
Male ‘Providers’ and Female ‘Housewives’: A Gendered Co-performance in Rural North India

Nitya Rao

ABSTRACT

Problems of measuring and public recognition of women’s work are not merely statistical. This article highlights the co-performance of stereotypical gender roles, where men and women jointly seek to establish the status of women as housewives rather than as farmers and of men as providers, thereby upholding a particular social order and simultaneously reinterpreting the meanings of existing norms to include new realities. Evidence from rural north India demonstrates the discernable disjunctures between social norms, narratives and action. Conscious of the growing insecurities faced by their husbands in the context of a rapidly changing economy, women try to allay rather than aggravate them. Instead of asserting their identities as ‘workers’, their strategies for gaining recognition and reciprocity from their husbands focus on reconstituting gender relations in the household, by expanding individual spaces and making incremental gains within the existing social order, rather than struggling for wider transformative changes.

INTRODUCTION

Entering Nihalapur village in the Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh (UP) in India on a cold January morning in 2010, I could see women scurrying from their homes to the fields, to harvest chillies, green peas and tomatoes, or to weed and water the wheat crop. They had little time to talk in their rush to return to their fields: the days were short and there was a lot to be done. The men had more time on their hands, yet they talked of leaving for the fields early in the morning while women cooked, cleaned and looked after the

I am grateful to the ESRC-DFID funded research project RES-167-25-0251, ‘The intra-household allocation of resources: cross-cultural tests, methodological innovations and policy implications’, which enabled me to conduct the fieldwork for this article. I would like to specifically thank Mina Swaminathan and Amit Mitra for their detailed comments on earlier drafts, and participants at the BASAS Annual Conference held at Southampton (13–15 April 2011) for useful feedback. I also acknowledge the comments provided by the two anonymous referees, which greatly helped to sharpen and improve the paper.

Development and Change 43(5): 1025–1048. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-7660.2012.01789.x

© 2012 International Institute of Social Studies.

Published by Blackwell Publishing, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK and 350 Main St., Malden, MA 02148, USA

children at home. Women's narratives were similar. What one saw seemed almost the opposite of what one heard.

A consensus existed between men and women on the local gender divisions of work: men were the providers and women the home makers. This is indeed the prevalent picture of rural women in the North Indian state of UP — confined to the home, dependent on men, and lacking autonomy and voice (Dreze and Sen, 1995; Dyson and Moore, 1983). In a month of fieldwork in rural Varanasi I found a deep disjuncture between intentions, utterances and deeds. Significant variations were visible between social norms and individual practice, stereotypes were upheld in formal responses and disjunctures revealed in open-ended narratives.

A deep tension exists between the 'universal' and the 'particular'. The former, as reflected in the normative landscape, attempts to articulate sets of substantial characteristics common to all beings, but as 'every subject is constituted differentially' (Butler, 2000: 12), what is produced externally can never fully be internalized and become a universal attribute. Universality is linked to the recognition of sets of activities and the content and skills associated with them, as conditioned by customary practice. These are politically articulated, seeking to maintain power hierarchies in society, so if recognition is not accorded, but denied or challenged, the universal ideal of the individual would itself be under question. Strong motivations thus exist to reciprocate recognition. This is not, however, a benign process, but rather one in which the repetition of existing norms itself offers the possibility of reformulating the meanings attached to them (Butler, 1997). In her discussion of women bee-keepers in rural Mexico, Villareal (1992: 259–60) notes the ways in which they often learned and used the language of subordination to extract benefits from it, aware too that the changes in their self-image would not go unnoticed. In the case discussed in this article, expanding the spatial definition of the home to include the fields carries the potential to disrupt and destabilize existing norms of seclusion and confinement to the home. Yet this has become an instrument for preserving the existing social and cultural hegemonic order, at least in appearance. Power is not static; rather, it is remade at various junctures within everyday life, re-articulated through everyday social relations (Foucault, 1980). The aim is to gain an edge, accepting compromises, if needed, in the process of contesting and redefining both the scope of universal norms and the meanings attributed to particular roles and identities.

The hiatus between norms and practices is well established. Less attention has been paid to naming and defining roles and responsibilities, the 'linguistic function of positing' (Butler, 2000: 27), which gives substance to particular acts of symbolization. The performance of gender can be a cultural ritual, a reiteration of cultural norms, an investment in particular subject-positions (Butler, 1990; Holloway 1984), and also a way of establishing existing claims and making new ones in contexts of rapid economic and social change. Yet

the implications of such naming for women's agency are ambiguous and ambivalent; they can both subordinate and enable.

Women's status has often been seen as dependent on their roles as mothers and wives, or their confinement to the domestic realm, but in rural societies, this public–private divide makes little sense. This article seeks to demonstrate not just the disjunctures between social norms, narratives and action, but the process of co-performance, where both men and women jointly seek to establish women's status as housewives, not farmers. The role of affective ties and shared interests, reflecting elements of mutual love and duty, in such co-performance cannot be ignored. Analysing the dialogue of a nineteenth century woman, Dahigauri, with her husband, a social reformer of his times, Desai (2002: 309) notes that she 'agrees that both duty and love demand self-surrender, but insists that the latter allows more freedom. Duty is surrender through compulsion [while] in a relationship based on love there is more equality'.

In the context discussed in this article, the crisis of livelihoods over the last decade has led to many men migrating to different parts of the country, depending on their wives to manage the home and the fields. Confronted with serious material disadvantages, women's narratives, describing themselves as household helpers, supporting their husbands to provide for their home, produce the possibility for agency and recognition at home and *vis-à-vis* the state, while reinforcing the status of men as the providers. This disjuncture between words and deeds provides insights into the renegotiation of participation and gendered power relations more generally, giving existing divisions of work new significance when so re-contextualized. Despite the absence of social rupture or wider social transformation, women, conscious of their roles in household provision, seek to reshape gender relations in ways that recognize their contributions and identities as persons, and legitimize entitlements to support and reciprocity within the conjugal relationship.

Resource entitlements are crucial for survival and securing livelihoods, and for women's status and agency (Agarwal, 1994). Cultural ideas about gender, however, do not accurately reflect women's positions within relations of production. Despite being able to act, speak out and make decisions, women continue to be represented as subordinate, their rights and obligations shaped by the ideas and workings of marriage and kinship systems rather than contributions to production (Moore, 1988: 37). In such a context, not seeking autonomy or making independent claims to resources is not necessarily a sign of lack of agency or indeed subordination, but could be a strategy for claiming complementary yet equal identities. The element of performance shapes and is shaped by social norms and expectations as well as opportunities for action, even if they are individual and incremental. Table 1 presents these interactions diagrammatically for analytical purposes.

