# BARGAINING RELATIONSHIPS AMONG SPOUSES IN URBAN INTERMARRIAGES IN INDIA: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF THE INTERSECTIONS OF GENDER, ETHNICITY, CASTE AND CLASS

BY
SONALI GHOSH

DISSERTATION
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, 2012

Urbana, Illinois

Doctoral Committee:
Associate Professor Assata Zerai, Chair
Associate Professor Moon-Kie Jung
Assistant Professor Keera Allendorf
Doctor Catherine Kenney

# ABSTRACT

This work is a qualitative study that explores how spouses in urban intermarriages in India negotiate for resources within the household as they navigate their way through varying norms that come with the different class, castes and ethnicities that they draw from. It examines negotiation with specific reference to (i) wedding expenses and wedding rituals (ii) division of labor within the household (iii) financial decision-making) (iv) maintenance and transmission of language and diet and (v) residential pattern. The paradigm of intersectionality which sees gender, class, race and other social categories as inextricably linked forms the backbone of the approach as it explores how gender, caste, class and ethnicity emerge and submerge in different contexts of the bargaining process for the couples in the study. In doing so it reveals how women in the study, exercise their agency in the intersection of these manifold and often ambiguous structures that leave the meanings of rules and norms of these multiple structures open for interpretation. It draws an agency continuum based on the innovation that the actors display in their exercise of choice. At one end is circumscribed agency in which choices are made within the extant possibilities contained in the multiple structures, without creation of new rules or norms. At the other end is transformative agency wherein new norms are created by transposing existing rules to new structural contexts thereby creating new parameters of choice that were hitherto not present. In between lies exercise of choice that does not fit neatly in either category. The study brings to attention how individual character traits steer choices within the compass of multiple structures. It establishes a continuum where in one end is women who most successfully assert agency and negotiate for resources. They associate themselves with assertive character traits like being “confident” or “strong willed”. At the extreme end are women least successful in negotiation that associates themselves with character traits like “being too soft”. Most women fall in the middle that have reasonable if not excessive success in asserting agency in negotiating within their marriages. They associate themselves with more temperate character traits like “calm” or “not too pushy”. The fieldwork was conducted in New Delhi, India between December 2007 and February 2009, and the work in the field spanned a period of twelve months that included recruitment and data collection. Case studies of sixteen couples in intermarriages are used as analytical data for the study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Heartfelt thank you to Ms. Julie Woolsey, Ms. Shari Day and Ms. Maggie Metzger Chappell for helping me navigate the graduate school administration smoothly all through my years of study at the University of Illinois. I give special thanks to Shari who has many a time gone an extra mile to help me during administrative contingencies. I will always remember her with gratitude.

I will remain indebted to my committee members, Professor Assata Zerai, Professor Moon-Kie Jung, Professor Keera Allendorf and Dr. Catherine Kenney for the invaluable guidance and direction they provided to my writing. Thank you for critically examining my work and asking compelling questions that helped me collect my ideas and give them shape. I cannot express in words what Professor Zerai, my mentor and advisor, has meant to me over the last few years. She has provided me with immense moral support and encouragement through the dissertating process. I could not have had a better advisor.

I thank all the women and men in my study that let me into their lives and homes. Through understanding you, I understand myself better.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....1

CHAPTER 2: METHODS……36

CHAPTER 3: EMERGING AGENCIES WITHIN MULTIPLE STRUCTURES.....49

CHAPTER 4: SUBVERTING GENDER: BARGAINING AT SINGLE POINT HEIRARCHY AND MULTIPLE POINTS OF DIFFERENCE.....79

CHAPTER 5: SUBVERTING GENDER: BARGAINING AT MULTPLE POINTS OF HIERARCHY.....125

CHAPTER 6: DISCERNING THE BROAD TRENDS IN NEGOTIATION……149

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION……183

REFERENCES:.....192

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Studies of intermarriages in India have placed close attention to inter-caste marriages, as the traditional marriage structure in India centered around caste endogamy, that is, it was arranged between men and women belonging to the same caste. One of the earliest studies focused on the trends and incidence of inter-caste marriages and reached the verdict, that in spite of the urbanization and modernization which provide young men and women the opportunity to interact freely across caste lines, the frequency with which they chose to defy caste lines is very small, and young people still hold dear mate selection through arranged marriages where caste endogamy is the norm (Cormac 1961). A more recent study (Saroja 1999) also reached the same conclusion in the rural Indian milieu, saying that under the circumstance of large scale dowry and severe competition for jobs, young people try to keep their caste affiliations, which can help them advance in life, and therefore prefer strict caste endogamy. A study of matrimonial advertisements of highly educated urban Indians, including those who seek education and job opportunities in the United States revealed their preference to marry inside their caste (Sharda 1990). However the most recent work on inter-caste marriage within the urban educated middle class (Chauhan 2007), which undertook a content analysis of matrimonial advertisements of three years, 1950, 1970 and 1990 indicates that caste is not as important a factor in finding a suitable match anymore, and people are willing to cross caste lines as long as they find mates of similar class status. Lack of surveys, past or current, and the absence of stringent requirement of marriage registration in India accounts for the discrepancies that studies reach in the incidence of inter-caste marriages and makes it difficult to ascertain the real numbers in inter-caste marriages

at present. However there is sufficient anecdotal evidence that young people, in the twenty first century, in large urban cities are increasingly marrying not only outside caste, but outside their class and ethnic boundaries as well. For the purpose of my study, intermarriage is viewed not only as inter-caste union but marriages that may also permeate the boundaries of class and ethnicity as well. One such study, Kaur (2008) has been made in the rural Indian context, which studies intermarriages across caste and ethnic divides as well. Kaur's (2008) main focus is to study the impact that adverse sex ratios have on rural marriage patterns and in her working paper states, that adverse sex ratios among certain ethnic groups like Punjab and Haryana force them to look outside their caste and ethnic boundaries for brides. Shortage of women due to practice of sex selective abortions lead to a shorter supply of women of marriageable age for these ethnic groups. As a result they bring in brides from Bengal, Assam and other ethnic groups where sex ratios are not as adverse as among 'Punjabis' or 'Haryanvis'. The men who seek such brides often have little or no agricultural land and are lower down the social and economic order, as the more well placed men prefer to marry within their own ethnic and caste groups. Similarly women who enter such marriages also come from destitute families whose parents are willing to arrange such matches for them, as they entail no dowry. Kaur asks how women in these marriages adjust to a new cultural environment and states that for women in these marriages in rural India, a 'cultural forgetting' takes place where that of the husbands replaces their own rites, rituals, language, food and dress.

My study explores intermarriages in urban India. Unlike Kaur's study where the marriages are propelled by adverse sex ratios and were arranged by the parents' of the bride and groom, in this study the marriages are self-choice marriages, popularly known in India as 'love marriages'. Men and women in large metropolitan cities in India are often thrown together at the

schools, universities and the work place and are often the milieu from where they find their spouse in these self-choice marriages. My study looks at intermarriages across, caste, ethnic, as well as class divides and explores intra household bargaining within such inter marriages. It looks specifically at allotment of resources within these marriages and seeks to find out how spouses negotiate with each other on five facets of married life that include (1) dowry and wedding expenses, (2) division of labor within the household, (3) residential patterns, (4) financial decision making and (5) conformity to and transmission of cultural traits of language and diet. The study uses the paradigm of intersectionality, which espouses that the social categories individuals occupy are manifold and interlocking, and that the influences of gender, race, class, caste, ethnicity and other such categories are intertwined. Given that the couples in my study draw from diverse class, castes and language based ethnic groups, this paradigm provides invaluable framework within which to study bargaining. The study asks two broad questions:

1) In what manner do the structures of gender, caste, class, and ethnicity intersect with respect to intra-household bargaining within intermarriages in urban India when spouses draw from diverse caste, class, and ethnic backgrounds? In what way does agency emerge with multiple structures at play?
2) In what manner do individual character traits of the spouses (for example, such as those of being aggressive or meek or empathetic, etc.) have a bearing on the bargaining process?

These questions will be further elucidated within the context of a review of extant literature on intra-household bargaining and intersectionality.

## *THEORETICAL BACKGROUND*

### I. Intra-Household Bargaining

*(i) Review of Bargaining Theories*

The reference point for a theoretical debate on intra household bargaining is Gary Becker's (1981) conceptualization of the unitary model of the family, which regards the household as a single entity. In his framework, the entire income and resources of the household are pooled and apportioned by an altruistic head of the household who represents the preferences and tastes of all its members, and keeps everybody's best interests in mind while working towards achieving maximum household utility. Amiss in this conceptualization is a possibility of distinct and conflicting individual welfare functions as pointed out by it critics who also draw attention to the fact that it is the household leader's command over resources that permits him to take on the altruist role (Julie Nelson 1995; Robert Pollak 1994). An immediate alternative to the unitary household model was the cooperating bargaining model which did away with the presumption of common tastes and preferences of household members, and conceived of the allotment of resources within the household as a negotiation between its individual members, the bargaining power of each individual defined by their respective fall back options such as income, property etc., (Bougignon and Chiappori 1992; McElroy and Horney 1981; Marilyn Manser and Murray Brown 1980).

Critics of the cooperative bargaining models (Katz 1997; Agarwal 1995; Nelson 1995; Seiz 1991) argued that the model is agreeable but for the main limitation that although they acknowledged that individuals' fall back options differ, the model lacks institutional content in the sense that it did not see the role of the institution of gender in the differing fall back options that the members of the family have. According to Katz (1997) the basic difficulty in the model

lay in its symmetric or equal treatment of the members of the household with respect to the rules of the game, that of "voice" and "exit". By voice she meant the ability to enter the bargaining field and by exit she meant the ability to literally exit the marriage or maintain a 'non-cooperative equilibrium' within the household (the latter concept pioneered by Lundberg and Pollack (1993), which meant members withdrawing into separate spheres, while remaining in the marriage) using the fall back options one has in case cooperative arrangements fail. Paraphrasing Katz (1997) the next paragraph summarizes the feminist critique of cooperative bargaining models.

First, feminist critiques drew attention to asymmetry in voice by arguing that they are governed by social norms, like for instance in certain societies women are penalized both socially and legally for trying to bargain on traditional gender roles pertaining to division of labor or sexual rights of the husband. There is also lack of symmetry in exit in the bargaining process according to feminist social scientists because in the bargaining process it is not only ones own evaluation of ones assets for which the exit threat can be used that is important but also how other members of the household evaluate your capital. Scholars like Sen (1995) argued that women's reproductive and productive activities are not highly valued by both men and women because they occur in the home or simply because they are carried out by women. Another source of asymmetry in exit lay in the fact that women in many societies may not even be aware of the alternatives like income earning opportunities which would increase their bargaining options. This might occur, for example, due to social seclusion norms like Purdah in some Muslim societies. Finally, literal exit, whether it be divorce or separation is precluded from women's options altogether in some societies because of the severe sanctions associated with women leaving their husbands even in case of abuse, these sanctions not being equally

applicable to men. To sum up, cooperative bargaining models scored over unitary household models by acknowledging that there may be conflict of interests between different members of the family in terms of taste and preferences, and see household members bargaining for resources using their individual bargaining powers which rest on their respective earned or unearned income. However they striped the individuals in the bargaining of institutional content by overlooking how bargaining powers becomes asymmetrical due to structures of gender.

The next class of bargaining models, the non-cooperative bargaining models apart from allowing for differing preferences between household members discussed the institution of gender in impinging on the bargaining process albeit in a more limited manner than feminist social scientists. Aril Rubenstein (1982) proposed the alternating framework model as one such non-cooperative bargaining model, where the sequence at which offers and counter-offers made by the members in the bargaining process impact the bargaining outcome. Drawing from this Susan Fleck (1997) argued that the husbands "first mover advantage" may result in keeping the women home and reduces their employability and thereby negatively influencing their bargaining power in future periods. Another non-cooperative model, which drew attention to how the male partner has an edge over his wife in the bargaining process, is the principal agent non-cooperative model, which treats the family economy akin to employer-employee or the landlord tenant relationship. Examples of this are the works of Robert Paterson (1985) and Anita Chawla (1993), who explained how men in rural west Africa use their status of owners of means of production, in this context owners of land, to draw their wives to provide them labor in their fields in return for meeting their minimum survival needs, therefore clearly constraining the wives options for exit.

However, even non-cooperative bargaining models, though they accommodated

asymmetry between the genders, confined themselves to the discussion of gender asymmetry in terms of economic aspects like control over earned or unearned income as enunciated above. They are restricted in their ability to incorporate the full complexity of gender interactions within the household, that is to say, about the qualitative factors that might determine bargaining power like the role of social norms and perceptions in the bargaining process. The qualitative aspects of power like social norms and perceptions that go beyond factors, like earned or unearned income, are explored by feminists engaged in bargaining research as briefly discussed a while ago in Katz's (1997) summary of the feminist critique of cooperative bargaining models.

Much sociological feminist literature on bargaining over housework, for instance, emphasized this role of qualitative factors like norms and perceptions in the battle for who does more housework (see Ferree 1990, Greenstein 1996, South & Spitze 1994, West and Zimmerman 1987, Hochschild 1989). Bianchi, Milkie, Liana and Robinson (2000), on their take in the feminist interpretation of bargaining over housework said: "With its focus on ideational and interactional expressions of gender, this (feminist) perspective emphasize that housework does not have a neutral meaning, but rather its performance by women and men helps define and express gender relations within households." Brines (1994) also argued that rules of economic exchange couldn't explain the behavior of some husbands who reduce their contribution to housework the more they become economically dependent on their wives. This is done, according to Brines, to reassert their manhood. Feminist explanations to situations where women refuse to renounce authority over housework or set standards too high for men (Allen and Hawkins 1999) is that because the social expectation of keeping the house spick and span rests primarily on the woman and not on the man. Therefore, the woman is anxious to maintain control and set the standards as a reflection of her competence as a wife and mother (Bianchi,

Milkie, Liana and Robinson 2000). Gendered norms and perceptions according to Aggarwal (1997) thus impinges on bargaining by limiting what can be bargained about, impacting whether the bargaining is covert or overt or whether the norms themselves can be subject to bargaining. Social norms, according to Aggawal (1997 curb women's bargaining power by ideologically placing them as primary child care takers consequently restraining their job and mobility alternatives, ideologically fashioning women's needs to be identical with their families, regulating their public space and so on. Gendered social norms according to feminist theorists thus provide the platform for intra household bargaining.

*(ii) Intersectionality within Intra-household Bargaining Literature*

In her critique of the parallel that people commonly drew between the situation of blacks and the situation of women which insinuated tacitly, that all women are white and all blacks are men, bell hook (1981) initiated a process for social scientists to deconstruct the category of African Americans and women. It developed into what is now called intersectional theory or simply intersectionality, which conceptualizes people occupying multiple interlocking social categories. It is a condition according to Deaux (2001) "in which a person simultaneously belongs to two or more social categories or social statuses and the unique consequences that result from that." Thus the basic tenet of intersectional theory is that it does not construct categories like race, class, and gender as autonomous categories of analysis, or tries to simply add one category to another (Brewer 1993; Zerai 2000) meaning which the axes of differences between people cannot be isolated into disconnected stands (Brah and Phoenix 2004; Lorde 1984).

How does intra-household bargaining literature incorporate structures other than gender in the bargaining process? One way theorists have incorporated multiple structures as being

significant in the bargaining process is by acknowledging that women from different social backgrounds have different levels of negotiating power within the household as allowed by their region, class, age, or other such structures. Thus Agarwal (1997:17) stated "Tibito-Burmese women of Nepal, who are not subject to purdah, enjoy considerable freedom of movement and are significant and visible participants in all types of economic activity, including agriculture and trading. But even they are subject to subtle aspects of gendered behavioral norms. These norms impinge on women's ability to negotiate their rights, including property claims within the family." An implicit understanding in this is that women from a particular region (Nepal) have more negotiating power than women in other regions in Asia might have, thus introducing region into her explanations of women's bargaining power". She also said:

"Mediated by gender, age, and marital status, social norms often define how household members should conduct themselves. In many societies behavior, which is assertive and loud, is much more tolerated in boys and men than in girls and women, and among women assertiveness is more accepted from older women than younger ones, from mothers-in-law than young daughters in law and from daughters than daughters-in-law. **Gendered norms** (emphasis mine) thus set the stage for bargaining that can take even within the market place. Fish trading in South India, for instance, true to its proverbial reputation is typically associated with loud haggling and aggressive marketing. The women who earn a livelihood by this means risked being dubbed as masculine and rejected as role models by their educated daughters."

(Agarwal 1997:17)

In this passage she acknowledged that social norms are mediated by categories other than gender. She drew attention to age and marital status by pointing out how younger women are given a lesser leeway to assertive behavior than older women. She also acknowledged implicitly

the role of class and region in the bargaining process by noting that the fisherwomen class in the region South of India allowed for a social norm which does not preclude loud haggling or bargaining which implies that these norms are both region and class specific as well. However she conceptualized the norms as principally gendered giving more weight to gender in her explanations of bargaining rather than deeming gender, class, age, region, caste, religion etc. to be inextricable strands, which together inform the bargaining, process.

Kabeer (2000), similarly acknowledged the role of class and region in the bargaining process in her ethnographic study of Bangladeshi women workers negotiating with their spouses for their right to take up paid factory work outside their homes. She compares two groups of Bangladeshi women, one, a group, which lives in Dhaka the capital of Bangladesh, and the other, a group of immigrant Bangladeshi women in London. In her analysis, Bangladeshi women in London less successfully negotiated their rights to be employed in factories, because they drew from landowning classes who were not used to having women in paid work, were more status conscious in their choice of work, and conservative in their evaluation of what constituted acceptable paid work. Therefore they did piece based garment work inside their homes rather than being employed outside their homes in factories. The Dhaka counterparts, drew from more mixed economic backgrounds including landless or land-poor households and less rigid in their choices. Moreover, in London there was a scarcity of work for the Bangladeshi community in general due to racial barriers, which served to confine women to piece, waged labor inside their homes while men took up factory work. In Dhaka, on the other hand, women's recruitment into garment factories did not lead them into direct competition with male labor because it was a new industry generating demand for female labor. Thus along with gender norms she weaves class and region specific labor markets in determining the bargaining within the household. However,

she used class and region in an overarching analysis of the bargaining process in the last part of her book. In her ethnographic description of bargaining within the household she described and analyzed bargaining with a focus on women struggling against gender norms in both the Dhaka and London context with little attention to class and region. And in fact acknowledging the preeminence given to gender she stated in the beginning of her study and stated:

"Gender is thus not the sole, or always the most salient aspect of inequality and disadvantage in people's lives. However, it is one that was until very recently, an unquestioned, taken for granted, aspect of social reality and rarely the subject of social science analysis. For this reason it continues to merit special attention. The dominant focus of this book will be gender relation, and on gender inequalities, as they play out in the domain of the household, where power and preference, constraint and consent, are more difficult to disentangle."

(Kabeer 2000:32-33)

Demographers have also incorporated structures other than gender in explaining fertility decisions within the household with Dyson and Moore (1983) organizing India into regional lines suggesting kinship patterns in the south of India where daughters are more valued and marry closer to natal homes favor greater female autonomy and lower fertility. Lower female autonomy and higher fertility is indicated in the North of India. Malhotra, Vannaman and Kishore (1995) also affirmed patriarchal differences between north and south as having a bearing on fertility decisions. Morgan, Stash, Smith and Mason (2002) compared Muslim and Non-Muslim groups in four Asian counties to determine whether religion or socio economic disadvantage played a role in fertility decisions. There was no support in their data of connecting pro-natalist attitudes of Muslim women to their religion or socioeconomic class, but suggested that group identity and political disadvantage may lead to more pro-natalist tendencies among

Muslim women. These studies clearly indicated structures other than gender in impinging on decision-making within the household.

Insights to intersectionality in existing literature are provided by suggesting or affirming how women of a particular region, class or caste may be more empowered than women from another region, class or castes. My study of intermarriages where the husband and wife themselves draw from different caste, class and ethnic backgrounds provides a complex and rich sample that has the advantage of clearly demonstrating through qualitative analysis how women actually draw from multiple structures in their daily lives to negotiate their way around in a marriage. Kaur (2008) also keeps a complex sample in her study of marriage patterns in rural India. She says, for instance, that rural women from Kerala who are more educated are able to negotiate their adjustment in their new marital homes better than uneducated rural 'Bihari' women in their inter caste and interethnic marriages. She says that negotiation for cultural differences happens in varying ways in accordance to women's prior standing and cultural background. However, overall, she concludes that all women in these intermarriages have to undertake the burden of adjustment to their husband's culture and are treated as second-class citizens. My study explores intersectionality by asking questions that vary from Kaur's study as will be discussed shortly in my discussion on the use of intersectionality in the Indian context.

*(iii) Structure and Agency within Intra Household Bargaining Literature*

My study aims to address the question of how agency emerges in the play of multiple structures. More specifically, are the women and men in my study able to transform structure in the creation of new rules or do they merely act within competing possibles already present in structure not necessarily begetting anything new? How does literature on intra-household bargaining deal with this particular issue of structure and agency? Kabeer (2000) in her empirical

work on Bangladeshi garment workers in Dhaka and London used her understanding of Pierre Bourdieu's framework of agency in her ethnography. Her understanding of Bourdieu to quote from her text is as follows:

"The notion of agency in Bourdieu's work is associated with the creative interpretation of rules rather than with their mechanical execution. Interests are always to the forefront in these interpretations; conformity occupies a secondary place. Consequently, individual actors may strategize within the framework spelt out by the community's code of conduct. But their interpretation of these codes brings into play a far more diverse range of practical outcomes than would be suggested by a formal inventory of cultural rules. An understanding of how such rules are invoked in practice and what this implies for the reconstitution or modification of the structures, which generate these rules help to illuminate the structuring of structures overtime. The passage from doxa (uncontested social order: bracketed explanation mine) to discourse occurs when the taken for granted way of organizing social life legitimized by the social order begins to lose its neutralized character and reveals its arbitrariness and when the congruence between its objective possibilities and its subjective evaluation is undermined, radically or gradually and unevenly".

(Kabeer 2000:45-46)

What can be gathered from her empirical work is that her demonstration of agency is not to show the passage from doxa to discourse because the ethnography does not study the first wave of women workers who entered the garment factories, but rather subsequent waves of women who did so after factory work had already entered into the realm of choice in the communities code of conduct. It can be said that she explained agency when prospects of paid factory work was already diffused in their gender ideologies as a choice between competing

possibilities (purdah vs. outside employment) and interpreting gender rules in ways to best serve their own interests. In her analysis, women displayed 'reluctant agency' when they had to take up factory work as distress sale of labor and 'active agency' for instance when husband and wife negotiated that it may be necessary to take up factory work to increase the standard of living of the family.

She sees both as going against the grain and explains it as 'going against established conventions of paid work for women' (2000:339). However, a critical reader would see it not as working against structural constraints but making choices with competing ideologies within the gender structures, albeit one of the competing possibilities being a more recent introduction in the realm of choice.

Gipson and Hindin (2009) made a statistical study of fertility decisions within the household of 3053 rural Bangladeshi couples and their study reported that when husbands and wives had discordant childbearing preferences, the wives' preferences prevailed over the husbands' preference. In a similar study by Gipson and Hindin (2007) data revealed that women decide to avail of contraception or not, suited to her individual fertility preferences heedless of their partners' preferences and without the knowledge of their partners. This in spite of patriarchal gender structures where husbands wield more decision making power. No explanation was given as why the wives could stand up against patriarchal structures. Another study, which documents trends against gender norms, resolves the issue by unraveling competing gender norms. Thus Luke, Schuler, Mai and Minh (2010) in their study of domestic violence within the household in Vietnam describe government policy, which upholds gender equality coexisting with inequitable attitudes. Their regression analysis revealed decline in violence among couples when both husband and the wife expressed equitable attitudes.

Another interesting take on how structural constraints are transgressed emerge out of work, which use sociology of emotions in their analysis of intra-household dynamics. Basu (2006) therefore argued that love turns class and gender hierarchies upside down, and is a valid variable in reproductive health outcomes and should be counted in the decision making process between spouses or partners. A study of resistance to condom usage among African American women, Sobo (1995) showed how contraceptive behavior is prompted not so much by the economic vulnerability of these women, but by the urge to sustain romantic ideals. Allendorf 's (2010) study on the use of maternal health care services among rural women in Madhya Pradesh, India documented that "high quality family relationships bestow greater agency which in turn help women secure access to maternal health care services" (2010-273). To measure quality of relationship with their husbands, women in the study were asked how relations with her husband were during and after her pregnancy ended. The respondents could answer that they had many, some or few difficulties with their husbands. Indicators of women's agency were ability to make decisions about their mobility and decisions about spending money. Agency in her study was equated with the ability to make independent decisions. Good quality relationships bestow agency, which enable women to secure maternal health services. There is no theoretical entanglement with the question if there were there competing gender norms in her location which enabled the women to make independent decisions, therefore encapsulating their agency within competing possibles already present in structure without creating novel outcomes. She was engaging with the sociology of emotions so it was not theoretical goal of her work.

My study also describes how actors exercise agency within parameters of competing possibles within structures, as most actions do not entail innovation. As large part of human action in this study comprises this category. Agency exercised without innovation as a choice

between preexisting norms can be understood in several ways. They can be a choice made in face of opposition. For example, choosing to pursue a career after childbirth, by following the modern gender norm of a competent career woman, is an exercise of such agency in the face of opposition from a husband who would rather she follow the traditional gender norm of giving motherhood first priority. Kabeer (1999) calls this kind of agency as the "power to" take an action. However the agency is still exercised within the parameters of preexisting norms. A second type of agency within this category is when a person's choices overrides the agency of others, such as for example a husband choosing to take dowry overriding his wife's choice in the matter due to traditional gender norms supporting his claims. The indicators of this agency, which is made within competing possibles without innovating new rules, are discussed in detail in Chapter 6. My study suggests an agency continuum base on the innovation that actors make in their choices. At one end are choices, which do not entail innovation and take place within the compass of competing structures. I call this "circumscribed" agency. At the other end are choices, which are made with preexisting rules but transposed to new contexts to innovate new norms or rules. The is called transformative agency as conceptualized by Sewell (1992) and has been used by Johnson-Hanks, Bachrach, Morgan and Kohler (2011) in their understanding of family change. In my study, I suggest a continuum with circumscribed agency at one end and transformative agency at another with human choices lying in between these two categories as well.

My study also suggests that a person's individual character traits often steers choice within the compass of these structures, in the exercise of agency. So a person might be 'lazy' or 'headstrong' or 'miserly' or 'introverted' or 'optimistic'. There are several other personal character traits that can be attributed to a person, which can influence the way that he or she can

negotiate. Thus for example, in intra household bargaining between two women of similar social backgrounds, the one who is "submissive" by nature may be less likely to refuse dowry than the one who is "headstrong or "forceful" by nature. However there has been no empirical work of the possible effect of these in intra household bargaining literature. I hope my preliminary effort towards drawing individual character traits into an understanding how spouses actively negotiate within the household provides a deeper understanding of the bargaining process between husband and wife.

## II. Intersectional Theory

*(i) More on Intersectional Theory*

Stemming from a discontentment of homogenized theoretical constructs of womanhood which disregarded differences between them, Black feminists in USA during the 1970's stipulated that the category of race be given important consideration in 'mainstream' white feminist theory which typically neglected the problems of third world and black women. This set in motion a deconstruction of the category of women and initiated analyses of the intersectionality of various social divisions; race, class and gender being till, not long past, the sole focus of intersectional theory. However when it began to be acknowledged in scholarship that other categories like ethnicity, caste, nationality, religion, sect, sexuality etc. had powerful impacts in social life definitions of intersectionality incorporated these categories as well like for instance Brewer, Conrad and King (2002) understand intersectionality as interweaving of gender, race, class, ability, sexuality, caste and other influences. In a crux, intersectional theory informs us that the social categories that individuals or social groups occupy are manifold and interlocking meaning which the axes of differences between people cannot be segregated into discrete pure stands (Brah and Phoenix 2004; Lorde 1984).

There have been however major differences in the conceptualization of intersectionality with reference to three major points. One, the underlying explanations to why race and gender oppression takes place where the debate lies on whether it is ideologies and meaning systems which bring forth race and gender inequalities (Collins 1999), or whether the emphasis should be on the material control of political and productive resources (Mullings 1997; Weber 2001). A related debate is whether the discrimination is conscious where the elite willfully draw away the resources from the oppressed (Collins 1999; Weber 2001), or whether it stems from unconscious cognitive processes of which the advantaged are not aware (Reskin 2002b; Ridegway 1997). The second point of contention are arguments of whether race and gender intersections are ubiquitous, theorists such as Collins (1999) and West and Fenstermaker (1995) saying that they operate at all places at all times while other theorists like Kilbourne, England and Baron (1995) talk of the possibility of circumstances in which one social category eclipses the other. The third point of contention is on the matter of who qualifies as intersectionally oppressed, on the one hand theorists like Bacca Zinn and Dill (1996) positing that all women of color are placed in a juncture of multiple interlocking systems of oppression, while theorists like King (1989) and Crenshaw (1995, 2000) argue that since black women suffer most on account of being subordinate in more than two axes of differentiation, it should be studied as a uniquely black women's experience. Despite these differences the main tenet which all agree on, according to Lindsay (2005), is on the relational nature of the difference between social groups as has been reflected in the manner in which it was possible for white women to enter the labor force, and exit the domestic sphere only because of the latter's exploitation of the labor of working class women of color as well as the labor of third world men and women (Zerai 2000; Barkley Brown 1995).

Lindsay (2005) however points out that articulation of the relational nature of differences has mostly been cast in terms of locating people in two distinct interdependent categories, the intersectionally advantaged, and the intersectionally oppressed. She says that while the notion of simultaneous oppression and advantage are present in the works of intersectional theorists, they nevertheless are not translated into practice. So while white women are constructed as being privileged as white but oppressed as women, the theorist who do so (hooks 1981,1990; Smith 1990; Bacca Zinn and Dill 1996; Collins 1990) however did not focus on this simultaneous status of white women and instead stress more on how both white men and women oppress black women eventually reducing the study of intersectionality to the analysis of two mutually dependent groups, that of the advantaged and that of the disadvantaged. Lindsay (2005) instead proposed that intersectional theory focus more on capturing the simultaneity of privilege and oppression by paying equally strong attention, for instance, to both the oppression that white women face in terms of gender as well as their privilege as member of a socially superior race. Thus theorists have posited different frameworks for intersectional research, some of which have been reviewed above and each model or framework has its own utility with respect to what it seeks to study.

*(ii) Using Intersectional Theory in the Indian Context*

Intersectional theory is an important research tool in India given that India is perhaps one of the most stratified societies in the world. India is arranged territorially in linguistic lines, with twenty eight states and seven union territories with almost all states having its own official language though some states of North Indian share a common language. There are twenty two languages mentioned in the eight schedules of the constitution and over sixteen hundred dialects. Each language group has its own unique cultural traits like food, festivals, diet, rituals (e.g.

marriage rites) etc. and Hindi and English are the commonly used link languages. Cosmopolitan cities like Delhi and Mumbai have people from various language groups living in the city though other state and cities of India also have small sections from other language groups residing in their states. India is also home to several religions (Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Bahai, Sikhism and tribal religions) though it is predominantly Hindu. Religion is for a large part not territorial. People from all religions are scattered across various parts of India speaking the language of the state they reside though some religious groups like the Zoroastrians are concentrated in the city of Mumbai. India has several castes (approximately three thousand castes and twenty five thousand subcastes) several classes and sects. Classes, castes, and sects are also not territorial and one finds a fair mix of these in each state. Therefore one language group can have people belonging to different religions, castes, classes and sects. What is particular to stratification in Indian society is that hierarchy is just one facet of the stratification systems in India, difference without hierarchy being another facet important to understand stratification in Indian society. It is this nature of stratification, which is important to understand before we undertake the task of studying Indian society using the framework offered by intersectional theory. According to Gupta (1997) "a proper comprehension of stratification in India requires its conceptual isolation from hierarchy as the latter is but one of the manifestations of the former." He said that "though a common metaphor used to explain stratification is the earth's crust this geological metaphor may mislead us into thinking that the layers or the social groups in India are always vertically or hierarchically arranged." So while, in India some castes or ethnicities may in cases be hierarchically ordered, even so, only particular operationalization of the term ethnicity or caste imply hierarchy. In fact, one can talk of different ethnicities and castes, which do not imply hierarchy and it, would not be

possible to hierarchize them.

To reiterate again, while the dominant mode of thinking about stratification is hierarchy because it is usual to see vertically hierarchized social groups like class, gender, sexualities etc., one needs to take into cognizance that in stratification systems like ethnicity and caste in India, the social groups are sometimes (but not always) horizontally or separately arranged. Intersectional theory holds within its folds axes of differentiation, which infer hierarchy such as for example class, gender, race, and western understanding of ethnicities. Even when intersectionality is conceptualized as people being simultaneously advantaged or disadvantaged, as for example, a white woman conceptualized as being privileged as white but oppressed as a woman, the implicit assumption in this framework of understanding intersectionality is that a person must occupy in one or the other axes of differentiation an hierarchical rank, in this example superior in race but inferior in gender. But to effectively use intersectional theory in the study of Indian society, one should be able to incorporate axes of differences, which infer equality along with axes of differences, which imply hierarchy as both may simultaneously collide in the lived realities of Indian people. To drive home the point one would need to understand how ethnicity and caste is understood in India as opposed to how it is understood in the west.

## *UNDERSTANDING THE LOCATION: EHTNICITY AND CASTE IN INDIA*

### I. Ethnicity in India

The concept ethnicity or ethnic groups has been employed to indicate varying situations to tackle particular concerns in different areas of the world there being no universally prevailing framework for understanding ethnic differences (Sabharwal 2006). In delineating the differences between the concept ethnicity as used in India as opposed to its usage in America, Sabharwal

(2006) argued that in America the concept was first used to denote immigrant groups of foreign birth as reflected in Warner and Sroles (1945) definition which defined an ethnic as "any individual who considers himself or is considered to be a member of a group with foreign culture and participates in the activities of the group" (Solors 1996). Immigration and assimilation were the twin concerns of early American theorists of ethnicity, and they believed that the American nation was at risk if ethnic interests were incongruous with that of the American mainstream, the mainstream characterized as white Anglo Saxon protestant society who by virtue of being hosts was not termed "ethnic". Implicit in the requirement for assimilation to the host society was the notion of hierarchy with the host culture being superior, and the ethnic culture being subordinate to that of the hosts (Sabharwal 2006). This way of analyzing ethnicity in terms of a dominant host society and subordinate ethnic groups was reflected in the work of Milton Gordon (1964) and Herberg (1955) where it was said that Anglo-conformity was the best way to describe assimilation in the United States, and the authors were hoping that the ethnic groups would be structurally assimilated into the cliques and clubs of the core society which they explicitly believed were Angle Saxon white protestants.

However, when it came to the notice of scholars that ethnic groups do not disappear, and are groups which renew and transform themselves as was documented in Glazer and Moynihan's (1963) prominent book "Beyond the melting Pot", the main concerns switched from assimilation to multiculturalism and theorists recognized cultural pluralism as the norm though retaining the definition of migrants being the ethnic groups. While most American social scientists today treat multiculturalism as the norm, their studies on ethnicity (where ethnic groups are however still defined as immigrants or second generation immigrant children) reveal that for the American people being American is still implicitly synonymous with being White (Devos, Theirrry,

Banaji, Mahzarin 2005), and that the feeling of hierarchy and paternalism are still prevalent among the whites, as for instance in a recent study where it was revealed that the common sentiment among the Anglos in terms of the Hispanics learning of the English language was that this is "our country" & Hispanics should "fit-in"( Sizemore 2004).

Shifting to ethnicity in the Indian context, the first major treatise on ethnicity was written by N.K Bose (1965) where the concepts of hierarchy, assimilation and immigration were absent in the analyses of ethnic relations. Bose studied Calcutta, a city in India where the majority population comprises of the Bengalis (a language group) and it is a seat of Bengali culture. He describes the diversities in Calcutta with ethnic roots in language, religion and historical tradition. In his study Bose labeled the 'Bengalis' "ethnic" along with other ethnic communities living in Calcutta (each with its distinct sets of cultures in terms of language, food and dress) like the 'Rajasthanis' (original settlers of the state of Rajasthan), the 'Gujaratis' (original settlers of the state of Gujarat), the 'Punjabis' (original settlers of the state of Punjab) Anglo Indians (people of an intermarriage between the British and Indians), and those from the four south Indian states and Muslims. In his analyses of Calcutta society, he observed that the 'Bengalis' had no wish that the 'Rajasthanis', 'Gujaratis', Anglo Indians or other ethnic communities try and imbibe the ways of life of the Bengalis because they have chosen to live out of their native region. To quote Bose: "Although Calcutta is the center of Bengali culture, a Bengali wishes a 'Rajasthani' to remain as he is rather than demand that he conforms to the way of the Bengalis" (1965:102). There is no indication of assimilation or the need for homogeneity in his analysis. However, most scholars who studied ethnic relations in India tended to impose western concepts to their study and the migrant communities in various urban regions being studied were labeled ethnic, while the concept of the host or native community not being ethnic crept in. Examples of

such studies are Myron Weiner (1978), Schemerhorn (1978), Kothari (1989), Baruah (1994) and Phadnis (1989).

In his study Schemerhorn (1978) labeled the religious minorities of India as ethnic while considering the Hindu majority population as the mainstream to which the minority religious communities Jains, Sikhs, Christians, Anglo Indians, Jews, Parsis, Chinese, Scheduled tribes and scheduled castes should assimilate into. Sabharwal (2006), in her critique of Schemerhorn said that by not recognizing the Hindu's as ethnic communities as well, he assumes a homogeneity within Hinduism, but in reality there is no existence of one dominant Hindu culture to which all other communities would assimilate though Schemehorn in his analysis equated the Hindu community with the Anglo Saxon white Protestants which early American theorists considered the model community in America.

Sabharwal (2006), in her own study, analyzed the ethnic relations between 'Marathis' and 'Kannadigas', two language groups living in the city of Belgaum which is predominantly 'Marathi' speaking though Belgaum itself is situated in Karnataka which is predominantly 'Kannadiga' speaking. In Belgaum city, there is a language friction between the two groups because being located in the state of Karnataka whose official language is 'Kannadiga', the 'Marathis' feel that they are at a disadvantage because other than English most official paperwork is done in 'Kannadiga' in government institution, all children are to learn 'Kannadiga' in schools, all public places have their billboards, posters, announcements etc. put up in 'Kannadiga'. However the 'Kannadiga's' reaction to that is that the same disadvantage holds true for the 'Kannadigas' settled in Maharashtra, the Marathi speaking state, where other than English, all government paperwork etc. is done in Marathi. Sabharwal dismisses the notion of an hierarchy between these two language based ethnic groups in India because not only do

neither of the groups consider themselves inferior or superior to the other, in diet, dress, norms and customs neither groups expects the other to assimilate. Moreover people in the study themselves admitted that the language disadvantage faced by 'Marathis' in Karnataka is of the same nature of the disadvantage faced by the 'Kannadigas' in Maharashtra. Therefore, if the presence of a supreme model culture to which others have to assimilate is taken as an indicator of hierarchy between ethnic groups, in the case of 'Marathis' and 'Kannadigas' the two language based ethnic groups in question one cannot speak of hierarchy between the two. Neither in the larger national context of India or in the local context of Belgaum, is 'Kannadiga' culture considered a model culture, both 'Marathis' and 'Kannadigas' continue with its own festivals, customs, diet, dress with equal liberty without any one group expecting the other to follow their norms. In terms of language though the official language in Belgaum is 'Kannadiga', neither 'Kannadigas' nor 'Marathis' can claim a superiority of its language because each of these language groups is mollified by the fact that it has its own language as the official language in the state where they constitute a linguistic majority. So if 'Kannadiga' is the official language in Karnataka where 'Kanadiga' speaking people are a majority, so is Marathi the official language in Maharashtra where Marathi speaking people are a majority. The languages of both the groups have the status of official language in the constitution of India, and each of the language groups has its language declared the official language in the linguistic state where they are a majority.

