The Impact of Industrialisation and Urbanisation on Patidar women in the Kheda district of Gujarat.

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I would also like most particularly to thank all the Patidar families in both London and Gujarat, who gave me advice, assistance
and a great deal of hospitality and I am especially grateful to the Patidar women in the study for their constant kindness and co-operation.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents for their support and I would like to dedicate this thesis to their memory as, sadly, they did not live to see the culmination of all my efforts.
This study sought to establish the impact of urbanisation and industrialisation on Patidar women in the Kheda district of Gujarat. Participant-observation techniques were used to gather much of the data and this was supplemented by 'informal interviews'. Seventy-two women between the ages of twenty and forty from nine towns and villages were interviewed about their daily routines and social interaction. Fifty-three married women with children under the age of ten from the original sample were further interviewed about more personal areas in their lives.

Urban residence had a greater impact on Patidar women than changes in their husbands' occupation. Rural women, whatever their husbands' occupation, were still very influenced by the caste-based values and lifestyles of an agricultural household. There was no very discernible difference in the position of women in paid employment, despite their ability to contribute towards household expenses. The important determinant was control of resources and capital, from which women were precluded by the patriarchal social structure.

The study established that urban Patidar women's position and roles changed along two dimensions. The domestic sphere in urban households had declined and Patidar women's power, in that sphere, had diminished as a consequence. Indeed, power and decision making was even more vested in men and the elders in urban areas than in rural areas.
But in the 'public domain' Patidar women's roles as demonstrators of status was even more enhanced than in rural areas as urban women took on new responsibilities. In a rural society dominated by caste values, the position of women had been seen as a prime means of reflecting the status of the household and the family, kutumb, and this was particularly evident at the time of marriage. Upward social mobility, within the caste system, could only be achieved by hypergamous marriages of Patidar women to higher status Patidar men.

In urban areas, the need to 'reproduce' the household's status in a society less dominated by 'ascribed status' had entailed Patidar women undertaking a more active role in 'status production work'. Moreover, in urban society, women had become even more important in 'demonstrating status' in a wider social arena. This had become apparent with the changing criteria for the selection of marriage partners and the even greater 'conspicuous display' at the time of weddings. Increases in certain forms of dowry payments, in particular, reflected the changing roles of urban Patidar women.

The urban Patidar, however, had not rejected a caste based society and urban women's position was still compatible with many features of 'Sanskritization'. But the urban Patidar had also chosen to adopt different markers of status in order to establish the status of the household within an emerging class society, which had a significant impact on urban Patidar women. In this wider status arena, urban Patidar women's status had been enhanced as a reflection of the upward mobility of their household.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gujarat Term</th>
<th>English Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agni</td>
<td>goddess of fire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ambanata</td>
<td>'mother' goddess</td>
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<tr>
<td>aple</td>
<td>initial engagement ceremony</td>
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<tr>
<td>bhaihi</td>
<td>brother's wife</td>
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<tr>
<td>bhaibij</td>
<td>religious festival to mark brother-sister relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>bhut</td>
<td>(possession) by ghost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bhuva</td>
<td>person who 'removes' ghosts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bijun anun</td>
<td>ceremony connected with marriage: literally 'second coming' of bride to new marital household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chanalo</td>
<td>'gift' of money from those who received invitation to the wedding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chanalo-matli</td>
<td>engagement ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chappals</td>
<td>sandals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cho Gam</td>
<td>'Six Villages'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chowk</td>
<td>group of families in same residential area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coroberi</td>
<td>see Shrimant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dahi</td>
<td>curd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dhobi</td>
<td>washerman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divali</td>
<td>new year festival of lights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dora</td>
<td>black necklace to ward of the 'evil eye'</td>
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<tr>
<td>divo puja</td>
<td>prayers to the household deity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diyar</td>
<td>husband's younger brother</td>
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<tr>
<td>diyami</td>
<td>husband's younger brother's wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>draxsh</td>
<td>female ghost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ekada</td>
<td>group of intermarrying villages with similar status</td>
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<tr>
<td>garba</td>
<td>dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ghi</td>
<td>clarified butter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gol</td>
<td>see ekada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goyhro</td>
<td>five day fast performed by young girls and women to pray for a 'good husband'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gyanun</td>
<td>gift of item of articles needed for care of new baby from the family of the mother of the baby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holi</td>
<td>religious festival where coloured chalks are thrown at all and sundry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jvrat Jivrat</td>
<td>fast performed by married women for the 'long life of their husband'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jagran</td>
<td>a fast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jajmani</td>
<td>system of work organisation within the caste system with a number of 'craft' specialists allocated to one landowner</td>
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<tr>
<td>jan</td>
<td>bridegroom's party at a wedding</td>
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<td>jat/jati</td>
<td>caste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaya Parvati Vrat</td>
<td>see Goyhro</td>
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<tr>
<td>jet</td>
<td>husband's older brother</td>
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<tr>
<td>jethani</td>
<td>husband's older brother's wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>joshi</td>
<td>holy man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaka</td>
<td>father's older brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaki</td>
<td>father's brother's wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
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<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaka</td>
<td>husband's father's brother</td>
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<tr>
<td>kaki</td>
<td>husband's father's brother's wife</td>
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<tr>
<td>kamin</td>
<td>workman; craft specialist</td>
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<tr>
<td>katta</td>
<td>religious service in thanks for fulfillment of vow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khadaki</td>
<td>literally 'gateway', courtyard: a residential grouping of families from same patrilineal group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kulin</td>
<td>exalted lineage: literally of the 'blood'; elite of Six Village ekada</td>
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<tr>
<td>kutumb</td>
<td>extended family group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mala</td>
<td>garland</td>
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<tr>
<td>mandi</td>
<td>henna paste used to decorate the hands and feet of the bride at the time of a wedding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mantra</td>
<td>religious verse or chant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masi</td>
<td>mother's sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matthia</td>
<td>crisp, spicy pancake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modun</td>
<td>literally 'to show the face' at the first visit of a new bride to her husband's home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mosul</td>
<td>mother's ancestral village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>najar</td>
<td>'evil eye'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>najar lage</td>
<td>to cast 'the evil eye' on someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nanand</td>
<td>husband's sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navratri</td>
<td>nine day festival with dance each night in honour of the Mother Goddess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>page lage</td>
<td>touch the feet of elders as a show of respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paithan</td>
<td>money payments in dowry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paneta</td>
<td>end of sari draped over shoulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pepri</td>
<td>crisp spicy fried food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>path</td>
<td>religious gathering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prasad</td>
<td>sweetmeat or fruit blessed at the temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>piyar</td>
<td>woman's parents' home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pol</td>
<td>see chowk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>puja</td>
<td>religious worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pujari</td>
<td>holy man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rakri</td>
<td>thread tied as token of brother-sister relationship at Rakshabandan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ras</td>
<td>festival to mark brother-sister relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sama Pancham</td>
<td>dance in which both men and women participated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sanskar</td>
<td>'good breeding'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saserun/a</td>
<td>husband's parents' home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sasu</td>
<td>mother-in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shravyn</td>
<td>'auspicious' religious month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrimant</td>
<td>ceremony at the seventh month of pregnancy to pray for a successful birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitra Satam</td>
<td>fast for smallpox goddess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sobhagranti</td>
<td>good wishes whispered in bride's ear for 'long life of her husband'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stridhanam</td>
<td>form of female inheritance: usually moveable wealth especially jewellery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suthar</td>
<td>carpenter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarati Term</td>
<td>English Translation</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>thodyun</td>
<td>group of five or six families in close residence; similar to khadaki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unjhya</td>
<td>ceremony to remove 'evil eye'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taluka</td>
<td>local government administrative area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vad Savitri</td>
<td>fast for 'long life of a husband'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>valand</td>
<td>barber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>varna</td>
<td>hierarchy of four rankings in the caste system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vastu puja</td>
<td>house warming ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vrat</td>
<td>fast for the fulfillment of a specific wish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zamidar</td>
<td>tax collector/landlord</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note on exchange rates.**

At the time of the main period of fieldwork, 1980-81, the rate of exchange was generally between fifteen and sixteen rupees to the English pound.

**Note** All Gujarati terms in the text are underlined.
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SECTION 1: THE BACKGROUND
'The dogs would bark', was the comment made by one of the villagers in Gada to a question as to whether he and his wife were ever involved in any joint social activities: the insinuation being that such behaviour would be regarded as extremely unusual if not 'peculiar'. The customs and values of village life in India are the product of the experiences of many generations of villagers. This does not mean to imply that such 'traditional' societies are static or unable to cope with changes, because this is palpably not so. Even theorists who have discussed Indian village life in such terms acknowledged that changes do, in fact, take place over time. (1)

As changes have always featured in rural society, however, other researchers, foremost of those being Srinivas (1966), have provided theoretical frameworks to discuss such developments, particularly to account for the upward, and downward, mobility of many castes in what is, in theory, a rigid social structure. (2) In the latter half of the twentieth century, however, although there have been significant changes in rural areas, the most dramatic development in Indian society has been the rapid growth of urban residence and the establishment of an urban and/or industrial workforce. A pertinent question is, therefore, are the theories pioneered by Srinivas and Pocock, amongst others, relevant in accounting for changes experienced by recent urban dwellers?

Urbanisation and industrialisation.

Many parallels can be found between the developments in India
now and the rapid urbanisation and industrialisation which occurred in nineteenth century England, although the two societies have a very different social structure as well as very different customs and values. (3) Both societies, for example, experienced urban growth which had no direct connection with industrialisation. Urbanisation is frequently a result of industrial development; but that is not the sole criterion for urban growth. As F.M.L. Thompson (1988) pointed out in the mid nineteenth century, the 'notional' small British town was no more than an 'overgrown village': "their inhabitants as close to the land in their way of life as their cottages were to the surrounding open country." (p.26) Just as, too, not all urban growth was connected with industry, nor was all industrial development confined to urban areas. Thompson's distinctions bear directly on twentieth century Gujarat, and particularly the Charottar region, where a number of the 'villages' have, indeed, the size of population associated with small towns. (Dharmaj, Karamsad and Bakrol in this study fall into this category.) But they preserved the occupation and lifestyle of agricultural villages. But, also, not all industrial, or professional workers are resident in the rapidly developing urban and industrial centres: some live in their old homes in the villages.

This piece of research cannot, therefore, simply compare rural and urban dwellers or make the assumption that rural equals agricultural and urban equates with industrial or professional life. From the findings of other studies, such as Thompson (1988), it is
reasonable to assume that the greatest degree of change has occurred
to those who not only live in an urban area, but who are also
employed in an urban environment in industry, commerce or the
professions.

The impact of economic development.

This research, however, does not concentrate on the impact of
urban and industrial development on the lives of men. A number of
studies have pointed out that there is a differential impact of
'economic development' on men and women; yet research studies,
frequently, focus solely on men. In many cases, where men may seem
to have prospered, women's position has actually deteriorated. (4)
Florence McCarthy (1977) indicated, in the context of villages in
Bangladesh, how the impact of 'modernization' was studied in terms
of its effect on men, not women. (5) Miriam Sharma (1985), however,
argued that the impact of development is not only not unilinear in
terms of having differential effects on men and women, it also
affected women from different socio-economic backgrounds in a
variety of ways. In the Indian context, the impact of urban and
industrial development varies, to a considerable extent, depending
on a woman's caste and class background. (6) This research seeks to
redress the balance, to some extent, and address the issues of the
specific impact of social change on Patidar women. It does not seek
to look at Patidar men, other than where their lives closely
intersect or parallel those of women. Such a focus is particularly
important in a study of a segregated society, where access to
women's daily lives has to be carefully negotiated and where women,
including a female researcher, cannot move with ease between the
male and female worlds.

Sanskritization and upward social mobility.

Although much of the research which has been conducted into social change in India has focussed on men, their upward or downward mobility has frequently been most clearly reflected in the position and roles of the women in such groups. Thus, in discussions of upward mobility, where the process of 'Sanskritization' is adopted, it is in women's behaviour that this is most easily discerned. In such circumstances, for example, women adopt much more orthodox religious practices and are much more constrained in their behaviour, by such measures as the strict observance of menstrual and childbirth taboos, and the correct practice of dietary restrictions. They might adopt a more secluded lifestyle than previously; so they can more easily maintain a 'good reputation'. Srinivas (1962, 1966) has described the process by which upwardly mobile castes mark their enhanced status by adopting the customs and mores of a higher caste, 'Sanskritization'. (See Chapter 3 for an elaboration of these theories.) This is frequently the 'priestly caste', the Brahmins. But castes, such as the Patidar, might opt to emulate another caste grouping.

However, in the context of this research, the important distinction is not so much with which 'upper caste' might be a 'role model', but whether that is the direction selected at all. It is, perhaps, more feasible that those living in an urban industrial environment, would choose to 'Westernize', by which Srinivas, and
others, sought to suggest a 'modern' image: liberal, educated and prepared to look beyond the immediate caste community. Others have preferred the concept of 'secularisation', where religion is no longer the focal point of daily life, but is relegated to people's private lives and may become only one aspect of an enlarged social life. (7) One of the aims of this research is to seek out in which direction Patidar women's lives are developing, without assuming that they will either all develop along similar lines, or that they will readily follow clearly defined models.

Changes in women's position may well be affected by their original background and position, just as the caste and class of a woman can mean that industrial and urban development also have differential effects. So families of women from one background may well 'Sanskritise', whereas others may seek to 'Westernize' or 'secularise'. Although the caste under study, the Patidar, appear to be a tightly-knit, homogeneous group to an outsider, there are also many very important status variables to be considered. Principal among these are the status of the village, or group of villages, in which a person was born, and, within that context, the status of their extended family within that village. (This will be discussed more fully in Chapter 3.) Those at the lower end of the status hierarchy might well choose to adopt the characteristics of those immediately superior, whereas those from the highest status groups might look outside the caste for new models to follow to mark their enhanced status.
The two dimensions of status.

One further distinction must be made in any consideration of women's position in society: what is meant by 'society'. Just as the impact of social change on women varies according to their caste or class and possibly according to the status of their family and village, women's position cannot be assessed solely by their status in the wider society: the 'public sphere'. In an Indian context, particularly, women as part of a caste group may possess a high status in society, higher than that of many men, in other castes. But this is their ascribed status, a reflection of the status of their household, whether that of their father or husband. It is not to deny that they may have an important role to play in creating and sustaining the status of that household, as has been discussed in the work of Patricia Caplan (1985) and Ursula Sharma (1986). But within the household, a woman's position can be very different, determined by gender and age. Whatever are the criteria by which women achieve their position in the household, they are certainly not the same as those which determined their status in the wider society.

The Research Problem

Having outlined the major theoretical perspectives which form the background to this research, I want now to focus on the research problem itself: what is the impact of urbanisation and industrialisation on the Patidar women in Charottar and what are the implications of these changes for women's position and role both
within the household and in the wider society? In order to understand the direction of social change, it is necessary to have a clear perception of the lives of women living in rural areas, women from both agricultural and non-agricultural households, before looking, in detail, at urban women.

The daily experience of Patidar women which has most meaning and relevance to them is that which takes place in 'the private domain' of the home. Some women, particularly in rural areas, have very little contact with 'the public domain', where men work and pass a large proportion of their daily lives. Moreover, this is also evident, even in the urban areas. Many women in middle-class, urban Victorian England found, too, that much of their time was spent in the private domain, creating a 'haven in the home' for men to return to after work. (Liddle and Joshi 1986). Why is it that Patidar women, particularly in rural areas, have become 'confined' to the home and what degree of power do they exercise in that 'domestic sphere'? In order to understand these issues, it is essential to establish a framework for the discussion of the principal determinants of women's position and roles within the household and the wider society.

Much has been written about the determinants of women's position, which will be discussed in full in Chapter 4. However, the argument falls broadly into two camps: those who see women's contribution to production and the subsistence of the household as the crucial determinant of women's position and those who contend that 'reproduction' is more important. If women's position is
determined by materialist criteria, then the changes which occur in urban women's contribution to the household economy as a result of urban living are likely to be very significant. In agricultural households, where women are actively involved in running the farm, it is possible that they had greater power within that domestic sphere. If that is so, have women in non-agricultural households found that their position has deteriorated with the loss of their active participation in creating the means of subsistence?

The central focus of the research is to establish the principal determinants of Patidar women's position within both a rural and an urban society. If women's contributions towards the household economy through their participation in the workforce, whether paid or unpaid, is not a sufficient explanation for their position within the household, what are the other important factors to be considered? Ursula Sharma (1980) has contended that it was women's inability, ultimately, to inherit family wealth, more particularly land, which was of great importance. It was women's control over resources which ultimately determined their position. The Patidar, as a rural caste, have followed Hindu custom whereby it was perceived as 'normal practice' for land and capital resources to pass to sons: thus retaining their control in male hands. Have occupational and residential changes brought about any change in the direction of inheritance amongst the Patidar?

If, as it has been argued, it is the ability to control and, ultimately, to inherit resources which is a crucial determinant of a
woman's position, is there a significant transfer of resources to Patidar women, either before or at the time of death of a woman's father? A number of writers, Goody (1976), Jeffery (1979), Harrell and Dickey (1985), have contended that this is one of the principal functions of dowry payments. They have argued that by the payment of large sums of dowry at the time of marriage, women are 'compensated' for their failure to inherit at the time of their father's death. But do dowry payments serve this function amongst the Patidar? Do women actually receive or control significant sums of money or capital? Indeed, are dowry payments not an important aspect of one of the core values of Patidar society: hypergamy and upward mobility?

Whatever the merits of the argument over the control of resources, it has also been argued that women's position is determined by the pre-existing patriarchal family structure. (Veena Das 1976). The contention is that regardless of women's contribution to subsistence, it is the existing balance of power within the family which determines women's position. Within the joint household, power was vested in the older, senior members of the family. Some earlier writers, such as W.J. Goode (1963), considered that one of the outcomes of 'modernization' would be the breakdown of the joint family system in an urban environment. (8) But has urban life brought about the 'decline' of the joint family? (9) Moreover, if there has been an increase in the incidence of nuclear households amongst the urban Patidar, has that enhanced women's power within the home or brought about closer relationships between husbands and wives, as a consequence? (10) Other research,
such as that of Kandiyoti (1977), has indicated that urban residence may bring about changes in family structure and the 'balance of power' within the household, but it is not necessarily women who benefit from such developments.

However, it is not just the existence of a patriarchal family structure which has a profound influence on women's position and role within the household, their involvement in 'reproduction' also has a significant impact. It is not just their role in 'biological' reproduction and the socialisation of children which is of importance, but women are also involved in creating the necessary conditions in the household to 'reproduce' the labour force. Moreover, women are involved in a third form of 'social reproduction' by which means the prevailing social structure and customs are perpetuated. (Edholm, Harris and Young 1977).

Responsibility for child care within the Indian joint family is often vested in older women, leaving the young mother to take on the burden of domestic chores. But have changes in family structure meant that younger urban women take a much more active part in 'child care' and what are the implications of this? Moreover, have other aspects of 'child care' assumed greater importance in an urban society where educational qualifications are increasingly necessary? (11) Any consideration of women's position in both the household and the wider society has to take into account women's role in this more comprehensive definition of 'reproduction'. Does 'reproduction', in the wider sense of 'reproducing' the values of
family and society occupy a greater part of women's time, as it has been found to do by writers such as Caplan (1985) and Ursula Sharma (1986) amongst urban women in other areas of India? They have contended that many urban women spend a considerable amount of their time in 'reproducing' the status of the household in the new socio-economic conditions in which they live.

Women and the status arena.

There are two dimensions to women's status, as has already been noted: women's position in the home and family and in the wider 'public domain'. Somewhat ironically, it has been argued that by maintaining women 'secluded' in the private domain, the status of the entire household was enhanced in the wider social arena. Women in segregated societies have been one of the principal means of 'demonstrating' the status of the household and the family. (Papanek 1973). The ability to keep women 'in seclusion' in a rural caste-based society is a reflection of a family's relative affluence; the family are able to forego women's labour power in agricultural work outside the household. Women's status within the household was not necessarily high, but the status of the entire household was enhanced in the 'public domain' by their seclusion in the home. (Miriam Sharma 1985). Such a practice of purdah restricting women's mobility was perceived as a form of 'Sanskritization' in a rural society.

With the transition, however, to an urban and industrial lifestyle, are Patidar women still important as 'demonstrators of status'? Is the 'seclusion' of women possible or even relevant in
an urban context? The observance of 'purdah' may well have proved a very successful means of reinforcing the 'sexual division of labour' in rural society, as well as reflecting the high status of the household at the same time. However, with the changing requirements of an urban household, Patidar women's roles in 'servicing' the needs of that household have, presumably, also altered. Moreover, are Patidar women still important as a means of demonstrating the status of the household in the wider society, or have the Patidar adopted other forms of conspicuous display of their status and wealth?

For the Patidar, another important indicator of status in a society dominated by caste, has been marriage. The criteria used for the selection of marriage partners were principally those of family status, backed up by capital or income. The standing of the whole family within the sub-group was a crucial determinant of marriage partners for both young men and women. But, in this process, a woman's status was of vital importance: firstly, in terms of her 'good reputation' and, secondly, that in herself, her manner and appearance, she represented the status of the whole family group. Marriage and wedding ceremonies were an important forum for the display of status. In an urban context, however, has marriage and the surrounding display and ceremony become more or less of a 'status arena'? 

Moreover, marriage was, also, one of the sole means of reflecting upward social mobility in a rural society dominated by
caste. Thus the importance of 'ascribed' status was reflected in the choice of marriage partners. But have these values been successfully transposed on to urban society? Dowry payments, too, were made on the basis of these status differentials based on the (sub)-caste hierarchy. But if the nature of marriage and the criteria for the choice of marriage partners has changed in an urban context, what has been the impact on dowry payments?

This research has to address two issues: the impact of social change on Patidar women's position within the home and family, but also the effect of urban and industrial life on women's position, as representatives of their household in the wider 'public domain'. In the following chapter, therefore, I shall examine both the history and development of the Patidar caste and the economic and social structure of the Kheda district, in order to understand the context in which those social changes, affecting Patidar women, are taking place.
INTRODUCTION

1. Earlier writers, for example, such as Gusfield (1967) have acknowledged that change does occur and have contended that there has been what they see as a 'great tradition' of Indian village life, which provides an overall ideological framework for village life. Changes are incorporated through 'the little tradition', which can include quite substantial alterations in established practice without disrupting the perceived 'harmony' of village life: a fusion of traditional and modern.

2. See Chapter 3 for further discussion of 'Sanskritisation.'

3. Such a detailed comparison goes well beyond the scope of this research.

4. Boserup (1970) was one of the earlier writers, in a very important study, to point out this tendency. Others, such as Bossen (175) and Miriam Sharma (1985) have supported this point. See Chapter 4 for further elaboration.

5. In this study, for example, Patidar men living in agricultural villages could be employed in a town in industrial or professional work, whereas their wives were still resident in an agricultural household in a predominantly agricultural village.

6. In order, therefore, to ensure the study was of a comparable group of women from a similar caste or class background, I decided to select my sample from women from the same sub-castes of Patidar, a very specific and clearly identified group, living either in their ancestral village or in the nearby town.

7. See V.K. Rao (1977) in Srinivas, Seshaih and Parthasarathy (eds), where he expounds 'secularisation' as confining religion much more to private life. In such a situation, for example, women were more likely to be able to have a good education and a career or, at least, to move towards more choice and independence in their lives.

8. Such theorists thought that 'modernisation' in urban life would follow a unilinear pattern, such as experienced in the west, with the development of nuclear families, which they felt facilitated capitalist expansion.

9. G. Ramu (1973) pointed out that joint families, such as the Birlas and Tatas have thrived in a capitalist environment; others contend that the joint family structure can enable entrepreneurial activity to flourish. For example, it can facilitate capital accumulation.
10. Hoogevelt (1978) explained that modernization theories postulated that due to the separation of home and work and the breakdown of the extended family, the husband and wife relationship assumes great importance with the need for emotional support from spouses and the consequent increased emphasis on 'romantic love'.

11. Thompson (1988) has shown how families in Britain, increasingly through the nineteenth century, saw the relevance of education in enabling their children to aim for a better standard of living than that of their parents.
CHAPTER 2. THE PATIDAR AND THE KHEDA DISTRICT
Gujarat and the Kheda district

Gujarat is one of the Western seaboard states of India, bordering on Pakistan. To the north of Gujarat is the arid state of Rajasthan, with the Thar desert, and, in the east and south, are the states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and the teeming city of Bombay. The Patidar, in this study, all live in the Charottar region of Gujarat. This area, now known as Kheda (or Kaira), has been called the 'garden of India'. (Pocock 1972) It is an area of 7,194 square kilometres of flat, fertile plain, bounded in the north by Sabar Kanth and the Ahmedabad area; in the south by the River Mahi, the Gulf of Cambay and the district of Vadodra (Baroda); in the west by the River Sabermati and Saurastra; and in the east, by the less developed area of Panch Mahals: see Fig 2:1. The Census of India claimed that Kheda is an unbroken plain 'amply blessed with irrigation facilities', with temperatures rising in the summer up to 45 degrees centigrade (1). According to Gillion (1968), Kheda, itself, was the richest, most densely populated district in the old Bombay Presidency and he contended that, at that time, it possibly had the richest per capita income in India. Mehta, in Lakdawala (1983), reported the per capital income for the whole of Gujarat in 1975-6, five years before this research, as being 1,236 rupees, the fourth highest in the country. (But the state also had the lowest annual growth rate, at that time.)
MATERIAL REDACTED AT REQUEST OF UNIVERSITY
The wealth of the area, and the state, had initially been based on agriculture. From the seventeenth century, Gujarat had been producing commercial crops, principally cotton, which were exported to Great Britain. Tobacco and groundnuts were other cash crops, exported from an early date. All three crops are still the main cash crops grown in the area. Since the 1950s, modern farming methods, with the use of pumpsets for irrigation, tractors and chemical fertilizers, have provided an incentive for even greater production of cash crops. (G.Shah in Lakdawala 1983.) However, Mehta contended (in Lakdawala 1983) that the state of Gujarat, as a whole, still had low productivity, in the mid seventies, compared to other states in India. The major food crops grown in the Kheda district were wheat, jawar, bajri (spiked millet), rice, gram and tur, as well as the cash crops: groundnuts and tobacco. (The 1981 Census: Series 5: Gujarat. District Census Handbook. Parts XIII A and B) (2)

A significant development in the agricultural sphere, initiated in 1946, had been the emergence and growth of the co-operative dairy movement, spearheaded by Amul, based in Anand. This movement had developed from a (buffalo) milk marketing union, enabling farmers, rather than middlemen, to gain the profits from supplying milk to areas such as Bombay. From its initial small start, Amul, by 1977-78, just prior to the fieldwork, handled 538,000 litres of milk a day. The byproducts, apart from milk sales, were butter, milk powder, cheese, baby food, casein, chocolate, weaning food, ghee and malted food. (3) This 'Anand' pattern of co-operative dairy movement has been copied successfully throughout Gujarat and India.
The co-operative movement, too, brought considerable benefits to the villages in the union, including such facilities as veterinary care and artificial insemination for the better care and development of local buffalo. But there were also facilities for the villagers, themselves. Some of the profits from the movement were directed back into social welfare activities, such as libraries, primary and secondary schools, roads, dispensaries and health centres, water works, electricity and telephone facilities. (4) But despite the receipt of a fair price daily for milk produced, which supplies some of the poorer members of the co-operative with their only cash income, A.S. Patel (1983) contended that the major beneficiaries have often been the big landowners. In his own village, Narsanda, he pointed out that the Patidar are the major landowners and compose 29.2 per cent of total households. Yet, they form 54.2 per cent of the membership of the co-operative in the village, and 61 per cent of the milk supplying households. (A.S. Patel 1983 in Lakdawala). Somjee and Somjee (1974) confirm these findings: they pointed out that the management of the co-operatives, by and large, has stayed in the hands of the more powerful castes, despite the often numerical superiority of the lower castes. They contended that the lower castes 'preferred' to see those accustomed to management in control so that the local co-operative would be economically successful.

Kheda district, itself, was predominantly an agricultural area until after Independence in 1947. The two major cities were outside the area: but the once princely capital city of Baroda, was just
immediately to the south, whereas Ahmedabad was considerably further to the north. Ahmedabad, however, has been at the heart of textile production and acted as an entrepot to European towns since the mid nineteenth century. (Gillion 1968). But Baroda, the nearest commercial centre for the area, has developed its industrial base much more recently and now has a large petro-chemicals complex, with fertilizer production, petroleum and natural gas. It is also a major industrial centre for pharmaceuticals, chemicals, cotton textiles and engineering. (1981 Census) A considerable number of the workforce is drawn from the Kheda district. Ahmedabad, on the other hand, is more distant and a smaller number of Kheda people 'commute' there to work. But the Kheda district, itself, has developed its own industrial base in the period since Independence as a result of deliberate government policies to try and retain the local population in the immediate area. Concomitantly, the university town of Vallabh Vidyanagar has been developed to ensure that further education could be obtained by the rural population without its having to leave the area in order to obtain qualifications at distant urban universities. Industrial development locally has provided much employment for a population which might otherwise have emigrated to the large cities, particularly Bombay.

The population of Gujarat and Kheda district is a rapidly expanding one. (Mehta 1983 states that Gujarat has one of the highest birth rates in the country, as well as a high infant mortality rate, which has increased rather than decreased, since Independence. It was 110 per 1000 live births in 1961 and 152.12 in
1971, with no evidence of decline.) (5) Kheda, itself, had a population of 3,051,027 in the 1981 Census, with 2,408,672 rural inhabitants and 606,355 urban ones. Men outnumbered women in both rural and urban areas. The decennial population growth rate between 1971-1981, in Kheda, was 23%. The urban population of Gujarat, as a whole, was 31.10%, but only 20.11% in the Kheda district. The sex ratio was particularly biased against women in Kheda. The Indian Census records sex ratios as females to a thousand males and the sex ratio for Gujarat was 942 females: 1000 males. But, in the Kheda region, this dropped to 915 females: 1000 males.

Villages and towns in the surveys

The Kheda district is subdivided into ten administrative areas, known as talukas. The towns and villages, in this study, are situated in three of these talukas. Anand taluka is the main focus of the study; the villages of Ajarpura, Bakrol and Karamsad are situated in it, as well as the towns of Anand and Vallabh Vidyanagar: see Fig 2.2. Anand taluka, itself, is 676 square kilometres in area; one of the larger of the taluka areas. Dharmaj and Gada are situated in Petlad taluka and Nadiad is in the Nadiad taluka. Baroda, the nearest large city, lies just outside Kheda district. The area is linked by the north-south axis of the main Bombay to Ahmedabad railway line, on which Baroda, Anand and Nadiad are situated. Branching in a loop from Anand to Nadiad, is a narrow-gauge railway for carrying freight and passengers. All the higher status 'village' in the 'Cho Gam', the 'Six Villages', are
MATERIAL REDACTED AT REQUEST OF UNIVERSITY
connected by this rail-link; as well as by good road links and bus services. (There will be a fuller discussion of the significance of the varying villages statuses in Chapter 3.)

The Cho Gam, 'Six Villages', is composed of Nadiad, Dharmaj, Karamsad, Bhadran, Vaso and Sojitra. Survey data was gathered from informants and respondents based in three of 'the Six Villages': Nadiad, Dharmaj and Karamsad. (6) Only Dharmaj, by the time of the 1981 Census, was still classified as a 'village'; moreover, it had previously been classified as a town until 1971, when it was declassified along with Bhadran. (Nadiad was classified as a city in the same census.) Other informants and respondents lived in 'the Twenty Seven Villages' of Anand, Bakrol, Gada and Ajarpura: Anand was classified as a town. The remaining women surveyed lived in the newly established university town of Vallabh Vidyanagar, generally referred to as VVN, which had been planned and developed since Independence, and in the large cosmopolitan city of Baroda. Neither had any specific association with any ekada. (See Chapter 3).

The figures from the 1981 Census show a period of rapid urban expansion, although the decade between 1961-71 saw an even greater rate of growth for Anand and Vallabh Vidyanagar: 46.2% and 128.7% respectively. (7) Indeed, the Anand area was defined as a 'standard urban area', which included Anand, Vallabh Vidyanagar and Vithal Udyognagar, formerly the industrial adjunct of Vallabh Vidyanagar, but classified as a town in its own right by 1981. The 'standard urban area' also included ten rural components as well, among which were Bakrol and Karamsad, which were considered possible contenders.
for urban status by the time of the 1991 Census. (See Fig: 2.2)

Because of the proximity of the industrial areas of Anand and Vallabh Vidyanagar, VN, the 'villages' of Karamsad and Bakrol were actually growing quite rapidly in size, retaining the existing inhabitants, instead of losing them in migration to other urban centres: see Table 2.1. The more remote village settlements, even the large village of Dharmaj, had not seen such an expansion in the population.

Table 2.1: Population of villages and towns surveyed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1971</th>
<th>1981</th>
<th>Growth '71-'81</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vadodra</td>
<td>309,716</td>
<td>467,487</td>
<td>734,473</td>
<td>+ 57.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadiad</td>
<td>78,952</td>
<td>108,269</td>
<td>142,689</td>
<td>+ 31.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anand</td>
<td>40,458</td>
<td>59,155</td>
<td>83,936</td>
<td>+ 41.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VN</td>
<td>6,782</td>
<td>15,509</td>
<td>18,197</td>
<td>+ 17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karamsad</td>
<td></td>
<td>14,896</td>
<td></td>
<td>+ 36.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakrol</td>
<td></td>
<td>11,125</td>
<td></td>
<td>+ 31.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharmaj</td>
<td>9,208</td>
<td>10,299</td>
<td></td>
<td>+ 8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajarpura</td>
<td></td>
<td>4,347</td>
<td></td>
<td>+ 7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gada</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,826</td>
<td></td>
<td>+ 14.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Data from 1971 and 1981 Census of India)

All the villages situated in the talukas of Anand, Petlad, Borsad and Nadiad had better facilities than other parts of the Kheda district (1971 Census). They had access to electricity, schools, hospitals, good roads and telephones. Although supplies of both electricity and water were intermittent, particularly during the summer season. Residents of Gada had, still, at times, to
resort to the wells near their homes. But the appearance of the villages varied considerably dependent on their historic status and also more recent factors, such as the flow of funds from residents living away from the village. The highest status villages of Karamsad and Dharmaj, for example, contained many fine buildings, elegantly decorated, with paved streets running through the villages: some of these buildings were of a considerable age and the villages, themselves, had benefitted from the influx of money from overseas migrants dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century. (See Fig. 2.3) The small village of Gada, on the other hand, did not contain such older well constructed buildings. But it had a more recent influx of funds from former residents living outside the area: one, a cinema owner in Bombay, had sent money to build a maternity home and temple. In Dharmaj, too, a new Swami Narayan temple had been built, using money raised from former and current residents of the village. Just as the historic standing of the villages, and former villages, now classified as towns, could be seen by the magnificence of the dwellings, so those villages and towns which are thriving could be discerned, frequently by the presence of modern buildings. In such cases, many affluent families sought to build a new home with a garden on the outskirts of the village and move outside the old courtyards where the original family home had been built.

The emergence of the Patidar

There appears to be some uncertainty as to the origins of the Patidar caste. Most authorities agree that the Patidars' ancestors
were part of the Gujar tribe which stayed for a time in the Punjab before eventually settling in Gujarat. G.I. Patel (n.d) for example, quoted the Bombay Gazeteer which claimed that they were part of the White Huna tribe of Gujars, who passed through Punjab in the sixth, or ninth, century, whereas Heredia (1972) claimed it was the eleventh century. Whatever the century, little is heard again of the caste until the seventeenth and eighteenth century, when they sided with the Marathas, the Hindu forces, against the Moghuls. Thus they were part of the process which enabled the Gaekwad of Baroda to eventually come to power. (8) Consequently, they benefitted in the subsequent period, as much of present-day Kheda was under the jurisdiction of the Gaekwad. They received rewards of land for their support in the struggle. (Tahmankar 1970). According to Heredia (1972), such leases of land were known as patti, literally 'pieces of land', and hence the name, Patidar. From this time forward, they were well known as agriculturalists. G.I.Patel (n.d) said of the Patidar:

"They are sober, peaceful, hardworking, hospitable, independent and thrifty (except on the occasion of marriages and similar festive ceremonies." (p.4)

Others have not been so complimentary in their historical assessment of the Patidar as a caste:

"Patel is a surname, but in a way it speaks by itself, denoting thereby the occupation of a person carrying the surname ....... Though they cannot be termed exactly tyrants, they were rude enough to exhibit that they were a class by themselves. They were rude not only to people in general but even at times to the ruling power (the British)......That is why, Patidar by itself, is not a popular class among the masses." (Bavdekar 1976. p.352-353)

G.I.Patel (n.d.) claims there was one main division between the Patels: the Kanbi, or husbandmen, and the Patidar, or shareholders.
There was, and is, in theory, at least, no intermarriage between the two groups. Pocock (1972), however, claimed that, in fact, the Patidar developed from two groups, the two sons of Ram: the Leva Patidar, who settled mainly in Charottar, that is Kheda, and the Kadwa Kanbi. Heredia (1972) claimed, moreover, that the Leva Patidar were mainly agriculturalists and the Kadwa were more involved in trade and commerce. In 1931, according to Pocock (1972), the name 'Patidar' which had applied to only the most prosperous, was taken over by the 'Kanbi' Patidar as well. (9) (The Patidar, who are the subject of this thesis, all considered their ekada, a group of in-marrying villages, and the other ekada surveyed, to be Leva Patidar. (Ekada are discussed in Chapter 3.)

Under the Gaekwad of Baroda, the district was divided into administrative areas of some forty to seventy villages, over whom was appointed a hereditary headman, or Desai. (Srinivas 1966) This was generally a Brahmin, Bania or Patidar. The (Kanbi) Patidars were peaceful at this time, during the later half of the eighteenth century, and, consequently, prospered. Some were appointed as tax collectors, or 'Patidar', which was a name eventually assumed by the whole caste. With the advent of the British in the nineteenth century, the Patidar continued to prosper; they were generally favoured because they were 'peace-loving and thrifty' (Pocock 1955). Under new land settlements, some Patidar were able to buy some of the uncultivated land which became available. (Srinivas 1968 in Singer and Cohn). Previously, they had only had a lease of or share in land. According to Gillion (1968), the Patidar, as shareholders,
had originally had joint responsibility to pay the land revenue of their village. But under the British, the dominant lineages became 'de facto' rulers. The British wanted to create an independent 'wealthy' group of cultivators, who would give them support in rural areas. Hoogevelt (1978) called this process which occurred under British rule in India, 'comprador feudisation.' This is perceived as a means of fusing a feudal form of land tenure with capitalism. Whereas under the feudal system, peasants had paid a percentage of their crops as tax, they began to pay a fixed rent, regardless of crop yields. Officials, such as the zamidar, the tax collector, became hereditary, so creating a rural elite to support the British. In Gujarat, many of such a rural elite were from the Patidar caste.

Despite their advancement under the British, however, the Patidar became supporters of the Independence movement in the twentieth century. (Vallabhbhai and Vithalbhai Patel, both from Karamsad, were two well-known supporters of the movement.) At the end of the nineteenth century, the Kheda area had been beset by a series of calamities: drought, famine and plagues of locusts and rats, which drove many Patels to leave the area for Bombay and even to emigrate to East Africa, in search of work. (Pocock 1955, Gillion 1968) (10) At this time, many of those from the 'Six Villages', particularly, went overseas. Those who remained took more to trading with Ahmedabad through the cotton trade and increasingly became involved with the textile mills after the First World War. (Gillion 1968) According to G. Shah (1975), with increasing prosperity, the Patidar sought entrance to the Kshatriya Sabha, the caste association of the kshatriya, the warrior caste.
But they were rejected. (The Kshatriya tended to support the British in the Independence struggle.) But in 1931, when the Kanbi took on the caste name of Patidar, an even stronger caste group was created. (Pocock 1972) (But within that caste, the internal divisions of Kanbi and Leva were and are still observed.)

Since Independence in 1947, many Leva Patidar have prospered; however, not all have done so. A.S. Patel suggested that a number of the Leva Patidar, particularly from the 'Six Villages', had land seized under the Land Ceiling Act legislation, passed after Independence. (11) This affected people, in theory, who did not cultivate their own land; consequently, those Patidar who had emigrated, especially to East Africa, lost land. (12) It was certainly true that some members of my sample, from the 'Six Villages', whose families had been working in a professional capacity in the courts, had lost land under this legislation. (13) However, Ghanshyam Shah (1983 in Lakdawala) contended that the rich Patidar farmers in Kheda district had tended to 'sabotage' the Tenancy Acts and make land ceiling legislation ineffective.

Certainly, research conducted in Mogri, a village in the Kheda area, showed that land reform between 1947-1960 had affected only seven per cent of households in the village. (Amin n.d c.1964?) Amin made a further point, in connection with Mogri, that although a number of the village residents had moved out into the non-agricultural sector, becoming business or professional people, sixty per cent still had property or members of the family with property, in the village.
Ghanshyam Shah (1983 in Lakdawala) emphasised that not all Patidar are well off: only a third own more than five acres and fourteen per cent are landless. Fifty-one per cent are poor cultivators who own up to five acres. But the overwhelming majority of these Patidar would be considered to be 'Kanbi' Patidar by the informants in my sample and, thus, a completely separate group from the Leva Patidar. Shah (1983) did agree that the 'Leuva' Patidar had no social intercourse with other Patidar. He considered that the richer (Leva) Patidar in Kheda have largely succeeded in protecting their economic and political interests. He pointed to the fact that the Patidar are still in control of most of the village panchayats (councils), despite only forming thirty-four per cent of the population, as opposed to the Kshatriyas who represent fifty-five per cent of the local population. He felt the Patidar held on to power by dividing the lower castes, who, moreover, depend on them economically. (Somjee and Somjee 1974) Not all commentators agree, however. Pravin Sheth (1983 in Lakdawala) considered that the Patidar have lost predominance to the Kshatriyas. A.S.Patel's research (1983), however, showing how the Patidar have succeeded in dominating the milk co-operative movement, would seem to confirm that the Patidar are managing to retain a considerable degree of political power, even in the villages where they are outnumbered by other castes. (14)

Focus on the Patidar as the sample

The Patidar, in the Kheda area, were selected as the focus of the thesis research because they fulfilled several very important
criteria. They are one of the dominant castes in the Kheda area. They were one of the main landowning groups. But they have also been involved in migration, both from rural to urban areas and also overseas. The Patidar have adapted to changes in profession as a result of migration, but even in rural areas, they have diversified their occupations. Consequently, from the point of view of selecting a sample, they provided not just a stable group employed in agricultural activities, but also other members who were involved in non-agricultural work, both in rural and urban areas. Thus, within the same caste and sub-caste groupings, there were Patidar members in varying stages of transition from the original caste occupation.

Table 2.2: Husband's main occupation (63 women)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Twenty-Seven Villages</th>
<th>Six Villages</th>
<th>Total Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming</td>
<td>9 47%</td>
<td>1 7%</td>
<td>10 29%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income from land</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
<td>1 7%</td>
<td>2 6%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural business</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 13%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pan house/shop</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
<td>1 7%</td>
<td>2 6%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 3%</td>
<td>4 14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own business</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
<td>2 13%</td>
<td>3 9%</td>
<td>9 31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factory owner/manager</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 13%</td>
<td>2 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical/admin</td>
<td>6 32%</td>
<td>6 40%</td>
<td>12 35%</td>
<td>3 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(&quot;in service&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11 38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The sample was chosen to include women whose husbands were still involved in the original caste occupation of agriculture and farming. But it also included those who, although still resident in villages and, indeed, sometimes in farming households, were, themselves, working in non-agricultural occupations. None of the husbands in the urban sample had any occupational connection with agriculture. (See Table 2.2: Husband's main occupation). A number of husbands had more than one occupation; where this was the case, I have categorised them according to their main occupation. For example, one farmer in Ajarpura ran a transport business as a sideline, with assistance from his brothers. He has been classified as a farmer. In Table 2.2, the principal occupations of the husbands of women in the sample fell into three main categories: occupations related to agriculture, including farming; those connected with running a business, this might frequently have been owned jointly with other members of the household or extended family; and working in some form of 'white-collar occupation', such as clerical or administrative work, known as being 'in service', and considered to be rather prestigious, or being qualified in a professional capacity. Those in 'the Twenty-Seven Villages' were most likely to be employed in some form of work related to agriculture, although a significant number of men were also 'in service'. In 'the Six Villages', the occupational distribution was more evenly spread, with only a small number of men involved in agricultural pursuits. The largest single group were, again, 'in service', but considerably more men were involved in business activities than in the smaller, 'Twenty Seven Villages'. In the towns, the largest category of men were those employed in a professional capacity, with considerable
numbers, too, involved in business activities. (15).

The Kheda area, as has already been discussed earlier in the chapter, is one of rapid urban and industrial expansion and the Patidar have been very actively involved in these developments. Consequently, they have been at the forefront of social change within the area in terms of their involvement in urbanisation and industrialisation. The thesis, itself, sets out to examine whether this pre-eminent position in economic development has been translated to the Patidar social system. Has economic development brought upward social mobility for the Patidar and how has this been manifested within the strictly hierarchical Patidar society? It is Patidar men who are, predominantly, actively involved in economic development; women in the same networks are not necessarily affected by such developments in the same way, which is one of the major issues this thesis seeks to address. (There is a fuller discussion of this point in Chapter 4.)

The Patidar have a history of migration, dating back to the beginning of this century. They have been involved not only in rural-urban migration in India, but also in overseas migration: firstly to East Africa and from thence to the United Kingdom and America. Because of these developments, I was able to gain entree to the Patidar in Kheda, through contacts made in London with relatives who had migrated there. (See further discussion in Chapter 5.) This greatly facilitated one of the most significant and difficult aspects of qualitative research: finding a sample and gaining acceptance. It was necessary to be able to select a sample from a
sufficiently large group of people, in order to reflect the various status groups and socio-economic developments among the Patidar. They had migrated in large enough numbers to ensure that I was able to make a significant number of contacts in London through whom to gain 'entree' in the Kheda region. But, in addition to this considerable advantage, the Patidar were also very prominent in migration from rural to urban areas and in the subsequent urban and industrial expansion: all within the district of Kheda, itself.

There were considerable advantages in using members from the same caste, primarily because they all shared the same culture, customs, religious beliefs and values, whether they lived in rural or urban areas. The Patidar in Kheda area are, generally acknowledged, both by themselves and others, as having a very strong sense of caste identity, which stretches across sub-caste groupings, so that, to outsiders, at least, they seem a very cohesive force. It was likely to prove easier, therefore, to establish the impact of changes from a rural to an urban lifestyle when all members of the sample had been brought up similarly to share a common cultural heritage. Marriage patterns, for example, vary considerably from one caste to another, and from one area of India to another. Consequently, it would be very difficult to detect significant changes in such practices, if the sample was composed of a disparate, or widely dispersed group.

One of the particular advantages of selecting a sample from those Patidar resident in the Kheda district was that they were not only a very homogeneous group, but that they lived in very close
proximity. The majority of the towns and villages in the survey were within very easy travelling distance of each other: one village was, indeed, within less than half an hour's walking distance. Yet despite this proximity, the area contained small agriculturally based villages, larger villages, small and large towns; some with extensive industrial complexes. (See Table 2.3 below). Moreover, there were villages from different status groupings all existing in the same area. The towns and villages, in which the women surveyed were living, were selected to represent a cross-section of Patidar society: they include the small, agriculturally-based villages of Gada and Ajarpura, which were both in the lower status group of the 'Large Twenty-Seven'. Other 'villages' were larger, often like small towns, with a more complex economic base, not reliant on agriculture. Bakrol, from 'the large Twenty Seven', and Dharmaj and Karamsad, from 'the Six', fell into this category. (There were no small agricultural villages in 'the Six'.) The towns of Anand, from 'the large Twenty-Seven' and Nadiad, in 'the Six', had both developed from villages to become industrial centres. Vallabh Vidyanagar was a completely new development and contained Patidar from many different status groups. It included quite a large population of Patidar who had, at one time, lived overseas, particularly in East Africa, but who were now settled in Gujarat. Baroda, on the other hand, was a long-established township, the once capital city of the Gaekwad, and an urban centre for centuries.
Table 2.3: Village and Town of residence of sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Twenty Seven Villages</th>
<th>Survey A + B</th>
<th>Survey C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Small Villages</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gada</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajarpura</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakrol</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Six Villages</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Large Villages</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharmaj</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karamsad</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Survey A + B</th>
<th>Survey C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anand</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadiad</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WN</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baroda</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey A + B: 72 women aged 20-40, single, married, separated and widowed

Survey C: 54 women taken from Survey A, all married with children under the age of ten.
Patidar society, reflecting the wider Indian society, is underpinned by a social system based on a very strong sense of hierarchy and status. The Patidar were selected in order to research the impact of social change on a cross-section of status groups within a caste living in both rural and urban areas. By choosing to focus on the Patidar caste, I could examine more carefully the differential effects of such change. (16) For example, those people emigrating to an urban area could well show different ways of adaption to a changed lifestyle, depending on the status of their village of origin, because different sub-groups could value different markers of upward social mobility. Families, too, from an agricultural household would find a much greater disparity in lifestyles than those from a professional household, previously resident in a village. Such transitions, particularly from a rural, agricultural background to an urban professional background, in one generation, were most likely, however, to affect women, because of the nature of migration patterns, and, more particularly, because of the marriage practices of the Patidar.

The experience of Patidar men and women in any discussion of social change, associated with economic developments such as urbanisation and industrialisation, is necessarily very different. (17). Women, by and large, are not actively involved in the workforce. But there are other forces in people's lives which affect women, but not men. The Patidar follow exogamous marriage patterns, which means that once a woman marries, she not only has to leave her own natal family and home, but also her village. Patidar custom means that women cannot marry someone from their own village: and
hence, someone known to them from childhood. They have always had to 'migrate' to their husband's family home and village, and, increasingly, this also entails a move from a rural to an urban area, after marriage. Consequently, women have, often, two very significant social adjustments to make after marriage: adapting to a new household and family and to a very different lifestyle. Any research into the impact of social change on Patidar women has to take into account very different factors to those affecting men. The impact of economic development, discussed further in Chapter 4, has differential effects on men and women. Women's patterns of migration are determined by different factors to those of men.

The next chapter will look in detail at the social system which determines men's and women's place in Patidar society. But the focus of the research on Patidar women will seek to redress the balance of previous work which has discussed social change solely, or mainly, in terms of its impact on men.

2. Indeed, the tobacco crop in Dharmaj, one of the villages in the study, had been one of its principal sources of wealth.

3. This information was obtained from a pamphlet: "The Anand Pattern of Co-operative Development", published by the Kaira District Co-operative Milk Producers' Union Ltd. (1978)

4. Information from the pamphlet referred to above.

5. Another government report went into more detail: in 1971, Gujarat had the highest overall urban infant mortality rate in India and the second highest overall rural rate. (Women In India: A Statistical Profile 1978). It gave the male rural infant mortality rate as 160.8 and female at 157.8: urban rates were 128.2 for male infants and 133.8 for females. Miller (1980) pointed out a correlation between high female infant mortality rates and high marriage costs.

6. According to the 1971 Census, Nadiad has a wide trading and manufacturing base; some of its major industries were: bidis, textiles, iron safes, soap, furniture, brass, copper and metal goods manufacture.

7. The 1981 Census uses certain clearly delineated criteria to define an urban area:
   a) it either is a municipality or has a municipal corporation.
   b) it has a minimum population of 5,000; 75% of the male workforce are engaged in non-agricultural or allied activities, and there is a population of at least 400 persons per square kilometre.

8. The fortified areas and closed courtyards, known as khadaki, in 'Six Villages', date from this period, when it was necessary to defend themselves from the Rajputs during the Maharatta Wars, which brought the Gaekwad to power. (Pocock 1957a)

9. My informants agreed that there was a distinction between the Leva Patidar and Kanbi, who were seen as 'inferior'. A number considered Patels who lived outside the Kheda district as being Kanbi, and hence inferior. Others considered only those Patels in the 'Six', 'Five' and 'Twenty Seven Villages' as being Patidar. Some Kanbi had become very rich, but were still not considered possible marriage partners by some informants, whereas others considered that a Kanbi Patel girl might marry into the 'Six Villages', if she gave enough dowry. This would have to be a very considerable amount.
10. At this time, much money poured back into villages, like Karamsad, to build mansions. (Panjabi 1962)

11. This information was gained through a personal communication with Dr A.S. Patel in 1980.

12. As a result, some members of the 'large Twenty Seven Villages' were now more prosperous than those from 'the Six', because, at that time, they were cultivating their own land. Somjee and Somjee (1974) found that many Kanbi (Patidar) in the Kheda villages in their study, had benefitted in the 1960s as a result of the Land Ceiling Act, which enabled them, as tenant farmers to buy the land, owned by the (Leva) Patidar.

13. Another informant, Bharti, claimed that her husband's family of seven brothers from Bakrol, had lost their land as a result of government regulations. The other six brothers now farmed elsewhere: three in northern Gujarat, two in Virsad in Kheda, and one in Kenya.

14. An informant in Gada, however, Rajni, claimed that the Patidar were no longer so powerful politically in the village, with the Solanki, previously farm workers, becoming more important. A large number of Patidar, however, were living outside the village. He claimed four hundred families in all, were resident elsewhere; yet the total village population was only 2800.

15. Those occupations categorised as being 'in service' included the following: railways administrator, road tax officer, government service, university clerk, pharmacist, clerk in high school, university technician, clerk at a milk co-operative, clerk at college, bank employee. Those in professions included a trainee accountant, bank manager, metallurgical engineer, college lecturer, chartered accountant, college teacher, engineer, forest officer, lecturer, insurance broker. Those running their own businesses included manufacturing digestive agents, running a petrol station, a pan house, a boarding house, a printing works, an optical business and a building contractor. One man owned a casting factory. There were a number of men who had secondary occupations: a bank employee who also managed his own factory; a government service worker who also acted as an insurance agent; a farmer with a transport business; a landowner with an ayurvedic pharmacy manufacturing his own tablets; and a man who ran a shop whilst helping on the family farm and running the family transport business.

16. Pocock (1957), for example, has pointed out that the effects of 'Sanskritization', the social changes which can occur as a result of upward mobility, can vary depending on the starting point of the caste group under study. See later discussion in Chapter 3.
17. Other studies, notably those of Pocock (1972), look solely at changes affecting men in Patidar society. But other such examples can be found in work such as that of A.S. Patel (1983) whose discussion of the co-operative movement and its impact on village life makes no specific reference to women, who, generally, have the main responsibility for the care of buffalo.
CHAPTER 3. CASTE, CLASS AND GENDER
CASTE, CLASS AND GENDER

No study of any aspect of Indian society can fail to take into consideration the importance of caste, more especially so, when considering the position of Patidar women. The philosophy behind the caste system presupposes the very hierarchical nature of the Indian social structure. Superficially, this may appear rigid and immutable, but this is, of course, deceptive. Even within a more static rural society changes did occur, and are still doing so. But generally such changes were over generations. More rapid industrialisation and urbanisation have altered the pace of change, and opened up more scope for individual upward (and downward) mobility. However it is probably still generally true to say that the majority of Indians are born into a fairly clearly delineated position in Indian society and, material circumstances notwithstanding, will remain in that position; this applies equally to the Brahmin and the Harijan (Untouchable). In order to understand this seeming inflexibility, one needs to look at the basis of the caste system. Before looking more closely at the determinants of caste and how this permeates through the whole social structure of the Patidar caste, I would like to suggest that there are two alternative ways of 'perceiving' the social structure; firstly, the very strictly hierarchical one, already mentioned, which seems to be the male 'world view'. On the other hand, Patidar women do not experience the social structure in the same manner as men and I would like to contend that the important features of their social world, are, therefore, considerably different from those of their male kin. In this chapter, I intend to discuss what the
components of these two world views appear to be.

Varna

Underlying the caste system is the concept of varna; Srinivas (1966) argues that varna provides a theoretical framework which embodies the main features of caste. He contends that this concept constitutes a single 'all-India' hierarchy which neatly divides Indian society into four divisions, or varna, and all those excluded from one of these four divisions, are classified as Harijans, or Untouchables. This hierarchy is said to date back to Vedic times, and is supposed to be immutable.

Atal (1967), however, has pointed out that there was, in fact, freedom of movement between the varnas in Vedic times; such movement did entail a change in customs to those more consonant with a different varna. The varna hierarchy is based on considerations of purity and is headed by the Brahmins, or priestly castes; the Kshatriyas, the warrior or ruler castes are second, followed by the Vaishyas, merchants or businessmen and finally, the Sudras, or agriculturalists. Outside, and below, the four varnas, are the Harijans, who perform all the 'impure' or 'dirty' work. Dumont (1972) argues that each varna has its own prescribed rights and obligations, which individuals are expected to fulfill to the best of their abilities (1). He, too, feels that 'purity' overrides considerations of power, and wealth, as the Brahmins will always be accorded the highest ritual status even though they may not wield a great deal of power. Dumont, therefore, considers that the
distinction between the 'priestly' and the 'warrior' varna ensures, generally, that status and power are vested in different groups of people.

Varna, in fact, has a fairly limited applicability in daily life. Each varna, far from being a homogeneous group, is composed of thousands of castes and sub-castes. These castes also vary from region to region. The main function the varna provide, therefore, is to facilitate the ranking of castes in different regions of the country. A caste in the Sudra varna of one region would know that its status was similar to a caste from the Sudra varna in another region, but lower than castes from the Kshatriya or Vaishya varna. However, this can provide no more than a broad approximation between regions of respective rankings of castes. Srinivas (1962, 1966) pointed out, too, that especially between the middle ranking castes, there is much 'jostling' to enhance one caste's position in their varna, at the expense of the others.

Srinivas (1966) claimed, too, that the tenure of power from region to region varies and is generally held by the 'dominant caste' or castes in that region. 'Dominance' entails more than strength in numbers. It does not necessarily mean that a certain caste is numerically strong in a particular village, but that its membership is spread over the immediate region. Moreover, a dominant caste is not necessarily from one of the highest varna. Certainly as far as the Kheda district is concerned, as Pocock (1972) has pointed out, the Patidar are not the sole or the chief landowners in the area. But as Jayaraman (1981) emphasised
'dominance' in a certain region is principally attributable to the ownership of a sizeable amount of local arable land, that is, generally, 'dominance' is based on economic power, and this can normally be expected to be combined with considerable political power. As a result of this economic and political power, such castes generally achieve a fairly high position in the local hierarchy, certainly over a period of time. Where there is more than one 'dominant caste' in a particular area, there is likely to be considerable conflict to achieve ascendancy over other castes. As Oommen (1977) has indicated, in a rural area, this is likely to be manifested by changes in the ownership and control of land.

The varna hierarchy is, in fact, far from being immutable as a closer examination of the Patidar caste in Charottar reveals. Several writers claim the Patels were originally Kshatriya when they first arrived in Gujarat and acquired land. (G.I Patel n.d., K.L. Panjabi 1962) As has already been discussed in the previous chapter, dates for their arrival vary from the sixth to the eleventh century. Indeed some informants claimed to belong to the Kshatriya varna. But the Gujarat Kshatriya Sabha (a caste association for Kshatriya castes) rejected the Patel claim. (G. Shah 1975, Pocock 1957, 1972). Pocock (1959, 1972) suggested that they may be of Sudra origin. (2) Certainly their occupation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as cultivators, would support Pocock's theory. But their present status is not totally clear and provides evidence of the possibility of mobility through the varna, as the status of the caste changes.
Varna, then, provides the framework into which individual castes can be slotted and consequently ranked. However, it is their own caste which is important to the individual, certainly to the Patels. Their caste and their standing within their caste is of paramount importance. Caste (or jat/jati) is a term of everyday usage, distinguishing one group of people from others, particularly in the same area. Most Patels I encountered, during my fieldwork, lived, worked and frequently interacted only (or mainly) with other Patels, and they were careful to draw distinctions between themselves and other castes, whether higher or lower. (3) The concept of varna had little relevance to daily interaction.

Caste

The features of the caste system have given rise to much controversy, but the major schools of thought fall into two opposing camps: one emphasising the importance of the 'ideological' aspects of caste and the other placing greater stress on 'economic' factors. There are those, such as Dumont (1972), who argued that the fundamental nature of caste is governed by the principles of purity and impurity which also underline varna. Bougle, (Pocock 1957a), one of the earlier proponents of this stance, has identified three characteristics of the caste system; its hierarchical organisation, hereditary specialization and reciprocal repulsion based on purity. Dumont (1972) following Bougle saw caste based primarily on the purity/impurity dichotomy. (Gould 1958 in Kolenda) This is not just a matter of hygiene and cleanliness, but is related to cultural factors as well. Dumont (1972) envisaged the caste system as 'complimentary' as the Brahmin's purity can only be maintained by
the nearly permanent state of impurity associated with many Harijans. All 'dirty' tasks, such as the slaughter of livestock, especially cattle, and the related handling of products such as leather, or the removal of 'night-soil', the handling of others' dirty clothes, or any function bringing contact with others' waste products, such as hair or food, are all seen as highly polluting, and consigned to the lowest castes. For a high caste person, even physical contact with these polluted lower castes, will require a ritual cleansing bath. (4) The higher the caste, generally the greater are the attempts to adhere to strict vegetarianism. This can even extend to the cooking medium employed. In the North, clarified ghi (a product of the revered cow), is perceived as the most desirable, because of its 'purity'. (Dumont 1972). Commensality, that is the giving and taking of food between castes and eating together, is a reflection of this criteria of purity. Only food prepared by Brahmins is likely to be accepted by all other castes, as they are conceived as being the most ritually pure; food or water from other castes will generally be declined. Moreover people will usually only eat with those who are seen as their equals (or superiors) and certainly would not eat together with a lower caste person, although this cannot always be rigidly adhered to in urban areas. (5)

Dumont (1972), moreover, contended that in order to understand Indian society, one must forget (western) concepts of equality: Hinduism is based on a superior/inferior spectrum from which one can only hope to improve oneself by performing one's allotted tasks well
in this life, so that one will be reincarnated into a higher caste or varna. Members of higher castes are considered superior because they have achieved this position through the fulfillment of their duties (dharma) in their previous lives. Only by following the codes of behaviour ordained for one's individual varna, can an individual hope to be re-born into a higher caste or varna. By dint of thus following the necessary body of religious rulings for one's particular caste over a series of reincarnations (samsara), one can ultimately transcend reincarnation and achieve moksha (Srinivas 1962.) Moreover, caste determines not only one's level of spiritual attainment, but it also provides the framework which dictated one's economic function, as well. Within one's own lifetime, it is virtually impossible as an individual, in a traditional rural setting, at least, to break out of this framework.

Those, such as Dumont, who adhered to an ideological interpretation of caste felt that it provided a means of regulating economic relationships, based on mutual interdependence. In a predominantly rural society, caste divisions, too, were meant to ensure a permanent labour force, with all the craftsmen and labourers at hand to service fairly self-sufficient villages and small towns. It is doubtful that this hereditary specialisation was ever quite so efficient in practice as the ideal, as natural shortages of certain workers, particularly specialists, were bound to occur from time to time. However, the general framework operated in most areas of what is now modern India, and in many areas this was even more clearly defined in the jajmani system, where one or more jajman or landowner was served by a number of kamins or
workmen, or craft specialists. (Srinivas 1962, Dumont 1972). It has been argued that this system of economic interdependence between workers and landowners, ensured not only a viable division of labour, but also a fair distribution of resources as landowners would endeavour to safeguard their own workers, kamins, even in times of difficulty. (Beidelman 1959, Wiser 1956, Dumont 1972). But others have argued with more conviction that this was an idealistic interpretation of a relationship where virtually all the power and resources were vested in the hands of one person, or, perhaps, a small group of persons. (Beteille 1965, Kolenda 1963). As Beidelman (1959) emphasised interdependence was hardly a reciprocal relationship when it was between landless and powerless workers and their landed, and powerful, employees. As Mencher (1974) has pointed out the caste system from the perspective of those at bottom of the hierarchy is perceived as principally the means by which economic resources and power are regulated, albeit unequally. They do not see it in terms of purity and pollution. Moreover, many villages fall outside of the jajman/kamin relationship and even the jajman/kamin relationship, itself, is fluid, especially with the continuing expansion of a money economy. (6)

Bailey (1963), however, disputed the emphasis on the ritual aspects of hierarchy, interdependence and hereditary specialisation of roles which was a feature of Dumont's interpretation, stressing the pure/impure dichotomy of caste relationships. Instead, Bailey (1963, 1967) felt it was essential to establish who controlled economic resources. He considered that caste hierarchy was based on
the differential control over productive resources. Beteille (1965), too, thought that the hierarchy was based on status, which ultimately reflected wealth, which had been acquired over generations. Bailey (1963, 1967) did concede, however, that ritual aspects of caste could not be discounted. Generally there was a linkage between economic, political and ritual status in the villages; status was the product of a summation of roles. But it was possible for a caste to acquire economic, and even political power, without achieving a compatible 'ritual status': this was particularly apparent with Harijan castes, such as the Distiller caste described in his fieldwork in Bisipara, West Orissa, who did not seem to be able to lose their 'Untouchable' status. Bailey was able to point out how the caste hierarchy could change significantly as a result of new economic factors, such as the introduction of cash crops, intruding on the village economy. He certainly observed competition and conflict over status.

Social mobility within the caste system

Bailey's discussion of the 'new economic frontier' showed that the caste system was not, however, as rigid and stultified as the emphasis on the ritual aspects of caste seemed to imply. Over time, it was apparently possible, as a caste to transcend one's original status, or even to lose one's standing. The Warrior caste in the village he studied, which had been the 'dominant caste' until the arrival of the British in the nineteenth century, saw its economic and political control decline with the introduction of registration of land holdings and the development of alternative avenues of
employment, bringing in their wake, a cash economy. Their own landholdings became smaller and a number of members of the caste were obliged to sell land, which was eagerly acquired by those who had benefitted from the cash economy. On the other hand, the Konds, the potter caste, who worked much less easily cultivated land, opted to grow turmeric, which they exported. Their caste, therefore, thrived on the changing conditions. Beteille (1965), also, described changes in a Tanjore village since Independence in 1947. For a variety of reasons land ownership had changed hands and over half the land in the village belonged to absentee landlords. A number of the original landlords had moved to the towns to take up employment and others had disposed of land in response to the Land Ceiling Act. Thus through changes in economic status, probably as a result of changes in occupation or economic prosperity as a group, upward and downward mobility could occur, usually over several generations. (7)

Srinivas (1966) in discussing the effects of social change, was careful to point out that changes occurred even in a rural context. Often when a caste had improved its economic standing it sought to gain ritual acceptance of its enhanced status. Thus, in the case of upward mobility, one would concomitantly expect to see the group as a whole move towards different behavioural norms, for example, by ceasing to eat meat, or drink alcohol, or adopting more 'orthodox' forms of behaviour. Srinivas (1966) has called this process 'Sanskritization', where in cases of upward mobility a caste, or sub-caste, tended to emulate the religious and social practices of their immediate superiors, in order to gain recognition of their
improved standing. Pocock (1955) pointed out that in Charottar, where the Brahmins are not a 'dominant' caste, the process might be more likely to be one emulating Kshatriyas or Vaishyas. In Gujarat, for example, this might well be the Bania caste, who are generally, prosperous merchants. Bailey (1967) established, however, that the more affluent members of an upwardly mobile caste did not always endeavour to include the poorer members of the caste group in their changing status. Instead, they gradually cut off links with those caste members who had failed to prosper, so that eventually they became a separate grouping altogether, a sub-caste. In the village context, this entailed moving away from the members of the original caste area and establishing a separate residential area.

As Jayaraman (1981) has pointed out social change does not just take place along what he called the 'traditional axis', such as the process of Sanskritisation described by Srinivas. But change also occurred along a secular axis, too. In this concept, too, he followed in Srinivas's footsteps. Srinivas used the term 'Westernization' to cover the changes which occurred, particularly, in urban households. He felt that the term 'modernisation' would imply a judgemental attitude, assuming that all changes which were occurring were 'for the better', they were good in themselves. Instead, he merely wished to contend that upward mobility for some castes, (and classes), would not necessarily entail a more rigid adherence to orthodox views, but that some groups would be open to new ideas and influences, many of which might well have their origin in Western attitudes and lifestyles.
In this discussion of the direction of social change, women's position in the caste or group under examination can provide an important marker. Indeed, Srinivas, (1966) made this very clear in his analysis of the process of Sanskritization. When a caste adopted more orthodox forms of behaviour this generally affected women in the caste more than anyone else. Greater orthodoxy demanded that the caste should follow ideologically 'purer' forms of behaviour and codes of morality. 'Purity' was very much vested in women's hands. This 'traditional Brahmanical' attitude towards women, took the form of limitations on women's sexuality and their freedom of movement. Hence practices such as early marriage were adopted, and separation and divorce were not allowed. Remarriage, for women, even if widowed at an early age would no longer be considered. Women were secluded, where possible, so removing them from any danger of immorality. (8) So, in the past, the achievement of higher caste status would certainly be marked by observance of such prescriptions based on perceived Brahmanical behaviour. Liddle and Joshi (1986) explained, in the context of the caste system, men have always derived honour from the seclusion of the women in their family and the retention of a 'good' reputation. Veena Das (1976) has indicated it was essential for women's sexuality to be successfully contained because they provided 'gateways' by which members of the lower castes could gain entry into the upper castes; moreover, they would 'pollute' the upper castes in the process. Thus the ability to keep women secluded in the home, as their labour was no longer necessary in the fields, and the successful control of their sexuality, meant that women have always been, in Caplan's term, 'boundary markers for caste'. (1985) (As later discussion
will show, women, too, become 'boundary markers for class', but by adopting very different forms of behaviour.)

**Social mobility, status and women**

Much of the discussion of caste and upward and downward mobility has been conducted on the basis that change affects men and women in similar ways. Some research has shown, however, that on the contrary, women may well be adversely affected even when their husbands and men in the family are able to improve their own positions. (Boserup 1970, Bossen 1975). Boserup (1970) was one of the earlier writers to show that development may well place women at a disadvantage while improving men's position at the same time, often at the expense of women. Women's position has often deteriorated even further as a result of migration to urban areas, because women have not acquired the necessary skills to obtain anything other than very basic manual or domestic work, whereas, in rural areas, they had a certain expertise in agricultural tasks. Bossen (1975), too, criticised what she called a 'unilinear' model of development which depicted progress towards 'modernization'. Women frequently suffered in the process when men were given the technical means to grow cash crops, for example, whereas women continued the hard labour of subsistence agriculture. Basin and Malik (1975) in their fieldwork in Rajastan offered concrete examples of this process: tribal women from the traditionally cultivating castes of Dangis, were excluded from new skills and, consequently, were no longer primary food producers. They became
domestic workers instead. As a result, men's prestige was enhanced at the expense of women's and women ceased to play much part in decision making. Over the twentieth century, therefore, Indian women have apparently been displaced from involvement in agricultural production, certainly as far as statistical records are concerned, although they may well be working harder than ever before. (Zeidenstein 1978). Miriam Sharma (1985) stated that the number of women recorded in the workforce declined from 34% to 17% between 1911-1971, but their involvement in agricultural labour was up from 74% to 80%. Women were frequently employed as casual labour, however, and not as full-time waged labour. According to Miriam Sharma (1985), too, this process has speeded up since the 'Green Revolution', which commenced around 1965.

Miriam Sharma (1985), however, emphasised the necessity of looking at both caste, class and gender in order to gain an accurate picture of developments. In her research in a village in Uttar Pradesh, she indeed found that lower caste Chamar women had been 'marginalised' because they no longer had land of their own to cultivate. Instead they were employed on a casual basis to help with planting and harvesting crops. Higher caste women from the Bhumihar caste, in contrast, had been able to withdraw completely from agricultural work, because the family farm was benefitting from the 'Green Revolution'. Sharma makes the point, therefore, that it is essential to examine women's caste and class position because the effects of development are experienced differently depending on the original status of the household.
But Miriam Sharma went on to make another very important point regarding gender. She emphasises the necessity of looking not just at caste, or class, but at women's position relative to men within their own community. In her own sample, the low caste Chamar women had low status within society in general. But in their own household, where, certainly in the past, and now through their waged labour, they made an important contribution to the family's subsistence, they had a fairly equal involvement in decision making. The high caste Bhumihar women, on the other hand, were very much subordinated within the family, but they had high status in society generally. Sharma contended, therefore, that for these women: "there has been a 'trade-off' between low gender status in the family and higher social class status in the community." (9)

Jayaraman (1981), too, felt that Indian women's status had to be viewed from two standpoints: firstly, the 'absolute value' of that status in terms of how much power and prestige women have, and, secondly, the 'relative value' of that status as compared to the men in their household.

Both Miriam Sharma and Jayaraman made a very valid point that women's status cannot be perceived as a single entity: they see it in terms of two dimensions, that of the family and the wider community. However, there is a further factor which has to be taken into consideration and that is the changing nature of women's status over their life-cycle. There is a considerable difference in the status of a middle-aged or elderly women, particularly the mother of one or more sons, who is the senior female in the family and the newly arrived bride. (These differences will be discussed in
subsequent chapters on the family and women's spheres of power and influence.)

**Women and class**

In a rural context, despite recent upward mobility and economic changes, the important social group is still generally considered to be one's caste, or sub-caste. Srinivas (1962) considered that the economic changes precipitated by the British from the nineteenth century onwards, produced a middle class in India. This developed both from the ever-increasing numbers of administrative workers to service the bureaucracy, but also as a result of expanding commercial and business interests. He felt, however, that they tended to reinforce the existing hierarchy and attitudes. Beteille (1965) felt that the intrusion of class in the villages brought about a certain shift in the balance of power. But Jayaraman (1981) and Miriam Sharma (1985) both made the point that, indeed, caste and class still largely overlap in rural areas. For Jayaraman, caste still regulated status in rural areas. But he did concede that with new openings for creating wealth and political power, 'class mobility' might gain over 'caste rigidity'. At present, however, there is still a link between occupation and caste, because the higher castes took advantage of opportunities to gain an education and professional qualifications. Consequently, although an urban middle class has developed which has largely prospered, it still tends to be dominated by the higher castes. In urban areas, however, where caste and class tend to overlap, as Caplan (1985) found in Madras, the emergence and awareness of class differences are
increasingly playing a role.

Just as the impact of development affected rural women differently, depending on their caste, so women find the experience of urban life takes a variety of forms. Poor women in an urban context can find themselves at just as much of, or more of, a disadvantage than women in rural areas because of their lack of education and skills. Higher caste and upper class women, however, generally find urban life has much to offer. They may well remain in relative 'seclusion' because their affluent urban life demands that they should continue to be 'boundary markers for (their) caste', but they will have an expanded range of activities with which to fill their time. Liddle and Joshi (1986) equated this with the 'privatisation' of Victorian women in nineteenth century Britain, when women provided a 'haven' in the home away from the 'cut and thrust' of capitalism. Here they could exercise their social skills and preside over a comfortable and well managed household. But, as Liddle and Joshi indicated, the emergence of the urban middle-class in India has opened up certain areas which, in the long-term, are potentially 'liberating' for women. Middle-class, educated women are, on occasions, being allowed to be employed in 'respectable' work and earn their own income, which could, theoretically, enable them to survive independently. The employment of women in high status professions, such as medicine, can actually improve the social standing of the household, in a class society, as well as contributing to its finances and middle-class lifestyle. But, as Liddle and Joshi pointed out, at present,
men still control decisions relating to education and work, so that it has done little to change women's status in the family. Indeed, their very employability can become an asset in the 'marriage market'. Moreover, they still have the responsibility for running the household smoothly.

Most middle class urban women, however, still do not go out to work. Several recent pieces of research have come to very similar conclusions about the important role middle-class Indian women have developed in an urban context. Papanek (1979) described how many Indian women devoted much time to creating a pleasant home environment and in fostering their culinary skills. Much time was given to entertainment and lavish hospitality to members of both kinship and wider social networks. These she categorised as 'family status production' activities. Caplan (1985), too, found that her sample of upper and middle caste and class women in Madras spent their time in similar activities: she termed it 'status production work'. She maintained that these were not trifling activities but were part of the essential process of 'reproducing' the class system. In a rapidly developing urban society, women were playing an active role in developing the formation of new life-styles and cultures associated with class. This 'status production work' was an essential part of the 'reproduction' of an emerging middle class. (10) Ursula Sharma (1986) felt that a similar process was evident in her fieldwork on women in Shimla. She felt that the satisfactory performance of this 'household service work' was necessary to maintain and enhance the family's standing in society. Such activities as gift giving or the attendance at lifecycle rituals
were part of this process. Women were particularly vital in cementing social networks and gaining access to useful sources of information, such as good schools. By such 'household service work' they were facilitating class formation: in a more stable society, such activities served to 'reproduce' class and status, but in a society, such as Shimla, in a state of flux, they were very actively producing the household's class and status position. In this sense, therefore, they were moving away from being the 'boundary markers of caste' to becoming the 'boundary markers of class'.

The Patidar

After this general discussion of caste, class and gender in Indian society, I intend to examine the applicability of these concepts to the Patidar caste and, in the process, elaborate some of the points discussed above. The history and development of the Patidar caste has been discussed more fully in Chapter 2, where it was established that they were originally an agriculturalist caste, of probable Sudra origin, who rose to prominence under the British Raj in the nineteenth century. Through their appointment as tax collectors (Amins/Desais) they were able to improve their position as landlords. Further economic prosperity followed emigration, in the early 1900s, to East Africa and subsequent emigration to many countries, including Britain and the United States.

Although, in theory, the Patidar define themselves as a caste, within the Patidar caste, there is a very clear hierarchy. It was only in 1931 that the Patels (the caste name meaning village head,
landowner) took the name of Patidar. Those Patels living in the Charottar district would argue that they are the only 'true' Patidar, although there are Patels living throughout Gujarat. Even within Charottar, the highest status Patels would define themselves as Leva Patidar, that is Patels involved in business, administration and trade, and all or most of those below them as Kanbi or Kadva Patels, (those defined as only being involved in agriculture), although neither of these definitions in practice, is exclusive. It, therefore, depends on one's position within the caste, to which status group one belongs, who one would define as Leva Patidar, and who, Kanbi/Kadva. To complicate the issue further, even within one village considered to be a high-status, Leva Patidar village, Kanbi or Kadva Patels could be in residence. (11)

Among the Leva Patidar, however, there are other more important, but smaller groupings which are also very strictly graded within the hierarchy. These groupings have an immediate effect on people's lives. One of the most important determinants of an individual's status is the 'village' into which he or she is born. As this is a patrilineal group, the 'village of birth' is considered to be the one to which one's father, or his ancestors, belonged. It is possible, in theory anyway, to trace back ancestry, through the male line to the 'founding fathers' of the village. (Although all were villages originally, a 'village' can now be a small to medium town, and some are expanding rapidly.) Each village usually belongs to a grouping of villages called an ekada or gol. These ekada are called by the number of villages they contain, hence the cho gam, or 'Six Village' circle and so on. Pocock (1954) claimed that the
ekada were placed in a hierarchy, according to their wealth. The other villages in the same ekada, therefore, are accepted as having the same or similar economic standing. In theory, anyone born into a village in that ekada can only marry someone else from the same ekada. The ekada is, therefore, a circle of intermarrying villages. This does not, and never has, worked in practice; they are not totally endogamous groups. It is only women who will leave the ekada through marriage, and the significance of this will be discussed below. A man can never 'leave' his ekada or village, although he may never live there and his material situation may be vastly different from the residents of that village, his paternal ancestry determines his status.

I conducted my research in villages from two principal ekada. (However, a number of women from these two ekada had links with a third intermediate ekada, 'the Five', either through birth of marriage.) The 'Cho Gam' (Six Villages) was generally regarded, by themselves and others, as the one with the highest status. They considered themselves to be kulin, that is from 'exalted lineages'. This superiority was based on 'blood', that is the 'purity' of this elite group. (Pocock 1954). But, ultimately, this had to be backed up by superior wealth as well. Once the family's wealth had gone, then their 'name' went, too. (12) This term, kulin, was reserved only for members of the 'Six Villages'. The second ekada was called the 'Large Twenty-seven', which now contains approximately sixty villages. It was ranked in third place after 'the Six' and 'the Five'.

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Pocock (1957) contended that these ekada, groupings of villages are ranked in a hierarchy which is determined, as is caste, by criteria of 'purity' and orthodoxy, as well as their proximity to 'Brahmanical' ideals. But he did also stress the relevance of wealth in determining status. (Pocock 1954) Their status certainly appeared to be as much related to 'economic standing', and I would speculate that, as Srinivas has already demonstrated with caste, that improvements in wealth and prosperity over time are likely to occur, concomitantly, with movements towards religious orthodoxy and purity. Hence amongst the highest status ekada, brother and sister exchange marriages, or meat eating, for example, would not generally be found. (13) Proscriptions are 'ideals' and even within the highest status groups economic exigencies could force families to lower their standards. Thus poor families have to contemplate widow remarriage or marrying their daughters 'down', 'economic graduality' as Pocock (1972) termed it. Indeed Pocock himself, in his own studies of one of the lower ekada, the 'Seven', discussed cases where girls from a high status village, Karamsad, one of 'the Six', married boys from 'the Seven'. All members of 'the Six' would deny that this had ever occurred or could occur and, if presented with the facts, might well try to argue that the family concerned were not Leva Patidar, but must be Kanbi or Kadva. This argument, however, would only be possible if the family concerned belonged to a low status khadaki (extended family unit) discussed below. The importance of the village's economic prosperity seems also to explain the flux in membership of the ekada over time. For example, the 'Twenty-seven' ekada, at the time of my research, actually contained about sixty villages and although only generally third
place in a league table of ekada, certainly contained some prospering 'villages', especially the thriving industrial and agricultural centre of Anand, which possibly added to the attractiveness of membership of this ekada. The rate of expansion is seemingly, therefore, outpacing changes in its nomenclature. One could, however, discern a future division whereby the most affluent, highest status, villages would withdraw and possibly form a separate ekada.

Certain of my informants in the most prosperous village in the 'Large Twenty-seven' stressed that their village, and a small number of others in the ekada, were superior to most of the other sixty villages in the 'Large Twenty-Seven'. (14) These were normally the villages they would consider if they sought to marry their daughters within the 'Large Twenty-seven' and over a period of time it is conceivable that this top grouping could eventually break away completely. Again, a few informants spoke of 'the Twelve Villages' in which they grouped the villages of both 'the Five' and 'the Six', suggesting perhaps a much closer linkage for marriage purposes, at some stage. Quite a number of informants mentioned a seventh village, Sauli, or more correctly, three khadaki of that village, as having previously had very close links with 'the Six'. No-one currently appeared to have any marriage links with it. This could again, imply that as Sauli had declined in status, initially a few high status khadaki had still been acceptable, but even these were no longer seen as respectable contacts for marriage purposes. Other villages, such as Virsad, appeared to have no recent links with any
ekada, but marriages in both directions took place with 'the Twenty-Seven' and girls were married into all three high status ekada but it seemed with reasonably high dowries, suggesting that it possibly had a similar ranking to some of the villages in 'the large Twenty-Seven'. (15)

The ekada appears to be the most significant 'institution' in Patidar society. Men are born and die members of it. They live, work and socialise and marry in it (in theory if not always in practice). Certainly for the families who still live and work in the village even today, contact with Patidar outside one's ekada can be very limited, unless one has been through higher education and even amongst those Patidar who do have more contact with their fellow castes from other ekada, there is considerable ignorance about their composition and customs, and they are often perceived as 'different'. (16)

Khadaki

Although the ekada and village provide the outer limits of the Patidar social world traditionally, the khadaki, or extended family, provides the meaningful unit for daily activity and interaction. Khadaki, actually, denotes a gateway or entrance, but signifies to its users, the courtyard or cluster of houses reached through this door. In the nineteenth century, all houses tended to be built around an inner courtyard area with only one entrance with a substantial door, which was firmly closed at night, so it was a form of protection against intruders. (17) The occupants of these

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khadaki were generally descendants of the same lineage and if the extended family grew too large, then a break away would occur and another khadaki would develop nearby. (18) Khadaki vary in size, depending on the size of the lineage group; today, they may still be composed largely or totally of lineage members. Generally, not all family members can or do live inside the khadaki, either through lack of space or choice. There may, too, be completely unrelated people living in a khadaki, occasionally not even Patels, as families who have migrated 'outside' especially abroad, quite frequently attempt to rent out their homes, if no family members are left to live there.

In each village, some khadaki are 'higher' than others and, consequently, when a girl's family contemplates a marriage into another village, in their ekada, they would look at a comparable or higher status khadaki. Social occasions and life cycle ceremonies take place within this group. Members of the khadaki, and extended family members from outside the khakadi, would be expected to contribute generously to any expenses on such occasions. Whatever happens to one family or individual in this unit, can reflect significantly on all the other members of the extended family. It is in the interests of the whole group to contain any adverse events, or scandal and to utilise the individual's success. A man cannot rise 'above' his khadaki; therefore, to be truly successful and enhance his status, he must elevate the whole khadaki. A prosperous man would, indeed, be expected to help out his poorer relatives and he would need to do so for his own self-advancement.
This is particularly evident in marriage which is central to any status considerations, as will be seen later. One marries, not an individual, but into a family and the actions of all the members of that family can raise or lower its standing. (19) But as a man cannot raise himself above his khadaki or detach himself from it, he must endeavour to enhance his khadaki's status and his own accordingly. However, in practice, Pocock (1973) has argued that as a particular 'lineage' has prospered, that is generally the families associated with one of the khadaki, then the richer relatives tend, over time, to disassociate themselves from their poorer relatives: possibly they will even form a new khadaki.

It might be inferred from the delineation of the hierarchical nature of the Indian caste system that the social structure would be somewhat rigid. But this is palpably not the case as Srinivas' research has shown and the Patidars' upward mobility substantiates this argument (Srinivas 1962). The Patidar, themselves, although presenting an image of a uniform group to the outer world, in fact reflect the hierarchical nature of Indian society, based on an interrelation between economic standing and an approximation to the ideals of 'purity'. Just as the relative positionings in the hierarchy of the caste system vary over time, so, too, do Patidar lineage and village units. But, as a man's position is predetermined, at and by his birth, such changes in status can only be achieved through the medium of female kin.

An individual man is born and is likely to die in virtually the same position in the seemingly fixed hierarchy of the Indian social
structure. His varna, caste and village of birth, and hence association, cannot be changed in his lifetime. (20) The ranking of his family and his own status, within his caste, was also unlikely to change dramatically; unless, of course, in recent times, rapid industrial and professional success could enhance his own status. But even dramatic success or failure could perhaps take more than one generation before a whole family's standing was re-assessed. Women's position in the hierarchy, however, is determined very differently. They also are likely to be born and die in the same varna and caste, but the other determinants of their position, their gol, their village and khadaki, are liable to considerable changes, mainly as a result of marriage.

Patidar women

For Patidar women, their village, ekada and khadaki are, of course, important, and are equally deterministic in dictating their position in Patidar society, at their birth, as for a man. But unlike men, their position in the wider society is bound to change over time, unless they do not marry, which is still very uncommon in Patidar society. Any study of the position of Patidar women must, therefore, include an analysis of the marriage process. Firstly, I wish to discuss the ideal. A Patidar girl cannot under any circumstances marry anyone from her own village, that is her father's village, nor should she marry anyone from her mother's village, as all the people involved are seen as 'fictive kin'. She should marry someone, however, from her own ekada and from a
comparable or preferably higher status village and khadaki to her own. She should never marry 'down', that is into a lower status khadaki, village or ekada. Pocock (1972) reports that in the past, these rules were enforced by fines. However, if a family was so poor that they had to face the disgrace of marrying their daughter 'down', they were unlikely to be able to afford the fine anyway. On the other hand, if they contravened the rules and married 'up', that is completely out of the ekada, they might well 'budget' for the fine in the total cost of the marriage, which would, by definition, be expensive. The dilemma, in the past, was of contravening ekada rules to achieve a desirable match. The dilemma, now, is to achieve a superior match without incurring exorbitant dowry and marriage costs. The girl is always expected to marry 'above' her and, even, in a match between two comparable status families, the girl's family is always viewed as inferior, the gift/girl givers and the boy's family, the recipients of girl, gifts and dowry.

By establishing links with a higher status family through the marriage of a daughter, the marriage prospects of all her other unmarried female kin are enhanced. So, families 'gambled' in a very elaborate 'game of chess', because such marriages are expensive as they are virtually always accompanied by a high dowry. The greater the distance between families, the greater the dowry involved, on most occasions. The gamble is incurred not so much in the hope that this will be a 'happy match', but that the cost can be recouped through commanding a better match for one's own son than might previously be expected. One might hope, therefore, to
'balance' out the cost of one's own daughter's marriage through what is received at the time of a son's wedding; an obvious stumbling block occurring when daughters outnumber sons. The cost can and is, at times, shared by other members of the khadaki. So the individual 'misfortune' of a superfluity of daughters can be mitigated by the generosity of one's relatives. Over time, through the successive marriages of 'daughters' of the khadaki into other high status khadaki, and the contacts, or 'alliances' established, the whole khadaki may be elevated. (Presumably, too, on a wide enough scale, a whole village can improve its standing and command much better matches. If and when this occurs, the village concerned would/could detach itself ultimately from one ekada and move, over time, into another.)

It is evident, therefore, that the consequence of such marriage practices ensure that the position of Patidar women in the social structure changes over their life-span. They are bound to spend their married life not just in a different family, but also in a different khadaki, in a different village. At times, they may even be members of different ekada. (23) A woman's sense of identification with and loyalty towards khadaki and village, is arguably, liable to be of a different nature to her husband's. Women were generally not good informants about the relationship of members of a khadaki, especially, at their sasera, village of marriage, because they only belonged to a certain khadaki, through their husband's family, never in their own right. But they were perfectly well acquainted with the respective villages into which
their sisters, fictive kin and sisters-in-law had married.

Frequently, because of the concentration on male kinship links, little is made of the contacts between women in the same extended family. Yet, for Patidar women, the contact with their own immediate female kin was one of their major sources of social interaction. (The different patterns of social interaction for rural and urban women are discussed in Chapter 15.) Although marriage customs, in many Indian castes, dictated that women moved completely away from their own networks at their piyar, the home of their parents, these networks, built up before marriage still assumed great importance for women. As researchers such as Ardener (1975) have shown, women can exist within a prevailing (male) hierarchical social structure, while creating their own alternative worlds, composed of lateral links with their own female kin. Like other groups of women, Patidar women could gain a great deal of support and help from these lateral links with their own kin, which were made on a fairly reciprocal basis. Women, therefore, although fully aware of the prevailing hierarchical perspective of the social structure in the Patidar caste, had, their own (muted) 'world-view' which could place more stress on lateral links, that is particularly between female kin in other khadaki and villages. (24)

Patidar women, and the alliances they contract through marriage, perform a very central function in cementing the Patidar kin networks and wider political groupings, as well. Ekada, as Pocock (1957) has argued, may well reflect degrees of 'purity' and represent the desire to protect the unit from infiltration or
pollution from below. But they also operate at a socio-politico-economic level to protect the interest of a dominant group and further those interests. (25) In a largely agricultural society, especially, it was only through marriage alliances that links were forged with other networks which could be built upon by subsequent marriages.

There is also another vital function which women have performed in the Patidar social structure, that of 'status' carriers. In such an extremely hierarchical society, status is actually marked at the time of marriage. It is marked by the match one looks for and can command for one's children and it is only through daughters, as has been seen, that status can be elevated through a superior match. (One's daughters' children are liable to have a higher status than one's sons' children). Any traditional Patidar, Hindu, wedding offers ample scope for the ostentatious display of wealth and status. (26) This is manifested in a multiplicity of ways, through dress, the number of guests, the style of entertainment, feasting, gifts made, and, ultimately, of course, the dowry given. The marriage is a reflection of the family's wealth and standing manifested visibly in the bride's appearance.

Women are, it has been argued, 'demonstrators' of status in another manner. (Papanek 1973). They are the symbols of the family's 'honour' and pride. Because of this, it is of paramount importance that they retain an unblemished reputation, not just to ensure that they, personally, can be successfully married, but also
to ensure the good name of the whole family. As a result of this crucial factor, a whole social system, which dictates the division of labour has gradually developed. An analysis of this division of labour is central to an understanding of both Patidar women's position in a 'traditional' rural society and the recent changes which are occurring, as a result of urban and industrial development.

Patidar women, in this respect, have acted very much in the sense of what Caplan (1985) called 'boundary markers of caste'. This is certainly evident in a rural context. In an urban context, however, it has been argued that as women have moved away completely from involvement in any form of agricultural production, they have taken on many new roles which serve to reflect and consolidate the status of their own family and social group. (Caplan 1985, Sharma 1986). However, because of the particular proximity of urban areas to those original villages in which the Patidar lived, their sense of caste, and caste solidarity has remained very intact. Pocock (1957), indeed, commented on how effectively the Patidar caste had survived its transfer to East Africa at the turn of the century. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that they have been able to retain such a strong caste identity after a migration to urban areas only a few miles away from their rural roots. Moreover, they often reside in areas composed of new housing developments solely for the Patidar caste. In such a context, therefore, is there any evidence to suggest that class interests are beginning to be acknowledged as important? Such a development could well be reflected in the changing roles adopted by women in urban areas. By examining the
impact of urban life on women's roles, it will be possible to establish whether Patidar women act not just to reflect the status of their own family within the caste, but show, as well, how by their involvement in these status producing roles, they are acquiring a new significance in the establishment of class boundaries.
1. Each person is born into a specific varna, and a particular caste, as a result of their actions in their previous lives. This is known as their karma. Dharma, on the other hand, is the body of religious rules which are thought to govern the lives and conduct of members of each varna, and caste.

2. Pocock pointed out that most Patidar do not wear the 'sacred thread' which is normally associated with membership of a higher caste in one of the first three varna. (They are believed to be part of the cycle of re-incarnation.)

3. Pocock (1957b) claims that 'difference' in East Africa between castes has replaced a strict concept of purity and impurity.

4. Simadri (1977) also suggests that in the more orthodox south, a considerable distance had to be maintained between 'clean' and 'dirty' castes; even contact with the shadow of an 'Untouchable' could be polluting.

5. At Patidar weddings, this segregation is practised even amongst members of the same caste as guests from the groom's party (considered to be 'superior'), always eat first, men then women, followed by the bride's guests, men and lastly female guests of the bride. Moreover, the food is frequently less splendid at each sitting.

6. Pocock (1957a) argues that because of the late ascendency of the Patidar in the nineteenth century, under the British, the jajmani relationship has never taken root, in their area, and certainly in my fieldwork, I found no systematic evidence of such links apart from those associated with life-cycle ceremonies and the services that the valand (barber) performed in all of these. However, there were still links in some Patidar families based on the jajmani relationship, particularly between the 'family' priest and valand.

7. Pocock (1955) discussed the upward mobility and the Patidar themselves. Similarly, Srinivas (1962) and the Achari (smiths) who claimed to be Vishvadarma Brahmins, and one Harijan caste which claimed to be Kshyatriyas.

8. Srinivas (1962) who called this Brahmin code "harshness towards women" explains that for a Brahmin wife, her husband is her deity, and she should treat him as such, even eating from the remnants on his plate.

9. M. Sharma (1985) p.82. M.Sharma makes the point that caste and class status generally still overlap in the rural context.

10. Further elaboration of Caplan's theory on 'reproduction' is found in Chapter 4.
11. But as Bailey (1967) has pointed out, presumably they would live in different areas of the village.

12. Pocock (1954). This 'blood' or 'purity' of 'the Six', therefore, seems to be the ritual recognition of superior economic and political power. The ritual status would not survive the loss of wealth.

13. This is looking at moves towards orthodoxy as facets of upward mobility associated with 'Sanskritization'; however, I am not unaware of the counter-effects, at times, of western influences. But these processes will be discussed at a later stage.

14. For example, Bakrol, Anand, Changa and Gada.

15. Pocock (1954) mentions an eighth village which used to belong to the gol (ekada), composed of seven villages, which he studied; but it had fallen on 'hard times' and lowered its standard, by adoption, for example, of widow remarriage, and so families had stopped marrying their daughters into it. Moreover, as families in the eighth village could not afford to pay a high dowry, they were unable to marry their daughters into the other 'Seven Villages'. So all contact had ceased.

16. My research, encompassing three ekada, was facilitated by a general recognition that customs in the three ekada were different (even if this was not true in practice) and a desire to retain that difference.

17. Even today, there are patrols of village men, especially in the rainy season, to protect the village against thieves.

18. Some people prefer the term chowk or pol.


20. Except on the occasions when the upward mobility of his caste, or sub-caste, over a period of generations is finally acknowledged and generally accepted by all the other castes.

21. Probably imposed by the caste panchyat.

22. A danger can exist, however, in taking a lower status girl for a high dowry, because this, or a number of such matches, could actually 'lower' the status of the Khadaki.

23. The consequence for the socialization of girls are immense; as girls are always going to have to adapt to a different social environment after marriage, they must be conditioned to be very flexible.
24. E. Ardener describes these alternative worlds using the term 'muted'. See S. Ardener (1975)

25. It is outside the scope of this study to analyse in detail the function of the ekada at a macroscopic level. But, as there was a close correlation between high status villages, rail and road links and industrial developments, one could argue that they had organised very effectively to gain control over local resources through political power, such as the cooperative dairy and the Congress Party.

26. One informant, who had held a very large social gathering to celebrate her daughter's birthday, which was not a customary celebration, dwelt at length on the guest list, especially how many doctors attended.
CHAPTER 4. THE POSITION OF WOMEN: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES
THE POSITION OF WOMEN: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Introduction

Discussion of the position of women has generated much controversy over the years. In recent decades, a considerable body of literature has arisen in an attempt to understand the reasons why in most, if not all, societies, women have less power than men over decisions determining the course of their daily lives. A number of writers have attempted to find an overriding theory to explain why women appear to be subordinated to men wherever they are living; others have concentrated on specific groups of women in a particular society and sought to establish the factors which determine their standing within that society. Other writers, taking a broader perspective on women, have felt that no one theory or factor is sufficient, in itself, to explain the situation of women in many different and differing societies. They have felt that it is necessary to look at a number of variables which influence women's position in different sets of circumstances. In this chapter, I want to discuss the theoretical perspectives I have employed to establish the main factors which determine the position of Patidar women in both rural and urban areas of Gujarat. In subsequent chapters, I intend to discuss my data in the context of these theoretical perspectives. In the process, I shall establish the standing of Patidar women in Kheda in relation to other members of the family, or extended kin group; their rights and duties in that society and the roles they are expected to play; and the degree of control they can exercise over the major decisions affecting their
The two main theories which account for women's position fall into 'rival camps'. Marxist inspired theorists rely on an understanding of the economic determinants of women's position, whereas the opposing 'camp' seek to explain women's position in terms of their 'nature', or biological functions. In this argument, women are determined by their child bearing and rearing and, instinctively, adopt a 'nurturing' role. Men, on the other hand, do not have this first-hand experience of 'nature', instead their realm is concerned with the wider community outside the home environment, where they are involved in networks and relationships which help to 'integrate' society; this sphere of power and influence in the broader society has been classified as men's concern with 'culture', as opposed to women's with 'nature'. (Ortner 1974).

These arguments will be looked at more closely below, but before progressing further, there are some important points to bear in mind. Rosaldo (1974) contended that women's position is 'sexually determined'; women do not have to go through 'rites of passage' as do men in a number of societies. Their position is, therefore, 'ascribed' rather than 'achieved'. However, it does not seem to be particularly helpful to view women as a homogeneous group in this way. As Bujra (1978) pointed out, regardless of women's common experience as mothers, their class is an extremely important determinant of their position within society. It should be borne in mind that women's standing in the community may well be on a different basis to their standing within the family. The former may
be 'ascribed' through her relations to important men, such as her father or husband, but it may not be gender-related. As Mary Searle Chatterjee (lecture 1982) emphasised, in India, in particular, women's class can be more important than her gender. As we have already seen in Chapter 3, India is a society which is fairly clearly demarcated into hierarchies, where women from higher caste or status groups can be considered more important than men from a lower status group.

Again, class among other variables, can clearly alter the direction in which women's lives change. Industrial, urban and rural development do not bring about a unilinear change in women's lives. Gusfield (1967) made the point, too, that there can be change in what appears to be 'traditional' societies. Indeed, in India, he claimed, there had often been a fusion of the traditional with modern developments. It is vital to establish not just the economic framework of people's lives but to look closely at influences at work on men and women's lives. As discussions of 'development' have shown, women's position vis-a-vis men has actually deteriorated even when men's position is improving. (Boserup 1970). Women's circumstances, too, may deteriorate far more rapidly than men's for a variety of different factors. This, again, will be discussed more fully below.

Finally, it is worth remembering that most people do not see their own position in terms of some universal truth. They see it in terms of their own subjective experience. So, as Makhlouf (1979)
found in the highly segregated society of North Yemen, urban women who participated in a round of segregated entertainments in their leisure hours in the afternoons, thought themselves highly privileged compared to women in the rural areas: these rural women were actively involved in production and, consequently, had to work very hard. They had no time for such 'pleasant' leisure activities. The reference groups of these North Yemeni urban women were the lives of such rural women which they knew from their own experience. So, too, Patel women were likely to see their lives in terms of the hard work experienced by women in agricultural homes compared to the 'comfort' of urban life, even more so if they compared themselves to women in other castes. They rarely compared their position to that of men in their own community. But as Buvinic (1976) explained, it is necessary to differentiate between two different entities. One which she called 'position', is the person's place in the social structure; in the case of the Patidar, whether rural or urban, this was perceived as high up the social scale in both class and caste terms. But Buvinic discussed, too, what she called 'status', which she stated is how group members evaluate that position; what prestige, power and esteem is accorded to it. In this respect, the 'status' accorded to Patidar women was generally that 'ascribed' to them by their relationships with men: either their father or their husband and his family. Women, therefore, tended to evaluate their position in terms of their superior prestige and power compared to those in inferior positions both in their own caste and in the wider community. As the discussion in the following chapters will reveal, however, the 'status' of Patidar women, as defined by Buvinic, was, generally, 'low' in the sense that they had little
power or control over their own lives or means to command prestige in their own right.

The materialist basis of women's position

One of the main theoretical approaches to analysing women's position in any society is to look at the economic base. The mode of production and the form of women's involvement in that production is seen as being the major influence on women's position in that society. These theories emanate from the writings of Marx and Engels; Engels' discussion of women's position has been particularly influential, in this respect. (Engels 1972). Engels claimed that in pre-industrial societies, women's position was much more egalitarian because they were actively involved in production. Briefly, in such societies, work was carried on in and around the home and women were able to combine domestic duties, child care and involvement in food collection or subsistence farming. This was especially the case in self-sufficient communities based on hoe agriculture, hunting and gathering food, or patterns of shifting agriculture. Once communities or families settled permanently in one place and concentrated on more intensive agricultural methods, which entailed the use of such farming implements as the plough, then a surplus over basic requirements was likely to be produced. Once a surplus was produced, men appear to have gained control of this surplus and used it as a basis for exchange. Gradually, as a result, they were able to build up their control over land, property and possessions and in the process, women became one of these
possessions, too. Women had remained more occupied in the domestic sphere, partly because of child care arrangements, and did not have access to control over excess food supplies, and, hence, the power and wealth such control brought. Engels was eager to trace the development of society from its earliest stages and account for the development of the contemporary state. By outlining women's gradual economic dependence on men, in the context of the patriarchal family, he sought to indicate the way forward by suggesting that if the state were to subsume women's responsibilities in the home, then they would be able to be actively involved in the labour force, and, concomitantly, assume much more egalitarian status with men. Subsequent developments in the twentieth century, as well as much more extensive research into different types of societies have proved Engels, and Marxist analysis to be incorrect or insufficient, in many respects. Critics, whose comments are discussed below, have emphasised Marx and Engels' work was theoretical and subsequent empirical work has not always borne out their ideas. Nevertheless, they pointed in a direction which has been highly valuable and much enlarged upon by subsequent writers.

In 1970, Esther Boserup drew extensively in her own research on the general framework of Engels' ideas to explain how women's position in society had evolved. She pointed out that in societies based on a pattern of shifting agriculture, women were responsible for most of the agricultural work, whereas men tended to concentrate on hunting. This pattern prevailed, particularly in Africa. Once groups settled in an area and farmed more intensively, men took over
many of the farming responsibilities: they always ploughed the land. Women became more confined to the domestic sphere and only participated in the harvest, if at all. In Boserup's theoretical framework for agricultural development, wives of land owners tended to withdraw more and more from active involvement in agricultural work, sometimes even adopting the veil to distinguish them from female agricultural workers belonging to lower status groups. Boserup contended that whenever women are actively involved in production, they are much more involved in major decision-making processes. Others make a similar point: Sanday (1974), too, looked at women's contribution to subsistence in African societies and argued that where women's share in production is fairly equal to that of men, then women's position is enhanced and they have more control over decisions affecting their lives. But she went on to point out, in the African context, that where women did the bulk of the agricultural work, because men were occupied with other roles, such as warfare, women's position tended to deteriorate. Men in such circumstances tended to acquire power and prestige and, thus, they could appropriate the product of women's labour.