Table 1. *Conceptualizing the Links between Norms, Performance and Action*

→	Norms	Performance	Action
Norms	Social conventions, rules of behaviour and cultural expectations at a particular place and time.	Limits to articulation set by social context in terms of what they are doing relative to what they ought to be doing.	Maximize individual goals within limits set by social power relations and one's position within them.
Performance	Upholds, challenges and adapts meanings and interpretations of norms according to personal exigencies of the household and its social relations at a particular point in time.	Speech, representation, posturing, both linguistically and in practice.	Highlights gaps and contradictions in everyday life, often even suppressing the truth.
Action	Extending, redefining and reinterpreting norms in socially acceptable ways.	Pushing the limits/ boundaries of norms to justify actions.	Doings in reality, everyday practice.

Note:

Conceptualizations of the key terms (norms, performance and action) are given in the diagonal.

METHODOLOGY AND CONTEXT

This article draws on data from five villages of Varanasi district, collected as part of an ESRC-DFID funded research project on intra-household allocations. Data are taken from a household survey of 400 rural couples, in-depth interviews with forty of the couples, focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Men and women were interviewed separately, both in the survey and in-depth interviews, to gauge perceptions about their relative contributions to the household, access to assets and information, experiences of work and final say in household decisions. The in-depth interviews specifically probed changes in livelihood and work patterns and their implications for conjugal relationships, expectations and aspirations. The data were collected between February 2009 and April 2010.

Caste critically shapes everyday lived experiences, of naming what is legitimate and appropriate and what is not, as well as shaping gender and wider social relations. The prevalent assumptions about gender conservatism and the seclusion of women in North India, for instance, don't apply to the same extent to Dalits or the Scheduled Castes (SCs), whose engagement with the public domain is accepted as part of their caste identities and roles. Of the sample, 54 per cent (211 households) included peasant castes, primarily the Kurmi Patels, Mauryas and Yadavs, all administratively categorized as OBCs (Other Backward Classes); 35 per cent were Dalits, mostly landless; and the remaining 11 per cent were upper castes like Rajputs and Brahmins. Given my interest in farming households and the gendered shifts in farming practices, and also the social and cultural differences according to caste, this article focuses primarily on the OBCs.

Within each caste there is considerable variation between the normative and the lived experiences of women, based on their individual attributes and personality traits (age and stage in life cycle, education, marital status, appearance) and their complex social worlds, horizontally and vertically layered with networks of groups and sub-groups, each striving for its own self-definition (cf. Kumar, 1988: 201). Tables 2A and 2B present the age, education and work profile of OBC women and men in the sample.

Three points stand out. First, as couples were selected for the study, and given the difference in age at marriage, the sample of women is generally younger than their male counterparts.¹ Secondly, there is a huge gender gap in educational attainment, with 75 per cent of women being non-literate or just literate as compared to 27 per cent of the men. Educational attainment is differentiated by age; in the youngest age group (less than thirty years), only 45 per cent of women are non-literate or just literate, and 16 per cent have studied up to secondary level or beyond; nevertheless a gender gap of over 30 percentage points persists. Thirdly, all men, irrespective of their education and across age categories, except for the elderly, are in productive work. For women, such work is not connected to education, but shows a strong age/life-cycle dimension. Women between thirty and fifty years of age are active in the workforce, irrespective of their educational level — they have completed child-bearing and are not too old to work. Hence in this article, I analyse women's discourses and representations and the ways in which they mediate social norms keeping in mind their particular subject position in the household at different points in the life-cycle (Rao, 2008). I use age categories as a proxy for the life-cycle stage, classifying women under thirty as young daughters-in-law, those of thirty-one to fifty as mothers, and those over fifty-one as mothers-in-law.

In the next section, women's work in the context of local livelihoods is discussed, locating this within larger evaluations of women's work participation in India. I then analyse the meanings, explicit and implicit, within the narratives of both women and men. There is a high level of congruence, with a clear pattern of repetition and reiteration of stereotypical identities, but within these, there are also suggestions for reformulation and re-signification.

WORK, LIVELIHOODS AND INTERDEPENDENCIES IN RURAL VARANASI

Varanasi is a major religious centre with a continuous flow of tourists and pilgrims throughout the year. The city was formerly a centre for handloom weaving — silk saris from Varanasi formed an essential part of the dowries

1. Getting exact age data was difficult. Both women and men reported a gap of five to seven years between spouses. Some 75 per cent of women were married before the age of sixteen, 30 per cent of these before fourteen. The remaining 25 per cent were married between the ages of seventeen and twenty. Over 50 per cent of men were married before eighteen, but only 10 per cent under fourteen.

Table 2A. Education, Age and Work Profile: OBC Females in the Sample

Age Work status	Below 30 (20%)			31-40 (33%)			41-50 (25%)			Above 50 (22%)			Total		
	W	NW	Total	W	NW	Total	W	NW	Total	W	NW	Total	W	NW	Total
Non-literate/just literate	9	10	19 (45)	24	24	48 (70)	23	22	45 (85)	18	28	46 (98)	74	84	158 (75)
Primary	1	4	5 (12)	3	3	6 (9)	1	2	3 (6)	0	1	1 (2)	5	10	15 (7.5)
Middle	3	8	11 (26)	2	4	6 (9)	3	2	5 (9)	0	0	0	8	14	22 (10)
Secondary	0	4	4 (9.5)	4	1	5 (7)	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	5	9 (4)
Higher Sec	1	1	2 (5)	0	3	3 (4)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	5 (2.5)
Degree	1	0	1 (2.5)	1	0	1 (1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2 (1)
Total	15	27	42	34	35	69	27	26	53	18	29	47	94	117	211

Table 2B. Education, Age and Work Profile: OBC Males in the Sample

Age Work status	Below 30 (13%)			31-40 (27%)			41-50 (28%)			Above 50 (32%)			Total		
	W	NW	T	W	NW	T	W	NW	Total	W	NW	Total	W	NW	Total
Non-literate/just literate	3	0	3 (11)	11	0	11 (19)	18	1	19 (32)	21	3	24 (36)	53	4	57 (27)
Primary	5	0	5 (18.5)	16	0	16 (28)	12	0	12 (20)	13	3	16 (24)	46	3	49 (23)
Middle	8	0	8 (30)	15	0	15 (26)	16	1	17 (28)	8	3	11 (16)	47	4	51 (24)
Secondary	8	1	9 (33)	6	0	6 (11)	6	0	6 (10)	11	0	11 (16)	32	0	32 (15)
Higher Sec	2	0	2 (7.5)	6	0	6 (11)	4	0	4 (7)	2	0	2 (3)	14	0	14 (7)
Degree	0	0	0	3	0	3 (5)	2	0	2 (3)	2	1	3 (5)	7	1	8 (4)
Total	26	1	27	57	0	57	58	2	60	57	10	67	199	12	211

Notes:

W = work, including engagement with agriculture, wage-work, self-employment or government employment
 NW = non-work, including domestic work and unemployment

Source: Household survey; figures in parentheses denote percentages.

