when I was pregnant because my *derani* looked after the cattle and went to the fields. I still had to do *ghar nu kam* and all the cooking but at least I didn't have to go to the farm' (Bhavni Patel).

Relationships between female household members are often strained because of these events in individual women's lives. Shanta said that her mother-in-law made her feel very guilty when she was pregnant, saying,

'Now who will do all your work. I am too old and there is no one else. You must return quickly from your *piyar*' (Dhoodima Patel).

Shanta had to return from her *piyar* five days after the *shreemant* ceremony and stayed at her *sasru* until two weeks before the delivery. There are also problems between sisters-in-law caused by changes in domestic responsibilities. When Mita was pregnant her sister-in-law had to cancel a trip to her *piyar* and made Mita feel responsible for postponing her visit.

It is always women who are responsible for managing affairs within the home, and when one of them is unable to participate in housework they are responsible for the redistribution of their workload and the organising of other female neighbours and female kin to take over certain tasks. In households where women have to supervise in the fields as well as carry out all household activities, this redistribution of tasks becomes very difficult. Once a woman is three or four months pregnant she can no longer be seen out in the fields. She is then assigned work within the house while another woman takes her place in the field.⁵

⁵Since domestic responsibilities generally include agricultural tasks which are seen as being part of the overall responsibility of women within the household, they are interchangeable and the carrying out of one task can be transferred to another woman, thus making the analysis of different areas of work problematic.

'When I was pregnant and couldn't go out to the fields, *ma* would send my *derani* to the farm. I thought that was because I wasn't supposed to work too much but *ma* wouldn't let me rest. I had to do more than my share of the housework. Even before when I was menstruating and I couldn't cook, she made me clean out the barn or the loft' (Muni Patel).

In- and out-migration changes the amount of work that each woman within the household carries out and the division of labour between women. When Anu got married, her mother said,

'I am happy that Anu has married a good boy and they are settled in America but since she has left I have not been able to cope with all the work. We can't afford a *Dubli* and *ma* is too old to do any work. I have to go to the *kheti* (farm), milk the buffaloes, look after *ma* and *dada* and do all the other housework' (Savita Patel).

Much status production work is carried out by older women of the household who pay social visits, add final touches to dishes already prepared by younger women to make them look more elaborate and decorative, attend various ceremonies and look after guests. As far as younger women's involvement in status production work is concerned, their responsibilities in this area of work merely consist of behaving in the appropriate manner namely, remaining primarily within the home.

A new wife in her *sasru* must adjust to the existing organisation of the household, and within the joint family she has little power to demand reciprocal adjustments from other members of the household. This position only changes when she becomes an older daughter-in-law and eventually a mother-in-law. Thus,

'In a joint family there is segregation of the sexes and a general subordination of woman to man; woman's life is characterised by self-control, reserve, modesty and respect towards the female hierarchy' (Liddle and Joshi 1985, 142).

If an unmarried sister-in-law lives within the same household, the new daughter-in-law assumes responsibility for her tasks. The *naland* (sister-in-law), is permitted more 'leisure and freedom because her turn to get married and be a daughter-in-law will soon come' (Manju Patel).

When Jayshree married and moved to her *sasru* she complained of many domestic work responsibilities and longed to return to her *piyar*.

'My *diyar* and *naland* are unmarried and since I got married, and came to my *sasru*, my *naland* hasn't had to do any housework. I have to do it all because I am *vahu*. Until a *derani* comes into the house I will have to do everything' (Jayshree Patel).

Once her *derani* comes to live in the household, Jayshree will be the elder daughter-in-law and will then have the power to delegate the more strenuous and least liked tasks to her. In Sera, among young unmarried girls, there is always talk of the advantage of marrying an eldest son, which is that they would thereby acquire more power within their *sasru*. Even parents see a good match in these terms.

Women from joint households have some flexibility in their work patterns because of the possibility of sharing tasks. However, because of the increasing responsibilities of raising the status of the household and household agricultural work, rarely are women completely alleviated from performing tasks. Instead, the responsibilities for carrying out certain tasks are exchanged for others. Thus, work patterns and responsibilities are adjusted and reallocated to incorporate life-cycle changes. For example, a menstruating woman who is not allowed to cook will exchange responsibilities with another female household member who in turn will take her place at the *chulla*. A woman's hours of work are rarely reduced. They are simply occupied in different activities according to their stage in the life-cycle and position within the household.

2 Nuclear Households

Within Patidar households there is a rigid sexual division of labour whereby men do not carry out any domestic tasks. Therefore, in nuclear households where there is no other woman with whom to share tasks, inter-household relationships with female neighbours or kinfolk are important. However, in the absence of a female hierarchy, women from nuclear households often have greater control over their time and work even though their workload is often heavy. When members of joint households separate into nuclear households,

'a *bahu*, (daughter-in-law), can wrest some control over her daily life in her *susral* (in-law's), where self-determination is otherwise hard to achieve. The *sas* (mother-in-law) no longer operates such strict surveillance over her *bahu*, while the *bahu* can more actively schedule her working day and cook what her husband wants without regard to his relatives preferences' (Jeffery 1989, 53).

Even though upper class Patidars are in a position to employ domestic labourers, Patidar women are still required to be around to supervise labourers, organise the carrying out of different tasks and cook. Thus, upper and middle class women from nuclear households

have to find replacements when they return to their *piyar* or during pregnancy, and *suavavad* (post-partum).

Most nuclear households cannot maintain strict restrictions on menstruating women since they cannot afford to withdraw them from tasks when no other female member is available to carry them out. Most of these women continue to cook while menstruating but when a woman is ill or in the later months of pregnancy, a female relative is called in to help. These women do not come to look after the woman who is ill or pregnant but to ensure that all domestic work is carried out and that the household continues to run smoothly so that men of the household are not inconvenienced. Cooking is a particularly difficult task to delegate to another woman; not only must food be prepared at specific times during the day but food preparation is often highly personalised to suit the requirements and tastes of household members. Men may not demur towards the employment of different methods of cleaning by the woman who comes to help out but will complain about food not being prepared in the way they are accustomed to.

Women who come to help out also have domestic responsibilities within their own households. When Lila was ill no one could come and help because it was a busy agricultural period and her brother's wife was pregnant. Therefore, it is not always easy to find women who can take over responsibilities.

