

**Women Bargaining with Patriarchy in Rural
Pakistan: A Case Study of Khairpur, Sindh**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates how young married women in rural Sindh commonly strategize and negotiate with patriarchy. I set out to elaborate the kinship system in the villages of Khairpur, Sindh in order to understand women's lives in different phases such as puberty, marriage, motherhood and when they become mothers-in-law. A theoretical framework informed by Deniz Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of 'the patriarchal bargain' supported by Sylvia Walby's (1990, 2011) notion of 'private patriarchy' or 'private gender regime' is utilized to explore women's bargaining strategies for survival. Between June and September of 2012, I conducted fieldwork in six different villages in Khairpur district using observation, interviews with women aged between 15-30 years and three focus group discussions. Based on women's accounts and on observation of village life, I focus on the negative consequences of women's location within consanguineous marriages, the gendered division of labour and the extended family system. Women's situation is further exacerbated by low level of education and early marriages which burden their lives from a very young age. The study reveals the strong relationship between poverty and the perpetuation of patriarchy; all the cultural practices that contribute to women's subordination are designed to counter social insecurity. The strategies that women employ for their survival centre on improving their esteem before their family members such as attention to household tasks, producing children, and doing craft work to generate extra money for the family's well-being. These conditions are usually seen as evidence of women's subordination, but they are also actively adopted strategies for survival where accommodation to patriarchy is what wins them approval. I conclude that women's life-long struggle is in fact a technique of negotiating with patriarchy, and, in so doing, they not only internalize the culture which rests on their subordination but also reproduce it in older age in exercising power by oppressing other junior women.

Key words: Patriarchy, Sindh, Women, Patriarchal Bargain, Power and Oppression

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Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my parents who bore the burden of raising and adorning me with the ornament of education. I wish they were alive to see that their struggle is finally bearing fruit.

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is an original piece of work and has been carried out according to the rules and regulations of the University of York. No journal articles have been published, but two journalistic articles: 'Terrible tradition: She is too young for it' and 'Society: The real support' have been published in Dawn Newspaper.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In this thesis, I investigate the patriarchal structure of the villages of Khairpur and explore women's strategies for survival in the stronghold of patriarchy. I analyse how kinship and practices embedded in local culture help in the perpetuation of patriarchy and shape women's subordination. While I focus on young married women, I also consider their experiences in the context of women's wider life course from puberty to older age, when they become mothers-in-law and reproduce the same oppression they themselves had suffered.

My motivation for this study is based on my own lived experience; I grew up in a middle class family¹ living in a small city where one is expected to follow cultural norms even if s/he does not believe in them. My family was neither very traditional nor very modern. We were socialised and raised without any kind of discrimination between the siblings; specifically by my father, who believed in gender equality and treated all of his daughters as equal to his sons. I had a big family and my father was the only breadwinner. It was very difficult for him to provide us with the comforts of life with limited resources, thus he prioritized education and health. My family's real crises began after his death; I was 16 years old and pursuing higher secondary education. In a society where a patriarch is supposed to feed and protect his family, his premature demise can be like taking shelter away from the family; my family was in such a situation. The only person who I saw struggling to provide us with the same life as my father did was a woman – my mother. Whenever I see a duck with her ducklings, I am reminded of my mother, who was looking after us, and keeping us secure in the same way. For almost ten years after my father's death, my mother left no stone unturned in finding ways to invest in her children's education. Probably to her, it was the only way in which she could change her children's destiny. Her ten years of solitary struggle had made her tired, and one day, out of the blue, she bid farewell and left us. Her death was not just the death of a woman; it was the death of the head of the family. We were once again deprived of the shelter that we had

¹ The class system in Pakistan is divided into three main categories namely upper class, middle class and lower class. People's status can vary within one specific class.

constructed through much struggle, but this time with one significant difference, that by the time of her death she had succeeded in completing the majority of her tasks and her children were well equipped with education, which strengthened them in dealing with life on their own.

Although my mother had limited literacy, she had strategized to make her family's survival possible with very few resources. She succeeded in equipping us with education which she thought would enable us to escape from difficult circumstances, giving us the confidence and sense to deal with challenging situations as well as providing us with economic opportunities. This worked well in my case; my mother's support and encouragement took me through the higher levels of education one after another, which indeed created more opportunities and options for me in life, in other words a woman had become a means of empowering another woman. This is very rare in the part of the world where I was living. Therefore, I am the only woman from my city who reached the highest level of education with an honourable academic job and gained the opportunity to pursue a doctoral degree in the UK. It has often made me feel proud, but on the other hand it has also made me feel guilty. Why only me, why not others as well? Why are only a few women given access to resources while this right is snatched from others?

Like every other candidate particularly those from eastern countries, pursuing a PhD was also a strenuous process for me. I was born and bred in a small city of rural Sindh, Pakistan; although it had all the required facilities, the standard of those facilities was compromised ultimately affecting quality of life. Pakistan's education system is divided into public and private as in the UK, but unlike the UK the public education system in Pakistan lags far behind from private sector and suffers from negligence and lack of monitoring by the authorities. Therefore, people from the upper and middle classes educate their children in private schools whereas people from lower and lower middle classes have to send their children to public schools due to financial constraints. In urban areas of Pakistan, approximately 41 per cent go to public schools and 59 per cent go to private schools, whereas in rural areas, 74 per cent of students go to public schools while 26 per cent go to private schools, this includes Madrasas as well (Pakistan Economic Survey 2013-14). I was from one of those families who could not afford the luxury of educating their children in private schools. However, my father took special interest in our studies: on one hand he

could not afford to send us to private schools, but on the other hand he did not want to compromise on our education. He mentored me until I grew enough to understand my studies, as soon as he realised that I was on track to be able to handle my studies alone, he distanced himself. Owing to the negligence and corruption in the public sector education system, the standard of education in rural areas is even worse than in urban areas. My schooling was based on rote learning and expectedly, it did not add to my intellectual capacity; it was all about reading chapters, memorising answers and taking an exam at the end of every year, there was no emphasis on true understanding. My family's financial condition meant we had to compromise on almost everything; I strongly believed that education could help me fight against the odd situation my family and I were caught in. I wanted to acquire the best education in order to change my situation completely and forever, but contrary to my expectations, my education was not contributing to my learning.

Pakistan is divided into four major provinces based on ethnicity. The dilemma of a Pakistani child is that s/he has to master more than one language in order to communicate in personal and professional life. For example, if a child's mother tongue is Sindhi, s/he has to learn the national language – Urdu – to communicate with his friends and teachers, s/he also has to learn English – the official language of the country – for written communication or taking any exams. English language is compromised in public schools specifically in rural areas, where even if the syllabus and courses are designed in English, the medium of communication is still Urdu or Sindhi. The teacher would read the course and translate it in Urdu or Sindhi for students' comprehension. This, I believe, affects a child's understanding; his/her intellectual capability remains hidden because s/he cannot understand the knowledge written in course books. Those who are educated in private schools perform better as the medium of communication goes hand in hand with the curriculum. My abilities were constantly affected by this phenomenon. The situation was exacerbated during late 1980s and early 90s when Arabic was added as a mandatory course in the public schools system, I now had four languages to learn. My class fellows and I would often play around with words and letters from these languages rather than gaining an understanding of the course material and enhancing our learning. This resulted in us learning national and regional languages rather than the one that was the most important for everybody's future, English. I had been attracted to English since

childhood; I wanted to know exactly what was written in books, not what was translated to me. My interest and curiosity developed with the passage of time, particularly when the teacher did not complete the syllabus within the given time and would leave it unfinished as exams approached. I would watch TV shows and programs in English, note sentences in daily use and try to parrot them in order to learn the language, but that was not enough. I relied on reading, memorising, and then writing in order to pass exams, but my thirst for learning the language remained unquenched. It was during my undergraduate studies when I realised that my situation was going to be no different than other powerless women; those who complete their undergraduate studies and marry soon after that. I was upset by this because I always wanted to make a difference. I joined a private academy in the final year of my undergraduate studies for which I still thank my mother, who enabled this through her support. I benefitted from this as after two years' of tutoring I was now able to understand the language properly and speak short sentences in daily use. I was on track but the journey was too long, the gap in my education was to take years to remedy if not decades.

I started my PhD with my past academic deprivations intact. The flow of information from every side had upset me, and a huge gap between my fellow students and me, and particularly my teachers in CWS, in terms of their writing and language, further disheartened me. I found myself at the bottom, they were on the top, and there was a long distance that I had to crawl. I was terrified to realise that, and for the first two years I suffered from the insecurity of not being able to complete my PhD. Actually at the same time, I was filling the academic gaps unconsciously; throughout the PhD process I did not realise that the unlimited flow of information and exposure to resources were actually the means I was deprived of in my country. My intellectual abilities had remained quiet and unmoved, yet as soon as I was provided with the platform of the UK academic environment, my intellect started to respond. Most importantly, my academic writing, which was missing throughout my life, started to be sharpened. My learning had started from the very first day; for example, I had written my methodology chapter between October and December 2012, and when I came to redraft the chapter in August 2014, I realised how much progress I had made in my writing, thinking and understanding, and had to rewrite the entire chapter. It had been, as my supervisor calls it, a 'steep learning curve' for me.

I had started my PhD with the same approach without being aware of it until my understanding sharpened, and that happened after I came across feminist literature and finally understood academic writings. For example, in my life before the PhD, I had never read any feminist literature, not even novels, so the feminist inside stayed sleeping until awakened by those who had contributed to the literature on gender inequality, e.g. Christine Delphy and Sylvia Walby, and provided the unconscious feminist in me with food for thought. My fieldwork further added to my critical thinking because it was there when I gained practical experience of what women's lives were like, and analysing the data was the final awakening for the sleeping feminist inside me.

Data for social indicators in Pakistan have been showing how deprived and disadvantaged women are in this part of the world. The further one examines the data the more deplorable a picture it presents, showing how marginalised women are. For example, the female literacy rate in Pakistan is shocking: according to the Pakistan Economic Survey (2013-14) the total female literacy rate in Pakistan is 48 per cent, which means less than half of female population is literate, while the majority does not have access to this opportunity. The female participation rate in schools radically drops in middle and higher levels of education. The situation is worse in rural areas where only 37 per cent of women are literate. In the case of rural Sindh, where I have been living, women's literacy rate drops down drastically from 70 per cent in urban areas to 22 per cent in rural areas. A huge gap between urban and rural women's literacy not only disadvantages rural women but also affects them differently in terms of how they lead their lives, how they negotiate with patriarchy and how they cope with problems.

Areas in Sindh can be divided into three main categories according to the access to and provision of social services. In the first category fall big cities which are well equipped with education, employment, health services and modern technologies. In the second category are towns where people have moderate social provision; people living in those towns often send their children to big cities for the purpose of education and employment. In the third category are rural areas – villages – with minimal health, education and formal employment facilities, which make life more difficult than in other areas.

Until the age of 21 I lived in a small city called Jacobabad, which was the district headquarters, and belonged to the second category. Some part of my life was spent travelling between urban (first category) and rural (third category) areas, I was very attracted to the first category cities for my higher education and proper employment and finally moved to Hyderabad, the second largest city of Sindh province, to pursue my Master's degree. My encounters with urban women further made me compare urban women's lives with rural ones; in one part of the province, women were living with sound health and education facilities and, they were part of an active social environment while elsewhere, women were confined to their houses without proper health or education facilities. In urban areas such as Hyderabad, social life had no specific boundaries, women could mingle with the opposite sex in education or the work place, could adopt the latest fashion and more importantly, women from all classes had access to formal employment. In contrast, such things in rural areas were next to impossible.

If I were to classify women according to these categories, it would look like a pyramid; the top most part of the pyramid belongs to women living in urban areas with the most advantages in life, in the middle part are women [like me] who live in towns with middle level facilities, and the bottom part, which constitutes the major part of the pyramid, represents women living in villages. I was in the middle of the pyramid observing the top and the bottom, but whenever I took myself out of the middle and assessed the difference between the top and the bottom, I found a huge and disturbing contrast in women's lives. Such a contrast in rural and urban women's lives was definitely making an impact; negative for the former and positive for the latter. I had lived experiences of life at both the top and middle of the pyramid, but the bottom one remained unexplored, which constituted the major portion of the pyramid and was where women had the most difficult life. This encouraged me to investigate women's lives in the villages of Sindh which were characterised by a rigid form of patriarchy. Thus, my own lived experiences, my mother's struggle to help me in my life and my personal interest in marginalised women were my motivations for carrying out this research.

Throughout my academic life, I hardly came across any studies which could draw a clear but detailed picture of rural households. Although there are some studies that

present women's position in Pakistani society (Isran and Isran 2012; Sathar and Kazi 2000; Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001), these are mainly descriptive in nature and do not provide a detailed picture of household power distribution, which I was particularly interested in. It was not the case that knowledge of social relations within the household was completely missing; it was very much part of the studies of households in rural areas, but those studies focused more on the household as a whole than on the oppressed within it, concentrated more on culture rather than on how culture affects people, emphasized employment as a source of bargaining but ignoring those who do not have such opportunities but still strive to survive.

In other words, my study aims to bridge a gap in knowledge by placing young, married, unskilled, unemployed women with limited literacy at centre stage. These women constitute a huge majority in the province, taking a descriptive look at their lives or exploring only a specific part of their lives was not fair to them. I cannot boast that my study has made a huge contribution by exploring rural women's lives within the household, but I can claim that I have succeeded in investigating a portion of those women's lives which tells what their lives are like. Therefore, the study not only addresses a gap in knowledge but also serves my purpose of exploring rural women's lives.

The structure of the thesis represents women's lives in rural areas from childhood to womanhood and later on. In the next chapter, I present a review of the related literature on patriarchy and gender discrimination in South Asia in general and in Pakistan in particular. This chapter also introduces the theoretical framework that I have used to analyse the data which is informed by Deniz Kandiyoti's (1988) theory of the 'patriarchal bargain' and Sylvia Walby's (1990, 2011) 'private patriarchy'. Chapter 3 focuses on the methodological approach to the research. I discuss why I opted for qualitative research and what made me take a feminist perspective when analysing my data. I present the research process, sketching my journey from village to village, illustrating field challenges and how I faced them.

This is followed by my first analysis chapter (chapter 4); this chapter highlights how the kinship system prevalent in the villages affects women's lives. I elaborate on key characteristics of the kinship system such as patrilineity, patriarchy and extended family, and classify the two main forms of marriage on which this kinship system

rests; that is consanguineous and exchange marriages. I reveal economic and cultural factors that perpetuate these kinds of marriages and also address women's own views of them.

Chapter 5 examines women's household work, focusing on gendered division of labour inside the household, which is markedly asymmetrical. Three main ideas run through the chapter: how household work is valued, who controls it and who benefits from it. I offer an overview of how household work is done in the absence of technology, which makes women's tasks more time and energy consuming. I then move on to women's craft work, carried out in their free time, and demonstrate how it contributes to their family's welfare. I make extensive use of pictures in this chapter in order to illustrate the situation in which women live. Chapter 6 investigates the family's power structure. Analysing power through Steven Lukes' (1974, 2005) theory of power, I assess three forms of power i.e. naked, latent and hidden, operational in the patriarchal structure. However, I intend to see how women strategize and negotiate with power and articulate their desires in family decision-making processes. This chapter also addresses women's mobility issues but the centre of the argument is how women deal with restricted mobility; this includes a discussion on the extent to which women are able to strategize for countering the control over their mobility.

In chapter 7, I specifically draw out women's strategies for negotiating with patriarchy when they seem to be powerless. I argue that even though they are oppressed, they can use certain sources as strategies to survive. I also explore why the majority of the women adopt the strategy of least or no resistance and sum up the chapter with women's wishes for their daughters that are actually reflections of their present lives. Finally, in chapter 8, I summarise the significant elements of the study; in doing so, I point out the gaps in the literature about rural women and suggest where my study contributes to filling those gaps. I also recommend future directions for research which might be useful in adding more knowledge to the subject, and how a fuller picture of the rural patriarchal system might be drawn.

Chapter 2

Rural Pakistani Women in Context: Patriarchy and Poverty

Introduction

Patriarchalism is a global phenomenon which has variable structures and degrees. As a basic structure, Castells (1997, 2004) describes patriarchalism as institutionalized male authority over females and their children in the family. Globalisation, technological advances and the rise of feminist movements since the late 1960s have challenged the patriarchal family around the world (Castells 1997, 2004). However, the changes that have taken place during the twentieth century have not eradicated patriarchy from the world. Three main areas in the world still bear the burden of patriarchy: northern parts of South Asia particularly Hindu and Muslim societies, West Asia/North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. In terms of Asia, radical changes have eroded the power of fathers and husbands in East Asia to some degree, but Southeast Asia still has the basic features of patriarchy, while patriarchy is more entrenched in the South Asian region. In spite of the signs of crisis in most countries, patriarchy in South Asia has not disappeared with global social changes: it reigns centrally in most South Asian societies, particularly among Hindus and Muslims where male headed families are common and major decisions are still taken by men (Therborn 2004). This chapter highlights the form of patriarchy prevalent in South Asian societies, particularly Muslim societies, focusing on Pakistan. In this advanced era of the 21st century, Pakistan is known to have retained a rigid and resilient form of patriarchy. This leaves a question to be answered: what kind of life and social status do women endure under this unyielding form of traditional patriarchy? In this chapter, I try to answer this question by highlighting patriarchy in Pakistan in general and in rural areas in particular. I start by taking a descriptive approach to patriarchy in South Asia and discussing general trends in South Asian societies. I then analyse patriarchy in Pakistani society highlighting social indicators that reflect women's low social status. Informed by existing relevant studies, I develop a theoretical framework in order to explore women's survival strategies in this stronghold of patriarchy.

South Asian cultures share some features in common and are simultaneously different from each other in many ways, but particularly among Hindu-Muslim communities, the region is regarded as having some general and distinguishing characteristics. For example, it is primarily patrilineal with patrilocal residence, has severe gender inequality, and women are excluded from inheritance and succession: for them property is often replaced with dowry. Early marriages are common and contribute to men's control over women, domestic violence is widespread and is reinforced by male power (Agarwal 1994; Dube 1998, 2001; Ganesh and Risseuw 1998; Sathar and Kazi 2000; Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001; Khan and Hussain 2008). These can be seen as the defining features of South Asian patriarchy. Patriarchy in South Asia is, however, unequally spread; it is stronger and more rigid in rural than urban areas. Since the region is predominantly rural, a strict form of patriarchy persists in agrarian societies and is associated with the reproduction of kin groups, peasantry and the gendered division of labour (Moghadam 1992).

One of the common features of South Asian culture is the patrilocally extended family system, which is the fundamental unit of this patriarchal system. It provides the most senior man with power over everyone within the family (Kandiyoti 1988; Moghadam 1992). This old patriarchal form of the family has been dissolved in many parts of the world, but is still resilient in South Asian societies where the patriarch keeps his offspring together under his control as long as he can (Quddus 1995). This family type is very common in rural parts of South Asia because it is linked with the agrarian economy where the eldest man is the owner of property, particularly house and land, which gives him power over everybody else.

Patriarchy reigns in most South Asian cultures constraining every aspect of women's lives: their mobility, participation in family decisions, employment and education opportunities, all are curtailed and controlled (Sathar and Kazi 2000; Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001). Although the vast majority of South Asian people live in rural areas and rely on agriculture for their survival, this sector fails to provide rural people with regular and permanent employment. As a result there is a wide gap between rural and urban people and many of those living in rural areas experience extreme poverty (Agarwal 2010). This gap impacts particularly on women. Women living in rural areas of South Asia marry earlier than their urban counterparts and bear more children, which increases human resources in the shape of child labour to address

poverty. In addition, these women experience controlled mobility which bars them from accessing education and economic opportunities. This renders them isolated and powerless, and consequently they depend on their husbands and children for social status and well-being (Ahmed and Bould 2004; Agarwal 2010). However, the effects of patriarchy and the patriarchal family structure on women's lives are yet to be fully explored and investigated in the rural South Asian context particularly in Muslim societies. According to Kirmani (2011), approaches to understand gender inequality in Muslim countries need to be contextualized in relation to a variety of issues such as local power relations and not just religion. This is the focus of my study; I intend to investigate rural women's lives in relation to local power relations as 'patriarchal structures are relatively stronger in the rural and tribal setting where local customs establish male authority and power over women's lives' (Ferdoos 2010: 50). In urban areas, capitalism has increased some opportunities for women, and, therefore, women have greater control over their lives than women in rural areas who still live under traditional patriarchy. My aim is to examine the extended family structure in Pakistan, specifically in rural Sindh, in order to understand the role of the extended family in the perpetuation of patriarchy. I also want to explore what role this patrilocally extended family plays in women's lives in terms of their current position within the family; this includes investigating women's everyday lives, their participation in family decision-making and the controls exercised over them.