In a similar vein, M. Kay Martin and Barbara Voorhies (1975) explored the changes in women's position in hunting and gathering societies, where women's foraging provides the staple diet and they pointed to the correlation between this and greater sexual and personal freedom. "Power", they claimed, "attaches itself to those who control the distribution of food or wealth, irrespective of sex". (p.10-11) In societies with more settled forms of
agriculture, 'horticultural' societies, women's contribution on the whole declines, as does, concomitantly, their status. They argued that once conflict occurs over scarce land and resources, male aggression helps to reinforce their dominance in the development of patrilineal, patriarchal forms of social relations. Such developments foreshadowed women being valued not just as food producers, but more so as child bearers. Again, they followed Engels in depicting men's acquisition of land, resources and the concentration of surpluses in male hands. Women are confined to domestic food production and their status declines further. This process continues in industrial societies, where it is further compounded by the dichotomy between home and work. As happened, to a considerable extent, in British society from the eighteenth century onwards, women become dependent on male wage labour, whether working themselves or not, because even when work is available, female work has acquired the stigma of lower status and low pay.

Theorists who propound the materialist basis of women's oppression provide a very convincing framework for analysing women's position and there are ample examples from specific societies to prove their point. Draper (1975) discussed how the position of !Kung women in a hunting and gathering society in Africa deteriorated once their life-style became sedentary. Again, Doranne Jacobson (1974) pointed out the much greater freedom of movement women in Central India possess compared with women from similar socio-economic groups in Northern and Western India. These women in Bhopal, in Madhya Pradesh, are able to return to their parents' home on frequent occasions after marriage, where they frequently
participated in work. Because their labour power is valued by both natal and marital families, they do not give dowries, certainly no more than token sums, and their movements are much less restricted. Matthiasson (1974) argued that women are valued more in what she calls 'complimentary societies' where men and women have their own spheres of work. She included Jean Briggs' research on Eskimo women in a hunting group, where she felt men and women valued and respected each other's spheres of work and May Ebihara's discussion of Khmer village women in Cambodia, who took an active part in rice cultivation and marketing. These women have considerable freedom of movement, may choose whom they marry, can also divorce and remarry. But an important point here, to be borne in mind for later discussion, is that these women may also inherit land and property which they retain. There are numerous such examples, from South East Asia in particular, which seek to prove the point that where women are actively involved in production, they appear to exercise much greater control over the decisions affecting their lives. However, whether their relation to production is sufficient in itself to explain their position will be considered more fully later.

But there are as many examples, if not more, to disprove some important aspects of the theories concerning the materialist basis of women's position. Meillassoux (1972) felt that Marx and Engels had been too simplistic, especially when discussing pre-capitalist societies. He differentiated between two forms of exploitation of land: land as 'subject of labour' which he saw as typical of
egalitarian hunting and gathering societies, and land as the 'instrument of labour' which typified an agricultural economy which produced a surplus. In hunting and gathering societies, where land is the 'subject of labour', then the importance of a person's involvement in providing the means of subsistence is reflected in their standing in that society. But once land becomes an 'instrument of labour' involvement in production is not sufficient in itself to determine status. In such societies, any surplus became concentrated in the hands of the elders, who had inherited it from their predecessors. With this surplus, they controlled both young men and women and were able to control both the means of subsistence and of reproduction. Hence, the emergence of patriarchy. So, the importance of inheritance, just as much as control over production is evident.

Many researchers have pointed to examples of societies where the amount of work women perform has little impact on their status; even, as Sanday (1974) emphasised, when women participate to a very considerable extent in providing the means of subsistence. Peter Aaby (1977) argued that the materialist basis fell down when hunting and gathering societies are examined. Although these societies are often depicted as being relatively egalitarian, by such writers as Maillassoux (1972), Aaby contended that women provide the vast bulk of food for survival and probably domesticated the herds as well. Yet, although they produce and frequently control the major source of subsistence, women are never the dominant sex. Admittedly, their position is considerably enhanced compared to women in other forms of society. But the equation of control over means of production
and dominance with that community, fails. In fact, in many hunting and gathering societies, it is the products of the hunt, caught by men, which are valued.

Other writers make the same point: Margaret Mead (1976) did so. Rosaldo (1974) stated that although women may produce the staple food, rice, it is men's work which is valued, when they supply meat. She found, in fact, that whatever tasks men perform, they are more highly valued than those performed by women, even though these tasks may well be performed by women in other groups. Rosaldo contended that men have set themselves apart from domestic tasks, and, as a result, they have succeeded in gaining a certain social distance and, consequently, respect, for their tasks. As she pointed out, in order to emphasise their 'social distance' and lack of involvement in domestic tasks, Tuareg men actually wear a veil which symbolises their detachment from such routines. It seems to be not necessarily the task or ritual, but the social meaning or credit accorded to it by the community that counts. In this respect, there is no direct correlation between the position accorded by society and involvement in production. In fact, Bossen (1975) argued that women undertaking a large workload in a subsistence economy far from being viewed as equals, may well be treated more like 'slave labour'. Ursula Sharma (1980) certainly failed to establish any direct link between women's involvement in production and their status within society in her research in both the Himalayas and the Punjab. Indeed, she found that Himalayan women had become much more actively involved in agriculture as a
result of men's migration elsewhere, in search of wage labour. But all the women seemed to have achieved was a double burden of work. As Ursula Sharma explained, neither of the two communities she studied had a purely subsistence economy and consequently, it was difficult to attempt to attribute women's position to a single variable.

On the other hand, Yolanda Moses (1973) in her research in Montserrat found that women were frequently responsible for providing the means of subsistence and they did have considerable say in decision-making, but only when men were absent from the household. When they were present, despite women performing virtually all the work, men made the decisions. T.N. Madan (1976) writing about the status of Hindu women in India made a similar distinction as regards work to those made by Rosaldo. In the Indian context, he stated that it is not work itself, which determines women's position, but it is the status of the work that women do. (1) But, the decision about women and paid employment in India is generally made by fathers or husbands on the woman's behalf. As women were only able to work with the permission of male members of their household, their possible contribution to subsistence had done nothing to increase the power or control they exercised over their own lives.

**Development theories**

Social anthropological studies, such as those cited above, have already shown considerable weaknesses in a purely materialist analysis of women's position. However, even more convincing
evidence can be obtained from other researchers who have looked closely at the impact of development policies in both rural and urban areas, which indicate that a Marxist analysis may well offer many answers when evaluating social change from a male perspective, but it certainly falls down when trying to explain what has happened to women's position.

Some of the major discussion of women's involvement in providing the means of subsistence and their participation in the labour force, generally, has taken place over the impact of development programmes on Third World countries. Much of the literature has, until recently, concentrated on the effects on men, and it has assumed that these were the same for women. However, a number of studies have now shown that, contrary to expectations, women's position has often deteriorated as a direct result of development policies, even where men's may have improved.

A number of writers have, in fact, criticised the concept that development or 'modernization' is necessarily always beneficial. Bossen (1975) disagreed with writers such as Goode and Bernard who took a dichotomous view of the world, where traditional practices are necessarily 'bad' and such 'modernization' is always a positive move. A structural functionalist approach tends to see such 'modernization' as following a pre-ordained pattern, ultimately replicating the developed Western economies. The development theorists, such as Frank (1971), influenced by Marxist thought, saw the interconnectedness of the global system which allows Western
economies to develop at the expense of other societies. This did not imply that no group benefitted from development; it depended very much on the class or group within developing countries, some turned the situation to their advantage. However, the position of many people was impoverished by development and even the most recent aid programmes which have endeavoured to rectify the imbalances, have frequently done so at the expense of other groups; so in recent years, men may have benefitted at the expense of women.

Many programmes were totally geared towards men and any aid or training available was given to them. As a result, men were frequently given the expertise and equipment to farm cash crops, whereas women were left to their subsistence farming. (Boserup 1970, Tinker 1976). So, often, where previously women had a fairly egalitarian position, once men were producing cash crops, they became increasingly more powerful at the expense of women; because women were not given the knowledge with which to compete. (Basin and Malik 1975, Rogers 1980). Although this pattern may be discerned as a result of recent development policies, in fact, its origins can frequently be traced from initial contacts with colonising powers, who sought to deal exclusively with men. (Rogers 1980). Rogers pointed out, too, that the balance of power was further weighted against women, during the colonial period, when male rights of inheritance to land were reinforced, although, traditionally, the land concerned may have been owned jointly, or even by the women. This was especially the case in certain African areas.

Hanna Papanek (1977) made the point that women may be affected
very differently by development policies, dependent on their class background. She felt that for poorer, working women, their position often became worse, but that middle-class women withdrew completely from the labour force and specialised in certain roles, within the domestic sphere, particularly preparation of food, consumption and child care. Consequently, they became more dependent on men, economically. It is possible, therefore, that amongst the middle-class Patidar women, too, similar processes were occurring. Deniz Kandiyoti (1977) discussed the change which occurred in Turkey when semi-nomadic people settled permanently and started producing cash crops. It was the young men who benefitted as they were able to act much more independently from their elders. But women were confined to the home; it became unacceptable for women to work. As Kandiyoti pointed out:

"the breakdown of the traditional land-based, patriarchal system has a potentially liberating effect on women. However, this effect has remained largely potential, since there has been no shift from an unrecognised, underprivileged labourer status to that of a free and emancipated one. Rather, as the female has become freed from her traditional toil and begun to enjoy leisure, she has increasingly turned into a conspicuous consumption item for males and not into a productive member of the community." (p.72-3)

This analysis is particularly pertinent in view of the class and economic background of Patidar women. None of the Patidar women are involved in subsistence farming. Research findings, therefore, based on women who are just scraping an existence, have little direct relevance for the direction of change in Patidar women's lives. In India, when Basin and Malik (1975) looked at the effects of aid programmes on a group of such tribal women in a rural area of Rajasthan, they found that Dangi women, formerly from the cultivating
castes, had been excluded from the economic work force and had become domestic workers. They were no longer the primary food producers. Men's prestige had been enhanced at the expense of women and they, now, took little part in decision-making.

Within the same community, as Miriam Sharma (1985) found in Uttar Pradesh, some castes could benefit economically at the expense of others. But the status of women, within these groups, did not necessarily correlate with those of male members of the household. She argued that the upper caste male members of the Bhumihar caste had considerably enhanced their status, whereas the position of Bhumihar women in the household had declined as a result of their withdrawal from the labour force. (2)

Rogers (1980) contended that women often have a larger workload as a result of development policies geared towards men. Improved techniques enable men to produce more, yet women's work has not been eased by technological advances. So, for example, they may still be responsible for weeding, transplanting and harvesting the increased rice crops. Moreover, men often migrate for better work opportunities, leaving women, as Sharma (1980) found, to shoulder their tasks in the subsistence economy. Laurel Bossen (1975) pointed out the deleterious effect of development on women involved in trading, particularly in South-East Asia and Latin America. In these areas, women were involved in internal trade, but as trade expanded, Western merchants preferred to deal with men and gradually men took over the export trade. Hence, Bossen, like Boserup, felt that women's position, generally had deteriorated as a result of
technological and socio-cultural changes which had caused such communities to be more integrated into the world market economy.

However, it is important to remember that conditions in different societies vary and it is not always helpful to try and generalise. As Papanek (1977) pointed out, class is always a very important variable. This is more apparent in societies where the two sexes are fairly strictly segregated. As Mernissi (1976) found in Morocco, because a number of segregated institutions existed, such as schools, colleges and hospitals, women were able to achieve appointments to responsible posts because of deliberate policies to only employ women. (Such employment was, however, usually contingent on men's assent.) Sacks (1974) pointed out in Western societies, since the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, work and home have been divided. Most working-class men were employed as wage labour, but frequently their earnings were insufficient to support a wife and family properly. So women, when possible, found employment which has exploited their labour power by paying very low wages. As Beechey (1979) claimed, women's roles vary very much over a period of time, depending on labour fluctuations; they act as a 'reserve army of labour'. Blumberg (1976), too, felt that women's position was crucially determined by their economic power, but that this varied over time depending on the number of men available, for example, as a result of migration, and the total demand for labour, as well as how easily women could combine work with child care functions. Their position definitely improved when their labour power became necessary due to
labour shortages in the community. However, Beneria and Sen (1981), in a critique of Boserup (1970), felt that she had failed to place sufficient emphasis on 'reproduction' in determining women's role in economic development. They contended that the monetary reward for women's labour power varied from one society to another, dependent on their employment patterns. The wages paid were actually determined by the cost of maintaining and reproducing the labour force. (3). Development programmes, therefore, needed to address the wider issues of women's role in 'reproduction' both biological and social, in order to redress women's declining status. (They also needed to look at the process of capital accumulation, which was leading to (widening) class differentiation and changes in gender relationships.)

Inheritance: ownership of land and property

The previous discussion has shown up a number of flaws in arguments trying to account for women's position purely in terms of their involvement in the labour process or providing the means of subsistence. A number of writers have, indeed, argued that it is necessary to take a broader perspective than the materialist basis of women's position and look not just at labour, but at ownership of property and inheritance. Veena Das (1976) refuted a strictly economic determinist approach to the position of women. She contended that: "the particular use to which the surplus generated by women through their own labour is put, is contingent upon the existing framework of social relations; it is not constitutive of these social relations." (p.143) She went on to argue that in
India, land is managed as 'corporate property', that is as belonging to the joint family, and any surplus produced by women is acquired by men. In South East Asia, where women have an equal role in cultivating rice, they also have fairly equal inheritance; as Ebihara (1974) has already shown in respect to Khmer women. So Veena Das claimed that women's contributions are highly valued where they have already been accorded a place in the structural arrangements for ownership and management of property.

Ursula Sharma (1980) in her research on two groups of Indian women, agreed with this view. She put forward the theory that a woman's economic status is not just determined by her role in production; it is necessary also to look at her control over household resources, and the inheritance laws in her group. Sharma actually argued that it is the necessity for men to keep property which includes land, labour and capital, in their own hands which has brought about the existence of purdah. By segregating women, it enables men to retain better control over productive resources. Indeed, when families pay dowry at the time of marriage of their daughters, they are not giving this money in lieu of their inheritance, but it is a means of enhancing the newly married woman's position with her in-laws. It does not benefit the women herself. "In practice, dowry is treated as a passport to a good match, a high-status husband, and the favour of one's in-laws." (p.49) A woman virtually always foregoes any rights she had to inherit. So even when she is making a considerable contribution to production, as did the women Sharma studied in the Himalayas, unless
they have control over the land itself, they receive no direct benefit. Moreover, once women are removed from direct involvement in production, then their dependence on men increases.

Other writers, too, have stressed the importance of inheritance in determining women's position. Goody (1976) looked at inheritance customs both in the African continent and in Euro/Asian societies. In Africa, there was plenty of land available for cultivation. The labour power, therefore, of both wives and children was always welcome. The fact of who inherited the land was not generally an issue because plenty of land was available for whoever wanted to cultivate it. In areas, however, where land was scarce, such as the Euro/Asian continents, then it became necessary to ensure the perpetuity of land tenure, by retaining it in the group. It was essential to be certain that heirs to property were legitimate and Goody argued, this was the main reason for purdah. Beneria (1979) agreed that the need to ensure legitimate heirs in order to retain 'property' in the family, brought about a sexual division of labour, which enables women's reproduction to be more effectively controlled. Such developments occurred in areas where land was 'intensively' farmed, normally associated with plough agriculture. In order to ensure no rival claims on land, women were married out of the group, hypergamy, and given a dowry to compensate (them) for their loss. On this point, Goody, as well as writers like Boserup, disagreed with Sharma over the function of dowry and purdah. Jeffery (1979), too, considered that dowry is compensation for foregone inheritance and that purdah is essential to preclude dangerous liaisons and so ensure the legitimacy of male heirs.
Sharma discounted the theory that dowry is compensation for deferred inheritance because, she contended, women will virtually never take up the rights to land to which they are entitled, unless, nowadays, no immediate male heir is available.

In those societies, therefore, where women do not have the right to inherit or they forego these rights, then whatever their involvement in production, as Sharma has shown, they have little or no part in decision-making. Their labour power is appropriated whether it is in the form of agricultural or domestic work, or in the reproduction of the labour force. When women do inherit, as has been seen in the case of South East Asian women, their control over their lives is greatly enhanced. Vanessa Maher (1976) discussed the position of rural Moroccan women, who as Muslim women, were entitled to a half of a brother's share of their father's land, when the land was divided after his death. (Usually they forewent their inheritance and left the land with their brother.) But as a result of this fact, they were able to return to the natal home, if they were divorced because they had their own source of income. Urban Moroccan women do not have a share of land to which they could return in times of difficulty and divorce was, consequently, much rarer in urban areas. (4)

Patriarchy and reproduction

As many writers have pointed out, among them Kuhn (1978), the patriarchal form of social relations developed in pre-industrial, pre-capitalist societies. Patriarchy developed as societies
abandoned a nomadic way of life and settled in certain areas and developed forms of agriculture, such as intensive farming of land or herding of flocks. Denich (1974) explained how women in pastoralist families in the Balkans were content to live within a patriarchal family because they obtained protection from the frequent raids by other tribal groups on themselves and their children; they were coerced, as many women have been subsequently, by the fear of male aggression. But patriarchal social relations have been superimposed on to post industrial capitalist forms of society: they are 'cultural relations which are carried over from one period to another'. (Eisenstein 1979, p.77) So Eisenstein (1987) claimed that even in the context of industrialised societies, women are still confined to the family, and the domestic sphere, because it is seen as the most effective manner in which to bring up children. However, as women are isolated in the family, they, instead, act as a form of unpaid labour which helps to prop up the capitalist state.

There is an important school of thought, however, which is diametrically opposed to both a Marxist analysis of the position of women or the acceptance of the importance of discussing women's position in a patriarchal social structure. Such writers see reproduction and child rearing, women's biology, as opposed to involvement in production or the power base within the family, as the determining factor. In this context, 'biology' can be taken to include both a woman's 'innate feminine nature' and her bodily, reproductive functions. At one extreme, Tiger and Sepher (1977) felt that a woman's biology was totally deterministic. (5) They felt that women's 'maternal instincts' were so strong, that is
innate, that any attempts to tinker with roles would be unsuccessful. Most other writers are far less extreme in their analysis: they see the facts of child bearing and rearing, as well as social conditioning into the mothering role, as, probably, the most important determinant of women's position in society; but many would acknowledge that other factors must be considered as well.

The majority of recent writers, however, have acknowledged that although 'biology' is an important factor, it cannot be discussed in isolation from the form of social relations in which it occurs. They see it in the context of the two spheres of public and private life: the one connected with child bearing and caring for the whole family and the other functioning in the wider community where power is vested and decisions made. Many recent arguments, however, have rejected the possibility of these two spheres being 'complimentary': separate but equal. They are seen as being part of the power relationship associated with a patriarchal social structure, whether within a capitalist framework or not. (Ortner 1974). Different terminology has been used to typify these two spheres, apart from the dichotomy between public and private. A number of writers have employed the categories of 'nature' and 'culture' to define these two spheres, particularly, as Pateman (1987) has pointed out, as patriarchy rests on an appeal to the restrictions of 'nature' as a justification for the division into the unequal domestic and public spheres. Rose and Hanmer (1976) identified this emphasis on the importance of child care and its impact on the division of labour as the thinking of such 'radical feminists' as Shulasmith Firestone
Nelson and Olesen (1977) also discussed the analysis of women's oppression as being determined by 'nature', their reproductive capacity and its implications for the division of labour in terms of confining women to the domestic sphere and childcare.

Pateman (1987) pointed out the weakness in what she saw as the 'radical feminist' approach because it relied on a universal answer to the subjection of women by men, that of 'biology'. She identified a similar category of argument in what she terms the 'anthropological' approach. The most influential author of such theories is Ortner (1974) who took a similar stance to 'radical feminists' such as Firestone; but Ortner pointed out that although women are 'associated' with bodily functions, through giving birth and rearing children, and are, therefore, perceived as being close to 'nature', they also perform a mediating role between 'nature' and 'culture'. Men's activities remove them from direct involvement with 'nature', as seen above, and involve them in events spanning a wider area. But women actually bring up children, especially boys, to function in this different sphere and, hence, have to be aware of how both male and female spheres operate. Rosaldo (1974) made a similar point. She argued that women's oppression and male authority are a consequence, ultimately of maternity and child care, which serves to restrict women's mobility. Because of these obligations, women frequently are not able to form 'associations', such as the formal and informal networks organised by men, so they cannot take part in the public sphere in an effective manner. They are frequently unable, therefore, to 'bond' into powerful groups and
organisations as men do for such reasons, and not as Tiger and Sepher (1977) have contended because they lack an 'innate' ability to do so. Hence they are excluded from major decision-making forums.

Pateman (1987) is one of the more recent writers, however, to reject the concept of 'biology' or 'nature' as being too universalistic a reason for accounting for women's subordination in all societies. Other writers, who acknowledge the importance of reproduction in determining women's roles and their position in society, have previously tried to place it in a broader framework. Juliet Mitchell (1971) was one of the earlier writers to try and reconcile the two main currents of thought on women's position. She endeavoured to bring together ideas on the materialist basis for women's oppression and the importance of reproduction in dictating the patterns of women's lives. She felt that economic determinants based on women's participation in production were an insufficient explanation; their involvement in child bearing and child rearing within the family were equally important. Because of women's reproductive capacities and their involvement in child care, especially when children were very young, women often became more restricted to the domestic sphere and to tasks associated with the home; both for convenience and for their own protection. Pregnant women and women with small children were more vulnerable to any forms of attack. (6) Hanmer and Maynard (1987) pointed out the universality of women's fears of male violence, regardless of class: they felt all women were 'controlled' by such fears. Juliet Mitchell
(1971) felt that, for other reasons, too, women were often restricted to the domestic sphere in order to control women's sexuality more effectively, particularly to ensure legitimate heirs and protect men's honour. Consequently, because of women's reproductive powers, men's needs to control these powers and women's involvement in socialising children, the domestic sphere became women's only sphere of activity. They acted as 'unifiers' of the family and because of their isolated situation in the home, very often became more conservative and traditional in their outlook and roles.

Edholm, Harris and Young (1977) supported Juliet Mitchell's analysis. They felt women adopted the attitude and roles they do because of their socialisation. However, they sought to expand on the definition of 'reproduction' and its importance in women's lives. They identified three forms of 'reproduction' which act as determinants of women's position. Firstly, they mentioned human or biological reproduction and point out the degree to which women can control their own reproduction. Secondly, they discussed the reproduction of the labour force and state that people enter the labour force in different capacities depending on their abilities, socialisation, and background, among other factors. Thirdly, they discussed the concept of 'social reproduction' by which they mean the perpetuation of the current social structure and customs. Women are involved in all these forms of reproduction which encompass not just 'nature', in the biological sense, but in terms of socialisation, or 'culture', as well.
Caplan (1985) agreed with Edholm, Harris and Young's expanded definition of 'reproduction'. She concentrated particularly on women's role in 'social reproduction' and the formation of class difference in an urban society. Using Papanek's (1979) concept of 'status production work', Caplan illustrated how Indian women in non-productive work, that is not in paid employment, were able, through their household tasks and social and leisure activities, to reinforce the status of their household in the emerging middle class. They were 'reproducing' the particular social formation, including the means of production and the relations of production. Ursula Sharma (1986), too, felt that women were central in not just in reproducing family status, that is the existing social structure, in a (new) urban environment, but they were, indeed, instrumental in actually 'producing', or creating that status in an urban society in a state of flux. Consequently, it was only through an appreciation of such 'status production work', that is women's role in 'reproduction', in its widest sense, that their position in society could be understood. Eisenstein (1979), too, had, in what Jacquette (1982) called a 'socialist feminist' critique, sought to reach a definition of 'capitalist patriarchy': in a modification of Marxist theory, she sought to link 'the relations of production' with 'the relations of reproduction'. She contended that 'the cause of (women's) oppression is not production or reproduction, but the social construction of those activities.' (p.277).

In this attempt at synthesis, Eisenstein reflected the attitude of many later writers, who consider that although women's 'biology'
and their consequent involvement in child rearing are of importance in determining women's position and role in society, any discussion of this need to be placed in its social context. McDonough and Harrison (1978) agreed that any definition of patriarchy and its need to control women's fertility and sexuality is rooted in 'historically specific' societies, and it is essential to look at 'concrete kinship structures' and class ideologies to understand what form it takes. These will determine the form 'reproduction', including the division of labour, takes in that specific society; it was not 'biology' which determined women's position. Veena Das (1976) declared that any discussion of the position of women in the Indian context needed to take into account not just the materialist basis of women's position but the fact that it was contingent on the prevailing social structure. So many authors have felt that women's role as mothers and in reproduction can only be fully understood in the context of the social structure in which they live. Beechey (1979), after rejecting the various schools of feminist thought on patriarchy as failing to fully explain its continuing existence, also emphasised that any theory of patriarchy should be 'historically specific': the form patriarchy took in different social institutions should be studied. Rosaldo (1980) agreed with the necessity to study specific social relations in 'concrete' societies. Men are dominant in all societies, she contended, but men and women have varying degrees of access to power and these must be analysed in the society under study. Pateman (1987), too, agreed with Rosaldo: she felt that the argument that women's 'biology' is in itself oppressive is incorrect. The impact of child bearing on women's roles varies from one society to another: it does not.
necessarily confine women to the home. So once again she felt the specific form of social relations has to be examined.

Although a number of writers have discussed the existence of 'matriarchal' societies, such as Gould Davis (1971), the majority would agree with Matthiasson (1974) that such societies are ideals; in reality, women live in male dominated societies, but their degree of control and involvement in decision-making can vary considerably. (There is a full discussion on the varying degrees of power women could exercise and the possibility of indirect means of influencing events in Section 6.) Women's position in all 'societies' was dependent on a variety of factors apart from economic determinants, particularly the type of kinship system and residence patterns. Leghorn and Parker (1981) suggested the other areas which need to be studied, apart from women's involvement in production, in order to understand the determinants of women's position in a specific society. They felt that women's fertility and its control was central to understanding women's position, but that it was equally important to consider their access to and control over resources, because this was frequently a major source of women's power.

From Chapter 7 onwards, I shall apply these criteria in an examination of Patidar women's changing position in both a rural and urban context. Did Patidar women's contribution to the economy of agricultural households not enhance their status? Or was the existing social structure of the patriarchal family and women's role in reproduction of greater import in determining their position?
1. Liddle and Joshi (1986) also made the point that in the emerging class society in Indian towns, women were allowed to work if the work was of a sufficiently prestigious nature to enhance the social standing of the family, and not just for their contribution to the total income of the family.

2. Miriam Sharma (1985) pointed out the vagaries of development programmes where some sections of a community could become richer at the expense of others. She found that the position of the lower caste Indian women and men she studied, the Chamar, has deteriorated as a result of the 'green revolution' in that area of Uttar Pradesh. The Intensive Agriculture Development Programme of 1965 onwards had quickened the pace of polarisation amongst the peasantry: the economic position of the richer castes in the countryside had improved. But the poorer castes had lost control over their own land; so the Chamar women could no longer work on their own land as primary food producers, instead they were dependent on whatever casual agricultural labour was available. Because these Chamar women made a cash contribution to the household economy, their status was high within that household. But the standing of the household and caste, as a whole, had plummeted.

3. Beneria and Sen (1981) argued, for example, that in Asia all the family members might work and were, consequently, paid lower wages; whereas in Africa, only the men worked and were paid sufficiently for their own keep. (Women were seen as self-sufficient, dependent on their own production of food.)

4. Reiter (1975), however, pointed out that although many Frenchwomen, in a study she made, inherited their parents' home, they were 'queens' in their own home, but had no power outside the domestic sphere. So, although inheritance rights are important, they, too, cannot be taken in isolation from other factors.

5. Tiger and Sepher (1972) based their conclusions on their fieldwork on Israeli kibbutzim, where they observed that women's position and roles had failed to radically change, despite a complete restructuring of their social relations and work opportunities. They did not, however, take into account the long-term effects of conditioning and the difficulties in changing human behaviour, in practice, rather than in theory.

6. Juliet Mitchell (1971) and other feminist writers at the same period, such as Firestone (1971) and Millett (1972), stressed the use of (implied) violence to keep women in 'submission'. They contended that patriarchy relied on force and intimidation for its continuance. Brownmiller (1975) took this argument further by suggesting that rape was a form of social control: a generalised threat as much as actual force. See Chapter 14 on purdah and segregation for further reference to this concept.
SECTION 2: METHODOLOGY AND THE SAMPLE
METHODOLOGY: THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The history of the research problem

In discussing the methodology I used to obtain the data for this piece of research, it is as important to look at its history as at the final result. The techniques I employed, for example, in gaining entree, were determined by the original conceptions of the research. Originally, I had hoped to analyse the impact of social change on Patidar women emigrating to London from the Kheda district of Gujarat. Consequently, my initial contacts were made with members of the Patidar community in London; subsequently, I was able to contact their relatives in Gujarat. However, once I was 'in the field', in Kheda, I realised that there was a considerable degree of social change occurring in that area as a result of rapid urbanisation and industrialisation. The effect of such changes on Patidar women were considerable and I had already collected extensive data on this subject. Urban Patidar households were, on the whole, more affluent. But were these very visible improvements in Patidar women's standard of living reflected in their position and roles in the household? It, therefore, seemed important and justifiable to concentrate on a full discussion of those issues. Finally, constraints of both time and money made it unlikely that the much longer-term study of communities in two countries could be completed.

The focus of the research, itself, as has been discussed in much greater detail in the introduction, is on the impact of social
change on Patidar women living in Kheda, or Charottar, area of Western Gujarat. By comparing the daily lives and experiences of Patidar women from rural areas with those living in urban areas, it has been possible to establish how women have been affected by the move away from an agriculturally based, rural society to a rapidly developing urban environment. The discussion is based on an upwardly mobile group who are moving on from their agricultural base to one centred on business interests and the professions. It has been of central importance to establish what were the key factors in determining women's position in Patidar society, in order to examine what has been the effect of changes in residence and of husband's occupation on women's position; moreover, has the power and control they exercise over their lives, changed as a consequence? The transition for women from a village life, where their lives developed along very clearly delineated lines, to one where changes were necessary to adapt to urban life, replicates, in many respects, the degree and direction of developments for Indian women migrating to new lives overseas, which was the original focus of the research. It is, of course, very pertinent, too, to a more generalised discussion of changes in women's status as a result of development in Third World countries.

It is important to know the history of my research problem in order to understand why I decided to employ the fieldwork techniques I used in collecting my data. Tracing my research problem back to its genesis has become a piece of investigative work in itself as the original concepts have evolved and changed. Initially, I was fired by a desire to find out how Asian migrants to England adapted
to a life-style so radically different from the one they had left. At that time, I had recently returned from the sub-continent and it was intriguing to imagine the impact of the changes necessary to adapt to western society. Moreover I had come across instances of problems likely to be encountered, through my own social work experience and an earlier piece of research. (1) So the initial focus of my research was on not only how people adjust to a culture and environment very different from the place of their origin, but also how this affects them and what sorts of problems may well be generated.

In order to explore this further, it seemed that the format of a comparative study might be the most effective one to utilise. I sought to establish how migrants from a traditional rural society adapted to the complexities of urban life and work in a western society without the support of their own institutions, especially the joint family and strong kinship links whilst perhaps experiencing the added handicaps of loneliness and isolation, exacerbated by language and cultural barriers. It seemed essential, therefore, to spend time in the area and with the community from which a group of such migrants came, in order to fully understand their cultural background and the socio-economic conditions in which they lived. Only then could I expect to understand how their position and roles in British society had changed or were changing, and also to be able to identify what effect these changes were having, if any, on their ability to cope with their life in this country. A comparative study of a group of migrants from their own
area of origin in the sub-continent and a similar, or related group in this country, seemed an ideal means not just of understanding the background of the group under study, but also of highlighting and emphasizing the changes taking place.

From the outset, I was particularly anxious to make a study of the changes in position and roles of women migrants, partly because this group, at the time, seemed under-researched, and, partly because the impact of such changes seemed likely to be far greater on women than on men. As a woman, I found the study of women's issues more relevant and more interesting. Moreover, as I was envisaging a study of women from a much more segregated society, I was liable to have much greater access to women than to men and I was hoping to redress the balance, a little, of many of the studies undertaken by male researchers, where women play a very peripheral part, perhaps from lack of interest, but certainly because in such societies male researchers had no access to all-female groups. Such research had already been done on men, especially in the sub-continent, as well as on predominantly male migrants in this country. (Tambs-Lyche 1975, 1980; Ballard 1977 in Watson.) There were a number of theoretical reasons why women had a far greater gulf to leap from their old world to this new one. They were accustomed to a life surrounded by close kin and neighbours and more distant kin in their own villages. Their lives were centred around the home and they probably would never have worked and certainly not in the sort of heavy manual work they might have to undertake in England. Moreover, in England, they appeared to have taken on the dual burden of all the domestic work in the home as well as being
employed outside the home. The position of newly-married young women, who had come to England from their parents' home in the sub-continent to join their husbands and in-laws in this country, seemed particularly pertinent. They had to make the adjustments not only to a new life in a strange country, but also to learn to live with groups of comparative or complete strangers, far away from any familiar faces. (In retrospect, such a transition seems only to be an extension of the experience of many newly married women in India, itself.) As it would have been very difficult to acquire a large enough sample of 'newly-weds', however interesting this group was to study, I decided, instead, to focus on younger, married women, preferably with small children under the age of ten, because they represented a fairly homogeneous group who were living through the same stage in their life-cycle and were likely to be experiencing, therefore, similar sorts of problems and difficulties. They were also more likely to have been brought up as a group of the same generation to share similar outlooks and expectations.

It became obvious that I had to narrow down my potential sample even further, as it would not be theoretically useful to study women migrants from the whole Asian sub-continent, whose attitudes and lives would vary enormously. Some research had already been conducted on Muslim women. (V.Khan 1974, 1976a, 1976b; Jeffery 1976.) Others had researched the Sikh community. (Ballard 1977, Pettigrew 1972.) There are two main groups of migrants from India, the Sikhs from the Punjab, and Gujaratis, especially the Patels. Muslim migrants came mainly from specific areas in Bangladesh and
Pakistan. Very little work had been undertaken on the Gujaratis, apart from Pocock's work. (Pocock 1972.) Nothing, at that time, was explicitly on Gujarati women. (2) But, after a few months of preliminary fieldwork in the Wandsworth area of London, I narrowed my sample again. Even within the state of Gujarat, there were too many differences between members of the various castes who had migrated to London, for me to be able to arrive at any useful conclusions. There were differences not just in socio-economic backgrounds, but in customs and cultural values as well. (3) I chose, therefore, to concentrate on the Patidar caste, from the Charottar area of central Gujarat, a sufficiently small and compact area in which to conduct fieldwork. The Charottar Patels were well represented in London and they were a very clearly delineated group with a shared body of customs and beliefs. There were strong community links both amongst the families in London and with their families and kin in Gujarat. They were a landowning caste, most of whom still retained close links with their rural background. Moreover, the Patidar come from a small area of Gujarat, the Kheda district, where they were the dominant caste. They were a closely-knit group both culturally and socially: as important, however, was the fact that because they originated from a relatively small area, it would be feasible to study a cross-section of the caste.

Having selected the group I hoped to study, I decided to use the contacts with the Patidar I had made in London, as a means of gaining entree in Gujarat. As I was interested in the effects of social change, I did not wish to confine myself to a kinship study. (4) I felt this would be too restricting, especially when looking
at 'problem areas' in women's lives, because the particular difficulties of one or two women in the same close network, might well be atypical, and a product of a very specific set of circumstances. Also, one kinship group might well be very unrepresentative. By using a larger sample to cross-check the accuracy and quality of the data I was gathering, I was endeavouring to ensure its greater 'reliability' and prevent any bias towards one particular group of women. I wanted, therefore, to look at a cross-section of Patidar society, both in Gujarat and England. Consequently, I built up links with twenty to twenty-five different families in London, who were able to provide me with entree to a similar number of families in Charottar, who were scattered over more than ten 'villages', as well as towns; these 'villages' were, themselves, members of three different status groups, or marriage circles: indeed they ranged from small villages to small towns. (5)

As a result of these early extensive contacts, I was able, eventually, to derive a sample from a cross-section of socio-economic backgrounds, status, and educational levels from within the Patidar caste. In view of the fact that the original concept of the research had evolved since its inception, this was particularly important. In order to understand the processes of change taking place in Gujarat, it was essential to have a sample from both low and high status groups of Patels, as well as from both villages and towns. Women from both joint and nuclear households were interviewed, too. The sample was chosen, finally, to represent women from agricultural households in the villages, a transitional
group of women still living in villages, but whose husbands were employed in business or the professions, and an urban sample, all of whom were in business or professional households. By studying these three groups, it was possible to isolate the most important variables in determining women's position: such as involvement in production, and household composition.

My fieldwork in India, in 1980-81, took place over a period of just over eighteen months. I returned, however, in 1985 for a shorter period of five weeks, in which I concentrated on certain areas of research which had become more prominent after the decision to change the emphasis to that of social change in India, itself. This enabled me to supplement some of the data previously gathered and explore some new areas.

Fieldwork techniques

Although the bulk of my fieldwork was conducted in India, I spent four to five months over two summers in preliminary fieldwork in London, where I concentrated my initial efforts on contacting a sample and gaining entree and building up rapport. This served a dual purpose of building up a sample in London, if necessary, for the later stages of my research and provided me with an introduction from my London sample to the families in Gujarat. Such an introduction, by letter, as a bearer of gifts, and on two occasions, personally, through two London Patidar women visiting in India, greatly facilitated my acceptance in Gujarat. There is considerable interaction between Patidar who are resident in London, and their
kin and friends in India. Frequently some distant relative or friend would act as a bearer of gifts or make a courtesy call on behalf of others left behind in London, when they returned to Gujarat on a visit. So, I was able to utilise this role. The more difficult task was initially to overcome any suspicions and hostility in London about my motives and the sort of demands I might make. (6) My prior personal contacts helped allay some of these fears and prolonged contact over two to three summers further played a part.

From the early stages of my research, it became apparent that my most effective and productive fieldwork technique was the use of participant-observation, certainly in the initial stages. The Patidar were a caste and community about whom I knew very little, and about which not a great deal had been written, in English at least. So, in order to build up a body of knowledge from which to develop some initial hypotheses, I needed to spend a great deal of time asking questions and observing, both in London and Gujarat.(7)

During the initial months in India, it was particularly important to spend time in winning my informants' trust and friendship in view of the sensitive nature of some of the data I hoped to obtain during the course of my research on problem areas in women's lives. Whilst conducting my fieldwork in India, I stayed with a number of families for a series of visits, usually a few days at a time, but the majority of the 'participant-observation' was conducted during shorter social calls, similar to those which the Patel women, themselves, made. (8) Only when I returned for my
shorter period of fieldwork in 1985 did I stay with the family of one of my respondents for five weeks. (The reasons for this will be discussed more fully later in the chapter.) I endeavoured not to take notes during these informal sessions, unless a very complex topic was being explained. But occasionally I tried to note down a few key words, which were expanded as soon as possible into more detailed notes. (9) These notes were later written up into a daily log and categorised where possible. Through constant note-taking and evaluation I was generally able to establish what gaps existed in my knowledge, formulate tentative theories, and re-consider the questions I needed to ask to elicit the information I required.

After a number of months in the field, I acquired in the region of fifteen to twenty very good informants from a number of villages and a range of socio-economic backgrounds. (10) These women provided the information which formed the basis of my daily observations and note-taking; however, it was amply supplemented by data collected from numbers of other women who were members of the social networks to which my informants belonged. (11) Many of these more distant, contacts became my respondents when I eventually embarked on the more structured interviews.

Eventually, after around five to six months, when I felt I was acquiring a much clearer picture of the society I was studying, I also saw the desirability of gathering data more systematically in certain areas. As I was endeavouring to study women from a cross-section of villages and small towns, and thus from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, it seemed essential that I obtained an
equal 'depth' and quality of material from this cross-section and it seemed that the most effective way of ensuring this was to devise certain semi-structured interview schedules. Initially, therefore, I constructed two fairly short and straightforward schedules focussed around daily routines and patterns of social interaction and leisure activities, incorporating religious observances. (See Appendix 1 for copies of these schedules.) These schedules also enabled me to acquire all the essential demographic data I needed at the time of interview, rather than trying to ensure I had acquired the same basic data from all my sample of women in a series of informal interviews.

For these initial schedules, I interviewed seventy-three women, aged between twenty and forty, who were single, married and divorced or separated. (12) (The data from these schedules are referred to as Survey A: Daily Routines and Survey B: Social Interaction, in the text.) They came from nine different small villages and towns and from different kinship networks. These women were connected by birth of marriage with two of the highest ekada, or 'marriage circles'; 'the Six' and 'the large Twenty-Seven'. (There was a third ekada, 'the Five', which was ranked between 'the Six' and 'the large Twenty-Seven' with which some women had connections through birth or marriage, too.) Many of the interviews were conducted with the aid of 'informal interpreters', that is any close contact of the women who spoke English and was willing and able to perform this role. Generally it was another woman, a female relative or friend, but, for four or five interviews, an English-speaking man acted as
interpreter; he was a close relative. (13) A number of the interviews were conducted as group sessions, with other relatives, neighbours or friends adding their own comments and 'reminding' respondents of people they had met socially, which proved useful, when it came to the schedule on social interaction. (14).

Towards the end of my fieldwork I embarked on a second semi-structured, interview schedule, focussed, this time, around potential problem areas in women's lives. (See Appendix 2: Personal Data.) I had deliberately left this schedule to the later stages of my fieldwork because it necessitated not just 'good rapport' but a sensitive and in-depth knowledge of the potentially stressful aspects of women's lives. I had already covered much of the ground with some of my key informants and was able to use the schedule as an opportunity, for further probing, and validating data acquired earlier. (15) With some of my other respondents, however, with whom I was not so well acquainted, I was not always able to attain such 'high quality' data. (16) A number of women spoke English and I was able to interview them directly. I did, however, use a paid interpreter whenever necessary, when I conducted interviews with women who spoke little or no English. It was important that these interviews were not conducted by a friend or relative, given the possibly sensitive nature of the data being disclosed. Moreover, I always endeavoured, often with difficulty, to conduct the interviews in private.

I restricted my sample, for this second interview, to fifty-four married women, aged twenty to forty, all of whom had children
under the age of ten. These fifty-four women had all been part of the earlier, larger, sample. I selected this smaller group for interview because they represented a very homogeneous group, who were passing through similar stages of their life-cycle, and were likely, therefore, to experience a similar range of problems. (17).

The schedule, itself, was devised in order to try and uncover stressful areas in women's lives, particularly in relation to changes in their position and roles. It was deliberately open-ended so that the maximum amount of ground could be covered by probes and supplementary questions. (18) Consideration was made for the fact that stressful experiences might well manifest themselves through somatic symptoms. (19) Also, alternative explanations for difficulties and emotional problems were explored in questions dealing with possible external (supernatural) forces at work in women's lives. A number of hypothetical questions were introduced in an attempt to circumvent reticence about disclosing problems whether from fear of the displeasure or anger of the other family members if they happened to discover the disclosure, or because of anxiety over the family's reputation. (20) Hypothetical questions, too, were important to counteract the entrenched fatalism evident in many women which made it difficult, at times, to establish what feelings were, over certain predicaments.

Having amassed a considerable quantity of data on the fabric of women's daily lives, both in villages and towns, their customs, rituals and value systems and their world view, there appeared to be
ample scope for exploring the changes in women's position and role within the context of Indian society, itself. From a preliminary analysis of the fieldwork data it was clear that processes of change were equally evident in India as in those women who had migrated to England. The effects of urban living appeared to be significantly altering women's role within the family as well as outside the home and, although, generally not directly involved in the industrial process, themselves, women were nonetheless influenced by these developments. The quantity and quality of my data and the diverse nature of my sample could enable me to draw useful conclusions on the changes in women's position and role in Indian society which were also pertinent to changes occurring to women outside India. In some respects, the direction of any such changes can be explored more easily within the Indian context, because the women are not living in an alien culture and society. Considerations such as language problems, alienation and racial discrimination, which must necessarily have a profound effect on a number of Asian women living in British society, can be safely excluded as variables in the Indian context. It was easier, therefore, to isolate variables of social change as causal factors in areas of conflict, which can be more directly related to changes in women's roles and position in society. Thus the research problem became focussed on the effects of social change on women's position and role within Gujarat, as a result of changes both in residence from rural to urban areas, and the impact of changing occupations from agriculture to business and the professions. It is hoped that whatever the findings prove to be, that their implications will be seen to go beyond the immediate context of Patel women in the state of Gujarat, and will shed some
light on the processes involved in producing changes in women's position and role generally, and implications for future developments.

Problems of fieldwork

Much has been written about "entering the field" and "gaining entree", and perhaps slightly less about "staying there", until the completion of the fieldwork, once the initial excitement has given way to the months or even years of hard-work. (M. Glazer 1972; R. Wax 1971; Berreman 1962; P. Golde 1970.) Of course, without "gaining entree", very little can be achieved, as Rosalie Wax (1971) found in her early research at a Japanese internment camp during the Second World War. She was seen as part of the government administration which perceived all the camp members as undesirable aliens. Not until she was able to disassociate herself from the administration, and prove she was not a 'spy', did she start to make any headway. Similarly, Berreman, (1962) in his research in a Himalayan region, was viewed with great suspicion because local people could not account for his activities. They attributed his unusual behaviour to the fact that he must be a "spy" or a missionary. (21) By relying extensively on kinship networks, the personal contacts I already had in London, and the 'good informants' I acquired over successive summers of fieldwork there, I was able to avoid this predicament. I further endeavoured to explain my research and the purpose of my visit to India in a manner which was understandable and acceptable to the people concerned. (22) Attempts at "allaying
suspicion", however, also had pitfalls; a comparative study is not easy for women (particularly from small villages) to understand when they cannot imagine or envisage a life radically different from their own. The degree of acceptance, initially, depended on who provided an introduction and in what circumstances. (23)

India is a society where distrust is endemic, to a certain extent, about any 'outsiders', that is those outside one's own caste, one's own khadaki, and one's own family. In a small, closed community, it is very difficult to hide anything likely to be detrimental to the family's reputation. Yet it is essential to remain in good standing in order to ensure a good match for children, and especially, daughters. Any blemishes on the family name, or imputations on a girl's honour, could devastate her chances of marriage. Naturally, therefore, there is considerable circumspection about what is disclosed to outsiders. Any newcomer is, therefore, viewed as a potential threat. Moreover I sought to talk with women, thus risking the implication that I did not consider men's opinions were important, and, even worse, to younger women, who although obviously my 'peer group' were of least importance in the household. Older women, especially mothers-in-law, might resent such attention being given to their 'inferiors'. With girls and women at their parents' home, there was generally no problem as we were perceived as 'friends'. Similarly, there were few problems with younger married women who lived away from their in-laws, or who spoke English where their in-laws did not. The major difficulties arose at a later stage in the research when I arrived, armed with interpreter and interview schedule and
endeavoured to engineer a corner or roof top for some privacy. Most people had accepted me sufficiently well enough by that time to tolerate this, but just occasionally, a mother-in-law would drift in and out, probably driven by a mixture of curiosity and suspicion, at what was being disclosed. Earlier sessions were conducted as 'open house' especially the daily routine and social interaction schedule which most people enjoyed; many women joined in jogging the memory of the person being 'interviewed' about who had called and when.

Building up rapport is essentially a matter of 'communicating'. At a very basic level this is derived from one's appearance and manner. Even body language such as basic movements and gestures conveys very different meanings in India to western ones. I tried to appear reasonably smart but 'modestly' dressed by western standards, in order not to be too at variance with local women, especially when travelling. (24) Also a friendly, warm open, outward manner helps! But, of course, language is the most important medium of communication with informants. Like the Indian sociologist, Sesaiah on his arrival in Japan, I also found it was more difficult to make myself understood, than I had thought. (S.Sesaiah in Srinivas 1979.) Different pronunciations, local dialects and rapid speech often made my attempts at Gujarati conversation very difficult. Moreover, when speaking in a group, several people often spoke simultaneously. One informant even commented, with some perspicacity, that he could tell I was not a Patel because I did not shout loudly enough to make myself heard over the rest of the participants. Even with English speakers, I
did not always fare any better, because Indian English is, of course, an entity in itself, and although I generally, could understand what was being said in both languages, (Gujarati and Indian English) people often had problems understanding me. Luckily a number of Patidar women spoke excellent (English) English, because they had been brought up in East Africa, and had usually married a husband living in India. So, where possible, I used such women (or sometimes men) as informal interpreters. At a later stage, for the more structured interviews, I employed an interpreter as I could not always rely on 'informal interpreters' being available when I needed their services and I needed to preclude the possibility of different interpreters giving the schedules very varied inferences and interpretations. Moreover, the questions in Survey C needed to be handled carefully because of the potentially sensitive nature of some of the responses.

Berreman (1962) has written about the importance of selecting a 'good' interpreter, and the effects different interpreters can have on the quality of the data. His first interpreter, a Brahmin, was of very high status in the village and sought to convey 'orthodox' religious and social practices in the Himalayan village under study, as aspersions were frequently cast against the orthodoxy of Himalayan Hindus by their plainsmen compatriots. It was only after the departure of this interpreter, when Berreman started to employ a Muslim interpreter, that the less 'orthodox' practices were revealed and he had much greater access to the lower status members of the village; however at some detriment to his previously good rapport with high status Hindus.
In my own case, I was very aware that an interpreter had a considerable impact on the quality and quantity of data collected. However, in the circumstances I could not afford to be unduly critical and selective. After a number of months in the field, I had found only one of my informants who was willing and able to work with me regularly as an interpreter. I had several very clearly defined criteria which restricted the scope of my choice. I needed a female interpreter, and preferably a married, Patel woman. Those Patel women who wanted to work and were in a position to do so, were already working. Others might be able to help out occasionally but family demands would always take priority, particularly for married women. A husband had only to invite an unexpected guest, or a mother-in-law to request some extra help in the home, and all my plans had to be abandoned. Although much of the literature emphasises the benefits of being an outsider when conducting in-depth interviews over personal matters, in these circumstances, given the considerable distrust of outsiders, and frequently active dislike of some groups, such as Muslims, I considered that women were only likely to confide in someone they could 'trust'. I had spent months building up rapport and I did not want it destroyed by using the wrong interpreter. I felt it was essential, therefore, to use a Patel woman.

My first interpreter, Sudha, came from the lowest status group (of the ekada I was studying) and the largest. She and I had had considerable time to become acquainted and we were 'good friends'; moreover, she had a fairly friendly and easy manner which helped
people to relax. But we had scarcely started interviewing when she left abruptly for East Africa, her permit coming through suddenly. The bulk of my interviews were conducted through two other interpreters, neither of whom I had known previously. One, Meena, was found for me after a number of weeks, through the local university Sociology Department, and when she, in turn, had to give up due to a very problematic pregnancy, my third and final interpreter, Anjana, was found very rapidly by a local shop and restaurant owner, who exemplified the utility and prevalence of kinship and patron/client networks in Patidar society.

I had no alternative on these occasions, and my two main interpreters had strengths and weaknesses which undoubtedly affected the quality of my research. Meena came from the highest status group of villages, 'the Six', and from a high-status family. This ekada is the smallest and consequently it was very easy for any of my respondents in 'the Six' to 'place' her. Within minutes, each woman had established the other's antecedents, of course, on occasions this facilitated entree and rapport, especially for the social interaction/daily routine schedules. But prior personal knowledge about one another's backgrounds did also create some barriers, not to mention the danger with lower-status ekada and families that, as in Berreman's experience, women might have tried to project an image of orthodoxy in the presence of someone who was liable to look down on their, perhaps not strictly orthodox, lifestyles or beliefs. In some respects, Anjana had the ideal social background; she came from the middle-status ekada, 'the Five', so
was deemed to be of sufficiently high-status to be acceptable to the highest status groups, yet not too high to be so intimidating to the lowest status one. As she had spent most of her youth in Madras, and her parents, too, had lived 'outside' for much of their lives, then her immediate family was not well-known. But she was generally acceptable as a 'Five village' Patel. Not only did she seem eminently acceptable in terms of 'status' but she spoke English (as a result of her Madras convent-school education) fluently, better perhaps than Gujarati. But a 'linguistic giant' is not necessarily ideal. Meena's English was not fluent, and at times she had difficulties finding words in English for more complex ideas, but she had a far more amenable personality and she was married. (25) Basically, she was interested in people and, of course, this interest transmitted itself to my respondents. For Anjana the whole experience was more of an 'academic exercise'. Meena quite happily contributed to general conversation after formal interviews ended. Of course, such conversations can sometimes be most illuminating and perhaps even more productive than the interview itself. Anjana, however, found such 'socialising extensions' of the interview sessions somewhat tedious, at times. Studying to qualify as a lawyer, her manner very occasionally could betray more of interrogation than 'sympathetic probing'. Such shortcomings were, to say the least, unfortunate, but given ever increasing pressure of time, lack of an alternative interpreter and towards the end of this period of interviewing, five months of riots, curfews, armed patrols and intermittent chaos, which often made movement to other towns and villages, difficult and perilous, no alternative remained.

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Some of the issues encountered in ensuring the acceptability of my interpreters were, also, relevant to myself. As an outsider, sanctioned by their relatives, I was acceptable and initially my 'outsider' status enabled me to ask 'naive' questions which would look totally foolish if put by a Patel. Even so questions about daily routine, social interaction, religion and leisure activities seemed totally pointless to women who were unaware of life-styles radically different to their own. But I am dubious about other facets of the so-called advantages of the outsider role; especially one's objectivity, or detachment from the social structure, which is meant to facilitate 'confidences'. This was not a large industrial area, where anonymity could be assured. Even in towns, people tend to live in areas which are totally or largely composed of others of the same caste and possibly ekada. One's visitors are seen and identified and one's actions and movements are rapidly known. In this 'closed society', I used kinship networks and snowballing to ensure entree and acceptance; but the concomitant of such methods is that others in these networks are bound to be aware of who else has been interviewed. Even when families or women are not personally known to one another, they can easily be placed. I do not consider, therefore, in this context that the role of outsider is really viable; in order to elicit 'confidences', one needs to establish a degree of trust such that confidences can safely be made. With a large sample, spread over a number of towns and villages, such trust cannot be established, to the same extent, with all respondents. It must, therefore, be acknowledged that the depth of data gathered must vary considerably from respondent to respondent, but that, generally, the quality and/or depth is greatest from those women.
with whom I had developed the closest and strongest relationships. Those women I knew the least, either through lack of contact or failure to build up good rapport were less prepared to divulge more problematic information and consequently the data I obtained from some of them was less fruitful and detailed. Thus I gained a more sketchy idea of the more problematic areas of these women's lives.

There were some advantages in not being associated with daily interaction in a woman's social circle, when gossip was normally bandied back and forth. Moreover, the fact that I could not chatter away in Gujarati in such a circle made it easier for me just to listen rather than have to contribute to the conversation. On the other hand, it was essential not to appear too remote from women's lives as I could not then be expected to 'understand' their problems and values. In some instances, having an interpreter could be advantageous; she, at least, was considered to be fully aware of the nature of village life, mothers-in-law, or whatever was the topic under discussion, and, so she could convey this information to me. The whole issue, therefore, seemed to be the delicate one of ensuring a balance between being sufficiently detached and, at the same time, trusted in order to reassure respondents that any comments they made would be strictly confidential. Indeed, on my return in 1985, for a further brief period of fieldwork, my reliability as a confidante had been further accepted and some very sensitive information, which had previously not been disclosed, was then revealed to me.
Another well documented area of research is the danger any ethnographer or sociologist encounters in the field, the danger of 'going native'. (M. Glazer 1972) Apart from the generally acknowledged danger of losing one's supposedly more 'objective' analysis of a culture different to one's own, I was very conscious of two further pitfalls. Firstly, there was the general lack of understanding or acceptance that anyone might chose to be alone. Yet I very rapidly jettisoned my idea of living as one of a family in favour of living alone, as I realised I would never be given the time, space, or quiet in which to record and analyse fieldnotes. Indeed, on my second, short period of fieldwork, when I did stay in the household of one of my respondents, it certainly was very difficult to find time even to record the brief notes of my daily observations. Moreover I felt particularly swamped by impressions, ideas and data, especially in the earlier days, and needed time to cogitate and digest them. The constant demands of meeting new people and building up relationships is extremely demanding and a number of fieldworkers have reported how they became drained to the point of illness. (Golde 1970). Consequently, apart from living separately, in rooms attached to a family bungalow, I also ensured that I took a number of breaks away from the area which gave me an opportunity to catch up on fieldnotes, think about the work ahead and recoup my energies for another intensive burst of work; because whilst 'in the field' I found there was little respite, not even the refuge of closing the door and windows on the outside world at the end of a tiring day. (Because of the very high temperatures, up to 45 degrees in the summer months, it was essential to allow as much cool evening and night air into my room as possible.)
Another great pressure was one particularly associated with being a woman fieldworker and having to combat many people's attempts to slot me into the conventional female role. Suggestions that I wore a sari, or learnt cooking appear harmless enough on the surface, but the implications for how I would be perceived are considerable. To adopt this strictly domestic role would have completely altered the basis of my research. I would have been much more restricted to certain groups of families and much of my time would have been occupied in domestic activities. There is no denying that useful data could also have been acquired by concentrating largely on using such participant-observation techniques, but it would have precluded me from extensive interviewing of a much larger sample. Time available for other visits would have been much more restricted. I had to be very firm and persistent, after a few initial contacts with informants, that I did not need to be chaperoned, collected and transported everywhere. Many Patel women do not generally travel outside their immediate vicinity unaccompanied. For longer journeys, they often have a male escort, otherwise they will travel with other friends, particularly if they are going somewhere not well known. If I had been obliged to depend on being escorted, I would have quickly alienated 'goodwill' as men frequently resent the time spent in escorting their female kin, never mind a guest! Nor would I have been able to visit numbers of people in varying circumstances, as my informants were frequently faintly suspicious about my other contacts outside their own networks whom they could not 'place' and with whom they could not establish some link, at whatever superficial a level.
This was particularly pertinent as I was visiting women and families in different ekada and it was not uncommon for families to have few if any contacts outside their own ekada. So, even though I was visiting other Patels in the same area, there was certainly a degree of distrust and one or two (male) informants initially insisted on escorting me to other families in order to ensure I was not coming into contact with 'undesirables'! (27).

The ultimate attempts to 'take me over' were the number of offers I received from elderly female (heads of households) to arrange a marriage for me. This raised a number of issues; it reflected a desire to place me in an acceptable role as a woman of my assumed age, even though 'studying' must be or should be concluded before considering marriage. It seemed to suggest my acceptance, but again, it could also have been, on occasions at least, an attempt to test out my motives, by women who did not really find 'research' or 'study' a totally comprehensible explanation for my presence. However, given my long contact with the women concerned, overall, I consider they had probably decided that as I appeared amenable and eager to learn their ways, and I had such assets as a very good education (and a British passport) that I might possibly be considered as a match!

In a society where women generally have far greater restrictions on their actions and their movements, there are undoubtedly some issues which a woman fieldworker has to face, which would not apply to a male fieldworker. I have already indicated how my own mobility could well have been circumscribed if I had not been
very firm and resolute. There was again, however, a very delicate balance between maintaining my independence without alienating my informants. As I was seeking to study women and would generally only have access to those women with the tacit consent of their elders, and particularly husbands and parents-in-law, I had to appear as a 'desirable' acquaintance or 'friend'. This entailed considerable and constant care with 'role management'. Stereotypes of the behaviour of 'western women' are fairly prevalent in Indian society, and are generally not very positive; there is a tendency to assume all western women are 'morally loose': a term which, for my informants, would encompass not just sexual 'laxity' but immodest dress, drinking or smoking. As unmarried Patidar girls all wear western-style clothes, I tried to ensure I dressed in a similar fashion. Modesty extends beyond dress to comportment, and, similarly, I had to endeavour to relate to men, only in a way which Patel women would find acceptable. (28) Peggy Golde (1970) in her research in Mexico frequented the local cafe for company and to drink there, but the clientele were all men. Consequently, her access to women became very limited. In Gujarat, where alcohol is illegal, but drinking does take place in private amongst men, the majority of women were most critical of anyone, even men, imbibing. If I had stepped over these boundaries, I would certainly have not been welcome in many households, by either men or women.

As a 'white' woman I had to exercise even greater care in my role as I was very 'visible'. White women were rarely seen in most of the areas I visited in Charottar and it was, therefore, very easy
to identify me. Unfortunately, too, as a white person and a
foreigner I was, at times, treated as a V.I.P. and shown around all
the local institutions, such as schools, and co-operative dairies.
This reaction luckily subsided with time. But as a white woman,
working largely amongst women, politics were rarely if ever an
issue. With men, in mixed social gatherings, such topics as
politics, colonialism, and the British Raj arose and a white British
male fieldworker might well have found his fieldwork experience more
contentious. But generally, the Patidar are pro-west because of
their strong links through migration.

As Hanna Papanek (1964) has also pointed out, in a segregated
society, there are some very definite advantages, too, in being a
white woman fieldworker. A white male fieldworker would never gain
access to all-women groups and can only observe in mixed social
groups, which are not always very frequent. Moreover, women may be
very subdued and participate little in such gatherings. As a white
woman fieldworker, however, there are occasions when women are
accepted quite happily in all-male groups (without damaging their
reputation) because they are treated as 'honorary males'. This is
particularly likely to occur on occasions, or in households, where
men are the only English speakers. It can also, too, be part of a
'vetting' process, before one is able to socialise freely with the
women involved, in all-female groups. Women are, therefore, in a
better position, in such instances to gain insight into family life
and both male and female worlds.

I have already touched upon aspects of my status amongst my

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respondents. At times, especially initially, I was treated as a V.I.P., or honoured guest, as a respected outsider would be treated. However, over time, I had to try to transcend this role as it obviously precluded me both literally and figuratively from Goffman's 'back regions'. (Goffman 1959) After introductions, however, I tried to circumvent this formal role, by adopting the local practice of 'visiting'; making unplanned social calls, following up invitations and reciprocating calls. (29) This was impossible when visiting the more distant villages, as it could entail a totally wasted journey. Most women were generally pleased at such social calls, and over time, I found myself labelled as masi (mother's sister), or' auntie ' by the children. Therefore, I had become a 'fictive sister' or friend. Kinship ties, even though fictive, are more generally used, rather than friendship per se. (P.Jeffery 1979). This is not to deny that my 'acceptance' was on some occasions, at least, facilitated by my high status, as 'white', and a 'foreign sister'. (30) Some of the younger girls, too, acknowledged that they felt their association with me would enhance their own status.

Because of such attitudes, I felt it was doubly important to be very careful in any opinions I might express. Firstly, of course, I was conscious of the effect my attitudes might have upon the opinions of my informants and which, therefore, could bias my data. This was, naturally, an important consideration, not to invalidate my own research. But I was also very aware that I might be a very 'formulative' influence, especially for younger women and girls and
that I had a moral responsibility not to encourage a woman in actions which might make her life very uncomfortable or untenable after my departure. In the circumstances, therefore, I tried always to follow and not to lead: to remain 'neutral' when possible.
METHODOLOGY


2. As I already had strong personal links with Gujaratis, especially members of the Patidar caste, this further influenced me to study this group.

3. For example, one group, who claimed close links with the Patidar but who lived outside the area of Charottar, generally married someone from their own village, and hence, someone they knew. The Patidar would never consider this and always married their daughters outside their own village, and, therefore, generally into a house of strangers.

4. See V.Khan (1974) Ph.D, Bradford, and her study on the relatives of one family she lived with in Bradford.

5. Contacts made with these families in Gujarat rapidly 'snowballed' after my arrival and I eventually selected women from different families in nine different 'villages'.

6. Suspicions that I was seeking financial support for my research or perhaps had possible connections with a government agency.

7. As I was trying to emulate the methods expanded by Glaser and Strauss (1968), using the "constant comparative method" to generate hypotheses.

8. I shall discuss visiting patterns and social interaction in Chapter 15.


10. The number fluctuated over time because of the mobility of my sample.

11. Once introduced to one woman, other contacts could 'snowball' very rapidly, as mentioned earlier, through further introductions to her extended networks, composed of kin and friends.

12. One woman was later excluded because she was a 'Kanbi' rather than a 'Leva' Patidar and although resident in a 'Twenty-Seven' village, her husband's and her own family were not considered to belong to that 'marriage circle'.

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13. The few occasions when men were used as interpreters, virtually all in the earlier stages, were generally not very successful because I had to continually ensure that the men concerned asked women respondents the questions rather than giving their own impressions. Other women, too, very occasionally adopted this attitude, but towards the second half of these interviews, I generally used my paid interpreter. As I discuss later, I had a number of problems with interpreters and had several periods when I had to manage without one and contrive to use my own resources.

14. Later in the chapter, I discuss the problems of 'privacy' in greater detail.

15. I had conducted a small pilot study in North London over a period of two months in 1979, in order to help develop this interview schedule.

16. Changes, too, in interpreter did not facilitate this.

17. Moreover, G.W. Brown (1978) had studied a group of women in South London with similar characteristics in his work on depression. And, therefore, it seemed there would be some interesting points for comparison and discussion.

18. See Appendix 2 for Schedule C on problem areas in women's lives.


20. See discussion of reputation, 'izzat' and similar concepts and necessity to keep it 'unsullied', in later chapters.

21. P. Golde (1970) gives other examples of 'suspicion' which she encountered during her fieldwork in Mexico. She was taken for a 'bandit's moll', who was supplying information on likely victims.

22. People generally accepted that different 'kinds' of people, or castes, have different customs.

23. For status reasons, many women were eager to call other women to their homes to meet me, and later for interview, in the manner of a 'patron-client' relationship, hardly conducive to good rapport.

24. Not easy in the dusty, overcrowded conditions and searing heat.

25. Because I was still single, questions on topics such as contraception were even more difficult to put as many of the married women were quite 'modest' when discussing such topics. Again, however, Meena, the married woman had far more restrictions on her time than Anjana who was available at all times, as long as she returned home before "too late", about nine pm.
26. P. Golde (1970): Golde and Nader in Mexico developed malaria, hepatitis, became run-down and depressed as a result of isolation.

27. I gathered on my return in 1985 that a number of my urban informants envied my independence, my ability to move freely and not to have to take others into consideration when I made any plans.

28. Generally with male kin, or 'fictive kin' of a similar age relationships may be fairly relaxed, but with non-related men, of course, women were much more careful, and any two such persons spending any length of time alone together would be viewed with suspicion.

29. It resembles accounts of formal visiting in middle-class and upper-class society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For example, those made in Mrs Gaskell's "Cranford", or in the novels of Jane Austen.

30. 'Fairness' is a highly valued attribute amongst most Indian groups and especially for women.
CHAPTER 6. INFORMANTS AND RESPONDENTS: THE SAMPLE
INFORMANTS AND RESPONDENTS: THE SAMPLE

Characteristics of the Sample

In the previous chapter, I discussed how the sample was acquired by 'snowballing' techniques, using a nucleus of reliable informants based in the nine villages and towns in the surveys. Now I will look more closely at the composition of the sample and the criteria for its selection. The villages and towns formed a cross section, ranging from small and medium-sized villages to large 'villages', similar in size to the small towns. The sample for Survey A and B was composed of seventy-two women living in rural and urban areas. Of the thirty-six women living in the villages, 21%, fifteen, came from small villages, Gada and Ajarpura, both members of the lower status ekada, 'the large Twenty Seven'. (See Table 6.1 for more details.) Fifteen per cent came from medium-sized villages, Bakrol and Dharmaj, the former in 'the large Twenty-Seven', the latter from the 'the Six'. Fourteen per cent of the women came from what was known as the large 'village' of Karamsad, which was defined in the 1981 Census as a 'small town'. Karamsad was part of the highest status ekada, 'the Six'.

The size of the population of a village, however, was not (necessarily) the main criteria which distinguished one village from another. The villages of the ekada of 'the large Twenty-Seven' and 'the Six' were part of two virtually autonomous social networks with differing customs. There was little contact between the two networks at a social level, which was the main link for women.
Table 6.1: Women interviewed in Survey A + B by town and village

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<th>The Twenty Seven Villages</th>
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<td>Gada</td>
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Consequently, there were frequently greater similarities between the women from 'the Twenty-Seven Villages' whether they were small or large villages, than with women from 'the Six Villages'. Women from urban areas also had very close associations within the ekada. Indeed, both Anand and Nadiad were 'villages' in their own right in their own ekada: Anand in 'the Twenty-Seven Villages' and Nadiad in 'the Six', 25% of all the women in the survey. A further 25% lived
in the towns of Vallabh Vidyanagar and Baroda which had no particular attachment to any of the ekada. The towns contained Patidar from a variety of ekada, as well as members of many other castes. The women surveyed in these towns were from one of the three highests ekada, 'the Six', 'the Five' or 'the Twenty-Seven': though all the women in the survey were connected by birth, or marriage, to 'the Six' and 'the Twenty-Seven'.

The families in the sample came from a cross-section of occupational backgrounds, ranging from farming households to those involved in manufacturing, business and the professions. In order to ensure that the women in the household, who were interviewed, formed a homogeneous group suitable for comparative purposes, the respondents, who were surveyed, were in their early adult years: that is between twenty and forty. Not all the women, therefore, who had proved to be good informants in the earlier stages of the fieldwork, based on participant observation techniques, could be included in the surveys, themselves. (In some cases, they were too old, or alternatively, all their children were over the age of ten.) But the women I had been able to contact through these informants, who did fulfil the criteria for inclusion in the surveys, were used to form the networks of respondents who were formally interviewed. (Because of a vagueness and lack of precision over ages, it occasionally only became apparent after subsequent calculations, that women, or their children, were perhaps older than they had indicated. Such is the case of Ranjan from Dharaj, who is included in the data, whose real age, for example, was probably over forty, although it was claimed otherwise, at the time of the surveys.)
Data acquired from informants in the earlier stages of the research was used as a basis on which to formulate the open-ended questions in the surveys. (See Appendices: 1 and 2). This data, too, has been used to substantiate and elaborate on, where necessary, the findings at various stages in the research, because many good informants, although not formally interviewed for any of the surveys, had provided a wealth of relevant information on many of the issues under discussion.

In the first two surveys, Schedule A on Daily Routines and Schedule B on Social Interaction, a cross-section of thirty-six urban and thirty-six rural women, between the ages of twenty and forty, were questioned, so that single, married, separated or divorced and widowed women were interviewed: see Table 6.2. Only a few separated, divorced or widowed women were included; indeed, very few women in these categories were known to any of the respondents. For Schedule C, which concentrated on more sensitive, potentially problematic areas in women's lives, the sample was restricted to those women whose lives, in both rural and urban areas, were passing through a very similar phase: that is the bearing and raising of young children, up to the age of ten. For this reason, the original sample of seventy-two women was reduced to fifty-four; it excluded single women, newly married women, women who were no longer married and women without children. (Three married women with children were no longer available for interview for Schedule C. Details are contained in Table 6.3.) Sudha, for example, from Bakrol had gone abroad before the second interviews were conducted. Two women from Gada were either not in the village, or 'too busy' on a number of
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</table>
occasions when I was present to take interviews. One of these women, Chaya, had just given birth to her second child and was absent at her piyar for long periods.)

Table 6.2 contains data on the larger sample of seventy-two women, referring to them by a pseudonym and actual place of residence. (All names of both respondents and informants have been changed.) The average age of these women, at the time of their marriage, was 21.9; this masks a slight variation in age at marriage, dependent on rural and urban residence: see Table 6.2. Women in the smallest villages, Gada and Ajarpura, married at younger ages; both these villages were in the lower status ekada, 'the large Twenty-Seven'. An older average age at marriage was found in two larger villages, Dharmaj and Karamsad, and the town, Nadiad, all members of 'the Six', the highest status ekada. Discussion on the reasons why the high status women, who lived in this ekada, married at a later age is given in subsequent chapters. Both status considerations and the educational levels reached by women were important determinants of age at marriage and there was a close correlation with rural and urban residence. (These factors will be discussed in Chapter 12 and Chapter 20.) Similarly, the reasons for the very small number of separated or divorced women in the sample will be fully discussed in Chapter 11. The relatively small number of single women in the sample reflected, in the main, the fact that the majority of women were married in their early twenties. This point will be expanded on further in Chapter 12.
The sample interviewed for the second semi-structured interview schedule, Schedule C, included many of the women in Survey A and B. (See Appendix 2 for an outline of Schedule C on Personal Data.) All these women, aged twenty to forty, had one or more children under the age of ten. Table 6.3 focusses on the family size in both towns and villages. This table includes data on fifty-seven women, three of whom were not available for the full interview using Schedule C.)

The general finding from the data was that small families seemed popular with two children per family, the most frequently recorded number: 58% of all children. Indeed, over two-thirds of the urban children were in families of just two, compared to under 50% in the villages. In the villages, there were more larger families than in the urban sample. Nearly 40% of village children were families of three, or more. But, the largest recorded family was only four children: the only such family in the whole sample: see Table 6.3. Table 6.3 gives details of the number of male and female children in the sample and their age at the time of the survey.

The significance of and variations in family sizes and their impact on women's lives is discussed fully in Chapters 11 and 12. Despite the preference for male children, discussed in Chapter 11, there was an equal preponderance of male and female children overall in the sample. However, the sex of the children in the family was an important factor in determining family size: see Chapter 12.

But, firstly, in the following section, I want to discuss the data taken from Schedule A on women's daily routines, in order to establish the direction and pace of change in urban women's lives.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>1 child</th>
<th>2 children</th>
<th>3 children</th>
<th>4 children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gada</td>
<td></td>
<td>G14, B7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neeta</td>
<td></td>
<td>B13,B9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanita</td>
<td></td>
<td>G8, B9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rupa</td>
<td></td>
<td>G3, G5mths</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhano</td>
<td>B2</td>
<td></td>
<td>G10, G8, B6</td>
<td>G6, B9, B2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaya</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpana</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hema</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ajarpura</td>
<td></td>
<td>G3, B7</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalpana</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kamini</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>G7, B8, B4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaya</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tara</td>
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<td>G1mths, B2</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>Kapila</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bakrol</td>
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<td>G8, B7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sudha</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ila</td>
<td>G2mths</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raju</td>
<td></td>
<td>G5, B7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raksha</td>
<td></td>
<td>G10mths, B2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakuntla</td>
<td>B2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharma</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>G14, B3</td>
<td>G10, G7, G5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushpa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>G10, G5, B8</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Ranjan</td>
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<td>G1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sumita</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Dipti</td>
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<td>Karamsad</td>
<td></td>
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<td>G11, B8</td>
<td>G13, G10, B6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aruna</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manju</td>
<td>G3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daksha</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rekha</td>
<td>G1</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhakula</td>
<td>B1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benna</td>
<td></td>
<td>G9, B12</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Prabhu</td>
<td></td>
<td>G5, B3</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towns</td>
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<td>Anand</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sita</td>
<td></td>
<td>G7, G6</td>
<td></td>
<td>G4, G2, B2mth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indu</td>
<td></td>
<td>G6, G3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nalika</td>
<td>B5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lata</td>
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<td>G10, B7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rashmi</td>
<td>B7</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeta</td>
<td>G1mths</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pratima</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharmista</td>
<td></td>
<td>B4, B2</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Indira</td>
<td></td>
<td>G15, G10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakshmi</td>
<td>G2</td>
<td></td>
<td>G2, B6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saroj</td>
<td></td>
<td>G12, B8</td>
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Table 6.3 cont:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>1 child</th>
<th>2 children</th>
<th>3 children</th>
<th>4 children</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nadiad</td>
<td></td>
<td>G11,G8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shobna</td>
<td></td>
<td>B8,B6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charulata</td>
<td></td>
<td>G2</td>
<td>B6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sirla</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B4,B2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joshua</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VVN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panna</td>
<td></td>
<td>G5,G2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lila</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bharti</td>
<td>G2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kashori</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B10,B5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nira</td>
<td>G7</td>
<td></td>
<td>B4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sucheta</td>
<td>B4</td>
<td>G7</td>
<td>B4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amrita</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meena</td>
<td>B7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baroda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hansa</td>
<td></td>
<td>G6,G2</td>
<td>G10</td>
<td>B7,B4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radha</td>
<td></td>
<td>B5,B9mth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purnima</td>
<td></td>
<td>G13</td>
<td>B15,B10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sushila</td>
<td>G9mth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sub Total  | 7  | 8  | 34 | 30 | 12 | 15 | 2  | 2  |

TOTAL      | 15 | 64 | 27 |    | 4  |    |    |

% of total | 13%| 58%| 25%|    | 4% |    |    |

G = girl + age at time of survey
B = boy + age at time of survey
SECTION 3: THE DOMESTIC SPHERE

HOUSEHOLD MANAGEMENT AND DAILY ROUTINES
CHAPTER 7. RURAL HOUSEHOLDS
Farming Households

'The Twenty Seven Villages'

A khadaki in 'The Twenty Seven Villages'
Introduction

The importance of analysing the materialist base of women's position has been discussed in Chapter 4. Patidar women in a rural agricultural household, generally had a very heavy workload. They were still actively involved in tasks related to the running of a farm. Women in professional households, whether they were in small or large villages, or the towns had fewer tasks to perform. Consequently, it is essential to examine the duties of women in different households in order to establish whether their contribution towards the family economy enabled women to exert greater power or influence either in their own domestic sphere or in the broader context of the family or the community. Moreover, with the loss of any agricultural work how did Patidar women occupy their time? Was there a decline in their responsibilities in the domestic sphere, and, if so, did this result in a diminuation in their status in the family? Had women found other 'duties' of equal or greater importance which were essential for the smooth-running of professional households? Did these new roles compensate women for their losses and, perhaps, cause them actually to be more valued than previously? Or did it lead to more women taking up paid employment outside the home because their labour was no longer an integral part of the economy of an agricultural household? In the following discussion of women's workloads and their daily routines, I shall seek to answer these questions.
The Patels were traditionally a landowning, agriculture based caste, many of whom were still actively involved in farming their own land or less likely, as tenant farmers. Many Patel men were involved in farming in a supervisory, managerial role with all the heavy work performed by farm servants or casual labour. Intensive farming methods were used as well as more sophisticated farming techniques such as irrigation schemes. None of the work in the fields was performed by women from the Patidar caste, not even at harvest times. Men spent much of their time away from the home, involved in work or social activities. In agricultural households, they often returned only for meals and, perhaps, a short rest in the afternoon. Evenings, apart from when eating, were often spent with groups of male friends at one another's homes, or even just sitting in a cool spot in the village. Work hours varied with the seasons, as did those, often, of professional or business men. In the summer months, many offices and institutions, including schools, started very early, so that they could close by midday. Some reopened in the early evening. The afternoons were spent in rest. However, in the cooler months, hours changed and many people did not start work until mid-morning, including the schools, finishing in the early evening. Even when not employed in agriculture, men often spent much of their time away from home, meeting friends and business colleagues, in their free time. In agricultural households, because of the responsibilities of the farm, there was no very clear concept of a 'weekend'. But in other families, Sunday was generally a free day; however, some large businesses and factories closed down on Friday instead. For women, especially, there was no significant change in routine: all household tasks had still to be performed.
Women in the larger villages and towns were often involved in other activities, but, in the small villages, there was little change from one day to the next. (This will be discussed further in Chapter 15.) The home was very much the preserve of women and the old, who had grown too tired to wander further afield.

My sample was composed of women from small villages, large villages, and small towns: see Chapter 6 for details. (Data in this chapter came from Schedule A, which included 36 urban and 36 rural women: see Appendix 1.) A third of all the women in the sample from both towns and villages, were from households based on agriculture. The overwhelming majority of households which were dependent on agriculture for a living were situated in the villages, and more particularly in 'the Twenty-Seven Villages. Indeed, nearly two-thirds of the households in the villages had some connection with agriculture. (See Table 7.1 below).

Table 7.1: Agriculture-related households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Twenty-Seven Villages</th>
<th>Six Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farming sole occupation</td>
<td>8 38%</td>
<td>2 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming + other occupations</td>
<td>5 24%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural business</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some income derived from land and/or buffalo</td>
<td>2 9%</td>
<td>2 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No known income from agriculture</td>
<td>6 29%</td>
<td>9 60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total | 21 | 15 | 36 |
It was not possible to make a very strict dichotomy between agricultural and non-agricultural based households. There were a number of categories of agriculture-related households. The most numerous were those which were entirely based on farming: of these, eight were fairly small farms, cultivated by the husband, with, perhaps, the aid of other relatives, and certainly with the assistance of agricultural labourers. Seven out of eight of these small farming households were in the small villages. There were two very large farms, one in the small village of Gada, managed by Hema's husband, and the other in the large village of Dharmaj, which belonged to Ranjan's husband and his brother. (1) But there were also a further five farming households, all in the small villages, where the principle source of income was derived from the farming produce; but members of these households were also occupied in other activities. Kalpana's husband, for example, had the main responsibility for managing the family farm, but he had also 'diversified' by establishing a transport business. Other brothers and male relatives in the same household worked in a clerical capacity in a bank, as well as helping with tasks connected with the farm. It appeared to be a common development in rural areas for fathers and\or uncles in joint families to continue farming, whilst one or more son took up an alternative career. So within one household, one or more brother might be involved in farming or have taken over total responsibility for the farm, whilst others were engaged in different occupations and might or might not, as the need arose, participate in the farming side of the family's joint income. As much of the work on larger farms was 'managerial', there was

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probably insufficient work to fully occupy all the men in a joint household and so alternative means of supplementing the joint income were sought.

Two other women, in the large village of Dharmaj, had husbands involved in an agricultural business: they produced feed for cattle. One of the large farmers living in the same village was also involved in the processing and sale of the tobacco he grew. Six further households claimed to have income from land which they did not farm themselves: these were evenly distributed between villages and towns. However, it was possible that more households, in both the towns and the villages, also received some income from land farmed by a tenant, or a more distant relative, about which the women in Survey A were perhaps not aware, particularly if it was not a major source of income. The most significant feature of the involvement in farming, whether at a practical or business and managerial level, was the degree to which it was concentrated in the smaller villages, belonging to 'the large Twenty-Seven', particularly in the smallest village of all, Gada, where all the women questioned had some connection with agricultural households. Indeed, only four husbands engaged in agricultural based pursuits were from large villages, in 'the Six'.

In fact, in the large villages, the majority of my sample, 80% gave their husband's 'main' occupation as being business or professional (including clerical work). (See Table 7.2 below).
Table 7.2: 'Main' occupation of husbands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Small Villages 'the 27'</th>
<th>Large Villages 'the 6'</th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td>11 52%</td>
<td>3 20%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business or</td>
<td>10 48%</td>
<td>12 80%</td>
<td>36 100%</td>
<td>58 80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21 100%</td>
<td>15 100%</td>
<td>36 100%</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even in the small villages, 48% gave their husband's 'main' occupation again as in business or a profession. This does not necessarily mean that these families had no contact with farming or landowning; it reflects, instead, that they saw their husband's principal occupation as business or professional work and chose to identify with this career, rather than the land. The major part of the household income, particularly in large joint households, would still come from farming, itself, even though a woman's husband was not actively involved in it. Indeed, very few families, even in large towns, have no contact with 'the land'. Someone in the family, possibly grandparents, or uncles, were actively involved in agriculture. Some families had, however, completely lost their direct link with the land. These families were often those with larger landholdings who forfeited their land under the Land Ceiling Act which restricted the amount of land individuals could hold as landowners not actively involved in farming the land.

Since only around a third of my sample (23) were closely involved in agricultural work, it would appear, superficially, easy
to divide my sample into agricultural/non-agricultural households for the purpose of analysis. However, this simplify the picture overmuch. It is, of course, extremely important to consider the principal occupations of any household when discussing the position of women within their own particular society, as has been seen above. Naturally, women's roles will vary considerably from a household centred around farming to one centred around a profession or business in a town. Some women, however, lived in large farming households and were involved in domestic work to facilitate the running of such a household, even though their own husbands were actually employed in professional work, themselves. Moreover, my sample contained a third, possibly transitional, group of households, where the husband worked in business or a profession and no-one in the household was involved in any form of agricultural occupation. Yet such a family were living in the midst of other families, whose livelihoods were based on agriculture. In such situations, it was only to be expected that the life-styles and social values of the agricultural households still exerted considerable influence over those living in non-agricultural households, more especially when it is remembered that many of these non-agricultural households have to a greater or lesser extent, strong links, themselves, with other relatives still engaged in agricultural pursuits.

Before looking in detail at women's daily routines, there was one further factor that could possibly affect women's workloads: the social structure of their family. In both the small and large villages, the majority of women lived in joint families: the
implications of this will be discussed in much greater detail in Chapter 10. But as far as the distribution of joint and nuclear families was concerned, there appeared to be no strong correlation between agriculture based households and joint family residence. See Table 7.3 below. Those in the small villages from agriculture-based households were more likely to be living in a joint family than a nuclear one; however, this still applied even when women were living in non-agricultural households. In the large villages, women in agricultural households were evenly split between joint and nuclear families. But those in non-agricultural households were predominantly living in joint families. Joint family residence was slightly more common in the small villages and agricultural families were more likely to be living in a joint family than otherwise. In the larger villages this was not so evident and joint family residence was more prevalent with non-agricultural households.

Table 7.3: Family structure and agricultural occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Small Villages</th>
<th></th>
<th>Large Villages</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joint</td>
<td>Nuclear</td>
<td>Joint</td>
<td>Nuclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural connection</td>
<td>11 52%</td>
<td>4 19%</td>
<td>3 20%</td>
<td>3 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non agricultural</td>
<td>5 24%</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
<td>7 47%</td>
<td>2 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16 76%</td>
<td>5 24%</td>
<td>10 67%</td>
<td>5 33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a discernible difference, however, between the size of households, both between village and urban households and between
small villages and large villages. This difference was evident, as well between the average size of both joint and nuclear households. (See Table 7.4 below.)

Table 7.4: Size of rural and urban households.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th></th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joint Families</td>
<td>Nuclear Families</td>
<td>Joint Families</td>
<td>Nuclear Families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No: of households</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No: of persons</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average No: per household</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The size of village families was significantly larger than those in urban areas, with obvious connotations for the level of women's workload necessary to run a large household. The average size of both joint and nuclear families was larger in the villages: indeed, the largest village joint household, in Ajarpura, had twenty-three members compared to the largest urban joint family with thirteen members. Even nuclear households were larger in the villages. The average size of all urban households, at 5.27 members, was very similar to those surveyed by Standing (1985) in Calcutta, where the average household size was 5.4: with families ranging from one member to fourteen. The average size of a rural Patidar household was 8.5 members.

There was also a difference in household size between the
families in small and large villages. (See Table 7.5 below.)

Table 7.5: Size of household in small and large villages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Small Villages</th>
<th></th>
<th>Large Villages</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No: of households</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No: of persons</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average No: of household</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The small villages, therefore, also had the largest number of persons per household, both in joint and nuclear families: see Table 7.5. Patidar women living in the large villages, however, still lived in households with more members than those in urban areas. The average household in small villages was eight members and 6.1 members in the large villages. The size of all rural households meant that village women were more likely to have a heavier workload than those women living in urban areas, although it depended on the degree of help available from other women in the household and servants. This question will be considered later in this chapter.

**DAILY ROUTINES**

Initially, however, I would like to examine the work-load and world of those women in 'agricultural households': joint and nuclear. As I have already stated, these women are not actively
engaged in work in the fields. In fact, their work was centred very much around the household. But this did not preclude them from playing a productive role as part of the agricultural unit. Their work encompassed the areas of activity normally associated with 'nature' and 'nurture'. But there were a number of specific categories of work which were essential to ensure the smooth-running of an agricultural household.

Methodology

Each women in the sample was asked what tasks she performed throughout an ordinary working day. She was also questioned about who else in the household might help her with these tasks, and if anyone else had other areas of responsibility for domestic work. A woman might well share her work-load with other female relatives in the household, or on certain occasions, relatives or friends living outside the household. She might also receive assistance from a servant, or even more than one servant, for certain tasks. In general, however, in the agriculture-based households, whether a woman was living in a nuclear unit, or in a joint household, she did not receive a great deal of help from servants. Occasionally, in a large agricultural household, especially if there was extra work or some members of the female household were ill or absent, then 'farm servants' could be called upon to help out.

Food preparation

All women, whether married or single, were involved in food preparation. No servants, in the agriculture-based households,
participated in any task connected with preparing food. Preparation of food covered a wide spectrum of activities, starting with making tea as members of the household rose in the morning. Women usually rose first at around five thirty to six am depending on the household and the season. Snacks, usually prepared in bulk beforehand, were often served with the tea, or they might be served a little later in the morning with more tea, after other members of the household were dressed. This 'breakfast' was not a communal meal, but was served at times convenient to other members of the household, such as before school or work began.

The main meal of the day was eaten later in the morning. Again there was no fixed time for such a meal. It might be served to everyone at once, but more than likely, it would be prepared and served when it best fitted in with the tasks and daily routine of each member of the household. Some families or individuals might prefer to eat before starting work or school, which could be between 10 and 11 in the morning. Starting times for schools, particularly, were flexible, depending on the season. It was, of course, far more time-consuming to serve perhaps three of four separate individuals or groups of people, spaced throughout the morning, rather than having one set meal-time. It meant food might well have to be prepared and kept hot for a period covering two to three hours.

The preparation time for even the simplest of meals was also in the region of one to two hours. Vegetables, pulses, and rice had to be carefully sorted and cleaned to remove impurities. The
vegetables were then prepared and cooked, using a variety of spices. These spices and herbs in turn, had either to be cleaned and chopped or freshly ground. Finally, chapattis, or some other wheat-based food such as rotlis or puris, had to be mixed, rolled and cooked, often freshly for each member of the family. Sometimes the corn had to be ground to be used in these dishes; but several days or weeks' supply was usually prepared at one time.

After this major meal of the day, all the utensils had to be washed and put away, and the kitchen area, itself, swept, washed and kept tidy. Nine women in the small villages had all these cleaning tasks to perform themselves, as did four women in the large villages. Other women, however, had a servant to clean the utensils; certainly the largest and dirtiest used in cooking.

Other mealtimes were less arduous. Later in the afternoon, virtually all women prepared tea, after a rest, with possibly a snack, for themselves, and other members of the household at home. This might be repeated for children as they arrived home from school. Later, in the early evening, they would begin to prepare the evening meal. This might well consist of some leftovers from lunchtime and, generally took less time to prepare, as it was not such a heavy meal. Preparation time, in the villages, would vary from around thirty minutes to an hour. But, once more, women had frequently to be available to serve individual members of the family throughout the evening. Children might eat earlier, and a number of women waited to eat when their husband returned home, even though other members of the family had already eaten. Sometimes, husbands,
or male-in-laws could be late, perhaps up to nine or nine-thirty pm, because they had to work later hours or because they had leisure activities elsewhere. Only after feeding everyone could women complete the cleaning of utensils, and ensure that the kitchen was left tidy for the morning. As women in the villages tended to sleep fairly early, from 9 pm onwards, such tasks could delay their sleep.

Serving at meals

In a number of households, specifically joint households, it appeared to be common practice for one woman to be present to serve out food and see that everyone's plate was replenished when necessary. (Frequently a small quantity of food might be served initially and more would be given until the person eating had had sufficient.) This was certainly less common in farming households and only occurred in three joint households, where one woman took on the role of serving. Five women in professional joint households also mentioned serving food, and this also occurred in one agriculture based household. When women talked of serving food, they generally implied that they were not eating at the same time, but were waiting on other members of the family. No woman in a nuclear family mentioned this task; presumably although serving out food, she ate at the same time as some or all of the other family members. There would appear to be no particular difference between agricultural and non-agricultural households, the determining factor was more likely to be whether or not the women lived in a joint household. Only one woman, the wife of a man who managed a big farm, mentioned having to serve food and entertain guests as part of
her regular routine.

Throughout the day, other activities connected with meals were undertaken, whenever there were free moments. There were always vegetables and herbs to be carefully sorted through, cleaned and chopped, as everyone's staple diet was vegetarian, and meat was only eaten by a small number of people, mainly men, and then not on a regular basis. Rice and pulses presented a similar problem as they were either stored or purchased in bulk and had also to be checked for impurities such as stones or insects, as had flour, whether it was ground at home, or taken to a nearby flour mill. Most village women would need to make periodic visits to the flour-mill, possibly once a fortnight, unless they could detail a servant or younger member of the family to perform the task. However, unless a woman was extremely pressed for time, this would present her with a good excuse for leaving the home environment and the possibility of meeting others, mainly women, for a change of conversation. This was particularly important to younger women in joint households, who would have very little reason, under normal circumstances, to leave not only the home, but also the area, such as the courtyard, in the immediate vicinity of her home.

Milk

A regular duty in those households where there were no buffalo giving milk, was to go and collect milk from the milkman who came around the houses with milk from the co-operative dairy in the nearby town. There were two deliveries a day, in the morning from 4
am onwards, and in the evening from three to four onwards. Women had to take a vessel in which to collect the pasturized milk from the churn. Two deliveries were necessary in village households, in order to ensure fresh milk for the evening. Even in those households possessing a refrigerator, the frequent power-cuts, especially in the summer-time, made it extremely difficult to keep food and milk fresh. The summer months often saw regular cuts three to four times a week, lasting from very early morning to nearly midnight.

Water

All households had their own tapped water supply, but the mains supply was only switched on at intervals. Some households might only have water between three and four am, or at another early hour. Others would have two or three opportunities during the day to obtain water. Some houses had circumvented this problem by installing a cold water tank on their roof, but this was still dependent on an electricity supply to pump the water up into the tank. Such tanks were only available in newer houses and the traditional houses in the village did not possess such a tank. Even so, drinking water had to be stored at night-time or early morning in order to ensure it was cool. Water taken from taps or a tank on the roof could be extremely hot during the day and impossible to drink. Water pots were cleaned regularly and stored correctly. In some households, water was allowed to filter through several clay pots before being drunk, in order to cut down the risk of drinking
impurities. Thus the necessity of a cool and adequate water supply could entail women rising at a very early hour.

**Special food preparations**

Other foodstuffs were prepared in bulk on an occasional basis, possibly every few weeks, or, in some cases, once yearly. Snacks taken at breakfast time, in the afternoon, or given to guests were prepared from a number of ingredients such as rice and some form of pulses, plus any number of additions, such as nuts. Usually, they were all deep fried. Other foods were prepared for special occasions, such as festivals. Most religious festivals had some special food associated with them. Many festivals, such as Divali, necessitated the preparation of considerable quantities of food. At the time of Divali, particularly, many guests would call and all had to be served with special foods, both savoury and sweet. Many of these foodstuffs took hours to make. Consequently, women frequently called their relatives, neighbours or friends to their homes in order to lighten the burden. They would spend a whole afternoon or even day in cooking one food item, such as matthia a very thin crispy, spicy pancake, deep fried in ghi. On some other occasions, those women called in to help, would request assistance, in return, when they embarked upon the preparation of large quantities of foodstuffs. Not only, therefore, was the immediate workload lightened but the women had the benefit of one another's company whilst they worked. At other important ceremonies, when many guests were to be entertained, other women would be called to participate in the preparation of large quantities of food. Such occasions might occur at the 'house warming ceremony', vastu puja, for a new
Fig. 7.1: Village Households
house, or in the days preceding a wedding, when several hundred guests may have come to stay, prior to the wedding day, itself.

**Preservation of foodstuffs**

Another major area of responsibility for women in connection with food was the correct preparation and storage to ensure its long-term preservation. (See Fig 7.1). As has already been mentioned, many basic food items were bought or prepared in bulk and needed to be kept over a long period of time. In the case of rice and pulses, for example, they needed to last until the crops of the following year. So, it was essential to ensure that they were kept dry and cool and did not become infested by pests, either insects or rodents. Insects were particularly difficult to ward off and extensive measures, such as coating rice in an edible castor oil before storage, had to be undertaken. After this process, the rice, as with other dried produce, was stored in tightly sealed steel drums or tins and covered with a cloth. Alternatively, in older households, the dried produce might well be stored in very large clay jars, easily a metre and a half high. Similarly, any cooked foods, such as the snacks or special foodstuffs, described above, had also to be carefully stored in tightly sealed jars. Not only did women have the sole responsibility for storing this food, but they also had to ensure that, in the case of the dried foods, they monitored the rate at which it was used to guarantee that it lasted until a further supply was available.
Cleaning

For village women, their second major area of work was various forms of 'cleaning'. This covered a whole range of activities and, of course, could be undertaken with greater or lesser degrees of thoroughness. However, in the long, hot, dusty summers, when dust blew around in profusion, and in the unavoidable mud and dirt of the monsoons, then no woman could neglect cleaning operations, without it being spotted very quickly. On some days, women might have to sweep floors on two or three occasions because of the dust. Everyone entering a house left their shoes at the threshold, so this helped to minimise the amount of mud and dust trampled into a house. But all cleaning operations were still very slow and tedious as no-one, not even in modern houses, had any sophisticated cleaning apparatus. The basic utensils were a bunch of twigs tied together, with which to sweep the floor, and a cloth and bucket of water, with which to wash it. All these manoeuvres were performed from a crouching position, as was cooking.

There were three distinctive areas which could be categorised under the heading of 'cleaning': the work entailed in keeping the house itself clean and tidy; washing clothes; and cleaning dishes and utensils, after cooking and meals. All floors were swept and washed daily; the majority of households had stone tiled floors, which were easy to clean. Some had floors which were regularly coated, by the women in the household, with cow-dung which created a hard surface similar to concrete. Many rooms served a number of purposes in the traditional village houses, where room space might
be limited. Rooms could act as reception rooms for guests during the day and sleeping quarters for some members of the family at night-time. All houses would have a separate room or, at least, a separate area for cooking, at the rear of the house. Some would act as storage rooms as well, for the large quantities of food preserved during the year. In a large house, there would be separate rooms purely for storing food. They were generally in a central position on the ground floor of the house; consequently, there was no natural light and this room was one of the coolest during the hot summer months.

A traditional house had very little furniture; a bed for the parents, which might well be shared with one or two of the younger children. Alternatively, the smallest children might sleep with one of the grandparents. Also, there would be a large steel cupboard, always kept locked, in which money and valuables, especially jewellery, were kept. It would also be used for clothes, particularly those worn on special occasions, and sometimes bedding, which was not in use. Such a cupboard would hopefully deter theft as well as protecting its contents from the ravages of insects or vermin. Most households had some folding chairs for guests, but generally people sat on the beds or charpoys, cots, or on the floor. Most people still sat on the floor for eating. Very few families in the small villages possessed a dining table and chairs. All houses had an electric fan and light, but these frequently could not be used in the summer months because of the power cuts several times a week.
This general dearth of furniture and moveable goods made housework very straightforward. There was virtually nothing to dust and the main cleaning work was concentrated on the floors. Particularly important were the kitchen or kitchen areas because food was both prepared and eaten off a plate put on the floor. The bathroom and toilet, generally situated outside the house, in the courtyard, had also to be kept very clean. They were usually in one room, with a floor-level toilet, a tap and plastic cup, which was used for personal ablutions and a large plastic bucket and cup, which was used to pour water from the bucket, over the body, when 'taking a bath'.

Bedding had to be taken out at night-time and carefully folded and put away during the day. Clean clothes had also to be folded and put away either in the steel cupboard, or, possibly, on stone shelves, built into small alcoves in the walls. Clothes in use were usually hung on a hook in one of these rooms.

Servants and house cleaning

All village households had cleaning tasks to perform, whether they were agricultural or non-agricultural. Some, however, had help with such tasks. In the smallest village, Gada, where seven families were involved in farming and the other two had links with farming, only one woman out of nine had a servant for her cleaning; this was Hema, the wife of the manager of a large farm: see Table 7.6 below. In the small village of Ajarpura, one very large joint family, with twenty-three members, based around agriculture and
developing business interests, had a servant who helped with the cleaning work, but the women, themselves, still had to undertake such tasks as well. In the other 'Twenty-Seven Village', Bakrol, the two women whose husbands were 'in service', that is office workers, also had servants to assist with the cleaning. All the other women in small villages with husbands involved in agriculture appeared to do all their own house cleaning. In the larger villages, in contrast, the majority of women had help with house cleaning from servants. Only one woman's husband was solely occupied in farming and she had no help from servants. One other woman, Pushpa, an ex-secondary school teacher, waiting for an entry permit to the United Kingdom, chose to do all her housework in order to keep occupied, as did another ex-office worker, Manju, living in a small rented flat with only her husband and young daughter. Another woman, Prabhu, originally from a lower status village, also did her own cleaning. In two other families, women were responsible for their own cleaning, but they did have assistance from other female members of the household. Eight women had servants to do their cleaning work; three were in agriculture-based households, the remainder in 'professional' households.

Servants and cleaning utensils

Cleaning utensils was a particularly arduous and 'dirty' task, especially those utensils used for cooking. Both cooking and eating utensils tended to be made of cast-iron or stainless steel, or occasionally, of the older traditional bronze based utensils, no longer in common use. Many cooking vessels were very large and had
to be cleaned with a variety of mud, acting as a scourer, and water. These were thoroughly rinsed and left to dry. All families who had servants to help with house cleaning, also employed a servant to wash dishes, certainly the cooking vessels, if not all those used for eating: see Table 7.6.

Table 7.6: Use of servants in villages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Small Villages</th>
<th>Large Villages</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For house cleaning</td>
<td>7* 33%</td>
<td>8 53%</td>
<td>15 42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For utensils</td>
<td>9 43%</td>
<td>11 73%</td>
<td>20 56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For washing clothes</td>
<td>6 29%</td>
<td>8 53%</td>
<td>14 39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women who received no help from servants</td>
<td>11 52%</td>
<td>4 27%</td>
<td>15 42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No: of women</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* includes four women from same large household.

This was not necessarily the same servant who cleaned in the house. All cleaning of dishes took place at a tap in the courtyard. Several other women employed servants just for washing dishes. Eleven households in small villages based entirely on agriculture, or with a strong agricultural link, employed no servant for cleaning dishes, or any other cleaning operation. The only other farming household, in a large village, did have help from a servant cleaning dishes, but for nothing else. Three other households with a 'professional' base, employed servants for cleaning dishes, but not for other cleaning activities. In all, fifteen women had to do all cleaning work themselves: over half the women in small villages had to do all their own cleaning, but only a quarter of women of those
in the larger villages.

Servants and washing clothes

Another arduous and daily task in a hot and dusty country was washing clothes. All washing had to be done by hand. It was all performed in the home environment, either in the bathroom or outside, at the courtyard tap. All clothes were soaped and left to soak; then they had to be thoroughly pounded and rinsed, before being left to dry in the sun. Clothes naturally dried quickly and were folded very smooth. Very few women reported ironing clothes or mending; safety pins were frequently used instead.

Some women preferred to soap and soak their own clothes whilst leaving the pounding and rinsing operation to a servant. Virtually, all the women who employed a servant to clean dishes also employed a servant to wash clothes. (Table 7.6 above) This would be a different servant; the washerwoman would be from the dhobi, caste. All servants employed in cleaning work of any nature were women. One woman, Ranjan married to a farmer in the large village of Darmaj, did all her own cleaning and washing and employed a servant only to help in washing utensils; as did, Pushpa, the ex-professional woman in the same village, waiting to come to England, who chose to keep herself 'busy'. One other professional woman, in a small village, also washed all the family clothes, but she had help with all other cleaning activities.

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Use of servants

A general pattern regarding the use of servants and cleaning work can be distinguished. Three-quarters of the women in 'the Six Villages' had help from a servant for some of their work whether they were in an agricultural or a non-agricultural household. In the small villages, less than half of all the women had help from servants. The majority of women in small villages were in agricultural households, but slightly more than half of them had no servants and so had all of their own cleaning work to perform. (See Table 7.7 below). However, in the larger agricultural households in both the small and large villages, some help from servants usually appeared to be available. Indeed, all the agricultural households in large villages had some help from servants. All the more prosperous farming households had assistance: for example, at the home of the large tobacco farmer in Dharmaj, and of the manager of a large farm in Gada. But the farm worked by a large joint household in Ajarpura, also had servants to help with cleaning operations. Those households classified as 'professionals' did not necessarily have servants: in the small villages, few non-agricultural households had servants, but in the large villages, there was a fairly equal division between those 'professional' households who had servants and those who did not. (See Table 7.7 below). In the four professional households in the large villages without servants, however, two had help from three other female family members. Two others lived in very small family units in small rented flats.
Table 7.7: Servants and whether households were agricultural

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Small Villages</th>
<th>Large Villages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Servants</td>
<td>No servants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>households</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-agricultural</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>households</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12 57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the small villages, there was no clear association between the employment of servants and family structure. Fifty per cent of women living in a joint household received help from a servant, but fifty per cent did not: see Table 7.8 below. In the larger villages, however, the majority of the women living in a joint household had a servant: however, slightly more women in nuclear households also had servants. Moreover, a higher percentage of women in the large households had servants even though the average family size was smaller than small village households.

Table 7.8: Use of servants and family structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Small Villages</th>
<th>Large Villages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Servant</td>
<td>No servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint family</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8 38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12 57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In an earlier table, Table 7.6, it was seen that the most common form of help, in all households, was with washing utensils: 73% of women in large villages and 43% of those in the small villages received such help. In household cleaning, 42% of all village women had some help and 39% had a washerwoman for their clothes. The same servant was frequently employed for cleaning the house and utensils, but a different servant would usually wash clothes. The work of the servants would usually be supervised and paid by the most senior woman in the household, as she was responsible for the allocation of domestic tasks generally.