Hemu is divorced and lives with her brother and his wife. She has few domestic responsibilities, but, complains that,

'Everyone asks me to go and help them if they are ill or if they want to go away. Nani comes and fetches me just to help her make *rotlas* if they have visitors or to sit in her house and watch the Dubli while she goes to the field. They think I have nothing to do because I have no husband or children' (Hemu Patel).

Sushila often asked her neighbour to make *rotlas* for members of her household if she was going away for the day or was busy in the fields. However, after a time, her neighbour refused to help because Sushila was never free from her own domestic responsibilities and thus, could not reciprocate the favour.

In nuclear households, Patidar women are more dependent on paid domestic labourers, if they can afford to hire them, and on female neighbours and kinsfolk. Women from nuclear households that have moved out of the Patidar *falia* face particular problems. Although

some are able to employ domestic labourers they are isolated. When Madhu, who lives in a *haveli* (large house) outside the Patidar *falia*, needs other women to help her with *papad* rolling no one goes. One Patidar woman said,

'Madhu never comes to help when I am making *papad* because she lives further away and has to stay at home all the time. I know she is on her own but so am I, yet I go to help other women' (Chandan Patel).

The difference is that Chandan lives within the *falia* and can therefore leave her domestic labourer for a short time while she goes to help roll *papad*. She can also rely on neighbours to come and fetch her if she is required to return to her house. Madhu, on the other hand, is restricted to staying within and around the home by her unpaid domestic responsibilities.

Other customs have been regulated and altered in order to meet labour demands in nuclear households. For example, *shreemant* is now rarely carried out as anything other than a ritual and a formality. Few Patidar women go to stay at their *piyar* for more than a few weeks before the delivery of their child. Women are required to stay at their *sasru* to carry out their share of the agricultural and domestic work whether this involves supervising labourers, going out to the fields or washing and cleaning.

The effects of in- and out-migration upon women's work is much greater for women within nuclear households than for those who belong to joint households. The time of marriage and choice of marriage partner is often conditioned by the composition of the household and women's unpaid domestic work responsibilities.

'just before I got married, my *sasu* and *sasra* left for England. My husband and his grandfather were left in the village and they could not look after the farm on their own. My husband had to get married so that there would be a woman available to do all the housework. For five years I was married to him. During that time I did all the housework and milked the buffaloes. I had to get up at 5 a.m. and never stopped working all day. I didn't know anyone in my *sasru* whom I could ask for help. I wasn't allowed to go to my *piyar* because there was no one else who could look after *dada* (grandfather). When my sister got married, my brother

came to collect me but my husband told him that I had to be back in the evening. I could never stay overnight at my *piyar*' (Hemu Patel).⁶

Hemu's wedding was arranged because her husband needed someone to look after his grandfather and the house after his mother had left for Britain.

A similar situation occurred for Leena who was married to Rakesh when his mother and brothers moved to Britain. Rakesh was the only son left to look after the farm and, although they can afford a domestic labourer, it is still difficult for Leena to visit her *piyar*. Hemu and Leena's situations would not have arisen twenty years ago when most Patidar households were joint. At that time, a son emigrated leaving his wife and children in India. Gradually nuclear household units emigrated leaving old parents behind. Now, with agricultural production becoming so much more profitable, the tendency is for one son and his wife and children to remain in the village while others continue to emigrate. This may change when visas and green cards for entry into Britain and the United States are obtained.

There is also a change in women's work during the school holidays and during the summer when, because of the drought, children attend school only from 7.30 a.m. to 11 a.m. instead of from 10.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Young girls are then available to help out with housework. Indu Patel's young daughter, Dipli, looks after her younger brothers and sisters while washing clothes and dishes, and collecting water. Dipli is twelve and is able to do most of the cooking and cleaning while her mother goes to the fields. Thus, in middle class nuclear households where domestic labourers are not employed, school holidays reduce the domestic responsibilities of women. In upper class households, women's tasks, such as organising and supervising labourers, are not of the type that can be delegated to children.

All Patidars send their children to school at least until the age of fourteen or fifteen. Although many middle class women would prefer to have their daughters available to help with housework, education has become increasingly important. Sending children to school, rather than keeping them at home to work, shows that the household belongs to a

⁶Although Hemu's household is not strictly a 'nuclear' one, since her husband's grandfather lives within the same household, there is still no other female member with whom tasks can be shared.

high class and has high status. Pushpa said it would reflect badly on her if she kept her daughter from school to help with the housework; it would show others that she could not manage her own workload.

For some women, school holidays mean more work. Women with sons and no daughters have no help in domestic work. They have to cook more and watch over the boys throughout the day.

'Although they say that it is better to have boys, I don't know what I would do without Jyotsna and Nita. Boys would be more work because they never help their mothers. Look at Madhu - now the holidays are here she gets no time for anything. Jitu and Vimal play all day and never help her. Girls are better in some ways' (Lila Patel).

In nuclear households it is not possible to share and exchange responsibilities with other women on a daily basis. There are times however, when women are unable to work and female kinsfolk have to be called on to help out. But, this is not always an easy alternative.

HALPATI WOMEN

Halpati women belong to households with little or no access to land and therefore the paid employment which they are forced to take up must be combined with their unpaid domestic responsibilities. This section looks at unpaid domestic tasks carried out by Halpati women and how these affect, and are affected by, their paid work.

Since Halpatis were formerly bonded labourers of Patidar households, this combination of paid and unpaid work did not exist in the same form or to the same extent as it does now. Patidars require agricultural and domestic labourers but no longer take responsibility for the maintenance of the labourers' households. There is now a clearer separation between 'work place' and 'home' and in time allocation than when labourers worked for their *dhaniamos*' household and lived on his land. This does not mean that each activity is now carried out in a separate geographical location and within a set time period but that Halpati women must combine and manage two areas of work, one paid and the other unpaid.

Sex segregation among Halpatis is not as obvious nor as rigid as it is among Patidars. In areas of paid activities men and women may perform different tasks but within the same sphere of activity and in the same location. Besides, *chapras* are too small to allow for any spatial segregation between male and female areas. Most Halpati *chapras* consist of one room. One side is used for cooking and the other for sleeping and this lack of space means that most activities are performed outside the home.