Quiet clearly there are situations in India where ethnicities are not hierarchized. In fact many such language based ethnic groups cannot be hierarchized for neither sociologists nor the people themselves can say for instance that the 'Bengalis' are superior to the 'Tamilians', or the 'Gujarathis' are superior to the 'Marathis' and so on. The language based ethnic groups as mentioned above ('Bengalis', 'Gujarathis', 'Marathis') are not or expected to be model cultures

for other language based ethnic groups, each of these linguistic group maintaining her distinct cultural traits, and each having a state where its language is declared the official language. This is not to mislead one to think that conflict never come into the equation in inter-ethnic relations. In fact, there have been severe ethnic conflicts in India where certain language based ethnic groups have tried to resist the imposition of a pan-India hierarchy of language where Hindi was to be declared the national language of the whole of India, as in the instance of the anti-Hindi movements from the Tamils of South India in the 1960's who successfully resisted the Hindi language being declared the national language. Hindi is the official language not only of the Central government of India, but also the official language of many north Indian states. However the reason why Hindi speaking people cannot be placed hierarchically above Bengalis or Marathis in spite of its status as the official language of the Central Government along with English is that it lacks sufficient prestige (Friedrich 1962). To an educated person, the prestige of a language in inextricably linked with its literature, and on that ground Tamil, Bengali and Marathi has a more impressive literary heritage (Suba 1996). Moreover Hindi's official language status in the states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan (the Hindi speaking belt of India) does not necessarily accord its people greater political and economic status. In fact a Gujarati speaking state is more economically powerful than Uttar Pradesh, the largest Hindi speaking state containing people of the Hindi speaking ethnicity. Uttar Pradesh might have more politicians represented from their state in the Indian Parliament, yet it is one of the least economically progressive states in the county. Economic, political and social prestige do not overlap, and accrue to Hindi speaking people because of Hindi being the official language of the Indian government. Therefore, a sense of hierarchy between Hindi speaking people or Bengali or Tamil or Gujarati speaking people is missing (see Freidrich 1969). Where

political, economic and social discrimination overlaps as in the case of the ethnicities of North East India, who have historically been socially, economically and politically isolated from the rest of India one can see a definite hierarchy (Baruah 1984; Brass1985). Similarly, the 'Bhils', a tribal group of Madhya Pradesh, are documented to be treated as inferior to the high caste Hindus of Madhya Pradesh and are expected to model their lives according to those of the dominant Hindus in Madhya Pradesh (Baviskar 1995). Similarly the Sikhs, a religion based ethnic group in India have time and again fought against being assimilated into the Hindu religious fold, and attempt at Hindu groups not according them the status of a separate religion in their own right (Brass 1985). Hierarchy is an important part of interethnic relations in India. However according to Beittlle (1992) "the notion of hierarchy need not be an essential element in all situations while keeping in mind that interethnic relations does not preclude hierarchy".

**II. Caste in India**

Castes too are understood as primarily hierarchically arranged groups, however much Indian literature has done away with this narrow understanding of caste. Caste has in common usage been falsely depicted to mean the fourfold stratification of Indian society into four categories: 'Brahmins' or the priests, 'Kshatriyas' or the warriors, 'Vaishyas' or the merchants and 'Shudras' or the menial service workers. This was a simplified way of looking at caste through the western colonial gaze (Srinivas 1991; Gupta 1991). In ground reality caste actually refers to the numerous 'jatis' or the endogamous groups traditionally based on hereditary occupational difference, with notions of purity and pollutions separating and hierarchizing the castes. These 'jatis' run into hundreds in number, as opposed to the general four fold understanding of caste (Srinivas 1962; Shah and Desai 1992). In the long past the caste system had a number of features, which are dying out today. For one, they were divided on the basis of

occupational groups that were hereditary, thus a blacksmith's children would belong to the blacksmith caste and follow the same occupation as their father and forefathers before them, the potter's children would belong to the potter caste and follow the same occupation. Infringement of one's hereditary occupation would be generally dealt with severe punishment. However, even historically there have some flexibility regarding this rule, and for instance, the priestly castes would take up agriculture without too much penalty. A second characteristic of caste was that the members of 'jatis' were believed to possess innate bodily particles of pollution and purity. The 'jatis' that were believed to contain more bodily impurities were ranked lower down the order than those 'jatis', which were believed to contain pure bodily particles (Kolenda 1991). It must be noted that there were several 'jatis' which were different from each other in terms of occupation and cultural norms, but were believed to have the same level of pollution and purity in their bodies; that is, while many 'jatis' were hierarchically ranked in terms of purity and pollution there were many which were distinct 'jati' groups yet equal in purity and pollution (Gupta 1991). A third traditional feature was that these 'jati' groups were endogamous and a member of a 'jati' was not allowed to marry outside his or her own caste. Fourthly, each 'jati' had its own culture in term of dress, food habits kinship etc. (Ghurye 1991). Traditionally the 'jatis' that were ranked hierarchically kept a physical distance from each other because those 'jatis' that were deemed inferior on the basis of the polluting particles in their bodies were believed to spread their pollution by touch. Therefore, physical distance was maintained by the hierarchically ranked 'jatis'. Physical distance meant that housing was separated; people of lower 'jatis' clustered in particular parts of a village and town, while members of a higher 'jatis' clustered in another. There were rules against inter dining because pollution was believed to be spread through food. Some of the distances kept went as far as avoiding, an inferior 'jatis'

shadow. These 'jatis' even whose shadows were avoided were termed 'untouchables' (Khare 1991). In modern India there has been a lot of liquidation of the traditional features of caste (Srinivas 1966). For one, they are no longer based on hereditary occupation; therefore a blacksmith's son need not be a blacksmith by profession. But the point to be noted is that while most people do not follow the occupation of their traditional 'jati', they still are considered members of that particular 'jati' (Bougle 1991). So if a blacksmith were to today be a farmer, he still maintains the 'jati' membership of the blacksmith caste even though the profession might have changed. Also the rule of endogamy while still largely practiced, that is people of a 'jati' only marry people of the same 'jati', the endogamy rules have loosened up slightly due to the growing phenomena of marriage by choice as opposed to the traditional arranged marriage (Hardgrave 1991). Moreover physical distance is no longer possible to maintain between the different 'jatis' because modern life does not allow one to follow the rules of maintaining distance. Modern transportation systems have people traveling together, restaurants have people eating together etc. Also the government of India has declared the practice of untouchability punishable by law. However many castes still practice their dietary customs till date.

The most important feature however of caste or 'jati' is that both historically and till present date hierarchy is just one of the ways in which caste operates. Therefore the social ranking of 'Gareri jati' is equal to the 'Majroti jati' and 'Krishnaaut Goala jati' as is the 'Goala jati' of Bihar rank equal with the 'Kurmi jati' and 'Mamat jati' (see Gupta 1991). Similarly the 'Nabashakhas', a group of 14 'jatis' are considered equally pure but distinct in their customs (Gupta 1991). Given this nature of the caste system, Das (1982) in fact asks of 'jatis' to be seen as not a difference in degree but of quality Ghurya (1991), while talking about hierarchy in the caste system drew attention to the fact that the "order of social precedence among many

individual castes cannot be made definite because not only is there no ungrudging acceptance of rank but also the idea of people on this point are nebulous and uncertain". Except the 'Brahmin' at one end and 'Harijan' at another, the ranking of the intermediate castes is not fixed and most intermediate castes think their caste to be better than the others (see Berreman 1991, Marriot 1991, Mukherjee 1991, Pettigrew 1991, Beteille 1992). In fact if one were to ask an ordinary person in India to rank the hundreds of intermediate 'jatis', he would be quite inept at the task and no one really knows what the hierarchy is or if there is any hierarchy at all between many 'jatis'. Thus, in Sabharwal's (2006) study of the city of Belgaum she says that in Belgaum for instance while it may be possible to place the 'Brahmin' on top of the caste hierarchy, there is no way to rank the intermediate castes relative to each other. There is then an absence of a consensus of hierarchy between intermediate castes. What does absence of a consensus on hierarchy mean in the 'jati' system? Can a situation where a group of intermediate 'jatis' making rival claims to superiority, with regard to which members of other 'jatis' cannot decide either way translate to equality between the 'jatis' in question? The answer is yes, because these intermediate 'jatis' have no social power over one another and in the absence of relations of power and the inability of one 'jati' group to impose its will on the other one can call the intermediate 'jatis' as adjacent or equal castes. Thus the 'Baidyas' and 'Kayasthas' of Bengal can be called adjacent or equal 'jatis' even if each 'jati' claims superiority over the other. Both these 'jatis' enjoy equal power in Bengal society, economically, socially and politically (see Mukherjee 1991). Moreover there is virtually no link between castes in various regions in India which function as independent and standalone units (Sabharwal 2006). Therefore as an example, there is no way one can rank the 'Kayastha' caste in Bengal region of India with the 'Khatri' caste in the region of Punjab as they are simply distinct units and there is no relation of

power between these two groups and an absence of social subjugation of either of these group vis-à-vis the other. In fact this horizontal division of caste across cities, towns and villages is not just a product of modern India, but has always been an inherent feature of the cast system, which western scholars who studied caste in India choose to ignore (Shah and Desai 1992). Quite clearly then, theory and research in India has shown that while castes are hierarchized groups, to see only the aspect of hierarchy and overlook the equal divisions is to do injustice to the proper understanding of caste in India.

In fact post-independence, the government of India also created a list of castes to be used for official purposes for deciding which caste groups affirmative action benefits will be accorded. Former untouchable castes are officially listed and termed 'Scheduled Castes'. There is a separate list for other backward castes too, who were marginalized historically but were not untouchables. Both these groups get affirmative action benefits from the government of India. The government has also created a list of economically and politically advanced castes that cannot apply for affirmative action. These are called the 'forward castes' who were historically powerful and do not need the benefits of affirmative action. In this list of forward caste lie many culturally different castes such as 'Boddi's' of Bengal and 'Banya's' of Rajasthan who are culturally different but are accorded the same 'forward caste' rank.

**III. Using Intersectional Theory in the Indian Context**

How then does the concept of difference among ethnic groups and castes impact the way intersectional theory is applied in the study of Indian society? Evidently, intersectional theory has to include within its fold a conceptualization of stratification systems which can infer equality to culturally different groups as in the case of different but equal castes and different but equal ethnic groups and to erase the dominant mode of thinking about stratification in terms of

hierarchy and inequality alone. To put it simply, difference need not always translate to hierarchy in the lived realities of people in India. Stratifications systems, which infer hierarchy, can collide with systems, which infer equality in any given situation in India, and only the inclusion of both can give a true picture of interactions among people in India. So for example, if one is to study bargaining relations within intermarriage, a rapidly growing phenomenon in India and wishes to use the tools of intersectional research, one cannot do so without acknowledging that the axes of differentiations that collide in the bargaining process are simultaneously those that hierarchize and those that just separate. Let's take the example of a Bengali upper class woman belonging to the 'Kayastha' caste and a 'Rajasthani' middle class man belonging to the 'Banya' caste. The social categories that intersect here are gender, class, caste and ethnicity, and the husband and the wife should be seen occupying all these categories simultaneously while bargaining, the wife being disadvantaged in terms of gender, advantaged in class, different but equal in ethnicity and caste, and it is the entirety of her positioning in the categories of gender, class, caste and ethnicity along with her individual character traits which will determine the bargaining process in terms of what exactly is being bargained for, how the bargaining is done, and outcome of the bargaining. To reiterate not all equations of caste and ethnicity within intermarriage will essentially entail equality, for instance a husband and wife may belong to different and hierarchized castes as well, but the researcher must be prepared for analyses of situations of intermarriage where stratification systems that collide can include both hierarchy and equality. My study has sixteen couples in intermarriage. Eight couples in the sample are hierarchized by gender alone, that is, belong to the same class and belong to different but equal status caste and language based ethnic groups. Another eight couples are hierarchized at two or more structural points, that is, apart from gender they belong to either different classes or/and different and

hierarchized castes or/and different and hierarchized ethnic groups. The purpose is to seek explanations to the following questions: (1) Does gender hierarchy turn intra household bargaining in favor of the husband in an intermarriage when the spouses are hierarchized by gender but are equal in class, and non-hierarchized but differentiated by ethnicity and caste? If not, what is subverting gender hierarchy? (2) When couples are hierarchized at multiple points, in an intermarriage what roles do class, caste and ethnic hierarchies play in the negotiations? Is it possible to rank structural hierarchies in order of their importance to the negotiating process? In using such a sample to answer these questions the research provides an opportunity to enrich intersectional theory by incorporating within its theoretical fold stratification systems that infer equality along with systems that infer hierarchy, as both these together are important to understand the lived reality of spouses within an intermarriage in India.

***SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH***

The study is significant in many ways (1) it is the first of its kind to study intra-household bargaining relations within intermarriages in urban India. There is a predominance of rural studies in India as less that 5% of journal publications in important social science journals cover urban themes (Sabharwal 2006). Giving voice to urban Indian men and women is an important objective of this study. (2) It makes a crucial contribution to empirical studies on intra household household bargaining by taking a lead in demonstrating how a variety of individual personality traits can impact active negotiation between husband and wife. (3) It enriches empirical studies on intersectionality by demonstrating how agency emerges in negotiations in the confluence of multiple ambiguous structures. It not only takes into account multiple structures of caste, class, gender and ethnicity as simultaneously impacting social life but also treats every structure in the study not as a monolith but as ambiguous and reveals agency in the conjunction of these diverse

indistinct structures. An empirical demonstration of such complexity in intersectional research is a significant contribution to intersectionality studies. (4) The study develops intersectional theory by integrating within its theoretical fold stratification systems that infer equality along with systems that infer hierarchy, as both these together are important to understand the lived reality of spouses within an intermarriage in India. Intersectional theory has traditionally focused on inequality. However, since the theory itself claims that intersectionality is a simultaneous interplay of all positions an individual occupies, in the context of Indian society it would be impossible to ignore situations where individuals are positioned as equals in certain spheres along with hierarchical nature of their interactions in other spheres of stratification. To take into account the multiplicity of social locations, it therefore becomes important to give place to horizontal ties along with vertical ties in intersectional theory, as it is a simultaneous interplay of both which can fully capture life in India. (5) It offers a nuanced understanding of the emergence of agency by outlining a continuum between circumscribed agency and transformative agency with some actions lying in between the two categories. The underpinning factor, which distinguishes the two categories, is innovation in action. Circumscribed agency operates within pre-existing norms without innovation. Transformative agency also draws from pre-existing norms but applies it to new contexts to make new rules or norms not previously available in society in the exercise of that choice. Transformative action has been utilized in the research on family change but this is the first study to draw a continuum of agency on the foundation of innovation in action exercised by the actors.

***CHAPTER PLAN***

Chapter two lays out the method that is used for the research. It gives an overview of the larger epistemological underpinnings of the study followed by details of the sampling process,

data collection and data analysis plan. Chapter three addresses the theoretical goal of showing how agency emerges in the confluence of multiple structures. In addressing the emergence of agency the chapter also engages the first question of the research, which is to answer the manner in which multiple structures intersect in the process of negotiation within intermarriages. It unravels the agency continuum between circumscribed and transformative agency. Chapter four, discusses negotiations between couples where gender is the only point of hierarchy between the spouses, the other points of caste and ethnicity being different but equal. In such a situation, does gender hierarchy turn intra household bargaining in favor of the husband in intermarriage when the spouses are hierarchized by gender but are equal in class, and non-hierarchized but differentiated by ethnicity and caste? If not, what is subverting gender hierarchy? This chapter brings to attention the importance of individual character traits in the bargaining process. Chapter five discusses negotiations with couples that are hierarchized at multiple structures, that is, when apart from gender; caste, class and ethnic hierarchies also come into play in their relationships. It asks, what happens when couples are hierarchized at multiple points, in intermarriage. What roles do class, caste and ethnic hierarchies play in their negotiations? Is it possible to rank structural hierarchies in order of their importance to the negotiating process? Chapter six, deliberates on the criteria that were used as indicators of agency in the negotiation process and discusses broad trends that were captured in the negotiation of wedding expense and rituals, division of labor, financial decision making, diet and language, and residential pattern. The last chapter concludes with a brief summary of the research, laying out its limitations and strengths. It also marks out scope for further research in the area.

# CHAPTER 2

# METHODS

According to McCall (2005) methodology is a cogent set of notions about the philosophy, methods and data that inspire the research process. In this chapter I will outline first my philosophy and then my method and data with which I produce my work. With regard to the philosophical underpinnings that underlie intersectional method, I paraphrase McCall (2005) in this paragraph. She identifies three approaches on how to study intersectionality saying that each approach produces different kinds of knowledge. First she defines anti categorical approach as the study of intersectionality, which refuses to make fixed categories of either subjects or structures and sees them as fluid. It challenges boundary making and rejects research based on categorization. Different disciplines do so using particular methods, history with genealogy, literature with deconstruction, and anthropology with new ethnography. All of these, question the completeness of what is socially constructed as a category. For example, it questions what biologically constitutes gender and gender is seen not as male or female but as a continuous process of being, there being countless genders, instead of two. Feminists of color while being critical of categorization do not deny its reality in social life. They undertake the intra categorical approach to study intersectionality. Their studies kick started research on intersectionality and it began a study of women at multiple subordinate positions. Their primary focus is a single dimension of multiple locations. Thus a study of an Arab American middle class heterosexual woman is investigated at the intersection of these categories (race, ethnicity, class, gender and sexual), but in a single dimension of each instead of in a full range of dimensions in a full range of categories. Although broad racial, national, class, and other structures are understood in this

research it cannot understand the complexities of the life of individual people who occupy these interlocking categories, no matter how detailed the level of disaggregation. Another off shoot of this approach is to study a single social group through an extended comparison with other standard groups, for example, comparison of working class men to working class women or Latino domestic workers to African American domestic workers. The focus is to how these categories are experienced, reproduced, and resisted in everyday life. In these studies the former group is of focal interest and the latter group provides background comparison and contrast. The third approach is the inter-categorical approach which makes provisional use of categories to study the relationship between social groups, more importantly, how they are changing rather than with their definition or representation. It asks if meaningful inequalities exist at all because perhaps inequalities, which were large in the past, are currently small or large in one location but small in another. The subject is multi group and it seeks to empirically chart the changing relationships among multiple social groups. It does not study intersections of multiple categories of a single social group, such as the representation of Arab American, heterosexual women, but the relationship among social groups defined by the entire set of groups constituting each category. It compares, for instance, in terms of education or income each of the groups constituting a category: women and men, whites and blacks, middle and working class and so on. The model does not question simply the effect of race on income but how the effect impacts men and women differentially, or effects highly educated men and poorly educated men differentially and so forth.

My study does not neatly fall into any of these categories, as many intersectional studies do not. But it contains elements of the inter categorical as well as the intra categorical approach. Like the intra categorical approach, it sees gender, caste, class and ethnicity not as simplified

social fictions but as social boundaries people experience in their daily life. It understands a single dimension of each of the interlocking categories as they intertwine with one another in the bargaining process. Like the inter categorical approach it seeks to understand the relationship between people who occupy various structural categories rather than just understanding multiple intersections of one single group. Unlike either the inter categorical or intra categorical approach, broad gender, caste, ethnic, class and gender structures are understood in the research but it also tries to reach out to the complexity of the individual operating within the intersection of these categories by asking how an individual's character traits may possibly affect the bargaining process.

## *METHOD*

I will spend the rest of the chapter elucidating specifics about my sample, data collection and data analysis techniques. The research is a qualitative study, based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in New Delhi, India between December 2007 and February 2009, and the work in the field spanned a period of twelve months that included recruitment and data collection. Case studies of sixteen couples in intermarriages are used as analytical data for the study.

### I. Location and Sampling

The research takes place in New Delhi and NCR (National Capital Region) because it is a cosmopolitan center in which resides a good mix of people belonging to different cultural backgrounds. This was important because the research was exploring intermarriages and needed to recruit couples from different classes, castes and language based ethnic groups. It does not take into consideration inter religious marriages, therefore it samples from the Hindu religious population alone. The Hindu religion is chosen because it has the largest number of adherents in

India (80.4% of total population of India and 80.2% of total population of Delhi; census of India 2001), and provides the largest religious population base to draw from if one wanted to keep religion constant. The sample chosen has couples living as a nuclear household. This is because the research wanted to focus on the dynamics between husband and wife in a nuclear unit rather than the dynamics between all extended family members in a joint family unit. The couples selected in my study are divided on the basis of the following criteria: Eight couples are in an inter marriage where only gender is the point of hierarchy in their relationship, while ethnicity and caste are points of difference. The other eight couples have more than one point of hierarchy, that is, apart from gender; class, caste or ethnicity hierarchizes their relationship. The purpose of this division is to seek explanations to the following questions:

1) Does gender hierarchy turn intra household bargaining in favor of the husband in an inter marriage when the spouses are hierarchized by gender but are equal in class, and non-hierarchized but differentiated by ethnicity and caste? If not, what is subverting gender hierarchy?
2) When couples are hierarchized at multiple points in an inter marriage, what roles do class, caste, and ethnic hierarchies play in the negotiations? Is it possible to rank structural hierarchies in order of their importance to the negotiating process?

Keeping these research questions in mind the sample was required to satisfy the following criteria:

1) That it consists of sixteen married couples living in New Delhi and National Capital Region in a nuclear family unit.
2) All the sixteen couples are Hindu between the ages 21 to 50.
3) The husband and wife in each of the sixteen couples belong to different language

based ethnic groups as well as different castes.

4) At least four of the sixteen couples have differences in ethnicity, castes as well as class.
5) Differences of ethnicities, caste, and class are of a hierarchized nature in eight of the sixteen couples. The hierarchy prevails in any one of the three structures of differentiation.
6) Differences of ethnicities, castes and class are equal in the other eight of the sixteen couples. The difference is equal in all three structures of differentiation.
7) At least four out of the sixteen couples have children between the ages of 0-16 years.

The sampling method is ***purposive sampling*** where participants are selected because of certain specific characteristics. The sampling technique is ***snowball*** or chain sampling where the married couples are identified from people who know people that fit the particular criteria required. I used the snowball technique because intermarriages that fit the above criteria would have been otherwise difficult to identify. The snowball sampling involved three steps. First, I made a connection with friends, acquaintances and neighbors in New Delhi. They were requested to make a list of all the inter-ethnic, inter-caste and inter-class married couples that they know in the city, and find out whether they would be willing for the researcher to initiate contact with them. Second, I made a visit is to those married couples that give permission to initiate contact and obtain informed consent from them to participate in the research. Third, I made a request to both partners in the marriages to individually fill out a short questionnaire obtaining background information of their class, caste and ethnicity. Caste and ethnic differences are obtained by asking the subject to state the name of his or her caste and ethnicity in the questionnaire. Class differences are obtained using information of income and education level of

the subject's family of birth. From the questionnaires, the sixteen couples that fulfill the sample criteria listed above are chosen. There were twenty seven couples that fit the criteria listed above out of which fifteen were couples hierarchized only by gender and twelve were couples hierarchized at more than one point of stratification. The criteria for including those in my study were that (1) the couple fit the conditions for my required sample as listed a short while ago, and (2) a good participant-researcher rapport was established in the initial meeting. The second criterion was very important because I was going to be spending a week with the couples and it was important that the researcher feel safe and comfortable with prospective participants in the study. Rapport building between participant and researcher is significant especially in a qualitative study. I rejected eleven couples that met the prerequisite of my sample. Some of the factors that led to the exclusion of these couples were (1) lack of rapport (2) very long work hours for both the spouses, which allow very little time that a researcher could spend for the purpose of the study (3) lack of knowledge in spoken English. Participants in my study belonged to different ethnicities and have different mother tongues. It was impossible for me as an investigator to be familiar with all the language spoken in India. Moreover, I wanted to be able to conduct the interview myself without the need of an interpreter. One, because I did not have adequate monetary resources to hire language interpreters and two, because direct flow of conversation without a third party allows for more intimate exchange of knowledge between the researcher and the participant. The three hour interviews with each participant explored a very private domain of marriage and the ability to communicate effortlessly was important to build trust between participant and researcher.

The sample took a middle class bias. Firstly, because of the demand that every participant is conversant in spoken English for the reasons just mentioned. English education is mostly a

reserve for the middle class in India. Secondly, because of the social location of the researcher, I did not go in search of a middle class sample but by virtue of my own social location as a middle class woman who has been educated in English medium schools and colleges in India, the social networks I used for recruitment drew mostly from the middle class strata. Given below are two tables (1) which shows the social locations as caste, class, and ethnicity of each of the participants (2) which gives personal information of each of my participants such as age, education, occupation, number of children, age of children and number of years married.

Table 2.1: Social Location of the Sixteen Couples in the Study

| **Name** | **Gender** | **Class** | **Caste** | **Ethnicity** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Geeta<br>Sheel | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Middle | Khatri (Forward Caste)<br>Kayastha (Forward Caste) | Punjabi<br>Bengali |
| Deepika<br>Arup | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Middle | Khatri (Forward Caste)<br>Nair (Forward Caste) | Punjabi<br>Malayali |
| Amrita<br>Vipin | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Middle | Khatri (Forward Caste)<br>Kayastha (Forward Caste) | Punjabi<br>Bengali |
| Mamta<br>Dinesh | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Middle | Rajput (Forward Caste)<br>Boddi (Forward Caste) | Rajasthani<br>Bengali |
| Rupa<br>Vaibhav | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Middle | Kayastha (Forward Caste)<br>Khatri (Forward Caste) | Bengali<br>Punjabi |
| Kaajal<br>Achintya | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Middle | Kayastha (Forward Caste)<br>Nair (Forward Caste) | Bihari<br>Malayali |
| Idika<br>Bharat | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Middle | Kayastha (Forward Caste)<br>Nair (Forward Caste) | Punjabi<br>Malayali |
| Falguni<br>Anirban | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Middle | Khatri (Forward Caste)<br>Boddhi (Forward Caste) | Punjabi<br>Bengali |
| Sameera<br>Eshaan | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Upper<br>Middle | Banya (Forward Caste)<br>Brahmin (Highest Caste) | Rajasthani<br>Tamilian |
| Meeta<br>Pankaj | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Upper Middle<br>Lower Middle | Boddi (Forward Caste)<br>Rajput (Forward Caste) | Bengali<br>Rajasthani |
| Esha<br>Arijit | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Middle | Khatri (Forward Caste)<br>Mandal (Scheduled Caste /Former Untouchables) | Punjabi<br>Bengali |
| Chanchal<br>Uday | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Middle | Khatri (Forward Caste)<br>Ahom ( Backward Caste) | Punjabi<br>Assamese (One of India's neglected North-Eastern ethinic groups) |
| Savita<br>Amar | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Upper | Brahmin (Highest Caste)<br>Khatri (Forward Caste) | Tamilian<br>Punjabi |
| Asha<br>Anand | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Lower Middle<br>Middle | Rajput (Forward Caste)<br>Brahmin (Highest Caste) | Marathi<br>Garwali |
| Daksha<br>Pankaj | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Upper Middle | Brahmin (Highest Caste)<br>Nair (Forward Caste) | Garwali<br>Malayali |
| Shalini<br>Pandu | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Upper Middle | Boddhi (Forward Caste)<br>Brahmin (Highest Caste) | Bengali<br>Marathi |

Table 2.2: Personal Information of the Sixteen Couples in the Study

| Name | Age | Education | Occupation | Number of children | Age of Children | Years married |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Geeta<br>Sheel | 37<br>45 | Master of accountancy<br>Masters of Accountancy | Dress Boutique Owner<br>Dress Boutique Owner | 0 | NA | 12 |
| Deepika<br>Arup | 24<br>24 | Master of Arts<br>Master of Arts | Children's Councilor<br>Copy Writer | 0 | NA | 1 |
| Amrita<br>Vipin | 35<br>36 | Master of Business Administration<br>Master of Business Administration | Home-Maker<br>Businessman | 1 | 4 | 8 |
| Mamta<br>Dinesh | 34<br>34 | Doctor of Philosophy<br>Master of Arts | Home-Maker<br>Manger at a Pvt Sector firm | 1 | 6 | 11 |
| Rupa<br>Vaibhav | 31<br>37 | Master of Arts<br>Master of technology | Home-Maker<br>Engineer | 1 | 7 | 9 |
| Kaajal<br>Achintya | 34<br>35 | Master of Business Administration<br>Master of Business Administration | Home-Maker<br>Manager at a Pvt Sector firm | 1 | 3 | 7 |
| Idika<br>Bharat | 26<br>26 | Master of Arts<br>Master of Arts | Market Researcher<br>Market Researcher | 0 | NA | 2 |
| Falguni<br>Anirban | 29<br>34 | Air hostess Training Diploma<br>Master of Business Administration | Flight Attendant<br>Marketing Executive | 0 | NA | 5 |
| Sameera<br>Eshaan | 27<br>28 | Master of Business Administration<br>Master of Business Administration | HRD Executive<br>Marketing Executive | 0 | NA | 2 |
| Meeta<br>Pankaj | 34<br>36 | Master of Arts<br>Master of Arts | Creative Writer<br>Businessman | 1 | 3 | 9 |
| Esha<br>Arijit | 35<br>35 | Doctor of Philosophy<br>Master of Arts | Home-Maker<br>Curator | 1 | 6 | 8 |
| Chanchal<br>Uday | 29<br>34 | Master of Arts<br>Master of Commerce | Home-Maker<br>Manager at Pvt. Sector Firm | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| Savita<br>Amar | 34<br>34 | Master of Business Administration<br>Master of Business Administration | Financial Consultant<br>Financial Consultant | 1 | 4 | 7 |
| Asha<br>Anand | 35<br>37 | Bachelor of Arts<br>Master of Arts | Administrative Assistant<br>Businessman | 2 | 5,7 | 10 |
| Daksha<br>Pankaj | 35<br>41 | Master of Arts<br>Master of Business Administration | Home-Maker<br>Manager at Pvt. Sector firm | 1 | 7 | 10 |
| Shalini<br>Pandu | 33<br>34 | Master in Technology<br>Master in Technology | Businesswoman<br>Businessman | 1 | 5 | 7 |

## II. Data Collection

The case studies of the sixteen couples takes place in the houses of the participants in the research. I stayed for a week in the houses of seven couples. The rest of the nine couples did not have room to accommodate me but allowed me to visit for a period of a week. For the couples where both the husband and wife worked outside home, I visited twice a day. Once in the mornings before they pushed off for work. The time I stayed in the mornings ranged from one to two hours depending on how long the spouses took to leave for work in each household. I visited again in the evenings as soon as either spouse was back from work and stayed till they retired for the night. Again the time I spent in the evenings ranged from two to four hours

depending on when the spouses returned and when they turned into bed in each household. In households where the wife was a full time homemaker I visited in the mornings and left when both spouses retired for the night. No stay or visits to any of the sixteen couples homes was made in a continuous week's stretch and every couple usually gave me two or three days at stretch with the remaining days scheduled for a later time. The data collection techniques include in-depth interviews as well as participant observation of these sixteen married couples for one week each. Interviews and observation takes place within the premises of the homes of the couples. Sometimes the interviews and observation spills over while traveling with the subjects during the course of their daily activities (like shopping, going for work etc.) Data collection procedures are the following:

*(i) Extended Open-Ended Interviews*

With each couple, there is an interview with husband and wife separately for a minimum of three hours each conducted within a one-week period. The interviews rarely took place in a continuous stretch. Working men and women would sometimes give interviews while travelling for work and I would accompany them in their commute. Sometimes they set aside twenty to thirty minutes in the evenings before they went to bed. For full time homemakers occasionally the interviews would take place while they were engaged in chores like cooking and sometimes during their leisure time. The interviews are exploratory in nature, trying to gauge how each participant understands the bargaining process. The interviews use a discussion guide to cover issues of wedding rituals and wedding expenses, bargaining over household chores, maintenance and transmission of diet and language within the household, financial decision making and residential pattern. Particulars of the questions asked are laid out in Chapter 6. Interviews were a very effective tool in gathering data because for most of the domains of bargaining, like wedding

expenses or mode of residence negotiations have taken place much prior to the time of research. It is only though a recollection of the issues that channeled decision making in these spheres that data could be effectively gathered.

*(ii) Participant Observation*

Interviews have a limitation in that what people say may not be always what people practice or sometimes people might be inarticulate or uncomfortable expressing certain matters. To make up for this drawback of the interview technique, there is a use of another technique, participant observation, to understand the bargaining dynamics between husband and wife. Among things that could be observed is for instance, what languages are spoken at home between the spouses, and with their children, what food is eaten, conversations between husband and wife around meal planning, household division of labor, who does what chores around the house or conversations around housework between husband and wife. For households where both the spouses work outside home, observation takes place in two shifts, once in the mornings before one or both the spouses leave for work, and then later in the evening when both husband and wife are back home after their day of work are over till they retire to bed. For the households with full time homemakers, observations are in a continuous stretch from when the spouses wake up in the morning till when they retire to bed. I sometimes engaged in the activities of my participants especially in household work and childcare. However questions asked during interviews regarding household chores made up for the possible error in data that participant observation can bring.

**III. Data Analysis**

In data analyses, I borrow in part the suggestions of Uttal and Cudarez (1999) who have well documented some of the common dilemmas that researchers can run into in intersectional

analyses. The first dilemma one can encounter according to Uttal and Cudarez is the possibility that the respondents may not articulate their responses in terms of their lives being shaped by the social categories that they belong to. They might not be cognizant of how social locations shape their lives, and therefore not respond in accordance to what the researcher may want to hear. That is, for instance, in asking about how noneconomic decisions are made within the household, a participant in the research may not necessarily directly mention that gender or ethnicity influences the decisions. What does the researcher do in such a situation? According to Cudarez and Uttal, even if the interviewees do not explicitly mention the social categories, the data emerging from the interviews can be interrogated to see how the social categories that a person is located may shape individual accounts. In the first step of analysis I ask how the issues and views that surfaced from the pool of individual accounts about economic and noneconomic decision making, maintenance of cultural norms in the family, division of household chores etc., were possibly shaped by each of the respondent's social location as a member of different kind of groups they belong to, that is, by gender, caste, ethnicity, and class. For every sphere of decision making, I code the responses in terms of whether it is gender, caste, class, or ethnicity that is underlying bargaining. Along with these structural locations I make a note of how individual character traits are being mentioned in the responses to their understanding of the bargaining process. Therefore pool of individual accounts and observations are analyzed by delineating how gender, ethnicity, class, caste, and individual dispositions shape these accounts even if the respondents do not explicitly mention any of the categories explicitly in their interviews.

The second problem in intersectional analysis is how one shows the simultaneity of social structures impacting people's lives. In this research, the challenge is to show how the

social structures of gender, class, ethnicity, and caste together impact the bargaining process. I first see how gender informs the account and observations, how ethnicity informs the account and observations, how class informs the account and observations, how caste informs the account and observations, and how individual character traits inform the account and observations separately. The second step is to see all these questions in relation to one another discerning when each seems to be important, and how they emerged and submerged in relation to one another. Some structures singularly or in combination are more important in some contexts than in others. Thus gender is relevant in certain aspects of bargaining while caste in another, or class in another, while in some contexts a combination of individual dispositions along with one or more of the social structures carry significance in the bargaining. I coded each response according to the relevance of gender, caste, class, or ethnicity and collated the relevance of each structure in singularity or combination as emerged from the data.

The research studied five dimensions of negotiation which are (1) Dowry, Wedding expenses and rituals (2) Pattern of Residence (3) Division of Labor (4) Financial decision making (5) Diet and Language. The indicators of agency in negotiation in each of these five domains are discussed in detail in Chapter 6. Some instances of these indicators are for example, a couple's ability to defy the dowry norm, a woman's autonomy in personal expenses or her ability to transmit her own diet and language to her children. For every spheres of negotiation, I counted expression of agency by each couple, for both the husband and wife using the criteria I have described over the course of Chapter 6 in identifying manifestation of agency (see Chapter 6). Women who displayed more or equal agency as their husbands in four or five of the domains is understood to have bargained most favorably, women who displayed more or equal agency as their husbands in two or three of the domains, is understood to have achieved a modicum of

success in the bargaining process while women who displayed more or equal agency in zero to one of the domains is comprehended as having achieved least success in the bargaining process.

# CHAPTER 3

## EMERGING AGENCIES WITHIN MULTIPLE STRUCTURES

In this chapter I unravel how agency emerges in the negotiation for resources within intermarriages. The theoretical goal of this chapter is to illustrate an agency continuum where at one end, is what I have described as 'circumscribed agency' and the other 'transformative agency', with certain actions falling in between the two. The concept of transformative action has been used by scholars such as Johnson-Hank, Bachrach, Morgan and Kohler (2011) and Malhotra, Schuler and Boender (2002) in their understanding of family variation and change. I will explain their understanding of the concept in the course of elucidating the continuum that emerges from my own data. However, I will begin with an overview of the works of theorists such as Anthony Giddens, Pierre Bourdieu and William Sewell on the subject of emerging agency.

Giddens (1984) pointed to the duality of structures by which he meant that people act in ways that are defined by structure, however structures themselves in turn are embodied and enacted by human action and practice. Therefore there is a reciprocal relationship between the two. He accounts for change by saying that human agents can sometimes and in certain circumstances put their structurally informed knowledge to work in innovative ways, which gives scope to modify the same structures that guided action. He defined structure as "rules and resources, recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems" (1984:377). "Rules are generalizable procedures applied in the enactment and reproduction of social life" (Giddens 1984:21). These rules may refer to daily rules of etiquette or to deeper structures such as the set

of equivalences between private-public, male-female, and nature-culture. Resources are human or material objects employed to protect or augment power. Human resources can include physical strength; intelligence and emotional commitment that can be used, as sources of power in social interactions. Non-human resources are non-animate objects that can be used for the same. According to Sewell (1992) the contradiction in Gidden's theory lies in conceptualizing structures as virtual, that is in the mental realm because quite clearly resources especially non-animate resource that include factories, weapons and land do not have a virtual existence. And to conceive of structures as virtual denies it its duality because if only mental structures become form-giving entities, actors are agents of mental structures who only recite pre-existing scripts. Sewell (1992) argued it would serve us better to conceptualize structures as simultaneously composed of rules, (he terms schemas), and resources which are virtual and actual. And agency to him becomes the ability to transpose and extend rules or schemas to new contexts that can lead to unpredictable accumulation of actual resources, which can generate transformation within structures. As examples he took, an offer of marriage made to a new patriline or a crop planted in a newly cleared field. The impact of transposing rules to new contexts on the resources of the actor is never certain. The upshot of negotiating marriage to a new patriline could either be the family's heightened status or its elimination in a feud; the return for the newly planted crop may be subsistence, famine or abundance. To quote Sewell (1992:18) "Moreover if the enactment of schemas creates unpredictable quantities and qualities of resources, and if the reproduction of schemas depend on their continuing validation by resources, this implies that schemas will in fact be differentially validated when they are put into action, and will therefore potentially be subject to modification." He also maintains that resources embody cultural schemas and are never entirely unambiguous. To quote Sewell again (1992:19) "The form of the factory

embodies and therefore teaches capitalist notions of private property. But as Marx, points out, it can also teach the necessarily social and collective character of production and thereby undermine the capitalist notion of private property." Resources and schemas thus may have multiple meanings and "agency is the actor's capacity to reinterpret and mobilize an array of resources in terms of cultural schemas other than those that initially constituted the array" (Sewell 1992:19). Therefore structures are at risk and can generate change because meanings of cultural schemas that are embodied in resources are ambiguous, schemas are transposable and resources accumulate unpredictably. Agency for Sewell is the capacity to transform structures and transformation is possible because by their very nature. Structures are unstable because its meanings are ambiguous, its rules or schemas transposable and its resources accumulate unpredictably.

Sewell also took points with Bourdieu's theorization of structure and agency. According to Bourdieu (1977) social life is molded around hierarchies that express the community's ideologies. These are hierarchies of gender, age and class that mirror the official account of the community's social relationships. By virtue of being in these relationships, human beings have access to resources that gives opportunities for agency. However, agency is limited within terms and meanings laid down by the official accounts of these hierarchical structures. Therefore human behavior is governed by each one's social position within the community, and most part of this behavior is guided by the norms of conduct governed by the social position, which lays down the objective range of possibilities of behavior or action. This is his concept of 'habitus', which sets limits to what is doable, thinkable, and permissible and what is out of limits. This socially structured aspect of action relegates human behavior to unquestioned routine and tradition, that is, to the realm of 'doxa'. The transition from 'doxa' to 'discourse' that is to the area

of contestation of what was hitherto absolute begins when the taken for granted loses legitimacy and this emergence of discourse implies the co-existence of competing possibilities. However according to Sewell, Bourdieu failed to show how the habitus itself may generate change. To quote Sewell on Bourdieu (1992:14) "In Homo Acadmicus, e.g. change arises from sources external to the habitus he is analyzing- fundamentally from the immense rise in the population of students in French universities in the 1960's." Continuing with this criticism later in the paper he says that Bourdieu (1992:16) "...cannot explain change as arising from within the operation of structures. It is characteristic that many structural accounts of social transformation tend to introduce change from outside the system and then trace out the ensuing structurally shaped changes, rather than showing how change is generated by the operation of structures internal to a society."