Although South Asian societies have been witnessing transition as a result of modernisation and globalisation, the roles and responsibilities of women in relation to their household have changed less than might be expected. For example, in urban India, the process of modernisation and advances in technology has improved quality of life for many and has transformed the family structure from extended to nuclear. However, women's traditional roles as mothers and homemakers still persist (Dube 2001; Verma and Larson 2001). These culturally produced roles and responsibilities result in gender discrimination as inequalities are reinforced through the ways men and women are socialized into different roles. The social priority accorded to men through local cultural traditions prevails in many rural areas of developing countries. Women are now more likely to enter into employment, but the division of labour is still the same within the household, which binds women under the double burden of work inside and outside the home. The responsibility for children and elderly persons

at home also lies with women (United Nations 2001). Ideological notions regarding men's and women's roles play a central role in restricting and burdening women's lives (Raju 1993) and women in patriarchal South Asian societies still abide by this ideology which constrains their lives. However, there are varied degrees of female autonomy in the South Asian region; Pakistani Punjab and Uttar Pradesh are more gender stratified where women's autonomy is bound up with traditional factors. In contrast, Tamil Nadu has an egalitarian setting in which education and to some extent economic activity increases women's autonomy, but in general, most South Asian women lack decision-making authority and are excluded from major family decisions (Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001). Kabeer (2001) points out that women's firm devotion/obedience to the prevailing cultural norms and practices such as son preference, discrimination against daughters, strong authority and control of the mother-in-law over the daughter-in-law, clearly indicate that women not only internalize their low status, largely based on inequalities, but also pass on this discrimination to other women. Women's acceptance of practices of discrimination against girl children, in food distribution and in gender-based violence can commonly be found in South Asian countries. This suggests a need to explore the form and degree of patriarchy prevalent in different areas of the South Asian region. For example, social sanctions on women are common in the South Asian region but their intensity varies within the region due to factors such as caste or religion (Raju 1993). As there are different ethnic and religious groups in South Asia, there are also higher chances of locating cultural and religious differences that strengthen or weaken the patriarchal stranglehold and reveal women's position in the relevant context. Pakistan, due to its 96 per cent Muslim population and Hindu culture, inherited from the sub-continent, is one of the regions worth exploring.

Patriarchy and Rural Pakistani Women

Pakistani society is basically deeply patriarchal and this affects almost all institutions (Gazdar 2008). In rural Pakistan, patriarchy has a strong base on which to flourish. The common features of South Asian patriarchy, such as the patrilocal extended family system, son preference, dowry, and parents' control over their children are very evident here. This is particularly relevant to my study as I am investigating

women's position within patriarchal extended families. Within this broad field, I am particularly interested in gender relations and the division of labour based on men's and women's specific roles in Pakistani society. I seek to understand the role of patriarchy in women's lives; for example, in their participation in education and employment opportunities, their mobility and marriage, decision-making power, as well as the implications of patriarchy for their lives, and most importantly the way women continue to survive under traditional patriarchy.

In the Pakistani context, patriarchy can be defined as 'a kinship-ordered social structure with strictly defined sex roles in which women are subordinated to men' (Moghadam 1992: 35). It refers to a system where men dominate women, older men dominate younger men, where descent is traced through men and property and assets are transferred through them (Batliwala 1994). This provides men with immense authority over their women. In countries like Pakistan, patriarchal power is established by controlling women in different ways such as restricting their access to the outside world, segregating and excluding them from economic opportunities and tying a family's honour to its women and expecting men to safeguard that honour. A woman's illicit relationship with any man brings shame to the family and the family's honour can only be restored when the woman is killed by the men of her family. Honour killing is common in rural areas and originated from the tribal and rural areas of Sindh province (Patel and Gadit 2008). Domestic violence is also endemic in Pakistani society, particularly against wives, which intensifies from slapping to fatal attacks. At no stage of their lives are women free from domestic violence; patriarchal principles are reinforced through prejudice, anger, abuse and violence (Khan and Hussain 2008). Older women also play their part in precipitating violence against younger women, especially daughters-in-law, in order to keep them under control.

Thus, an overall structure of traditional patriarchy – with male dominance and female subordination within the private domain – can be found in Pakistani society. The normative structure² of the society facilitates men's participation in social activities and restricts women within households, it also provides men with more authority and mobility than women. As a result, women lack access to education and employment

² By normative structure I mean the system based on old cultural norms and values.

which further exacerbates their condition, this is visible from the standing that Pakistani women generally have in family and community (Moghadam 1992; Quddus 1995; Maqsood 2007; Patel 2010). However, women's oppression in everyday life and their exclusion from major decision-making is difficult to notice as only extreme cases of violence against them are highlighted by the media (Gazdar 2008).

The normative structure of Pakistani society – that men are bread winners and women are service providers – results in a strict form of gendered division of labour (Quddus 1995; Maqsood 2007). This prevents both men and women from supporting each other in carrying out their assigned tasks (Sourabh 2007). However, the studies I have cited overlook the possible outcome of this strict form of gendered division of labour. These studies also do not differentiate between urban and rural women's domestic labour and the way they perform it. Absence and presence of technology has an impact on the way women in South Asia carry out their day to day tasks such as cooking, cleaning, washing and so on. In her work on a Punjabi village in Pakistan, Aschenbrenner (1993) stresses the need for a thorough study on Pakistani village women, their everyday lives, household labour and family relationships in order to investigate status of women in the villages of Pakistan.³ Responding to this need, I want to analyse how a family's gender relations more specifically gendered division of labour affect women's lives, how many hours a day are dedicated to carrying out the tasks assigned to them and how they use this labour as a means of survival in a stronghold of patriarchy.

Much work has been done on the issue of women's empowerment with reference to Third World countries, but there is lack of work on young married women inside households in Pakistan. The few studies that have been conducted are quantitative and mostly focus on the women in Punjab province (See Abbasi 1980; Aschenbrenner 1993; Sathar and Kazi 2000; Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001; Ferdoos 2010). Although these studies offer a good overview of the patriarchal system prevalent in Pakistan and its impacts on women, they do not thoroughly examine and investigate the private sphere where women are the primary victims of patriarchy particularly in rural areas where a rigid form of traditional patriarchy persists.

³ Although she sketches village life in the rural Pakistani context, she does not address family power relations and women's status in the rural Pakistani context.

Pakistan is a large country that has a population of 188.02 million in 2013-14.⁴ With the highest population growth rate in the region, Pakistan has the world's 6th biggest population. It is the world's 10th largest country in terms of its labour force of 59.7 million. The majority of the country's population lives in poverty in rural areas, which encourages people to migrate to cities thereby increasing the growth of urbanization. However, more than half of the population still lives in rural areas as the agriculture sector is regarded the backbone of Pakistan's economy and provides rural people with a (limited) livelihood. Though from the early 2000s, Pakistan has shown progress in improving its social indicators such as education, health and population growth rate, there is still much to be done in order to provide an improved and liveable life to its people, particularly those in villages. Table 1 shows selected demographic indicators for Pakistan.

Table 1: Selected Demographic Indicators of Pakistan

	2014
Total Population (million)	188.02
Male Population (per cent)	51.35
Female Population (per cent)	48.65
Urban Population (million)	72.50
Rural Population (million)	115.52
Total Fertility Rate	3.2
Population Growth Rate (per cent per annum)	1.95
Female Life Expectancy at birth (years)	66.9
Male Life Expectancy at birth (years)	64.9

Source: Pakistan Economic Survey 2013-14.

Demographic pressure and the country's socio-economic conditions mean that it is essential that the population growth rate be controlled. Owing to its high fertility rate, there has been only very slow progress over recent years. Although there has been slight and gradual reduction in the annual population growth rate from 2.12 per cent in 2007 to 2.05 per cent in 2010, it still stood at 1.95 per cent in 2014 which is the

⁴ Population estimates are made on recent projections carried out by Sub-Group II on Population projections for the 10th Five Year People's Plan 2010-2015. Since no census has been conducted since that of 1998, National Surveys on Population Projections by the Statistics Division are the major sources of demographic indicators.

highest in the region except for Afghanistan. Its fertility rate is also the highest in South Asia and was 'stubbornly resistant' to change until the late 1990s (Durrant and Sathar 2000). Despite a countrywide family planning program, accompanied by strong political support since the 1980s, Pakistan failed in controlling the fertility rate, which currently stands at 3.2. Like the population growth rate, total fertility rate (TFR) has also declined considerably from 6.60 during 1980-85 to 3.6 in 2010, but it is still higher than its neighbouring countries, for example, in Bangladesh it is 2.3, China 1.5 and India 2.4. The current Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR) in Pakistan is 35 per cent and predicted to be 37.5 per cent by the year 2015. CPR has witnessed quite slow progress, less than one per cent from 1998 to 2004 and 5 per cent until 2014 (30 per cent in 2008 and 35 per cent in 2014) (Pakistan Economic Survey 2009-10, 2013-14). In spite of the progress under which TFR decreased from 4.8 in 1997-2000 to 3.6 in 2009-10, it is worth noticing that this progress was achieved more in urban areas as the result of education and health facilities which were made accessible to women. In rural areas, literacy is less prevalent, families still do not know the importance of family planning and avoid using family planning methods due to social and cultural constraints (Mahmood and Ringheim 1997). In addition, Pakistani women, particularly from rural areas, do not have access to sex education or to protection from early and unplanned pregnancies or legal abortion that might help them to avoid the birth of malnourished babies. The majority of women in Pakistan suffer from a lack of rights over their bodies, they are unable to decide the number of children to bear, to assure they have safe sex or to use protection against sexually transmitted diseases. Men dominate all spheres of life and give priority to their own desires. Women are required to follow men (Moghadam 1992; Maqsood 2007; Patel 2010). However, existing studies overlook the important role of material and culture in promoting large families, which has resulted in demographic pressure thereby increasing the country's socio-economic challenges. For example, in the South Asian context, a classic patriarchal family must have sons in order to provide future security, especially to parents who depend on their sons and need their support in old age (Ahmed and Bould 2004). This is particularly because daughters leave their natal family after marriage while sons remain with their parents for rest of their lives. Failure to have a male child can often lead to the second marriage of a man, adding further suffering to a woman's life.

Although polygamy is legally valid, it is not very common in Pakistan. It is more connected with men's gaining better status in society; yet, women often remain under the threat of a second wife, which can make them more vulnerable in the family and society. Polygamy is also seen in lower and middle classes, and may be a result of an emotional attachment or failure to bear children with the first wife. In any case, polygamy brings suffering to the first wife and her children. In a few cases, women have to leave the homes of their husbands after his second marriage. Though second marriage is illegal without the prior permission of the first wife, men break this law and often decide on a second marriage without informing their wives. Women usually do not find it worthwhile to complain against their husband's second marriage as punishment against breaching this rule is very minor, and reporting their husbands can put women in a worse position (Patel 2010). Son preference is common in patrilineal and patriarchal societies for different reasons; for example in India, people prefer sons to avoid excessive dowry demands for daughters (Gupta et al. 2003), the notion of man as the breadwinner, who makes the family's survival possible, also contributes a great deal to son preference (Dube 2001). However, in South Asian societies like Pakistan women also make an economic contribution through their informal work, conducted to make ends meet. This raises the question of whether it is really child labour or son preference that is more relevant in addressing economic issues that lead to large numbers of children. For example, in Bangladesh where women's dependencies transfer from father to husband and from husband to sons, son preference is common and a family must have sons in order to assure the future security of the family (Ahmed and Bould 2004). There are, however, other underlying factors or interests that need to be explored and examined, such as socio-cultural reasons, in order to understand son preference in patrilocal extended families in the rural Pakistani context.

Social life in Pakistani society centres upon family and kin group. Family is important for people hailing from all strata and classes because it not only provides them with security but also with identity (Blood 1994). As in other parts of South Asia, the family structure in Pakistan is exceptionally patriarchal, the extended family system is the basic norm, and hierarchy is central to it (Lieven 2011). This family type is further strengthened through kinship arrangements, tribal systems and associated norms (Gazdar 2008). It is a fundamental source of security for family

members and the majority of people rely on the family for social and economic survival. The old patriarchal extended family system is therefore very resilient and is still prevalent and valued in rural areas (Quddus 1995; Hakim and Aziz 1998; Maqsood 2007). The functioning of this family type in the 21st century, where the patriarch, the most senior man in the power hierarchy, is still the ultimate authority figure, and at least in principle controls everybody's life and most importantly makes crucial decisions for others' lives, such as regarding marriage, needs to be investigated. The situation of women – how they survive in these families – requires further exploration, which is the purpose of my study.

Marriages are important in a sense that they determine a person's position within a society, and, therefore, the decision of who marries whom needs to be decided carefully (Chowdhry 2004). Marriage patterns in South Asia reflect the prevalence of arranged marriages where the strong control of parents over their children's marriage can be witnessed. Although love marriage is also legal, any union must have parental approval otherwise it is seen as a shameful act (Therborn 2004). Eurasian societies are known for their practice of kin and status endogamy to strengthen ties of solidarity and to keep property within the group (Goody 1976). In the case of Pakistan, the agrarian family system is strong enough for parents to exercise unlimited control over their children's marriage (Zaman 2008). The main purpose of marriage is to affiliate or link two extended families in order to strengthen the kinship ties, therefore, cousin marriages, particularly with the father's brother's children, are preferred (Blood 1994; Lieven 2011). This results in a high number of marriages taking places within the close kin group, placing Pakistan among the countries which have the highest rates of consanguineous marriages in the world (Agarwal 1994; Jones 2010). Although the studies I have cited describe why arranged or cousin marriages are very common in Pakistani society, the interests of different stakeholders in these marriages have been overlooked. There is a lack of sufficient understanding of socio-cultural factors that encourage consanguineous marriages in Pakistan (Hussain 1999). This is an issue that my study addresses through exploring how and why parents control their children's marriages. As Goody (1976) sees property and status as the main reason for kin and status endogamy in Eurasian societies, I want to examine the social and cultural influences that strengthen people's choices for marriage in rural Sindh, particularly ones contracted

within the close kin group. I also want to explore women's position and preference in marriage decision-making and how the system affects other aspects of women's lives such as education.

According to Blood (1994), 'Gender relations in Pakistan rest on two basic perceptions: that women are subordinate to men, and that a man's honour resides in the actions of the women of his family' (n.p.). In order to safeguard this honour and save the family from any disrespect, every effort is made to minimize women's contact with the opposite sex. This notion impacts on women's lives, such as in control over their mobility; they are also required to live under *purdah* (seclusion and veiling) and move within their allocated social spaces. However, mobility is a significant issue in rural and rigid areas of Pakistan such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan where it is almost impossible for women to move outside their homes before marriage and contact any man who is not a close relative. Therefore, most of women's lives in these areas of Pakistan are spent within the four walls of their households. On the other hand, gender relations are somewhat more relaxed in Sindh and Punjab and poor rural women support men in the fields, but their mobility is again controlled strictly once their work is no longer required (Blood 1994). In other words, women's mobility is determined by their family's financial needs; it is not restricted when it financially benefits the family (Naheed and Iqbal 1997). However, how relaxed gender relations are in rural Sindh, which is known to be a tribal area and the birthplace of honour killing, is missing in many of the reports. This is one of the issues I want to bring out; specifically what kind of gender relations are generally part of families in rural Sindh, and how this impacts on women's lives. Moreover, studies cited above also claim that in rural areas of Sindh women generally have more freedom of movement, but there can be substantial variations within the region depending upon the local culture and the socio-economic conditions of its people. It is unlikely that women's situation in rural Sindh is more or less the same in all parts of the province. Given local variations within the region, it is important to explore specific localities as I do in the Khairpur region. It is also important to take account of differences between women in terms of age and status – how a woman's age and status might affect her mobility. This is something that requires more investigation in order to deepen our understanding of women's lives and how patriarchy affects them in a specific region within a province.

Pakistani women's social status is reflected in the country's social indicators such as health, education and employment; rural women in particular are doing very poorly on these fronts. Ferdoos (2010) states that Pakistani women have heterogeneous status across classes, regions and the rural/urban divide; this diversity in women's status is likely to be related to the tribal, feudal and economic structures that have a considerable impact on women's lives. Pakistani women do not hold a valued status within the family. Male family members are given preference in everything, for example, education, skills, and job opportunities. As a result, women who are not well equipped with education or marketable skills remain under the economic dependence and dominance of men in all social relationships.

In terms of literacy, women's low levels of education are illustrated in the country's yearly surveys. According to the Pakistan Economic Survey 2013-14, Pakistan's total literacy rate is 60 per cent, this rate is unequally distributed among areas and between males and females; more prevalent among men than women and more widespread in urban than rural areas. For example, the total male literacy rate is 71 per cent while the female literacy rate is just 48 per cent; the urban literacy rate is 76 per cent as compared to the rural rate of just 51 per cent. In terms of regions, literacy is unevenly spread; the province of Punjab ranks highest with a total 62 per cent literacy rate whereas Balochistan ranks lowest with only 44 per cent total literacy.

Table 2: Male and Female Literacy Rates in Pakistan

Area	Male	Female	Total
Pakistan	71	48	60
Punjab	71	54	62
Sindh	72	47	60
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	72	35	52
Balochistan	62	23	44

Source: Pakistan Economic Survey 2013-14

Historically speaking, Pakistan made quite a good improvement in increasing its literacy rate from 26.17 per cent in 1981 to 43.92 per cent in 1998. The male literacy rate increased from 35.05 per cent in 1981 to 54.81 per cent in 1998, while the female literacy rate increased from 15.99 per cent in 1981 to 32.02 per cent in 1998. However, Pakistan has not made any encouraging development on this front during

the last few years. The literacy rate has shown very gradual progress, such as moving from 55 per cent in 2006-07, to 56 per cent in 2007-08 and 57 per cent in 2008-09, and currently the literacy rate stands at 60 per cent. Unfortunately, education has been a neglected area in Pakistan: the country's spending on education is just 2.1 per cent of GDP, which is the lowest of the countries with the same income. For example, Bangladesh spends 2.6 per cent, India 3.3 per cent, Iran 5.2 per cent, Nepal 3.2 per cent, Thailand 4.5 per cent and Vietnam 5.3 per cent (Labour Force Survey 2009-10; Pakistan Economic Survey 2013-14).

Table 3: Regional and Rural Urban Variations in Literacy Rate

Region/province	Literacy rates 10 years and above		
	Total	Male	Female
Pakistan	60	71	48
Rural	51	64	37
Urban	76	82	69
Punjab	62	71	54
Rural	55	66	45
Urban	77	82	72
Sindh	60	72	47
Rural	42	59	22
Urban	77	84	70
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	52	72	35
Rural	49	69	31
Urban	66	78	52
Balochistan	44	62	23
Rural	37	55	15
Urban	65	81	47

Source: Pakistan Economic Survey 2013-14

The gender discrimination in the education sector of Pakistan is reflected in the national statistics. The wide difference between male and female literacy rates is due to historical prejudice against educating girls. The literacy is lowest in the areas where education is less prevalent and women experience controlled mobility. Pointing out this discrimination, Ferdoos (2010) demonstrates that women's rights to

education are not stressed in Pakistan. More than half of children are not enrolled in schools and among these girls outnumber boys. A wide gap between urban and rural literacy is evident in Pakistan's national statistics. Female literacy also witnesses the rural urban gap, being less than 40 per cent in rural areas. Regionally, female literacy rates vary from province to province, but except for Punjab all provinces have a female literacy rate of under 50 per cent. There has been progress in increasing the female literacy rate but this improvement is uneven among the provinces (see table 3).

This discrimination against women also affects their participation in employment, and those who do participate are often engaged in informal work, which is under-reported. Both phenomena are more evident in South Asian Muslim communities such as Pakistan and Bangladesh where female employment is religiously and culturally stigmatized (Bardhan 1993). The tight control exercised over women's mobility, upheld for the protection of honour and maintenance of the respect given to the family, curtails their access to formal and informal employment in Pakistan. In spite of having the world's 10th largest labour force (59.7 million) only 15.5 per cent women are participating in the labour force. The female employment rate has slightly increased from 14.9 in 2008-09 to 15.5 in 2012-13 due to the considerable rise in unpaid family workers/helpers,⁵ particularly women, but historically speaking women's employment has always been very low in Pakistan. This is reflected in the country's national statistics on labour force participation.

Table 4: Labour Force Participation Rate (per cent)

	2012-13
Total	32.8
Male	49.2
Female	15.5

Source: Labour Force Survey 2012-13

National statistics on women's labour force participation indicate two important phenomena that affect women's participation in labour: first, social sanctions

⁵ An 'unpaid family worker is a person who works without pay in cash or kind on an enterprise operated by a member of his/her household or other related persons' (Pakistan Economic Survey 2009-10: 249).

imposed on women hamper their participation and bar them from participating in employment. The cultural stigma attached to female employment impacts upon women's willingness to work outside their homes, therefore generally women remain within their households (Hakim and Aziz 1998; Maqsood 2007). The large gaps between men's and women's employment reflect a lack of opportunities for women and further reinforce the idea that paid work is not suitable for them.