The sexual division of labour is more flexible in paid work activities than in unpaid domestic work activities. Therefore, although Halpati men and women may be engaged in the same paid agricultural activity, the division of labour within the household places full responsibility on women for household production and reproduction. Halpati women carry out all domestic tasks including washing clothes and dishes, cooking and cleaning as well as childbearing and childrearing. They also collect dung for fuel and to patch up their *chapras* and *chullas* after the monsoon. Their work has been made much harder because they have to collect firewood for cooking and water for washing, often walking far from their homes. These tasks are time-consuming and must be fitted in with daily paid responsibilities. They do not have sufficient funds to store food and so necessarily, make daily visits to the village store for paraffin and flour which adds time onto their daily activities. Some Halpati men may look after children or cook when no woman is available, but these tasks are carried out only occasionally and are not the regular responsibility of Halpati men.

The amount of time for unpaid domestic work varies greatly during the year, from very little time during the peak agricultural season to more time in the middle of the monsoon when employment is not always available. Similarly, the time taken to carry out tasks varies seasonally. Some Halpati men take up work as watchmen when they move their households to the fields for periods of up to nine months. Women then have to travel further for water and food and are isolated from the support of other women in their *falia*. There is also no access to farmers' land during the monsoon, so firewood and dung are not easily accessible.

From the late 1960s and early 1970s, Halpatis have been allocated small areas of land on the margins of the village on which to set up Halpati Societies. In or near each of these Societies is a well and a small shop. The government gave Halpatis cheap materials with which to build neat rows of *chapras* although the original layout has subsequently

changed substantially. When a son marries and brings his wife to his *piyar* he usually builds a small *chapra* next door to his parents where he lives with his wife. Similarly, if a woman brings a *ghar jamai*, they will live separately from her parents. There are few joint Halpati households.

Because of this proximity of households, there is much more inter-household sharing of responsibilities between Halpati women than among Patidars. Kinsfolk generally live next door or nearby if not in the same household and old parents or in-laws can sometimes be called on to watch over young children. Younger Halpati women are not as controlled in their time and work by mothers-in-law or sisters-in-law in their domestic responsibilities. This contrasts with the lack of control they have over paid work activities which are conditioned by male members of their households and employers.

I CLASS DIFFERENCES

It is the paid employment of individual female household members that determines the amount of time available for household domestic work. The following section examines the way in which Halpati women combine their unpaid domestic work with their paid work.

1 Unpaid Domestic Work and Paid Domestic Work

Women from 42 Halpati households work as paid domestic labourers for Patidar households. This is an area of paid work where women carry out similar tasks to those which they carry out within their own household. Cash incomes from this area of work are very low but there are certain advantages (discussed in Chapter Seven). Halpati women are able to take young children with them and therefore carry out childminding responsibilities at the same time as earning an income, and these children are fed and sometimes clothed, depending on the generosity of the employer. In this way, Halpati women can partly reduce their unpaid domestic responsibilities when they carry out paid domestic work. However, they often resent the demands made of them as paid domestic labourers when they also have their own domestic responsibilities. One Halpati woman complained,

'I spend more time washing and dressing *Kanbi's* children than I can ever spend looking after my own. I rush here in the morning not even having washed or fed my own children and then the *Kanbis* say we do not care for our own children and that we do not look after them properly but I don't have the time' (Savita Halpati), (see Cock 1980).

These women work in Patidar households from 7 a.m. until noon when those who do not take up agricultural work return home to carry out domestic work. For example, Munki returns home from her paid domestic work at noon when she fetches water and carries out some of her own domestic tasks. She then looks after her two young children and collects firewood for her *chulla* from nearby fields.

As part of their wage, most Patidar households give domestic labourers food at noon to take home and share with other household members. Men who work as *kayam mujoor* are also fed by their employers thus reducing Halpati women's household cooking responsibilities.

Paid domestic labourers are expected to work longer hours during weddings or special festivals and so have even less time to carry out unpaid domestic chores. Extra remuneration is offered but this is typically minimal. One Halpati woman described the difficulty faced at such times:

'I have worked for the whole day every day this week because of Bhavna's wedding. All they gave me was a few Rupees and an old sari. My children came with me but there was no time to wash clothes and yesterday I had to ask Munju (a neighbour) to fetch water for me and I had to wash the clothes in the night. The *Kanbi's* extra money doesn't help with all that work' (Sita Halpati).

Since paid domestic labourers can be required to work flexible and extra hours, they are unable to plan their own domestic responsibilities. As Shanti said,

'If I ask to go home in the middle of the day to feed my children and fetch water, *kaki* always says, "if I let you go you won't come back for hours and I don't want to have to come and fetch you'. I tell her I have work in my house too, but *Kanbis* think they are the only ones who wash and clean and that we are dirty' (Shanti Halpati).

When the system of permanent attachment prevailed, Halpati female labourers could carry out their unpaid domestic work alongside their work responsibilities for the *dhaniamo's* (landholder's) household. Not only were many of the daily requirements of the Halpati household met by Patidar farmers, but they also lived on the farmer's land

and therefore had easy access to water and firewood. Of course, these facilities were provided so that women would be free to devote more time to work for the *dhaniamo* and his household, and were inadequate 'benefits' to compensate for their poor living situation.

Farmers no longer necessarily have direct control over all members of a Halpati household or intra-household relationships, controls and power structures. Previously, a *dhaniamo* could override the wishes of all members of Halpati households if he required the labour of any one member. This no longer exists to the same extent and Halpati women have to balance the demands of their employers with those of their husbands. This is not always easy as Bhanu explained,

"The *Kanbis* want us to work more, particularly during weddings or when Kanbi women cannot do any work, but our husbands get angry. "Who will do all our *ghar nu kam*?" they say to us. One day my employer wanted me to stay and grind the *jowar*. I didn't want to stay because it is tiring work and takes so much time, but my husband wanted money for *daru* so he made me work. Then last week my husband got angry because my employer asked me to work extra hours which I did but then I didn't have enough time to fetch water for my own household. (Banu Halpati).

Halpati men now exert more control over their household members contrasting with the previous situation whereby this control was minimised by their employers' demands. This is not to contend that the overall power relations within the village caste and class hierarchy have become more equal. Landholders still exert considerable authority and control over those who lack access to the means of production.