Sewell with his conceptual vocabulary of multiple meanings of resources and schemas, transposability of rules or schemas, and unpredictability of resource accumulation gives a good explanation of how change can emerge within the structures of a society with multiple examples as elucidated a while ago like planting of the new crop, marrying into a new matriline or the multiple meanings that a factory can embody. Thus for Sewell, structures are rule-resource sets that lie in the realm of the virtual as well as actual. Agency is the ability to bring about transformation by reinterpreting the multiple meanings of rules and resources and transposing them to new contexts. This can lead to unpredictable resource accumulation that can in turn lead to modification of the rules or schemas themselves.

Johnson-Hanks et al. (2011) expand on the work of Sewell in their approach, that they call 'theory of conjectural action' (TCA) to understand family change. They use Sewell's concept of schemas as virtual structures that are engaged in classifying and interpreting the world

and resources (for example materials such as markets, information, physical capacities, legislation) that are invoked and transformed over time. However they add that social action transpires in conjunctures and construals. Conjunctures are short term and contingent alignments of structure. To quote Johnsan-Hanks et al. (2011: 54) "In TCA, conjunctures provide the specific enactment of structures at a given time and place: construal is the counterpart to conjunctures: the way that an individual reads a specific conjuncture through specific schemas." Identity impacts the construal of conjunctures. While coming into a setting, people are acclimated to signals related to significant personal identities for example 'good worker' or social identities such as 'soccer mom'. They tend to construe the situation relative to these cues. Their primary point is that transformative action surfaces out of construal, grounded in schemes and materials, identity and conjunctures.

They make their case by using TCA to elucidate family transformation by explaining the emergence and spread of Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART's) in family formation in American society. They contend that Louise Joy Brown's birth in 1978, using IVF is the transformative event that engendered a new, intricate structure: the current social arena of infertility. The precise facts of the birth occasioned meaningful alterations in schemas and materials that made those changes possible. The conjunctures of legal and social change in the 1960's and 1970's and the specific construal of pregnancy, led to the birth of Louise Brown. Lesley and John Brown took the help of obstetricians in 1976 to help overcome their infertility. There were 60 unsuccessful attempts at IVF, by other couples, before Lesley Brown's fertility trial led to pregnancy. The legal and social conjunctures that led to a successful "test tube" baby were the civil rights movements and second wave feminism where disadvantaged groups demanded public attention. In conjunction with medical revolutions, social and legal processes

that were taking place simultaneously permitted infertile couples to proclaim their procreative rights and promote assisted reproductive technologies. This attention to the need of uniform access to procreation sprouted out of the right's movement of the 1960's as well as legal precedents. The case of Roe v. Wade (1973) enforced the distinction between early pregnancy as a private affair, and late pregnancy, a public concern. This division was fundamental because any legal constriction on abortion could only pertain to late pregnancy, and that allowed IVF to develop as a technique. The birth of Louise Joy Brown changed fundamental schema and resources. They point out to three schemas that operate around parenthood in America. They are (1) Legitimate parenting comes from biological relatedness (2) Children's identities are embedded in their genes (3) Hard work is righteous and valuable in parenting and reproduction. After the birth of Louise Joy Brown, not only were there material changes in the expansion of reproductive technologies available to infertile couples but also these schemas around parenting also altered. While biological kinship is still vital, how it is located is changed. Couples, who opt for donor eggs, trace biological relatedness through a gestational link because the baby is nurtured in the mother's womb. Couples, who use a surrogate womb, traced their biological relatedness through a genetic connection. Genetics, gestation, and sometimes lactation are used to provide biological relatedness. A form that the second schemas take post expansion of ART's is that children must be told of their genetic origins. And finally the last schema is recast by giving certain dignity to parents who take recourse to ART's because of the hard work they have into becoming parents. Thus, the transformative event of Louise Joy Brown's birth, that sprouted in the conjuncture of technological and social movements, and the construal of a pregnancy, led to structural transformation in the form of alteration of schemas and resources around parenting. There was no explanation, however, of how the personal or social identity of Louise Joy Brown

parents impacted the construal of conjunctures in the birth of their child leading to the eventual structural transformation in reproduction.

We all know that not all of everyday human actions or choices have potential for transforming structures as illuminated above. Innovation by transposing rules that could lead to unpredictable resource accumulation is not characteristic of every action or choice. Nevertheless, at any point of time human action is guided by ambiguous structures where its rules and resources have multiple meanings. And people live by simply making choices between arrays of meanings that are constituted in multiple structures that do not necessarily produce new rules. In my field, most actions or choices lie in this realm of operating within a sphere of already available choices that are currently in place in society entailing no innovation. For the purpose of this study, I therefore conceptualize as 'circumscribed agency' a choice that is made within the parameters of pre-existing rules without innovation by the action of transposing ambiguous rules to new contexts. Like Johnson-Hanks et al. (2011), I have borrowed Sewell (1992) to understand choices that lead to creating new rules, that is the exercise of transformative agency. However I have limited myself in my empirical demonstration of transformative agency using the theoretical work of Sewell (1992) without engaging in the language of conjuncture and construal used in the TCA approach by Johnson-Hanks et al. (2011). However unlike Johnson-Hank et al. (2011), I describe the emergence of agency in the interaction of multiple structures of caste, class, ethnicity, and gender and the ambiguity in rules that are present in each of these. I understand transformative agency in this study as an exercise of choice that entails current innovation or creation of new rules in the present environment for or by those exercising the choice. This creation takes place by transposing existing rules to new contexts in the context of multiple and ambiguous schema and resources. This creation of a rule may have transformatory

potential for future resources and rules available to society. Between circumscribed agency and transformative agency there lies an exercise of choice that does not neatly fit into either of these categories. In the remaining chapter, I will draw this continuum with examples of each. I use the term structure as rule-resource sets. Rules would include rules of etiquette and gender, ethnic or caste or class norms that govern interaction. Resources would be both human (e.g. physical strength) and non-human (e.g. land). I will begin with an elucidation of 'circumscribed agency' by describing the lines of actions and decisions made by the couples in my study in their negotiation for resources within their marriages. The intent of this chapter is to illustrate rather than exhaust with examples, so I have chosen three case studies to unravel the continuum, one of circumscribed agency, one example of transformative agency and it is the only of its kind in my study, and one that lies in between the two.

***CIRCUMSCRIBED AGENCY***

Amrita was twenty seven years old when she married Vipin who was twenty eight at the time of their marriage. They have been married eight years now. By standards of Punjabi families according to Amrita, it was a late age for a woman to be married. Her parents and her younger brother were not happy when she announced that she wanted to marry a Bengali man and they tried to convince her out of the marriage. It seems their biggest fear was the cultural differences between the two communities and they were worried that she would not be able to adapt as a bride is expected to, to the husband's culture. Since food and language, two basic ingredient of everyday life was itself different, why they asked was she trying to make her own life difficult? A quote that reflects her parent's anxiety is as follows: "My parents said they have non-veg (meat) during 'Navrattras' (a traditional Punjabi festival). How will you manage?" Vipin's family was none too thrilled either over their son's choice of wife. They wanted a

Bengali girl because to Vipin's understanding familiarity is comforting. After coaxing on both sides, the parents agreed. Neither Amrita nor Vipin wanted a 'run away' marriage. What did it for her parents, according to Amrita, was that she was getting older and Vipin was earning well and belonged to a respectable middle class family like her own. When marriage was on the cards and preparations were in full swing, one of the first points of negotiation was what style would the marriage be in? Which ethnic cultural marriage traditions and rituals would be followed? While both are essentially Hindu marriages and have common wedding vows conducted by a priest around a holy fire, there are ethnic differences in bridal groom and dress, in the manner ceremonies are conducted before and during the wedding and gift exchange traditions. In the case of Amrita and Vipin, Amrita took the leading role in deciding how the wedding would be conducted and around matters of ritualistic gift exchange. Vipin and his parents were removed from the process of planning for the ceremonies. It must be pointed out that there are ambiguous gender norms regarding wedding rituals which allows for navigation as to whether the bride's or the groom's wedding rituals should be given preference. On the one hand, it is traditionally the bride's side, which hosts the wedding. Therefore, that is taken as cue for an argument, which calls for the wedding to be conducted in the manner that the bride and her family want, as they play the host. On the other hand there co-exists a norm which considers the groom and his side to be ritually superior to the bride and her side, and therefore calls for the wedding to be conducted in favor of how the groom wants so as not to displease him and his family. In this case it was the former rule that was teased out. Both norms were embedded side by side and Amrita expressed her agency by teasing out the one that suited her most. Amrita says on the issue:

"My father-in law said that whatever the girl's side wants we will do it (the wedding) that way. It is their party after all. I also really wanted Vipin to come Punjabi style on a horse and

band. Bengali's are way too serious. Does not look nice coming in all serious for a wedding. So I told Vipin, you better arrange for a band. He did not know where to arrange it from, so I gave him the number of the company that would arrange for his 'ghodi' (horse) and band. …. I wore a 'Lehenga' (wedding dress of a Punjabi bride) and told him to wear a decent 'sherwani' (wedding attire of a Punjabi groom). 'Dhoti Kurta' (Bengali grooms traditional wedding attire) is too sober for Punjabi weddings. He agreed but he wore a 'topor' (Bengali wedding head gear) with it". Vipin says: " I wore a 'sherwani' but a 'topor' with it. Everything was done Punjabi style since they were hosting the wedding. But the 'topor' was a symbolic Bengali touch."

In a Punjabi wedding, a groom arrives at the wedding venue on a horse with his relatives and friends dancing with music performed by a live band. Bengali grooms on the other hand enter the venue in a somber manner without band music but with women ululating as a good omen. There are many such differences in the way ceremonies are conducted between Punjabis and Bengalis. In this wedding the norm of allowing the wedding to be conducted the way the bride and her family want it was largely followed with symbolic touches of Bengali wedding rituals. Ambiguous and conflicting gender norms regarding whether the bride's or groom's wedding rituals should be followed at the wedding allowed Amrita to make a choice in favor of her ethnic wedding rituals. Her agency was contained within the rules already embedded in the gender structure, which is why it is the exercise of what I call "circumscribed agency". Her agency was to tease out the meaning that was in her favor in this situation.

Norms of gift exchange in weddings differ by ethnicity in India. Gifts are in the form of cash and kind. Here I will make a distinction between ritual gift giving and 'dowry'. Dowry is the demand for cash and kind by the groom and his family from the bride's family under duress and is placed as a condition for marriage. The law distinguishes between voluntary gifts made

by the bride's family to the bride during marriage and transfer of wealth from bride's family to the groom and his family under pressure, the latter punishable by dowry laws and the former, that is voluntary gifts, not falling under the purview of dowry (see Srinivasan and Lee 2004, Shenk 2007). All the couples in my study also made a distinction between the two. Amrita was clear that there was absolutely no question of dowry in her marriage to Vipin. She says of Vipin and his family regarding dowry "They are not the dowry types." Dowry is associated with immorality in the modern schema. Vipin also mentions that Amrita's father had asked him whether he had any dowry demand and he had answered in the negative. Amrita and Vipin had discussed the issue of dowry in their courtship days and were of the opinion that dowry was a retrograde institution. They both were following the modern gender norm that was institutionalized by law in their decision-making regarding dowry. Both of them expressed their agency by a choice within the more traditional and the modern norm already contained in their social milieu. Amrita expressed agency by choosing a no dowry option to lessen the economic burden on her parents while Vipin expressed agency by choosing the no dowry option because he wanted to ideologically align himself with being virtuous. Even though the no-dowry norm was introduced later, their agency is circumscribed as they chose between rules already entrenched in their social environment without creating any new ones.

Ritualized voluntary gift giving norms differ by ethnicity. In Punjab the bride's family give gifts of cash to the groom and his family members they call 'shagun' (auspicious gift of money) during the engagement ceremony. They also make gifts of clothes and jewelry to the groom and his close circle of relatives. The bride receives clothes and jewelry from the groom and his families though none of the bride's family members are by tradition require to be given anything in cash or kind in the form of gifts. Among Bengalis ritualized gift giving does not

involve cash in the form of *shagun* for the groom and his family. Gifts are made in kind, mainly clothes and jewelry to the groom and very close circle of relatives. In return the groom and his family give gifts of clothes and jewelry to the bride and clothes to the members of the bride's family, though by tradition the flow of gifts is larger from the bride's family to the groom's family. It is common knowledge that gift giving in Punjab from the bride's family to the groom is of a much larger scale than what is practiced in Bengal. As Amrita puts it:

"Punjabis are very elaborate in what we give, but Vipin and his family did not expect much. But my father and mother wanted to give him good gifts, but we toned it down because they are Bengalis. Also I did not want to make my parents to spend too much money. Unnecessary expenditure is not good. We gave Rs. 51,000 as 'shagun' money and two suits to Vipin. To his mother we gave a 'saree' and a chain, to his sister -in-law we gave a 'saree' and some gold jewelry. We gave clothes to the rest of the family members, 'sarees', suits and all. Vipin's parents gave me a gold set and a 'saree'. They wanted to give my mother, father and close relatives 'sarees' and suits but my father would not hear of it. Amongst Punjabis the girl's family don't take anything."

What is happening here is interesting. Dowry is widely prevalent in Punjab and is present to a far smaller degree in Bengal. Ritualistic gift giving is also practiced in a much larger scale in Punjab than in Bengal. Amrita and Vipin are strictly against dowry but do not question the ritualistic gift giving where traditional gender norms dictate that the bride's family bears more of the gift giving expenses. However, ethnic difference on the scale of gift giving also plays a role here in reducing the gift giving expenses for the woman's family. Though among all Hindu ethnic groups ritualistic gift giving entails a larger share of gift giving on part of the bride's family, the scale of gift giving is lesser in Bengal than in Punjab. Moreover, Bengal also

allows for gifts to flow from groom's family to the bride's family, even though the bride's family makes the larger share of gifting. Amrita and her family did not accept gifts from Vipin's family, but they were cognizant of the lower scale of gifts that were given in Bengali weddings and brought down the expenses they would have otherwise made in gift giving had the groom also been a Punjabi. What mediated negotiations here were (1) ethnic variations in norms of wedding expenses and (2) a nebulous gender structure where the traditional need that the bride's side spends more in gift giving coexists with the modern gender norms which denounce lavish wedding expenses borne inequitably by the woman's family. Ethnicity and gender intersect in the decision making process and Amrita displays agency by bringing down gift giving expenses of the bride's family, navigating within the boundaries of existing, though, nebulous rules. Again here, her agency is circumscribed within pre-existing rules without creating new rules.

After the wedding Amrita and Vipin stayed for three months in Vipin's parent's house after which they moved into an apartment that they rented close to Vipin's parent's house. Amrita's parents also lived close to the new place. Neither of them wanted to stay in a joint family set up and they were on the same page about nuclear family residence. One of the main reasons that Amrita wanted to stay separately was the issue of food. Bengalis are ethnically fish eaters and normally every meal will have some river fish. Also there is a hint of sweet flavor in many Bengali dishes, which may be unpalatable to the Punjabi taste bud because Punjabi food is spicy. Amrita is averse to the smell of fish. Amrita belongs to the 'Khatri' (forward) caste of Punjab. Though 'Khatris' are non-vegetarian castes, in some 'Khatri' households the women are expected to maintain a vegetarian diet. Sometimes 'Khatri' men can also be brought up vegetarian. Amrita belongs to one such 'Khatri' household and in her natal home she and her mother were vegetarians. However caste injunctions regarding intake of non-vegetarian food is

loosening up and there co-exists modern ideologies which overlooks strict caste rules regarding vegetarianism for vegetarian castes. Amrita became non-vegetarian after marriage. She started taking meat because she wanted to "share in his (Vipin's) experience." However, she negotiated with Vipin regarding dietary habits of the household. Even though she started eating meat, she would not eat fish as the smell repulses her. Second, all non-vegetarian food at home would be the bought out precooked ready to eat meals. No non-vegetarian food would be cooked in her kitchen. Here she maintained some of the traditional caste injunctions of not allowing meat being cooked in the kitchen but allowed herself to be flexible enough to start eating meat as modern loosening caste norms would not strictly censure her. Vipin belongs to the 'Kayastha' (forward) caste, which is a non-vegetarian caste. He says about Amrita's switch to non-vegetarianism: "It was like... she used to go out with me and she would, I mean, feel out of place. I was probably, unintentionally; I was always pushing her to eat non-veg. And gradually you know she eats everything. Not fish… that's in her psyche…the smell. We still have not given Purab (their son) fish though he eats chicken and mutton."

A cook comes in every morning for one hour to prepare daily lunch and dinner in Amrita and Vipin's household. Amrita gives instructions to the cook as to what to prepare for the day. Vipin is out to work by the time the cook comes. He is not involved in the kitchen. Amrita feeds her four year old son breakfast, lunch and dinner. Vipin does not engage himself in his son's meals. In the whole week I was present, the meals at dinner would consist of at least one type of cooked lentils, one type of cooked vegetable, and ready to eat chicken for dinner. Vipin was at work and not present for lunch at home. Since only Amrita and Purab, their three year old son, ate lunch together, there was no non-vegetarian food at lunch.

When I ask Vipin what he feels about not having fish at home he said: "It's not

inconvenient. Whenever I want fish I just go over to my mother's. She stays close by." The negotiation for dietary habits between Vipin and Amrita embrace norms of gender, caste and ethnicity. By virtue of traditional gender norms, Amrita takes charge of the kitchen and meal planning, and Vipin is happy to let her take charge of the food department. With the role of the kitchen manager she decides that there will be no non-vegetarian food cooked in her kitchen, aligning with her traditional caste norms. Vipin had put subtle pressure on her to start eating non-vegetarian food, and given that modern castes are slack on the injunctions on non-vegetarian food, she allows for pre-cooked meat into their dietary habits. Most of her food is cooked according to Punjabi style and the Bengali taste for fish is forfeited for her and her son, though Vipin would still have his share of fish at his mother's house. Both Vipin and Amrita make their decisions using the norms available within ethnic, caste and gender structures and bring to bear their agency in settling for food habits within their household. Amrita is able to hold on more to her ethnic diet for herself and her son, but does so within embedded rules.

Another issue of active negotiation is language. Amrita and Vipin speak to each other in English. They speak to their son in Hindi and English. In the week that I spend with them, not one word is spoken in Bengali, the ethnic tongue of Vipin. Amrita's ethnic language is Punjabi. No Punjabi is also spoken at home. Amrita grew up speaking in Hindi because Hindi is the spoken language in a lot of Punjabi households. When Purab was a baby and a toddler, he was spoken to in two languages, Hindi and Bengali because both parents wanted for their child to pick up their own language. Purab did not begin talking till age three. That worried Amrita immensely. Purab was taken to a speech therapist and it was suggested that he be spoken to in one language only. Hindi became the language of choice. When I asked Amrita why not Bengali she said: "Bengalis are very proud of their language and all, but Purab was so little and he was

struggling. The thing is he can always pick it up later. Even I picked it up. All his friends will speak in Hindi why not just start with Hindi?"

Hindi is the official language of the state of Delhi along with English. Given the vast Hindi speaking population in the state, it is also a popular language for communication among the general population and in schools. Amrita was anxious that her son would be burdened with too many languages at a tender age and that he may not be able to communicate comfortably in school. So she insisted that the language at home be Hindi. Vipin also agreed since he was also worried about his son's delay in beginning speech. However Vipin is keen, now that Purab talks like any other child he knows, that he pick up Bengali too. Amrita is still not quite ready to try two languages on her son. She says: "There is no hurry. It will all come. Maybe my son is not smart enough to pick up so many languages all at once." But Vipin says: "My cousin is married to a 'Tamilian'. Her kids speak four languages, Tamil, Bengali, Hindi and English. When parents are from different backgrounds, children become sharp. They learn three-four languages but the doctor says boys are slower to pick up languages, so I am fine, but he should learn soon enough. He should not miss out on such a rich language."

Amrita and Vipin speak with each other in English with a smattering of Hindi words. Amrita knows how to speak Bengali as well. She picked it up because Vipin's parents speak with her in Bengali. However with Vipin she continues with English as a matter of habit. When they started dating, that was their language of communication and it has remained so till today. Vipin is also comfortable speaking to Amrita in English. Like a lot of middle and upper middle class people who are educated in English medium schools, English is a popular language of choice in communication in India. Neither put pressure on the other to speak in their own ethnic tongue. However, when it came to the son it was Amrita's decision in the confluence of gender and

ethnicity that bore upon the family. Amrita spent far more time with her son taking up the traditional gender role as the primary care giver of the child. She took this to her advantage in terms of letting her choice reign, as she interacted with her son more closely giving him far more time than Vipin did. Amrita being a native speaker of Hindi and Hindi also being the local language of Delhi also weighed in on the negotiation. Given the circumstances of his son's speech delay, Vipin has understood Amrita's anxiety. However given his ethnic pride on his own language Bengali, Vipin, as he told me, will soon start speaking to his son in Bengali.

Vipin runs his own business. Amrita has a position of director in his business firm. She works from home. However hers is mostly a token position. She works from home occasionally helping Vipin out in some of his ventures. When they had got married eight years ago, Amrita was working in a reputable company after having received a degree in business management. Three years into the marriage she became pregnant. After Purab was born, Amrita hired many full time maids to take care of the baby while she was away at work. However she was dissatisfied with the quality of childcare that the maids were providing. Vipin's and Amrita's parents lived close by but were unable to provide childcare support because they were too old. The only other resource she had was day care centers. But those around her neighborhood were, according to her, unhygienic and not fit for a baby to stay even for a day. She very badly wanted to pursue her career. She had got an 'MBA' (Masters in Business Administration) degree not for nothing she said. Vipin was also keen that she rises in her career and motherhood should not stymie her progress. However, she did not have enough access to resources that could enable her to continue work, unless she also sacrificed on the welfare of her baby. Amrita says: "What could Vipin do? He was also helpless. He left it to me. He said you decide, it's your call. I left my job. … yes, I was very depressed, from an active life to just sit at home. But then I think I

was right, my priority should be my child. Sometimes I feel so jealous of women who have active support from their in-laws or parents so they can do what they want. And really I have no faith in servants. So I did what I should."

In this situation there was no question who would cut back on their career. The 'natural' choice was Amrita. The contemporary construction of gender norms has an uneasy coexistence of traditional constructs that condemn women who make sacrifices in their family life to advance a career, yet values the modern construction of an accomplished career woman who can compete with men in any field. This incongruous feature of social structure of simultaneous demands of selfless mothers and self-actualizing career women has also been noted by Hays (1996) and Blair- Loy (2003). It bestowed a dilemma to Amrita who was presented with compounded normative expectations. It is within these prescriptions of different sets of meaning, and given lack of resources to support the norm of the competent career woman that Amrita settled to leave her career and stay at home. Vipin was able to continue his career uninterrupted and override Amrita's agency within the environment of these multiples schemas concerning women's work and by the dominant traditional norm of the man being the main breadwinner. The traditional division of labor of women as care takers and men as the bread earners was reached given the lack of resources for childcare available to Amrita. Amrita has settled into this role with a grudge. She is the primary care taken of their child and all household chores. She takes care of the meals, her child's homework, and all other domestic chores. Vipin, comes back late from work, usually not before 9.00 p.m. everyday. His interaction with his child is playful activities. Sunday is his rest day when he prefers to unwind watching television.

However her lack of independent earnings does not prevent her from having any say in financial matters regarding the household. She sets a monthly budget running the household and

cannot tolerate Vipin questioning her about her personal expenses on her clothes or other personal shopping. She says: “I am not spendthrift, but when I spend I will not have anybody asking me where I spend what.” Vipin is an extravagant spender on personal items. And on big investments like a car or a fancy television, a computer, it is Vipin who makes the decisions. Amrita is not a big spender on gadgetry, and though she tries to dissuade her husband from lavish spending she says: “He will not listen to me. Maybe because he has the money power. He wastes a lot. And he likes the show. Big car and all. I feel people will get jealous. So I tell him to not do too much.” Amrita has not let go of her financial decision making powers in terms of autonomy in spending after she gave up on her career. She is cognizant that he has the ‘money power’ as primary bread earner to make the bigger decisions on major purchases. She however continues to exercise her agency in making decisions regarding investments and savings for the household because she says is “smarter” in this matter.

For Amrita and Vipin, gender, caste and ethnicity aligned themselves singularly or in combination, merging and submerging in different contexts of the bargaining process. They exercised their decisions within parameters of multiple meanings contained in these structures, agency emerging in teasing out meanings that suited their circumstances and resource available to them. Amrita and Vipin, both displayed agency in refusing dowry and bringing down wedding expenses for the bride. Amrita lacked agency in pursuing a full time career but was able to maintain autonomy is personal spending and in the domain of diet and language. None of their choices were made with any radical alteration of rules that were already not present within the structures. The traditional dowry taking norm co-existed with the modern norm, which scorned dowry. The norm of ritual superiority of groom, which demanded more of his ethnic rituals being followed at the wedding, coexisted with the one that allowed more of the bride’s ethnic wedding

customs to be followed at the wedding. The traditional norm of men being the primary bread earner coexisted with the norm of women being as competent as men in the workforce. The norm of adhering to a traditional vegetarian caste diet coexisted with more modern and lax caste norm regarding diet. These multiple and ambiguous norms were already present in Amrita's and Vipin's social setting. They exercised agency within these parameters without creating new rules. Of course, in a sense their agency has transformatory potential because as more and more women chose to assert agency on their behalf in terms of wedding expenses, diet and language, financial decisions, residential patterns and division of labor, a massive structural transformation will be on its way, with perhaps a potential to create future new rules. But in terms of current choice, they still exercised it within parameters of what is already embedded and available in their social milieu without modifying those rules presently. This distinguishes it from transformative agency, as exercised by Meeta and Pankaj. As will be shortly described, Meeta and Pankaj made choices by creating new rules hitherto unavailable and these have the potential of future structural transformation of society.

***TRANFORMATIVE AGENCY***

Meeta and Pankaj exercised what I categorize as transformative agency in the domain of negotiation for mode of residence. However, for every other sphere, dowry, like Amrita and Vipin, they exercised circumscribed agency. What follows is their case study. Meeta and Pankaj were married nine years ago. Meeta is now thirty four years old and Pankaj thirty six. They have a three year old daughter named Payal. Meeta is a 'Bengali' woman while Pankaj is 'Rajasthani'. Meeta is from the 'Boddi' (forward) caste and Pankaj is a 'Rajput' (forward caste). There is additionally a class difference between the two. Meeta is from an upper middle class background while Pankaj is from a lower middle class background. Both of them are much aware of this

class difference. Says Meeta:

"My parents were shocked when I told them I wanted to marry Pankaj. They were terribly sad that I wanted to marry a person whose parents are so uneducated, especially since my mum-in-law has only studied till class 4, while both my parents are doctorates. The difference was just too glaring to them. His father runs a small neighborhood grocery store and they are very ordinary people. They just did not see the fit."

Meeta and Pankaj met at a festival ground when Meeta was fifteen and Pankaj was seventeen. They had both come with to the festival with respective sets of friends. They exchanged numbers and started dating. They dated for ten years before they married. Both sets of parents were vehemently opposed to the marriage, Meeta's parent's more so on class grounds. Pankaj's parents were ruffled also with the difference in the ethnic background. They came around when they realized that their children would not budge from their decision to marry. Meeta's parents did not want to meet with Pankaj's parents in the very first place. However Pankaj's parents made the first move and made a formal visit to Meeta's home where they set the date for the marriage. Dowry was a matter of concern here. Says Meeta:

"My husband did not want anything (dowry). At the time of the wedding they (her parents-in law) could not say anything. They were a little subdued. They knew my parents were superior in terms of education culturally and all. Then my brother-in- law got married to a girl from UP (Uttar Pradesh) and the new bride got a lot (of dowry). My mum-in-law would often say 'Hume to teri shaadi mein kuch fayde nahin hua' (we made no monetary gain during your wedding). I don't see why she expected anything to come to her at my wedding. Then I and Pankaj fought back saying why should you benefit in terms of material things. This is ridiculous and backward thinking. Thank God, my parents warned me against wearing my jewelry and

going to their house in the first night. They told me that my jewelry would be taken away. So I left it all at home. They have never seen my wedding jewelry. I am not aggressive but very assertive. That the way I negotiate."

Pankaj had already told his parents not to expect any dowry. He said of the matter: "In our courtship only we decided there would be no dowry. See, I already told them (his parents) before the wedding only, don't expect anything. I mentally prepared them for it. I told them they are Bengalis, they will not give any dowry. And anytime my mother says anything about it to Meeta, I immediately tell her (my mother) to stop it. Now she has stopped saying anything." It was decided between the husband and wife there would be no dowry. The groom prepared his family who were expecting dowry that since the girl is from Bengal, not to expect any dowry. Meeta was well aware that the Pankaj's ethnicity would mean massive dowry but both Pankaj and Meeta were cognizant of media messages and gender equitable laws against dowry and were not in favor of it. Again both chose to assert their agency here within the boundaries of norms already available without innovation.

After the wedding, Meeta shifted to live with Pankaj in the same building as that of Pankaj's parents but on a different floor. They lived as a separate nuclear household. Two years after the wedding Meeta's father suffered a massive heart attack. Her mother was also aging and Meeta decided that she needed to be close to her parents so that she could be of support to them. She suggested to Pankaj that they move into the second floor of her father's house and live separately like a nuclear household, just as they were living on top of Pankaj's father's house. Pankaj would not hear of it. Meeta left Pankaj and shifted on the floor above her father's house anyway. Meeta and Pankaj were temporarily separated for one year. Meeta says: "It was such a bad phase. But I was strong. I knew he would eventually come around. He just had to

understand. His parents already had another son living with them. My parents have nobody. If I could live on top of my mom-in-law's house why can't Pankaj. Everything is becoming equal so why can't this work? It will be a good thing we are doing." Pankaj shifted in with Meeta after a year's separation. He said his parents were in a state of shock when he took that step, as men simply don't do what he did. He says: "Meeta's parents were growing old. So she wanted to be closer to them. So I also thought it's okay. It's actually a very good thing. I did not want to give up on my marriage because of this. Now I have a good relationship with my own parents as well. They also understand now. Everybody needs to be looked after."

In India, women are mobile as wives and daughter's -in law. They are expected to make the residential shift after marriage either to their husband's home or to their husband's father's home. Extremely rarely do men live with his wive's parents, and such circumstances are seen as distasteful and derogatory to all concerned. Pankaj and Meeta want to create a new positive and appreciative lexicon of a residential pattern, which is traditionally derided. They moved on a floor on top of Meeta's fathers house so that they are given support during old age. They both see it as a "good thing" and derive the positive imagery from rules of gender equality that they have transposed to a new context. Maybe this spurs a movement of more such couples adopting these residential patterns with a positive shroud around it so that it may have the potential of changing patriarchal residential patterns. It is this exercise of agency that I understand as transformative agency because it entailed innovation by transposing existing rules to a new context.

Meeta and Pankaj settled into the floor above Meeta's parents house beautifully and have been living there together for six years now. Meeta is a creative writer and works for an advertising agency while Pankaj runs a small business. They have a three year-old daughter.

Meeta's parents provide childcare when Meeta and Pankaj are out at work. They both get up around seven in the morning every day and practice yoga for half an hour. Pankaj gets Payal ready for school and makes breakfast for everybody. The daily cleaning maid come at eight in the morning every day, and works for half an hour. Pankaj leaves for work, leaving Payal to school on his way. Meeta returns from work between 7.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m., collects her daughter from her parents. Meeta and Payal have dinner together. Meeta makes dinner twice a week and they have refrigerated leftovers for the remaining days. Pankaj returns from work later, between 9.00 p.m. and 10.00 p.m., by that time Meeta has put Payal to bed and she is in bed herself reading. Pankaj warms and eats his own dinner by himself, takes a shower, and joins Meeta and Payal in bed by 11.00 p.m. Meeta gets a full weekend to herself. Pankaj works Saturdays. Sundays they usually stay home for large part in the afternoon. Meeta does the larger share of the cooking though Pankaj enjoys making a special Sunday brunch for everybody. Cooking unwinds him, so sometimes he cooks Sunday dinner as well. Pankaj always cleans up himself, not only after his cooking but also after Meeta finishes her bulk cooking for the week. The division of labor on household chores and childcare is balanced fairly between the two. Pankaj takes charge of Payal in the mornings while Meeta takes on the responsibility in the evenings. Of enormous help are Meeta's parents who fill in for them in the afternoons after Payal returns from school. Meeta says that the division of household chores is comfortable because "Pankaj is a liberal husband." What helps is that they have an additional resource of childcare available. They have pulled out the more equitable gender norms regarding men's work and women's work to negotiate a pattern that works fairly for both of them. They both believe that Meeta must be a competent career woman and aware that it entails a fair share of housework and childcare that modern working women vocalize. Men's involvement in housework is an

available modern gender norm that is spread through advertising for example where men are shown donning the chef's hat at home or changing a baby's diaper. That of course co-exists with more traditional norm of men being sole bread earners while wives being responsible for household work that is lived out daily by many couples. Meeta and Pankaj make a choice within the parameters of these traditional and modern norms available to them. Their exercise of agency in this sphere is circumscribed within already available norms even though the modern ones have been introduced into society later. In financial matters there is parity in decision-making and in spending patterns. Neither believes one or the other is more extravagant. They make decisions regarding major household purchases jointly and no one has the upper hand in this department.

Meeta and Pankaj speak with each other in a mix of Hindi and English, more English than Hindi. However they both speak to their daughter in Bengali. Why Bengali I ask, and Meeta says: "She will learn Hindi in school anyway. That's the spoken language in Delhi, so she might as well learn Bengali at home." Pankaj speaks fluent Bengali and picked up the language speaking to his mother-in-law and father-in- law in Bengali. I ask Meeta why Pankaj took the trouble to learn the language. She says: "I don't know, he likes new things. He is excited by new things." When I ask Pankaj why he speaks to his daughter in Bengali he says: "Because she knows more Bengali than Hindi. She learns more Bengali because Meeta speaks with her in Bengali. Her grandparents speak with her in Bengali. So in the family domain it's Bengali."

In dietary preference in their household there is a stronger leaning to Bengali food. They like to experiment with their food so they cook Chinese and Italian food. Neither have caste injunctions on eating non-vegetarian food so it is not a matter of contention. When I ask Pankaj why more Bengali food is cooked he says: "See everything is more or less her way. I adjust more than she does. I don't give her the opportunity to adjust. But you know she has accepted me. I am

loud and rough because of my background and she is refined. But she is okay with it."

Pankaj and Meeta refer to their class differences in impacting their decision-making within their household colluding to it in many ways. For instance Meeta says to me one day while we were generally chatting about his accommodating nature: "Pankaj has been subdued. He has never tried to be aggressive. He respects my parents. He knows that they are kind of... I think the decision for him to marry me was to move forward in life."

In the confluence of gender, class and ethnicity Pankaj and Meeta negotiate their intra-household decisions. Caste does not weave itself in, in their case. Within the multiple meanings present in these structures they draw in meanings pertinent to their negotiations, saying no to dowry, bringing parity in household division of labor and child care, and in financial decision making. Understated is the class difference, which works itself into Pankaj making more of the 'adjustments' as he calls it, whether it is in language or food. What is remarkable in their case is that agency emerged to create new innovative rules that can have potentially transform patriarchal residential patterns. Transposing an existing rule of gender equity to a new context, they provide a lexicon of respectability to shifting in with the wife's family for the purpose of taking care of daughter's/ wife's parents in their old age. Such a combination of residential pattern with this lexicon is generating, what I call in the beginning of my chapter, transformative agency. Of course, the transformation here is context specific. The lexicon regarding mode of residence that is so novel in India might as well be routine in other parts of the world. Malhotra, Schuler and Boender (2002) brings this to attention by saying that what may be a sign of agency in rural Bangladesh might not be a sign of agency in urban Peru and one cannot use uniform criteria for measuring agency in every social setting.

***WHAT LIES IN THE MIDDLE***

Idika and Bharat display agency in most domains in the category of circumscribed agency. However one particular decision of Idika cannot precisely be said to be expressing either circumscribed or transformative agency. It rests in an uneasy place at the continuum that is bound to occur because human actions are invariably untidy. Idika and Bharat are both twenty six years old and work in a market research firm where they met a year before they tied the knot. They decided to marry at a younger age than most of their friends because it felt illogical to wait longer. They knew they had to marry someday, so why not right away. It would save rent and they wanted to live together. Live-in relationships are still taboo so they married.

Idika is a Punjabi 'Kayasth' and Bharat is a 'Malayali' 'Nair'. There was no dowry at the wedding, agency displayed here by teasing out the modern norms on dowry. The wedding was a mix of Punjabi and 'Malayali' rituals and this was negotiated within the ambit of ethnic variations in rituals and the ambiguous norms as to whether the groom's side or the bride's side's rituals should be given more weightage. Like most of the couples in my study, Idika was able to negotiate to bring down wedding expenses for her family given that she was marrying a 'Malayali' amongst whom wedding expenses for a middle class bride and her family are modest compared to Punjabi standards. Idika calls herself carefree and happy-go lucky. She says she likes to have fun. She says:

"It makes Bharat mad how I can live like this. You know irregular meals, not bothered about cleaning the house. Bharat is more mature. He can't live off 'Maggie' noodles, so we mostly eat outside. I don't cook much. I am sure he wants me too. I should probably. But I don't. There are 'funner' things to do. I do the cleaning sometimes though, you know sort out the mess in the bedroom... maybe once a month. I am married now, after all. Some

responsibility comes from marriage. But it's not like I need my bed made every day. I don't have time in the morning. So it remains like that only most days as you see."
She adds: "No Bharat does not clean up ... I don't like to clean...and he's a guy... I know I have three brothers.... but our maid comes every morning. So it's not all that bad."

Idika likes a foot lose fancy free lifestyle. She is cognizant of and adheres in a manner to traditional gender norms, which expects her to cook, clean and keep house. She occasionally cleans a mess but does not expect Bharat to because "he is a guy" with the assumption that being a woman she does not like to clean so how could a man possibly. When the bed is made, however occasionally, she makes it. She does not resent Bharat for not picking up the mess. Bharat says: "She (Idika) lives like she's still in hostel.. I don't want that kind of life anymore. But it's okay. We don't fight too much about it. Maybe in a few more years. She becomes more womanly". He adds: "See who likes housework.. But you know if she starts doing more maybe I also will do. But on my own I don't want to do. She's all about having fun..... and she is a fun person... you know I like that.. and you know they say you can't have it all." Bharat says he would take initiative in housework if Idika did more than she currently does. But he did not see it the other way round that, perhaps, if he started doing housework then she would also be more enthused about housework than she currently is.

The curious part in their negotiation is that they both adhere to the traditional gender norm of the woman being ultimately more responsible for the housework. In fact their residential choice was also made keeping in mind this very fact. They chose a place closer to Idika's office so that she could come back early and pay more attention to the house, which as she said is always messy. The intentions for both of them to choose a place of residence based on this factor was that she needs to do more housework. She did not 'want to' but she thought she 'ought to'.

Notice she says she should be more responsible since she is married. She does not expect her husband to do housework. That is the norm she believes in. She was brought up with brothers who did no housework, so she does not expect it out of her spouse. Therefore, Idika does whatever little housework is done between the two. This comes from a traditional norm already embedded in society. She knows she "ought to" to do the housework, she even does more than Bharat, but she chooses not to cook. The 'ought to' that springs from tradition does not translate into the actual doing with respect to cooking. Bharat would want her to cook, but does not push her. They eat out. She feels guilty, but her fun loving nature overpowers the guilt. She never expects Bharat to do the cooking, and does not tease out modern equitable norms that expect the man to have a fair share of housework. She conforms to the traditional gender norm in thinking that she should be doing the cooking and feels guilty for not doing so. However she does not act on the traditional gender norm and chooses not to do the cooking. That is an expression of her agency. However a point to be noted is that even in a traditional set up, it is not unusual for a woman not to cook. Women in India employ household cooks since labor is cheap. However, if the traditional mindset on household work were adhered to, the woman would nevertheless train and instruct the cook and oversee the cooking. In this case, she undertakes none of the traditional responsibility of cooking either by cooking or by training and instructing a cook. She uneasily adheres to a traditional norm by picking up whatever little housework and not expecting her husband to contribute. However, she innovates in a manner by choosing not to cook at all. Choosing not to cook is not entirely transformative agency because as I mentioned earlier that in many household women employ cooks to do the cooking. However in part it is novel because she takes no responsibility for any aspect of the cooking, in spite of adhering to the traditional gender norm that she "ought to be" doing so. Therefore in the sphere of household work, Idika's

agency rests awkwardly between circumscribed and transformative. There is no conflict regarding ethnic diet because they eat out most of the time with cereal and milk for breakfast. They eat at a wide variety of joints catering to Chinese, Italian or Mediterranean food. They also sometimes eat at North Indian and South Indian restaurants, which cater Punjabi and 'Malayali' food. However Bharat picks what places to eat most of the days.