Second, women who manage to participate in the labour force remain invisible because their work goes unreported. Women's drastically low rates of labour force participation, as shown in table 4, not only indicate the country's inadequate efforts to bring women into the economic mainstream but also raises a question as to how and why the women who form approximately half of the population of an agricultural country have a labour force participation rate of just 15.5 per cent? Pakistani women are known to play their role in supporting the economy by working with men in the fields, but, unfortunately, their work is not taken into account if it is informal. The large gap between the sizes of the male and female labour force and their levels of employment is due to the predominance of women's labour in the informal sector, where their work is not registered. The situation is even worse when it comes to rural areas where the agricultural sector provides both men and women with employment opportunities; these women experience lower literacy, which bars them from entering into formal employment. In addition, women often work as unpaid workers and their activities do not enter into the regular market; this work also remains invisible and unrecorded (Bagchi and Raju 1993; Patel 2010). Thus, female labour force rates show low levels of participation. In addition, the female labour force participation figures are usually taken from records of employed and waged workers and particularly include figures from privileged women like me, who do professional jobs and draw monthly salaries. Women's informal work, particularly if it is in villages, is hardly noticed. This is also true for the women who run small business such as shops or sell their handicrafts. The area where my research is centred is one in which people rely on agriculture and women work along with men in order to make ends meet. There is a high possibility that, like their counterparts in other rural areas of Pakistan, women's work in this area goes unnoticed. Since these women are not part of mainstream employment, I set out to investigate what kind of paid or unpaid work women are engaged in, how this is

related to the nature of gender relations and the degree of mobility allowed to them, the gendered division of labour, and, most importantly, how this paid or unpaid work contributes to women's lives. Their low level of employment suggests that if women continue to remain within households, they are less likely to increase their status (Jha 2005). The studies I have cited mainly relate women's status to education and employment, and demonstrate delaying marriage and pursuing higher education and a career as an expected outcome. Such studies also indicate that the economy is the sole base of women's status and autonomy, which may be the case, but I argue that we should attend to both economy and culture, and the roles they play in empowering or disempowering women in a given region. Cultural norms are central in curtailing women's opportunities. Stigmatization of women's education and employment originates from home; it impacts on women's acquisition of education and participation in economic activities.

As a result of lack of education and autonomy, women are denied basic rights such as inheritance, social participation and decision-making. Ideological notions – that women are good only for household work – are central in the perpetuation of patriarchy in Pakistan; the ideology of the sexual division of labour – according to which women are regarded as service providers and men as breadwinners – has implications for women who are then confined to households in order to fulfil their role as service providers. In addition to this, the absence of schooling not only leaves women unprepared for employment but also strengthens the perception that this field is irrelevant to women, and the undercounting of rural women's work in informal and agriculture sectors encourages the belief that women are unsuited for many kinds of work. In actuality, rural women in Pakistan are generally involved in income generating activities but economic opportunities for women are limited and poorly paid, which increases their dependence on men (Moghadam 1992; Bari 1998; Maqsood 2007).

Women's role and status in Pakistani society are derived from both Islam and local culture. Cultural and Islamic values attached to the role of mother suggest that the status of a mother is supreme (Shah 1986, in Hakim and Aziz 1998). According to Sathar et al. (1988), religion places emphasis on the specific roles of men and women; women's roles in Pakistani society are directly influenced by Islam where women are regarded as wives and mothers and their status can be enhanced by

marriage and reproducing children. Therefore, soon after the age of maturity parents start looking for a husband for their daughters. Culture, too, plays an important role in defining women's status in society. Ferdoos (2010) argues that Pakistan is not a completely Islamic country. Although there are some rights that women enjoy, they are not given all the rights that are prescribed by Islam; some aspects of Islam that ensure women's purity and honour are stressed, but the rights of equal education for men and women are not emphasised and acted upon. Maqsood (2007), discussing the basis of discrimination against women in Pakistan, explains that social exclusion of women, based on inequalities, is specified by a culture that very narrowly defines women's roles according to the needs and requirements of the social structure. Women are socialised with these inequalities and feel themselves inferior to men. They are taught the skills that are necessary to mould themselves to their ascribed role and responsibilities. The remaining skills are acquired by men.

Both Islamic culture and regional culture – shared with the rest of the Indian subcontinent – go hand in hand in Pakistani society. Restrictions on women are derived from the religion that does not give equal rights to women in terms of inheritance, marriage, and divorce, but Islamic law provides women with basic rights such as education, employment, inheritance, and the right to choice in marriage. However, the prevalent culture prevents women from exercising certain rights prescribed by Islam; women often do not avail themselves of their basic rights granted to them by law because the culture contradicts with the law. For example, young women's marriage is often arranged by their parents and women are not consulted (Shaheed 1998a). Such contradictions between the law and the culture can be seen in women's everyday lives. The perception that women are secure at home confines the majority of women to the household, but they are also excluded from their family's decision-making process. Tight controls on women's mobility, coupled with *pardah* are exercised, curtailing their contact with the social world outside the household (Khan 1999). These restrictions constrain women's educational and economic opportunities and affect their social life; women's education and employment are stigmatized, which discourages them from entering these fields. They are left with little or no exposure to social life and a minimal share in the socio-economic mainstream. Forms and degrees of control on women however vary from area to area depending upon local culture (Maqsood 2007; Hakim and Aziz 1998).

Such conditions not only offer an overview of women's tough lives under the bastion of patriarchy but also provide a researcher with reasons to carry out a thorough investigation, in order to analyse the traditional patriarchal system and why it encourages local people to bar women from accessing their basic rights. A detailed insight into this would not only highlight how male dominance disempowers women and serves the hidden interests of their family, particularly men, but would also help to understand how women whose education and employment are stigmatized survive under the stronghold of patriarchy. In order to analyse this situation more effectively it is important to think about how patriarchy works, particularly in the private domain. I now therefore turn to my conceptual framework, which informs my thesis.

Bargaining with Patriarchy: Theoretical Framework

Patriarchy is the best available term to describe the system of male domination and female oppression in Pakistan in general and in rural areas in particular. Although the concept of patriarchy is unfashionable in the west, it is widely used in the east because the system remains dominated by men, particularly in Muslim societies. This is mainly attributed to the low levels of industrialisation and education, which reinforce patriarchy in such societies (Moghadam 1992). The work that I found most relevant to my study – how women survive under patriarchy – was Deniz Kandiyoti's (1988) theory of 'patriarchal bargain'. However, before using Kandiyoti's idea as the primary theoretical framework, I want to introduce Sylvia Walby's (1990, 2011) concept of 'private patriarchy' or 'private gender regime' which enables a better understanding of patriarchy in private arenas and women's position in it.

Patriarchy has remained a contested term in Britain. Some western feminists argue that patriarchy is inapplicable to western industrial societies. Others, however, claim that these societies are still patriarchal but in a particular form. For example, some feminists such as Hartmann (1976), Delphy (1984) and Walby (1990) see patriarchy as a useful concept to analyse women's oppression. Hartmann (1976, 2002) provides a chronology illustrating women's position in pre-industrial and industrial western societies and claims that patriarchy still persisted after the industrial revolution. She

makes a historical argument that the separation of home from work after the industrial revolution worsened women's situation. Men organised to control all the skilled labour, and kept women out of well-paid work, which made women dependent on men. It was a vicious circle where women could not earn enough to survive, so they had to marry men for their own survival and take on domestic responsibilities that further disadvantaged them in the labour market. Within these contentious debates of whether patriarchy was a product of capitalism or a separate system alongside capitalism in the industrial west, some feminists, such as Barrett (1980), regard patriarchy as an ahistorical concept. According to Barrett, the concept of patriarchy was based on the rule of father in past societies and did not apply to Britain because patriarchy in its classic form did not exist in Britain. The concept of patriarchy further became unpopular in the west because of a theoretical shift, in particular, the rise of postmodernism.

Walby countered and responded to this criticism by historicising patriarchy (Jackson 1998; Rahman and Jackson 2010). Walby (1990) defines patriarchy as 'a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women' [20]. She argues that patriarchy is not an ahistorical concept, that patriarchy is modifiable; it does change and evolve. Walby argues that the positive transition of contemporary society in Britain seems to be empowering women and weakening patriarchy, but patriarchy is as yet far from eliminated, rather, it is transforming. Modernisation affected women in Britain in a simultaneously progressive and regressive way, for example, men's control over women declined, expropriation of women's labour by men also reduced but women were still caught in the web of wider patriarchal relations, such as in the burden of childcare, which is still women's responsibility. Thus, while the form or degree is changing, patriarchy still prevails.

Walby (1990) differentiated between two forms of patriarchy, namely private and public, in order to conceptualize women's exploitation in the two primary domains i.e. private and public. She uses these two forms to discuss the historical shift from private to public patriarchy in the western context. Under private patriarchy, the household is the major site where individual patriarchs oppress women. In contrast, public patriarchy is established in institutions outside the household such as employment. Unlike private patriarchy where women are oppressed by individual patriarchs, women under public patriarchy are exploited by collective patriarchs.

Walby argues that the patriarchal strategy in the shift from private to public changes structural relations; this is a transition from an 'individual to a more collective form of appropriation of women' (1990: 179).

In her later work, Walby (2011) reconceptualises patriarchy in terms of gender regime, and thus shifting her analysis of private to public patriarchy to private to public gender regimes, in order to avoid any controversy with the term patriarchy, but she explains that she means exactly the same thing. Like private patriarchy, women in domestic gender regimes are excluded from public spheres and are confined to households, whereas in public gender regimes, women are given access to public spheres such as employment, education and polity, but the strategy for exploiting women develops from exclusionary to segregationist.

Walby's conceptualisation of household exploitation was inspired by Delphy's (1984) concept of the domestic mode of production. During the early years of second wave feminism, household work was the centre of feminist debate, women's subordination was explained in relation to their household responsibilities, and their oppression was associated with capitalism. Marxist feminists sought to analyse household work in terms of how capitalism was benefitting from women's labour (Jackson 1998). Delphy countered this notion and recognised patriarchy and capitalism as two separate structures. She set forth a theoretically independent model of patriarchy which works side by side with capitalism – the domestic mode of production – in which men benefit from women's labour. She explains that gender inequality stems from the domestic domain where men use women's labour. She argues that housework is regarded as valueless in western societies because it does not involve any remuneration or exchange and it is done for someone else 'within particular social relations'; the particular contract of marriage assigns a woman to a master (her husband), and the woman performs all her duties without charge. If the same woman performs the same tasks for another house, she would charge a reasonable amount for her services. Delphy and Leonard (1992) argue that household work is the product of patriarchal gender relations under which men use women's labour. Women's labour is seen as an unlimited personal service that has no job description or set number of hours. On the other hand, the husband, who is supposed to look after her maintenance, fulfils the responsibility according to his income and generosity rather than to her needs. According to Delphy (1976b and 1977a, in

Jackson 1996), men and women constitute a class of exploiters and exploited respectively; women's paid work, which is expected to liberate women from their husbands' appropriation of their work, does not result in minimising this appropriation because women still perform both – paid and unpaid labour – simultaneously. If a woman enters into formal employment, she is still expected to do the housework and bear the burden of childcare, which means she is singularly responsible for these obligations.

Drawing on Christine Delphy's idea of household exploitation of women's work, Walby contributed to the analysis of how the household is the main site of oppression in private patriarchy and how women's work is exploited by family members, particularly men.⁶ In her earlier work, Walby unconsciously talks about patriarchy in an entirely western context, more specifically in Britain. In her later work, she starts to think more internationally; she begins to suggest that private and public patriarchy are also characteristics of different parts of the world (Walby 2011). The internationalization of her work makes it more relevant to my research; for example, she illustrates how global northern societies have been witnessing a transition from a domestic gender regime to a public gender regime, but this transition in the global South has yet to begin. In developing countries like Pakistan – in the global South – the social environment is still traditional where a rigid form of patriarchy reigns. Thus, Raju (1993) notes that Walby's work helps in understanding women's position in private spheres in the South Asian context where patriarchal ideology prevails and results in expropriation of women's labour by family members. Although Walby initially analysed patriarchy and its advantages and disadvantages to different stakeholders in the western context, her way of dealing with the degrees and forms of patriarchy is not limited to the West and has some relevance to eastern patriarchal societies such as Pakistan.

Thus, Walby's work can help us understand the conditions under which men appropriate women's labour within households under private patriarchy. What Kandiyoti (1988) refers to as 'classic patriarchy' – in which an elder man dominates all younger men and women – can be considered a form of private patriarchy (Walby

⁶ However, there are differences between Delphy and Walby on the shift from private to public patriarchy: Walby argues that the shift from private to public frees women from domestic exploitation. Delphy and Leonard argue that it actually increases women's exploitation; if women have employment and continue to perform housework, they are clearly working in the home for nothing.

2009). The main and important distinction between Walby and Kandiyoti's work is that Walby theorizes patriarchy in a capitalist context, in other words capitalist patriarchy, whereas Kandiyoti theorizes patriarchy in an agrarian context – classic patriarchy. Kandiyoti presents an overview of household relations particularly in the extended family system. Her analysis of the power hierarchy among family members and women's exploitation in the patrilocally extended family system is something that Walby does not deal with. Walby is more concerned with how men exploit and benefit from women's labour whereas Kandiyoti focuses on how women strategize under the heavy burden of patriarchy. Walby and Kandiyoti are dealing with two different aspects – private patriarchy and how women survive under it – respectively; these theories can be seen as complementing each other which makes a workable theoretical framework for my research.

According to Kandiyoti (1988) the patrilocal extended family is the main characteristic of classic patriarchy that helps to reproduce this form of patriarchy. Moghadam (1992) also links women's subordination in agrarian and kinship-ordered societies with peasantry, which ultimately encourages the extended family system; in agrarian societies, patriarchy has a structure which creates a particular kind of hierarchy. The extended family, commonly dominated by male family members, is the embodiment of that hierarchy and facilitates men's control over women. Thus, the subordination of women is associated with the reproduction of the peasantry which encourages the perpetuation of the extended family and strict division of labour. For example, the household structure (patrilocally extended family) gives unlimited power to the elder (the patriarch) over his subordinates. This form of kinship-ordered family in classic patriarchy is prevalent in South and East Asia and in the Muslim Middle East and provides researchers with an opportunity to explore the role of the extended family in the perpetuation of patriarchy in different locations.

According to Kandiyoti (1988) the phenomenon that erodes the base of classic patriarchy and its main characteristic – the patrilocal extended family – is the flow of market opportunities and capital through industries and factories in rural areas in the East. These market opportunities pose a threat and create a crisis for classic patriarchy. The failure of classic patriarchy sets younger men free from the subordination of older men, and younger women from the subordination of older

women. Younger men and women can then head their own households as a nuclear family, which means they also set this direction for their children. However, the process of the erosion of patriarchy is not complete and classic patriarchy, in its traditional form, exists in Muslim countries, particularly in rural areas. Moghadam (1992) discusses the advantages of industrialisation which erodes patriarchy by facilitating women's participation in public arenas and then the emergence of universal citizenship, but this process is incomplete in most Muslim societies. Social indicators show that women's participation in the public sphere of many Muslim patriarchal societies has yet to take place.⁷ This suggests that traditional patriarchy is strongly linked with agrarian societies where women are almost completely confined to their homes, and that industrialisation and women's access to employment is the major reason for women's liberation from classic patriarchy. However, from Walby's point of view, in South Asian countries where women have been permitted to enter the labour market, these women are freed from private patriarchy, but, they are free only to be exploited under public patriarchy in a low wage economy such as in Pakistan and Bangladesh. This also indicates that women's status is associated with material assets and resources that give them an opportunity to bargain. In this case, uneducated and unemployed women are unequipped with resources with which to bargain. I am going to make a major point in this thesis that while economic opportunities and employment do help women to enhance their status and challenge patriarchy, culture is equally important: it complicates women's lives even if they enter into employment. Therefore, forms and degrees of rigidity within a culture are also essential in determining a woman's position in the household.

While I endorse Walby's and Kandiyoti's conceptualisation of patriarchy in relation to economics and employment, I argue that apart from this, culture is also an important determinant of the perpetuation of male dominance. It is not only the lack of access to market opportunities that bar women from escaping patriarchy; practices embedded into culture are often strong reasons behind the continuation of patriarchy. It is due to the internalization of cultural practices that women reproduce patriarchy, thereby preventing themselves from gaining liberty under what we call traditional

⁷ However, Malaysia is one of the Muslim countries where female literacy and labour force participation is high, i.e. 98.5 per cent and 44 per cent respectively (UNICEF 2013; The World Bank 2013). There are varying ways in which Islam is interpreted in different countries; Malaysia is an Islamic country, but women's education and work are promoted and seen as consistent with Islam.

patriarchy. In this way, 'classic patriarchy' (Kandiyoti) and 'private patriarchy' (Walby) are actually part and parcel of traditional patriarchy where women do what culture expects them to. In her later work, Kandiyoti (1998) critiques her previous argument by elaborating that bargaining within the household is not always determined by economic elements; cultural factors and power exercised over women also play a role in shaping women's bargaining power. Women cannot shape the rules of the game because the power lies with the powerful, therefore, women bargain within the limits provided for them. For example, if a woman, after going through hardships as a young bride, oppresses her daughter-in-law in her later years, it is because it is her only available option through which she can enjoy power and control.

Kandiyoti's (1988) ideas have been applied in a number of different contexts, for example, women's altruism in the Bangladeshi context as a response to patriarchy (Kabeer 1997) and older women's role in the perpetuation of patriarchy in Indian society (Fernandez 1997). I am using Kandiyoti in the rural Pakistani context where the extended family system is common, where transition through industrialisation has yet to take place and where women do not have resources like education or employment in order to enhance their status within the family. The important question that arises here is: are women, unequipped with education and employment, too weak to resist oppression? The main theoretical framework of my thesis suggests that in a society where women's lives are constrained, I should look for evidence and investigate strategies that women use to negotiate with patriarchy. I should not assume that women are totally passive as, according to Kandiyoti (1988), in any known society and under the strongest patriarchal system which confines women to households, women do strategize to bargain according to local constraints in their lives. Despite all their responsibilities, burdens and restrictions, women strategize to create a level of space that helps them shape their lives (Kandiyoti 1988). They develop their strategies according to the restricted circumstances they live in; lack of exposure and resources affect the extent to which they strategize (Shaheed 1998a). Thus, I should look for the ways they strategize and negotiate with patriarchy. The literature also provides sufficient evidence that women are not passive victims of patriarchy. Kabeer (1994) makes a point that although women in developing countries are not powerful enough to confront men, they are not completely

powerless. They realise the consequences of any confrontation would be against them, women, therefore, find it strategic to avoid confrontation and continue with their ascribed roles and responsibilities. Under many restrictions and strong patriarchal control, women struggle and bargain to improve their situation. Referring to Kandiyoti, Kabeer (1997) endorses the view that women's accommodation to patriarchy is important to them: it may carry strategic importance for their long-term benefit in order to maximize their security and options for survival. Kandiyoti terms this the 'patriarchal bargain'. She argues that this patriarchal bargain helps women to adopt active or passive resistance according to their situation. Kandiyoti (1988) argues that in Muslim communities, if women claim their inheritance rights, it will sever their ties with their brothers, therefore they do not press their claim. This is how women maintain favourable relations with their brothers in case their marriage contract is breached or they are ill-treated on account of not producing any offspring. Kabeer (2001) found a comparable situation in her study of Bangladesh, where Muslim women's waiving their property rights to their brothers is actually a tactic for maintaining good relations with their brothers.

Women's bargaining strategies may change with time especially when they are drawn into the labour market (Townsend et al. 1999). In this context, Kandiyoti opens doors for future research to be conducted in order to understand women's long-term and short-term bargaining strategies in different locations. The status of women in Pakistan is not homogeneous and restrictions on them vary from area to area (Hakim and Aziz 1998; Ferdoos 2010) but in general women in Pakistan are excluded from the power distribution within the family (Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001). Walby's work is important in looking at how men appropriate women's labour, and Kandiyoti's work on patriarchy further helps in understanding women's ways of surviving under the stronghold of patriarchy. Thus, using this framework shall enable us to understand women's lives in rural parts of Sindh.

Conclusion

Patriarchy is well entrenched in Pakistan particularly in rural areas where resilient cultural norms and values provide patriarchy with a base from which to flourish. The common features of South Asian patriarchy such as patrilineal kinship, patrilocal

residence, extended family, gendered division of labour, son preference, dowry, and early marriage are basic features of Pakistani society. These characteristics not only contribute to gender discrimination and provide men with unlimited and unquestionable power over women but also burden women's lives in terms of controlled mobility, exclusion from the public sphere and lack of access to resources such as education and employment.

The concept of patriarchy is important for understanding women's oppression in Pakistani society. The notion of men as bread winners and women as service providers substantially reduces women's participation in education and employment because these fields are considered irrelevant for women. Despite women constituting about half of the population, Pakistan has a drastically low level of female participation in education and the labour force which speaks volumes about the patriarchal power that constrains women's lives. Social stigma attached to women's education and particularly their employment further eliminates the chances of women's participation in the formal employment. Therefore, women carry out economic activities through informal and unregistered work because the majority of the population are poor, and both women's and men's work is essential for their family's survival.

One of the most common and important elements of the patriarchal system – the patrilocal extended family – provides substantial support to patriarchy. Based on the kinship order, the most senior man, the patriarch, acquires the superior position and women are at the bottom. On one hand women work shoulder to shoulder with men in running their day-to-day lives, on the other hand their lives are constrained in order to keep them under patriarchal control. Important decisions for their lives, such as marriage, are taken by men, thereby reinforcing men's power over women in order to maintain the status quo. In this situation, a woman is not only used as a commodity but is further exploited in terms of providing unlimited services to her family members without question. The concept of patriarchy provides a sound base from which to explore and analyse the lives of an oppressed and exploited section of Pakistani society – the women.