2 Unpaid Domestic Work and Paid Agricultural Work

'Women.....have to do double work! We have to do the housework, and when the housework is finished we have to do field work, and when the field work is finished we have to take care of the children. We have to do all the work. What do men do? They get up, they take a bath, they eat some bread and go to the fields. But understand what their duty is; they only do the work allotted to them in the fields. They only do one sort of work.....if it (housework) would have been paid, we would have got *double pay*. If housework were paid it would go to the women. Are you men listening? (Kaminibai) (Omvedt 1979, 765).

This is the situation that exists for most Halpati women and no doubt, many of them would concur with the sentiments expressed above.

Women cannot take children with them when they work in the fields which makes it difficult for Halpati women with young children and no one available to look after them during the day to take up paid agricultural work.

Some paid agricultural work for which women labourers are required, such as weeding, can involve only half a day's work, in which case most Halpati women combine this work with their childminding responsibilities. Working hours for this agricultural activity are organised to allow women time to return home for a few hours at noon so that they can carry out unpaid domestic work before returning to the fields at 2 p.m. where they work until 5 p.m. The work is divided into two shifts with payment being made at the end of each shift. This means that Halpati women can combine their paid work and fulfil their unpaid domestic responsibilities more effectively and are not necessarily committed to working both shifts. Most other work, however, involves a commitment to working in the morning and the afternoon sessions. Rice transplanting and harvesting require a full day's work and labourers are only paid at the end of the day. Some women with young children split the work between the morning and afternoon shifts and share the money at the end of the day. However, farmers are not keen on this as they can never be guaranteed that labourers will turn up in the afternoon.

When labourers are employed by farmers in neighbouring villages, attracted by the incentive of higher wages, few Halpati women with children are able to go. These gangs of labourers tend to be made up of unmarried girls or women without childcare responsibilities. They leave Sera at 6.30 a.m. but have no opportunity to return to Sera until they finish work at 7 p.m.

One Halpati woman with four daughters under the age of six was unable to carry out agricultural work for the whole day in another village. She complained,

'Everyone has gone to weed in the sugar fields in Pinsad today but I could not go. Until the eldest is old enough to look after the others, there is little farm work that I can do' (Summan Halpati).

There are certain advantages in carrying out paid agricultural work. With increasing amounts of public land being appropriated by Patidar farmers through the bribing of local officials, women now have to travel far to gain entry into fields to collect firewood. However, female labourers are able to collect firewood from the fields at the same time as

carrying out paid agricultural work, thereby cutting down on time spent on unpaid domestic work.⁷

Halpati women's paid work greatly affects their unpaid domestic work responsibilities. For most of them it is imperative for the financial security of their households that they engage in as much paid work as they are able to find. This has become increasingly important as agricultural paid employment opportunities for Halpati men have declined. The necessity to take on an increasing amount of paid work forces Halpati women to perform only the most essential household domestic tasks if they cannot find paid employment which allows them the time or the opportunity to carry out these tasks. More generally, Halpati women have less time for their own unpaid domestic work, and instead of their unpaid domestic work conditioning the form and extent of their paid employment, the situation is the reverse; it is their paid work that conditions the amount of time remaining for domestic tasks and when these tasks can be carried out.

II HOUSEHOLD ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

There are 31 joint and 91 nuclear Halpati households in Sera. However, the differences between them in terms of women's work patterns are not as great as they are amongst Patidars. Most female members are required to take up paid employment irrespective of the size of the household. Furthermore, women from nuclear households are generally able to call upon the support of female kinsfolk who are not household members and neighbours in such a way as to minimise the difference between them and women from joint households as far as sharing strategies are concerned. The existence of some *ghar jamais* means that a number of women are living amongst their natal kin from whom they may receive more help than from their in-laws. It is often easier for a woman to ask her own mother for help in domestic work than to ask her mother-in-law.⁸

⁷The collection of dung from public land is auctioned to a farmer and any Halpati caught collecting dung outside their own *falia* can be fined. See Agarwal (1986, 1989); Shiva (1989).

⁸In Sera, in-laws were less likely to interfere in cases of domestic violence whereas a woman could always be guaranteed the support of her own parents and brothers.

Life-cycle changes are influential in effecting work patterns, and strategies concerning the distribution of unpaid work are adopted that relate to the size and composition of the household. Halpati women still maintain strict restrictions while menstruating. They may collect water but most of them avoid cooking. Halpati men cook at such times but only when there is no female relative or friend available. It is usually when women are away from home that men will cook since they have no access to a social network such as women maintain, and would feel embarrassed to ask another woman to cook for them.⁹

Divorces are common amongst Halpatis, and unlike Patidars children remain with the woman after a divorce. A divorced woman can also go back to her *piyar* once her marriage has broken down and will not be made to feel a financial burden on her natal kin because she is able to take up paid employment. Many single mothers prefer to work as domestic labourers as they are provided with food and clothes and because they can take children to work with them.

Halpati girls start looking after younger brothers and sisters at an early age, often when they are as young as five years old, and soon after learn how to cook and carry out other domestic work. Very few Halpati girls are sent to school and being around their mothers most of the time they gradually learn domestic skills. However, as soon as they are old enough, they also engage in paid employment and do not stay at home to carry out unpaid domestic work. Therefore, housework can be delegated to daughters who are old enough to carry out unpaid domestic work but not old enough to take up paid employment.

Pregnant women carry out paid and unpaid work for almost the entire duration of their pregnancy. However, after delivery, they are 'impure' for a period of *sava maina* (five weeks post-partum). Ideally, they should not cook or collect water for anyone else apart from themselves and their baby. Neighbours and relatives usually help out at this time, but because of increasing paid work responsibilities due to economic necessity, it has become difficult for other women to help out and for Halpati women to maintain these restrictions for more than a few days.

⁹Halpatis maintaining restrictions while menstruating contradicts the situation recently emerging amongst Patidar women. It appears that it is better for Patidar men's status that women cook while menstruating rather than requiring men to cook at this time although these women are breaking with purity and pollution regulations.

When pregnant daughters return to their *piyar* their mother's domestic work responsibilities are increased. Bhanki did not work in paid employment for a week when her daughter came for the delivery of her first child:

'I need to spend time with my daughter now that she has come from her *sasru*. I have to cook her good food and look after her' (Bhanki Halpati).

Only rarely can Halpati women take time out of paid employment in order to spend more time on unpaid domestic responsibilities. Bhanki was able to do this only because her husband was making money from *daru* at the time.