There appeared to be no clear relationship between the size and composition of a household and the employment of servants. An important factor was obviously the economic one of whether the family could afford a servant. But it was not related to the amount of domestic work which women in the household had to perform. The women receiving the least help were in agricultural households in the small villages: yet they had some of the heaviest workloads. The more prosperous agricultural households, whether joint or nuclear, all received some help from servants. But in joint households, too, where there were a number of women to bear the burden of household work, servants were frequently employed, particularly in the large villages. Moreover, some women in professional families living in small nuclear households also had servants. It would seem, therefore, that the employment of servants occurred more often when a family could afford it, which was not necessarily always in the households with the greatest workload.
Households that were sufficiently prosperous, therefore, could choose to employ servants and so relieve women of the burden of such 'dirty' polluting tasks, which, as Caplan (1985) has pointed out, were 'demeaning' to high caste women. Consequently, women were freed from heavy, dirty domestic work, just as they had been withdrawn from agricultural work, previously. It was part of the process of seclusion, which marked women out as 'demonstrators of status'.

In this village sample, it is difficult to draw any conclusions about women in paid employment outside the home, and the use of servants. Two women, who worked as primary teachers, had servants to help with all their work; Ranjan had a wealthy tobacco farming husband, and Raksha had a husband 'in service', an office worker. A third woman, Jaishri from the same village as Raksha, who worked in a bank, did not have any help in the home; she lived with her in-laws as did Raksha, too. It would seem, therefore, in this study, that even when women were in paid employment, themselves, finance was still an important factor, along with the family structure and an element of personal choice in determining the employment of servants, or otherwise.

Child care

Not all women in this survey, Survey A, had children; some were newly married, others not yet married. In fact, twenty-eight out of the thirty-six rural women had children under the age of ten. But child-related tasks were mentioned infrequently by these women, when
discussing their daily routine. They placed much more emphasis on food preparation and cleaning. The role mentioned by women most frequently was 'supervising homework'. This could range from sitting with, or being present when, children wrote their homework. Other women took a more active role, helping and explaining areas not understood by the child. All children, even those as young as three, who attended kindergarten, were given written tasks to undertake virtually every night. Eleven out of seventeen women with children of kindergarten or school age, mentioned this as part of their daily routine. There appeared to be no significant difference between women in agricultural and non-agricultural households. Six of the women who were in farming or agriculture-based households saw supervising homework as an important task, worthy of mention; however, only four other women in agriculture-based households had children of school age at home. One woman, Hema, had sent her children to boarding school.

The other child-related task most frequently discussed was 'feeding children', presumably when this entailed feeding children at a different time to adults. This could include either the main meal of the day at mid-day, or possibly preparing snacks for children on their return home from school, or if they ate at a separate time in the evening. In some households, children could well eat at different times on all these occasions. This was referred to by nine women, six of whom were in agriculture-based households. From these figures, it is possible to suggest that agriculture-based households were perhaps less likely to have very
fixed mealtimes, as women had to be prepared to feed men whenever they returned home after completing the work in which they were engaged. Farming tasks, unlike perhaps the work routines of professional men, could not be so strictly regulated. So women in these households became accustomed to feeding household members at their individual convenience.

Ten women had children under the age of two years. Yet only four out of the ten mentioned feeding the baby, all of whom were in agricultural households; only two women made any comment about bathing their babies. Yet bathing small children was a frequent, possibly daily occurrence, followed by applying oil to the baby’s body. It is possible to speculate that such tasks were not considered for reference because they were so automatic as to be overlooked. Alternatively, they might have been performed by other, older women in the household. In the case of feeding children, some of these babies would be totally breast fed and babies were normally fed on demand, rather than at any set feeding time. Hence, women did not see this specifically as a task, unless some other preparation of foodstuff or milk was entailed.

The only other area of child care mentioned by a number of women was connected with ensuring children were ready for school. This covered a number of items such as seeing that children were washed and dressed properly for school. All children attending school wore a simple school uniform. Some women extended this supervision to ensure that children changed out of school uniform on their return home. Eight women mentioned this as part of their
daily routine; five in agriculture-based households. Only two women mentioned taking their small child, of three, to kindergarten. In villages, women felt perfectly happy to allow young children to find their own way to and from school.

Only three women talked of 'playing' with their children all of whom were under the age of three. Overall, considerably less mention of child care was made than any other major activity. Women appeared to perceive food preparation and cleaning as their major tasks, whereas 'child care' was not a role of which they were aware in their daily routine. It was slotted in among all their other tasks. Children were part of the total household to be serviced and were not seen as having any special needs or demands, except in the case of education and possibly different mealtimes, dictated by their school routines.

There is also another important consideration in respect of child care. In a joint family, where tasks were shared, supervising and looking after children would not necessarily be considered the sole prerogative of the child's mother. Any older member of the family but generally women more than men, because they were around the house more of the time, would watch over or help any child in need of care. This might be an older sister, or aunt or, on many occasions, the grandmother. Older women often seemed to take more responsibility for child care than the actual mother, who had many other tasks to perform. The different roles played by women in respect to child care will be looked at further in Chapter 11.
Agriculture-related tasks

The remaining major area of work not yet considered for village women was those tasks connected directly with agriculture. Apart from preparing food for agricultural servants, the only area of work in which women were directly involved was the care of buffalo, which women were able to undertake without leaving the immediate precincts of their home. Two women in a large agricultural household referred to both the preparation of food for servants and to actually having to serve out the food to the servants at mealtimes. One prepared this food and served it in the morning, with some help from other women, and the other took over responsibility for the evening meal. She also received help. Another woman talked of having to prepare tea for the agricultural servants, but not meals.

A number of households, in the villages, possessed one, or sometimes more than one, buffalo, which they kept for milk. This milk was generally used by the household and any extra was sold. The care of these buffalo was seen as being 'women's work'. Thirteen women, all but one of whom lived in the small villages, mentioned work arising from looking after the family buffalo. Nine of the women came from agriculture-based families, all with some involvement in farming. In fact, six out of nine families who made their livelihood entirely from farming, possessed a buffalo. Another four families kept buffalo; the husbands of three of these women were, themselves, involved in business or a profession, but they lived in households where other members of the family were involved in agriculture. In some households, older women, the
mothers-in-law of my sample, did the bulk of the work connected with keeping a buffalo. Sometimes, one woman had all the responsibility. In three households, a servant helped with the cleaning of the buffalo; that is, removing the dirty straw from the buffalo's stall. Only four of the women mentioned that they performed this task, themselves. In other households, other members of the family undertook this chore. Each morning, the buffalo had to be given grass to eat and water to drink, its stall had to be cleaned. It might also be given a special foodstuff prepared by the local co-operative dairy, based in the nearby town of Anand. Three women had the responsibility of preparing foodstuff for the buffalo. Four women mentioned having to feed the buffalo as one of their chores and two other women gave it water. Some buffalo were allowed to wander freely around the village. But the majority of households seemed to prefer to keep their buffalo tied in their stall, which was often near the door to the household. Buffalo were fed and watered again during the day and in the evening. They were milked twice a day, in the morning and evening, if they were giving milk. Seven women had sole responsibility for milking the buffalo; four other women shared the chore with another female relative. In one household, Raksha's mother-in-law milked the buffalo. She had sole responsibility for it, as her daughter-in-law was working as a primary school teacher. In Sumita's household, it appeared the farm servant milked the buffalo. Only one woman, Jaya, in a large farming joint household, mentioned boiling the milk before it was used. In two other households, women referred to milk being taken to the dairy and sold.
Although looking after buffalo was seen as one of the responsibilities of the women's sphere, only in four households in the sample was it the sole burden of one woman. In all four households, this woman was the only female present. In the other households, the work was shared with other women, and in three cases, with a servant, who did the more unpleasant, dirtier work of cleaning out the stall. (2) All the women, however, except possibly one, were involved in the milking process.

**Income from milk**

Most families appeared to keep buffalo solely to provide milk for their own consumption. Generally, if a family kept only one buffalo, then this would provide only for their own needs. In a large joint family, more than one buffalo would be necessary to produce sufficient milk for all the household. Only if milk was produced surplus to family needs, was it usually sold to the dairy. Before the advent of the village co-operative dairy, all surplus milk had usually been converted into curd, dahi, and used in cooking. Only one woman among those surveyed was dependent on the sale of milk as her only form of cash income. Alpana was a young widow, who had been left in very straitened circumstances. Only one other household mentioned selling milk at the time of the survey. If any surplus milk was sold, the money obtained appeared to go towards general household expenditure and the cost of feeding and caring for the buffalo. So, although women had the responsibility of the day-to-day tasks involved in looking after the buffalo, there was often no direct income from the buffalo and any money, which was obtained was part of the general funds over which they had no direct
control. Only in the case of a young widow, living alone with her mother-in-law, was a woman able to use the income as she wanted. In this case, however, exigency for basic household goods dictated the disposal of any money she obtained. It did not appear to be an important source of income for any other families in the survey.

Other routine tasks

A number of other tasks were undertaken by some of the women which fall outside the principal areas of work described by the women. It must be remembered that in a household with more than one woman present, tasks would be divided out amongst the women. This was generally the responsibility of the oldest women, usually the mother-in-law, but in some instances, it could be another older female relative, such as an aunt-in-law, that is a husband's aunt, or the eldest sister-in-law. Tasks would be allocated by this senior woman to all the other women and the servants, as well. Sometimes older girls, in their teens and upwards, would be given small tasks, too. If they had left school or were not at college, they would certainly be expected to help out, perhaps with food preparation. One older girl, Chandrika, had the task of collecting and storing the bedding of the family of over twenty members, each morning and producing it again for use in the evening. The bedding would only be an eiderdown in the winter-time and a sheet in the summertime. The beds, in this case, were used as seats during the day. 'Cots' used by some family members would be stored up against a wall during the day and would also need a mattress.
In this same household, cooking was shared out between various women and other women in the household would be responsible instead for washing clothes or cleaning. Although in larger households, women had individual responsibilities, these were fairly flexible. In the case of sickness, absence or in some households, at the time of menstruation, another woman would take over that particular task. Village men were never mentioned as performing any of these female tasks; if they did so, it was on extremely rare occasions.

Six women mentioned lighting fires, generally used for heating water for baths in winter time especially. Two other women also discussed heating water for this purpose. This was one of the first tasks, prior to everyone else waking up. All these households were farming or agriculture based ones.

Three village women, from farming households, talked of mending clothes and two of them also sewed clothes as well.

**Shopping**

This has been left until late in the discussion of the village women's tasks, largely because shopping figures very little in their lives. A much fuller discussion of women's involvement in shopping and the role it plays in women's lives is given in subsequent chapters. Only four women mentioned going into the village to stalls and shops to buy vegetables. Only one of these women, Ranjan, had any connection with agriculture and her husband was a big tobacco farmer. The other three women were married to professional men. Women in farming families had much of their fresh food supplied direct from the farm. They could also, as did the
other women, buy vegetables from the stalls which came round to each house daily. Other foodstuffs, particularly dried foods such as rice and pulses were either grown on the farm or bought in bulk on a yearly basis and stored. Only one woman, Alpana, referred to shopping for other food such as tea or sugar. But she was a widow and had no man in the household. Four other women mentioned going out to a stall to buy milk, as discussed above. In other families, either men shopped for other foodstuffs or bigger items, or a child was sent on an errand to a local shop. Women were frequently too busy with other household tasks to have time to go out for one or two small purchases. Moreover, with younger married women, it was generally felt preferable that they should not have the time or opportunity to wander freely around the village. (The justification for such limitations on their freedom of movement will be considered further in discussions on 'purdah' in Chapter 14.)

Small villages, indeed, had only a few shops selling a restricted range of items. Bigger items would be obtained from a nearby town, probably by one of the men, when there on other business. Women made very infrequent excursions for clothes or special purchases to a nearby town. However, these were likely to be rare, because women's clothes in most families still came as gifts from her parents, both to herself and often to her children. Household items, such as cooking and eating vessels, were given at the time of marriage. Sums of money were usually given at the time of weddings or other ceremonies, not a present. (Only when there was a wedding in the immediate family had purchases to be made.)
Women's workload in these small and larger villages, whether in agricultural or non-agricultural households, was centred totally around the home. None of their tasks took them outside the home and the immediate surrounding area, usually composed of their courtyard and perhaps the neighbouring courtyards. Buffalo were kept in the courtyard just near the front entrance. Here, too, was possibly the bathroom and toilet. Women might also sit in the courtyard, in the shade to prepare vegetables or possibly just to rest and converse with their relatives and neighbours. There was little reason to go further afield; possibly an occasional journey to have corn ground or to buy something from a nearby shop. There were opportunities, too, in the course of religious or social events, but these will be examined more closely in Chapter 15.

Activities outside work: daily religious observances

Women spent the remainder of their day generally in resting or in religious based activities. Those religious ceremonies performed in the home were always regarded as the responsibility of the eldest women. Older women were seen by all as the upholders of religious traditions. All women started their day with their daily bath and teeth cleaning, which were regarded by many as a form of 'ritual' cleansing. A few women postponed their bath until after they had done their first tasks of the day, such as lighting fires, preparing breakfast or sometimes cleaning. But it was usually seen as the correct way to start the day. In those households where no other women were present, then this bath would be followed by morning
prayers and divo puja, lighting a candle to the household god.

In three households there was no mention of morning prayers. In one large agricultural household, none of the women discussed this point. It was quite probable, however, that the older generation of women in the household, their sasu and kaki sasu performed this duty. It was also feasible, however, that because this was a very busy household, such duties were overlooked and not observed on a very regular basis. These same women were also not involved in religious activities, such as temple visiting. There was only one household, where no other female relatives were present to perform divo puja, where the woman concerned did not discuss this duty. Three other women also made no mention of it, but all three had older female relatives, who would perform the task. Indeed, in the case of a further three women, reference was made to an older female relative who performed this ceremony. Only women appeared to perform these duties to the household gods, because religious observances in the home were felt to be the responsibility of women. Indeed, it was customary for the older or oldest women in the household to undertake this worship on behalf of all family members. Only if a woman's sasu or kaki sasu was absent would she perform the duty herself.

The observance of divo puja reflected the level of religious commitment in the household. One of the marks of high status in the caste community was the extent to which religious duties were observed: their degree of Sanskritization. Consequently, failure to fulfil these religious duties could reflect badly on the household.
Perhaps, surprisingly, only three women attended the temple regularly on a daily, or nearly daily, basis. All three women lived in the same khadaki and frequently went together to the nearby temples in their village, Bakrol. Only one, Raju, was a farmer's wife. Other women attended the temple, but not on such a regular basis. Nine women included other forms of religious observance in their daily routines. Five of these prayed regularly for longer periods of time, possibly in the evening; another woman did so during the particularly holy month of Shravgn. Another recited religious readings; and two women spent their free time preparing garlands, mala, to present to the temple. One other woman, with her mother-in-law, meditated and performed a special puja, form of worship, to their god.

Those women who spoke of such daily religious observances, in excess of general practices, were generally from professional households, where they usually had more spare time at their disposal. There were four women from farming households: one, however, was Neela, who was divorced and had returned to live at her piyar where she had more time on her hands. Two others were from prosperous farming households: Ranjan, the wife of a tobacco farmer and merchant, and Hema, whose husband managed a large farm in Gada. But she only made special religious observances during one specific month. Those women, therefore, who placed more stress on religious observances seemed to be those from more prosperous households, frequently in professional families, who generally would have greater time at their disposal for such activities. Women in agricultural households had other more pressing preoccupations. The
significance of other less regular forms of religious observances will be discussed in Chapter 19.

Activities outside work: leisure/resting

There were periods during the day when women were not occupied with tasks. For most women, in practice, this was generally spent in resting or sleeping for some period during the afternoon. Generally, once a woman had finished her duties connected with the mid-day meal, she would rest and this might last anything from thirty minutes to several hours depending on her work-load, and inclination. As some women were not able to sleep until comparatively late at night and had to rise early the following morning, they needed this period in which to rest. The rest period was also influenced by the climate. In the hot summer months, everyone would rest and generally sleep as a result of the searing and oppressive heat in the middle of the day. Only nine women did not appear to rest. (But the data from this question could be influenced by the time of year at which the women were interviewed.) Four of these women were actually out at work and so had no opportunity to sleep. One other woman, Manju, often took tuition classes for school children in her home, at this time. Another young woman, Chandrika, was attending typing and sewing classes in the afternoon. So, in fact, there were only three women at home, who had the opportunity to rest, who did not do so. Only one of these, Alpana, a young widow, professed not to have any time to spare for resting, as she had too much work to perform.
Sixteen women, just under half, however, appeared to have no other opportunities or form of relaxation, other than possibly sitting and chatting with neighbours or family, usually in the evening. (The manner in which women filled any free time they had available, including social interaction, will be considered in a Chapter 15.) Three of the four working women appeared to have no time for 'leisure' activities during their daily routine: all three came from families with strong links with farming. Indeed, Ranjan, was married to a tobacco farmer. But the fourth woman, Malini, who worked in a bank, was not yet married and still lived with her mother. She had time during her evenings when she visited her friends and family and went to the cinema. She was in the unusual position of possessing a motor-scooter and so was able to be mobile.

Eleven out of the thirteen other women, who spent no time on leisure activities, were from farming families; one other also had strong links and only one came from a professional family in a large village. Indeed, this was the only woman from a non-agricultural background who had no leisure time other than when she rested. In fact, what was quite striking was the divide between agricultural and non-agricultural households on this matter. Moreover, because most of the farming families were in small villages, there was a sharp dichotomy between large and small villages. In the large villages, only two women from farming families, one of whom worked, Ranjan, had no leisure time; all other women reported other leisure activities. Six of them read, anything from newspapers, to novels or religious books. One was interested in handicrafts and eight reported going to visit friends or family on a regular basis. Four
listened to the radio, or tapes, and two played cards. One attended a regular religious group for prayers and songs and one went to the cinema. Yet in the small villages, in farming or agriculture-based households, as we have seen, well over half the women had no regular form of relaxation. This was very largely from lack of time due to their heavy workload. Amongst those women who did report some leisure activities, they mainly mentioned interests based in the home: eight read, two listened to the radio, two other women were interested in handicrafts and one young unmarried woman, Chandrika, went to typing and sewing classes. Only one woman, Hema, married to the manager of a large farm, from amongst all the farming and agriculture-based families, mentioned visiting friends or relatives as a regular occurrence. Reasons for such limitations and why the leisure activities of women in small villages were restricted will be discussed in Chapter 15.

Summary of village routine

Before examining the lifestyles and workload of urban women, I would like to summarise the salient points concerning village women. Their main areas of responsibility were connected with food preparation and preservation, and in cleaning operations. In farming households, these responsibilities extended to possibly more extensive food preservation, feeding of agricultural servants and the care of buffalo. Particular importance was attached to serving food to the family at mealtimes. Much of women's days were spent in preparing and serving food at convenient times for other family members. To a much lesser extent, women saw one of their roles as
looking after or bringing up their children. This was rarely viewed by these women as being a particular role in its own right. Child care was very much incorporated into all women's other responsibilities and often delegated to whoever was available. All these major tasks for rural women fell within the home. In large households, the duties would be organised by an older woman and shared amongst all the women of the household. In the smallest, farming households, few women had any help from servants in their home. Only in the larger extended agricultural households and the professional households in the large villages, did women receive quite considerable help with the burden of their work, particularly women in joint households.

Not surprisingly, for women in agricultural households in the smaller villages, there was little time for relaxation or leisure after completing their tasks. In fact, these women rarely left the home and the immediate area of the courtyard, and then only on rare occasions. Only in larger villages were a number of women able to visit friends outside their home. Their daily routine brought them into little contact with men for they shared no work tasks together, and met only at mealtimes and at night. So younger women, especially, were enclosed in an all-female world, where the major decisions affecting their daily lives might well be made by older women. However, within this world, these women had an important role in ensuring the smooth-running of the household and the effective management of domestic resources. Without their servicing work in the household, complimenting men's work on the farm, it would prove extremely difficult to run the farm successfully.
1. All names mentioned in the text are pseudonyms.

2. Cow dung was used as a fuel for cooking, although no woman mentioned using it for such a purpose. The majority of women used primus stoves and parafin, or calor gas rings, when they were preparing food. It could also be used as a 'floor covering'; it was spread over the floor surface and hardened like a form of cement. This had to be renewed at regular intervals. Only one woman, the wife of a farmer in Dharmaj, mentioned performing this task. As it was only possibly a monthly occurrence, it was obviously not part of women's regular, daily routines and may have escaped mention by some women. But the majority of households, anyway, had some form of tiled floor surfaces.
CHAPTER 8. URBAN HOUSEHOLDS
None of the urban Patidar women lived in households where there was any involvement in agriculture. Not only were all their husbands in a profession or in business, but no-one else in the household had any connection with farming, except in a small number of cases where they received some income from land. The domestic sphere of urban women was entirely centred around servicing the needs of the immediate family; moreover, there were more women in nuclear families in urban areas than in the rural sample. Consequently, there had been a significant shift in the duties and roles which urban women performed. They, too, had more help available from servants, which gave them even more opportunity to 'specialise' in their household duties and increasingly in activities outside the home. Professional and business households had different priorities to rural agricultural households. In this chapter, I shall examine the shift in domestic responsibilities and establish what new roles and skills were required by women in order that they performed their changing 'duties' successfully.

The thirty-six urban women in my sample all came from similar socio-economic origins to the village sample. Previous generations of the family were all from the same caste and the same group of villages. Some were brought up in villages; certainly, if they were not, their parents were, and there was still frequent contact with relatives in these villages. (None of the women from the Charottar area lived more than a few hours' journey, at the most, from their home, or their ancestral village.) So they were very aware of
village life and customs. Now their lives were very much centred in towns around the lives of their husbands, who were in business or one of the professions. Out of thirty-six urban women, only five were living in the old quarters of the towns dating back to the last century and even earlier. (These old sections of the towns were, at one time, the original 'village', which were built around khadaki or chowk). The other thirty-one women were living in houses in residential areas, which had grown up since Independence in 1947. Consequently, the style, decor and furnishings of these homes could be very different from those of village women.

What was immediately apparent in any comparison in life-styles between urban women and village women, was, of course, the complete loss of work in the agricultural sphere. For rural women involved in agricultural households, this represented a significant demand on their energies and time available for other work tasks. Moreover, a greater number of urban women were living in nuclear families than in rural areas, although more than half still lived in a joint household. Consequently, a number of major questions can be raised when considering the impact of living in an urban environment upon women's work-loads and their daily lives. Firstly, what were their principle areas of work? Have some areas of work expanded or contracted as a result of different life-styles and changing expectations? Has the loss of the agricultural tasks led to a contraction in women's spheres of influence and a concomitant loss of power? Or, was it possible, that newly adopted roles had been such that women's position had been enhanced as a result?
Main areas of work: food preparation

As with all village women, the major area of work for urban women was connected with food preparation and providing meals. No woman in either town or village was able to avoid some involvement in this work and usually it was one of their major responsibilities, even if the task was shared with other women. Even young unmarried women living at home would assist to a greater or lesser extent in cooking meals and serving food. As with village women, the day was likely to start with tea and some form of fried snack for breakfast. Women tended to rise early, between 6 and 7 am depending on the time of year. (School started early in the summer at 7 am, in order to avoid the heat in the middle of the day. But in the winter, school started later, at ten or eleven o'clock, so women were able to rise slightly later if they wished. Professional men did not need to rise at the same time as farmers. So it depended to a certain extent on when their husbands wished to rise and partly on the habits of their mother-in-law, if they were living in a joint family.) As in the villages, the main meal of the day was served at mid-day and a less substantial meal in the evening. Where other females were in the households, then these tasks would be shared with them. As in rural households, women also had to spend long periods actually preparing foodstuffs. They still had to check all rice, pulses or grains and vegetables for impurities. Indeed, ten women mentioned having to do this daily, whereas only four rural women did so. As meals were often more elaborate in urban households, they often had a great deal more preparatory work than for those simpler meals cooked by women in farming households,
especially. One time-saving device a large number of urban women possessed was a machine to grind corn, so they did not need to take or send corn to a nearby mill to be ground. (This machine was manufactured locally.)

Use of servants: preparation of food

One significant development, however, was the involvement of servants in the preparation of food and tea, especially. Although only four women, out of the thirty-six urban women originally surveyed, noted that servants helped with food preparation and particularly in preparing tea for guests, this was a new departure. Indeed, a number of other women had adopted this practice when I returned for a subsequent short period of fieldwork, in 1985. In these cases, servants might help in washing or sorting through vegetables, grains and pulses, and perhaps chop many of the vegetables, prior to cooking. In this way, some of the tedium was taken out of the work for the women, themselves.

The involvement of servants in food preparation was particularly significant in that it conflicted with caste-based proscriptions. Generally, food was only acceptable when cooked by equals and superiors and at public functions, such as weddings, all food would be prepared by a Brahmin (of the highest varna, the priestly caste), to ensure that it was acceptable to everyone. As I was not able to establish the exact caste of all servants, then it was difficult to generalise. They were, of course, from lower socio-economic groups, but some, at least, were supposed to be from
the Rajput caste, that is the warrior caste from the Kshatryia varna, which would probably be viewed as equal by all Patels. However, not all servants, by any means, were from this caste. It should be noted that servants were generally involved in the preparatory work and not the cooking and, therefore, this might be deemed 'ritually' acceptable. However, a more likely explanation was that caste was seen as less relevant to these urban Patels. Many had lived, or had relatives who had lived abroad, in East Africa or in the United Kingdom, where it was impossible to observe caste proscriptions in the same manner as in India, when few members of other castes were actually living in those countries. (1) In fact, overseas, it was observed mainly in connection with marriages. Other families in India might have disregarded caste proscriptions as a result of their education, introducing them to new ideas.

Elaboration of meals

But the significant development in this area of work, was one of quality rather than degree; that is, women were no longer involved only in preparing a meal, however basic, to satisfy the hunger of family members, they were increasingly concerned with dietary factors and the need to present a balanced meal. For example, in a busy village household the staple main meal would be along the lines of chapattis, or a similar flour-based 'bread', such as rotis or puris, a spiced vegetable dish, possibly of potatoes, followed by rice and dal, made from lentils, or khadi, made from a yoghurt base. These dishes would also be prepared in urban
households, but more than one variety of vegetables would be served and varied from day to day; a sweetmeat or sweet dish might be added; and perhaps a salad and/or fruit. Moreover, whereas village women frequently served left-overs for the evening meal, many urban women would start in the evening to serve something fresh, because their husbands were not satisfied with eating up 'leftovers'.

Each day, an effort would be made to vary the diet from the previous day. Consequently, one of the most immediate topics of conversation, whenever urban women met, was to discuss what they had prepared and were preparing for their families in an attempt to discover something different to serve up. On occasions, women would prepare more than they needed for their own household and send some to another friend or relative, who would reciprocate on another occasion, especially if they had prepared something that was a speciality. This enabled women to vary meals to a greater extent. As no-one seemed to possess anything resembling a local Gujarati recipe book, women had to rely on using recipes passed on from mothers, mothers-in-law and friends and relatives. Another aspect of this trend was in women's preparation of pickles and chutneys when certain fruits and vegetables were in season. These households could then offer a choice of these items at mealtimes throughout the remainder of the year.

Foodstuffs were still preserved, too. Although more food was available for sale in the towns, households still bought dried foods such as rice and pulses wholesale, when the new crops first became available, and stored them for the remainder of the year.
Frequently, a number of closely-related families, now living separately, would buy large quantities of dried food, especially, and divide it up between the various units. It was probable that purchases on such a large scale were arranged between men and their business colleagues in the dried food trade. As with village households, it was the women's responsibility to ensure that all such food was preserved and correctly stored. They also had to monitor the consumption of such stocks in order to have sufficient to last the whole year.

Entertaining

For both village and urban women, a major part of their workload revolved around the preparation and cooking of food. However, the significant development for urban women was the specialization in this role. A filling meal was not really a sufficient requirement; more education had meant that the value of a more varied diet had been learnt. But, probably of even greater importance, was the desire to use wealth to provide greater comfort and variety in life and also that this should be manifest to others. One of the most interesting developments mentioned by women was their perception of having to entertain guests by providing hospitality. This generally entailed far more than just providing tea, but also the preparation of snacks and meals as well. They were referring both to the female guests who called on them and their husband's male friends and business associates. Only four women failed to mention having to prepare tea and snacks. Two of those were working full-time and, therefore, were not at home when
such visits would take place. One other was a young woman, whose sister-in-law had the responsibility for that task. Indeed, thirteen of the remainder, 36% of the urban sample, mentioned preparing such snacks twice or more a day, sometimes with help from a servant or another female relative. More interesting, however, was the fact that six women, 17%, specifically referred to having to entertain guests as part of their daily routine, that is guests called so frequently that preparing food and drinks for such people, was seen as an important daily task. As will be discussed later, the social patterns of those urban women differed significantly from their village counterparts for whom visiting friends at all was an extremely rare or even non-existent occurrence. In consequence, they, too, rarely had to entertain guests, certainly not their own, unless relatives. Indeed, only one village woman made any reference to entertaining guests, as her husband managed a large farm.

Serving food at mealtimes

In these urban households, only six women referred to serving food to family members at mealtimes. All these women were in joint households and it would appear that they shared the same conception over their role as the village women. Only where women specifically waited on other family members and served their food, before eating their own meal did they mention this as a task. For other women, in smaller families, this was just part of their mealtime routine, serving others and themselves and eating together. Indeed, for urban families it was perhaps easier to have fixed mealtimes as husbands who worked in business or a profession had regular hours
and ate at the same time each day, whereas agricultural households were more dependent on seasonal factors.

Milk

Even in towns, women had to ensure milk was collected daily or twice a day, from the small wagons which were pulled around the streets. They, of course, had no alternative source of milk, as no-one nearby had buffalo or cows producing milk. Although only five women mentioned having to collect milk daily, someone in the household had to do this particular task, so if the woman herself did not perform it, then a child, servant or other family member had that responsibility.

Water

Despite the fact that urban women lived in much more recently built houses and a number had water-storage tanks, many women still had to ensure cold drinking water supplies. In families without a refrigerator, water pots had to be filled late at night or in the early morning to ensure cool water. (The majority of urban families did, in fact, possess a refrigerator; some families in the villages also did own a refrigerator, mainly women from the larger villages. The occasional family in the small villages might also possess one, but because of frequent power cuts, in the summer, it was often not possible to use it.) One woman, Vina in Baroda, rose especially early, sometimes around 4 am, to fill the pots because that was when the town's water supply was switched on during the cool part of the night. Even if a family possessed a refrigerator, they could not
store sufficient cool water for everyone's need and the supplies of cold water in the refrigerator had to be constantly monitored. Indeed, eleven urban women specifically discussed having to keep water pots clean and freshly filled, compared with seven rural women.

**Shopping**

Another significant difference in the pattern of urban women's days and their responsibilities could be observed over shopping. As has already been seen, most village women obtained fresh fruit and vegetables from their own farms or the mobile stalls which toured around the village streets and courtyards daily. Only four village women mentioned going out shopping for food. In urban areas, however, although stalls still served houses in most areas, many more women actually went out to shop to the bazaar. Over a third of the women, thirteen, mentioned it as part of their daily routine. In some households, other people shopped; sometimes it was older members of the family, such as mothers and fathers-in-law or other older relatives. It was quite a common occurrence for a retired father-in-law to do such basic shopping. Children or servants, too, might be sent out to make last minute purchases. Many of the other women went on a less regular basis. Only those with active older relatives in joint households might never, or hardly ever, have occasion to shop for food. In this respect, therefore, urban life offered women much more occasion to be mobile and get out of the house, but it did also add another dimension to their responsibilities. Shopping was not, however, generally conceived as being burdensome. In fact, seven women mentioned shopping for
general items on a regular basis, and many of the others enjoyed shopping expeditions but at less frequent intervals. These were often undertaken with other women and will be discussed in more detail later. They were considered to be more of a social occasion than a necessity. No village woman reported going on shopping expeditions on a regular basis and again, as will be seen later, many never went at all as any extra items were either bought by male members of the household, or in the case of clothes, supplied by relatives. Only two women mentioned sending servants to do shopping regularly, but other women also deputised such tasks to servants, when they were available.

Urban housing

One major differences between rural and urban living was in the design of the houses. Thirty-one out of thirty-six urban women lived in modern homes, some only very recently built, and certainly not more than twenty to thirty years old. Only four women lived in the old areas of town, where dwellings closely resembled the substantial village homes of some of the rural women in the sample. These traditionally designed houses were generally built looking on to courtyards. They had small rooms, with few or no windows, for shade and opened out on to the shaded courtyard area. Houses tended to be two or three storeys high. Indeed, the height was a very visible manifestation of the owner's status and wealth, as well as ensuring a number of cool rooms in the depths of the house. In contrast, the modern urban homes, which were beginning to spread to the outskirts of villages, too, were detached, if possible, with
Urban Households
their own private land surrounding them. This land was increasingly cultivated as a garden and a number of families, particularly by 1985, had started to employ gardeners to tend and water it daily. These buildings were frequently built as bungalows and only the more affluent had an additional floor. Others had one or two floors in a block of apartments, but most aspired to their own plot of land and private dwelling. Consequently, urban women's immediate environment was usually very different from rural women's and often more private. Inside, too, urban houses were very different, with larger rooms and windows making rooms much lighter and brighter. They also tended to have much more in the way of furniture. In most homes, people would dine from tables. They would have dining chairs and also folding chairs for their own relaxation as well as for guests. They might even have purpose-built upholstered sofas and most homes would have 'coffee' tables and occasional tables, with knick-knacks as well as shelving, or some form of unit, on which to display crockery and family 'treasures'. There was, therefore, much more in the way of dusting and sweeping. The more affluent homes all had separate living and sleeping quarters. Modern houses, too, would have separate bathrooms and toilets inside the house; sometimes, there would be several in one household. Hence, there was more to clean and keep tidy.

Cleaning in urban households

As with rural women, urban women perceived cleaning to be one of their major responsibilities. They, too, identified three distinctive areas of cleaning operations: house cleaning, washing clothes and washing up cooking utensils. But, in other respects,
urban women's involvement in cleaning and the form of the tasks, themselves, differed substantially from the experience of rural women.

Servants: their involvement in cleaning

Urban women, however, received much more help from servants with their house cleaning. Indeed, all the women living in nuclear families received some help from servants and the overwhelming majority of these women employed servants for all the basic household duties: cleaning, washing dishes and utensils, and washing clothes. (See Table 8.1 below) Women in joint households did not receive quite so much assistance, partly because the majority received some help from other women in the household. An examination of the assistance received for cleaning operations illustrates this point. Eleven women had no help from servants with cleaning in the house; but eight of these women were living in a joint family and so were able to share the work with other female members of the household. Five women appeared to do the bulk of the cleaning in their homes: two of these women were in joint households, Radha in Baroda and Sharmista in Anand, but they had no other females in the family with whom to share their work. The other three women lived in nuclear households, one of whom, Rita, was widowed and lived with her children. Of the remaining 25 women, only three women mentioned helping in the cleaning work. The other 22 women certainly left all the heavy or dirty work, such as sweeping and floor cleaning, to the servants.
Table 8.1: Use of servants in urban households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Joint families</th>
<th>Nuclear families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Servant</td>
<td>No servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning</td>
<td>11 58%</td>
<td>8 42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utensils</td>
<td>17 89%</td>
<td>2 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing</td>
<td>13 68%</td>
<td>6 32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What was even more interesting, however, was the discussion over cleaning utensils used in cooking and eating. Only three women claimed to wash their own dishes. All the other women had a servant who performed this onerous and dirty task.

Again, when it comes to examining who did the arduous work of washing and rinsing clothes, all by hand, 29 women left this task to servants. All but one of the urban women in nuclear families employed a servant for this task, as did over two-thirds of the women in joint households: see Table 8.1 above. Five of these mentioned that they soaped the clothes beforehand and left them to soak, but they did not help in the really heavy work of washing. Once again, as with cleaning tasks, five of the six women, in joint families, who had no washerwoman to do this work, shared the duty with other female members of the household. Indeed, only one woman in a joint family and one in a nuclear family, had the sole responsibility for washing clothes. Seven women mentioned folding clothes when they were dry and probably more women performed this task, as the washerwoman would not necessarily still be present. Only one woman mentioned ironing and she shared this work with the servant. (There were small firms which specialized in laundering and
ironing, where clothes could be sent just to be ironed.) Only one other woman mentioned mending clothes on a regular basis.

Summary: servants and status

From the above discussion, it is readily apparent that a significant shift has taken place in the degree to which servants were employed to help with domestic tasks. In some respects, the burden of work associated with cleaning may well have expanded, with larger, more furnished houses. Moreover, professional men and their wives had a much greater need to be smartly dressed more of the time than agriculture-based families. But urban women's contribution to this work had sharply diminished. There was an increasing tendency to offload dirty and arduous work on to servants. Given the Indian caste system, this represented not just changing status associated with a middle-class, professional life-style, but also ritually enhanced status as a result of the loss of dirty, that is 'polluting', duties connected with washing clothes and other household duties. The importance of servants, as an indicator of enhanced socio-economic status, cannot be too strongly underlined. Those households with the heaviest workload, the agriculture-based ones, had virtually no outside help with cleaning tasks. Yet the small urban households had the most help: this was particularly the case in nuclear families.

Unlike rural households, where 44% of women received no help at all from servants, only two urban women, 6%, had no such help: both these women were in joint families. One woman, however, was the
only female in a small joint household. Two other urban women, in joint households, too, only had assistance from servants in washing utensils, but they did receive help from other female relatives. Yet 58% of rural women washed their own dishes. Eighty per cent of urban women, 29 in all, had help with washing clothes from servants, and a further five, 14%, from female relatives; only two had no help. Yet half the rural women had no help with washing clothes. Only five urban women had no help with cleaning in the house, 25, or 69%, had servants and six shared the work with others. But 20 rural women, 56%, had no help. When female relatives were present in urban households, then slightly less use was made of servants. But the trend, in fact, seemed to be to employ a number of servants, when possible on a full-time basis. On a subsequent visit in 1985, this development was even more apparent. Lata's family, for example, provided accommodation in their garden for their full-time servant and her husband; he had his own job, but helped out with some tasks, such as gardening and looking after the car. Moreover, the servant's younger sister also helped out with some of the household tasks, and took over all the work, for a while, when her sister had a baby. In Lila's new home, too, in 1985, there was more than one servant to help her in the home and with their car. The number of servants, of course, reflected on the status of the family concerned, and it also left women with more time available for other activities.

Very few women, however, would have claimed to have had an excessive amount of 'free-time'. Other duties developed and some
tasks had assumed greater importance, as has already been seen with reference to food preparation and the entertainment of guests. One woman actually mentioned having to look after the flower arrangements as one of her tasks, as was defrosting the refrigerator. Indeed, several women reported having to 'supervise' servants as one of their duties and ensure that the work was properly done. Another mentioned one of her tasks as having to give food to the servant. (This food would be part of that already prepared for the members of the family.) One of the recurrent topics of conversation was the difficulty in obtaining 'good servants', that is those who turned up to work regularly, worked hard when present, and who did not need to be closely supervised all the time. Once having found a good servant, the other major worry was to keep her, as many servants were young girls, or women, who were likely to be married off and sent away to in-laws' households, or if already married, there were the interruptions of childbirth and the possible problems arising as children grew up.

Other tasks

Urban women, like rural women, had to make beds and ten women reported doing so. Urban women were more likely to have one or more separate bedrooms, used solely, or mainly, for that purpose. The beds were, therefore, ready for use. In many households, however, one or more beds still had to substitute as seating during the day; in that case, bedding had to be stored elsewhere. Urban women, too, still had to heat water for washing and baths in the cooler weather. A few families had a boiler, heated by wood, but many heated water on their calor gas rings. Only two women referred to this task.
Child care

For most urban women, the concept of 'child care' was much more highly developed than for the majority of village women. Some, indeed, with a college education had studied such subjects as 'Home Economics', which incorporated studies into child care and development. Moreover, having been relieved of the heavy burden of cleaning work, women had more time to spare to devote to their children. In nuclear families, too, no other women were available to look after children; nor in such small families, with rarely more than two children, were older brothers and sisters available to take on this role. Twenty-nine urban women out of the thirty-six in the sample, in Survey A, had children, compared to twenty-eight out of thirty-six of the rural women.

Babies

Only four women had babies under the age of two years and all four mentioned feeding the baby as part of their daily routines; three mentioned several feeds. Another two women with small children of two years old also referred to feeding the baby. Children were often breast fed even after the age of two, but not in the case of these two children. They were fed separately from the rest of the family and still perceived as 'babies'. Only two of the women with small babies mentioned bathing them; the two others had mothers-in-law who may have taken on this role. Two other women with daughters aged two years old discussed bathing their baby, but, in this case, the task was delegated to a servant. In the case of another two year old, this responsibility had been taken over by the
mother-in-law. Although a much smaller number of urban women had young babies, they all seemed to acknowledge their care as being one of their duties and a particular role, whereas, for many village women, it tended to be minimized amongst the numerous other tasks they had to perform. Also 'child care' was rarely conceptualized as a role in itself, but tended to be subsumed amongst general 'nurturing' roles. A significant development, too, amongst urban women was the involvement of servants, at times, in child care roles. Indeed, three years later, on a subsequent fieldwork trip, this trend was still more evident; in Lila's family, a servant had been specially delegated to look after their new baby. This was seen, however, by many to be an unnecessary expense, as it was the mother's responsibility to care for this child. A number of their relatives felt that employing a servant for such a task was an attempt to appear to raise themselves above their status in comparison with their immediate circle. It was consequently viewed as a needless extravagance. Lila and her husband, however, no longer lived with his parents and were, therefore, more able to conduct their own lives as they wished. Moreover, as they had had a 'love marriage', they had a much closer relationship than the majority of couples and Lila, herself, was much more able to influence her husband and was able to acquire a servant to look after her children's needs.

Urban women spoke more frequently than rural women of tasks relating to the care of their children. There were two major areas that urban women identified in relation to child care. Firstly, a large proportion of women with children of school age, 13 out of 21,
reported having to feed their children separately, four of them on
more than one occasion per day. Women, too, had younger children
who attended kindergarten daily, and so were away from home for five
or six hours per day. However, the question of separate mealtimes
was also a seasonal one, as school and kindergarten times changed
with the advent of the hot and cooler seasons. For both rural and
urban women, therefore, their child's presence at home at mealtimes
fluctuated. In the hot weather, schools started early and finished
by lunch-time and children were then free to eat with the rest of
the family. But some mothers were more willing to feed children at
different times so they could attend extra tuition classes, or
extra-curricular activities, such as sport, music or dancing,
outside school. (2)

Urban women showed a significant preoccupation in the
appearance of their children, compared to rural women. Twenty women
made specific mention of having to get children ready for school
and/or ensure they changed on their return from school; this was out
of a total of 23 women with children, who were likely to be
attending school or kindergarten. Figures were complicated as not
all children attended kindergarten, or started school at the same
time; and several children, in both rural and urban families, were
away at boarding school. (Only eight rural women mentioned
supervising getting their children ready for school.) The
importance of this reference was that it reflected two developments;
one alluded to already, when it was pointed out how child care
functions had assumed much more importance in their own right for
urban women. But, secondly, it seemed, too, to underline a development generally more evident in women's lives, that was a much greater pre-occupation with 'appearance' and always looking smart. All children wore a simple uniform at school, but for these urban families, this had to be clean and well-turned out every day.

Urban women mentioned having to take their children to or from school, or to the school bus more frequently than rural women: eight urban women compared to two rural women undertook this task daily. But this, more than anything, reflected the greater distance to be travelled to and from school in urban areas. Urban women, too, could not let young children wander so freely in busy, rather chaotic streets on their way to kindergarten or school, as their counterparts in villages could do. Most children in villages would go to the same schools, which was not always the case in an urban area. However, for both rural and urban women, education seemed to be equally important. Fourteen urban women stressed the necessity of supervising their children's homework every day, but so, too, did eleven rural women. (3) If academic education was as important for women wherever they lived, urban women seemed much more interested in their children's 'informal learning'. Only three village women mentioned 'playing' with their young children, and one of these women, Pushpa, was an ex-teacher, who had lived previously in the capital city of Ahmedabad. But nine urban women discussed 'playing' or spending time with their children, of all ages, daily. Their activities were fairly varied, ranging from going for walks or watching a child ride his bike, to reading and playing board games. Other women just played with their young children. Again, what was
significant for urban women was that they understood the importance of play and created time to spend in such a way with their children. This did not mean that no-one played with children in villages; adults would always play with small children, especially, but this was not necessarily the child's mother, who would be too busy, but often grandparents, older brothers and sisters, or other adults with time to spare. Playing with children was seen as a source of fun and entertainment. Urban women, however, were actually able to spend time with their children and for a number of them 'playing' was seen as an important process in child development; they perceived it, therefore, as not just 'fun' but a necessary duty towards their child.

Other daily activities: leisure

Given the loss of all forms of agricultural work and the increasing use of servants, urban women generally appeared to have more time available after finishing their essential tasks. (The time spent on completing tasks obviously varied from woman to woman). Like village women, urban women also took a rest in the afternoon; some slept, others listened to the radio or read. Only six women claimed not to rest; three young women were studying and one was a teacher. The two other women were at home and certainly, on many occasions, had opportunities to rest or read, if they did not do so daily. Manda, particularly, had to help with providing refreshments to her father and mother-in-law's guests, who called throughout the day. In other respects, too, however, urban women appeared to have much more opportunities for leisure activities.
Sixty-six per cent of urban women, 24 in all, found opportunities for reading, from newspapers to books. In fact, twelve of these 24 women, were able to sit and read several times a day; indeed, four of them read on three or more occasions daily. Seventeen women, just under half, sat and listened to the radio and music on cassettes, each day. Four women spent time daily on handicrafts, two played cards. Five women talked of taking a walk or exercise daily.

Only two women watched television regularly, at the time of the survey, this was because only one hour of educational and agricultural programmes were broadcast daily. Three years later, a much wider range of programmes was available throughout the evening, and sometimes in the afternoons. Consequently, many more urban families owned televisions and watched them regularly every day. Also the majority of them also owned video recorders which were becoming very popular. Again, at the time of the survey, eight women talked of going to the cinema regularly, but with the advent of the video recorder, leisure patterns had started to change. This, along with other leisure activities, will be discussed in Chapter 19.

The most popular leisure activity was visiting. Just under half of urban women professed to go visiting friends or other members of the family every day. In the more spatially separated urban communities, women had to make deliberate moves to go out visiting; whereas village women could just sit outside their homes and chat to members of their families and neighbours. For urban
women, the time entailed in visiting could take up most of the afternoon and early evening.

The great difference in terms of leisure time between urban and village women can be seen in the fact that all the urban women claimed to have time for rest and/or leisure activities. Only two women failed to mention any other activities other than resting, but both, on occasions, certainly were able to undertake other activities. In this respect, there was a decidedly sharp divide between the urban women and those village women living in agricultural households. Some women in urban families appeared to have the greater part of the day at their disposal, outside of household tasks, whereas many village women were only able to manage to rest or sleep in the afternoons. Otherwise, they were occupied in some household duty. Even the four urban women working outside the home had some time for leisure activities. One even managed to have a rest, and the others found time for reading, watching television or visiting in a similar fashion to other urban women. Yet village women, working outside the home, seemed to have no free time at their disposal at all. This would seem to underline the heavier workload in village households, and, as has been seen, less help with domestic work from servants. This was particularly true for agricultural households, but even professional households in the villages did not appear to have as much time at their disposal as urban women, partly because they had less help, by and large, from domestic servants with their household tasks.

Another development, resulting from this greater amount of free
time, was urban women's preoccupation with not just their children's smartness, but also with their own appearance. Seven women referred to spending time every day tidying themselves up, or changing one or more times a day, particularly after their major household duties had been completed. If women were contemplating going out visiting, or shopping, they would usually change and possibly put on make-up.

No village woman made any reference to setting aside time for her appearance. (This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 19.)

Religious duties

In terms of regular daily religious activities, there appeared to be little significant difference between the practices of rural and urban women. Urban women, too, reported having their daily bath followed by prayers to the household gods. The seven women who did not have to perform diva were in households where other more senior, female relatives were present to undertake this duty. Six mentioned the fact specifically; three young women were still living with their parents and their mothers would always be expected to do this duty. But three other women failed to mention this ritual at all. All three lived in a nuclear household, and may have omitted to specify the task. As with women in villages, daily attendance at the temple did not appear to be popular; only one urban woman went to the temple daily, compared with three in the villages. Again, like village women, eight urban women undertook to perform other religious duties daily; four of the women who did not perform the diva ceremony to the household shrine, said prayers at other times during the day; three other women also prayed and one sang religious
songs. From an examination of daily routine, therefore, there would not appear to be any clear difference in religious observances between urban and village women. But a more detailed discussion of religious practices throughout the year, in Chapter 19, will discuss the changing nature of religious observances amongst urban women and their significance as an aspect of 'status production work'.

**Attitudes towards housework**

Not surprisingly, the burden of housework in rural households was such that village women experienced much greater stress from the demands made upon them. In Survey C, composed of fifty-four married women with children, women were asked about how they felt they coped with their household duties. As might be anticipated, it was women from the villages, especially those in farming households, who complained the most. The majority of women felt they could cope quite adequately, except if they were ill, pregnant or perhaps had some very pressing personal problem. But village women became very tired and particularly when they had the burden of extra agricultural work. Vanita from Gada, explained how at harvest time, she had to provide food for forty extra people who helped with cutting the paddy, wheat or bajra. Another young widow, Alpana, in the same village, spoke of worrying about having so much work to do on her own. She, too, had no servant. Another village woman explained how all the work left her so tired, yet she still had to do it, although she often felt ill.

In contrast, an urban woman, Rashmi, commented that if she felt too tired to complete her housework, she went to see a film. In
fact, urban women did not complain about housework to a large extent because most had servants to do the more burdensome work. Only if there was some problem about the servant, who was absent for some reason, might urban women complain. Even so, a number said that even when their servant was away, they could cope well enough. One important factor was, of course, the size of the household. In large joint families, as has been seen, they were less likely to have servants. Moreover, village households tended, on average, to contain more family members whether they were joint or nuclear. The burden of work, therefore, was likely to be much more irksome; but it had to be done. Younger married women were rarely in a position, in such households, to be able to leave work undone if they wished to do so, because older women usually controlled the domestic sphere. Bhakula from a professional joint family in Karamsad, discussed how she had to work from morning to night to manage to complete all her work, and, consequently, she was always tired. A few women from professional families in both the large villages and the towns, however, complained because they found housework boring. These women were well educated and could not accept the tedium of household routine with equanimity, whereas the less well educated village women, from a farming household, had neither the time nor the experience, to consider a life different from the one they were living. A final group of women who mentioned some difficulties over housework, were those who actually worked outside the home. In fact, one village school teacher, Raksha, had a full-time job and no help in the home, because of a strained relationship with her sasu, so she found life very hard. Urban
women, who worked, sometimes felt tired, but this was usually when their servant was not available to help with the domestic work.

SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENTS

As has been seen through a detailed examination of the domestic workloads of rural and urban women, one of the most significant developments appears to be the lessening of urban women's heavy workload. This trend can be detected already in the professional households in the villages, where servants are being employed increasingly to take over the heavy, dirty work. In towns, this tendency is developing further with servants taking over in areas which had previously only been performed by the women themselves, such as food preparation and child care. Further the move away from agricultural work has brought a diminuation of women's traditional sphere and roles. A rather complex picture has formed; in an agricultural household in the domestic sphere, especially in a large joint family unit, women have considerable areas of responsibility and they have, too, to make important decisions regarding the running of the household. But it was seen in the case of looking after buffaloes, for example, that this more direct involvement in productivity did not give women any involvement in decision-making outside their own sphere. Whilst the domestic sphere and the men's agricultural world operated side by side, then in many ways their roles were complimentary. But still, as will be discussed in Chapter 16, the patriarchal nature of the family was and is such that men make the major decisions affecting the whole family unit, even though an individual woman can have high status within her own segregated sphere.
In professional households, women have lost, to some extent, their range of responsibilities in the domestic sphere. Their roles have become much more specialised. They have started to concentrate, to a greater extent, on their servicing roles: food preparation, entertainment and child care. Patidar women's skills in these roles reflected on their husband's status, just like the middle-class business executive's wife in the West, whom Finch (1983) has called the 'incorporated wife'. Urban women's status, more especially in nuclear families, is, if anything, even more determined by the husband's profession and position in society than before, because women have begun to move away from their own sphere and have become an extension of their husband's sphere. The ability to prepare good food, ensure a pleasant home environment and be able to put up a good appearance in front of his guests, has brought a much greater emphasis on looks and dress. Hence the greater preoccupation urban women have developed over their own appearance and that of their children, as well as the greater attention paid to comforts and the appearance of the home. Moreover, urban women have had to develop activities with which to occupy themselves in their greater amounts of free time.

Urban women certainly regarded their situation in the home as superior to that of Patidar women in agricultural households, and, indeed, most rural women aspired to this less arduous life-style, if not for themselves, then for their daughters. But there were aspects of a more rural life which women in both communities valued, particularly, the social support and companionship of other women. However, before moving on to consider the other determinants of
women's position and roles within society, I would like to turn to examine the impact of paid employment on women's status. Is there any evidence that women's ability to earn a salary changed their status in the family, or gave them greater control over the major decisions affecting their own lives?
1. Pocock (1957b) found in his research on the Patidar in East Africa that they were not able to observe all the caste prescriptions, because there were insufficient representatives of each caste for the correct hierarchy to be observed in a proper manner. Moreover, a strict occupational link with caste was impossible without representatives of all the castes. The Patidar had maintained their identity as a caste by developing the concept of their 'difference' from those castes who had emigrated to East Africa and the local people, as well. Pocock felt that despite class differences, the Patidar would be able to maintain their separate identity as a caste in similar circumstances, such as their transfer to large urban areas in India.

2. Most urban children and a number of rural children received extra private tuition outside school to supplement their school classes. The standard of education, particularly in state schools, was not felt to be high and large classes made it impossible for children to receive individual attention. Even at private schools with classes in English, many urban parents paid for private tuition after school, as well. This became increasingly so as the examinations for the Secondary School Certificate, and the Higher Secondary School Certificate approached. Many children received two hours extra tuition a day, either before or after school hours.

3. Papanek (1979) mentioned roles such as supervising children's homework as an aspect of 'status production work'.
CHAPTER 9. WOMEN IN PAID EMPLOYMENT
Women in paid work outside the home

In the previous chapter, I have discussed how Patidar women's involvement in the production process within an agricultural household did not give them any significant degree of control over the major decisions in their lives. Any power they had was concentrated within the home and on the management and control of resources for family use. There were a number of women in my sample, however, who worked outside the home in paid employment. In the towns, especially, Patidar women were beginning to be found in work, quite frequently as teachers or in another profession. It was well-known that Patidar women who had lived overseas or whose relatives were abroad were generally employed; sometimes in quite menial work. It was not, however, generally acceptable for Patidar women in Gujarat to work as a matter of course. Only certain clearly specified jobs were considered respectable and then only in certain circumstances.

Although a large proportion of urban Patidar women had the education and qualifications to enable them to take a job, only a small number did so. Sometimes, women worked before marriage, if their fathers allowed them to do so, but always with the knowledge that their career might have to stop at marriage if their future in-laws were not happy with a working wife. Other women were not allowed to work, in case it affected their marriage prospects. Occasionally, women started working after marriage because their
husbands were prepared to let them do so. Younger women did seem, however, eager that their daughters should be educated for a career, in case it ever became necessary for them to work at some time in the future. (Women emigrating abroad would usually expect to work and there was also just the possibility that some 'disaster' would leave a woman with no financial support.) But one important point stood out, women only worked if others allowed them to do so.

Before looking more closely at the impact of women's paid employment on their position in the home, I want to examine the working history of my sample, in order to establish which women worked and their reasons for doing so. Marriage was usually seen as one of the main determinants of whether women were able to seek employment or not. It was felt to be the prerogative of a woman's parents-in-law and her husband to decide whether she could seek work, or continue working, after marriage. (This will be discussed more fully later in the chapter.) Because of the availability of servants, or other women in the household, to help with domestic work, the birth of a child did not appear to be an important turning-point in a woman's career.

In the villages, only five women had been in paid employment before they married. The data under discussion concerns women from Survey C, all married with children, unless otherwise specified. Three of these women had continued teaching after marriage; but Pushpa had subsequently stopped because she and her family had moved to Dharma and she had been obliged to give up her job. There was
no suitable work as a secondary school teacher in the village. At the time of the survey, therefore, only two married women with children in the villages, Raksha and Ranjan, were still working, as they had done before marriage as primary school teachers. There were two other married women who worked at home: Manju took private tuition classes in her own home and one other woman, Dipti, helped her husband by cleaning grain at home and preparing foodstuffs for his business. She was not paid for this work, however, as she worked for the family enterprise.

There were two other village women in employment, who were not included in Survey C. One older, but not yet married woman, Malini, had a full-time job in a bank, which entailed her travelling from branch to branch and to Bombay on business; but she was considered exceptional and was extremely well-known in the whole area because of these somewhat unusual activities! (She also travelled by motor scooter which was extremely rare for women, at that time, but in a matter of three to four years had become much more generally acceptable for women.) One recently married woman, Jaishri, (a respondent in Survey A) who had no children at the time of the survey, had also continued working in a bank.

Three of the five village women who had worked before marriage, Pushpa, Raju and Manju had, at that time, been living in the state capital, Ahmedabad, where there was far more prospect of suitable work. Their husbands had gone to live in a village for work reasons: Manju's husband worked in a bank in the large village of Karamsad. Raju's husband had taken over the management of the
family farm, and Pushpa's family was waiting for permission to emigrate to England. (This took over eight years to arrange.) The three women had stopped working because no appropriate work was available in the village. In their case, the geographical mobility of their husbands had precluded the continuation of their careers. Indeed, by 1985, Manju had found work as a secondary school teacher. Their marital status had not been the determining factor in dictating whether they could seek paid employment, or not. It was the lack of suitable work which limited these three women's options.

In rural areas, there were few women who were in paid employment after marriage; women who had married into and were still living in a farming household rarely worked. They were too busy with their household and agricultural duties to also undertake paid employment, even if the opportunity was available. Indeed, no woman in either of the two smallest villages in the survey, Gada and Ajarpura, was in paid employment or had ever worked, either before or after marriage. (Little suitable work, however, was available in these villages.) In Survey C, as has already been discussed, only two of the married women with children out of 25 rural women questioned, were working; see Table 9.1 below. Only one of these village women had a husband who was involved in agriculture and this was Ranjan, married to a wealthy tobacco farmer, who ran a very big enterprise, including merchandising his own produce. There were servants who undertook all the household and agricultural work, apart from cooking for the family. Both she and her husband had married late in life, by Patidar standards; she was his second wife,
and she had already been working for well over ten years before she
married. She continued working with only short breaks, while she
had her three daughters. The other village woman who had continued
working after marriage was Raksha, who had one young son, aged two,
looked after by her parents-in-law, during the day. Her husband was
in a clerical position at the university and between them they
supported her in-laws as well. None of the women in farming
households worked, or had ever been in paid employment, even before
marriage, except for Raju, who had come to live on her husband's
farm, some years after marriage, on the death of her father-in-law.
Prior to that they had both lived and worked in Ahmedabad.

Table 9.1: Percentage of women in paid employment
(Survey C: married women with children)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before marriage</td>
<td>5 (20%)</td>
<td>6 (21%)</td>
<td>11 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After marriage</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>4 (14%)</td>
<td>6 (11%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the towns, slightly more women were working or had worked, at
some time in their lives: see Table 9.1 above. Six women had been
employed before marriage, but only three continued in the same job
after marriage. Two were secondary school teachers, Indira and
Kashori, and one, Saroj, was a college lecturer.

Joshna had worked for a number of years before her marriage, at
the age of twenty-eight, as a laboratory technician, even moving
around the state and living away from home. However, after
marriage, she stopped working as her parents-in-law and her husband disapproved. The other women with experience of employment before marriage had been brought up in East Africa, where a different set of social attitudes prevailed. Lata, for example, had worked as a secretary in East Africa until she came to India to be married. (Manda, too, had trained as a secretary in East Africa, but did not appear to have been employed.) No Patidar women in the Kheda area, however, would be allowed to work as a secretary. Another woman, Sita, who had been brought up in East Africa, had worked in a bank for a year before her marriage.

Only four married women with children, of the 29 women from towns, questioned in Survey C, were in paid employment at the time of the survey: the two teachers, Indira and Kashori, one lecturer, Saroj, and Bharti, who had started her own beauty salon, which was prospering. (Bharti claimed to earn in the region of two to two and a half thousand rupees a month.) (1). Bharti had been born and brought up in East Africa, but in this area of Gujarat, it was extremely rare for a woman to be running her own business. Moreover, there had been considerable opposition, from members of her family and her immediate social circle, because, in India, the work entailed in running a beauty salon, particularly hair-cutting, was regarded as very 'low caste'. Only her husband supported her initially in her endeavours. Up until very recent years, such activities as decorating the bride at her wedding, especially the rituals of drawing intricate patterns in henna on the girl's hands and feet, had traditionally been performed by Muslim girls or another low caste. But the 'Western' model of hair-dressing and the
'beauty salon' was developing in urban areas of Gujarat. (Their arrival reflected the increasing importance placed upon women's appearance in an urban environment; this was not only confined to the wedding ceremony, as in the past, but was an integral part of everyday life for an increasing number of urban women. This will be developed at length in Chapter 19.)

Another urban woman, Meena, had been employed in a number of capacities since marriage. She had worked as a laboratory technician in England for two years after marriage, whilst she stayed with her sister. On her return to India, she had worked as a telephone operator and later, too, she had had a beauty parlour, which had not been successful. But at the time of the survey she had ceased her most recent work, as one of my interpreters, because she was pregnant. Malika, helped her husband, in the home, by packing his products for sale. Like Dipti, in Dharmaj, she was not paid for this work as it was part of a family enterprise. An unmarried women, mentioned in Survey A, Neena, subsequently became a civil engineer and was employed in a government post.

Only six of the married women respondents, with children, were working after marriage: two in the villages, who were both primary school teachers and four in the towns, two secondary school teachers, a college lecturer and a businesswoman. All, except Bharti, the businesswoman, were in education, where their hours of working and holidays fitted in well with their children's activities. Bharti, too, could organise her own working hours.
More women, eleven all together, had worked before marriage and in more varied careers: see Table 9.1. However, a number of these women had lived in a very different social environment: three village women, out of five who had worked, had lived in the large city of Ahmedabad, where it was common for women to work. (2) Two of the urban women had been in paid employment in East Africa before marriage, where attitudes towards women and work were very different.

Two of the four village women in paid employment before marriage continued to work afterwards, as did three of the six urban women. No village woman had started paid employment after marriage, at the time of the survey and only one urban woman had done so. (She had started her own business with the full approval of her husband.) Consequently, only women who worked before marriage were, in the majority of cases, able to work after marriage. A number of women who had worked before marriage had had to cease paid employment, often because they moved away from their original workplace. They did not, however, find alternative work.

Availability of work

The proportion of women working, at any one time, was small and there appeared to be no marked difference between towns and villages: in the region of twenty per cent of married women with children had worked before marriage, and just over ten per cent continued to do so, after marriage and the birth of their children. However, there was a higher percentage of women continuing to work in urban areas than in rural areas: see Table 9.1 above. One
important factor was, of course, the availability of 'suitable' work. More women in villages had worked when they, too, had lived in urban areas, both before and immediately after marriage. But there was little or no work available in villages apart from a very limited number of teaching posts, mainly in primary schools. In smaller villages, older children travelled to school outside the village. In one of the smallest, most remote villages, Gada, no woman worked regardless of qualifications or inclination, because there was no work available in the village or nearby; whereas women in villages situated near to the urban areas of Anand and WN, such as Bakrol and Karamsad, had greater opportunities for employment. Women, generally, worked locally, frequently within walking distance; some women, like Bharti used an autorickshaw to take her to work. Others might be taken on their husband's scooter, such as Jaishri in Bakrol. The proximity of the work-place was an important factor for most women. Consequently, those women who had lived outside India, at any point, had had much greater chances of employment, which were not necessarily open to them, when they came to live in the Kheda district, especially in a rural area.

Desire to work

The other important factor to be considered, however, was women's desire to work and if they wished to do so, who made the decision whether they could seek employment or not. Women's attitudes to working were, of course, tempered by the knowledge of the lack of availability of suitable work or their own lack of qualifications. For a number of women, as well, there was the
realisation that they had no time to take up paid employment even if
the opportunity arose. However, women still manifested a
considerable interest in working.

In the villages, out of 25 married women with children
questioned, 60%, fifteen professed a definite interest in working:
see Table 9.2 below. Three other women had wished to do so in the
past, but had since changed their minds. Raju had previously worked
in a town and enjoyed the experience, but she had come to feel that
she had too much to do in running her farming household. Both
Rekha, in Karamsad, and Dipti, in Dharmaj, had initially wanted to
work but felt they had acquired too many responsibilities. Four of
the seven women, who definitely did not want to work, were from
large and busy farming households and had far too many household
tasks to contemplate taking on further work. The three other
village women, Benna, Aruna and Daksha all married to professional
men living in Karamsad, also felt they had too much to do in the
home to consider working.

Table 9.2: Women's desire to work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desire to work</td>
<td>15 (60%)</td>
<td>22 (76%)</td>
<td>37 (68%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No desire to work</td>
<td>7 (28%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>9 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure/ambivalent</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>8 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No: of women</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the towns, out of a total number of 29 married women with
children surveyed, 22 women, just over three-quarters, wished to
work: see Table 9.2 above. There were seven women who were
ambivalent or not desirous of working. Only two women definitely did not wish to work: one woman, Purnima, a graduate, was quite specific about not wanting to work for anyone else, which she appeared to find demeaning. The other woman, Rita, was a widow, who claimed to be happy with her life in the home. Three women had actually worked, but felt that they now had too much to do in the home to keep them occupied. Lata and Sita had both worked whilst living in East Africa, before marriage, and had enjoyed doing so. Meena, the third woman, had just made the decision to give up work in order to bring up her second child. Her first son had been largely brought up by her sasu, as she had gone to work in London for two years just after his birth and she had also worked on her return. Panna had never worked, but had wished to do so, when she had first married. Now she, too, felt she had too many household responsibilities. Sharmista had two small children, which she felt, precluded her from seeking employment. But she thought she might well be interested to work when they grew older.

The reasons women gave for wanting paid employment fell into two distinct categories. Village women were more likely to profess a desire to earn money, as their main reason for wanting to work: see Table 9.3 below. Eight village women out of fifteen who worked or would like to work mentioned the importance of earning money. One widowed woman, Alpana, desperately wanted to earn money to supplement her very meagre income. Another working woman, Raksha, a teacher, said her family needed the money. Three other women, also, wanted to earn money to help their families' financial
position. Neeta wanted to have the security in case anything happened to her husband who was much older than herself; she was his second wife. All the other village women gave their main reason for wanting to work as wanting an interest outside the home. They would meet new people and it would help the 'time to pass'.

Table 9.3: Main interest in working

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desire to earn money</td>
<td>8 (53%)</td>
<td>4 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest, self-fulfilment</td>
<td>7 (47%)</td>
<td>18 (82%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No: of women 15 22

Urban women, however, tended to give different reasons for wanting to work: see Table 9.3 above. Only one urban woman, Radha in Baroda, wanted to work, solely, in order that she could have her own income and, therefore, have control over her money. In fact, only three other urban women mentioned the importance of money: one, Indira, because she was separated from her husband and bringing up her own children. Rashmi, too, thought her income would help out the family finances, as her husband was a teacher and did not earn very much. Malika, who helped her husband in his fairly newly established business, by packing up his products in their home, was pleased to be contributing towards the family finances as well. But they were also motivated by a desire to do something 'interesting' or 'satisfying', or to alleviate boredom. The remaining eighteen women, who professed an interest in working, were not motivated by a desire to earn money: they all did so for non-financial reasons. These varied from wanting an added interest to using their
education, or having new experiences, meeting new people, or to alleviate boredom, overcome loneliness and for self-fulfilment. Urban women much more frequently cited the desire to meet new people, or feeling lonely or bored. Village women virtually never expressed themselves in such terms.

Although there was a similarity in reasons given by both urban and village women, it was quite striking that whereas only one urban woman wanted to work solely for money, over half the village women, who wanted to work, did so solely or principally for money. In these village households, an extra income would have made a substantial difference to the family finances, whereas in many urban households, any income earned by the women would not have made a significant difference to the family economy. Instead, women sought to work because it would be an interest, it would give an extra dimension to their lives, in a sense, just as they looked for hobbies or pastimes to absorb their additional leisure time. Indeed, many women referred to wanting to work in order to 'pass time'. But also for a number of educated women, there was a strong desire to use their skills and qualifications and a sense of frustration at not being able to do so.

Although only a minority of women had worked at some point in their lives, a majority wished to be able to do so. Indeed, only 17%, nine out of the fifty-four married women with children surveyed, expressed no desire to work at that time. (But some of these women had, in fact, worked in the past and had enjoyed doing so.) Yet, at the time of the survey, only five were working full-
time and three other women were undertaking work in the home, helping their husbands in their business. So despite a seemingly strong inclination to work, most women were not doing so. As has already been seen, a number of factors such as availability of work, or household responsibilities were influential in determining whether women worked. But one of the most crucial factors was that women were not free to make the decision on their own. Before marriage, they needed their father's consent and after marriage, they had, at the least, to have their husband's support, if not that of their in-laws as well. Not one woman would have claimed that the decision was entirely her own. When women were working, they were doing so with full support from their husbands. Other married women spoke of giving up interesting careers at marriage, because their husband had desired them to do so. No woman would even contemplate working without her husband's consent.

In the villages, 56% of the rural women who were not working thirteen out of twenty-three women, said their husbands would not allow them to work; five of these women claimed their parents-in-law, as well, would not allow them to do so. But a number of women claimed no-one would object; indeed, even women who did not want to work said no-one would object. But, in these cases, the women themselves, were recognising the impossibility of their being able to find suitable work and the issue had never arisen for discussion. In the towns, in fact, even more husbands objected to their wives working; seventeen out of twenty-six, 65% of those not currently working. In another four cases, even when husbands might be
supportive, parents-in-law would definitely disapprove. Only in one case did a husband disapprove, but the mother-in-law would not have raised any objections to her daughter-in-law working. Only three urban women stated that no-one would mind if they did work and two other women, who already worked, said no-one had disagreed with their decision.

Women gave a number of reasons why they were not in paid employment; many of which have been mentioned already. The most frequently cited reason was their responsibilities in the home and towards their children. Around half of the women surveyed, twelve village women and fourteen urban women gave this domestic role as their principal explanation. A fifth of the village women gave as additional reasons that they had not studied and therefore would not find any suitable work. But only one urban woman made this point. These were the only reasons stated by women from small villages and from the majority of farming households. However, women married to professional men mainly in towns, but on occasions those living in the larger villages, as well, revealed another, completely different rationale for women staying at home and not taking up paid employment. It appeared that many husbands felt that it would reflect very adversely on their own earning ability to have a working wife. The implication was that a husband was unable to provide adequately for his family on his own. If a family was affluent, therefore, there was no justification for allowing wives to work. Most people were very much governed by the prevailing norms and were not prepared to flout convention. Bharti told of the tremendous opposition from family and friends when she set up in
business and a great deal of the criticism was levelled at her because of the 'low status' of her work in the beauty salon she owned. (Only the wholehearted support of her husband enabled her to begin this venture; once she was apparently successful, however, the criticism tended to disappear.)

Similarly, girls in the Patidar community in India would not be allowed to train as nurses, although this was a possible career opening for a woman. Nursing entailed touching and handling people and their body fluids from many castes, all of which was considered 'polluting' or of 'low status', as more people described it. Training to be a doctor, however, was very acceptable as this was viewed as one of the highest status occupations. In such cases, a female doctor might well marry a male doctor and help out in his work, but such instances were still comparatively rare in this area. Regardless, too, of economic affluence, amongst a number of families, the feeling remained that their family or khadaki had 'high status' within the gol or marriage circle, for historical reasons, and, consequently, women from such families could not consider working without giving rise to tremendous criticism and gossip. This attitude was particularly evident amongst families living in the older, long-established, high status, khadaki in both the larger villages and the traditional areas of towns, where families had remained in their ancestral homes rather than moving out into the modern urban developments which had sprung up since Independence. One woman from such a background commented that women would be seen to have 'no value' if they worked.
The inter-relationship between women's work and 'status' appears quite complex. In the smaller villages, of lower _ekada_, and in the lower status _khadaki_, which were, by and large, where the farming households were concentrated, women were virtually never in paid employment. Work was rarely available and women lacked qualifications to take up any form of work which was seen as acceptable. If, however, the opportunity arose, then women's paid work was often seen as a valuable adjunct to family finances, as long as it was commensurate with family prestige. In the professional households living in higher status _khadaki_ in larger villages, or the original residential areas in the towns, women generally had qualifications which would have enabled them to work, and job opportunities were available, but the consensus was that working women would severely damage family standing. Women from similar backgrounds and with similar qualifications, but who had married into affluent families in modern areas of the towns, might well work if prestigious enough employment was available. (3) If they worked it was from interest or to pursue careers and rarely defined as mainly for financial reasons.

Attitudes towards women working outside the home thus varied, according to social factors. (4) The family's financial position was obviously important; but so, too, were historical factors which had determined the status of the extended family unit. Those families which questioned some of the traditional values connected with status and the social structure were likely to be more open to
women working. In this context, it was interesting to bear in mind that another important factor was associated with those women who had worked or were still working. A number had lived abroad, either being brought up overseas, in East Africa or Burma, or they had spent some of their adult life abroad. Others had been brought up in and lived in major cities, where attitudes had changed more rapidly and greater opportunities for women to work were available. Indeed, ten out of thirteen women who had worked or ever worked outside the home, had lived in a major city or abroad, for some considerable period of their lives. Five had been born abroad. (However, not all women born abroad necessarily worked or had even worked, either before or after marriage: certainly Lila and Manda had never done so.) Consequently, those women had, in all probability, worked in a society where social class had been a more important determinant of status than caste.

Women, work and housework

Although the number of married women in the sample in paid employment was comparatively small, they all had households to run. When it is considered that many women stressed that heavy household duties would make it difficult for them to work, how were those working women able to cope? Only six married women were working at the time of the survey; two in villages and four in towns. Ranjan, a village teacher married to a tobacco farmer, had a servant to help with all her household work; another teacher, Raksha, had help from a servant as well as some from her mother-in-law. But at the time of the survey, her relationship with her mother-in-law was very
strained over the very issue of work and household duties. Although her income was vital to the family, they still expected her to fulfil all the usual household tasks. Three out of the four urban women, who worked, lived in nuclear units and all had help from servants. The fourth woman, Bharti, lived in a joint family where household responsibilities were shared out and, although they had help from servants, she still performed her duties before setting off on business. She, however, had a servant to help care for her two-year old daughter. The daughter and this servant usually accompanied her to work. Raksha, the village teacher, who also lived in a joint family household, left her young son with her mother-in-law. Two other women, in the past, had left their preschool age children with their own mothers when they were teaching. In those situations, the women all lived in towns with their mothers living nearby. This was, of course, impossible in traditional village life, as married girls always married out of their own village, so moving away to their husband's village, leaving their own mother behind at their piyar. Their parents were, thus, never at hand to help with child care. One woman had even gone to work in London, leaving her young baby with her in-laws. When other working women had had small children, they had frequently still been living in a joint family household and, hence, had had help. Otherwise neighbours of the family had helped. (Children also started to attend kindergarten classes, often before they were three years old.) Residence in a joint household, therefore, could make it considerably easier for women to contemplate working, as their were alternative sources of child care available. Not all mothers-in-law would have been prepared, however, to take over this
responsibility completely. Urban women, sometimes, had the other alternative of leaving their children with their own mother, when she happened to be living nearby.

Two women appeared to have, or have had, difficulty in reconciling a career with their work in the home. But on both occasions, it was because of seemingly unreasonably heavy demands made by in-laws who would make no concessions over household duties. Other women, such as Manju, who continued with their educational studies after marriage spoke of similar burdens. Their studies were tolerated as long as they could fulfil all their other domestic obligations. Two school teachers, as well, professed to have given up chances of promotion because they felt they could not take on additional duties as well as their current household responsibilities. In one case, however, in 1987 after the marriage of her elder daughter, Indira accepted the post as principal of a large girl's school with more than one thousand pupils.

Working women in the sample, therefore, were not generally in any significantly different situation to other women. They relied on help from servants, and either sympathetic in-laws or parents, if they lived nearby. When such help, especially from relatives, was not available, or was grudgingly given, the women were placed under a great deal of stress which had to be resolved at some stage by fairly drastic measures. In Indira's case, when she was first married and teaching at the same time, she only continued in her career with help from her own natal family, mother and siblings; her
situation eased only after she and her husband had separated. She then lived separately with her two daughters and no longer had the same duties to perform for her in-laws.

There were some occasions, though the situation was so uncommon that it was always commented upon, when women received some help from their husbands with minor household duties. In Ashok's household, where his wife was working as a teacher, he and the teenage children each had their tasks to do, such as cleaning away dishes after meals. A number of men were known to cook, but this was entirely because they wished to eat meat, and their wives would not 'pollute' themselves by even preparing such food. But Bhaskar, for example, might occasionally help with some other dishes. In another nuclear household, Jitendra helped his wife during a very difficult pregnancy, when she had to rest, by undertaking such tasks, as making refreshments when guests arrived and, even, ironing. But such examples, except those in Ashok's family, were the product of particular circumstances and were not the norm. The only 'task' men generally seemed prepared to undertake, at times, was playing with their young children.

Impact of women's earnings

With so few women working, it is not easy to make other than general remarks about the impact of women's earnings on their position in the home and in the community. All the women who worked or had ever worked were asked what they did with their earnings; only one woman claimed to keep all her money for herself. This was Ranjan, married to a wealthy tobacco farmer, who did not need her
earnings for his business or household finances. All the other married women contributed most, if not all their money to the household budget. If they lived in a joint family, these earnings were absorbed in general family expenditure. Even the successful business woman, Bharti, running her own beauty salon, contributed towards the joint family budget. But she did keep some for her husband, daughter and herself. Women who had worked before marriage spoke of giving money to their parents, who had generally saved some or all of it and had then used it for expenses or given it, in the form of dowry, at the time of marriage. One woman, Joshna, who had worked as a laboratory technician before marriage spoke of spending all her earnings on herself, or giving some to her brother, who was studying. The general picture, therefore, appeared to be one in which the bulk of women's earnings was absorbed into family expenditure. This did not mean, of course, that they did not spend some on themselves, but it did not appear to be significant amounts. Certainly, working Patidar women in London used their own earnings to buy the 'obligatory' gifts for their families on their return visits to India. There seemed to be no particular use made of earnings by women in the sample, although some of those women who did not work, but wanted to do so, spoke wistfully of being able to buy clothes or personal items for themselves if they had earned any money.

Interesting and significant developments were taking place, however, as a result of women pursuing careers. One of the women in the sample, Indira, had separated from her husband for a number of
years. She supported herself and her two daughters with no help from her husband or his family. She had, however, received moral and financial support from her own family. She was also living in a house which belonged to other members of the family. But she did earn sufficient money to be economically independent and, in fact, in addition to her salary as a teacher, twice a day, she took private tuition classes for about ten pupils, who were studying for their secondary school examinations, in order to supplement her income. It was unlikely that she would even have taken the step of leaving her husband, if she could not have supported herself financially. Moreover, it was debatable whether her own family would have been as sympathetic towards her if the whole financial burden for her two daughters and herself had fallen on them. In another instance, too, a young married woman, working in a bank, had separated from her husband in East Africa and refused to return. Originally from Dharmanj, where she visited her piyar regularly, she lived in Bombay with relatives as she could not afford her own accommodation in such an expensive city, but had adequate money to keep herself. However, it certainly would have been completely unacceptable for a young unattached woman to live alone, unless she was living in hostel accommodation, solely for women. In both these situations, women were able to live apart from husbands and support themselves. It was extremely unusual for divorce or separation to occur amongst the Patidar; even in cases where the relationship was extremely difficult, a facade was often preserved of normal married life, because there was no alternative for women who had nowhere else to go, especially once their own parents were dead, and when they had no other means of support.
Another important development, too, was for women who were not yet married to be in paid employment. There were instances of unmarried women who had adopted careers and could be economically self-sufficient. This had produced a number of women well past the traditional age of marriage. One woman teacher, in her forties, supported herself and her widowed mother. Another woman, Malini, in her mid-thirties had a career in banking and travelled widely. She ultimately did marry, but it was not for financial security, but seemingly to gratify her mother and other family members. Marriage was considered essential for everyone in Patidar society. In previous generations, it was virtually unknown for women to remain unmarried, but women with careers had begun to feel that there was not the same urgency to marry to secure the future, financially, although strong social pressures remained. One woman had qualified as a civil engineer and was even entitled to her own accommodation with her job, so that, theoretically, at least, she did not even need parental approval for her actions. However, although the potential for independent action was present, at this stage, it was not possible to say what long term developments there might be. Were some women just delaying marriage or was it possible that some would never marry: instead, they could support themselves through their own career? In most cases, at the moment, the effect of women's work and their earning power was only being used as a postponing or delaying tactic, rather than causing any tremendous divergencies from established social patterns.
Summary

Although only a small percentage of Patidar women were working either before or after marriage, there appeared to be a very strong desire, felt by the majority of women, to work. Women in agricultural households had neither the time, nor the opportunity to work, as no suitable work was available. Even the more educated women in the villages, usually found in professional households, were unlikely to find acceptable work locally. However, women were not just prevented from working because of lack of suitable local employment. The decision to work did not rest with them alone, they had to have the approval of their father before marriage and their husband afterwards. In this respect, something of a dichotomy can be observed: in the smaller villages, husbands and their parents seemed less opposed to women working, than in the higher status, larger villages and the towns. Women in small villages principally wanted to work for financial reasons and possibly their income would have substantially benefitted the household. But women in such households had few qualifications to enable them to find work, and very little work, even teaching, was available locally. In the towns where work opportunities existed and women often had the qualifications to enable them to find good employment, there was frequently greater opposition from husbands to the idea of a working wife. Both rural and urban families feared that household duties might suffer if women went out to work, even in those households where servants undertook all the heavy and dirty tasks. (5) But often opposition was based on fears that a working wife would be seen to reflect on the husband's own earning power and could damage
his status in the community. Most urban women wanted to work to enrich their lives by having an 'interest' outside the home; earning an income was not the major criterion. But in urban households, it was frequently only in higher status families that women in prestigious careers would be allowed to work. These families were secure enough of their own standing; moreover, they felt that women working in a profession would not detract from their status and would, in all probability, add to the status of the household. (6)

At the time of the research, as only small numbers of Patidar women were working in the Kheda district, it was difficult to detect long-term trends. Two points, however, appear to stand out; women worked only when their families, whether natal or marital, agreed that they could do so. Moreover, their earnings, as yet, had not changed social roles or responsibilities in the home, even though much of their income was contributed to the family budget. Customary duties had still to be performed adequately by the women themselves. Although women might be earning money, they did not seem to have any significant involvement in family decisions, although this will be explored later in discussions on decision-making. There were indications of potential changes, however. It would appear that, as Veena Das (1976) contended, women's position in India was determined by existing patrilineal relationships. The fact that they were in a position to earn money did not bring about a dramatic change of their position, because any wealth they gained was appropriated by their husband and family for the 'general good'. But the wealth acquired by husbands and in-laws from the girl's family, at the time of marriage, was also used by the in-laws for
the whole family, and the bride herself, had no say in its disposal. Nor did such wealth give her any control or power in family decisions. In the next chapter, therefore, I shall examine family structure and Patidar women's roles within these patriarchal families to determine why they appeared to have so little control over the disposal of their own financial contributions to the family budget, whether these came from earned income, wealth acquired through marriage, or the product of their own labour in the household.
1. In Kheda, male agricultural workers, sorting through tobacco leaves for Ranjan's husband, earned five rupees a day and their food. A clerical worker might earn in the region of five hundred rupees a month. Standing (1985), in her research on employed women in Calcutta in 1981-1982, established three categories of household income: five hundred rupees and less per household was poor; one thousand rupees and less was poor in terms of urban living requirements and two thousand rupees or more was prosperous. Bharti's earnings, therefore, at the same period, in a small town, were very handsome.

2. M.Wood (1971) in A.de Souza (ed), in her research in Ahmedabad, found a number of middle class married women, all in paid employment.

3. Liddle and Joshi (1986) contended, in their research on Indian women, that a high occupational position was acceptable for those families who had moved away from the caste based values of seclusion of women, as a mark of status and had become part of a class society. These ideas will be developed in later chapters.

4. A parallel could be drawn between the processes at work here and in other studies of Muslim groups where as family status improves, women are withdrawn from work outside the home and adopt purdah as a reflection of their more leisured life-style and the ability of the family group to support economically inactive females in their midst.

5. Ursula Sharma (1986) discussed the difficulties her sample in Shimla found in combining paid employment and the time-consuming 'household service work', performed by non-working women. This will be discussed further in Chapter 19.

6. The seclusion of women in the home and the dislike of women seeking paid employment, for status reasons, reveals the degree of Sanskritization within the caste. This will be expanded on in later chapters.
SECTION 4: WOMEN IN THE FAMILY

RESIDENTIAL PATTERNS AND FAMILY STRUCTURE
CHAPTER 10. RESIDENTIAL PATTERNS AND FAMILY STRUCTURE
RESIDENTIAL PATTERNS AND FAMILY STRUCTURE

Introduction

In the preceding section, the importance of economic factors in determining women's position was discussed at some length. It was apparent, however, at a number of points in the discussion that although involvement in production was important in determining women's position in the community and the family, it was also essential to look at what form social relations took in that society. Whatever women's contribution to the domestic economy, if the household or family unit was controlled by men, then women's power to influence or determine their own lives was necessarily limited.

Patidar society was decidedly patriarchal; major decisions were made almost solely by men. But it would be an incomplete picture to represent a society where women were solely dominated by men. It was also a hierarchical society, which was evident in any discussion of the caste system. This could mean, therefore, that higher caste women could exercise considerable power over lower caste men. Caste, in this sense, had precedence over gender. But for many people, the most directly relevant manifestation of hierarchy within their own lives was in the joint family. The ideology of the joint family was evident amongst the majority of the Patidar whether they were actually resident in a joint family household or not. All important decisions were made by elders, generally the older generation of men; but older women, too, could have some involvement.
in decision-making. This could depend upon the subject under discussion and also the personality of the woman, herself. Certainly within the solely 'feminine' domestic sphere, many of the decisions were made by older women, or the most senior woman. But by various means, such a woman could also influence, on occasions, decisions outside the immediate domestic sphere. Generally, however, such decisions were made by the most senior man in the household, frequently in consultation with other relatives of his own generation. Thus in a large family unit, it was important to remember that it was not just women whose lives were controlled by others; it was also the younger generation of men.

There has been considerable discussion about the nature of the joint family. Academics have drawn distinctions between three generational families, where grandparents, sons and their wives, and grandchildren live together and those of 'collateral' households, which are composed of two or more brothers and their respective wives and children (Khatri 1972). (1)

Kuntesh Gupta (1982) quoted Sarma (1964), who preferred to establish the following definitions of households instead: nuclear households, which could include single persons; joint family with parents; joint family with brothers and joint family with others, that is relatives of the wife or husband. Shahini (1961) on the other hand, in her study of joint families in Baroda, defined two forms of 'jointness' based on the perspectives of the students in her survey: a family with the student's father and father's brothers and relatives; and one with the student's own married brothers.
Ursula Sharma (1986) discussed the family by utilising a blanket term, the 'complex family', which incorporated all forms of non-nuclear households, in order to circumvent the plethora of categories for various forms of 'joint family'.

Definitions of jointness, however, usually entail living in a common residence, sharing a common kitchen, owning property in common, and worshipping the household god. Such households would be composed only of male descendents of the original founder, with their wives and children, except where widowed, or unsupported female relatives have returned to their natal homes for support. But rights to the household and property only pass through the male line. Desai (1964) in his discussion of joint families in Mahuva, in Gujarat, emphasised 'jointness' was not just a matter of residence, but also the degree to which roles were performed and responsibilities towards joint family members were fulfilled. Indeed, he established four degrees of jointness: nuclear households with no property in common, but where mutual obligations were fulfilled; those who lived in nuclear households but who had property in common; those households which would become nuclear households if they lost of gained a member; and, fourthly, those with three or more generations under one roof with common property. In fact, a number of writers have made the point that joint residence was not necessarily the crucial element in 'jointness'. Ramu (1973) felt that joint control over such matters as finance, expenditure and marriages was more important than joint residence as a determinant of jointness; the family was thus joint in structure,
'a cultural entity'. Devadas Pillai (1974, 1976) made a similar point when he stressed that jointness was essentially a matter of values where the members were socialised to see the greater good of the family unit as being more important than each individual composing that family. So, the communal good took precedence over individual desires. Kuntresh Gupta (1982) stressed that it was more appropriate to examine the extent and degree of 'jointness', which she felt was determined by kinship composition, size of household, property ownership, pooled resources and the pattern of authority within the family.

'Jointness', therefore, appears to take a number of forms. To many people it was not just a matter of residence or ownership in common, but also one of shared responsibilities over decisions, as well as a financial commitment. A number of researchers, too, have pointed out the cyclical nature of family development in many groups in Indian society. (Abbi 1969; Van der Veen 1976 in Devadas Pillai). At certain stages in the life-cycle of a family, it could well be composed of only parents and their children; that is, it is a 'nuclear family'. But as the sons grow up and marry in their turn, a third generation is born, so creating a new 'joint family' households. As more grandchildren are born and grow older, the household may split again because of lack of space or family tensions, and revert to a number of nuclear units. Thus the permutations are endless. Consequently, the current family structure and living conditions are not necessarily significant in themselves in determining women's position. What is more important
is to examine a woman's total experience in her lifetime of joint and nuclear family living, and, secondly, to explore her orientation: her preference for living either in a joint family or a nuclear one and her reasons for that choice. In this way, it can be established what 'ideology' is dominant in women's thinking. If they adhere to the 'communal ideal', then their actions and decisions are likely to be somewhat different to those women who have a preference for a more individualistic approach to life and, possibly, a concomitant of this, a preference for the nuclear family, where they are not so subject to others, particularly to other women's, ideas. A woman's actual residence was not necessarily, in this context, particularly helpful in revealing what were the most important components of her world view. A woman may well, because of circumstances, be currently living in a nuclear family, but if she had always known or preferred joint family living, then her behaviour and attitudes would be coloured by this.

When discussing the joint family in the context of the Patidar community, I have endeavoured to use the criteria which Patel women, themselves, employed. They used the term 'joint family' to apply to any household unit where one or more of the husband's parents, or their siblings were resident, or where siblings of the husband whether married or single, were resident in the same household. Hence, it was a term which was used rather loosely, but it did entail sharing cooking responsibilities for that unit. As far as a young married Patidar woman was concerned, she would expect to defer to any older members of her husband's household, where she was a 'newcomer' and 'outsider'. From her perspective, for example, an
elderly mother-in-law, or other older female relative, was a powerful figure who had much more of a decisive voice in any matters than young women in the family. This was the situation even though these older women were economically dependent on the male members of the household. There were instances of two families sharing one house, perhaps living on different floors, but they cooked separately and considered themselves to be a separate household. When I discuss 'joint families', therefore, I am considering such units that live and eat together. There were a number of the nuclear households, who acted together as a unit for many financial transactions and in decision-making but, as they classified themselves as living separately as nuclear units, they have been defined as such. Indeed, for Patel women the pertinent terminology for classifying family units were rather 'jointness' and 'living separately' and not a distinction between 'joint' and 'nuclear' units, at all.

There has been some debate, too, on the significance of nuclear and/or joint family living in rural and urban contexts. Although the joint family has been seen as the ideal mechanism for rural, agricultural landowning groups to maintain their hold on their property, there is no conclusive evidence to show that the joint family cannot adapt successfully to urban life, as writers such as Goode (1963) have argued. Goldthorpe (1978) felt that the 'conservative' nature of Indian society was merely delaying the breakdown of the joint family. Ramu (1973) argued that joint family living helped to promote and encourage 'entrepreneurial activity' in
the groups he studied. Conklin (1976), too, saw no evidence that the joint family hindered social change, as Parsons (Ross 1961) claimed, and was thus on the decline in urban areas. He contended that the joint family could, in fact, act as a buffer between transitional phases, both financially and emotionally. Moreover, nuclear families found in urban areas may well have been in a transitional phase, perhaps as a result of fairly recent migration from rural to urban areas.

K.G. Uma (1986) found in a study of a Brahmin caste in Bangalore, with many professional workers, that living in a joint family actually facilitated the diversification of occupations: moreover, there were fewer economic dependents because more people were able to work, including women. However, Hilary Standing (1985) found the opposite in her research in Calcutta: larger families meant more dependents, not more earning family members. Abbi (1969) made the point, that although joint family living is closely associated with rural areas, in fact, the majority of rural households are nuclear. Although there were more nuclear households than joint ones, because of the much higher numbers of people in a joint household, it appeared that the majority of people, in rural areas, were actually living in joint households.

In the earlier discussion in Chapter 7, it was shown that joint family households predominated amongst the Patidar: see Table 7.4 and Table 7.5. Twenty-six women out of thirty-six in rural areas lived in joint households and eighteen women out of thirty-six did so in the towns. But the greater significance of this figure could
be seen when the total size of these households was considered. The number of people in the families surveyed living in joint households in rural areas was 265, compared to 42 in nuclear households. Similarly, in urban areas, although there was an equal number of joint and nuclear households, 124 people lived in joint households compared to 66 in nuclear ones. The average size of households in rural areas, therefore, particularly in the small villages, was considerably larger than that of urban households. (See Table 7.4 and Table 7.5.)

In view of the variety of theories relating to joint family households, it is important, therefore, to consider the practices of the particular caste under study. Savitri Shahini (1961), for example, made the point, in her research on joint families in Baroda, that the Patidar, one of the castes in her sample, were a 'traditional', rural, agricultural caste, where the joint family had always predominated. Even, therefore, in Baroda, where the majority of the other castes in her study, including Brahmins and Banias, were living in nuclear families, only 35% of the Patidar were doing so. (She contended that there was a strong bond amongst the Patidar due to the common property held by family members in their village of origin, where some members of the family still lived.)

JOINT OR NUCLEAR?

It was important, therefore, to look in detail at the pattern of residence amongst Patidar women. Was rural women's main experience that of living in a joint family and were urban women
more likely to be living in nuclear units? Or had the joint family structure adapted well to an urban lifestyle? (Data in this chapter are taken from two studies: Survey A and Survey C: see Appendices 1 and 2 for more details.)

Table 10.1: Current family situation of 72 women in Survey A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In joint families</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In nuclear families</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                  | 36   | 36       | 72    |

A majority of all the women, 61% lived in joint households. So, in both towns and villages, a minority of women lived in nuclear units, but this was much more significant in the villages: see Table 10.1. Only 28% of rural women lived in nuclear units, whereas half of urban women did so. However, amongst those urban women living in nuclear families, two young widowed women and their children lived in a flat in one part of the house, whilst relatives lived in another flat in the same building. These two young widows, Rita in Baroda, and Nira in VN, lived separately, but they did have daily contact with their other relatives. One other urban family had split the traditional home so that one brother and his family lived separately downstairs and the other brother, his wife, Shobna, and their children, lived separately upstairs. However, since the majority of the urban women in modern housing were young, either newly married, or fairly recently married with families of small children, it cannot be said conclusively that they would remain in
nuclear units.

The largest numbers of nuclear families were, indeed, found in the recently developed areas of the towns, particularly in Anand, and the totally new town of VVN. In VVN, there were only two joint families out of the nine families surveyed: see Table 10.2 below.

Table 10.2: Joint and nuclear households by town and village

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Joint families</th>
<th>Nuclear Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gada</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajarpora</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakrol</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharmaj</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karamsad</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anand</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadiad</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VVN</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baroda</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No: of households</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the older areas of the towns of Baroda, Nadiad and Anand, joint households were more common. In a number of instances, men in the family had moved to towns as a result of their work. Consequently, when they married, their parents were, more likely to have remained in their village. But there was a considerable likelihood that over the passage of time, these nuclear families could well evolve into joint family households. Older in-laws could join their son and his family in town, if they grew unable to cope with life on their own. At a later stage, too, when sons grew up and married, their future wives and children might well join these urban households. However,
at the time of the survey the majority of women were living in joint family households, although in an urban environment, there was a more even balance between joint and nuclear units.

But by looking more closely at women's family situation over their life-cycle, a much more complex picture emerged. When the residential patterns of the sixty-two married women in Survey A were examined further, a very striking pattern became apparent. (A number of the 72 women in Survey A were unmarried and are not included in the following discussion). Half the women were living in villages, 31, and the other half in towns. Yet all of them had lived with their parents-in-law or other in-laws in their early married life: see Table 10.3 below.

Table 10.3: Patterns of residence of married women in Survey A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joint  Nuclear</td>
<td>Joint  Nuclear</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First year(s) of</td>
<td>31              -</td>
<td>31              -</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>married life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation at time</td>
<td>16              15</td>
<td>23              10</td>
<td>64*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of survey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*2 village women from nuclear families were not available for questioning on their early years of marriage.

Some women remained only a matter of months with their parents-in-law after marriage and/or returned during long vacations when their student husbands or themselves were not studying. But most stayed for a number of years with their in-laws before setting up their own households. A number of women had had several changes in residence over their married lives. One urban woman, Indu, for example, had
lived in a joint household with her parents-in-law and three other brothers-in-law and their respective wives, for a number of years after marriage. Then, because of her husband's work, she had moved elsewhere in the state and lived separately for four years. Subsequently, she moved with her husband again to another town, but at the time of the interview, she was living with the joint family again, then composed of her father-in-law, the three other brothers-in-law, their wives and children. The general pattern was, however, one where women spent a period of time with their in-laws before moving to their own household; although on the rare occasions the movement could be in the opposite direction. A village woman, Hema, had lived separately in East Africa, before returning to India to live in a joint family household.

This pattern of spending a period of time in the in-laws' household before setting up one's own household varied little from village to town. Fourteen urban women, 44%, were still living in the same household as they had done, when they were first married, and eighteen village women, 56%, were doing so, too, see Table 10.4. Eighteen urban women, 56%, had moved households and fourteen village women, 44%, had done so. However, where the pattern in the villages was for women to live with their in-laws before settling into their own households, urban women tended to move more frequently. Out of the eighteen urban women who had moved since their marriages, a third, had done so more than once. One woman had moved five times. Such multiple moves were all connected with their husbands' careers or studying; occasionally women completed studies after marriage and continued to live with their own parents, or another relative.
Table 10.4: Number of residential moves after marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Same place</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved once</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved more than once</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be remembered that moves did not necessarily always take place from one village household to another, or one urban household to another. Occasionally, women would move back into the villages after having lived outside in urban areas, or a woman who had lived in a village moved to an urban area. Out of 32 married rural women, however, 84% had always lived in a village since marriage and 75% of urban women had always lived in a town in India, or overseas, since marriage: see Table 10.5. Five village women had lived in towns, or overseas, for a number of years, before returning to their husband's village where they lived at the time of their interview. But of the eight urban women who had spent some of their married life in villages, five had done so for a matter of weeks or months, at the most. The vast majority of urban women, therefore, had spent all their married life in towns and most rural women had spent their married lives in their village.

Table 10.5: Movement between town and village since marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Villages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always lived in villages</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27 84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always lived in town/overseas</td>
<td>24 75%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived in both</td>
<td>8 25%</td>
<td>5 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary: residential patterns after marriage

All women, whether living in towns or villages at the time of the survey, had spent some period of their married lives living in a joint family unit. Indeed, initially after marriage, all women lived with their in-laws for some period of time and the reasons for this will be discussed in the next chapter. After a number of years, a greater number of village women were still living in a joint family household than amongst urban women; but in both cases, a significant number, 56% of urban women and 44% of rural women, had moved into a different household. Urban women, however, were more likely to have moved on more than one occasion. Movement was generally confined to changes of residence from one village household to another village household, or, alternatively, one urban household to another urban one.

Residential patterns before marriage

In order to complete the picture, it is relevant to look at women's residential patterns before marriage. Information on the childhood experience of 54 married women was available from Survey C, mentioned above. (At the time of Survey C, 29 women were living in towns.) Nearly half of the women then living in towns, had lived in towns before they were married as well: see Table 10.6. Ten women, 34%, had lived for a time in both towns and villages, and only five, 17%, had lived in a village until their marriage. Twenty-five women were living in villages at the time of the survey; of these, slightly over half, 52%, had always lived in villages
before marriage and seven, 28%, had lived in towns and villages in their childhood. Five women from the two largest villages had always lived in towns before their marriage. No woman from a small village had spent all her childhood years in a town; in fact, the vast majority, 11 out of 13 women from small villages, 85%, had always lived in small villages. (The smaller villages were all from the lower status ekada, or marriage circle.)

Table 10.6: Residential patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village or urban life before marriage</th>
<th>Currently in Towns</th>
<th>Currently in Villages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always lived in village before marriage</td>
<td>5 17%</td>
<td>13 52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always lived in town before marriage</td>
<td>14 48%</td>
<td>5 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived in both town and village</td>
<td>10 35%</td>
<td>7 28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29 100%</td>
<td>25 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A pattern emerged, therefore, in which the majority of women from smaller villages, of lower status, had always lived in villages before and after marriage. Women from the larger villages and towns had spent their childhoods either solely in towns or had lived for periods of time in both villages and towns. A small proportion of women from larger villages and towns had lived in villages in their childhood. The pattern was one which very much tied in with the existence of hypergamous marriage (to be discussed more fully in Chapter 20) where women from lower status groups become socially
upwardly mobile through marriage. Women marrying fairly 'equal' partners would remain in similar social circumstances: they would continue living in either town or village.

Before marriage: joint or nuclear?

An unexpected residential pattern emerged when a comparison was made between women living in villages and towns. In fact, more women living in towns at the time of the survey had lived in joint households throughout their childhood; 13 out of 29 women, 45%: see Table 10.7 below.

Table 10.7: Before marriage: joint or nuclear families?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Currently in Towns</th>
<th>Currently in Villages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lived in joint family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before marriage</td>
<td>13 45%</td>
<td>7 28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived in nuclear family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before marriage</td>
<td>10 34%</td>
<td>9 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived in both</td>
<td>6 21%</td>
<td>9 36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only seven women, 28%, living in villages at the time of the survey, had lived in joint families before marriage. But, taking a slightly wider perspective, six urban women, 20%, and nine rural women, 36%, had lived in both nuclear and joint families before marriage. Taking the two groups together, 66% or urban women and 64% or rural women had spent at least part of their childhood years in a joint family. In contrast, far more rural women, 72%, had experienced
life in a nuclear family for at least some period of their childhood, whereas only 55% of urban women had done so. Urban women had, in fact, less experience of nuclear family life than rural women in their years before marriage, even though after marriage the situation was reversed.

Women who had lived in both nuclear and joint families often explained their experience as being the result of changes within the family as they grew older. They were born into a nuclear family, but as the family grew up, older brothers married and brought their new wives into the family unit. Consequently, if a girl was the eldest, or one of the eldest in her family, or she had no brothers, then her family would not have undergone this transition from nuclear to joint family unit before her marriage and departure from home. Other women reported moving into a different household to complete their studies, possibly at secondary school or more especially for higher secondary education, at around fifteen or sixteen. This occurred more often with village girls because higher education was not available in or near their own village. Some girls had completed their education, especially college education, by staying in an all-girls' residential hostel in a nearby town.

Residence abroad or outside Gujarat

There appeared to be considerable variation in women's residential patterns before marriage. In both villages and towns, only half the women surveyed, 48% of urban women and 52% or rural women, see Table 10.6, appeared to have had continuity of experience, that is they were born and brought up in a village, or
town, and continued to do so after marriage. Other women had experienced both rural and urban life, if not before, then after marriage. Considerably more women had, however, moved from village life to urban life than vice versa. But within both groups there was a considerable degree of movement.

Table 10.8: Residence abroad or outside the state before marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Villages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brought up in Gujarat</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born/lived abroad</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born/lived outside state</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Total: 29) (Total: 25)

(Returned to Gujarat to study) (11 38%) (5 20%)

However, the striking feature that distinguished urban women from rural women in the survey was their 'cosmopolitan' background. Whereas 80% of the rural women, had been born and brought up in Gujarat, whether in a rural or urban area, only 45% of the urban women, had been born and/or reared in the state: see Table 10.8 above. Forty-five per cent of the urban women had, in fact, been born or lived abroad in East Africa or Burma; a further ten per cent, three women, had been born or lived for longer periods outside the state. Eleven of these sixteen women had come to Gujarat when they were older for their education. In contrast, only 12% of the village women had been born or lived abroad and another two had been born or lived outside the state for long periods. All five came to Gujarat at a later date to study.
So, although there was a degree of movement amongst both urban and rural groups, the nature of that movement was very different. Eighty per cent of rural women had lived in Gujarat, in a village for most, if not all, their childhood years; only twenty per cent of rural women had grown up totally in towns. The movement between villages and towns could be largely explained as a result of seeking higher education outside the village. But it could also be partially explained by girls born abroad or outside the state, returning to their grandparents in the villages for schooling. Only 17% of urban women had been brought up in villages and had married into urban life. But 55%, well over half, had been born and had lived for significant periods abroad or outside the state. A substantial number of these women had come to Gujarat for educational purposes; but the remainder of those women brought up outside the state, spent all their formative years outside Gujarat: see Table 10.8.