Chapter 3

Exploring Rural Women's Lives: Methodological Choices and Challenges

Introduction

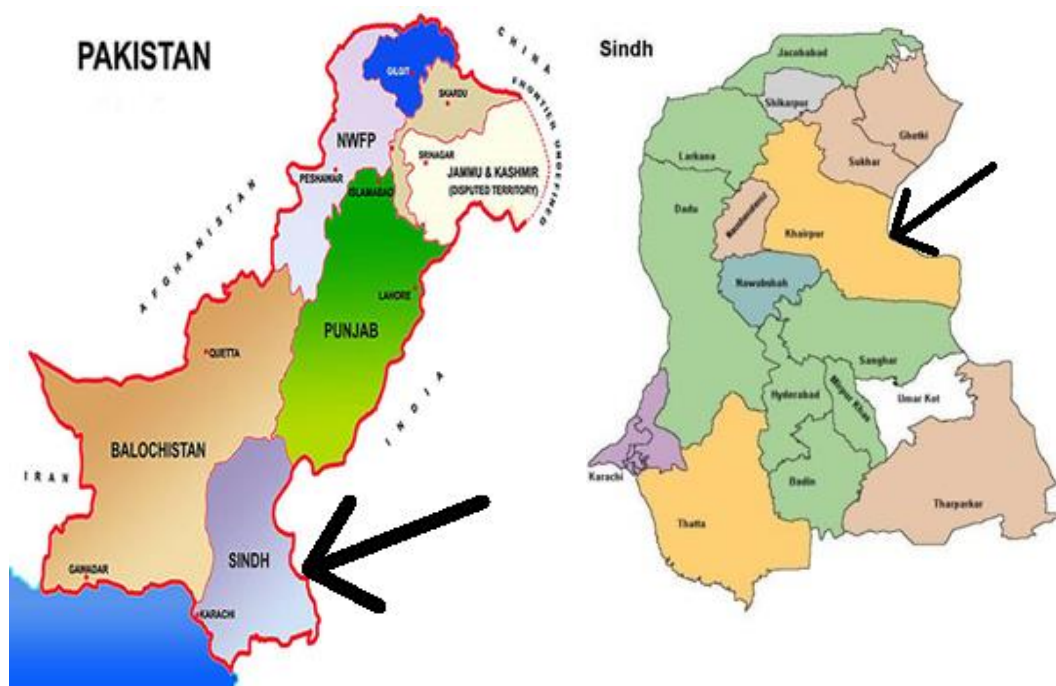
Conducting research in rural Pakistan poses a number of challenges particularly in the area where I carried out this study. In this chapter, I discuss my choice of methods as well as the problems I faced in undertaking this research. I conducted fieldwork in six villages, I describe how I negotiated access in these villages, the use of intermediaries and my experiences in each of the villages. Finally, I discuss the process of transcription, translation and analysis. My journey through these villages provides me with an opportunity to reflect on my own life in comparison to the women in my sample and elaborate their situation in which they did not have the opportunities and facilities that an ordinary woman like me has enjoyed. There were certain elements that simultaneously made me an insider and an outsider in the location in which I was working; I explain these characteristics and discuss how they helped me to interact with villagers, but most importantly, I describe my experience of using multiple methods of data collection pointing out what worked and what did not work in the rural setting.

My fieldwork was conducted in the Khairpur district of Sindh province. The Khairpur district lies in southeast Pakistan (northern Sindh) and is the second largest district of Sindh province in terms of area. The district is divided into eight administrative units (Talukas), and Khairpur city functions as the headquarters of the district. Approximately 95.5 per cent of its population is Sindhi while other ethnic groups include Punjabi, Siraiki and Baloch. Khairpur city has education and healthcare facilities fulfilling the needs of the locals as well as nearby villagers. The city has a public university, where I have been working since 2008, and a medical and engineering college.

I chose Khairpur district as the area for my fieldwork for a number of reasons: first, being a resident of the city, I was acquainted with the area and people; I, therefore,

had good relations with the people who enabled me to find intermediaries for the research. Secondly, because the law and order situation in Sindh province is not stable, travel to any distant areas could have carried a security risk. Thirdly, my fieldwork was not funded by my sponsor,⁸ and financial constraints did not allow me to conduct fieldwork a long way from my home base. It was for these reasons that I limited my fieldwork to the Khairpur district.

Figure 1: Map of Pakistan and Sindh Showing Khairpur District:



Source: Google Maps

At the outset, I envisaged this research as qualitative sociological research with interviews as the main research method. In keeping with the usual time period for completing a PhD, I planned to spend three months undertaking the fieldwork, as most of the CWS students do.⁹ I decided to talk to women in different villages rather than a single village; I was aware from the beginning that there were variations within the region, and I wanted to access diverse groups of rural women in terms of

⁸ Although I had requested my funding agency to cover my expenses, my application was not approved.

⁹ I worked within the norm of usual fieldwork period for PhD students at the Centre for Women's Studies. Moreover, lack of funding and limits of the PhD project in terms of its duration prevented me from extending the fieldwork further. I therefore limited it to three months.

their position and status, their access to education, employment opportunities and degree of control over their mobility. I could have decided to focus on one village in more depth, but exploring women's lives in different villages gave my study a broader perspective. In retrospect, undertaking qualitative research in the rural setting presented me with more challenges than I had anticipated. The fact that I was dealing with an impoverished under-educated population who had very limited opportunities and exposure to the wider world made my research more difficult than expected. The research process revealed the shortcomings of the methodological choices I had initially made, as discussed in the following sections.

Methodology and Data Sources

I believe I have been a feminist since my childhood. For example, I remember participating in a provincial-level essay competition in which I had highlighted the complexities of the lives of women in rural areas of Sindh. As a reward I was sent a prize and a letter of appreciation from the then provincial minister. Although I was very young, not even in high school, I had a deep interest in women's experiences which came after witnessing the huge contrast between my life and village women's lives. I did not enjoy a particularly privileged upbringing, but theirs was even worse than mine. This mindset remained throughout my life; whenever I visited any village or came across a marginalised woman, I tried to interpret her situation according to her experience not according to how she is judged by others. My inspiration for this study was part of the continuation of my own interest in rural women. When I began this study, I had a very limited understanding of what village life is like, now that I have carried out this research and analysed the data I collected, I can imagine how difficult life can be in these villages, particularly for women.

The broad based aim of my study was to understand young married women living in rural areas of Pakistan in general and rural Sindh in particular and explore data on the strategies, needs, opportunities, and difficulties these women have. I sought to document and analyse women's negotiation with patriarchy in informal settings to understand the measures that young married women use to improve their positions within households. I intended to assess the overall impact of women's strategies within households so that I might explore and analyse how women play their roles to

bargain with patriarchy in order for them to improve their status and minimize the threats they face. A feminist approach was essential in order to collect and analyse meaningful data. According to Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002), there is no methodology which is specifically feminist, but a research project is feminist when it is framed by feminist theory, as mine is; I draw on Walby's (1990) and Kandiyoti's (1988) theorisation of patriarchy. Most importantly my own commitment to the project has contributed to the feminist nature of my research, as, Letherby (2003: 5) notes the feminist approach to methodology acknowledges the subjective involvement of the person doing the research – in my case my long-term concern about the hardships facing women's in rural areas. Another aspect of feminist research, according to Ramazanoglu and Holland is that, 'feminist approaches are distinguished by conceptualizing taken-for-granted male power in the family/household as a critical issue'¹⁰ (2002: 147). Ramazanoglu and Holland further note that feminist research does not mean that researchers have to study only women or consider women as innocent, but grounded in women's experience, feminist methodology should reflect women's lives and experiences. Informed by these insights, I developed a feminist methodological approach for my study.

Academics in Pakistan prefer quantitative research over qualitative enquiry. My teachers, colleagues, friends and all the other academics I know have used quantitative research for their projects. I recall one incident when, during my M.Phil studies, I went to my teacher and asked him which methodology should I use for my study, and he replied in a firm tone 'obviously the quantitative one', and then explained that the analysis of quantitative research through graphs and tables makes the study easy to interpret, whereas it is very difficult to read long and detailed summaries of qualitative analyses. Convinced by this explanation, I used quantitative research in my M.Phil research, though in my heart I always questioned how tables and figures can explain the oppression and exploitation that women suffer. The experience of locating 400 respondents to meet the quantitative research criteria was a difficult process. The study was not very successful in terms of deepening my understanding of the problem I was investigating, which further increased my need for and interest in qualitative research for future studies. It is, therefore, a matter of

¹⁰ Although this comment was made in the context of feminist approaches to violence, this is also central to my project. Though I am not working on violence, I deal with male power which is central in shaping women's lives in this setting.

personal interest and conviction that I adopted qualitative research methods for my PhD, I was convinced that qualitative research was needed in order to document and understand the lives and experiences of village women.

When I returned to Pakistan to conduct fieldwork and discussed my study with my colleagues, all of them asked me how many questionnaires I was going to have filled in for data collection. It was due to the current quantitative research environment that they all asked me the same question. It was surprising to them when I told them that I would use qualitative methods and would conduct about 30-35 interviews. They raised their eyebrows, as if to ask how only 30-35 interviews could fulfil the requirement of a PhD study. They were also surprised by the extended period I spent in the villages conducting my fieldwork; they could not understand why it took roughly 3 months to conduct 30-35 interviews. They could not conceive of the idea that qualitative methods such as observation and semi-structured interviewing demand an investment of time in order for the researcher to understand family dynamics. Kabeer (1994) highlights one such aspect of qualitative over quantitative research in which it is important to carry out observations to analyse power structures:

Economists have demonstrated the greatest faith within the social sciences in the scientific status of quantitative knowledge and the least respect for qualitative insights. However, there are significant dimensions of the human experience that do not lend themselves to enumeration. One such dimension ... is that of power. Quantitative approaches may be able to measure 'statistically important' areas of decision-making power for women and men, but the elusiveness of power lies precisely in its resistance to 'objective' observation [134].

In accordance with Kabeer's argument, I saw qualitative research as necessary to answer my research question(s) for example, the strategies married women adopted to bargain with patriarchy could only be understood through qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Secondly, the data I was looking for was exploratory. Such research aims at becoming familiar with the basic issues of people's lives. It helps in building a picture of what is happening and also provides direction for future research. Qualitative data is frequently used in exploratory research because it 'tends to be more open to using a range of evidence and discovering new issues' (Neuman 1997: 19). Quimby (2012:3) also highlights

the importance of qualitative research in ‘constructing, describing, representing and interpreting social reality’, but above all, qualitative research can help in exploring ‘a wide array of dimensions of the social world’ (Mason 2002: 1). I wanted to assess different aspects of women’s lives such as a daughter, wife, daughter-in-law, and sister-in-law and this would only be possible through qualitative methods.

Informed by the theories of Walby and Kandiyoti, I wanted to explore women’s negotiations with patriarchy in the private sphere. I attempted to respond to the need that Kandiyoti has identified to understand women’s short term and medium term strategies for survival in different locations where classic patriarchy persists (see Kandiyoti 1988: 286). I therefore hoped to deepen the understanding of the way women continue to survive under the stranglehold of male dominance. Within this broad aim, there were several supplementary themes which were the essence of the proposed study formulated as follows:

Table 5: Themes and Related Issues to be Explored

Themes	Sub-themes
Everyday Life	Carrying out everyday tasks, division of labour, childcare, craft work.
Decision-Making	Marriage decision-making, financial decision-making, general decision-making pertaining to day to day matters.
Mobility	Access outside home, visiting relatives and friends, access to healthcare and other important areas.
Standing in the family	Dowry, support from natal family after marriage, relationship with the affinal family members particularly the mother-in-law and eldest sister-in-law, aspirations for sons and daughters.

Like other feminist researchers, I was interested in exploring women’s lives and hearing their experiences. Given that there is no one specific feminist method (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002: 15), I planned to use multiple methods including focus group discussions (with older men and women), observation and semi-structured interviews with young women. There was and is little existing research on the issues I was addressing; available studies are either based on quantitative

research or focus on other regions of Pakistan such as northern Punjab (See Abbasi 1980; Aschenbrenner 1993; Sathar and Kazi 2000; Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001). Therefore, asking people about their lives, listening to their experiences and observing them in a natural setting was the only way to access what I was interested in. Interviewing has been seen as a way of allowing access to informants' knowledge, perspectives, ideas and experiences of their own lives and in their own words (Tylor and Bogdan 1984; Reinharz 1992; Mason 2002). Thus, within the time limit of three months, I planned to conduct 30-35 semi-structured interviews with young married women. Since I intended to explore the life of women in everyday social settings, their daily routine and interaction, observation was also an important method and was to prove extremely useful in making sense of women's accounts in terms of their living conditions in households and their daily routines.

I also planned to conduct focus group discussions with older men and women because of their strategic importance as fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law in a patriarchal society. Their perception and views shape young women's lives, and I was interested in those views. I thought talking to men was particularly important because they are the ones with power and it was essential to record their perception of women's lives.

I intended to interview 30-35 women from different villages of Khairpur district. I planned to use snowball sampling in order to find women who would meet the criteria I had set for recruitment. Snowball sampling is advantageous particularly when the nature of the research is exploratory, qualitative or descriptive (Atkinson and Flint 2001). Snowball samples 'emerge through the process of reference from one person to the next' (Streeton, Cooke and Cambell 2004: 37), it is 'network' sampling in which one respondent recommends another who is willing to be interviewed (Gilbert 2008: 179). This method is suitable when there is no sampling frame due to the unavailability of an adequate list of potential informants. Personally, I felt snowball sampling was ethical because a person is not interviewed under any pressure but with his/her consent.

I had certain criteria in mind in recruiting participants in terms of ethnicity, age, sex, education and family type. The first criterion was ethnicity; I selected Sindhi women which is the largest ethnic group of Sindh province. The second was that they should

live in patrilineal extended families because this family structure is the base of patriarchy and is a very common form of residence in Pakistani society particularly in rural areas where it is hard to find nuclear residences. Thirdly, I planned to recruit young married women aged between 20-30 years. The reason for choosing women from this age group was that these women are considered subordinate to almost everyone in the family, they are in the most disadvantaged situation as they are at the bottom of the family hierarchy. Therefore, these are the women who bargain with patriarchy from the least favourable position. Fourth, I planned to recruit women with little education because female literacy is as low as 22 per cent among women in rural areas of Sindh province (Pakistan Economic Survey 2013-14). Finally, my study involved women who did not have formal employment. Like literacy, female employment is neither encouraged nor common in rural Sindh; girls are married at a very young age which results in their early drop-out from schools and leads to exclusion from employment; restricted mobility further curtails their chances of formal employment. After their marriage, these women are completely dependent on their husbands and fathers-in-law and become a source for the reproduction of male dominance by reinforcing patriarchal values to their children, particularly daughters (Quddus 1995; Sathar and Kazi 2000; Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001; Maqsood 2007; Khan and Hussain 2008; Patel 2010). The realities I encountered in the field made me modify the criteria I had originally used. For example, age of women; women in the villages marry very young so I extended the age limit downwards, and in some cases, women were rather more educated than I had expected (see below).

Intermediaries

My sample was recruited with the help of intermediaries such as community leaders, local officials and school heads. Although I was familiar with the city, I did not know much about the villages near the city. It was for this reason that I needed intermediaries who could make my access to the villages possible, introduce me to the villagers, enable me to locate respondents and facilitate organising interviews and focus group discussions. I had contacted my friend Aliya¹¹ and a colleague Inam in Khairpur before embarking on my journey to Pakistan. My friend Aliya was working

¹¹ All names of intermediaries and participants are pseudonyms.

as a social mobilizer in a local NGO and my colleague Inam was serving as an Assistant Professor in my university. Their assistance in the entire research process was substantial and I contacted most of my intermediaries through them.

Of six villages that I visited for the fieldwork, my friend Aliya accompanied me to two of them and introduced me to other important people who helped me meet my participants. Since her work was related to reproductive health, she had contacts with doctors and many influential people in the villages. It was through her contacts that I met Gul, a policewoman. Gul accompanied me to her village and subsequently her parents' village. My colleague Inam accompanied me to two other villages; one was his own village and another was his friend's. In his own village, I was introduced to Gori who was his family's maid and helped me access the women in that village, whereas in the other village, he introduced me to Hassan who was a labourer. Another intermediary was Ahmed, a driver in a local NGO, who I was put into contact with by my friend Aliya, and who helped me access women in his village. The last village I visited was that of my driver who had offered his services voluntarily for my fieldwork. All of my intermediaries enjoyed intimacy with and respect among the local people in their respective villages. The way their position allowed me negotiate the participants made me think about the status they had achieved in the villages. Initially, I thought their education and job had a strong role to play in their status. For example, Gul was a policewoman, she was well known and respected in her village. Her job and family's support strengthened her relations with others in the community while her cooperative nature further enhanced her position and she became popular locally; Gul was a household name. Similarly, Ahmed who was a driver in an organisation enjoyed similar respect and trust from people. His education and job earned him veneration in his village and he enjoyed influence over local decisions. But in contrast, Gori was an illiterate elderly woman, but despite her old age she was very active and confident and enjoyed free access to the villagers' homes. She treated all men and women like her children. Likewise, Hassan, who was head of the labourers, was also uneducated and did not have a formal job, yet he had influence and the villagers listened to his opinions. This made me think that formal job and education were not the only criteria for achieving an influential status in a village setting; personal interest, strong communication skills, gender and age were also important. But above all, trust is a significant element in

developing mutual respect. If people allowed their daughters-in-law to be accompanied by Gul for the focus group discussion, it was because of their trust in her. Similarly, people's confidence in these intermediaries earned me a level of trust and willing cooperation as a result of my connection with them. Therefore, trust was an important aspect in accessing participants and seeking their cooperation in the field, working as a chain weaving and holding us (myself, the intermediaries and the villagers) in a respectful relationship. I consider my intermediaries to be suitably reliable because people whom I trusted had put me into contact with them. Nonetheless, I do not want to overplay the degree of trust given the small amount of time I spent in the villages.

I used intermediaries because it was necessary in order to introduce me to the villagers. Their usefulness had to do with how influential they are in their local villages. For example, Hassan had a strong position because he stood for workers' rights, and because he was influential he was a good person to be used as a contact between me and my respondents.

My intermediaries were very cooperative throughout the fieldwork. There was nothing that could compensate them for this. I wanted to offer gifts before my departure but my friend Aliya advised me against this because villagers never take gifts from guests. Instead they gave me handmade pots and handicrafts as tokens to remember them by.

My Journey of Locating and Interviewing Women

I formally started my fieldwork at the beginning of July 2012, but prior to that I made a visit to one village at the end of June. The main purpose of this visit was to familiarise myself with village life; I wanted to see villages closely, observe people's lives, the sources of their livelihood and most importantly how women live in these villages. Before going into the field, I discussed my plan to conduct focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with my friend Aliya who was to introduce me to the communities in some of the villages. She suggested that I cover one village in one day and have 5-6 interviews in the same village so that we could finish our fieldwork as soon as possible. I clearly understood her point: she thought I

would use quantitative methods and would have questionnaires to be filled for data collection. I explained what I was supposed to do and that it was not possible for me to conduct more than one or two interviews in one day.

Although I had set some criteria for recruiting participants, my encounter with women in the field made me alter it; I had planned to interview those aged between 20-30 years, but I found that girls as young as 15 and 16 years were married because of the prevalence of early marriages in the villages. Initially I was upset to see these young girls tied into marriage and childbearing while they themselves were children, but I hid my emotions in order to save my respondents from any embarrassment. Of the interviews that I conducted, 11 respondents were in the age group of 15-20 years, 13 were aged 21-25 years and six were in 26-30 years. All of my interviewees had arranged marriages with close kin, except for two women who had love marriages, but they too were within the close kin group. The majority of my respondents had 3-6 children, only three of the respondents did not have any children and one had delivered a baby that died soon after birth.

Table 6: Estimated Age of the Interview Respondents

Estimated age (in years)	No. of respondents
15-20	11
21-25	13
26-30	6
Total	30

These ages are estimates only. Usually women in villages are not aware of their ages. Many times I asked the participants about their age and, after some consideration, they just smiled helplessly. In those situations, I first ascertained the average age of first menstruation in the villages, which was 12-13 years. I then asked women how many years after their first menstruation they were married, and then asked how many years ago they married. I then added these numbers to the average age of puberty in the region to estimate their age.

Female education is rare in rural Sindh particularly in villages, therefore, I expected women to have little or no education. However, to my surprise, some women had more education than I had expected; a few of them were educated up to 10th level. Of all the women that I interviewed, seven were not literate, ten women had 2 to 5 years' of schooling, eight women had acquired 6 to 9 level of educated whereas five women had 10-12 years' of formal education. One of these women was continuing education after 10th level and that too after 14 years of her marriage.

Table 7: Literacy Level of the Respondents

Years of formal education	No. of respondents
None	7
2-5	10
6-9	8
10-12	5
Total	30

The prejudice against female literacy – that education makes a girl rebellious – is a central cause of a woman's lack of literacy, and this eventually leads to her marriage within two or three years of her first menstruation. Therefore, the majority of my respondents were less educated and married at a very young age. Out of the 30 women I interviewed, 28 were married between the ages of 12-19 years, one woman was married at the age of 11, and one was married at the age of 21.

According to the last criterion for recruitment, none of the respondents had any formal employment; however, most of them were involved in some type of home-based craft work for their livelihood. The few women I met who were engaged in formal employment were usually living in a nuclear families, for example, my intermediary in the first village was a policewoman; she used to be part of an extended family but after obtaining her job she and her husband moved to a separate household.