Table 3. Land Ownership (in hectares) by Caste

Aggregate size of holdings ^a	SC	OBC	Other	Total
Landless	103 (74)	100 (47.5)	6 (14)	209 (53)
Marginal (less than 1 ha)	12 (9)	11 (5.5)	1 (2)	24 (6)
Small (1–2 ha)	11 (8)	19 (9)	1 (2)	31 (8)
Semi-medium (2–4 ha)	4 (2.5)	32 (15)	1 (2)	37 (9.5)
Medium (4–10 ha)	6 (4.5)	19 (9)	4 (10)	29 (7.5)
Large (over 10 ha)	3 (2)	30 (14)	30 (70)	63 (16)
	139 (100)	211 (100)	43 (100)	393 (100)

Note:

a) The plots are distributed across the village, rather than constituting a consolidated holding. Data do not include leased-in land.

Source: Household survey; figures in parentheses denote column percentages.

of elite Indian women in both colonial and post-colonial times — but since 2003–4 the industry has declined due to the Multi Fibre Agreement (MFA) coming into effect. Many looms shut down. The rural landless Dalit men who were involved in this activity shifted to insecure work such as casual farm or non-farm labour, piece-rated work in the power-loom sector or self-employment such as rickshaw pulling (Ciotti, 2010). For the women who assisted their men with weaving, or who worked as agricultural labour, food insecurity has increased, as neither of these two jobs is easily available now. Sarita,² thirty-four, a non-literate Dalit woman, rued: ‘We get wage work barely two months a year. The wages are extremely low, just Rs 25³ for a day’s work. We do it only if desperate. We have heard of NREGA, but the *sarpanch* [headman] hardly provides any work.⁴ Arranging two square meals a day gets difficult. Often we go to bed hungry, scraping together something for the children’.

Rural Varanasi is largely dependent on agriculture. The cropping patterns have shifted over the last two decades. Cereals have been replaced by cash crops like vegetables, fruits and flowers to meet the urban demand. Varanasi’s vibrancy isn’t sufficient to maintain local livelihoods due to the gross inequality in the distribution of land and other resources (see Table 3). Only 23 per cent of OBCs own more than 4 ha of land, making them medium

2. All names have been changed.

3. Rs 73 = 1 GBP as on 1 June 2011.

4. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme assures 100 days of work in a year at a wage rate of Rs 100 per day to all poor people who demand work. Workers complained of extensive corruption: 100 days of work are recorded by the *sarpanch*, but they receive only twenty-five days’ wages, hardly sufficient in a context of rising prices and little alternative work. Evaluations of MGNREGA in Uttar Pradesh reveal a depressing scenario, with estimates of between 7 and 20 per cent of the due wages actually reaching the worker (personal communication, Hiranmoy Dhar). The official statistics reveal employment provision of a little over 40 per cent of the target: http://nrega.nic.in/homest.asp?state_code=31&state_name=UTTAR%20PRADESH (accessed 13 October 2010).

or large farmers, with larger landholdings concentrated in the hands of a few upper caste households. A medium farmer, Satish Maurya, who cultivates flowers for the Varanasi market, noted:

If one has land, then it is easy to get the *kisan* credit card.⁵ A credit limit is set at Rs 6,000 per acre of land. This is provided 50 per cent in kind, that is, fertilizers and seeds are provided by the cooperative society, and the rest in cash. There is no profit in agriculture. I survive because of the flower trade. It is profitable, but needs cash.

He pointed out, ‘the Horticulture Department distributes seeds, which give good yields, but only to medium and large farmers with more than two hectares of land. The marginal and small farmers lose out’. As Table 3 reveals, another 15 per cent of OBCs are semi-medium farmers, 15 per cent small and marginal farmers, and close to 50 per cent are landless. The latter do lease land, especially from absentee landlords, but on increasingly unfavourable terms. A just-literate Kurmi Patel mother of three children, Meera (thirty-six) explained, ‘We sometimes try to get small plots of land for share-cropping. Nowadays the landlords don’t want to give more than one-fourth sometimes even one-fifth of the crop. They say that they pay for the inputs and only our labour needs to be compensated’.

Land ownership here is not just an indicator of social status, but also a tool for accessing resources from the state. Leasing in land does not provide the same entitlements, greatly disadvantaging the landless, and also women. Just six women had land titles in their own names: three OBC and three upper caste. The titles, however, were a way for their husbands to escape land ceiling legislation, rather than land inherited or purchased by the women. In fact, none of them reported an active role in farming or land management.

Table 4 presents data on the main activity reported, by caste and gender. Among OBC men, 15 per cent work on their own farms, and another 20 per cent work locally as casual labour. A further 25 per cent, reporting regular work in non-agriculture, are migrant, working in the textile sector in Gujarat and Mumbai. An equal number are self-employed in petty trade, contracting and business. Their wives and other household women manage the land at home. Men are hardly involved in domestic work. More than a third of OBC women work on their own farms, as regular or casual workers. This brings them some food for the home and fodder for cattle, but no cash incomes. Women like Sunita — twenty-six, with three children, educated to grade 8, and responsible for family provisioning in her migrant husband’s absence — can’t refuse low-paid, home-based, piece-rated work to ensure petty cash for everyday expenses: ‘We earn Rs 13 stringing 100 grams of beads. This

5. To get over the cumbersome process of crop loans to be negotiated each season, the Government of India introduced the concept of *kisan* (farmer) credit cards (KCC) in 1998–99. Valid for three years, the KCC provides farmers with a credit limit based on their landholding size.

Table 4. Main Activity by Caste and Gender

	SC		OBC		Others		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Work on farm	4 (3)	2 (1.5)	32 (15)	18 (8)	14 (33)	2 (5)	50 (13)	22 (6)
Casual labour	69 (50)	19 (14)	42 (20)	12 (6)	2 (5)	0	113 (29)	31 (8)
Govt employment	2 (1.5)	1 (0.5)	7 (3.5)	2 (1)	9 (21)	2 (5)	18 (4.5)	5 (1.5)
Regular work in agri.	11 (8)	40 (30)	15 (7)	46 (22)	9 (21)	5 (12)	35 (9)	92 (24)
Regular work in non-agri.	22 (16)	0	53 (25)	8 (4)	4 (9)	0	79 (20)	8 (2)
Self-employed, non-farm	21 (15)	3 (2)	52 (24.5)	7 (3)	3 (7)	0	76 (19)	10 (2.5)
Domestic work	3 (2.25)	67 (49)	1 (0.5)	111 (53)	0	32 (76)	4 (1)	211 (54)
Not active	4 (3)	2 (1.5)	4 (2)	3 (1)	0	0	8 (2)	5 (1.5)
Others	3 (2.25)	2 (1.5)	5 (2.5)	4 (2)	2 (4)	1 (2)	10 (2.5)	7 (2)
Total	139	136	211	211	43	42	393	391

Source: Household survey; figures in brackets are column percentages.

takes 3–4 days, as we have to first finish all the other work. The glass beads lacerate our fingers, but bring some cash for small purchases’.