Amrita-Vipin, Meeta- Pankaj and Idika-Bharat are expressing agency in their own unique ways with caste, ethnicity and gender emerging and submerging in different contexts of the bargaining process. Mostly they navigate around the multiple, ambiguous, sometimes conflicting meanings of rules and resources available to them to generate decisions and meanings already present within the gambit of the structure within which they were operating. The agency they generate within the confines of already available norms, traditional or the more recently introduced are options already available to them in their social milieu without requiring innovation. This is what I called circumscribed agency. Idika exercised agency that could not fit into the category of circumscribed or transformative but sat uneasily between the two. It is difficult for a researcher to capture the exact point of a rupture to change. However, I hope that the agency, which emerged out of decisions that Meeta and Pankaj took in shifting to the floor above Meeta's parents' house by engaging an innovative and new lexicon of respectability to it, provides an indication of a possibility of such a structural transformation in the making.

# CHAPTER 4

## SUBVERTING GENDER: BARGAINING AT SINGLE POINT HIERARCHY AND MULTIPLE POINTS OF DIFFERENCE

The couples selected in my study are divided on the basis of the following criteria: Eight couples are in an inter marriage where only gender is the point of hierarchy in their relationship, while ethnicity and caste are points of difference. The other eight couples have more than one point of hierarchy, that is, apart from gender; class, caste or ethnicity hierarchizes their relationship. The purpose of this division is to seek explanations to the following questions:

3) Does gender hierarchy turn intra household bargaining in favor of the husband in an inter marriage when the spouses are hierarchized by gender but are equal in class, and non-hierarchized but differentiated by ethnicity and caste? If not, what is subverting gender hierarchy?
4) When couples are hierarchized at multiple points in an inter marriage, what roles do class, caste, and ethnic hierarchies play in the negotiations? Is it possible to rank structural hierarchies in order of their importance to the negotiating process?

I address the first question in this chapter. I show a subversion of gender in several instances in the sample of couples hierarchized only by gender but differentiated and equal in caste and ethnicity. I show how ambiguity in gender, caste, and ethnic norms in many instances unsettle hierarchical advantage of gender for the husbands. Gender norms are often at crossroads with each other and also sometimes conflict with caste and ethnic norms which themselves have multiple meaning that are at odds with one another. It is at the intersection of these various

nebulous structures that agency emerges which allows for women to navigate many times to their advantage in the negotiation process. They make choices within the boundaries of rules and norms provided by these structures. This chapter also suggests that an individual's character traits often steers choice within the compass of these structures. I have delineated a continuum that emerges out of my data. At one end are women who are able to assert agency and negotiate most successfully in their favor, in most spheres of bargaining that I explore. These women portray themselves in terms of more forceful character traits such as 'confident', 'not a pushover' 'strong willed', 'independent', and 'dominating' while describing their decision making processes. At the other end of the continuum are women who are least able to assert their agency and negotiate in their own favor having all or most spheres of bargaining that I explore tilt towards the husbands' benefit. There is one such woman in my study and her husband describes her as "too soft" or "not aggressive at all" therefore being associated with meeker character traits than the women who are most successful in their negotiations. Most women fall in between the two extremes making reasonable, if not excessively successful attempts, in the confluence of multiple structures, in affirming their agency in negotiating in their own favor. The women in the middle associate themselves with temperate characteristics such as 'caring', 'not a nag', "understanding". While there may be many other explanatory variables, which influence the ability to bargain that the current study has not explored, it nevertheless indicates a strong association between individual character traits and bargaining power. Indeterminateness of multiple structures themselves allows space for negotiation, while a person's individual traits has the ability to influence the amount of bargaining power in her hands.

It may be argued that character or personality traits are themselves an outcome of structure, as for example being brought up as male or female predisposes one to certain character

traits. Literature pertaining to the relationship between structure and personality traits provides conflicting views on the subject. King (2003) states that human beings possess conspicuous variances in individual conduct, mindsets and several other indices of what is termed personality. These are vital distinctions in discerning human nature and it would be abnormal to have a human populace with people of undistinguishable personalities. As our social milieu is occupied with people with differing personality traits, it is important to ask why that should be. Manifold reasons sustain these individual disparities and scholars disagree as to which cause is more predominant. Biologists and evolutionary psychologists argue that personality variation is less a consequence of the social location or social structure in which people are located and more a consequence of new genetic combinations persistently being articulated through sexual reproduction in human beings (Tooby and Cosmide 1990). This importance to perpetual reordering of genotypes as a reason for personality variation is defended by showing huge differences in personality traits of people occupying similar social structures. Thus in a study by Loehlin (2011), an analysis of personality traits was made from a data set of 654 monozygotic and 648 dizygotic adult Australian twin pairs to suggest that personality variation is partially owing to genetic legacy and partially emerging out of the social environment in which those genes developed. Thus quoting from his study "…. The effects of shared families, peers, etc. no longer provide clear contributions to personality structure in these adult twins- just as shared environments seem to make minimal contributions to individual variations along particular personality dimensions after adolescence" (Loehlin 2011:666). In contrast to these studies, works of sociologists like Kohn, Li, Wang and Yue (2007) and Kohn, Khemelko, Paniotto and Hung (2004) have persistently shown that ones station in class structure and in social stratification are carefully related to central aspects of personality such as intellectual flexibility or a sense of well

being. Therefore, the debate around the question of the impact of social structure on personality has yielded varying arguments. It is not within the scope of this study to research the source of individual character traits for the participants in my study, but to suggest that varying personality traits be taken into consideration on any explanation of intra household bargaining especially within the context of them facilitating choice within the boundaries of structure. There are multiple other factors that influence intra household bargaining which my study has not taken into account, but my data indicates a strong association between character traits and affirming agency during negotiation, women with more assertive character traits being able to garner more resources for themselves.

There have been studies that seek personality correlates of bargaining behavior within the sociology of organizations and social psychology. Marlowf, Gergen and Doob (1966) explain how people with egotist personalities threaten opponents during bargaining, while the person who tends to divulge only his inadequacies places herself bare to other's advantage. Similarly Harnett, Cummings, and Hamner (1973) in their study of bargaining within business executives show that those highest internal control obtain a greater pay off than their risk taking and externally oriented counterparts. Within the field of intra household bargaining there are no empirical studies that trace an association between personality traits and bargaining. Quick (1998) does not specifically study active bargaining relationships but does examine how personality differences with specific reference to motivational orientation impact the career trajectories of spouses. Quick's (1998) work studied trajectories of spouses in the intersection of family structure and personality in the form of "motivation orientation' and indicates that men are more motivation oriented than women and therefore have more upward career trajectories. In my study an association emerges between personality traits and bargaining power, women

who identify themselves with more assertive character traits being able to greater affirm their agency in negotiating with their spouse in what they want to pursue than women who identify with less assertive personality traits. However, to reiterate, it is the social structures of caste, class, ethnicity, and gender within which the negotiation takes place, the variances in norms and rules themselves providing space for negotiation. Again, it is in the intersection of varying and nebulous social structures that women assert agency and subvert gender. I proceed now to examine and explain the negotiation process in detail.

### *BARGAINING AT SINGLE POINT HIERARCHY AND MULTIPLE POINTS OF DIFFERENCE*

The points of differences are summarized in the table below for the eight couples that are hierarchized only by gender.

Table 4.1: Social Locations of the Eight Couples who are Hierarchized only by Gender

| **Name** | **Gender** | **Class** | **Caste** | **Ethnicity** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Geeta<br>Sheel | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Middle | Khatri (Forward Caste)<br>Kayastha (Forward Caste) | Punjabi<br>Bengali |
| Deepika<br>Arup | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Middle | Khatri (Forward Caste)<br>Nair (Forward Caste) | Punjabi<br>Malayali |
| Amrita<br>Vipin | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Middle | Khatri (Forward Caste)<br>Kayastha (Forward Caste) | Punjabi<br>Bengali |
| Mamta<br>Dinesh | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Middle | Rajput (Forward Caste)<br>Boddi (Forward Caste) | Rajasthani<br>Bengali |
| Rupa<br>Vaibhav | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Middle | Kayastha (Forward Caste)<br>Khatri (Forward Caste) | Bengali<br>Punjabi |
| Kaajal<br>Achintya | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Middle | Kayastha (Forward Caste)<br>Nair (Forward Caste) | Bihari<br>Malayali |
| Idika<br>Bharat | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Middle | Kayastha (Forward Caste)<br>Nair (Forward Caste) | Punjabi<br>Malayali |
| Falguni<br>Anirban | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Middle | Khatri (Forward Caste)<br>Boddhi (Forward Caste) | Punjabi<br>Bengali |

I met Geeta through a friend in Delhi who had recommended that I go to her for some clothes that I needed to get stitched for a local wedding. Geeta and her husband Sheel run a boutique of tailor made women's clothing. Tailoring is an inexpensive option in India, as labor is

cheap. Before setting shop both Geeta and Sheel were actually trained chartered accountants and they met while Geeta started apprenticing for an accountancy firm where Sheel was already working for a few years. Sheel is eight years older than Geeta and when I got acquainted with them Geeta was thirty seven and Sheel forty five. Geeta proposed to Sheel two years after they met at work. According to Geeta, Sheel was hesitant initially because he thought Geeta deserved better. Sheel did not mention this in my conversations with him. Geeta is a middle class Punjabi, 'Khatri' and Sheel a middle class Bengali, 'Kayastha' (see chart). Gender hierarchizes their relationship. Given this hierarchy, do all negotiations within the marriage go in favor of Sheel because of gender advantage? At the time Geeta and Sheel decided to marry, there were contesting gender norms regarding wedding rituals. One, which entailed that the wedding rituals be conducted according to the marriage rites of the woman's ethnicity as they host the wedding and two, which entailed that the rituals be conducted according to the ethnic requirements of the groom because the groom as the bride taker is ritually superior than the bride givers. Both parties were cognizant of these simultaneously occurring possibilities and Geeta and Sheel decided to meet halfway where there was a mix and match of rituals from both parties. The bride's family undertook the expenses of the wedding; however the expenses were toned down because of ethnic differences in expected wedding expenditure. As mentioned in the earlier chapter, Punjabis expect ritualistic gift flow from the bride's family in a much larger scale than among Bengalis. The gift flow includes money as 'shagun'. The law distinguishes 'shagun' and other gifts from dowry as the latter is paid under duress and as a condition of marriage while the former is voluntary. There was no dowry in this wedding, and the scale of gift giving was minimized to suit the interest of Geeta and her family as ethnic norms varied with regard to expected gift flow from bride's family to groom and his family. With regard to gift giving the

ethnic norms of Sheel were adopted in alliance with modern gender norms, which disapproved of inequitable gift exchange during marriage. Therefore, it was within the ambit of social structure, under the confluence of variant ethnic and ambiguous gender norms that Geeta was able to assert her agency and bring down wedding expenses for her family and equalize wedding rituals between hers and Sheel's ethnic rituals.

After the wedding, Geeta shifted in with Sheel in an apartment close to Sheel's parent's house. This was so because it is traditionally expected of the son across Hindu Indian culture to take care of his parents during old age. The son may decide to continue living with his parents after marriage or may sometimes live in an accommodation close to the parent's home. Modern families may not always follow this expectation, however, the tradition till exists even among the modern urban people in India. It is an expected gender norm for the wife to move into her husband's place of residence post marriage. Geeta did so without question. It was not negotiated. However shift in place disturbed her. She did not take well to the new location. She says:

"It was bad, bad.. what a quite dull locality. I come from a very happy, fun, screaming dancing, singing kind of family and suddenly I come to this silent, quiet, quiet, quiet place. So I was depressed for a long time. I actually, after return from office used to go for a walk and I could see no kids playing in the garden, no one out there, so I used to feel, where am I stuck, there was no life, you know? It was really horrible."

Sheel also realized that she was not adjusting well to her new home. He was reticent talking about it in our interview though. All he said was: "She had problems. She did not like the place."

However there was no discussion between the two about shifting to the place she lived before the marriage. It did no occupy space for negotiation between the two. Did she ever think about shifting to another location? She says: "I wanted to but no, if we move away then it's

possible that Sheel lose inheritance to his father's house. He (Sheel's father) might give it all way to his elder brother (who lives with the father in one household). It's quite possible that he (elder brother) influences the father. So it's important to be near." Geeta herself will not inherit from her parents, as all property will go to her brothers as per traditional patriarchal inheritance norms among the Punjabis. Traditional gender norms of virilocal residence and that which required the son to look after his father in old age as well, as well as the ethnic and gender norm which disinherited Geeta from her own share of her father's property (especially rampant in Punjab and much of north Indian ethnicities) took away Geeta's agency and kept her from moving even though she was unhappy in her current location. She never discussed it openly with Sheel but she had these factors running in her mind mentally.

Just about everything else in there marriage is negotiated in favor of Geeta. Geeta took the decision to shift from the accountancy firm that they were both working in, to opening their own boutique of women's attire. She was unhappy at work that required long hours and no creativity. She always had the knack of designing clothes and she had done so for herself since she was a teenager. Two years into her marriage she decided on a career switch while Sheel continued in the accountancy firm providing the monetary stability. Traditional gender norms requiring the male to be the main bread earner worked in her favor. She started in a small room of their apartment and advertised herself word of mouth. She was talented and in two years she was making enough money to rent out a separate place to run her boutique. She hired twelve tailors to work for her. And since she thought that the business was growing way too big to handle on her own, she suggested to Sheel that he quit his accountancy firm and join her in business. Sheel was not sure at the beginning but it took him less than six months to agree. He had no experience or talent in the area of designing women's clothing. But Geeta wanted an

additional person to mind the store and handle the accounts, and she thought her husband would be a better partner to her work than having to hire external help. And Sheel was not ecstatic with his current job either. So he took her suggestion in a short time. When I started my research with them, they had jointly been running the boutique for ten years. They take turns in supervising the store and taking customer orders. Geeta does a morning shift from 7.00 a.m. to noon. She starts early in order to be available to women who stop by before work. Sheel does a shift from 1.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. They take turns alternate days to do the 7.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m. shift for those customers who drop by after work. They keep the store open Saturdays and Sundays but keep the store closed on a Tuesday. Their work is pretty evenly divided. He manages the accounts including salaries to the tailors, payments to and settlement with cloth vendors, taxes, and supervision of the store. She designs the clothing, directs and oversees her tailors and supervises the store. On asking Geeta, one day how her husband got involved in her business one of Geeta's reasonings were: "He was not too happy in his work anyway.. and he is a great guy... he is not the type who will.. he is best to have as a husband.. he keeps the best in the relationship.. I am not the good one." Geeta attributes her husband's flexibility in career shift to his being a 'great guy' and his inclination to give his best to their relationship.

Profit and all earnings from their business go into a joint account. They do not have separate accounts. Geeta makes most of the financial decisions on expensive household goods. She decides when to buy the new television or washing machine and sets the budget. She also decides how much to spend on vacations. She also makes financial investments on behalf of both of them. Sheel is not interested in household budgeting. He says: "I am happy to let her manage. I don't have too much interest in things anyway. She is indulgent.. likes to buy, she buys most stuff. She knows how much to spend and save." Handling major financial decisions is

traditionally a male domain. Sheel takes a backseat on financial decision-making in the household front even though traditional gender norms gave him an edge. His voluntarily choosing not to, because of lack of interest in investments, is also an expression of agency just as Geeta's control of the sphere, which has been traditionally a male domain. He is also less extravagant of the two in personal spending. He does not buy too much for himself, as he is disinterested. Geeta says: "I buy more, he is a miser.. I don't know why..I want him to buy more." Geeta asserts agency by drawing on gender norms that emphasize equality between husband and wife. She keeps greater power in financial decision making for the household as well as personal expenses and Sheel is not unhappy about this and voluntarily consents to keep it that way. While navigating within the ambit of gender norms it is to be kept in mind that they use personal characteristics such as 'miser', 'disinterested in finances' to explain their decision making in the financial sphere.

There is equilibrium in household division of labor. Geeta wakes up earlier than Sheel at 5.00 a.m. every day because she gets to the boutique at 7.00 a.m. She takes a bath and gets ready for work by 5.30 a.m. She meditates for twenty minutes every morning after bath. Sheel is up by 6.00a.m. Geeta makes tea for both of them and they share tea and breakfast of cereal and milk or bread sandwiched with left over vegetables before Geeta leaves for the boutique. The boutique is ten minutes away from their house, so she leaves home at quarter to seven. They have a cleaning maid who comes to do the dishes and scrub the floors daily. She comes at eight every morning. A cook comes between 9.00 a.m. and 9.15 a.m. Sheel instructs the cook on what meals need to be prepared for the day. Sheel reads the newspaper leisurely in the morning while the cook prepares their lunch and dinner and packs it away into the refrigerator. Geeta arrives for lunch at noon. The have lunch together. Sheel has lunch heated for both of them when Geeta arrives.

Sheel pushes off for his shift at the store at 1.00 p.m. Geeta takes an hours nap in the afternoon and then works with designs till Sheel is back at 6.00 p.m. Geeta and Sheel do not have children. They spend time watching television over a snack in the evening before Sheel or Geeta push off for the 7.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m. shift on alternate days. They have dinner between 10.00 p.m. and 10.30 p.m. and Sheel always heats the food though they clear away the table together. They work weekends too till 6.00 p.m. every Saturday and Sunday. Weekend evenings are for catching up with family and friends. They take a whole day off on Tuesdays where they do a bit of cleaning of the house themselves, dusting of the furniture and rearranging stuff in the house. Geeta says: "I taught him to clean. I trained him. It does not come naturally to him. But I know how to get it done. I know what I want and this is how it has to be cleaned and this is how the room has to look and he does it." When I followed up on how she gets it done (how she gets him to do the household work even though it does not come naturally to him) she says: "He is very understanding. It is because of him I am here today. He is quiet and patient. It's a huge thing."

Geeta decided she did not want to have children before she married Sheel and discussed it with him prior to the wedding. Why such a decision, I asked? She said:

"I am a very independent type of person. I don't go by norms of the society that this has to be done. I can never abide by the rules of the society, I do what I feel is right, as per me, but I will never hurt anybody. I don't want anything from anybody. I want no favor from anybody. I am my own person. I believe I am my own person and I do what I think is right. I am not one of those who feel I have to be a mom... have kids, be a mother you know all that. That is what you are supposed to do but I like to have fun."

Did Sheel not want children? Sheel says: "It was her decision. I had no preference one way or the other." This was an unusual decision taken by Geeta and Sheel in a culture, which puts great

pressure on women to become mothers post marriage and does not look on favorably on women who chose not too. There is an incidence of couples who chose to remain childfree however they are few and far between. It was remarkable that despite still predominantly prevailing traditional gender norms where a woman is accorded high status after becoming a mother of a son, here was Geeta boldly saying that she prefers to have fun than to become a mother. There was pressure from her own family members to have a baby, though Sheel never expressed a desire. His own family members did not intervene. Why and how did the decision on whether to become a mother rest mostly on Geeta? Geeta attributed it to her independent nature.

The spoken language at home is English with small amounts of Hindi. Geeta also picked up Bengali, Sheel's ethnic tongue. She uses it to communicate with Sheel's family. Sheel was already conversant with Hindi, the spoken language of most Punjabis in Delhi, when he married Geeta. His mastery of Hindi was because Hindi was the local language spoken in the streets of Delhi. He did not have to take extra trouble to learn a language to communicate with Geeta's parents. Why did Geeta learn Bengali? She says: "It's a good language to learn. It did not take me time to pick up. We were constantly meeting Sheel's family.. and they don't speak much Hindi or English with one another. I guess being good with languages helps." Punjabis and Bengalis are different but non-hierarchized ethnic groups. There is respect for the Bengali language on the part of Geeta and it was pretty much the only way she could communicate with her husband's family who would speak only Bengali within the home. Geeta and Sheel spoke predominantly English with one another as is common amongst English educated urban couples. They had met in the workplace where English is the medium of communication and that was their medium of communication when they started dating. Both of them were used to different languages at home. While living with their parents, Sheel was habituated with Bengali and Geeta

with Hindi. They continued to speak with each other in English once they married within their own home as that was the language with which they started communicating, and it was the language, which made them comfortable around each other.

Diet at home is a mix of the caste and ethnic diets of both Geeta and Sheel though more in favor of Geeta. Geeta is a 'Khatri' where traditionally women in many 'Khatri' homes do not eat non-vegetarian food. Sheel is a 'Kayashta', a non-vegetarian eating caste from Bengal. Bengalis ethnically are also fish eaters. The caste and ethnic affiliations are non-hierarchized. Geeta trained their cook in preparing meals. And because she knows more Punjabi cooking recipes than Bengali ones, that is what she passed on to their cook. However, she also tried through the course of the marriage to learn various Bengali recipes. She eats fish infrequently but makes sure it is prepared at home at least once a week. Sheel was used to eating fish everyday before marriage. Geeta broke her traditional caste norms to imbibe the more modern caste norm of being lax in dietary rules thus letting herself eat non-vegetarian food occasionally. But being the one who also trained the cook, given her gendered role, it dictated most of the way food was prepared which was mainly with ethnic spices of Punjab than the ones used in Bengal. There was also the simultaneous traditional gender norm, which would have required of her to prepare all meals according to the taste of her husband and to prioritize his taste, but given the various meanings that the gender structure embodied she chose what would suit her.

In the negotiations between Sheel and Geeta, clearly gender does not triumph in all decisions going in favor of Sheel. An indeterminate gender structure carries equivocal bearings on possible choices that Geeta can take to subvert gender hierarchy. Moreover, ambiguity and variance in caste and ethnic norms also infringe on gender for negotiations to be more egalitarian as in the case of wedding expenses and wedding rituals, language and diet. Note that in many

instances both Geeta and Sheel mention or make references to personal characteristics of the spouse like 'he is a great guy', 'he is a miser', 'he is not the type', 'he is very understanding, quiet, patient', 'she is indulgent', 'I am an independent type', 'being good with languages' to explain decision making outcomes or why a spouse agrees to certain terms and conditions laid out by the other. An important factor in Geeta's mind that allows her to get her house organized is a particular way and having Sheel to share housework is because Sheel is understanding, quiet and patient. She has to negotiate for evenness in household division of labor because it does not come naturally to him. In her own words she has to 'train' him. Similarly in financial decision making it is the lack of interest on Sheel's part, which according to Geeta, gives her more decision making powers towards household expenses and investments. On personal expenses Geeta spends more because according to Sheel she is 'indulgent' and he is 'disinterested' and to Geeta, Sheel is a 'miser'. Geeta's attributes her decision of not having a child to being independent and having a mind of her own. She indicates that her learning of Sheel's ethnic language Bengali was partly due to 'being good at languages'. Clearly these personal character traits have a bearing on the negotiations. However character traits of individuals find no place in bargaining theory literature or in the structure-agency paradigm so far. My data clearly cannot ignore the necessity of bringing individual traits with the fold of intra household bargaining and agency that emerges in the process of negotiations. While multiple and muddy structures provided the ambit within which choice could be exercised as was described as "circumscribed agency" in the previous chapter, it is also a person's patience, independence, miserliness or disinterestedness that determines the outcome of intra household negotiation. However attention to personal character traits in my analyses does not entail undermining the role which structural rules and resources have in Geeta's ability to negotiate. While her personal character

traits are enablers in her negotiation process, she does so with the rules and resources that she can garner for herself. Geeta is able to negotiate financial decision making in her favor because she has been able to exercise a career choice, which brings her sufficient personal income to have a say in financial decision making. Equilibrium in division of labor is also reached because Geeta does not have to divert her attention to traditional child care activities which for most women in my sample is attributed to women who leave their careers post child birth, due to insufficient structural resources available for child care. So to return to the question, does gender always triumph in favor of the male in intra household bargaining where caste and ethnicity are different and non-hierarchized? And if not, what factors subvert gender? The answer is: Gender hierarchy, in certain circumstances was undermined due to ambiguous gender, caste and ethnic norms which intertwine to give Geeta a more egalitarian negotiating field. Geeta's and Sheel's personal character traits are also crucial to the negotiating process. Geeta often describes herself as an assertive, confident and ambitious in the course of my conversations with her and described her husband as mild, gentle, and a good human being. In my observations of Sheel with his customers in the boutique, Sheel does have a more genial and temperate manner with his clients than Geeta did. Geeta is less likely to accommodate repeat alterations for clothing for her customers without a surcharge. Sheel is more likely to submit to customer demands. So there are certain character traits that do work themselves into bargaining, which propels one to make certain choices within the boundaries of structures.

It is not surprising that among the couples where the wife describes herself and exhibited traits of assertiveness, aggression, self reliance and assurance, gender structures are more likely to be subverted in many aspects of bargaining. Another such case of a wife identifying with aggressive character traits and displaying greater agency is the negotiations between Deepika and

Arup.

Deepika and Arup is a very young couple. Both are twenty four years old. They met while studying in Delhi University. Deepika is of Punjabi ethnicity and 'Khatri' (forward) caste, while Arup is a 'Malayali' ethnicity and 'Nair' (forward) caste. Both belong to similar middle class backgrounds. Deepika's parents showed no resistance or displeasure to Deepika choosing for herself a 'Malayali' spouse. Neither did difference in ethnic and caste background matter to Arup's parents in their son's choice of wife. Their apprehension was however that Arup was too young to be married and had no steady job to be able to support a wife or start a family. These issues were of little concern to Arup and Deepika. Deepika was working two jobs as a children's councilor in a hospital and a school after having finished a Masters degree in Psychology. And Arup was one year into a job as copywriter in an advertising company. Both felt they were ready to be married and announced their wedding plans to their respective parents. Deepika's parents had retired in the city of Dehradun a little away from Delhi, and Arup and Deepika made all the wedding arrangements themselves. They both wanted the marriage to be in temple and Deepika easily took to Arup's parents' suggestion of a South Indian 'Malayali' temple that they used to visit. Deepika thought it was a convenient choice because she did not know of any other temple in Delhi herself where marriages could be performed. She wore the traditional 'Lehenga' (Punjabi bridal wedding attire) but the entire ceremony was over in twenty five minutes according to the 'Malayali' style, which was a relief to Deepika as she did not want the wedding to take absolutely ages. To both of them the wedding meant little more than a ceremony to formalize their relationship and it did not matter to them what style the wedding was conducted. Dowry was not discussed before or during the marriage. Deepika says: "No, it wasn't even discussed. There was more of a silent understanding I think, you know I knew the kind of family

that he came from that they would not get into all this (dowry).” Gift giving was also unfussy. Arup says: “There was not much of an exchange. Just ‘sarees’ and shirts and stuff exchanged between the parents. I was also given some clothes. Deepika was given some ‘sarees’ by my parents. We gave Deepika's parents some stuff.. clothes and all. Among us (‘Malayalis’) all this (gift exchange) is a simple affair.”

Unlike in Punjabi weddings where ‘shagun’ money is given to the groom and his family, no such ritual money giving took place. Deepika says her mother did feel that as ‘ladki wale’ (girl’s side) they were not doing things adequately, since in Punjabi culture they give so much to the groom. But Deepika convinced her parents that ‘Malayali’ people do not have such expectations, and so they better not waste money. Here Deepika and Arup, negotiate within structural boundaries. They navigate within diverse ethnic norms on gift giving and align themselves with the more contemporary gender ideology that censures unbalanced wedding expenses acquired by the bride’s family during weddings in order to reduce expenses for Deepika and her family.

Deepika and Arup moved into a one bedroom rented apartment after her wedding. Before they were married, Deepika was sharing an apartment with a roommate and Arup was staying with his parents. There was never any question of staying in a joint family set up with his parents, say both Arup and Deepika. They enjoy their privacy. Deepika as I mentioned before does two jobs, one in a hospital and one in school. Her day starts early at 6.30 a.m. Arup wakes up before her to switch on the water pump. That is part of his morning chores and then he gets back to bed to sleep till 10 or 11 a.m. His work hours entail late nights and late mornings. Deepika leaves home at quarter past seven in the mornings, to get to her first job at her school. She prepares herself a quick breakfast of sandwiches and fixes a few sandwiches for Arup for his

breakfast daily. They both buy their lunch at work. She catches the school bus to school and is on duty till 1.00 p.m. at the school. Her second shift at the hospital is from 2.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. every day. She takes a public bus from the school to the hospital. She gets back home between 5.15 and 5.30 p.m. She come back and relaxes for the rest of the time that she has to herself. She is a voracious reader and spends most of her spare time reading. For one hour in the evening she prepares dinner. Arup comes back home late nights anytime between 11.p.m and 2.00 a.m. His job profile calls for late nights. Deepika is asleep by the time he comes home. He does not disturb her; he quietly has his dinner and goes to bed. Arup's mornings beginning late. He cleans the kitchen and does the dishes every day before leaving for work. They have not been able to fit in a daily cleaning maid in their schedule. On weekdays, Arup and Deepika do not run into each other. Arup works on a Saturday too. Sunday is their time together. They get up late, not before noon on Sundays. Sometimes they choose to spend their Sunday together as a couple having a meal out together, visiting malls or the cinema. On other weekends they catch up with friends. Occasionally, they pay a visit to Arup's parents, maybe once in two months. Sunday is also the time to clean up the house mess. Deepika says that Arup needed training for this chore. She says:

"I think pretty much we share everything. It is not something that he has naturally in him. He has stayed with his parents too long, so never had to do anything. He was never very independent. I was in a hostel so used to do everything by myself. But he has started making it a point to do stuff like making the bed. I leave early and the bed has never been a mess when I come back. His parents are coming today and he will do the dusting. On weekdays we don't get the time. Only Sundays. So all that is pretty much shared. He is not like a typical male sitting on the couch. Also in his own family he saw his mom and dad sharing chores. It's very un-patriarchal there. So he is not an 'MCP' (male chauvinist pig). He is willing (to do household

work) and forming this pattern was not difficult."

Arup says: "I rather play a game than do household work. But life is not a game. And we do things together like getting groceries. So it's all cool." Deepika is aware that modern gender ideologies encompass an equitable division of labor and she recognizes that her husband is not an 'MCP' (male chauvinist pig) who would not share in the housework. They both adhere to this equitable norm to settle into a fair share of household work between the two.

They speak only in English with each other. That is the language they spoke with each other when they met in university and they are most comfortable in English. The food they eat is prepared mostly Punjabi style. Deepika does the cooking and is not a big fan of spending too much time in the kitchen. So she prepares what comes easiest to her, which is her own ethnic style. And given that Deepika has taken charge of meal preparation she is able to push her ethnic cuisine into the table for most part. There is no conflict in terms of vegetarian or non-vegetarian food. They were both brought up eating meat and have no caste injunctions barring them from eating or cooking meat at home.

Deepika is more extravagant than Arup. She says: "I am more spendthrift. And I think having lived alone I am also used to having my own money and spending it like I want. I have never taken money from my parents since I left school. I pretty much managed. I had scholarships, I worked. I am used to having my own money and spending it the way I want." Deepika associates her spending pattern to her financial independence and so does Arup. Arup says: "She earns the money so she spends it. We have minor tiffs at times .. very minor. When the time comes she will start saving. But I save more because I worry more. I like a sense of security."

Both Arup and Deepika make joint decisions about the big purchases for their apartment.

Deepika's sense of entitlement due to her financial independence plays a role in monetary decisions and habits. Hence, Deepika and Arup have extracted the more equitable norms and ideologies within the structures of gender and ethnicity to strike a balanced share of marriage expenses, household labor, and financial decisions. Food and dietary habits went in Deepika's favor because she picked up gender rules and meanings of women being the primary meal planners and used that to her advantage.

Apart from the multiple meanings contained in gender, caste, and ethnic structures that weaved together to work to the benefit of Deepika, her forcefulness is pivotal in her negotiations with her husband. In describing herself Deepika says: "I was always a free person. I manage everything on my own which is not the trend for women in most households.. but I pretty much can do everything on my own." For example, in her reflections about the even balance in household chores in her home she says: " I guess I am dominating type. So he does the cleaning even if he does not like to." She even describes her husband as "not being an 'MCP' (male chauvinist pig) " in our conversations around housework. Arup wants to align himself with more equitable gender norms governing spousal relationships and describes himself as 'laid back' and someone who 'does not have a big male ego'. Deepika is considerably able to negotiate in her own favor in spite of gender hierarchy putting her at a disadvantage. Her character traits enable her to reach a favorable balance, for instance in her negotiations over housework. However, it must also be noted that she is in a stage of life where she does not have children yet. So the more common division of labor that is reached between young mothers and their husbands', where the wife is the stay at home mother who takes care of all or most of the household work while the husband assumes the role of the bread earner without any contribution to household work does not apply here. She does not have to operate within those structural constraints as yet. While

personality traits are important, it is within structural boundaries that agency is asserted.

The case of Amrita and Vipin was laid out in detail in the last chapter so I will mention it here in passing. Vipin characterizes himself as 'non-confrontational'. He lets arguments be because he is 'mostly a calm person'. Amrita describes herself as a woman of 'strong views', which allows her to have her way with Vipin. She also agrees that Vipin is non-confrontational. In our conversations on food habits about Vipin not minding about her injunction against non-vegetarian food being cooked in the house or not letting their son eat non-vegetarian food, she says: "See its in his nature.. why have conflict? He will say, why have arguments?" Again, Amrita's assertive nature propelled her to have her way with food habits, but it is important to keep in mind that gender rules, which accredited her with the role of meal planning, allowed her this space for negotiation in the first place.

At the other end of the spectrum we have the case of Mamta and Dinesh. Mamta practically has nothing going for her in the bargaining process. Mamta, thirty four years old, belongs to the 'Rajasthani' ethnic community who speak Hindi at home. She belongs to the 'Rajput' (forward) caste of Rajasthan. Her husband Dinesh, also thirty four years old, is a Bengali and belongs to the 'Boddi' (forward) caste of Bengal. They both belong to similar middle class backgrounds. They met in University when they were both pursuing a Masters degree. After they completed their studies, they wanted to marry much to the dismay of Mamta's parents who shared the same anxiety of Amrita's parents that their daughter would have a hard time adapting to her husband's culture. However they relented and the marriage took place completely in Bengali style. Mamta says of the wedding:

"My mother said since you are going to be part of their family they should be happy. I like this logic. Their rituals should be followed. It is important that it goes according to their

satisfaction. So it made sense to me that the marriage takes place the Bengali way. I did everything their way. I wore a 'Saree' (Bengali bridal dress) instead of 'Lehenga' ('Rajasthnai' bridal attire). I even wore a 'topor' (Bengali wedding head gear). We used their priest." Dinesh says on being asked about the wedding rituals:

"I really did not want it to be a 'khichdi'(crazy mix) of customs. Once we decided to get married we proposed that let it be one style. We were not particular about which style. If they wanted 'Rajasthani' let them do fully 'Rajasthani', but if it is Bengali let it be fully Bengali. It is up to them. They are hosting the wedding. They (Mamta and her family) understood that we were simple casual people. They liked our family and thought what we are saying is right. So they said let it be fully Bengali style. They did everything the Bengali way. Mamta was even seated on a wooden seat and circled for the 'pheras' (ceremonial vows taken around the holy fire)."

As I mentioned earlier there are ambiguous gender norms that could guide what ways the wedding rituals should be followed. On the one hand since the bride's side hosts the wedding, norms allow a space for the bride family to decide on how to organize the wedding. This co-exists with norms, which places the groom and his family as ritually superior, and therefore pressing that the groom's wedding customs be followed. Quite clearly here Mamta and her family decided on the former norm. Both she and her mother accepted their ritual subordination, which allowed Dinesh to have the wedding in his ethnic style. It must be mentioned that Mamta dearly missed wearing her own cultural bridal attire, but was not able to assert her agency to be able negotiate this in her favor because of the ingrained norm of pleasing the groom's family since they are ritually superior. It was within the ambit of divergent ethnic wedding customs and conflicting gender norms about whose ethnic rituals should be followed, that decision making

ensued and everything was conducted according to the groom's ethnic culture. This was quite unlike Amrita and Vipin who conducted the wedding according to the wedding customs of the bride, and Geeta and Sheel who equalized the wedding customs between the bride and the groom.

However, similar to Amrita-Vipin, Geeta-Sheel, and Deepika-Arup, Mamta and Dinesh also brought down the wedding gift expenditures for the bride's family. There was no dowry demand. Says Dinesh: "We are educated people. We don't believe in all this." The modern association of dowry with something reprehensible allowed Dinesh to exercise his agency in the matter by rejecting dowry. However, in ritual gift giving more expenses were borne by the bride's family though the scale brought down because the groom was a Bengali. Says Mamta:

" In our custom, we keep giving. But their family said it's not like that with us. So my mother had to restrict herself to giving only to seven or eight people. My parents were very surprised. And they said how can we let our daughter marry like this. What will people say? My mother is too much into giving. She said Mamta, what will people say. …. they also gave my mother and father and my close relative clothes for gifts. It does not happen in our culture. Girls side don't take anything, But they insisted. That's how the Bengalis do it. The also give."

Dinesh says: "They wanted to give us cash as 'shagun' (money given to the groom and his family as an auspicious token). But we did not want all that. We don't take cash. They were also surprised to receive gifts from us. They really appreciated us. They could not imagine that such a family can also exist where they don't take money." The flow of gifts from the bride's side to the groom's side tipped in favor of the groom as per larger traditional gender norms governing weddings. However, given that modern gender ideologies coexist which chides unbalanced wedding expenses that the bride's family incurs along with the fact that the groom is Bengali,

where the scale of gift giving is lesser than those in North Indian ethnicities such as Punjab and Rajasthan, worked to attenuate the expenses incurred by the bride's family.

After the wedding Mamta and Dinesh moved to Britain for a one year and then came back to India to live as a nuclear household, though close to Dinesh's parent's house. The decision was made to live separately because there was not enough space in Dinesh's parents' house to accommodate Mamta and Dinesh. Mamta recalls her early married years to me. She fostered the traditional gender norm that the wife should accommodate to the needs of her husband. So she carried this over in her choice of food and language as well. Mamta belonged to the 'Rajput' (forward) caste, which was non-vegetarian, but again in some Rajput households such as hers women are vegetarian. She was brought up as a vegetarian. However, on marriage she adapted to Dinesh's cuisine almost immediately. Dinesh belongs to the 'Boddi' (forward) caste, which is non-vegetarian. He wanted that she eat fish and meat. His logic was that a non-vegetarian diet gives more strength to the body so it would be good for Mamta to switch. Mamta changed over. She learnt to cook meat and fish and began partaking non-vegetarian food. Unlike Amrita, she did not forbid cooking meat and fish in her own kitchen. She also fed her daughter meat and fish without hesitation because that was what Dinesh wanted. She teased out the slackening caste norms regarding non-vegetarianism and that in confluence with her alliance to the traditional gender norms, which expect the wife to blend in the ways of her husband and his family, she switched completely to her husband's diet. Her style of cooking was ethnically Bengali. She picked up Bengali recipes from her mother-in-law. On being asked why she changed her dietary habits she simply says: "I learnt the Bengali way because I am now married to a Bengali. His family would also appreciate me more that way. They cannot change their taste but I can." There was always Bengali cuisine served in her house for the week that I was staying

and she served the favored Bengali staple grain of rice instead of 'rotis' (wheat breads), which was the preferred staple grain in Rajasthan. She says: "I used to miss 'roti's' initially. I never felt full with only rice. But now it does not bother me." Note that inspite of going hungry, she did not assert her agency in choice of food, working against her own interest in order to adhere to the traditional gender norm of accommodating to the needs of the husband.

She gives the same arguments regarding language. She speaks Bengali fluently and speaks with her daughter in Bengali. She says it comes naturally to her. She says: "It was in my own interest that I learn Bengali. That way I won't feel like a stranger when I am with his family. I practiced with my husband and I picked it up fast. We speak to each other in Hindi sometimes when we fight. But mostly Bengali comes to me. Even with my daughter somehow, Bengali just comes out." Her need to blend in to her husband's culture prompted her to pick up the language. Even though she, like Amrita, was the primary care taker of her child and in charge of the kitchen, and could have used that advantage to pass on her own diet and language to her daughter, she instead cued in to cultural meanings that required her to fuse into her husband's culture. She mentioned that she missed speaking in her own language. However her acceptance of her secondary status, and the need to put her husband's preference before her own, disallowed her to push for her own language.