My search for participants led me on a journey in each of the six villages. From village one to village six, I encountered six different worlds of women that were

similar in many ways, but different in other ways that need to be highlighted. For example in village one, I found a young policewoman, Gul, who was leading her life in the best possible way available to her, whereas in other villages I did not see any other woman who were as self-reliant and confident. I found a high degree of female literacy in village two, which was surprising, but in other villages women had very limited literacy. My journey through these six villages (discussed below) illustrates many expected and unexpected aspects of women's lives in rural areas.

The first village

Soon after reaching Khairpur I planned a visit to a village close by. With my friend Aliya, I visited the first village which was about 15 kilometres from Khairpur city. Aliya had been visiting this village as part of her job. This village was closely linked to the highway making the provision of social services such as education and healthcare possible. As soon as we entered the village, the sight of the school building made me glad. Since it was a very hot summer day, young boys were bathing in the local canal and playing in the water, the only enjoyable form of entertainment in the scorching heat. The absence of girls was worrisome for me. I asked Aliya and she told that the mixing of girls and boys here is considered to be risky, so villagers do not allow their girls in the canal. I just listened and thought that heat affects people regardless of their gender.

This village seemed rich in terms of resources, for example, an irrigation canal and date palm trees. I observed that most of the men were busy in the date palm industry plucking and processing the fruit. I frequently saw young men riding donkey carts full of dates, which is the usual way of transporting dates from farms to processing areas. Aliya described everything to me on our way. She was quite familiar with the local doctors and took me to one who was helping her in her own field of reproductive health. We dropped by the clinic of Dr. Usman who was fanning himself with a hand fan. He was pleased to see Aliya and greeted me with much respect, and instantly asked his assistant, a young boy, to bring us hand fans. The location of his clinic was not helpful in protecting us from the heat, considering this he took us to his home and asked us to sit under the tree as there was power breakdown. There I explained to him the purpose of my visit. He immediately

phoned a woman and asked her to come to his house as soon as possible. Before her arrival, he told us that she was a policewoman and could make our access to women possible. Within ten minutes, a woman in her mid thirties entered the house; it was Gul, the policewoman. The doctor asked her to help us and take good care of us. Gul received the message and took me to her house. Aliya preferred to stay back so that she could discuss job-related matters with Dr. Usman.

In the villages, taking good care of guests and treating them with high degree of respect is considered honourable work; villagers never allow their guests to leave without serving them food or drinks, even if the guest is someone unknown to them, as I was. A guest is expected to accept whatever is offered to him/her, any refusal is considered a sign of arrogance. Thus, I accepted all the offers of tea and cold drinks in the villages. I discussed my research with Gul at her home where she served me tea and started questioning me about my research in order to understand how she could help. She told me that most houses in the village had patrilocal extended families, only a few had nuclear families including hers. I spent a few hours talking to Gul and discussing village life, we then planned our first visit for the following week.

I started interviewing in the beginning of July, 2012. Aliya was happy to accompany me on this visit and then left me with Gul for rest of the week. The first house that Gul took me for an interview was her neighbour's. It was morning, and all the women in the household looked extremely busy with cooking, washing and sewing clothes. The young women came to greet me, Aliya and Gul then left to continue their assigned duties, but these women did not miss the opportunity to offer us drinks. I was sitting with Gul in the corridor where she continued describing village life to me. It was very hot and electricity was not available due to the power shortage. That was probably the reason that the old man and children in the house were sitting under the tree. Soon a woman came and gave us hand fans. Gul told me that the village was experiencing 16-18 hours of power shut down each a day, and sometimes power supply was restored at night. This discovery upset me for two reasons; first, in spite of this long power breakdown these women continued to perform their duties. Second, they did not have air conditioning in any case, and, on top of that, 16-18 hours power breakdown further eliminated the chances of using

electric fans. Therefore, I too faced the prospect of working in this heat for more than two months in different villages.

The deplorable conditions of weather and power breakdown did not seem to be affecting the women in the household. To them, the shade of a tree was enough to protect them from the heat. Many of the women were sewing clothes under trees while a few of them were resting. In the homes where trees were not planted, women were working under the sun, which had darkened their skin. All of this made me think that my timing to visit women for interviewing was not appropriate. This could have been a barrier between my respondents and me, for example, if women were busy doing household chores, they would not have the time or inclination to be interviewed. I therefore started visiting them during the afternoons, the hottest part of the day when they were less busy.

I noticed that older women in the households were absent. On my enquiry, Gul told me that it was the date harvest season, so older women were working on date palm farms. Young women were not allowed to work outside the home because they were expected to look after the household. Therefore, older women go out for labour and bring in some money.

Since on my first visit it was very warm inside, I asked Gul to move out and sit under the tree so that we could also be close to the women of the house. The tree was near the kitchen so I could easily have free and informal conversation with them. I started asking about their daily routines and slowly and gradually moved to explaining to them why I was there and asked if anyone wanted to be part of my study. A woman came forward and showed interest. The same woman later on took me to the house of her uncle where her cousin came forward for an interview. It was a big house divided into different portions allowing a couple of families to live in one place.

I interviewed five more women from different households from this village using snowball sampling. It took me more than one week to complete six interviews. Gul was very cooperative and remained with me during my visits in the first and second village. Since she had a government job, I had to organize my field visits according to her convenience. It happened sometimes that she received an emergency call from her department, in that case, she would phone me and we would reschedule our visit.

During the interviews she remained involved with other women in the house and discussed my research with them.

When I had completed the interviews in the first village, I requested that Gul, who had now become my friend, take me to another village if it was not a problem for her. During the week I had realized that Gul was free to go anywhere. She did not have any restrictions on her mobility as her formal job had licenced her freedom. This was probably because of her job, and partly because she had six children and was of a mature age. I noticed that she did not go to her office when I was there. I asked her if I was the reason for her absence from the job. She told me that she has a relaxed kind of job; the department would keep her on standby and she was called whenever a policewoman was required.

During the week I visited the first village, mothers-in-law requested to be interviewed. This situation was quite interesting. One of the mothers-in-law suspected that her daughter-in-law had talked against her, so she wanted an opportunity to speak up in order to tell the other side of story. This happened many times, mothers-in-law would ask me when I was going to interview them. Due to their willingness, I conducted a focus group discussion with them in the first village.

Table 8: List of the Interview Respondents From the First Village

S No.	Pseudonym	Age	Education	No. of Children	Age at marriage (in years)	Type of marriage	Size of household
1.	Amina	26	5th	2	19	Arranged	12
2.	Razia	30	8th	6	14	Arranged	13
3.	Subhan	15	Nil	Nil	14	Arranged	7
4.	Fahmida	21	5th	1	14	Arranged	9
5.	Ruqaiya	20	8th	1	14	Arranged	7
6.	Tasleem	20	10th	2	17	Arranged/ Exchanged	15

The second village

The second village that I visited was that of Gul's natal family. It was very close to the first village and it did not take long to reach there. Gul took me to the house of her uncle who was a school headmaster and much respected in the village. As soon as the women in the house saw Gul with a stranger (me), they flocked around us. We had a nice conversation with Gul's uncle and Gul told him about my research. The daughter-in-law in the house came forward and showed her willingness to be interviewed. We went into a separate room and Gul left the house to meet with other relatives and seek the consent of other women for interviews. I interviewed six women within one week from this village, Gul would introduce me to the women and leave to see her relatives, she would usually return by the time I finished an interview. I was pleased that her position as an intermediary was providing her with an opportunity to see her relatives whom she had not seen for some time.

Table 9: List of the Interview Respondents From the Second Village

S No.	Pseudonym	Age	Education	No. of Children	Age at marriage (in years)	Type of marriage	Size of household
1.	Asma	20	8th	1	18	Arranged	10
2.	Fouzia	20	8th	1	16	Arranged	17
3.	Rehana	25	8th	2	19	Arranged	16
4.	Mumtaz	30	10th	6	15	Arranged	9
5.	Shah Bibi	22	8th	3	15	Arranged	8
6.	Safia	20	8th	1	18	Arranged	8

The women I interviewed in this village were educated up to 8th class. This was a matter of surprise for me. On enquiring into this matter, I was told that the school for girls is very close to the houses, and secondly, the headmaster of the school (Gul's uncle) had educated his daughters at that school. The fact that a respected village man had sent his daughters to school encouraged others to do the same. There was no building for the school in this village few years ago, so the master would take classes under the tree as he was very committed. All of my respondents were educated under the tree. It made me happy and sad at the same time; some women's education can

inspire other women and can contribute to their enhanced status. Similarly, restrictions on some women mean restrictions for all women which results in reinforcing patriarchal values and practices.

The third village

The third village that my friend Aliya took me to was about 15 kilometres away from the city. It was the village of a young man (Ahmed) working as a driver in Aliya's organisation. Aliya and I went to Ahmed's office in the city and from there Ahmed drove us to his village. Ahmed was much respected in the village, he was a literate man and had a formal job in the city; this gave him leadership over others. He not only enjoyed respect but also had a say over village decisions. Owing to this, as soon as we entered the street leading to Ahmed's house, people stopped to greet him and then continued with what they were doing. When we entered his home, all stood up to greet me and my friend Aliya.

So far, people's welcoming attitude was a matter of surprise for me; nobody raised concerns about my research, they remained cooperative and hospitable. I often discussed this with my friend Aliya, she told me that Sindhis by nature are very hospitable. I knew that Sindhis are known in the country for their hospitality and respect to others especially women, and I was experiencing that on a personal level. This hospitality is common in other regions of Pakistan, for example, Saeed (2012) found such kindness among Pashtuns in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa – the north-west province of Pakistan – where it is almost impossible for a guest to escape the hospitality of the host.

Interestingly, all of the residents in the village belonged to the same caste; the tradition of strict cousin marriages did not allow any space for other social groups; the village was also named after this caste. I was surprised to see a young girl running a grocery shop in the village. Due to the wholly kinship group endogamous marriages in the neighbourhood, all residents were relatives, and thus the girl was allowed to run the store. Later on, Ahmed told me that the girl was young, after two or three years her brother would replace her and she would either be at home or be married. However, it is still possible that strict kin group endogamy had reduced the

chances of threats to that girl, thus allowing her family to grant her permission to run the shop.

Table 10: List of the Interview Respondents From the Third Village

S No.	Pseudonym	Age	Education	No. of Children	Age at marriage (in years)	Type of marriage	Size of household
1.	Gulshan	30	5th	5	18	One-sided love marriage	20
2.	Aisha	30	10th	Nil	15	Arranged	14
3.	Bakhtiar	25	5th	1	19	Love	8
4.	Sakina	25	5th	3	16	Arranged	26
5.	Hakim	30	10th	4	19	Arranged	9

Ahmed asked Aliya and me to sit in a room and went to talk to the women in his house. He returned after ten minutes and told me that his sister-in-law (brother's wife) was willing to be interviewed. He introduced me to his brother's wife Hakim and took Aliya out of the room to provide us with privacy. After I finished my interview with Hakim, I asked her to tell me about other women who might be willing to be interviewed. She told me about another woman in her neighbourhood and asked Ahmed to take me there. In the same way, I found four other women who agreed to be interviewed. I planned my visits for these meetings during the coming week. Luckily, I did not have to alter my schedule to visit them in the afternoon because women in the village were happy to be interviewed any time. One of them said 'it does not matter if anyone of us is not performing household tasks due to the interview, my sister-in-law or any other woman will do it if I am not available'.

The fourth village

The fourth village that I visited was about 15 kilometres from the main city. It was the village of my colleague Inam who had offered me his assistance in my fieldwork when I was in the UK. After I had visited three villages, I planned a meeting with Inam in order to organise interviews in his village. He invited me to his house; his invitation served my purpose of observing the village prior to interviewing.

The village was not that far from the city. It usually took me half an hour to reach the villages I had visited so far. I enjoyed my travel to this village because it was surrounded by large date palm farms. Since it was summer, people were busy in date harvest and processing. Once again, the proximity of the village to the city enabled the villagers to have better standards of living than others. This was evident as soon as we entered the village; we saw a large hospital and a school, a number of shops and plentiful transport. A significant number of buffalos was a sign that villagers had substantial resources such as livestock. Most of the houses in this village were *pecca*¹² and Inam's own house was equipped with all main facilities.

Inam and his wife treated us with respect and traditional hospitality. As soon as the village women saw an unknown woman entering Inam's house, they followed out of curiosity. Within 15 minutes of my arrival there were about 10-12 women in their thirties and forties, some with infants, greeting Inam's wife and sitting around us. Here I was caught in a misunderstanding; the visiting women thought I was from a funding agency. Although they were disappointed to know that I did not belong to any government department, they continued to discuss village life with me. Inam was also there asking questions about my research. He phoned his maternal aunt (mother's cousin) and discussed the feasibility of my fieldwork. After they finalised everything, Inam told me that I could visit the village after two days and see his aunt who lived next door to him but was out of the village on the day I was there. On my return to Khairpur, I noted all of the important things from the day's visit.

I visited the village again after two days and met the maternal aunt of Inam; she called her maid and introduced me to her. Gori, the maid, was in her sixties. Despite her old age, she was very active and would frequently visit several households in a day; she enjoyed free access throughout the village. Gori asked me to wait, and after a while, returned accompanied by many women. I was surprised to see that many women arriving for interviews at one time. My surprise ended soon as I realised those women mistakenly thought that I was from a government agency and was there to distribute money under the government's Income Support Program (BISP).¹³

¹² *Pecca* is a common word which stands for concrete, the opposite of *pecca* is *katcha*.

¹³ Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) is associated with the former late Prime Minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto. The program aims at poverty reduction and women's empowerment among unprivileged people.

It was also difficult for me to follow qualitative research methodology in an environment where people were used to quantitative research. The women were happy to know that I would interview them, and when they came to me for the interview, they looked around me and tried to find something. I could not understand that. This happened quite few times until I came to know that they were actually looking for the questionnaire which they expected me to fill in for data collection. Interestingly, these women had usually thought that I was a representative of the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) and would come to meet me in the hope that I would distribute money, fill in the form to gather information about them. The situation was very tricky. I did not want them to return without talking to me. I would sit with them and ask about the monthly income program through which they received money. After talking to them, I came to know that the women had not received money for many months and whenever an unknown woman is seen in the village they followed her in the hope that she was from government's funding agency. They told me that many times the women officers under BISP visited the villages for paper-work but never returned to distribute the money. I then explained to the women why I was in the village and after listening to this many of them returned to their homes. I had good conversation with the few who remained in the house. This happened in other villages as well and I had to tackle the situation with care and patience.

Table 11: List of the Interview Respondents From the Fourth Village

S No.	Pseudonym	Age	Education	No. of Children	Age at marriage (in years)	Type of marriage	Size of household
1.	Shabnam	24	11th	2	21	Love	13
2.	Fatima	24	Nil	3	14	Arranged	16
3.	Mariyam	25	Nil	2	17	Arranged	7
4.	Ghazala	25	5th	2	17	Arranged	12
5.	Shabana	17	5th	2	14	Arranged	12

After the women left, Gori, still confident, came to me and asked me to come along with her. She had decided to take me to the households and help me to conduct interviews with the women there. She took me to eight houses where I met eight

women of whom five met the criteria I had set for recruitment. The other three women were around 35 years old and very close to the status of being mothers-in-law. After visiting those houses, I made plans to interview those five women in the coming week.

The week that I spent in the village was very fruitful. I gathered useful data; participants were very cooperative and open though the length of our conversations was not very long. They told me about some different trends in the village. For example, during the interviews I came to know that there were a large number of young boys involved in drug addiction and gambling. I also learnt that parents marry off these young boys so that their wives may look after them thus adding more misery to a woman's life, a woman who not only has to live with a drug addict but also has to suffer frequent abuse and violence. It was uncomfortable to see how young women are used as a means to facilitate men's lives; they do not have their own life to live. On one hand I was happy to have collected meaningful data that would enable me to portray women's lives in the villages, but on the other hand that happiness was often side-lined by the bitter facts the data contained. Discussing similar experiences in her fieldwork, Wei (2011) elaborates on her feelings about gaining valuable data as a result of the interviewees discussing painful experiences. On one hand she was excited to have collected meaningful data, but on the other hand she felt guilty; her respondents' painful life stories haunted her for weeks.

The fifth village

By the time I completed interviews in the fourth village, my colleague Inam had arranged my visit to the next village. This village was relatively far from the city and was also in a barren and hilly area. The social conditions of this village were very poor; it did not have any clinic or dispensary, people told me that they go to Khairpur city to access health facilities. During my journey to this village, I often saw people fetching water from the canal as this isolated village did not have any regular water supply. Surprisingly, in the absence of basic facilities, I found that there was a proper electricity supply in the village. I was told that the village contained a shrine of an ancient Sufi, after which the village was named. The regular visits of pilgrims forced

the government to provide the village with an electricity supply but not with healthcare, water and education facilities.

Since it was a rocky desert area the majority of men were labourers involved in rock breaking. There we met a friend of Inam named Hassan who introduced me in the village. Hassan was the head of labourers, he told me that labourers work the whole day breaking rocks and receive a meagre amount in return which does not help to improve their standard of living. He had raised his voice against this situation several times and due to his efforts he was well known in the village. He took me to his house and introduced me to his daughter-in-law Basheeran; he explained to her why I was there and asked her to cooperate with me and take me to women who were willing to be interviewed. Basheeran was a very active and talkative woman and instantly consented to be interviewed upon my request. After interviewing her, she took me to another household. In contrast to my previous experiences, the woman in this household was reluctant to be interviewed. She excused herself by saying that her child was crying so she could not be interviewed. We thanked her and started to look for another respondent.

It was a tough job to find respondents in such a hot area which was completely barren. It was 1 pm and I was walking under the scorching heat. Basheeran was used to it, she did not care about this and took me to another house. I was surprised to see a young girl there who was washing dishes under the sun; there was no shade. She was sweating heavily but continued performing her task without any break. I interviewed one more woman from there and located three more to be interviewed in the week.

During my way back to Khairpur city, I kept thinking about Basheeran who was Hassan's daughter-in-law. She was very active, talkative, friendly and different from other women in the village. After a thorough discussion with her, I came to know that originally she did not belong to that village. She was born and bred in another area, where she had better access to education and other facilities. Basheeran was educated up to 8th class. She had not wanted to marry into such a poor barren village that lacked basic facilities, but was forced into such a union. Since she was the eldest

daughter-in-law and belonged to a financially better-off family than her in-laws and had an exchange marriage,¹⁴ she enjoyed a powerful position in her family.

Table 12: List of the Interview Respondents From the Fifth Village

S No.	Pseudonym	Age	Education	No. of Children	Age at marriage (in years)	Type of marriage	Size of household
1.	Basheeran	30	8th	3	20	Arranged/forced/exchange	12
2.	Parveen	15	Nil	Nil	12	Arranged	5
3.	Shehzadi	21	Nil	3	15	Arranged	11
4.	Najma	20	Nil	3	11	Arranged	11
5.	Asiya	18	2	Nil	11/12	Arranged	6

The village's location and temperature had affected me, my face had turned red and by the time I reached home a rash had appeared on my face. It was matter of concern for me: I neither wished to see my face in this state nor did I want to quit my fieldwork in that area. I had made a commitment to the remaining women to come back and interview them. I called my intermediary Hassan and told him that I would visit them after two days. It was time to think through ways to organise the fieldwork without affecting my health. I called Inam and Hassan and discussed the situation of law and order in the village. They both assured me of the security in the village. Hassan told me that the presence of the Sufi's shrine keeps the village crowded thereby reducing security threats. I then told them about my plan to conduct interviews in the evening instead of afternoons, and they both supported this. The strategy of visiting the village in the evenings was successful because evenings were not as hot and I managed to interview the women properly.

By this time, I was very tired and decided to discontinue field visits for a week. I planned to collect some secondary data during the week and the best place for that was the library of my university. I visited the library for this week and had several meetings with the librarian who later sent me the latest reports on social indicators of Pakistan.

¹⁴ A marriage in which two women are swapped in marriage, this marriage involves brother-sister pairs (see Chapter 4).

The sixth village

The sixth and the last village was about 20 kilometres away from the main city. It was the village of my driver who had been asking me to visit since I had started my fieldwork. The village was not different from other villages and the majority of people were primarily involved in the date palm industry. Women's lives in this village, in some respects, were similar to those in other villages, but they had stricter control on their mobility and were also forced to observe *purdah*. Girls' education was not encouraged; therefore all the women that I interviewed were either illiterate or educated only up to second or third class. The majority of girls in this village were also married at a young age. My driver's fiancé was 11 or 12 years old and he (in his twenties) was pressuring his future mother-in-law (his mother's sister) to contract the marriage as soon as possible. His aunt brought the girl before me and questioned me 'is my daughter in proper age of marriage?' I was speechless.

My driver, Basheer, told me that his future mother-in-law Shamshad would help me locate respondents. I explained my study to Shamshad, she said that a woman in her neighbourhood would help me in this regard. She took me to a woman named Shahjahan. After a brief explanation, Shahjahan showed her willingness to be interviewed. In the same way, two other women agreed to be interviewed in the village during the week. I conducted one interview on that day and wanted to do one more, but my driver told me that this area was not safe after 4 pm, so it was advisable to return to the city and revisit this village the next morning. During our return journey to Khairpur city, he told me stories of kidnapping on the route, which makes the lives of social and health workers difficult.