The National Sample Survey data (NSS)⁶ capture this trend. Despite an overall decline in female work participation between the 50th (1993–94) and 64th Rounds (2007–8) from 33 to 29 per cent in rural and from 17 to 14 per cent in urban areas, self-employment grew. Male work participation remained almost stable during this period (NSSO, 2010). Disaggregation by caste shows that the decline is highest for the SCs and STs, dependent on casual wage labour (which has seen the highest rate of decline over this period), while the OBCs do marginally better. Their ownership of small plots of land and livestock resources relies on women’s unpaid work as household helpers, both on and off-farm (Neetha, 2010).⁷ This (rather than own account work) is captured in the category of self-employment which was included in the definitions of work adopted by the System of National Accounts in 1993 as a result of a decade of feminist advocacy (Hirway, 2009).

The overwhelming engagement of OBC women in farming is accompanied by its relabelling as ‘household work’ (*ghar ka kaam*) rather than ‘agriculture’. Such naming, visible in national statistics, has also occurred in local narratives. When Soni — twenty-four, secondary school educated, mother of two — wanted to work to ease financial pressures, her husband Rajesh (twenty-seven) refused, saying, ‘She could earn Rs 50 to 100 daily. I said she shouldn’t work in other’s fields, as employers disrespect labourers. Now she just helps me on our farm. She has no other source of income’. The income differentials between migrant men, sending home remittances of around Rs 1,000⁸ monthly, and farming women, engaged in unpaid work on household farms and earning barely Rs 100–150 a month stringing beads, reveals the gap in opportunities for exchange (of their labour) between men and women. Women are constrained by the lack of resource access and control, absence of support from their natal kin, social taboos on their movement, responsibilities for household maintenance and childcare, and patriarchal norms of appropriate behaviour (Tienstrakul, 2006). The nature of work and the terms of participation, far from recognizing women’s contributions, reinforce and perpetuate the representation of men as providers.

NARRATIVES AND REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN’S FARMING WORK

Social norms in rural Varanasi ideologically uphold male provisioning and female dependence. Both men and women reiterate these norms, agreeing

-
6. Conducted by the Department of Statistics, Government of India, this large-scale sample survey provides comparative, longitudinal data on different dimensions and categories of employment.
 7. The NSS data show the feminization of the agriculture sector, engaging 67 per cent of men and 84 per cent of women (NSSO, 2010: 65).
 8. They earn around Rs 150–200 daily, or Rs 4–5,000 monthly.

with statements like ‘women should not undertake paid work without their husband’s permission’ and ‘the wife should always obey diktats of her elders, particularly in-laws, whether she likes them or not’ (see Munro et al., 2011). Ramlal, fifty, said, ‘I earn. I wouldn’t like my wife to go out to work. It is my responsibility to maintain the family’. According to Bachu Ram, thirty-four, ‘It would be shameful for me if my wife goes out to work. It’s fine if she works at home stringing beads or sewing. She used to string beads earlier, earning about Rs 100 monthly. I supervised and kept accounts of her work’. Working outside the home is viewed as ‘shameful’, and in many ways discounting male authority.

These men did not want their wives to be visibly earning. Some couched it by saying they preferred their wives not to labour outside without respect for low wages, but rather to look after their homes, acknowledging the real barriers to women’s engagement with markets (for inputs, credit and sale of the produce) and other public spaces. Others felt an earning wife would bring shame to the family and pose a threat to their identity as provider, by highlighting their failure to do so. In a context where their own work insecurity threatened their masculine roles as providers, men wanted to retain ultimate responsibility for market-related tasks and insisted that their women didn’t go out of their homes. They did, however, expect them to work on their family farms. Ravi Nath, thirty-eight, a mason, is away from home on various jobs for over fifteen days a month. The couple have bought a small plot of land, under an acre, from his earnings. He expects his wife Kamla — thirty-four, secondary schooled, mother of six children — to farm. ‘Earlier we share-cropped, but the output sufficed for only two to three months. Kamla now farms and occasionally goes to the nearby village for wage work. During the harvest, this brings her 5 kg of grain for a day’s work’. For these men, the definition of home has been extended to include the farms.

Women continue to differentiate between the home and the farm, highlighting an expansion in their spheres of activity. Yet they adjust their work and actions to support their men emotionally and materially, rather than aggravate insecurities. In non-threatening ways, they assert a claim for recognition. Meenu (twenty-eight, a just-literate Kurmi Patel, married at fifteen, with four children), said: ‘We are confined to the home for two or three years after our *gauna* [move to the husband’s home a few years after the marriage]. Then we work in the fields. Everything is expensive now, so we support our husbands by working in the fields and taking on any other available work, in addition to household work. We do not go to the markets’.

According to Kevala (fifty-three, married at twelve, with four children and non-literate): ‘We manage everything in the farm and at home. But for purchasing inputs or going to the markets, we need to depend on our husbands, and in their absence, on other men in the family’. This discloses a higher level of engagement and control, of managing almost all agricultural activities single-handedly, as well as the domestic work, while Meenu’s

narrative represents her as a helper and supporter to her husband, rather than an independent cultivator. Both their husbands are migrants. Their divergent narratives highlight differences in their respective positions within their households.

Most households are joint and follow patrilineal inheritance patterns. For women the household structure and composition, and their subject position within it, make a huge difference regarding social norms and expectations of behaviour.⁹ When a woman like Kevala becomes a mother-in-law, she can give instructions rather than take them. So can a senior daughter-in-law, especially one with sons. Younger daughters-in-law, serving and taking instructions from almost everyone else, men and senior women, are the most vulnerable. Meenu lives with her in-laws. Her husband, a mill-hand in Surat, remits money monthly to his mother. She manages the money, giving Meenu only a small portion and occasionally a bag of fertilizer. Without directly confronting her mother-in-law, Meenu presents her farm work as supporting her husband in fulfilling his provisioning role, hoping through her discourse to improve the terms of cooperation and reciprocity within the marriage.

A majority of OBC women in agriculture represent themselves as helpers rather than primary producers. This emerges from the survey which asked men and women whether they engaged in the agricultural process as primary or secondary cultivators, to understand how they perceived and represented their own work in household agriculture. The questions were further disaggregated by activity, given the gender segregation of agricultural tasks, with women responsible for sowing, weeding and harvesting, rather than land preparation or ploughing. Table 5 shows a high level of congruence between male and female responses about the contributions other people make to different farming activities. This is reflected in the value of the index, where 1 reveals complete agreement in responses, less than 1 reveals female undervaluation/male overvaluation and greater than 1 reveals male undervaluation /female overvaluation of contributions.

On the aggregate, there is a high level of congruence regarding the wife's secondary role, with the index for all activities close to 1; there is less congruence about the wife's primary engagement. The data reveal a marked life-cycle dimension, with women up to fifty consistently undervaluing their own primary contributions. Even though women like Meenu or Kamla were single-handedly managing all farm operations, the discourse of men as primary producers prevailed. A greater divergence exists in perceptions after fifty, with women such as Kevala seeing themselves as primary rather than secondary cultivators. Women below thirty undervalue both their primary and secondary contributions, but especially secondary contributions. This is because many of them are newly married, raising young children.