Mamta feels she got a raw deal when it came to her career. She left a well paying job to stay at home after her daughter was born because there was lack of any good day care centers and maids were unreliable. Her own parents lived too far to give her support and her husband's parents were not willing to shoulder the responsibility. She says about giving up her career:

"I repent so much. Had I continued I would be earning 70,000 rupees a month. What I thought I would be and see what I have become. But its all for good only. Nobody would take

care of her like I do. She was a weak type of child. I kept her with a maid but I realized the maid was not taking care at all. I thought let some time pass and I will start my career again. But I got more and more involved with raising my daughter and doing household activities. I kind of forgot myself and started losing my identity. What is the point of having a Ph.D.? ….. He (Dinesh) always wanted me to work. Even now he tells me. You are all the time sitting at home. He is always after me to join work. But then I think I should give more time to my daughter. Nobody else can take care."

Dinesh on his part says: "Yes, Mamta should work. It's not good for her to sit around at home all day." When I ask him about responsibility for childcare for his daughter in the event that Mamta resumes her career he does not have an adequate answer. He says: "Yes, I don't like day -cares myself." He does not have anything else to say. Quiet clearly, Mamta and Dinesh endorse the modern gender norm that women should be doing well in their careers. But given the dissatisfaction they have for resources available for day care, they embrace the traditional gender norm of the wife assuming the primary childcare taker role. Mamta lauds herself as a good mother but continues to feel deeply resentful and regretful of having to let her degree go waste. She was unable to exercise agency in this domain of pursuing a full time career given a lack of adequate resources and the traditional gender ideology, which attaches primary bread earner status on the husband.

Mamta, wakes up every day at 6.00 a.m. She makes tea for herself and packs the school lunch for her daughter, Diya. Her husband buys lunch at work. She then wakes up her daughter and gets her ready for school. She takes Diya to the school bus stop at 7.00 a.m. and comes back and wakes Dinesh up at 7.15 a.m. Dinesh reads the paper over a cup of tea and then gets ready to leave for work at 8.15 a.m. Mamta prepares lunch for the day. She does not employ a cook like

many middle class women do. A part time maid comes to clean the dishes and mop the floors at around 11.00 a.m. everyday. She is done preparing the day's lunch and dinner by then. She does some light dusting and watches some television between 11.00 a.m. and 2.00 p.m. When Diya is back from school she has lunch with Diya and takes a short afternoon nap with her. Between 3.30 p.m. and 4.00 p.m. during weekdays, she sits down with Diya's homework. Diya is in grade 2 and Mamta monitors her schoolwork. They are done with schoolwork between 6.30 p.m. and 7.00 p.m., after which Diya goes out to play with her neighborhood friends for an hour. Mamta catches up on the phone with her mother, her mother-in- law and a few friends in the evening. Some evenings she may need to go to the neighborhood market to fill up on the groceries. Dinesh is back from work between 8.00 p.m. - 8.30 p.m. He takes a shower and spends time catching up with Diya before they sit down to have dinner together between 9.30 p.m. - 10.00 p.m. Mamta gets Diya's uniform and school bag ready before she tucks her into bed. She then joins her husband in the living room to watch a little television before they retire to bed at 11.00 p.m. Dinesh has a six day workday like most offices in India. On a Sunday, they alternate between spending time in his own parent's house or a visit to Mamta's parents. They throw in dinner or movie occasionally on a few Sundays.

This routine settled in after Mamta quit work. She does the household chores with little contribution from Dinesh. Says Mamta on household chores: "At times I want him to help, but I see he is busy. He really can't do much. His office work takes up all his time. I would say with household work or with Diya he is of no help. Nil ….But you see my daughter also want me only. Like she wants me only when she goes to sleep." Dinesh says: "She never chases me to do things, though sometimes she says at least one day in a week you an do something (household work). But I just get one day of the week to rest. I don't want to spend the whole day into these

things."

Like Amrita and Vipin, Dinesh and Mamta settled into a routine where the wife would be in charge of childcare and household chores. And the reason for this pattern for division of labor was that because the husband works hard at office they really cannot have it any other way. She wishes for his involvement in household chores but is unable to attain it given this reasoning. Mamta uses her stay at home status to explain her personal spending too. She rarely spends anything on herself. She says: "I hardly go out of the house. I do not need many things. I spend more on household stuff. I don't need fancy stuff." The reason why Dinesh is more extravagant on personal spending is because according to her is "He needs more things than me." She expresses her desire that her husband buy her more things, pamper her with gifts, and she expresses sadness that it does not happen. She does not want to be exercise her own agency in personal spending internalizing the feeling that she deserves less because she does not earn. Dinesh expresses qualms about Mamta's attitude regarding spending: "She does not take any initiative. The same old sunglasses she has been wearing for years." However, Dinesh spends far more on himself given his independent earnings. However, Mamta and Dinesh make decisions together regarding any major purchase for the house like a washing machine, refrigerator or a microwave oven. She usually tells Dinesh what the house needs and then Dinesh undertakes research on what is the appropriate model and it is Dinesh who ultimately decides on an appropriate budget and the appropriate time to buy depending on current cash flow to their household.

Mamta seemed to asset very little agency in negotiating for resources. The permutation combinations of multiple gender, ethnic and caste ideologies that she teased out led to he forgoing her own ethnic rituals during the wedding, forsaking her diet and language and her

career. It is not of coincidence that she says: “I don't like to bother people.” She is a people pleaser and her decision for example to imbibe completely the dietary habits of her husband was part from ambiguous gender and caste norms and part for her suppliance and flexibility in accommodating to the needs of others. She said of her decision to change her diet completely: “I have married a Bengali now. They (Dinesh and his family) cannot change their taste but I can.” Dinesh also talks of his wife as being under confident. He says: “You know she has a Ph.D. Can you tell? Sometimes I wish she would ask for something, tell me her wishes.. but she has no wishes .. no desires.. Doesn’t she ever want anything? She can be more aggressive sometimes, no.” Mamta was cognizant that she had very little say in most matters and it instilled in her a sense of despair which came out when she said to me very softly one evening while I was chatting with her: “I have given a lot ..sometimes I think what am I left with?” I freeze when she says that, because she says it with such sadness.

Mamta’s character traits differ from Amrita’s and Deepika’s, Mamta being far less assertive in nature. However, all of them operate within structure, with their individual character traits being one of the possible reasons that this study uncovers as allowing some women to more successful in their negotiations. Mamta changed her diet completely and it was within the confines of gender and caste rules that she did so. Gender rules which requires her to conform to the ways of her husband post marriage and liberal caste rules which allows her to change her diet to a non-vegetarian diet is the structural compass within which she is operating. A more aggressive character trait worked in favor of Amrita, who instead chose the gender rule of women being in charge of meals, along with still existing caste injunctions regarding eating meat, to negotiate diet in her favor. Both were operating within the confines of structural rules and resources available to them, with individual character traits allowing Amrita to assert more

agency and bargain with more success.

Mamta is however the only woman in the study who is completely shackled under traditional gender norms and her exhaustively complaint nature was unique to her alone. In the case of Amrita-Vipin and Geeta-Sheel, gender structures does debilitate their negotiating powers in certain ways like in loss of career post childbirth for Amrita and unsuitable place of residence for Geeta post marriage, however, the more aggressive disposition characteristic of both these women and the relatively 'easy –going' nature of their spouses, capacitate them in many aspects of their marital lives, to make choices in their own favor within the confines of intersecting and nebulous gender, caste and ethnic structures. Among the four remaining couples in this sample, none of the wives are particularly as forceful as Geeta, Amrita and Deepika or as compliant as Mamta. They are less successful than Geeta or Deepika in their ability to negotiate but are neither at a loss like Mamta. I will discuss their cases in detail.

Rupa lives with her husband Vaibhav and their seven year old son Rishabh in a rented two bedroom apartment in a middle class apartment complex. Rupa is thirty one years old when I meet her and Vaibhav is thirty seven. Rupa is a homemaker, and has been one since Rishabh was born, quitting her position in an insurance company as many women in my study do, for want of adequate child care facilities. Vaibhav works at a government job as an engineer in a managerial position. Rupa enjoys being a homemaker. She likes the comfort of her home and likes the leisure of an afternoon nap while her son is at school, and browsing though magazines in the early evenings. Her days are unhurried and she prefers it that way. She says: "Vaibhav, sometime says go back to work but I really don't want to. I like to look after my son and husband and give them so much time. I like the time I get for myself when Vaibhav and Rishab are away. I am not like those hard-core career women. I don't like a chaotic life." Vaibhav says his wife

"likes it easy", but he does not mind her at home full time either. He gets a lot of attention from her when he is back from work at 7.00 p.m. every evening. He says: "There is really no reason to complain though I sometimes feel she perhaps gets bored.. but I don't think she is interested in working either." Rupa, Vaibhav, and Rishabh lead a simple life together without the material trappings that can come only from a double income household for a middle class couple. They don't drive a fancy car; they have modest furniture and an unassuming lifestyle. Rupa quit her job post childbirth because structural resources of childcare were not available to her. Gender rules which still require men to be the main bread winner and for women to put their families before career was the field within which she made her decision to be a stay at home mother. However her own personal disinterest in a career also provides her a satisfaction at being a full time home maker, unlike other women in my sample who deeply resent being full time homemakers post childbirth.

Rupa's mellowness spills on to most spheres of her life. She says: "I don't like to spend too much time in the kitchen. One hour, maximum daily. You know cook some vegetables and 'dals' (lentils). I don't bother to cook non-vegetarian food for myself. My mother gets it for me. It's (cooking non-veg) messy. She lives not very far away. Comes every three days and brings me 'mach er jhol' (fish curry). So I don't cook it." Rupa is a Bengali 'Kayastha' and Vaibhav is a Punjabi 'Khatri.' Rupa is from a fish eating ethnicity and caste while Vaibhav was brought up vegetarian. Rupa cooks vegetarian food everyday unless they have visitors or guests on weekends that eat meat and fish. Rishabh, their son does not eat non-vegetarian food. Vaibhav did not want him to. Her cooking style is predominantly Punjabi because she says: "I married a Punjabi. I don't know... I just started preparing stuff more his way. I enjoy it a lot too."

Apart from cooking Rupa, does all the other housework at home too. A part-time maid

comes in the morning and evenings to clean the dishes and sweep and scrub the floors everyday. Rupa dusts the furniture, every three days. She takes care of the laundry and puts away clothes, neatly stacked shirts and pants for Vaibhav and Rishabh in their cupboards. She prepares the monthly grocery list and has them delivered home. She goes to the nearby vegetable market for fresh produce every alternate day. Rupa also oversees Rishabh's homework for two hours everyday sometimes in the afternoons, and sometimes after dinner. Vaibhav has little to do in the home front. But that does not bother Rupa. She says: "I still have three or four hours to myself everyday, without husband and without my son. Personal space. Vaibhav does not get that. It won't be fair for him to do the housework too."

Vaibhav seems happy with the arrangement. Vaibhav himself is a mild mannered soft-spoken man who calls himself conservative and reserved and says: "I prefer simple things. I like simple solutions to everything." So if the division of labor fell into place as it was currently, it was a natural thing to happen and he states: "No real need to shake it up, unless she wants to." Negotiations for division of labor between Vaibhav and Rupa are reached within structural rules and resources, which pushed Vaibhav to be the main bread earner and Rupa to be full time homemaker post childbirth. Since Vaibhav was making all the money, Rupa thought it fair that she does all the housework. However, again it must be noted, Rupa who 'likes to take it easy' says she enjoys the personal space and the three hours of leisure she gets as a full time home maker that Vaibhav does not. She is not unhappy with the situation as many who are full time homemakers in my sample are. Her negotiations regarding division of labor are not against her favor.

Vaibhav and Rupa speak to each other and to their son in Hindi, which is Vaibhav's mother tongue. They had met in the workplace, but they did not use English, the workplace

language with each other. Both were more comfortable with Hindi, which is the official and local language of Delhi. Rupa was very comfortable in Hindi as she was brought up in Delhi and was as comfortable in Hindi as she was in Bengali, her mother tongue. She did not see any particular need for Vaibhav or Rishabh to learn Bengali. She says: "Hindi and English are enough .. why a third language on top of that .. unnecessary headache. Father's language is enough." Vaibhav was keen that Rishabh learn Bengali though. He says: "Its always good to know more languages.. but Rupa does not talk to him (to Rishabh) in Bengali. It will require a little effort for Rupa to teach him Bengali now. He is already seven. Maybe if she had spoken to him in Bengali when he was smaller he would have known three languages by now."

Adhering to the more traditional gender norm Rupa feels that transmitting the ethnic language of the father would suffice for her son, Rishabh. Her reasoning of cooking predominantly Punjabi dishes and getting her son to follow the food norms of his father's caste also reflects the same attitude. She does not cook non-vegetarian food for herself in her home kitchen too, though the more modern and lax caste injunctions on food do not prevent her from doing so. But she also mentions that she does not like to spend too much time on cooking, and her own mother cooks Bengali fish curry for her so that it she avoids the mess of cooking non vegetarian food in her own kitchen. By nature she is leisurely and likes a relaxed pace in life. She considers the prospect of her son learning Bengali an unnecessary headache. Even though gender structures prevented her from continuing work post childbirth, she prefers being a full time homemaker. She did not want the chaos of being a working mother, and in her own words she is not 'like a hard-core career woman'. She likes having her own time within the comforts of her home. So her personal traits of being easygoing maneuvered her choices within the scope of multiple structures.

Vaibhav describes Rupa as being a gentle, amiable and friendly person. She says she likes to keep peace and needs a sense of harmony in her life. And in the negotiations for their marriage expenses, she was the only woman in my study who did not actively or even subtly try to bring down wedding expenses for the bride family. The groom's family had wanted the wedding in a city called Rishikesh near Delhi where a lot of Vaibhav's relatives live. The brides family had to pay for all the hotel accommodations for the bride's and the groom's guests which were approximately three hundred in number. She realized it would break her parent's bank account. But she did not want to start her married life in a discordant note she said. She wanted to avoid all tension, which is why she also let the entire wedding happen according to Punjabi rituals. There was room for negotiation that could subvert gender hierarchy here as was discussed in the examples of other Bengali-Punjabi weddings. But her dislike for chaos and pandemonium deflected that choice and she negotiates within traditional gender norms and Punjabi ethnic norms that require her to incur heavy expenses at the wedding. This need for keeping peace also halts her from negotiating financial decisions on her behalf. Vaibhav being the primary and only bread earner plays a major role it financial decisions tilting in his favor, but Rupa also adds: " Maybe I think we need something right now for the house and I tell him. Most of the time he does not agree and gets it when he thinks it's appropriate. He takes his time. Sometimes he thinks it's not needed. I have been telling him we need brighter lights for the home...I just let it be, you know. I don't like to spoil a nice day."

Rupa is certainly not as aggressive as Geeta in subverting gender structures nor is she as resigned as Mamta at the other end of the spectrum who says that in the end she has nothing left. Rupa out rightly enjoys her time as a full time homemaker. She transmitted to her son with readiness the caste norms and ethnic culture of her husband, and kept some of her own alive by

eating Bengali non-vegetarian ethnic cuisine, which she also sometimes cooked for guests. However, she avoided intervening in financial decision-making and compromised substantially on wedding expenditure and wedding rituals within the structural gambit of ethic differences ambiguous gender norms. Like Rupa, three more women in this sample fall in the middle of this spectrum in their success at negotiations with their spouses.

Kaajal is a mother of a three year old girl. She cooks Sunday lunch in my first meeting with her. Her husband, Achintya, watches cartoons on television with their daughter, Surabhi. She makes 'Dosa-Sambar' (wafer thin rice pancakes and lentil soup) with coconut and tomato 'chutney', an ethnic 'Malayali' dish. Kaajal is a 'Bihari'' Kayastha' and Achintya is a 'Malayali' 'Nair' (see chart). I ask her how she learnt to make such perfectly turned out 'dosas' She says with a pleased laugh: "Internet recipes and practice." She continues: "It's not too hard really. Initially I thought I will never be able to make them. We used to eat them in restaurants. But I thought might as well lets give it a shot now that I have a 'Malayali' husband to feed. My first time, the 'dosas' were really fat. But I kept trying. I had a lot of time, then. I can make 'Malayali' food really well now. I like to cook too. Cooking new things keeps my creativity alive." In the course of the afternoon she tells me that she does not cook Bihari food too often and the reason for that, was, to quote her: "He just does not have a taste for it. Once in a while he can have it but mostly he prefers 'Malayali' food. So I land up making more 'Malayali' food". I ask her if she missed her own cuisine. She says: "Sometimes I do. But you know I am less rigid about food. I can eat more or less everything. I am the flexible type. I really like 'Malayali' food too. So it does not matter so much for me. Also Surabhi (daughter) has also acquired the taste for 'Malayali' spices. She has been eating it more. So we are pretty set." It is important to note that Kaajal understates her own food preference by saying her choice does not matter much. She

does not cook her own ethnic cuisine because her husband does not like it, and the spouse's preference for his own ethnic cuisine is a bigger factor in choice of food. She learnt to cook 'Malayali' food because she is now married to a 'Malayali'. She inculcates the norm of following the practices of her husband and though she enjoys the ethnic cuisine of her husband, she does have less agency than her husband in the matter of food.

Kaajal is the cook at home. There is no conflict over vegetarian or non-vegetarian food because both their individual caste affiliations allows for eating meat. Kaajal plans and prepares all the meals. She could have used this gender role to her benefit and prepared more of her own ethnic meals but puts her husband's tastes first taking the more traditional gender norm of giving preferential treatment to her husband's tastes and desires. In her explanations she also indicates cooking new things maintains her creativity, she is less rigid about food and that she is a flexible type, alluding to personal character traits as part of the reason that guided her choice in meal preparation in adhering to more traditional gender norms.

Kaajal and Achintya speak with each other and to their daughter in English at home. They say it is important for Surabhi to pick up fluent English first rather than Hindi or Malayali as English is language in her school and language is a key to good school performance. Surabhi speaks some Hindi and some Malayali too. She picked up Hindi as it is the local language and her friends at the neighborhood park speak Hindi. Her paternal grandparents talk to her in Malayalam so she has picked up that too. But she is most fluent in English. Kaajal understands Malayalam fully and can speak it though she says she is awkward with it. She speaks to her parents-in-law in whatever Malayalam she can muster she says. Achintya is appreciative of his wife's effort to pick up his ethnic tongue. He says: "It sounds very nice. Its broken 'Malayam' that she speaks with my parents. But you know it's the effort, which counts. She has always been

such a thoughtful person every which way." Working within structure, Kaajal picked up the traditional gender norm of imbibing her husband's culture and learnt his ethnic language. Being thoughtful is how Achintya understands her choice.

Kaajal often makes references to the fact that she is "not the controlling type of wife" in my conversations with her. She says: "I know a lot of women who try to control their husbands. I am sure you know them too. I just can't be like that. A husband is your husband not your son. Live and let live." On personal financial expenditures she says: "I keep myself in check. We are a single income family. Achintya is more extravagant. But I don't say much to him. I am not the controlling type of wife." Kaajal and Achintya both worked at the same office where they met when she was twenty six and he was twenty seven. Both have completed their diplomas in business administration from fairly reputed institutes in Delhi. They got married a year after they met. They were having troubling conceiving a baby and they had been trying unsuccessfully for three years when she decided that work stress was not conducive to her getting pregnant. She left her job and been a full time homemaker since then. Her lack of a paid job definitely plays into her curbing her personal expenses. She says: "See now that you are at home. What do you need? You don't need great clothes.... or lunch money...I don't know when I'll join a job next ..that's why I am careful with money." She ties her personal expenses to her having a job and an independent income which she gave up a few years go. Achintya does not have this constraint and freely spends more on himself. They did make joint decisions in financial investments though and her inputs were of importance to Achintya. According to him: "She's (Kaajal) pretty good with the stock market. So she has to be active in our portfolio." Kaajal, like many young mothers, is a full time homemaker and her husband the primary bread earner. Within the structural constraints, which inhibit her lack of income, she curbs her personal expenses.

Achintya's access to income definitely gives him an edge in personal expenses, however she does not seek to curb her husband's extravagance because she does not see herself as 'a controlling wife'. Thus personal character traits here again guide negotiation within the gambit of structure.

Achintya does not take any active role in housework. Apart from playing or watching cartoons with their daughter on weekends, all other hands on duties lie with Kaajal. Kaajal gets Surabhi ready for school, feeds her, clothes her, teaches her the alphabet, reads to her. Kaajal cooks, does the groceries from her neighborhood market and takes charge for the general upkeep of the house. A cleaning lady comes in as in most middle class urban Indian homes, to clean the dishes and sweep the floors. Kaajal wishes that he contributes to household work: "At least sometimes he can do something. But he is just too tired after work. He wants to come home and watch TV, that's all. And on Sunday he just wants to vegetate in the couch. I feel it, you know. I could be him, too. But anyway, I am not the nagging sorts. I hate to be the nag. And anyway I don't work so I might as well do all the housework." Here, Kaajal is aware that she could have been the earning member working outside the house when she says: "I could be him, too." Structural constraints which pushed her into being full time home maker gives her the bulk of the housework, however her personal character trait of 'hating to be the nag' also prevents her for negotiating for more housework contribution from Achintya.

Kaajal was far more assertive in negotiating for their wedding expenses though. Malayalis have modest weddings and keeping that in mind, she brought down the expenses that otherwise soar for middle class Bihari women and their families. To her it was 'a matter of principle'. She says: "It's outrageous how much Biharis send on their daughters' weddings, even now in the twenty first century. What a burden. It's not right. I did not want my parents to go

through that unnecessary hassle. You have to be considerate to your parents. Some girls don't care. But I do. 'Malayalis' are so much better that way." The wedding rituals were also conducted mostly 'Bihari' style as according to Kaajal: "It did not matter to Achintya, either which way. He's' pretty cool about these things. He thinks its all girly stuff. And the wedding should happen the way the girl wants it to." Again here it was within the confluence of structure that Kaajal demonstrated agency. Ethnic variance between 'Biharis' and 'Malayalis' regarding wedding expenses gave her choices to operate upon, as did the co existence of traditional and modern gender norms, the latter shunning inequitable wedding expenses for the woman.

Like Rupa, Kajaal is less assertive than either Geeta or Deepika and reasonably, though not excessively successful, in subverting gender hierarchy in her negotiations with her husband. Multiple gender norms and variance in ethnic rules regarding wedding expenses helped her to decide in her favor in the mediations for wedding expenses and rituals. She is not too successful in garnering household work from her husband or curbing his wasteful personal expenditures though she was active in decisions of joint financial investments. She put a backseat to her own dietary preferences and mostly absorbed and transmitted to her daughter her husband's ethnic culture. It is important to take heed of the several times Achintya and Kaajal express their mediations in terms of personal character traits. Kaajal uses traits such as 'flexible', 'creative', 'not too rigid', 'flexible', 'not the controlling type', 'hate to be a nag', 'considerate' in many aspects of her reasoning of the choices she made. Achintya describes Kaajal as 'thoughtful' while explaining why Kaajal learnt Malayalam and Kajal describes Achintya as 'cool' in explaining why he did not take objection to the wedding rituals being conducted Bihari style. Contrast the traits to the ones Geeta and Deepika use for themselves such as 'confident', 'ambitious', 'dominating type'. Geeta and Deepika's more forceful personal traits work

themselves into making more choices to their own benefit within the gambit of structures while Kaajal's and Rupa's more temperate traits give them a less modest success in subverting the gender hierarchy at play in their marriage. All these women are working within structural rules and resources at their disposal with personal traits enabling some to be better negotiators.

Idika and Bharat's case was discussed in the previous chapter so I will mention them in passing. Idika too falls in the middle of the continuum in her assertion of agency in the negotiation for household resources. Like most of the couples in my study, Idika was able to negotiate to bring down wedding expenses for her family, operating within varying and ambiguous structures, given that she was marrying a Malayali among whom wedding expenses for a middle class bride and her family are spare compared to Punjabi standards. In financial matters, Idika takes no interest. Bharat decides how much to save every month and they stick with it. He makes an occasional investment in the stock market when he thinks there is a good opportunity to make money. According to Idika: "He is more responsible and more serious about these things. So I leave it to him."About personal expenses, Idika says: "We both don't spend much. With all the eating out we are actually left with very little end of every month. Our salaries are not that high. We've just started out. But whatever little we save is because Bharat says it's important.  He is really a mature guy."

Idika and Bharat are even in personal expenses. Both of them are employed outside the house and earn more or less the same salaries. Unlike most young stay at home mothers who lower their personal expenses as compared to their husbands; Idika did not feel this structural constraint. They both make equal decisions regarding what to purchase for the house, however financial decisions regarding savings and investments are left to Bharat. This is attributed to him being more 'responsible' and 'mature'. Use of personal character traits is very common in my

study when talking about financial matters. The last couple in this sample, Falguni and Anirban, also attributes personal character traits to their decision-making in the financial sphere. Falguni says: "I let him make all the financial decisions. I am not money minded at all. He (Anirban) is. He can think about money whole day and can sit in front of the lap top whole day reading about bull or bear market. It's very irritating actually." Anirban uses almost the same lingo when speaking about their personal expenditure pattern. He says: "Falguni is not materialistic. I like to buy a good watch or an expensive shirt but all this does not excite her. She is more simple."

Falguni is twenty nine and Anirban is thirty four. Falguni is a flight attendant in a local airline and met Anirban at a flight that he was taking for work. Anirban is a senior marketing executive for a company selling televisions. They have been married five years. Anirban is a Bengali 'Boddi' and Falguni a Punjabi 'Khatri' (see chart). They got married with entirely Bengali style rituals because her parents felt that was how she could win the good will of her parent's in law as she was going to stay with them anyway. Their first year of marriage was spent in Anirban's parents' home. Falguni says: "I would have liked to wear a 'Lehenga' (Punjabi bridal dress) instead of a 'Saree' (Bengali bridal dress)...but I didn't create a fuss. Maybe my parents were right. They all appreciated how much we tried to everything correctly in then Bengali way. He (Anirban) also really appreciated how I was trying hard to fit in."Anirban says of the wedding being Bengali style: "She is really accommodating. She took real pains. Even sat on a 'pidi' (stool in which a Bengali bride is carried around the fire during the wedding ceremony) for the 'pheres' (rotation around a sacred fire as part of wedding ceremony). I don't think I could have done so much as she did." However gift giving from the bride's family was on a smaller scale because of variance in ethnic traditions regarding gift giving working in confluence with modern gender norms, which frowns on inequitable gift flow. In fact, Falguni

says: “We were shocked.  Anirban’s family actually gave all my aunts and uncles ‘Sarees’ and ‘Kurtas’ (traditional Indian garments). That (gift to the bride's family from the groom's family) just not happens with us. We wanted to give Rs. 71,000 as ‘shagun’ money but Anirban is such a decent person. He just did not want it. So we were also fine. They did not expect much so I told my parents its better to bring it (gift giving expenses) all down.”

After marriage Anirban and Falguni stayed with Anirban’s parents in their house for a year. That is why Falguni says she speaks Bengali fluently. She says: “They used to speak with me only in Bengali. So I just had to learn.” Currently they speak with each other in a good mix of Bengali and English. She says: “Anirban likes to continue talking in Bengali. That way he says I will keep the habit so that I can talk to his parents too. I want to talk more in English but he pushes towards Bengali. So it’s alright with me since I know the language, what’s the harm.” She follows here the more traditional gender norm of acquiring the husband’s language post marriage.

They moved out of Anirban’s parent's house because the diet was not suiting her at all. She says: “It was very very difficult for me. The constant smell of fish. Some days I thought I would die if I stay in that house one more day. I just could not eat fish but everyone around was eating so the smell was there. I can eat other Bengali vegetarian preparations but not fish. I told him (Anirban) we just have to rent our own apartment. He also understood. He is very sensitive that way.” Falguni was brought up as a vegetarian ‘Khatri’ and she wanted to maintain that. She however does cook chicken and goat meat for Anirban on weekends though she does not eat it herself.  Anirban says: “That's really generous of her. She does not eat meat you know. And cooking just for me.” Falguni wanted to maintain her own caste diet and still existing traditional caste norms allowed her to exercise that choice. Anirban’s ‘sensitive’ nature also made way into

negotiation, as according to Falguni he understood her inability to tolerate the smell of fish. However, imbibing the traditional gender norm of blending into her husband's culture post marriage, she learns his language and cooks non-vegetarian meals for him.

Falguni has a hectic flying schedule as a flight attendant and has very little energy left for housework. She is unable to employ a cook because she is out of the house by five every morning and sometimes she does night or evening shifts too. So there is no fixed schedule for her. Anirban also leaves home at 7.30 in the morning, as he has to drive through heavy traffic to commute to work. That leaves no time for a cook to come in that early. Anirban is back from work by 8.00 p.m., however paid cooks do not agree to work that late in the evening. She cooks every Saturday morning, which is her day off. And because of the uncertainty of her hours they do not have a daily part time help that most middle class households have. She gets a cleaning lady to come in every Saturday morning. However the kitchen sink lays ridden with dirty utensils for most of the week. She says: "Anirban has no inclination to wash the utensils. I sometimes do it.. maybe once a week in between before Saturday.. It would help if Anirban steps in one more day to do the dishes but its one thing he just won't do. He is stubborn. Household work and Anirban are like north pole and south pole." Again here traditional gender norms of women picking up most of the housework operates in their negotiation here, however, Falguni herself is not pushy as say, Deepika, when it comes to demanding a share of housework from him.

Falguni also falls in the middle of the spectrum when it comes to negotiating power with her husband. She did bring the wedding expenses down and got her husband to shift out of his parents' house and kept her vegetarian caste diet intact operating within the gambit of multiple and ambiguous gender caste and ethnic norms. However with housework, wedding rituals and

language she wasn't quite as assertive. Again note that they bring personal traits into their discussions. Some of them used for Falguni are 'not money minded', 'not materialistic'; 'accommodating', 'generous' and some used for Anirban are 'sensitive' and 'stubborn'.

It is important to factor in these individual character traits within the spectrum of intra-household bargaining because it has the power to guide choice in one direction or the other when wives and husbands are making choices over diet, spoken language, wedding expenses, financial matters, or even division of labor. As I have described, the men and women in my study often use traits such as 'miserly' to explain why a spouse spends less or 'non-materialistic' when a spouse does not take interest in financial decision-making. Or traits like 'laid back' or 'likes to take it easy', 'likes fun' to explain why a wife does not join workforce, or why a spouse does not do sufficient housework around the house.

My sample has women and men of varying personal traits. If you place them in a continuum, women who were more forceful with their negotiations often used words such as 'confident', 'ambitious', 'dominating', 'head strong', 'independent' to describe themselves, in their reasoning how they get their way around their husbands to get many aspects of their marital live work in their favor. These are Geeta, Deepika and Amrita. They describe their spouses as being 'not an MCP (male chauvinist pig)' or 'non confrontational' or 'respectful to women'. At the other end of the spectrum is Mamta, who indicated a people-pleasing trait and says 'she does not like to bother people', and her husband complains of her complete lack of any aggression. She has been able to negotiate very little in her favor in her marriage and she shows her remorse by saying: "I have given a lot...sometime I think all what am I left with?" In the middle of the spectrum are women like Falguni, Idika, Kaajal and Rupa who are not excessively successful in their negotiation, but nevertheless have had sufficient favorable outcomes to suit them. They and

their spouses describe their character traits as ‘gentle’, ‘amiable’, ‘accommodating’, ‘generous’, ‘fun loving’ and ‘not too pushy’. Their husbands are described as ‘understanding’, ‘sensitive’ and ‘stubborn’. Clearly personal character traits influences behavior and qualified Deepika to demand evenness in wedding expenses, division of labor, financial decision making and choice of diet and language. Mamta’s entire absence of assertiveness disenfranchises her to her detriment in her dynamics with her husband. It is important to understand the consequence that these traits have in the exercise of agency in these women, as nudging them in particular directions, within the range of rules and norms governing multiple structures. It may be argued that character traits are themselves an outcome of structure, as suggested and debated in the beginning of the chapter. But it is not within the scope of this study to engage in debate on how and where individual character traits emerged in my participants but to suggest that it be taken into consideration on any explanation of intra-house hold bargaining especially within the context of them facilitating choice within the boundaries of structure. So to revert to the question posed at the beginning of the chapter: Does gender hierarchy turn intra household bargaining in favor of the husband when the spouses are hierarchized by gender but are equal in class, and non hierarchized but differentiated by ethnicity and caste? If not, what is subverting gender hierarchy? Yes, structural hierarchies of gender are overturned in negotiations, and the husband does not necessarily have the upper hand in all aspects of bargaining by virtue of gender advantage. That is because the gender structure itself is nebulous with conflicting rules and norms operating in different aspects of social life. Therefore, for example, traditional gender norms that warrant an unequal unidirectional flow of gifts from bride’s family to the groom during the wedding putting extreme pressure on the bride and her family coexists with the modern gender norms that chastise this dictum. In addition there are varying ethnic norms

regarding gift exchange with some cultures insisting on unidirectional and abundant gift flow from bride's party to groom and while others enjoining a mutual and modest flow of gifts between the two parties. In the confluence of these structures a woman can make a choice to upturn gender hierarchy and choose the more modern and equitable gender and ethnic norms or even chose not too. Similarly with dietary choices, traditional gender norms require a woman to be selfless and imbibe the preferences of her husband, which co-exists with modern norms that approve of women maintaining their particularity. Caste mandates regarding meat eating coexist with ones, which are slack about dietary injunctions. In the intersections of conflicting gender and caste norms, a woman in intermarriage can chose again to destabilize gender hierarchies or in the contrary maintain them. Variances in ethnic and caste norms themselves allow space within which negotiations between the spouses take place and I demonstrate how agency is displayed in the confluence of multiple and often ambiguous structures. My data explores one of the possible reasons that can account for varying degrees of success in negotiation and suggests that woman's character traits often steers choice within the compass of these structures, in the exercise of what my last chapter referred to as 'circumscribed agency'. I have delineated a continuum that emerged out of my data, with one-end women having more forceful character traits able to displace gender hierarchies in several aspects of intra household bargaining and the extreme end of those lacking any assertiveness who maintain the traditional gender hierarchies. Most fall in between the two extremes making reasonable if not excessive attempts, in the confluence of multiple structures at subverting gender in some aspects of their married lives. As demonstrated, all the women in the study negotiate with their spouses within the structural rules and resources at their reach, with individual character traits helping steer choices one way or the other.

# CHAPTER 5

## SUBVERTING GENDER: BARGAINING AT MULTIPLE POINTS OF HIERARCHY

To recapitulate, my study has sixteen couples in intermarriage, eight of which has only gender as a point of hierarchy, but are differentiated but non-hierarchized by caste and ethnicity. Their cases were discussed in the previous chapter in order to determine if this single point gender hierarchy gives the husbands' in these intermarriages a faultless advantage in the negotiating process for wedding rituals and expenses, language, diet, division of labor and financial decision making. It is drawn out that the gender hierarchy can be subverted in the confluence of often conflicting and ambiguous gender, caste and ethnic norms, with individual character traits ushering the exercise of agency in a continuum, that range from appreciable success to upturn gender hierarchy to very little success within the gambit of these multiple structures. The other eight couples in my study are hierarchized at multiple structural points, that is, apart from gender; they are also in a hierarchical relationship with reference to either caste, or class or ethnicity. There is a minimum of two points of hierarchy in their marriages. The goal of this chapter is to ascertain the role that hierarchies of class, caste and ethnicity influence the negotiation process in intermarriage. In adherence to the paradigm of intersectionality we find that these multiple hierarchies intertwine, emerge and submerge at different aspects of the bargaining process, and for each couple in their individual situational context. But the data also reveals, that certain couples can identify one particular point of hierarchy which influences their negotiations significantly more than other points of hierarchy, in their relationship. This runs

counter to what intersectional theory has been trying to shrug off as the 'additive' model" where discriminations based on hierarchies can be ranked. Thus Bowleg (2008), Collins (1991), Cudarez and Uttal (1999) and Weber and Parra-Medina (2003) reproach research, which suggests that people can identify the primary source of their oppression. My data suggests that, though the hierarchical structures of gender, class, caste and ethnicity have differential impact and salience in different aspects of the bargaining process in the lives of each individual couple, emerging and submerging at different points, some of the couples do identify very clearly with one particular structure of domination, that has a notably larger consequence in intra household bargaining in their experience. They can clearly identify a primary source of disadvantage. The table below lays out the multiple points and hierarchy and difference of the eight couples whose experiences are shared in this chapter.

Table 5.1: Social Location of the Respondents at Multiple Points of Hierarchy

| Name | Gender | Class | Caste | Ethnicity |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sameera<br>Eshaan | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Upper<br>Middle | Banya (Forward Caste)<br>Brahmin (Highest Caste) | Rajasthani<br>Tamilian |
| Meeta<br>Pankaj | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Upper Middle<br>Lower Middle | Boddi (Forward Caste)<br>Rajput (Forward Caste) | Bengali<br>Rajasthani |
| Esha<br>Arijit | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Middle | Khatri (Forward Caste)<br>Mandal (Scheduled Caste /Former Untouchables) | Punjabi<br>Bengali |
| Chanchal<br>Uday | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Middle | Khatri (Forward Caste)<br>Ahom ( Backward Caste) | Punjabi<br>Assamese (One of India's neglected North-Eastern ethinic groups) |
| Savita<br>Amar | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Upper | Brahmin (Highest Caste)<br>Khatri (Forward Caste) | Tamilian<br>Punjabi |
| Asha<br>Anand | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Lower Middle<br>Middle | Rajput (Forward Caste)<br>Brahmin (Highest Caste) | Marathi<br>Garwali |
| Daksha<br>Pankaj | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Upper Middle | Brahmin (Highest Caste)<br>Nair (Forward Caste) | Garwali<br>Malayali |
| Shalini<br>Pandu | Female (Wife)<br>Man (Husband) | Middle<br>Upper Middle | Boddhi (Forward Caste)<br>Brahmin (Highest Caste) | Bengali<br>Marathi |

Sameera belongs to a wealthy business family from 'Marwar', Rajasthan in North India. She belongs to the 'Baniya' caste. Sameera married Eshaan who hails from a modest middle class background. Eshaan belongs to the 'Brahmin' caste, recognized as the ritually highest caste in India. He is ethnically a 'Tamilian', an ethnic group from South India. There are three points

of hierarchy in their relationship, gender, class and caste. They met at the work place and married within two and a half years of dating. Sameera is twenty seven and Eshaan is twenty eight years old and they have been married two years now, and they do not have children. Sameera says it was hard to convince her parents that she would be happy with Eshaan. They had vehemently opposed the marriage because of their class divide. She says: "My father was furious. He thought that being brought up in the lap of luxury and I was throwing it all out. He had 'rishtas' (arranged marriage proposals) for me from some of the riches business families in Marwar. He could not understand why I had made this choice. But I made it clear to him that I will either marry (Eshaan) or nobody. And he knew how headstrong I am. So he had to relent."

Eshaan's parents had also tried to dissuade him because they had apprehensions about how a woman from a rich family could possibly adjust to a mediocre lifestyle. Says Eshaan: "See, It's not as if I did not know all this. 'Bade baap ke beti' (rich man's daughter) and all. Of course, it will be a step down for her. Living in a two room rented apartment ..but we (Eshaan and Sameera) had discussed all this before deciding. I had made it very clear to her in the beginning. It's not going to be all roses and stars. But we just thought you know we could work it out." Eshaan and Sameera had met at work, as trainees for a multinational company in Delhi after having completed their business management degrees. There was instant attraction they said and spent every minute they could together. The very first issues they had were planning the wedding. Eshaan had wanted a small temple wedding with sixty odd guests. Sameera said that she did not mind having a small wedding herself but she had to think about her parents as well. She says:

"Anyway, I was not marrying a guy of their (parent's) choice. If they want to give me a big wedding, let me give them this happiness at least. I reasoned with Eshaan. I knew he would

not like the thought of an over the top wedding. But you know sometimes you just have to go with the flow. You know to my parents a wedding is a matter of family pride. All my parent's friends would attend. They can't have a small wedding for their daughter. It's unthinkable. It was a difficult situation for me. I mean, I had met Eshaan's parents. They are simple people. They would feel out of place with all the show. I did not want to embarrass him or his parents. But we just could not meet midway here."

The same happened during gift exchange. Says Sameera:

"See, it's too much of all this for us. Girls are packed away with all the parents can give, literally like camels carrying all food, gifts, clothes and all that. My mother would check on me and ask me, should I give this or that. And I was like, please don't overdo it. It would hurt their sentiments. They would think that they don't have all this that's why you are giving me so much. They will feel affronted and insulted. It was very stressful for me because I was scared of insulting Eshaan and his parents. I know my parents did not want to insult anyone but you know it's so much a part of big business families where it is a matter of prestige how much you give to the girl. I understand all that but it could have been perceived as an insult by Ishaan. So I told her not to buy a very expensive 'Saree' for his mother. You know otherwise in our families the mother in-law is easily given a 'Saree' of 50,000 Rs. But I told her to stick to a budget of 10,000. Gifts to Ishaan were also moderate; you know fewer suit pieces and all that. I am not heartless. I had to think of their pride too."