Life-cycle changes have fewer implications for Halpati women's unpaid domestic responsibilities than for Patidar women's work in the same sphere.

CONCLUSION

The rural transformation process in this area has led to changes in women's unpaid work activities but individual women's experiences have changed in different ways. Some women have an increased unpaid (and paid) workload whereas others have been moved out of one area of unpaid work into another.

Many Patidar women have been moved from carrying out manual tasks for the day-to-day running of their households and are increasingly involved in maintaining and raising the status of their households. The household has sufficient access to the means of production to engage labourers, maximise profits and further reduce women's manual domestic responsibilities. Upper class Patidar women now engage in activities which are not only geared towards the production and reproduction of the household on a daily basis, but also towards the raising of the class and social standing of the household within the community. They have become increasingly confined to carrying out activities within the home: they supervise domestic labourers, organise the running of the household and carry out status production work. Middle class Patidar women still carry out some unpaid agricultural tasks and therefore, cannot engage so extensively in status production work. Furthermore, they must organise their time to combine all work activities within and outside the home.

Halpati women have to combine different areas of work in order to survive and must organise their time and work in order to fulfil all duties efficiently. However, their unpaid domestic responsibilities generally cannot be a priority. They benefit from close kinship ties, but even those to whom they can delegate work have their own increasing workload. Furthermore, there are very few Halpati women who are not engaged in paid work activities.

Halpati women have also experienced changes in their unpaid domestic work. Some responsibilities that were taken over by Patidar farmers during the bonded labour system, such as the provision of all meals and clothes, are now the sole responsibility of Halpati women. Halpati women now have less time to carry out unpaid domestic work in contrast to Patidar women who have more time for this activity. Simultaneously, this has resulted in an increased burden of housework for poor women as access to, and availability of, fuel has been reduced by the commercialisation of agriculture.

Out of economic necessity, Halpati women have fewer restrictions on their mobility. The sexual division of labour in domestic work activities is less rigid for Halpati women and sex segregation much harder to maintain because of limited physical space within the home and because men and women are often employed to work in the same field.

Patidar men are not directly involved in unpaid domestic work although they exert indirect influence in that they hold financial control and can make demands for food and clean clothes at any time. Halpati men also remain outside the sphere of domestic work although they may cook when necessary and look after children but only on an irregular basis. Women do not have control over household finances but, since they are responsible for buying food from the store on their way back from their paid employment, they generally spend their wages on food for the household. Men's wages are used to buy food but more often are spent on *bidis* and *daru* which are consumed by both men and women.

It would not be true to say that upper class and upper caste women, having been removed from more manual tasks, now have more leisure time. However, there is a vast qualitative and quantitative difference between carrying out work for the benefit of household status and prestige, and carrying out manual labour for daily household survival, only procuring enough for subsistence. Halpati and Patidar women's experiences of unpaid domestic work are becoming increasingly diverse. On one hand, as their

households have secured their daily survival, Patidar women are spending an increasing amount of time on work that maintains and raises the status of their households. On the other hand, Halpati women struggle with the increasing amount of paid work they are forced to take up out of economic necessity, and have less time to complete their own domestic responsibilities.

10 CONCLUSION

Women's work has been analysed in this thesis in the context of the specific conditions in Sera, south Gujarat. A classification system which distinguishes between forms of work and women in different socio-economic positions has been developed. The particular locality of the fieldwork and the theoretical framework constructed are used as an example of a way of developing further our understanding of the position of women.

Following an outline in Chapter One of the theoretical issues with which this study is concerned, Chapter Two examined methodological problems. The choice of the ethnographic method as the one best suited to an analysis of social processes and social change was explained. Chapter Two also considered the role of the researcher and the general problems encountered during fieldwork including the particular dilemmas I faced.

Chapters Three and Four outlined the demographic structure of Sera and the particular process of agrarian transformation respectively. The analytical construct and the divisions that I employed to differentiate women and their work were presented in Chapter Five.

The following four chapters provided the description and explanation of the empirical reality. Chapters Six and Seven looked at the paid agricultural and paid domestic work experiences of Halpati women and the way in which these were combined with unpaid responsibilities. The unpaid agricultural and domestic work of both Patidar and Halpati women was described in Chapters Eight and Nine. The way the empirical data were presented in these chapters followed from the framework previously set up and provides an example of the way in which differentiation among women can be analysed.

The experiences of individual women described in this thesis occur within the context of a society undergoing a specific form of rural transformation. This thesis looks at women's work as it articulates with two distinct but interrelated sets of social relations; capitalism and patriarchy. The emphasis has been on differentiation and diversity of women and their work to identify their relationship to these two forces. Women do not only operate within these social relations and are affected by them, but are also important in sustaining and defining the form of social relations as wage-labourers and unpaid workers. By differentiating between women it has been possible to locate the cause and site of

oppression of different women within the broader exploitation of women by men and of wage-labourers by capital.

Patidar women sustain and raise the class and status position of their household through avoiding manual work and engaging in status production work within a rigid sexual division of labour, whereas Halpati women carry out an increasing amount of paid work in order to sustain their households and allow the raising of class position of a landed minority. Thus, the needs of the household in order to subsist and the requirements of capital accumulation desired by Patidars determines the form of gender and class relations within the Halpati household and outside their home. The demand for this specific form of capital accumulation requires the maintenance of a strict division of labour by sex for most Patidar households and the expropriation of wage-labour from a majority for whom the sexual division of labour must necessarily be minimised. In this way, women's work not only articulates with patriarchy and capitalism but also allows their extension. Capitalism and patriarchy are interrelated at different levels. For example, it is patriarchal ideology and the needs of capital accumulation which make women primarily responsible for unpaid domestic and unpaid agricultural work.

The experiences of Patidar and Halpati women are becoming increasingly diverse and they are positioned differently in relation to class and gender inequalities.

I WOMEN'S WORK

Work and work patterns contribute to the form of women's oppression and the forms of control exerted on them and by them. Clearly these work patterns are part of a wider context in which there are more diffuse and intangible overarching factors determining women's position. These find their expression in customs regulating, for example, marriage, controls over fertility, women's access to resources and other forms of social and physical control such as domestic violence. In this thesis, these issues have been brought into the discussion, insofar as they impact on women's work patterns but were not considered separately.