9. Munro et al. (2011) calculate a mean household size of 7.3 and mean number of children as 2.66 in this site. Jejeebhoy (2000) notes that living with in-laws poses a major constraint to women's autonomy in North India.

Table 5. Index of Contributions to Different Farming Activities amongst OBCs

Agricultural engagement	Up to 30			31-40			41-50			Over 50			Total		
	Hus (9)	Wife (10)	Oth (10)	Hus (18)	Wife (23)	Oth (23)	Hus (20)	Wife (17)	Oth (17)	Hus (24)	Wife (16)	Oth (16)	Hus (71)	Wife (66)	Oth (66)
Primary:															
Sowing	0.45	0.9	1.2	0.91	1.8	1.07	1.5	0.24	0.6	1.38	1.5	0.54	1.17	0.63	0.86
Ploughing	0.45	-	1.0	2.3	0.8	0.45	1.4	-	0.6	1.38	0.75	0.59	1.45	0.83	0.65
Weeding	0.45	0.9	1.2	0.97	0.8	1.1	1.16	-	1.6	1.38	1.5	0.45	1.1	0.62	0.92
Harvesting	0.45	0.9	1.2	1.4	0.23	0.89	1.07	0.4	1.2	1.5	0.5	0.5	1.2	0.43	0.94
Total Prim.	0.45	0.9	1.15	1.4	0.9	0.87	1.28	0.32	1.0	1.41	1.06	0.52	1.23	0.63	0.84
Aggr. Prim.	2			0.64			0.25			0.75			0.51		
Secondary:															
Sowing	0.72	0.9	2.5	0.23	1.43	0.9	0.48	1.53	0.8	-	0.72	1.7	0.44	1.17	1.2
Ploughing	2.3	0.9	0.53	0.29	3	0.93	1.18	2.14	0.44	-	0.42	1.6	0.87	1.2	0.92
Weeding	1.5	0.45	1.3	0.45	1.37	0.95	0.87	1.2	0.77	-	0.67	1.86	0.74	0.95	1.19
Harvesting	0.9	0.6	2.5	0.29	1.5	1.2	1.18	1.2	0.75	-	0.76	1.6	0.61	0.98	1.27
Total Sec	1.35	0.71	1.7	0.31	1.82	1.0	0.93	1.51	0.69	-	0.64	1.69	0.67	1.1	1.1
Aggr. Sec.	0.52			5.87			1.62			-			1.64		

Notes:

The index for husband, wife and others is calculated by dividing the female responses on the perceptions of contributions of their husbands, themselves and others, by male responses to the same questions.

The total numbers of responses were 66 female and 71 male; 5 women were unavailable.

The aggregate index for primary and secondary engagement is computed by dividing the average of the wife's contributions by those of the husband's.

Figures in brackets constitute the total number in each age category.

Education could have strengthened the articulation of their primary contributions; however, it is difficult to establish causality based on the small sample of ten women below the age of thirty.¹⁰

Similarly, there is a high level of congruence revealed by the index for husband's primary contribution which is consistently close to or greater than 1. Here too, younger women see this differently, crediting others with a greater role, as many have a migrant husband not working in agriculture. Clearly, there is an element of co-performance, especially in the thirty to fifty age group, with both men and women constructing a particular ideal of women's farming work, and household provisioning more generally, highlighting this as a secondary or supportive activity, and male contributions as primary.

Individuals were surveyed independently to prevent couples influencing each other's responses. Women strongly reiterated social norms and expectations, undervaluing their own primary contributions more than their husbands did. Methodologically, these open-ended, qualitative narratives revealed a greater jointness than the figures suggest, pointing to the limitations of particular methods, such as survey questionnaires, in uncovering the nuances of everyday negotiations, sharing and influence within households. Twenty-eight year old Mira Patel, married at fourteen, soon after completing grade 8, expressed an element of equality in their work: 'Our family is engaged in share-cropping. We all work. The earning is utilized for household needs. No one can claim a separate share, it is our joint work'. As mentioned earlier, women over fifty claim a greater primary role, almost at par with their men in sowing and weeding activities. By this age, they are more assertive of their own identities, explaining also the divergence in male and female perceptions. Their activities are, however, likely to be more supervisory (including over daughters-in-law) and managerial rather than necessarily involving field work.

In India, ploughing is generally accepted as a male preserve. In the study area a few medium-sized farmers own tractors, often purchased through bank loans, which are hired out for ploughing others' lands. While men often took the responsibility for ploughing, they reported a higher involvement of others in this process than their wives, given the widespread practice of hiring tractors. It is therefore surprising to note women reporting a high involvement in ploughing and land preparation, even as a secondary activity. Mechanization of ploughing and its marketing has helped them overcome traditional taboos on ploughing in the absence of their men. Women were aware of the rates and requirements for hiring a tractor and supervising land preparation: 'hiring a tractor costs Rs 400 for an acre of land, and we need to plough the land at least 2–3 times' (Kavita, thirty-eight).

10. No correlation was found between educational level and any of the decision-making indicators.

Despite such gains, why do women echo perceptions about their roles as secondary cultivators? Several explanations are possible. Women's formal narratives are driven by their perceived lack of status as cultivators based on material indicators like the absence of land titles and other resource entitlements (credit, services, and membership of agricultural cooperative societies), alongside access to only poorly paid cash-earning opportunities, rather than a lack of awareness about their own contributions. They recognize the importance of the husband's cash contributions to farming, be it for the purchase of inputs, hiring a tractor or hiring labour. Malti — thirty-six, non-literate, with five children — said:

My husband goes to work on a power loom in the city. With uninterrupted electricity supply, he can earn Rs 400–500 weekly. He purchases all the family provisions and pays school fees for four children. He also pays for hiring the tractor and fertilizers. My eldest daughter, now sixteen, stays at home to help me with farm work, stringing beads and the domestic chores. I keep silent and never bicker, as without his income we would be unable to farm or educate the children.

A second reason is the fear of violence resulting from what could be perceived as female success in the context of male insecurities and failure. As Malti continued, 'Last summer there were many power-cuts, and the looms didn't work. My husband earned nothing. We got heavily indebted. He would beat me in anger'. Given the widespread prevalence and acceptance of domestic violence, women strive to maintain domestic peace. Richards sees such agricultural performance as a strategy for coping with unpredictable conditions, of negotiating timing, turn-taking and the broader social dynamics of cooperation and togetherness (Richards, 1989: 40–41).

Thus, whether as a result of their socialization as home makers, or a fear of conflict in the family or a discontinuation of male support, women don't claim independent access to resources or defy social norms around gender roles. Rather, by reasserting themselves as secondary cultivators, supporting their husbands in their role as providers, they seek to enforce male responsibility and reciprocity. While men have always used speech and language to renegotiate their sphere of action (Carney, 1988), women here retain the veneer of housewives to renegotiate both their physical spheres of action and material entitlements *vis-à-vis* their husbands. Their narratives are shaped by particular everyday circumstances as well as larger economic and political considerations and can be understood by contextualizing them in a particular time and space — a region that has witnessed economic decline and hardship over the last decade, intensified by rising prices, declining state support to agriculture, large-scale corruption in the implementation of state social protection measures and increasing male out-migration.