**Conclusions on residential patterns**

This movement between countries, states, towns and villages helped to explain, to a certain extent, why women had experienced both joint and nuclear living before marriage. But it was more important in clarifying the varying residential patterns between urban and rural women. Rural women were more likely to have been born in a village and stayed there for substantial periods of their early life, unless they moved to towns, usually for educational reasons. In the larger villages, there were a number of women who had been brought up completely in towns, 20% of the rural sample,
but no women in small villages had spent all their earlier life in urban areas. A number of those rural women, brought up in nuclear families, reported how the family structure had changed when their older brothers had married and introduced new wives into the family. So, to a certain extent, whether they lived in a nuclear or a joint family depended very much on their position in the family and whether they had older brothers.

Eighty per cent of the urban women, in contrast, had lived in towns for some, if not all, of their early years before marriage and only 17% had lived in villages until their marriage. Moreover, over half had lived a substantial period outside the state. Just over a third of these, (11/29) had returned to Gujarat for educational reasons. In many cases, these young women returned with some of their family, perhaps with their mother, too, and lived with relatives in Kheda. Sometimes, the whole nuclear family moved; but often the main family unit remained abroad. Other girls stayed in hostels when they returned. But all these overseas families had close relatives, frequently one set of grandparents, at least, in Kheda. (3) As a result of the degree of movement, it was difficult to obtain a clear picture of family structures, because of the frequent state of flux. What did emerge, however, was that even before marriage, the urban women had travelled more and were far more cosmopolitan than their rural counterparts, who, in general, were much more likely to have remained in their own village or, possibly, nearby villages and towns.
Joint budgeting

As has been very clear from the literature discussed previously, and also from the survey data on Patidar women, residential patterns were far from constant and followed a cyclical pattern: at some periods, they would be nuclear units, and, at others, joint. One feature of joint family life, which was often quoted, was the existence of joint budgeting. Uma (1986), for example, found that in Brahmin joint families in Bangalore, each person in paid employment contributed a share to the household budget, keeping some for him/herself and the immediate family. Standing (1985) also found that the majority of working women she surveyed in Calcutta, gave their earnings to the senior members of the household for the use of all members. But, in some instances, the woman used the money herself for domestic expenses. She found that women's degree of control over any common fund varied according to age, not earning capacity. In order to establish what practice Patidar households adopted, the budgets of the families in Survey C were examined.

In the towns, 45% of the women were living in joint families; 92% of these families had a joint budget, (twelve out of the thirteen joint families.) Similarly, in rural families, 64% lived in joint families and 88% of these had a joint budget, too: see Table 10.9. But there were variations in how the women surveyed defined 'budgeting jointly'. In one small village, Ajarpura, members of a large farming household shared all the income and resources from the farm, but any income earned by the men, in either
their profession or business, was kept by each nuclear family for their own use.

Table 10.9: Family budgeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Villages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Currently in joint families</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint income</td>
<td>12.92%</td>
<td>14.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate income</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>2.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Currently in nuclear families** |       |          |
| Joint income                | 5.31% | 2.22%    |
| Separate income             | 11.69%| 7.78%    |
|                            | 16    | 9        |

In other households, the reverse seemed to apply. If individual members of the household, usually the men, worked in independent professions or businesses, they frequently made a contribution towards the joint budget and kept the remainder for the use of their own immediate nuclear family. The form the joint budget appeared to take was, therefore, very dependent on the sources of income from which it was derived. If a family operated a farm or a business jointly, then there was likely to be a common fund from which expenses were paid. But if each (male) member of the household had a separate career, then they were generally expected to contribute an amount to the common overheads.
Nuclear households

However, these criteria were not confined solely to those living in joint households. Although eleven out of sixteen of the urban families living in nuclear households had a separate budget, 31% actually contributed to a joint income, for shared expenses amongst members of the same 'joint family', who did not reside in the same household. In the villages, there were fewer nuclear families: see Table 10.9. Only two of these nuclear households contributed towards a 'joint budget'; one was a professional household with a large tobacco farmer and his wife, Ranjan, who lived in the large village of Dharmaj. They were living separately with their three young daughters, but the husband's other brothers had a common interest in the farm and their family home. The variations in practice evident between urban and rural households could be attributed to occupational differences. In the nuclear units in the villages, each household was farming its own land. Those households with more than one brother involved in farming activities, were more likely to be living jointly. In the towns, however, a number of families had businesses or professional interests in common, and so their income came from one source, although they had opted to live separately. Hence, there was a joint budget and items such as foodstuffs, were often bought wholesale in bulk and then divided between the separate households. Each household was then given an allowance for other expenditure.

Even though households were entirely separate, in that they were composed of nuclear units and the man had a separate profession
or business from his other male relatives, there were still many contributions made towards the joint budget of the extended family. Lata, for example, had always lived separately with her husband, who was an insurance broker, but he had held himself responsible for many family expenses, particularly the wedding expenses of his younger sisters. In fact, Lata's whole family network, brothers-in-law, cousin (brothers)-in-law and, sometimes, even her husband's sisters' families shared many joint purchases, because they were all living in the same urban area. (4) (In such an instance, where a nuclear family, like that of Lata's, had an independent source of income and budgeted entirely separately, although they still made contributions towards the expenses for joint responsibilities, they were categorised as budgeting separately.) In a similar instance, Bhakula from Karamsad, commented that although she and her husband had lived separately for a number of years in another town, they had still sent contributions back to the joint family, with whom they were living once again.

Women's earnings, too, seemed to be treated in a similar fashion. Business woman, Bharti, from VN, lived in a large joint family household. She made contributions from her own income towards the running of this household. But she also kept some of her earnings to spend on herself. However, women's earnings, too, were influenced by the financial state of the family concerned. In Bakrol, Raksha, a primary school teacher, had to contribute all her earnings to the joint budget; whereas in the successful tobacco farming family in Dharaj, Ranjan, another woman teacher, was able to keep all her earnings for herself.
The existence of the concept of joint responsibility, even where families were living separately, was particularly evident in the case of widowed women. Joint financing acted as a form of 'social security' net for those family members who could not provide for themselves, for whatever reason. This was particularly important for women who were frequently unable to, or not allowed to work. Rita, a widow in Baroda, for example, still lived in a flat above her late husband's uncle and she and her children were also still the financial responsibility of her in-laws. But Nira, a widow in VN, lived in the same block of flats as her sister and her family; she and her children were financially dependent on her father. In the case of Alpana, a widow from Gada, no-one seemed to want to accept financial responsibility and she survived on the small amount of money made from selling milk from her buffalo. Presumably, because their own financial circumstances were not good, neither her in-laws nor her own family wished to help out. She did, however, live in her late husband's house and received food from the farm, now worked by another brother. The ideology of joint responsibility which entailed contributions towards joint family expenses, whether the family was actually physically resident in the joint family, or lived separately, was intended to prevent such hardships. But it hinged on individual members fulfilling their obligations to help others out in time of need. Hence, the belief in the importance of the 'joint family' existed whatever form of residence an individual family occupied. Indeed, the existence of the concept of joint family obligations was more important for women than for men as they were most likely to be financially dependent.
Ursula Sharma (1986) has pointed out the difference between controlling and managing household expenditure. (An analysis of the 'balance of power' within households is found in Chapter 16.) It seemed that decisions over any major expenditure were made by the older members of the family, generally male, not necessarily even resident in the same household. But some of the younger urban Patidar women certainly were involved in the 'management' of daily expenditure, for items such as food and household goods; even, at times, for sums allocated for gift giving. This did not, however, apply to women in rural households who had very few occasions when they needed to handle money, as they were rarely in the position of buying and paying for any goods. Moreover, even in urban households, only the senior women had such responsibility. (5).

Preference for joint or nuclear living

Patidar women had, generally, had experience of living in both nuclear and joint families and were, consequently, in a position to express an opinion about their current and future preferences for family life. Such opinions provided an indicator as to their attitudes towards their current family situation, whether they felt generally contented or were experiencing a degree of stress. Further, it reflected whether their orientation was towards a 'joint ideology', a commitment to the larger family unit. Or were younger Patidar women eager to see the breakdown of joint family life in order to exert greater influence in their own home, or even greater financial control or a greater degree of intimacy with their husbands? Patricia Caplan (1985) indicated that her sample of women in Madras had no expectations of a companionate marriage, despite
rather romanticised ideals about marriage whilst they were single. Manesha Roy (1972) made similar findings amongst Bengali women; Hilary Standing (1985), in fact, found an adherence to joint family living amongst her sample in Calcutta, particularly amongst those women not living in such households. Many women did not like the 'added responsibility' of nuclear family living.

Table 10.10: Preferences for living jointly or separately

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prefer joint</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer separate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No particular preference</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When Patidar women were asked whether they preferred living in joint families, or living separately as a nuclear unit, 61% claimed to prefer living jointly and only 13% preferred living separately: see Table 10.10. There was an intermediate group, 26% of the total sample, who had no strong preferences in either direction. They professed they could live quite happily in both situations. There were no very marked contrasts between the urban and rural groups of women: 59% of urban women and 64% of rural women preferred joint family living. If figures for those women who felt no strong preferences were included, then 86% of urban married women and 88% of rural women preferred or were perfectly happy with joint family life. As only 14% of urban women and 12% of rural women preferred living separately, it can be seen very clearly where women's
preferences lay. Their orientation was very markedly towards joint family living. Yet only 54% of the total number of women surveyed were actually living in a joint family at the time of survey.

Evidently, there must have been a degree of dissatisfaction with current living conditions when a significant number of women would have been happier living a different form of family life.

Table 10.11: Satisfaction with present living conditions (whether living jointly or separately)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Living in joint family</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liking joint family</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislikes joint family/prefers separate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Living separately**    |       |          |       |
| Liking separately        | 6     | 4        | 10    |
| Dislikes separate/prefers joint family | 10     | 5        | 15    |
|                          | 16    | 91       | 25    |

Out of the total group sampled, 54% (29/54) were living in joint families and 86% of those preferred living in joint families: see Table 10.11. Only 14% of these women were unhappy with joint family life and would have liked to have lived separately. Rural and urban women were fairly unanimous in these preferences: 85% of the urban women and 88% of the rural women who were living in a joint family
professed to prefer these family circumstances. The picture that emerged, however, from women who lived separately was very different.

Nearly half of the sample were living separately, 46%, but only 40% of them, (10/25) actually enjoyed living in nuclear units, see Table 10.11. In fact, a greater number of the rural women who lived separately, 44%, were happy to do so. Only 38% of urban women living separately were content about their current situation.

There was considerable dissatisfaction, therefore, about living separately, but this discontent was slightly more evident in urban areas than in rural areas. More than half the urban sample lived in nuclear units, 55%, but only just over a third of rural women lived separately, 36%. Dissatisfaction with living separately was slightly less evident amongst rural women, possibly because they were compensated for lack of relatives actually in their home, by other relatives living in surrounding houses in the same khadaki. In towns, neighbours were rarely relatives and might not even be from the same caste and so close relationships were less likely to have developed.

Reasons for preferring joint family life

Urban women were much more able to verbalise their reasons for preferring a joint family lifestyle. By far the most common reason given by urban women was that joint family life provided company; one never needed to be alone. They were also the source of entertainment and even 'fun', and women felt they were less likely
to be bored, see Table 10.12) The next most important factor was that housework and child care could be shared, which was even more helpful to a woman in paid employment. Moreover, women were able to go out when they pleased and leave the children behind, because someone was always there to look after them. (6)

Table 10.12: Reasons for preferring joint family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Towns (29 women)</th>
<th>Villages (25 women)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment/not bored/company</td>
<td>14 (48%)</td>
<td>5 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with housework and child care</td>
<td>9 (31%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring, 'harmony'/good relations</td>
<td>7 (24%)</td>
<td>6 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elders make decisions/take responsibility</td>
<td>6 (21%)</td>
<td>6 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others to look after children</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and help if problems</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less expensive</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average no: of advantages</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another important asset of joint family life, for Patidar women, was that others, usually the elders in the family, were able to give advice, whether over correct behaviour, or how to perform certain prescribed customs, or over problems. Moreover, responsibilities were shared; in fact, if elders were present, they could well take most, if not all, the responsibility. So, support and help was always available, for example, if a woman was ill. Women appeared to value highly not just practical help and advice, but also the
'caring' aspect of joint family life. When relationships were good in the family, then a woman felt sure of 'warmth', 'caring', 'love' and 'affection'; a life of 'harmony'. (7) One other aspect also of importance was that joint family life was less expensive than living separately.

Village women seemed far less able to isolate specific reasons for preferring joint family life. They tended to generalise about their feelings of happiness in a joint family, because relationships were good; moreover, they had learnt to adapt to that particular family. Hence, they stressed the importance of good relations in a joint family and its 'caring' nature just as much as urban women had done. Equally important was that advice could be sought and responsibility shared. Joint family life could also provide support and help, perhaps, at times of difficulty, such as illness. Other women valued the joint family because it supplied them with company, but this factor had been stressed much more by urban woman, for whom it was the most important feature of joint family life. Even so, it was still an important source of social interaction for village women. Mention was also made of being able to go out or away and leave children behind with other joint family members. But only one village woman discussed being able to share housework or child care, whereas this had been very important for urban women. Three village women mentioned, too, that joint family life was less expensive; indeed, this was slightly more important to rural women than to urban women.

In such discussions, women were not always reflecting their
everyday experience. Instead, they were considering the 'ideology' of the joint family. Although they all valued the possibly caring and supportive nature of joint family life, this was not necessarily the reality. In fact, urban women were possibly more likely to quote all the advantages of joint family life because they were, in some cases, living separately and desired those characteristics offered by an 'idealised' joint family. Village women were more likely to be living in a joint family or could observe in their neighbours, at very close proximity, the reality of joint family life. Consequently, they tended to stress more the need to adapt and 'get on well' with other family members, in order to make joint family life work well.

Indeed, rural women proved just as able as urban women to express the disadvantages of joint family life. The overriding discontent that rural women had over joint family life concerned the prevalence of quarrels, or tension and conflicts, within the joint family. Forty-four per cent of rural women mentioned this point. Frequently this related to their own mother-in-law, but it could also refer to conflicts between other family members. Urban women, too, placed considerable emphasis on the prevalence of quarrels; this was mentioned by twenty-one per cent of the urban women. But they were slightly more concerned over the restrictive nature of the joint family. Twenty-four per cent felt that joint family life inhibited independence because women were expected to conform and do as they were instructed. Moreover, seventeen per cent of urban women felt that they could not come and go as they pleased or visit
whom they wished. Village women, too, reported these disadvantages, but in much smaller numbers. Possibly the restrictions appeared greater to urban women, who were on the whole, more highly educated and, hence, more accustomed to think and plan for themselves. (9) Urban women, too, placed slightly more stress on interference in their personal lives from other joint family members and their inability to plan their own lives, relate to their husbands as they might wish, or bring up children along the lines they wanted; although village women did also make references to these points. The other disadvantage of joint family life, cited more often by urban than rural women, was the burden of housework in a large joint household, where there was less likely to be a servant. Urban women in nuclear households would frequently have servants to perform these heavy household chores.

The advantages of living separately in a nuclear unit can of course, be deduced, to a greater extent, from women's criticisms of joint family life. Urban women had more to say on the topic of living separately than rural women. More urban women were, however, actually living in nuclear units at the time of the survey. Urban women valued the freedom, and lack of interference when they lived separately. They could go out when they wanted and visit whom they wished and they did not have to do as they were told. Some valued having greater responsibility and being able to make plans for their lives and their children's future. Four women stressed that they had greater privacy at home, could relax more easily and talk more freely and openly with their husbands. (This was felt to be a factor which was felt to be of greater importance to women such as
Lila, who had contracted a 'love marriage'. Intimacy was normally discouraged in joint families. Rural women saw few advantages in living separately, but three did value their independence and the ability to come and go as they pleased. Three others enjoyed being able to make their own plans about how their families were to be brought up. Women were slightly more vociferous over the disadvantages of living separately. For both rural and urban women, the major problem was boredom and loneliness. Urban women, particularly, stressed their dislike of being alone and the loss of company that living in a nuclear family entailed. Other disadvantages were only mentioned cursorily: one was having no help in the home with household tasks and the other was having all the responsibility and worry on their shoulders. Two mentioned the extra expense of living alone.

Both rural and urban women had professed a preference for joint family life and they were far more able to express its advantages over those of living separately. In some cases, women may have been referring to an 'ideal' rather than the reality of their own lives. In a joint household, it was, in some cases, not always easy to gain privacy and women, at times, were a little anxious to express criticisms of the joint family which might be overheard. Moreover, not all women may have felt sufficient trust to voice criticism during an interview in case it was relayed back to their in-laws. (10). If they were living in a joint family where relationships were difficult, they had had to learn to adapt and compromise in order to make their lives bearable. Moreover, in particularly
difficult circumstances, they might be reluctant to express criticism which might turn to their disadvantage and exacerbate an already difficult situation. In such cases, they found it impossible to express preferences clearly as the concept of choice and control over their lives was completely alien to them. They had been brought up to expect to adapt in order to survive. In such circumstances, as Berger, (Makhlouf 1979), has pointed out, people's attitudes tend to appear totally fatalistic. But they reflect the reality of 'traditional societies' where people have 'fixed identities'. Only in 'changing societies' do people have 'life plans'. Fatalistic attitudes are, in fact, a reflection of a reality where choice or a different sort of life is unknown and incomprehensible. Educated women were more aware of such choices and, consequently, found it easier to express preferences. They, therefore, appeared to be less fatalistic.

The future: children and the joint family

In order, therefore, to try and elicit women's ideal family situation, they were asked to hypothesise about their children's future; in particular, whether they wanted or envisaged that their son would live with them in a joint family after he married. Daughters would, of course, marry or move away to their husband's home and the question of their future was not quite so pertinent to the women, themselves. However, some women did make particular reference to their wishes for both their sons and daughters; one woman only had daughters and in such circumstances, therefore, preferences were not always expressed as the decision would be made
by the daughter's future in-laws. The girl's mother would not be able to exercise a great deal of influence.

Table 10.13: Preferred residential patterns in the future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Joint Family</td>
<td></td>
<td>Joint Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference for children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint family</td>
<td>8 73%</td>
<td>9 69%</td>
<td>8 57%</td>
<td>4 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear family</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 15%</td>
<td>3 21%</td>
<td>1 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own choice</td>
<td>3 27%</td>
<td>2 15%</td>
<td>3 21%</td>
<td>3 37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17 71%</td>
<td></td>
<td>12 55%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 27%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>22 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This question, in fact, quite strikingly emphasised women's preferences for joint family life, whatever their current circumstances. Data was available from a total of 46 married women in Survey C: 24 urban women and 22 rural women, see Table 10.13 above. Urban women, particularly, preferred the idea of joint family life for their children: 71% of all urban women made this choice, whether they were living in nuclear or joint families,
themselves. The majority of rural women also preferred joint family life, but not in the same degree: only 55% of the total.

Eleven urban women were living in a joint family at the time of the survey and 73% of these women wanted their children to continue doing so. The other three women in joint families, felt the choice should be left to their sons. No woman who was actually living in a joint family wished her children to live in a nuclear family. In Table 10.14: Preferences for self and children, it can be seen that out of sixteen women who would have liked to have been living in a joint family, even if they were not currently doing so, 88%, fourteen, wanted their children to live in joint families and the two remaining women wanted their daughters to live in joint families, even if their sons did not do so. Evidently, urban women living in joint families were sufficiently satisfied with the form of lifestyle that they wished their children to continue in the same manner.

What was more striking, however, was that 69% of urban women living in nuclear families at the time of the survey, also wanted their children to live in the joint family, rather than live separately after marriage. (See Table 10.13 above) In fact, only two women, 15%, who were living separately were happy for their sons to live separately after marriage, and even one of these women wanted her daughter to live in a joint family. The remaining two women, who were living separately, felt their children should make their own choice of residence in the future. Indeed, urban women living in nuclear families did not appear to be at contented with
their lifestyle. They wanted their children to experience joint family life. For women with sons, this, obviously, reflected a desire to have their own sons and grandchildren remaining with them in a joint household. But women were also considering their own daughters, who would be living in a completely different household, as a very junior, uninfluential member, in the early years of their marriage. Only two women who were living separately were happy to continue doing so. (See Table 10.14 to follow.) Even they wished their own children to live with them as a joint family, when the time arrived. Moreover, only 8% of all urban women wanted their children to live separately: see Table 10.13.

In the villages, there was a slightly stronger feeling that children should be able to make their own choice about place of residence after marriage: 27% of the total, compared with 21% or urban women: see Table 10.13. This was possibly the result of apparently greater dissatisfaction with women's current residence. Indeed, 37% of women in nuclear families in the villages felt their own children should be able to state their preferences. Although the majority of women living in joint families, 57%, and exactly half of the women living in nuclear families felt that their children should live in joint families, such a preference was not quite so popular in the villages as in the towns. Moreover, the idea of living separately seemed more tenable with village women than urban women: 18% of rural women stated this preference, including 21% of those actually resident in joint families. (However, one of these women, Hema, lived in a village and she
wanted her sons to move to a town because of the greater opportunities.) Only 8% of urban women wanted their children to live separately and no urban woman resident in a joint family made such a choice. But village women, who were living separately, also appeared to be as discontented with their situation as were the urban women questioned. Only one of them wanted to live separately, but she wanted her daughter to live in a joint family, despite some of the possible disadvantages of the early years of residence: see Table 10.14 below. Half of the women living separately wanted their children to live in a joint family.

Where women made specific references to their daughters, they all felt that it would be preferable if they lived in a joint family: 23% of rural women and 8% of urban women made this stipulation. Two village women felt their daughters should be free to make their own choice. In some instances, women felt that it was acceptable for their sons to live separately, but not their daughters. There seemed to be a general feeling that daughters should have this more 'protected' environment.

Residential preferences for self and children

Whatever women's current residential circumstances, the majority of both urban and rural women appeared to find joint family life preferable for themselves and for their children in the future: see Table 10.14. This was even more apparent when women who were happy to live in either nuclear or joint families were included. Only 13% of women preferred the option of living separately, either for themselves or for their children. It was, however, a slightly
more popular option amongst rural women, who had more experience of joint family life, and presumably were not completely happy about their own experience.

Table 10.14: Preferences for self and children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current situation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint family</td>
<td>11 46%</td>
<td>14 64%</td>
<td>25 54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear family</td>
<td>13 54%</td>
<td>8 36%</td>
<td>21 46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24 100%</td>
<td>22 100%</td>
<td>46 100%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Preference for self</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint family</td>
<td>16 67%</td>
<td>13 59%</td>
<td>29 63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear family</td>
<td>2  8%</td>
<td>4 18%</td>
<td>6 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No preference</td>
<td>6 25%</td>
<td>5 23%</td>
<td>11 24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24 100%</td>
<td>22 100%</td>
<td>46 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>For children</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint family</td>
<td>17 71%</td>
<td>12 55%</td>
<td>29 63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear family</td>
<td>2  8%</td>
<td>4 18%</td>
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<td>11 24%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24 100%</td>
<td>22 100%</td>
<td>46 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The preference for joint family life was, in fact, more marked amongst urban women than rural women, even though more urban women were living in nuclear units at the time of the survey. The prospect of joint family life was even more popular amongst urban
women for their own children, than for themselves. Indeed, many urban women, living separately, appeared to be least content with their situation. Yet they had all experienced alternative ways of living, whereas not all village women had lived in different family circumstances, especially after marriage. There was, however, a significant body of opinion amongst both rural and urban women, almost a quarter of the women surveyed, who had no strong preferences about living jointly or separately for both themselves or their children. Many of these women felt that there were advantages and disadvantages about both family systems.

Summary

The marked preference, however, for joint family life would seem to indicate that the 'ideology' of joint family life was the prevalent one in the area. Whatever women's current family circumstances, and whatever their actual experience, they felt that such a way of living was to be preferred. When they talked of the future, they were, as well, talking about circumstances over which they were likely to have more control. As young married women they were very much under the control of their family elders and their husband. Far from nuclear units being the result of women's inability to live together in a joint family unit, which was a reason often proffered by men for the breakup of a joint family, there were very strong aspirations for women to be able to live in a joint household.

There was evidence to suggest that only a small number of women
had any desire to live in a nuclear household. They did not seem to have any strong aspirations for greater privacy or an opportunity for a more intimate relationship with their husbands: a companionate marriage, a similar finding to that made by Caplan (1985) in her Madras sample. Indeed, there was a much stronger feeling amongst women in nuclear households of missing the company of other women. Moreover, many women preferred joint family life because they did not have to take on further responsibilities and there were other, older members of the family to whom they could turn for advice and support. Many women, too, felt a joint household was a preferable environment for their daughters in the future, after their marriage.

When women speculated about their own sons, they were envisaging circumstances, when they, themselves, were likely to be an authority figure in the family, at least in the domestic sphere. Hence, they could determine, to a greater extent, the quality of family relationships, which were felt to be so important. But they also had a preference for joint family living for their daughters, too, where they would not be in a position to exercise any influence over the quality of their daughters' lives in their in-laws' homes.

The predominance of a joint family 'ideology' was important on two counts. Firstly, it was likely to influence women's feelings about their own family circumstances, whether they were living in a joint family or otherwise. Those living in nuclear units tended to feel dissatisfied and feel that certain elements were missing from their lives. Those actually living in joint families, who were at
all critical, tended to reflect that their 'reality', their experience of joint family life, did not match the ideal, but the way of life, in itself, was not at fault. But, perhaps, more importantly, because all these women had actually experienced joint family life and also showed a marked preference for it, then this strong orientation also influenced their concepts of women's roles. It appeared probable that women who preferred joint family life, itself, would socialise their own children, and especially the girls, to adapt to such a lifestyle in the future. In those circumstances, qualities such as compromise and the ability to remain on good terms with everyone were highly valued, because they enabled the joint family to function smoothly. But individual aspirations tended to be discouraged because they could undermine the unity of the whole. Expectations of future patterns of residence, therefore, could determine many of the characteristics to be encouraged, or otherwise, in the process of socialisation. In the next chapter, therefore, I shall examine what women consider their roles to be and how they mould their daughters and daughters-in-law to perform these roles adequately.
1. Kuntesh Gupta (1982) contended that female sociologists have a different perspective to men in their studies of the family.

2. Seymour (1975), for example, found many nuclear families in Bhubaneswar in the new town development.

3. Shalini (1961) reported a similar finding amongst her Patidar families living in Baroda, who generally had at least one set of relatives still in the 'ancestral village'.

4. The inclusion of sisters' families in such purchases was seemingly a new development, facilitated by their proximity as a result of living in the same urban area.

5. I did not have the opportunity, however, to collect systematic data from respondents on this question.

6. Standing (1985) found that one of the major reasons given by her Calcutta sample for preferring joint family life was that it provided good child care arrangements. Another important factor was that women preferred not to have the added responsibility of living in a nuclear family.

7. Makhlouf (1979) found that women in traditional Yemeni society similarly valued the concepts of 'peace' and 'harmony' in family life.

8. A number of urban women, however, spoke spontaneously of the good nature of their in-laws, even of instances of mothers-in-law who treated them like daughters. So the 'ideal' did exist for some women.

9. Standing (1985), too, found that for her Calcutta sample one of the major disadvantages of joint family life was the prospect of intergenerational conflict. (A second factor was resentment over unequal income.)

10. Hence, women were asked about which form of lifestyle appeared better and what were the advantages and disadvantages of such forms of living. They were also asked to speculate about their children and the residential pattern they would like their children to adopt.
CHAPTER 11. WOMEN'S ROLES IN THE FAMILY
WOMEN'S ROLES IN THE FAMILY

Introduction

Patidar women lived in an extremely patriarchal society and, consequently, their roles were determined by the men in their lives. Most women were completely financially dependent, firstly on their father and their paternal uncles, and later on their in-laws. Even those women who were in paid employment did not consider doing so without their husband's permission. So, one of the attributes they were taught to acquire very quickly was the ability to adapt and compromise in order to remain on good terms with whomever they were living. This necessity provided the main influence in shaping and forming women's character and personality throughout their lives. Those characteristics which women themselves valued the most were the ability to sustain good relationships and to live in 'peace and harmony', not to argue, all of which required 'a good nature'. (1) But if women's ability to be on good terms with their families was one of the most crucial requirements, it was also a product of the central function of their lives: marriage and motherhood.

Childhood

From birth onwards, marriage was the most important factor in determining the shape of a girl's life. Even the reaction at her birth was influenced by the future necessity of making a good marriage. Women mentioned their relatives crying at the birth of a girl, and their anger, too, because a girl's marriage was extremely expensive and it was seen as a burden from birth. Families started
saving for marriage as soon as a girl was born and a family with a disproportionate number of girls could be financially ruined. One village woman, Sudha, claimed that at the birth of her first child, a daughter, she was told: "Why have you given birth to a stone?" Indeed, even the sweetmeats which were given to relatives and friends at the birth of a baby, especially a first baby, were of much better quality when the baby was a boy. Moreover, girls were not just a financial burden until they were married, but remained a liability for the rest of their lives. Substantial gifts to the married daughter and her children were made: the girl's parents were expected to provide her clothes after she was married and generally her children's clothes. They often paid for their grandchildren's education and the mother's brother bore considerable expenditure at the marriage of his niece. On top of this, if anything went wrong with a woman's marriage, she would have to return to her father's home, or at his death, to her brother's and hope that they would accept financial responsibility for her, and probably her children. As her parents might no longer be alive if there were any crises in her adult life, a woman needed to have a brother, and one with whom she had a good relationship, who would be prepared to help her out. Because of the central importance of this relationship, there were a number of 'religious' festivals, which cemented the bond: Rakshabandhan, when a brightly coloured string was literally tied by the sister round her brother's wrist, so that he would protect and care for her in the future. He presented her with a gift in return. At Bhaibij, at the start of the new year, the string was removed in another ceremony, which further marked the importance of the relationship, when the brother was called to his married sister's
home to be feasted. Absence of a brother in a family, even when surrogate 'cousin' brothers were prepared to take on the responsibilities of a full brother, could cause problems in finding a marriage partner.

Despite the general desire to have sons, and the disappointment at the birth of a daughter, there was no evidence that girls were less well treated, although women mentioned the prevalence of female infanticide in previous generations. Indeed, there was a certain counterbalancing influence which led many families to 'indulge' a daughter, because once she left her parent's home, piyar, she might expect not to be treated well. This practice was continued after a girl's marriage, whenever she returned to parents, when she was allowed to relax and not expected to work, in compensation for her assumed heavy workload and difficult life at her in-laws, sasera. So her sisters-in-law, bhaibhi, brother's wives, would look after her on her return to her piyar, as they, in turn, hoped to be cared for when they returned to their own parental home.

Small children, both boys and girls, were treated as a great source of pleasure and entertainment and, at times of leisure, were passed from one member of the family to another. At other times, the grandmother, Ba, frequently assumed responsibility for keeping an eye on babies or young toddlers. However, whoever was available would take on this role. If there were older children, then they were often expected to look after young children. In the villages, when children grew older, they played freely in the alleyways and
courtyards near their home, but in towns, children would be expected to stay around the home area, or at their neighbour's. Children of this age were allowed considerable latitude in their movements. Moreover, children were included in any social events and there was not a great deal of differentiation into adult and children's activities, even in the most sophisticated households. Children tended to have a similar bedtime to the adults, except the youngest, who were still taken to social occasions, but might fall asleep before the evening was over.

Until around the time of puberty, boys and girls were treated fairly equally. There was a strong emphasis on education and, indeed, so much time could be taken up in studying that even very young children had little time to spare. At the age of two and a half to three, young children, mainly in the towns, and in one or two of the larger villages, were taken to kindergarten classes, all day, where they were taught to read and write and simple arithmetic. They even had 'homework' which they were expected to complete at home each evening. Most children, who attended, were from the urban professional classes, and for women who lived in nuclear families, kindergarten classes provided not only education for their children, but an alternative form of child care during the day. This pressure for educational achievement was continued as the children grew older with many children, again especially in urban areas, attending special tuition classes, both before and after school. Urban mothers, particularly, saw it as one of their more important tasks to supervise their children's homework.
Both boys and girls were encouraged to study hard and do well, but for different reasons. Boys needed a good education for their future careers, whether they continued in the family business or followed an independent path. Girls, however, were encouraged to study because this was seen as an asset in the marriage market. Some mothers wished their daughters to have qualifications so they could work, if they wished to do so, or if their lives did not follow the expected pattern. However, only a very limited number would allow their daughters to work before marriage, as it was feared that work experience would be considered to have 'spoilt' a girl. (There appeared to be a general feeling that work experience would bring girls and women into contact with the 'real world' and they could, in the process, possibly lose some of their 'innocence' and malleability. Not only might they become too self-confident and opinionated, but there was always a danger in their coming into contact with men with whom they might form 'undesirable' friendships.) Many parents, therefore, considered it was the decision of their daughter's husband and in-laws whether she should work, or not. They did not want to jeopardise her chances of making a good match. Moreover, the level to which a girl was educated was not just dictated by her own ability. It was also carefully gauged to compliment her prospective marriage partners. It was felt only proper that a husband should be more educated than his wife, so a girl who was 'over educated' would find it very difficult to meet a suitable match. Some village women explained that their education had been stopped when they were around fourteen or fifteen because they would have had to travel elsewhere for further education and
their families were not willing for them to leave the village. A number of urban women had taken a degree, often in Home Economics, which educated them in the 'Western' models of child care and household management. Occasionally, in the middle of their final examinations, they were taken to meet prospective partners, because it was felt that once a girl had completed her education, at whatever level and whatever age, she should be married shortly afterwards.

Despite their school-work and studies, children were expected to perform small errands and help with watching younger brothers and sisters. However, as girls grew older and approached puberty, they were expected to learn some of the essential tasks involved in keeping a home. They would start to learn how to prepare and cook food, and were particularly expected to be able to serve guests with drinks and snacks. As daughters grew older and their studies were completed, they were usually given some household duties, such as helping with the preparation of meals and light cleaning jobs, so that they would be able to undertake all the tasks in their new home, once they were married.

In these years before marriage, girls would have more time available than at any time in the future, but they had to use it circumspectly. They might have hobbies, such as embroidery, learning to type and going to the cinema. But whatever they undertook had to be either supervised or to be in the company of a number of suitable female friends. A number of girls, through the National Cadet Corps, even went away on supervised camping
expeditions, where they learnt, among other skills, to mountaineer and rock climb. But only a handful of girls had travelled independently and it was usually only acceptable if this was in a school party or supervised group, or if they were with a male relative, that is a 'surrogate' brother. Groups of girls might go to a cinema or another function, but usually in daylight hours and too much independence was discouraged. This was a crucial age when a girl's reputation could be permanently damaged by associating with the 'wrong' people, or if she was suspected of having even the slightest of relationships with a boy. In the villages, it was less likely to occur because all villagers were viewed as 'fictive kin' and, therefore, a girl could move around more freely. But most girls and women were only too well aware of the power of gossip and circumscribed their behaviour accordingly.

Indeed, girls knew this was only a respite before marriage. They were all aware of the inevitability of marriage; they might be able to postpone it through various strategies, such as studying, if they wished to delay marriage. But they knew that eventually they would be married. Their whole childhood, and particularly from their early teens, was a preparation for this day. They had been brought up to expect to find married life perhaps difficult, until they learned the routine of their new household and had adapted to its ways. One young woman, Madhu, who had known her future husband and his family for a number of years, and was extremely unusual in this respect, acknowledged that her whole life would change. She would have to rise at around 4.30 am rather than the 8 - 9 am which
she did whilst unmarried, because her future mother-in-law rose at that time. She would have to adapt her religious beliefs, as her sasu belonged to a much more orthodox and stricter religious sect than her own. But girls knew their future happiness depended on their ability to adapt and fit in to their new household. The more independent hoped that over a period of time, through persuasion and example, they might change certain ways to their own liking, but this was expected to be a matter of great patience and diplomacy. There was no question, however, in girls' minds that they would be married; the only uncertainty was 'when'. Indeed, from the time of puberty onwards, girls undertook a yearly fast, lasting five days, Goyhro, to pray for a 'good husband'. They continued with these ceremonies until they were married, and sometimes even afterwards.

The concomitant of these somewhat restricted, though generally realistic expectations of married life, was also a notion of romantic love. The idea was fuelled primarily by the images of love and romance in Hindi films, but had a precedent, too, in the religious myths. (2) A number of young women expected to 'fall in love' with their husbands after marriage, and, indeed, some had obviously done so. Most people spoke of love growing after rather than before marriage, as in the West. If this actually occurred, then it could compensate considerably for difficult in-laws, or a hard working life. Ila, from Bakrol, commented, philosophically, on her very irascible sasu that her man was so 'nice' that this troubled relationship did not matter. Mothers-in-law were 'like that' anyway. But such cases were not the general rule. (3) Moreover, the strictures of joint family life mitigated against such
developments, as any show of affection or attempts at intimacy were discouraged and stopped. Indeed, a young couple rarely had any time alone together, and even their leisure activities would often be in segregated groups. They could only retire to their own room, if they had one, at bedtime, when everyone else did so.

Young married women

During the course of the marriage ceremony, itself, women sang songs marking the transition from the happier days as a daughter of the household to the cares and responsibilities and possible difficulties of married life. At a marriage ceremony, the bride and all her relatives and guests were always considered the 'inferior' side. They were the 'givers' of a bride, gifts and entertainment, whereas the husband and his family received. This symbolism reflected, too, the status of the bride after marriage. She was, possibly, the youngest and newest member of the household and also had the lowest status. She was expected to show deference and respect to all her seniors, including her husband, and to serve their needs. Panna explained how she had to 'nail her sari to her head' in the presence of her mother-in-law, as it was considered a mark of respect to cover her head in front of her superiors: even to the extent in the more traditional families of covering her eyes, as well. She spoke, too, of having to leave the room when her father-in-law entered. Certainly, young women were expected to remain quiet in the presence of their elders and not proffer any opinions.

The early months and years of marriage were crucial in moulding
young women into the ways of their marital family. They were taught not just the ways of cooking the family's favourite meals and delicacies, and how household tasks had to be performed, but also the family's own 'customs' such as which religious festivals and fasts they observed. The way they dressed, whom they saw, whom they visited, in fact, all areas of a woman's life were determined, at this stage, by her in-laws. This 'apprenticeship' was eased by the fact that husband and wife came from such similar social groups, from the same sub-caste and from families of similar standing. So, it was argued, the necessity to adapt and learn new ways was minimized for the girls.

As Chapter 10 showed, all the Patidar women surveyed had spent some time living in a joint family after marriage, even if subsequently they lived separately with their husband and children. Even women, who were waiting for a visa to join their newly-wed husband overseas, would spend this time living with their in-laws after marriage and not their own families. Lata from Anand was brought up in East Africa, but came to India to be married. After her marriage she returned to East Africa for a year, but lived with distantly related in-laws and not her own family. In earlier years, girls had returned to their parents' home shortly after marriage and had spent several weeks or months there, before returning to live permanently with their in-laws. This custom had largely lapsed apart from a token gesture of returning for perhaps only a few hours or days. Presumably, it was current at a time when the age of marriage was much younger, coinciding with puberty, and it served to ease a young girl more gradually into her marital home and duties.
The tradition still remained, however, of returning to the girl's parental home for her first baby, and, possibly, subsequent children, if she could be spared from her husband's home. Even when parents were abroad, women usually went to stay from their seventh month of pregnancy onwards with other relatives of their parents. Whilst with these relatives, they were cared for both before and after the birth; they were not expected to take part in housework, apart from very light tasks, and they had the benefit of care and advice from their own mother, or other older relatives, on how to care for young babies. Their whole attention was given to the care of the new baby. Their departure to their relatives, at the seventh month, was marked by a ceremony called Shrimant, when female relatives gathered to wish the pregnant woman a successful outcome to her labour. The high point of the ceremony was conducted by a woman who had a living son, and no history of problems such as miscarriages. This was hopefully to ensure the birth of a healthy son. As many women became pregnant within weeks, or a few months, of their wedding, they had the prospect of returning to their piyar within seven or eight months of marriage. All women stayed at their piyar until at least five and a quarter weeks after the birth of the baby, as they were considered ritually 'unclean' until that point. But many stayed weeks and months longer. The decision to depart was often the subject of great debate and negotiation between the husband's family and the girl's parents, who could not refuse outright, but could use arguments of weakness or ill-health to delay the departure of their daughter and her baby. One woman stayed for more than a year after the birth of her first child. While at her piyar, a young mother was not expected to perform any work, but to
concentrate solely on her baby. Moreover, she was surrounded by her own female relatives all with much greater experience of child care, who gave her a great deal of support and help. (Some women also returned for subsequent births where possible, if their husband's household was able to spare their labour.)

However, apart from these occasions of child birth, she could only return to her piyar with her husband's or her in-laws' permission. Usually, she would be allowed to return for certain rituals, particularly weddings, when some women returned for several days or weeks to help with the preparations, especially for a sister's wedding. A woman could only return, however, when other women were able to take over her duties in the home, so she was partly dependent on the extent of her workload, and mainly on the goodwill of her in-laws. Women in nuclear families had to make alternative arrangements, if they wished to spend time away from their husband's home. Usually they took the children with them, if no-one else was able to care for them. They still had to find a friend or relative prepared to cook for their husbands, however, in their absence.

Relationships with husbands

Such long absences, when women returned to their piyar, reflected on the nature of many husband-wife relationships. There was little opportunity for those couples who lived in a joint family to develop a very close relationship, even if both wished to do so. Structurally, such closeness was seen as divisive within a joint
family, as the particular desires of the couple were likely to
supersede those of the interests of the joint family as a whole.
Consequently, a young couple were not given the time or the privacy
to get to know each other well. They were not allowed to spend time
together alone, apart from when they slept, and once their children
were born, they would probably share the same bedroom, if not the
same bed. Even then, a young woman might not be able to retire to
her room or bed until her sasu permitted her to do so. In the
villages, particularly, she might not even have a specific room of
her own, but she and her husband might have to sleep in one of the
general purpose rooms, after everyone else had retired for the
night. Certainly, no outward show of affection was tolerated and up
to the present generation of young women, wives only referred to
their husband in the third person, never by name. Even at
mealtimes, husband and wife would eat separately, and it was
considered one of a wife's duties to serve her husband's food.

Wives in nuclear families were not likely to be so
circumscribed. They also had more time free from household tasks
and, in many cases, the help of a servant. But it was unlikely that
they would have moved away from the joint family to become a nuclear
unit until after the birth of one of more of their children. By
such a time, the pattern of their relationship with their husband
was already well established. As has been seen in the previous
section, as household tasks declined, women had developed other
roles, particularly that of 'mother' to occupy their time. They
were much more conscious of the importance of correct child
development and felt the necessity of devoting certain periods of
the day to the care of their children. Moreover, even when living separately, they were not able to be alone with their husbands for very much of the time, particularly because of the custom of children staying up in the evening to a similar time to their parents. Most nuclear families, as well, still followed the pattern of having their young children sleeping in the same room, if not the same bed, even when there was space for them to sleep elsewhere. This often continued until well after the children started to attend school, and possibly up to the approach of puberty.

Women seemed still to place a much greater emphasis on their perception of their role as 'mothers', rather than on their role as 'wife', even in the nuclear family; but this marital relationship was, to some extent, in a state of flux. There was the possibility for a couple to grow closer when they lived separately; this proved to be particularly the case for those who had contracted love marriages. In the small number of such marriages, like that of Lila and Jagdesh, they certainly appreciated the possibility of more intimacy in their relationship. They were very eager to live separately from Jagdesh's parents, after a number of years of marriage. They were then more able to bring up their children as they wished and to discuss matters affecting the immediate family. Certainly, a wife in such a marriage felt more able to act on her own ideas, knowing that she would receive support from her own husband, even if there was opposition from other members of the extended family. However, for many women in arranged marriages, the fact of living separately had not necessarily brought the couple any
closer; they still led fairly separate lives, when the couple had separated from the joint family. Women in arranged marriages, even those living in nuclear families, rarely commented on any sense of satisfaction or fulfillment from their marital relationship, whereas they certainly did so at the birth of a son. It should not be assumed, also, that because a family lived separately, they were free to act as they pleased. They could still be subject to the dictates of joint family life. Even Lila and Jagdesh returned to their parents-in-law nearly every evening to eat after they first set up house alone. Other women were still instructed on their duties and obligations towards others, to attend certain functions or offer help to other relatives with some household task. In such cases, the influence and control was still evident, only it was slightly distanced. But for many women, there was also a sense of loss, possibly of loneliness, from living in a nuclear family. They valued the support and availability of female company in a joint family setting. The potential of a closer relationship with one's husband did not seem to provide compensation for this deprivation.

In both joint and nuclear families, social activities would often be conducted separately; with husbands spending much time away from the home with their male friends, only returning to eat and sleep. Indeed, one husband living in a nuclear family in Gada, commented that 'dogs would bark' in the village streets, if he and his wife were seen going out together to a social function, so strange would the activity seem. The traditional role of husband and wife was symbolised in the page lage ceremony at Divali, the Gujarati New Year. At Divali, everyone had to demonstrate anew
their respect for their elders, and superiors, in the family, by touching their feet: a ritual performed by a young bride not just to her parents-in-law and older brother and sisters-in-law, but also her husband. The only fairly relaxed and possibly close relationship acceptable for a young bride was with her younger brother-in-law, with whom she might have a 'joking', mildly flirtatious relationship. At Holi, this took a particularly overt form, when she and, usually, other younger relatives, became a target of much practical joking when coloured powder was thrown in profusion all over the victim.

Young married women were not expected to assume any responsibility. Particularly in a joint family, household tasks and bearing children were perceived as their main concern and even these would probably be supervised by an older woman. They were not involved in making decisions and they did not have to undertake any duties outside the household, whereas older women had a number of ceremonial duties to perform at many social functions, especially marriages.

Roles: ideal characteristics

Given the roles which young married women were expected to adopt, it was not surprising that they valued those characteristics which would enable them to perform such roles well. They had been brought up from childhood to fulfill their wifely duties and had subsequently found, from experience, that to behave as they were
expected was the most likely way to ensure a peaceful and harmonious life, which most women valued very highly. (Data is taken from 54 married women in Survey C.)

Table 11.1: Ideal characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perform all household tasks</td>
<td>15 60%</td>
<td>19 66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help others with work</td>
<td>2 8%</td>
<td>6 21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook well</td>
<td>4 16%</td>
<td>13 45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mix with people/enjoy entertaining</td>
<td>5 20%</td>
<td>10 34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good nature</td>
<td>12 48%</td>
<td>11 38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The outstanding characteristic valued by both urban and rural women was the ability to perform all household duties well: 60% of village women specified this ability, as did 66% of urban women. A fifth of urban women, too, mentioned the importance of helping out others with their work, but only two village women did so. All the women lived in nuclear families, and, hence, it was important to them to receive extra help when they were undertaking particularly arduous tasks in the home. Urban women also differentiated between general household tasks and the ability to cook well. Almost half, 45%, particularly stated that they could cook well and, obviously, felt that this was a desirable attribute; but only 16% of the rural women made this distinction. Similarly, just over a third of the urban women stressed that they enjoyed mixing with other people and were good at entertaining guests; whereas only 20% of rural women felt this was a characteristic worth mentioning. This emphasis
reflected the greater importance of entertaining and mixing with other people, in urban women's lives, whereas it was a somewhat peripheral part of village life. Consequently, a reflection of their more restricted lifestyle could be deduced from the emphasis some village women placed on staying at home, not wasting time by visiting, and, by extension, gossiping, and, certainly, not talking to, or, in some cases, even looking at men, outside the family circle; the implication of such behaviour being that they were flirting. However, urban women did not feel their behaviour, in this respect, should be so circumscribed, presumably because it was necessary, at times, to entertain their families' guests, perhaps even their husband's business colleagues.

The other major characteristics mentioned by a significant number of women were centred around the ability to 'get on well' with others. It was felt important not to argue by both rural and urban women, and, if arguments did occur, not to hold grudges. About a quarter of the urban women (7/29) stressed that they did argue and were obviously proud of the fact; four others mentioned that they were hot-tempered and did become angry quickly, but this was a fact which they regretted. Four other urban women, 14%, stressed that even after arguments, they did not bear a grudge. Twelve per cent of the village women, (3/25) discussed their equable temperament; two, however, qualified their apparent good temper by stating that they were not in a position to answer back, because of their natal family's poverty or indifference and, consequently, their situation was far too insecure to jeopardise in any way. Nearly half of all the women felt that they had a 'good nature' or
had been told so by others, by which they meant they were 'kind', 'generous', 'quiet', apparently happy because always smiling, 'easy-going' and 'patient'. Forty eight per cent of rural women and 38% or urban women stressed this point. Such a 'good nature', of course, implied their ability to be on good terms with everyone and this was further reinforced by statements emphasising the importance of 'harmony' within the home, maintaining good relations with everyone and not interfering in other people's business. Twenty eight per cent of both the rural and the urban women felt they were able to remain on such good terms with everyone.

Far fewer women in either the villages or the towns placed much stress on the 'mothering' role. Only a small percentage of rural women (3/25) felt it relevant to mention that they were 'good at mothering' and two others mentioned they were good at looking after children, generally. More urban women discussed this point: about a quarter (7/29) felt they made good mothers and three felt they were good at looking after children. The relative lack of discussion on this point might, of course, mask the fact that it was such an integral part of any Patidar woman's identity that she could not or did not conceptualise it as a separate identifiable characteristic.

It certainly was not easy for women to respond very readily to the question and they did find it easier to discuss the more practical areas of their lives such as housework and cooking. Consequently, a number of women mentioned their ability at their hobby, which was most frequently a handicraft such as embroidery.
In fact, 40% of the rural women mentioned this fact compared with just over a quarter of the urban women (8/29), who had other outlets for their leisure activities. Moreover, working women generally felt they were capable at their careers and gained considerable satisfaction from this realisation. (Twenty-one per cent of urban women and 12% of rural women discussed this.)

Village women actually found it more difficult to discuss the topic at all. Discussion tended to centre around their capacity to work and keep on good terms with everyone. They did not value themselves highly, or gain any particular satisfaction from life. Ila from Bakrol, commented, when questioned further: "What more can I say? I exist". Others laughed with surprise at the strangeness of the question. Several women stressed that housework was their main occupation and, consequently, outlet. "In doing my work, I get my pleasure," said Bhano from Gada.

Older women

As women grew older, their situation changed quite considerably. None of the women surveyed had reached the position of being mothers-in-law themselves, but occasionally, they could be the eldest female, if their own mother-in-law was dead or, perhaps, too weak or indisposed to exercise her authority. But the evidence was there in the very situation of the younger married women: power was vested in older women and ultimately, in older men. Women had most contact with other women, even outside the joint family: the instruction, guidance and disciplining of younger women was
generally felt to be the responsibility of older women, particularly any tasks connected with household duties. Even when women lived separately with their husband and children, mothers-in-law could still exercise a great deal of authority over them. Lata from Anand, like all her sisters-in-law in a similar situation, was liable to be telephoned by their sasu and summoned to help in various communal tasks or instructed to attend various social functions when some woman was required to represent the family. Such tasks generally fell to the elder family members. But, especially during the very hectic wedding season, there could well be conflicting invitations. Someone had to attend, on the female side, to represent the family and present the necessary 'gifts' of money. It would most probably be construed as a slight if family representatives did not attend. Women, particularly, were witnesses as to the propriety and lavishness of the ceremony. Men were generally unable to see any of the wedding ceremony, because they were gathered in all-male groups away from the main celebrations, watched virtually totally by female guests. Important 'business' was transacted on such occasions and, of course, they were an ideal forum for acquiring and transmitting news and information.

As a woman grew older, and her children, but particularly her sons, matured, then she acquired greater influence and power within the family. With the marriage of her own sons, and/or nephews, she built up her own 'empire' over which she had control. It was her decision who performed what tasks, what food was bought, how much preserved and what was cooked. She decided how her daughters-in-law
should behave, or how much latitude they could have. But she was
able to influence decisions beyond the immediate domestic sphere,
either because she had acquired sufficient respect and weight from
successfully bringing up her children, or over the years, for her
opinion to be taken into account. More particularly, she was able
to use her influence over her adult sons to gain a voice at all-male
gatherings.

But, although most mothers-in-law could exercise considerable
authority, particularly over the female members of the household and
the children, they also had their own tasks to perform. Apart from
participating in cooking and cleaning duties, in farming households,
it was frequently the older women who cared for buffalo, one of the
more onerous tasks. Moreover, they might also take on duties such
as shopping, which would take them away from the immediate
household, as it was much more acceptable for an older woman to move
freely as she was not likely to bring the family into disrepute by
unseemly behaviour with the opposite sex! Older women also often
took on the role of mothering their various grandchildren, or other
younger members of the household. Finally, it was seen as the duty
of older women to perform all the necessary religious and ritual
ceremonies connected with the household. They acted as a
representative of the household when they said daily prayers to the
household god. (Only when no older woman was present in the
household would younger women be obliged to take on these roles.)
Joint family: conflict

Despite the general high regard among women for life within the joint family, conflict was inherent within its structure. Although many families did succeed in living harmoniously, this was as a result of many compromises and adjustments. Within each generation, there was inevitably a battle for power and influence, although the bias was always with the older generation. Each young bride came to the household with no natural allies or friends. She was particularly likely to come into conflict with her mother-in-law who, most probably exercised her greatest influence through her son. She was, understandably, reluctant to see this influence with her son eroded through a close relationship between husband and wife. The whole dynamics of joint family life mitigated against such particularistic relationships and opportunities for such close relationships to develop were deliberately discouraged. Consequently, stories about dictatorial mothers-in-law, whether mythical or true, abounded and many women referred to conflicts either between themselves and their mother-in-law or sisters-in-law. In such conflicts, the son was expected to support his mother rather than his own wife, and, frequently, the young husband would distance himself from any arguments and try and remain neutral. Consequently, a young married woman would rarely receive any overt support in any disagreements from any other members of her marital family.

Conflicts, too, were often projected on to women, when, in fact, the major source of discontent was actually between their
respective husbands; a frequent area of conflict between brothers, for example, was over sharing out the joint property, if it was to be divided up, or over their allocation of income. When two brothers were in disagreement, it was difficult, too, for their wives to remain on totally harmonious terms. As they were together for the major part of the day, arguments tended to occur between the women, although the origin of the conflict was disagreement between the men. So, relationships between sisters-in-law could also be contentious, with resentments when one sister-in-law seemed to benefit unfairly. Bhakula from Karamsad, would have liked to have worked, but as the eldest daughter-in-law, she had been kept at home to help with the household duties. Her much younger and newly married sister-in-law had been allowed to work because her help was not needed in the household. Bhakula had resigned herself to staying at home, because she had little other choice; moreover, with the birth of her first baby, she was more reconciled to the idea. Similarly, Meena, from the same village originally, had gone to work in London after her marriage, leaving her young baby in the care of her mother-in-law and older sister-in-law, Benna. On her return, Meena and her husband went to live in the town of VN, leaving Benna to help out in the joint household. Benna's resentment was obvious. Generally, however, as has been shown above, joint families continued to function because young girls were brought up to adjust and adapt to their new household, and to endeavour to remain silent and on good terms with everyone. If they were to achieve any influence, it had to be through manipulation, not through conflict. (This will be examined further in Chapter 17.)
There was a broad consensus between both rural and urban women over what were the role Patidar women were expected to fulfil within the household. Such roles were a reflection of joint family life within a patriarchal society. Younger women were expected to defer to their elders; in joint households, women spent the majority of their time with other women. Even women in nuclear households, however, looked to other women for company; they had few expectations of companionship from their husbands. Indeed, the majority of women preferred the 'ideology' of the joint family, whatever the reality of their own lives. There were some significant differences, however, in how women perceived their roles. The 'ideal characteristics' which women felt were required of them as wives, varied considerably between urban and rural households. Urban women placed much greater emphasis on aspects of their role which reflected the changes in their lifestyle. They felt they needed certain skills, such as good cooking and certain character traits, which would enable them to function better in the wider 'status arena'. An ability to mix well with people and to enjoy entertaining a variety of guests was an indicator of how they perceived one of their major roles as being 'status production work'. (This will be discussed more fully in Chapter 19.) In the following chapter, however, I shall discuss how some of the major formative factors in women's live had begun to change, so enabling them to cope with their new role expectations.
WOMEN'S ROLES IN THE FAMILY

1. Information was taken from Survey C, composed of 54 married women with children under the age of ten.

2. A number of educated women who did read English novels concentrated solely on the romances of 'Mills and Boon'.

3. Manesha Roy (1972) also described the existence of an expectation of romantic love in marriage amongst educated Bengali women, which she attributed to a diet of novels and films. She depicted their subsequent dissatisfaction, as husbands were generally more interested in the sexual side of married life because they already received companionship and love from their female relatives, particularly from their mothers and sisters.
CHAPTER 12. AREAS OF CHANGE: EDUCATION, AGE AT MARRIAGE AND FERTILITY
AREA S OF CHANGE: EDUCATION, MARRIAGE AND FERTILITY

Introduction

In Section 3, it became apparent from the discussion of Patidar women's daily routines that the lives of women in non-agricultural households and, particularly, urban women were developing in new directions. Women, themselves, acknowledged, as we have seen in the previous chapter, that they needed to possess some different characteristics in order to handle the demands made on them in urban households. The hard-working, good-natured, easy-going personality ideally desired in young women in agricultural households, who would remain quietly in the background doing their duties, was not necessarily suited to an urban household. Women in these households needed not just the practical skills of knowing how to cook well and present food in an appetising manner, but they also needed, at times, to participate more actively in entertaining guests and in other social events. What were the changes which had occurred in Patidar women's lives which enabled them to deal successfully with changing circumstances?

EDUCATION

Some changes, of course, such as higher educational qualifications, could have significant implications for other areas of women's lives. Chapter 9 showed how a number of urban Patidar women wanted to seek paid employment because they were 'bored' and desired an added dimension in their lives. Some women wanted to be
able to use their qualifications in a practical manner. But another aspect of a higher education was that it opened up other avenues to women and brought a greater likelihood that they would acquire a more questioning approach towards their lives. There were obvious long-term implications in that educated women were less likely to accept traditional customs, values and roles in an unquestioning manner. Nor would educated younger women necessarily find it easy to defer to senior uneducated women in the household. (1).

In Table 12.1 below, the variation in the educational standards between rural and urban women can clearly be seen. (The data was collected from 72 women in Survey A.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 12.1: Educational standards of women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to secondary school certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher school cert./Cambridge or equivalent qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studied to graduate/professional qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Just over two-thirds of the women living in towns had a degree or an equivalent professional qualification. Only a third of village women had studied to this level and two-thirds of those women (8/12) lived in the larger villages. In contrast, only 14% of urban women had only studied up to Secondary School Certificate level, taken at the age of fifteen upwards, depending on ability; but 42% of village
women had only studied to this level. (A sixth of the urban women had intermediate qualifications at Higher Secondary School levels as had a quarter of the village women.)

All women, whether rural or urban, had stayed at school until at least the age of sixteen and studied up to the standard of Secondary School Certificate. (Children in Gujarati schools only moved up into the next standard after passing their yearly examinations, so that children might reach the same standard of education at different ages.) However, after the age of sixteen, there was a significant difference between rural and urban areas. The smallest villages had the lowest educational levels, whereas nearly three-quarters of urban women had gone on to study further for higher educational qualifications: see Table 12.1.

In Section 3, it has already been shown how both rural and urban women stressed the importance of a good education for their children; one woman from a small village, Hema, had even sent her children away to boarding school in order to achieve this. Women, too, had pointed out, as one of their roles, the need to supervise their children's homework; even very young children in kindergarten had work to undertake at home. Because of large classes, particularly at state schools, children often needed supplementary help in order to understand their lessons. Many went for private tutorial classes, outside school hours. But mothers, too, supplied such help. Consequently, it was becoming increasingly important for women to receive a good education, if only to be able to assist their own children in their school careers.
A good education, therefore, had become a prerequisite for girls as well as boys, when families began to search for suitable marriage partners for their children. This was particularly the case in urban households, as can be seen in Table 12.1. However, families did not want a future bride to have a good education solely so that she could 'socialise' her children more effectively; it also enabled women to undertake new social roles with more confidence: see Chapter 19 for more discussion. A good education had become a necessity for women to undertake their roles in 'reproduction' successfully: not just rearing a new generation, but 'reproduction' of the household's status within the wider community. (Caplan 1985, U. Sharma 1986). It was particularly important for a number of urban women to be able to mix with a wider social circle than most village women encountered: see Chapter 15. Urban women came more frequently into contact with their husband's business networks and had, at times, to act as a conduit for information between a husband and his colleagues, much as Finch (1983) found in her British sample of 'incorporated wives'.

These educational requirements for young women often meant they were much more highly educated than older members of the household, particularly their sasu. There was some evidence of conflicting attitudes between the younger and older generation, for example, over the rearing of the new generation of children. Lila and her husband, Jagdesh, were pleased to have more opportunity to dictate the manner of their own children's upbringing, which they only felt able to do after they had gone to live separately. The majority of women chose other means rather than open conflict to try and achieve
their desires, when they were not in accord with their elders: see Chapter 17. This was partly because of the balance of power in the household and partly because of their own upbringing which had 'socialised' them to defer to their elders.

MARRIAGE

Age at marriage

This requirement for a good standard of education for girls as well as boys, in a family, had had an impact on their age at marriage. As both were studying longer, marriage was generally deferred until studies were completed. Partly as a result of further education and partly as a result of greater maturity by the time of marriage, some young women found it more difficult to make the necessary adaptations to the new household. One woman, Manju, had been a keen rock climber before her marriage and had even qualified as an instructor as well as working in an office before she settled in one of the larger villages. She had very definite ideas about what she wanted to do, but in order to take her teaching qualification after marriage, she had had to perform all her household duties first, before attending college each day. No-one was prepared to make any concessions in her duties in order to enable her to study.

The age at marriage for both rural and urban women was overwhelmingly concentrated between the ages of nineteen and twenty-four, when young women were generally expected to have finished their studies: see Table 12.2, based on data taken from Survey A.
Table 12.2: Age at marriage of women (a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 and under</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 - 20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 22</td>
<td>9*</td>
<td>11+</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 - 24</td>
<td>8+</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4*</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 upwards</td>
<td>3+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>plus* not yet married</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plus+ married later</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Certainly many people felt that if a woman was not married before she was twenty-five, then there would be considerable problems, because the number of suitable men still single was sharply reduced. The biggest differences in ages, however, could be seen between those women living in small villages, who generally had a poorer educational standard, and those in larger villages and towns, married largely to professional and business men: see Table 12.3 below. Just under half of the women in the small villages, 48%, were married by the time they were twenty, whereas only 13% of the women in larger villages were married by that age. Indeed, women in the larger villages married even later than in the towns, where 28% were married by the time they were twenty. Even so, only one woman in the total sample had been married at the age of sixteen.
Table 12.3: Age at marriage (b): Large and small villages (3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Small Villages (27)</th>
<th>Large Villages (6)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 and under</td>
<td>5 24%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5 14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 - 20</td>
<td>5 24%</td>
<td>2 13%</td>
<td>7 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 22</td>
<td>7 33%</td>
<td>2* 13%</td>
<td>9 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 - 24</td>
<td>3+ 14%</td>
<td>5 33%</td>
<td>8 22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 26</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 7%</td>
<td>1 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 upwards</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3+ 20%</td>
<td>3 8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|              | 20+ 95%             | 13*+ 86%           | 33 91% |

* plus one woman not yet married in that age group
+ plus one woman married later in the year of the survey

Although marriages in both towns and villages were concentrated largely between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, in the larger villages, there was a significant group, 27%, who were not married until they were twenty-five or over. Women in the large villages of Dharmaj and Karamsad, all came from the highest status ekada, 'the Six', and obviously the higher the status of the women's ekada and khadaki, the fewer the pool of suitable higher status men. A number of women in the highest status groups, therefore, had found difficulties in finding suitable partners of as high, if not higher, status. This could delay the age of marriage. It was possible that some higher status women who had hoped to marry into an urban household had eventually to agree to a marriage in one of 'the Six Villages' instead, when a suitable urban match was not forthcoming, because their age made an urban marriage increasingly unlikely. This
would account for the high educational standards in many women in the larger villages. (The late age of marriage is considered in Chapter 20, when the criteria for selecting marriage partners will be discussed.) In previous generations, the age at marriage was considerably younger; it can be seen, therefore, that it was more difficult to fit into a joint family, when an educated young women might well have formulated different views to her in-laws, and have, possibly, had the opportunity to express such ideas before her marriage. One educated single woman, Vina, in her early thirties at the time of the research, explained that her own father had been married by the time he was eleven and his bride was even younger, only eight years old.

**FERTILITY**

The discussion in Chapter 4 showed how many authors have considered 'reproduction to be a key factor in determining women's position in society. (4). It was not just the physical act of bearing children, which was felt to limit women's role, but also the restrictions imposed by their responsibility in bringing up and 'socialising' children into their roles in future adult life. It was certainly true that in Indian society, women were revered more for their roles as mothers than as wives. Indeed, amongst rural Patidar women, caring for children appeared to be so intrinsically part of their daily experience that they did not even conceptualise it as a 'task', or even one of their 'roles'. However, urban Patidar women and the more educated rural women, mainly in the larger villages, were beginning to emphasise the importance of this
role in their lives and could discuss the merits of certain aspects of child care. This development was, however, actually taking place at a time when the size of both rural and urban Patidar families was diminishing quite rapidly, from one generation to the next. Whereas previous generations had been brought up in large families, this generation were deliberately restricting the size of their families. For urban women, particularly, they actually had more time to devote to the socialisation of their children and, sometimes, even consciously did so because they had received higher education in 'child development' or child care. Yet, although the role of mother seemed to be becoming more central to Patidar women's conceptions of themselves, the actual time spent in pregnancy and caring for babies was diminishing.

Age at first child and number of children

Although Patidar women were married at a later age than the previous generation of women in their families, there was a fairly general pattern, in both towns and villages, of giving birth within the first two years of marriage. It seemed important to prove that a woman was fertile and there was considerable pressure and anxiety, if a woman did not become pregnant fairly quickly. Sudha in the small village of Bakrol, was married at eighteen. When she still had not given birth by the time she was nearly twenty, there was tremendous disapproval from her family and nearby relatives and neighbours in the khadaki. However, it is interesting to note that although women from small villages were married at an earlier age,
there was a longer gap before their first conception. (5) Not one of the 58 women had her first child before the age of nineteen. (Data taken from married women with children questioned in Survey A). A government report in 1978 stated that, in Gujarat, the median age of maternity at the first child in rural areas was 21.32 and 22.40 in urban areas, compared to 21.04 for rural areas and 21.84 in urban areas in the whole of India. (6) A number of women were, however, in their early thirties before their first child was born. Generally, such delays in conception caused considerable anxiety for women. One woman, Bhakula from Karamsad, after trying for her first child for a number of years, had undertaken a special fast, katta, and vowed to go on a pilgrimage if she gave birth. (She fulfilled her pledge on the birth of her first child.)

Table 12.4: Fertility: years of marriage and birth of first child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In first two years</td>
<td>18 64%</td>
<td>24 80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 4 years</td>
<td>8 29%</td>
<td>3 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years and upwards</td>
<td>2 7%</td>
<td>3 10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eighty per cent of urban women and 64% of rural women gave birth within the first two years of marriage, see Table 12.4 above. This did not include any reference to prior miscarriages or abortions within these two years. No woman who married before the age of 18 had children immediately, which accounted for the greater weighting of first births, two to four years after marriage amongst
rural women: 29% compared to 10% of urban women. (No data was obtained as to whether this was a result of a deliberate policy of family planning in the families concerned.)

Table 12.5: Age of women at birth of their first child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 and under</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/20</td>
<td>6 21%</td>
<td>4 13%</td>
<td>10 17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/22</td>
<td>9 32%</td>
<td>6 20%</td>
<td>15 26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/24</td>
<td>4 14%</td>
<td>11 37%</td>
<td>15 26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/26</td>
<td>5 18%</td>
<td>6 20%</td>
<td>11 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 upwards</td>
<td>4 14%</td>
<td>3 10%</td>
<td>7 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The age of women when their first child was born closely reflected the age at marriage, with births being concentrated between the ages of nineteen to twenty and twenty-six. The peak age for first births was slightly older for urban women, around 23 - 24, 37%, whereas 32% of rural women were 21 or 22 when their first child was born. Indeed, fifty per cent of rural women had had their first child by the time they were twenty-two, whereas only a third of urban women had done so.

**Subsequent children**

The number of subsequent children was determined predominantly by two factors: the necessity of having a son and the desire to keep
family sizes as small as possible because it was felt to be very expensive to bring up children. These two criteria were, of course, frequently in conflict. There was a universal desire amongst both urban and rural women to have as small a family as possible. Indeed, two women, Rashmi and Malika, who were sisters, had only one child, a son, and they stated they were definitely not having any more children. (Moreover, by 1985 when their sons were both in their teens, they had not had any more children.) Other women would have liked to have stopped after their first child, but had been pressurised by their husband or in-laws into having a further child. This was particularly the case when the first child was a girl. Indeed, many families were perfectly satisfied with two children as long as they had a son. Some had three children, especially when the first two were girls: see Table 6.3 on number and sex of children of the women surveyed.) But everyone agreed that it was futile to go on having children after this, for the sake of bearing a son, because a family could well have to bear the burden of four daughters and the problems and expense of their marriages. Everyone could quote examples from either their immediate family or relatives of the prevalence of large families of girls, in previous generations. Meena, who acted as an interpreter for a while, was one of nine sisters, with one young brother. Lata came from a family of eight: six sisters and two brothers; Anjana, my 'longest-serving' interpreter, came from a family of five: four daughters followed by a young brother. Because such examples were so readily at hand in their own peer group, without even having to look back at parents' or grandparents' experience, the women, and usually their husbands, were determined to limit their families. Indeed, only one
woman surveyed had more than three children, Kamini, who had four. It was extremely rare to come across any couples, or even their in-laws, who contemplated having families as large as four children.

In fact, amongst the 54 married women with children, in Survey C, the average number of children per family was exactly two: in the towns, the average was 1.9 children per family and in the villages, 2.1. (The larger villages of Dharmaj and Karamsad had the same average of 1.9 children per family as the towns, whereas women in smaller villages had a slightly higher average: 2.3 children per family.) The final size of the families of the women questioned would, in some cases, be larger, because all the women were still of child-bearing age. They were all asked how many children they would like and if these projected family sizes materialised, then the average number of children per family would be 2.26. The proposed urban family size worked out at an average of 2.14 children, and in rural families, the average was 2.4. There was little marked difference between small and large villages on the eventual proposed size of family. These totals were, of course, only speculative. But all the women were aware of some form of family planning, whether they used any method at the time of the survey or not. Yet the average number of children for all women in Gujarat, by the age of forty, was 6.13. (Women in India: A Statistical Profile 1978).

It was, indeed, apparent that most women employed some form of family planning, as although the majority of women conceived and gave birth to their first child within the first two years of marriage, there were much longer intervals between subsequent
children. Out of the 54 women surveyed, 41 had more than one child: 21 in towns and 20 in the villages: see Table 12.6.

Table 12.6: Fertility: Average interval between children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Small Villages</th>
<th>Large Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of children (women with more than one child)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average no: of years between children</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No: of women</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average number of years between children was exactly three years. The average interval between children was the same in both towns and villages: three years. Women in the smaller villages, however, had shorter intervals between children than either women in the towns or in the large villages, in 'the Six'. Indeed, as on a number of other occasions, women from the professional families in larger villages tended to have adopted a similar practice to urban women. In this instance, indeed, there was a larger interval between the births of children in the larger villages, 3.6 years, compared to the towns, where the average interval between children was three years. This was, in fact, confirmed by the statements of women from professional and business backgrounds where young women, after their first child, planned to have a three to four year gap before their next child, if not longer. (6)
Family Planning

There was ample evidence to show, therefore, that women were planning when they would have children and presumably this ability to plan successfully would enable them to limit their family size, as desired. Indeed, a number of women had been sterilized once they had achieved the family size thus wanted, and other women expected to be sterilized, too: see Table 12.7 below. Sterilization appeared much more popular in the villages, particularly in the small villages, than in the towns. Twelve village women, 50%, had already been sterilized and a further four, 14%, planned to have the operation at a later date.

In the towns, other forms of limiting families were popular. Only three urban women had been sterilised and four more planned to have the operation, a total of 24%. But 19 women used contraceptive methods such as the IUD, pill, sheath, or the 'safe period', or claimed they would have an abortion, if they became pregnant; some 66% of the urban women surveyed. There was not a great deal of evidence of married women actually having abortions, if they had an unwanted pregnancy. But the topic was not talked about very openly, as, certainly, members of the older generation did not usually approve of its practice. Only 24% of rural women claimed to be using some form of contraception; but half had already been sterilized. Very few urban or rural women, however, were using no contraception at all, only 10% of the total. The majority of these wanted another child.
Table 12.7: Family Planning and Sterilization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th></th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sterilized</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned to be sterilized</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using contraception</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(including abortion)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Small Villages</th>
<th>Large Villages</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sterilized</td>
<td>9 69%</td>
<td>3 27%</td>
<td>12 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned to be sterilized</td>
<td>2 15%</td>
<td>2 18%</td>
<td>4 17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using contraception</td>
<td>2 15%</td>
<td>4 36%</td>
<td>6 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(including abortion)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 18%</td>
<td>2 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On a subsequent visit, three years later, none of the women visited at the time of the survey had become pregnant, unless they had actually stipulated when originally questioned that they wished to have a further child. Hence the projected family size was liable to be a fairly reliable indicator of eventual family size. (Information received since that time has confirmed the original projections.)

Although there was a certain difference in the practice of contraceptive methods and sterilization, this did not appear to be age related. The 54 married women with children surveyed did not
differ significantly in age between the towns and villages; the average age of women living in villages was 31.11 at the time of the survey and the average age of urban women was 30.25 years. In fact, the women who opted for sterilization were generally from the smaller villages, and they also tended to be on average several years younger than women from either the towns or the larger villages. Women from the small villages were of an average age of 28.6 at the time of Survey C, whereas women from larger villages were 34.87 and urban women 30.25. Hence the popularity of sterilization as a method of family limitation was not found, as might have been expected, amongst the older women. Indeed, the oldest woman interviewed, Ranjan, aged over forty at the time of Survey C, was still hoping to have a son. It would seem, therefore, that for the less affluent families living in the smaller villages it was more essential to ensure that the family was not burdened with any unwanted children, once a healthy son had been born. Amongst the poorer families, the birth of a further unanticipated child, most particularly if it proved to be a girl, would turn out to be a tremendous financial burden. It seems more likely that the prosperous professional and business families could possibly shoulder the expense of another child with slightly less difficulty. Even so, urban families were slightly smaller on average than rural ones. However, amongst these urban families, there were suggestions that abortion would be used as a means of family limitation. (7) Indeed, women discussed the possibility of 'selective abortion', when the unborn child was found to be a girl. Although a number of women questioned had mentioned the possibility of such an abortion, they had not had one as tests had proved that they had conceived a
son. But this development, it was felt, could be particularly beneficial in reducing the burden of unwanted daughters.

**Summary of data on marriage and the family**

Women appeared to be marrying at later ages compared to preceding generations and the age at marriage was similar to those found among many Western countries, such as the United Kingdom. The marriage of girls was being deferred until their studies were completed. In villages, this tended to be at a slightly earlier age than in the towns because village women, generally, were not so highly educated. The majority of women gave birth soon after marriage. Once they had done so and proved their fertility, then there was generally an interval of, on average, three years before a subsequent child was born. Family size was strictly limited, with all families preferring no more than two to three children, although the priority for most women was to give birth to a son. Such a desire was as a direct consequence of dowry payments and costs at the time of marriage of a daughter, which was perceived as a tremendous burden in most households. The cost of a daughter's marriage was more particularly expensive in urban households, as will be discussed more fully in Chapter 20. Consequently, urban families had slightly smaller families than most rural households. As F.M.L. Thompson (1988) commented on late nineteenth century Britain, in a period when "middle class lifestyles were becoming more costly and ambitious, and it seemed more and more desirable to shift family expenditure away from numerous children and towards
other things." (p. 61).

This chapter has monitored significant changes in Patidar women's lives, both between this and previous generations and between rural and urban women. Urban women have achieved higher educational standards: this process has brought about a deferment in the age of marriage, until these qualifications were obtained. Once married, women strictly limited family size, by contraceptive means not just through the later age of marriage. Thus women's time spent on child bearing has been dramatically reduced. But other forms of 'reproduction' have emerged to fill women's time, particularly for urban women. Much more time was consciously spent by urban women in socialising their children to achieve good qualifications in order to fulfil the changing expectations of urban life. Women were not necessarily thinking in terms of careers for themselves, or their daughters, but they needed the skills acquired through education to provide adequate support in their husband's household and take an active role in the developing 'status arena'. This new form of 'status production work' is discussed more fully in Chapter 19.

Before looking at that development, however, I want to discuss in the following section the impact of living within a patriarchal family structure on women's position, and more particularly to concentrate on the processes by which Patidar women are denied access to power and involvement in important decisions affecting their lives. Firstly, I shall analyse how the form of inheritance prevalent in Patidar society limited women's access and control of economic resources in Chapter 13. Secondly, in Chapter 14, I shall
discuss how women, by becoming 'demonstrators of status' were removed from active involvement in the community outside the domestic sphere and thus were unable to achieve any economic power base of their own. Patidar women's roles as 'demonstrators of status' were an integral part of the form of seclusion, purdah, which prevailed in Patidar society and was reinforced through segregated social interaction. The manner of manifesting status has undergone a change in urban society as women have adopted different roles in the 'status arena'. This has produced changes in the form of 'purdah' which Patidar women practice and it also had influenced the new forms of social interaction which were developing in an urban context. These developments will be discussed in the final chapter of Section 5.
1. A number of educated informants spoke of resentment, at times, at the attitude and expectations of less well educated women.

2. Under the Child Marriage (Restraint) Act of 1978, originally introduced in 1929, boys had to have reached the age of 21 before marriage and girls the age of 18. (M.A.Khan and Noor Aysha 1982).

3. Discussion of ages was approximate as women were, at times, rather vague about their age at marriage. Moreover, they counted age differently to Western concepts: for example, they might claim to be 32, by which they meant they were 'running 32', i.e. 31 coming up to 32. It was not possible to check out accuracy of women's and their children's ages, as they did not remember the year of birth, marriage etc. Too much counterchecking caused irritation and confusion at times.

4. Chapter 4 discussed how 'reproduction' had a wider definition than that of child bearing and rearing. It included socialisation of a new generation into the values and customs of the wider society. It was also extended to include the 'reproduction' of the status of the household within the community. See Caplan (1985), J.Mitchell (1971).

5. Singh and Singh (1986) found that the 'upper stratum' of families in rural areas, in their sample, were raising the age at which they conceived.

6. McLaren in Prior (1985) reported that in England before the Industrial Revolution, there was an interval of three to four years between children. She claimed that children were breast fed on demand up to the age of three to four years and because of this lactation, it acted as a 'natural contraceptive'. Some Patidar women certainly breast fed their children until they were at least two years of age; but not all women followed this practice.

7. In a recent report, Vibhuti Patel stated that the amniocentesis test devised to detect genetic defects was being used to determine the sex of children in the womb. As a result, in 1988, in a sample survey of 8,000 abortions carried out in Bombay, 7,999 were female foetuses. She stated that clinics carrying out these tests had advertised: "Spend 500 rupees now and save 500,000 rupees (on dowry) later". (GUARDIAN: Tuesday December 4, 1990).
SECTION 5: PATRIARCHY AND SEGREGATION
CHAPTER 13. PATRIARCHY AND INHERITANCE
Introduction

Patidar women's participation in production, whether in a paid or unpaid capacity, had no significant impact on their position within either the household or the wider society. This position was apparently determined by the pre-existing patriarchal family structure, whether Patidar women lived in a joint or a nuclear household; roles were clearly delineated based on age and gender. Eisenstein (1979) has argued that this 'sex gender system', or social relations of production are "cultural relations which are carried over from one historical period to another." (Beechey 1979: p77). Consequently, although in the case of Patidar women, their roles had changed from those performed in a rural agricultural household to those expected in an urban household, the family structure in which women lived had remained essentially the same. As Eisenstein (1979) continued: "while the economic organisation of society may change, patriarchy which is located in the social relations of reproduction, provides a system of hierarchical ordering and control which has been used in various forms of social organisation, among them capitalism." (Beechey 1979: p77).

McDonough and Harrison (1978) argued for a dual notion of patriarchy; one where women's fertility and sexuality were controlled through monogamous marriage and women's economic subordination was ensured through the sexual division of labour. Kuhn (1978) agreed and pointed out that it was pre-capitalist modes
of production that dictated this division of labour and the division of property. As capitalism has evolved, she argued, women have become concentrated in the domestic sphere, where they had taken on the 'servicing' of the men and children in the family: that is 'reproduction' in order to enable them to earn money.

The lives of Patidar women followed a similar pattern. The sexual division of labour, particularly in urban households, has meant that much of women's time is spent in 'household service work'. Patidar women, as the data in Chapter 10 showed, had a strong preference for the patriarchal joint family: the majority accepted the role expectations and attitudes associated with such an 'ideology'. Moreover, they were eager to 'socialise' their own children, including daughters into pursuing the same lifestyle. But can such 'socialisation' of children, from one generation to the next, account for the perpetuation of a patriarchal family structure and the sexual division of labour? McDonough and Harrison (1978) have already indicated two processes by which Patidar men, in this instance, have managed to retain control of their power over women within the household: the control over resources and their control over women's fertility and sexuality. In this chapter, I want to concentrate, principally, on how the customary patterns of inheritance have acted as a buttress to Patidar men's authority within the family and society.

Like many castes in northern India, the Patidar have always practised 'endogamy', the custom of young girls being married away from their own natal village, so removing daughters of the family
out of reach of access to resources or the possibility of ever having a controlling influence over property, at the death of male elders. This has facilitated the customary patterns of inheritance because married women's absence from the household, made it impossible for them to participate in the management and running of the family farm or enterprise.

In most patriarchal societies, wealth and the power associated with it, has passed from one generation of males to another. In joint families in India, in the majority of cases, property passes from a father to all his sons, and from his sons to all his grandsons. The Patidar are no exception to this rule. Particularly when their wealth and power was based on land, inheritance was only through the male line. (1) This control in male hands was strengthened by the practice of marrying all girls not just outside the extended family, but outside the village completely. No girl was ever allowed to marry anyone from her own village, pivar, as all the village was construed to be her father's 'fictive' kin, so her 'brothers'. Such a match was, therefore, inconceivable. Indeed, one of the greatest scandals, remembered twenty years afterwards with shock, was of a young Patidar girl who eloped with a Patidar boy from her own village. There was no consanguineous relationship; nonetheless, the misalliance was known to a wide audience. Even the young men from a girl's mother's village, her mosul, were not considered to be possible marriage partners, as they were too closely related. (2) Consequently, a woman's links with her own village were severely curtailed after marriage and she moved away to live with strangers.
Male Inheritance

By passing landed property from one generation of males to another, the inheritance remained intact: all the sons were expected to remain in the family home and farm the family property. It was still not considered desirable for one brother to choose to live separately from the family and farm, if this entailed redeeming his share of the property: such divisions were eventually likely to make the farm unviable. (He could separate from the agricultural household without rancour, if he retained his financial interest in the property.) Moreover, by passing it from one generation of males to another, all male members of the family were provided for, unlike the English practice of primogeniture which necessitated younger sons finding an alternative source of income. Indian women were only maintained until marriage, in theory, unless unforeseen circumstances entailed their return in later years.

Patidar women had not been entitled to inherit in the past. Now, legally, they are entitled to an equal share of the inheritance, with their brothers. But, particularly, in the case of landed property, this very rarely takes place. Patidar women had not inherited land, nor anticipated doing so, except in certain contingencies. Sometimes, land might have been left, theoretically, to women, in order to circumvent legislation such as the Land Ceiling Act, which restricted the amount of land any one person could own and farm. But even when this occurred, women were expected to forego their share and allow their brothers to use the land, just as Ursula Sharma (1980) found in her sample in North West
India. Only when there were no possible male heirs might a woman inherit and farm land. The mother-in-law of Raju, from Bakrol, an older woman with grown up children, had returned to her parents' home, piyar, after she was widowed, because they had no direct male heirs. Her son, their grandson, was now farming this land. Similarly, although many of the Patidar had now diversified their interests into business and the professions, the general expectation was still that such a business or professional practice would pass to their sons.

But there was some evidence of changing practices, particularly amongst urban women with natal family living overseas, where a number of women claimed they would receive an inheritance from their father, usually in a monetary form. Lata from Anand, for example, claimed that her father's property in India, two houses in a nearby town, would be left to both his son and daughters. The younger son, however, would receive a larger share than his sisters: he would inherit one house and the proceeds from the sale of the other would be divided amongst his six sisters. (The older son had refused his share of property in India.) Equally, however, the custom of adopting a male heir was still practiced, when there was no son in the family: Malini's mother in the large village of Karamsad, who had no sons, had adopted the son of one of her daughters as her heir. But the evidence available would suggest that landed and business interests were unlikely to risk being damaged by sharing them equally between sons and daughters. A business enterprise would be inherited by the sons who would generally continue working
together in partnership. Only where monetary sums were available might daughters benefit directly.

**Female Inheritance**

There was a particular form of inheritance, however, in Hindu society which was perceived as applying only to women. This was the disposal of their own wealth, *stridhanam*, which was generally in the form of moveable wealth, usually jewellery. This was acquired as gifts marking various important life-cycle events. The most important gifts of jewellery were given at the time of a woman's own marriage, principally by her own family, but there were also some obligatory gifts from her in-laws. At subsequent ceremonies, such as Shrimant, prior to the birth of her first child, she received gifts of jewellery from her in-laws. Other women, too, might save any sums of money they received and buy some form of jewellery as an investment. Most events were marked by a form of gift-giving, which, as a result of inflation, was often more of a token sum. Such events as the first visit to an elder's house after marriage, or after New Year, or after the return from a long trip away, were marked by a gift of money. Similarly, births and deaths were always accompanied by gifts of money, connected with specific rituals. (See Chapter 18 for a discussion of the direction and significance of gift giving practices.)

The gifts generally passed to younger females and some people felt that this had developed as a further means to compensate women for not inheriting. Whatever the source of the gifts, however, they
were considered to be the woman's property, which was ultimately her resource in times of hardship and old age. It was also hers for the purpose of disposal. Often, such money was invested in jewellery. This jewellery was normally given to the woman's own daughters, and possibly, daughters-in-law, after her death. If she wished, she could give away some or all of her jewellery before she died, but it was felt advisable not to dispose of all one's wealth, in this way, as it was the only safeguard against some unforeseen financial disaster. It was a form of 'social security' and an asset which would not lose its value. Hence, any surplus money women obtained was generally invested in this most secure form of wealth. Some women gave away some of their jewellery to their own daughters, when they married, particularly if the family's financial circumstances were somewhat difficult and it was the only means of giving the girl an adequate amount of jewellery. However, gifts might also be given because the mother had a considerable amount of jewellery which she did not need or want by the time of her own daughters' weddings. Madhu in the large town of Baroda, who was one of four sisters, said her widowed mother would divide her jewellery between her four daughters on her death; not, seemingly, to her one daughter-in-law. But Lata's friend, Snehlata, from the town of Anand had had two of her own bracelets adapted to a more fashionable style to give to her daughter, in order to supplement the amount of jewellery her daughter would receive as gifts at marriage. The remainder would be newly bought gold. (The amount and cost of gold giving at the time of marriage and its purpose is discussed in Chapter 20.)

Although this concept of stridhanam was generally acknowledged,
women's property was far from inviolate. It was an equally widely held view that in times of necessity, women's jewellery was a resource which all the family could utilise. Even when it was not absolutely essential, women could be put under considerable pressure to sell some of their jewellery for family purposes, or even to 'give' it to one of their husband's sisters, their nanand. It took a very strong-willed women to resist such pressures. Panna had sold all her gold jewellery so that her husband could invest the money in his business, which had not prospered. She did not, however, gain much sympathy from some of the other women, but rather she was a source of criticism when she appeared in her silver jewellery at a family wedding and a sari which was known to have been renovated and repaired. (Silver jewellery was considered to be much inferior; women received gold jewellery as gifts at the time of a wedding or other auspicious occasions and only wore minor items of silver jewellery, such as anklets. Bangles and necklaces were always gold.) Jewellery and saris were one of the principal manifestations of status which was particularly paraded at weddings. Its significance as one of the core values of the Patidar will be discussed in Chapter 20. But such a reaction towards Panna and her silver jewellery, indicates how reluctant any woman would be to part willingly with her jewellery, which represented her only form of security and was also one of the outward signs of her status, or more particularly, that of her husband.

Moreover, despite the fact that jewellery was given specifically to the woman, principally at marriage, there were oft-
quoted occasions of situations when a couple had separated, but
where the husband's family had retained all of a woman's jewellery.
This was the case with Meena's sister, who had been given a large
amount of jewellery at marriage: 100 tolas, worth a considerable
amount of money, well over 150,000 rupees. However, the husband of
this woman who returned to the United Kingdom had not made any
arrangements for his new wife to join him. His family would not
return the jewellery which was in their hands. Meena's family had
no recourse to law as dowry payments are 'illegal', in theory, under
the 1961 Dowry Abolition Act, although it was not enforced. (Under
this Act, both giver and recipient were liable to six months'
imprisonment or a fine. (M.A.Khan and Noor Aysha 1982). This was
perceived as a great injustice, but one for which there was no real
remedy apart from pressure from other members of the Patidar
community on the family involved. Indeed, when a woman returned to
her parent's home for the birth of her first child, after Shrimant,
she always took with her all her jewellery, apparently in case she
did not survive childbirth. At least, her family would have secured
her jewellery. Hence, although the generally accepted custom
recognised this form of female wealth and right to inheritance,
there were many instances when this practice was breached. The
'right', itself, depended on the goodwill of a woman's in-laws, even
after her death, because jewellery remaining could then be disposed
of in a way that could be against the deceased woman's wishes: one
reason, perhaps, to dispose of individual pieces of jewellery as
gifts during the woman's lifetime.
Dowry: as a form of inheritance

As Tambiah (1973) has argued, theoretically dowry is given at marriage as a form of compensation, because a woman does not normally inherit any of the family's landed property, at the death of her father. Members of the Patidar, themselves, would probably agree with this contention. Other writers, too, such as Jeffery (1979) have certainly followed this interpretation. Thus it can be claimed that the large sums of money handed over at the time of marriage were the woman's share of the inheritance. But the sums of money, paithan payments, given by the bride's family to the groom's relatives, as well as other gifts, did not benefit the girl directly. Indeed, they did not even act as a 'conjugal fund' for the newly-wedded husband and wife to be used to set up or benefit their own household, as Tambiah (1973) contended was the supposed function of dowry. In the Patidar caste, such sums were given to the parents-in-law and neither husband nor wife gained any advantage from this money. Yet Tambiah (1973) claimed that these gifts, money or otherwise, at the time of marriage, were supposed to be given to the woman and her husband could not dispose of them without her permission. Frequently, such a paithan payment was used to finance a younger daughter's wedding and help, in turn, to supply her dowry. Indeed, one of the most persistent reasons given for continuing the practice of giving and accepting dowry by the Patidar was that otherwise it would prove impossible to finance their own daughters' weddings. Dowries had to be received at the time of a son's wedding in order to prevent financial catastrophe falling on the family when they 'married off' their daughters.
Tambiah (1973), in fact, in developing his discussion of 'dowry' went some way to disprove his own contention that dowry was supposedly a form of compensation for inheritance by illustrating how women, as was the case with the Patidar, became 'pawns' in the exchange of high dowry payments. He discussed hypergamous marriages as a process "whereby a family of lower status, but not necessarily of inferior wealth, attempted to raise its position and its prestige by contracting a superior marriage for its daughters and sisters. Here there is an exchange of status for wealth, and no doubt the dowry givers can themselves get their return by demanding higher dowries from their own wife givers": (Tambiah 1973, p64.) Thus he tacitly acknowledged that the money transferred as dowry payment was a function of upward social mobility. (See fuller discussion in Chapter 20.)

Further, the very practice of giving large sums of jewellery and considerable numbers of saris to a daughter was an acknowledgement that the actual money, paithan, given was not for her use. One of the prime reasons for spending so much money on jewellery and saris was to ensure not just that the family's status was visibly evident, but that the girl received some form of financial security in her future married life. What these large sums of money represented, as Sharma (1980) argued, was a form of 'bridegroom' price; the family were buying their daughter into a good family. Even after her marriage, they continued to pay considerable sums towards her maintenance in the form of gifts and clothing for herself and her children. There was no question of the money sums given as dowry, paithan, being returned on the rare
occasions when the marriage ended through divorce, separation or even early widowhood. It was only women's jewellery which, it was felt, should rightly be returned in such circumstances. Consequently, it was evident that, for the Patidar, paithan did not represent an alternative form of female inheritance, because once given, it became the property of the bridegroom's family and the woman, herself, had no claim on it under any contingency.

Summary: inheritance and the position of women

Until very recently, Patidar women did not inherit either land or other forms of property. Even today, they are only likely to inherit land if there are no male heirs, or if it is a device to circumvent certain legislation. Then they would be expected to forego this inheritance in favour of their brothers or other male heirs. It was possible that the families which have diversified into business and have cash sums available would leave monetary sums to daughters. But the only direct form of female inheritance was the jewellery which women had received as gifts. The monetary sums exchanged at the time of marriage, as dowry, were given to a woman's in-laws and she did not have any access to this sum of money, nor was she usually involved in any decisions over the allocation of this money.

Patidar women did not, therefore, inherit any productive resources. Even if they were actively involved in production, as village women in farming households could be, they did not control
production; they only participated in it. Neither through their own labour power, nor through the control of productive resources could they influence decisions in any direct manner. Any influence they did exert in such decisions was likely to be by more 'manipulative' means, as will be seen in Chapter 17. So within the family, they had no power base as a result of their own work, nor through the control of resources. Male relatives possessed the wealth and it was inherited by a younger generation of male relatives on whom women were dependent, by and large, for maintenance and support even after marriage.

**Anomalous roles: young widows and divorcees**

The patriarchal family structure has survived in Patidar society, even in the face of changes in women's position and roles in urban areas, because male power within the family and within society was still reinforced by their control over economic resources. It has already been seen how male inheritance was ensured by marrying women 'out' from the natal village. But further steps were taken, too, to make sure that inheritance passed through the male line. In Patidar society, customs and social values accepted over generations had so 'enshrined' women's roles that it was very difficult for individual women not to conform. So the patriarchal family structure continued to deny women access to an inheritance of resources and reinforced economic dependency on men. This was particularly apparent in the attitudes towards and the treatment of (young) widows and divorcees, although the latter were extremely rare.
In the patriarchal Patidar society, women were defined in terms of their relationships with men: they were daughters, wives and mothers. At every stage of women's lives, a male relative had the economic responsibility for their maintenance. However, if women were unfortunate enough to be no longer in the role of daughter, wife or mother, then their position became very precarious. The position of young widows, and similarly young divorcees, whether childless or not, was very difficult. They represented a threat to patriarchy at two levels: firstly, there was the fear that if they remarried, this could complicate any question of inheritance. Goody (1976) commented on the problems in patriarchal societies where remarriage brought step-parents who might manipulate an inheritance to the advantage of their own children. But, secondly, if young women did not remarry, then their sexuality was a potential threat to the family and community. Any liaisons were strictly deplored because of the threat to the family's reputation which would affect the standing and prospects of other female relatives. (This aspect will be discussed more fully in the following chapter.) Moreover, any children who might result from such relationships, whether legal or otherwise, would also present a threat to the inheritance of the male children of the first marriage.

Consequently, the solution adopted by the Patidar, as in similar patriarchal castes, was twofold. Widowed women were rendered as unattractive as possible by various rituals incorporated into the bereavement ceremonies on the death of a husband and, where possible, they were secluded in the home for long periods. Gyanshyam in Dharaj, for example, recalled his elderly aunt who had
only recently died, who had been secluded behind the high walls of their bungalow compound since she was widowed in her teens. She had never left the precincts. Such seclusion, of course, was an extension of the process of 'Sanskritization' whereby the family's status was enhanced by being in a position to maintain economically 'unproductive' women in the household. In the case of young widows, not only were women economically 'unproductive', but also not active in any 'reproductive' sense either: they would not bear any (further) children, nor could they participate at all in the 'status arena', in any form of 'status production work'. Such seclusion of widows, however young, was also sanctified by the Hindu Brahminical religion which forbad the remarriage of widows. Consequently, even childless widows, who had no offspring to inherit from their husband's patriarchal family, were constrained by women's position within Patidar society as 'demonstrators of status'. High status families 'preferred' to keep such young (childless) widows secluded within the domestic sphere, in order to reflect their status. The majority of women in this position were still not allowed to take up paid employment, because of the implications for the status and economic standing of the husband's family.

Such economic dependency could place young widows, or divorcees, economically dependent on the household at a tremendous disadvantage. Moreover, they had little prospect of improvement in their position as they grew older, unless they had given birth to a son, and future heir. Women with only female children were even more of a burden, because of the future costs of marriage; it was possible, that the financial burden of such women and their children
was less likely to be borne by their former husband’s family.

That women were defined by their relationships with men, ultimately through marriage, and subsequent motherhood, became even more evident when the position of unmarried women was examined. It was considered a duty and necessity to marry all daughters, and women who have never married were virtually unknown. For this reason, Sudha was married off very quickly on a visit to India from East Africa, because her father suddenly fell seriously ill. It was feared he would die and he was pressurized to marry his eighteen-year-old daughter so that she would be settled before his death and, hence, not a financial liability on his relatives. Ironically, he lived for a number of years afterwards, but she had to endure this hastily arranged match with a husband from a small village, when she was used to an affluent and comfortable lifestyle.

Widows

Not only were virtually all women married, but it was also considered a great misfortune to outlive a husband. It was perceived as the wife’s fault if her husband died first, particularly if he died when they were both still young. (3) She had obviously brought ill-luck to the family. This feeling was reinforced through the rituals conducted after the death and the family’s subsequent attitude towards the widow. In the villages, Patidar women could still have their heads shaved on the death of their husband. This was even more important with young women, whose hair was seen as one of her chief adornments. All jewellery was
removed, for the remainder of a widow's life, and very sober dress had to be worn henceforward. Traditionally, widows wore a white sari for the rest of their lives, but gradually it has become more acceptable, particularly outside the villages, to wear very subdued colours. Such measures ensured that widows were as unattractive, and unobtrusive, as possible, so attempting to minimize the possibility of involvement with other men. Such widows were no longer in the 'status arena' and their pleasing appearance was no longer necessary to 'demonstrate' the status of the family. (See Chapter 19 for the role of women's appearance in 'status production work'.)

In the past, women had to remain in their homes for the first year after a husband's death. For older women, the situation could be difficult, but usually because of the position they had established in the family, particularly through their relationship with their sons, they were accorded respect and, at times, could be very powerful in the family. But for young widows the situation could be extremely fraught. They no longer had any very clear role within the family, even if they had children. If they were young and childless, they often returned to their own natal family. Even when there were children, particularly young and female children, it was not uncommon for women to return to their piyar. One family in Dharmaj had been completely responsible for a widowed sister and her four young children: three daughters and a son. The husband's family had no further contact.

Only three women in the sample had been widowed. A young
woman, Alpana, from the smallest village was placed in a very precarious position financially. Her husband had farmed in Gada and she to remain at her husband's home despite much abuse from her mother-in-law, because her own family refused to have anything to do with her and her three children: two young girls and a boy. Such a situation only reinforced other women's awareness of staying on good terms both with in-laws and their own brothers. But, in a poor family, an extra four mouths to feed would not be welcome. The two other young widows, in the sample, lived in urban areas. Nira, after a very stressful marriage, had returned to her natal family and lived in her own flat with her young son and daughter; her sister, with her husband and family, lived in a flat upstairs. Nira and her children were maintained financially by her father; he would not consider her wish to work. Rita, the third widow, had a similar living arrangement. However, in her case, it was her husband's father's brother, kaka, and family who lived beneath her in their own apartment. She had been married longer before her husband died and had three children: two boys and a girl. The eldest son was fifteen. Another young childless widow, not in the sample, had returned to live with her own widowed mother in Karamsad. She could not remarry, but was working in a bank.

The remarriage of widows was still not a very acceptable proposition for Patidar households, even if widowed in their twenties. It was inconceivable for widows with children. Yet widows were circumscribed in their behaviour for the remainder of their lives. Apart from their sombre dress, they could not participate in most social occasions. They could not dance at the
festival for the Mother Goddess, Navratri, for example, one of the highlights of the year. It was just considered feasible that a young, childless, widow might remarry, in theory, but that was only amongst the more educated, liberal-minded Patidar families. I came across no examples in practice, although young widows were not very common.

Divorcees

The situation of separated women and divorcees was similar to that of young widows. Divorce was still stigmatized; a number of people in one high status village, went so far as to contend that there were no divorces amongst the Patidar in that area. Certainly, in the past, it would not have been considered possible under any circumstances. In extreme cases of marital difficulty, a separation might have occurred. But even so, such occurrences were not discussed very openly. Most women would endeavour to keep the marital relationship going because of the probably deleterious implications for their situation, if it should end. Even more so than young widows, they were totally dependent on the goodwill of their own natal relatives, for a home and their upkeep and many families would put a great deal of pressure on women to remain with their husband. It was not feasible for a young divorcee or separated woman to live alone, even with her children. She had to live with relatives in order to protect her reputation from criticism and gossip, because her behaviour was seen to reflect on other members, particularly female relatives in her family. Yet it
was extremely unlikely that a divorcee would remarry, particularly if she did have children. There were, in recent years, examples of childless women who had been divorced shortly after marriage, who had remarried. But such instances were still uncommon and there were equally cases, such as the young childless woman, Kundan, who had been separated for ten years, where her natal family did not wish her to obtain a divorce. Yet, in Kundan's case, she was in a position to support herself as she worked as a bank clerk.

Examples of divorce and separation were so comparatively rare that there was no apparently generally acknowledged role or position for such women. Indeed, there was only one divorced and one separated woman actually in the sample. If the marriage had broken up in the very early stages, then it seemed that the girl's family tried to remarry her fairly quickly. Certainly, Neela's family succeeded in arranging a second marriage to a groom from outside the area; hence from a lower status ekada. However, in the examples of separations in more long-term marriages, the women concerned were in paid employment. The only separated woman in the sample, Indira, was employed. She had two daughters. The fact that these women were able to gain employment was possibly a major factor in enabling them to separate, because they were not a financial liability on their own families. (One other women, not in the sample, was said to have been prevented from separating by her natal family because they did not wish to leave her husband free to remarry. So although her own natal family had taken over financial responsibility for her, they insisted that she remained in her husband’s household, where she and her children lived entirely separately from her
husband. As she did not work, she had very little option but to concur with her own family's wishes, as she was financially dependent on them.

In the few cases where separated wives, and some young widows, actually had children, it seemed to be the practice that the mother and her natal family assumed responsibility for them. Despite the rarity of divorce and separation, however, and the difficult situation in which such women were placed, a number of young, educated urban women contended that they would certainly not tolerate physical or mental ill-treatment in their marriage. They claimed they would rather undergo a separation than endure such treatment in order to perpetuate their marriages. However, any Patidar woman contemplating such action needed her natal family's full approval.

It did appear to be the practice, in the instances which came to my notice, that where a women with children had been separated, divorced or widowed, her own natal family would very often assume financial responsibility for bringing up the children. (It seemed that certainly, in some instances, even the male children in these families would not inherit.) In fact, the woman's family, even when she was married, made considerable financial contributions towards the children's upkeep, so they were, in a sense, continuing this custom to a greater degree. But it was not the usual custom in other patriarchal societies for the father's family to have so little involvement with their own male offspring and potential
heirs. In Muslim society, for example, where divorce was more common, sons, at least, were expected to live with their father's family, certainly after the age of seven. (Because of the comparative rarity of divorce and even the prevalence of young widows with children, it is difficult, however, without more extensive data on the practice followed by the Patidar, to make very conclusive comments.)

Summary

Within the patriarchal family structure of Patidar households, women were defined in terms of their relationship to the men in the household as daughter, wife or mother. As married women, they were defined by their reproductive capacities: of children, family values and the household's status. On the death of a woman's husband, or through the final breakdown of a marriage, Patidar women's roles became very tenuous. On these occasions, women frequently returned to their natal families, whether because their former husband's family was not prepared to go on maintaining them, or whether, partly, at least, women preferred to be with their own relatives.

Women from the higher status families, in 'the Six', were not generally allowed to remarry under any circumstances. Women with children had no expectation of remarriage, regardless of the status of their ekada. But it was frequently not the former husband's family who paid to maintain the women and her family: such behaviour reflected well on the status of the natal family, able to keep so many dependents. Women from lower status khadaki had to fend as
best they could; they were encouraged to remarry, as also in the case of divorce. Moreover, widowed women with children would find it very difficult to return to their natal family who had not the resources to maintain so many extra mouths. It was not possible for such women to find work in rural areas, although no-one would object to them seeking employment. In urban areas, however, women had found it easier to 'separate' from their husbands because they could work. They were not allowed or encouraged by their families to seek divorce.