It is these wider systems of control which create the context in which, for example, women do not own land and in which they are expected to follow pre-determined paths with respect to their life-cycle. They create a particular socialisation of women, reinforcing their subordinate position in society.

The system which results is not only one which is imposed by men and male-dominated ideology on women, but also one which is internalised by women themselves. Thus, there is an ideological control whereby, for example, although men may restrict women's mobility and work activities at times of menstruation, women concur with this view and feel themselves to be polluting. Thus, this form of control, which appears self-constructed, has an influence on women's self-image and self-value. However, values are not fixed or rigid but change with particular conditions. To return to the example of menstruation, certain Patidar women cannot maintain purity/pollution restrictions. In this case, the sexual division of labour within households that are now predominantly nuclear engenders a change in behaviour and attitudes. It is therefore important to consider the changing nature of ideologies within which gender relations are constructed and by extension, the way in which these affect women's work patterns.

The differentiation that exists between women and women's work emerges as the central theme in this thesis. Changes in the agrarian system such as increasing in- and out-migration, the commercialisation of agricultural production processes and transformed labour relations have affected the work that individual women perform and also their status and position. Furthermore, the form and extent of control over women and exerted by women has undergone transformation, further differentiating them. The resulting picture is one of women's continued subordination. However, the subordination is one which is manifested and impinges on different women in complex and diverse ways.

In this thesis, differences between women and their work have been elucidated through a classification system based on distinctions between paid and unpaid and agricultural and domestic work. Within these broad categories, further divisions between women were discussed in terms of class and caste position of households, life-cycle changes and household organisation and structure.

1 Paid and Unpaid Activities

In terms of the paid and unpaid distinction, I have shown that one group, Patidar women, are involved solely in unpaid activities whilst another group, Halpati women, engage in both paid and unpaid work. However, Halpati women were also identified as increasingly involved in paid activities to the detriment of the time available for their unpaid responsibilities.

Within their households, Halpati women have the potential for economic independence and this allows them a degree of liberty which may be manifested in the ability to leave their marital situation. Since they have the opportunity to earn a wage they can return to their natal village where they will not be seen as dependents. Thus, their access to paid work allows them a possibility of supporting themselves and their children. However, Halpati women can not always obtain regular paid employment. I have illustrated how their opportunities are restricted either to working as paid domestic labourers, for which remuneration is below subsistence, or as *choota mujoor* which is usually irregular and temporary work. Thus, there is a gap between the potential that exists for sustainable independence and the likelihood of its realisation.

Within their households, Halpati women's paid work is regarded as an economic contribution and their status therefore, rises. However, the payment is often so low that this contribution is also considered to be marginal. Furthermore, their paid domestic work is tied to their husbands, and thus, falls under male control.¹

Because of the different forms and localities in which Halpati women work their time and work, is controlled by different people at different times. As paid domestic labourers they are supervised by Patidar women; as paid agricultural labourers their work patterns are determined by farmers and supervised by farmers or their wives, whilst in the unpaid domestic sphere, they are subordinate to their menfolk.

Finally, and most importantly, Halpati women are increasingly bound into a situation which squeezes the amount of time spent on the reproduction of their own households in order to meet increasing demands as paid labourers. Symbolically, even when it comes to who should be responsible for the control of fertility, the centrality of Halpati women's paid work is used as a reason for encouraging men rather than women to be sterilised. The argument is that were Halpati women to be sterilised, they would be unable to carry out their daily tasks effectively because the operation requires a two to three month

¹Controls over women are manifest in different ways. Sometimes they are expressed overtly and physically in the form of domestic violence. I heard of, and witnessed incidents of, domestic violence by Halpati men against Halpati women but do not think that these women, more than women from other castes, more frequently face this form of violence. Instead, this only appeared as so because their every day lives were much more shared and in the open, as opposed to, for example, Patidar women's lives which tended to be more isolated and less visible to the outsider.

recuperation period. During this time, they are unable to perform the tasks which their paid and unpaid labour require, in particular the lifting and carrying of goods.

In contrast to Halpati women's work patterns, Patidar women's work consists only of unpaid activities. Because of their caste status and class position, they are not involved in paid employment and therefore lack the potential for economic autonomy and are always seen as dependent. In addition, their lack of involvement in paid labour and consequent lack of financial independence, means that it is difficult for them to leave a marriage and return to their *piyar*. The divorce rate amongst Patidars is high, with at least one per household. These divorces tend to be instigated by husbands in contrast to Halpati households where it is more often women who seek a divorce. This difference seems to suggest that Halpati women's potential for economic independence allows them to take greater control over their domestic situation (see footnote 1).

When Patidar women are expelled from the household or choose to leave their husbands, they return as dependants to their natal kin. Here, they are seen as a financial burden on male members of their *piyar*, even if these men are wealthy, and are therefore usually forced to remarry, generally within a period of six months. In reality, far from being financial dependents, these women's return to their *piyar* brings *sharam* (shame or embarrassment) on themselves and their natal kin whether they have been pushed from their *sasru* or chosen to leave. Furthermore, they are not allowed to keep their children with them since they are not in a position to support them financially and because it is not considered appropriate for a woman to enter into a second marriage with children from a previous one.

The absence of Patidar women's involvement in paid work is economically possible and is conceived of as a means to acquire higher status. In addition, despite the controls over Patidar women mentioned above, they positively internalise this situation as a form of independence in that they are 'free' from working for someone other than their household members and from carrying out manual labour. Because they only carry out unpaid work they are only subordinate to the control of other male and female household members. Furthermore, it is within the unpaid sphere that Patidar women can exert control over others. Within the rigid household hierarchy, they can be superordinate vis a vis younger women or, as supervisors, they are able to command paid female labourers. This contrasts with the situation for Halpati women nearly all of whom must carry out an increasing amount of paid work out of necessity, and thus household hierarchy is not so pertinent in facilitating the control of others.

Thus, individual women are positioned differently in class and gender relations; Patidar women's subordination lies more in unequal gender relations within the household whereas Halpati women's extensive involvement in waged-labour has intensified their subordination through exploitative class relations and a patriarchal system within which they are delegated particular paid and unpaid responsibilities.