The following section discusses the implications of these perceptions of work for women's role in household decision making and allocation of resources.

DECISION MAKING AT HOME: WHERE DOES THE ADVANTAGE LIE?

Despite the role of OBC women in farming, their participation in decision making regarding borrowing money, purchasing or leasing land, crop selection or engaging with the market in buying inputs remains weak. Barely 10 per cent of women credited themselves with any voice in production-related matters. Observations in the village and in-depth interviews provided a more differentiated and nuanced account of decision making within households. In the absence of migrant husbands, in particular, women take all the everyday decisions. Even if they do not go to purchase seeds, they decide what they want and then get a man from the neighbourhood, often a relative, to buy them, as Kevala indicated. Yet their responses to the survey and their narratives present men as the ultimate decision makers. Here too, there is a high congruence between men's and women's perceptions, with men crediting women with a higher role in financial provisioning than women themselves (see Table 6).

While the need to support male provider roles could explain low levels of decision making in the productive realm, what is surprising is the reported low level of voice in schooling and health-related decisions, except in the forty to fifty age group, as childcare is an essential element of women's reproductive roles. The response seems driven by women's lack of access to cash and social networks. As Soni's husband did not let her work, she says, 'I expect my husband to bring all the household provisions and bear the full expenses of the children. I also expect him to provide me food, clothes and some money for my personal expenses'. Murti (fifty-two, a non-literate Kurmi Patel woman with four married children), noted, 'We women obey our men and observe purdah, as then they are obliged to provide for all the needs of the home'. What emerged quite strongly were women's efforts to ensure male contributions to the household by representing them as the primary decision makers. This is influenced by issues of identity, but also the material context, where male wages and earning capacities are much higher than women's.

Shanti, forty-five, indicated, 'My husband decides everything. He decided on the education of our children and marriage of our daughter. As I have no economic contribution, I agree to what he says'. Though she highlights economic contribution here, there is only a marginal difference in the involvement in decision making between working and non-working women, especially in the younger age groups (below forty), this being very low to start with. All these women work on their household farms, but extending the definition of the home to include the fields has shifted the meanings of domestic work. Adding farm work to domestic work has expanded the scope and spatial dimension of women's activities and the spaces for action and movement. It has also increased the invisibility and undervaluation of women's work.

Table 6. Index of Female and Male Perceptions on Household Decision Making

Age	Up to 30 years			31-40			41-50			Over 51			Total		
	FW	FNW	M	FW	FNW	M	FW	FNW	M	FW	FNW	M	FW	FNW	M
D-M variable															
Financial provisioning	0.08	0.07	0.07	0.06	0.05	0.10	0.20	0.08	0.12	0.05	0.07	0.10	0.10	0.07	0.10
Agriculture	0.08	0.06	0.14	0.05	0.06	0.05	0.10	0.07	0.05	0.10	-	0.06	0.08	0.05	0.07
Fertility/marriage	0.04	-	0.02	0.01	0.01	-	0.08	-	0.01	0.03	-	0.01	0.04	0.02	0.02
Children's upbringing	0.04	-	-	0.05	0.05	-	0.20	0.07	0.01	0.07	0.02	0.02	0.09	0.03	0.02
Running the household	0.50	0.60	0.23	0.53	0.62	0.36	0.73	0.57	0.43	0.75	0.67	0.36	0.62	0.62	0.36

Notes:

The total number of female working (FW) is 94, female non-working (FNW) 117 and male responses (M) 211. The indices represent W/H, that is, the ratio of wife by husband as the primary decision maker, as reported by themselves.
 The financial provision index is derived from 5 questions (decisions on purchase of major goods; wife working outside the home; purchase or sale of jewellery; how income is spent; whether to borrow money). The agriculture index is based on 2 questions (which crop to grow; buying/renting land). The children's upbringing index is derived from 2 questions (what to do when a child falls sick; how much schooling to provide children). The fertility and marriage index is based on 2 questions (number of children to have; whom to marry). The index on running the household is based on 2 questions (preparation of food; inviting guests home).

Yet, women had various strategies for influencing their men. Kamla, thirty-four, said that she could influence her husband by caring for the children and the household, cooking good food when he returned home and speaking to him affectionately at night:

He is faithful and consults me on most key decisions, such as the marriage of my daughter, visiting relatives, taking action when someone is sick; yet, if annoyed or upset, he can get violent. I then remain silent and peaceful. I want him to provide fully for the children. I have saved some money from my wages in the bank, but I want to keep that for the future.

Even though a relatively small number, sixteen of these women now have bank accounts. Meera, thirty-six, insisted that choosing the appropriate time was important; she spoke to her husband when he was in a good mood, and at his leisure. He was currently not employed, and though her in-laws took care of household provisioning, she made bead necklaces to buy herself gold earrings. These are not new strategies, yet in a context of threatened masculinities, they provide an effective way for women to open up crucial decision-making moments to get their points across. In providing emotional support and security, in addition to physical and material contributions (Picchio, 1992), they express their love and care, and also establish reciprocal claims. Enforcing male reciprocity is particularly important in a context of steadily declining male contributions to joint work.¹¹

Submission and attempts to please the husband don't always work. Hiramani — thirty-eight, non-literate, with four children — said in exasperation, 'My husband does what he likes. He decides everything, only occasionally consulting my mother-in-law on important matters. Sometimes I advise him to protect him from problems, but he doesn't listen to me. Only when I stop doing the household work, does he realize I am annoyed and accept my opinion'. Priti, twenty-five and a secondary school graduate, cites lack of time, and children being young or unwell, to express her inability to take on additional work burdens. Here, forms of non-cooperation, although temporary, are used to influence the husband's unilateral decision making. Women use their husbands' dependence on them for cooking food and performing everyday tasks of home management to their advantage: when these are not appreciated, then the only way to make their point is by withdrawal.

Such acts of avoidance and attempts to challenge ideological presumptions emerge in women's speech. As Kevala put it:

I don't possess any money or have any savings; I don't feel good with this position. I know that I am an equal partner in my husband's land. This is also my property, but I cannot use this on my own will. But if my husband ever attempts to sell the land against my wishes I shall go to court.

11. In Andhra Pradesh, Garikipati (2008: 635) found 6 per cent of male labourers employed in joint tasks but 54.5 per cent of all female workdays constituted joint work. Recent NSSO data (2004–5) reveal male contributions to farm work and domestic work are declining in both rural and urban areas (Rao et al., 2008).

There is no false consciousness here; women are very aware of their positions within the household and society. They seek to accumulate resources, whether jewellery or savings in banks, when possible. Nevertheless there is an ambivalence about the extent to which they can push their resistance, and ultimately they accept the social norm of the husband as the principal decision maker, in order to strengthen their own position as a 'good wife' and thereby reinforce the legitimacy of their claims to support.