Traditional gender norms require the bride's family to host the wedding and give gifts to the groom and his family. But what seems to dominate Sameera's narrative here is her acute awareness of her class status. Eshaan had wanted a small wedding. Her class warranted a big wedding. And a big wedding it was. Her class position warranted ostentatious gifts. But she told

her mother to bring down the amount they spend on gifts in an effort to bridge the otherwise apparent class gap between them.

Wedding rituals were conducted in the style of Sameera's ethnicity. Says Eshaan: "The wedding just slipped out of my hand. I just let them do whatever they wanted. I could not care less what rituals were followed. Though they did ask me whether we wanted any Tamil rituals, but I was not interested. Frankly I just wanted it all to get over really soon."

Class seems to significantly permeate most of the decisions made between Eshaan and Sameera. They moved into a rented apartment close to both their places of work after marriage. She is less 'heartless' when it came to negotiation for household division of labor. Note than in the negotiation for wedding gifts she says she is not a heartless person and had restrained gift flow so as to not wound Eshaan's pride.

Sameera, is less sensitive when it came to negotiation for household division of labor. Sameera and Eshaan are currently working for two different multinational companies. They both earn enough together to employ a part time daily cleaning maid who mops the floor, cleans the dishes and does their laundry. They also have a cook coming in for forty minutes in the mornings. She cooks their dinner and refrigerates it so that their evening meal is ready when they come home from work. They buy lunch at work. However Eshaan cleans their everyday mess that accumulates through the week, the clothes, books, bills and towels strewn around. He also does the groceries. Sameera is scared of driving. She always had an employed driver in her natal home. She wants to employ one now too but Eshaan thinks it is a useless expenditure. He drives her to and from work every day. I watch Sameera sprawled on bed after work while Eshaan does the picking up every second day. He also runs the errands for home while Sameera continues with her reading or watching television. Says Eshaan: "I don't see it as a chore or anything. I

grew up like that, you know without batting an eyelid washing your own car and things for the house. I don't think it's primarily her job just because she is a woman. I know she is not used to doing all this stuff. Always had servants running all around her. It's an adjustment for her to do all this. I don't mind really." Sameera says: "I just am too lazy. I know I should be doing more of the housework. But I just can't get myself to do it. Maybe if I had acquired these habits from childhood I would have. Eshaan is really good about keeping the house. Thank God. And he is really weird about doing everything himself. He really believes everyone should do everything himself and not order other people around."

Given that Sameera belongs to a wealthy background she had resources at her disposal to get all of her housework and picking up done by servants at her natal home, and she brings those class norms with her after marriage. She needs to be driven around and someone picking up after her. Eshaan is cognizant of these class habits and it subverts the traditional gender norm of women doing majority of the housework. Sameera attributes her lack in contribution to housework due to being 'lazy', but in the same breath she says: "if I had acquired these habits from childhood" implicitly referring that she was unaccustomed to housework due to her class.

Class again draws up predominantly in negotiation when it comes to financial decision making. Both Eshaan and Sameera draw nearly equal salaries at work. However Sameera's parents supplement Sameera's financial reserve by signing checks and giving her cash, every festival around the year. Sameera says:

"See, I am more cash rich. My parents keep giving me money through the year, for 'Diwali', 'Teej', 'Karwa Chauth' (Indian festivals), though I tell them not to overdo it because Eshaan has a problem. Eshaan, you know, won't touch the money. Too much ego. I just then spend the money for us both without telling him. Like I bought this 'LCD TV' for the bedroom

from the money that my parents gave me last Diwali. I did not tell him, just went ahead and placed the order. If I consulted with him he would have definitely whined. Even holidays I just book without telling him. I don't consult him for any huge purchases because I know he will have a problem and will ask where the money is coming from."

Sameera's class provides her the resources to make these decisions, as she was more 'cash rich' than her husband. Eshaan says:

"I wish she would stop taking money from her parents. She's not a child anymore. It really bothers me. But I don't want to make an issue out of it either. I told her the first year of marriage but the money did not stop coming from her parents. I don't want this to create a rift. She has stopped telling me about the money she gets. I am not stupid. I can figure out. Where does all the fancy stuff come from? But I am mature... don't want to spoil our relationship just because she has rich parents."

Eshaan is a 'Brahmin', which is a recognized all over India as a ritually superior to all other castes. However Sameera being from the 'Baniya' caste does not give Eshaan an edge on their negotiations. Says Sameera: "We are both vegetarians, so don't know how it matters if he is 'Brahmin' and I am 'Baniya'. I don't think any of us made a fuss about caste even during the wedding. Everything was vegetarian even at the wedding." On the issue of caste Eshaan says: "No, we don't think about caste. Come on, we are educated people here." Caste does not come up voluntarily in the interviews until probed. On probing, caste hierarchy was dismissed as a matter of little concern. Caste hierarchies do not reveal itself during my weeks stay with them. It does not manifest in any conversation, nor does it impact negotiation over diet where it has the tendency to become most palpable.

While the hierarchies of caste do not influence negotiation, hierarchies of class seeps into

various facets of their married life, working in favor of Sameera in subverting traditional gender norms for instance, with regard to household chores and financial decision making. Both Eshaan and Sameera, are keenly mindful of the role class difference has played in decision around their wedding rituals, gift giving and expenses and it is the most important structural hierarchy in their relationship.

Class also works in favor of Meeta in her marriage with Pankaj. Meeta and Pankaj's case was taken up in the Chapter 2, to demonstrate transformable agency and I will not rerun their story in much detail here. Meeta to recall is from the Bengali ethnicity, 'Boddi' (forward caste) and an upper middle class background. Pankaj is ethnically a 'Rajasthani', belonging to the 'Rajput' (forward caste) and lower middle class background. There are two points of hierarchy here, gender and class. As Pankaj mentions in his interview, "See everything is more or less her way. I adjust more than she does. I don't give her the opportunity to adjust. But you know she has accepted me. I am loud and rough because of my background and she is refined. But she is okay with it." This cognizance of his class background seems to spill over to a lot of his decisions. He makes the above remark when I ask him why he followed his wife's ethnic diet. Interestingly the most common answer of men who follow their wife's ethnic or caste diet is "well she cooks", "she takes care of the kitchen", attributing gender norms of women as meal planners as the locus of decision making regarding dietary habits. But Pankaj, in response to my question says he adjusts in all counts, making in the same response, a reference to his rough and loud background. As described in Chapter 2, between Pankaj and Meera, language, diet, residential pattern and financial decisions are tipped in favor of Meera while they strike a good balance in dividing household chores. And in a casual conversation with Meera about Pankaj's accommodating nature Meera says after some thought: "Pankaj has been subdued. He has never

tried to be aggressive. He respects my parents.  He knows that they are kind of... I think the decision for him to marry me was to move forward in life." Both are perceptive of the class difference between them, and use it in the explanation of much of their married life. Discernibly, in both the cases, Sameer and Eshaan as well as Meet and Pankaj, the structural hierarchy of class is the primary source of disadvantage in negotiation for the husbands.

There is yet another instance where one particular structural hierarchy governs all aspects of their married life over other structural hierarchies. This is the case of Esha and Arijit, both thirty five years old when I make their acquaintance. They have been married eight years now. Esha is a middle class Punjabi 'Khatri' woman and Arijit, a middle class, Bengali Scheduled (former untouchable) caste man (see chart). The caste distance between the two was an unmistakable thorn in the eyes of Esha's parents when she announced her decision to marry. Arijit works as a curator at a museum and Esha met him at the museum, which she used to visit for purposes of her Ph.D. research. Issues of caste are delicate to discuss, as modern urban Indians are ideally supposed to eschew caste hierarchies as the constitution also bans all discrimination on the basis of caste. Says Esha:

"My parents are not broad minded. It was a big thing for them that Arijit was a 'SC' (scheduled caste). I don't care. Caste is terrible. But I had to convince my parents. They are of an older generation. I could not tell Arijit that my parents were opposing the marriage because he is 'SC'. I made up something. I told him, my parents just don't want me to get into a love marriage. I felt so bad that that being 'SC' was a problem. I felt bad for Arijit."

But Arijit wizened up to this opposition to him soon enough. He says:

"I was meeting Esha's family for the first time. We met in a restaurant. Her 'mama' (maternal uncle) was there too. He asked me where I studied and in was asking me about my

board exam results etc. I knew what he was getting too. That I was a 'quota' student (affirmative action for scheduled and other backward castes in the form of a fixed quota for students in educational institutions in India). I know most people think that even now. But I was meeting them for the first time and I was their potential 'damad' (son-in-law). Can you show some respect? It wasn't Esha's fault. She was getting uncomfortable. I wanted to protect her. I knew she would have to face more of this after she married me. I just was as polite as possible. But I knew they were not happy at the thought of a 'SC' husband for Esha."

Esha's parents came around to the idea of their daughter's marriage to Arijit when she threatened to elope. They met with Arijit's parents in his house to discuss the wedding plans, that is, what manner the wedding rituals were to take place. Says Esha: "My mom and dad were acting terribly high handed. They had a problem with everything my in-laws were suggesting. I was so embarrassed. I was burning. So I intervened and said I wanted to be a Bengali bride and want everything organized the Bengali way. It was deliberate effort on my part to make up for such rudeness of my parents. I love my parents but its uneasy feeling to have parents who believe in caste. My son is an 'SC'. Do they see him as an 'SC' or as my son?"

Esha wore a traditional Bengali 'Saree' for the wedding, wore a 'topor' (Bengali wedding head gear), put 'alta' (red paint that Bengalis decorate their hands and feet with), and 'chandan' (sandalwood) on the edges of her face as Bengali brides do. She preferred her own Punjabi bridal attire but she reiterated: "I did not want them to think that I feel I am superior. I just wanted to normalize everything."

Gift exchange was minimal. Esha says: "My parents hardly spent anything. They were so unhappy with my choice. They would not have had a problem with any other caste but 'SC' was just not in their..." Note that she frames all her discussions around wedding rituals and expense

within the framework of caste. She wanted the rituals to be the Bengali way, to assuage the caste-ism of her parents. Little was spent on gift exchange because Arijit was a scheduled caste. Esha's need to ease the caste tensions around the wedding seems to spill on to her life post marriage to Arijit. Her mortification at her parents' behavior makes her bend backwards to accommodate to the needs of Arijit. She made necessary dietary changes immediately after marriage. She says: "Ya, 'Khatri' women do not eat fish and meat. But I started off. I like to eat fish. There is some non-veg dish cooked every day in our house. I cook it myself". She continues: "Yes, Aarav, (their son) also eats non-veg. It can't be any other way. Both Arijit and Aarav feel their meals are incomplete at lease without one piece of fish or chicken." When I ask her why she adapted to a non-vegetarian diet she says: "It's very delicate. If I would have not, he would have thought because I am a 'Khatri'. I don't ever want him to feel that way ever. I can never get over with what my parents made him go through. And he is such a decent guy. He was never disrespectful to them."

She learnt the Bengali language soon after the marriage. She speaks fluent Bengali with her son. Bengali is the medium of communication at home. When I ask Arijit, how Bengali came to be the spoken language at home, he says: "Because of Esha's enthusiasm. I don't think now you can distinguish her from a Bengali. She speaks the language, not only eats but cooks 'mach er jhol' (fish curry) just like a Bengali. She did not grow up eating non-veg. Now she also has to eat it every day. I don't know. It's just her. She's a very selfless person. She likes to see me happy first."

Arijit attributes the language and dietary changes made by Esha to her 'selfless' nature and enthusiasm. He never makes reference to caste in any of our conversations apart from when we initially talked about the wedding. Esha lets Arijit make the lead decisions for most aspects

of their married life. She takes no interest in financial investments. Arijit sets the budget and appropriate time for any major purchase. She says:

"I guess it just became a habit to let him make all the decisions. You know I started off my married life like that, and it just became that way for everything. But I don't regret. He has my interest in mind for everything. He spends more on me and Aarav than on himself. He watches my back. I could not have a better husband. My parents still find it hard to tell my 'biraadri' (extended family) about his caste. When will they realize that 'Khatris' or 'Banyas' or 'Brahmins' don't make a person good. It's all about what's inside the person."

Esha weaves caste predominantly into most of her conversations. Arijit being Scheduled Caste does not matter to her personally, but it nevertheless constitutes the central point, which drives manifold decisions in her married life with him. However, interestingly in this case, it becomes a potent source of advantage for Arijit in his marital life without active negotiation on his part, in spite of being placed hierarchically below her in the caste order.

In this sample, hierarchies of caste is instrumental in intra household bargaining only when the social distance between the caste is very large, as in the above case, a scheduled caste and a forward caste, though curiously swaying the outcomes in favor of the disadvantaged caste. In cases where the social distance between the castes is not large as for instance between Brahmins and other forward castes, caste hierarchy does not make a dominating impact on negotiation. There are six other cases in this sample where the hierarchies were between Brahmin and other forward castes. We examined the case of Sameera and Eshaan in the beginning of the chapter where class hierarchy is instrumental in subverting hierarchies of gender, but the hierarchy of caste between them is not a point of contention in their negotiations. As soon as the social distance between the castes widens, it begins to aspect negotiation more

apparently.

There is one more couple where the social distance between their castes is wide. This was Chanchal and Uday. They are hierarchized at three points, gender, caste and ethnicity. Uday is an Assamese 'Ahom' and Chanchal is Punjabi 'Khatri' (see table). People of Assam belong to the ethnicities of North East India, which have been politically, economically and socially marginalized historically and are still catching up with the rest of India. Uday is Assamese 'Ahom', 'Ahom' being one of the backward castes of the state of Assam. Uday is hierarchically placed below Chanchal in ethnicity and caste with simultaneous gender leverage. Unlike in the first three cases, where one hierarchical structure dominated the bargaining discourse, here gender, caste and ethnic hierarchies rise and fall comparably in different aspects of the bargaining process. Uday is keenly aware of the sharp ethnic and caste divide between him and Chanchal and is also attentive to them in her negotiations. Says Chanchal: "He gets very defensive about his Assamese culture. They have been sidelined for so long and he takes it personally. So he tries to make sure there is equal respect for both cultures in our marriage. Sometimes I think he overdoes it and I get irritated. But we just battle it out. He made me wear white on the wedding. Can you believe it?"

Punjabi Hindu widows wear white and it is regarded an inauspicious color to wear to any wedding. Assamese brides get married in white, in their traditional wedding attire called 'Sutlong'. Chanchal at first refused to even entertain the idea. But Uday was insistent. Says Chanchal:

"How can you make a bride wear white? I mean c'mon it's a color for widows and it's my wedding day. But Uday said it's all in the mind. He was goading me so much so I finally said okay. But I said first I will wear a red 'Lehenga' for my 'pheres' (ambulations around fire

during the wedding ceremony) and then I can wear the 'Sutlong' for the repeat ceremony. I am not a walk over. He can't just randomly dictate. But we did some Assamese wedding rituals as well. We did mainly a Punjabi wedding though, but it was quite enough that I wore white. So he (Uday) should not complain. My mother also wanted me to cooperate because we are the 'ladke wale' (girl's side) and did not want to create trouble."

See the hierarchies of gender and ethnicity intertwines in bargaining here. It was required of Chanchal to co-operate because she was a girl. So she wore white. But it was Punjabi rituals that were given predominance with a few token Assamese ones thrown in, with it being 'quite enough' that she wore white. The token Assamese rituals were on the insistence of Uday who wanted acknowledgment of his ethnic culture during the wedding.

They have a two year old son, Ranbir, who was born two years into their marriage. Chanchal is twenty nine and Uday thirty four. They had met at work. Currently Chanchal is a full time homemaker and pregnant with her second child. Hindi and English are the spoken languages at home. Uday tries to convince Chanchal to learn Assamese so that his son can also learn Assamese. His interaction time with his son is minimal, so he knows the role that Chanchal plays in transmitting language. Chanchal says:

"I should, because he is so touchy about the Assamese language. But let's be real. It takes so much to learn a language. I rather speak with Uday in a familiar language in the little time I get with him. How painful is it to speak in broken Assamese when you hardly interact, two hours in a day. And I know Ranbir should know his father's language too, but is it really that important? Why be parochial? He can always learn an international language. That will be more useful to him in the long run."

Uday says: "I really wish I could teach Ranbir Assamese. But Chanchal does not help.

She just refuses to even try to learn Assamese. And I don't spend too much time with him. Maybe I should sit down with him and teach him. If I neglect Assamese myself, how can I expect other people not to neglect it." It's important to note that she associates learning Assamese with being parochial but does not make the same association with the Hindi language.

Chanchal left her job after Ranbir was born because she had no help with childcare. She deeply resents sitting at home. She says:

"I feel like bursting sometimes. Home whole day. I was not used to it. I was always used to having my own money. It stifles me. But there is nothing I can do. Then there is this next one coming. Maybe, after few more years I can join back. But who will take me then. It's all hunky dory for Uday. I don't think he will be able to stay at home even one day with Ranbir. But it's not that he does not understand. I take out my frustrations on him. He doesn't react back. He is helpless too. I can see that."

Gender has not always put her at a disadvantage as she passes her own language to her son due to more time that she spends with him. The diet in the home is also completely in accordance to Chanchal's caste and ethnic affiliations given that she is the cook at home. She will not hear of having non-vegetarian food cooked at home or feeding her son meat. She says:

"The thought disgusts me. What 'paap' ! (sin). Uday does not like it when I say that. He thinks I am being arrogant about my caste. Really I wish he wasn't so oversensitive about his caste. It is what it is. I have to be straightforward. Why mince words? Ranbir will have meat over my dead body. Uday can do what he likes. He eats non-veg at restaurants. I try talking him out of eating meat, but it's too late for that now."

It is interesting how caste, ethnic and gender hierarchies rise and fall in different aspects of their married lives. Chanchal is (maybe unmindfully) dismissive of Assamese culture. She dismisses

the Assamese language, as being parochial to learn, is indignant of having to wear the traditional Assamese attire at her wedding. She is openly abrasive about Uday's caste diet even though she knows Uday is sensitive of his backward caste status. However gender hierarchies force her to quit work, making her a full time homemaker, which she intensely grudges. It cannot therefore, clearly be said here, that one particular structural hierarchy imposed over another or trumped them.

This pattern of hierarchical structures emerging and submerging comparably with neither one trumping over the other is also present in the rest of the four couples in this sample. We see, how class hypergamy on the part of men, in the first two cases described in the chapter, largely destabilizes traditional gender equations in favor of women in an intermarriage, allowing class to have the predominant impact on their negotiations. However class hypergamy on the part of the wives' does not have such an overreaching effect on the marital lives of couples. There are four cases in my sample where the husband belongs to a higher class than his wife.

Savita is thirty four years old. She has been married to Amar for the last seven years. Savita is 'Tamilian' by ethnicity, Brahmin by caste, and belongs to a middle class background. Amar is Punjabi by ethnicity, 'Khatri' (forward) by caste, and belongs to an upper middle class background. There are three points of hierarchy here, gender, caste, and class. The only time the difference in class background comes into discussion, and a negotiation was made in favor of Amar because of his class is in the aspect of gift giving:

"They are much wealthier than us. And they are Punjabis. So you know how much they wanted during the wedding. I was enraged when I heard all that they expected. To all the relatives we had to give something or the other, 'Sarees', suits, to a train of people. On top of that 'shagun'. Is marriage a commercial transaction or a sentimental one? We had a limited

budget and we could afford only to a certain extent. I did not want my father to go broke on my wedding. But my father said lets maintain their standards only. So we had to give much more than needed".

Amar says: "Savita just did not understand. You know a certain class has to be maintained during the wedding. It was not for us but for all the 'beradari' (relatives)." Savita like other women in my study believes in the modern gender ideology of disapproving of inequitable gift exchange however, his wealthier class status could not restrain an opulent gift flow. But, class hierarchy does not skew any other aspect in Amar's favor in his marriage. The wedding rituals were conducted half Punjabi and half 'Tamilian' style to the satisfaction of both parties. Caste hierarchy is also dismissed as inconsequential as it is in cases where the social distance between the castes is small. Savita says:

"I don't think we (Amar and Savita) have this thing of Brahmins being superior and all. We don't think like that. I don't think there is any harm eating non-veg. Sunil (their four year old son) eats non- veg too. I did not grow up with it so I don't feel like having it. Amar mostly buys non-veg food from outside but when he is in the mood he cooks also. I don't cook it; I mean I don't eat it so how can I cook it. But Sunil (son) has, and I don't have any problem with it." Savita dismisses the Brahmin caste injunction barring non-vegetarian food for her son because she does not believe in Brahmin superiority and, wants to adopt the more lax caste norms for her son. She retains her caste diet for herself as a matter of habit.

Amar and Savita share a rather equitable division of labor at home. Both are financial consultants to two separate firms. Savita works longer hours than Amar. But she keeps her son with her own mother while she is away at work. Amar picks him up from Savita's mother's house on his way back from work. Amar in fact, spends more time in child rearing activities

than Savita, during weekdays. He spends time reading to Sunil, feeding him dinner, and putting him to bed. Savita spends more time with her son on weekends. Unlike some other women who quit work post childbirth Savita, carried on climbing up the career ladder because she had her mother's help in childcare. And she attributes her financial independence, to her equal share in personal expenditure and financial decision-making within the household. Here gender ideologies of equality are buttressed with adequate support or resources, allowing for an easier negotiation of egalitarianism between husband and wife. Caste hierarchy finds no place in their worldview. And class advantage seems to make very little inroads in tipping the favor in favor of Amar, apart from the aspect of gift exchange during the wedding.

Similar findings are made in another case where the husband belongs to a higher class than the wife. This is the case of Anand and Asha, thirty seven and thirty five years old respectively. They have two sons aged seven and five. Anand and Asha have been married ten years now. There are three points of hierarchy in their marriage, gender, caste and class. Anand is Garwali, an ethnic group from the state of Himachal Pradesh. He is a middle class Brahmin man. Asha is ethnically a Marathi and she belongs to the 'Rajput' caste. Asha belongs to a lower middle class background. Her mother was a widow at the time of her wedding. About the gift giving negotiation Asha says: "No, they never asked. Actually my father-in-law was very open about this. He very clearly told 'Ki ladki ki father nahin hai' (the girl does not have a living father), so we will not demand anything. What all they have to do, let them do on their own wish. If they want to give anything, that's their wish. If they don't want to we will make sure whatever we have to do, we'll do it." She adds: "My mother met them and she told them she has her own, what do you say, her own points, terms and conditions. It's like I will not do this and I will not do that. 'Ki mein zyada spend nahin karungi, tum bologe ye dena hain' (I will not spend much,

you will say give this and that). I was also totally against this traditional marriage. Total waste of time and energy, plus waste of money."

Asha's mother's widowed status in-fact helped bring down the wedding expenses as the lack of a male earning member generates sympathy. So Anand's higher class status did not sway gift flow in his favor. In addition, both Asha and her mother reject traditional gender norms of the bride's side being overburdened with the expenses of gift giving. The wedding itself was conducted 'Garwali' style. Asha says: "Anand's parents insisted 'Garwali' style. See we are cosmopolitan, though we have traditional language and those food habits and language is still there. Did not matter to me how it was conducted. And sometimes the 'ladke wale' (brides's side) has to make the compromise." Anand says about the wedding being conducted 'Garwali' style: "Little bit adjustment 'ladke wale' (bride's side) have to do. It's not as if we were asking for a lavish wedding. Only desire was it to be according to 'Garwali' rituals." Observe how both Anand and Asha draw on traditional gender norms of the bride's side having to compromise to settle for the 'Garwali' style wedding.

Asha works as an office administrative assistant in a company. Her boys are sent to day care. According to her they are big enough now. When they were younger she had taken a break from work. Anand runs a very small garment factory. Asha complains of her husband not offering to do any housework. She says: "He does not touch housework. I also work hard. But no, he will not do anything. I can't make him do it. What to do, we live in this kind of society where we women have to do everything."

Anand works from nine in the morning till nine at night. Asha returns earlier at 7.00 p.m. Anand mentions this for his lack of contribution to housework. He says: "I know she wants me to do some little things. But she does not work late hours in the office. I come back from office and

have to lay the table, clear the table?" After coming back from work Asha in fact helps her boys with their schoolwork. She does not actually have that extra two hours of leisure than Anand insinuates. Again traditional gender norms govern their tussle over housework.

Though Anand is a Brahmin he eats meat like many Brahmins who favor the more modern lax caste norms. So there is no negotiation over caste based dietary injunctions as Asha also belongs to a non-vegetarian caste. The social distance between their castes is small. Their caste hierarchies do not stir negotiations in favor of Anand. Caste never comes up in conversation until specifically asked.

Class differences seeps itself in again in the discussion on finances. Both Asha and Anand make even handed decisions regarding major purchases for the household. In fact Asha also makes many more of the decisions regarding financial investments. Anand says: "She is better at them. She is shrewder than I am. So it's better that she takes care." However regarding questions of saving and personal expenses they turn discordant. Says Asha: "See I was not brought up thinking things will just come. We came from a frugal family. You have to work hard, and save more than spend, that's what my mother always taught me. Anand grew up differently. He can't keep money. The more I try to save the more he spends. Difference in background has made this trouble between us. We fight a lot but then he can't curb his spendthrift habits. I can't control him. 'Bade Baap ka beta' (rich man's son)."

Anand, also agrees that his personal expenses disturb his wife. He also implicates that the reason she is so careful about money is because she grew up with a widowed mother. However he says that her material prospects have changed but she hasn't changed with it. Class hierarchy does not play an overpowering role in the lives of Anand and Asha as it does with Sameera-Eshaan and Meeta-Pankaj. Hierarchies of gender and class step up and down in

different aspects of their intra household bargaining, without one necessarily trumping the other completely. As already indicated since the social distance between their castes is small, Anand being Brahmin does not work particularly in his favor in the negotiations with each other.

There are two more couples who are hierarchized by caste and class apart from gender. In both the cases the husbands belongs to the higher class and the social distance between the castes is small. In a similar pattern with Anand and Asha, caste hierarchy does not advantage the spouse who is from the higher caste, given the small hierarchical distance. Class makes inroads into the bargaining but not in the overwhelming manner in which it does when the wives belong to the higher class. I will discuss both their cases briefly.

Daksha is 'Garwali', Brahmin, middle class woman who married Pankaj, a Malayali, Nair, and upper middle class man. They married after having known each other for two years at work and have been married ten years now. They have a seven year old daughter, Shantala, who was born two years into their marriage. Daksha is currently thirty five and Pankaj forty one years old. Like in the case of Savita and Amar, Daksha's family in the confluence of class and gender had to incur higher expense than usual at the wedding, due to the class standing of Pankaj. Pankaj's upper middle class status boosted social expectations of a more than modest wedding that Daksha's middle class family could afford. Says Daksha: "They were expecting a farm house wedding. In our type families we hire the community center halls, but this was one time expenditure. And I understand. It the prestige of Pankaj's family also. So we did a farmhouse wedding. My parents had to take a bigger loan for my marriage. It was a big pressure."

Caste hierarchy again is too narrow to give Daksha any significant advantage in her negotiations. In fact, in the mediation over caste based diets, Daksha teases out the traditional gender norm of having to blend into her husband's culture and started a non-vegetarian diet for

herself, given the modern laxness of caste based dietary injunctions. Gender seems a little more influential in many aspects of their married lives. Daksha, imbibed the Malayali language both for herself and their daughter Shantala based on the same traditional gender norm that maneuvered her choice of diet. There is a traditional gender division of labor though there is evenness in financial matters. Pankaj never takes any financial decision before consulting Daksha first and getting the go ahead from her. Daksha in fact spends more on personal expenses attributing it to her 'womanly need to shop'.

Class works itself in curious ways in Shalini' s marital relations with Pandu. Shalini is a middle class 'Boddi' Bengali woman married to an upper middle class Marathi Brahmin man (see table). They have a five year old daughter, Sheela. According to Shalini, she feels more comfortable with Pandu making the decisions regarding purchases of house décor, or any expensive attire that she sometimes bought for herself. Shalini frankly says that he has better taste, and is more cultivated than she is, so she lets him make the decisions. Says Sheela: "I've never grown up in those circles. You know where they make anything look elegant buying the right stuff. Pandu has. So it's best for him to choose the upholstery or my 'Sarees'." Again caste hierarchy has a negligent influence in tipping negotiations in Pandu's favor. Says Sheela: "No, we never even think about caste. It's never even come up." Pandu has started eating non-vegetarian food. Says Pandu: "She does all the cooking and the smells were enticing. So I just switched. I don't believe eating non-veg is a big deal in today's day and age. And she used to coax me to try. Now I eat non-veg every day, she cooks it every day." Pandu does very little around the house. It is a traditional gendered division of labor much to her consternation because they are equal partners of the small company of handmade paper goods they run together. She would like assistance around the house and with her daughter.

Gender, class, caste and ethnic hierarchies align themselves in several different ways in different contexts of the bargaining process for each couple in my sample who were hierarchized at multiple structural points. For most of the couples there is no one particular structural hierarchy, which imposed over other structures. That is, for five of these eight couples, one could not rank gender, caste, class or ethnicity in order of importance in the bargaining process. They work themselves in different ways in different contexts, each of these couples exercising agency in their unique sets of choices within the ambit of multiple structures. Three couples however, clearly delineated one particular structural hierarchy as having an overarching effect in their married lives. Those three couples are Sameera and Eshaan, Meeta and Pankaj, and Esha and Arijit. Class overpowers all other structural hierarchies in the bargaining process for Sameera-Eshaan and for Meeta-Pankaj subverting gender hierarchies between them, while caste hierarchy overwhelmingly underlie all the decisions for Esha in her negotiations with Arijit. We however see how interestingly in their case, being Scheduled caste and placed below Esha in caste hierarchy does not work to any disadvantage for Arijit in their negotiations. While each couple has their own unique stories, there are certain trends that can be teased out. Class hierarchy becomes of overarching importance in negotiations in the practice of class hypogamy by women, that is, when women married into a class below her social standing and her advantaged position in class negates gender disadvantage in her relationship with her husband. This did not hold true in the practice of class hypergamy by women, that is, when they marry into a class above their social standing. Class does have certain implications even in these cases as we witness in their stories but not enough to have overriding reach on their negotiations. Caste hierarchies are not a source of structural disadvantage in marriage when the social distance between the castes is minimal as between Brahmins and other forward castes and were even dismissed as being

unimportant to their relationships. When the caste hierarchy widens as between a forward caste and scheduled caste like between Arijit and Esha, or between forward caste and backward caste as between Chanchal and Uday, the schisms are consciously acknowledged and used albeit in rather different ways. We see how Esha tries to ease the caste tensions by compromising on most aspects of bargaining in their marriage, while Chanchal is abrasive about her caste superiority. This brings me to the concluding point about again the role of individual character traits within the bargaining process, leading to differential outcomes in negotiation. It is not uncommon even in the case studies in this sample to use traits like 'not heartless', 'lazy', 'selfless", 'shrewd' to mention a few, as explanations for the choices they made. Esha's empathetic nature comes out in her mortification at Arijit's insult at the hands of her parents during the wedding and it has a role in all her subsequent choices. Arijit uses the term 'selfless' for Esha to explain all the choices she had made. Compare that to Chanchal's rather brusque temperament and her characterization of herself as "not a pushover" as an explanation for her unwillingness to adopt aspects of her husband's ethnic culture. As explained in detail in Chapter 4 and briefly reiterated here, these character traits are impossible to dismiss in a holistic understanding of intra household bargaining in their capacity to steer choices in one direction or the other.

# CHAPTER 6

## DISCERNING THE BROAD TRENDS IN NEGOTIATION

It was demonstrated in the previous three chapters how gender, caste, class and ethnicity intersect in unique ways in the lives of each couple, while their individual character traits route their decisions within the ambits of these multiple and often ambiguous structures. There are some trends that can be identified out of the decisions that they made in negotiating for wedding expenses and rituals, division of labor within the household, financial decision-making, diet and language and mode of residence. I will describe these trends in this concluding chapter. I will also filter out at the start of this chapter the criteria I have used to identify agency in the negotiations for these resources. Agency as implied before is a fuzzy term encompassing wide conceptual and empirical administration. I will delineate the conditions I have used in the study to gauge the exercise of agency among the participants in my study in the negotiation for these various resources. Simply defined, the term agency has been succinctly put in several ways. Sen (1985:203) defines agency as "what a person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important." Kabeer (1999:438) defines agency as "the ability to define one's goals and act upon them." Samman and Santos (2009:3) define agency as "an actor's or group's ability to make purposeful choices." However a more nuanced discussion of what constitutes agency often follows which brings out the different layers of the term. Kabeer (1999) suggests that agency has both positive and negative connotations. She says "in the positive sense of the 'power to' it refers to people's capacity to define their own life choices and

to pursue their own goals, even in the face of opposition from others. Agency can also be exercised in the more negative sense of 'power over', in other words, the capacity of an actor or category of actor to override the agency of others" (Kabeer 1999: 438). In this study I have accounted for agency as both 'power to' and 'power over' as exercised by the spouses.

The 'power not to' also constitutes agency in instances if either spouse is not making decisions in a particular domain but could if they wanted to. Thus a husband's choice not to make financial investment decisions for the household is also accounted for as an exercise of agency. The 'choice not to' take decisions as an indicator of agency is gathered from Samman and Santos (2009) review of the indicators of agency. However choosing 'not to choose' is not taken as an indicator of agency if it reinforces a person's subordinate position and operates through compulsion. Thus if a woman chooses not to eat or denies herself any other household resource to placate her husband's preference, but at the risk of impairing her own health and survival, it often is, as Kabeer (2009) suggests, an internalization of their secondary social status. Therefore apparently voluntary nature of choices whether one 'chooses to' accept domestic violence or "chooses not to' eat a meal are examples of behavior where the 'choice' is a result complicity to a subordinate status and reinforces it. Such instances of 'choice' will not be counted for as an indicator of agency. Kabeer (2009) for instance says that agency should not be attributed to a woman who chooses to accept dowry as it a practice, which concurrently articulates and strengthens son preference and converts daughters into financial burdens. Dowry is a value and practice within which women are demarcated as a subservient group and a plain gauge of gender bias in India. Therefore choosing to accept dowry by a woman will not be taken as an indicator of agency as it is in complicity of and reinforces their subordination.

However, this leads up to another gray area of the voluntary nature of choices: the

question of altruism in the exercise of choice. Thus Kabeer (2009) problematizes a woman prioritizing her husband's needs before her own as an action that can be interpreted as either altruism or internalization of her subordinate status. Scholars such as Fierlbeck (1995) and Jackson (1996) tilt towards interpreting such actions as the latter and Jackson (1996:497) notes that she wishes women are "a little less selfless and self-sacrificing". In this study, cases of apparent altruism such as for example a wife giving up her diet in favor of her husband has been interpreted as acceptance of subordinate status after careful reading into the circumstances that lead up to or follow such a choice. Thus if the wife says it is more appropriate to follow the husband's diet choice and she did it because it made him happy, but follows up later by saying that it often left her feeling hungry and there was nothing she could do, it is not taken as being altruistic or an indicator of her agency.

Another region of debate regarding measuring agency are the relevance of different household areas where decision-making takes place. Kabeer (2009) suggests that not all are equally persuasive as indicators of agency since there is usually a hierarchy of decision-making responsibilities which reserves certain key areas for women and others to men. Therefore decision making regarding food is more a woman's domain while market transactions in major assets a male domain. Hence, giving equal importance to women's decisions regarding food, which is pre-assigned to women anyway is less indicative of her agency than decisions regarding areas of choice which have been traditionally denied to them. While I agree with Kabeer's argument, this study has not given one area of choice more importance than another. Therefore while diet and language are traditionally female domains, the circumstances in the marriages in my study are more complicated by the fact that the spouses draw from different castes and ethnicities and the husband's ethnic language and diet may be given more importance in spite of

food and language being female domains. Consequently, the power of women to choose in areas traditionally reserved for them is as important as for example the domain of finances.

Lastly, an indicator of agency is also taken into account even in the lack of exercise of deliberate choice such as for instance in the domain of choosing residence. As patri-viri local residence is a traditional norm, a wife may stay near the husband's parents' house without much deliberation. However, the husband's power to achieve these results is taken as an indicator of agency because it is an outcome that he may have chosen to his advantage vis-à-vis his wife even if he did not make the deliberate choice. An indicator of agency as lack of deliberate choice as explained above is gathered from Samman and Santos (2009) review of concepts of agency. It is close to Kabeer's conceptualization of agency as "power over" or the ability to override another's choice, but here it is not by overt coercion but simply by virtue of tradition. The rest of this chapter will delve on the broad trends in negotiation that emerges between the spouses in my study in the five different domains chosen for the research. For each domain I put forward examples of what is counted as exercise of agency.

***WEDDING EXPENSES AND RITUALS***

There is no give and take of dowry amongst any of the couples in my sample. To recall, dowry is the demand for cash and kind by the groom and his family from the bride's family under duress and is placed as a condition for marriage. The law distinguishes between voluntary gifts made by the bride's family to the bride during marriage and transfer of wealth from bride's family to the groom and his family under pressure. The latter is punishable by dowry laws and the former, namely voluntary gifts; do not fall under the purview of dowry (see Srinivasan and Lee 2004, Shenk 2007). Every couple clearly states that there was no dowry in their wedding. During the course of the interview with the couples, the line of questioning regarding dowry

typically took the following route: 1) did dowry cross your mind during your courtship period? Did you discuss it at all? (2) During the wedding talks, was dowry brought up in discussion? The follow up questions were: (a) by whom was the dowry issue brought up? (b) can you describe the discussions around it, example, who asked for what, how a decision was reached regarding whether to give/ receive dowry and what to give? (c) what prompted you towards that decision?

Given that dowry has been outlawed by the constitution of modern India, and has taken on an immoral overtone in society some couples did not even discuss it during their courtship days because they said it did not occur to them at all or did not enter their mind space. One such couple was Deepika and Arup and to quote Deepika: "No it wasn't even discussed. There was more of a silent understanding I think, you know, I knew the kind of family that he came from that they would not get into all this (dowry)." For this particular couple here was no discussion around dowry even during the wedding talks when the family members became involved in the wedding. However, dowry was on the minds of some of the other couples much prior to their wedding such as between Pankaj and Meeta. To quote Meeta: "In our courtship days only we decided there would be no dowry. See I already told them (Pankaj's parents) before the wedding only, don't expect anything." It is interesting to note here that Meeta had to convince Pankaj's parents about refusing to give dowry. Pankaj himself agreed on the no dowry policy without much coaxing from Meeta, but was apprehensive about his parent's reaction to Meeta's and his stance regarding dowry. However Pankaj also convinced his parents. Both Pankaj and Meeta exercised agency in their rebuffing of the dowry norm. Both defined their choice and pursued their goal in opposition to more traditional norms that were embedded in society and expressed by the groom's parents. Wider family was very much involved in the negotiations surrounding

dowry in most cases, however the couples in the study were instrumental in voicing their choice and implementing them. Mostly the woman would bring up the issue with the prospective groom much prior to the wedding, during courtship days itself and then the decisions they reached were negotiated with the wider family, who would often bring it up during wedding discussions. Although between Amrita and Vipin, it was decided while they were dating that there would be no dowry, during the wedding talks with the wider family, Amrita's father had asked Vipin if he wanted dowry and if so what he wanted. Vipin answered in the negative, as that was the decision he reached with Amrita. Though it would seem that refusal to accept dowry worked against the benefit of the groom, the men in the study did not see dowry as merely an economic issue but also an issue, which marks a stamp on their character. They did not want to be associated with a "retrograde" institution, which would characterize them as backward or immoral. So the men too made a clear choice and expressed their agency by choosing not to take dowry and by doing so they gave up an economic advantage but gained an alignment with the loftier moral norms of the modern day Indian man. For the women, dowry was mainly an economic issue and they asserted their agency in choosing against dowry, which is an economic burden to their families.

Regarding wedding expenses, the typical line of questioning was the following (1) who incurred the cost of the wedding party (and other functions, ceremonies associated with the entire wedding)? (2) was there a discussion around who would pick up the costs for these functions (citing each function mentioned)? (3) can you give me a rough idea of how much was spent in (mention each function) from your side and how much from the spouses side? (4) who was involved in the discussion? (5) can you describe the discussion around them, for example how a decision was made regarding who picks up the cost for (mention function)? (6) whose decisions were given more weightage and why? (7) who spent more money in all the functions and

ceremonies around the wedding? (8) was there any gift flow between the bride and the groom's families? (7) were there any discussions around gift exchange? (8) can you describe the discussions, for example, who were present at the discussions, what items were expected to be given, by whom and to whom, how a decision was made regarding gift flow, whose decisions were given more weightage and why? (9) who spent the most money in gift giving? (10) can you give me a rough estimate of how much money was spent in gift giving from your side and how much from your spouse's side? These questions were exploratory in nature as there was a good amount of variability in the type and number of functions in each couple's wedding, as well in the nature and extent of gift exchange. So it was impossible to have fixed standard questions given this variability. To estimate whether the groom or the bride's party spent more, a tally was taken of the expenses incurred for each function that the couples mentioned as well as for the gift exchanges that occurred.