2 Agricultural and Domestic Activities

In this thesis, the classification adopted also makes a distinction between agricultural and domestic tasks. I accept that this distinction is a difficult one since specific tasks often transcend these divisions and for instance, much of women's unpaid agricultural work is carried as part of their domestic responsibilities. For example, Patidar women's responsibility for cooking for fieldhands is commonly perceived as a domestic task although I identify this work as belonging more properly to the agricultural sphere. However, it is necessary to make divisions between agricultural and domestic work in order to identify the range and mix of tasks in which women are involved, to understand the way in which the carrying out of different work patterns relates to production and reproduction within the household and outside the home and to assess individual women's relationship to household and non-household members.

Halpati and Patidar women are involved in both agricultural and domestic tasks. However, the form and extent of these involvements vary between them and amongst the two groups. Halpati women are variously involved in combinations of paid and unpaid agricultural and paid and unpaid domestic tasks, whereas Patidar women are solely involved in unpaid agricultural and unpaid domestic work.

Halpati and Patidar women are responsible for unpaid domestic tasks for their own households; work which involves the maintenance of household members. However, I have shown that the amount of time Halpati women can devote to this area of work has been reduced to a minimum. On the other hand, Patidar women have been increasingly confined to a different range of activities carried out within the house and are now primarily engaged in those domestic tasks aimed at maintaining and raising the status of their household. Thus, for Halpati women, the time spent in unpaid domestic work has changed, i.e. been reduced, whereas for Patidar women, it is the nature of their tasks that has changed, i.e. removal from manual tasks and concentration on status production work. This has led to increasing differentiation between women from the two castes.

Because of their men's involvement in agricultural work, Halpati and Patidar women are also involved in unpaid agricultural tasks as part of their responsibilities as wives and daughters. For example, Halpati women take over agricultural tasks allocated to their menfolk as paid work, such as looking after cattle taken on *bhage*, and Patidar women supervise paid labourers working on their households' land.

Responsibility for, and the nature of, these tasks has changed in recent years. Halpati men have only recently gained access to these forms of paid agricultural work which has meant that women's participation in their men's tasks in the form of unpaid agricultural work is new and is increasing.

Patidar women, on the other hand, used to carry out more manual work, than at present, when they worked beside paid labourers. Increasingly, however, their unpaid agricultural work has become confined to the home and involves only supervisory tasks in the fields.

In the case of Halpatis and Patidars, the transformation of women's responsibilities are a consequence of the changes that have taken place in the agrarian system and are determined by their menfolk's involvement in agriculture. Moreover, neither group of women have any say over the type of tasks they are required to perform or any direct control over the income derived from their work.

Only Halpati women are involved in paid agricultural and paid domestic work. However, their experiences in each of these areas are different. Within the paid domestic sphere, their time and work is controlled to a greater extent and their remuneration is lower than for paid agricultural work. Furthermore, paid domestic labourers are tied to the employment of male members of their household. However, there are advantages which ameliorate these detrimental factors: they benefit from additional payment in kind for themselves and their children and have access to loans in times of need.

At most times of the year, Halpati women continue to have access to paid agricultural work, in which they are involved in 'female' tasks such as weeding. For this involvement they are given a daily wage comparable to that paid to men and have greater control over their time and work than in paid domestic employment.

Paid agricultural and paid domestic work have implications of status for the women who carry them out and for their households. Those who are involved in paid agricultural work earn a higher income and have a modicum of control over their time and work, whereas those carrying out paid domestic tasks receive little remuneration and are in effect, 'tied' to

their employer's household and dependent on the employment of their menfolk. Therefore, the status of women varies between individual women according to their work patterns.

What clearly emerges from the different categories of work discussed in the thesis is that both agricultural and domestic work, whether paid or unpaid, are productive tasks necessary for the maintenance and reproduction of the household. Thus, a production/reproduction dichotomy would ignore a complex reality of the relationship between the two. In fact, I would argue that production and reproduction cannot be separated.

Theoretical frameworks and empirical studies in which distinctions between agricultural and domestic work are not made have a tendency to make invisible some areas of women's work, to take little account of the different spheres in which they are involved and thereby ignore the complexity of women's work experiences. Furthermore, making these divisions enables an understanding of the different strategies adopted by households for survival, in the case of Halpatis, and for capital accumulation and fulfilment of status aspirations in the case of Patidars.

3 Diversity of Women

Besides differentiating tasks, the responsibilities of individual women within these spheres of work are further differentiated by their own socio-economic position.

The household caste and class position determines the way in which household labour is allocated. Therefore, some people sell their wage-labour working for others who in turn are able to withdraw from certain areas of work reflecting their household's rising economic and social status. In addition, women's work experiences are conditioned by the composition of the household and their position within it. Within joint households, sharing of tasks occurs based on a female hierarchy while in nuclear households with only one adult female member there is no task-sharing.

Upper class Patidar women are increasingly involved in status production work while middle class Patidar women continue to perform manual agricultural and domestic tasks. Another implication of class position within the Patidar caste is that middle class women are involved to a greater extent in the running of the farm since men are more often engaged in non-agricultural paid employment to supplement their income from the land. Furthermore, for middle class Patidar women, the implications of household size are more

important than for women from upper class households because the latter are in a position to hire workers to replace household labour.

The delegation of tasks that takes place within joint Patidar households reflects female hierarchies of age and social position. Thus, for example, young daughters-in-law are delegated manual work or confined within the home to carry out domestic tasks while mothers-in-law take on a supervisory role. With changes in a woman's life-cycle, her position in the household and the work for which she is responsible also change.

Within the Halpati caste, there are less clear cut class distinctions. Differences exist more in the form of paid work involvement rather than in income levels. Although the sharing of tasks in joint households is commonplace amongst most castes, Halpati women have an increasing workload of paid employment thus making the sharing of unpaid responsibilities less possible. However, inter-household networks are strong within this caste group and, where there is a need for sharing tasks, these might transcend household boundaries, making the size and composition of the Halpati household less pertinent in this respect. Variations in work responsibilities that are a result of differences in age and social position are negligible amongst Halpati women because of the economic necessity that compels nearly all of them to acquire paid work.