The difficult situation of young divorced, separated or widowed women acted as a reminder to married Patidar women as to the relative desirability of their 'lot'. Not only was the financial situation of widowed and divorced women precarious, the position of their own children seemed far from clear. Some male offspring, in such families, did not appear to inherit. Consequently, women were deterred from choosing anything other than the married state, for the security of themselves and their offspring. The balance of power was, therefore, maintained within the patriarchal family structure of Patidar society, partly by limiting the desirable roles for women to those which reinforced established family patterns. But it was also strongly buttressed by women's inability to acquire access to resources, either through their own labour power or through the inheritance of wealth and property. They had, certainly in the past, no means to build an independent power base.

In the following chapter, I want to establish how Patidar society
ensured women, as the family's prosperity grew, were confined to the domestic sphere, where their behaviour became increasingly a 'demonstrator of status' for the household. Patidar women's physical workload certainly diminished, but, in the process, men were able to guarantee their control over economic resources. Moreover, by the seclusion and segregation of women, they ensured the legitimacy of their male offspring by controlling women's sexuality.
1. Tambiah (1973) argued that Hindu custom demanded that inheritance passed through sons to the third generation, then it could revert to a daughter's son. If a family had no son, inheritance could go through a daughter's son; alternatively, families could adopt a close relative as a 'son'. Another option was to bring a daughter's husband into the home as a gharjamai, and his son would inherit. (Men, however, were not eager to be in such a position which could be considered demeaning.)

2. The prohibition did not seem to extend any further, unlike the Brahmin practice; indeed, it was not really possible to do so. In the Six Villages, Cho Gam, ekada, for example, this would have limited an already rather restricted field of suitable partners even further.

3. E.B. Harper (1969) commented on the low status of Brahmin widows in a patrilineal family structure in South India, where women could not inherit. (He contended that because of the 'guilt' engendered by the poor treatment received by such widows, they were often credited with malign powers, such as the ability to poison others.)
CHAPTER 14. PURDAH AND SEGREGATION
The purpose of purdah

The Patidar were a rural, agricultural caste who had succeeded in retaining their land within the joint family through the practice of male inheritance. There was no mechanism for Patidar women to inherit land or capital and there was no evidence to suggest that urban residence had altered this practice to any meaningful extent. Patidar women had no means to accumulate any wealth, apart from possibly through stridhanam, which the household could call on in emergencies. Thus the patriarchal family system was reinforced by this male inheritance which prevented Patidar women building up an economic power base. Their economic dependency on men was emphasised at time of crisis, such as the breakdown of marriage or the early death of their husband.

But the patriarchal family structure was also reinforced by the practice of purdah and the concomitant segregation of men's and women's activities. The practice of purdah was an effective means of controlling women's sexuality and ensuring that women adhered to the required social roles for women as wife and mother. (Vreede de Stuers 1968). But other writers have credited purdah with different functions. Purdah, in this context, does not necessarily mean a form of veiling, as found in many Muslim societies. It is a means of regulating social relations between men and women and within Patidar society entails a certain degree of segregation and perhaps, as importantly, an internalization of a certain mode of behaviour.
Sharma (1980) felt that purdah, in the north Indian communities she studied, primarily acted as a means to preclude women from production. It functioned as part of a division of labour which tended to seclude women away in the domestic sphere, and certainly if they were not actively involved in production, they had no opportunity to gain control over land or agricultural produce. So it helped men to retain possession of agricultural land and produce in their own hands, and this was reinforced through male inheritance. But in the process, purdah also served the purpose of preventing undesirable liaisons and ensuring that through a system of arranged marriages, girls made a good match with someone of a similar or higher status, by which means Patidar status was maintained and enhanced. She contended that:

"purdah...has a double-edged ideological function. It favours the consolidation of property-owning groups (and the emulation of these groups' values and culture by others). It also favours the concentration of the direct control of property in the hands of the male members of the group." (p.202)

Papanek (1973), too, considered that purdah served two functions but not with quite the same emphasis as suggested by Sharma. Firstly, she saw it as a means to regulate the division of labour. It effectively precluded women from many areas of paid work, particularly in Muslim countries and also limited the scope of women's activities even in the domestic sphere. It frequently precluded them from tasks such as collecting fodder which would give them too much freedom of movement, or bring them too much into contact with the 'public sphere', such as marketing which would involve meeting unrelated men. It is, however, class related, as
poorer families can not necessarily afford to observe purdah fully. It may be essential for women to help with agricultural work. Poorer families cannot keep unproductive women in the household. The other function of purdah, Papanek contended, is that of 'symbolic shelter' to protect women from contact with undesirble men and ensure that they retain their purity until they are married. Any imputations of disreputable behaviour by a girl can have a devastating effect not just on the girl, herself, but on the honour of her whole family. In Muslim societies, this concept is known as 'izzat', but it is also a feature of Hindu families as well. Women are seen as the guardian of family honour and morality; it reflects very badly on the males of the family, if they are unable to keep their women 'under control'. Indeed, the actions of just one girl can affect the marriage prospects of other girls in the family, as well. Consequently, Papanek felt that women become the 'symbols' of the family's status:

"the view of life which is implied in the use of symbolic shelter is also one which sees individuals primarily in the context of their social units rather than as single individuals, architects of their own fate. At the same time, women who are sheltered become important demonstrators of status of their protectors, and their behaviour becomes important in terms of honor and family pride for an entire kin group." (p.293)

She made the point, however, that purdah takes different forms in Islamic and Hindu communities within the same country, India. Whereas in Islam, women are veiled against any unrelated and unknown males, within Hindu society, it is the woman's closest male (affines) in-laws, from whom she secludes herself, in order to show her respect for her elders by her modest demeanour. Muslim women move freely, amongst their own relatives whether by birth or
marriage, but although Hindu women have much greater latitude amongst not just the family, but the whole community, before marriage; after marriage they must act with much greater circumspection.

Feldman and McCarthy (1983) were critical of the conceptualisation of purdah as a means of sex role socialisation and the preservation of the honour of the family. They felt that greater stress should be made of purdah as a 'demonstrator of status'. In their sample of rural Muslim women in Bangladesh, the 'burkha' had originally been brought back from the 'haj' to Mecca; so it was seen as a mark of high economic status. Women could observe purdah, too, without wearing a veil; in its manifestation as the segregation and seclusion of women, it was generally acknowledged as a mark of high social status, part of the process of 'Sanskritization', as women were withdrawn from the labour force. Miriam Sharma (1985) found that, in her upwardly mobile sample of the Bhumihar caste in Uttar Pradesh in North India, women secluded in the home were seen as a demonstrator of this mobility.

Purdah, has no universal manifestation: indeed, as Sharma (1980) commented, purdah is on a spectrum experienced by all women to a greater or lesser extent. In extreme cases, it can entail virtual total seclusion, where any ventures into the outside world can only occur if women are completely obscured by a 'burqa' covering them from head to foot, as found in traditional Afghan or Yemeni society. But the degree of seclusion, segregation and
veiling varies from one community to another. Verity Khan (1976b) spoke of the skill women in Pakistan employed in manipulating a dupatta, a long scarf, or a chaddar, a shawl, in different contexts, used on different occasions, so that greater or lesser amounts of a woman's head and body are covered, as custom requires. Indeed, as Cora Vreede de Stuers (1968) stated, purdah is far from being just the physical clothing in which women are veiled, or obscured, but a 'whole frame of mind', which can be readily observed in a woman's demeanour. Some of the poorest women with whom she did research in the Delhi region, could not afford to purchase a 'burqa' or have a separate women's section to their home, a 'zenana', but they still maintained a strict segregation and acted in an appropriately modest manner. Jeffery (1979) expanded on this point by describing how women frequently observe a form of 'eye purdah' by such means as keeping their eyes strictly fixed on the ground and never looking a man in the face. With such internalized behaviour, veiling is secondary. As she observed, even amongst those who had adopted the practice of mixed social gatherings, in India, these were frequently 'segregated', in that men and women formed totally separate and exclusive groups at opposite ends of the room. Papanek (1973) made the point, as well, that the observance of purdah by Hindu women is not just a result of the impact of Islamic society on Hindu practice. It was also an integral part of Hindu customs, and reflects a 'code of modesty' which epitomises the relationships between younger members of a family and elders, and particularly between young females and the senior male affines. Moreover, it inhibited any possibility of closeness developing between older men and younger women. This meant that no form of 'favouritism' was
shown towards a particular female, so causing division within the patriarchal joint family.

The majority of women, in such societies, accepted that the practice of purdah was an integral part of women's daily life. For many, as Papanek has shown, it was a reflection of status and women in many societies appreciated this visible manifestation of their wealth and prosperity. Makhlouf (1979) in Yemen, reported that women she researched, certainly did not feel it was a sign of 'inferiority'. Indeed, wearing a 'burqa' can enhance mobility by enabling women to move freely and unnoticed, where, otherwise, they would be subject to deleterious comments. Moreover, it can be a sign of upward social mobility, much prized by families who have just attained a situation where they can afford to keep the women at home, rather than actively involved in production. Jeffery (1979), however, reported real dissatisfaction with the observance of purdah from some of the women she surveyed living at a Muslim shrine, near Delhi. They felt their vision of the world was very restricted: they were like 'frogs in a well' only able to see the small patch of blue sky over their heads. However, even these women did not wish to reject 'purdah', they only wished to ameliorate certain of its aspects, such as the restrictions it placed on them being educated after puberty.

There is such a diversity of experience of purdah in the Indian context, from one community to another, that it is necessary to examine carefully how it was manifested in Patidar society. More
particularly, in view of its correlation with upward social mobility and class, the differences in practice between rural and urban families will be examined carefully. In those non-agricultural families, in both towns and villages, where women no longer participated in any manner in 'production', had Patidar women become more 'secluded' and adopted stricter practices of segregation and 'purdah' to reflect their enhanced status? Had Patidar women's mobility been restricted or had other considerations counteracted the stricter observance of 'purdah'? In order to establish what changes had occurred, it is essential to consider how the Patidar, themselves, perceived 'purdah': what they felt was its function.

The Patidar and the function of purdah.

The form purdah took for Patidar women was much less restrictive than amongst many Muslim communities, for example. Indeed, the women, themselves, would probably not consider that their lives were governed by a form of purdah. However, they certainly were, in the sense of providing a framework which governed male:female interaction characterized by segregation and a degree of seclusion. There was a very clearly defined division of labour, which was reinforced by the restrictions placed on women's behaviour. There were very generally acknowledged codes of behaviour, which no-one would even consider transgressing. For example, even a widowed woman in a fairly difficult financial situation would not consider working, as neither she nor the community in which she lived, would consider it acceptable. Even if a woman inherited land, she would never be able to think of farming
it, herself. She would have to employ a man to do such work. Such examples were extreme, however, they demonstrated very clearly restrictions on women's lifestyles, which were not just imposed by outside pressures, but also by a woman's internalized set of values.

Reputation

The manifestations purdah took for the Patidar will be examined later, but the reasons they observed it, must be considered now. As far as the Patidar were concerned, it served two interdependent functions. Firstly, it ensured that girls and women preserved a 'good reputation', by which is primarily meant that they remained 'innocent' and 'chaste' before marriage. Girls should not have had any pre-marital sexual experience, in any form and preferably, their knowledge of such activities should be strictly limited. Combined with the lack of awareness or experience, they should also possess a 'modest' and 'unassuming' air. These requirements, until recently, at least, continued to a large extent after marriage. However, with the advent of an urban lifestyle where wives may be expected to entertain business colleagues of their husbands, it was not necessarily still considered advantageous to be too 'modest' or 'unassuming' as such women would be expected to be able to converse more freely with their guests. However, even after marriage, in whatever context, women were generally not expected to 'flaunt' their 'sexuality' in public, at all. It may be acceptable for light banter amongst those circles who were regarded as kin, or very close friends; but not in other contexts. There was still considerable
admiration for a 'simple' way of dressing and appearance, with no use of make-up or highly fashionable Western clothes. Such girls or women who wore these were subject to a certain degree of criticism, although amongst urban women, again, there were some signs of this disapproval breaking down.

Girls and younger women, particularly, were not placed in such a position that any opportunities for dubious activities could occur. Moreover, they should not be placed in such a situation, nor act in such a manner, that any aspersion could be cast on their character, however innocent they might be. The paramount importance of women's reputation is a product of the absolute necessity of making as good a marriage for her as possible. A girl's reputation is not just important for her own future, but also for all the younger female members of her family. Hence, even after marriage, a woman's behaviour was still commented upon, because it reflected on her upbringing and the possible development of her younger female relatives. There was a tremendous fear of such acts as separation or divorce, or the knowledge that a girl had had a boyfriend, because even if the women, herself, was beyond being further affected, other members of the family would suffer for her 'wrongdoings'.

One of the major purposes of purdah, it was generally acknowledged, was to protect women from 'predatory' males and their presumed 'uncontrollable sexual impulses'. Indeed, there is a tradition in both Hindu and Islamic culture that women, too, have overpowering sexual impulses which can be even more dangerous than
those of the male. Veena Das (lecture 1982) confirmed that within
the Hindu religion, women, such as the goddess Durga, can represent
a very powerful, 'devouring' sexual force which men need to fear and
placate. So, purdah may serve to keep men and women apart, in order
to ensure that their mutual desires have no possibility of other
than a legitimate outlet. This aspect of purdah was certainly
acknowledged by the Patidar, because they placed such importance on
the necessity of preserving an unblemished reputation. Purdah did
play a certain role in preventing eligible males and females from
ever meeting or having the opportunity to misbehave. But much more
rested on the internalized codes of behaviour which governed women's
and men's lives. Before marriage, within a girl's own village,
there was considerable scope for moving around freely. But young
women and men had been inculcated with the idea that other members
of their village should be regarded as kin and, therefore, they
could not be considered as possible partners. Moreover, even though
there were greater opportunities to meet members of the opposite
sex, when studying, for example, many Patidar women explained that
as they had been brought up to expect an 'arranged marriage', it was
impossible for them to contemplate members of the opposite sex as
other than friends.

Status and upward social mobility

The necessity of retaining a 'good reputation' in order to
safeguard marriage prospects for the woman, herself, and her female
relatives, was closely connected with the whole system of arranged
marriages. As marriages were arranged between two groups liable to be hitherto unknown to one another, the character of each marriage partner was considered carefully. So it was important that no damaging rumours 'were abroad'. There were a number of other criteria considered necessary for a 'good match' and why this was so important, which will be discussed more fully in Chapter 20. But what is of relevance, at this point, is to understand what a 'good match' meant to the Patidar and why it was considered so important. Within the strict confines of the caste system, marriage was only possible between members of the same caste or sub-caste. The opportunity for upward social mobility based on wealth or merit, from one caste to another, was not possible. Social mobility could only be marked within one's own sub-caste or as a result of movement by the whole group, ekada, or sub-caste, to a more elevated position. Hence, the paramount importance of preserving the 'good name' of the group and not just of the individual. However, even here there were a number of restrictions on male mobility. The Patidar themselves are divided into marriage circles, gol or ekada, and a man is born and remains within this circle throughout his life. Only women could marry 'out' and hence 'up', or sometimes 'down'. Each family hoped to better itself by marrying their daughter into a better family, which would, itself, reflect on their own prestige and status. Girls become the markers of upward social mobility through marriage, because only through affluence, success and status could a family command a good match. In Papanek's term, they are 'demonstrators of status'. (Papanek 1973) Women, in such circumstances, needed to preserve a 'good reputation' not just to ensure they married well, but also because they had become, in the
process, the repositories of the family's 'good name'; they were the
harbingers of 'morality'.

The restrictions, which were placed on women, as a consequence
of this process, were rarely resented. The majority of women
aspired to such upward social mobility, or, more particularly, the
lifestyle associated with it. If they could not have the 'ease',
they associated with an urban or wealthy family, they wished their
daughters to achieve it. Whatever limitations or restrictions were
imposed on women's activities in wealthy urban households, there was
a general desire for what was perceived as greater comfort and less
work, all of which were regarded as being of higher status, compared
to women's lives in agricultural households. Those few who rejected
the restrictions entailed, perhaps on movements or the form of
dress, were generally regarded as 'noteworthy', if not rather
peculiar. In these cases where women perhaps envied or desired
greater freedom of movement or control over decisions affecting
their own lives, their position was often as much compounded by
their own fears of transgressing, rather than by obstacles in their
path. Malini used to move freely all over the area on her own
scooter, and dressed in Western jeans; consequently, she was the
object of much comment. She was in her mid thirties before she
married: moreover, her husband was not from 'the Six Villages'. Yet
once married, all this changed overnight. She started to always
wear saris and gave up her scooter, presumably because although
before marriage her behaviour was regarded as unusual, after
marriage it became totally unacceptable to her husband and his
family. Malini no longer considered herself able to flout convention. Those women who did disregard some of the conventions, generally did so with the support, or encouragement, of either their fathers or husbands. That there were clearly defined codes of behaviour is not disputed, but these could be disregarded. Generally, however, women did not rebel against their 'socialisation' and conformed to what was expected of them.

Purdah, in the case of the Patidar, appeared to reinforce the prevailing social structure rather than act as a determining factor. There was no evidence to show that, if women were active in production, in any form that they were likely to be given a share of the inheritance. However, all Patidar women surveyed were confined to the domestic sphere and took no active part in agricultural work outside the immediate environment of the household. Indeed, where Patidar women were most actively involved in agricultural production, they had little chance of inheriting any wealth, because this could have resulted in a division of the land. The suggestion made by Sharma (1980) that purdah was a means of preventing women inheriting land and controlling resources had a certain validity when applied to the Patidar. In families whose wealth was based on business or the professions, however, there was some indication that women might, at least, receive certain monetary bequests on the death of their father, but they would not inherit a share in the business itself. (Yet, it was in these very families where women tended to be least productive.) The acceptance of a form of purdah regulating male:female relations did certainly make it difficult to alter the 'status quo'. Because women were restricted in the work
they could undertake, as a result of status considerations, they could not continue family farming or business interests, and, consequently, this did serve to preserve these interests in male hands. The observance of purdah, too, made it difficult for women to find paid employment in other than certain restricted areas, such as teaching and certain clerical jobs; where such work was available locally. But the degree of restriction was not universal; it depended very much on how far a woman and her family were up or down the social scale. A complex number of factors apply apart from the nature of the work itself. If a family was recently upwardly mobile, for example, it might seem desirable to preclude women from any form of paid employment in or outside the home. On the other hand, some families who were wealthy and confident enough about their status could well feel it was prestigious to have a woman working in a highly regarded profession, such as medicine. So, in that sense, the observance of purdah tended to reinforce the seclusion of women in the home and their exclusion from the paid work-force, but for the Patidar, it was particular aspect of purdah, which was their main consideration when deciding whether to allow women to enter employment. Their major preoccupation was with matters of status: whether it was considered that having one of the female family members in paid employment was likely to enhance or damage the standing of the family.

The practice of purdah amongst the Patidar

Patidar women did not experience 'purdah' in its most extreme forms, that is the total exclusion of women from any areas of public
interaction. Nor did they wear a veil or any form of clothing which, hid them totally from public view. (1) Nevertheless, they were constrained by less drastic means which strictly regulated relationships between men and women, and which, effectively, restricted most women from participating freely in all the activities generally open to men. Limitations were put upon women in a number of different ways; firstly, through a division of labour which focussed women's activities in and around the home. Secondly, social relationships and activities tended to be conducted amongst members of the same sex and, thirdly, women's freedom of movement was severely hampered. Before looking more closely at how these factors affected both rural and urban women, however, it is essential to understand how Patidar women have internalized a set of values which underpinned all these restrictions on their behaviour.

**Internalized constraints**

As discussed in Chapter 11, Patidar women were socialised from an early age to adapt and conform to the customs of their marital homes. Up until the time of marriage, whilst girls remained in their parents' home, they were allowed greater latitude. They had more opportunity to express themselves and do as they wished, but still within fairly clearly delineated boundaries. After marriage, they were expected to take a 'backstage' part in the household, servicing family members, and waiting upon guests. Certainly, as young married women, they would not expect to entertain their own guests, except on infrequent occasions, and only if their mother-in-law was agreeable. They were not encouraged to speak out in any
gatherings, and ideally, a young woman should do her tasks well without comment or complaint. Such would be the desired characteristics of any potential bride. She should be 'modest', by which was understood that she was quiet, unassuming, unobtrusive, and respectful of her seniors. In the past, such 'modesty' was visibly manifested by the actions of young women, who were expected to cover their faces in the presence of their elders, especially a father-in-law or older brothers-in-law. Panna from VN reflected on her early married life; she had had to leave the room, when her elder brother-in-law entered it, and always covered her face in the presence of her elders. Madhu still had to pull her sari over her face in the presence of her paternal grandfather, who was very 'orthodox'. She was not expected to speak or laugh loudly. Such overt evidence of respect was disappearing and was unlikely to be expected in many urban Patidar households. However, ritual expressions of respect were still performed at all important ceremonies; at every wedding, the young couple had to touch the feet of all their elders. Every Divali, new year, too, women were expected to perform this mark of respect to all their seniors, commencing with their husbands. Moreover, young women, particularly in rural households, but also in large urban ones, were still expected to be 'modest' and unassuming and stay in the background. But, in nuclear households, particularly those of professional or business men, a wife would be increasingly called upon to entertain guests, especially in mixed groups or if her husband was absent. Thus the traditional role of a wife was proving inappropriate in some instances, as will be seen later.
A concomitant of the 'modest' behaviour expected of women was also the way which was thought suitable for them to dress and display themselves in public. There were very clearly defined criteria of what is considered 'modest' or 'immodest' in dress. Sleeve length, for example, was a crucial indicator of fashion. But traditionally-minded village women had never adopted the 'fashionable' sleeveless blouse, worn underneath a sari, because any display of the shoulder and upper arm was considered 'immodest'. Once married, all married women were expected to wear a sari; no village woman would refuse to do so and only a very small minority of urban women might occasionally wear the alternative shalwar-kamiz (a long blouse worn over loose trousers). None would consider wearing western dress, yet all unmarried girls did so. The train of the sari could, of course, be pulled over the head to cover hair and face in the presence of elders when such practices were still observed. In such circumstances, however, a sari was not just a mark of modesty, it also reflected the married status of a woman. (2) Moreover, it demonstrated, too, the economic status of the wearer, or more relevantly, her natal family, who usually supplied her saris. No urban woman, certainly, would leave the house on however small an errand without changing into a smart sari. Village women would also do this, but to a lesser extent, partly because they tended to stay inside a fairly limited area around their home and courtyard. The significance of dress and appearance will be explored more fully in Chapter 20 on status. Here a consideration of dress is of importance in that it reflected the modest demeanour of its wearer.
This 'modesty' was observed amongst women as well as men. (3) Women would not go swimming, even on days set aside solely for women at a local swimming pool. Even when on holiday in East Africa, Madhu from the large town of Baroda, and who was not yet married, would not wear a swimming costume when at the seaside with her female cousins. Other women would not change from one sari into another, even in the presence of close women friends, despite the fact that they were still wearing full-length, thick cotton petticoats and a blouse. So, too, modesty seemed to dictate that most women refused to breast feed in the presence of other women. Just as Malini, a single woman, had been criticised for continuing to wear jeans and riding her motorcycle well after the age she should have been married, so, too, were married women if they did not conform. Another urban women, Panna, living in a nuclear household, explained how she was criticised by her young sons for having her hair cut short and for wearing sleeveless blouses with her saris. They felt she was being much too 'modern'.

Menstruation and child birth

Further manifestations of the way women's sexuality was very much denied or repressed can be found in attitudes towards menstruation and child birth. There were a number of restrictions on behaviour observed at these times. These were based upon concepts of 'impurity', just as the caste system, itself, was associated with similar concepts of 'pollution'. It was generally held that whilst a woman was menstruating, she was 'unclean' and, therefore, not able to undertake certain tasks. Any of her
customary roles which brought her into contact with the 'pure', or 'clean' had to be avoided. Thus she could not touch any clean clothes or bed linen without 'polluting' it. She could not touch any of the clean eating vessels, nor could she serve food and handle the water container, even for herself. If she needed any of these items, they would be handed to her by someone else. She could not even go near the cooking area, and at mealtimes might eat apart on her own, on the floor, or at a separate table, or even outside the room where others were eating. Moreover, she could not say the daily prayers to the household god, nor attend any religious ceremonies at the temple. Also if there were any religious festivals, she could not participate in them. These included the much-loved garba, or dances, at the time of Navratri, the festival of the nine nights, in honour of the mother goddess, Ambamata. (4)

Such practices, however, represented an 'ideal' not observed by everyone. Like the concept of 'purdah', itself, full observance required that there were substitutes for women's labour, so that women could remain completely secluded and unproductive for four or five days at a time. Observance, therefore, varied considerably; it was governed by socio-economic factors, but also by beliefs and religious orthodoxy. In agricultural households, where there was a heavy workload, it was not necessarily feasible to lose the labour power of one woman over such a number of days. As it was not a topic very readily discussed by women, who tended to refer to it very obliquely, it was not easy to tell in large, farming households, whether these observances were all kept or not, as there was a ready supply of alternative women to perform all the necessary
duties. In small households, there were not necessarily other females available to take on additional work. Sometimes neighbours might cook, but often this practice had to be overlooked and women cooked as normal. Indeed, this was particularly true in small urban families where a number of women mentioned observing a special religious fast on one particular day, Sama Pancham, as an atonement for transgressing the taboo. (5)

Some educated, urban women claimed that these practices were dying out. A village woman, Neeta from Gada, had also stopped observing such customs because her two sisters-in-law, both graduates, who had lived in England and America for many years, berated her for continuing these observances. When Sudha came from East Africa on her marriage, she encountered a great deal of criticism because she refused to observe any of the usual customs associated with menstruation. Her widowed mother-in-law had not been able to observe them fully before, as there were no other women in the household. But it was felt proper by their neighbours in Bakrol that, with two women in the household, they should recommence such practices. Similarly, when living in Dharmaj, Vina's mother had been pressurized into teaching her to cook when she was ten or eleven, so that she could take over these duties, when the mother, herself was menstruating. Neighbours had objected to cooking for her when she had two young daughters of her own. However, the majority of both urban and rural women did make at least token observances such as abstaining from praying at the household shrine.
In fact, those households which appeared to follow very strict practices were frequently in urban areas. A number of families belonged to a particular reformist sect of the Hindu religion; they were members of the Swami Narayan movement. The sect had many followers amongst the professionally successful and expanding urban classes, where women's work-load, anyway, was frequently eased by the presence of servants. They combined awareness of urban and western influences, with a desire to adhere to more traditional practices. Hence women in these families might be highly educated, but still expected, for example, to sit apart at mealtimes. One young woman, Madhu, a doctor's daughter, who was going to marry into such a family, but did not come from a family who were members of the Swami Narayan movement, spoke of her anticipated embarrassment and fear at having to sit apart when eating. Modesty dictated that she could not explain why she would have to do so, but she felt she would have to undergo the questions and taunts of young male relatives asking for an explanation for her behaviour. Vina rationalised her observance of all the 'avoidance' taboos by claiming to please her mother, who was a Swami Narayan follower; however, she felt strongly enough about them herself, to ensure that guests in the household should also observe all the proscriptions. As Vina quite correctly pointed out, however, these practices were not necessarily viewed as a disadvantage by women. They, in fact, ensured that for three to four days, women were able to rest because they could not undertake many of their usual tasks.

Strict observance of menstrual taboos could, thus, be linked in many instances with both the socio-economic standing of the family.
and concomitantly, attitudes towards 'purdah'. Where women's labour could not be spared, usually in agricultural households, then such practices were ignored or not observed at all. Even in farming households with a number of adult women, menstrual taboos were not necessarily strictly observed. But once a family was sufficiently prosperous to employ servants, if other females were not available to take over the work, then women could observe all the menstrual taboos. This was particularly evident amongst professional or business families in the cities, where the more orthodox Swami Narayan movement was also more popular. Such families were likely to adopt Sanskritization as a model, which was based on orthodox religious practices. However, in other families, particularly when women, themselves, had been born or lived overseas, these practices were not necessarily observed. These women had, in some instances, been influenced by Western models of behaviour, but others, especially those in nuclear households, were just not able to practice these taboos rigidly. However, none of the women, whether in rural or urban areas, rejected the concept of certain taboos completely.

When a woman gave birth, too, similar customs were followed. In the majority of cases, women had returned to their parents, or another relatives' home, before the birth of their child. Usually they returned after the ceremony of Shrimant at their in-laws home, during the seventh month of pregnancy. They were then collected by their brother, or another male relative and taken to their piyar. This was certainly the pattern for the birth of the first child,
and, also, frequently for subsequent children. She would be cared for by female relatives, in most circumstances, from her natal family. Women were not allowed to cook or handle food and drink, or wash and handle clean clothes. In fact, they were expected to rest and concentrate on feeding and caring for their baby for the first five to six weeks after the child's birth. Such a practice was obviously of great benefit to the new mother and her baby, but meant a considerable increase in the workload for other women in the household and a certain inconvenience. During this five to six week period, the new mother was considered to be 'unclean' and she was not considered to be 'ritually pure' until she attended the temple at the end of a prescribed number of weeks. Up to that time, she was supposed to remain at home, resting on her bed. Some families believed that if the woman (or baby) were touched, then the person who touched them would have to bathe before eating. (They might also bathe to 'ritually purify' themselves, if they felt polluted by contact with other impure objects, or persons of certain low castes.)

In order for a woman to remain resting beyond the early weeks of the baby's life, there had to be sufficient female labour power available in her marital home to take on her tasks. What was significant was the number of women who stayed at the piyar for weeks, if not months after the prescribed five to six week period. It was known for women to be away from their sasera for up to a year. The length of a woman's stay with her parents could be a matter of much negotiation, as the parents tried to extend their daughter's stay away from her sasera for as long as possible. Once
she returned, she would be expected to perform all her household
tasks again. Pressure could be exerted for her return if there was
a heavy workload or if other female in-laws, particularly mothers-
in-law, began to resent their additional burdens. Sisters-in-law
were probably less likely to complain as they hoped for a similar
respite from their workload when they were pregnant. The length of
the sojourn reflected on the status of both marital and natal
families because the latter were supporting the mother who was
completely domestically unproductive over a long period and the
former were foregoing the wife's labour in the home over the same
period.

The ceremonies associated with widowhood, too, were supposedly
because of pollution taboos. However, as was shown in the previous
chapter, they served other purposes and reflected a fear or dislike
of the widow's lowered status. In some cases, in the past, widows
had been expected to remain housebound for up to a year. On top of
this they were made to undergo a number of ceremonies, which were
distressing, if not humiliating. They had to have their heads
shaved, usually, if this was still observed, only a token amount was
cut from the hair. Towards the end of the fourteen day bereavement
period, when a number of ceremonies were performed, they might have
to experience cold water poured over them in the presence of many
onlookers. Such practices were observed, if at all, in the
villages.

The end result of all these rituals at bereavement rendered
women as unattractive as possible. Socially, this was particularly important with young widows, even if they were newly-wed and without children. A young widow was a threat to the social order, because she could never be married off and yet if there was any suggestion that she had any contact with a male friend, then her reputation would be ruined. This would, of course, cause considerable damage to the rest of the women in her natal family, whom it might be feared, could act likewise.

Women were, therefore, much more constrained and circumscribed by their own bodily functions and by significant life events in a manner which did not apply to men. Their female body functions regularly made them 'unclean' and necessitated a number of 'avoidance taboos'. They also precluded women from attending many functions and ceremonies and restricted their normal routines, though, on occasions, this was an advantage. Moreover, the fact that families had the capacity to find alternative sources of labour to replace women during these unproductive times gave evidence of the family's economic prosperity. One recently widowed woman in the village of Bakrol, tended her buffalo each day, although she was not abiding by the correct code of behaviour of staying in her home and doing nothing. She did so, however, only because no-one else was available to do the work. So full observance of such taboos would in the past have provided evidence of the prosperity and standing of the family, as was their capacity to keep women in a form of purdah. Such criteria still applied, but had in some instances been modified by the demands of urban life, particularly amongst nuclear families. Moreover, observance of such taboos was
also influenced by the family’s attitudes towards such traditional practices: religious families, particularly in urban areas, would continue to follow menstruation and bereavement taboos, but families with a similar socio-economic background with more liberal views would moderate or stop the practices completely.

Reputation and the repression of sexuality

For the Patidar the observance of purdah was a matter of status; being able to keep women out of agricultural work and paid employment, but it also necessitated that women acted in a manner commensurate with their status, that is they behaved in a modest and unassuming way when required. The way a woman acted reflected upon the standing of the whole family. As Papanek (1973) commented, they become 'demonstrators of status'. One of the principal criteria used in assessing the status of Patidar women was their reputation. As has already been discussed, without an untarnished reputation, girls would generally be excluded from the marriage stakes, most certainly from the better matches. Moreover, one girl's ill-repute could reflect very badly on the rest of her family. Consequently, girls were inculcated with ideals of modesty and they lived in an environment where sexuality had to be repressed. Certain behaviour could be tolerated in youths and men, but not in girls and women.

One sixteen-year old, Hassu, from VVN explained her attitude very seriously: she would never talk to boys or respond to any of their taunts or teasing, because this would only encourage them. She had no wish to enter any liaison and anticipated a marriage
arranged by her parents within the next four to five years. Marriage contracts were formalised at an engagement ceremony, chanalo; but even though this was considered to be binding, the marriage ceremony followed in a matter of weeks. Many people contended that this was to ensure that no deleterious rumours had time to circulate about either of the partners which could lead to the calling off of the ceremony. Even though nothing ill could be said about either partner, 'malicious' persons might wish to prevent the match, especially if it was a particularly advantageous one. So no possibility of even ill founded rumours should be allowed.

For young women pre-marital sexual activity was unacceptable in any circumstances. Even the mildest of flirtations was frowned upon. Indeed, amongst village girls, this was not very likely to occur, as most boys or men they encountered before marriage were relatives, or regarded as such. Other Patels in the village were considered to be 'village kin'. No marriages were permitted with someone from the same village. In the towns, on the other hand, young women could meet young men who were not related in any way and, therefore, potential partners. Despite such opportunities, however, it was still rare for urban girls to have boyfriends, and even rarer, when this did occur, for it to culminate in marriage. The importance of preserving a 'good reputation' had been so well drummed into girls' consciousness that they did not consider developing such liaisons. Manda, in her thirties at the time of the surveys, had been brought up in East Africa. She explained how her older sister had had such a 'love marriage' which had caused so many
problems. Her sister had been completely ostracised by all her natal relatives for ten to eleven years. Consequently, she would never have contemplated any such action. Moreover, her parents were very strict. Indeed, girls and women frequently stated if they themselves, 'erred' to such an extent that their behaviour became well-known there would be severe reverberations on their other sisters and young female relatives, who would be kept even more closely under check. Any serious relationship, unless it culminated in marriage, would virtually put an end to most girl's chances of marrying.

Some urban girls felt there were ways to circumvent restrictions and the possibility of discovery. They might surreptitiously meet a boyfriend at the cinema, under the pretext of going with a group of female friends. But the possibility of having any time alone together was most unlikely. One young man in the town of VN commented, regretfully, that it was not feasible to meet any girl alone without being seen and recognised by someone known to the family, unless perhaps it was in a large town like Bombay. With the expansion of higher education, the present generation of young girls did meet young men, but usually only in groups, and generally nothing more than friendship developed. This was the result partly of lack of opportunity, but more importantly, because girls made a choice not to become involved in such circumstances. The risks were felt to be too great.

However, it was not just young unmarried people whose behaviour was circumscribed. No public displays of affection or attraction,
even between married couples, were tolerated. In joint families, newly-weds were usually discouraged from spending time alone together. In village households, there was little privacy because living and sleeping accommodation was limited. Even in larger urban households, with spare rooms, young children generally slept in their parents' room. One older urban couple, with married adult children, displayed a photograph of themselves taken on a recent trip to Europe. They had their arms around each other's waists, which they pointed out, would have been totally impossible in Gujarat. Young, unmarried women seemed to have little knowledge about sexual matters and even educated girls, soon to be married, had no awareness of different methods of contraception. A number of married women claimed to have little interest in sex and saw it as a 'duty'. They certainly would not talk to their husbands about the subject. However, this could well be partly attributed, at least, to the custom of arranging a marriage, when the couple perhaps only met once or twice before the wedding, and, occasionally, in the past, not at all. Equally, other young women were very happy with their husbands and did not feel inhibited in the same way. (6)

Attitudes to 'love marriages'

The observance of purdah for Patidar women, to some extent, in the villages and, particularly, in urban areas, was more a matter of the internalization of certain forms of behaviour than the seclusion of women. Certainly, rural women were 'secluded' in the domestic sphere, but this was less applicable to urban women. Yet they were
generally firmly against the idea of boyfriends because of the impact on a girl's 'good reputation'. In the circumstances, what were women's attitudes towards the possibility of a 'love marriage'?

Only four Patidar women, in the sample had contracted 'love marriages': data taken from Survey C. Only one woman, Bharti, had met her future husband at college and had eventually overcome parental opposition to such a match. Another woman, Indira, since separated, had asked her family to 'arrange' a marriage with her college lecturer. (He was from a higher ekada, 'the Five'.) The two other women had met their future husbands actually through their own families. One of them was Lila and the other woman, Kashori, had known her husband for ten years before marriage; he was the son of some of her parents' friends. Even so, they initially opposed the union. (All three women lived in VN at the time of the surveys.) In all three cases, the boyfriends were from similar or higher status groups of Patels. They all belonged to the 'marriage circles' in which families would look for prospective partners anyway. One other woman, Meena, had met a boyfriend at college, but because he was from a different caste, a Brahmin, her father would not agree to their marriage. (7)

It appeared that what might be known as a 'love marriage' was acceptable under certain circumstances. When the couple were from the same socio-economic background and ekada in which families would, in any case, seek potential spouses, then it was possible to gain family acceptance. In these circumstances, the same vetting procedures were applied as in an arranged marriage: see Chapter 20.
Women brought up entirely in a village environment had no scope to meet possible partners if they wished to do so as it was considered completely impossible to marry someone from the same village. But even for urban women potential partners were restricted because very few women would consider a non-Patel as a partner. Purnima, from Baroda, had lived outside the state before she married and so claimed there was no-one suitable with whom she could have formed a relationship, because they were all of a different caste. Moreover, there were too many restrictions. Even for girls who did study further and often had to live away from home, there were no real opportunities to meet the opposite sex. Such girls always lived in a girls' hostel if they could not remain with relatives. These hostels were very strict so that families of girls would feel confident in allowing their daughters to stay there. Other women were young when they married; Pratima had not even left school. But even if opportunities might have arisen, most women dismissed the idea because they wanted an 'arranged marriage'. Shobhna from Nadiad, had lived in Ahmedabad, the state capital, but her family were very strict because they had such a 'good name', so she could not consider anything other than a marriage of her parents' choice. Panna from VVN said she had been so 'reserved' that she never spoke to any boys. Prabhu from Karamsad explained that she could not have met anyone as her family was so strict she could not get out of the house.

So, although potentially there was greater scope for girls living in urban areas to have contact with the opposite sex,
particularly if they went on to higher education, the experience of
the women surveyed actually failed to provide any substantial proof
of this happening. Admittedly, the only three love marriages
amongst the women surveyed were urban women, who had gone on to
higher education, but this only represented 10% (3:28) of the urban
sample; one other woman had had a serious relationship which she had
hoped would lead to marriage, altogether a total of 14% (4:28).
Amongst younger, unmarried women, there was no evidence of dramatic
changes either, even amongst female urban students. The majority
were anticipating arranged marriages once their studies were
finished. There were reports of love marriages, but these were
still by far the exception. Frequently these, too were constrained
within very restricted boundaries. Madhu in Baroda had known her
fiancé for nearly six years before they were married. He lived
nearby. Yet when his newly married brother-in-law offered to take
Madhu on his scooter to a typing class, which they both wished to
attend, her family felt this would presume far too much. It would
give cause for gossip and her future in-laws would consider she was
acting in a presumptuous manner in adopting too 'close' a
relationship with her future family, although the wedding had been
fixed for a few months hence. The majority of young women, however,
appeared quite content to undergo an arranged marriage; those who
were not eager to have such a marriage usually did not consider
finding their own partner as an alternative. Instead, they used
their studies to defer the event. For urban women, particularly,
there was a possibility of meeting future marriage partners.
However, women's attitudes were determined by internalized values
which dictated the importance of a good reputation and a preference
for an arranged marriage. External restraints, in the form of segregation and seclusion of women, were not, therefore, necessarily essential to prevent most women forming undesirable liaisons.

Double standards

Whereas women had to be virgins at marriage, or run the risk of being rejected, and remain faithful afterwards, women felt men could be much freer. Prostitutes or 'call girls' were available and some men certainly had affairs. One young married woman commented, philosophically, that she would not 'mind' if her husband had an affair, as long as it did not affect her or her children! When Indira's husband started drinking heavily and bringing home his drinking partners, she moved her young daughter to her mother's home, so that the daughter's reputation should not be damaged, by association. Another urban girl, Madhu, spoke of a relative who was 'separated' from his wife and had a girlfriend of long-standing whom he wished to marry. The wife's family refused to allow a divorce, so that the husband could remarry. The appearance of normality, however, was better than the reality of the breakdown of the marriage: it was a question of the family name.

SEGREGATION

Any system of purdah relied very heavily on different mechanisms for segregating men and women in their own social spheres. So purdah, as a means of regulating relationships between men and women, did not depend solely on internalized constraints.
Indeed, in Patidar society there was a great emphasis on the actual segregation of men and women. Within Patidar households, men's and women's activities rarely overlap. They are occupied in different, but complimentary, spheres. The significant difference between male and female lifestyles rests on the degree, or lack, of mobility each experiences. Women's ability to move around freely, even within their own village, was much more restricted. Such limitations on their freedom of movement had considerable implications for the form which any leisure activities or social interaction took.

The extent to which women remained in their separate 'sphere' and the degree to which their movements were circumscribed and what form these restrictions took depended on a number of factors. As purdah for the Patidar was not just a means of regulating relationships between men and women, but also a reflection of social standing, then the form purdah took was liable to vary. In rural areas, it was particularly an indicator of high social and economic standing, when Patidar women as 'demonstrators of status' were maintained in the home and were not economically active outside the household. Thus it was a sign of 'Sanskritization'. Such values were also operable in urban areas, but the form purdah took had to adapt to the changed circumstances. Segregation was still very much evident, but in a somewhat 'modified' form. Urban families had not rejected purdah as a mark of social status, but the demands of the new 'class' society had resulted in a 'refinement' of its operation: see subsequent discussion in Chapter 15.
The village: segregation in and around the home

The division of Patidar men's and women's lives within the village setting followed a well-established pattern. By examining, initially, how these segregated lifestyles operated within the village, it will become more apparent what changes and adaptations are taking place in urban households. The division of labour has already been examined in detail in Chapters 7 and 8, so I will briefly reiterate here the chief features of village women's working lives in relation to segregated activities. All household tasks such as food preparation, cleaning and cooking, washing utensils, laundering clothes, dusting, sweeping and cleaning the house and its surrounding courtyard were performed by women. At mealtimes, women in village households rarely sat down to eat with men. Usually they were serving men, children or older members of the household and ate quite possibly alone, if not, they would probably eat with other women. Very few activities were likely to take them out of the home and its immediate surroundings. Even in farming households, women's chief responsibility was caring for the buffalo which were stalled in the courtyard, frequently, very near the only door. If they cooked for agricultural workers, this was in the kitchen of their own home. Only, occasionally, women might have to leave the courtyard and the khadaki to go to the flour mill. Excursions outside the home for shopping were rarely necessary. Stalls with fresh vegetables, or milk, if necessary, called at the house daily. Other goods would usually be purchased by men in the household from the village, or if it was an unusual item, they brought it from a nearby town. Children were frequently sent to purchase unexpected,
last minute, items. The only other reason for leaving the immediate vicinity of the household was to attend the temple, but, even then, there was usually one within five minutes walk from the home.

Consequently, village women's world was concentrated very much around the home and the surrounding houses in the khadaki. Their activities, too, were virtually all with other women. Even in whatever leisure time was available, this was likely to be spent amongst other women in the household and possibly neighbours. Generally the main periods of relaxation were in the afternoon, following the main meal of the day when women might rest especially in the hot summer months. Before starting work on preparing the evening meal, they would often sit outside in the late afternoon, as the day cooled, and talk. Usually women from other houses in the courtyard would join in. These women were often related through marriage, even if the link was several generations removed. They were seen as 'cousin sisters'. Moreover, they all belonged to the same status group. Again, after the evening meal, before going to bed, there was time for relaxation. In the late evening, for often the only time during the day, the whole family, men and women, might sit together. Even then, the men were often sitting elsewhere with other male friends. Thus Patidar village women lived out their lives in a narrow ambit, which was largely female-orientated.

Older women might move away from the immediate household on social visits or for more important errands, but only if the situation arose where no-one else was available, would younger married women be expected to do so. Such seclusion of women could
only occur in prosperous Patidar families where women's labour was never required on the land. Women from lower ekada and castes would, from necessity, have to move around the village and outside it, in the course of work. Sudha explained how before piped water was laid on in her village, Patidar women had gone after dark to fetch water to the house, so that they would not be seen. In some villages, too, the old wells were still in use, in emergencies, within the courtyard so that, even for water, women were not obliged to leave the vicinity of the khadaki. In Dharanjang, one old lady who had only recently died, had never ventured outside the high walls of her home and garden after she had been widowed, but had remained totally secluded. In another high status village, Karamsad, one of my male informants reported that his mother had never left her home without being accompanied by a low caste woman, from the barber caste. (8)

Even when guests came to visit the household, they would separate into male and female groupings, with men often sitting outside in the shade, whilst women congregated in the kitchen to help prepare tea and snacks. Mixed groups were rare, unless they were very close relatives, perhaps; generally both sexes felt uncomfortable in the presence of a number of members of the opposite sex. Village men and women were not used to socialising together and so felt ill at ease. Mahendra absented himself from an all-female group, although it was composed of his wife, two nieces and myself, because according to his wife, he was 'shy'. Other men, too, would choose to sit alone rather than join in with a group of women. Similarly, Sohan, a young married woman, quickly disappeared from a group of three or four men, all neighbours, and myself,
because she professed herself 'bored' with the conversation. Even within the home, therefore, mixed gatherings outside the immediate family, were very uncommon.

Territoriality

When the opportunity arose, women could move freely around their own village. But if they needed to travel outside the village, usually by bus, they had frequently to be escorted; certainly if they were going any further than a nearby town. If they were attending some social function, or had to make some unusual purchases, such as wedding gifts, village women would rarely go alone. Normally they would be accompanied, at least, by a female relative or neighbour. But even visiting their own families, they might well be accompanied by another woman in the household. If the excursion was further than the nearest town, then they would undoubtedly be escorted by a male member of the household. If they were going somewhere not visited before or they were likely to be travelling after dark, they would certainly not go without a male companion. (9) On train journeys, there were usually 'ladies' compartments, for women travelling unaccompanied. But often women with male escorts, would prefer to sit there in the all-female company, rather than in a mixed compartment. Travelling in the dark was considered very unsafe for a woman and there were many lurid tales to support this thesis. Yet no woman had personal experience or heard of any difficulties from any close friend. Anne Edwards (1987) explained how patriarchal social relations relied on such mechanisms, as the threat of male violence, to maintain their power.
and control. By such devices, Patidar women willingly remained in the domestic sphere, where there was no threat to their reputation and no scope for sexual adventures. As Patidar women had rarely travelled far after dark alone, it was difficult for them to obtain any real knowledge of 'dangers' they might encounter. Such dependence on men meant that any major excursions away from the village could only be undertaken when men were available or willing to oblige. However, village women were not so circumscribed when journeys in and near the village were necessary.

Towns: segregation in and around the home

The division of labour within urban households followed the same pattern, except that urban women as has been seen, were far more likely to have servants, nearly always female, to help with the tasks, and so had more time to devote to other activities. Women and men recognised the same concepts of 'separate spheres' as in village households. But two factors were at work which affected urban women significantly. Firstly, they were more likely to be living in a nuclear household, which meant that no other adult women were residing with them. When this occurred in a village context, there were usually other female relatives living nearby, whose husbands' families had often lived in the same khadaki for generations. Urban women living in new housing developments were not surrounded by kin. If they lived in a recently built house, there might not even be any neighbours for some distance. Even if there were neighbours, some of the spacious new homes were surrounded by gardens and walls and it was impossible to sit outside
one's own house and talk with the neighbours. Even in older, or perhaps less affluent 'societies' (small housing estates) neighbours were not as close as in the old village khadaki, where all the houses were built side-by-side, facing on to a central courtyard area. Urban neighbours, too, were not only not relatives, they might not even be Patels, but possibly from a caste with whom Patels were not particularly eager to mix socially.

Within the home, more particularly in nuclear families, women and men might spend more time together. If they lived in a nuclear family generally they would eat together, even if the wife served her husband and children first. At times of relaxation, they might also be together. However, as urban men generally worked some way from the home, they did not spend a great deal of time in the house during the day, unless they could return for their mid-day meal. In the evening, they might well stay at home, but if they did so, some of their male friends were likely to call. Otherwise, they would go out and call on friends elsewhere. Patidar men's and women's social circles were still dominated by their own gender. Urban women in such households, however, had been obliged to learn how to mix with their husband's male friends. Not only were they the only person available to serve drinks and snacks, but sometimes such guests, frequently business colleagues, might call whilst a husband was not present and the wife had to be able to pass on messages and discuss matters in her husband's place; somewhat like a secretary. On occasions, the husband's friends brought along their wives, but then the gathering would fall naturally into all-male and all-female groupings with little mixed interaction.
Women, however, tended to feel 'isolated', even sometimes if they lived in a joint household. They did not meet other women by just sitting outside their own homes and relaxing. Instead, they had to make a conscious effort to go and visit. This entailed changing clothes and smartening up their appearance, before they could leave their home. Moreover, although this was possible in the afternoon, when the day started to cool off, it was less easy in the evening, because after the meal was finished, it was late to venture out visiting, and no woman would go any distance unaccompanied. Even with neighbours nearby, women might not mix with them a great deal, if they were from a different caste or area. Consequently, urban women had developed a more formalised concept of 'visiting' their social peers amongst the Patidar, perhaps even pre-arranged by telephone, rather than having the ever present, all-female group of neighbours outside, in their khadaki.

Urban women, too, had to leave home more often not just for social reasons, but also to go shopping. More goods were, of course, available in towns. But items such as fresh vegetables had to be purchased and when husbands and children were at work or school, women often had to go themselves to the nearest shopping area as the vegetable venders who called at each household in the villages, did not necessarily call at urban homes. If women employed a full-time servant, they might be sent on such errands. But most families still only had part-time help and women had to make the journey themselves. Like visiting, shopping could be much more of a social event as well, with several women meeting to go on an
excursion for larger items, such as clothing or jewellery purchases. So urban women were often experiencing, on the one hand, feelings of isolation because they no longer possessed a ready-made social circle around their home. On the other hand, however, they were having to leave the home more often for essential reasons, such as shopping, as well as doing so, on occasions, for social contact with relatives and friends.

**Urban women and territoriality**

Urban women, too, were constrained by limitations on their mobility. Some did travel around towns alone, certainly during the day, and even further afield, but many would only do so in the company of female friends or relatives. If no woman was nearby or available to accompany them, many would stay at home, even in the afternoon, despite a strong wish to see friends and enjoy the support of female companionship. Frequently, this was as a result of feelings of unease and lack of confidence as a result of a sheltered and secluded upbringing, rather than actual proscriptions on their movements. More confident women, often those who were working, felt much more able to travel alone.

A further constraint on affluent urban women and, to some extent, women from professional families in the villages, was the manner in which they travelled. Such women would generally not walk any distance, because it was 'tiring'. They had to hire an auto-rickshaw or be taken in a hired car or the family car, when such a vehicle existed. They would certainly never contemplate travelling
on the seriously overcrowded buses, often full of lower caste villagers with parcels and sacks of goods. They could not fight their way on to such vehicles, which was often essential, particularly during the busy 'wedding' season in the hot summer months. However, in order to preserve appearances by travelling in comfort, they were often even more dependent on the availability of men for excursions even nearby. In nuclear families, in particular, there was only one man available to accompany women. It could be a tremendous source of contention for women who could not persuade reluctant husbands or relatives to take them on social visits, when they had the leisure time to do so.

Summary

As Ursula Sharma (1980) commented, purdah is on a spectrum, observed by all women to a greater or lesser extent. Patidar women certainly observed purdah, but not in the most extreme of its forms, such as total veiling. Indeed, it would appear that since previous generations, there had been a certain relaxation in its strictness. In Patidar society, purdah was manifested in different ways: firstly, it entailed the seclusion of women in the domestic sphere with very clear limits on their territoriality. But it was also reinforced by the segregation of men and women, not just in the sexual division of labour, but also in social activities. Finally, Patidar women had been inculcated with the values associated with purdah to such an extent that few desired to breach it. Thus, in urban areas, women's freedom of movement had been greatly extended from necessity, but they still behaved in a manner which precluded
any unbecoming interaction with the opposite sex.

That Patidar women observed a form of purdah is not open to dispute, but what was the function of such observances could well be. As was discussed earlier in the chapter, there were three principal functions purdah can perform, all of which operated in Patidar society. Purdah was primarily a means of controlling women's sexuality and of making sure that women remained in the roles designated for them of wife and mother. Moreover, it further ensured that any children they bore were legitimate heirs. In this sense, it made certain that inheritance passed to the correct members of the next generation. But purdah also ensured that women, themselves, through seclusion in the home, had limited access to resources and thus enabled the maintenance and control of wealth and property in male hands. In this manner, purdah acted as a buttress to the patriarchal social structure.

Purdah, however, served another function which was of equal, if not greater importance, to the Patidar. It acted as a mark of social status, with women as the demonstrators of that status. Because of the primary importance of this function, purdah took different manifestations dependent on the economic and social standing of the family concerned. Within rural society, the observance of purdah was very much a caste based model. As families achieved higher status, they were able to 'Sanskritise', to maintain women solely in the domestic sphere. In the highest status villages of 'the Six', it was not even considered generally acceptable for well qualified women to seek paid employment. Their duty lay in
running the household smoothly. But in urban areas, manifestations of purdah had changed because the households concerned were no longer part of a totally caste based society. Hence Patidar women no longer best served the requirements of the household in their 'status production work' by remaining secluded in the home. Women still observed purdah, but in order to gain a good education, for example, they had had to be able to move and mix more freely, even before marriage, at a very vulnerable time in terms of their 'good reputation'. This had been achieved by the internalization of values necessary to ensure their good behaviour and modest demeanour. Urban women had to have much greater freedom of movement in order to fulfil the status requirements of the household and these changes in their patterns of social interaction will be considered in the following chapter.
PURDAH AND SEGREGATION

1. As described by Jeffrey (1979) when talking about Muslim women living in the precincts of an Islamic shrine near Delhi.

2. I was sometimes urged to wear a sari, as it would be assumed I was married and, therefore, I would be given more respect.

3. Patidar women appeared to have very strongly internalized the constraints on their sexuality, even amongst their own sex. Veena Das (1976 in Nanda) has argued that women's sexuality was very threatening to a male patriarchal society because by the wrong liaison, women can become allied with lower status men. Its control is essential for the maintenance of power relationships in the family and successful marriage alliances.

4. Doranne Jacobsen (1974) reported that in some areas of India, like Madhya Pradesh, women stayed completely apart, often in a special room for five days whilst they menstruated.

5. In my own research, a number of women whose natal families lived not too far distant, returned on a visit once monthly, perhaps at the time of menstruation, as their labour power was not available at their in-laws. At their parents' home, they would not be required to do anything.

6. Jacobsen (1974) found that young women in the Bhopal region of Madhya Pradesh, had not been told about menstruation and sex. When they became pregnant, after marriage, this was discerned because they did not spend the ritual five days apart from the family.

7. Although Brahmins are the highest caste, Patels appeared to be more rigid in conforming to prescriptions to only marry within the same sub-caste grouping, as will be discussed later.

8. This informant explained this relationship as part of the jajmani system operating at that time.

9. On the day I was to make my first visit to a family in the village of Ajarupa, two young men from the household were sent to accompany me. On my return the same evening, a young female friend insisted on escorting me back to my own home, but as she could not travel alone after dark, her brother had to accompany us both.
CHAPTER 15. SOCIAL INTERACTION
SOCIAL INTERACTION

Introduction

The observance of purdah has had a very significant impact on patterns of social interaction amongst Patidar women. In rural areas, young married women were confined to the immediate environment of the home and khadaki to a considerable extent and this was a major restriction on their possible contacts. Moreover, virtually all village activities were in segregated groups, so that Patidar women's choice of social contacts was limited. In the towns, women had to have greater freedom of movement in order to be able to fulfil all their household duties. But these were not the only factors which determined different patterns of social activity between rural and urban women. As Green, Hebron and Woodward (1987) pointed out, in reference to women in Sheffield, there were differences between male and female patterns of social interaction and leisure, because of women's lack of time and access to leisure activities. This was certainly true for rural women, particularly those women in agricultural households, who had heavy workloads. They simply had a great deal less time for social activities than both rural and urban women, or even rural women in non-agricultural households. Moreover, the significant change in the nature of urban women's 'status production work' had also brought them into contact with a different social circle.

Rural Patidar women's networks were very clearly defined, and strictly limited. Their heavier workloads meant they had less time available for social contact. Their social circle, therefore,
tended to be composed of those people in the immediate vicinity; moreover, they generally had to spend their time with those women acceptable to their in-laws. Because of purdah and considerations of respectability, their social activities were largely segregated from men, so the vast majority of their social interaction took place with other women.

With urban residence, Patidar women's patterns of social interaction were subject to considerable changes. They had to make up for the loss, in many instances, not just of the immediate joint family, but the presence of usually closely related neighbours in the very near vicinity. There was a possibility that urban women would feel isolated because of the loss of this readily available social circle. Indeed, many women claimed to feel lonely and isolated in their urban homes. Moreover, in building up new networks, women were constrained by considerations of status and purdah. They had to ensure that new social contacts were socially acceptable and, consequently, not all those people in the immediate vicinity might fall into this category. Also, they could not always travel when and where they pleased, unless accompanied. But, generally, they had made considerable changes to compensate for these losses, although these networks were, perhaps, more 'loose-knit' than in the villages. (1) Whereas neighbours had provided the foundation for most social contact for village women, urban women had substituted other sources of social contact, particularly from their own family and relatives, and the work contacts of their husbands, and, on occasions, themselves.
Research on the move away from close-knit networks in English society, such as the classic work by Bott (1973), has made much of the loss of support from kin and neighbours, which has affected the quality of women's social lives. However, in the Indian context, particularly for Patidar women in urban areas, the loss was not always as severe as it initially seemed. In village areas, women were dependent on the networks of their in-laws, already in existence before they married into the village. Such social circles were not always what women would choose for themselves; moreover, they did not always find them supportive, because they could not confide in the in-laws' social network, if there were any problems at their sasera. Village women, too, had none of their immediate natal family nearby who could provide social contact or support on a very regular basis. Urban women, in contrast, often had relatives from their own family living in the same town, or in a nearby village. On occasions, even their own parents were in the vicinity. Consequently, there was a much greater degree of contact with their own family, which more than compensated for the loss of a 'close-knit' network of neighbours. Moreover, they often had a network of their own friends in whom they could confide their problems. So, although they were not part of a very 'close-knit' community, they had often been able to construct new networks, which were potentially much more supportive. In many cases, the quality of urban women's social interaction was certainly superior to that of rural women; but usually the quantity of social contacts had increased considerably as well.

In the following discussion of the data, it will be seen how
the networks of urban women were not perhaps so 'close-knit' as in rural life, but, generally, they were more extensive, and as a result urban Patidar women had, on the whole, a richer social life than their village counterparts. In this, of course, they were aided by greater amounts of time at their disposal for leisure activities.

Neighbours

The most frequent form of social contact amongst village women was with their neighbours. The village women surveyed all reported very regular contact with their neighbours. (3) Indeed, nearly 80% were in daily contact with their neighbours and a further 8% saw them regularly several times a week: see Table 15.1 below. Only 14% claimed to have no regular contact with neighbours. Three of these women, in the same village, Dharmaj, lived some distance from their nearest neighbours. In the case of two of these women, Dipti and Rakhi, the houses nearby in the same street, had all been closed up because their occupants had left the village, so they were rather isolated. The other woman, Ranjan lived in a large house surrounded by its own grounds and a high wall, on the edge of the village. (This had been built at the turn of the century in the wave of affluence following the first migration to East Africa). In this respect, her life-style resembled that of urban women in new housing developments rather than most village women living in the narrow, closely-built streets and courtyards. Moreover, she worked full-time as a teacher and, consequently, did not have the same leisure
time at her disposal as other village women. The two other women who were not in any regular contact with neighbours, both lived in large joint households. Jaya, in fact, from the village of Ajarpura, said that as her own joint household was so big she did not feel the need to have regular contact with her neighbours.

Table 15.1: Contact with neighbours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily contact</td>
<td>28 78%</td>
<td>20 56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times a week</td>
<td>3  8%</td>
<td>4  11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No regular contact</td>
<td>5  14%</td>
<td>12 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36 100%</td>
<td>36 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Far fewer urban women saw their neighbours on such a regular basis. Just over half the women saw their neighbours daily; a further 11%, saw them several times a week: see Table 15.1 above. But a third had no regular contact. Three of those women were working, two as teachers and one ran her own business; but some working women still kept in daily contact with their neighbours despite having less time at their disposal. Five women who had no regular contact, like village women in a similar situation, lived at some distance from any neighbours; two of these women and one other lived in large joint households and had constant female companionship. Two women had recently moved to their new home, so had not had a great deal of time to become acquainted.

In the smaller villages, Gada and Ajarpura, virtually all the women saw their neighbours regularly, and these neighbours were
usually relatives by marriage as well. Not all village women had stated, however, whether their neighbours were related, possibly because they were not sure themselves of the degree of kinship. But of those fourteen village women who saw their neighbours regularly, eight definitely stated that at least some of these neighbours were related, usually by marriage, and in the case of the other six women, it seems probable, from other information, that they were related, too. In the village of Bakrol, too, the general opinion was that people living round about in the same khadaki, were from the same kutumb or family. It was not always easy for the younger married women to know the complexities of relationships, dating back several generations, when they had been fairly newly-married into a family where everyone was a stranger. In the larger villages, neighbours were less likely to be relatives because there had been greater mobility within the village, when people moved into new homes, or from outside, when people moved there to be nearer centres of work.

In the towns, only 17% of women had daily contact with neighbours who were also relatives. Moreover, two of these six women lived in khadaki in the older parts of the towns, which resembled the villages in construction and social structure. Another two also lived in the same house, but it had been divided into two independent sections.

The village women surveyed, therefore, were far more likely to have daily contact with neighbours and these neighbours were much
more likely to be related than those of women in urban areas. But wherever the women were residing, their regular contacts were overwhelmingly with Patels rather than members of any other castes. Only three village women had neighbours who were not Patels, with whom they had some contact. But only four urban women noted any regular contact with neighbours who were non-Patels: two of the neighbours were South Indian, so outside the hierarchy of the Gujarati caste system. Two others were of similar status castes, and one women reported contacts with 'non-Patels' who belonged to groups which married into the Patels and were generally regarded as 'Patel' in practice if not by name. So urban living was not generating any rapid breakdown of the exclusiveness of Patel social interaction. Indeed, it is possible to speculate that the absence of suitable neighbours, particularly Patels, contributed to the lesser contact urban women had with their neighbours. (4) However, in the towns, women did often interact on a less frequent basis with members of different castes and possibly different religions, sometimes through their own work, but more often through meetings with their husband's business colleagues and wives. Social contact with non-Patels will be explored in greater detail later in the chapter.

The Family: Contact with parents.

When women married they moved away from their parent's village, piyar, but they still remained in contact with them. In fact, parents and relatives at home were the only other social group with whom all women, whether rural or urban, were in regular contact.
Where possible, all women returned to their parents' home on visits, except when parents were living abroad. Even then, women often returned to visit remaining grandparents or aunts and uncles. Village women tended to return home every month and stay for a day or two. Out of 32 married village women, half returned home every month; an additional 13% returned more often, every two weeks. Others went less frequently at regular intervals over the year: see Table 15.2 below. Two women made only yearly visits: Urmila because her mother lived in Bombay, and Madhu because her mother was very poor. Only three women appeared not to be in contact with their parents: in two of those cases there had been a disagreement and in the third case, it was possible that the parents were both dead. In fact, in the three small villages, in 'the Twenty-Seven', only two women did not go on monthly or more frequent visits to their parents. In larger villages, from 'the Six', parents sometimes were further away, outside the state.

In the towns, too, there was a similar pattern of regular contact. Urban women, however, were less likely to stay with their parents: rather, they tended to visit them for a few hours instead. Parents were more often living in or near the same town, so proximity helped to increase the degree of contact between married daughters and their parents. Where parents were still residing in a village, or further afield, then the custom of monthly or slightly less frequent visits tended to occur. Consequently out of 31 married urban women, 71% saw their parents at least once a month. The percentage was even greater than first appears, because out of these 31 urban married women questioned, seven had parents who lived
abroad. They were, of course, not able to see them very frequently. Of the remainder, 92% (22:24) saw their parents at least once a month. Comparable figures for village women were only 63%. In fact, many urban women went to visit their parents more frequently than once a month: one woman, Malika, saw her mother daily and five other women saw their parents several times a week at their homes; a further five, 16%, saw them weekly: see Table 15.2 below. Other women went less regularly during the year. Purnima whose parents were in London, still went to her piyar where her kaka, father's brother, lived, twice a year; another woman, Lila, in the same position, went instead to visit her paternal grandparents once a month.

Table 15.2: Frequency of visits to the parental home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Married village women</th>
<th>Married urban women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily visits</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times a week</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice monthly</td>
<td>4 13%</td>
<td>3 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>16 50%</td>
<td>8 26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two monthly</td>
<td>2 6%</td>
<td>1 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three times a year</td>
<td>5 16%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>2 6%</td>
<td>1 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less often/no contact</td>
<td>3 9%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abroad</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7 23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

32 31

419
Although urban women did not usually tend to stay overnight on their visit to their parents, it is evident from Table 15.2 above, how much more frequently they were able to visit their parents compared to village women. But the degree of contact between married urban daughters and their parents was even greater than the above information suggests, because many parents in nearby urban areas appeared to visit their daughters at their marital homes, too. In the villages this was an extremely rare occurrence and in the past parents would only have visited their daughters in their marital homes for a very limited number of ceremonies. Siblings might feel free to visit more often, but the women's parents would have felt extremely uncomfortable doing so. Only four village women, out of 32, claimed that their parents visited them regularly in their own homes, about every three months. But urban women reported much more frequent contacts. Sixty-two per cent of the 24 urban women with parents in India had some form of regular contact with those parents, who visited them in their own homes. Parents often called in to see them separately when they were out on other business. Fathers might be on a business trip in the area and mothers shopping: see Table 15.3 below. Indeed, 40% of those urban women with parents in India saw those parents in their own homes one or more times a week. No village woman received such regular visits; moreover, only 12.5% had any visits at all. There were, however, only four urban women, 16.5%, with parents in India who never had visits from their parents in their own homes.
Table 15.3: Frequency of parents visiting daughters in their own home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Village women</th>
<th>Urban women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times a week</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4 17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5 21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two weekly</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two to three months</td>
<td>4 13%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>28 87%</td>
<td>9 37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>32 100%</td>
<td>24*100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Urban women with parents in India

Those urban women with parents in India had considerably more contact, both through visiting their parental home and in having parental calls in their own marital home. Those with parents abroad tended to see them, sometimes yearly, but certainly every two to three years. At times it was more often, when parents returned to India on a visit or they went abroad to see their natal family. Often, at least one member of the woman's family would return to India each year and often stay some time with the woman, herself, especially if the parental home had been closed up or rented out. All seven women with parents abroad stated that when their parents returned on visits to India, they would stay some, if not all the time, at their daughter's home. Four lived in joint families and three in nuclear families.

One reason for the greater contact between urban women and
their parents in their own home was the greater prevalence of nuclear families in towns. Ten out of the fifteen women whose parents regularly called on their homes lived in nuclear families: see Table 15.4 below.

Table 15.4: Urban women and visits from parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Urban women (32)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joint family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular visits</td>
<td>5 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No visits</td>
<td>5 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents abroad/stayed with daughters</td>
<td>4 28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when in Gujarat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those women, however, who claimed to have no regular visits from their parents were divided equally between nuclear and joint families. It had not been acceptable in the past for the girl's family, particularly her parents, to call at her sasera, where they were considered to be 'inferior'. However, increased mobility and out of state or overseas migration had contributed to changes in this practice. It was obviously easier for a woman living in a nuclear family to have whom she wished calling at her home, especially in the daytime when her husband was at work. Moreover, urban women were not occupied with household tasks and so had the leisure time available for such calls. In joint households, particularly in rural areas, callers might arrive at an inopportune time when women were busy with household duties; older women would receive such guests, whilst the younger women continued with their
work. If a young woman's family called then she would not be able to do her duties, causing considerable inconvenience and possibly annoyance to all concerned. Such an onerous workload rarely applied to urban women, who were able, even in joint households, when their in-laws were favourably disposed, to receive callers in the afternoons.

**Contact with other relatives**

Urban and rural women also received visits from other relatives. (In this context, the term 'visit' was perceived by the women as a specific social call, as opposed to a 'casual encounter', or a very brief contact with someone, usually a neighbour, who dropped in for only a few minutes on an errand.) Once again, however, urban women had much more social contact with other relatives than did rural women. Indeed, a third of rural women had no contact with relatives other than their own parents: see Table 15.5 below. In contrast, only ten per cent of urban women were as socially isolated. However, these visits were more likely to be from relatives of their husband, rather than their own extended family. Consequently, those women living in nuclear families were likely to receive more calls from their own in-laws, particularly in urban areas where these relatives were probably living nearby. Women in joint families saw these relatives in the daily course of their lives in their own household.

Village households did, however, receive visits from members of the family who had moved away: one of the most regular visitors was
a woman's nanand, her husband's sister, who had married and moved to her own sasera: see Table 15.5. A nanand might return once a month on a visit to her own piyar, just as the village women surveyed tended to visit their own parents on a monthly basis. Village households, too, were likely to receive visits on business matters connected with the farm, from other members of the family, particularly brothers who had moved away. Their wives, also, would make courtesy calls on their parents-in-law, and the daughters-in-law resident in the household would be included in these visits from their jethani or diyarni. Apart from these regular visitors, members of the older generation living outside the village also called on occasions. Such visitors were generally the husband's aunts and uncles, his kaka or foi: his father's brother and sister respectively. If village women were not living with their parents-in-law then they might call on rare occasions.

Table 15.5: Visits made by and received from relatives over a 5-day period

(a) From or to husband's family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relation to Husband's Family</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th></th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents-in-law</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jet/diyar</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jethani/diyarni</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanand</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle-in-law</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aunt-in-law</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparents-in-law</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of visits</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Urban women received significantly more visits from their in-laws than rural women: see Table 15.5 above. But more women in towns were living separately, so they had to make and receive formal visits in order to maintain the family ties. Urban women also received frequent visits not just from their parents-in-law but also from their husband's brothers, their jet and diyar, and their wives, either alone or in couples. In some towns a number of brothers and their wives, and their 'cousin' brothers might meet regularly either together or in single sex groups. (First cousins were frequently referred to as 'brother' and 'sister' or 'cousin brother' and 'cousin sister'). Such social gatherings might be recorded as one social visit, but incorporate a considerable number of people. The other most frequent group of relatives seen were the woman's parents-in-law; generally women paid such visits on their in-laws at their home sasera. It was not common for the parents-in-law to make visits on their daughters-in-law. Because they were elders, they should, by custom, be shown the respect of receiving visits from their 'inferiors' in the family. In fact, only two women out of the seven who made regular visit to their parents-in-law stated that they also came to the respondent's home to visit on occasions. Again, there was quite considerable contact with kaka and kaki sasu, the husband's father's brother and wife, who were often acting in the role of absent parents-in-law. A limited number of other relatives were seen.

Urban women appeared to be far more mobile than rural women and were, therefore, much more likely to go out and make visits to relatives in their own homes, whether these were from their own
family or relatives by marriage. Village women, of course, were much more restricted in scope in whom they could visit locally, especially as there were likely to be few of their natal relatives living in the same village on whom they could call. So there was no particular visiting pattern amongst village women. If their mother's sister, masi, cousin or sister, happened to have married and be living in the same village, then they would call. Other relatives situated near enough to be visited easily were generally their husband's relatives, especially mothers-in-law or sisters-in-law. The natal relatives of village women generally lived outside the village. So a few village women went further afield to see their brothers, and 'cousin' brothers, and their wives, and their own sisters, or 'cousin' sisters.

Urban women in the same survey period, of five days, recorded twice as many visits to the homes of relatives: 32 visits compared to sixteen visits for village women. (See Survey B: Social Interaction). Urban women, however, were not confined solely to their husband's relatives for social calls. Urban women were most likely to visit their own sisters; a quarter of the visits, in fact, were to their sister's home. There was a much greater likelihood that a woman's sister would be living in the same town than in the same village, because marrying two sisters to men from the same village was not a common practice. Nearly half those visits paid by urban women were to their mother-in-law, or kaki sasu, their husband's father's brother's wife, who was possibly acting as a surrogate mother-in-law. Other visits were made to a variety of
relatives on both the woman's and the husband's side of the family; frequently the women's own aunts and uncles and more often than not her husband's brother, or 'cousin' brother, and their wives, depending very much upon which relatives happened to be living in the town or in close proximity to it. In both villages and towns, calls made were overall, fairly evenly distributed between the woman's own relatives and her relations by marriage.

Both rural and urban women received some visits from members of their own family as well. By far the largest group of relatives seen were their own siblings, particularly sisters, or other close female relatives of their own generation: see Table 15.6 below. Urban women, however, did tend to see more of their own relatives, than did village women; often their own relatives were living nearby in the same urban area, or they could be reached easily because of good transport links between the towns and nearby villages. Because of the customary practice of endogamy, marrying out of one's own village, it was unlikely that a rural woman would have very many of her own relatives living in the same village; occasionally a cousin or an aunt might also be married to a man in the same village. It has been assumed, therefore, that the link between sisters, or 'surrogate sisters', was not important in the Indian context because of such marriage practices and that women were not able to obtain any significant support after marriage from this source. However, this was one of the more important relationship for Patidar women; moreover, it was sustained despite separations. Indeed, the most frequent contact village women had was with their own sisters and 'cousin sisters' who came to visit them, and also to a slightly
lesser extent, with their brothers. The only other recorded contacts were with other close female relatives, a 'cousin brother's wife' and a masi, mother's sister, living nearby. For urban women, too, the most important social contact they had kept up was with their own sisters, whom they saw more than any other relatives; only two saw brothers separately, however, many more would see brothers on their return to the piyar where many brothers would be living in a joint household. The other most frequent contact that urban women made was with their father's brother and their wives, kaka and kaki, and with their father's parents. Such contacts were often a substitute for those women whose parents lived abroad. They would return on regular visits to their families who were still living in the joint family household at the girl's piyar. (Other relatives seen regularly were a mami, mother's brother's wife, and a masi.)

Table 15.6: Visits made and received from relatives over a 5-day period

(b) From or to own family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sisters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6* 50%</td>
<td>8 44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brothers</td>
<td>4 34%</td>
<td>2 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncles and aunts</td>
<td>1  8%</td>
<td>6%  34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparents</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1+ 8%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of visits 12 18

*Includes two 'cousin sisters'
+'Cousin brothers' wife
&Includes two aunts on their own
Frequency of regular visits

It has already been established that urban women had far more contact with not just their parents, but with relatives on both their own and their husband's side of the family. In Table 15.7 below, the number of visits made and received by women from relatives other than their parents over the period of a year, is analysed. These were contacts made on a regular basis, such as weekly or monthly visits made throughout the year. Out of the 32 village women surveyed, 34% received or made no regular visits over the year, compared to only 9% of the 31 urban women. (Village women received an average of 1.06 visits each, whereas urban women received an average of 1.61 visits. However, when those women who had no regular contacts over the year, other than parents, are subtracted from the totals, then the disparity in number of visits made and received virtually disappears. A total of 23 village women then had an average of 1.61 visits compared to the 28 urban women who were involved in 1.78 visits each.)

Table 15.7: Average number of weekly or monthly contacts per woman (over the year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of visits</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of women with no regular contacts</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average overall number of visits</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average adjusted for women not involved in regular contacts</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No: of women</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It has already been seen how urban women had far more contact with not just their own parents, but also with a wider network of relatives. In Table 15.8 below, further evidence is provided to underline this trend. Well over a half of the urban women saw these other relatives, outside their immediate family circle, at least once a week if not more frequently. Women, therefore, were in weekly or more frequent contact with relatives outside the immediate family circle. Fewer village women made such regular contacts: for example, only 18% saw such relatives more than once a week. About a third of urban and village women were in regular contact with a relative once or twice a month. Village women, however, recorded more regular contacts with relatives over longer periods of time, reflecting the greater distances and difficulties village women had to face to keep in touch.

Table 15.8 (b), below, shows how 90% of urban women had regular contact with relatives other than their immediate family, compared to 73% of village women. Contrary to findings in English society, especially those of Elizabeth Bott (1971), who found that women lost their close-knit social circle of relatives as a result of upward mobility and moves away from long established residential areas to new urban localities, urban Patidar women had enriched their social life by being able to have much more frequent contact not only with their immediate family circle, composed of both their husband's and their own relatives, but more distant relatives as well. (5) This appeared to have resulted from a variety of factors, particularly the greater proximity of relatives in urban areas than in rural areas and better transport. Moreover, urban women had much more
time at their disposal to go on such visits and used them as one of their principal means of filling leisure hours.

Table 15.8: Frequency of regular contacts with relatives (other than parents and those in the immediate household.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Towns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 3 times a week</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortnightly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two monthly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three monthly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six monthly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no: of regular contacts</td>
<td>34 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>50 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Towns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week/or more often</td>
<td>15 44%</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month/more often</td>
<td>10 29%</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times a year</td>
<td>6 18%</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>3 9%</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no: of regular contacts</td>
<td>34 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>50 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contact with friends

The strong trend determinable amongst urban women of keeping in closer and more regular contact with relatives was also evident in their relationship with friends. Again, urban women had more time available to devote to such visits, but their friends were likely to be from a wider network than amongst village women. In fact, village women were very dependent on their immediate neighbours for any friendships they formed. Very occasionally, a school friend from their natal village, where they lived before marriage, might marry into the same village as themselves. But, otherwise, it proved very difficult to sustain any friendships made at school, college, or even work, prior to marriage, because such friends were likely to live at some distance, in other villages, and the women, themselves, would have neither the time nor the opportunity to see them. There was a much greater chance that urban women might find that former friends were now living in the same town and this did, occasionally, form the basis for future friendships among the women in the survey. But they were more likely to make friends from amongst the wives of their husband’s business colleagues, whom they saw regularly both with and without the presence of their respective husbands.

Number and frequency of visits with friends

Data on friendship formation was obtained from Survey B on social interaction. The 36 urban and 36 rural women were asked about their friendships over the survey period of five days and also about their regular contacts with friends: see Table 15.9 below.
Half the village women surveyed had no contact with friends, whereas only 36% of the urban women appeared to have no contact with friends. Moreover, even those village women with friends had less contact with them than urban women did.

Table 15.9: Average number of contacts with friends over a 5-day period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of women with no friends</td>
<td>18 50%</td>
<td>13 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of visits</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>made over 5-day period</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of visits</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>made or received from friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of visits</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>made or received (excluding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>women with no contact over</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-day period)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No: of women</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Village women had fewer friends and made and received fewer visits with these friends than did Patidar women living in the towns. Yet with the exception of two of these contacts, all their friendships were with women living in the same village as themselves. Urban women's friendships were more dispersed, not only throughout the town in which they lived, but also with women in another town or village. Over 20% of their contacts were with friends living outside the same town as themselves.
Frequency of visits paid by friends

It should be remembered, however, that although urban Patidar women were more likely to have friends, when village women had friends they tended to see them slightly more often than urban women did, probably because of their greater proximity to one another. Indeed, over a third of village women with friends stated they saw a friend daily; whereas only 15% of urban women did so: Table 15.10 below. Of rural women with friends, 70% were in contact with them, during the week, compared to 63% of urban women with friends. Indeed, those village women with friends maintained very regular contact with them. Urban women saw each friend slightly less frequently, but they did have more friends so that they received more visits altogether.

Table 15.10: Frequency of visits to and from friend.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily contact with friends</td>
<td>7 35%</td>
<td>5 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once or twice a week</td>
<td>2 10%</td>
<td>9 28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>5 25%</td>
<td>7 21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once or twice a month</td>
<td>3 15%</td>
<td>7 21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>3 15%</td>
<td>5 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total of regular contacts with friends</td>
<td>20 100%</td>
<td>33 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No: of women with no friends</td>
<td>18 50%</td>
<td>13 36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Just as village women formed fewer friendships than town women, women in smaller villages tended to have fewer friends than those in
the larger villages of Karamsad and Dharmaj. In fact, 55% of women in small villages stated that they had no friends, whereas only 44% of women from larger villages made the same claim. However, amongst urban women the figure was reduced to 36%. A number of women in small villages lived in joint families and had claimed, as has already been stated, that they had neither the time, because of their heavy workload, nor the necessity for contacts outside the immediate family. Moreover, in small communities there was considerable distrust of those outside the immediate family and social circle.

**Place and location of visit**

Many women received visits from friends in their own homes and also were in a position to return these visits: but more urban women were able to do so, 55%, compared to slightly fewer village women, 45%: see Table 15.11 below. Nearly a third of village women, in fact, only saw friends in their friend's homes and a further 15% met friends only outside the home, in the village streets or at work. In comparison, a small percentage of urban women saw their friends only if they visited them in their friend's homes and an even smaller number only saw friends at work, and not on other occasions. No urban women, however, were in the position of just seeing friends in the street. Such situations were more likely to arise when women, in joint families, were unable to receive guests in their own homes, possibly because of the presence of their in-laws, or, again, because their friend was not able to leave her own home because of restrictions placed on either her time or movements. In contrast,
only a small number of both urban and village women only received
guests at home. Generally, these women lived in circumstances which
rendered it easy for them to receive friends: three of the urban
women concerned were, in fact, unmarried, so that parents were quite
happy for them to meet friends in their home.

Table 15.11: Location of visits made by and to friends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th></th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own home only</td>
<td>2 10%</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend's home only</td>
<td>6 30%</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own home and friend's home</td>
<td>9 45%</td>
<td></td>
<td>18 55%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside home/in the street</td>
<td>2 10%</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At work</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total of friends</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, therefore, those urban women with friends were the
ones most able to make and receive visits in each other's homes,
frequently because they lived as a nuclear unit, and had fewer
constraints on their activities in their leisure hours. Moreover,
urban women were more likely to have formed friendships with the
wives of their husband's friends so that there was unlikely to be
opposition to their visiting each other's homes. The family's
standing and background would be well-known to the woman's husband
and his family. Women who lived in joint families, or in close
proximity to their in-laws, might be constrained in their social
relations. Particularly with young married women, some in-laws were
reluctant for them to keep in contact with their own friends and
expected them to socialise only with people who came to the house, who would generally be other relations or friends of their in-laws.

Source of friendships

The friendships, themselves, were with women from more diverse sources and groups. Women did not always mention how they had become acquainted with their friends. Indeed among village women, in the case of nearly a third of the friendships recorded, their exact nature was not stated. However, all of these friendships were with women living in the same village and, significantly, in the villages, all friends were from the Patidar caste. In three of these friendships, the women concerned were unmarried and still living in their natal villages. Consequently, they were acquainted with many unmarried girls of a similar age because they had grown up together and gone to the same school. Another village woman, Benna, had close friends made through her participation in an informal religious gathering of five or six women which met regularly to sing religious songs and perform religious ceremonies. Such friends were not necessarily immediate neighbours, but came from the surrounding courtyards and nearby houses. In another category, where village women did specify how they had formed friendships, the largest number were formed with neighbours, 15%, and with the wives of their husband's friends, another 15%: see Table 15.12 below. A few village women still remained in contact with female friends they had known in their own village, prior to marriage, but generally they only met in the village, itself, and did not visit one another's homes. One woman, Raksha, had friends amongst the teachers at the
school where she worked, but, in general, as with most work-related friendships, these friendships did not extend outside of working hours. Another woman stated she had formed a friendship with a woman she had met through her in-laws. Only two women visited a friend outside the village in the nearby town of VN; one of these was an old neighbour who had since moved.

Table 15.12: Basis of friendship formation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neighbours/ex-neighbours</td>
<td>3 15%</td>
<td>4 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College/ex college friends</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
<td>4 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/same village</td>
<td>2 10%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through relatives</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
<td>2 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband's friends</td>
<td>3 15%</td>
<td>10 30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other interests</td>
<td>2 10%</td>
<td>3 9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>2 10%</td>
<td>2 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>6 30%</td>
<td>5 15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                              | 20 100%  | 33 100%|

Urban women tended to specify more exactly how their friendships had been formed. Only in 15% of friendships were there no details of how women had become acquainted with their friends. But there was one category where urban friendships differed significantly from those formed by rural women: that composed of the wives of the friends and associates of a woman's husband. Moreover this was the most important source of friendships amongst urban
women: they accounted for thirty per cent of friendships, compared to only 15% of village contacts. A number of these husband's friends had been made through their business contacts, some even worked in the same business or firm and, consequently, were not always Patel. In one sense, this appeared to be a significant development away from single sex gatherings and networks and the potential growth of mixed group interaction. However, in the vast majority of cases, such friendships still tended to follow former patterns. When husbands and wives met as a group, they still separated to interact with their own sex. Frequently, women called on their female friends alone and thus followed the same pattern as other female friendships, except that they had become more dependent on their husband's networks to meet women. There were, however, more social activities in which both sexes participated, often as a family unit, which represented a significant departure away from the practice in the villages. (For further discussion, see Chapter 19.)

Amongst urban women the other most significant group with whom they interacted were with friends at college or work, over 20% in all. Such friendships did not necessarily extend outside working hours, or endure after college had finished. In fact, the three women who mentioned college friends had only very recently finished college, in the last year or so. Two had just married. Whether the friendships would continue into later life was questionable, as none of the older married women mentioned such friends. The three working women claimed not to have contact with work colleagues after working hours. (6) But a number of these friends were not Patels
and consequently would not participate in the same social activities which, even in towns, largely revolved around the extended family.

Other urban friendships had arisen from a variety of different backgrounds: see Table 15.12 above. Rashmi, for example, saw a friend daily, when she came during her 'recess' at school to spend her break at her home. Twelve per cent of friendships were with a neighbour or former neighbour. Three women had met friends through participation in shared interests: two unmarried sisters had made friends whilst 'trekking' in the Himalayas. (7) Hansa had met female friends through her membership in the 'Lions' organisation, which she attended along with her husband.

As with village women, a small number of urban women had made friends through their relatives. One woman was in close contact with friends of her parents who acted as surrogate parents, whilst her own parents were in East Africa. Another woman had close links with her own sister's various in-laws, although this sister, in fact, lived in America. Unmarried women who still lived at home tended to retain any childhood friends who had not married and moved away.

Neither urban nor rural women tended to have any male friends. One unmarried, working village woman, Malini, claimed to have a male friend who helped her with business matters. The two unmarried sisters, who went trekking, Vina and Neena, had also made male friends as a result of this interest. (8) But no other woman made reference to male friends. In Malini's case, she had had to take
over many of the responsibilities of 'the man of the household' as her father was dead and the other children, all daughters, had married and left home. Consequently, she had dealings with men over business affairs. Similarly, in Vina and Neena's family, there were no sons and the two girls, well past the usual age of marriage, had taken over many of the responsibilities of both a son and his wife: one girl was working full-time as an engineer and the other helped out considerably in running the household. As a result, they were allowed much greater control over their own lives than most other unmarried women. However, even on their 'trekking' expeditions, they were usually accompanied by a male cousin of a similar age to themselves, acting as a 'surrogate brother'.

Interaction between castes

The outstanding difference between rural and urban interaction with friends was the much greater contact between members of different castes in the urban context. None of the village women reported having any friends who did not belong to the Patidar caste. Indeed, there was virtually no form of social interaction at village level which was not with other members of their own caste. All relations were Patel, and, virtually all neighbours were Patel. As most people living in the same khadaki, or street, were distantly related in some way, then it was rare to have non-Patels as neighbours. Each caste tended to live in certain areas of the village, but, occasionally, when houses were rented out by absentee owners, then other castes, usually of a similar social as well as economic standing, had moved in. Even the older areas of the towns
had a similar residential pattern, so that virtually all neighbours were likely to be Patel. None of the urban women who lived in the original older areas of the towns had formed any friendships with non-Patels.

But amongst urban women, generally, 36% of their social contacts with friends were with non-Patels. (See Table 15.13 below.) A quarter of these contacts, however, were with friends at work, who were not seen in any other social context. Even then, the majority of work colleagues were Patels, two out of three of the working women stated that they only had one non-Patel friend amongst their work relationships. Two women, who had recently finished their studies, had a friend who was not a Patel, in both cases a 'Shah'. A further quarter of these contacts with other castes had been made through the woman's husband; they were his friends. Such friendships were frequently a result of business interests and several women boasted that their 'friends' circle' was composed of doctors, many of whom were also Patels. Such contacts were not only prestigious, but they also served a useful purpose. Many transactions, not just of a business nature, were undertaken on a reciprocal basis. Thus a dentist might supply free treatment to a patient, but would expect to receive some service, such as financial advice, in exchange, at a future date. Other contacts with non-Patels had been made as a result of shared interests, such as 'trekking'. In the case of the other friendships with non-Patels, no information was available as to how the contact had been made.
Just under a third of friendships discussed by urban Patidar women were with non-Patels (12:33). The bases for these friendships were generally in areas which were not available for the majority of rural women. The largest categories were those related to the paid employment of both women and their husbands. In rural areas, such contacts, when applicable, would generally also be Patels from the same village. But in the urban areas, work was opening up wider social circles so that women were encountering people from outside their caste. Their shared work experience offered them a basis for friendship, too. Similarly, women had formed friendships with members of other castes through their education and burgeoning interests; again, such opportunities were not so readily available to rural women.

Table 15.13: Urban women's friendships with non-Patels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Non-Patels</th>
<th>Patels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At work</td>
<td>3 25%</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>2 17%</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband's friend</td>
<td>3 25%</td>
<td>7 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interests</td>
<td>2 17%</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbours</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through relatives</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>2 17%</td>
<td>3 14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No: of friendships</td>
<td>12 100</td>
<td>21 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The castes from whom these friends were drawn were generally of very similar or higher standing; other friends were not from the
area, originally, and, therefore, were not part of the local caste hierarchy. Consequently, it was not possible to place them exactly in relation to local castes. In other instances, friends were from different religious groups, either Christian or Jain, and were probably not from the immediate area of Kheda. So, they, too could not be fitted into the local hierarchy in the same manner. More than half of the non-Patel friends were from castes associated with very similar background to the Patidar; certainly their present, urban occupations. They were from the merchant, Vania, Lohana, castes; businessmen and moneylenders like the Shah, and traditionally gold dealers like the Choksi. Indeed, a third of all friends were from one particular caste, Shah, which was probably of a higher status than the Patidar, originally from the Kshatriya, the warrior caste, but now they were involved in commerce and business, in a similar manner to the Patidar. A sixth were from the higher, priestly caste of Brahmins, who were generally involved in the professions. One other caste represented among women's friends was the Thakkar, a landowning caste, like the Patidar themselves. So these friendships, in fact, reflected the changing nature of the Patidar's occupation away from agriculture to finance, business and the professions. They reflected shared interests which transcended caste solidarity. The socio-economic standing of these colleagues was such that the Patidar felt a sufficient bond to be able to form relationships based on their mutual class interest, rather than their shared customs and values.

Although no village women surveyed currently had friends from any other caste, a small number had acquired such friends at either
school or college. Indeed, a sixth of both urban and village women had formed friendships with girls outside of their own caste at some stage in their school or college career. However, they were no longer in contact with these friends. Such friendships rarely seemed to continue once attendance at school or college had ceased. Indeed, several women pointed out that if, for example, they had Muslim friends, because of the hostility between the two communities, they were not allowed to bring these friends to their home. In fact, many of the Patidar still showed a strong distrust for anyone outside their own caste, even, at times, for Patidar from a different ekada, consequently, there were considerable barriers in the way of forming friendships outside one’s immediate ‘community’. These former friendships, mentioned above, were on the whole, with girls from the same groupings and castes as current friendships outside the Patidar, with the addition of other outsiders, such as South Indians and Punjabis. No particular group or caste predominated in these friendships, unlike later friendships with the strong bias towards other commercial and business-orientated castes, reflecting mutual employment. It should also be borne in mind that well over 80% of both village and urban women had not had any friendships in their school and college years with any girls other than Patels. Indeed, in many instances, particularly those women living in villages, all their friends were from the same ekada. They did not even have friends from other sub-castes of Patels. In such circumstances, many women, therefore, mixed entirely with Patels from their own family and friends. Moreover, these friends were all from the same ekada. Their knowledge, therefore, of other
communities, even amongst the Patidar gol, was very limited and they knew little, indeed, about the customs and beliefs of other castes.

Degree of social contact

Finally, in order to underline many of the differences in patterns of social interaction between village and town women, I propose to examine data, from Survey B, taken over a 5-6 day period from 36 village and 36 urban women. This data related to the amount of social contact made by women in their own homes and it applied to visits made to them by family, relatives and friends over the previous five days. It deliberately excluded contact with neighbours, because, particularly in the village context, such visits were difficult to enumerate. The next-door neighbour might call round at the house on a number of occasions during the day, perhaps to borrow or return some item, and such visits were sometimes not mentioned or even remembered because they were frequent, commonplace and of a very short duration. I have concentrated, therefore, on visits which entailed travelling a certain distance, even if only a few streets, and which lasted more than a few minutes in duration: such contacts which were perceived by both the caller and hostess as a 'visit', rather than a casual encounter. Each 'visit' might involve more than one visitor, but if the guests arrived as a group, they were treated as one social unit for the purposes of the survey.

Enumerating visits in this manner, a very clear pattern quickly emerged. Amongst the smaller villages of Gada and Ajarpura, women
received few callers; they had, on average, one visitor every other day: see Table 15.14 below. In the three other villages, the average was slightly higher, although even then, they did not receive, on average, a visit every day. The total for Bakrol was higher than the other small villages, in 'the Twenty-Seven', and came into the same league as the larger villages. This was probably attributable to the fact that Bakrol is situated much closer to an area of urban development and is, consequently, much easier to visit; similarly with the large village of Karamsad. But within the larger villages, anyway, there was a greater degree of social interaction, probably resulting from the presence of a number of women from professional households, who had more leisure time available.

Table 15.14: Number of visits made and received per day (over previous five days)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No: of women</th>
<th>Average no: of daily visits per woman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>27 Villages</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gada</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajarpura</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakrol</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6 Villages</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharmaj</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karamsad</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Towns**                    |              |                                      |
| Anand                        | 13           | 1.18                                 |
| Nadiad                       | 5            | 1.24                                 |
| VN                           | 9            | 1.91                                 |
| Baroda                       | 9            | 1.40                                 |
| **Total**                    | 36           | 1.43                                 |
A very striking difference emerged for urban women. They, on average, had made double the number of visits. Even within the towns, however, there was some degree of variation, though nothing like so extreme as between the social interaction of rural women and that undertaken by urban women. In the town of Anand, which had developed originally from one of the villages in the ekada of the 'large 27', slightly fewer visits were made. So, too, in the town of Nadiad, which had a similar history. But in the town of VN, which was a new town entirely composed of residents from elsewhere, by far the greatest amount of interaction was evident. Women in this town, received, on average, nearly two visits every day: see Table 15.14 above. In the older, long-established town of Baroda, the figure was not quite so great, for here people had been settled for many generations. (9)

The other counterbalancing statistic to emerge from the survey resulted from data on those days women received no visitors, at all. Again, a similar pattern of social interaction can be described with women in the smaller villages spending a smaller proportion of their time receiving visitors. In less than half of the days surveyed did they make social contact in their own home: see Table 15.15 below. In Gada, the smallest village, for example, during an average 3.2 days of the five days covered by the survey, they received no callers. In fact, the average amount of time without visitors was half the allotted period, two and a half days out of five.

In the towns, however, women, on average, spent slightly less than a quarter of the survey period without having social calls. In
Nadiad, the total was particularly low because two women were involved in Navratri, which entailed spending the whole night dancing with their families and friends. Consequently, although they slept much of the next day, during the evening and night they were involved continuously in social interaction. Under normal circumstances, however, it would seem that urban women, particularly in the new town of VN, where there were a large number of nuclear families were compensating for the absence of their own relatives in the home by involving themselves in more formalized social contact with family and friends who lived at greater distances.

Table 15.15: % of survey period with no social contact in home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average No. of days</th>
<th>Average No. of days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Villages</td>
<td>Towns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gada</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Anand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajarpura</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Nadiad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakrol</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>VN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharaj</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Baroda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karamsad</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>total of days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Length of visits per interaction

Urban women generally, were involved in many more social contacts than rural women. These social contacts, too, on the whole were more likely to be of longer duration than those made by rural women; see Table 15.16 below. Such a variation in length of visits
tended to reflect the difference in visiting patterns. Rural women were likely to be involved in much shorter visits with their neighbours, from whom they might have borrowed some household item, or paused for a short conversation. Visits of a longer duration reflected more formal social occasions for a specific event, or where women had actually decided to make social calls. Such longer visits, therefore, were more prevalent in the towns where women spent much of their leisure time making 'calls' on friends and acquaintances. (Much longer periods of leisure time, too, were necessary to attend formal social gatherings, or go on outings or trips to the cinema.)

Table 15.16: Approximate length of visits per interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visits</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes duration</td>
<td>22 16%</td>
<td>31 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>26 19%</td>
<td>51 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 hour upwards</td>
<td>40 29%</td>
<td>93 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several hours</td>
<td>30 22%</td>
<td>64 24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All day/24 hours</td>
<td>19 14%</td>
<td>23 9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of visits</td>
<td>137 100%</td>
<td>262 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Women in the villages, on the other hand, were more likely to make visits of longer duration, such as overnight excursions. This could be partly explained because of rural women's greater likelihood to return to their piyar on an extended, often once-monthly, basis. Otherwise, women going for social functions might well have needed to stay overnight as transport was unavailable to take them back to their village.
Summary

From the preceding discussion, two distinctive patterns of social interaction can be discerned. The form that these two patterns took was very largely shaped by considerations of purdah. Because of the necessity of preserving reputations and maintaining family status, both before and after marriage, women's social activities were largely segregated. Moreover, the extent of their movements outside the home was determined by generally accepted delineations. But the amount of social contact made by women was also influenced by other factors: in the confines of a small village, women were restricted to a fairly limited group of people with whom they could interact. They were more likely, also, to be living in a joint family and, therefore, have a constant source of female companionship at home. Even if they were not, they would be living in a khadaki surrounded by distant relations, so that these neighbours provided the most constant group of companions. But village women, too, had less free time in which to participate in social activities. So for village women, the most regular form of social contact was with their neighbours, many of whom were distant relations and all of whom were from the same Patidar caste. In the smaller villages, in fact, this tendency was even more marked. Their only regular social contact outside the village was with their own parents and resident brothers at their piyar, on once, or perhaps twice, monthly visits. Otherwise their social interaction was very largely confined to their own village, and, often, their own khadaki. There would be some visits from other relatives, both on their husband's and their own side; the most regular was often
their husband's sister, nanand, returning home on her regular visit to her parents and piyar. Occasionally, they might receive visits from their own sisters or 'cousin sisters', or call on them, and they also were visited by their brothers; but their own parents never came to see them at their sasera. However, a third of village women received no visit from relatives, or from friends. Those who did have contact with friends, were nearly always with women in the same village. They were all from the Patidar caste and such friends were seen fairly frequently. Consequently, within a village, women's social interaction was very much self-contained and very largely independent of their menfolk. Neighbours, friends and relations could thus be seen without the necessity of a male escort, except on the occasions where women were travelling further afield. Even at social functions to which both sexes were invited, each sex tended to gravitate towards its own group on arrival.

Once families moved to an urban area, it usually became necessary to modify these social patterns. A woman was often no longer surrounded by female relations either in her home or in the neighbouring houses. Moreover, neighbours might not even be Patels. Consequently, urban women saw considerably less of their neighbours; in fact, one third had no regular contact at all. But they compensated for this loss of female companionship in and around their home by seeing much more of their own relatives and friends, as well as their husband's relations. Urban women not only made much more frequent visits to their parents, often living in or near the same town, but they also received frequent visits from their
parents at their own home. This was facilitated by their greater likelihood of living in a nuclear family. They were also able to keep in much more frequent contact with other relatives, particularly their own sisters, because of their proximity, greater amount of free time and ease of transport. Even when urban families were living separately, they were still in very regular social contact with their husband's brothers and sisters-in-law, both separately, and as couples.

When urban women's contacts with friends were considered, they were being drawn more into their husband's networks. The most common contact women had with friends was with the wives of their husband's friends, whom they either saw alone or in couples with their respective husbands. Although such contact was often between a number of couples, generally, the two sexes separated to talk or take part in different activities; the men perhaps playing cards, or even drinking, whilst women chatted in another room, or prepared food. This development, however, made women more dependent on their husband for their social interaction, more particularly for any evening activities. Not all husbands wanted to participate in such interaction and, consequently, their wives missed a number of social gatherings and felt isolated in their homes.

Urban women's other source of social contact was with female friends alone, and these visits were usually confined to the afternoons and daylight hours. Many women preferred to go visiting accompanied by another female friend, so that these expeditions took on a more organised and formal pattern, when they would not only
make a short visit on one friend, but see a number of other acquaintances in the same vicinity. Such friendships were not necessarily with Patels, particularly if the friend was made through the husband's business contacts, or the women's own previous college or work colleagues. So that, although social activities in urban areas were still largely with fellow Patels, there was a marked increase in the contact with people from other castes and other areas of the country. Much of women's free time was spent in such social interaction, and urban women had considerable leisure time at their disposal. Not all such contacts were purely for conversation and companionship.

Unmarried girls had the most time at their disposal for social interaction. They were able to see their old school and college friends fairly freely, both in their own homes and often elsewhere. The extent and variety of their activities depended much on their parents' reaction; but once married most of the friends and many of the activities were given up permanently. (These, too, will be considered in a later chapter.)

Village women's social interaction was very much influenced by considerations of purdah and segregated social activities. It was virtually all with fellow members of the Patidar caste. Usually these contacts were from the same ekada, much of the interaction was narrowly contained within the village and khadaki. Urban women's social interaction, on the other hand, was much more widely based. Although many contacts were still with members of the same caste, particularly as relatives, there had been considerable developments in the basis of friendship formation. These 'new' friendships
reflected the changing occupational states of both urban Patidar men and a small number of women. These 'non-Patel' friends were from 'castes' of a similar or higher social status, but the important link was probably that of shared work and economic interests. Consequently, they suggested a development away from the shared self interest of the same caste to shared interests based on social and economic class.

Urban Patidar women had much more time available for social activities than rural women, particularly those involved in agriculture. They spent much more time making and receiving social calls, both with relatives and friends. Much of this social interaction, however, served an important function in cementing networks and information 'broking', which will be considered in Chapters 17 and 18. Another purpose of much of urban Patidar women's social interaction was in 'status producing' activities, discussed in Chapter 19. It was evident that urban women's social interaction was much less constrained by considerations of purdah than women in rural areas: they had greater freedom of movement, at least during the day. But there were very good reasons why urban women were no longer so visibly 'secluded'. After all, some village women in non-agricultural households also had considerable amounts of 'free time', but their patterns of social interaction had not changed in such significant ways. Urban Patidar women were no longer sufficiently acting as 'demonstrators of status', by remaining in the home. In order to serve the interests of the household, they needed to take a more active role in 'status
production work' in an urban society, which placed greater value on conspicuous display and consumption as outward marks of upward social mobility.

Before embarking on a fuller analysis of Patidar women's roles as 'producers' and 'reproducers' of status, I want first to concentrate on the degree of power and control Patidar women can exert over their lives. In the patriarchal joint family, decision making was vested in the elders of the family, particularly men, but older women, too, could have considerable influence. Have the changes in women's position and roles in urban households enabled them to take a more active role in decision-making? Or has the diminuation of the domestic sphere in the household led to a concomitant loss of power? This chapter has shown how urban women had much greater contact with their own relatives and friends than rural women. Has this enabled them to build up their own networks in order to gain greater practical and emotional support? Ursula Sharma (1986) has shown how the mother-daughter relationship has developed in Shimla as a result of both women living in the same community. Such close relationships were difficult to maintain under a patriarchal endogamous family structure. But urban Patidar women, too, had much more contact with their mothers, sisters and female relatives than was possible in rural areas. So have they been able to draw greater strength and exert more influence through such extended networks? Or has the development of social activities in company with their husbands and their need for a male escort to travel any distance or mix socially after dark, actually made Patidar women socially more dependent on men in their household?
1. Elizabeth Bott (1971) described 'close-knit' networks where there was frequent interaction between all those involved. Although the networks of the urban Patidar were more 'loose-knit' in that not all those people in a woman's network met each other regularly, there was still a very considerable degree of 'connectedness', with most people being related or involved with the others in the network to a very great degree.

2. J. Boissevain (1974) discusses the high 'density', such as those amongst the village Patidar, where everyone is interacting all the time. However, in the case of village Patidar women this did not necessarily mean that the 'quality' of such interaction went beyond fairly superficial communications.