The weddings in each of the sixteen couples were hosted by the bride's family as per the traditional gender norms of every ethnic group represented by the study. Voluntary exchanges of gifts were made during the wedding where expenses for gift flow were larger from the bride's family to the groom and his family. However, most women in my sample were able to actively negotiate for lowering these expenses entailed in hosting the wedding and other functions associated with the wedding as well as in gift exchange. They asserted their agency in minimizing costs for their families, which can otherwise boomerang causing considerable stress. This is made particularly possible because modern gender ideologies, which discourage inequitable financial burden for the bride's family during weddings, intersect with the variance in ethnic norms regarding wedding expense. Some ethnicities in India, such as the Bengalis and the 'Malayalis', do not require very vast gift flows from the bride's family. Women in my sample

tease out norms that favored reduction of expenses when they are in intermarriages, which contain these variant ethnic rules regarding wedding expenses. There are however, four cases out of the sixteen where these expenses are not reduced, as described in the previous chapters. Two of them are the case of Amar-Savita and Daksha-Pankaj, where the husband belongs to the higher class than the wife and their class norms require a lavish wedding. One must note, that in not all cases where the husband belongs to a higher class, that this holds true, as in the case of Asha-Anand where expenses were brought down in spite of the higher class standing of the groom because the brides's mother was a widow. The third case, where the woman did not bring down expenses is in the case of Sameera-Eshaan, where the husband Eshaan belongs to a lower class. This is because Sameera herself wanted a lavish wedding as per her class norms in order to please her parents. The last case where the woman does not bring down the wedding expenses is the case of Rupa-Vaibhav (hierarchized only by gender). Her explanation for not doing so, to recall, is that she is peace loving and did not want the marriage to start at a discordant note. She lets the traditional gender norms dictate the heavy expenses borne by her family, even though she could have maneuvered through the variance in ethnic norms to bring down the expenses. Gender, ethnicity and class weave themselves around negotiations for wedding expenses, though predominantly most women assert themselves in this area of negotiation despite individual differences in assertiveness in other areas of negotiation. As in the discussions around dowry, the discussions around wedding expenses also included extended family, however the brides and the grooms themselves were active agents in the discussions, thereby bringing down expenses on behalf of the bride's family. Mostly the bride and the groom exchanged conversations around expenses amongst each other and then worked on getting their families to accept them. Men asserted agency in aligning with the modern norm, which discourages inequity in wedding

expenses and coming around to accepting lowered wedding costs for the bride's family. They considered it the nobler thing to do. Women were active agents in bringing down wedding expenses on their own behalf and their motivation was more economical than ideological.

The questions asked about wedding rituals were: (1) can you describe to me the wedding rituals that were followed in (mention function)? (2) does that ritual affiliate with the wife's or the husband's ethnicity? (3) were there prior discussions around what rituals would be followed? (4) who were present at the discussion? (5) can you describe to me the discussions around (mention ritual), for example, who wanted it followed, was there easy agreement or was there resistance from any one and why? (6) whose wedding rituals were given more weightage in all the ceremonies around the wedding and why? Again, these questions were exploratory in nature as there is a huge variability in the type and number of rituals followed at each wedding. A tally was done of the number of rituals from the wife's side and the number of rituals from the husband's side. This was done to ascertain for each of the couples to see which party's rituals were given more importance in the marriage.

Wedding rituals are negotiated within the ambit of ambiguous gender norms, simultaneously present. One norm requires that wedding rituals be performed according to the ethnic norms of the bride because it is her family which hosts the wedding. The second norm requires the wedding rituals to be conducted according to the rites the groom since he is traditionally considered ritually superior to the bride. This provides room for navigation and four out of the sixteen couples arrived at a consensus of dividing more or less equally the rituals of each of their ethnic communities. Class does not intervene in deciding in whose favor the rituals bend between the bride and groom, when there is a hierarchy in class between the couples. Apart from Sameera-Eshaan (where Sameera belonged to a higher class than her husband) and rituals favor

Sameera, in every other case the rituals do not necessarily favor the spouse who belongs to the higher class. The decisions sway between equalizing wedding rituals and having it either only the groom's way or the bride's way depending on which gender norm (outlined above) concerning performance of wedding rituals they choose. It is not surprising to note that most of those women who equalized wedding rituals or those who performed it according to the bride's ethnic requirements, like in the case of Amrita, Meeta, Geeta and Sameera, associate themselves with individual character traits of high assertion and boldness. Those who conducted the wedding fully in accordance to the groom's ethnic mores like in the case of Mamta, Rupa, Idika, Esha and Asha associate themselves with more temperate individual characteristics. There is a single case of ethnic hierarchy between the bride and groom, Chanchal-Uday, where the rituals went in favor of Chanchal, who is hierarchically advantaged in her ethnic position.

In this domain too extended family joined the negotiations for instance in the case of Amrita and Vipin, the groom's parents suggested that wedding be performed according to the ethnic rituals of the bride's family. Amrita was herself extremely decisive about the fact that the rituals have to be performed in accordance to her own ethnic Punjabi customs, however the easy support from the groom's parents made it even easier to assert her agency and follow her own ethnic practices. There was parental involvement in Mamta and Dinesh's case too where the bride's mother wanted all customs to be according to the groom's side in alignment with the tradition that the groom's party is ritually superior. While Mamta willingly agreed with her mother, her acquiescence is not counted as agency because it is in complicity to her gender subordination and she often times mentioned during the course of the interview that she wished she could have worn her own ethnic attire during her wedding day. Given below is a chart of the outcome of the negotiations surrounding wedding expenses, dowry and rituals for each of the

couples.

Table 6.1: Negotiation Outcome for Dowry, Wedding Expenses and Wedding Rituals

| Name | Dowry | Wedding Expenses Incurred | Wedding Rituals Followed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Geeta- Sheel | Nil | Bride > Groom with reduction in bride's family expenses | Bride = Groom |
| Deepika-Arup | Nil | Bride > Groom with reduction in bride's family expenses | Bride < Groom |
| Amrita-Vipin | Nil | Bride > Groom with reduction in bride's family expenses | Bride > Groom |
| Mamta-Dinesh | Nil | Bride > Groom with reduction in bride's family expenses | Bride < Groom |
| Rupa-Vaibhav | Nil | Bride > Groom with no reduction in bride's family expenses | Bride < Groom |
| Kaajal- Achintya | Nil | Bride > Groom with reduction in bride's family expenses | Bride > Groom |
| Idika-Bharat | Nil | Bride > Groom with reduction in bride's family expenses | Bride < Groom |
| Falguni-Anirban | Nil | Bride > Groom with reduction in bride's family expenses | Bride < Groom |
| Sameera-Eshaan | Nil | Bride > Groom with no reduction in bride's family expenses | Bride > Groom |
| Meeta-Pankaj | Nil | Bride > Groom with reduction in bride's family expenses | Bride = Groom |
| Esha-Arijit | Nil | Bride > Groom with reduction in bride's family expenses | Bride < Groom |
| Chanchal-Uday | Nil | Bride > Groom with reduction in bride's family expenses | Bride > Groom |
| Savita-Amar | Nil | Bride > Groom with no reduction in bride's family expenses | Bride = Groom |
| Asha-Anand | Nil | Bride > Groom with reduction in bride's family expenses | Bride < Groom |
| Daksha-Pankaj | Nil | Bride > Groom with no reduction in bride's family expenses | Bride < Groom |
| Shalini-Pandu | Nil | Bride > Groom with reduction in bride's family expenses | Bride = Groom |

All the respondents in my study displayed agency in rejecting the traditional dowry custom. For women it was a more economic incentive and for men it was ideological. Similarly, in other wedding expenses while the bride's side did spend more than the groom, twelve of the women in my sample showed agency by reducing the otherwise prohibitive expenses that the bride's family would usually incur. The grooms of these twelve women were also active agents in reducing the costs for the bride's family and as in the case of dowry their incentive was ideological. In the four cases where the women were not able to reduce their wedding expenditures, as described in the previous chapters, Savita and Daksha indicate that they felt compelled by traditional gender norms and their subordinate class stature, and Rupa suggested helplessness at being a woman thereby internalizing her secondary gender status. Therefore their

negotiations in this domain is taken as a lack of agency while their husbands' actions are held as agency in the sense Kabeer (1999) used as "power over" another person's will. Sameera too did not reduce the costs of the wedding but she quite clearly stated that she always wanted a lavish wedding given her wealthy family background. She clearly desired an extravagant wedding and did not see herself being coerced in anyway as her parents could clearly afford it without in any way feeling overwhelmed. This was in direct opposition to her husband, Eshaan who belonged to a lower class background and did not want a wasteful wedding, as it would simply highlight their class differences. Sameera triumphed over Eshaan and Sameera's engagement in the negotiations in this sphere is appropriated as an act of agency while her husband's is not because he saw it through the lens of class subordination, which he could not overcome. In the case of negotiating for wedding rituals, four of the couples were able to divide ethnic rituals equally, both bride and groom desiring such equity and deeming it 'fair' and expressing their agency by successfully negotiating such a division. In eight of the couples, the groom's side rituals were followed more than the bride's side and seven of these brides accepted the traditional gender norm of ritual superiority of the groom's side for this outcome though often indicated in the course of the interviews that they wished some of their wedding customs especially wedding attire was to their choice. The grooms here had more agency as "power over' the will of their brides by influence of traditional ritual superiority. Between Deepika and Arup though, Deepika willingly accepted the rituals of the groom's family not for the reason as indicated by the other women but only because the groom's ethnic rituals were much shorter and simpler and she preferred convenience and simplicity over the elaborate rituals of her own ethnic background. Deepika is attribute agency in this domain as she desired simple rituals and attained her choice through free will. For the four cases where the bride's rituals override the grooms, Eshaan lacked

agency in negotiation due to his subordinate class status vis-à-vis his wife Sameera and Uday due to his subordinate ethnic status vis-à-vis his wife, Chanchal. Vipin-Amrita and Kaajal-Achintya actively chose to follow the gender norm of the brides' side rituals being more appropriate for the wedding as opposed to the gender norm of ritual superiority of the groom. The brides Amrita and Kaajal were active agents in this choice but so were the grooms, Vipin and Achintya, as they decided not to impose the norm of ritual superiority even though they could. The 'choice not to' is therefore is also a display of agency. Below is a table of some examples of what has been counted as agency in the sphere of wedding rituals and expenses and dowry.

TABLE 6.2: Examples of Agency in Negotiation over Dowry, Wedding Expenses and Rituals

| NEGOTIATION DOMAIN | EXAMPLES OF AGENCY |
|---|---|
| Dowry | 1) Refusal on the part of the bride to give dowry inspite of existing traditional gender norms and actively choosing the more modern norm of rejecting dowry<br>2) Refusal on the part of the groom to take dowry despite existing gender norms and actively aligning themselves ideologically to the modern code of conduct which sees dowry as immoral (Choosing 'not to' even if one could) |
| Wedding expenses | 1) Actively negotiating to bring down wedding expenses for her family on the part of the bride<br>2) Actively choosing to reduce brides' family expenses on part of the groom and aligning himself with the modern ideological norm of equability in expenses |
| Rituals | 1) Choosing to follow the rituals of the groom on part of the bride by volition because of simplicity and less time consuming groom's ethnic wedding customs (Deepika-Arup)<br>2) Choosing to equalize wedding rituals between bride and groom on part of both because it is seen as the 'fair thing to do' |

## *DIVISION OF LABOR WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLD*

To understand the negotiations in division of labor within the household, I explored two themes (1) Choices that spouses make between pursuing careers or choosing to be full time homemakers and how they come to this decision. (2) The division of daily household chores between husband and wife. To explore the first theme the typical line of questioning was (1) are you a full time homemaker or engaged in a career? (2) how did you decide to become a full time homemaker or (mention career choice)? (3) did you discuss your choice of being full time homemaker or pursuing a career with your spouse? (4) can you describe to me the discussions if any, for example at what point of time in your life you had the discussion, what led to the

discussion, who brought it up, what were the issues pertinent to the discussion? (5) What factors do you think went into the decision of being a full time homemaker or engaging in a career?

There are again ambivalent gender norms, which are at crossroads when it comes to how women make a decision between pursuing a career and being a full time homemaker. One, that expects her to be the ideal homemaker, caretaker of her children and husband first and career woman (if at all) next. Two, that expects her to compete at par with men at the workplace that upholds the ideal of woman second to none at the workplace. Eleven out of the sixteen couples in my sample have children. Nine women left work after childbirth because of lack of adequate day-care facilities for their newborns and with the implicit assumption that it has to be the woman who leaves paid work for childcare. This in spite of the fact that six out of these nine women were doing professionally equally well as their husbands, and earning as much as their husbands during the time they left work. All the nine couples reason out their decision, taking norm one, children first, career next or if at all. However, eight out of these nine women (apart from Rupa, who is happy being a full time homemaker) resent, many deeply, the setbacks to their careers. For these nine couples, (Amrita-Vipin, Mamta-Dinesh, Rupa-Vaibhav, Kaajal-Achintya, Esha-Arijit, Chanchal-Uday, Asha-Anand, Daksha-Pankaj, Shalini-Pandu) post birth of their children, the rhythm of household labor is one where the wife looks after the children and home and the husband contributes nil or minimally to childcare or household labor. The husbands of these women have more agency in this domain given that pursuing a career is by norm the first right of men and their expression of agency is a "power over" the agency of their wives. None of them said they would want to have given up their careers to take up full time childcare, if given a choice. Some like Uday and Dinesh commiserate with their wives' resentment of having to leave their careers and even encourage them to take up jobs once the

children are older. However at the time of childbirth, they preferred their wives leaving their jobs and husbands continuing with their careers. All the nine men whose wives gave up their careers justify the decision of their wives being at home in the first few years of the child growing up citing reasons such as “men cannot breastfeed” or “mothers are the best for their children”. Many women in the course of their reflecting of their decision about becoming full time homemakers post childbirth talk in the same breadth about it ‘being the right thing to do’ and ‘how unfair it actually is’. Rupa was the only one among these nine women who held no grievances or regrets about being a full time homemaker. Here, as a researcher I had to interpret whether her choice was due to complicity with her role as a ‘mother first’ and putting her needs in the back burner or an affirmation of a choice without coercion. Rupa expressed happiness at being at home. She believed she could have worked outside home but being with her son full time gave her far more satisfaction. Kabeer (1999) says that apparent voluntary choice that women make such as giving dowry can be disempowering and should not be counted as agency. The choice of being a full time homemaker cannot be deemed disempowering for Rupa as she did it without qualms and showed pleasure in being able to be a full time homemaker. Her choice is an expression of agency. The other eight women, who ‘voluntarily’ gave up their jobs “as it was the right thing to do” after childbirth, felt disempowered and regretful with the setbacks it entailed to their career. Therefore, they cannot be said to have expressed agency in this realm of their lives. Two women, Mamta and Savita, did not leave work post childbirth. Both their mothers stepped in for childcare which allowed them to pursue their careers following norm two, like a man. This is another instance of extended family entering the space of negotiation between husband-wife. With mothers stepping in the daughters were enabled to express their agency and remain in the workforce. Five couples do not have children. They are

Deepika-Arup, Geeta- Sheel, Sameera- Eshaan, Idika-Bharat and Falguni- Anirban. The negotiation over careers begins in my study after birth of their first child.

For the second theme concerning division of daily household chores, I chose participant observation and interviews to gain my data. I made an activity log of the participants in my study making, a note of the different activities that they engage in through the course of a day. This was done for a period of a week. I sometimes became involved in their activities such as cooking and childcare. However, I followed up my observations with interviews so that I had more information about the daily activities that participant observation could obscure because of my involvement with the chores they engaged in. The questions asked were: (1) can you describe to me in detail a typical weekday starting from when you wake up in the morning till you go to bed at night? (2) can you similarly describe to me a typical day on a weekend. (3) can you tell me how you fell into this routine of chores that you just described? did you ever discuss with your spouse who would undertake what chores or did it just fall into place without discussion? (4) what factors do you think led to the distribution of the daily chores between you and your spouse that you just described? (5) between you and your spouse who do you think undertakes most of the household chores? (6) if you could, would you rearrange the distribution of chores between you and your spouse? If so, in what manner? The questions were open ended and the interviews were not designed with a list of prefixed set of household chores that I had questions about. To find out who did most of the household chores between couples, I made a tally of the observations from the activity log as well as from their responses in the interviews. In all the eight cases mentioned a while ago where the women were full time homemakers, the husbands did almost nil housework with minimal responsibility of childcare. Most typically the chores that these women were engaged in throughout the day, were preparing breakfast for the

family, packing school lunches and lunch packs for their husbands, bathing and feeding infants and kids, getting them ready for school, making sure that their school bags were packed, checking their homework, helping them prepare for school lessons and exams, watering plants, doing the laundry, maintaining and arranging closets, keeping a wardrobe ready for their children and their respective spouses, preparing grocery lists, doing the groceries, cooking, cleaning up after cooking, setting the dinner table, cleaning up after meal, cleaning out the refrigerator, dusting furniture, keeping track of and paying bills, taking children to the park, reading to children, making their beds, and putting them to sleep. Mostly the husbands came back late from work during weekdays and their involvement with their children were restricted to asking them about their day or watching television briefly with them. During weekends the husbands spent more time in activities with their children such as reading to them, or taking them to the park. Household chores were minimal for the husbands of these women, maybe restricted to clearing out their own dinner plates or occasional plumbing in case of a water leakage in a faucet. The reason why husbands did not help out more with the housework was explained by their hard and long hours of work outside the home by both husband and wife. However, these women do feel shortchanged, as most of them were typically bored and frustrated by their daily chore lineup and would have preferred to have been actively pursuing their careers instead. They would like to have had their husbands pick up some of their routine chores but were unable to negotiate this on their behalf. They clearly lacked the agency or the 'power to' achieve an outcome they desired in this domain while their husbands exercised agency in the sense of "power over" overriding the agency of their wives. It is important to note that every household, (apart from Deepika-Arup) in the study had a part time maid who came in for about an hour in the mornings. These maids washed dishes, and swept and swabbed the floors of their homes. All households in the study had

hired help to do the ironing of clothes as well. Dish cleaning, floor cleaning and ironing were typically the chores that were outsourced and lessened the burden of household work for full time homemakers. Geeta, Sameera and Savita, all three who had active careers, employed cooks as well which did away with one additional household chore. Amrita was the only full time homemaker who employed a cook as well as part time maid and an ironing lady. While outsourcing some of the household chores definitely helped out full time homemakers, they still did a bulk of household chores and picked up most of the chores around childcare.

In all the five cases, where the couples had no kids the husbands and wives have more or less equal career graphs, but only three have an equitable division of labor within the household, for one of them, the negotiation shifting in favor of the wife. They are Deepika-Arup, Geeta-Sheel and Sameera-Eshaan. All three are prominently assertive in character traits, and Sameera as explained in her case study has the added advantage of class steering the division of labor in her favor. Among the other two, who do not have children, Idika-Bharat and Falguni-Anirban, the husbands do minimal to nil housework. Both these women are not of a forceful temperament. In negotiation for household work, class hierarchy seeps through in the case of Sameera-Eshaan. Meeta too had class advantage over Pankaj but she also has her own mother stepping in for childcare. A woman being of a lower class than her husband does not matter in negotiations for housework. None of the other women, apart from Sameera and Meeta are of a higher class than their husbands and it is primarily gender norms that set the foundation within which negotiations took place. When left with no childcare options, individual character traits of the women does not make an impact on the decision to leave the job. But when not pushed against the wall, as in the case with the five couples who do not have children yet, the more assertive ones are able to equalize division of labor within the household than the ones who are less assertive. Given below

is a chart, which gives an overview of the outcomes of negotiation in the domain of division of labor.

TABLE 6.3: Negotiation Outcome for Division of Labor

| Names | Career Choice | Daily Household Chores Performed |
|---|---|---|
| Geeta-Sheel | Equal career graph (no children) | Equal |
| Deepika-Arup | Equal career graph (no children yet) | Equal |
| Amrita-Vipin | Homemaker: Left paid career post childbirth | Wife > Husband |
| Mamta-Dinesh | Homemaker: Left paid career post childbirth | Wife > Husband |
| Rupa-Vaibhav | Homemaker: Left paid career post childbirth | Wife > Husband |
| Kaajal- Achintya | Homemaker: Left paid career post childbirth | Wife > Husband |
| Idika- Bharat | Equal career graph (no children yet) | Wife > Husband |
| Falguni-Anirban | Equal career graph (no children yet) | Wife > Husband |
| Sameera-Eshaan | Equal career graph (no children yet) | Wife < Husband |
| Meeta-Pankaj | Equal career graph (mother helped in childcare post childbirth) | Equal |
| Esha-Arijit | Homemaker: Left paid career post childbirth | Wife > Husband |
| Chanchal-Uday | Homemaker: Left paid career post childbirth | Wife > Husband |
| Savita –Amar | Equal career graph (mother helped in childcare post childbirth) | Equal |
| Asha –Anand | Left paid career post childbirth but resumed currently | Wife > Husband |
| Daksha –Pankaj | Homemaker: left paid career post childbirth | Wife > Husband |
| Shalini –Pandu | Homemaker: left paid career post childbirth | Wife > Husband |

Given below is the agency table for the domain of division of labor.

TABLE 6.4: Examples of Agency in the Negotiation for Division of Labor

| Negotiation Domain | Examples of Agency |
|---|---|
| Division of Labor | 1) Husbands having greater agency in choice of pursuing full time career overriding agency of wife due to traditional gender norms (power over)<br>2) Wife exercising agency to pursue full time career post childbirth even in face of opposition (power to)<br>3) Wife demanding and achieving equitable division of household chores with spouse |

### *FINANCIAL DECISION MAKING*

Negotiations over financial decisions, covered four themes (1) major joint household purchases, (2) investments and savings as well as (3) who spends more on self and (4) autonomy in decisions regarding personal spending. The line of questions for theme one typically follow: (1) what was the last major purchase you made for the household? (2) who wanted it and who suggested that you buy it? (3) who set the budget for it? (4) when did you purchase the item and who decided when to purchase it? (5) who do you think usually makes decisions regarding major purchases? (6) what factors do you think tilts the decision making in favor of spouse/self/ balanced decision making in this sphere? (7) could you describe to me what led to the purchase

of (mention an item) for example, who suggested you buy it, when it was bought, who set the budget, who made the decisions regarding budget and when to buy it? The line of questions for the other themes are (1) do you make plans for investments or/and savings for your household? (2) who makes these decisions? Whose decisions do you think carry more weight in this sphere and why? (3) can you describe to me discussions around any financial investment or saving plan that you last made, for example, who brought up the issue, who decided for/against it? (4) who spends more on personal needs such for example hobbies, or personal grooming items? (5) what personal items do you usually spend on? (6) do you first discuss with your spouse about budgets and expenditure on personal spending? (7) do you need to check with your spouse before making a personal purchase for yourself or inform your spouse about the purchase? Are there any restrictions imposed on you for your personal spending? The responses were coded for each couple according to the four themes and tallied to see who had greater decision making power in major household purchases, investments, and personal spending.

Negotiations around these are closely tied to the choices women make with regard to their careers. Among the nine women who have children and left paid employment post child birth, five of them, Amrita, Rupa, Esha, Chanchal and Shalini let their husbands make most of the decisions regarding financial investments and major household purchases. They also spend less money on themselves personally, giving the reason that they have less need for personal items since they do not work outside the home any longer. They feel restricted due to a lack of personal income, thereby unable to exercise agency in this domain. Three women, Kaajal, Asha and Daksha, have equal say in joint household purchases and investments but Kaajal and Asha like the other five, keep their personal expenses at a lower level than their husbands citing the same reasons of having less needs now that they were home full time and feeling the same

restrictions of lack of personal income. One of these nine women, Daksha, however had equal say in decisions regarding joint household goods/ investments and inspite of lack of personal income; she continues to personally spend more than her husband. She attributes it to her more extravagant nature and her husband's natural miserliness. Class hierarchies do not make a bent on the negotiation process, for all these nine women are of equal or a lower class status than their husbands. Therefore, they do not have any advantage to turn negotiations in their favor. For men who are higher class than their wives it is not their class status, but more their wives' decision to quit paid employment after child birth, that turns financial decision making in their favor. An exception is the case of Shalini-Pandu where Shalini lets most purchasing decisions be made by her husband because he has more "refined" taste than her, in accordance to his class. Class however does make inroads for Sameera-Eshaan since Sameera is more cash rich as described in her case study, with her parents providing her constant supply of money thereby allowing her to make major decisions for joint household goods as well as having greater purchasing power for personal spending. Apart from Sameera-Eshaan, Deepika-Arup and Geeta-Sheel are also among the couples who have no children and for whom financial decision making are in favor of the wife. Deepika-Arup and Geeta-Sheel are hierarchized only by gender, so class makes no impact on their negotiations here. Both Deepika and Sheel call themselves extravagant and their husbands miserly by nature. One must note, again Sameera, Deepika and Geeta are among the most assertive women in my sample. Idika-Bharat and Falguni-Anirban, (hierarchized only by gender), also without children and with both wives working and earning well, have financial decision making tilt in favor of the husband. In both cases, personal character traits such as 'lack of money mindedness', and being 'non-materialistic' are referred to in their explanations as to why the wives do not take interest in financial matters or spend less than their husbands. See

below the two tables, which outline the negotiation outcomes and examples of agency in the domain of financial decision making.

TABLE 6.5: Negotiation Outcome for Financial Decision Making

| Name | Who makes more Decisions on Major Household purchases | Who makes more Decisions on Investments and Saving | Who makes more Personal Expenses | Who has more Autonomy in Personal Expenses |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Geeta-Sheel | W > H | W > H | W > H | W = H |
| Deepika –Arup | W = H | W < H | W > H | W = H |
| Amrita Vipin | W < H | W > H | W < H | W = H |
| Mamta- Dinesh | W = H | W < H | W < H | W < H |
| Rupa-Vaibhav | W < H | W < H | W < H | W < H |
| Kaajal-Achintya | W = H | W = H | W < H | W < H |
| Idika-Bharat | W = H | W < H | W = H | W = H |
| Falguni- Anirban | W = H | W = H | W = H | W = H |
| Sameera-Eshaan | W > H | W = H | W > H | W > H |
| Meeta-Pankaj | W = H | W = H | W = H | W = H |
| Esha-Arijit | W < H | W < H | W < H | W < H |
| Chanchal- Uday | W < H | W < H | W < H | W < H |
| Savita- Amar | W = H | W = H | W = H | W = H |
| Asha- Anand | W = H | W > H | W < H | W = H |
| Daksha-Pankaj | W=H | W = H | W > H | W = H |
| Shalini-Pandu | W < H | W < H | W < H | W = H |

TABLE 6.6: Examples of Agency in Negotiation over Financial Decision Making

| Negotiation Domain | Examples of Agency |
|---|---|
| Financial Decision Making | 1) Wife making a decision on major household purchase or investment decisions and acting upon it<br>2) Husband choosing not to act on decisions on household investments because wife is sharper in financial matters or lack of interest or boredom around the issues (choosing' not to' even if he could)<br>3) Wife having equal or more personal purchasing power than husband due to personal financial independence or in spite of lack of financial independence<br>4) Husband having more agency to spend on self without accountability to wife (power over)<br>5) Wife exercising agency on spending on self without accountability to husband (power to) |

### *DIET AND LANGUAGE*

To understand negotiations in the domain of diet and language I used participant observation and interviews. In participant observation, I made a note of what is cooked and eaten by all family members at meal times for each household and conversations if any, around meal preparation or food. I also noted the languages that were spoken with one another by family members in each household. I also interviewed every participant about negotiations around diet and language. The typical line of questions for understanding negotiations around diet were the following (1) what caste diet do you generally follow at home? (2) do you eat predominantly a vegetarian/ non-vegetarian diet or a mix of both? (3) were there any dietary changes for you post

marriage? (4) if there were changes, what factors do you think went into making the changes? (5) did you have a discussion around diet with your spouse? (6) can you describe to me the nature of the conversation around diet, for example, who brought it up as an issue for discussion, who was expected to make the required changes and why? (7) between you and your spouse, whose dietary preferences were given more weightage and why? (8) what diet does/do your child/children eat? (9) how did they inculcate this preference? (10) did you think either you or your spouse have any influence on your children's diet? From the field notes and interviews, I coded caste as well as ethnic diets followed in each household to tally which spouse's diet is given preference for the spouses themselves and which spouse's diet is given preference for their children, if they had any.

Diets vary by cast and ethnicity. For certain castes, traditional caste norms prohibit the intake of meat, though more modern caste norms are lax of these requirements. There are ethnic variations in cuisine as well. In negotiation for household diet various structural norms come into play. According to traditional gender norms the woman is in charge of the kitchen and meal preparation, so one might assume that she calls the shots when it comes to making decisions for her family's diet. However another gender role requires her to imbibe the culture of her husband on marriage, which includes the husband's diet as well. There is no predominant pattern in dietary negotiations as women in my sample have varying responses to what they choose to tease out of the multiple meanings that the structures provided them to operate within. The more assertive the woman the more she affirms her agency and negotiates in favor of her own caste norms regarding diet, teasing out her traditional role in the kitchen and the more traditional caste norms regarding diet in case she belonged to a vegetarian caste. In case she is coaxed to imbibe her husband's non-vegetarian caste diet, she justifies her change in diet by pointing to the

modern laxness in caste dietary injunctions or complies with her subordinate gender status by saying that the husband's dietary preference should be given more importance, in the latter instance denying herself agency. More often than not the couples reach a middle ground where both diets are given space say, for example, non-vegetarian food being allowed to be eaten but not necessarily cooked at home. Caste hierarchies per say have no role in the negotiation process. When the social distance between the castes is narrow, as is the case between Brahmins and other forward castes, it is not necessarily the Brahmin spouse's diet, which is followed at the table. Caste hierarchy is, in fact, never a matter of contention in any process of bargaining whether it is wedding expenses, division of labor or financial decision making, when the social distance between the castes are narrow. When the social distances between the castes are wide, caste hierarchy plays a role as in two cases, Esha-Arijit and Chanchal-Uday. Chanchal, we see takes cognizance of her caste advantage to support her caste diet and Uday in this domain loses agency by virtue of his subordinate caste status. Esha, as is described in her case study, negotiates against her own interests in order to ease caste tensions between herself and her husband. Hierarchy in class is mentioned as having a role in dietary decisions between Meeta and Pankaj, who suggest in response to the questions about his diet that everything tilts in his wife's favor because of her class. Pankaj loses agency by virtue of his subordinate class in this domain as is suggested by his response.

For understanding negotiations on language the following questions were asked: (1) what language do you speak with to your spouse? (2) is it the same language you spoke to him before marriage? (3) did language spoken between the two of you change after marriage? (4) what factors do you think accounts for the change? (5) what language do you speak with to your children? (6) why do you think it became the language of choice? (7) how much influence do

you think you or your spouse had in what language your children speak in? (8) what factors do you think led to your child speaking this language/ languages?

In the negotiation over spoken language, ten of the sixteen couples in the sample (Amrita-Vipin, Deepika-Arup, Meeta-Pankaj, Geeta-Sheel, Idika-Bharat, Sameera-Eshaan, Chanchal-Uday, Amar-Savita and Shalini-Pandu, Kaajal-Achintya) just continue to speak with each other in English as they were habituated to, when they initially met in the workplace or in school. Among the six who do not speak in English, three of the wives have picked up the ethnic languages of their husbands and that has become their language at home. They are Mamta, Falguni and Esha. Mamta and Falguni (hierarchized only by gender with their husbands) believe in blending with the husband's culture post marriage. Also in their case, starting their initial married life in a patrilocal joint family where only the husband's ethnic language was spoken, also came into force in them picking up their husband's language. Extended family therefore influenced choice of language here. Both mentioned that they missed speaking in their own ethnic language. Esha, as mentioned before, turns every stone to accommodate with her husband, including picking up his language so as to assuage the caste tension between them. The other three, Rupa, Asha, Daksha speak in Hindi with their husband, which is their husband's ethnic tongue, as well as the local language of Delhi, so they were already well versed with it, when they got married.

However not every couple who speak with each other in English also speak the same language with their children. Six of the nine couples who speak with each other in English have children. Out of these six couples, four speak to their children in the mother's ethnic tongue while the remaining two (Shalini and Kaajal) speak a mix of both the parents tongue to the children, one of them invariably being Hindi, the local language of Delhi. Chanchal, Savita,

Meeta and Amrita make sure that their children are more fluent in the mother's ethnic tongue resisting effort to make the husband's ethnic language the prime language for the child. In all these cases, the mother's proximity to the children helps to ensure that her language was definitely one of the languages being transmitted to the children. Those couples who speak in Hindi with each other also speak with their children in Hindi. Those who speak with each other in the husband's ethnic tongue (other than Hindi) also speak to their children primarily in the husband's language. Predominantly gender norms that call for women being primary care takers of the children allow for women to assert their agency to equalize the transmission of language, either by making sure that it is their ethnic tongue that is spoken to with their children or that a mix of both the father's and mother's tongue is taught to them. This is in opposition to gender norms that call for the father's language to be the primary language of the child. When two ethnic languages are taught to the children one of them is invariably Hindi, the local language of the city as well as the official language of the country. Gender norms are essentially the ambit within which negotiations are made in transmission of language; however cognizance is also taken of the local language of the state as a matter of a language of convenience. Pankaj again points to class as a reason why his daughter speaks in his wife's language because "everything goes her way". As described in the precious chapter, ethnic hierarchy between Chanchal and Uday also leads to Chanchal marginalizing and dismissing Uday's ethnic tongue as parochial, therefore unimportant to her son. Given in the next page is a table, which summarized the negotiation outcome for diet and language.

Table 6.7: Negotiation Outcome for Diet and Language

| Names | Whose diet was given preference within the household | Whose language was given preference within the household |
|---|---|---|
| Geeta-Sheel | Wife > Husband | Wife = Husband |
| Deepika-Arup | Wife > Husband | Wife = Husband |
| Amrita-Vipin | Wife > Husband | Wife > Husband |
| Mamta-Dinesh | Wife < Husband | Wife < Husband |
| Rupa-Vaibhav | Wife < Husband | Wife < Husband |
| Kaajal-Achintya | Wife < Husband | Wife = Husband |
| Idika-Bharat | Wife < Husband | Wife = Husband |
| Falguni-Anirban | Wife = Husband | Wife < Husband |
| Sameera-Eshaan | Wife = Husband | Wife = Husband |
| Meeta-Pankaj | Wife > Husband | Wife > Husband |
| Esha-Arijit | Wife < Husband | Wife < Husband |
| Chanchal-Uday | Wife > Husband | Wife > Husband |
| Savita-Amar | Wife = Husband | Wife = Husband |
| Asha-Anand | Wife = Husband | Wife = Husband |
| Daksha-Pankaj | Wife < Husband | Wife < Husband |
| Shalini-Pandu | Wife > Husband | Wife = Husband |

See below a table which outlines examples of agency in the domain of language and diet.

Table 6.8: Examples of Agency in Negotiation over Diet and Language

| Negotiation Domain | Examples of Agency |
|---|---|
| Diet and Language | 1) Wife making a decision to follow her own caste diet for herself and her children in spite of resistance from husband. (power to)<br>2) Husband deriving agency by overriding agency of wife in matters of dietary choice ( power over)<br>3) Husband or wife willingly making and enjoying the experience of dietary change without being pressured to do so<br>4) Wife making a decision to transmit her language as primary language to her children in spite of resistance from husband (power to) |

## *RESIDENTIAL PATTERN*

To understand negotiations around residential patterns I covered two themes, preferences on joint or nuclear family units, and the actual place of residence that is where the couples decide to live. The typical line of questions that were asked in the interview were: (1) were you in a joint or nuclear unit right after marriage? (2) how long did you stay in a joint family unit?

(3) why did you decide to shift to a nuclear unit? (4) who brought up the issue of moving out of a joint set up and who made the decisions regarding shifting to a nuclear unit? (5) what factors do you think went into making the decision of shifting to a nuclear family unit? (6) how did you choose your current place of residence? (7) what factors do you think went into the decision to choose this current place? (8) whose decision do you think carried more weight in choice of residence? I coded the responses based on these two themes and tallied the answers to find out whose decisions carried more weight in both choice of family unit and place of residence.

Out of the sixteen couples, eight have both sets of their parents living in Delhi. Upon marriage six of the eight couples adopted a patrilocal form of residence. Four of these couples, Anand-Asha, Daksha-Pankaj and Falguni-Anirban, Amrita-Vipin moved into joint residence into the husband's father's house, while three couples, Meeta-Pankaj, Mamta-Dinesh, and Geeta-Sheel moved close to the husbands' parents' house, though living in nuclear units. Eventually due to lack of space Amrita-Vipin and Falguni-Anirban also shifted out of joint residence with the husband's father and lived as a nuclear unit to a place near to the husband's father's house. Amrita also had her own parent living close by. Asha-Anand and Daksha-Pankaj moved out to a place, which they could afford, not close to the husband's parent's place. The remaining couple that has both sets of parents living in Delhi (Esha-Arijit) chose a place based on rent affordability though it was Arijit's choice of place that was chosen. Therefore, five of the eight couples who had both parents living in the city chose to live near the husband's parent's place. This decision was largely dictated by norm though most of the women in these couple wished they had more access to their own parents as well. Geeta, to recall had a lot of problem adjusting to her new residence. The decision to move from joint to nuclear made by Anand-Asha, Daksha-Pankaj, Falguni-Anirban, and Amrita-Vipin indicated active agency by both the spouses, as they were

unhappy with the space crunch. Extended family resisted the move initially but came around when Vipin and Anirban chose a place close to their parent's house. Asha-Anand and Daksha-Pankaj could not afford the rent in the husband's parent's neighborhood. Their shift therefore caused a little ill will with the extended family. Patri-viri local residence however was the dominant mode of residence for couples who had both parents living in the city.

Two couples had only the wife's parents living in the city (Savita-Amar and Rupa-Vaibhav). Savita-Amar chose a place of residence keeping work place commute as a consideration rather than proximity to the wife's parents' while Rupa-Vaibhav gave consideration to rent affordability. None of the remaining six couples, Deepika-Arup, Kaajal-Achintya, Idika-Bharat, Sameera-Ishaan, Chanchal-Uday, and Shalini-Pandu, have parents in the city, so the choice of residence is also based on an appropriate rent that fits the budget, and proximity to workplace. First preference is given in two of these cases to proximity of the wife's workplace (Shalini and Idika). The decision to live closer to Idika's workplace was so she could pay more attention to the house. This was not made out of Idika's willingness because she clearly disliked housework. Shalini preferred the arrangement because she did not like work commute. Out of the sixteen couples, one couple moved in as a nuclear unit at a floor above the wife's parent's house. That is Mamta-Pankaj. They were living as a nuclear unit on the floor above Pankaj's father's house when they got married. To recall, two years into their marriage Mamta's father suffered a massive heart attack. She shifted in to the floor above her father's house because her father needed the care. This led to a temporary one year separation with her husband. Patrilocal residence is common and looked upon as favorable. A son and his wife looking after the son's parents in old age is expected and appreciated. A woman is not expected to look after her parents at old age. This is among the reasons for son-preference in India. In the

very rare instances when the husband lives with the wife's parents the husband is looked upon with severe contempt and perceived as someone, even from within the wife's family, who does so because he is a useless economic dependent who cannot but live off his wife's family. Pankaj shifted in with Mamta one year after their separation because he realized that his marriage would be in jeopardy if he did not. Besides he says he began to appreciate the fairness that Mamta's parents are looked after just as his own parents were being looked after by his older brother. It is something that is "good" and "must be done" according to Pankaj. Mamta reasoned that everything was getting equal between men and women so why should there be any exception in the case of the wife's parents getting their due respect in their old age just as the husband's parents did. Mamta's family was happy with the decision and Pankaj's family gave Pankaj their full favorable support after he made the move. For a son-in-law to move in with his wife's parents for the purpose of taking care of them in old age, with a lexicon of respectability and a sense of worthy purpose was not a ready-made choice available to them when Pankaj made the move. They created the sense of worth and purpose, the necessity for the wife's parents to be looked after at old age, (which is not otherwise a legitimate necessity), encompassing it with a respectable lexicon and purpose which is missing for the very rare son's-in-laws who stay with their wives' parents. I must add that on my encounters with neighbors of Pankaj and Mamta, I perceived a sense of admiration for the both of them for having made this move. Maybe this can have a potential for a structural transformation where the wives' parents are not neglected at old age and one of the reasons for son-preference could disappear. Meeta-Pankaj is the only couple that opted for this residential pattern. It was difficult for Meeta to negotiate for the shift because it entailed a separation of one year. However Meeta keeps referring to her as "strong-willed" when she is describing this episode of her life and being strong willed did pay off. Neither Meeta

or Pankaj overtly refer to Meeta's higher class status while talking about this particular episode, however, both often colluded to class when it came to a general conversations around compromises and adjustments in the marriage, Pankaj eventually being the one who is the more accommodating of the two. Given below is the table summarizing the negotiation outcome for residence patterns.