The most worrying indicator regarding women's agency and well-being is their low level of control over their fertility and marriage decisions. Priti was married at fifteen, when she had just completed her 8th grade examinations. She said, 'I was not keen, but had reached puberty. My marriage was fixed and I had no say in it. I really wanted to finish my schooling, hence requested my father that my *gauna* be conducted after four years. To this he agreed'. Women are never consulted about their own marriage — at best they are informed of the decision — but there is some room for manoeuvre thereafter. The premium on education in the marriage market (Jeffery and Jeffery, 1994), and the fact that Priti was a good student, worked to her advantage. Even mothers seem to play a minimal role in marriage decisions regarding their daughters. Budhni, fifty, a non-literate mother of nine, commented:

My husband takes all the important decisions. Sometimes he considers the opinion of our eldest son. I don't interfere and don't take it to heart if I am not consulted. He took the decision about our daughter's marriage. His decision will be for our well-being, so why should I interfere? I sit beside him and talk to him peacefully. I do advise him, but the ultimate decision is his own. The quality of forbearance in a woman makes her effective and influential in her life. With the passage of time, the relationship between the husband and wife gets stronger.

Budhni's statement conveys many emotions. Her husband considers their son superior to her: he is consulted on important matters, not she. She justifies this in terms of the larger interests of the household. The qualities of forbearance and silence in contrast to outright assertion were emphasized by most women. Silence enables them to avoid violence and maintain self-respect. Murti noted, 'My husband ignores my advice. I opposed his decision of marrying off our daughter, but he went ahead according to his own will. My persistence would have caused a quarrel, even violence'. Most men too reiterated, at least publicly, that they took all decisions, but expected their wives to cooperate in seeing them through.

The birth of a son is widely seen to enhance women's status, but it does not significantly shift their decision-making abilities. Over time such women gain control over other women — their daughters-in-law. Susheela (forty, non-literate) described this process: 'My first child was a girl. My in-laws were unhappy. Next a son was born but he passed away. The third was again a girl. Then I had two boys. Finally my father-in-law began to show me some respect and affection. Yet my husband takes all the decisions in consultation with my in-laws'. The birth of a son gives women status in the marital home and reduces ill-treatment, but it does not necessarily impact on

intra-household power relations. Just-literate Kanti, thirty-two, said, 'After three children, including two sons, I wanted to have the operation. But my husband didn't agree. He said I shouldn't bother as he was feeding the children. I had to accept it'. Even after the birth of sons, women's voice in fertility control and marriage decisions remains weak, pointing to a limited control over their own bodies and future lives.

It is only in the daily running of the household, ensuring regular food preparation or whether to invite guests, that women do have some voice. These decisions are about the daily reproduction of household maintenance tasks, rather than even slightly more strategic domains such as the education of children.

CO-PERFORMANCE: THE CONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN AS 'HOUSEWIVES' AND MEN AS 'PROVIDERS'

The above analysis reveals a process of co-performance, where men and women jointly construct women as housewives and men as providers. Butler's notion of performance emphasizes a cultural ritual that seeks to create a core gendered self, constructed through a 'stylized repetition of acts' (1990: 191), yet here not just women but men too reiterate norms and values supporting and reinforcing women's performance of their roles. Men recognize women's contributions to household farming, but in order to maintain social boundaries and their own identities, they shift the meanings of farm work in their everyday speech to be an extension of women's household responsibilities. This eliminates in one stroke the need to name and define them as 'workers', thus excluding them from gaining an identity as providers.

Economic valuations are important for improving visibility for women's work and securing entitlements, yet economic empowerment is clearly not adequate for crossing gender boundaries and radically transforming social norms and relations. Such valuations miss out critical elements of women's engagement in the work process both at the individual and structural levels. These include the economic and institutional contexts which collectively deny women recognition for their work by perpetuating material disadvantage (e.g. lack of entitlements to land and other productive assets, gender wage differentials, financial exclusion) alongside ideological and social expectations regarding gendered work patterns, representations of identity and assertions of reciprocal recognition. Understanding the need for material and social security, and a complex combination of love and fear, is crucial for interpreting women's discursive strategies and their performance of particular roles and identities.

Women do exercise agency, and in their speech, talk about domestic and farm work as distinct activities. They combine strategic compliance and accommodation with small acts of everyday resistance to expand their spaces

for action and interaction within the existing social system, even though these gains are often temporary and incremental (Scott, 1990). For instance, notions of honour linked to discreet sexual conduct, put into practice through control over women's mobility and restricting them to the home, are manipulated by several of the women in socially acceptable ways. Priti gave in to early marriage but was able to postpone her *gauna* and complete her schooling. Meenu dropped out of the workforce briefly after marriage to establish her home-maker role, but re-entered soon after. Yet women underplay their own contributions, maintaining the dominant discourse of male provision. In an institutional context that socially, ideologically and materially disadvantages them, they carefully consider the risks of taking on additional responsibilities.

Women are engaged in a range of productive and reproductive work, even in the so-called patriarchal heartland of North India. This has become unavoidable in the changing economic context, where a stagnant agricultural sector necessitates male migration even amongst land-owning households. Women are more visible and articulate, but social norms and conventions remain strongly patriarchal, with men and senior women having strong interests in their reproduction. Younger women do not challenge these norms overtly but their narratives reveal the scope offered by the changing context for reinterpreting existing norms, and extending their meanings to include new realities. Priti has been elected to the local government, as the seat was reserved for a woman. Her husband Rajesh manages the everyday tasks of this position, as she has two young children and responsibility for the home and farm. Whenever there is official work, he accompanies her. Rather than denying his support, Priti builds on it to gradually expand her own influence in the public sphere. The manifestation of both words and deeds are shaped by the specificities of the local cultural and historical context, and need to be understood as elements of women's struggle to redefine gender differences within the particular social order. They seek to build on the gains in access to greater physical space in their everyday lives by emphasizing reciprocity and interdependence, rather than total dependence or autonomy.

Gender becomes a way of signifying all social relationships of power rather than being limited to the self-evident categories of men and women (Scott, 1988). As the experience of life itself is heterogeneous and multi-dimensional, changing over women's (and men's) life-course, these strategies reflect ongoing negotiations of gender identities (Kandiyoti, 1998; Raheja and Gold, 1996). For instance, in her narrative, Meenu points to several paradoxes in her life. Her husband sends money to his mother, and she has no voice against her mother-in-law, just quietly taking what she is given without arguing. On marriage she shifted her ties from her natal to conjugal kin, but her husband continues to devalue the conjugal bond in favour of his pre-existing relationships with his patrilineal unit. By not openly critiquing her husband or blaming him for not fulfilling his responsibilities as provider, by her own hard work and outward submission, she seeks to build

a more cooperative and reciprocal intimacy with him. Older women, on the other hand, are much more forthcoming in asserting their primary role in household production, even though their involvement in decision making, as self-represented, doesn't necessarily improve. Although their ability to exercise power may not have changed in their own conjugal relationship, it has in relation to their sons and daughters-in-law. This becomes the site where their agency and authority is exercised and culturally legitimized. Education apparently gives some of the younger women confidence to speak, yet it is women's age and subject-position in the household which influences their ability to negotiate improved outcomes for themselves and their families.