3. Data taken from Survey B of 36 village and 36 urban women on their patterns of interaction.

4. Girls who reported having Muslim friends at school, for example, had generally not have been allowed to bring them into their homes.


6. Sharma (1986) also found that in her sample of women in Shimla, women in paid employment did not see colleagues outside work, although they did mix more with their husband's work associates.

7. This interest was not quite so unusual as it seems: a small number of other women had been involved in walking and climbing activities prior to marriage, but these had been terminated at that time.


9. It should be borne in mind that these represent only an average over a period of five days. The period, itself, for each woman was not necessarily representative of her daily routine as the survey was done over a period of months and covered various major festivals and life-cycle ceremonies in women's lives. In general, however, these events were shared by both urban and village localities; the possible exception was a small number of women in WN, whose survey period covered part of the Divali holiday in which much visiting takes place. However, all women in this town had high averages whether they were interviewed at the Divali holiday or not. So that, overall, I do not consider this should distort the figures unduly.
SECTION 6: POWER AND INFLUENCE

MALE AND FEMALES SPHERES
CHAPTER 16. THE LOCUS OF POWER: DECISION MAKING PROCESSES
Introduction

The position of Patidar women, as has been seen in previous chapters, was largely determined by the lack of access or control over economic resources, whatever their own contribution to the household economy, whether they were in paid employment or not. Moreover, they did not receive any substantial share of the inheritance whether at the time of death of their father, or earlier as dowry payments. Through the operation of purdah and seclusion of women, women were generally precluded from active involvement in wealth creating activities. But it was the pre-existing patriarchal joint family which continued in existence in urban areas, which determined the roles expected of Patidar women. There was a strong adherence to joint family living, but women's roles had changed as a result of the demands of urban life. The important question was had there been any alterations in the balance of power within urban households as a result of women's changing roles?

It has been recognised that village women particularly the older Patidar women in the household, had exerted considerable power within the female domestic sphere. Women's power outside this domestic sphere had, however, been on their male relatives: a particularly important relationship, in this respect, was that of mother and adult son. The importance of this axis was equally relevant in urban as in rural households. But with the diminution of the domestic sphere, women's sphere of influence had declined. Had their greater involvement in different forms of 'work', in
status production activities, enabled them to have greater involvement in decision making? Are urban Patidar women able to exert any direct control over the major decisions affecting their lives, or do they still have to utilise various strategies and devices to influence events?

A number of researchers on women's position in various societies have formulated certain categories of society dependent on the degree of power women exercise. Matthiasson (1974) for example, discussed societies with three different degrees of power: firstly, 'manipulative' societies, such as the Maranda in the Solomon Islands, where women only exercised any power through indirect means. Her second category was a 'complimentary' society, such as the Eskimo, where men's and women's tasks were more evenly balanced and interchangeable and women had greater say over the direction of their lives. Thirdly, a largely hypothetical group, an 'ascendent' society, illustrated by the Iroquois, where women actually exercised political power and could elect and dismiss the chiefs. Leghorn and Parker (1981) also formulated three different categories of society where women's status and power differed. They contended, however, that in all circumstances, men exercised the greatest power. They sought to identify various criteria which illustrated the degree of power women could exercise. In such societies women might have 'minimal power', as in Peru or Algeria, 'token power' as in the USA, and 'negotiating power' as again with the Iroquois. The degree of power women could exercise depended on a variety of factors: the value placed on their fertility and physical integrity, their access
to and control over resources, education and work, and the nature of their social networks. Applying such criteria, Patidar women were only able to exercise 'minimal power'; they had no direct control over events and could only influence them through indirect, 'manipulative' means.

Power in Patidar society fell into two distinct spheres: a direct one, dominated largely by men, and an indirect one by which women are able to influence events to a more limited extent. In such societies, Ardener (1978) argued, women adopted a 'muted' role. Instead of contributing directly to important decisions, they often 'used' others to express their views. Thus, they might use one of their children to express an opinion, more so as their sons became older, which reflected their views. Caplan and Bujra (1978) stated that women can achieve a great deal in many societies and situations by presenting a 'united front', a show of 'solidarity'. However, within Patidar society, there are too many divisions separating women from acting in unison on many issues, especially in rural areas, although there were occasions when they acted together effectively. (1) Usually the division of caste, sub-caste and family loyalties prevented women from acting in unison. Even within the home, once married, there were inherent conflicts of interest between the women of the family. Mother-in-law and daughter-in-law might well not agree, but authority was vested in the sasu. Between two sisters-in-law, there could be feelings of favoritism and envy, not just over their own treatment, but also as a projection of conflicting interests between brothers over financial and property matters. As Carstairs (1957) has pointed out in Rajasthan, there
existed in these small communities an endemic distrust of outsiders which engendered suspicion of other's motives. This hindered attempts to confide troubles, for example, and gain outside support.

However, women do find ways to act in concert to obtain their ends. Moreover, they can and do manipulate people and situations to their advantage. By such tactics, they can survive and, sometimes, surmount otherwise intolerable situations. But Patidar women did not, generally, as Friedl (in Reiter 1975) has contended, in the Greek context, exercise considerable power through their control of the household. Friedl felt that this control enabled women to influence quite strongly, the men in their household. But for Patidar women, as Harding (1975) found, their position was reinforced by prevailing attitudes within the wider society. Women have to use their verbal skills to manipulate opinion in this wider context to support them. But, the power of gossip is double-edged and can, equally, be turned against women and used to their disadvantage. So, although it can be a useful weapon, it is also a tool to maintain them as well, in their prescribed roles.

Unlike Bott's (1971) findings amongst British women, Patidar women, who experienced segregated conjugal roles and were part of close-knit networks, did not necessarily gain support from such networks, because of the conflicts in female interests. Patidar women, particularly, in the village, were not surrounded by their own kin. In the towns, it is true that a number of women were able to sustain close contacts with their own families and this did provide supportive relationships. But village women frequently
spoke of not having anyone in whom they could confide personal difficulties. Female networks, however, even if they did not provide emotional support, very often supplied considerable practical help and thus, alleviated women's workloads.

Women's networks, too, could function in a more formal way by helping to cement family and kinship relationships. This was particularly evident in the many life-cycle ceremonies and ritualised social functions which women attended. As the majority of these ceremonies were segregated, women had to function as the female family representative in their sphere. Usually, older women were given such roles, but in their absence, and particularly in nuclear families, younger women had to play a more active role. Their most formalised role was of participating in gift exchanges, which demanded considerable skill in remembering all gifts, given and in reciprocating properly. Any mistakes could cause considerable dissatisfaction and potential rifts in the kinship networks. Finally, women acted individually through their own personal relationships or by dint of their personality to exert influence on events in a variety of ways. The areas in which Patidar women were able to exercise some authority and influence events, and the methods they employed is discussed in Chapter 17.

Initially, I have chosen to look at the process of decision-making by examining a series of crucial issues in women's lives. Over the major concerns it will be seen how men, as elders and husbands, were most usually the decisive persons. Lal (1977)
traced in his research on Indian families a tendency for the focus of power to be shifted in nuclear families on to the husband, to the detriment of other elders, whether male or female. Certainly, it is true that husbands in nuclear families did take many decisions: Lata's husband, for example, decided on the decor of the house, the furniture, even what was to be cooked for the evening meal. But this research amongst the Patidar presented little proof of such a shift away from joint decision-making. On major issues, even amongst nuclear families, other members of the joint family, although not living in the same household, would be consulted. (2) Moreover, some nuclear households still contributed towards a joint budget or received their own household money from the joint (business fund). As, too, writers such as Desai (1964) and Ramu (1973) pointed out, a more useful concept to consider can be 'jointness', the degree of shared responsibilities and obligations, which held members of a joint family together even though they did not share the same residence. Nuclear residence did not necessarily entail completely autonomous decision-making.

**DECISION MAKING**

Within the domestic sphere, women could and did, at times, exert considerable authority in household matters. Even there, however, decisions may well be made by the older women, or elders of the family. In their absence in a nuclear family, then the husband could be involved in discussions over many matters. But it was certainly true that where the most important issues are concerned women very rarely took a decision by themselves and might not
contribute an opinion, at all, to the final outcome. I intend to look more closely at three major areas in women's lives to establish how the decisions were made which determined the lines along which women's lives developed.

Choosing marriage partners.

Initially, I shall seek to establish who were the crucial people involved in the complicated process of finding a suitable husband for the women surveyed. The bride-to-be played little part and a great deal of reliance was placed on hearing of potential partners through kinship and social networks. Although in some parts of India, some wealthy families advertised in the newspapers for possible partners in order to obtain a wider choice, this practice did not appear to have spread to the Patidar. None of the women surveyed, in fact, had been introduced to her husband in this manner. The whole process depended very much on hearing of potential partners through as wide a variety of contacts as possible. A number of researchers have pointed out that in segregated societies, men are often very dependent on women and female networks to hear of and actually meet suitable girls for their sons. This is particularly true in societies where men have very little access to women's gatherings and have little opportunity of meeting women who are not closely-related. Makhlouf (1979) in North Yemen discussed an all-female social gathering, the 'tafrita' which served very much this purpose. Veena Das (1976) felt women in India provided a very important structural link in marriage alliances. Through their knowledge of suitable marriage partners,
they were able to act as mediators between the groups involved. But Sharma (1980) felt that this important role for women of contributing towards the cementing of marriage alliances diminished as women became more mobile. Particularly in urban areas, men were able to obtain access to unrelated women through business links.

In Patidar society, women certainly were involved in informal discussions about possible marriage partners. Indeed, some women enjoyed trying to 'match make' and some older women were involved in the negotiations over the terms of the marriage. But younger women, married or otherwise, had very little part to play in such proceedings. Even when a younger sister, or a nanand, a husband's sister, remained to be married, women denied any responsibility in arranging a satisfactory match. Such decisions were not in their province and were the responsibility of their elders. What was surprising, however, in view of other pieces of research, was the limited role which the married respondents in Survey C felt that other women, even elders in their family, had played in arranging their marriage. Some women had met a number of potential partners before meeting their subsequent husband. As the first they may have known of the pending marriage was at an engagement ceremony, they, perhaps, were not always fully aware of the machinations leading up to the match. But the vast majority of women had been given the opportunity of meeting their future husband before the match became binding. The majority, too, professed to know how their future husband had become acquainted with their family, or as they always stated, their father. In an overwhelming number of cases, the link
between the future husband, and his family, and the woman's family was through a male contact. This proved to be the case for both urban and rural women. The formal involvement of women in the match-making process was strictly limited and this was even more evident amongst urban women than rural women. Although, it was more than probable that some women, at least, were actively involved in the preliminary 'informal' stages of finding a suitable marriage partner. But, certainly amongst urban marriages, the crucial link was much more likely to be through one of the elders of the family or the parental generation of friends than amongst village women.

Village marriages

The discernible pattern amongst village matches showed how important were male kin and friendship networks; particularly amongst the older generation of men. Table 16.1 indicates this tendency: seventy-two per cent of weddings had been arranged by the efforts of male relatives and over fifty per cent of these had been directly through the girl's father or his friends or another older male relative and their friends. Twenty per cent of the women had met their husbands through the intervention of men of their own age group, either their own brother, 'cousin brother' or their friends. But what was interesting, in the village context, was that twenty per cent of the matches had resulted from introductions of the future husband by the girl's sister, 'cousin sister' or friend, to her father. Such girls, of course, were probably recently married themselves and had met a whole new group of potential partners for their, as yet, unmarried sisters and cousins. Moreover, if the
marriage of one young girl into a particular khadaki in a certain village had worked well, then families often wished to cement these ties further by marrying more girls into the family concerned. Such links could often be quite convoluted and illustrated the importance and complexity of kinship networks: for example, in Ajarpura, Kalpana had been introduced to her husband through a contact made between her brother's wife's father's brother, her bhaibhini kaka. Raksha in Bakrol had met her husband through the intervention of two male friends, her sister's friend's husband knew her future husband's mother's brother, her mama sasera. It is evident from such links that women, too, were involved and although the decisive persons were generally the men concerned, it was possible that women made certain suggestions, upon which their male relatives acted.

Urban Marriages

Table 16.1: Marriage links between husband and wife

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male links</td>
<td>18 (72%)</td>
<td>22 (76%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female links</td>
<td>5 (20%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of urban women, the participation of a male relative or friend in finding a suitable marriage partner, was even more decisive than for village women. It seemed that as Sharma (1980)
found, urban men were able to utilise their more extensive business networks to make contact with potential partners for their female relatives without having to draw on the knowledge and expertise found in women's networks. Only seven per cent of urban women claimed that another woman had been instrumental in introducing them to their future husband: see Table 16.1. Despite the fact, too, that most of the negotiations went on behind their backs, very few women had no knowledge at all of how their husband had been introduced initially to their family; only two village women and one urban woman claimed to be in ignorance over this topic. The most significant differences between urban and village women was the fact that a number of urban women had contracted what were called 'love marriages'. 'Love marriages' were those in which partners had met independently of parental intervention and decided they wished to marry. The four urban women surveyed who had contracted love marriages, had done so with the consent of all the families concerned. In fact, the process by which these marriages finally took place differed little from the conventional 'arranged marriage'. Often, a relative was approached to consult the parents to see if they would approve and afterwards negotiations would follow the usual course. By such devices, the marriage could be made to appear socially acceptable. (If parental approval was not obtained, then the general assumption was that the couple would be completely ostracised by the families concerned and this had certainly occurred in Patidar families known to my informants.) Even on those occasions where the couple had 'fallen in love' and decided to marry, they had frequently met through their own
relatives. Only one woman, Indira, had met her husband at college, where he was a lecturer. But Kashori, for example, knew her husband because he was her brother's friend and she had seen him in her own home and known him for ten years before they were married. No village woman claimed to have contracted a 'love marriage'. (Aruna from Karamsad, however, had certainly seen her husband, who was a friend of the son of her masi, very regularly over a whole year before her marriage was 'arranged'.)

Role of the elders

In the total sample of village and urban women, only seven per cent had chosen their own marriage partner. In the overwhelming majority of cases, the choice had been made for these women and quite frequently it had been negotiated solely through the senior members of the households concerned. No-one of the woman's generation was involved. This trend was even more marked in the towns than in the villages; indeed, in the villages, 40% of the matches had been brought about by the intervention of siblings or their associates: see Table 16.2. In the towns, however, in only 20% of the matches had the introduction been made through the auspices of the women's peer group: seventeen per cent had been through male cousins, brothers and friends and only three per cent through females of this age group, in this case, the cousin, a daughter of the father's sister.
Table 16.2: Marriage: generational involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Older generation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male elders of the family</td>
<td>7 (28%)</td>
<td>11 (38%)</td>
<td>(33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female elders of the family</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>(2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father and father's friends</td>
<td>6 (24%)</td>
<td>7 (24%)</td>
<td>(24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total of older generation</strong></td>
<td>13 (52%)</td>
<td>19 (65%)</td>
<td>(59%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Younger generation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother, male cousin or friend</td>
<td>5 (20%)</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>(19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister, female cousin or friend</td>
<td>5 (20%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>(11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4 (14%)</td>
<td>(7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total of younger generation</strong></td>
<td>10 (40%)</td>
<td>10 (34%)</td>
<td>(37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. of women</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So 65% of urban women had had their marriages arranged by the elders in their family, only one of whom was a woman. In that particular case, Meena's mother's sister, her masi, was married to her future husband's father's brother's son, the son of her kaka sasera. Consequently, the majority of marriages were arranged either directly through the girl's father and his friend or an uncle from either side of the family, her grandfather, or even her brother's wife's father. The initiative for finding husbands for
young female relatives appeared to rest decisively in the hands of men: 81% in the case of urban women and 77% for village women. This trend was, therefore, slightly more marked in the towns than the villages. Moreover, the tendency in the towns was even more likely to be towards the choice being made by the senior male members of the family, than in the villages. Even though, ultimately, more urban families lived in nuclear units, the actual choice of the future spouse rested very firmly in the hands of the older generation, who frequently were not even resident in the household. (However, there was, of course, quite a strong likelihood that the initial suggestion of future spouses had been broached by older women in the family. Once inquiries were begun, this role appeared to have been taken over largely by the men. It was possible, therefore, that women's involvement was greater than appears, but as in most areas of their lives, the influence they exercised was by indirect means and their role was not generally acknowledged. If this had been so, young married women might well not have been aware that their name had first been mentioned in connection with an arranged marriage by a female member of the family, as all future action was taken by men.)

Fertility

As has already been shown in Chapter 12, there was a very strong desire manifested by the Patidar to limit their families to no more than two or three children. The prime criterion for determining family size was the birth of a son. A number of families were limited to one child, where that child was a son.
Others felt a desire for a daughter, or wished for a second son and if the first child was a daughter, then everyone assumed that there would be a second child in the hope of a son. However, a number of women commented that after two daughters, their families felt it was not worth having a third in case that, too, was yet another daughter. In fact, it was only in more affluent families that talk was heard of three or four, because the cost of bringing up and marrying children could be afforded then, without fear of substantial financial hardship. Consequently, in many families, all women were likely to be agreed on, or aware of the necessity of bearing a son and also limiting family size to as small a number as possible.

There was no evidence to suggest any of the women wished to have any more children than they already had. Occasionally, a woman with two sons suggested that she might have preferred one of these sons to be a daughter, as they provided more companionship. However, they professed not to want to have more children despite this desire. Indeed, the main conflict of opinion generally arose between the women, themselves, and their husbands and/or parents-in-law who wished them to have more children. A number of women expressed a wish to stop after their first child, but knew that they were expected to have more. There was little to suggest that women made up their own minds about the number and sex of children they wanted and adhered to their decision. Generally, they appeared to comply with their husband's wishes. On occasions, a husband might agree with his wife and disagree with his parents about the necessity of having more children; then the couple were likely to
stand firm in a determination to limit their family size. But, generally, this question would appear to be one decided by members of the household, perhaps even taking into account, as well, the composition of their brothers' families, whether they were actually resident in the same household or not. If other brothers had several sons, then it might be possible to consider not having more children, if only two daughters had been born, because there would be close male relatives in the next generation to take on the duties and role of the absent son. Even a woman's own parents were likely to put pressure on her to bear a son, however.

Table 16.3: Decisions over fertility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision made by:</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband and self</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-laws</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband and in-laws</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consensus: (Husband, self and in-laws)</td>
<td>11 (44%)</td>
<td>14 (48%)</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self/bad health</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>4 (14%)</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated/divorced</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By far the largest single group amongst both urban and rural families, 48% and 44% respectively, was that in which all parties were agreed about family size and the decision whether or not to have further children: see Table 16.3. Amongst village women in 10 out of 11 cases, this consensus had been largely arrived at when it
was considered that families were complete. Indeed, many women, 6 out of 11, had been sterilised as all members of the family were convinced that they wanted no more children. Amongst those urban families, too, who appeared in accord over their views on family planning, the majority, 11 out of 14, had decided that their families were large enough.

There were instances when the women's husbands and parents-in-law had not been in agreement over family size. In a number of such cases, the husband's wishes prevailed over his parents. This appeared to be slightly more likely in the villages than towns, perhaps because parents-in-law in small villages were not as in tune with the desire for smaller families in the present generation as their urban equivalents. Indeed, village in-laws were more likely to press for larger families than the husband and wife desired and they were more likely to prevail over their wishes, too. Usually women spoke in terms of pressure from their mothers-in-law as the most concerned person. Of course, such a topic would not be broached between father and daughter-in-law, and could only be discussed by mother and daughter-in-law. Vanita from Gada had been pressurized by her in-laws into having a third child, although she wanted to be sterilized after her second. Kamini from Ajarpura with her husband's agreement had wanted to be sterilized, too, after her second child, but her mother-in-law would not allow this: so she had four children, instead, before her sasu died and she was able to have the operation. Not every village sasu however, felt the same. Most encouraged small families and a number felt that their daughter-in-law's fertility was her husband's concern. In the
towns, only one mother-in-law appeared to have intervened and prevailed against the wishes of the couple. She had insisted that her newly-wed daughter-in-law should proceed with her pregnancy and not have an abortion. But, apart from this instance, urban in-laws were generally acquiescent about smaller families, presumably because the expense of bringing up children in an urban life-style was greater than for children reared in a large household in a country area. In fact, in the towns, it was more likely to be a woman's husband who would like to have several sons, who would go against the general trend.

Over the issue of fertility, the husband's opinion appeared to be the most decisive. Only in a few cases did parents-in-law take the decision alone. Generally, all discussions over how many children there were to be in a family, and what sex children should be, necessitated the husband's consent. In some cases, the husband's wishes were the sole determinant. In the villages, in 32% of cases, the husband's views were decisive, with or without his wife's accord. In 44% of cases, all the members of the family were in agreement. In the towns, the figures were similar: in 30% of cases, the husband's wishes were the crucial factor and in a further 48% he and all other family members were in accord. (See Table 16.3 above.)

But what influence were Patidar women, themselves, able to bring to bear on this discussion? All were aware of the necessity of giving birth to a son and understood that they might have to have
two or three children before this occurred. A number of women expressed a desire to stop after their first child, but, generally, only whose who had borne a son could hope to do so. No woman had, in fact, been able to exercise sole control over her own fertility. If she was not in agreement with what other members of the family expected from her, particularly her husband, she had had still to concur with their wishes. Women had not, however, proved completely powerless in influencing the decisions over family composition. But they had to resort to less direct means of achieving their ends: what Leghorn and Parker (1981) have called 'survival strategies', to be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

One of the most common strategies employed, more generally by urban than rural women, was to plead ill health. One village woman, Prabhu from Karamsad, already had two sons. She and her husband had no wish for more children, but her sasu was quite pressing. However, after a recent miscarriage, Prabhu had been able to argue that she should defer the decision about bearing any more children for three years, on health grounds. Similarly, in the towns, 14% of women were not having any more children, or were postponing the decision into the future, mainly on 'medical advice'. Although Indu of Anand had two daughters, and there were no sons yet in the joint family, no-one expected her to have any more children because her health had been so badly affected that she had been advised it would be extremely dangerous for her to become pregnant again. Shobna from Nadiad, too, was in the same position and could not have any further children. Manda, also from Anand, suffered from severe asthma attacks and although she had only one daughter, and, at the time of
the survey, there were also no sons in the joint family, she was not intending to become pregnant unless she recovered substantially from this asthma. (But six years hence, she had had no further children.)

One other woman, Bharti from VN, who had her husband's full support, was intending postponing having a second child for at least four years, so that it did not interfere too much with her business activities. (She was running a beauty salon.) Only because she had a good relationship with her husband, with whom she had had a 'love marriage' was she able to resist the pressures from her mother-in-law on her, the eldest daughter-in-law.

Another woman, Charulata in Nadiad, had adopted one of her sister's twin daughters, as she had two sons of her own and did not want to have any more children.

Patidar women, themselves, could only influence the size of their family, by adopting various 'strategies', such as ill health. Where any conflict of opinion occurred, women's wishes were generally the least important. They felt obliged to conform with what other members of the family desired. Indeed, the most influential person, in this respect, was usually their husband, particularly in urban areas. Family size generally reflected his wishes. But parents-in-law, too, especially the women's sasu were frequently involved in this decision.
Education and work

In any discussions about further education and possible careers, women were all agreed that the decision largely rested with others. Before they were married, their father would decide if and what they could study and whether they could have a career. After marriage, it was assumed that husbands and in-laws would make that decision. Some fathers had no objections, themselves, to their daughter working, but would not allow her to do so, in case it alienated potential marriage partners, who were opposed to women working. However, the danger was that further qualifications might render the girl far more educated than most of her potential spouses and, hence, take her out of a large proportion of the marriage market. Consequently, Madhu in Baroda had found herself completely circumscribed. Her father, a doctor, had dictated what course she had to study at degree level and, after his death, her brother, as head of the family, made the decision not to allow her to study for a Master's degree, and certainly not to work. Her future in-laws certainly would not allow her to work, even though she was contracting a 'love marriage'. Even Vina, from the same town, with her indulgent father, who allowed her to travel widely and meet with male friends, could not be persuaded to allow her to work for someone else, because of the reflection on his prestige. Nor could she be allowed to set up her own business. A sociology lecturer from the town of VN explained, ruefully, how she had been forced to give up her career after marriage, because her husband disapproved. Married women only worked with the support of their husbands. Occasionally, women might start or continue a career if their in-
laws were opposed or unhappy about such employment as long as she had her husband's full backing. But no woman worked without her husband's approval.

This issue more than others was felt to be more the concern of the husband rather than the whole family. This dictum applied whether the woman was living in either a joint or a nuclear household. As on the two other major issues discussed, it did not appear to alter the balance of power significantly between husbands and in-laws as decision-makers, whether the family was living jointly or separately. Whereas with arranging a marriage, the issue was felt to concern the whole family and particularly the senior male members of the family, where education and work were concerned, the decision was felt, by many, to involve the husband more than anyone, reflecting as it did on his ability to keep an 'unproductive' wife if he chose.

In the villages, 78% of women living in nuclear families stated that their husband was the person who decided whether they would work or not: see Table 16.4. But 31% of husbands in joint families also made the decision themselves. So, just under 50% of village women claimed their husband was the crucial person in the decision-making process. In the towns, by contrast, fewer women stated that their husband was solely responsible for such a decision. Indeed, only 35% of urban husbands in nuclear families made this decision alone and more urban husbands in joint families, 41%, actually were responsible for making the choice than in nuclear families: see Table 16.4.
Table 16.4: Husbands as decision makers over work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husbands in nuclear families</td>
<td>7:9 (78%)</td>
<td>6:17 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husbands in joint families</td>
<td>5:16 (31%)</td>
<td>5:12 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>12:25 (48%)</td>
<td>11:29 (38%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, however, fewer husbands in the towns, 38%, made the decision about their wives working than did village husbands. Despite the greater prevalence of nuclear families in the towns, there was little evidence to suggest that husbands were taking on the decisions over major family matters alone. The majority still seemed to consult their parents and family about such important issues. In fact, they appeared to act less autonomously than their village counterparts.

Table 16.5: Decisions taken over women's education and work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>11 (44%)</td>
<td>10 (34%)</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband and self</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-laws</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4 (14%)</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband and in-laws</td>
<td>11 (44%)</td>
<td>13 (45%)</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No. of women</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The largest single decision-making group described by women
surveyed was still felt to be one composed of all the family members concerned: that is parents-in-law, husband and, possibly, herself. As in the decision-making over fertility, nearly half the women questioned, in both towns and villages felt that the final outcome reflected the general opinion of all concerned and that husbands and their parents were in accord over important issues. Only in a small number of cases did women state that their in-laws had made the decision over working, without taking her husband's view into account. In all these cases, the women concerned lived in a town. No rural parents-in-law had taken such an authoritative stance. However, women living in towns were liable to be better educated and more qualified for work than rural women. Moreover, as there were more openings for work in the towns than the villages, the decision was more likely to be actual than hypothetical.

There were two cases concerning urban women which fell outside the main categories. Firstly, one young widow, Nira, had returned initially to her father's house and now lived separately, but was still financially dependent on her father. She had been forbidden to work by her father, although she very much wished she could do so. On the other hand, Indira from Anand, had always worked despite the disapproval of her in-laws and with no active support from her husband. Her husband, however, had not opposed her desire to work. When she had separated from her husband, there was no question of her husband or in-laws intervening, particularly, as they gave her no financial support in any way. None of her own family objected to her working. Indira was the only woman to take the decision to work very much on her own initiative. Other working women also had a
strong desire to work, but they had all been very actively supported by their husbands, sometimes against considerable opposition from their parents-in-law. Such conflicting attitudes were not just unidirectional. Sometimes, they went in the opposite direction with in-laws quite happy to see their daughter-in-law working, if they wished, but with very strong opposition from the woman's husband. The only other area in which women were very decisive was in those instances where women stated emphatically that they did not wish to work, so the question did not arise, as their husbands did not wish them to do so either. Other women also professed not to want to work, but in such a way that implied, in a number of instances, that they were fully aware of the general opinion on such matters, and it was pointless to hold a contrary view.

Thus the actual decision made regarding work reflected several shades of opinion, with some families fully opposing or supporting women's desire to work and others divided over their attitudes.

Table 16.6: Those willing to allow women to work/study further

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husband willing</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In laws willing</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 ( 3%)</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both willing</td>
<td>7 (28%)</td>
<td>6 (21%)</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own decision</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 ( 3%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the general desire of women, themselves, to be able to work,
which was discussed in Chapter 9, the majority of their relations were opposed to the idea. Those who supported the idea of their women working were in a minority in both towns and villages. (See Table 16.6 above.)

Table 16.7: Those not willing to allow women to work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husband not willing</td>
<td>10 (40%)</td>
<td>7 (24%)</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-laws not willing</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both unwilling</td>
<td>4 (16%)</td>
<td>7 (24%)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others unwilling</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A similar percentage of village and urban husbands and in-laws were in favour of the women surveyed working. Only a small number of husbands in both environments would have allowed their wives to work, if work had been available: Table 16.6. In fact, the greatest opposition to women working came from husbands in both environments, but village husbands were particularly hostile to the idea: Table 16.7. Not only did village wives generally have far more domestic duties and less help in the home, but because of their poorer qualifications they could have only undertaken very low status work, even if it had been available. Hence, for both practical reasons and the question of status, village husbands were hostile to the idea. But, in fact, the urban dwellers were slightly more against women working than in rural areas. Many of the more prosperous urban families did not want any aspersions cast on their status by
agreeing to a woman going out to work, even in a prestigious job.

But it should be noted that just because the particular women surveyed were, or were not, allowed to work, not all women in the same household were treated alike. In some households, one sister-in-law would be allowed to work, whilst another was not. Some women were in the position to undertake more prestigious work than others; in these circumstances, their employment was possibly more acceptable. But the judgement appeared to be based partly on the need for the woman's domestic labour in the home; where other women were available to perform domestic tasks, it was easier for another women to take up employment. However, this was only possible where there was a high degree of support from the whole household for such an action, but particularly the woman's husband. Bhakula, for example, from Karamsad, was the eldest daughter-in-law in the household. She was accustomed to helping her mother-in-law with the bulk of the work in their joint household, particularly after the birth of her first baby. When another brother in the household was married, however, his young wife was allowed to go on working at a bank where she had been employed before marriage. The household work was already satisfactorily managed by the women in the family; she had only to help with certain tasks, such as cooking, on her return home. On the other hand, Bharti from VN, who ran her own beauty salon, performed all her household duties before she started work in the morning, despite the presence of younger sisters-in-law in the family. Her husband had supported her in her desire to work, but other family members had not done so. By fulfilling all her
allocated duties, she could not be criticised by them for placing an added burden on other females in the household. But other women in the household, who disapproved of Bharti's career, were able to make its pursuance as difficult as possible by not co-operating to ease her burden in the home.

The desire for more involvement in decision-making

Not all Patidar women were content with the fact that major decisions, affecting their lives, were made, by and large, by other people. Women's dissatisfaction with the current situation was revealed when they were asked to discuss what level of involvement they wanted their own children to have in such decisions. This was particularly evident in their desire to see their own children participating much more in the most important decision over whom they would marry. Urban women, more especially, expressed the intention of giving their own children more control over the direction of their own lives: both girls and boys. Whether this would occur in practice was, of course, debatable, as their husbands and other elders in the family had also to be taken into consideration. But the significance of their statements rested in the degree to which they reflected a covert expression of dissatisfaction about their own lack of involvement in such matters. At the time of the research, however, Patidar women could only resort to certain strategies by which they could influence such decisions: these will be explored in Chapter 17.

But the dislike of some Patidar women of their own lack of

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power, however, can be inferred from their response to questions about their children's future. They were particularly asked to comment on the marriage of their own children, in order to establish whether women would choose to follow the same practices used to arrange their own marriages. There was a decided majority in favour of allowing their children more choice in choosing their marriage partners. When they professed to want their children to be able to select their own partner, they were not necessarily implying a 'love marriage' or anything approaching a Western model of marriage. Some only intended that their children should be much more actively involved in the whole process. Nevertheless, there were frequently expressed constraints on whom they could select and, moreover, parents felt whomever they did choose should be with parental approval, otherwise they might 'cut relations' with them, as one woman suggested. Also, it should be borne in mind that women's views on this question might well not be shared by their husbands, who would probably have the deciding voice. Moreover, they were discussing an event ten or even twenty years hence, and as many commented, opinions and the social situation could and probably would change considerably in that period. The question, itself, coming a relatively short time after their own marriage was possibly a better reflection on their feelings about what happened to them. As the marriage of their own children becomes a reality, their opinions could undergo a transformation.

There was still a strong feeling in the villages that parents wished to choose the partners, themselves, for their own children. Many felt it was their duty to do so, an obligation towards their
own children. In Table 16.8, it can be seen that 40% of village women felt this way compared to only 24% of urban women. Sixty percent of village women, however, did feel that their children should make their own choice, as did 76% of urban women.

Table 16.8: Decision making and children's marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent's choice</td>
<td>10 (40%)</td>
<td>7 (24%)</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child's own choice</td>
<td>15 (60%)</td>
<td>22 (76%)</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of women expressed a willingness for their children to present their own choice, but if the person was not suitable or if their children did not have any preferences, they would proceed to arrange a match. The great majority of women still wished their children to marry Patels, with 64% of village women, and 69% of urban women stating this preference: see Table 16.9.

Table 16.9: Decision making and children's marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Restrictions over choice</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patels from own ekada</td>
<td>10 (40%)</td>
<td>12 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Patel</td>
<td>6 (24%)</td>
<td>8 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside own caste</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>7 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>6 (24%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A further 12% of village women who wished to arrange the marriages themselves were likely to do so from amongst the Patidar. Only 12% of village women were open to the idea that their children could
marry outside the caste, but a quarter of urban women were willing for this to happen. Around 40% of both urban and village women still wanted the marriages from their own ekada, or marriage circle. Also, those women who were willing to consider a marriage outside their own ekada or gol, may have hoped for a 'superior' match, to make a hypergamous marriage, particularly for their daughters. Some urban women, 12%, stated that they would consider the situation of their sons and daughters differently. It was felt that boys were freer to choose whom they liked; besides, it was more difficult to oppose them if they went against their parents' wishes. But women more often favoured arranging their daughter's marriages. The importance of ensuring a 'good match' for a daughter was greater than that for a son on three counts: firstly, it was a source of upward mobility which reflected on the family's standing, as a whole. But, secondly, it was feasible for a boy to divorce and remarry, if some misfortune happened in the marriage. The decision once made for a girl was generally considered irreversible. Thirdly, of course, a son and his new wife would usually spend some time in the parents' household, where the girl could, hopefully, be 'moulded' to adapt to the new household. But if a daughter's new home was unsatisfactory, there was not a great deal parents could do to rectify the situation.

There was still a strong body of opinion in favour of the more accustomed form of arranged marriage, particularly amongst village women. But the majority were in favour of allowing their children more choice and, amongst some women, but more so in the towns, there was a willingness to accept marriage partners from groups previously
never considered a possibility: members of other castes were mentioned by a quarter of urban women.

Summary: who makes major decisions?

In assessing where power was vested in Patidar families, when considering the major decisions affecting women's lives, it has become very apparent that these women have very little direct control over their own destiny. Indeed, all would accept that a girl's future after completing her studies, was one of marriage and rearing children. There was no one person who made all the decisions affecting a woman's life. In fact, usually, a number of people were concerned. Before marriage, the decision about studying and work was made by the father and other senior members of the family circle. At the time of marriage, the choice of partner was often seen as the responsibility of the elders of the family and, particularly, the male elders. This process seemed to occur even more in urban areas than the villages. It was possible, in the villages, for a girl's future partner to be introduced to her by her own peer group. Despite the higher prevalence of nuclear families in towns, decisions over marriage seemed to be even more influenced by the elders in the joint family than in the villages. Urban women, therefore, seemed to be more subject to the decisions made by their elders than women in the villages, even though they were more likely to be living in a nuclear household.

Over fertility, there appeared to be a fairly widely accepted
view in both villages and towns on the composition and size of family: preferably not more than two, or three children, at the most and this to include certainly one son. Where there was a conflict of views between in-laws and husband, the husband's view would probably prevail. But on this topic, a woman's sasu was felt to have considerable influence. Once married, the decision about whether a woman might go on studying or work became the responsibility of her in-laws and husband. More people were opposed to women working than supported the idea. In the villages, particularly, the decision was generally made by husbands who felt women had far too much to occupy them in the home to consider allowing them to work. But also they were aware that only low status work might be available for many village women. In the towns, indeed, although the husband's views were important, in-laws were more influential in forming opinions. When the decision was against the idea of women working, it was generally because it was felt this would reflect very badly on the status and prestige of the family. In fact, urban women were more constrained over their desire to work than village women, even when prestigious work was available, because of these considerations.

Only when it came to considering their own children's future were women able to manifest a desire to shift the balance of power away from the elders in the family and, to some extent, their own husbands. There was a strong feeling that, in the future, their children should be more actively involved in choosing their own marriage partner. The wish to still arrange these marriages was stronger among village than urban women. But the majority wanted
their children to have more choice, even to the extent of looking beyond the currently acceptable sources of partners. Indeed, a quarter of urban women would consider allowing their children to marry someone who was not even a Patel, despite the rarity of this occurrence at the time. Despite this expression of a desire for more involvement in decision-making, the current position was one where women had very little direct control over major areas of their lives. Only in the case of a small number of urban women could evidence of any change be detected. There were instances of women choosing their own partners in a 'love marriage', and, also, of women deciding they were going to work despite hostility from their in-laws. Such examples, were, as yet, few, but they did reflect the beginnings of a shift in power and control in women's lives.

Urban residence and decision making

But despite the occasional evidence of some Patidar women, particularly in urban areas, exerting some control over the major decisions in their lives, urban women, in general, did not appear to have acquired any greater power or influence. Indeed, in urban areas, decision making seemed to have become even more vested in the hands of both men and the elders in the family. Unlike Kandiyoti's findings in Turkey, the elders in the family, whether resident or not, do not seem to have lost power as a result of urban residence. (3) Whereas the younger generation of both men and women played a significant role in arranging marriages for village women, urban marriages were very much the sphere of the older generation of men.
Such a development reflects the even greater importance of marriage to upwardly mobile urban households than to families in rural areas. As will be discussed in Chapter 20, urban women have become very much 'demonstrators of status' and their successful marriage is of great importance to the entire family; consequently, it is arranged by the senior representatives of the family. Similarly, decisions over whether women should be allowed to work or go on with their studies were seen, in the villages, to be more the responsibility of a woman's husband. But these decisions were not likely to arise very often, because of the lack of suitable work. In the towns, however, educated women could potentially find reasonable paid employment. Yet in urban households, the decision over work was more likely to be made by the senior members of the household, including the husband. Such a decision could have serious repercussions on the whole family unit both in terms of the loss of the women's labour power in the home and, possibly more seriously, the impression it would create in the wider community. Urban women's contribution to 'status production' both through their extended social roles and their appearance meant that women's activities were of crucial importance to the whole household.

Decisions, therefore, in the urban context seemed to be made very much with the consideration of not just the household's interests, but those of the joint family, whether they were living jointly or separately. These major decisions appeared to be reached after considering the best means of enhancing the status of the 'family'. In the process, however, individual women seemed to have less power than formerly, even through exerting influence through
members of the own generation. Even their own husbands tended to act in concert with other members of the family. Urban women's dissatisfaction with their lack of power can be inferred from their desire to allow their own children more control over their lives. But despite their education, they were still not involved directly in those decisions which affected them most closely.
1. In 1985, after the death in suspicious circumstances of the wife of a professional man, a Patel, some women had supported a rally in the local town hall, called by outsiders, to try and safeguard all women from ill-treatment and cruelty in their homes, which might even culminate in their death. Such ' politicisation' was a singular development in women's consciousness. I am not aware, however, of any of my informants or respondents participating in this meeting, nor do I know of any subsequent developments.

2. I am using the term ' joint family' to include members such as parents-in-law, brothers-in-law or other senior relatives who were perceived as being part of the ' joint family'. Although they were not all resident in a joint household, they acted as a unit in making any major decisions likely to affect the family as a whole. See Chapter 10 for further discussion.

3. Kandiyoti (1977) found, in his research on migration from rural areas to small towns in Turkey, that younger men setting up home with their wives in urban areas acquired greater power, whereas their wives' position appeared unchanged, despite the loss of their previously heavy agricultural tasks.
CHAPTER 17. WOMEN'S SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

PERSONAL POLITICS AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES
Introduction

Patidar women were not involved, to any great extent, in the major decisions affecting the course of their lives. The only circumstances in which they had possessed any degree of power was in the domestic sphere, where they were responsible for the daily management of the household. But for urban Patidar women, this sphere had diminished in size and as Stacey and Price (1981) noted, women's power frequently declines with the loss of separate spheres for men and women. Indeed, in some Patidar urban nuclear households, husbands had even become involved in decisions over domestic matters. As Kandiyoti (1977) pointed out in a Turkish context, urban migration did bring about a redistribution of power, but far from urban women being the beneficiaries, it was the younger urban men who gained power. However, amongst the Patidar, there seemed to be an even greater emphasis on joint decision making in urban areas, between the older members of the family and the husband, regardless of their residential circumstances. Even Patidar men living in nuclear households consulted senior members of the family over major decisions, but not their own wives. As has already been pointed out in Chapter 10, 'jointness' was more than just a matter of joint residence. (Desai 1964, Ramu 1973, Gupta 1982). Many families living separately still functioned financially and socially as a 'joint family', with shared obligations and responsibilities. From the analysis of data in Chapter 16, power
within the patriarchal joint family was still very much vested in
the senior male figures in the family. The decisions they made were
taken in the 'best interests' of the household or non-residential
'joint family'. Frequently, major decisions entailed an evaluation
of the best means of enhancing the status of the household. But
such decisions were not necessarily in the 'best interests' of the
Patidar women concerned.

Both rural and urban Patidar women had had to discover more
covert ways of trying to influence events to their advantage. They
had used a number of means to gain help and support and bring
pressure to bear to change decisions. Were such 'personal politics'
and 'survival strategies' still as necessary in urban households?
Patidar women in such units still had little direct access to power:
they could only be said to belong to a society where women exercised
'minimal power' in their lives. (Leghorn and Parker 1981). They
were able to exert influence, however, by a series of indirect
means. As Stacey and Price (1981) have contended:

"the notion of power undoubtedly has to do with the
ability of an individual or a group to influence the
course of events in the direction they desire even
against resistance by others." (p.3)

In order for Patidar women to be able to 'influence' events,
they had to adopt 'indirect' means of doing so. Lamphere (1974) has
pointed out that women have to use a series of strategies to
influence events. Sometimes, they are able to succeed through
persuasion in obtaining their ends; but, at other times, they have
to adopt different strategies, such as argument or the manipulation
of opinion through gossip. One potentially important 'strategy',
she argued, was the use of networks, which could be a great source of support. By such methods, women were able to take certain actions which alleviated some of their problems and difficulties and enabled them to cope with the sometimes detrimental effect on themselves of decisions made by others. Many women gained strength and support from their own female networks: what Caplan and Bujra (1978) have described as 'solidarity'. Although women may have been unable to exert any direct power over the course of their lives, they were certainly not completely powerless. But what influence they could bring to bear had to be achieved by indirect means: by manipulation and 'survival strategies'.

In a number of societies where women had 'minimal power', they have been known to resort to using other women to perform errands or tasks for them so that they could achieve their desired ends. These 'patron-client' relationships amongst women have been reported particularly in societies where some form of purdah or segregation of women was common. Maher (1976), for example, described such a process amongst women in Morocco, where the more circumscribed urban women in purdah, in order to obtain the services they desired, patronised the more mobile rural women, whose lower status meant they were not obliged to observe strict purdah. Urban women rewarded these rural women, who acted as their 'clients', with gifts and other services. Despite the status differentials between Patidar women, however, they did not appear to build up such 'patron-client' relationships amongst themselves. They operated on a more co-operative basis, relying on reciprocal forms of help and
support provided by their female networks. No Patidar women, however, were subjected to the form of segregation experienced by the urban Moroccan women described by Maher, so they had more scope to perform their own tasks outside the home.

But, although Patidar women did not cultivate their own 'patron-client' relationships, urban women, particularly those married to professional men, often acted in a way to compliment their husband's patron-client relationships. Through their own female networks, they could help to establish or build up gift-giving relationships which were an inherent part of the patron-client nexus, based on obligations and reciprocity. Indeed, women as gift-givers in whatever context, were acting as part of male dominated networks which were cemented together by these links. So, women were scarcely unaware of hierarchy or of the various obligations of their rank. The importance of women's contribution to this 'status production work' is discussed further in the next chapter.

Because Patidar women did not develop their own 'patron-client' relationships, Tambs-Lyche (1980), in his work on the Patidar in Britain, claimed that Patidar women were less aware of rank than their menfolk. He felt that they were more egalitarian. But although Patidar women in Gujarat did not build up such relationships, it was certainly not true to imply that they were not aware of rank. They did not observe the same niceties of hierarchy observed by men. Mahendra, in Dharmaj, for example, would always 'call' people to his home in order to meet me, despite my repeated
preferences to visit them in their own homes. Rajni, too, a former serpanch, an important official in the village, always followed this practice of 'calling' people to his home, rather than visiting them personally. Both men, by such actions, sought to underline their superior status: they were acting as a 'patron' summoning his 'clients' to attend on him. But women were much less likely to draw attention to differences in status, by calling others to their home. Indeed, many enjoyed the opportunity of dressing up and going out in order to make their calls on other women. Such visits provided them with a legitimate reason for leaving their home.

It was possible, however, that younger women might not be aware, to the same extent as men and older women, of the subtleties of status based on the importance of a particular family or khadaki in the gol. But women, especially as they grew older and had built up greater expertise, could always 'place' a newcomer in the status hierarchy very rapidly by questioning her about her family, kin and village. Women, too, were aware of the distinctions dictating whether they should mix with members of other castes, and even within their own caste. They would remember who came from the 'Kanbi' Patidar and who was true 'Leva' Patidar, even though they might be a friend of that person. But women were more concerned with the hierarchy in their immediate kinship network, because they spent the majority of their lives interacting with this group.

Not everyone with whom Patidar women interacted were perceived as being of equal rank. They observed the niceties of hierarchy,
too, but they adopted different criteria to those of Patidar men. The 'patron-client' relationships of Patidar men were part of the 'public sphere', but women operated principally in the 'private sphere' and consequently, for them, age and position in the family was, of course, very important. All women recognised the pre-eminence of older women, particularly when it came to undertaking the wishes of a sasu. If a sasu wanted some task performed, even if she was living separately, then this took precedence over any other plans. They were aware of who should defer to whom and would severely criticise those who breached these conventions. Lila, on her return from a prolonged trip abroad, had failed to make the required visit to all her female relatives immediately senior to herself. Consequently, this behaviour was seen as a slight. Older women, therefore, had the power to demand services from younger women, particularly within their own extended family. Younger women, however, were not in a position to control others so directly.

Younger women had to rely on more indirect means to exert their influence. Consequently, female networks were of particular importance to younger women, although older women, too, belonged to such groups. They used such networks to gain practical help when there was extra work to be performed: moreover, in the process, they gained useful information and exchanged gossip. They also used these networks to obtain emotional support. Urban women, particularly, had developed networks composed, at times, of their own natal kin, especially their sisters, and of old school and college friends. Hence, some urban Patidar women had access to
others sources of help and support, independent of their in-laws' networks.

FEMALE NETWORKS

In previous chapters, it has been seen how urban women had much more time at their disposal to participate in leisure activities, because they were not overburdened with household tasks. Moreover, they were able to keep in closer contact with their own kin because they, too, either lived in the same town or because of the better transport facilities from their urban base. Urban women, in their free time, were involved in many more visits to both kin and friends than their rural counterparts. So they had a much greater wealth of social contacts as well as being able to partake in a greater range of social activities.

Caplan (1978) in her study of middle-class women in Madras, discussed how they used their increased leisure time to participate in various social organisations, where they learnt how to make handicrafts with which to beautify their homes, or to acquire new recipes and forms of cuisine with which to satisfy and impress their husbands and the business colleagues they entertained. She did not see these as a source of female 'solidarity', but rather as a 'status arena', where women could acquire and display the skills of a leisured class. Patidar women, too, were becoming skilled in this 'status production work': see further discussion in Chapter 18 and 19. But they acquired such knowledge and skills from their own networks by exchanging information or from classes they attended.
before marriage. Very few, as yet, attended such organisations, or had become involved in the social welfare activities Caplan described. Only one respondent, Hansa, from Baroda, talked about a meeting of the Lions Club, to which she and her husband belonged; women generally had their own separate activities. (It is feasible that some women in the sample would join such organisations as they, too, grew older and their children reached adult life.) Whatever the source of their expertise and skills, the end product still became a means of demonstrating the status of the family which was able to maintain women who were involved in economically unproductive activities.

But for Patidar women, the principal component of their leisure was the making and receiving of visits in their own homes, whether of a formal or informal nature. Such visits, or meetings with neighbours, were undertaken for a variety of reasons: sometimes, just for company; on other occasions, for practical assistance or emotional support; or the calls were necessitated by social duties and obligations. It was through these networks, whether of neighbours, friends or relatives, that women were able to exercise some control over areas of their lives, or ameliorate their conditions. The most immediate form of help they could obtain was of a practical nature.

**Practical help**

Whereas Patidar men were more likely to utilise their 'patron-client' relationship if they needed extra help to tackle some unexpected work, women relied on their female networks to help them...
out of a particular difficulty. They were not in a position to 'demand' extra assistance, even if they were tired or ill. In women's daily lives, they could frequently turn for assistance to other women for help with child care or household tasks. It was particularly helpful to be able to leave children in someone else's care whilst tasks were undertaken or outings made. Such assistance was generally provided on a reciprocal basis. Female callers or guests would often sit and help women as they prepared vegetables, such as shelling peas and beans, or 'topping and tailing' other vegetables. (See Fig: 17.1)

Particularly for special events, women would call together their friends and relatives to help. In the village of Bakrol, Suđha, was holding a special puja, a form of worship, at the temple. After the ceremony, small gifts which had been 'blessed', called prasad, were given to all who attended. She had one of her neighbours, Raju, to call round and help her dehusk all the nuts, which were part of the prasad. Similarly, before Divali, Indira, in the town of Anand, called her sisters, relatives and friends together to prepare the special Divali foodstuff, matthia, for one of her neighbours, who had been taken ill and could not prepare her own. In Bakrol, Shakuntla had spent one afternoon going from house to house to assist all her neighbours whilst they made the same dish, matthia. At the time of a large enterprise, such as a wedding, friends and relatives could spend days helping to clean foodstuffs and prepare special dishes. Four women gathered to help Bella with these tasks before her husband's brother's wedding, when they would have to feed extra guests staying as part of the groom's
Village women and their networks

Fig. 17.1: Practical help
party. Such help would be freely given, but, in turn, a woman who had been assisted in this manner would have to reciprocate on a similar occasion, when called to do so. Hansa in Baroda, had to help her masi sasu, husband's mother's sister, when she had to prepare a dinner for in the region of 150 guests, as a return for the hospitality the family of her masi sasu had received from these guests in the past.

Whereas in the villages, women were generally dependent on in-laws and neighbours, some urban women, such as Malika, would call on their own mother, mother's sister, their own sisters and 'cousin sisters' to help as well, because they all happened to be living in the same town. This was a completely new development for married urban Patidar women because there had never been networks of their own female relatives to provide support, in the villages. It reflected the importance Sharma (1986) placed on the help and support gained from the possibility of mother-daughter relationships in Shimla. In such cases, women had greater resources to call on for aid, and they could do so without fearing any criticism which in-laws might make about their daughters-in-law not being able to manage all their work by themselves. Such occasions, too, helped to take some of the tedium out of the work, because women talked and joked amongst themselves whilst they worked. At one papri making session, Malika and Rashmi constantly sparred with each other, regaling everyone with anecdotes, causing much amusement amongst their co-workers. Each household made supplies of such foods for the following year, so a woman might be involved in a number of
these sessions at one time, when the ingredient became available: rice flour in the case of papri.

**Emotional support**

Women were also able to find more than practical support through their networks. On occasions, they could use this outlet to discuss some problem or discharge their anger over certain incidents. However, not all women were part of a network which could provide such support, particularly in the villages. Village women often felt that they could not confide in anyone in their immediate networks, because they were generally composed of relatives or friends of their in-laws. There was always the fear, therefore, that the information would reach the wrong ears. But there were occasions when friends could offer support and advice. Nira in VVN, a young widow, felt she had been given particular support by her 'friends' circle'. Indira, too, in Anand, had been advised by some of her friends, to respond to her estranged mother-in-law's gesture of friendship, by calling on her in turn, although Indira was very dubious about her motives. But women were more likely to turn to an individual friend or relative when they needed advice about a specific problem. It was essential that problems or criticisms should not become general knowledge, because this could worsen the woman's position. Moreover, the information could give the family a 'bad reputation' and no-one involved would forgive her for laying it open to general censure. Where such a 'confidante' was available, it could enable women to endure difficult situations, or she might receive helpful advice about how to improve her position. Other women could, thus, adopt supportive and constructive roles...
towards each other.

Confidantes

Given the greater mobility of urban women, their longer periods of leisure and their greater degree of social contacts, it was hardly surprising to find that they, too, had greater access to a 'confidante'. Both urban and village women, when they had a problem, were most likely to talk to their husbands. But urban women also had alternative people to whom they could turn. Many women discussed any problems with a variety of people. They might choose not to talk to their parents because they would worry, particularly if the problem was one related to their sasera, where they had little leverage.

Urban women reported more people in whom they could confide; 63 sources compared with 45 for village women: see Table 17.1 below. The most frequent source was husbands for both urban and rural women, but only just over a third of urban women contrasted with half of the rural women turned to this source. Similar percentages of urban and village women consulted members of their own family, in a quarter of the cases: about a fifth in both cases turned to in-laws with problems. Few village women had friends in whom they could entrust confidences, in only 7% of cases, whereas a fifth of the urban contacts were with friends.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Confidantes</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>21 (47%)</td>
<td>22 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own family</td>
<td>10 (22%)</td>
<td>16 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In laws</td>
<td>9 (20%)</td>
<td>12 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>3 (7%)</td>
<td>12 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No-one</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No: of women</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Village women appeared to be more dependent on their husband for someone with whom to discuss problems: 84% of women (21/25) consulted their husband over some issue, whereas 76% (22 out of 29) of urban women did so: see Table 17.1. Moreover, 28% (7 out of 25) of village women only confided in their husbands when they had a problem, yet no urban woman relied solely on her husband in such circumstances. Consequently, rural women seemed to be much more constrained about whom they could trust. They were, of course, much more restricted in whom they saw regularly and they lived within a very limited, tight social circle of in-laws and neighbours, where it was much easier for information to be overheard, or reach the wrong person. Village women, too, like urban women were often reluctant to confide in their own families, particularly their parents or mother, in case they became worried: 48% of urban and rural women claimed never to turn to parents with problems. In the case of urban women, however, their parents and other relatives were more likely to be abroad, so the situation was more complex.
All urban women, except one, had an alternative outlet for their problems: they were usually not totally reliant on their husband, or one particular person. But most women had a certain person to whom they turned first, or whom they would consult over the most important issues. This person could be termed their 'main confidante'.

Table 17.2: Main confidantes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>13 (52%)</td>
<td>13 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own family</td>
<td>6 (24%)</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In laws</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>4 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>6 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No-one</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No: of women 25 29

Village women were, again, more likely to turn to their husbands first, despite the greater prevalence of nuclear households amongst urban women. They were also more likely to turn to members of their own family, in most cases their mother, and occasionally, their father, a brother or sister. Nearly a quarter did so compared to 17% of urban women, discussed in Table 17.2. Urban women, too, talked to their mothers most, but also quite frequently, turned to a sister, partly because they had been able to keep in touch with their sisters more easily than village women and also because parents were, sometimes, absent abroad. However, in this context, the mother and sister relationship was seen as particularly helpful and supportive, and especially so for urban women. Village women
were not very likely to consult anyone from their sasera, as their main confidante. Urban women were more likely to do so; in fact, 14% turned to in-laws, nearly as often as they did to their own family. Usually, too, this was with another female member of a joint household. For both urban and village women, this 'confidante' was likely to be either a sasu, mother-in-law, or jethani, an older sister-in-law; other female in-laws such as diyarni, younger sister-in-law, nanand, husband's sister, and bhaibhi, brother's wife, were mentioned. Only twice were male in-laws consulted; once a father-in-law, as eldest member of the family, and a mama sasera, who was sympathetic.

The most striking difference between rural and urban women was in the extent to which they consulted a friend: only one village woman confided mainly in her 'fast friend'. (A 'fast friend' was an Indian English term used to mean a close or 'best friend'.) But 21% of urban women chose to confide primarily in friends: see Table 17.2. Village women, of course, did not have the same networks as did urban women and so had fewer opportunities to consult friends. But urban women felt confident enough in their friendship to turn to these 'outsiders' in preference to anyone else. Three women confided solely in their 'fast friend'; however, one of these women was separated and another widowed. Two of the other women had to rely on correspondence, because their friend had left the area and had gone to live abroad.

Malika, Kusum and Manda, all preferred to consult their older sisters about problems when possible, because there was a feeling
that they would be more understanding, having recently experienced similar sorts of problems themselves. In other circumstances, Meeta chose to complain to her jethani, Lata who lived in a nuclear unit, about being overworked by her sasu, in her late stages of pregnancy, when she was feeling extremely tired. As they shared the same sasu, she could anticipate much sympathy and perhaps some advice on how to handle the situation. On other occasions, a number of women could provide support, or help defuse situations through humour. In the case of Bhaskar, all his bhalbh, brothers' wives, and even his own sisters were very much in awe of him, because of his sudden temper. But, when together, they joked about him and even teased him mildly, so helping his wife and young sisters-in-law, who normally saw him as an omnipotent figure.

Information Gathering

Much of the patterns of interaction followed by urban women, and village women to a lesser extent, were undertaken to give and receive information. Nelson (1974) has explained how women in the Middle East can become 'information brokers' by acting as intermediaries between their own family and the wider community, through their own female networks. Patidar women, too, can operate in this manner. In the villages, certainly, it was still unusual to have a telephone, and many urban families also had not acquired one. Moreover, the service, certainly for long-distance calls, was unreliable. Therefore, arrivals and departures, for any period of time, were marked by a round of visiting. So women became acquainted with whomever was in the area, and also found out who was
absent. Those returning from visits could supply all the latest news about relatives living outside the area.

Such visits, however, were not just confined to such occasions. If a woman, probably with another relative or friend, went out visiting, she would, in most cases, not just call on one friend or relative, but also drop in to see everyone she knew in the vicinity. In the process, therefore, she would acquire a great deal of information and also reinforce links between herself and family and friends. On such an afternoon, Lata might call on up to six households. But, of course, these outings were very rare during the hot summer months or the monsoons, when the weather made such trips very unappealing. Women, like Lakshmi, who lived some distance away from other people were precluded from these visits. Lata, on the other hand, lived in the centre of town, so anyone coming to shop or go to the nearby hospital called; consequently she was inundated by visitors.

On such visits, women would catch up with all the latest births, marriages and deaths, and, more importantly, who was looking for suitable marriage partners. By such informal means, much marriage-brokering occurred, with the more formal moves being taken up by men. But also women would exchange less vital information about the latest fashions or recipes, which helped them to keep up with trends. For urban women who had to 'keep up appearances' such knowledge was quite important. It was no longer sufficient just to feed their families, they had to be able to provide variety,
particularly when guests were present. Other information, too, possibly of interest to her husband might also be gleaned. (1) Papanek (1979) has categorised such activities as 'status production work'. Both Sharma (1985) and Caplan (1986) found that women in their urban samples spent a great deal of time on such activities, which they felt served a vital function for the household as a unit. Urban Patidar women, too, were helping to establish and reinforce the standing of the household in urban society.

SOCIAL CONTROL

Gossip and ostracism

When both urban and village women met, they were virtually always liable to gossip at some point. Indeed, Lila commented on how she disliked attending the lengthy wedding ceremonies, because all people did was gossip. But as Ardener (1978), has pointed out such gossip frequently fulfils an important social function. By making comments on each other's behaviour, women were able to ensure that, generally, most people observed acceptable forms of social behaviour. Most generally, Green, Hebron and Woodward (1987) contended, such criticism was directed towards women who failed to fulfil the dominant definitions of femininity and domesticity. In fact, they adopted a 'policing role'. They most effectively 'policed' other women because these were the people with whom they mixed the most. But, they could, at times, influence men as well by laying them open to general censure. Thus, by indirect means, women might be able to ensure that husbands, or parents-in-law, modified their behaviour. Manda, for example, would complain to her diyami,
and, sometimes, her diyar about how uncooperative her husband could be: for example, never turning up for meals she had prepared. Her diyar, himself, might then talk to her husband and help persuade him to be more considerate.

In the small, encapsulated world of the village and the even more enclosed world of the khadaki, it was very difficult to hide a great deal from the neighbours. So women, like everyone, were very open to censure if they strayed beyond accepted norms. But even in the towns, women still moved in a fairly tight-knit social circle and, consequently, found it difficult to retain a great deal of privacy. Such a concept was quite alien and constant interaction with the same group of people made it difficult to keep many secrets. So, the majority of women tended to be constrained by the comments of others as they did not wish to acquire a bad reputation, which would reflect not just on themselves, but on the standing of the family, as well.

Gossip about women would occur whenever they began to stray too far from the ideal form of behaviour. If a woman started to behave too independently, then other women were sure to begin talking about her. This was particularly the case if she transgressed the bounds of 'territoriality'. Leghorn and Parker (1981) contended that women were discouraged from venturing too far or undertaking anything 'out of the ordinary' by the fear of rape, or attack. Such fears restrained any Patel woman from going far on her own after dark, which fell by early to mid evening, depending on the season of the year. Although no woman had had any bad experiences, nor appeared
able to quote examples of others who had, this was still a very real fear. Anne Edwards (1987), developing the argument first propounded by Millett (1972) and Brownmiller (1975), contended that in patriarchal societies, such generalised threats and fear of sexual assault are deployed to act as a mechanism of social control. There is no need for overt force, because women are so well socialised into adopting acceptable forms of behaviour. As a result, Patidar women actually limited their own freedom of movement. Moreover, even during the day girls and young women were subject to jeers and insults from groups of young men, about their appearance, or commenting adversely on their reasons for being out. (2) Consequently, younger Patidar women, certainly, were not keen to spend time or linger in public places in the daytime and would not consider doing so after dark. Consequently, as Green, Hebron and Woodward (1987) pointed out, women's choice of leisure activities were limited and effectively controlled, too.

Patidar women, too, would comment if they felt other women were spending too much time away from their home, partly because they were unsure about what the absentee was doing; but partly, also because it was felt they were neglecting their 'proper household duties'. Two women from the same khadaki in the village of Bakrol, commented in an acerbic manner about this: Raksha, who was already on bad terms with her sasu, rarely went out in case she incurred further criticism for unacceptable behaviour. But Raju ignored the gossip and was frequently absent from home on visits. She lived separately with her husband, whom she felt she could 'manage' and,
therefore, did not feel constrained by the criticism of her neighbours.

It was not just women's movements which were carefully monitored. Women were just as likely to comment if others failed to follow prescribed rituals. There was particular criticism of those who failed to show all the necessary respect and perform duties associated with their role. Lata, for example, was informed by her mother-in-law when she had to represent the family at various weddings. She felt obliged to attend, even if this only entailed being present for about an hour, perhaps for the wedding meal. She would only stay for the full wedding, if it was a particularly important one, or a close member of the family was being married. But, at a lesser level, much criticism was levelled against Lila for not calling on all her relatives after her return from a long trip to England. Moreover, she failed to bring gifts for everyone, which was customary, so leaving herself open to further censure. As she was happily married, in one of the few 'love marriages', she had the support of her husband in her actions.

Gift giving was a very integral part of Patidar social life. It reached its prime importance at the time of marriage. There was always continual pressure to give more lavishly and there was much negotiation between giver and receiver over the size of the 'gifts'. However, the gifts of gold and saris for the bride from her family, reflected very much on their status and wealth. (3) These gifts were put on 'exhibition' for both neighbours and relatives of the girl's family and the boy's family to examine. Consequently, if
they did not prove to be as impressive as anticipated, then there would be a great deal of social comment from all concerned. Families were very anxious to avoid such adverse comments on their status and tried to impress as much as possible. Consequently, it was very difficult to only give a modest selection of such gifts because of the public nature of the gift giving and the ensuing comments.

One of the most important areas where families were particularly concerned with the power of gossip was over the actual selection of marriage partners. Once a marriage had been arranged, the actual ceremony tended to take place very quickly afterwards. Even when there was a death in the family, of someone very close, and all other festivals and ceremonies were cancelled, wedding ceremonies still went ahead. Occasionally, this could be accounted for because the groom had to return to his home overseas. But the general consensus for the rapidity of the celebrations, at an otherwise inappropriate time, was because of a fear of the possibility of adverse gossip reaching the prospective partners' families. Girls were particularly susceptible to this. Moreover, if the marriage was ever called off at this stage, after the formal engagement or chanalo ceremony, it was felt to be extremely unlikely that the girl would find anyone else who would marry her, because of the implications on her reputation.

Gossip and adverse criticism, therefore, acted in a manner not just to prevent certain actions or behaviour, but also to ensure the
fulfillment of certain norms. In the villages, this was particularly evident as regards the observance of certain religious festivals and fasts. There was a variety of forms of 'fasts' which could be kept over the year, but there was considerable variation over who observed them or not. (Fasting did not necessarily entail total abstinence from food; usually it meant, perhaps only eating fruit for the day. But, sometimes, it meant consuming specially prepared foods.) There appeared to be preferences for certain fasts in particular villages, or even one khadaki. But where the majority of women kept a certain fast, it was not necessarily, very easy to ignore it. For example, on Sitra Satam, a fast to propitiate the smallpox goddess, only cold food was eaten. This was prepared the previous day. In the village of Bakrol, virtually all women appeared to observe this fast, despite the eradication of smallpox. If they had not done so, then everyone would have been aware of the fact, when they started to cook. So it had become general practice to observe it. The same criteria, too, appeared to apply to temple attendance, especially in the villages. In one khadaki, most women would attend regularly, if not daily, yet, in another, it was rare for any women to attend. It took a fairly strong-minded women to stand out against the comments of others and not conform to acceptable standards.

Consequently, even over very important decisions, women tended to conform, although it could go against their direct interests or wishes. Several widows had wanted to work, for financial independence and for an interest outside the home. But even in the case of the middle-aged village widow, who had no land to provide
her with an income, her relatives would not allow her to work. She had, instead, to rely on small contributions from relatives. Her own social circle, in Bakrol, was so enclosed that she could not consider flouting the norms. But even in the big town of Baroda, Madhu gave up the idea of attending a typing class with her prospective brother-in-law, because her mother was worried about the gossip which might ensue.

One of the most potent forces in keeping married couples together, even when they were totally incompatible, was the fear of gossip. Several women spoke of female relatives, who, to all intents and purposes, were separated from their husbands, but they still lived together under the same roof to preserve the facade of marriage. Kundan, who had left her husband in East Africa ten years before, ostensibly to study in Bombay, still had not divorced. The separation, too, was rarely mentioned outside the family. Although she was working, because of her position, she had to live with relatives, despite rather cramped accommodation, in order to safeguard her reputation. Nira, too, a young widow, was not allowed to live completely alone with her children. She resided in a flat, downstairs from her sister and brother-in-law in order to try and ensure she was not subject to criticism. However, any young widow, known to have conversed with an unrelated man, was likely to have aspersions cast against her character; she had always to be on her guard.

Conversely, young married women who did not become pregnant
immediately, were liable to encounter increasing criticism about their fertility. Women carried a very heavy burden of censure around with them, until they gave birth. One woman, Sudha, was not very happy about the sexual side of her relationship with her husband, when she was first married, but felt compelled to have sex until she became pregnant, and eventually gave birth to a son. But, although women generally were the source and butt of gossip and criticism, they could act in such a way as to safeguard other women's interests against men. By such means, parents and parents-in-law might hear about a husband's infidelity or ill treatment of his wife. In turn, they could endeavour to put pressure on the offending person to bring him into line. There was never any discussion of women who might have transgressed in a similar manner, but such an action would undoubtedly have precipitated much more severe repercussions, because the whole family's reputation was dependent on the 'good' behaviour of women.

Ostracism

The ultimate form of protest which was only adopted for extreme transgressions of accepted behaviour, was to completely ostracise the person, or persons involved. The fear of ostracism from such tightly-knit networks was frequently sufficient to prevent any extreme steps, because it would entail total exclusion from all forms of social interaction and life-cycle ceremonies and gatherings. Such action was generally only taken when a person married into the wrong group, against the wishes of the family: although it was feasible that it would have been invoked for other forms of extreme behaviour. Observance of marriage rules was
crucial to the maintenance and enhancement of a family's standing. If one person ignored them, particularly in the case of a girl, the outcome was liable to have a deleterious effect on the whole family. So if a daughter contracted a love marriage against the wishes of the rest of the family, particularly if she married out of the Patel caste into a lower ekada, or to someone from her own village, she was liable to be ostracised. Moreover, if that marriage did not prove successful, the girl would be left to fend for herself. If, however, an arranged marriage irretrievably broke down, the girl's family would, in most circumstances, be expected to take responsibility for her.

This manner of enforcing social norms was particularly effective in the villages, where there were no alternative networks for social contact. Sudha knew of several cases in Bakrol: one was an aunt who had married into a lower caste, the suthar or carpenter caste. In another case, two people from the same village had married. But as they were then all living in London, ostracism was less effective. In another well-known example, two people had eloped from the same village of Changa, more than sixteen years before the main period of fieldwork. They, too, had gone abroad, but when they returned on a visit to India, they still could not call on their families in Changa and the woman only managed to see her mother away from the village, in someone else's home. That whole family had been excluded from other weddings and festivals. Another girl, who had eloped had married someone she thought was a Patel from a higher-status ekada, but it materialised that he was
from a lower caste. She, too, was ostracised and even when she had her first baby, in East Africa, no-one in her family would call on her or give her any assistance. Younger sisters who would like to have helped were afraid to do so. Many years after, the stigma still remained, though the couple lived in England. But they were, at least, in contact with all their relatives.

Many people felt that those ostracised might hope, after some years, perhaps five if not more, to gradually be included in the family circle, to a certain extent. But, certainly, seeing the impact of ostracism on any family member or friend proved sufficient to deter others from contemplating a similar course of action. Manda, from Anand, had realised the effect on her older sister of contracting a love marriage and would not consider anything other than an arranged marriage for herself. On other occasions, the threat of ostracism was invoked in order to deter a girl who was possibly considering a rash marriage. Very few women were prepared to sacrifice their family and social network and the possibility of attending any social functions, by marrying against the wishes of their father.

PERSONAL POLITICS

Although the balance of power within the family and the community was completely against women exerting a great deal of control over their lives, it was possible for individual women to achieve their ends by other means. By dint of their own personality and by skilful manipulation of events, a woman could, at times, ensure a satisfactory outcome. Over time, she could build up
considerable influence, but only by adopting carefully thought out tactics. These Leghorn and Parker (1981) have called 'survival strategies'.

Survival strategies

In Chapter 16, it has been seen how women used various means to regain some control over their own fertility. They frequently used the argument of ill health, in order to limit family size. Urban women appeared to be more likely to have used such an excuse for not bearing any more children, particularly in face of pressure from husband and in-laws to become pregnant again. It was, however, possible to devise other means to ensure that women obtained their own wishes over fertility. Indeed, the most striking illustration of such a 'survival strategy' with regard to taking control of her own fertility was explained by Dipti, a village woman from Dharma. She had wanted to be sterilised but had been opposed by her sasu. After the birth of her third child, she had decided to take matters in hand and tackle her sasu. Firstly, she consulted her husband who gave his consent as long as her sasu agreed. Then she talked to her sasu, who, in turn, assented if she could gain her husband's consent. Using these conditional agreements, she took the initiative and went ahead and had the operation, much to her husband's subsequent disapproval and anger. But she had outmanoeuvred them and, of course, it was too late to reverse the situation.

Ill health was a frequent excuse cited by women to evade some
form of obligation. In many, if not all instances, the illness was genuine, but it was manipulated in such a way to be advantageous to the women concerned. Ehrenreich and English (1973) showed how, in a similar manner, upper and middle class women, in Europe and America in the nineteenth century, were able to benefit from the 'sick role', principally by avoiding sexual intercourse and the consequent unwanted pregnancies. Meeta was at her piyar after the birth of her first child; less than a year before, a previous baby had died at birth. Her mother argued, therefore, that she was very weak and should be allowed to stay longer than normal in the care of her mother and bhaibhi. Such statements were quite possibly correct, however, Meeta's real reason for wishing to delay her return was her rather critical and contentious sasu, who caused her much anguish.

Patidar women appeared to adopt a similar strategy, too, of upper and middle class Victorian women in order to achieve a limited degree of control over a situation, which was possibly escalating in an unforeseen manner. Several women spoke of fainting fits, usually at the time of a fierce argument, which, in Victorian England would probably have been diagnosed as 'hysteria'. (4) This strategy was employed by both village and urban women; it had happened several times to Raksha from Bakrol, who was in the midst of a bitter feud with her mother-in-law, and to Pratima, in the town of Anand, who had an extremely hot-tempered husband. By such tactics, they managed to end the argument without loss of face and defused the situation, in the process, drawing attention away from the focus of the argument. Similarly, other women reported severe asthma attacks. Lata was unable to move any bulky household objects, such
as mattresses or bedding, because the dust produced could provoke an attack; tasks which she relinquished with relief. Nor could she undertake some other household work, both in her own home or for others. Manda, too, was subject to even more severe attacks, to the extent that it was said she could not have any more children. But at a less crucial level, she also argued that she could not undertake certain fasts or attend some ceremonies, which were not particularly appealing to her.

Women, too, had a ability to turn certain conflicts to their advantage, or to make covert threats in situations where it was not possible to make an outright refusal. Meeta has already been mentioned and her attempts to avoid returning too soon to her sasera. She was, however, outmanoeuvred by her sasu, who could not make any direct demands for Neeta's return, when she had preferred such uncontesterable grounds for needing a longer rest. Meeta's sasu was, however, having to cook for herself and her two sons, one of whom was Meeta's husband. This was a task to which she had become unaccustomed, because Meeta was normally present. She, therefore, confronted the head of the family, her eldest son, Bhaskar, and stated that his brother was causing great distress to her by complaining about his mealtime. This was, after all, she contended, his wife's responsibility. Bhaskar was obliged to contact Meeta's brother, the head of her family, and reach a compromise over her earlier return, in view of such extenuating circumstances.

The same sasu, however, also manipulated events to the
advantage of another daughter-in-law. Bhaskar was refusing to allow his wife to visit her parents in England. His mother and aunt, masi, confronted him, in a jocular manner, in a large group about the reasons for his refusal. Having demolished any obstacles, such as alternative child care, he had no solid ground to oppose her departure, apart from the inconvenience to himself. He, therefore, had to change his stance to one of agreement, but still tried to prevent her departure by claiming to have no time to help her with all the extensive procedure of obtaining a visa. The crucial point had been gained, however, and in public. It was, therefore, very difficult for him to renege on this promise. As Makhlof (1979) commented, however, on her sample in North Yemen, the fact that women resorted to 'manipulation' to gain their ends was an indication of their lack of power.

Other women used threats to try and obtain their ends. The most potent weapon was the threat of a withdrawal of labour. In the case of Manju, from the village of Karamsad, when she was well advanced in her pregnancy, she did not want the upheaval and strain of entertaining her husband's unexpected guests at the time of the Navratri festival. He was in the habit of returning late at night with such friends and expecting food and drink. She felt she could not refuse outright, but threatened to return to her piyar, immediately, if he did so against her express wishes. She had used a similar tactic before, when she had been in the middle of a dispute with her in-laws over studying. On that occasion, she had left home for several days and stayed with her 'cousin sister', Lata, in the nearby town. Eventually, the situation was resolved to
her satisfaction. A relative of hers, too, Rekha, in the same village, spent several weeks with her parents after a particularly heated disagreement with her sasu.

Such absences caused much inconvenience and a greater burden of work to those remaining; moreover, it provided such overt evidence of disharmony in the household which was displeasing and a slight on the family concerned. If at all possible, therefore, all efforts would be made to restore an outward semblance of equilibrium, at least, by procuring the return of the aggrieved woman. Women, of course, had to possess supportive families to whom they could turn and it was a method which could not be employed very frequently, without losing its efficacy. Lila claimed to have made, what she considered to be, the ultimate threat to her husband that in the event of an affair which 'disrupted their family life', she would not hesitate to divorce him. Presumably, if the affair was kept 'quiet', she was prepared to tolerate it. (As she had made a 'love marriage' she had one of the closer relationships with her husband, compared to many other women.) (5)

More women, however, favoured 'conciliation' rather than conflict. Dipti, in the village of Dharmaj, felt a 'softly-softly' approach was by far the most successful. By being initially pliable and acquiescent, she had gained acceptance from her in-laws and over the years felt she had converted them to her way of doing and seeing things. Pratima, from Anand, felt compromise was the only way to handle her short-tempered husband. Even Anjana, from
WN, had no wish as yet to marry, but her family were putting great pressure on her to do so. Until she married, it was difficult to search for a partner for her younger sister, who was a particularly tall girl and for whom it would be a considerable problem to find a suitable match. Anjana could not refuse marriage completely, nor could she find reasonable grounds herself for refusing every boy; she, therefore, acted in such a way, when presented to a boy, which she hoped would thoroughly dissuade him of her suitability. In this fashion, she appeared to be doing her duty and following her parents' wishes, whilst being able to continue her studies.

Indira, in Anand, was even more skilful in obtaining the consent of her in-laws, a few years later, to her daughter marrying the person of her choice. This boy was the son of a friend, who had emigrated to the United States. He was well-qualified, as an engineer, but he came from a lower ekada. The elders of the family, therefore, were completely opposed because he came from a lower ekada. But as an American citizen, he was a 'good match' in all other respects. Indira suggested that if these elders could find a boy with the same assets, from the same ekada, 'The Five', then they should arrange a match with him instead. Such a man, however, was highly sought after and he could command a high dowry from a girl of his own ekada, so there would be no reason for him to marry less advantageously. They would not have been able to afford a high enough dowry to persuade him to do so. Consequently, Indira was able to marry her daughter to her friend's son, whom she, too, had known from childhood. By appearing to acquiesce with her in-laws' wishes and letting it seem they were making the vital decision, she
obtained exactly what she wanted without any unpleasantness. Such a marriage, not handled with sufficient delicacy, could well have been ostracised.

THE SUPERNATURAL: AS SURVIVAL STRATEGY AND SOCIAL CONTROL

'Najar lage' and 'bhut'

Nelson (1974), in her research in the Middle East, found that it was the frequent recourse of those in a fairly powerless situation to turn to outside forces, such as the 'supernatural' for aid and reinforcement. Hoogevelt (1978) commented on the possibility of 'pre-scientific' and 'scientific' views co-existing in developing societies. Indeed, Hoogevelt contended that beliefs in magic and superstition were used to mediate incompatibilities in society: the use of such concepts, often by 'scapegoating' individuals, was found at times of tensions and social change.

Certainly, Patidar women were still very much aware of beliefs in the 'supernatural'; even if they were sceptical themselves. Amongst Patidar women, however, the 'supernatural' seemed to serve as an avenue for gaining more power. For Patidar women, the most commonly experienced phenomenon, in this respect was najar lage, or the 'evil eye'. All women had heard of it and a very large majority had some experience of it in their lives. Jeffery (1979) described how Muslim women living at a shrine near Delhi, were afraid of attacks from nazr, or the evil eye. Consequently, they did not leave the vicinity of the shrine too often in case they provoked envy, which would attract the attention of the 'evil eye'. Young
girls, brides and pregnant women were most likely to be affected by the 'evil eye'. As Jeffery argued, in fact, the threat of the 'evil eye' acted in her sample as a means of social control. For many Patidar women, however, their first personal encounter with najar was with the birth of their first child. Prior to that many Patidar women, particularly educated women in urban areas, were rather dubious about the concept.

The widely-held belief amongst Patidar women, too, was that najar was invoked as a result of envy, generally from someone who had less than oneself. Consequently, as a Brahmin informant explained, it was felt to be wrong, for example, to eat in the presence of the poor, who might thus be provoked to place najar on oneself. Patidar women seemed to believe that najar was usually caused by good appearance and good fortune, possibly flaunted before others. It generally manifested itself in the form of undiagnosed aches and pains and particularly a fever. Small children were frequently reported to have suffered from it; usually they cried a great deal, for no apparent reason, and could not be soothed or quieted. They often had red or swollen eyes. Others mentioned that their children had had 'strange', 'wide' or 'staring' eyes. They would often have a fever and might even vomit. When these symptoms persisted and there was no apparent medical cure, even sceptical mothers agreed to have the ritual performed to remove the najar. This ceremony, known as unjhya, took a variety of forms, but at its most generally accepted level, it entailed a pot of salt, water and sometimes chillies being circled around the person's head a
prescribed number of times, then thrown away. Sometimes the chillies were burnt to establish if the problem was caused by najar. At other times, a mantra might be said. Many people, and most children, wore an amulet or put kohl around the eyes to deter najar. Unjhya was frequently performed by women themselves, either the mother of a child, or her sasu, or a female neighbour. Sometimes, in more extreme cases, an outsider, considered to have special powers, would be consulted and a more elaborate ritual undertaken.

Table 17.3: Belief in Najar Lage amongst married women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Believes in najar</td>
<td>13 (52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believed after had child</td>
<td>3* (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total of those believed</td>
<td>16 (64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not believe at all</td>
<td>9 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No: of women</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*some not absolutely sure

When married women with children were questioned about their belief in najar lange, two-thirds of them professed to do so, although a number of women, more so in the towns, expressed a certain ambivalence: see Table 17.3. Despite higher educational levels, in fact more urban women appeared to believe in the occurrence than village women, although a greater proportion had been convinced since the birth of their children. A few women professed to have experienced najar, although they did not believe in it; presumably implying that although others thought the cause was najar, they felt it was the result of some other unidentified cause. But many women spoke of problems with their baby and their
near despair when nothing could be done, until some older person, usually a sasu, performed unjhyā and the child ceased crying. This tended to convince previous doubters.

Table 17.4: Removal of najar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By self</td>
<td>2 (12.5%)</td>
<td>3 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By sasu</td>
<td>9 (56%)</td>
<td>8 (42%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By neighbour</td>
<td>1 (6%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By valand/old man/ pujari</td>
<td>4 (25%)</td>
<td>6 (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the majority of cases, women had turned to an older person for a solution. Usually this person was her sasu, or a neighbour, and on occasions it was an old man, in the village, or a pujari at one of the temples, vested with special powers: see Table 17.4. By such means, older people, especially women, were able to exert their own experience and power over younger women, even some with university degrees. This 'folk knowledge', by whatever means, enabled older women to maintain their position of authority in the household and the community. Moreover, belief in najar could be used as a control mechanism against anyone who might become too proud or exhibitionist about their own or their child's appearance and good qualities. For najar was not only placed on children. Madhu claimed her fiance experienced it. Daksha from the village of Karamsad also claimed to experience it, but did not dare to talk about it because people taunted her and contended that because she
was such a 'big hulk' no-one would 'put najar' on her. Meeta, from Anand, a science graduate, had worn a 'special thread' since the third month of pregnancy, after losing her first baby. Others wore a black necklace or dora, to ward off the 'evil eye'. But one should be careful in what circumstances one praised others, just in case it could cause an envious person to place najar on the person concerned.

Among the women who reported that they had experienced najar, only a small number of women professed to undertake the removal of najar by themselves. Virtually all, in both towns and villages, turned to an older, more experienced person to perform the necessary rituals: see Table 17.4. In approximately half the recorded instances, this was their sasu; sometimes it was an older female neighbour, perhaps when a sasu was not available. In more persistent cases, in a quarter of instances in villages and a third in the towns, an 'expert' was consulted who generally undertook some more elaborate ritual and who might prescribe some form of 'protective' amulet.

Belief in bhut

Penelope Brown et.al.(1981) contended that 'spirit possession' was often a manifestation of anger of conflict which women felt unable to express openly. They quoted an extreme example of village women in the Punjab, who sympathised with a woman who was so ill-treated that she eventually died. A number of the village women became possessed by a 'spirit', which was outside their control.
Brown et al. contended that these 'spirit possessions' provided women with a legitimate means of voicing their anger and protests.

Belief in bhut, ghosts or spirit possession, was not widespread amongst the Patidar women. There was no difference in attitude between rural and urban women: three-quarters of both groups did not believe in bhut at all. Only a quarter felt there might be some basis for the belief, because of some of the stories they had been told. Only a very small number of women claimed to have had any personal experiences: two women in both the villages and the towns. Of those women who felt there was some basis for a belief in ghosts, slightly more village women were convinced of their existence than urban women: see Table 17.5. But there was no evidence to confirm one educated woman's statement that only 'ignorant' and 'low caste' people believed in such happenings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 17.5: Belief in bhut</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not believe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience of bhut</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In both the towns and village, there were women who reported that members of the family who were supposed to have been possessed by a 'ghost', but they did not, themselves, believe this to be true. But, in other instances, women, themselves, had undergone the
experience, or seen close relatives do so, and this convinced them. One such example was Charulata from Nadiad whose kaki sasu had been 'possessed' by the ghost of her deceased jet, elder brother-in-law. He had not married and she had cooked and looked after him during his lifetime. Now, she was seen to talk to him and dance and sing, when he was in 'possession'.

Raksha from the village of Bakrol had been possessed by a bhut, known to be that of a woman from the next town, during a pregnancy, and had been unable to speak for several days, until special prayers, a mantra, were said. Another woman, Indu from Anand, had slipped into a ditch during which time a draxshi, a female ghost, had entered her body and, subsequently her health had gradually deteriorated. Doctors had been unable to help but a joshi, holy man, had removed the ghost by saying special mantras.

Unlike the belief in najar lage, caused by envy of those in more favourable circumstances to oneself, there appeared to be no immediate explanation for why certain people became possessed. Without much more detailed case histories however, it is not possible to understand the causes of these cases of 'possession'. They seemed to be haphazard occurrences and but even those women who were sceptical of the existence of bhut as an explanation for extraordinary behaviour, offered no alternative interpretation. However, it was quite possible that in all those instances, 'possession' was used by women as a 'strategy', perhaps unconsciously, to avoid a difficult situation or as an outlet for otherwise unacceptable feelings. When such an incident occurred, the
services of a specialist, such as a bhuva, a remover of ghosts, was generally required. It was not something that women sought to tackle, it appeared to lie outside their realm of authority or control.

Summary

Patidar women were rarely in a position to exercise direct control over their lives: power was vested with men in the 'public sphere'. Even in the 'domestic sphere', the elders, both men and women, were vested with power. Although a majority of urban women were living in nuclear households, the balance of power did not seem to have shifted in their direction. Both rural and urban women, therefore, and especially younger women, had to resort to a variety of strategies in order to gain a degree of control and influence over their lives.

To some extent, women could influence events through female networks. In this respect, urban women were at a greater advantage to rural women because they had been able to develop networks based on friends and their own female relatives, which were more independent of those of their in-laws than rural women's contacts. Sometimes they gained practical assistance to enable them to handle an excess of work, or they gained information or emotional support which enhanced their quality of life. Urban women, too, were more likely to have friends or relatives who could act as confidantes and give them advice and support with problems. Information, acquired from other women in a network, could benefit the whole household. Other activities, such as gift giving gave women a degree of power
and brought women more into the 'public sphere' and the 'status arena', particularly women living in urban areas, as will be seen in the next chapter. But much of women's influence was gained by skilful manipulation of people and events and by adopting various 'survival strategies' to gain the outcome which they wanted. Indeed, both rural and urban Patidar women had learnt to circumvent situations where they lacked direct power and they found, where they could, indirect means to influence events.
1. By such means, I heard of both rooms where I could live and also possible interpreters, in a very short space of time, a matter of hours on occasions, proving how efficiently information could travel.

2. One of my interpreters, Anjana, an unmarried woman, spoke of such taunts whilst waiting to meet me in the middle of the day. It was suggested she must be meeting a boyfriend, a damaging statement for a young unmarried woman. To avoid such unpleasantness, I had to call and collect her at her home each day. Another interpreter, Meena, was always accompanied by her husband.

3. Harrell and Dickey (1985), too, found that the display of dowry was a means of reflecting family status and wealth.

4. Although 'hysteria' is now rarely diagnosed in Europe and America, it is still seen in India as a common form of neurosis. As Smith Rosenberg, amongst others, has contended, it is one of the few ways open to those in a powerless position to attempt to cope with an intolerable situation. (Discussed in the Open University Reader, Medical Knowledge: Doubt and Certainty 1985). Generally, these symptoms will be seen in women, however, young men, in Asian families, have been known to report such symptoms as loss of consciousness during a heated argument.

5. Domestic quarrels between women are inherent within large patriarchal families, according to Collier (1974). Collier argues that particularly as women become more secure with the birth of sons, they are liable to assert their own needs more and work towards the breakup of the extended family. In smaller units, they hoped to exert more direct influence through husbands and sons. In the case of the Patidar, however, even those women living separately did not seem to have achieved any significant shift in the balance of power. Moreover, women sometimes found their female in-laws supportive and not hostile, as Collier's analysis postulates.
CHAPTER 18. GIFT GIVING
GIFT GIVING

Introduction

Patidar women, particularly younger married women, had little involvement in the major decisions made in their household. Indeed, as a result of urban residence, women had an even smaller contribution to make in such matters. Decision making in urban households was very much a case of senior members of the family, men in particular, arriving at outcomes which would be of benefit to the household as a whole. An especially important factor to be considered in arriving at any decision was of the effect on household status. Such decisions were not necessarily beneficial for women. The possibility open to Patidar women, however, for influencing decisions affecting their own lives were by indirect means: the use of informal networks of relatives or friends and a variety of survival strategies. Patidar women, however, also used the same means not just to exert control over their own lives, but also for the advantage of the whole household. These same informal networks, as Papanek (1979) also found, played an important role in Patidar women's status production work. One of the facets of this 'status production work' was gift giving.

Even in rural society, gift giving was an important role largely undertaken by older Patidar women. Eglar (1960) in her research of gift giving in Pakistan found that women there, too, had a central role to perform: men were involved on very few occasions. She contended it was a joint responsibility: men in the family supplied the money and women exercised their skill in 'giving'
correctly. But women were also the focus of gift giving as the 'daughter of the house'. Indeed, Eglar felt that gift giving, called vartan bhanji by her sample, was the means by which the family represented its 'honour' and standing, its izzat. (1) Weddings were the culmination of such gift exchanges.

"The number and quality of the gifts given and received are indicators of the family's knowledge and ability in dealing with people and provide an index of its status, influence and power and of the breadth of its social circle - all of which means 'izzat'." (Eglar 1960 p11)

Anne Betteridge (1985), too, commented on gift giving practices in Iran. She contended there were two forms: impersonal and intimate gifts. 'Impersonal' gift giving was often of items, such as sweets, which could be passed on to another recipient, in turn. The purpose of such gifts was to demonstrate social relationships and status positions. Givers needed to make an appropriate gift; they expected a suitable return. Other gifts were from elders/superiors to juniors/inferiors. (Intimate gifts were only given to close relatives or friends and were intended to be kept.)

As in other societies, gift giving for the Patidar was very much a reflection of status. It, too, was a role largely undertaken by women. As a result of urban lifestyles, younger Patidar women had become more involved in gift giving, particularly those women living separately. Urban women's social circles had broadened and they had more time available for social activities. As U. Sharma (1986) found amongst urban women in Shimla, gift exchanges were an important part of 'status production work' for the household. Had
the Patidar's gift giving practices undergone similar changes as a result of their urban residence? Moreover, what role did urban Patidar women play in such gift giving? Was it still primarily seen as a female role? Indeed, were gift exchanges amongst the Patidar only a means of demonstrating status or did they fulfil other functions?

The Patidar and gift giving

Patidar women were not able to exercise direct control over the major decisions affecting their lives, but they were able, at times, to influence events to their advantage. This was frequently achieved, as the discussion in the previous chapter revealed, as a result of the help and support gained from women's own networks. Women's networks fulfilled a variety of functions, but one very important area of activity was related to gift giving. Gatherings of Patidar women both on informal and formal occasions, such as weddings, were often focussed around gift giving. The necessity of presenting a gift on a generally recognised occasion, frequently gave women a reason for making a social call or arranging a particular ceremony. Because of the segregated nature of Patidar society, much of this gift-giving has to be undertaken by women. Many of the important life-cycle ceremonies which are marked by gift giving were only attended by women. It was their responsibility, therefore, to ensure that the necessary gifts were given.

But Patidar women were expected to perform more than this; they had to record correctly what gifts were given by whom, in order that on subsequent occasions, a gift of equal value was returned. Such
gifts were generally cash, however, they could sometimes be in the form of jewellery or clothes, when a woman would be expected to choose gifts of suitable value. On occasions, such as weddings, women might have to record the receipt of gifts amounting to many thousands of rupees. Any failure to record gifts correctly and consequent failures to reciprocate in proper terms, would cause great conflicts, if not permanent ruptures between the immediate kin of the giver and recipient of the gift.

When new relationships were being established, at the birth of a baby, for example, women have to know how much to give in order not to offend the recipient and to reflect the status of the giver correctly as well. Too small a gift could cause insult; too large a gift could cause embarrassment, because the recipient could not hope to be able to reciprocate in any acceptable manner. The value of such gifts was largely dictated by the closeness of the relationship, as well as its importance, and so gifts ought to reflect these factors. There was considerable criticism of women who failed to fulfil gift giving relationships properly. In some instances, failure to fulfil such obligations was deliberate. It was one of women's most powerful means of expressing disapproval of the behaviour of a particular individual. On occasions, too, women's failure to observe the correct gift giving procedures reflected their dislike of the very severe constraints of gift giving obligations.

For the Patidar, the exchange of gifts performed two separate
functions. One of these functions was to provide a family with sufficient funds to finance an important life-cycle ceremony, particularly marriage. In a caste which, until recently, relied on agriculture as its sole means of support, large sums of cash were not necessarily readily available at all times of the year. Much of their economy rested on barter and exchange of goods. When important family events, such as marriages occurred, it was very difficult for most people to raise the necessary sums of cash to pay expenses such as entertaining and feeding large numbers of guests, and, particularly, to buy all the gifts and pay the sums of money required for dowry. As a result, the custom developed of all kin members paying a certain sum of money to the head of the family responsible for the finances. All these sums were recorded and when other people, in their turn, held the same ceremony, such as a wedding, then these sums of money were returned. (The same process recorded by Eglar (1960) as vartan bhanji.) In such a way, large amounts of cash could be gathered quickly to pay for important social events.

When Vreede de Stuer (1968) discussed her findings amongst upper class Muslim families in northern India, she, too, commented on the similarities in the practice of gift-giving exchanges between such Muslim families and those undertaken by members of Hindu communities. She felt that gift exchanges amongst these communities were undertaken for two purposes: firstly to establish new kinship relationships upon a firmer basis, and, secondly, to provide contributions towards family expenses. Verity Khan (1974) in her work with Muslim women in Pakistan, however, felt that gift
exchanges, *vartan bhanji*, represented more complex processes as well. *Vartan bhanji* literally meant 'dealing in sweets'. Two basic rules governed *vartan bhanji*: an obligation to reciprocate and the maintenance of a disequilibrium in gift exchanges. Such exchange of gifts were not necessarily in the form of cash, it could include, too, the exchange of sweets, fruit, food, money and clothes. Any gift established a relationship between the giver and recipient, in which the recipient was expected to return the gift in favour or in kind to at least the same value, and, preferably, the value of the original gift should be exceeded when it was returned. In her analysis, she followed Mauss (1954) who contended that although such gifts might appear voluntary, they were, in fact, obligatory. They were really a form of loan, with no written contract, which ought to be repaid. Failure to reciprocate fully would represent a tremendous 'loss of face' and could result in the termination of the relationship between the giver and the recipient permanently.

For the Patidar, too, gift giving was not just a means of acquiring sufficient funds to finance important family celebrations. It certainly served the second function of cementing family and kinship relationships through a series of mutual obligations. But there was a very strong element of what Khan typifies as 'disequilibrium'. Such 'gifts', and exchange of services, were used to set up 'patron-client' relationships, and to reinforce the superior-inferior dichotomy of most Patidar interaction. In marriage, for example, the bride's family who gave away the bride were viewed as being 'inferior' to the groom's family, who received
not only the girl, herself, but an extensive range of gifts. Parent-child, husband-wife and brother-sister relationships were all invested with differing degrees of power. In this case, the elders and/or superiors, generally, gave gifts to their inferiors, which placed those such as the child, wife or sister under a permanent obligation to the giver as they were not in a position to reciprocate.

Gift giving, consequently, underpinned much of the hierarchical nature of Patidar society. It was a fundamental part of hypergamous marriages, to be discussed in Chapter 20, particularly in its manifestation as 'dowry'. It did provide what some of the Patidar themselves have called 'a form of social security', that is it acted as a means of providing funds. But it was also a reflection of inequality of relationships, with certain groups and people at a permanent disadvantage to others.

Gift giving amongst the Patidar, therefore, can be placed into two different categories. On one level the exchange of gifts served to cement relationships between two groups: these might be members of the extended family network or those not directly related, but connected in some important way, particularly marriage. Sometimes, the relationship was based on the provision of reciprocal services or it was a link between business contacts. Between such individuals and groups, exchanges were made. One person might give more than the other, but the expectation was there that each would 'reciprocate'. One gift demanded another of equal or greater value at that time, or on a subsequent occasion. Secondly, however, gift
relationships existed between individuals and groups who were permanently at a disadvantage. There was no expectation that a child should reciprocate on an equal basis, a gift from a parent or an older relation. Nor would brother and sister exchange gifts on a reciprocal basis. In such a relationship, a brother might give a sari, chosen by his mother or wife, or, alternatively, money to a sister, who would make a token gift of a rakri, a thread worn around the wrist, for example, or of a meal. The majority of gift giving was in the form of cash. Where gifts such as jewellery or saris were given, the women would be responsible for choosing the purchase.

But, although these two categories of gift giving existed, there were certain ambiguities. An elder might give to his or her junior and not expect any gift to be returned, as in the case of a brother giving to a sister, but, in turn, the recipient would give to the elder's child, establishing a new elder-junior (superior-inferior) relationship. In the process, these gifts would cement the ties between the two families. So the distinction between the two categories of 'gift giving' was not clear cut; there was much blurring of boundaries between the two groups. In order, however, to discuss women's role in gift giving, I shall discuss examples of practice in terms of the predominant 'function' of the gift relationship.
The ability to 'reciprocate' gifts correctly, and to start up new gift relationships, was very frequently the function performed by women. Mistakes would reflect very badly on the status of a family as a whole, but as such reciprocal gift giving was very often associated with life-cycle ceremonies, women, of necessity, had to perform this important role. At ceremonies such as Shrimant, before the birth of a new baby, for example, women formed the majority of those who would attend; the woman's younger brother-in-law participated as did a male relative from her own family, who came to collect her and take her back to her piyar, for the birth. Thus, too, at marriage, it was predominantly women who were able to watch all the ceremonies and only a small number of close male relatives saw any of the ceremonies or participated in any way. Male and female guests were segregated at weddings and men, often, were congregated outside the wedding area. Thus gift giving, on most occasions, including weddings, devolved on to women who, therefore, played a very active role in reinforcing the strength and interdependence of kinship networks through exchanging gifts.

Marriage was one of the principal occasions for gift exchanges. Appendix 3 gives details of the sequence of engagement and wedding ceremonies during which the various forms of gift giving occurred. These exchanges took a complex form with virtually every ceremony marked by some exchange of gifts. The function that each gift performed varied for the recipient according to the ceremony. The various gift exchanges, which started at the engagement ceremony
onwards, fell into the two categories already discussed. During the various ceremonies associated with the engagement and marriage, occurring on different days, the kinship networks of each family gave to the parents of the bride or the groom, depending on their connection with the family. On occasions, relatives gave to the bride and groom as a couple, or individually in addition to other payments.

One reason for giving sums of money was in order to contribute to the marriage expenses. The principal form of gift in this category was the payment of chanalo which was given by all those invited; they were usually related to the parents of one of the couple. This money was given whether anyone attended the wedding or not, even by those living overseas. The expectation was that at subsequent weddings in the donor's own family, this sum would be returned in full or possibly a greater amount would be given on receipt of an invitation to the wedding. On the occasion of Rashmi's wedding, for example, her eldest brother had to take responsibility for all the expenses, because their father was embroiled in a long legal argument overseas to regain his money sequestered by a foreign government. His uncles, the father's brothers, each agreed to give one thousand and one rupees, which was considered to be one of the highest categories of money gifts. (2) They were close relations and prosperous and so it would be felt, by those concerned, that they were able to afford this amount. (Gifts of money appeared to fall into specific categories, such as eleven rupees or fifty-one rupees and they never seemed to be 'round
As a nephew, Bhaskar was not obliged to return the sum at a subsequent wedding; but his father was supposed to do so and had given similar large sums, himself, in the past. The following year, however, Bhaskar arranged a match for another of his sisters, Malika. On this occasion, the two uncles would only give 250 rupees, because they were not totally happy with the groom chosen for Malika. Altogether chanalo raised eight thousand rupees on this occasion, which paid many of the expenses. The wedding dinner for all the guests, for example, was five thousand rupees.

When women were acting as senior representatives of their family, they generally handed over the payment of chanalo to a close female relative of the bride, who sat near her throughout the wedding ceremonies, recording the receipt of gifts. This money would subsequently be handed over to the male member of the family responsible for expenses, usually the bride's father or, in his absence, a brother. Men, too, would pay chanalo if they were able to attend the ceremony: this would usually be collected by a close male relative of the marriage party. (3)

At pithi, one of the other rituals performed as part of the wedding celebrations, the girl was symbolically prepared for the later more important ceremonies of the wedding by her older female relatives, during which they daubed her face with a preparation of tumeric, which acted as a face mask to purify the skin. Each female participant presented the bride herself with a small sum of money, which was hers to keep, if she wished, although she could contribute it to the wedding expenses. Informants felt that this money
generally went to the bride's father.

Whereas the payment of chanalo money, at a wedding, fell into the category of reciprocal gift giving, which was a way of contributing to a fund towards paying off the expenses of the occasion, other gift giving, during wedding ceremonies, performed a different function. It represented the formation of new gift relationships with the couple concerned, involving both male and female relatives. At the end of the wedding ceremonies, for example, before departing, the couple performed page lage; by touching the feet of all close relatives who were senior to them, they showed respect to their elders. In return, they were given a sum of money, retained by the groom, which acknowledged them as potential recipients and donors of gifts in their own right. They would not reciprocate directly to their elders, but would be expected, when necessary, to give to their 'juniors'. Thus reciprocation might not directly flow between two people, but between the older and younger generations of those concerned.

The main gift giving, however, was from the bride's family to the groom's and there was no expectation that this should be reciprocated. This relationship was acknowledged as being permanently unequal, with the predominance of gifts always passing to the groom's side. This is discussed later in this chapter.

Birth offered another occasion for female involvement in reciprocal gift giving. At around the seventh month of a woman's
first pregnancy, Shrimant or Koroberi was held at the woman's sasera; all her female in-laws attended the ceremony which was to pray for the safe delivery, preferably of a son. They all presented her with a sum of money and her mother-in-law usually gave a piece of gold jewellery. However, when her own male relatives came to collect her, after the ceremony, to take her back to her piyar, they were expected to give money to the girl's female in-laws in return. Such gift giving strengthened the ties between the two families, soon to be reinforced by the birth of a child. Raksha in Bakrol, however, had to pay all the expenses, for her own Shrimant because her sasu refused to do so, thus underlining the complete rift which had grown between the younger woman and her in-laws. (4)

When the new baby's grandparents first saw their new grandchild, possibly calling on the daughter-in-law and child whilst she was still at her piyar, then they gave the child a gift. But the girl's parents had to return twice as much, reflecting their 'inferior' status in relation to their son-in-law's family. In Meeta's family, her widowed mother invited Meeta's sasu and sisters-in-law to their original village home, for an exchange of gifts, even though Meeta's mother and all the other women concerned now lived in the same area of Anand. Like Shrimant, this event was only for women. All the female in-laws gave jewellery or sums of money to the child; Indira gave fifty-one rupees, as it was her brother's first child. (5) However, Meeta's mother, as the senior member of Meeta's family present, gave all those attending an equal or greater sum of money in exchange: fifty-one rupees to all the women and eleven rupees to their children, plus a cooking vessel. (These
were frequently exchanged to mark major life-cycle ceremonies and were engraved with the donor's name). Even the servant received a gift of a sari. Meeta's jethani, Pratima had a baby at the same time. But Pratima's mother did not 'call' all the female in-laws to visit the new child. Although this was her third child, it was her first son, so it was a cause of great criticism that the ceremony had not taken place so that customary gifts could be exchanged. The correct procedure of Meeta's mother served to underline the failing of Pratima's mother: both women stood in the same 'inferior' position as mothers of the 'bride' towards the same set of in-laws.