Table 6.9: Negotiation Outcome for Residence Pattern

| **Names** | **Whose decisions given weightage in Joint or Nuclear unit option** | **Whose decision given weightage in choosing place of residence** |
|---|---|---|
| Geeta-Sheel | Wife = Husband (started married life as nuclear unit on behest of both wanting nuclear) | Wife < Husband (patri-viri local residence) |
| Deepika-Arup | Wife = Husband (started married life as nuclear unit on behest of both wanting nuclear) | Wife = Husband (equidistant from work place) |
| Amrita-Vipin | Wife = Husband (waded out from joint to nuclear on behest of both wanting nuclear) | Wife = Husband (near husband's father house but wife's parent's also nearby) |
| Mamta-Dinesh | Wife = Husband (waded out from joint to nuclear on behest of both wanting nuclear) | Wife < Husband (patri-viri local) |
| Rupa-Vaibhav | Wife = Husband (started married life as nuclear unit on behest of both wanting nuclear) | Wife = Husband (based on rent affordability) |
| Kaajal- Achintya | Wife = Husband (started married life as nuclear unit on behest of both wanting nuclear) | Wife = Husband (based on rent budget) |
| Idika- Bharat | Wife = Husband (started married life as nuclear unit on behest of both wanting nuclear) | Wife < Husband (proximity to wife's workplace when she would have rather had it equidistant) |
| Falguni-Anirban | Wife = Husband (waded out from joint to nuclear on behest of both wanting nuclear) | Wife = Husband (based on rent affordability) |
| Sameera-Eshaan | Wife = Husband (started married life as nuclear unit on behest of both wanting nuclear) | Wife = Husband (equidistant from work place) |
| Meeta-Pankaj | Wife = Husband (started married life as nuclear unit on behest of both wanting nuclear) | Wife > Husband (near wife's parents house) |
| Esha-Arijit | Wife = Husband (started married life as nuclear unit on behest of both wanting nuclear) | Wife < Husband (husband's choice of place based on affordability) |
| Chanchal-Uday | Wife = Husband (started married life as nuclear unit on behest of both wanting nuclear) | Wife = Husband (based on rent affordability) |
| Savita –Amar | Wife = Husband (started married life as nuclear unit on behest of both wanting nuclear) | Wife = Husband (equidistant to workplace) |
| Asha-Anand | Wife = Husband (waded out from joint to nuclear on behest of both wanting nuclear) | Wife = Husband (based on rent affordability) |
| Daksha-Pankaj | Wife = Husband (waded out from joint to nuclear on behest of both wanting nuclear) | Wife = Husband (based on rent affordability) |
| Shalini-Pandu | Wife = Husband (started married life as nuclear unit on behest of both wanting nuclear) | Wife = Husband (based on proximity to wife's workplace because she did not like commute) |

TABLE 6.10: Examples of Agency in Negotiation over Residence Pattern

| **Negotiation Domain** | **Examples of Agency** |
|---|---|
| Residential pattern | 1) Husband deriving agency by overriding agency of wife in matters of residential choice ( power over ) patri-viri local residence by virtue of tradition<br>2) Wife deciding on matrilocal residence (power to)<br>3) Husband and wife exercising equal agency in choosing residential place equidistance from their workplace |

To briefly summarize the chapter, it is clear that men and women displayed active agency in negotiations in the various domains explored. Dowry was pushed aside by both men and

women in their discussions with each other during the courtship period as well as during the marriage talks when extended family entered the negotiations. As explained, for women economic incentives pushed their agency and for men it was ideological. Similar agency was displayed in bringing down wedding expenses for the bride's family. Many women and men decided to equalize wedding rituals "as a fair" thing to do, however women's agency was also overridden in this domain by virtue of traditional ritual superiority of the groom's party and women's acceptance of their subordinate ritual status. In the sphere of division of labor, largely women often lacked agency in able to pursue full time careers on childbirth, and were unable to demand participation they wished from their husbands on household chores. However few women as described in the section on division of labor were able to exercise agency to demand equal division of labor by virtue of their higher class status and their overall assertive disposition. Women who lacked a personal income often lost agency in the domain of autonomy in personal expenses, but were nevertheless able to exercise agency in decisions regarding major household purchases. Men sometimes chose "not to" participate in decisions regarding financial investments because their wives had better aptitude for it. They exercised agency in this sphere by 'choosing not to' even if they could as important financial decisions is male traditional domain. In the domain of diet and language, it was an assembly of affirmation and negation of women's agency as some chose to push for their own caste and ethnic diet for themselves and their children while some others accepted their secondary cultural status vis-à-vis their spouse. Mode of residence was largely patri-viri local for couples who had both parents living in the city. Women lacked agency even though they wished they had more access to their own parents. Men override the agency of their wives in this sphere by virtue of a cultural norm. However one couple in the study thrust their agency in establishing a matrilocal form of residence. For every

spheres of negotiation, as shown in the negotiation outcome charts, I counted expression of agency by each couple, for both the husband and wife using the criteria I have described over the course of the chapter in identifying manifestation of agency. Women who displayed more or equal agency as their husbands in four or five of the domains bargained most favorably, women who displayed more or equal agency as their husbands in two or three of the domains, achieved a modicum of success in the bargaining process while women who displayed more or equal agency in zero to one of the domains achieved least success in the bargaining process. And as described in Chapter 4 and 5, there emerged an association between women like Sameera, Deepika, Geeta, Mamta and Savita who characterized themselves in more assertive terminology (such as strong willed or determined) and more success in demonstrating agency. Women like Mamta who characterized themselves in least assertive terms (such as soft or 'like to please people') demonstrated least agency in their negotiation with their spouse. Most women like, Falguni, Idika, Kaajal, Trupa, Esha, Chanchal, Asha, Daksha and Shalini, who characterized themselves in terms of temperate characteristics (such as accommodating, amiable) demonstrate modicum agency and success in the bargaining process. Given in the next page is a table that summarizes who had more agency between the spouses in all the different domain of study.

Table 6.11: Agency Tally for Each Couple

| **Names** | **Who displayed more agency in dowry, wedding expenses and rituals** | **Who displayed more agency in division of labor** | **Who displayed more agency in financial decision making** | **Who displayed more agency in diet and language** | **Who displayed more agency in mode of residence** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Geeta-Sheel | Wife = Husband | Wife = Husband | Wife = Husband | Wife = Husband | Wife < Husband |
| Deepika-Arup | Wife = Husband | Wife = Husband | Wife = Husband | Wife > Husband | Wife = Husband |
| Amrita-Vipin | Wife = Husband | Wife < Husband | Wife = Husband | Wife > Husband | Wife = Husband |
| Mamta- Dinesh | Wife < Husband | Wife < Husband | Wife < Husband | Wife < Husband | Wife < Husband |
| Rupa- Vaibhav | Wife < Husband | Wife = Husband | Wife < Husband | Wife < Husband | Wife = Husband |
| Kaajal –Achintya | Wife = Husband | Wife < Husband | Wife < Husband | Wife < Husband | Wife = Husband |
| Idika-Bharat | Wife = Husband | Wife = Husband | Wife = Husband | Wife < Husband | Wife < Husband |
| Falguni-Anirban | Wife < Husband | Wife < Husband | Wife = Husband | Wife = Husband | Wife = Husband |
| Sameera-Eshaan | Wife > Husband | Wife > Husband | Wife > Husband | Wife = Husband | Wife = Husband |
| Meeta-Pankaj | Wife = Husband | Wife = Husband | Wife = Husband | Wife > Husband | Wife = Husband |
| Esha-Arijit | Wife = Husband | Wife < Husband | Wife < Husband | Wife = Husband | Wife < Husband |
| Chanchal-Uday | Wife > Husband | Wife < Husband | Wife < Husband | Wife > Husband | Wife = Husband |
| Savita-Amar | Wife < Husband | Wife = Husband | Wife = Husband | Wife = Husband | Wife = Husband |
| Anand-Asha | Wife < Husband | Wife < Husband | Wife < Husband | Wife = Husband | Wife = Husband |
| Daksha-Pankaj | Wife < Husband | Wife < Husband | Wife = Husband | Wife < Husband | Wife = Husband |
| Shalini-Pandu | Wife = Husband | Wife < Husband | Wife < Husband | Wife < Husband | Wife = Husband |

# CHAPTER 7

# CONCLUSION

In my concluding chapter I will begin with a concise summary of my research, followed by a description of the limitations and contributions of my study. It will end by briefly discussing the scope of further research in the area. My research sets out to explore relationships between husbands and wives in intermarriages in urban India as more and more young men and women enter into them. It does so under the lens of how men and women in such marriages navigated their way through varying norms that come with the different class, castes, and ethnicities that they draw from in their negotiation for resources within their household with specific reference to (i) wedding expenses and wedding rituals (ii) division of labor within the household (iii) financial decision making (iv) maintenance and transmission of language and diet (v) residential pattern. The paradigm of intersectionality which sees gender, class, race and other social categories as inextricably linked forms the backbone of my approach as I try to see how gender, caste, class and ethnicity emerge and submerge in different contexts of the bargaining process for the couples in my study. I also explore how agency emerges in the interplay of these structures.

My study has sixteen couples in intermarriage. Eight couples in the sample are hierarchized by gender alone, that is, belong to the same class and belonged to different but equal status caste, and language based ethnic groups. Another eight couples are hierarchized at two or more structural points, that is, apart from gender they belong to either different classes, or/and different and hierarchized castes, or/and different and hierarchized ethnic groups. The purpose is

to seek explanations to the following questions: (1) does gender hierarchy turn intra household bargaining in favor of the husband in an intermarriage when the spouses are hierarchized by gender but are equal in class, and non-hierarchized but differentiated by ethnicity and caste? If not, what is subverting gender hierarchy? (2) when couples are hierarchized at multiple points, in an intermarriage what roles do class, caste, and ethnic hierarchies play in the negotiations? Is it possible to rank structural hierarchies in order of their importance to the negotiating process?

The study witnesses a subversion of gender in several instances in the sample of couples hierarchized only by gender but differentiated and equal in caste and ethnicity. The study **suggests** that the ambiguity in gender, caste and ethnic norms in many instances unsettled hierarchical advantage of gender for the husbands. Gender norms are often at crossroads with each other and also sometimes conflict with caste and ethnic norms which themselves have multiple meaning that are at odds with one another. It is at the intersection of these various nebulous structures that agency emerges that allow for women to navigate many times to their advantage in the negotiation process, making choices within the boundaries of rules and norms provided by these structures. I draw an agency continuum where acts of choice can be categorized as what I call "circumscribed agency" or can be categorized as "transformative agency". There are actions that also fall in between these two. Circumscribed agency are choices emerging within the compass of extant possibilities already present within the structures without innovation, or creation of new ideas, or norms or rules on part of the actor. Thus, as an example, if a dietary choice has to be made by a woman of a vegetarian caste married to a man of a non-vegetarian caste she exercises circumscribed agency when she navigates through competing gender and caste norms or rules. One, a gender norm that requires her to unquestioningly adopt the customs of her husband post marriage, which would include diet. Two, a gender norm that

allows her to make the dietary choice according to her preferences due to her primary role as meal planner and cook. Competing caste norms also occur simultaneously, one a traditional caste norm, which strictly prohibits her from eating meat, and second a modern caste norm, which are more lax about these injunctions. If the woman decides to stick to her vegetarian caste diet she would tease out the second gender norm and the first caste norm, and it is in the intersection of these already present choices that she exercises her agency without creating any new ideas or rules.

The second kind of agency, "transformative agency" emerges by transposing existing rules to new contexts thereby creating new parameters of choice that were hitherto not present. The sole example of this kind of innovation is the case of Meeta-Pankaj who applies the idea of gender equality to the context of residential patterns creating a new choice of matrilocal residence with a positive lexicon (a 'good' thing) and a new purpose (looking after wife's parents during old age). There is only one instance of such agency in my study. There are also choices that lie uneasily in between these two categories such as Idika's exercise of agency in division of household chores with her husband Bharat. Idika adhered to the existing traditional gender norm of a woman being primarily responsible for housework, and between the two actually did more of the household chores. However she refused to do the cooking. A woman not cooking in the household is not a new norm since many households employ paid cooks. However the women of the household still train and oversee the work of these cooks. Idika's action of not cooking was not transformative, because paid cooks are a norm in many households, however her refusal to take any part in the cooking while still adhering to traditional gender norms regarding division of labor makes her agency not easily compartmentalized as either circumscribed or transformative.

My data suggests that an individual's character traits often steers choice within the compass of these structures. I have delineated a continuum that emerges out of my data. At one end are women who are able to exert high agency to negotiate successfully in their favor, in most spheres of bargaining that I have explored. These women portray themselves in terms of more forceful character traits such as 'confident', 'not a pushover', 'strong willed', 'independent' and 'dominating' while describing their decision making processes. At the other end of the continuum are women who are least able to exert agency to negotiate in their own favor having all or most spheres of bargaining tilting towards the husbands' benefit. There is one such woman in my study and her husband describes her as 'too soft', or 'not aggressive at all', therefore being associated with meeker character traits than the women who are most successful in their negotiations. Most women fall in between the two extremes making reasonable, if not excessively successful attempts, in the confluence of multiple structures, in negotiating in their own favor. The women in the middle associate themselves with temperate characteristics such as 'caring', 'not a nag', 'understanding'. None of these women who fall in the middle described themselves in terms of the forceful character traits that the women who were most successful in negotiating described themselves. It is important to understand the consequence that these traits have in the exercise of agency for these women, as nudging them in particular directions within the range of rules and norms governing multiple structures.

When couples negotiate at multiple points of hierarchy, couples for most part do not perceive one structural hierarchy as more important than the other in the bargaining process. Gender, caste, class and ethnicity emerge and submerge in unique combinations for each couple. However some trends can be teased out. When the woman belongs to a higher class than her husband, class differences seem to have a much larger impact on the bargaining process,

subverting gender and other hierarchies. Most negotiations bend in favor of the wives (Sameera and Meeta) when they belong to a higher class than their husband and both partners in the marriage are keenly aware of their class disparities and the consequences it has on their marriage. When the husband belongs to a higher class than the wife, class differences make their way into the bargaining process in modicum (for instance in wedding expenses, or financial decision making) but not in the overwhelming manner that it does when the wife belongs to the higher class. Caste hierarchies are important in negotiation when the social distance between the castes are large, and has an overwhelming importance in the case where the wife was a forward caste and the husband a Scheduled caste. Caste hierarchies have no implication on the bargaining process when the social distances between the castes are narrow. There is one case of ethnic hierarchy between the couple (Chanchal and Uday) and it makes reasonable inroads in the negotiation process, favoring the wife who has the ethnic advantage. All negotiations in this sample also, are made in the intersections of nebulous structures holding multiple meanings; with individual character traits having a ramification on the way agency is displayed. Thus we see Esha's sensitive, empathetic character trait deliberately turning negotiations in favor of her husband despite her caste advantage while Chanchal's more abrasive trait leads her to sometimes rub her caste advantage at her husband's nose to turn negotiations in her favor.

More or less, women in my sample are able to negotiate with reasonable success in bringing down wedding expenses and in maintaining and transmitting their own culture (wedding rituals, language, diet). However division of labor still seems to be steeped in traditional gender norms especially for young mothers who often have to leave lucrative careers after the birth of their children and unfortunately financial negotiations are closely linked to the career choices they make and therefore tilt largely in favor the husbands for these women.

Residential patterns were largely patrilocal for those who have parents living in the city. However there is a possibility of transformation in this sphere, one couple leading the way of creating a new choice of matrilocal residence transuded with new meanings and purpose.

***LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY***

The study has shortcomings. (1) The sample took a middle class bias. This is because of the demand that every participant is conversant in spoken English so that the researcher and participant are able to communicate freely without requiring a third party interpreter. Since there are several multitudes of ethnic languages in India that the researcher could not be conversant in, it was important that the respondents be able to communicate in English. Spoken English is mainly the reserve of the middle class in India and used as a link language by the middle class. Also by virtue of the researchers own social location as a middle class woman, the social networks used for recruitment drew mostly from the middle class strata. The sample would have been far richer had it recruited more from the lower and upper class strata as well. (2) All the couples in the study were intact 'love' marriages that had eventual social approval from the parents of the respondents. For most of the couples there was an initial resistance to their marriages by their parents, but they came around. Negotiation that takes place with such resolution can perhaps be more harmonious. For example, there was no exchange of dowry at all between any of the couples in the study. In the negotiations over dowry, therefore, since the spouses were in love and had managed to convince their parents to the wedding, it may have been easier to take a no-dowry stance. It would have been useful to have a contrast of negotiations over dowry between the couples this study in intact love marriages and those that were in conflicted marriages. (3) The study did not use age as a variable that could possibly impact bargaining between the spouses. In this research all the wives were younger to their

husbands or of equal age. It would have been interesting to see what shape negotiations can take for instance, when the wife is older to the husband. Also it did not factor in age gap between the spouses as a possible variable in impacting bargaining. A woman who is much younger to her husband may have less negotiating power vis-à-vis her husband than when the age gap is narrower. In this study there was only one couple with a considerable age gap of eight years with the wife being younger. In this case, the wife had more negotiating power. But one such case is not enough to draw any conclusions. It would have been useful to have contrasted negotiation between couples with narrow age gap and those with large age gaps between them.

***CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY***

The study has made important contributions. (1) It is the first study to explore intra household bargaining relations within intermarriages in urban India. Social Science in India spends most of its time, energy and funds in the study of rural India. Journal publications are reflective of this trend as for example less than 5 % of articles cover urban themes in important journals like Contributions to Indian Sociology (Sabharwa 2006). While study of concerns of rural India is vital, one needs to give voices to urban women and men to better understand their lives as well. (2) It has made a key input to intra household bargaining literature by being the first of its kind to show empirically how a variety of individual personality traits can impact active negotiation between husband and wife within a household. (3) It enriches empirical studies on intersectionality by demonstrating how agency emerges in negotiations in the confluence of multiple ambiguous structures. It not only takes into account multiple structures of caste, class, gender, and ethnicity as affecting social life but also treats every structure in the study not as a monolith but as ambiguous and reveals agency emerging in the convergence of these manifold indistinct structures. An empirical demonstration of such complexity in

intersectional research was challenging. (4) The study also provides an opportunity to enrich intersectional theory by incorporating within its theoretical fold stratification systems that infer equality along with systems that infer hierarchy, as both these together are important to understand the lived reality of spouses within an intermarriage in India. Intersectional theory has traditionally focused on inequality. However, since the theory itself claims that intersectionality is a simultaneous interplay of all positions an individual occupies, in the context of Indian society it would be impossible to ignore situations where individuals are positioned as equals in certain spheres along with hierarchical nature of their interactions in other spheres of stratification. To take into account the multiplicity of social locations, it therefore becomes important to give place to horizontal ties along with vertical ties in intersectional theory, as it is a simultaneous interplay of both which can fully capture life in India. (5) It provides a nuanced understanding of the emergence of agency by drawing a continuum between circumscribed agency and transformative agency with some actions lying in between the two categories. The foundation of distinction between the two categories is innovation in action. Circumscribed agency draws on pre-existing norms for exercise of choice. Transformative agency also draws from pre-existing norms but applies it to new contexts to make new rules or norms not previously available in society in the exercise of that choice. Transformative action has been used in the study of family change but this is the first study of its kind to draw a continuum of agency on the foundation of innovation in action exercised by the actors.

### *SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH*

My study leaves out of its purview an integral part of marriages, that of emotions. In my literature review I make a note of Allendorf's (2010) study of how quality of marital relationships impacted women's access to maternal health care services. Similarly Basu (2006)

draws attention to how romantic relationships can reduce inequalities and subvert formal rules and therefore asks for "love" to be taken as an as empowering a demographic variable as income or education. Considering that the couples I study are not in traditionally arranged marriages but marriages of choice, popularly known as "love" marriages in India, it seems to be almost ironical on my part to not ask about love and how it impacts their negotiations with one another. However, none of the couples talk about love voluntarily, in my conversations with them. Once, one of the women (Meeta) did passingly mention love and if I had probed, it did have the potential of a rich source of data. I recall her having said, "You know maybe he just loves me more", when she was reminiscing about how much her husband accommodated to her needs. I was regretfully too busy with gender, caste, class, ethnicity and individual personal attributes to follow up on love. Meeta is the only one who voluntarily mentioned love. None of the other thirty-five men and women in my sample bring it up in discussions about their negotiations. Maybe, because it's a cultural inhibition to talk openly about love between men and women or maybe one does not discuss what is taken most for granted. Either way, it needs probing and if I were to re-do my fieldwork, I would try to draw out conversations on how love can possibly turn around gender or class or caste hierarchies and influence negotiations, because without a doubt it must have an influence. The work can be more complete by using the perspective of the sociology of emotions and I look forward to a post-doctoral opportunity to do so. In the meanwhile I am happy to bring out the nuances in which the multiple and often ambiguous structures of gender, caste, class, and ethnicity intertwine in the bargaining relationships between these couples, agency emerging in the confluence of these structures with personal character traits nudging choices one way or the other within their ambit.

# REFERENCES


Agarwal, Bina. 1997. "Bargaining and Gender Relations: Within and Beyond the Household." Feminist Economics 3(1):1-51.

Agarwal, Bina. 1994. *A Field of one's Own.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Allen, Sarah M. and Alan J. Hawkins. 1999. "Maternal Gate keeping: Mother's Beliefs and Behaviors that inhabit greater father involvement in Family Work." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 61:199-212.

Allendorf, Keera. 2010. "The Quality of Family Relationships and Use of Maternal Health Care Services in India." *Studies in Family Planning* 41(4):263-276.

Baca Zinn, M. and Bonnie Thornton Dill. 1996. "Theorizing Difference from Multicultural Feminism." *Feminist Studies* 22:321-333.

Baruah, Sanjib. 1994. "The State and Separatist Militancy in Assam-Winning a Battle and Losing a War?" *Asian Survey-Review of Contemporary Asian Affairs* 34(10):836-877.

Basu, Alka Malwade. 2006. "The Emotions of Reproductive Health." *Population and Development Review* 32(1):107-121.

Baviskar, Amita. 1995. *In the Belly of the River.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Beitelle, Andre. 1992. *Society and Politics in India: Essays in a Comparative Perspective.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Becker, Gary S. 1991. *A Treatise on the Family*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Berreman, Gerald D. 1991. "The Brahminical View of Caste," in Dipankar Gupta (ed.) *Social Stratification*, pp. 84-92. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Bianchi, Suzanne, Melissa Milkie, Mary Liana, and John Robinson. 2000. "Is Anyone Doing the Housework? Trends in the Gender Division of Household Labor." *Social Forces* 79(1):191-228.

Blair-Loy, M. 2003. *Competing Devotions: Career and Family Among Women Executives*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bose, Nirmal Kumar. 1965. "Calcutta: A Premature Metropolis." *Scientific American* 213(3):91-103.

Bose, Nirmal Kumar. 1965. "Class and Caste." *The Economic Weekly* 17(35):1337-1340.

Bowleg, Lisa. 2008. "When Black+Lesbian+Woman ± Black Lesbian Woman: The Methodological Challenges of Qualitative and Quantitative Intersectionality Research." *Sex Roles* 59:312-325.

Bougle, C. 1991. "The Essence and Reality of the Caste System," in Dipankar Gupta (ed.) *Social Stratification*, pp. 64-73. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1997. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourguignon, Francois and Pierre-Andre Chiappori. 1992. "Collective models of Household Behavior: An introduction." *European Economic Review* 36:355-364.

Brah, A. and Phoenix, A. 2004. "Ain't I a Woman: Revisiting Intersectionality." *Journal of International Women's Studies* 5(3):75-86.

Brass, Paul. 1985. "Ethnic Groups and the State," in Paul Brass (ed.) *Ethnic Groups and the State*, pp. 34-55. London: Croom Helm.

Brewer, Rose M., Cecilia Conrad, and Mary C. King. 2002. "The Complexities and Potential of Theorizing Gender, Caste, Race and Class." *Feminist Economics* 8(2):3-18.

Brewer, Rose M. 1993. "Theorizing Race, Class and Gender: The New Scholarship of Black Feminist Intellectuals and Black Women's Labor," in S. James and A. Busia (eds.) *Theorizing Black Feminisms: The Visionary Pragmatism of Black Women*, pp. 55-76. London: Routledge.

Brines, Julie. 1994. "Economic Dependency, Gender and the Division of Labor at Home." *American Journal of Sociology* 100(3):625-88.

Brown, Elsa Barkley. 1995. "Imagining Lynching: African American Women Communities of Struggle and Collective Memory," in G. Smitherman (ed.) *African American Women speak out on Anita Hill -Clarence Thomas*, pp. 75-103. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

Burt, Ronald S. 1982. *Toward a Structural theory of Action.* New York: Academic Press.

Chawla, Anita J. 1993. "Intrahousehold Resource Allocation: A Principal-Agent Analysis with Empirical Evidence." Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Economics, University of Michigan.

Chauhan, Richa. 2007. "Seeking a Suitable March: Economic Development, Gender and Matrimonial Advertisements in India," in Misra, Kamal, K. and Janet Huber (eds.) *Recent Studies on Indian Women*, pp.152-170. Delhi: Rawat Publications.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 1990. *Black Feminist Thought*. New York: Routledge.

Cormack, M.L. 1991. *She Who Rides a Peacock*. Bombay: Asia Publication House.

Cudarez, Gloria Holguin and Lynet Uttal. 1999. "Intersectionality and Indepth Interviews: Methodological Strategies For Analyzing Race, Class and Gender." *Race, Gender & Class* 6(3):156-176.

Crenshaw, Kimberly. 2000. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Anti Racist Politics,” in Joy James and T Denean Sharply-Whiting (eds) *The Black Feminist Reader* , pp. 120-153. Massachusetts :Blackwell Publishers .

Crenshaw, Kimberly. 1995. “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against women of Color,” in Kimberley Crenshaw (ed*.) Critical Race theory: Key Writings that formed the Movement* , pp. 24-52. New York: New Press.

Daniel, S.C. 1996. “Ethnicity, Language and Nationalism: Some Conceptual Issues,” in M.M. Agrawal (ed.) *Ethnicity, Culture and Nationalism in North East India*, pp. 112-134. New Delhi: Indus Publishing House.

Das, Veena. 1982. *Structure and Cognition: Aspects of Hindu Caste and Ritual*. Bombay: Oxford University Press.

Dasgupta, Jyotindra. 1970. *Language Conflict and Nation Development*. Bombay: Oxford University Press.

Davis, Kathy. 2008. “Intersectionality as Buzzword: A Sociology of Science Perspective on What Makes a Feminist Theory Successful.” *Feminist Theory* 9(1):67-85.

Devos, Thierry and Mahzarin R Banaji. 2005. “American = White?” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 88:447-466.

Deaux, Kay. 2001. “Social Identity,” in *Encyclopedia of Women and Gender*, pp. 1-9. New York: Academic Press.

Desai, I.P. and A.M. Shah. 1992. *Division and Hierarchy: An Overview of Caste in Gujarat*. Delhi: Hindustan Publishers.

Dunn, Jennifer L. 1998. “Defining Women: Notes Toward an Understanding of Structure and Agency in the Negotiation of Sex.” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 26:479-510.

Dyson, T. and M. Moore. 1983. “On Kinship Structures, Female Autonomy and Demographic Behavior in India.” *Population and Development Review* 9(1):35-60.

Ferree, Myra Marx. 1990. “Beyond Separate Spheres: Feminism and Family Research.” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 52(4):866-884.

Fierlbeck, K. 1995. “Getting Representation Right for Women in Development: Accountability and the Articulation of Women’s Interests.” *IDS Bulletin* 26(3):23-30.

Fleck, Susan E. 1997. “Choice or Bargain ? Married Women’s Labor Force Participation in Honduras,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Economics, American University.

Ghurya, G.S. 1991. "Features of the Caste System," in Dipankar Gupta (ed.) *Social Stratification*, Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Giddens, Anthony. 1984. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Gipson, Jessica D. and Michelle J. Hindin. 2007. "Marriage Means Having Children and Forming Your Family, so what is the Need for Discussion? Communication and Negotiation of Childbearing Preferences among Bangladeshi Couples." *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 9(2):185-198.

Gipson, Jessica D. and Michelle J. Hindin. 2009. "The Effect of Husbands' and Wives' Fertility Preferences on the Likelihood of a Subsequent Pregnancy, Bangladesh 1998-2003." *Population Studies* 63(2):135-146.

Glazer, Nathan and Daniel P. Moynihan (eds.) 1975. *Ethnicity Theory and Experience.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Glazer, Nathan and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. 1970. *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians and Irish of New York City*. Cambridge: MIT and Harvard University Press.

Greenstein,Theodore N. 1996. "Gender Ideology and Perceptions of the Fairness of the Division of Household Labor: Effects on Marital Equality." *Social Forces* 74:1029-1042.

Gupta, Dipankar. 1991. "Continuous Hierarchies and Discrete Castes," in Dipankar Gupta (ed.) *Social Stratification*, pp. 1-23. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Hardgrave, Robert L. 1965. "The Riots in Tamilnad: Problems and Prospects of India's Language Crisis." *Asian Survey* 5:399-407.

Hardgrave, Robert L. Jr. 1991. "Urbanization and the Structure of Caste," in M.S.A. Rao, C. Bhatt and L.N. Kadekar (eds.) A *Reader in Urban Sociology*, pp. 58-89. New Delhi: Orient Longman.

Harnett, Donald N., Larry L. Cummings, and W. Clay Hamner. 1973. "Personality, Bargaining Style and Payoff in Bilateral Monopoly Bargaining Among European Managers." *Sociometry* 36(3):325-345.

Hays, S. 1996. *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Herberg,W. 1955. *Protestant, Catholic, Jews*. New York: Doubleday.

Hochschild, Arlie. 1989. *The Second Shift*. New York: Avon Books.

hooks, bell. 1990. *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics*. Boston. MA: South End Press.

hooks, bell. 1981. *Ain't I a woman*. Boston. MA: South End Press.

Jackson, C. 1996. "Rescuing Gender from the Poverty Trap." *World Development* 24(3):489-504.

Johnson-Hanks, Jennifer A., Christine A. Bachrach, S. Philip Morgan, and Hans-Peter Kohler. 2011. *Understanding Family Change and Variation: Toward a Theory of Conjunctural Action*. New York: Springer.

Kabeer, Naila. 1999. "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment." *Development and Change* 30:435-464.

Kabeer, Naila. 2000. *The Power to Choose: Bangladeshi Women and Labor Market Decisions in London and Dhaka*. London: Verso Press.

Katz, Elizabeth. 1997. "The Intra-Household Economics of Voice and Exit." *Feminist Economics* 3(3):25-46.

Kaur, Ravinder. 2008. "Missing Women and Brides from Faraway: Social Consequences of the Skewed Sex Ratio in India," Working Paper, Indian Institute of Technology, Department of Sociology, New Delhi.

Khare, R.S. 1991. "The Untouchable Version: Evaluating an Ascetic Ideal," Dipankar Gupta (ed.) *Social Stratification*, pp. 176-182. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Kilbourne, B., Paula England, and Kurt Baron. "Effects of Individual, Occupational, and Industrial Characteristics on Earnings: Intersections of Race, Class and Gender." *Social Forces* 72:1149-76.

King, D. 1989. "Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The context of Black Feminist Ideology." *Signs* 14(1):42-72.

King, James E. 2003. "The Structure of Personality Differences is not Uniquely Human." *International Review of Sociology* 13(3):533-554.

Kohn, Melvin K., Lulu Li, Weidong Wang, and Yin Yue. 2007. "Social Structure and Personality during the Transformation of Urban China: A Preliminary Report of an Ongoing Research Project." *Comparative Sociology* 6:389-429.

Kohn, Melvin L., Valerie Khmelko, Vladimir Paniotto, and Ho-Fung Hung. 2004. "Social Structure and Personality During the Process of Radical Social Change: A Study of Ukraine in Transition." *Comparative Sociology* 3:239-284.

Kolenda, Pauline. 1991. "The Ideology of Purity," in Dipankar Gupta (ed.) *Social Stratification*, pp. 60-63. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Kothari, Rajni. 1989. "Ethnicity," in David Kumar and Santasilan Kadirgamar (eds.) *Ethnicity: Identity, Conflict and Crises*, pp. 125-153. Hong Kong: Arena Press.

Lindsay, Keisha. 2005. "Reading Crises Narratives: Intersectionality in the Discourse of Marginalized Black Men," paper presented at political theory workshop, University of Chicago.

Loehlin, John C. 2011. "Genetic and Environmental Structures of Personality: A Cluster-Analysis Approach." *Personality and Individual Differences* 51(5):662-666.

Lorde, Audre. 1984. *Sister Outsider*. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press.

Luke, Ruth, Sidney R. Schuler, Bui Thi Thanh Mai, Pham Vu Thien, and Tran Hung Minh. 2007. "Exploring Couple Attributes and Attitudes and Marital Violence in Vietnam." *Violence Against Women* 13(5):5-27.

Lundberg, Shelly and Pollak, Robert. 1996. "Bargaining and Distribution in Marriage." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 10(4):139-158.

Ludvig, Alice. 2006. "Differences between Women? Intersecting Voices in a Female Narrative." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13:246-258.

Lynet, Uttal and Gloria Holguin Cuádraz. 1999. "Intersectionality and In-Depth Interviews: Methodological Strategies for Analyzing and Race, Class, and Gender." *Race Gender and Class* 6(3): 156-186.

Malhotra, Anju M., Sidney R. Schuler, and Carol Boender. 2002. "Measuring Women's Empowerment as a Variable International Development," background paper presented at the workshop on Poverty and Gender: New Perspectives, World Bank, Washington DC.

Malhotra, Anju, Reeve Vannaman, and Sunita Kishore. 1995. "Fertility Dimensions of Patriarchy and Development in India." *Population and Development Review* 21(2):281-305.

Manser, Marilyn G. and Murray Brown. 1980. "Marriage and Household Decision-Making: A Bargaining Analysis." *International Economic Review* 21(1):31-44.

Marlowf, David, Kenneth J. Gergen, and Anthony N. Doob. 1966. "Opponent's Personality, Expectations of Social Interaction, and Interpersonal Bargaining." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 3(2): 206-213.

Marriot, Mckim 1991. "Multiple References in Indian Caste Systems," in Dipankar Gupta (ed.) *Social Stratification* pp. 49-59. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Mahajan, Gurpreet. 2002. *The Multicultural Path. Issues of Diversity and Discrimination*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

McCall, Leslie. 2005. "The Complexity of Intersectionality." *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30(3):1771-1800.

McElroy, Marjorie B. and Mary Jean Horney. 1981. "Nash-Bargained Household Decisions: Toward a Generalization of the Theory of Demand." *International Economic Review* 22(2):333-349.

Milton, Gordon. 1964. *Assimilation in American Life*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Morgan, Philip S., Sharon Stash, Herbert L. Smith, and Karen O. Mason. 2002. "Muslim and Non-Muslim Differences in Female Autonomy and Fertility: Evidence from Four Asian Countries." *Population and Development Review* 28(3):515-537.

Mukherjee, S.N. 1991. "Bhadraloks of Bengal," in Dipankar Gupta (ed.) *Social Stratification*, pp. 176-182. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Mullins, L. 1997. *On Our Own Terms: Race Class and Gender in the Lives of African American Women.* New York: Routledge.

Nelson, Julie A. 1995. "Economic Theory and Feminist Theory: Comments on Chapters by Polachek, Ott and Levin," in Edith Kuiper and Jolande Sap (eds.) *Out of the Margin: Feminist Perspectives on Economics*, pp. 161-175. London and New York: Routledge.

Paterson, Robert Edward. 1985. "Modelling the Division of Labor and Assets within Peasant Households," M.Sc. Thesis, Department of Economics, Wadham College.

Paul, Friedrich. 1962. "Language and Politica in India." *Daedulus* 91(3):543-559.

Pettigrew, Joyce. 1991. "The Jats of Punjab," in Dipankar Gupta (ed.) *Social Stratification*, pp. 163-172. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Phadnis, Urmila. 1989. *Ethnicity and Nation Building in South Asia*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Quick, E. Heather. 1998. "Shaping Men's and Women's Career Trajectories: The Intersections of Personality, Family, and Opportunity Structures," Ph.D. Dissertation, Dept. of Human Development and Family Studies, Cornell University.

Shenk, Mary K. 2007. "Dowry and Public Policy in Contemporary India." *Hum Nat* 18:242-263.

South, Scott J. and Glenna Spitze. 1994. "Housework in Marital and Non Marital Households." *American Sociological Review* 59:327-347.

Srinivasan, Padma and Gary R. Lee. 2004. "The Dowry System in Northern India: Women's Attitudes and Social Change." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66(5):108-117.

Reskin, B.F. 2002. "Rethinking Employment Discrimination and its Remedies," in M F Gullian (ed.) *The New Economic Sociology: Development in the Emerging Field*, pp. 24-45. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Ridgeway, C. L. 1997. "Interaction and Conservation of Gender Inequality: Considering Employment." *Annual Sociological Review* 62:218-235.

Rubenstein, Ariel. 1982. "Perfect Equilibrium in a Bargaining Model." *Econometrica* 50:97-110.

Saroja, K. 1999. "Intercaste Marriage and Social Dynamics in India: A critique." *The Indian Journal of Social Work* 2:183-192.

Sabharwal, Gopa. 2006. *Ethnicity and Class: Social Divisions in an Indian City*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Samman, Emma and Maria Emma Santos. 2009. "Agency and Empowerment: A Review of Concepts, Indicators and Empirical Evidence," background paper prepared for the Human Development Report in Latin America and Caribbean.

Schermerhorn, Richard. 1978. *Ethnic Plurality in India.* Tuscan, Arizona: University of Arizona Press.

Seiz, Janet. 1991. "The Bargaining Approach and Feminist Methodology." *Review of Radical Political Economics* 23(1 & 2):22-29.

Sen, Amartya. 1995. *Inequality Reexamined.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sewell, William H, Jr. 1992. "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation." *American Journal of Sociology* 98(1):1-29.

Sharda, B. 1990. "Marriage Markets and Matrimonial Match Making among Asian Indians of United States." *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* 20:21-29.

Sizemore, David S. 2004. "Ethnic Inclusion and Exclusion: Managing the Language of Hispanic Integration in a Rural Community." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35:534-570.

Smith, Barbara. 1990. "Racism and Women Studies," in G. Anzaldua (ed.) *Making Face, Making Soul*, pp. 35-60. San Francisco: Aunt Lutte Foundation Books.

Sobo, Elisa J. 1995. *Choosing Unsafe Sex: Aids Risk Denial Among Disadvantaged Women*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Sollors, Werner (ed.). 1996. *Theories of Ethnicity: A Classical Reader*. Houndsmills: Macmillan Press Ltd.

Srinivas, M.N. 1991. "Varna and Caste," in Dipankar Gupta (ed.) *Social Stratification*, pp. 38-34. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Srinivas, M.N. 1962. *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*. Delhi: Asia Publishing House.

Srinivas, M.N. 1966. *Social Change in Modern India.* CA: University of California Press.

Suba, T.B. 1996. “Ethnicity Culture and Nationalism In North East India.” in M.M. Agarwal (ed.) *Ethnicity, Culture, and Nationalism in North East India*, pp. 114-125. New Delhi. Indus Publishing House.

Warner, W. Lloyd and Leo Srole. 1965. *The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups*. New Haven: Yale University Press. (Originally published 1945).

Weiner, Myron. 1978. *The Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

West, Candace and Don Zimmerman. 1987. “Doing Gender.” *Gender & Society* 1(2):125-151.

Zerai, Assata. 2000. “Agents of Knowledge and Action.” *Cultural Dynamics* 12(2):182-222.