Table 13: List of the Interview Respondents From the Sixth Village

S No.	Pseudonym	Age	Education	No. of Children	Age at marriage (in years)	Type of marriage	Size of household
1.	Khalida	22	Nil	2	13	Arranged	10
2.	Shahjahan	24	2	1	14	Arranged	14
3.	Mukhtiar	15	3	1	12	Arranged	13

I became accustomed to traveling about 50-60 kilometres every day. Luckily the road conditions were good, even the linking roads to the highway were in good condition making my travel manageable. The only problem that I faced was that of weather and dust; it made me sick many times. In every village, people would often ask me what made me visit the villages in such hot weather and during power breakdown, even my family did not seem to be happy about my visits to the villages under the scorching heat. Despite these concerns, my target was to finish my work in time and return to the UK. I was anxious to record what I had learnt in order to portray women's lives in these areas.

The tough circumstances and physical characteristics of the villages made me realize how ignorant I was about these women's difficult lives. The overall situation of women in the villages caused me to realise how privileged I was in comparison to them. They were deprived of essential facilities but managed to live their lives. They lacked basic healthcare and in some villages travelled many miles to see the doctor. They had no access to media exposure or technology, whereas I found life without media and technology next to impossible. I was finding the heat unbearable and it was making me ill, but they were working hard in this heat. These women were used to conditions that I found intolerable. Such social conditions also made me thankful of my situation about which I had long been complaining. Although my life was not as luxurious as others, I was ultimately empowered and enjoyed such things as access to education. My fieldwork had moved me in many ways; I had experienced something I had only read of and watched on screen. It was the first time in my life that I personally encountered and experienced the great inequality between urban and rural women's lives.

Observation and focus group discussions

Before conducting interviews and focus group discussions, I spent some time observing village life in order for me to understand the lives of the villagers and build a rapport with them. I understand that it requires a great deal of time and trust to maintain rapport with participants such as mine. I tried my best, but this was limited by the short period of time I spent in each village. Although my access to my participants through the intermediaries had enabled me to gain a degree of trust, the

brevity of interviews does indicate a lack of rapport with my participants. However, sharing my personal experiences allowed them to increase their degree of trust in me to some extent, in order for them to discuss aspects of their personal lives. I understood the requirements of the extended family system in which you have to win the trust of all the family members in order to access the woman in the family. For this purpose, I would first of all sit with the family members of my interviewee, discuss their daily routine, observe their lives, discuss their education generally, talk about how they felt about leaving education and marrying at a young age, and how the system of underage and exchange marriages works for them. This method was very useful in the field and helped me understand village life and its structure, and my frequent visits enhanced villagers' understanding of my research and their trust in me.

Despite the challenges of coping with hot weather and power shortages, I continued my fieldwork without any delay. However, convincing villagers to take part in interviews and focus group discussions was more challenging; women were shy and not used to being asked about their lives. On many occasions the women living beside the house, where I was conducting interviews, would come to see me out of curiosity, but when they knew that I was there for my fieldwork, they made excuses and left. Other women who agreed to be interviewed were not expressive and relied on short replies. Therefore, I spent more time observing the lives of people and building good rapport with the women so that they would speak in greater depth.

Because women often thought that I was from a funding agency and would distribute money among them, many of them consciously or unconsciously linked their answers with the poor financial condition of their family. They complained, for example that their husbands did not have formal jobs. This was hampering progress during the interviews. I had to repeat my questions a few times with more explanation. Later on, I decided that before the beginning of interviews, I would explain clearly that I was NOT from any funding agency and the sole purpose was to document women's lives and then submit a report to my supervisor [they did not know or understand what a PhD or a thesis was].

I completed 30 interviews by the end of August, but the length of the interviews was a matter of concern for me. Women could not speak at length for a few reasons, for

example, some were young, shy and had little opportunity and access to media, whereas others who were talkative could not speak against their relations with in-laws. They were being interviewed in their own households and lack of privacy made them reluctant to open up. A good interview lasted for maximum of 20 minutes; usually their answers were short sometimes only 'ok, fine, hmmm' etc. This was probably because they were not used to being asked detailed questions about their lives. I had realised during the interviewing process that lack of privacy was hampering interviews; interviews were frequently interrupted by other family members, and women who were aware of the presence of mothers-in-law nearby refrained from speaking against them. In that situation, the best possible solution was to bring the women out of their homes and have them involved in focus group discussions. I discussed this matter with my supervisor in the UK and with her consent I planned to organise focus group discussions with women.

In terms of improving my own interviewing skills, patience was an issue for me. The excitement of gaining data at once was something that I believe was hampering my progress, as extracting detailed information is a time-consuming process. Had I given more time to my respondents, and continually rephrased my questions, I might have gathered more data, but my struggle to decide whether it was ethical to repeat questions was something that always discouraged me from pressurising my respondents. I assumed their initial silence meant they could not answer at all, and therefore I remained unsuccessful encouraging them to discuss their lives at length in the beginning. I tried to ask questions in different ways, but may be, in retrospect, I should have adopted a more conversational style.

Taking women out of their homes was definitely a tough task in a setting where they are rarely allowed to visit even their natal families, but throughout my visits to the villages I had realised that trust made many impossible things possible. I contacted my intermediaries once again and asked them to help me. Gul, who facilitated me in the first and second villages, was more than happy to see me once again in her village. Her words were 'I am always at your disposal *adi* (sister)'. She assured me that she would work on it in two days and would make women's participation possible in the focus group discussion. I then made all the necessary arrangements within two days and left for Gul's village at the agreed time.

Although the women did not comment on my reappearance in the village, they seemed very happy. Gul went to call the women she had already contacted for the focus group discussion. The villagers' trust in Gul worked wonders; parents-in-law and husbands had no objection in sending their women to someone else's house for a focus group discussion, and by that time the villagers also knew me. She managed to bring six women and we started the group discussion. In the same manner, I conducted two more focus group discussions, one in the village of my colleague (village four) and one in the village of my driver (village six).

The strategy of conducting focus groups with young women was very successful: not only did they discuss the difficulties of their lives but they also shared the violence they or other women experienced in the household. This was partly because they were away from their houses and families and were in a better position to speak openly, and secondly, when one woman started to speak openly, another received courage from her. These women were able to reflect on situations being discussed, encouraging them to speak without any fear about their own marriages. According to Cronin (2008), the data generated through focus group discussion is different from the data generated through semi-structured interviews. Since focus group discussions aim to explore people's thoughts and perceptions of a specific subject, it helped me to investigate what women think of their lives in regards to male power over them. We thoroughly discussed issues such as exchange marriages, their effects, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship and so on.

After I finished the focus group discussion in village one, I planned to organise group discussions with older men and women. This village seemed to be perfect for conducting focus group discussion with older women because they had been eager to participate from the time I had started my fieldwork. These women feared that their daughters-in-law had told me something against them, and they wanted to present their side of the story as well. The older women would sometime intervene during interviews with younger women to remind me that I had to record their point of view also.

During the discussion, the older women were very friendly and jolly; they kept smiling and laughing at tiny things that they told me about their lives. One of them was trying to prove herself the best mother-in-law in the world by praising her

attitude towards her daughter-in-law. Others were generalising things by avoiding specifically describing their relations with daughters-in-law, but they were actually alluding to their own lives without mentioning them directly. But in general, the discussion was very fruitful in assessing older women's own lives and their expectations of their daughters-in-law, which shape younger women's lives. The next task was to interview their male counterparts: the patriarchs.

I had planned the focus group discussion with men in order to understand men's perceptions, as well as common beliefs and practices in the villages. Conducting the focus group discussion with older men was not an easy task; they usually do not talk to unknown women, not out of fear but out of respect. Approaching men from the families of my respondents on my own would have been useless without the involvement of a man as an intermediary. For that, I needed a man who could find and convince men to participate in focus groups. For that purpose, I requested that my colleague Inam help me. I knew he had many contacts and he could make it possible; he asked me to give him some time. I had kept this discussion to the end of my fieldwork and had started to wind up my work. After a week, Inam told me that he was unable to gather many people because villagers are reluctant to discuss their women. He told me that he managed to convince only three men. Anything at that moment was important; at least I found three men for a group interview.

Talking to men was relatively more difficult than speaking with women. I had not realized that until I began a discussion with them in one of the villages. They gave me a warm welcome and showed respect, but when it came to questions, they refused to agree that their women did not enjoy mobility or other rights to life. They told me that they do not educate their girls and sounded quite alright with this. On enquiring as to the reason, I was told that the environment was not good for girls: they explained that the presence of a male teacher in the school was a potential threat to them. The situation needed to be dealt with carefully; any question of education was heating up their temper, I waited for a moment until the discussion became more friendly.

Relationships Between Researcher and Researched

The relationship between the researcher and the researched is complex (Letherby 2003). Explaining this phenomenon Letherby argues that 'researchers do not always

hold the balance of power or even have control over their own involvement, let alone the respondent's involvement' [115]. Before beginning my fieldwork, I had assumed that, being in an authoritative position, I would control the situation. Therefore, in the field, I gave my respondents maximum freedom to decide whether they agreed to be interviewed or not and did not influence them in any way. In addition to this, women were free to answer as they liked; I never influenced or forced them to tell me anything that they did not want to share with me, however, I did share my difficult experiences as a woman in order for them to increase their degree of trust in me.

There were a few things that I always kept with me in the field. These included a voice recorder, note pad, mobile phone and digital camera. My digital camera helped me capture scenes of village life from households to fields. Women were reluctant to have their photos taken,¹⁵ therefore I captured the scenes of households, kitchens, streets, shops, clinics, canals, the date palm industry and so on in order to use them in my thesis, but that too after I sought their permission. I also noted interesting information that I observed in the villages. I would rewrite my whole day's observation and experiences every night before going to bed, these notes helped me in recalling my experiences while writing the thesis.

My study, in dealing with village women, involved more ethical concerns than normal because of the nature of the research, the level of my participants' education and the rigid traditional setting in which they were living.¹⁶ According to the ethics policy, I had to seek prior consent from the respondents, but since most of my respondents were less literate and could not read, write or sign, I recorded their verbal consent. However, before gaining their consent, it was important to explain to them what the research was all about and why I required their support. In so doing, I explained to them the purpose of the fieldwork and my interviewing. As highlighted by Trochim (2006) I committed to maintaining anonymity and I assured my respondents that only I would have access to their recorded interviews. Interestingly, one of the women was scared to see the recorder in my hand, she thought that it was video camera and I would video record her interview, but I showed her the voice recorder thoroughly and told her that it would only record her voice. I followed the

¹⁵ Only one woman showed willingness to have her photo taken while she was doing her informal work; I promised her that I would obscure her identity in the photo.

¹⁶ I had sought prior ethical clearance from the University of York ethics committee before embarking on my fieldwork.

same process with my intermediaries, and ensured them that I would keep their identity confidential and give them pseudonyms in my thesis.

There are number of challenges that a researcher faces while undertaking qualitative research such as maintaining boundaries, developing rapport and managing emotions (Dickson-Swift et al. 2007). My participants' relationship with me and their understanding of what I was doing were the ethical issues I had to deal with. I was very careful in the field as the research involved working with power relations and sharing of personal experiences. Therefore, I needed to be extra cautious in dealing with people's emotions as well as mine because, 'researchers, too, may feel strong emotions in the field' (Letherby 2003: 111). I often encountered the situation where women, while discussing the violence and abuse in their lives, began to cry. This kind of situation made me emotional as well and on many occasions I became tearful, but I had to have complete self-control in order for me to control the situation. However, I believe that sharing experiences was better than not sharing them at all. There was also a situation in which women hesitated to share painful experiences in their lives, in that case I used examples of my own life's difficulties which helped them build some confidence and share their experiences.

Social research brings the researcher and researched into some kind of social relationship which is rarely balanced (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002). Although it is assumed that the researcher 'holds the balance of power', the situation is different in practice (Leatherby 2003: 114), and researchers do not always have full control over the research. In the beginning of my fieldwork, I had assumed that my position would enable me to enjoy some power in the field, but the process was not as easy as I had thought. So far as the matter of controlling resources such as recorder, pen, and questions was concerned, I enjoyed my authority, but soon I realized that women were also in powerful position because a few of them, who did not want to be interviewed, pretended to be busy in looking after their children and in house chores and refused to participate in interviews and focus group discussions. Women also enjoyed their choice of place for interviews and consented to the focus group discussion at a common place: the house of an intermediary. Thus, I had to think through different ways where my potential power was challenged by the respondents. For example, in the beginning of my field visits, I realized that women in the first village were paying much respect to me as a guest, which I thought was a barrier to

our communication. They were reserved, gave short responses and exhibited submissiveness. This made me uncomfortable because I wanted them to be candid and talkative in order for them to share their stories. Thus, I did not start my interviews as soon as I started field visits; I made some informal visits in order to establish friendly relations with them prior to formal interviewing. For example, in villages one and four, I visited people first, familiarised myself with them, and interviewed them once I felt they were more comfortable with me. In the villages that I could not visit before interviewing, I would normally sit with the family of my interviewee for some time and then start the interview.

In these villages I was a stranger, but there were aspects that simultaneously made me as an insider and outsider. For example, ethnically I was an insider. I belonged to the same race, communicated with them in their language, and dressed like them. Luckily, due to having command of the language, I succeeded in noting every bit of information myself. This made me very comfortable in the field as well. Villagers did not consider me outside their ethnic group and were friendly and hospitable with me. To reinforce my insider identity, I dressed very simply and covered my head, something that I usually do not do in my daily life. I had some idea of the culture of village life, where women are expected to cover their heads; women are even expected to cover their heads before approaching any male family member. I also did not use any cosmetics and tried to retain a simple appearance; my hair was tied all of the time like village women. I wanted to look like them in order to enable them to feel comfortable. However, I also felt like an outsider several times because of my education and status which separated me from these women. Being a woman, I was similar to them, speaking their language and behaving like them, but ultimately my education and employment set me apart from these women. Had I been able to do long ethnographic work and lived in the villages, I might have been seen more as an insider. Nonetheless, these women were pleased to see a woman (me) doing so well in terms of a job in the university and acquiring my education in the UK.

Translation and Transcription

To me, the most interesting part of a PhD had always been transcription until I myself was involved in the process. I was attracted to transcription because I thought it did not require any energy for thinking and writing; you just listen to the interviews

and transcribe while moving towards completing one task of your PhD, it was like killing two birds with one stone. Unlike many of my PhD colleagues, I did not transcribe interviews and focus group discussions during the fieldwork; I did not want to replace my habit of writing each day's summary at the end of the day with transcribing interviews and group discussions. After I returned to the UK, I started transcribing the interviews, thinking the process would be easy. However, conceiving something from a distance and experiencing it practically are two different things; my experience of transcribing interviews was completely different from my perception.

As soon as I returned from the field, my next task was to write a draft of a methodology chapter in order for me to record my field experiences while they were fresh in my mind, and then move to transcribe the interviews. Since the interviews were not very long and I knew the language, I was relieved that transcribing them would be a simple task as I knew both Sindhi and English and both translating and transcribing data simultaneously would not be an issue.¹⁷ My real challenge began with the very first interview; although I knew the language, I was unaware of certain uses of it. I had probably ignored the famous saying that the Sindhi language changes on every 50 kilometres. For example, distinctive words for different things used in the local dialects were new for me; having always lived in cities I was unaware of certain words of the language, particularly the names of local products. Moreover, my academic background was spent struggling between different languages which resulted in mastering no language, not even my mother tongue. Thus, I could make sense of the standard words used by my participants, but to translate those words correctly into English was not easy, I did not even have a Sindhi to English dictionary. The situation was worrying.

I must confess that I started encountering PhD-related health issues after I began transcription, particularly prolonged headaches and stress. I guessed that transcription would not take long since the interviews and focus group discussions

¹⁷ Unlike some of my PhD fellows, I did not transcribe all the interviews in the original language for a few reasons. First, I knew both languages and there were minimum chances of losing the sense of what women told me. Secondly, my command over both languages gave me confidence to simultaneously translate and transcribe the interviews without transcribing them in the original language. Moreover, I have very little command over the written Sindhi language and find it very difficult to type it. In that case transcribing the interviews from spoken Sindhi to written Sindhi and then translating them from Sindhi to English would only result in spending more time than I could spare.

were quite short, but the use of certain terminology by my respondents and accurately writing common phrases used by women as a response of sadness or grief were challenges I had to face. As Birbili (2000) points out the same challenge for many researchers who collect data in one language and transcribe it in another; the emotions attached to it might not perfectly be translated. I made a list of all the words and phrases I was unable to deal with and called two of my friends in Sindh who I thought were expert in both Sindhi and English languages. My Skype meetings with them were fruitful in terms of receiving ‘Sindhi to English tutorials’. This helped to develop a complete sense of what women were saying.

I had to transcribe 30 interviews and 5 focus group discussions. I had often heard that the length of interviews my colleagues had conducted lasted for one hour or so. As such, I became stressed because my interviews were around 20 or 25 minutes long and most of the time women’s answers were much shorter. This made me feel that I had probably collected insufficient data, but later on I realised that although the interviews were short, they conveyed very meaningful information in terms of women’s marriages, decision-making and families’ gender relations in particular. Moreover, the focus groups discussions which tended to last longer provided more details. To this, I also added observations from my extended field notes.

Researchers are said to have ultimate control over the data and power of editorship (Letherby 2003), however, I did not want to use or misuse that power and wanted to analyse the data cross-referenced with my observations. As I transcribed the data the themes and sub-themes of my analysis chapters started emerging. The data I thought once insufficient proved to be sufficient; for example, women had given very significant information in terms of their marriage arrangements, relations within the kin group and the influence of these relations on the family system. All of this information fell together and formed one chapter under the name of ‘Kinship in rural Sindh’.

When I was analysing interviews and focus group transcripts, I also cross-referenced them with my observations of the villages. For example, in Chapter 5 where I specifically discuss women’s daily housework routine, I also draw on my observation of the conditions under which they did that work. When I explain the restrictions on mobility, it becomes important to understand the spatial organisation

of the village in order to analyse how this system helps women to make their important visits, and then I draw upon what I have observed about the ways village houses were constructed.

The major themes that emerged from the data such as underage and cousin marriages, household work, or families' power distribution were strong enough to be a separate chapter on their own. However, I did not use these themes as headings for my chapters because I wanted to discuss a number of issues in one chapter. For example in Chapter 4, I discuss underage, consanguineous and exchange marriage, and giving a heading to this chapter drawn from any one of these themes would automatically reduce the importance of the other themes. Thus, I grouped these themes under the chapter 'Kinship in Rural Sindh', and discussed the tradition of these marriages, their causes and their effects on women. This strategy was very useful in bringing relevant issues together in one chapter that presents a range of issues affecting women's lives in the villages.

My study is not an ethnographic work in the anthropological sense; I was not fully aware of the anthropological perspectives until I began to analyse my data and read some relevant sources. Although I was drawing on anthropological literature, I had not envisaged the possibility of doing this kind of ethnographic work. Here I must acknowledge the problems that the limitations of my methods present; unlike the long interviews on which qualitative sociological research is based, my interviews were very short. While I wanted to understand conditions in different villages, in retrospect, living in a single village would have given this study more depth. Security was another issue that discouraged me from extending my visits and staying in the villages overnight. It is very dangerous to travel around in rural Sindh, my driver and other local people would often tell me stories of kidnapping and ransom, and I was strongly advised to wind up my work before sunset and return to the city. Therefore, it was very difficult for me to gather in-depth data that might have been available had I spent more time there. This short period of fieldwork also resulted in missing some important relevant information such as detailed village data on seasonal work patterns, land tenure, household assets and the total population of each village. Since Pakistan has not held a census since 1998, secondary data on village populations and households was also hard to access. Visiting the villages over a three months' period was also insufficient for understanding issues relating to power and resistance. The

kind of restrictions under which the women lived also made it very difficult to document issues such as covert resistance without spending much more time with them. These women could not go out to a common site, such as a village well or a pump, where they could discuss their problems with each other. Most of the time they were at home under the surveillance of their in-laws, which also made it difficult to observe how they evade such control. This is the main limitation of my study; had I spent more time in the field, I could have collected richer data. Nonetheless, despite its limitations, this thesis still provides more insight than the primarily quantitative research previously conducted on these issues (e.g. Ilahi and Grimard 2000; Sathar and Kazi 2000; Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001) and a better understanding of women's lives in the villages and their negotiations with patriarchy.

Conclusion

Undertaking qualitative research in rural areas can be a challenging task in terms of accessing appropriate informants, maintaining rapport and extracting meaningful information. Since the majority of people in a rural setting such as Pakistan have limited literacy, it becomes fundamentally important to decide the methods for data collection carefully because formal interviewing does not always work in this kind of population. In this situation, the length of interviews and focus group discussions might not be as expected, but the usefulness of the information matters; data can sometimes be enough to present a qualitative analysis of a setting, if not an ideal one.