The payment of sums of money at such ceremonies would, as far as I am aware, come from the household budget. At Meeta's ceremony, the women were either married to Meeta's husband's brother, or they were Meeta's husband's sisters. They were all relatives of her husband and, therefore, had to receive more than they gave. One woman, Indira, was a teacher, separated from her husband, and handled her own sums of money. Other women, such as Lata, used her own household money for such sums or asked her husband. Other younger women might not have access to money and would need to receive sums from their husband or in-laws. Again, it depended on individual circumstances, the amounts of money concerned, and the nature of the gift giving ceremony, whether women kept these sums of money or put them towards family expenses. (6)

Within the kinship networks, there was usually a precedent to follow when called upon to present a gift. For example, one gave a
sum similar to that given at the birth of one's own child; moreover, the closer the relationship, the greater the sum given. However, the expansion of social networks in the towns, which transcended purely kinship links to those perhaps based on business contacts, presented considerable dilemmas for the women concerned. These new social contacts might not even be the same caste, never mind the same ekada and, consequently, there were no immediate precedents to dictate the size and shape of the gift. Sharda's husband consulted Lata's husband about business matters; on her first contact with Sharda and her new baby, Lata did not think about giving anything. But on further consideration, she felt she ought to have presented the child with a gift in order to cement the patron-client relationship, her husband had with the baby's father. She, therefore, later sent a small sum of money, five rupees, to the child. On the other hand, when her doctor's wife had a baby, she felt she should send an expensive gift, because her family received free treatment from the doctor himself. She felt she could have given fifty-one rupees as a gift, but preferred to choose jewellery for the child which, given the increase in the price of jewellery, worked out more expensive. In both these instances, she was acting as an extension of her husband in his patron-client relationships and had carefully to gauge the importance of these relationships in order that her gifts were of a suitable value. On subsequent occasions, the two families concerned would feel obliged to offer either gifts or further services. Although all the parties in these transaction were members of the Patidar caste, they were not part of kinship networks which had generally been associated with gift giving relationships. Indeed, Lata, in these two instances, was
performing 'status production work' in order to establish her husband's position more firmly with the two business contacts concerned.

Another form of reciprocal gift giving occurred at the birth of a child. But this was one of the few occasions when gifts were given directly by men. (Although men generally paid for gifts, it was more common for women to actually present them, partly, if not mainly, because of the segregated nature of social interaction.) The new baby's father would present his relatives and close friends with a gift; frequently this took the form of sweetmeats, but, sometimes, it would be a more substantial gift, such as a bangle. More expensive gifts were always given to mark the birth of a son. Reciprocation occurred later, as in many instances of reciprocal gift-giving, when the recipients of gifts, on a future occasion, themselves, marked the birth of a child in their own family by presenting sweetmeats or a small gift, in turn.

**Reciprocal gift giving and overseas networks**

Reciprocal gift giving had developed as a means of financing important ceremonial occasions for the Patidar, when they needed to raise large sums of money. It acted as a form of loan to be returned in full at a later date. It had survived the migration of Patels to towns and countries far afield. Patidar who lived overseas were unable to attend these ceremonies and present gifts. However, when representatives of the family did return to Charottar
on a visit, they had to present and receive all gifts from the occasions at which they were absent. Thus when Suvas and Ruma returned to Gada, their piyar, from England and America, respectively, they received all the sums of money and cooking vessels, which they would have received, if they had been able to attend the relevant ceremonies, particularly those associated with bereavement, discussed later in the chapter. Suvas spoke of shelves of cooking vessels, diligently kept by their elderly mother, which they had no intention of taking overseas.

The majority of gifts, however, were presented personally. Where these small gifts were concerned, it appeared to be the practice to wait until the sums could be exchanged in person. If families had not met for a number of years, a sum of money would still be given, for example, to mark the birth of a new baby, now possibly several years old. Moreover, gifts of money always had to pass between older and younger generations, as they would each year at Divali, the new year, which will be considered in the next section. Sums of money were generally given to mark these first meetings by the senior persons to their juniors, which underlined the relationship of deference between elders and their 'inferiors', just as at the time of Divali. Eglar (1960) commented on such payments in Pakistan, munh vekhan, literally 'to see the face', given when the persons concerned actually met. (7) The sums involved were generally very small, often under five rupees. Great stress, however, was placed on giving these gifts: Nayana, for example, who had given birth to her second son several years previously, tried very hard not to accept these sums of money, which
were worth relatively very little to her as she lived in England. However, on each occasion she refused, her relatives persisted until she was virtually forced to take the gift, thus continuing the gift relationship between the two families involved.

But a more recent development was the actual presentation of gifts not associated with life-cycle ceremonies, or the lifelong responsibility of the bride's family to clothe her and her children. Such families felt obliged to send gifts as well because of their assumed 'affluent' status of dwellers in Western countries. Such gifts were not part of prescribed patterns and were, at times, the subject of considerable acrimony. Manju from Karamsad, for example, received a set of nylon sheets from her husband's relatives in London. She wanted to impress her new relatives by sending a gift of greater value than the one she had received, but not knowing English prices, found this difficult to gauge. Expensive gifts, not available in India, were often requested from relatives abroad. However, relatives living abroad, on their visits to India, expected hospitality in return. All Lata's family lived abroad and consequently, she received visitors virtually every year. As they were also related to her husband through a marriage to his kaka, not only did she provide accommodation and food, but her family often expected to be transported on excursions around India, taking up both time and money. (It was debatable whether the same services would have been performed for Lata's family if they had not also been linked with her husband through his uncle.) Manju and her husband, similarly, had to entertain his relatives and take them on
a tour of India, spending all their savings in the process. However, they could not be seen to fail in their gift giving relationship and not provide suitable 'hospitality'.

Panna and her husband had got into debt in order to reciprocate gifts given by relatives on trips from England, who could afford to give more than they could, because of the higher standard of living in England. They had had to sell Panna's gold jewellery in order to be able to maintain their social standing by reciprocating correctly, even with their own kinship network in Charottar. If they failed to do so, they would no longer be invited to people's homes. Gift giving served to cement kinship and social networks, but failure to fulfil obligations, built up over a series of gift giving exchanges, could ultimately lead to being dropped from these circles.

Lila, on her return from a visit to her family in London, failed to mark her visit with all the expected gifts. She did not bring sweets for all her in-law's children in Anand, nor did she bring back gifts from other members of the family in London, as requested. This in itself brought considerable criticism, but she compounded her error by failing to visit her husband's 'cousin' brother's new baby on her return. She only escaped greater sanctions because she lived separately with her husband, with whom she had made a 'love marriage' and whom supported her in the face of censure.

Gift giving was, thus, a carefully considered transaction only
to be ignored at the risk of displeasure and criticism, if not worse sanctions. Women were particularly important in its performance. As Papanek (1979) has argued, the ability to reciprocate gifts correctly was an important aspect of the 'politics of status maintenance.' Thus Panna and her husband, mentioned above, strove to return the gifts on all the required occasions, such as weddings, in order to remain part of gift giving relationships. Failure to reciprocate would have broken this 'relationship' between families and led to their exclusion from such exchanges: hence, their family's status would have declined dramatically as a result of not being able to maintain their gift giving obligations, as in the vartan bhanji relationship discussed by Eglar (1960). Patidar women were the persons responsible for ensuring that such obligations were remembered and reciprocated adequately: they acted as the representatives of their household, in this respect.

Hospitality: women's reciprocity

One area of reciprocation which was particularly Patidar women's preserve was that of hospitality. For many gift giving exchanges, they were the vehicle through whom monetary sums were transmitted between one household and another. But the process of entertaining guests with a pleasing array of foods and refreshments was an area totally in the women's sphere. Even in their everyday cooking, urban women spent much more time in preparing meals and ensuring a balanced diet. It was one of the skills, urban women felt was really valued in a wife. It certainly was a prerequisite for entertaining guests. These might be female relatives or female
friends, who were thus refreshed on social calls, when much information was gleaned through gossip, which was often advantageous to the household as a whole: news of relevance to a husband's business interests, or prospective marriage partners for some member of the extended family. (8) But for urban Patidar women, some of this entertaining was also of their husband's circles, possibly of business colleagues.

Even when men were the initiators of invitations, they were entirely dependent on their wives to provide a sufficiently high standard of hospitality, yet it was particularly important for establishing new relationships and cementing old ones. New relationships such as those which occurred at marriage were always marked by inviting the people concerned, in this case the young couple, to a meal. Women would generally initiate this particular transaction on behalf of the household, as it was custom to do so. But on other occasions, men would frequently invite guests without consulting their wives. Relatives and friends from outside the area or from abroad were generally invited to partake of food. So, too, important festivals, such as Divali, the new year, were marked by the entertainment of guests with specially prepared foods. At Divali, visits were made to all members of the family senior to oneself, as well as friends, and each guest was expected to take some food or drink. Not to do so was something of a slight. Women were, therefore, appreciated for their ability to prepare certain foods and to entertain well. In fact, they made a point of remembering the partialities of former guests, so they could
particularly please them with a dish they had enjoyed. In entertaining, therefore, Patidar women were very active in 'the politics of status maintenance', by reciprocating previous occasions when they had received hospitality. It was essential that the food and drinks provided reflected the status of the household.

It was important, too, not only in the villages, but the towns as well, for women to be able to entertain the business colleagues of their husbands. There were few, if any, restaurants in the immediate locality where such business contacts could be entertained. Moreover, urban businessmen encountered other business colleagues from outside their own caste and even from a different area of India. Ties of kinship, therefore, would not bind these people together in business transactions. The links had to be cemented through patron-client relationships based on mutual obligations and gift giving, of which generous hospitality was a part. Women, in this context, were undertaking a very important function for their husbands. Papanek (1979) felt that the task of entertaining business colleagues was an important aspect of 'status production work'. It was part of the 'support work' provided for men in employment to be able to impress their colleagues with the status of the household. Janet Finch (1983), too, felt that such entertainment was one of the peripheral activities which wives of businessmen performed to enable their husbands to sustain their status at work and fulfil their obligations effectively. Such women, Finch, argued had become 'incorporated' into their husband's work roles; without their contribution the husband would be unable to fulfil all their employer's expectations. For the Patidar, this
form of hospitality, entertaining business colleagues, was not necessarily reciprocated; it could well form part of a patron-client relationship, where the 'patron' would not expect to be entertained. On some occasions, the form of hospitality women were able to offer were attempts to impress on the recipients the status differentials in their husband's patron-client relationships.

**GIFT GIVING AND STATUS DIFFERENTIALS**

As with varying forms of hospitality, gift giving was also part of a process of marking status differentials. Many gifts were not reciprocated in Patidar society. There were two forms of 'disequilibrium'; one in which gifts flowed from persons in a 'superior' position in the hierarchy to their 'inferiors' or 'juniors', such as brother-sister gift giving, and a second form in which gifts were given by an 'inferior' group to their 'superiors', as in marriage. The superior-inferior dichotomy was often seen in patron-client relationships; however, unlike some groups of women, such as those described by Maher (1976) in Morocco, Patidar women did not develop such networks. Any patron-client relationship in which they were involved, was on their husband's behalf. Although gifts in these unequal relationships were rarely reciprocated, and certainly not in full, they still performed the function of integrating kinship, social and business networks through creating dependencies. Social relationships in Patidar society were based on status and rank, and much of their gift giving practices reflected these status differentials.
In gift giving, as in marriage, Patidar women were at a disadvantage. They did not often have access to funds, to be in the position to 'donate' gifts. Frequently, the gifts they did make were on behalf of the household and were financed by their husband or in-laws. In terms of gift relationships, they were often the recipients, because they had less power in the hierarchy and gifts were perceived as going from 'superiors' to 'inferiors'. Gift giving was often seen as an obligation towards 'sisters and daughters' of the family, in the broadest interpretation of those relationships. Eglar (1960) pointed out how all women were defined as 'daughters of the house' so they could be receivers of gifts. In this context, therefore, women might become 'demonstrators of status' in that a brother would strive to give his sister a more than adequate gift as one means of reflecting his own prosperity. Similarly, with the flow of gifts from the bride's family to that of the groom, the woman's parents were endeavouring to reflect on their own financial prosperity and ability to give, which will be explored further in the next chapter.

**Senior-junior gift giving**

Each new year, Divali, was marked by a show of respect to all one's elders, called page lage. Women started that day by symbolically touching the feet of their husband, as the most important 'superior' person in their immediate network. A small gift of money was given by the husband to his wife in return. Children, too, touched the feet of their parents and were given a small gift. The day progressed with a series of visits in which respect was shown to one's elders, who in turn gave a small sum of
money, such as five rupees. As discussed above, page lage was performed during wedding ceremonies to symbolise the start of a new senior-junior relationship in the family. It can also be performed during other important ceremonies. Gifts in these encounters were always given by the elders to their junior in relationship, even to the extent of older sisters giving gifts to their younger brothers and sisters, but not expecting a gift in return. Lila from Anand, had saved money out of her housekeeping account in order to buy gifts for her younger siblings when she went to visit them in London. (9) She wanted to use her own money because she would have felt very constrained in what she could buy, if she had had to ask for money from the joint family budget. Sudha, too, from Bakrol, was planning to give a present to her younger sister, recently married. She still felt aggrieved that her husband's 'cousin brother' had failed to give her a present at the time of their marriage, ten years previously.

Most new relationships were usually marked with a gift: when a girl was married and first entered her new home, her sasera, she was given a piece of gold by her sasu, a new 'senior' relation, at a ceremony of 'showing her face', modun joyana, for the first time to her new relatives. The newly-married couple, too, were given small sums of money on their visits to the home of their 'senior' relatives. (Such relatives were not necessarily older, but were from the same generation as the couple's parents, or were married to older relatives of one of the couple.)
In the ceremonies following death, gifts of money were also given away, to those of the same generation or younger, which were said to be in remembrance of the dead person. These gifts were also thought by some to gain purification from sins. As property always passed to the male heirs, money was said to be given to females as a token of compensation. Whether the deceased was male or female, these gifts of money were given to 'sisters' and 'daughters' of the family and their menfolk. In fact, at one ceremony in Bakrol, a daughter of the deceased man received fifty-one rupees, whereas her husband received one hundred and one rupees. Husbands were compensated to a greater extent than their wives even though the kinship link was through the female line. Women sometimes gave such gifts before their death in order to ensure that the amount they wanted to give to each person was observed.

These gift giving relationships were seen as customary and were in addition to any sums possibly bequeathed at death. Moreover, they were not part of the deceased man's 'estate', nor, apparently, the responsibility of the husband's side of the family, even on the death of his wife. These sums of money appeared to come from the female's side of the family and were yet another aspect of the lifelong gift giving responsibility of a woman's parents and then her brother towards the married woman's family. If a married woman died, therefore, her brother, or his representative, gave sums of money to the females on her husband's side of the family. But the brother would also have to give sums of money to the same female in-laws of his sister, on the death of his sister's husband, too. So, when Indira's grandfather, her father's father, died, money was
given to all the females in his family by his wife's, Indira's grandmother's, brother. But when this grandmother dies, these same females, related to her deceased husband, would also receive money again. Lata confirmed that on the death of her father-in-law, her family paid one thousand and one rupees to his family, on behalf of her sister who is married to the deceased man's brother, and herself.

**Brother-sister gifts**

In the instances of gift giving from elder members of the family to their juniors, women and men had a fairly equal involvement. However, in the brother-sister relationship, brothers, after the death of a woman's father, did, indeed, have a lifelong responsibility, to give to their sisters, and to the family of their sister's husband, on a number of clearly delineated occasions, such as bereavement ceremonies. This applied whether a brother was older or younger than the sister. Each year, at the festival of Rakshabandan, a sister symbolically ties a thread, a rakri, around her brother's wrist as a reminder of the bond between them and his responsibility towards her. She prays that he will have a long life, because after the death of her parents, a woman becomes totally dependent on her brother for aid and protection, if any problems occur in her life, particularly with her marital family. A brother gives a sister a gift in return for the rakri. Sometimes, this is money. Indira in Anand received twenty-five rupees from two of her brothers, and the other two, who were much younger, gave her
eleven rupees each. All her brothers, however, were younger than herself. Manju, in Karamsad, as the only sister, used to receive three hundred rupees from her brother until her marriage. Afterwards, she sent the rakri by post to her brother in northern Gujarat, and received fifty-one rupees in return. One year, she received a set of stainless steel eating vessels from this brother. Lata in Anand sent her rakri to England; her brothers sent her saris whenever anyone from England visited her in Gujarat.

This lifelong responsibility of a girl’s family passed from her father, on his death, to her brothers. Her father, in his lifetime, and then her brothers, were expected to provide a woman and her children with clothes throughout her life. They often took on additional expenses, such as school fees. Even on the death of her husband, it was the widow’s own family who provided her with a new sari at the end of the bereavement ceremonies, to mark her new status. At marriage, the bride’s in-laws received dowry, composed of money, cooking vessels and furniture from her family; the bride, herself, arrived with a complete wardrobe of new clothes and a quantity of gold jewellery. But gifts, such as these, far from cease after the wedding. On the birth of her first child, she returned to her sasera with her gyanun, which was composed of all the essentials to care for the new baby: clothes, vessels and possibly a cradle. Also included were more gifts of jewellery for the woman and the baby as well as large quantities of a variety of sweetmeats; Madhu declared that in her family five and a half kilogrammes of sweetmeats would be taken back to her sister’s sasera. Indeed, during the first year of marriage, a woman was
usually given large quantities of sweetmeats by her own family to take to her in-laws at the time of major festivals, such as Diwali and Holi. If these gifts were not made, then their equivalent in cash ought to be given.

Meena from VN, however, pointed out that whilst she was working, she received no clothes from her family, as she was in a position to buy her own. Neeta from Gada, who had married her husband after the death of his first wife, received no clothes or gifts: her family were very poor and on the death of her father, she had no brother who could even attempt to take on such responsibilities. (10) Indeed, the absence of a brother in a family made it much more difficult for a woman to find a husband. In Neeta's case, therefore, her family had been willing to arrange her marriage to a much older, and wealthier, widower, because any better match would have been difficult to find. Chandrika, from Ajarpura, had no brothers and even the fact that she had a number of 'cousin brothers' living in the same household, who were willing to take over the full gift giving responsibilities of a brother, was not considered sufficient guarantee that she would continue to receive all these important gifts throughout her life. It has to be remembered that a brother's sons may have to take over these responsibilities, after the death of the brother, and in the case of a 'cousin brother', the actual relationship would no longer be very close. Hence, they might not be willing to take on the burden of these gift giving obligations. So the families of any potential spouse were worried that no-one would keep up their gift giving
obligations towards them: which was a very important inferior-superior relationship.

During the marriage ceremonies, in fact, a brother's future responsibilities were marked by several rituals. Before the main ceremony at the bride's home, sisters perform an act of puja with their brother, the prospective bridegroom at their parents' home. The brother cannot then return to his home until all the marriage ceremonies are completed, much later in the same day. He gives his sisters a gift of money before he departs; in Madhu's case, in Baroda, this was one hundred and one rupees to each of his four sisters. Again, after the main ceremonies in which the bride and groom are united, his sisters stop the car, (traditionally the horse and carriage) and will not allow it to move until, again, he has given them a sum of money. In Madhu's case, this was a further sum of one hundred and one rupees each. Such rituals serve to emphasise a brother's responsibilities for his sisters, even though he has taken a bride himself. Even when a woman's own daughter married, it was the woman's brother, the girl's mama, who provided some of the clothes worn during the wedding ceremony.

Sisters were not in a position to reciprocate in material terms: they respond through prayer and through a special meal prepared for their brother at the feast of bhai bij. Sisters could only remain in a dependent position as regards their brothers. They needed to be on good terms after marriage because their brother remains in the parental home and it depended on his goodwill whether they could return and stay, whether for short visits or in the case
of bereavement or possible marital problems, it could be for the remainder of their lives. They also depended on this relationship to clothe and provide, to a certain extent, for themselves and their children.

Flow of gifts at marriage: from 'wife-givers' to the groom's family

This responsibility which brothers have towards their sisters was a part of the wider responsibility of a girl's natal family towards her up until her death. At the time of marriage, this is particularly manifested in the flow of gifts from her family to that of the groom. A Patidar girl is married to someone of the same standing or from a higher-status family, but her family is always considered to be inferior. Consequently, her family is expected to give a variety of gifts, the most substantial of which are the dowry payments, to be considered in Chapter 20. The first transaction at the outset of an arranged marriage is aple when the engagement is made: the future groom's father gives the future bride a sum of money. The girl's father, in return, gives twice as much money back to each of the groom's relatives present, anything from twenty to two hundred people. So the new relationship between the two families is sealed with the bride's family already in an inferior position. At chanalo-matli, two separate ceremonies frequently combined, the marriage negotiations are finalised and often up to half the paithan, money payments for the dowry, is given. The engagement cannot be broken off, at this stage, without great disgrace, as this ceremony is considered binding: the future married
couple perform page lage touching their elder's feet as a mark of respect, to reflect the start of their new status in the two families concerned. They are given a money gift in return.

During the actual marriage ceremonies, themselves, there is an unequal flow of gifts from the bride's side to the groom's, apart from the more general gift-giving already discussed. During the ceremony, mangelfera, to the goddess of fire, Agni, which marks the marriage vows, the young couple circle a sacred fire four times. The bride's male relatives give the groom a present each time he circles the fire; these have been pre-arranged with the groom who may make demands for very expensive gifts such as a scooter. One of the more frequent gifts is a gold watch, or an electric fan, or perhaps a ring for the groom. But the bride's relatives have little choice but to try and comply with the groom's wishes. Later, it is the turn of the bride's female relatives to give their good wishes to the young couple during, Sobhagranti. They whisper into the bride's ear their hope that the new husband will have a long life and they each give the groom a sum of money. He returns their gift by presenting them each with a cooking vessel and a coconut.

After the wedding ceremonies are over, the bride goes to her new family, taking with her further gifts which make up more of her dowry. This is called the 'first coming, pahelun anun,' in the past, the girl then returned to her parents for a considerable time before finally taking up permanent residence with her husband and in-laws. She returned a second time, bijun anun with the remainder of her dowry. Now, the bride usually returns to her parent's home
very briefly, before going back finally to her sasera. After the wedding, too, the groom's parents call on the bride's parents at a future date, when they receive a gift. This should represent the end of gift-giving associated with the immediate wedding; however, gift-giving in various other forms continues throughout the bride's married life, such as the birth of the first child.

Summary

Women were most actively involved in reciprocal gift giving, particularly when this took place in segregated social groups, whether on a formal or informal basis. On such occasions, women acted as representatives of the household and had to display skills in remembering to reciprocate on the correct occasions and to gauge the amounts concerned in an adequate way to reflect the status of both the donor and the recipient. In fact, the hospitality displayed by women was one of the few ways in which they could participate in 'gift exchanges' and even establish their 'superior' status by the nature of the meal or food provided. Very good quality food in abundance reflected on the woman's own skills and her ability to provide such fare showed not just ample finances, but also good management.

But because of the nature of women's position in Patidar society, they had a less active involvement in other forms of gift giving, which reflected the difference in status between donor and recipient, such as those characterised by gifts from people in a
senior position to their juniors. On such a basis, they were likely to be either the recipient of the gift, as in a brother-sister relationship, or they were the reason for the flow of gifts, as in the case of marriage.

In this process, Patidar women were demonstrators of status as the recipients of gifts or as symbols of the flow of gifts from interior gift giver to recipient. This form of gift giving performed the function of underlining status differentials and, as such, it reflected the hierarchical patriarchal nature of Patidar society. Quite often the gift, itself, to a woman enabled the donor to manifest his economic standing in a society which until recently had few outlets for such display. Moreover, it was one of the means of reinforcing one of the core values of Patidar society: the status of the household and extended family in the community.

Generally, only when women were acting as an extension of their husband's patron-client relationship, did they participate more actively in the actual presentation of gifts. Gift giving in Patidar society, therefore, opened up an important role for women as the means by which different kin groups, and more recently, business and professional interests, developed stronger links. However, it also reflected women's dependent relationship on men and their inability to act as independent agents in gift giving relationships. Urban Patidar women were, however, acting as representatives of the household in both maintaining and creating status through these gifts giving activities.
In this chapter, it has been shown how gift giving has assumed an added proportion in urban areas. Women at a younger age have been involved not just in the 'politics of status maintenance', but in actively creating the household status in new social groupings. The function of gift giving was transcending the cementing of ties and alliances between caste based kinship groups in order to form such networks of people from a similar socio-economic class, which would further business and professional interests.
1. Eglar (1960 explained vartan bhanji as 'a mechanism of gift exchange widely practiced in the Punjab. The term means an exchange of gifts and also refers to gifts so exchanged, likewise it denotes the relationship between people established through this exchange.' (p105)

2. This wedding had taken place nearly ten years before the research, so it was difficult to place a meaningful value of the sums of money concerned. Caplan (1985), for example, stated that in a household in 1974-5, several years after the wedding in question, a monthly income of one thousand rupees would place a household in the top one per cent of the population.

3. It was possible that practices varied from one kutumb to another. Meena, for example, claimed that chanalo payments were always collected by male relatives of the bride, sat at a specific table at the entrance to the ceremonies, where men gathered. But certainly, at some weddings I attended, women collected and recorded chanalo.

4. A priest would conduct the ceremony of Shrimant and he had to be paid for his services and all the items he provided, which were necessary for the ritual.

5. Such sums as 51 rupees seemed to be 'auspicious'.

6. I did not establish what was the precise source of all these gift payments, whether families kept a separate budget for such contingencies. In many agricultural households, no woman would have access to sums of money as the domestic sphere was largely self-reliant.

7. The Patidar had a similar term modun joyanun, used when the bride first arrives at her sasera and they 'see her face' for the first time. In the past, she would have been veiled.

8. Mendelson (1985 in Prior) spoke of a similar process in seventeenth century England, when upper class Stuart women's main leisure activity was social visiting. They took great pride in entertaining because not only could they reciprocate other's hospitality, but it was an opportunity for conspicuous display.
9. I was unable to obtain systematic information on the prevalence of housekeeping accounts, because of the sensitive nature of discussion of financial matters. It was possible that Lila was particularly fortunate in the amount she received as she had a close relationship with her husband, as a result of their love marriage. Not all women would be able to save from any housekeeping money they received, but might have to return any excess to the general fund.

10. Because of these handicaps, a poor family and no brother, Neeta had only been able to contract a match as a second wife: normally, families were reluctant to make such arrangements.
SECTION 7: WOMEN, STATUS AND MARRIAGE
CHAPTER 19. WOMEN AND THE STATUS ARENA: STATUS PRODUCTION AND LEISURE
Introduction

As an agricultural caste, the Patidar have always possessed a very strict demarcation of different status groupings: the ekada or gol. Even within these groupings, finer gradations of status and ranking were evident, between not just individual villages in each ekada, but also between extended family networks, the khadaki and the kutumb. In rural society, however, there were few means available to mark these differences in status, but one of the most important markers were Patidar women, themselves. One of the primary means was to withdraw women from the labour force, on the farm, and 'seclude' women in the household. By such a practice, the Patidar were able to mark their enhanced standing and upward social mobility. They observed other criteria of 'Sanskritisation', too, such as the prohibition of widow remarriage, the strict observance of religious ceremonies and the practice of ritual purity. However, the observance of purdah was especially important as it ensured that Patidar women were married in a manner best suited to further the family's interests.

In the Patidar community, marriage has always provided the most important opportunity for the manifestation of status. Writing of the Patidar back in 1957, Pocock claimed:

"In Gujarat certainly wealth and power are important, but there it is wealth and power for the purpose of standing in a particular system where, in a sense, it is status that makes life worth living." (1957(a) p.305)

The confines of the caste system made individual social mobility
very difficult; the Patidar, thirty years later, were still concerned about their status within their own caste and within their own ekada, or marriage circle. Hypergamous marriages have always provided the Patidar with a means of improving their own position within the ekada by marrying daughters into higher status families. This process has been accompanied by the 'gift' of a large dowry. In urban areas, as women have become increasingly 'demonstrators of status', the whole importance of the wedding as a 'status arena' has been emphasised. Moreover, the gifts of money and goods, as dowry, have assumed much greater proportions, as women have become more 'inactive' economically in the household. Women frequently appear very much as pawns in a very lucrative marriage market. Their role is to represent the family status in their bearing, appearance and behaviour.

In previous chapters, it has been shown that the position of urban women was still very much determined by the patriarchal nature of the joint family. Their position was influenced by purdah, albeit in a more modified, often 'internalised' form. Moreover, women still had little access to any control over financial resources. Indeed, their position within the household had deteriorated in terms of their access to power, compared to Patidar women in agricultural households, who had control over the domestic sphere.

It is essential, however, to establish very clearly what is under discussion when considering Patidar women and status. The term 'status' can be equated with power: in such a sense, as Sharma (1980) has shown in a different context, women generally had low
'ideological' status and little control over the major sources of power, such as land, labour and capital. They could, however, exert considerable power in the domestic sphere in those societies where the two sexes were segregated. For Patidar women, with the decline of their agricultural domestic sphere, their areas of power have diminished. But no Patidar woman would consider that her 'status' had diminished because she was married to a professional or business man in the large villages, or particularly the towns, rather than an agriculturalist. Women sought to marry their daughters into urban or professional families because they felt it would improve their lifestyle as well as enhancing their status. But this status was ascribed; these women were reflecting the status of their husband and his family. As they identified with their husband's family, after marriage, and perceived themselves as one of a unit, they accepted this 'ascribed' status as an essential part of themselves. They, certainly, felt only superiority towards women working hard on their own tasks in farming families, even though, these women could exercise greater power over certain areas of their lives, in the domestic sphere.

Miriam Sharma (1985) found with the upper caste rural Bhumihar women in her research, that they were prepared to accept the decline of their influence in family matters because they were accorded high status in the wider caste community, as a result of their seclusion in the home. In a similar manner, urban Patidar women preferred a situation in which they were held in high esteem within their own caste community and the wider society because of their 'ascribed'
status as members of a prosperous household. Urban Patidar women could command much respect and esteem in their dealings in the community by acting as representatives of their husband and his kutumb. Even though they achieved such status at the expense of the diminution of their control over their own domestic sphere, the benefits more than compensated most urban Patidar women for what Miriam Sharma (1985) described as their 'low gender status' within their own household.

Despite these constraints on women's power within the household, there were compensations. Some of urban Patidar women's roles had undergone considerable expansion, whereas others had become much more specialised. The direction of these changes, however, was not under their control. The Patidar family, even in urban areas, still functioned as a joint entity, whether or not family members were resident in the same household. Urban Patidar women were still regarded as 'demonstrators' of their family's status. Their role was very much determined by the senior members of the family; indeed, with regard to decisions on major issues affecting women, these senior members played a greater role than in rural areas. This appeared to be a result of the changing, more enhanced public roles in which women were involved in urban areas as 'demonstrators' of the household's status.

Women in the 'status arena'.

Most of these more expanded roles in which urban Patidar women were involved were often defined as 'leisure' activities, to be
performed in women's 'free time'. Green, Hebron and Woodward (1987) contended that 'leisure' was an integral part of social relations, defined, as in the case of Patidar women, by a patriarchal family structure. Consequently, when it was to the household's advantage to seclude women in the home, then women's leisure activities were restricted to the same arena. But urban Patidar women were no longer serving the interests of the household by remaining so secluded. Indeed, as Sharma (1986) found, they could only perform 'household service work' by being able to mix with a wider circle of people and to interact in a more public manner, in the 'status arena'.

In some respects, the life-styles of urban Patidar women had followed a pattern of development similar to that found in bourgeois societies in nineteenth century Europe. Sachs (1978) described how in middle-class families in Britain:

"by the mid nineteenth century the idleness of the wife was the most sensitive indicator of social standing, because she became the means whereby the income of the husband was translated into symbols of respectability." (p33)

Some Patidar men commented on the 'idleness' of women in their household: 'eating and sleeping'. Hard work, according to Sachs was performed by lower status women and such middle-class women were expected to be 'decorous and decorative'. In such circumstances, through 'idleness', women as 'demonstrators of status' reflected a family's wealth and its ability to support economically inactive members. Away from the competitive thrust of working life, women were enabled to retain their 'femininity', as Sachs (1978) remarked about nineteenth-century British women, too. Moreover, urban women,
with their additional free time, could concentrate much more on their appearance. Even the way they dressed when they appeared in public symbolised the very wealth and standing of the family.

Although, urban Patidar women were expected to dress in accordance with the status of their family, more was expected of them. In a caste based society, where status was 'ascribed' by birth, women's appearance and demeanour were a sufficient 'demonstrator of status'. But in an urban society, where households needed to impress their upward mobility on a wider audience, Patidar women were expected to take a more active part in producing this status, or even, as Sharma (1986) found in Shimla, creating it.

Caplan (1978 and 1985) found similar developments taking place amongst upper middle class women in Madras, who spent some of their leisure time in participating in social organisations which provided them with a 'status arena' in which to manifest their ample leisure time and learn about new social skills with which to enhance their standing. These included skills such as handicrafts and cooking with which to improve their home life and also participating in a certain amount of social welfare work amongst the 'deserving poor'. Unlike these women in Madras, Patidar women did not participate, to any extent in such organisations. Most of their expanded activities were concentrated around their informal networks, social calls, cinema visits, shopping and certain religious festivals.
PURPOSE OF CALLS

Urban Patidar women's 'leisure' activities had taken on new dimensions and in order to understand the direction of change, I shall look, firstly, at the purpose they gave for their social calls. Using data from Survey B on social interaction, I intend to take a microcosmic view of women's leisure patterns over a five day period in their lives. (1) In order to qualify this picture, I shall also take a more general perspective of leisure throughout the fieldwork period in order to establish how recent developments have served to increase women's role as 'demonstrators of status' through their activities outside the home.

Over the five day period surveyed, women reported a considerable variety of social activities extending beyond purely social calls for conversational purposes: see Table 19.1. But urban women made twice as many visits as rural women during the five day period. Moreover, the picture presented by urban women was far more varied than that which emerged for rural women. Well over a third of activities in both groups did fall under the heading of purely social calls, which were obviously the most common means of filling leisure time. Women's networks, therefore, occupied a very central function in both urban and rural areas in enabling women to find some social relaxation. But other important categories were evident, in both groups.
Table 19.1: Purpose of visits over a 5-day survey period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of Visits</th>
<th>Villages (36 women)</th>
<th>Town (36 women)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duty calls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical/work related</td>
<td>17 (12%)</td>
<td>16 (6%)</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious visit</td>
<td>8 (6%)</td>
<td>15 (6%)</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit to a sick person</td>
<td>13 (9%)</td>
<td>11 (4%)</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescribed visit</td>
<td>19 (14%)</td>
<td>25 (10%)</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diwali</td>
<td>11 (8%)</td>
<td>26 (10%)</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Calls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piyar</td>
<td>4 (3%)</td>
<td>1 (-)</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>53 (39%)</td>
<td>92 (35%)</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinema</td>
<td>8 (6%)</td>
<td>12 (5%)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gatherings</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>32 (12%)</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14 (5%)</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3 (2%)</td>
<td>18 (7%)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of visits made</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Duty calls

Quite a considerable amount of interaction was perceived as being 'duty calls' by both urban and rural women. They were either on ceremonial occasions which could not be ignored, or they represented calls to give practical assistance or made under a sense of obligation. A far greater proportion of rural women's interaction, however, was spent on such 'duty calls': almost half their visits fell into this category, 49%. But just over a third of
the visits made by urban women, 36%, were made under a sense of obligation or duty.

A number of the respondents in Survey B were questioned at a period which happened to overlap the Divali holidays. During these holidays, women made a ritual 'first visit' in the new year on all their kin, friends and neighbours. Consequently, a substantial amount of leisure time had been spent in both towns and villages on such calls: nine per cent of the surveyed leisure time visits. But other 'prescribed calls' also comprised a considerable part of women's leisure activities. Such calls were those which women felt under an obligation to make as part of generally accepted duties. These calls were made at the birth of a baby, when mother and child were visited and a gift of money, usually, was presented. Similarly, when a couple are first married, they are 'called' to the homes of their kin to be given a meal and a gift of money. Other more recently recognised ceremonial visits were made when a family moved to a new house, vastu puja, or visitors came from abroad, or friends and relatives were about to depart abroad, on a long visit. In all cases, except the latter, gifts of money were made. Women in towns, generally, had more occasion to call on people in new homes, and also were more likely to know people coming from and going abroad because of their own more cosmopolitan kinship links. But other 'prescribed visits' were recognised in both towns and villages and they were accepted by everyone as being essential; they could not be avoided without causing offence or insult.

In the villages, more than the towns, women made calls which
combined both social and practical functions. On those occasions, women might gather to help prepare special food, such as matthia, for the Divali holiday. They might also use the excuse of borrowing or returning a foodstuff, or cooking utensils, as a reason for calling on friends or neighbours. Twelve per cent of rural women reported such contacts compared to only six per cent of urban women; see Table 19.1. Another frequent reason given for making calls was to see sick relatives or friends either at their own home or in hospital; 9% of women in villages and 4% of urban women gave this reason for a visit. An equal proportion of visits by urban and rural women, 6%, were for religious ceremonies, temple trips or excursions to distant shrines as reasons for going on a visit outside the home. Such outings might frequently be combined with a 'picnic' or on longer trips, took on the nature of a holiday. (In Gujarat, itself, there were not many scenic spots to visit and shrines were often a focus for an outing, particularly those near lakes or rivers.)

Social calls

Some of the interviews took place around the holiday period of Divali, when a number of women in small villages treated themselves to a rare visit to the cinema in the nearby town, when there were special showings of films with a religious theme. As a result, a similar proportion of cinema visits were made in both towns and villages, in the survey: see Table 19.1. But this belied actual long-term practices, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

There were only three categories of visits made by rural and
urban women where there were particularly significant differences. As has already been noted in other contexts, rural women were much more likely to return on longer visits to stay at their piyar than urban women. On the other hand, a number of urban women had been involved in shopping expeditions: Table 19.1. Five per cent of the visits made by urban women had been for such shopping trips, which were usually in the company of friends or relatives; no village woman had done so. Most of these excursions took place in the large cities of Baroda or Ahmedabad. However, there were no opportunities locally for village women. Moreover where only one rural woman recorded attending a social gathering, twelve per cent of urban women who had been involved in such an event over the period. Such social gatherings ranged from ceremonial occasions such as weddings, or Shrimant, performed in the seventh month of pregnancy before a woman returns to her piyar; or a katta, a religious service in the home to fulfil a vow made by the holder of the occasion, to involvement in a private garba, in thanks for the gratification of a wish, or the observance of the nine-day religious festival of Navratri, characterised by nine nights of dancing. But other occasions of a non-ceremonial nature were mentioned: meals in restaurants, trips to the zoo, picnics, musical evenings in the home, firework displays at Divali, walking excursions and formal club gatherings, such as the Lions organisation. No rural woman mentioned such occasions.

The far greater variety of leisure activities experienced by urban women is underlined when the figures for the survey period are
viewed in slightly more detail. By separating the small and large villages, this trend is emphasised.

Table 19.2: Purpose of visit in small and large villages and towns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of Visit</th>
<th>Small Villages</th>
<th>Large Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practical</td>
<td>8 (13%)</td>
<td>9 (12%)</td>
<td>16 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick visit</td>
<td>10 (16%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>11 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>7 (9%)</td>
<td>15 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescribed visit</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>16 (21%)</td>
<td>25 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divali</td>
<td>8 (13%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>26 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piyar</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>21 (34%)</td>
<td>32 (43%)</td>
<td>92 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinema</td>
<td>5 (8%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>12 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gathering</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>32 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>18 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of visits</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average no: of visits</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The largest percentage of visits was spent by all women on social calls: see Table 19.2. (Visits made to mark Divali, in most probability, reflected the particular period at which women were surveyed. Moreover, in small villages, Divali visits would be more concentrated in the immediate neighbourhood where the majority of a woman's in laws resided and could, therefore, take place in a short period. Urban women would probably have to travel further afield and space these visits over a longer period of time.) The greater
concentration on work-related visits was also found in the smaller villages, where less time was available for purely social calls. Nearly a third of the calls made by women in small villages were for a work-related purpose or to visit the sick; only 16% of the calls in large villages and 10% of urban calls were for the same purpose.

Visits related to conspicuous consumption or the display of material wealth, such as Caplan described as a 'status arena', took up a very small percentage of the leisure time of women from small villages. They made few of those visits where gifts were exchanged, 5%, and even fewer visits for religious purposes, 2%, which could also be combined with leisure and relaxation. Women from small villages did spend 8% of their time at the cinema, but this was largely because they were surveyed over the Divali period. (See further discussion of other data later in this chapter.) Women from large villages, in contrast, who were mainly from professional households, spent 21% of their time making 'prescribed' visits, frequently associated with gift exchanges and 9% of their time on religious occasions, more even than urban women: see Table 19.2 above. However, women from both small and large villages devoted none of their time to 'shopping expeditions', an important area of status display for urban women. Those visits, therefore, which took women into the 'status arena' predominantly involved those living in professional households in the large villages and the towns. But it was still only urban women who spent time on calls devoted to 'status production work'. No village women participated in social gatherings, nor in the variety of social activities discussed below,
in which urban women were frequently acting as an extension of their husband's networks and were performing roles beneficial to the status of the whole household.

The 'other' activities in which women were involved fell into a number of rather disparate categories. In both villages and towns, women were occasionally involved in sewing or typing classes; these were mainly for unmarried women, who had ceased their formal education and were adding to 'skills' whilst awaiting the arrangement of their marriage. Another unmarried woman, whose hobby was photography, had spent an afternoon taking photographs in the local park. One woman and her family had gone for a ride in their car. But most of the remainder of this social interaction had concerned business or legal matters, such as buying land for the site of a new bungalow. Urban women, on a number of occasions, had been present at such transactions. They had certainly been present when all the discussion about these deals had been taking place. Others had been involved in various forms of entertainment for their husband's business colleagues. Such involvement took them very much into the husband's sphere, not just catering for guests, but participating in social events. On such occasions, they were acting in a supportive role for their husband's career and business interests, as an 'incorporated wife'. (Finch 1983). This would not have been expected of most village women.

Not only were urban women spending a considerable amount of their time on such activities, when no village woman did so, but urban women were, also, involved in far more social situations than
village women. Table 19.2 illustrates how urban women made an average 7.28 visits over the five-day period of the survey, compared with 5 visits for women from large villages, and 2.95 visits for women from small villages. So urban women made more than twice the number of visits over the survey period compared to women in small villages and a significant proportion of this much greater volume of social interaction was spent on status related activities.

Further data on women's regular participation in leisure activities, also from Survey B, underlines not just the greater variety of these experiences for urban women but also how a significant number of these activities took place in the 'status arena'. As might be anticipated, they were far more likely to have joined in a range of social gatherings and outings, on a regular basis. The thirty-six village women were only able to mention five such regular excursions compared with nineteen mentioned by the same number of urban women. Some urban women, in fact, were involved in more than one such activity. Three village women reported regular visits to distant large towns, such as Bombay and Ahmedabad. In one case, Malini, who was not married, undertook this as part of her work, but she also visited friends and relatives whilst away. Urban women, also, went on such excursions, but it did not assume such a significant nature for some of them, whose parents were living in such cities. Some did not make such visits on a regular basis, but would certainly go more than once a year. Their excursions were subsumed under different categories, such as shopping expeditions or cinema trips.
One village woman mentioned attending Gujarati dramas occasionally, as did three of the urban women. Urban women also attended concerts, during the concert season in Baroda. One other woman, Manda, in the town of Anand, participated in weekly music sessions, during which various relatives, both male and female, brought musical instruments, made music and sang all evening. The only, at all comparable, experience referred to by a village woman was a weekly path, where a group of women gathered for a religious meeting, where they sang and prayed.

A number of urban women went regularly for picnics or out into the countryside. One went every week to a temple away from her town, and two or three drove nearly every month to Vadital, the main temple of the Swami Narayan movement. Other regular activities included organised gatherings connected with the Lions Club. But only two women were involved in regularly attending special ladies' meetings held in the large towns of Baroda or Nadiad.

REGULAR LEISURE ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE HOME

In order to consolidate this picture, to counterbalance any particular emphasis on exceptional activities, such as Divali or Navratri celebrations in the five-day period of Survey B, I shall now look in detail at the major leisure activities in which women were involved on a regular basis, that is on a daily, weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis. In Chapter 15, women's regular social interaction was examined. This chapter, however, looks at activities which fell outside formal and informal visiting patterns.
and concentrates on extraneous activities, which tend to reflect increased leisure time and the resources to finance them.

**Temple Attendance**

**Table 19.3: Temple visits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily visits</td>
<td>7 (19%)</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 times a week</td>
<td>4 (11%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>6 (17%)</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special days</td>
<td>11 (31%)</td>
<td>20 (56%)</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>7 (19%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No: of women</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Urban women, by and large, had greater leisure time, but they did not utilise it, generally, for regular attendance at the temple, see Table 19.3. Worship at a temple could take place at any time during the day and did not necessitate being present for a particular period of worship, or puja. However, urban women were frequently not situated near a temple and might have to make a special excursion to it, whereas village women often had a temple within a few minutes' walk of their home. They could, therefore, attend the temple in a few spare minutes in the morning or evening. Consequently, in the villages, there was a fairly large daily attendance at the temple, 19% of village women did so, and a further 11% attended several times a week: Table 19.3. But under a tenth of
urban women attended daily. Regular attendance amongst urban women tended to be on a weekly basis, 17% did so. Overall, 36% of village women went to the temple on a weekly basis, or more often, but 31% of urban women did so.

Urban women made much more of a point of attending the temple on special occasions, whether on their own fast day, or on a day when a special religious ceremony was taking place. On such days, many people might be expected to attend. Indeed, on certain religious holidays, the celebrations would be centred around a particular temple and urban women, particularly, made a point of attending. Such visits could often take on more than a religious significance as they might be combined with a family outing, incorporating, for example, a picnic or an excursion to a local fair. So families would dress in their best and make a day's outing of the religious celebration. Over half of urban women made this their major form of 'religious observance', 56%, compared with less than a third of village women: see Table 19.3. Such festivals occurred fairly frequently and also many people observed special days of 'fasting' and religious observance, which could entail cooking special food and attending particular temples. Urban women were, therefore, more likely to have the time available to observe these days. But, also, they presented a forum for 'dressing up': displaying their clothes and jewellery. Besides, it was necessary to have the means to attend a temple some distance from their homes and also be able to prepare special foods. For a number of urban women, with no particularly strongly held religious beliefs, they
were more a symbol of affluence and leisure than a conviction.

This does not imply, however, that village women were all highly religious. Indeed, their religious observance, outside the home, fell at both ends of the spectrum. They were more likely to attend a temple on a daily or very regular basis, but they were also more likely never to attend: Table 19.3. Six per cent of rural and urban women only attended the temple 'occasionally', but 19% of village women claimed never to attend a temple, compared to only 6% of urban women. Admittedly, village women had less free time at their disposal, but this cannot account for those women who never attended any temple. It was also a reflection on their religious convictions, too. Yet for village women, it was one of the most accessible means of variety and colour outside the home, and an opportunity to leave the home and escape from the daily routine.

Table 19.4: Temple visits amongst single women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily visits</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily visits</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 times a week</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special days</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4 (80%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>3 (75%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No: of unmarried women</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Amongst the small number of unmarried girls, in the sample, this trend was reflected, with 3 out of 4 rural girls never attending a temple. Significantly, 4 out of 5 urban girls, like
older women, preferred to attend on special days only: see Table 19.4. (It should be remembered that the reforming sect, the Swami Narayan movement, was very popular amongst urban, professionally successful families, who would make a point of observing fast days and days of particular religious significance.)

Shopping

Shopping expeditions, like temple attendance, could combine duty with pleasure. Many village women had no need to shop at all, because they were supplied with food from the farm, or stalls which came round the houses, and other goods were supplied by either their in-laws or their own natal family. However, a number of urban women, too, could have been in a similar position. Many chose, however, to go shopping for foodstuffs and other goods, rather than rely on the vegetable stalls near their home. Such shopping excursions, often took place in the company of other women and much time was spent in visiting several shops or bargaining over prices at a fairly leisurely pace, reflecting the social nature of the outing, rather than its functional aspect of purchasing goods. Care had to be taken to patronise those shops used by the family as such relationships had to be sustained, often in the hope of obtaining a 'good' price, or a 'discount'.

Only a third of village women shopped at all on a regular basis, that was weekly or more often: see Table 19.5. A further quarter shopped occasionally, for special purchases, such as clothes or gifts. But nearly a half, 42%, never shopped at all. In
complete contrast, 75% of urban women shopped regularly, either
daily, several times a week, or weekly. This was not just for food,
but for other purchases. Another 25% shopped for special purchases.
All urban women went shopping at some point and not just for basic
necessities.

Table 19.5: Shopping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly or more often</td>
<td>12 (33%)</td>
<td>27 (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(food and other items)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>9 (25%)</td>
<td>9 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(clothes and special purchases)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>15 (42%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On one such visit, Lila met up with a number of women friends,
whilst wandering around the stalls and shops of her small town, WN.
They all entered a chappal shop, selling sandals, because one woman
wished to purchase a pair as a gift. Several other ladies also
tried on a pair of sandals and purchased them, because they liked
that particular design. These women had not intended to buy
chappals, but had done so on impulse. Their household was
sufficiently affluent to be able to afford to make purchases not
based on necessity, but because that particular design appealed to
the women in question. They were involved in 'purchasing' as
conspicuous consumption, because urban women endeavoured to appear
attractively dressed, whenever they were in public. On another
occasion, Malini from Karamsad, had to make a number of purchases in
the nearby town of Anand, but she turned the episode into a social
occasion by going into a restaurant for a 'snack' and an opportunity to sit and talk. Women confined to small villages had neither the means nor the opportunity for such events, except, perhaps, on rare occasions.

However, such shopping expeditions were more significant, too, than a reflection of greater leisure and affluence and an ability to 'consume'. Women, on these occasions, particularly in towns, acted as an adjunct to their husband's networks. They patronised shopkeepers and businesses known to the family. In exchange, they expected either preferential treatment, or were helping to cement feelings of reciprocity between one businessman, their husband, and another. By patronising certain people, they anticipated these people would utilise their husband's services in return, or would feel under a sense of obligation to them. Hence, they were reinforcing male patron-client networks, as described by Tambs-Lyche (1980), and it was important that they made a good impression, both in their appearance and behaviour.(2)

Cinema

The most popular form of entertainment undertaken by women on a regular basis, was a cinema trip: Table 19.6. A Hindi film generally lasted from three to four hours, so that a cinema visit, even locally, took up a whole afternoon or evening. There were no cinemas in small villages or even in the large village of Dharma. Most people travelled to the nearby towns to see a film show or even
to the big cities of Baroda or Ahmedabad.

Table 19.6: Cinema attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily visits to cinema</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times a week</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>6 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
<td>6 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice a month</td>
<td>4 (11%)</td>
<td>16 (44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>10 (28%)</td>
<td>4 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three or four times a year</td>
<td>8 (22%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>4 (11%)</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No: of women 36 36

Contrary to the impression gained from the survey of women's leisure activities over a 5-day period, there was a marked contrast between urban and village women in the frequency with which they attended the cinema. Apart from two sisters-in-law in Karamsad, who professed to go the cinema daily, only a small percentage of village women were able to attend the cinema regularly: another 11% attended weekly or more often. On the other hand, over a third of urban women attended on such a frequent basis: see Table 19.6. Moreover, a further 44% attended about once a fortnight; so that 78% of urban women said they saw a film at least every other week, if not more frequently. But only 28% of village women did so. Only a very small proportion of urban women never went to the cinema or only...
rarely, 11%, whereas 41% of village women only very occasionally, if ever, attended a filmshow. The most likely frequency for village women was once a month, when just over a quarter of them saw a film. The smaller the village, and the greater the distance from a town, the less frequently village women attended the cinema. In Gada, for example, a number of women only went to the four films on a religious theme, shown over the year in the nearest town. Only one woman, Neela, went once or twice a month, but she was divorced and had no children, so her cinema visits resembled those of single women more than married women, as she had much more time on her hands.

Table 19.7: Single women and cinema visits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Several times a week</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>2 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>2 (50%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice a month</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>3 (60%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All single women, whether from rural or urban families, attended the cinema regularly, at least every fortnight: see Table 19.7. Indeed, village girls seemed to go to the cinema somewhat more often than urban girls. The fact that girls and women were able to attend the cinema so regularly, even Neela from the small village of Gada, indicated that it was not distance from the cinema which was the deterrent, more likely time, or in some cases, lack of companion. Some village women, like Benna from Karamsad, or Chaya
from Gada, complained that they never went to the cinema because their husband was not interested, so they had no-one with whom to go. But even Lata in Anand did not go frequently, although she lived across the road from the cinema. Her husband could rarely be persuaded to attend and she was reliant on female friends or relatives to accompany her. Moreover, she would not go across town to another cinema, unless she had, preferably, a male escort.

Most women were eager to be able to attend the cinema very regularly. At the time of the original research, television sets were quite rare, principally because they could only receive one hour of mainly agricultural programmes each evening. Consequently, the main form of entertainment was the cinema or the occasional Gujarati drama performed by college or school students. For those families who did possess a television set, it was mainly a status symbol. Frequent cinema attendance needed both time and money, especially as Patidar women generally sat in the best seats away from poorer, lower caste people. The more status conscious endeavoured to see the most popular films when they were first released, whilst they were showing in Ahmedabad, entailing several hours of travel, or even in big cinemas in Bombay, whilst on a visit there.

But, ironically with subsequent developments, cinema attendance no longer retained the same connotations of status. (3) By 1985, national television programmes broadcast from Delhi could be received easily in the area. Consequently, a number of families had
bought improved television sets, then more easily available, as well as video recorders. All the latest films could be viewed at home and the more affluent families would have family gatherings to watch such films. Those people, therefore, who still went to the cinema to see a film were manifesting their lack of finance to purchase the necessary equipment. One of the assets of home viewing was that it precluded any contact with other, lower castes and, particularly, for women, obviated any undesirable encounters with men who might make approaches in the darkened cinema, or make unruly or 'rude' comments. So, one of the major reasons for women leaving the home for social reasons was disappearing. The possession of a video-recorder helped to keep the higher status groups of women more confined to the home than less affluent families, in a recent manifestation of purdah.

Extension of leisure activities

The fact that urban women have more leisure time available than village women has already been discussed in Chapter 15. Depending on the season, many women slept in their free time in the afternoon, read, listened to the radio or music cassettes, embroidered or made handicrafts. Otherwise, the other major component of leisure was making visits, whether to neighbours, family or friends. Such visits might just be for company or conversation, but they might also have a practical purpose to help with a task or to call on someone who was sick. This was more particularly the case in the smaller villages than the larger villages and towns. Village women were also involved in making some duty calls, but these were not of
so diversified a nature, generally, precluding, for example, contacts with a husband's business associates or visiting a new home, for a vastu puja.

Village women were also involved, but to a much lesser extent in shopping expeditions or cinema trips. But when it came to consideration of other activities, some of more recent origin, village women were poorly represented. They did take part, at times, in religious pilgrimages or tours of various temples, but they did not have annual or regular holidays as some urban women did. Nor did they often participate in outings such as picnics, birthday parties or meals in restaurants which some urban women did. Village women, generally, had neither the same amount of time to spare for leisure, nor the opportunity to be involved in such a wide range of activities as had urban women. Many of the activities in which urban women indulged, reflected the extent of their leisure, such as the hours spent in handicrafts, or in visiting. But they also manifested the extent of their affluence and their status, because they involved a display of wealth.

Urban women had taken on new leisure activities and these fell into three different categories. Firstly, there was a growth of activities frequently connected with people known to the family, through the husband's business networks. By the time of fieldwork conducted in 1985, Lata and Bhaskar, her husband, were called upon to attend, for example, the wedding of a business contact, a goldsmith, where none of the other guests were related, and few were even from the same caste. Moreover, they attended their neighbour's
vastu puja, although he was not a Patel. On another occasion, they were invited to attend a large dinner for over two hundred people, arranged by a business contact to reciprocate the favours and hospitality shown to him. Guests arrived throughout the evening, for the khidgeree khadi party, were received by their host, ate and departed. A few years earlier, they opened their house to receive guests to watch the display of dancing in the street at the time of Navratri, because their home commanded a particularly fine view. Those who attended were mainly doctors and their wives who were seen as prestigious guests, but whom Lata was wary of addressing unless spoken to first. Similarly, Bhaskar's 'cousin' brother and sister-in-law in VVN held a large birthday party for their second daughter's first birthday, not a particularly auspicious occasion in social terms as this was not their first child, nor was it a son. Moreover, it was only fairly recently that birthdays had begun to be celebrated, to any degree, in urban households. There were reputedly three hundred guests at this event, held in the garden, which was decorated as if for a wedding. The most important point as far as Lila, the hostess, was concerned were the number of doctors, again, who attended. Lila and her friends spent four days preparing food and four cooks were hired to cook the food. They also showed a film in the garden.

On all these occasions, wives were invited to accompany their husbands. On arrival, however, the couple generally separated and joined groups of their own sex, even though the women were possibly not acquainted with any other women at these functions. On such
occasions, they were acting as a representative of their husband and his business interests, and dressed carefully in order to create a good impression. They had, also, to be able to socialise, to a certain extent, with those not well known to them, so that a shy or quiet woman was at some disadvantage.

Another aspect of increased leisure time was the prevalence of outings. In the villages, these were comparatively rare and largely occurred at festival times, being focussed around religious celebrations, so that a group of villagers might visit a temple and picnic on the nearby river banks, at the same time. Chaya from the village of Gada went with a large group of relatives to a religious fair and 'camped' there for several nights.

Urban and professional families did not, however, confine such trips to religious holidays. They had 'weekends', as well as extended holidays during which they could go on outings. (Agricultural households were more bound by the requirements of cultivating the land.) Excursions generally demanded, however, money as well as time. Transport was needed and with a general distaste for public transport, particularly buses, this proved expensive. One weekend, Indira from Anand, hired a minibus and took her daughters and their cousin for a day out in the gardens and park in the nearby town of Baroda. Bharti and her husband in VN tried to go every Friday, on his day off, for a picnic or an excursion in their car. In Baroda, Madhu went with her friends for picnics at a nearby lake and Vina took visitors around the planetarium or the museum, and, perhaps, on for a meal at a Chinese restaurant. In
Anand, itself, new restaurants were appearing where some families, such as Bharti's, the beautician, went out to eat occasionally.

But even more noticeable amongst professional and urban families was the degree to which women went away on holidays. Holidays, for the majority of local people, were associated with the duration of religious festivals. It was virtually only in urban households that families were in a position to have both the time and money to take a period of 'leisure' away from work. Each year, for example, Lata and her husband, Bhaskar, with a group of friends, endeavoured, during the Divali holiday, to hire a house in the hills near Bombay. Yet Sudha from the village of Bakrol, had only been able to afford to go on her first few days' visit to Bombay after ten years of marriage. In contrast, a relative of Bhaskar's, had a flat in Juhu Beach, a fashionable area of Bombay, which was always available to the family. Bhaskar was able to go and watch the test match in Bombay, when he wished to do so.

Kalpana, from the small village of Ajarpura, had taken the form of break away from the household which was all that was available for most Patidar village women. She had gone on a pilgrimage for the day to bathe in the 'holy' river, Mahi. No-one would be prepared to allow her to stay away any longer, in the agricultural household in which she lived, because she had too many duties in the home to perform. But Rashmi from Anand, went with her family on the long journey to Nepal and Nainital in the Himalayas. Schoolgirls, too, like Indira's daughter, went on school trips to Nepal. Two other
women from an urban household, Vina and Neena, unmarried sisters from Baroda, even went on mountaineering holidays in the Himalayas, nearly every year.

Urban families did still, however, combine holidays with religious observance. Indira spent five days visiting the holy places around Mount Abu, the nearest and very popular hill resort. For the more prosperous households, however, the idea of an annual holiday, for no purpose other than relaxation, was certainly being adopted. The concept of both the 'holiday' and the 'weekend' were not commonly acknowledged other than in urban households.

It was seen, too, as advantageous for young girls to have travelled, perhaps through school trips or organised activities, such as mountaineering. It was part of the educational process, giving girls a broader experience of life. Madhu from Baroda had even spent a number of months in Kenya, staying with relatives. Such a social ambit took girls and women well beyond the expectations of most of their village counterparts. They had neither the time, money or contacts to be able to participate in such activities. But, for urban women, the pursuit of leisure had become one of the more important manifestations of their husband's ability to maintain them in economic inactivity.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

Religious observances as a function of leisure have already been mentioned. In the villages, most social activities were focussed around either lifecycle ceremonies or religious festivals.
Indeed, the observance of such religious practices gave a pattern to the year, starting with Divali, the new year, and ending with Navratri. In urban areas, such customs were still observed, however, other religious ceremonies, as well, had assumed a greater importance: ceremonies such as vastu puja. However, in urban households, many of these ceremonies had an additional significance other than the religious one. Just as activities such as shopping or cinema attendance were opportunities for women to participate in the 'status arena' as 'demonstrators' of the economic standing of the household, so religious ceremonies could, also, perform a social function. They also provided opportunities for showing off wealth.

Vastu puja, for example, was performed as an act of blessing on a new house. Such ceremonies were genuine religious statements, but they also were occasions for everyone to view and admire the home, particularly when the house was newly-built. During such a religious ceremony, the home owners would participate, giving the women involved ample chance to wear their richest saris. Similarly, other ceremonies were held, such as katta, when parts of Hindu religious writings were read; many guests were often invited and special food provided. They often marked an event of some significance, such as the start of a new business, or the achievement of a goal, such as passing examinations. Such gatherings were uncommon in the villages, when time was not available, nor, if they did occur, would they generally be so prestigious.
The urban household was able to use the excuse of a 'religious ceremony' to invite guests, other than relatives and neighbours, to offer or reciprocate hospitality and, in the process, build up and cement networks, such as those amongst business colleagues. Consequently, such religious occasions had become a part of 'status production work'. Patidar women had, on these occasions, to ensure that the refreshments offered were more than adequate and, also, to participate in the 'entertainment' of all guests.

One particular religious festival offered tremendous opportunities for ostentatious display of wealth: Navratri, the nine days of worship of the mother goddess, Ambamata. Each night, for nine nights, women and girls dressed up in their finery and participated in various garba. (4) Only women participated in these circle dances, although there were opportunities for men to join in the ras. In the large towns, such as Baroda, only certain people could attend the most prestigious events and women vied with each other to look 'stunning'. Most garba were caste based. In some urban households, all the women and girls participating would expect to wear a different set of clothes on each of the nine nights: their appearance on these occasions presenting the public with a very conspicuous display of family wealth and economic standing. Patidar women were very much 'demonstrators of status' at such events.

Religious festivals, such as Navratri, offered the Patidar an excellent means of manifesting the status of the household, through the appearance of women participating in garba. In urban areas, hundreds if not thousands of people watched these occasions, apart
from all those others who actually were, themselves, dancing. Women were very much part of a process of conspicuous display on such occasions: it was the ultimate 'status arena', other than weddings, in which to parade wealth and status.

But another aspect of religious observance was equally very much a determinant of family status: this was the observance of vrat, a form of fast. Srinivas declared that one of the marks of 'Sanskritization' in a caste was when women observed vrat. Consequently, if the Patidar were looking to a caste based model of upward mobility, one would expect to find that women in Patidar households were very actively involved in the observance of vrat. If religion was becoming much more an aspect of private life, as would occur in the process of 'secularisation', then vrat might seem less significant to the Patidar.

**Vrat**

The observance of vrat did not necessarily mean complete abstinence from food. Often, it entailed a light diet for the day or the preparation of special foods, which were looked forward to as special 'treats'. In many families, women fasted at least one day a week: on occasions, their husbands did so too. Each day of the week represented a fast to a different deity. But there were special vrat which were very popular amongst women. These were a form of fast for one day or longer, which were undertaken in the hope that women's wishes would be fulfilled. The commonest reason for undertaking vrat was to pray for the long life of a husband, that he
would outlive his wife. Some of these vrat were started at puberty, long before marriage. Such was the commonly practised Jaya Parvati Vrat, undertaken every year for five years or longer. There were other vrat, however, which were popular with some women, but not others. Some would be undertaken by women in one the village, but not in another. Often this was explained as a status differential. Certain vrat were only considered to be performed by lower castes, or lower status people, by the highest status women. Alternatively, other vrat were no longer considered 'fashionable', although they had been observed by the previous generation.

There were a wide variety of vrat undertaken by women, but one which was regarded as particularly difficult was Ivrat Jivrat. This was performed once a year to try and ensure the long life of one's husband and entailed staying awake all night, so that a woman went without sleep for thirty-six hours. Pushpa from Dharma, one of the 'Six Villages' claimed that it was only observed by people from 'Kathiawadside', a euphemism, generally, for people from lower status groups or castes.

Table 19.8: Observances of fasts: Ivrat Jivrat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women from 'the Six'</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women from 'the Twenty-seven'</td>
<td>10 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used to observe in &quot;</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never observed</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ironically, the only married woman in the survey (Survey C) from 'the Six Villages' who observed \textit{Ivrat Jivrat} was Dipti from Dharmaj, too. Nearly half the village women questioned observed the fast, at that time, eleven out of twenty-five, 44\%, whereas only 10\% of urban women did so. Indeed, two more women in Gada had at one time kept this fast, but had stopped after they 'lost' their husbands: a total of thirteen, 52\%, of all the village women surveyed. However, what was more striking was the fact that only one woman from 'the Six Villages', considering both urban and village dwellers, claimed to observe the fast. All the rest of the women were from 'the Twenty-Seven Villages'; even the three urban dwellers who did observe the fast were all from 'the Twenty-seven'. Sirla lived in Nadiad, but her \textit{sasera} was Palana, as was Sharmista's, who lived in Anand. The other urban dweller was Sita from old Anand, her \textit{sasera}, but her \textit{piyar} was Gada, where the fast was very widely observed.

Virtually all the women who observed the \textit{vrat} had links with the same villages within 'the Twenty-Seven', even if they no longer lived there. Consequently, they were reflecting status differentials between different villages. The practice of this \textit{vrat}, which in one village, or group of villages, was seen as a mark of status, had been rejected as 'old fashioned' or low status by other villages higher up; it was hardly observed at all in the high status 'Six Villages' ekada. In the case of \textit{Ivrat Jivrat} eleven village women kept the fast: one from 'the Six Villages', Dharmaj, another, Prabhu lived in Karamsad, but she, herself, was from 'the Twenty-Seven', as was her husband. Two women from the same \textit{khadaki} in Bakrol observed the fast; all the women from the same \textit{khadaki} in

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Ajarpura kept it, including a woman born there who had married a man who lived in the village of Palana. In Gada, two women from the same khadaki also observed the fast, a further two had done so, but had ceased. One had done so when she was widowed, after observing it for nine years, another, Neela, on her divorce. Two other women, Lila and Kapila, from that khadaki obviously felt they should keep the fast, but both commented that it was 'too hard' for them to do. (Two urban women from WN, thought they might observe this fast one day; Bharti, whose husband was from Bakrol in 'the Twenty-seven' and Amrita, from 'the Six Villages.' Both felt it was too 'binding' at present, when they had small children. Also, once started, it should be continued each year indefinitely.)

Women seemed to adopt the fasts of their in-laws and immediate neighbours, just as they adopted other religious practices of their in-laws. Even if their own mother had kept a certain fast, there was no guarantee that a married woman would follow it. Vad Savitri, for example, was a special day of worship, entailing rituals of worship of the banyan tree, to ensure a husband's long life. Sudha from Bakrol, knew her mother used to perform it; her sasera was Palana in 'the Twenty-seven'. Now it was not observed in Bakrol, although fifteen years previously, some women had performed the ritual. Madhu, a 'Six Village' girl, living in Baroda, did not observe any vrat, but she knew that after marriage she would have to keep the vrat of Jagran, as her future mother-in-law from 'the Five', a lower status ekada to her own, did so. Yet she had no idea why the vrat was kept.
Women's observance of vrat did not relate to practices they had learnt in their childhood. Even though vrat were often for the universal desire for 'the long life of a husband', which was women's guarantee for retaining their position within the household. Whether women observed vrat related to the practice in their sasera; this, in turn, was related to the status of their village and the ekada.

Obviously, if women followed the examples of kin and neighbours, practices were bound to differ from village to village. But looking overall at practices both in the villages and towns, the main difference lay between what women from the high status 'Six Villages' professed to do and what vrat women from the lower status 'Twenty-Seven Villages' said they observed. In both towns and villages, the majority of women in 'the Twenty-Seven Villages' observed some vrat, whereas only a small minority of women from 'the Six Villages' did so. Seventy-four per cent of the women from 'the Six Villages', whether they lived in a town or a village, claimed never to observe any vrat. See Table 19.9 below. Amongst women from the lower status 'Twenty-Seven Villages', however, nearly the reverse was the case: 68% of women did practice vrat, whereas around a third claimed not to do so. By far the largest group of women not practising vrat amongst 'the Twenty-Seven Village' women were urban dwellers: 47% of urban dwellers. (A number of this group of women all belonged to an extended kinship network, so that they were likely to influence one another in their practices.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Observance of vrat</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Villages</td>
<td>Towns</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six Villages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed vrat</td>
<td>3 (33%)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>5 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not observe vrat</td>
<td>6 (66%)</td>
<td>8 (80%)</td>
<td>14 (74%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9 (100%)</td>
<td>10 (100%)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty-Seven Villages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed vrat</td>
<td>13 (81%)</td>
<td>8 (53%)</td>
<td>21 (68%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not observe vrat</td>
<td>3 (19%)</td>
<td>7 (47%)</td>
<td>10 (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16 (52%)</td>
<td>15 (48%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a definite bias in the observance of vrat towards the lower status ekada, and even there, to women from villages rather than towns. Very few village women from 'the Twenty-Seven' did not observe vrat, 19% of village dwellers, whereas virtually two thirds of women in 'the Six Villages' living in the villages, did not observe vrat. Such an incidence of practice backed up statements made by women from 'the Six', such as Mala in Karamsad, who claimed that women in her village did not practise any vrat. So, although urban women had more time and opportunity to observe vrat, this did not appear to have led to a general increase in their observance. Women from 'the Six' and especially those who were urban dwellers seemed to feel that such practices were beneath them. But amongst urban dwellers from 'the Twenty-Seven', over half of those living in towns still felt they should continue to practise vrat. This was a considerable reduction, however, compared to 81% or rural women in
the same ekada. Urban women, from 'the Twenty-Seven', like Hansa in Baroda, had ample opportunity in which to observe a large number of vrat. However, many urban women, especially from 'the Six', professed never to observe vrat, although they had sufficient time to do so.

**Sanskritization, vrat and religious observance.**

Srinivas (1962) identified vrat as one of the religious practices which upwardly mobile castes adopted, during the process of Sanskritization, when the Brahmin model of orthodoxy was emulated. Given the process of seclusion also associated with Sanskritization and patriarchal family relationships, women's position in the household depended very much on the continuance of their marriage, as there was little or no prospect of widow remarriage, nor of divorce and remarriage. In such circumstances, women in seclusion might well observe vrat; they had a vested interest in 'the long lives of their husbands'.

Using Patidar women's observance of vrat, as an example, it seemed apparent that many of these Patidar families had already undergone the process of Sanskritization, at least to a limited extent. ('The Six Villages' regarded themselves as the highest ekada; even they accorded a high rank for members of 'the Twenty-Seven Villages', slightly below their own. There were other ekada and groupings of Patels outside Kheda, which were considered 'inferior'.) The observance of vrat was most prevalent within 'the
Twenty-Seven', especially amongst rural women. But amongst rural women in 'the Six', which was the highest ekada, Sanskritization had been in process for some considerable period. Consequently, vrat were no longer a particular 'mark' of status, particularly as lower status members of other ekada had adopted their practice. Women in 'the Six Villages' considered them 'low status' and 'old fashioned'. So they were no longer widely practised in this ekada.

Vrat were observed even less in urban areas, even by women in 'the Twenty-Seven'. In rural households, within the confinements of a khadaki, it was difficult not to observe certain religious festivals without everyone nearby being aware of the fact. Rural women stressed how at Sitra Satam, the fast for the smallpox goddess, only cold food could be eaten. If any woman tried to cook, then all her neighbours would be aware of the fact. But in urban households, there was much greater distance between neighbours and, consequently, greater privacy. Religious observance, therefore, became much more a personal matter for members of the household.

In the context of Sanskritization, women's observance of vrat was part of their role as 'demonstrators of status', reflecting not just the family's religious orthodoxy, but the time spent on special preparation of foodstuffs. The observance of vrat in urban households no longer served the purpose of demonstrating status because it had become more of a private household matter. Those women, therefore, with strong religious convictions might well continue to practice vrat, but other urban Patidar households sought other means to reflect their 'religious orthodoxy', preferably in
'the status arena'.

Urban Patidar women were far less likely to attend the temple for regular daily worship than rural women: see Table 19.3. But they were far more likely to attend for special occasions. Moreover, both urban women and women from 'the Six Villages' were much more involved than rural women from the lower status 'Twenty-Seven Villages' in a variety of religious visits and ceremonies: Table 19.2. Urban Patidar women had not rejected religious observance as a means of 'demonstrating status', but they had adopted a more 'public' role outside the household, or at least in the presence of non-family members, at gatherings such as a vastu puja or katta. Women were expected to uphold religious traditions. But in urban areas, women were obliged to take a more public role in order to reflect the family's religious orthodoxy. In the process, too, they were able to reflect the standing of their household by their presence at religious ceremonies, as well as using these occasions for more secular functions, such as 'information broking' and 'gift giving'. Many religious observances had been subsumed under the mantle of 'status production work'. (Caplan 1885) In a more class-based urban society, religious observance was of little relevance in itself, but there were opportunities in religious ceremonies for 'household service work.' (Sharma 1986).

As Srinivas (1962) and Pocock (1955) pointed out, Patels, frequently from 'the Six Villages', had emigrated to East Africa at the turn of the century, and had, thus, been exposed to the Western
culture they found there. However, Patidar women who were no longer observing vrat, were not necessarily rejecting Sanskritisation, as such. Religious observance was still a very important aspect of Patidar women's lives. But they had adopted different markers of status to differentiate them from the upwardly mobile Patidar in lower status ekada. Moreover, in urban areas, Patidar women had certainly not rejected religious practices, but those that were adopted reflected the needs of households living in a society where economic class was assuming at least as much importance as caste, in the 'status arena'.

Another important reflection of Sanskritization in a caste was how they viewed the remarriage of widows. In Chapter 13, the position of divorced and widowed women was discussed. For the majority of both rural and urban Patidar, in theory, at least, the remarriage of widows, and divorcees, was regarded as unacceptable. But the issue was just as much a social question as one of religious practices. Economic necessity forced the lowest status families to consider remarriage. But for higher status families, it was a mark of status to be able to support such women for the remainder of their lives. In a class based society, economic factors would suggest the desirability of allowing divorced or widowed women to seek paid employment, in order to contribute towards their own expenses. But even amongst the urban Patidar, there was still considerable reluctance at this idea. A small number of women had been allowed to work, when separated or widowed, but the majority had not. This was not just a mark of Sanskritization, however; many middle-class families in Victorian Britain chose to mark their
economic standing by keeping women 'economically inactive' in the home, 'servicing' the needs of the family. (Liddle and Joshi 1986)
Moreover, as Abdullah and Zeidenstein (1982) contended, it was a 'socio-economic asset' to be able to maintain women in comparative 'idleness' in the home.

**APPEARANCE AND 'IDLENESS'**

The seclusion of women, therefore, and their 'comparative idleness' was an important 'demonstrator of status'. So, too, was women's demeanour and appearance when they were seen by others from outside the immediate household. Were the requirements of women in rural households, in regards to their appearance, the same for urban women who were much more evident in the 'status arena' and actively involved in 'status production work'?

The discussion in Chapter 15 revealed how village women's social behaviour was determined by their immediate environment. The majority of social contacts were within close walking distance. Rural women's 'social arena' was amongst their own kin and immediate neighbours. Women, in such circumstances, walked to their social engagements. Moreover, if they wished to travel further afield, they usually had little option other than to use public transport, because nothing else was available. More affluent families might be in a position to use an autorickshaw, but in the smaller villages, these were not readily available and had to be called from a nearby town. Only on rare occasions did they have access to a car: Hema's husband, a farm manager in Gada, had his own car, but this was exceptional. As a result, village women's mobility was usually
confined to a fairly limited area, but within this area they moved about freely.

Urban life and enforced idleness

But urban women had to travel greater distances in order to maintain their social contacts. Their relatives and friends were not necessarily their neighbours as well. But in order to keep in touch, urban women were frequently reluctant to walk. Even relatively short distances would only be undertaken when transport was available. Consequently, although urban women had a great deal more leisure time at their disposal, they were not always able to fill it as they might wish. They often would not consider using public transport, such as local buses, which were exceptionally crowded and used by many members of the lower castes. They were dependent on hiring autorickshaws or on being taken in their own cars. Hassu, a sixteen-year old from VN, contended that she could not manage the five minute walk to college, after the dancing the previous night for the Navratri festival. Others, like Meena from VN, found the short walk to and from the bus stop much too onerous. By 1985, however, a small number of women had learnt to drive and were able to go much more easily on local visits, when the car was available, although they rarely ventured away from their own town and possibly nearby villages.

It was not just the availability of transport, however, which determined urban women's social activities. Their whole lifestyle
precluded great activity. Madhu, for example, an unmarried woman in Baroda, had few responsibilities beyond a number of household tasks. She spent her time in chatting with friends and neighbours, reading light literature such as film magazines, and going for outings to the cinema or perhaps a restaurant. Yet she was described by her brother-in-law as 'Mrs Gandhi', the former prime minister, because she was so busy. Her slightly older married sister, who lived less than five minutes walk away, rarely went out at all, except to call on her mother and sisters; this excursion was considered 'very tiring'.

Such seemingly self-imposed limitations on social activities have to be considered in the context both of purdah and status. Urban women had given up their role in agriculture and heavy household tasks. They were being maintained to perform a number of specialised tasks. In the process, they were expected to epitomize the standing of the family: natal or marital. It was not considered acceptable, therefore, for such women to mix with poorer, lower caste people on public transport or even in the street. They had to travel in a style dictated by their standing, in the process, too, avoiding any contact with possibly 'undesirable' people, particularly men. Moreover, when they did appear in public, they felt obliged to maintain certain rigorous standards of appearance.

Appearance and the 'status arena'.

There was a fairly generally held view, especially amongst rural dwellers that women should seek to strive for a 'simple
appearance'. To those who lived in the villages, this was held to mean that women did not use make-up. Urban dwellers might express a desire for a similar ideal, but it was interpreted more liberally, to include, at least, the discrete use of make-up. But amongst some urban, professional dwellers, it was felt to be perfectly acceptable that women would look 'smarter' if they were well made-up. There was most likely to be the greatest criticism of make-up amongst village dwellers, for whom it had connotations of a Western lifestyle, and possibly less than desirable morals. Consequently, village women, particularly, were likely to underplay their interest in or time spent over their appearance.

Other factors, however, were just as influential in minimizing village women's attention to their looks. They contended that they had neither the time nor the inclination. Housework and child care took up most of their time. Moreover, there appeared little point in the daily course of their lives, because their main audience was composed of other women from the immediate vicinity, frequently related to them by marriage. Some village women, therefore, paid little attention to how they looked. On the other hand, a number were sufficiently concerned to undertake to diet by fasting regularly.

Urban women, however, always felt obliged to look smart when they appeared in public. Pushpa, although a village women from Dharmaj, took the trouble to change her sari just to accompany a guest to the bus stand. Pushpa had, however, until a few years
previously, lived in the large town of Ahmedabad where she had participated very actively in a wider 'status arena' than provided in the village. She had been in full time employment there. Women, felt constrained to dress in an acceptable manner, particularly by conforming to the generally held idea of wearing a sari after marriage. On her return to her mother's house, Sudha used to revert to Western-style clothes, which she preferred, but would not consider wearing in her husband's village. Even a single woman, like Malini, was felt to have transcended acceptable behaviour by wearing Western jeans.

Although urban women might dress fairly casually around the home, they felt obliged to be well dressed whenever they left their house. Some would wear full-length cotton housedresses during the day and change towards evening, when their husbands came home from work. But, with the very rare exception, no-one dreamt of wearing cotton saris outside the home, because, despite being cool, they were associated with the poorer people, who could not afford anything else. The Patidar women preferred synthetic fibres, preferably from abroad, 'foren' clothes, or on smarter occasions, perhaps silk of varying degrees of heaviness and expense. Even young girls boasted of only wearing 'foren' clothes, that is, usually, those sent to them by their maternal relatives living abroad.

Lata from Anand, for example, would not even go out to the nearby shops unless she changed into her smarter saris, and made herself up. She was extremely fastidious about her appearance, even
though she claimed that she spent less time on it than formerly. She had put on weight and felt more self-conscious about her looks, now dyeing her hair. In the past, she had changed every evening. But by the time of the fieldwork, she spent around thirty minutes on her appearance, only when she went out. Her sister-in-law, Lila, in VN, still spent thirty minutes bathing and changing into better clothes every evening. Yet women had servants for any strenuous or dirty work. Lata wanted short hair, but her husband disliked such fashions, so neither she nor her young daughter cut their hair. Nor would she even wear sleeveless saris, when they were fashionable, because he disapproved. Women's appearance was not, therefore, just a matter of personal satisfaction, they were projecting an image which reflected on the whole household.

With the changes in women's roles in urban areas, a woman's looks had become, even more so, one of the main criteria, for making a good marriage. After marriage, too, she was expected to retain a smart appearance, whereas village women did not feel such strong pressure to do so. Village women would certainly make an effort to appear at their best on special occasions, such as weddings. But as their range of social activities was, in general, so much more limited than those of urban women, they had relatively few opportunities where they felt it essential to dress well.

In Survey C of 54 married women with children, women were asked about the length of time they devoted to their appearance. The contrast between urban and rural was most marked; more
significantly, the greatest disparities occurred over time spent on women's daily appearance rather than on special occasions.

Table 19.10: Time spent on appearance: daily

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'No time'</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to five/ten minutes</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to fifteen minutes</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifteen minutes or more</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The vast majority of village women spent very little time on their appearance every day: see Table 19.10. Indeed, out of the 92% who spent up to five or ten minutes at the most on such activities, over a quarter, 28%, claimed to spend no time at all, or at most, to run a comb through their hair. Urban women, in contrast, spent significantly longer. Only ten per cent of urban women claimed to spend no time at all on themselves. Virtually a third of the women spent fifteen minutes or longer on an ordinary day in the home and a small number, around 13%, spent even longer, anything up to half an hour on their preparations. The urban women, in fact, who spent the least time on their appearance were the three women in full-time teaching and others, who claimed to be too busy in the home. There was a general feeling, however, that either before marriage, or certainly before children had been born, that a number of the women had spent much longer on their appearance. They mentioned spending more time on their skin, perhaps even 'bleaching' the skin to make
it fairer, or using talcum powder when they made up, for the same reason. Others had concentrated on more elaborate hair styles or their make-up and manicure. Only 20% of village women felt they had possessed more interest in their appearance before they were so preoccupied with household activities. However, approaching half of the urban women expressed a feeling that they had devoted more time to their appearance previously, despite still concentrating far more on how they looked than village women did.

On special occasions, such as wedding ceremonies, the disparity between urban and rural women over the length of time spent on preparations was not nearly so marked: see Table 19.11. Just under a third of urban women, and slightly more than a third of rural women, claimed they made no more preparations on special occasions. However, this has to be considered in the context that urban women, generally, spent longer on their appearance on ordinary occasions.

Table 19.11: Time spent on appearance: special occasions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No difference to usual</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to fifteen minutes</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to thirty minutes</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total women</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of village women, 60%, spent in the region of fifteen to thirty minutes on their appearance, whereas the majority of urban women, 51%, spent up to thirty minutes or even longer in their
preparations. Sushila in Baroda spent one and a half hours on special occasions and a number of other women spent in the region of an hour.

Weddings, and special life-cycle ceremonies, provided a status arena for all women, whether urban or rural, to display their finery. Even so, urban women, by and large, spent longer on their preparations for these events. When it came to daily life, urban women far surpassed the village women in their efforts, because many of their social activities took them into situations where it was necessary for them to make a good showing. Consequently, in recent years, a number of women had started to use 'beauticians'. Indeed, two women in the survey had, themselves, had their own beauty parlours; Bharti still ran a very profitable business. Much of their work was in the preparation of brides on their wedding days, but they also had regular customers and one woman ran classes in the care of nails and eyebrows.

The development of this service was significant in two respects. Firstly, in the past, only those from lower castes, or Muslim women, had undertaken such work, mainly preparing brides for their wedding day, because it was considered somewhat demeaning, more suitable for a servant. Secondly, only recently were there sufficient urban women with time and money to spare to create a need for such a business. It relied on women who needed to appear at their best, in order to reflect their wealth and status, rather than just on certain special occasions.
This emphasis on a woman's good looks was very much a reflection on her husband's status and that of his family. An attractive girl was likely to make a much better match, regardless of other factors. In fact, this was considered to be important by not just the young husband. There was criticism, for example, of a marriage made with a wealthy girl who was not considered 'good-looking', as it was felt to be unfair on her husband. In the village of Gada, an attractive girl, who had a slight physical handicap, was felt to have made a very good match with an educated village boy. She was not only from a town, but also had the possibility of a 'green card' and hence would be able to emigrate, with her husband, to America. Yet it was thought she must have had to pay a very large dowry to secure such a match, solely because of her 'limp'. A number of urban women commented on problems they had encountered in finding a suitable partner, because despite their looks, they were considered to have dark skins. Hence some women resorted to skin bleaching. Kusum's family, in the town of Nadiad, decided it was inadvisable to allow a match to be arranged with a boy whose family had commented on her dark skin. They felt she was liable to be abused and her life made unhappy. Similarly, when talks took place years before over Indira's prospective marriage in Anand, a family friend advised that she should be allowed to choose her own partner, because of the problems and abuse she would experience if a match was arranged. Indira, too, was very dark skinned. A woman's looks, therefore, were an important adornment for her whole marital family.

Once, however, her husband died, even if the widow was still
young, it was felt to be improper for her to continue to be attractive. Traditionally, a widow had all her hair cut or even shaved off. But this was no longer general practice. Usually, if observed at all during the bereavement ceremonies, only a token amount was cut from a widow's hair. As a woman's hair was seen as her chief adornment, cutting it off was meant to deprive her of her attractiveness, her femininity and sexuality. Even though this was generally not observed amongst the Patidar, widows were still expected to dress simply in white or possibly very pale and plain saris. In the village of Bakrol, a newly widowed woman was supposed to wear the same sari for the first two to three months after her husband's death. Widows no longer wore any jewellery. Nor could they wear make-up. Even young widows were expected to have a very plain and simple appearance, so that they were not likely to attract the attentions of men, as widows were expected to remain chaste and not remarry.

A woman's looks and her fine appearance were a reflection, therefore, of her own family and then her husband's family's status. This became particularly apparent at the time of the wedding ceremonies. Even close female relatives involved in the wedding ceremonies might wear up to four, completely different outfits, often new, as well as very expensive items of gold jewellery. Manju, at her 'cousin' sister's wedding, changed for each major stage in the ceremonies. Lata had a completely new set of gold jewellery, necklace, bracelet and earrings, when her husband's younger brother's wife's brother was married. Others dressed only
in their expensive saris and jewellery for the actual duration of whatever ceremony they attended. Rashmi, for example, in her own town of Anand, arrived at the wedding and changed into her finery only to attend the wedding dinner; then she changed again and returned home. It was necessary for her to appear well-dressed whilst she appeared in public, in her 'status arena', but not a moment longer.

But the main focus of attention, of course, at such ceremonies was the bride. She was under the constant eye of all the guests throughout the wedding ceremonies. Hours were spent in preparations and throughout the ceremonies, attention was paid to ensure that her make-up was still correct and that she was not looking dishevelled for the many photographs that were taken. At Kusum's wedding, for example, a very simple, small affair held in the monsoon season, six or seven hours were spent in applying the mandi to her hands and feet. Mandi is a form of henna paste which is painted in very elaborate patterns on to the palms of the hands and the feet. The most intricate patterns take many hours to apply and have to be left to dry, preferably overnight, so that the stain from the henna is strong. On this occasion, the painting continued well after midnight, yet the family were all up again by four or five o'clock in the morning, to continue preparations.

At Pritha's wedding, her cousin, Manju, spent more than three hours applying her make-up and jewellery, transforming her into an intensely glamorous, bedecked and bejewelled bride: see Fig: 19.1. Her nails were manicured and patterns painted on them; an elaborate
Fig 19.1: Urban Weddings

The Bride

Varad
hair style was arranged and lacquered. Foundation was applied to her face and talcum powder to make her look paler. Powder, rouge, eye liner and mascara followed. Then a delicate design was painted along her eyebrows in red, green and white, auspicious wedding colours. After her make-up was completed, all her jewellery had to be arranged. Eight to ten pairs of gold bracelets were put on her arms, each carefully matched to its partner on the other arm. Elaborate jewelled gold earpieces were fitted over the whole ear and a nose jewel affixed. A jewelled gold ornament attached to her hair, was carefully placed on her forehead. Silver anklets and jewelled ornaments covering her feet were arranged. Finally, the white paneta, draped over the girl's shoulder, was fixed and fresh flowers carefully pinned in her hair.

Such extensive preparations were undertaken, to a greater or lesser extent, at all weddings. Yet for this most important day in the bride's life, she did not choose for herself what she would wear. A sari and shoes for some of the ceremonies was provided by her mama, mother's brother. For the main ceremony of kanya dan, when the bride was given away to the groom, the outer garment she wore was chosen by her husband's family. A bride normally wore red or green for this ceremony. On Madhu's wedding day in Baroda, the sari given to her by her future in-laws was of a traditional style she particularly disliked. Although she was making a 'love match' with her boyfriend of about six years, and she had told him of her preference, she was still given and obliged to wear, a garment she disliked. Indeed, although this was an important day for the bride,
it was certainly not her day. How she looked and even what she wore was dictated by others; firstly, her own relatives, then her in-laws. She was a manifestation of how they wanted her to appear, but the ceremony itself, was the ultimate status arena, where wealth and status were made visible in the person of the bride and the opulence of the various gifts and ceremonies.

Although no other social occasion for the Patidar could compete with a wedding ceremony in importance, women in urban, professional families had also to attend a range of social functions, which village women rarely had to do. Neena from Baroda commented with acerbity that her relatives from overseas, the United Kingdom, had to dress up smartly even to go and sit in the dark at the cinema, because they felt they had to impress anyone they might meet on such excursions. Such feelings were shared by Patidar women in urban India. Even to have their photograph taken, they frequently changed and made-up, whereas village women felt no such necessity to do so.

Summary

Both Caplan (1985) and Ursula Sharma (1986) have argued that during much of the time spent in social activities, urban women were actively involved in 'status production work'. There was certainly a significant difference between the patterns of social interaction between rural and urban Patidar women. In rural societies, Patidar women were seen as 'demonstrators of status' by not just their 'seclusion' in the home, but by their 'idleness': periods when they had no household duties to perform. This was particularly apparent
amongst the non-agricultural households in 'the Six Villages'. Such women epitomised the role of women as perceived by Srinivas as Sanskritisation. These women were expected to be 'decorous and decorative', as Sachs (1978) remarked about nineteenth century middle-class British women. These rural Patidar women were acting, however, as 'boundary markers of caste'.

The status of urban households, however, was no longer based solely on the 'ascribed' values of a caste-based society. Business and professional men in these households had to be successful in their enterprises in order to establish a place for themselves in urban society. Urban Patidar women rarely worked themselves. They had a much more important role to perform in supporting their husband and the household in their newly established status. In one sense, they acted as 'incorporated wives', as Finch (1983) has portrayed them. But, frequently, they were working for the interests of the husband and his family's own business or professional enterprise, not a large corporation or bureaucracy.

In the course of many of urban Patidar women's social activities, they were involved in establishing and consolidating links between new networks and building up reciprocal relationships. Moreover, they were very involved in creating the status of their household through their own appearance and that of their home. Indeed, urban women considered their appearance to be of much greater importance than rural women. Whenever they moved into the wider 'status arena' outside the household or were involved in activities with those not from the immediate family, they took great
care to dress well.

The scale and variety of urban women's 'leisure activities' was far greater than that of rural women. If they were create a refuge in the home, as nineteenth century British women had done for their middle class husbands, it was difficult for many women to consider full time paid employment as well. (Caplan 1985 also found that urban women in Madras had difficulty in combining these two roles.) Urban Patidar families had little desire for women to seek work, because they felt the nature of women's work in creating a comfortable home and in 'status production work' was of greater importance.

The lifestyles and roles of rural women, particularly in 'the Six' followed very much the pattern expected in Sanskritization. But rural Patidar women lived in a society totally dominated by the values of caste. Urban Patidar women also fulfilled many of the criteria associated with Sanskritization: they lived 'secluded' from the working world and had adopted many of the religious beliefs of the orthodox Brahmins, including the dietary proscriptions. But the reality of life in urban Patidar households meant that women needed to look further than caste-based values. But it was not true to deduce that the urban Patidar had, therefore, adopted a 'Western' or 'secular' model in order to reflect their newly-acquired urban status. They were still very entrenched in a caste society, as their attitudes to marriage, to be discussed in the following chapter, will reveal. The Patidar had, therefore, had to adapt
their expectations of women's roles to a different environment. In the process, they were still very influenced by caste, but certain concessions were being made to the demands of an achievement oriented urban society.

In the following chapter, I shall discuss how marriage, which has always been the main 'status arena' and means of reflecting upward social mobility for the Patidar caste, has undergone a transformation in urban society. At the same time, I shall consider how dowry payments, too, have been affected by urban residence.
1. Data obtained from 72 urban and rural women over a 5-day period from Survey B on patterns of social interaction.

2. Consequently, I was taken to certain shops to make purchases for my household, and was not able to wander freely from one to another, comparing prices.

3. The discussion in this paragraph results from data gathered in a subsequent period of fieldwork in February 1985.

4. Each garba, danced in a circle, could involve hundreds, if not thousands of people. In urban areas, whole streets were devoted to one particular set of dancers, who danced round and round the circle, right into the middle of the night. All those involved in garba were women, but men joined in another dance performed in two circles: one composed of women dancing in one direction and another of men dancing in the other direction. Each brandished a pair of large sticks and at set times, men and women faced each other and whacked each other's sticks!
MARRIAGE: HYPERGAMY AND DOWRY

Introduction

Marriage has been the principal means by which the Patidar could manifest status, more so, perhaps, when they were solely cultivators of land. At that time, they had neither the means nor the opportunity for conspicuous consumption. Nor did they have a great deal of leisure time, which could be used for activities displaying their wealth and status. Weddings, therefore, provided an opportunity to display wealth. But they were far more important to the Patidar in another respect: that of upward social mobility. Because of the nature of the caste system, as discussed earlier, Patidar men's position in the caste hierarchy was defined at birth. They could not move out of the particular sub-caste in which they were born. But Patidar women were not so constrained. Inherent in any marriage among the Patidar was the feeling that the bride-givers were inferior to the groom and his family, even if the two families, in other respects, were equal. But an extension of this was actually to seek out a groom whose family was of much higher standing. Such hypergamous marriages were the principal means of enhancing the status of a family. Once one successful hypergamous marriage had been arranged, it was generally followed by a series of others, to consolidate the family's rising status. The bride's natal family, in turn, could expect sons to be able to command a bride of higher status, than would have been possible previously. Consequently, over a series of such successful marriages, the family's position would improve. Moreover, each marriage opened up
a new set of kinship links and a wide range of possible 'contacts' for both personal and business matters.

Marriage alliances have frequently been used to consolidate and extend networks. Thompson (1988) discussed attitudes towards marriage amongst the middle-classes in Britain in the nineteenth century, when it was important to ensure that matches were between 'social equals'. He explained that for the British middle classes: "intermarriage had very considerable business advantages at a time when trading and dealing depended a great deal on personal knowledge and contacts and mutual confidence, and when it was difficult to tell how far strangers could be trusted." (Thompson p.102). Patidar business relationships, too, still depended very much on personal links: frequently they functioned as extended 'patron-client' networks. In urban areas, these networks were no longer totally caste-based. Marriage alliances, however, had always been strictly between members of the same caste; marital links with other castes from the same socio-economic background had been inconceivable.

In a rural caste-based society, upward mobility could only be achieved by hypergamous marriages within the Patidar caste. But had urban residence in a society where economic class was possibly as important as caste brought any changes to Patidar marriage practices? Was marriage still perceived as the central means to mark upward social mobility? If so, what impact had urban residence had on dowry payments? Moreover, was marriage still the principal 'status arena' for the urban Patidar and what were the implications
for women's role as 'demonstrators of status' in urban marriages.

**HYPERGAMY**

In theory, a Patidar girl should marry within her own ekada, or gol. In the past, failure to observe this practice had been penalised with a fine. But even within this restricted group, her choice was limited even further to families of an equal or higher standing. For those girls, therefore, born into the highest ekada and into one of the highest status khadaki, the choice was very limited indeed. In previous generations, this problem had been contained by reducing the number of eligible girls at the top, sometimes by going to lengths of selective female infanticide. Girls, from the higher status families, therefore, often found it more difficult to find partners than those lower down the social scale, because their choice was so limited. Moreover, the situation was compounded by the fact that girls marrying their status equals were not expected to give a dowry, or certainly only a small fixed amount. In 'the Six', for example, such women, when they married, even into the prestigious Desai families in Nadiad, considered very high status, only gave three hundred and one rupees, a very small amount indeed. The highest status families, therefore, were sometimes more interested in taking a bride from a lower status khadaki or gol in order to obtain a larger dowry than that received from a match with a girl from a family of 'equal' status.

Status differentials applied not just between one ekada and another, but also between the various villages in the same gol.
Within each ekada, some villages were considered higher than others, particularly in the large ekada of 'the Twenty-Seven', where Ajarpura was considered to be low. In Bakrol, although there were five khadaki, only four were accepted for marriage purposes. Anand, on the other hand, because it had become a prosperous town, was considered to be the 'creme' of 'the Twenty-Seven', so much so that the 'small Twenty-Seven', another ekada considered to be of lower status, had sought to amalgamate with the 'large Twenty-Seven' in order to gain access to Anand boys for purposes of marriage. This bid had been fought off by the 'large Twenty-Seven', who were anxious to defend their own chances of such a match. The arrival of more villages meant greater competition for the 'boys' from the higher status families within the ekada, in all probability pushing up the size of dowries required to procure such a match.

When a new match was contemplated, families often focused on the thodyun of a girl, that is a small group of five to six related families, or more particularly on her kutumb, which was the girl's immediate family and her ancestors. In the past, this had been the prime consideration in evaluating the worth of a marriage, but the criteria were changing somewhat. A fairly equal match, therefore, which did not entail any significant exchange of large sums of money as dowry, was one within the same gol, with a similar status village, probably with a family in a khadaki of similar standing, whose family also held a similar status. The 'status' of such villages and families was based initially on economic wealth, acquired over a period of time, and the associated prestige which the family had been accorded because of their wealth. Such 'status'
or standing could survive, for a period of time, even after the loss of the family's wealth. As Abdullah and Zeidenstein (1982) pointed out, in the context of Bangladesh, in a rural society, land ownership and status were intertwined. Even after the loss of land, a family could retain its status for some considerable time: newly rich families might still be prepared to marry a 'poor' girl from such a family, in order to acquire their 'status'. In arranging a marriage in Patidar society, all these variables had to be taken into consideration before an approach was even made.

There were, of course, two other forms of marriage which fell outside of these criteria, those when the girl married 'up' into a higher status family and those when she married 'down'. Downwards matches, in theory, were not supposed to be allowed, and if they did take place, the family itself was liable to be ostracised, as well as fined. Such marriages, however, generally occurred because the family had no alternatives due to lack of resources and declining fortunes. There was a girl from Karamsad, in 'the Six', who had married a man from Bakrol, yet it was in 'the Twenty seven'. Her family presumably were unable to command a better match; people in Karamsad, itself, would have denied such a match could occur in case such matches brought the high standing of the whole village into dispute. In the case of another girl from Karamsad, however, who had hoped to marry a friend from 'the Twenty-Seven', the marriage was firmly blocked by her father. He claimed there would be problems when her younger sisters were to be married, even though the boy's family were successful business people.
But some seemingly downward matches were sometimes tolerated by the girl's side if the boy's family was very wealthy. Madhu, an urban girl from 'the Six' was allowed to marry her long-standing boyfriend from 'the Five', but his family were extremely well off, and, therefore, did not appear to present a threat to the family standing and the future marriage of her younger sister. Moreover, this family lived in the cosmopolitan town of Baroda, not surrounded by members of their own ekada. In the villages, any departures from the accustomed marriages practices were more difficult to contemplate in the face of possible criticism from all the other residents. (In Madhu's family, moreover, there were four daughters, which meant that their successful placing in good marriages was a heavy financial burden for their one brother. Their father was dead.)

One particular family from Virsad provided evidence of both processes in marriage, both 'downward' matches and hypergamy. Virsad was an independent village, not part of an ekada. It viewed itself somewhere outside 'the Six', 'the Five', and possibly, superior to 'the Twenty-Seven', but girls were accepted in marriage in all these ekada. When Lata was married fifteen years before the survey period in 1980-1, to her husband from Bakrol in 'the Twenty seven', none of her relatives would attend the wedding because they disapproved of the match. Yet her husband was highly educated and came from a prosperous family; he had since been very successful in business. (1) These same relatives, from Virsad, chose a few years later to marry their own daughter, Manju, into 'the Six' and pay a high dowry as a consequence. They were said to consider it more
important to acquire status from marrying into 'the Six' rather than look for an educated boy. By the time of the research, however, it was felt that Virdad was of a sufficiently high status for some boys to marry girls from 'the Six', suggesting perhaps a flux in the fortunes of both Virdad and some of the families in 'the Six'. Thus, each match has to be assessed by the status of families and villages at the time of the marriage. Moreover, as new criteria have become more important, such as education and career prospects, these have to be considered as well as the reputation of a particular kutumb, when marriages were arranged.

Using hypergamous marriages to achieve a general improvement in the family status is a lengthy process. It cannot be achieved by one match alone, but is part of a long-term strategy. If handled skilfully, each match can be an improvement on a former and in each generation the status of the family changes. Frequently, a pattern was observed of one sister marrying into a town, or even one of the large towns, followed by other sisters who went, perhaps, to live in Bombay or abroad. In one family in 'the Six', the oldest sister, Radha, was married to a man from Baroda. Gargi, the second sister, married a man living in London and the husband of the youngest sister, Priya, was from the United States. Matches with husbands from the United States were considered to be the most prestigious of all, partly because United States immigration policy was such that eventually all members of the family, if they so wished, could emigrate to America. An example of generational upward mobility can be seen in Lata's family: her mother came from a small village.
outside the Kheda district; villages outside the area were generally considered to be lower status. She was married into Virsad and despite having six daughters succeeded in marrying them into educated and prosperous families in 'the Twenty Seven' and 'the Five'.

In the case of upward mobility it was usual to give large paithan or money sums, and an ample supply of accompanying gifts as dowry. Jaishri, for example, was an only child. She was from a small, lower status village and not very good looking. However, she held a well-paid job in a bank. At her marriage, she was given a great deal of gold jewellery and brought fifty-one saris at her 'first coming'. At the ceremony of the 'second coming' to her in-laws, she would be expected to bring more. On the other hand, Kusum, although equally well-educated and attractive as well, refused to allow her family to give any dowry; consequently, her family could not arrange a match with a boy from overseas as they desired. Her husband, though a 'Twenty-Seven' Patel, lived in Bihar, in eastern India, considered to be a 'backward' state. Girls who steadfastly refused to let their families give dowry could remain unmarried: Vina and Neena, in their thirties, were one example.

New status determinants, too, were changing the criteria for giving dowry: Jitendra from Karamsad told of another man originally from that village, who was a doctor in the United States. He had returned in search of a bride. Because he had American citizenship, he was asking for a dowry of sixty-one thousand rupees, in stark
contrast to the sums mentioned previously in 'the Six' for a marriage within the ekada of three hundred and one rupees. (2). Families began to save for their daughters' wedding as soon as a daughter was born. This was of particular importance if they wanted to ensure an advantageous match. There were, sometimes, material gains from such matches, because whole new and probably wealthier networks became accessible for business purposes. When Meeta, from a small village in 'the Twenty-Seven', married into a successful business family living in Anand, whose 'ancestral village' was Bakrol, their business contacts were opened up to Meeta's brother, Suresh. Shortly afterwards, Suresh and his mother moved to Anand, themselves, and Suresh started a completely new business venture with Meeta's husband, some years after the marriage. Such joint ventures, however, were probably of recent origin, since the Patidar had expanded into urban businesses and commercial life. They were not really feasible for those Patidar who were cultivators, living in their own villages. But hypergamous marriages had been part of the Patidar way of life, because they had always been viewed principally as a means of improving the family standing.

In this process, a number of young women were seen mainly as pawns in a transaction. Some even felt this way, if a large dowry was involved and hence, a small number refused to allow their families to give dowry. (However, it was said that this had been given, on occasions, without the girl, herself, knowing.) There was a particular temptation for families who sought the means to enable their sons to emigrate. This was only possible if a female in the
family married a man with United States citizenship. Consequently, Chandrika's family, in Ajarpura, were eagerly seeking such a match for her, despite the fact that she very much wished to remain in India, near her family. But she recognised that it was her duty to accept such a match, if one could be found, for the benefit of the whole family. In Kusum's case, her family were so keen to take the opportunity of introducing her to a desirable husband, that they even collected her from one of her finals' examinations for her degree and took her to meet the young man, even though she had a further examination the following morning. Anjana, too, in her early twenties, studying for her law degree, was obliged to meet a series of prospective husbands, even though she did not feel ready to marry. She felt obliged to follow her parent's wishes; however, she succeeded very skilfully in deterring any interested parties during the course of her 'interview' with the young man concerned. Moreover, she did not wish her family to give dowry, which was a further deterrent. However, most young women, even if not prepared to marry, did not go to such lengths.