Men attribute more to their wives than the women themselves do, pointing perhaps to their desire to build closer bonds with their wives, or even just recognizing the contributions they make to their lives. Away from home, often for long periods of time, in insecure work environments, they seek security and support from their wives (Rao, 2012). Women's submission and care allays some of their fears and insecurities at the workplace; they have faith that their rural homes are well looked after. Women in this context, by quietly serving their men, improve their individual positions, contesting and manipulating the social norms and material constraints they face, to their own advantage.

Starting with women's everyday lives, as demonstrated here, helps us theorize more critically the trade-offs encountered by women and why they prioritize their particular, often individualistic gender interests in building conjugal solidarity, over more collective interests applicable to the larger category of women (Molyneux, 1985). Rather than a lack of consciousness about their contributions or indeed differences in class and status positions, they are deeply aware of these differences and the consequent risks of overstepping extant boundaries. Rather than economic independence or financial autonomy they seek recognition for their contributions and appropriate levels of reciprocity from their husbands, who increasingly either are not physically present or are engaged in insecure enterprises. Working on their farms reflects the complex interdependencies between men and women, a visible symbol of deepening mutuality and shared interests. Yet the disjunctures between their acts and narratives, while providing possibilities for reconstituting intra-household gender relations, ensure that gendered boundaries are maintained. Women's agency is ultimately incremental, serving to improve and secure their own lives, rather than changing meanings or relationships in long-lasting and transformative ways.

REFERENCES

- Agarwal, B. (1994) *A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1997) *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York: Routledge.

- Butler, J. (2000) 'Restaging the Universal: Hegemony and the Limits of Formalism', in J. Butler, E. Laclau and S. Žižek (eds) *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, pp. 11–43. London: Verso.
- Carney, J. (1988) 'Struggles over Crop Rights and Labour within Contract Farming Households in a Gambian Irrigated Rice Project', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 15(3): 334–49.
- Ciotti, M. (2010) *Retro-modern India: Forging the Low-caste Self*. London: Routledge.
- Desai, N. (2002) 'Traversing through Gendered Spaces: Insights from Some Narratives', in S. Patel, J. Bagchi and M. Krishnaraj (eds) *Thinking Social Science in India: Essays in Honour of Alice Thorner*, pp. 305–16. New Delhi: Sage.
- Dreze, J. and A. Sen (1995) *India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dyson, T. and M. Moore (1983) 'On Kinship Structure, Female Autonomy, and Demographic Behaviour in India', *Population and Development Review* 9(1): 35–60.
- Foucault, M. (1980) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–77* (translated by Colin Gordon). New York: Pantheon.
- Garikipati, S. (2008) 'Agricultural Wage Work, Seasonal Migration and the Widening Gender Gap: Evidence from a Semi-arid Region of Andhra Pradesh', *The European Journal of Development Research* 20(4): 629–48.
- Hirway, I. (2009) 'Understanding Poverty: Insights Emerging from the Time Use of the Poor', in R. Antonopoulos and I. Hirway (eds) *Unpaid Work and the Economy: Gender, Time Use and Poverty in the Global South*, pp. 22–57. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Holloway, W. (1984) 'Gender Difference and the Production of Subjectivity', in J. Henriques, W. Holloway, C. Urwin, C. Venn and V. Walkerdine (eds) *Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity*, pp. 228–52. London: Methuen.
- Jeffery, P. and R. Jeffery (1994) 'Killing my Heart's Desire: Education and Female Autonomy in Rural North India', in N. Kumar (ed.) *Women as Subjects: South Asian Histories*, pp. 125–70. Kolkata: Stree.
- Jejeebhoy, S.J. (2000) 'Women's Autonomy in Rural India: Its Dimensions, Determinants and the Influence of Context', in H. Presser and G. Sen (eds) *Female Empowerment and Demographic Processes*, pp. 204–38. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Kandiyoti, D. (1998) 'Gender, Power and Contestation: Rethinking Bargaining with Patriarchy', in C. Jackson and R. Pearson (eds) *Feminist Visions of Development: Gender Analysis and Policy*, pp. 135–52. London: Routledge.
- Kumar, N. (1988) *The Artisans of Banaras: Popular Culture and Identity, 1880–1986*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Molyneux, M. (1985) 'Mobilisation without Emancipation? Women's Interests, the State and Revolution in Nicaragua', *Feminist Studies* 11(2): 227–54.
- Moore, H.L. (1988) *Feminism and Anthropology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Munro, A., B. Kebede, M. Tarazona-Gomez and A. Verschoor (2011) 'Autonomy or Efficiency: An Experiment on Household Decisions in Two Regions of India'. GRIPS Discussion Paper 10–33. Tokyo: National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies.
- National Sample Survey Organization (2010) 'Employment and Unemployment Situation in India 2007–08: NSS 64th Round (July 2007–June 2008)'. New Delhi: National Sample Survey Office, Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, Government of India.
- Neetha, N. (2010) 'Self-employment of Women: Preference or Compulsion?', *Social Change* 40(2): 139–56.
- Picchio, A. (1992) *Social Reproduction and the Political Economy of the Labour Market*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Raheja, G.G. and A.G. Gold (1996) *Listen to the Heron's Words: Reimagining Gender and Kinship in North India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Rao, N. (2008) *"Good Women do not Inherit Land": Politics of Land and Gender in India*. New Delhi: Social Science Press and Orient Blackswan.

- Rao, N. (2012) 'Choosing Unfreedom? Migration and Changing Conjugal Expectations in Rural Bangladesh', *Journal of Development Studies* 48(1): 26–40.
- Rao, N., A. Verschoor, A. Deshpande and A. Dubey (2008) 'Gender, Caste and Growth Assessment — India'. Report to the Department for International Development (DFID). <http://www.uea.ac.uk/dev/publications/RPP8>
- Richards, P. (1989) 'Agriculture as a Performance', in R. Chambers, A. Pacey and L. Thrupp (eds) *Farmer First: Farmer Innovation and Agricultural Research*, pp. 39–42. London: Intermediate Technology.
- Scott, J.C. (1990) *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Scott, J.W. (1988) *Gender and the Politics of History*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Tiengtrakul, C. (2006) 'Home: Banarsi Women and Perceptions of the Domestic Domain', in L. Furzetti and S. Tenhunen (eds) *Culture, Power and Agency*, pp. 21–51. Kolkata: Stree.
- Villareal, M. (1992) 'Power, Gender and Intervention from an Actor-oriented Perspective', in N. Long and A. Long (eds) *Battlefields of Knowledge*, pp. 247–67. London: Routledge.

Nitya Rao is professor at the School of International Development, University of East Anglia, UK (e-mail: n.rao@uea.ac.uk). Her research interests include understanding gendered land and resource relations, intra-household decision making, migration and educational choices, gendered well-being, and growth, mainly in South Asia. She has published extensively in international and national journals.