Trust is an essential factor in enabling a researcher to gain the required information in a rural setting; the flow of trust between a researcher, intermediaries and respondents not only allows villagers to accept the researcher, who reaches out to them through the intermediary they trust, but also encourages them to give the researcher access to their social lives. This trust is useful in terms of obtaining meaningful data from people where they do not hesitate to share their painful stories. The researcher may experience mixed feeling of gaining useful data but may suffer from hearing about the pain his/her respondents went through.

I also highlight the problems that a researcher undertaking research in a rural area could possibly face, particularly researchers working in rural South Asia, who encounter scorching heat and other physical problems such as unsurfaced roads or power breakdown. Being in a rural setting for an extended period of time yields

fruitful results as well as lifelong learning for a researcher. I was unaware of the real difficulties of village life, particularly for women, as they are the ones who carry out household labour. The fieldwork has provided me with an opportunity to compare and contrast city life with village life and reflect on the opportunities and facilities available in both settings. In the next chapter I discuss the kinship organisation in the villages, which is fundamental to understanding these women's lives.

Chapter 4

Kinship in Rural Sindh: Forms of Marriage and their Consequences for Women

Introduction

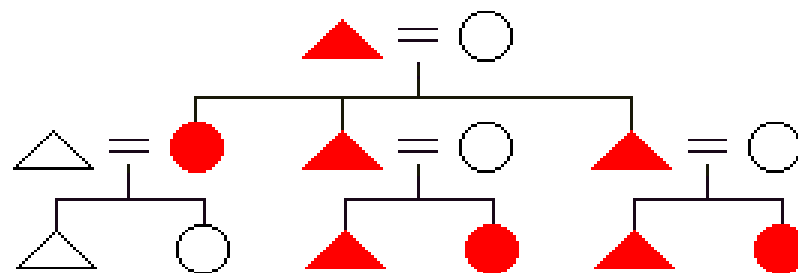
This chapter elaborates on the kinship system in the villages of Khairpur. I start by giving an overview of the traditional patriarchal system in Pakistan in general and in rural Sindh in particular. I present a picture of how the system works and what measures are taken to strengthen it. Two forms of marriage i.e. consanguineous and exchange marriages are central to the kinship system in the villages. I discuss the tradition of consanguineous marriages (marriages between close blood relations) in the context of the kinship system particularly in rural Sindh. The prevalence of consanguineous marriages in Pakistan is among the highest in the world (Bittles et al. 1993; Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2006-07; Jones 2010). All the marriages in my sample are consanguineous. In this context, I explore the reasons for these marriages; I argue that cultural benefits are as important as economic ones; both cultural and economic interests strengthen parents' as well as women's preference for these marriages.

In my sample, some marriages were exchange marriages as well as being consanguineous. This form of marriage system – the exchanging of two women in marriage – is an integral part of Sindhi culture in some of the villages. It usually involves two men marrying each other's sister or close kinswomen. Exchange marriage is less prevalent than simple consanguineous marriage, but it was the norm in one of the villages. I discuss how exchange marriage is not just the exchange of women, it is an exchange of securities and insecurities for them; the success of one marriage depends on the stability of the other, and therefore a woman can suffer if her brother's marriage does not work. Finally, I discuss the consequences of consanguineous and exchange marriages by considering whether or not they serve a welfare purpose for women. In relation to this, I record women's opinions about their life after marriage, which provides evidence as to why, despite all the burdens and

difficulties, women embrace what their elders decide for them. I conclude that this kinship system is central to women's subordination to patriarchal norms.

South Asia is predominantly patrilineal with some matrilineal societies in India and bilateral kinship in Sri Lanka¹⁸ (Agarwal 1994; Ganesh and Risseuw 1998; Dube 1998, 2001). In patrilineal kinship, the children of a couple gain their identity from their father and are members of his lineage. In patrilineal kinship, a son holds permanent membership of his father's descent group because he continues the lineage by producing sons, while a daughter has temporary membership because she leaves her father's home upon her marriage. She becomes a member of her husband's kin group and produces children of her husband's lineage.

Figure 2: Patrilineal Kinship¹⁹



Source: http://anthro.palomar.edu/kinship/kinship_2.htm

The common and prevalent perception of men and women in Pakistan, and in many parts of patrilineal India, is that men are seed providers to the wombs of women and women are regarded as the field that nourishes the seed. Since the man provides the material for reproduction, the common patrilineal thought is that children are descended from men, not women. Men continue the lineage: women are the vessels in which children grow. Thus, a child shares the father's blood and continues the lineage by providing the seed to his field (his wife); his identity is given by the

¹⁸ Matrilineal kinship is found in south-west and north-east India. There are three matrilineal communities in northeast India namely Garos, Khasis, Lalungs and a few tribes in the south-west India namely Nayars, Bants, Mappilas etc. that follow matrilineal kinship. In Sri Lanka, all the major communities have bilateral kinship. Bilateral kinship is also prevalent in southeast Asia.

¹⁹ In common anthropological notation, \triangle signifies a male, \circ means a female and = is the sign of marriage. In my diagram, the shaded ones are those within the kin group and the unshaded ones are outside the group.

father's kin group and, therefore, a male child shares a strong relationship with this group. The metaphor of woman being a field and man being seed provider is found among the Hindu population, and in tribal and Muslim communities following patrilineal kinship in India (Alavi 1972; Dube 2001). In Pakistan, the woman who cannot produce a child is commonly known as *banjh* (barren), a field that cannot produce anything.

'Kinship in Pakistan is not homologous. It is highly differentiated in terms of socio-economic class and status and segmented in terms of kinship structures' (Nazir 2012: 303). Nevertheless, traditionally structured patrilineal kinship is followed in Pakistan (Khan 1998), which is consistently and absolutely patriarchal (Quddus 1995; Taj et al. 2004). Women under this system of patrilineal kinship are viewed as second-class citizens (Khan 1998) and are considered the property of men. Their identity is constituted in terms of their relation to men making them dependent on men for their social security. Their dependency is further reinforced by patriarchal values propagated by society, culture and religion (UNICEF 2012).

Under patrilineal kinship, property is transferred through the male line. With little variation, norms of kinship are the same throughout the South Asian region. For example, men are the sole heirs of property among many of the Hindus in South Asia. Women are compensated with dowries as a substitute for their share of their father's property (Dube 2001; Pinto 2008). However, women in Pakistan are entitled to receive their share in property (equal to half of the brother's share) according to Islamic law. Women in Sindh are no different from their counterparts in other areas in terms of patrilineal and patriarchal rules. For example, their share in property has been ensured by the law, but in practice, they are usually deprived of this share and are compensated with dowry (Mumtaz and Meher 2007).

The family system in rural Sindh is patrilocal²⁰ and extended with very strong kinship ties. Before explaining the relationship between kin ties and marriage, it is important to understand kinship terminology because it is specific and it explains how everyone has a particular place within the kinship order. Children are socialized into these terminologies from their childhood calling their uncles and aunts and

²⁰ The residence of a couple is within the husband's family.

grandparents by their specific names. For example, the eldest family members in the patrilineal kinship are the grandfather (father's father) and the grandmother (father's mother), known as *dado* and *dadi* respectively. The mother's parents are called *nano* (mother's father) and *nani* (mother's mother).

A married couple is known as *murs* (husband) and *zaal* (wife). The parents of the husband are *sas* (mother-in-law) and *sohro* (father-in-law) to a woman. However, women prefer to call them by their pre-existing relationship²¹ or call them *amma* (mother) and *abba* (father). A husband's brother is called *der* and his wife is called *deryani*. A husband's sister is called *ninan*, but there is no terminology for her husband: he is commonly known as husband of *ninan* and is called *ada* (brother). For a man, the parents of his wife are known as *sas* (mother-in-law) and *sohro* (father-in-law). A wife's sister is known as *sali*, and her husband is known as *sandhu*, whereas wife's brother is known as *salo*. However, there is no terminology for his wife and she is called wife of *salo* or *adi* (sister).

In an immediate family, the father is called *abba* and the mother is called *amma* in rural Sindh. Their daughter is known as *dhi* and the son as *putr*. A sister is called *adi* and a brother is called *bha*. The wife of a married son is known as *nooh*, and the husband of a married daughter is known as *niyano*. The wife of a brother is called *bhabi* and the husband of a sister is called *bheniyo*. The terminologies for daughter-in-law and son-in-law are not used directly; they are used as terms of reference and both persons are usually called by their names. A son of a brother is called *bhaetro* and daughter of a brother is called *bhaetri*, whereas the son of a sister is called *bhanenjo* and her daughter is called *bhanenji*.

The father's brother is called *chacha* and his wife is *chachi*. The sister of the father is called *phupi* and her husband is called *phuphar*. The relationship terminology for sons and daughters of *phupi* (father's sister) and *chacha* (father's brother) is the same. For example, the son and the daughter of *chacha* (father's brother) are known as *sotr*, whereas son and daughter of *phupi* (father's sister) are known as *phupatr*. A sister of the mother is known as *masi*, and her husband is *masar*. The children of *masi* are known as *masat*. While a mother's brother is called *mama* and his wife

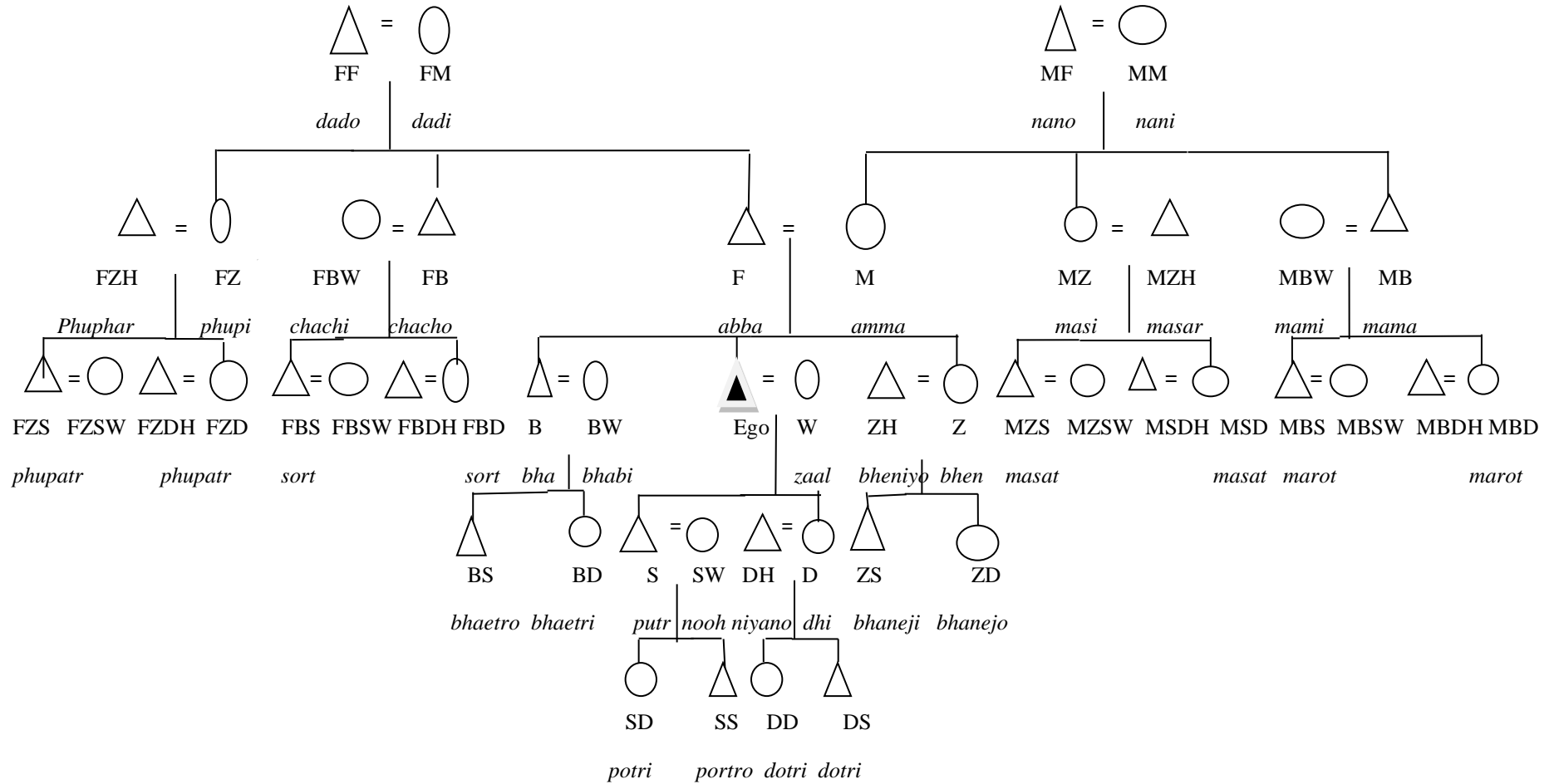
²¹ I will explain later that cousin marriage is very common in the villages and parents-in-law are therefore the uncle and aunt of a woman.

mami, their children are known as *marot*. There is no terminology for the spouses of cousins. They are either known by their names or called *ada* (brother) and *adi* (sister). Interestingly, the terms used to refer to maternal and paternal cousins are not used to address them; therefore all elder male cousins are called *ada* (brother) and all elder female cousins are called *adi* (sister). Younger male and female cousins are called by their names.

Kinship is an organising principle in the villages; the specific terminology for each person in relation to another shows an individual's place in different categories such as brother, son, husband and so on. These names de-individualise a person because kinship is more about the group than the individual, and a person's place in a collective identity is of primary importance. It is not only about maintaining familial relations, it is also a person's central place in her/his kin group where s/he shares several relations within the kin group. This system is unlike that in the UK where kinship is not precisely categorised, and those called aunts and uncles can cover different types of relationship. For example, the word 'aunt' refers to the mother's sister, the father's sister, the mother's brother's wife, the father's brother's wife. It covers both blood and affinal relations. However, in societies where kinship is a central organising principle, kinship terms often tend to be very precise in how they designate relations.

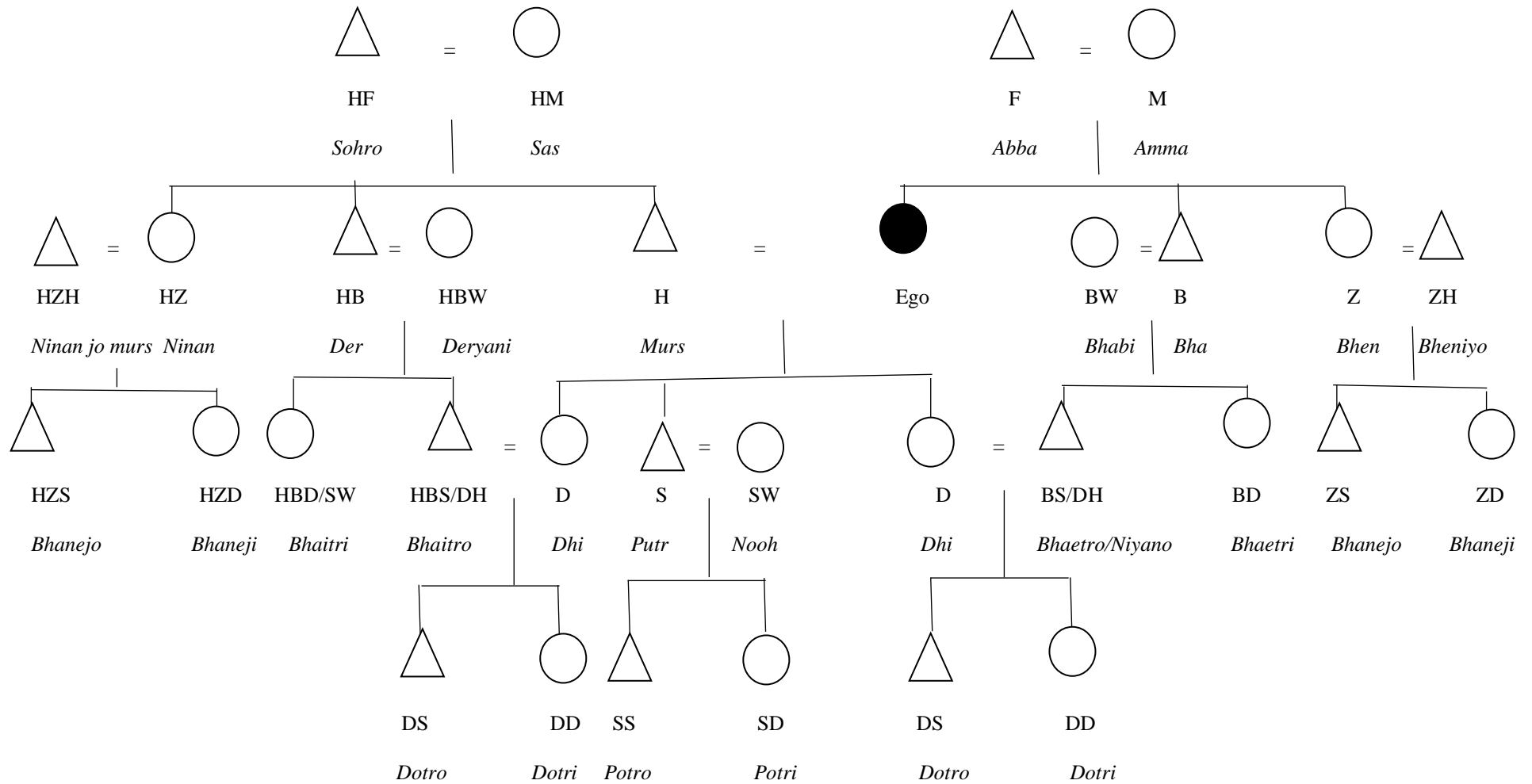
These terminologies also signify the primacy of relations in the kinship system. The specificity of these terms matters because they indicate the precise location that people occupy in relation to one another. These are very particular relationships and the fact that those relationships are named matters; for example, *abba* (the father) highlights the respect attached to that person as the head of the family, it also signifies his place, his authority and control over the family. *amma* (the mother) not only suggests respect but also love; and shows that *amma* is the female head next to the patriarch and is an important figure within the family. Below are the diagrams specifically designed by me in order to elaborate how kinship in rural Sindh is organised (Figure 3 and 4).

Figure 3: Organisation of Kinship in Rural Sindh (Male Ego)



F father Z sister P parent G sibling M mother S son
H husband E spouse B brother D daughter W wife C child

Figure 4: Kinship Diagram (Female Ego)



Note: I have tried to show the possible marriages that a woman's children can have within the kin group.

Consanguineous Marriages: An Overview

Pakistan is a Muslim and traditional society where marriage is considered a *sine qua non*. Among all the marriages that take place in different communities, consanguineous marriages remain the preferred choice of Pakistani people. In South Asian patrilineal and patriarchal societies, marriage establishes and strengthens men's control over women (See Dube 2001), but, in this section, I argue that apart from ensuring a man's control over a woman, the forms of marriages prevalent in the villages serve the purpose of keeping family members within the group and strengthening kinship bonds. Consanguineous marriages offer social as well as economic benefits to the villagers and serve their long-term interests. In relation to this, I discuss women's position under this system and how they benefit or suffer from it.

Consanguineous marriages or close kin marriages are the preferred choice of the people living in many parts of Asia and Africa (Bittles 1994). However, the system is not restricted to any specific part of the world; it is favoured in many Muslim countries of northern Africa, west and south Asia, and north, east and southern India. In these parts of the world, consanguineous marriages account for 20-55 per cent of all marriages and are central to the kinship system (Bittles et al. 1991; Bittles et al. 1993; Bittles 1994). Moreover, the circle of consanguineous marriages is not limited to Muslim societies: it is common among the Hindu states of south India where on average 20-45 per cent of all marriages are contracted between relatives.

Consanguineous marriages are also common among Buddhists, Christian, Jews, Parsis and Druze living in southern and western parts of Asia (Bittles 1994).

Muslims in South Asia allow village endogamy, but Muslims in Pakistan actively prefer it (Agarwal 1994). Consanguineous marriages are even stricter than village endogamy as they involve marrying within the close circle of kin. These marriages are central in the kinship system of Pakistan where more than half of marriages (56 per cent) are contracted between first and second cousins (Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2012-13). The results of the PDHS demonstrate that the rate of marriages contracted between first cousins account for 54 per cent of all the marriages in rural areas and 38 percent in urban areas; they are not only more common in rural areas but also among poor and uneducated people. Marriage to a

first cousin is more frequent on the father's side (28 per cent) than the mother's side (20 per cent). Thus, the percentage of consanguineous marriages remains highest among the least educated people living in traditional rural areas in Pakistan (Afzal et al.1994).

'Pakistan does, indeed, have one of the highest rates of consanguineous marriages in the world' (Jones 2010: 9). In their study conducted in the Punjab province, Bittles et al. (1993) found that 50.25 per cent of marriages were contracted between cousins and 37.07 per cent had one set of grandparents in common. A further 33.93 per cent of marriages were contracted within *biradari*²² relationships. Consanguineous marriages are more prevalent in Sindh than in other provinces, where these marriages account for 53 per cent of the total marriages (PDHS 2012-13). My data reflects this as all of the respondents I interviewed were either married to their first or second cousins or to close family relatives. Since parents choose these unions, there is very little chance of personal choice or love playing a role; all of the women I interviewed had consanguineous arranged marriages and only two of them (Bakhtiar and Shabnam) had love marriages and those too were consanguineous marriages. 30-year-old Razia, who was married to her father's brother's son, told me:

In this village, marriages are usually arranged with first cousins, and our own people (*pehnja*) are parents-in-law. I was 14 when I was married to my *sotr* (FBS). My marriage was arranged by male family members.