Determinants of 'good' marriage partners

There have always been certain essential criteria which have been sought after, as a prerequisite to a good marriage. Families would look for a prospective husband and wife from a village and khadaki with a similar standing to their own. In the case of the girl's family, they would probably be looking for a family of slightly higher status. Once they heard of a possible partner, they would generally try to make extensive inquiries both about the
family, kutumb, and about the character of the boy or girl concerned. Representatives of the two families would then meet and, in recent times, the couple would also meet for a short period, possibly having a brief time alone in which to talk, referred to as an 'interview'. There were some women in the surveys, however, who had been married in the last fifteen years or less, who had not met their future husband before the wedding. This 'interview' was still often the only opportunity for assessing the character of the prospective spouse, before making the nearly irreparable step of agreeing to the marriage and holding the chanalo ceremony, which performed the function of a binding engagement. It had become of fairly common practice, to allow the couple to meet once, or even more often, after this 'engagement', occasionally even on their own. But, of course, there was virtually no possibility of having second thoughts at this stage without a permanent slur on the reputation of both the parties, perhaps to the extent, in the girl's case, of being unable to find any other marriage partner.

Such a procedure was also followed when considering prospective suitors from overseas, either from East Africa, the United Kingdom, or the United States. There was then, however, the added dimension in that people coming from overseas, particularly the United Kingdom and the United States, were usually very limited for time. Consequently, the whole procedure had often to be concluded in perhaps three weeks, from the initial process of finding a bride, to holding the actual marriage. In such circumstances, it was not easy to make extensive inquiries, nor would people locally necessarily be acquainted with the character and behaviour of a young man living
overseas. In such cases, the family's original village, khadaki and kutumb would be checked, but as with urban dwellers in India, their residence overseas gave them added kudos, enhancing their status vis-a-vis families of similar standing in rural Gujarat. Consequently, they were usually in a position to demand a fairly high dowry. Snehlata was recalled from a visit to the United States to make all the necessary arrangements for her daughter's marriage, to a boy from overseas, which had been arranged by Snehlata's husband in her absence. She had only about a fortnight in which to comply.

With the changes in circumstances resulting from urban and industrial development since Independence, the criteria for selecting suitable partners had also undergone some alteration. The standing of the prospective partner's family was still important, especially amongst the highest status groups. 'The Six Villages', particularly, felt they were the elite: they had 'royal blood' and were, consequently, known as kulin villages. It was important, therefore, to marry with people of the same 'blood'. But other factors had assumed importance, too. Family status in an agricultural society was ultimately based upon land and resources; however, with recent developments, the basis of wealth changed. But, ultimately, it was the family's wealth which would determine a family's standing in the long term. With newly-acquired wealth the family would, over a period of time, be able to enhance its status through hypergamous marriages. If fellow members of a khadaki and the village were also more prosperous, then the whole group would
rise in status; one has only to consider the fluctuating fortunes of the ekada to see this at work. 'The Twenty-Seven', for example, had grown to over sixty villages strong as a result of acquiring more member villages through this process.

As a consequence of these changes, the requirements for both brides and grooms had become more complex. Families were looking for a groom who not only had a good family background, but was educated and potentially able to make his own way in the world. Personal contacts, however, were still of prime importance. It was difficult for even a well-qualified and talented person to be successful without them: so, a prospective groom, hopefully would be backed up by an established family business or professional practice. Most families, even if they, themselves, lived in a village, ideally wanted a husband for their daughters, who was an urban dweller, or even lived overseas. This was not just a question of status, and wealth, but also a general feeling that urban life presented a less arduous, more comfortable and interesting lifestyle. Hema, who had been married into the small village of Gada, certainly did not want her children ever to have to live in a village, and had even sent them away to school, in a nearby large town. She hoped they would settle and marry in a town.

Although a newly married woman was expected to adapt to the customs, habits and beliefs of her in-laws, parents, generally, felt it necessary to try to ensure that the prospective partner had a good nature, but also that they were sanskar. Panna and Kashori in WN, both mothers of boys only, wanted such sanskar girls for their
sons; that is that the girls had a 'good orientation and education'. Consequently, it was sometimes felt necessary not just for reasons of wealth and status to find a partner from a similar social standing to one's own. By such means, it could be ensured that a new bride would find it much easier to fit in with a way of life similar to her own and thus minimize conflicts and stress on both sides. Anjana, from VN, spoke of her discomfort at the prospect of marrying a boy whose family lived in East Africa and moved in a circle where there was a round of cocktail parties. She felt unable to cope with such a lifestyle.

Such a dilemma reflected some of the changing requirements for a bride who was to live in a town, or overseas. To have a 'good nature' and come from a 'good family' might be satisfactory for a village match, but a girl hoping to marry into a prospering urban family needed both good looks and a good education. In 'the Six Villages', this often meant having a degree. Hassu, a 'Six Village' girl living in VN, felt it was impossible for her to make a 'good match' unless she obtained a degree, even if the groom did not have a degree himself. As one of the elite, herself, from a good family in 'the Six', her choice of possible partners was limited anyway.

However, most other women felt that a girl had to be careful how far she studied, because it was more generally felt that a husband should be as well and preferably better qualified, than his wife. Consequently, Neena from 'the Six' was warned about studying for a Masters degree in engineering: a warning which she ignored.
Bharti from Virsad, was prohibited by her grandfather from studying medicine, partly because it would delay her own marriage for a long period whilst she completed her studies, and also because her younger sisters would also have a long wait for the same reason. It was generally felt that an older sister should be married before her younger sisters and delays encountered in finding a match for an older sister, held up the process, too, for any younger girls. How long a girl was allowed to study depended on a variety of factors other than her intelligence and desire to do so. Most families felt that as a future husband should be better qualified, the girl's family had to try to assess what sort of match she might expect. Many people were reluctant to allow studies to continue beyond degree level, because this would limit the number of well-qualified men available. Urban families, particularly, wanted a reasonable degree of education so that a wife would be able to assist her children with their school work, and, also, increasingly be able to converse in company. Consequently, such degree courses as 'Home Economics' were popular. But as Neena commented: most of the young men studying engineering with her were searching for a 'good-looking', but 'homely' girl, who would be good at cooking and housekeeping. Higher education in a girl was just one of a number of considerations for a bride.

'Good looks', in fact, were particularly important, even good looks in the groom. Vina's father wanted a 'good-looking' and wealthy son-in-law. Bharti's grandfather had rejected her future husband, initially, despite his good educational achievements, because he was not good-looking. Similarly, Nayana had appealed to
her younger sister, Lata, not to be deterred from her future husband because of his looks, as in all other respects, he was an admirable match. But if good looks were an important consideration in a husband, they were paramount in a bride. Those girls not considered 'good looking', or 'too dark', had to expect difficulties and possibly pay a considerably higher dowry. Jaishri had married her village husband from Bakrol, who had a degree and an office job. She, too, had a degree and worked in a bank, but because she was not very good-looking, she was given at marriage, large amounts of gold and saris, although it could not be construed as being a hypergamous marriage, or a particularly prestigious match. Skin colour and height were also contentious areas. Anjana, although only in her early twenties, was put under considerable pressure to marry, particularly because her family anticipated problems in finding a husband tall enough for her younger sister. They contended that until Anjana was married, they could not start the process of finding this younger sister a partner; if too much time elapsed, they would then have the additional problem of her age, with which to contend. Other women, too, had encountered problems because of their height. When Pratima was only sixteen, she was married to Haren; they were both extremely tall by Patidar standards. Despite her youth, it had been felt essential to marry her, because her chances of finding someone as suitable, taller than herself, were considered slight.

Although, the age at marriage was increasing amongst the Patidar, as was shown in Chapter 12, it was felt that girls should
be married shortly after completing their studies. Even women who studied to degree level, therefore, were often married by the time they were twenty-one or twenty-two. Indeed, once a woman grew much older she was felt to be at a disadvantage. Twenty-five was considered by many to be about the latest age at which a woman should marry. As was seen in Survey A, the majority of women were married between the ages of nineteen and twenty-four. Particularly, in the small villages, women were frequently married before they were twenty, generally because educational levels were lower. As many men, too, married in their early to mid-twenties, any delay in finding a partner for a woman, meant that the number of eligible men had diminished rapidly. Chandrika from Ajarpura, considered that she was becoming 'too old' to find a partner, yet she was only twenty-three at the time. Women were married when they were older; but this was rather exceptional and, often, not from choice. Ranjan in Dharman, explained that she was thirty-two before she married, but attributed this to the fact that she came from a very high status family, the Desais of Nadiad, and hence had experienced problems in finding someone of a similar status. Her husband, although high-status, was a childless widower; but, of course, very few high status Patidar men over thirty were likely to have remained unmarried. Another high status woman from 'the Six', Malini, was thirty-five before she married. Both women had careers: the former in teaching and the latter in banking.

There were other factors which made the task of finding a suitable marriage partner more difficult. The family of prospective husbands were frequently deterred if the girl had no brother.
Without a brother, there could be no guarantee that the lifelong responsibility for giving gifts would continue towards the wife once her parents had died. Chandrika in Ajarpura, lived in a large joint household of twenty-three members. She had five 'cousin brothers', all of whom she regarded in the same light as full brothers. Yet, despite their guarantees to continue to support her, a number of families were deterred from considering her as a prospective daughter-in-law. In other families, there were several sisters and perhaps only one brother. Consequently, their parents were not in a position to give a very large dowry. If there were several brothers, then dowries could be recouped from their brides on their marriage, and the whole process balanced itself out, to a certain extent. But where sisters outnumbered brothers, as they did in a number of families, there were obvious difficulties. Pratima, for example, the very tall girl of sixteen who was married to Haren, was one of six sisters, hence her family felt added gratitude at finding her a husband. In a few cases, too, girls had stated that they did not wish their families to give a dowry and this again caused difficulties. Many families felt trapped with regards to dowry, because they needed the money their son's bride would bring to help them pay for their daughter's wedding. Only if there were no daughters in the family might some families feel able to forego a dowry.

Other difficulties arose, especially for girls, when there had been some form of scandal in the family, such as an elopement, or a separation. In Madhu's family, great pressure was put on her mami

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to remain with her husband, even though they lived completely separately in the same house. By keeping up outward appearances, they hoped to be able, eventually, to marry off the sixteen-year old daughter of the marriage. If the couple had been officially separated, then everyone envisaged difficulties in finding a husband for her. Many people contended that one of the reasons for the very quick completion of the marriage process was to enable the ceremony to be concluded before any adverse gossip reached the other party. Certainly, once a wedding had been arranged, the ceremony tended to follow within a few weeks.

One final problem sometimes arose, too, after all other issues had been successfully resolved. Before the chanalo ceremony, horoscopes were exchanged; these had been charted at the birth of both the prospective couple. If the planets proved to be in adverse positions, then the match would be called off. Malika had experienced this with a young man she had wished to marry, and she still felt a certain regret that the match had not been fulfilled. In Vina's case, her chart was such that her choice of partners was very limited because the position of her planets dictated an early death for many of her potential partners. (She was still unmarried in her early thirties, at the time of the original fieldwork.) Even if in all other respects, therefore, the match was very suitable, if the horoscopes were incompatible, then the arrangements would proceed no further.
THE WEDDING CEREMONY: AS 'STATUS ARENA'

The actual wedding ceremony, itself, provided ample scope for manifesting status. Every aspect of the celebrations offered a means of exhibiting the wealth of the bride's family, who were responsible for most of the major expenditure. Both the size and tone of the wedding depended very much on the wealth of the bride's family. In Bakrol, when Kirit's sister was married, only a handful of guests were present. Similarly, at Chandrika's wedding in Ajarpura, a hundred guests were present. Kusum held her wedding in the temple in Nadiad, but only a similar number of guests were present. All these families came from villages in 'the Twenty-Seven Villages'. Yet at the other extreme, at many urban weddings, there could be anything up to two thousand guests present, particularly for meals.

Only close relatives attended all the ceremonies, which might commence in the early morning, or even the day before the main wedding ceremonies. The first ceremonies were held separately at the bride and groom's home, then, usually, the groom and his party, the jan, came to the bride's home where the second half of the ceremonies were held. The bride's father provided a dinner for all the guests, commencing with the men on the groom's side, then the ladies, followed by a third sitting of the men from the bride's side and, finally, the women guests and relatives on the bride's side, at the very end. The groom's guests were given the best food in ample quantities; the bride's guests were likely, perhaps, not to have so much to eat or not to receive some of the tastiest morsels, which
had perhaps run out, by the time of the fourth sitting for the bride's female guests. A number of people were very careful about what they ate in case the food was not of high enough quality. If, for example, food had been cooked in vegetable oil rather than ghee, they would not eat it. Lata often only toyed with her food out of politeness. A great deal of pressure was exerted with favoured guests to eat liberally as a reflection on the host's hospitality. Much comment was made on the quality and liberality of the food provided. All those who attended the wedding would partake of the dinner; some, indeed, only took the meal and then departed; particularly the male guests in the busy wedding season, who had work to do. (Many weddings were concentrated into certain periods of the year, so that some families might have several weddings to attend in one week, or even one day.) Female guests might stay longer and attend some of the most important ceremonies; sometimes, however, these fell late in the evening around midnight and, consequently, the majority of the guests had actually departed. Women gave careful consideration to which ceremonies they should attend and how long they ought to stay, in order not to offend their host and hostess. Usually, too, lunch and other snacks had to be provided for guests who had come some distance.

In a recent development, the boy's side occasionally held a reception to which they invited many of their own guests and provided refreshments. At Madhu's wedding, her wealthy in-laws invited several thousand people to their reception on the day following the actual wedding. Only fifty to one hundred guests were from the bride's side. A whole football field was filled with
guests and buffet refreshments. The wedding party stood on a
platform and received each guest, a process which lasted all
evening. The guests, themselves, were all photographed as they gave
a gift, generally of money, to the bride and groom. By 1985, some
families started to hold their weddings in a newly opened hotel on
the edge of Anand, and had most elaborate decorations, such as
floral fountains, erected for the ceremony. This, however, was not
a very common occurrence, as generally all the entertainment was
still provided by the bride's family, often at the family home.

Both the quality and quantity of food were very important
indicators of the status of the bride's family, as, too, were the
number of guests attending the wedding. Other factors, too,
reflected on how much they were prepared, and able, to spend: at
small weddings, guests often ate seated on the ground, whereas at
more prestigious affairs, they sat at tables. Small weddings, like
Kusum's, had no music, apart from women's singing, whereas many
weddings had hired a uniformed band to play wedding songs, and often
had music relayed, too, over a tannoy system. Not all the rituals
were observed at every wedding: for example, varad, when female
relatives of the bride paraded around the village, or the
neighbourhood, where she lived, with ornamental pitchers on their
heads, was often not observed in towns. Some claimed this was
because heavy traffic made this ceremony difficult to practice,
however, some families in urban areas still observed varad: see Fig:
19.1. Attempts had been made over the years to cut the wedding
ceremonies. Indeed, in previous generations, these had lasted
several days, but people could no longer spare so much time, nor the expense of feeding and housing large numbers of people over such a long period. Indeed, a reform movement, the Arya Samaj, performed very simplified ceremonies, for small wedding parties in an attempt to cut the tremendous cost of weddings. (None of my sample mentioned holding such a wedding.)

Many families reckoned that a wedding would cost the bride's family from one lakh rupees (100,000 rupees) to two and a half lakhs (250,000 rupees). This cost included provision for all the various components of the dowry: jewellery, saris and money, as well as other expenditure. Madhu, from the large town of Baroda, speculating before her wedding, thought that her brother, as head of the family, would have to pay in the region of one and a half lakh rupees. She estimated he would pay seventy thousand rupees for her gold jewellery and twenty thousand rupees for her forty-five sets of saris. Also in the region of five thousand rupees for two saris for each of her three sisters-in-law. The lunch and dinner would be in the region of twenty thousand rupees. There was also expenditure such as painting the house, four thousand rupees, as well as gifts for her husband such as a watch and silver lemonade set; not to mention other presents and sums of money given, as well as the sweetmeats presented to the groom's family at chanalo-matli. Yet she stated that she was not giving 'dowry', in that her brother made no money payment, or 'paithan', to the groom's family. Madhu was making a 'love match' with her boyfriend of several years. His family was also of lower status than her own, although they were wealthy. She was from 'the Six' villages, he was from 'the Five'.

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Hence, her family did not need to make large money payments. All the sums expended were a reflection of the wealth and standing of Madhu's family. Moreover, Neeta was the third of four sisters, so that her one brother had to expect to spend as much if not more on the subsequent marriage of her younger sister.

But Bharti of VN, who had her own business as a beautician and attended many weddings every year in that capacity, contended that it was usually the girl's family who wished to hold an expensive, ostentatious wedding which could act as a forum for their wealth and status. She felt families found few other outlets to outdo their neighbours and business rivals and, consequently, concentrated their efforts on weddings. She quoted the most lavish weddings, often held by large-scale tobacco farmers, as costing five to six lakh rupees. Such sums should be considered in their context of the earnings of Chandrika's 'cousin' brothers in Ajarpura: one, for example, a young graduate, worked in an office in the village for three hundred rupees a month. His brothers were given two hundred rupees a month for their full-time work in the family business. Many office and bank workers could only expect to earn around five hundred and fifty rupees per month for working in the local bank. College lecturers might expect to earn, perhaps, in the region of one thousand rupees. Yet such families, even in villages, still had to find many tens of thousands of rupees, if not more, even for a small wedding, when it came to marry each sister. Not surprisingly, families started saving from the birth of a daughter onwards. Moreover, the bulk of the expense was absorbed by various 'dowry'
Weddings, too, gave women their main opportunity to dress up and look at their best. The bride, of course, was the centre of attention, and, as was shown in Chapter 19, a great deal of time was spent in ensuring she was looking at her best. Moreover, constant checks were made to ensure that she continued to look well throughout the ceremonies, particularly as each stage of the rituals was marked by photographs; in the towns, by 1985, the use of video cameras was just beginning to develop, too. Other close female relatives also were particularly well dressed; indeed, they might change their saris and blouse sets up to four times, during the day, depending on the status of the wedding. New saris were generally bought for very close female relatives, like sisters and sisters-in-law, by the father of the bride. These heavy silk embroidered saris, often worn on such occasions, could cost from five hundred rupees upwards. However, all women attending a wedding had to gauge exactly what to wear in order to reflect the degree of kinship and the status of the wedding. Although, at marriage, all women were given a wardrobe of saris to equip them for all circumstances in their future married life, including weddings, wealthier women, particularly at urban weddings, felt that these saris had become outdated. Consequently, when possible, they bought new styles. Similarly, with the gold jewellery which was worn with great profusion, fashions also changed. Sometimes, women had their old jewellery redesigned, but Lata, for example, bought a whole new set of gold jewellery, including necklace, bracelets and earrings, for the wedding of the brother of her younger sister-in-law, Meeta. At
another wedding, much criticism was levied against Panna, by the other women present, for only wearing silver jewellery: yet she had been obliged to sell her gold to pay off family debts. On occasions, the necessary opulent appearance was achieved by borrowing jewellery, or saris, from other wealthier relatives. Relatives actually involved in the major ceremonies had just as much to reflect the status of the family as did the bride. Often an older brother and his wife would participate in the grahashanti ceremony, second in importance to the gift of the bride, kanyadan. On such occasions, indeed, the sister-in-law would be as magnificently well dressed as the bride.

Another major area of expenditure at weddings was the many sums of money and gifts given. All these were carefully recorded, and in the case of gifts to the groom, such as the four gifts at the mangelfera, the circling of the fire ceremony performed by the bride and groom, the presentation of each gift was photographed. The bride's family presented these four gifts, which were frequently objects requested by the groom. At a wedding, the groom might demand, for example, gifts such as an electric fan and a gold ring; at one wedding, Pritha's, he received four money gifts each ranging from five hundred to a thousand rupees. Much time was taken to ensure all these photographs were posed correctly, so that an accurate record of the gift was obtained. Other gifts were displayed to the guests: those clothes given to the bride by the groom's family were shown around for all to admire. But particularly important was the display of all the gifts the bride
was taking with her as dowry. All her saris, jewellery, utensils and other items were on display both at her own home before she was married, and later, fully inspected at her in-laws. In such a manner families felt obliged to give lavishly, otherwise adverse comments would ensue. Indira, a teacher from 'the Twenty seven', commented that it was easy for wealthy families to supply fifty-one saris as part of the dowry, but less wealthy families sought to emulate this practice and it was a tremendous burden for them. Moreover, the quality of gifts, such as saris, would be closely examined as well. Gifts given as dowry were the most important factor in establishing a family's wealth and status. As much time was spent in discussion over what was required by the groom's family, and what the bride's family could afford to give; the significance of such discussions and the essential part dowry played in the Patidar value system, will be discussed below.

DOWRY AND STATUS

Dowry can symbolise different features in different societies. In some cultures, it acts as a form of compensation for women who, otherwise, would not inherit any of their father's property. Patidar women rarely inherited land or fixed property, however, because their rights of inheritance were not generally acknowledged, except in the absence of a male heir. But as has already been discussed, it does not represent a form of compensation in Patidar society. Money payments which were given as dowry did not go directly to the girl; they were given to her parents-in-law, who had the disposal of the money in their hands. The sums given as money payments, paithan, moreover, were generally determined by the
groom's family, after negotiations; Caplan (1985) also made the same point about this practice in her sample in Madras. Consequently, paithan hardly reflected what the bride's family would like to give her as a form of compensation for loss of inheritance, it represented what the groom's family felt was acceptable.

Moreover, if it was intended as some form of compensation for foregoing inheritance rights, then a fairly general feeling of dislike for the institution would hardly be comprehensible. Indeed, some girls, such as Anjana and Kusum, were not prepared for their families to give dowry payments. In a number of instances, too, the families of some of the married women respondents had not given dowry on their marriage, because they disapproved of such payments. (Dowry payments are illegal in India, but no woman mentioned this fact as a reason for not giving dowry. Moreover, such payments were openly acknowledged.) Dowry represented a tremendous burden on many families, particularly when there were a number of unmarried girls and few, if any, brothers. It was generally felt that money received on a boy's marriage from the family of his bride, could be used to help make dowry payments on the subsequent marriage of one of his sisters. Consequently, it was difficult for many families, even if they disapproved, to refuse to take dowry payments on the marriage of their son, because they had further marriages of their own female relatives to finance.

The aspect of dowry which might more correctly be seen as a form of compensation for loss of inheritance rights, were the gifts
of gold jewellery given by the girl's family to the bride. These, as has been seen already, were theoretically hers; but, on her death, she was expected to bequeath them to her own daughters and daughters-in-law. However, in times of hardship, this jewellery could be used as a family resource: Panna had sold all her 125 tola of gold in order to pay off debts caused by her husband's failed business venture. Other families found that if a woman separated from her husband, it was often difficult to regain jewellery which was rightly hers. Meena's sister had been married in Kheda to a Patidar man normally resident in England. He returned to England, but refused to allow his bride to join him there. Her family lost 100 tola in gold, given to the bride at the time of the wedding, which the groom had taken with him. His family refused to return the jewellery. Sometimes, too, women had to sell some of their own gold or have it refashioned in order to give their own daughters large sums on their marriage. Gold jewellery was of more direct benefit to a bride, but even so, it was not necessarily in her power to dictate the manner in which it was disposed.

It was certainly, however, a manifestation of the wealth of her own family and it was felt that the possession of such gifts would place her in high regard in her in-laws family. Sharma (1980) contended that a bride was merely a 'vehicle' for the passage of wealth from her own kin to her husband's family. But by giving large amounts of both money and gold jewellery, her family hoped to ensure that the girl would be respected and well-treated in her new family. Hence, women took pride in the size of these payments and particularly in the quantity of jewellery and clothing they were
given. These high payments reflected both on the bride and her natal family's prestige.

Boserup (1970) contended that there was a close correlation between the decline in women's economic productivity and an increase in the size of dowry payments. Such a position could produce instances of female infanticide because of the financial burden of marrying off daughters, as Miller (1981) has also reported. There was no evidence to suggest such practices existed in Gujarat, although they had done so in previous generations. However, there was evidence to suggest that perhaps baby girls were not nurtured as assiduously as boys, in Gujarat as a whole. (Chapter 2 contains details of the very high infant mortality rates in Gujarat. Moreover, the possibilities for selective abortions of females has also been discussed.)

Sharma (1980), too, found the prevalence in her own research of larger dowries whenever women ceased to play a very active role in the subsistence economy, and withdrew to a life of 'relative' idleness. However, amongst the Patidar, even when a woman was working before marriage and could bring an income into the home, the level of her dowry appeared to remain unaffected. Saroj, a lecturer, for example, was given her three previous year's earnings as her dowry payment by her family. Women earnings could, in fact, enhance their own marriage prospects by adding to the available sums of money for dowry. This development certainly occurred in the United Kingdom. For the Patidar, therefore, economic productivity was not the sole criterion for the size of dowry payments.
Harrell and Dickey (1985) contended that dowry payments were not a means to compensate families for 'maintaining' an 'unproductive' female in the household. They reiterated the point made by Divali and Harris (1976) that dowry payments were small or non-existent between status equals and that dowry was a function of hypergamy. It was certainly the case amongst Patidar families that dowry payments increased significantly, the greater the difference in status between the bride's and the groom's family. Harrell and Dickey (1985) felt that one of the functions performed by dowry was to enable the bride's family to publicly display their wealth and social status. If dowry did not act as a means of 'early' inheritance for the Patidar, was its primary function for the Patidar to display of the status of the family and to reflect status differentials?

**Dowry: its constituents**

Dowry was a term employed by the Patidar to cover a number of elements. Before discussing 'dowry' in any further detail, therefore, it is necessary to define exactly what its constituents were for the Patidar. Dowry's most important components, arranged between the respective families, were the payment of a sum of money, known as paithan, the gifts of gold jewellery to the bride, her saris, and household items. Paithan was considered to be very important. The gift of gold jewellery to the bride, however, could overshadow this payment by tens or even hundreds of thousands of rupees. At the time of the research in 1980, the price of gold was rapidly rising: early in the year, it was reckoned at R1,500 per tola, but by the end of the research it had risen to around R2,000
if not more. (Around this time, gold stood at a high of about eight hundred dollars an ounce). All gifts of jewellery were reckoned by the number of tola they contained. (One tola was equal to just over eleven grammes: very approximately two and a half tolas to an ounce.) By 1985, it had rise to R2,300 per tola.

Apart from payments of money and 'gold', another important component of dowry were the gifts of saris: families also equipped their daughters with a wardrobe of saris and blouses, including many very expensive ones, suitable to be worn on ceremonial occasions. Such heavy silk saris, often embroidered in gold or silver thread could cost from at least R500 to well over a thousand rupees. Indeed, an ordinary synthetic fibre sari, worn for outdoor excursions, could cost in the region of R500. Of course, natal families were expected to continue to supply saris throughout the woman's life and keep her and often her children completely clothed. Her appearance on future occasions reflected, therefore, on the wealth and status of her family of origin. Finally, women supplied cooking and eating vessels and various items of furniture, such as beds and bedding, as decided before the chanalo ceremony, when often, half the paithan was given. Such gifts were expected to be sufficient to supply the couple's household needs if they were to set up an establishment of their own.

In order to give some context to the following discussion on dowry, it should be remembered that other castes did not necessarily give dowry of such magnitude, if at all. Madhu, who was opposed to
payments of paithan, contended that the Baniya caste (of merchants) gave only half a tola of gold and a few saris. Yet they were considered to be of a similar standing to the urban Patidar. Nor did they exhibit all these dowry gifts. R.K. Amin, (n.d.) in his research in a small village in the Kheda region, confirmed this statement. He found that three castes in the village gave dowry: the Banias, the Harijans and the Patels. But dowry represented only 10% of the marriage expenses for the Bania caste, 20% for the Harijans and 50% of the Patidar’s wedding costs.

There were various contentions about what constituted high or low dowries, however, amongst the Patidar. A university sociology lecturer, from 'the large Twenty-seven', Dr A.S. Patel, felt that the range of payments was as follows: high dowries ranged from payments of ten to fifteen thousand rupees, plus fifty tola of gold and upwards; medium payments fell in the range of money payments up to ten thousand rupees and gold from 25-45 tola; low dowries would entail gifts of gold in the region of 10-25 tola, with little or no money payments. Informants in 'the Six', such as Sunanda, Mahendra and Jitendra, felt that average dowry payments in that ekada could vary between five to twelve thousand rupees, with a minimum gift of gold from 15-20 tola. However if the girl was from a lower gol, the payments would be much higher, anything up to two hundred tola might be given. (I never encountered anyone who had made such a payment.) But if a girl from 'the Six' married a boy from 'overseas', generally the United States or the United Kingdom, then even she would have to make large payments, despite her high status, because overseas matches had acquired even higher status.
Table 20.1: Theoretical range of dowry payments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gold</th>
<th>Money</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High payments</td>
<td>50 tola upwards</td>
<td>R10,000 - R15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium payments</td>
<td>25 - 45 tola</td>
<td>Up to R10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low payments</td>
<td>10 - 25 tola</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In those circumstances, even 'Six' girls might have to give thirty thousand rupees and fifty or sixty tola in gold. Indeed, Sushmita from 'the Six' could provide evidence of this in her own family: her eldest daughter, Radha, married a man from 'the Six' living in Baroda. She took no paithan and twenty-seven tola in gold. The second daughter, Gargi, married a man from 'the Six' living in London: she took seventy-five thousand rupees in paithan and twenty tola in gold. Her youngest daughter, Priya, married a 'Six' man living in America: she took forty thousand rupees in paithan and twelve tola in gold. But between the marriages of the two younger daughters, gold had risen from five or six hundred rupees per tola to fifteen hundred rupees per tola. Sushmita, herself, claimed that each daughter should have been given the same amount in gold, but rising prices had precluded this for her. However, there was a strong sense that a form of parity should be maintained amongst sisters, and also amongst incoming brides, if they came from similar status families. Sita in Anand, had set the precedent in her in-laws family by bringing five thousand rupees in paithan; her following sisters-in-law had brought the same amount. However, the amount of gold and saris given was not necessarily the same as this reflected more on how much the bride's family was prepared and wished to give her. Even in what were considered 'love marriages',

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girls were always given gold and saris, even when no paithan was offered. Indeed, in the absence of paithan, the amount of gold and clothes given, tended to increase considerably. When Lila made a 'love match' with a man from a family of very similar status in the same gol, her father gave no dowry. But he did give her one hundred and eleven tola in gold.

The amount to be given as dowry was carefully negotiated before the match was sealed at the chanalo ceremony: a number of factors were taken into account before arriving at the final sum. Amongst families who were considered status equals, little of no paithan, money payments, in theory, have changed hands. However, there was always the generally held belief that the bride's family were 'inferior', because they were the bride-givers. Consequently, a small sum would be given to denote this. In the high status families of Nadiad, in 'the Six', in Shobna and Charulata's khadaki, 301 rupees were given at marriage. Of course, if it was an hypergamous marriage, with the bride coming from a lower gol, and marrying into a high status, wealthy family and gol, then the paithan payment might be high indeed. In the previous generation, Jitendra, who was from a high status family in 'the Six', claimed that his mother, from Ode, a village in a lower gol, 'the Five', brought paithan of one hundred thousand rupees; whatever the value of the sum at the time, it was certainly sufficient for the family to build a new home. But his own wife, Meena, from 'the Six, had only brought a dowry of five thousand rupees. Amongst the women surveyed, the highest amounts given as actual paithan payments were
sums of fifty to sixty thousand rupees, from women who had come from much lower gol, the 'small Twenty-seven'. Even within the same gol, however, if a bride was from a 'lower' family, perhaps village dwellers, marrying into a successful urban family, then more would be given. The girl's own good looks and education might minimize this slightly, but more probably, they made it easier for the boy and his family to consider her as a suitable match. In Jitendra's case, he had had a 'girlfriend' whilst at college who was from the 'small Twenty-seven'. Her family had been prepared to consider the marriage and, he claimed, had offered one hundred thousand rupees as a dowry payment, because of the difference in status. As this was a much lower gol, his family had refused, considering the gap in status to be too great: there was always the risk that such a match might serve to 'lower' the standing of the high status family and very careful consideration had to be made before embarking on such a match.

Paithan

It has been contended that, as women became less economically productive, their dowries, that is money payments, became larger. (Sharma 1980). There was certainly some evidence to support this contention amongst the Patidar; but the picture was more complex than a straightforward division between dowries given to women in agricultural and non-agricultural households, or urban and rural households. For the purposes of analysis, I have grouped women from the second highest gol, 'the Five', who were all urban dwellers, with those from 'the Six'. There was evidence to suggest that these
two gol had, possibly, at one stage, been part of one gol. There were insufficient women from 'the Five' to analyse their data separately; moreover of the five women from 'the Five', three had married into it from another ekada, 'the Twenty-seven'.

Table 20.2: Paithan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Towns (29 women)</th>
<th>Amounts of paithan given</th>
<th>Women from 'Six' and 'Five'</th>
<th>Women from 'Twenty-Seven'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over R15,000</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High R10-15,000</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium R5-10,000</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>6 (43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low up to R5,000</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
<td>6 (43%) *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of women</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*two from Virsad - downward matches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Villages (25 women)</th>
<th>Amount of paithan given</th>
<th>Women from 'Six'</th>
<th>Women from 'Twenty-Seven'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over R15,000</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High R10-15,000</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium R5-10,000</td>
<td>5 (50%)</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low up to R5,000</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of women</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was some evidence that suggested that women who were no longer economically active in agricultural households were bringing larger amounts of paithan. Around fifty per cent of all groups, except
those women from 'Twenty-Seven' villages, who were virtually all involved in agricultural households, gave sums of money of five thousand rupees and above; what would be considered in the medium range of sums given. This was the case, too, for women from villages in 'the Six', who were generally not in agricultural households, but many of whose husbands were employed in professional work or business. But only in 'the Six' were there payments of paithan above the amount generally considered as a high level of dowry, that is above fifteen thousand rupees. Twenty per cent of urban women in 'the Six' and ten per cent of rural women had paid such amounts: in all cases, these were hypergamous marriages. Their families had been prepared to pay larger amounts in order to marry them into higher status ekada, even when the husband was still living in one of the 'villages', albeit a very large 'village'. It was still largely the original village with few modern buildings or the facilities of urban life.

Manju's family from Virsad, outside any ekada, but still ranked as fairly high status, had felt it important to marry her into 'the Six' and had paid seventeen thousand rupees for the privilege of so doing. In the case, however, of the three women married to men from 'the Six', living in towns, the paithan payment had been much higher. They ranked with the level of 'excessive' demands made by overseas Patidar, particularly from the United States, or perhaps the United Kingdom. Sucheta from 'the Twenty-seven' had paid thirty thousand rupees in paithan to marry her 'Six' husband, who lived in VVN. But Nira and Purnima had paid more: Purnima paid fifty-one thousand rupees to live in Baroda. Her
parents and other siblings all lived in the United Kingdom; she was the only member of the immediate family in Gujarat. Nira's father had eventually been forced to make payments of up to sixty thousand rupees, although, initially, it had been agreed that a payment of around twenty-five thousand rupees would be made. After channeling her in-laws had demanded considerably more and Hima's family had felt they had no option but to pay.

Women in 'the Six' whether they had been born into 'the Six' or married into it, appeared to make the largest paithan payments, although urban women from 'the Twenty-Seven' were nearly as high. There was little difference in the level of payments between urban and rural women from 'the Six', all of whom were considered to be high status; but there was a significant difference between all these groups and women from rural 'Twenty-Seven' villages. Moreover, a third of rural 'Twenty-Seven' women paid no paithan at all; in three out of six cases, these women were from the lowest status khadaki and villages in the survey. Their low levels of payment were approaching those of other castes such as the Baniyas. Indeed, two of these women gave no gold either and very few saris: two or three in the case of Alpana from Gada. But these three were all heavily involved in the heavy work of the agricultural household; it would appear, therefore, that there was possibly a correlation between dowry and economic productivity.

However, the relationship was not quite so straightforward. Indeed, there was a greater percentage of urban dwellers, from both
'the Six' and 'the Twenty-Seven', who did not give paithan than of those resident in the villages: see Table 20.2. Hence, the level of paithan payments was not solely related to women's 'economic unproductivity', otherwise all urban women would have been expected to bring higher payments than rural women. Yet more than a third of all urban women gave no paithan. As it was not necessarily economic 'productivity', therefore, which dictated the size of paithan payments, a closer examination of the data on other women in hard working agricultural households, suggests an alternative explanation. Hima, also from Gada, gave no paithan, too, but her husband managed a large farm and was from a higher status family. He would not take or give dowry on principle. In Hima's case, therefore, although no paithan was given, her family gave one hundred tola in gold and fifty-one saris, a very high number indeed. Ranjan from Dharmaj, who brought one thousand rupees, and Neeta from Gada, who gave no dowry, were both married to husbands whose first wives had died. Yet they brought more than the minimum amount of gold and saris. Other women such as those married in one large family in Ajarpura, brought small amounts of dowry, it was true, under five thousand rupees, but in the medium range of other payments. The same applied to other women in agricultural households; Dipti in 'the Six' brought seven thousand rupees and seventy tola in gold. The significant factor in all these amounts was not just economic productivity; it was the status of the family and the gol into which women were marrying. They might work equally hard in a 'Twenty-Seven' or a 'Six' agricultural household, but would bring considerably more dowry to those in the higher status families. In some families, if the status was considered very
equal, whether low or high, no dowry was taken.

There were women in the towns, too, who had given no dowry. In the case of three women, this was because the match was a 'love marriage'. A similar case arose in Karamsad, one of 'the Six'. Although Aruna claimed to have had an arranged marriage, she had seen her future husband every day for a year at a neighbours and, consequently, knew him very well. Although, technically, the match was 'arranged', the couple knew each other well and were very content with the match.

Table 20.3: Women not giving paithan (1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages (6)</th>
<th>Towns (10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Love marriages</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband's second marriage</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband refuse paithan - on principle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal status</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The borderline, therefore, was difficult to draw, but whether because the couple knew each other so well, or because they were from very equal status families, there was no dowry. There was a higher incidence of urban families who did not believe in taking or giving 'dowry' than in rural areas; but, a fairly similar number who did not appear to give paithan because they felt the families were of equal status: see Table 20.3 above. However, generally, those urban women who gave no paithan, received some of the largest quantities of gold and saris: Panna received 125 tola, Lila 111
tola, Hansa 70 tola; such amounts paralleled and exceeded those given in hypergamous marriages. Yet these were marriages between two families of 'equal status'.

Table 20.4: Women not giving paithan - by ekada (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ekada</th>
<th>Six (6)</th>
<th>Twenty-Seven (11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Love marriages</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband's second marriage</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband refuse on principle</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal status</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were far more families in 'the Twenty-Seven' not giving paithan, than in 'the Six'. Only one village family in 'the Six' failed to give paithan. Two-thirds of those who did not give paithan for whatever reason were from the 'Twenty-Seven' and a just over a third of the total, four, refused to do so on principle. None of those in 'the Six' gave as a reason for not giving paithan, that they objected to it on principle. Indeed, a number of those who did voice criticism were from 'the Twenty-Seven', rather than 'the Six'. Many members of 'the Six' were unlikely to give up this benefit deriving from their status differential, over the other ekada. Many of 'the Twenty-Seven' had acquired as much, if not more wealth, than many in 'the Six', as a result of changes since Independence in 1947, but the ekada had not yet achieved the same status as 'the Six', the kulin. Members of 'the Six' still chose to observe such historically derived status, through high paithan payments, but some of those in 'the Twenty-seven' chose to use other
means to manifest their status, rather than buy their way into 'the Six'. However, the movement away from paithan was more evident amongst urban dwellers, and so, too, was the development of manifesting status through other means.

Gold

Although there were significantly higher payments for those women marrying into the 'idleness' of urban life, or into a professional or business family in one of the villages, there was not really a correlation between lack of economic productivity and high paithan payments. Indeed, paithan payments were far more a reflection of the status and wealth of the family concerned, whether the woman was in an agricultural household or not. When it comes to considering the amounts of gold jewellery and saris given as part of the dowry payments, then there was a most decided connection between the size of 'gift' and a lack of involvement in an agricultural household.

Women, who were marrying into families where their lifestyle would enable them to be involved in a range of social and leisure activities, received considerably higher amounts of gold jewellery. In the towns, amongst all groups, a fifth of the women received one hundred tolas of gold or more. Yet high payments were considered to be fifty tola and upwards: see Table 20.5. Indeed, the majority of all urban women had received what were considered 'high' amounts of gold. This tendency was just as marked amongst village women living in the 'Six Villages'; sixty per cent of them had received 'high' amounts of gold.
Table 20.5: Dowry payments: Gold

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of gold payments</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Six (10)</td>
<td>Twenty-Seven (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 tola and above</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 tola or more (High)</td>
<td>6 (60%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-45 tola (Medium)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>8 (53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-25 tola (Low)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Six (14) (+ Five)</th>
<th>Twenty-Seven (14)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 tola and above</td>
<td>3 (21%)</td>
<td>3 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 tola or more (High)</td>
<td>4 (29%)</td>
<td>6 (43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-45 tola (Medium)</td>
<td>6 (43%)</td>
<td>5 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-25 tola (Low)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In contrast, only one village woman in the 'Twenty-Seven' had received such an amount. The highest level of 'gifts' of gold were to urban women from 'the Twenty-seven', over 43% received 'high' payments; 21% exceptional amounts and the remaining 36% received gold in the medium range of gifts: all these amounts were at the higher end of the spectrum of payments, whereas in 'the Twenty-Seven Villages', themselves, the payments were clustered around lower levels. Indeed thirteen per cent of 'Twenty-Seven Village' women, living in the villages, received no gold at all. No other group of women fell into this category.

What appeared to be happening with these gifts of gold was a
twofold process. On one level, the amount reflected the status of the marital families into which girls were marrying: the highest status groups, therefore, 'the Six', and in some cases, 'the Five', were receiving the highest level of expenditure, whether the marriages were hypergamous or not. Indeed, the highest recorded amounts given were not for hypergamous marriages: Panna with 125 tola, Lila with 111 tola; only about one in three of these really high amounts were for such marriages. The status of the 'Six Villages' was sufficient to ensure that, even in the villages, large amounts of gold were given. The villages in 'the Six' were, of course, usually bigger and generally more prosperous than those in 'the Twenty-Seven'. But the second process was one reflecting changes in status and lifestyle as a result of urban residence. The group actually giving consistently higher levels of gold jewellery were those of 'the Twenty-Seven', who lived in towns. It was generally accepted that they had not such 'ideological status' as those from 'the Six', but they were economically prosperous.

In order to manifest their more recently acquired status, during the last generation or so, they chose to channel their wealth into forms of conspicuous consumption by showering their daughters with opulent jewellery and clothes rather than contract hypergamous marriages. Their outward appearance was a visible manifestation of this wealth. Out of the twelve highest gifts of gold recorded amongst urban women in the survey, all above the fifty tola or 'high dowry' mark, only two had been given to girls from 'the Six', marrying a husband from 'the Six'; five were the result of upwardly mobile hypergamous marriages, but the remaining five, just under
half, had been contracted by women in 'the Twenty-Seven' marrying into their own gol. That this trend was continuing could be witnessed in a subsequent marriage in 1984 into one of the urban family networks from 'the Twenty-seven': Shanta married the youngest brother, Lata's diyar. He did not even have a degree, but the whole extended family was continuing to prosper and each member had their own home. Despite the fact that the match was between two families in the same gol, Shanta, a graduate, gave a paithan of eleven thousand rupees, which had not been 'asked for', as well as seventy tola in gold with a further fifty tola, promised at a later date: 120 tola at a time when each tola cost R2,300. This, by any criteria, was a very high dowry; yet it was not a hypergamous match as such.

This increased affluence resulting from successful diversification into business and professional careers had also filtered through, on occasions, to those daughters married into village life, for whatever reasons. Hima, brought up outside the state in an urban area, who had lived overseas with her husband, had been forced to return to his village to manage the family farm. Not from choice a village resident, her family had given her one hundred tola in gold, as had Sudha's family when she married a young professional man in Bakrol. Her marriage had to be concluded very quickly because, at the time, it appeared her father was on the point of death and everyone wished her to be married in case this happened. Such families, however, still ensured that their daughters received considerable amounts of gold, no doubt partly to
safeguard their daughter's financial position, as was one motive for all families, but equally, as a means of reflecting their own status. There were no paithan payments in these cases. Most urban families, however, chose to marry their daughters, whenever possible, into families living in similar circumstances.

Women acquired considerable status and prestige from the possession of jewellery. Jacobsen (1974) felt it "symbolises material and social well-being" for women to own jewellery. Indeed, women often chose, themselves, if they were given money to invest it in jewellery. Lila, for example, although already possessing 110 tola at the time of marriage, managed to save considerable sums of money, both from gifts and from her household expenditure, as well as sums she had received as a silent partner in her husband's firm. She decided to buy diamonds because her parents-in-law had not allowed her to have any at the time of marriage. She claimed, therefore, to have spent a further forty thousand rupees on bangles, earrings, a pendant, and a mangelfera, a form of necklace showing a woman's married status. Lata, too, had bought jewellery for her friend's daughter on her marriage, because many years before, the friend had bought some for Lata's daughter at her birth. But Lata did so surreptitiously because her in-laws would not approve of such a gift outside the family. Women obviously chose this form of investment because they valued the status as well as the security associated with the possession of gold jewellery. They wanted the visible manifestation of this status, not just the security of savings in a bank account.
Saris

One of the other major components of dowry, which all women received, were saris, with sets of blouses and petticoats to match. These were intended to provide women with a wardrobe for all purposes, which would only be increased by future gifts from parents and brothers over the years. Most women did not wear saris before marriage, except perhaps for special occasions. Hence the need for a whole new 'wardrobe'. Moreover, women needed expensive fine and heavy silk saris, often embroidered for ceremonial occasions, such as weddings which they would then be called upon to attend. On such occasions, they needed to be able to dress well to reflect the standing of their family, both marital and natal.

In assessing these gifts, I have derived similar categories to those used in considering paithan and gold payments. Only two women from 'the Six' living in a town fell into the highest category. Indeed, the rural-urban divide was more marked in this area of dowry payments than in any other: see Table 20.6. All urban women, whatever their ekada, had received more than forty-one saris and concomitant 'sets'. Indeed, nearly half of urban women from both 'the Six' and 'the Twenty-Seven' had received sufficient saris to fall into the higher categories of fifty-one saris, or more. In this respect, women in 'the Six' living in villages did not benefit as well. Only one woman was in the highest category, but the vast majority of 'Six Village' women fell into the medium group, around forty-one saris, 67%. In contrast, women living in the 'Twenty-Seven Villages' fell predominantly into the lowest category, 62% in all. Indeed, one woman, Alpana in Gada, had received less than ten
saris. It seemed that urban women were expected to have more call for an extensive and expensive wardrobe.

Table 20.6: Dowry payments: saris

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Six</td>
<td>Twenty-seven</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 51</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42 to 51 (High)</td>
<td>1 (11%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 to 41 (Medium)</td>
<td>6 (67%)</td>
<td>4 (30%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 21 (Low)</td>
<td>2 (22%)</td>
<td>7 (54%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under ten</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of women</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unlike other aspects of dowry payments, such as paithan and gold, there was a much greater level of gifts of clothing to urban women than to rural women. Although village women from 'the Six' were well provided for, there was a considerable disparity between the number of saris they received and between the quantity urban women from both 'the Six' and 'the Twenty-Seven' received. This
appeared to reflect a general feeling that the social arena of urban women demanded a very well-groomed appearance. Village women, even in high status families in 'the Six', were not expected to have the opportunity in their social life or their leisure activities during which to sport such clothing. This was deemed particularly the case with village women in 'the Twenty-Seven', whose activities away from their immediate home area were very limited indeed.

**Hypergamous marriage and high paithan**

Amongst the women surveyed, there were five urban women and one village woman who had been married into a higher gol. All these women had taken large amounts of dowry with them to their new homes. The sums, however, were particularly large for the women who married from a lower gol into either 'the Five' or 'the Six'. This was true also for the village women who had married into a 'Six Village'.

Table 20.7: *Dowry payments made in hypergamous marriages*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Six Town</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Five Town</th>
<th>Twenty-Seven Town</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purnima</td>
<td>Sucheta</td>
<td>Manju</td>
<td>Nira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold (tola)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saris</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paithan (thousands of rupees)</td>
<td>R51K</td>
<td>R30K</td>
<td>R17K</td>
<td>R50K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piyar</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Virsad</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The larger the gap between the two gol, then the greater appeared to be the sums paid. Certainly, the amount of paithan payment was highest from the three women in 'the small Twenty-Seven', the lowest gol mentioned in this survey, into 'the Five' and 'the Six'. These large payments applied whether the women were to live in urban or rural areas. Only one woman, Pratima, from 'the small Twenty-Seven' who married into an urban family in 'the Twenty-Seven', paid virtually the same amount as a woman from 'the Twenty-Seven' itself would pay. Large paithan payments would only be paid whether the family was resident in an urban or a rural area. Even Manju's family from Virsad was prepared to make big payments to marry into a 'Six Village'. Yet her relative, Lata, who married into a much wealthier urban 'Twenty-Seven' family paid no paithan at all; but she was given what would be considered fairly high dowry payments in gold, fifty tola, but not such high amounts as Manju's family had given.

Amongst families marrying women into similar status families in the same gol, there was a fairly consistent sum made in money payments. All such matches, whether between couples in 'the Six', 'the Five' or 'the Twenty-Seven', paid paithan up to ten thousand rupees. Only those women in hypergamous matches had to give more than this, but they had to give substantially more. Paithan payments were not, therefore, about ensuring that daughters were married into households where they would have little hard domestic or agricultural work. Certainly, there was some variation between women entering agricultural households and those living with professional and business families in urban areas, but the
differential was no more than a few thousand rupees compared to the
tens of thousands extra paid in hypergamous marriages.

Madhu from 'the Six', who married into a very wealthy urban
'Five' family paid no paithan, nor did Kusum from 'the Twenty-Seven'
who married a husband from a slightly lower status village in the
same gol. It was the status of the family and the gol, which
appeared to be dictating the level of paithan payments. In cases of
hypergamous marriages these were of supreme importance, because
there was always an element of risk in making an alliance with a
much lower status family. Considerable money payments were needed to
shore up the family's standing and compensate it for any possible
difficulties. But there was apparently more danger for the bride's
family that this relationship would be exploited and increased
demands would be made; once the chanalo ceremony had taken place, it
was very difficult for an arrangement to be broken without
particularly jeopardising a girl's future prospects of marriage. It
was in the case of two such hypergamous marriages that additional
demands for paithan were made: in Nira's instance, after the chanalo
ceremony, her in-laws asked for more than double the original
paithan. Her family felt trapped into making the payment.

From Table 20.8, it can be seen how the highest paithan
payments were concentrated amongst the high status 'Six Villages',
whether the families were urban or rural dwellers. But a different
pattern emerges for other dowry payments. There was still a
correlation with high status when gifts of gold were concerned.
Table 20.8: High dowry payments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Six and Five</th>
<th></th>
<th>Twenty-Seven</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Town</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Town</td>
<td>Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold over 50 tola</td>
<td>47% 7</td>
<td>60% 6</td>
<td>64% 9</td>
<td>5% 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saris over 50</td>
<td>33% 5</td>
<td>10% 1</td>
<td>36% 5</td>
<td>5% 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paithan - R10,000 upwards</td>
<td>27% 4</td>
<td>20% 2</td>
<td>5% 1</td>
<td>- -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of women</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But, as Table 20.5 showed, the highest payments of all, the top twenty per cent, were concentrated amongst urban dwellers, whether from 'the Six' or 'the Twenty-Seven'. Slightly less expensive, but still very high payments of fifty tola and above were given to rural and urban women from 'the Six' and urban women from 'the Twenty-Seven'. But only five per cent of village 'Twenty-Seven' women received such amounts.

Summary

The complexity of patterns in dowry payments reflected both the different functions that dowry served and the impact of social change on urban society. Large payments of paithan have always been seen by the Patidar as a function of hypergamy, a means to obtain upward social mobility. In this respect, paithan payments still served this function. This was particularly apparent amongst the highest status ekada, 'the Six' and 'the Five', who had a vested interest in the continuance of this practice. Paithan payments were very much part of a caste based society, where social mobility was
achieved through marriages alliances with higher status groups within the caste. Members of the urban 'Twenty-Seven', however, showed less interest in this form of marking upward mobility. They did not seem to use women as 'boundary markers of caste' in forming marriage alliances, to the same extent.

The significant development had been in the payment of both gold and saris as components of 'dowry'. Urban women were much more actively involved in the 'status arena' than any of the rural women, even those in professional households in 'the Six'. They had many opportunities to manifest the status of their household through their appearance and it is in this context that the increased amounts of gold and saris given should viewed. They were an aspect of 'status production work' and a visible embodiment of the household status 'achieved' in an emerging class society. The amounts of gold given were similar in the urban households of both 'the Six' and 'the Twenty-Seven'. Women in village households in 'the Six' received even greater amounts of gold: see Table 20.8 above. Gold jewellery was possibly a form of 'early inheritance' for women. It certainly gave women status and a certain degree of security within the household. But it was also a marker of status and wealth of the natal family of the women concerned. It is possible, too, that urban households saw gold as a better form of long-term investment than large paithan payments, which might be eroded by inflation.

But it was in the number of saris urban Patidar women received that the importance of their role as 'demonstrators of status' can
be perceived. Only urban women, regardless of ekada received large numbers of saris. The largest number of saris were recorded in urban families: Purnima brought one hundred saris, when she married into 'the Six'. Indira brought over seventy when she married into 'the Five'. Even village women in 'the Six' who had been given large amounts of gold, as well as substantial paithan payments, rarely received large numbers of saris; although they still received a respectable number, the vast majority fell into the 'medium' level of such gifts. Yet a greater percentage of village women in 'the Six' received larger amounts of gold than urban women in 'the Six'. Gifts of saris, therefore, reflected more than just wealth and status, they represented the changing nature of women's lives in urban society. Urban women from both 'the Six' and 'the Twenty-Seven' needed to be able to mix in a wider 'status arena' where their appearance was of prime importance in demonstrating household status. The activities of urban women in 'status production work' necessitated the elaborate range of saris. Urban women were active in creating the status of their household in a society no longer dominated by caste and their very appearance was important in this respect.

Marriage and dowry payments, therefore, had changed along parameters which reflected the changes in urban Patidar society. The characteristics thought desirable in a future marriage partner placed greater emphasis on present and future achievement and not just on ascribed status; even the future bride was required to have adequate educational qualifications to ensure she could fulfil her
changing role requirements satisfactorily. But there was no evidence to suggest that women's role as demonstrators of status in the status arena, at a wedding, was in decline. Indeed, there were even greater expectations that women's appearance, not just at weddings, would reflect the household status.

The changes which were developing in marriage practices result from the changing priorities of urban life. Hypergamous marriages were still occurring: mainly between lower ekada and 'the Six' or 'the Five'. However, there were few examples of intermarriage between 'the large Twenty-Seven' and 'the Six', amongst the women surveyed. There were two possible explanations for this development. Firstly, the economic prosperity of 'the Twenty-Seven Village' ekada has meant that more wealthy families were of a similar or higher economic standing to many families in 'the Six' and members of 'the Twenty-Seven' no longer felt that an alliance with 'the Six' marked any form of upward mobility. It was even possible that the elite families and villages in 'the Twenty-Seven' would eventually break away and form a separate high status ekada.

However, an alternative explanation was that urban families from 'the Twenty-Seven' felt they had more to gain economically in a marriage alliance with other families in 'the Twenty-Seven' whom they met in the course of business. Hence urban families were considering the socio-economic implications of a union with similar urban households. They no longer wished to mark their economic prosperity by a match with a family from a higher status ekada, because they were looking beyond caste based values. Instead,
Patidar families saw greater advantages in seeking tangible economic benefits through marriage alliances with urban families, whose newly acquired wealth also bestowed a concomitant status based on that wealth.

Dowry payments, too, reflected this move away from status differentials based on (sub)-caste and landed wealth. The areas of dowry payments which had seen rapid expansion were in gifts of gold and saris, both of these visibly reflected the status and the wealth of the woman's family and served to cement marriage alliances with families where such outwardly visible demonstrators of status had an audience and a status arena.

Urban Patidar families were, therefore, moving away from the caste based values of the rural Patidar, whose only status arena was that of marriage and who were known for their thrift on other occasions. In an urban society, where a household needed to establish its status, it became much more important for families to 'conspicuously display' their wealth and one of the principal vehicles for this display were urban Patidar women.
1. Lata was one of six daughters, hence the considerable difficulty in contracting good matches for all these women. Yet by marrying into a less prestigious family, in the long-term, a very advantageous match had been arranged. This daughter was the second to marry into this extended family. Her elder sister had married a 'brother' of her husband's father.
SECTION 8: THE CONCLUSIONS
CONCLUSIONS

It is evident from the previous chapters that Patidar women in the Kheda region of Gujarat were experiencing the impact of social change; however, the greatest impact was felt by those women living in urban areas. Although predominantly a rural society, with four-fifths of the population still living in rural areas, there has been rapid and widespread industrialisation and urbanisation since Independence in 1947. (Census of India 1981). However, not all urban growth can be really described as 'urbanisation', as many small towns, such as Karamsad, retained many of the characteristics of large villages. Such developments, of course, have occurred, in other contexts. As has been pointed out, not all urban growth in nineteenth century England was associated with industrial development. (Thompson 1988).

Is it possible to comment on which has had the greatest impact on Patidar women: industrial or urban development? As earlier research has shown, such development has a differential effect on men and women. (Boserup 1970, Bossen 1975, McCarthy 1977, M. Sharma 1985). Patidar women, in this research, fell into one of three distinctive groups of women: those in rural, agricultural households; those in rural households with a husband in non-agricultural employment, usually in business or a profession; and women in urban households, all of whose husbands were employed in business, or the professions. Rural husbands not employed in agriculture had often experienced considerable change in the sphere of their activities, but these changes, in the public sphere, had
not permeated through to the private domain of the home. The lives of the wives of rural husbands still, to a considerable extent, followed the pattern of rural women whose husbands were actively involved in agriculture, and who lived in agricultural households. It was only those women who were actually resident in urban areas, who experienced significant changes in their lives. As far as Patidar women were concerned, therefore, it appeared that place of residence, as opposed to husband's occupation, was of most importance in having a significant influence on their lives. Even in those instances, where women were in paid employment, themselves, the place of residence, either rural or urban was still the most important influence in determining the form of their home lives. It would appear that the entrenched pattern of women's lives in agricultural households was sufficiently strong to counteract countervailing influences, such as changes in the relations to production, certainly in a rural context. Moreover, even in urban areas where women were still resident in long established residential areas, such as a khadaki, which was in existence when the town was still a village, women's lifestyles had not changed as much as those in new urban residential areas. So even though the economic base of the household might have changed, women's lives in the private domain could be relatively untouched. What, therefore, were the crucial determinants of women's position in Patidar society?
The two dimensions of women's position

Before that question can be satisfactorily answered, however, in previous discussion in Chapters 1 and 3, it has been pointed out that women's position in Patidar society must be viewed from two perspectives. In a village setting, in particular, women's lives were largely contained within the domestic sphere. Consequently, their position was largely determined by variables within the immediate family. In such a context, therefore, the family hierarchy and the form of gender relations within the household were of crucial importance: age and gender tended to be the determining factors within the family. But, increasingly so with an urban lifestyle, women also had a role to play in the wider sphere of the public domain. In this context, their status was ascribed: they reflected the status of the household and extended family in any contact with members of society outside the family. Their gender was subsumed in the general status of the family.

It has been argued that the impact of economic development on women can vary according to their original position in society. (M. Sharma 1985). For example, Miriam Sharma found that for the upper caste Bhumihar women she studied, development meant their complete withdrawal from hard agricultural work to the seclusion of their home, where their power was diminished. At the same time, however, their 'ascribed' status in society, as part of a prospering family was enhanced. They had achieved higher social status in the community at the expense of low gender status within the household.
The impact of social change, therefore, on Patidar women needs to be discussed in the context of both the private and the public domain. It was quite possible that changes may have produced improvements in women's position, in some respects, but that a deterioration had also occurred in other areas of their lives. Moreover, those changes which did occur were also affected by the status of the family in its _ekada_, as well as women's role in economic production.

**WOMEN'S ROLE IN PRODUCTION**

It is essential, therefore, to establish the determinants of Patidar women's position both within society and the home. Is women's contribution to subsistence as important, as has been contended. (See earlier discussion in Chapter 4.) Their withdrawal from involvement in agricultural work, to the greater seclusion of the domestic sphere was likely to affect Patidar women in a deleterious manner. In agricultural households, Patidar women certainly had a heavy workload, both in domestic duties and in supplementing farming activities. Consequently, because of the nature of gender relations in Patidar households, older women had considerable responsibility and power in managing the domestic sphere: but the younger women, who were the focus of the research, did not. Even so, this considerable contribution towards the household production did not seem to have given even the older women any degree of control or power outside the immediate domestic sphere. Certainly, the younger women who worked the hardest had the least power or influence. Even when Patidar women were in paid
employment, particularly in the rare cases in the villages where women's salary could be a significant contribution to family resources, women's position certainly did not seem to have been ameliorated. As Ursula Sharma (1980) pointed out in her study of Himalayan women left to cope with the domestic and agricultural work, when their men migrated elsewhere to work, women were certainly no more powerful, they had only achieved a double burden of work. (Sanday (1974), too, concluded in research outside India, that women's contribution to subsistence, in itself, appeared to have little impact on their status.)

Because of the nature of gender relations in Patidar society, older women had considerable power over the domestic sphere. This was particularly apparent in agricultural households, where the volume of work was greater. Older women controlled younger women and any servants detailed to help them. They also had control of resources, particularly foodstuffs, for domestic use. This power had diminished in non-agricultural households and particularly in urban households, because the domestic sphere itself had contracted with the loss of agricultural duties. But even in urban households, the domestic sphere could still be quite large and demand considerable organisational skill in a large joint family. But women, even older women, never had direct control over major issues, affecting the family, and younger women certainly had little say in either rural or urban households, regardless of their contribution to production of a paid or unpaid nature. (1)
A crucial point, in this respect, is that regardless of women's role in production, whether paid or unpaid, they had little or no control over the capital created either from the produce cultivated or money earned through paid employment. Even when women did earn money, it went, in the overwhelming majority of cases, into general funds, over which they had little or no control. Moreover as Sen and Sen (1985) contended, in their research based on a national sample, in order to improve Indian women's position, participation in the labour force was insufficient in itself, women needed to have access to resources, but more particularly, the rules of inheritance needed to be changed. Certainly Patidar women in agricultural households did not inherit on the death of their father, nor did urban Patidar women appear to inherit any substantial share of family wealth. Occasionally, women might have a claim on paper, but this was to circumvent rules and regulations over tax and land.

It has been contended that dowry payments were, in fact, made in compensation for not inheriting anything on the death of a woman's father. Harrell and Dickey (1985), for example, saw dowry in these terms, with money being transferred to the 'conjugal fund' of the couple at the time of marriage. But money payments, paithan, were not paid to the Patidar couple; they were given to the groom's parents at the time of marriage, who retained control over this money. If paithan had been paid as a form of early inheritance, it would have been a direct reflection of the girl's father's wealth. However, the amount of money payment made as part of the dowry varied according to the status of the groom's family: if a girl married into a village household, the family would receive
considerably less than sums paid to an urban household. There was more basis for the argument that a girl received her gold jewellery at the time of marriage, as a form of inheritance, stridhanam. The amount of money spent on gold jewellery was certainly a greater reflection of the girl's natal family's own wealth and status. It could, therefore, be seen as a form of inheritance, as considerable sums were involved. Moreover, it certainly gave Patidar women considerable status and a sense of security. However, it did not appear that this money was seen as a women's sole property. There were plenty of examples of jewellery being used as a family resource to raise cash, or of other females in the family being 'given' pieces of jewellery that they liked, as they were 'given' saris from those brought by the bride at the time of marriage. On occasions of marital disharmony, when a woman returned to her parents, even if she did not actually separate or divorce her husband, there was often conflict because the groom's family retained her jewellery. So, although, in theory, gold jewellery could be perceived as a form of inheritance, Patidar women's control over their 'own' jewellery reflected the power relations within the family and their lack of involvement in decision-making and control over their own lives.

PATRIARCHY AND REPRODUCTION

As Standing (1985) found in her own research in Calcutta, a woman's ability to earn an income, whatever the size, was not sufficient in itself to significantly affect her position in the family. Standing contended that the only way to do so was to break
down the existing gender hierarchies. Whatever Patidar women's contribution to the household economy, they did not have control over the family resources, nor did they inherit family wealth. It would appear to be, therefore, the existing structure of patriarchal family relations which was the crucial determinant of women's position, both in rural and urban households. In rural, agricultural households, all the major decisions over education, work, marriage and even the number of children in a family, were made largely by men, with some contribution from older women. But even though there were more nuclear households, in urban areas, the balance of power did not shift towards more participation by women. The same family members were still the most active in decision-making processes, even when they were not resident in the same households. There had been a certain realignment of power in urban households, but in the favour of younger men. As Kandiyoti (1977) found in the patriarchal families who had emigrated to urban areas of Turkey, the younger men employed in industrial or clerical work in the towns, took a much more active role in decision-making, along with the older family members. Such was the case, too, amongst urban Patidar families. But many of the major decisions, especially in urban areas, were still made by older members of the 'joint family', whether resident in the same household or not. Urban residence, therefore, had done little to dent the patriarchal family. Indeed, in some instances, male power seemed to have been enhanced at the expense of women. For example, in such instances as arranging a marriage when older women, particularly, had been important as intermediaries in finding suitable marriage partners, Patidar men had begun to take over this role. They were able through their
extended urban business networks to hear of suitable partners for their children without needing the help of female relatives.

Because of patriarchal family relations, even in rural agricultural households, where Patidar women had a heavy workload, they did not have any degree of control over the major areas of their lives. But, at least in these households, women had a considerable degree of influence in the domestic sphere. In urban areas, in contrast, their power had diminished in the domestic sphere and men were more actively involved in some of the decision-making processes, which rural women had controlled because of the strictly segregated nature of rural society. Women's major means of influencing decisions was still by indirect means by using various 'strategies' and manipulation to achieve their ends.

The patriarchal family structure has been reinforced in Patidar society by the practice of marrying girls out from their own village into another village in the same or different ekada. Consequently, they were 'strangers' in their new households and, as such, were unlikely to have a power base for many years. Moreover, because of the segregated nature of Patidar society, women in rural areas, particularly, spent very little time with male members of the family, even their own husband, so they had little opportunity to build up relationships, in order to exert influence over decisions. Indeed as Ursula Sharma (1980) contended, such practices, too, enabled men to keep control over resources because women were restricted through the observance of purdah in their contact with
the public sphere. Such observance of purdah, too, had restricted Patidar women in the urban environment, because it limited either their ability to work or the nature of the work they undertook. Even within the context of family businesses, despite adequate qualifications, women were never actively involved in the administrative work, even in a 'backroom' capacity.

Patriarchy, what Veena Das (1976) called 'the existing framework of social relations' in Indian society, was one of the major factors which determined the nature of women's lives in Patidar society. But there was another important determinant which had become increasingly significant for those women living in urban households: 'reproduction'. Despite the very small family size, marginally smaller in the towns than the villages, women were much more conscious of their 'role' as mother. A very small proportion of women's lives was actually spent in bearing children, unlike most women in previous generations. But women in non-agricultural households, and urban women, particularly, devoted much more effort into 'reproducing' the customs and values of the family in the next generation. Child care had become one of women's principal daily duties. Moreover, the importance of a good education to enable both male and female children to function well in their adult lives, had been recognised. There was general acceptance that one of women's roles was in 'reproducing' the next generation of the family and ensuring that they were well educated and equipped to cope with the demands of work in the public arena and the social and cultural demands of family life in the private arena. Because of these increased expectations beyond the physical bearing, feeding and
nurturing of children, Patidar women were expected to have acquired a good enough education, themselves, to handle these commitments.

But the aspect of 'reproduction' which had assumed dramatic proportions for urban women was in the role they played in establishing the status of the household in a new urban environment. Patidar women had always been placed in the role of 'demonstrators of status', even in agricultural households. The degree to which they were secluded or actively involved in the agricultural workforce was one of the primary means of 'demonstrating' the status of the family. The ability to maintain women in some form of purdah, or seclusion, away from the work commitment outside the domestic sphere, had always been a mark of status in the Indian context, to some extent, just as in nineteenth century Britain, women in the 'emerging' middle class found their role in creating a 'haven in the home' for their husbands. (Liddle and Joshi 1986). In this context, Papanek (1973) called women 'demonstrators of status'. In Patidar society, in particular, women were especially important as 'demonstrators' of status at the time of marriage, when Patidar brides were the means of manifesting the family status by their very appearance. But women were even more important in being the vehicles by which means the family and khadaki enhanced its status. Patidar families sought to improve the family's status and contribute towards the upward social mobility of the whole extended family through a hypergamous marriage. The bride at a Patidar wedding became the physical embodiment of this process. In order to fulfil the attributes of this role properly, rural Patidar women
were required to be of modest demeanour and good reputation and observe all the restrictions of their secluded lifestyle, whenever possible, depending on the economic circumstances of the household.

The loss of agricultural work could have been expected to be followed by greater seclusion in the home and as little contact with the 'public domain' as possible: as in the process of Sanskritization. (Srinivas 1977, M. Sharma 1985, Liddle and Joshi 1985). Within a village context, this was fairly generally observed, but the changing requirements of urban life placed different demands on women's time and behaviour. It was no longer sufficient in a number of urban households for younger women to rely on maintaining a 'good reputation' and modest bearing in the presence of others, they were expected to take a more active role in what Papanek (1979) called 'family status production'. In this 'status production work', Papanek felt that women were involved in aspects of 'reproduction' described above: the training and upbringing children, as well as supplying the necessary support to enable 'workers', usually husbands, to function in their jobs successfully. She also concluded that women were involved in the 'politics of status maintenance', that is through such activities as gift exchanges, gossip and ritual and religious observances. Urban Patidar women, too, had moved very much into this 'status arena', where they were combining not only the attributes of 'demonstrators of status' by appearing at their very best in both dress and behaviour, whenever in the public eye. But they were also seen in such status enhancing activities as 'shopping' or cinema attendance. It was not just that many of their 'leisure pursuits' brought urban
Patidar women more conspicuously into the 'status arena', they had become involved in other aspects of 'status production work'. Many of their roles in the domestic sphere, as well as the public sphere, had become related to maintaining and transmitting the status of the family. Much of their social interaction revolved around formal visiting which was a very important aspect of status production work. On such occasions, much information was given and received, often of use to the woman's husband; formal gift exchanges took place, increasingly outside the family with the wives of business colleagues or important contacts, such as doctors' wives. Indeed, a number of urban women were having to learn how to 'mix' socially with those outside the immediate family circle, particularly with friends and colleagues of husbands. In that sense, some urban women became more dependent on their husband's social circles for their social life, particularly for some formal occasions and for some social activities in the evenings or weekends. Indeed, for a small number of women, there were certain parallels with the lives of those 'incorporated wives' described by Finch (1983), who had something of a 'vicarious career' supporting their husbands through their work activities. (3)

In rural households, the majority of Patidar women's lives was spent in the domestic sphere. As with urban women, their position in the domestic sphere was determined by their lack of access and control over resources and the patriarchal nature of the family hierarchy. Their roles, too, were very much defined by their domestic duties and responsibilities of child care within the home. But the significant development for urban women, who had no heavy
agricultural workload to contend with, was how certain aspects of their position had assumed greater importance. This was particularly the case with the transition of Patidar women's role as not just 'demonstrators of status', but with their more active contribution in 'status production work' The development of this role, however, obliged women to be more active in the public arena than formerly. With the diminuation of the workload in the domestic sphere in non-agricultural households, women in non-agricultural and urban households had experienced a concomitant decline of their power and influence within the home. Indeed, some urban men in small households were actually making more of the domestic decisions that previously. Despite their own educational qualifications and even paid employment, urban women appeared to have no greater control over the major decisions in their lives and less power within their own 'female domestic sphere'. But, their role in the wider public arena had expanded, and the significance of that will be considered below.

THE PUBLIC ARENA: CASTE

The impact of industrial and urban development is experienced differently dependent on the socio-economic conditions of those concerned. For urban Patidar women, the majority have achieved a much better standard of living, but at the expense of a general decline in their own power base and spheres of influence. Their position within the household, therefore, has certainly not improved to any extent and has, in certain aspects, deteriorated. But their
position in the wider social arena has changed considerably with the enhanced fortunes of their household. As Miriam Sharma (1985) amongst others, argued, women's 'ascribed' status in society can dramatically improve because she is a reflection of the whole household, but it is not a reflection of her own individual status.

Sanskritization v Westernization

Did upwardly mobile Patidar families seek to emulate the customs and values of those castes higher than themselves, in an attempt to mark their enhanced status, or did they look beyond the constraints of a caste society for alternative models? For the Patidar, in this research, it certainly seemed to depend very much on the status group to which a household belonged: those in the lower status ekada of 'the Twenty-Seven', for example, were likely to seek to emulate the behaviour of higher castes. This 'Sanskritization' could be seen in attitudes towards women and paid employment. In the lower status ekada, particularly in 'the Twenty-Seven', there was less resistance to the idea of women working, although very few were able to do so. It was felt that urban women did not need to work: it was incompatible with their husband's status, in most instances, for women to seek paid employment. This attitude was particularly evident amongst the prospering families in 'the Twenty-Seven'. But attitudes in some urban families, more especially among members of 'the Six', were that women might work if the work was of a prestigious nature; in an acceptable environment.

Looking in a little more detail at attitudes to work, it was
apparent that the situation was of even greater complexity. Certainly a number of rural women in 'the Twenty-Seven' would have been allowed to work if work had been available, whereas the majority of urban women, whether from 'the Twenty-Seven' or 'the Six', would not have been given 'permission'. But most rural women in non-agricultural households from 'the Six' would also not have been given permission to work, even where work was available. Such a variety of attitudes reflected the complexity of the impact of changes taking place. Lower status families might well seek more seclusion from the public arena, whereas highest status families had kept women in seclusion over generations. Some of the higher status families, particularly in the towns, were prepared to look beyond such markers of status, as seclusion of women, in a new direction. But were such differences in attitudes, a reflection of certain groups seeking to 'Sanskritise', whereas others looked to a more 'Western' or 'secular' model, or were other variables at play?

Let us look at another example: the observance of vrat and other religious ceremonies. The observance of vrat, when women devoted themselves to various fasts, generally for the well-being of their families and, frequently, specifically of their husbands, has been seen as a mark of high status, concomitant with the seclusion of women. (Srinivas 1966). Vrat were observed by the Patidar, but they were most keenly observed amongst members of 'the Twenty-Seven', particularly in the villages. The observance of vrat amongst either rural or urban women in 'the Six' was very rare. Such findings indicate that for women from the lower status 'Twenty-
Seven', the observance of vrat was a sign of upward mobility. Women from the 'Twenty-Seven Villages' in non-agricultural households and those in urban households had more time to devote to religious practices than women in agricultural families. Yet there had been a decline in the observance of these practices, especially in urban households. The observance of vrat amongst women in 'the Twenty-Seven' hardly illustrates that women with more leisure and higher status were seeking to emulate the practices of higher castes. Moreover, where does this leave women from the high status 'Six Villages'. They did not, on a general basis, observe vrat, yet they were from a higher status ekada. On this occasion, they seemed to have rejected the orthodox model of Sanskritization: was this an example, therefore, of members of 'the Six' seeking to 'Westernise'?

There were other examples to support the theory that the Patidar were seeking to 'Sanskritize' or had adopted 'Sanskritization' in their attitudes towards remarriage. In the orthodox Hindu religion, remarriage for women was totally unacceptable. Widows under no circumstances could remarry and separation or divorce would not be contemplated. There was evidence of support for those beliefs from all groups within the Patidar in the research; however, amongst the rural households in the lower ekada, remarriage did occur. Although, examples were rare, young childless divorcees remarried and young childless widows would have been allowed to remarry, because of the economic burden of maintaining dependent females. In higher status families, particularly amongst both the rural and urban 'Six Villages', divorce and remarriage would not be considered under any
circumstances, although in families in severe financial difficulties, it must of necessity have occurred on occasions. The ability to maintain dependent females, such as widowed sisters in the household, was obviously a mark of wealth and hence social status. In such a context, it can be seen that such Patidar women were 'boundary markers of caste'. (Caplan 1985). They reflected the status of the family within both the khadaki and the gol, which was the effective unit of caste for the Patidar. There were those, however, amongst the higher status families in 'the Six', who would have contemplated divorce and remarriage, as long as the woman was childless. The highest status families, it was felt, did not need to observe such markers of status because their position was so secure. Virtually all members of both 'the Twenty-Seven' and 'the Six' sought to adhere to one of the basic tenets of Sanskritization: the remarriage of widows. Only some of the wealthiest of the highest status groups chose not to do so and adopt a 'Western' model in respect of such marriage practices.

There appears to be a considerable divergence of practice amongst the Patidar. Certain trends suggested that families from the lower status ekada, as they became upwardly mobile, were seeking to Sanskritise, whereas those in the higher status ekada, were looking towards a more Western model. But when other aspects of women's lives are examined, the difference in practice is not primarily one between lower and higher status ekada, but between women in rural households and women in urban households. A more general examination of religious observances confirms this tendency.
Village women were far more likely to attend the temple on a regular, possibly daily basis, except, perhaps, for women in large agricultural households with a heavy workload. Urban women did not make such a point of regular attendance at temple, regardless of their ekada. But urban women were much more likely to be involved in special religious ceremonies, such as vastu puja, which were attended by members outside the immediate family circle. But, as I have already argued in Chapter 19, the observance of such ceremonies was not really evidence of Sanskritization, but was an example of 'family status production'. The much greater frequency of such religious ceremonies in urban areas represented a desire to offer a form of 'entertainment' to a social circle extending outside the family. The form of such entertainments was more acceptable because they fell within the framework of existing cultural, that is religious, practices. But they represented attempts to adapt existing cultural practices to new social demands.

An urban-rural divide was evident in the practice of purdah, too. Village women could observe purdah restrictions and yet still move freely around within their immediate neighbourhood, visiting relatives and friends, because of the kin-based nature of their khadaki. Urban women, however, no longer lived in khadaki, not only not in the midst of relatives, but not necessarily even members of the same caste. In order to mix socially, therefore, they had to travel further afield. Many urban women, because of status considerations, would not be seen to walk relatively short distances, nor would they use public transport, if they wished to travel any distance. Consequently, they had either to use private
transport, such as an autorickshaw, or rely on male relatives to take them by car, when available. In such instances, urban women were more restricted in their movements because of status considerations. (4) After dark, urban women became even more dependent on men for any social contacts, because they would not leave the immediate vicinity of their home and neighbours unaccompanied. Urban women, in some respects, therefore, could be more restricted in their movements than rural women: they would appear to be reflecting increased 'seclusion' associated with Sanskritization. But this was not the whole picture because with money, most of the difficulties could be circumvented. Transport could be hired or acquired and urban women could then keep in contact with a much wider social circle. Moreover, through increased social activities with their husbands, they met a much wider social circle, at times, transcending ekada and caste barriers. Restrictions were not so great that they could not be circumvented and alternatives found: women were, after all, able to take up paid employment in urban areas.

CASTE v CLASS

The complexity of social change was not just attributable to the position of women and their households in the ekada status hierarchy, although this was important. But the direction of change in women's lives was also directly related to the location of their household: in a rural or an urban area. What appeared to be happening was that rural households, including non-agricultural ones, were looking towards other castes for models to reflect their
status in the caste community. Consequently, they appeared to be involved in a process of Sanskritization. The highest ekada, 'the Six', had already largely 'Sanskritised'. So within a village context, they retained the same values and patterns of behaviour. But women in households in urban areas had experienced different demands on their lives. They no longer lived in a society, as in the rural areas, which was completely dominated by caste. Many urban husbands were carving careers based on their own abilities and hard work and were seeking to find a new position for themselves and their households in this urban society. Women were as vital a 'demonstrator of status' in this new environment as they were in a rural one. But the means of marking such status were changing as the form of society was changing. Urban Patidar women were no longer 'demonstrating status' in a rural society where people's position and roles were ascribed. They were helping to establish the status of the household in a new environment through their 'household service work'. (U.Sharma 1986). Moreover, they were no longer operating in a totally caste based society, but one where they were part of an emerging middle class. Indeed, their actions were helping to 'create' this emerging class structure.

Because of the changing demands of urban life, therefore, the form of segregation and seclusion of women which operated in the villages was no longer completely relevant. It was still not desirable for Patidar women to mix freely with all sections of society, but the caste-based nature of village social interaction had broken down, to some extent. Moreover, there were more social
activities which involved both men and women, even though once under way, many of those involved in activities divided into male and female groups. As Liddle and Joshi (1985) have contended, in a caste based rural society, seclusion of women brought prestige to the family. But in a social world less dominated by the values of caste, then women's lifestyles could change, as long as they still bestowed status on the family. Consequently, although existing gender hierarchies still prevailed, women were allowed to be in paid employment as long as that work was compatible with female status and respectability. But this 'relaxation' of female seclusion, in this urban context, did not signify 'Westernization', or a rejection of Sanskritization. It reflected a move away from caste inspired patterns of behaviour towards behaviour more relevant in an urban society, where an emerging middle class was assuming importance. Urban Patidar women still maintained their 'distance' from lower castes and classes to the extent of refusing to use public transport.

These changes can be detected in the main focus of Patidar social interaction: their 'status arena' of marriage, with the concomitant dowry payments. There was no evidence to suggest that the Patidar were rejecting marriage as a vehicle of upward social mobility. There were still hypergamous marriages with high dowry payments whenever a woman was married into a family from a higher status khadaki and, particularly, a higher status gol. Such practices seemed especially popular amongst members of 'the Six', who could, of course, demand the highest dowry payments from the family of any girls marrying up into 'the Six Villages'. Even
agricultural households in 'the Six' could demand a high paithan, money payment, whereas agricultural households in 'the Twenty-Seven' received much smaller amounts of paithan, if any money was given. Large paithan payments were not made, however, when village girls married into an urban family in the same ekada. Only those marrying up from outside the gol could expect to make large paithan payments. In the payment of paithan, therefore, there was little to suggest that the caste based criteria for hypergamous marriages was changing. The status of the family within each sub-caste was still important.

But there was some evidence of change within urban families, more particularly amongst 'the Twenty-Seven'. Prospering families in this gol did not seem to be looking to the higher ekada of 'the Five' and 'the Six' to mark their enhanced status. Most of these urban families in 'the Twenty-Seven' were looking within their own ekada, or for a match with a family of Patidar living overseas. Such a development could suggest that as the urban Patidar in 'the Twenty-Seven' had become so prosperous, they were seeking to re-align the status differentials between their ekada and those of the higher status ekada of 'the Six', and 'the Five'. In such a large ekada, 'the Twenty-Seven' was composed of over sixty villages, it was possible that the 'villages' which had developed into prosperous towns, would seek, over time, to separate themselves to form a new ekada, of a similar standing to 'the Six'. These urban families already viewed themselves as the 'elite' of their ekada. But it was also possible that these urban families were ceasing to look solely
within the caste to mark their higher social status. They were also thinking in terms of families of similar socio-economic standing not in terms of caste differentials, but of class. If such were the case, then it would be logical to expect more intercaste marriages between urban families of a similar socio-economic background. There was very little evidence of this happening as yet, amongst the Patidar. But there was evidence to suggest that attitudes were changing, in this respect. Urban Patidar women, in particular, were prepared to consider that their own children could marry outside the caste: a quarter professed to be prepared to consider an intercaste marriage. But any break in Patidar marriage practices would be deeply significant: marriage and hypergamy were at the heart of Patidar caste identity, with Patidar women as the ultimate 'demonstrators of status' within the caste. It was possible that some Patidar families were choosing not to mark their upward social mobility by seeking to ally themselves with a family of more highly ascribed status, but were considering, instead, only the materialistic factors of the wealth and future prospects of the prospective match. Then, surely, this would mark a shift from a caste based perspective to one which emphasised class based interests?

Such a shift in perspectives would account, too, for the change in emphasis on the desirable qualities of a future marriage partner, particularly amongst urban families. The bride's family had started to look at the education of the groom and his qualifications, as well as at his prospects for a future career. The status of the family was not necessarily the prime criterion which dictated the
choice of partners. The continuing wealth and prosperity of families had assumed a greater importance. These changing perspectives had also affected the characteristics thought to be most desirable in a future bride. Good looks and appearance were at a premium for women who were expected to represent the family more frequently in a much wider 'status arena'. Moreover, it was felt necessary for women, too, to possess a good education, possibly up to degree level so that they could deal adequately with the increased expectations of child rearing and education of children, as well as the broader responsibility of 'status production work'. It had become much more important that women could mix socially, particularly when they had to mix with their husband's networks. Unlike developments in many larger urban areas, husbands and wives in urban Patidar families still had their own relatives close at hand. (5) Consequently, a wife's increased social interaction with her husband's social and business networks, was not just a result of lack of alternatives. Urban Patidar women were not necessarily involved in many joint activities with their husbands, but they did undertake important transactions with the wives of their husband's colleagues: much time was spent on formal visits in order to present gifts, exchange information and take part in social events, so helping to cement relationships and create obligations, which were more class than caste based. Through their participation in such events, urban Patidar women were actively involved in creating a new status for the household; they were becoming not boundary markers of caste, but of class. (6)

So within this area of Kheda, the impact of urbanisation and
industrialisation was provoking somewhat different responses. Within rural households, families were more likely to be influenced by the values of a caste based society, but these values were not necessarily relevant for households in urban areas. However, because the process of urbanisation was taking place on a relatively small scale within a rural area with a very strong agricultural identity, there was no comprehensive rejection of caste-based values. Urban residents all had very close links with their ancestral villages and family members still employed in agriculture. It had not been necessary to break social links with members of the family still resident in rural areas and it was still possible to participate in all the important lifecycle ceremonies. The experience of urban residents in Kheda, therefore, was dissimilar to that of people who had moved completely away from their area of origin to live in a large urban cosmopolitan society. Unlike research conducted in large urban centres, the Patidar were only a short bus or car ride away from their village base, at times, it was even within a short walking distance. Consequently, where Caplan (1985) in her research in Madras, Standing (1985) in Calcutta and U. Sharma (1986) in Shimla found evidence of women's roles in creating an emerging class society, the picture was more fluid in the Kheda district. There was certainly proof that women's roles were changing to meet the demands of middle class society, but there were also countervailing pressures from the continuing acceptance of caste based values and customs. (7) Indeed, it was possible that some of the changes which had occurred were partly a redefinition of the status of some of the sub-caste groupings.)
This dichotomy between the countervailing pressures of caste and class can be discerned in dowry payments. Money payments, paithan, have always been an indicator of status in Patidar society. They reflected the disparity between the status of the bride's and the groom's family and the ability of the bride's family to pay for an alliance with a higher status family. Patidar women had always been 'demonstrators of status' in the marriage market; they were the 'pawns' used in the caste society as a means to achieve upward social mobility through hypergamous marriages. The amount of money given as paithan reflected these status differentials and it was given in the hope that the bride would be well received in her new marital household. The payment of paithan continued to reflect the importance of marriage in a caste based society as a vehicle to upward social mobility. But there were changes in dowry payments, which also reflected the changing nature of urban Patidar society. Larger amounts of paithan seemed quite frequently to be given to girls marrying into urban families, regardless of the status of the khadaki and gol. But more importantly, it was the significant difference in other forms of gifts from Patidar families which manifested a move away from caste based values. This was particularly evident in the large amount of gold given to women marrying into urban households, compared to those marrying into rural households in the same gol; this was more especially the case with members of 'the Twenty-Seven Villages'. But the different requirements of urban Patidar women's lives was, even more clearly reflected in the number of saris women received at marriage. Urban women were felt to need a superior wardrobe in order to reflect the standing of their own natal family and their husband's family, in
their much increased dealings in the 'public arena', where they were required to undertake many more status enhancing tasks, which would reflect the middle-class nature of their household.

The form of dowry payments given, therefore, indicate the ability of Indian society to embrace polarities. Many of the developments which have taken place in urban Patidar women's lives can be accounted for in terms of existing tendencies amongst upwardly mobile castes: specifically trends such as 'Sanskritization'. But theories of change relevant to a caste based society cannot account for all the changes in urban women's lifestyles. Despite the very strong caste identity of the Patidar, in urban areas, there are evident signs that mutual class interests, superceding those of caste, have begun to emerge.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

If urban Patidar women were part of a process where an emerging class society was replacing caste as the framework for household status, then the future was likely to hold significant developments for these women, too. In households, where the economic base depended on the success of family enterprises or flourishing personal careers, it was feasible to speculate that it would become increasingly more acceptable for women to be in paid employment, when that work was of a 'prestigious nature'. Such work, too, would provide an income which could contribute towards the purchase of the necessary 'status symbols' and lifestyles of a class based society.
Consequently, it was likely to become increasingly important for women to continue on to higher education. Moreover, even when women were not in paid employment, such an education would enable women to function much more successfully in a wider social circle and ensure the correct upbringing for the children in the family. (8)

Although Patidar women's earnings have not significantly altered their position within the household, the ability to earn money did bring an added dimension to their lives. It gave them the potential of financial independence. Already, on a very small scale, a number of women were supporting themselves financially. Indeed, it had enabled women who were separated from their husbands to maintain themselves without having to ask their own families for financial help. A small number of professional single women, too, had deferred marriage, which was no longer essential for their financial security. Consequently, the fact that Patidar women had received a good education and were qualified to undertake a career, whether they had, in fact, been in employment or not, enabled women to be less financially dependent on men, if circumstances demanded.

The corollary of such an emphasis on education was that much wider opportunities were opened up to women. This did not necessarily mean that the outlook of the majority of women was likely to be radically influenced, but women were aware that there was a certain element of choice which could be made. (9) In rural societies, as Berger (1967) has pointed out, women have 'fixed identities', that is they were born into a certain status and role in life which was predetermined before their birth. They had no
control over the form their lives would take. As Patidar village women said of their lives: "I work and exist". Such pre-ordained lives breed fatalism in people's attitudes because events which affect them are totally outside their control. For village women, in particular, because of their 'encapsulated lives', they had no experience of alternative lifestyles and they tended to perceive any misfortune that befell them as their 'fate', possibly retribution for their own failures in earlier lives. (10) But education and urban life opened up new possibilities for women, where other alternatives existed to their present life. There was even the possibility of making plans for the future.

Patidar women had, however, up to this point been circumscribed by what Veena Das (1976) called the 'existing framework of social relations', that is the patriarchal nature of Patidar family life and the existing gender hierarchies. Although the presence of more nuclear family units in urban areas had apparently done nothing to erode the existing power structure, there were some developments which should improve women's position.

Unlike patterns of urbanisation elsewhere, for example in the United Kingdom, in Kheda district, it had frequently brought women into greater contact with their own family and friends, made before their marriage. (11) When women were married into another village, they were cut off from all their own networks of support and help. But urban life enabled both women, their parents and siblings to live in the same town, or within easy access of that town. Consequently, urban Patidar women had a much wider circle of their
own choosing to whom they could turn for practical help, such as child care, and emotional support. Urban women all had 'confidantes' apart from their husbands, to whom they could turn for advice. It was easier, therefore, for women to work even if their in-laws were not prepared to take over child care responsibilities, if a woman's own natal family were willing to do so. Moreover, in the case of marital problems, they were liable to receive greater emotional support. Although such developments did not change existing patriarchal relationships, they could help to subvert them, to a certain extent, and ameliorate women's position. Because of the limitations on family size, too, Patidar women were not so constrained by the demands of constant child bearing and rearing, which left them freer to explore other avenues.

An anticipated development of a class-based society would be a diminution in caste based social interaction. There was already evidence to show that there was some degree of contact, certainly between members of different ekada and, to some extent, with other castes. Such changes in patterns of social interaction could be expected to facilitate changes in marriage practices with more marriages outside the ekada based on class rather than caste, plus, potentially, intercaste marriages, for the same reason. In a village context, girls and boys mixed together in a brother-sister relationship. But in an urban area, such relationships were no longer applicable. Consequently, it had become easier for girls and boys to meet potential partners and influence the choice of their own spouse. Both neighbours and school, college or work friends could be considered as a potential match. Indeed, some couples had
already manipulated an 'arranged' marriage in order to marry the person of their choice. Such a choice, in the future, was not necessarily from the same or similar status ekada, as long as they were from a similar socio-economic background. When partners were able to take a much more active role in selecting their own future husband or wife, there was a greater possibility of closer relationships developing between spouses. Certainly, in the small number of 'love marriages' amongst the Patidar in the survey, women appeared to have greater influence over their husbands in decision-making, than other women. Such marriages could, therefore, undermine the patriarchal nature of decision-making processes and give younger women greater control over important decisions affecting their lives.

Such developments might imply considerable conflict between different generations in the marital family, if gender hierarchies were threatened. There was, however, a very strong commitment to the ideal of joint family life and a desire for 'peace' and 'harmony' within the household. As Kandiyoti (1977), too, in the context of similar developments in Turkey pointed out, women have been brought up and conditioned to be 'malleable', so that they adapt well to changing environments, so enabling them to fit in well with the values and customs of their husband's household after marriage. Because of such an upbringing, Patidar women were able to adapt to demands made of a young wife in a new household, whether this was an agricultural household or an urban professional one. The majority of Patidar women, therefore, were more likely to seek
to comply with the requirements of their family and household than
to look for a radical change in their lifestyle. But the potential
for change in Patidar women's lifestyles was, indeed, considerable,
particularly in urban areas. Would the preference be, however, to
keep women as 'demonstrators of status' or to occupy much of their
time in 'status production work'? Or would the demands of a class
based society make it increasingly important for women to seek paid
work outside the home? In the context of Indian family life, this
was likely to be resolved by whatever brought the greatest benefit
to the household, not to the women involved.
CONCLUSIONS

1. Hilary Standing (1985) in her research on women in Calcutta found that women's ability to earn money was insufficient to alter their position in the family. Any money they earned, as with the majority of Patidar women, went into family funds and the women, themselves, did not have control over its use.

2. Caplan (1985) has described a similar process in her research on women in Madras: she called it 'status production work'. U. Sharma (1986), too, found that middle-class women in Shimla were involved in 'household service work'.

3. Many of the activities involved in 'status production work' were not acknowledged by men in the household as being in any sense 'useful'. Women's activities were rarely publicly accorded value, it was not perceived as 'work'. Abdullah and Zeidenstein (1982) however, pointed out that it was a deliberate means of enhancing family status to imply that women were 'idle', because it suggested the family was wealthy enough not to need their labour power. In their research in Bangladesh, men were quoted as saying of their womenfolk that they 'cooked and sewed quilts'.

4. By 1985, a small number of women had learnt to drive, which partially overcame their mobility problems, whilst enabling them to only come into contact with 'desirable persons'.

5. In the new town of Bhubaneshwar, for example, Seymour (1975) attributed women's joint visiting patterns with their husbands to the absence of either of the couple's kin.

6. Caplan (1985) argued that women in Madras in their 'homemaking' and social activities were not just sustaining the family and maintaining kinship links, but that they were contributing towards the 'reproduction' and formation of lifestyles and culture associated with class.

7. Jayaraman (1981) and M.Sharma (1985) both found that there was an overlap between caste and class in rural areas: even in Madras, Caplan (1985), felt this overlap existed to a certain extent.

8. Mehta (1975) found that women's lack of education contributed towards marital breakdown in couples when the husband's career had become increasingly successful and took him into a much wider social ambit.

9. Kapur (1970) found that the educated working women in her sample had changing expectations of 'happiness'. Previously, women had gained satisfaction for doing their duty in caring for their husband's needs.
10. Makhlouf (1979) in her research in North Yemen, felt that in 'traditional' society, women's lives followed a certain pattern, which however painful it might have been for them was the 'correct behaviour'. Hence, they expected other women to conform to these norms.

11. Unlike Seymour's (1975) finding in Bhubaneshwar, where women in areas of the new town had lost contact with kin.


Mennessi, F. (1975) Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society. Schenkman


APPENDIX 1. SURVEY A AND B
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>PIYAR (village of birth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>AGE AT MARRIAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>HOUSEHOLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>HUSBAND'S OCCUPATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>OWN OCCUPATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>FAMILY OVERSEAS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PROBE:**

Fast days:

Prayers:

Visits to temple:

Shopping: food/veg/clothes etc.

Regular visits to cinema: etc.

Help in home: servants, etc.
### SOCIAL INTERACTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY</th>
<th>RELATIONSHIP</th>
<th>WHERE SEE</th>
<th>HOW LONG</th>
<th>REASONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Probe: How know friend?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Close friend?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PROBE:** Anyone seen daily?

  weekly?

  regularly?

  How often see parents?

  Any non-Patel friends?

**CHECK:** Visits to other houses?

Visits away from home, who with?

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APPENDIX 2. SURVEY C
I'm interested to learn something about your personal life, and some of the things that have happened to you recently - nice things and difficulties.

PERSONAL DETAILS: NAME/VILLAGE OF RESIDENCE

A. LIFE HISTORY

Where were you born? and brought up? nuclear/family? joint

Were you educated there?

Did you live anywhere else? before marriage?

And after marriage? where have you lived? nuclear/family? joint

confinements? (parents?) how long?

PROBE: if live separately?

do you still contribute to the j.f. budget?

if working?

and your money?

And are your parents still there? They're both alive?

If dead? When did they/he/she die?

B. MARRIAGE

And now some questions about your marriage?

Was it an arranged marriage/love marriage?

How was your marriage arranged? How did you meet?

If arranged: Who arranged it?

Did you meet your husband before chanla(engagement) or the wedding ceremony?
For an "interview"? Any subsequent meetings?

Did your parents give "paithan" (dowry). How much: gold, money, saris, gifts?

Was there someone else you wanted to marry? PROBE: Boyfriend?

What happened? How did you feel then? And now?

C. PREGNANCY

When was your last pregnancy?

How many pregnancies have you had? just..


What happened?

How did you feel about that?

Have there been other problems (with pregnancies) in the past?

What about having any more children? If not? Why is that?

If yes:

Do you want a boy or a girl?

What do other people in the family think about having more children?

PROBE: husband? in laws? preference: boy/girl?

If don't: so you're using some form of contraception?

If not: so what would you do if you became pregnant?

And were your other children planned? Did you want boys or girls?
1. PERSONAL HEALTH

1. How are you feeling at the moment? Have you been unwell in the last year?
   
   PROBE: What was the matter? What symptoms?
   Have you seen anyone about it? Who?
   What did they say? Diagnosis? (if any).

   If cause not known: What do you think it is?

   If not consulted anyone: Why not?

2. Are you sleeping satisfactorily?

   PROBE: Frequency of disruption? How often wake early/can't sleep?
   What is the cause? When did it start?


   What do you think is the cause?
   When did it start?

4. How are you finding life at the moment?

   PROBE: general state of mind:
   - cheerful, contented, miserable/sad etc.

   If miserable/sad etc. (or very unhappy) Why is that?

   How does it make you feel? PROBE: Like crying/suicidal?
   When did it start?

   If cheerful/content/etc.:

5. 

   - so there is nothing that upsets you moment? nothing that worries you/makes you anxious?
5. Do you ever find it difficult to concentrate on what you are doing?

If yes:

Why is that? Something on your mind/your mind is elsewhere?

When did it start?

2. SELF ESTEEM/CONFIDENCE

6. What are your good points/strong points?

PROBE: What are you good at?

And as a person. PROBE: Characteristics. (In your nature)

Have you always been like that? When did it change?

Is there anything in your life gives you special fulfillment or satisfaction?

7. How much time do you/can you spend on your appearance and special days?

PROBE: Has this always been the same?

When did it change? Why?

8. How do you feel about going out (on an excursion/errand/visit?)

And meeting new people?

And if you go alone? Or with other people?

PROBE: Have you always been like this?

If not: when did it start? why?
4. RELATIONSHIPS: FAMILY AND FRIENDS

9. And how are things at home?
   PROBE: How are you getting on with everyone in the house?

   If OK:
   ----- 
   So you are content with things(your relationship) with your husband?

   Where applicable: And your mother-in-law? sisters-in-law? others?

   Has this always been the case? When did things change? Why?

   Could you tell me which is better, living in a joint family or a nuclear family?

   Why is that? PROBE: privacy, independence, restrictions, company, support.

   Which do you prefer? Why?

   PROBE: So how do you feel about your present life?


    If difficulty: Why is that? When did it start?
    --------------

    If well: Has this always been the case?

    If not: When did it change? Why

    Do you see your family/friends as often as you used to do?

    Why not? When did it start?
11. Have you been worried or concerned about anyone in your family? 
Or anyone else you know?

PROBE: Why was that? When did this start?

How did you feel then? And now?

If appropriate: What do you think is going to happen?
-------------------

12. How are things going for your children?

PROBE: They haven't been ill recently?
When was that? What was wrong?
And no problems at school?
And they're getting on with you?
And everyone else in the family?

Sometimes (parents and) children have difficult phases.
Has this ever happened?
When was that? Why?

4. PRACTICAL AREAS

13. How do you manage with all the things you have to do in the house?

PROBE: Have you always managed? Or found it heavy going?

When did this change? Why was that?

14. Do you work? (including homework) Have you ever worked?

PROBE: How do you feel about work? Would you like to work?

Why do you want to work? Or not want to work?

How does your husband/and his family feel about you
If working: How do you get on with people at work?
----------
Has it always been like that?
When did it change? Why?

How does it affect the rest of your life?

With the family? And housework?

15. How about your free time?

Have there been any changes in the way you spend it?

Anything new?

PROBE: Is there anything you used to do, but don't do now? you were good at?

In the last year? Before you were married?

How do you feel about this?

When did this change? Why?

16. Is there anything perhaps that we haven't discussed that's getting you down or worrying you?

PROBE: Financial problems? For your in-laws / or parents?
Problems in marrying a relative?

How does this make you feel? When did it start?
(Is there anyone you can consult/talk to about this?)

5. INTIMACY
17. What about other problems? Is there anyone you can talk to about them?

Is there a close friend or family member you can turn to if you have any troubles?

How often do you see that person?

And what about your husband?

18. Have you had any experiences of "najar lage"? (Evil eye).

PROBE: Recently? Can you tell me about this?

How does it affect you?

Who can you go and see about this?

Or: What can you do to get rid of it?

So you do/don't believe in this?

And have you had any experiences of "bhut"? (Ghosts)

So you do/don't believe in them?

6. GENERAL

19. Has anything happened in the last year which you found upsetting?

PROBE: Loss of someone close to you? through death? moving away?

What happened? How did you feel then?

And how do you feel now?

AND: What about anything exciting, a surprise or something unexpected?

How did you feel about it? And now?
20. In your life so far, is there anything you wish had turned out differently?

Do you have any regrets? PROBE: About your marriage? children? work?

(e.g. Some people have very romantic ideas about marriage?)

21. You've told me a lot about how you feel about life at the moment, but what are your feelings about the future?

PROBE: Why do you feel like this?

Have you always felt this way?

22. And finally, would you like your children's lives to follow a similar pattern to your own?
APPENDIX 3. ENGAGEMENT AND WEDDING CEREMONIES
ENGAGEMENT AND WEDDING CEREMONIES

Engagement

Aple: initial engagement ceremony  
Chanalo-matli final engagement ceremony where marriage negotiations are finalised.  
(Both ceremonies can be combined.)

Separate ceremonies held at both the bride's and the groom's home

Mandap auspicious ceremony for good luck; with Ganesh puja and a thread is tied around the wrist of the bride or groom.  
Mahurat Pithi a ritual purification before the main wedding ceremonies.

Gujara procession to collect lingam used in Grahashanti.  
Grahashanti puja to the planets for peace, performed by the parents of older brother and his wife.  
Varad procession of female relatives, on the father's side of the family, carrying pitchers.

Arrival of the groom's party, the jan at the bride's home or the place of the wedding.

Ceremonies involving both bride and groom - kanya dan

Hasta melap joining of bride's and groom's hands, signifying the gift of the bride by her parents.  
Mangelfera bride's hand placed in the groom's: they circulate the fire four times. In the presence of Agni, they are making a vow to stay together always.  
Kalvo ceremony of feeding of sweetmeats to one another, presented by the bride's family. It is said to symbolise a vow to eat together always in the future.  
Khavadavvo Sobha granti whispered in the bride's ear by her currently married female relatives: 'long life to your husband.'

Page Lage performed at the bride's home and later at the groom's home. Touching the feet of elders who give money in return.
Bride's arrival at the groom's home

Paisa ramvana dipping for coins in water. Usually at the groom's home or at the wedding hall, if not held at the bride's home.

Modun ceremony performed when a bride arrives at her new home. Literally 'to show her face'.

Joyalun anun the first arrival of the bride at her new home with part of her dowry after the wedding.

Pahelun anun the final arrival of the bride with the remainder of her dowry.