Work responsibilities in this caste, as among Patidars, vary with other life-cycle considerations such as menstruation and pregnancy. However, there are differences in the effect of life-cycle changes on women and their work between these two caste groups. Besides household organisation and structure, these effects are partly determined by factors of economic necessity, social status and gender relations. For example, in the case of menstruating women, Patidar men choose to allow women to continue their cooking responsibilities, contrary to purity and pollution restrictions, rather than take over this task themselves. Two reasons can be postulated for this decision. Firstly, and somewhat ironically, paid domestic labourers are excluded from cooking for Patidar households because of caste regulations regarding concepts of purity and pollution. Secondly, Patidar men would feel emasculated were they to engage in 'women's' work. The dilemma of choosing between purity/pollution regulations as they are applied to women and the sexual division of labour is resolved in favour of the latter. This example shows the interplay between different expressions of patriarchal ideology. The sexual division of labour in Halpati households is more flexible and this, combined with the desire to raise their status by adhering to purity and pollution restrictions, means that Halpati men prefer to carry out this primarily female domestic task rather than permit menstruating women to

break with social regulations. The choices made within households are therefore often very different and this example shows the variety of factors that can determine the decisions that are made regarding menstruating women's work which include social status, maintenance of social rules and regulations and perhaps most importantly, the form of the sexual division of labour.

II PROBLEMS IN CLASSIFICATION

Previous studies that have attempted to describe women's work and position have tended to homogenise their experiences, failing to distinguish between those conditions faced by all women and those that are specific to particular groups of women. When looking beyond the gender divide, it is necessary to identify the major forces behind women's differentiation. However, making clear cut divisions between women and the tasks that they perform, is problematic. Furthermore, in the very process of identifying categories there is a tendency for an emerging classification to be used so rigidly as to falsify a complex reality. This is often because theoretical/conceptual and empirical/descriptive classifications and dichotomies are confused.

Though classification into different groups is useful as an initial step to de-homogenise women, there is a danger that it will create another conceptual barrier to understanding the totality of individual women's experiences. Thus, the multi-faceted experiences of individual women have the potential to be submerged by a classification of groups of women such as the one I adopt in the same way that it is occluded by an all encompassing, exclusive focus on the gender divide. In order to minimise the simplifications which result from a rigid application of this approach, I have attempted to illustrate the ways in which particular women combine their different areas of work on a daily basis and the way in which work patterns change over a longer period.²

²Throughout the fieldwork and writing up of this thesis, I was forced to question the possibility and even validity of attempting to formulate a framework which focused on individual women rather than on groups of women. Perhaps a focus on individual experiences are more applicable to Western, twentieth century societies where individuality is emphasised. Having carried out this study I feel that, for example, it would not have been possible to describe the experiences of paid domestic labourers without an understanding of the experiences of their female employers. An exclusive focus on the individual may not allow an accurate or full understanding of the interconnectedness of women's lives and their experiences in the rural Indian context.

III FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

The central theme in this study has been the examination of different women's work experiences within a specific rural context. The nature of agrarian capitalism is specific insofar as it articulates particular historical and socio-economic factors and therefore, provides a particular example of rural change. Clearly, however, it has implications for, and is affected by, much wider forces and processes of change. Furthermore, the form of agrarian capitalism existing within this context is not static, but changing, and thus continuously transforming the types of work in which women are involved and the social relations under which they carry out this work.

In analysing women's work and the development of capitalism in agriculture, we can gain a greater understanding of the relationship between class and gender; capitalism and patriarchy. It is these relationships which need to be examined further in order to understand the nature of agrarian capitalism and assess its effects on women and gender relations.

On the basis of the findings of this research, it is possible to identify several forces of change which are likely to impact on the relations and processes already examined. Here, I can only speculate on several possible alternatives of the future path and form of capitalist development in agriculture which directly and indirectly has implications for women's lives; their work patterns, the site and form of their oppression and subordination and the sources of their control.

Considering the continually changing nature of rural transformation, there are several factors affecting the village of Sera which reflect much wider processes occurring and also have more extensive implications for other areas. As far as immediate changes are concerned, I consider as important three issues of immediate relevance to the situation in this region of south Gujarat:

First, despite the current problems of accessibility to irrigation water and the relatively low crushing capacity of the sugar co-operative serving this particular area, Patidar farmers will continue to produce sugar cane. Furthermore, their production of other food grains will decrease as mangoes also become increasingly important. Thus the two major crops grown will be cane and mangoes, to the exclusion of other crops, both of which rely heavily on seasonal in-migrant labourers.

Secondly, Patidars continuing to migrate abroad and renting their land to other caste members who remain in the village, suggests that there will be further concentration of the land in the hands of a minority and thus, increasing polarisation between the different landholding and landless classes. It is also possible that there will be a new group of important farmers among the Ahirs if the current rate of Patidar out-migration continues. However, it is equally possible that the number of returning migrant Patidars might increase not only with the realisation that there is a lot of money to be made in sugar cane production but also that 'foreign' is *not* always better.

Thirdly, in-migrant labourers are becoming increasingly important participants in the south Gujarat agricultural scene. Their continued presence will affect labour relations, forcing many local Halpati labourers to seek alternative employment.

If these are realistic hypotheses of the changing nature and future form of rural transformation, individual women's experiences will be further differentiated. Moreover, I would argue that although the nature of women's subordination will change, different forms of subordination will continue to exist and, for some women, be intensified.

VILLAGE HOUSEHOLD CENSUS 1987

I HOUSEHOLD DEMOGRAPHY:

Caste:

Type of Living Quarters:

Number of rooms

Number of current residents in household:

Pucca/Kutchra

Separate Animal quarters YES/NO

CURRENT RESIDENTS:

Name	Sex	Age	Relationship to Male Head of Household	Marital Status	Birthplace	Education Level

II OUT-MIGRANTS:

Name	Sex	Age	Relationship to Male Head of Household	Marital Status	Current Residence	Reason for Leaving	When did they leave

III ACCESS TO WATER:HAND PUMP:TUBE WELL:IRRIGATION CANAL:

OWN/SHARED

MOTORISED/MANUAL

AREA IRRIGATED:

COST PER ANNUM

IV LIVESTOCK:

	Number	Use	When Bought	Cost	On Loan
BULLOCKS					
COWS					
BUFFALOES					
GOATS					
POULTRY					

V AGRICULTURAL TOOLS AND RESOURCES:

TRACTOR: owned/co-owned/borrowed

CART:: owned/co-owned/borrowed

PLOUGH: owned/co-owned/borrowed

TEMPO:: owned/co-owned/borrowed

OTHER TOOLS/MACHINERY:

FERTILISER: Chemical/Manure

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