Young age at marriage is an important aspect of consanguineous marriages (Bittles et al. 1993; Afzal et al. 1994). In the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (2012-13) it is indicated that more than 50 per cent of women marry by the age of 20 and one-third by the age of 18. Among the women I interviewed, 15 women were married before/at their 15th birthday. Only five women were married between the ages of 19-22. The median age at marriage in my data is 15, and girls are often married at or before their 15th birthday. 18-year-old Asiya, who was the youngest married of the women I interviewed, told me:

I was 11 or 12 years old when I was married to my *masat* (MZS). I was in class two. My parents discontinued my education and married me with my *masat* (MZS). Since my parents had arranged my marriage, I had to accept their decision.

²² A wider kin group, the term can also be used to refer any kinds of hereditary kinship link or patrilineal lineage depending on context.

South Asia has highly gender-stratified cultures. The distinguishing features of these cultures are ‘patrilineal descent, patrilocal residence, inheritance and succession practices that exclude women’ (Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001: 687). However, levels of women’s autonomy vary within the region. Despite cultural differences between India and Pakistan, Pakistan shares certain similarities with patrilineal and patrilocal India. Dube (2001) highlights a common feature in South Asian communities – that a woman’s residence in her natal home is only temporary; her permanent home is that of her husband. This characteristic, connected with patrilineal kinship, is central in the prevalence of early marriages. The majority of women I interviewed were of the opinion that a girl is like a guest in her natal home and her permanent residence is the husband’s home. In addition, in rural areas, the age of puberty is important in deciding the timing of a girl’s marriage, which was approximately 13-14 years in the villages I visited. Soon after the girl reaches puberty, her parents start planning her marriage and it is usually contracted within one or two years of her first menstruation.

Although the minimum legal age of marriage in Pakistan is 18 for males and 16 for females (PDHS 2012-13), this law is completely ignored in the villages of rural Sindh; half of my respondents were married before the legal age. The villagers tend not to register the child at his/her birth since most deliveries take place at home. Therefore, nobody has any record of how old a person is. When children are enrolled in a school, their assumed age is given which is not always correct. In terms of women’s marriage, the important thing for parents is that they are married, not the age at which it takes place, and the measure for deciding age of marriage for women is their menstruation. My data provides evidence of marriages that took place soon after the beginning of the menstruation cycle and long before the legal age for marriage. In some cases girls were married instantly after their first menstruation, such as 20-year-old Najma who had just taken the bath²³ to clean herself following her first periods.

However, if a girl has her menstruation later than other girls, she will be married late. For example, Asma was married at the age of 18 which was considered quite late in

²³ The common belief in the villages is that a girl is not clean when she has her periods. She cannot say her prayers during that time. She is considered clean after she has the bath when her periods are finished.

the villages. The reason for her marrying late was that she began to have periods at the age of 18. While usually girls are married after one or two years of their first menstruation, Asma was married in the same year of her menstruation. However, there are few such examples like Asma and the majority of girls are married at a very young age. Table 14 shows the women's age at marriage:

Table 14: The Women's Age at Marriage

Age group	No. of participants
11-14	12
15-18	13
19-22	5
Total	30

The prevalence of and preference for consanguineous marriages indicate that these marriages entail certain specific benefits to the villagers that they cannot achieve in non-consanguineous marriages. There are many economic, cultural or personal issues that matter to people from rural areas, consanguineous marriages ease their lives in a number of ways by addressing these issues. It is important to explore and analyse the factors that encourage villagers to accept consanguineous marriages.

Why are Consanguineous Marriages so Prevalent?

In relation to the prevalence and acceptance of consanguineous marriages in rural areas, it is necessary to explain how and why people believe in this system, which, as Hussain (1999) notes, has not been fully researched in Pakistan. No research has ever been carried out to explain why and how women accept kin endogamy, particularly in Sindh. I approach this problem, through my participants' accounts, to address the gap. In so doing, I explore women's experiences of consanguineous marriages and the consequences that these marriages carry for them.

Marriage decision-making

Marriage unions are central in establishing and positioning a person within a society, therefore they carry importance and are subject to vigilance and control (Chowdhry 2004). The family structure in the agrarian system in Pakistan is strong enough to control the marriage decisions of offspring (Zaman 2008). In rural Sindh, as elsewhere in Pakistan, families are hierarchical; power and authority are shifted to the men in descending order, and women in this hierarchy find themselves at the bottom. As patriarchal authority plays a central role in deciding consanguineous marriages between families, the decision of who marries whom remains with male family members; women never enjoy the right to decide who they will marry, who their children will marry. There is a level of prestige for the wife of the head of the family, where a senior woman enjoys respect and power. However, this prestige has its limitations; the senior woman can be consulted over major issues, but the authority to make a decision is only enjoyed by men, particularly the patriarch.

Table 15: Marriage Arrangements of the Women

Type	No. of marriages
Father's side	17
Mother's side	11
Double cousin marriage	2
Total	30

In the villages of Khairpur, the process of arranging young people's marriage is completely controlled by their parents, especially the father, uncles and grandparents if alive; initially women's mothers can be consulted but it is male kin who make the final decision. In some cases, elder brothers also make decisions on their sisters' marriages. The complete patriarchal control over marriage decision-making helps explain why marriage to patrilineal kin is more common than to matrilineal kin; the father's interest in strengthening his ties with his own kin group is a prominent factor. Therefore, the majority of my respondents were married to their father's nephew or father's cousin. In a few cases, husband and wife were double cousins i.e. the woman's husband was the son of the father's brother and the mother's sister. Table 15 shows the percentage of marriages on the fathers' and mothers' sides and between double cousins.

A further subdivision of table 15 helps to understand the actual relation that the women share with their husbands. In consanguineous marriages, the father's brother and mother's brother occupy an important place. The largest single category of the women (10) I interviewed was married to their father's brother's sons. Since the father's brother's son is important because he would be from the same lineage, a marriage to him was a matter of pride for women. This was evident among women in this situation. The mother's brother is also important in the maternal family, and six women were married to their mother's brother's sons. Interestingly, a few of the women's husbands were related to them in a more complex way. For example, 20-year-old Rehana was married to her maternal grandmother's sister's son. Her grandmother and mother-in-law were thus sisters. Table 16 shows how women were related to their husbands.

Table 16: Relation of the Women to Their Husbands

Married to	No. of marriages
FBS	10
FZS	3
MBS	6
MZS	2
FZS and MBS	2
Father's cousin	4
Mother's cousin	3
Total	30

A generational shift also takes place when a woman is married to her father's or mother's cousin, as Rehana is, but if she marries her father's second cousin (for example father's cousin's son), she marries into her own generation. The situation varies depending upon the availability of the potential groom or whether a first cousin or second cousin of her parents is considered more suitable for her.

The arranged marriage system, which is weakening in Southeast Asia, is still resilient in South Asia (Jones 2010). Jones explains that young people consider their parents best suited to select their life partners and therefore they do not tend to challenge the arranged marriage system. There are other things that strengthen parents' say over arranging marriages. For example, Jeffery and Jeffery (1996a) highlight an important aspect of their study of Indian society, in which women feel embarrassed by showing

interest in marriage matters or dowry arrangements that may bring them a bad reputation. Many women, therefore, did not know about their future husbands. For parents, their daughter's silence is a mark of consent and good training. A similar pattern was found by Qadir et al. (2005) in their study of marital relations in Pakistan. They discovered that 'the fear of hurting or annoying their parents prevented many women from openly expressing their opinion in the choice of husband' [203]. Girls are socialized in a way that makes them submissive to their parents, and they have to accept what their parents decide for them. For example, 20-year-old Safia told me that her father had died, and her mother and brother arranged her marriage to her MBS. Since she had seen her natal family happy with this proposal, she submitted to their decision. However, in a few cases, marriages are fixed before a girl is born and her future husband has either just been born or is two or three years old, such as 25-year-old Ghazala:

I am married to my *marot* (MBS). My parents never asked my consent for this marriage. They had fixed it when I was in my mother's womb. Since my family's honour was dear to me, I did not say anything and married my MBS.

In the patriarchal setting, marriage decision-making remains within the hands of men; women are not only excluded from deciding about their own lives, but are also deprived of making choices concerning their children's marriages. In households where the father has passed away, his eldest son will take over the responsibilities of deciding on the marriages of younger ones in consultation with his brothers. As a result, it is irrelevant for women to think about their daughters' future. On the question of her daughters' marriage 20-year-old Najma told me:

I do not think anything about the future of the marriage of my daughters because their future is under the control of my brother-in-law. He is the head of the family. So he should think about it, not me. It is useless for me.

Consanguineous marriages are often decided without considering the equality of the couple in terms of age and education. If a man has his nephew to marry his daughter, he does not consider the nephew's age and education in comparison with his daughter's. In my sample, 30-year-old Aisha, who was educated up to 10th level, was married to a man who did not have any education at all, but she had to surrender to the will of her parents. This inequality is considered normal because a woman is always required to submit to the choices and demands of her in-laws. In consanguineous marriages, the difference between a man's and a woman's age is

ignored, as are the man's faults such as being a drug addict or unemployed, but, in terms of a prospective daughter-in-law, there are certain typical demands made of a woman. In the focus group discussion with mothers-in-law, all of the older women told me that they wanted a daughter-in-law who had good homemaking qualities. None of them mentioned their requirements for the men who were to be married to their daughters.

Economic factors

According to Goody (1976), Eurasian societies are characterized by in-marriages, whether those take the form of status or kin endogamy, 'like tends to marry like, or better' [103].²⁴ Unlike Africans who encourage out-marriage in order to merge culturally with other groups and integrate themselves which is politically significant for them, Eurasians tend to isolate themselves by following in-marriages, which take place in all classes and at all levels, in order to preserve their property and status. The economic factor is important in the prevalence of consanguineous marriages: property and dowry remain two economic incentives for consanguineous marriages, which deepen their roots. Bittles et al. (1993) and Hussain (1999) indicate that the consolidation of family property is a common reason for consanguineous marriages among the land-owning class. In this section of society, consanguineous marriages keep the family property within the kin group which might otherwise have to be given to a stranger, and will weaken the economic status of the family. Most of the women I interviewed came from the families with little or no land;²⁵ therefore this was not an issue for them. Among people who do not own any land, or have only a small amount of land for living, arranging the dowry for a woman and the bride price for a man are factors that discourage marriages outside the kin group.²⁶

²⁴ However, kin exogamy is favoured elsewhere in Asia such as China (Wolf 1972).

²⁵ Only three women in my sample came from families who had a little piece of land on which their families survived.

²⁶ Poverty-ridden communities of South Asia are known for selling women into marriage. Marrying a daughter through bride price (in which the groom pays the bride price to her father) is prevalent in KPK and in some parts of Sindh province. The practice of commodification of women is normal in almost all provinces of Pakistan and is known by different names, such as *Valvar*, *Vekro*, *Wani*, *Faislo*. This practice is considered normal in rural Sindh where poor parents can marry their daughters in settlement of a loan that they cannot pay (Shah 1998; Khan 2006). However, this type of marriage is not represented in my sample.

Consanguineous marriages offer incentives to both parties: if a woman is going to marry her father's nephew, her parents will not demand her price (bride price) and her parents-in-law will not pressurize her parents for the dowry, but will accept her with whatever dowry she brings. The blood relationship with the parents-in-law minimizes dowry demands, which might otherwise create tension in the family. It is these factors that mattered to my respondents as none of them were wealthy. Elsewhere, a small dowry or non-payment of the dowry by the bride's family often leads to domestic violence or murder of the bride by her husband or parents-in-law. These kinds of murders are reported almost every day in India (Rao 1997). According to Rao, parents often cannot fulfil the excessive demands of dowry from the groom's family. I did not find that this was issue among the women I interviewed as consanguineous marriages helped them to avoid these problems.

The economic factor also strengthens women's preference for consanguineous marriages; they realize that their parents cannot afford a good dowry for them and therefore they can only be accepted by their close relatives. The majority of women were from the lower class and their fathers and brothers did not have regular jobs and could not provide a substantial dowry; they were given nominal and common dowry items such as small containers for storage, gold jewellery, furniture, fans, cots, crockery, clothes, and shoes, but their in-laws never complained. The economic condition of the people in the villages prevented them from buying many of the things needed for their daughter's daily use. A container is an essential part of a dowry because a woman stores her dowry items or gifts in it. 30-year-old Gulshan told me the number of items she was given for her dowry:

My parents were poor, so they did not give me much in dowry, only two or three suits, a few pots, one container etc. My parents-in-law never said anything about that.

In a few cases where a woman's parents are too poor to arrange anything for her, parents in-law give money to the woman's parents so that the woman can bring a few things that she needs immediately after the marriage. This strengthens women's preference for consanguineous marriages. They remain thankful to their parents-in-law for all the assistance they provided to ease the marriage. 15-year-old Subhan, who had a double cousin marriage (FZS/MBS), told me about her dowry:

My parents gave me a few things in dowry such as few clothes, a gold nose pin etc. They could not give me a fan. They were very poor, and they took a loan for my marriage. My mother-in-law is my father's sister and my father-in-law is my mother's brother, they were happy with whatever my parents gave me in dowry.

However, Subhan's parents are unusual in taking out a loan; the majority of the people in the villages do not take out loans because the instalments and the credit add to their problems. Poor villagers manage as much as they can within the resources they have. A woman's affinal family²⁷ is already linked to her natal family through a blood relation minimising any chance of violence or threat to her as a result limited dowry items; a woman who is their niece is more important than the dowry. 30-year-old Hakim, who went through the same situation, told me about her experience:

My parents are very poor and did not give me anything in the dowry. My parents-in-law arranged crockery, clothes etc. for me. I was important for my husband, not the dowry. My husband often told me that.

Moreover, consanguineous marriages also entail long-term financial security; if a man and his family are in financial difficulties due to unforeseen circumstances, his close family would immediately help him; the stronger the relationship is, the more security it provides in terms of financial assistance.

Consanguineous marriages are not the only way of ensuring social security, in other Asian societies it is done differently; for example Chinese families are strictly exogamous in kin terms (Wolf 1972). Marrying out creates alliances between clans, whereas marrying in strengthens the relationship within the kin group and maintains family property. Goody (1976) relates the prevalence of kin endogamy in Eurasia to property and inheritance. Bittles et al. (1993) also identify the consolidation of family property as the main reason for marriages between kin among land holding groups in South India and Japan. However, in the villages of Khairpur, this marriage system is less likely to concern property; the villagers did not have much property, but other economic as well as cultural factors are important in the prevalence of consanguineous marriage. Both strategies (marrying within or outside the kin group) are often developed with the interest of wider social group in mind, rather than women's own interests. Some societies are strictly exogamous and others are strictly endogamous, but in either case, people's marriage options are restricted. Marrying

²⁷ The affinal family is a family related by marriage. Affines are relatives by marriage.

inside the kin group probably limits choices to a greater extent as compared to marrying out. It also limits choices more than other forms of endogamy such as village endogamy or clan endogamy. If there is possibility of marrying into another clan or kin group, there is at least some choice, but if a marriage has to be within the kin group there is a limited number of potential spouses available.

Cultural Factors

Traditional areas, in general, are reported to have the highest rates of consanguineous marriages (Bittles et al. 1993) as culture plays a central role in the reproduction of kin endogamy. According to Jones (2010) consanguineous marriages are common in societies with a rigid culture which does not allow interaction between men and women outside of the kin group. Contact between men and women within the close kin group is allowed; this facilitates these marriages. Therefore, consanguineous marriages are prevalent in Islamic societies. In exploring the cultural reasons for consanguineous marriages, Hussain (1999) finds that families with consanguineous marriages have a better social standing than families with exogamous marriages. Moreover, the cultural similarities of both families facilitate the couple, especially the woman, adjusting to the family and making a smooth transition to married life.

Culture also facilitates the maintenance of patriarchal authority within the family. Hussain (1999) points out that patriarchal authority is kept within the family by consanguineous marriages. A woman's life in rural Sindh is controlled by different men from her family from the time of her birth; her father controls her before her marriage, he then passes this authority to his brother (woman's father-in-law) after her marriage, and then the father-in-law gives this authority to his sons (woman's husband and his brothers). Thus, in Pakistani society consanguineous marriages are favoured to safeguard patriarchal authority.

In addition, the chastity of a woman is of central importance in a marriage; a woman carries the family's honour, which is more important than her life. The consequences of harming this honour can be fatal; women in other parts of Sindh are often killed if found in any illicit relationship with a man. Dube (2001) highlights the similar phenomenon in the subcontinent as a whole, whereby women who want to marry for

love or who engage in illicit love affairs can pay a terrible price. Brothers are known to have killed their sisters over this matter. Therefore, people in rural areas prefer to marry a woman who is modest, and who has never had an affair. However, the implications of this are different for the women in the villages of Khairpur.

Consanguineous marriages assure family members of a woman's chastity because they have known her since birth. The significance of chastity puts extra pressure on parents who keep their daughter under strict surveillance and control her mobility so that her chances of marriage will not be reduced.²⁸ If a woman is found guilty of a love affair before marriage, she is married off to a man from a different *biradari* who usually lives in a separate village. The reason for this is that everybody within the kin group knows about her affair, which brings a bad reputation to her family and reduces her siblings' chances of marriage. So, as a punishment, she is married off to a different village so that her natal family can cut her off completely. This also sends the message to the kin group that the girl is no longer part of her natal family. In a focus group discussion, Asiya shared the tradition of her village:

We do not have the system of honour killing here. However, we do have a few women who had an affair with men and were considered immoral by their *sardars* (tribal heads). They were married off to men outside their caste and *biradari* (men from our village). Now they live here.

Consanguinity in Pakistan aims at strengthening the solidarity of a kin group, if outsiders enter the group they will weaken it (Lieven 2011). The stronger consanguinity a group has, the more cohesion and strength it will develop in order to safeguard the interest of the group. In so doing, consanguineous marriages are used as a means of enhancing a family's solidarity. Being traditionally-minded, people in rural areas share strong and loving bonds within the family; consanguineous marriages serve the purpose of maintaining this bond throughout the process of marriage and child bearing. For example, if two married brothers have been living with their respective families in the same house, they prefer to marry their children to each other's, once these children reach puberty, in order to keep the solidarity of the family intact. Naseer, a father-in-law whose two sons were married to his brother's daughters, explained to me:

²⁸ There is a difference in mobility in the pre and post menstrual life of a woman; before menstruation she might be free to visit her relatives, but after menstruation tight restrictions on her mobility are imposed.

Both of my daughters-in-law are my nieces (BDs). See we are poor people. If we have a hard time, it is our relative daughter-in-law who can tolerate everything and stand by us through thick and thin. We also feel close to them and support them in a hard time. Since our daughters-in-law are our close relatives, we take care of each other.

By contrast, if they marry their children outside of the family, the outsiders would enter the kin network and pose a threat to the solidarity of the brothers. For example, if a daughter is married outside the kin group, her natal family has to maintain relations with her affinal family. This will allow the men of her affinal family, who are considered outsiders, to visit her natal family and see her sisters and sisters-in-law who observe *parda* from outsiders. This can be disturbing both for the women inside the house and for their men who do not want outsiders to see their women. 30-year-old Aisha, whose husband's sister had a non-consanguineous marriage, told me:

We usually have consanguineous marriages here, but my husband's sister is married to a man who is not our close blood relative, though he is from the same clan (*biradari*). Whenever he visits our home, all we women go inside their rooms and do not come out until he leaves. All other men of his family are not allowed to enter our house.

The consequences of a son marrying outside the kin group are different from if a daughter were to do the same. If a son has an exogamous marriage, he will bring a woman from a different culture and background into the family, which might create problems, but his lineage will remain pure because she will produce children of his lineage, therefore, the regulations regarding marriage to outsider are less rigid for men. A daughter's non-consanguineous marriage will transfer her reproductive capacity from her kin group, leading her to produce children for a different kin group. This will weaken her relations with her natal family as she will develop strong relations with her affinal family as a consequence of producing children, especially sons. Therefore, women face much resistance to marriages outside the kin group.

For this reason, women are discouraged from non-consanguineous marriages, and people in rural Sindh encourage kin endogamy to keep the lineage pure. Therefore, if there is no proposal for a woman within the close family, she may have to remain unmarried all her life. The lack of a potential bridegroom among her kin may thus make it impossible for a woman to marry at all. In villages with a high prevalence of consanguineous marriages, the idea of non-consanguineous marriage is next to

impossible. 30-year-old Razia told me about the common practice of consanguineous marriages in her village:

I have never seen any woman marrying outside the kin group here. See these two old women in the house, they are my *phupis* (FZs). They are still unmarried because there was no proposal for them in the family. Still there are many young women who want to marry outside the family, but they are helpless because men of the family do not agree. Once there was a woman who liked a man outside the village. She ran away with him knowing that her marriage with that guy was not possible. Our relatives tried their best to break her marriage and bring her back. But the guy whom she was married belonged to a very strong group. So, all my relatives' efforts were in vain. Now both group members have broken all ties with each other.²⁹

Since consanguineous marriages entail many benefits for the villagers and enhance their solidarity within the kin group, these marriages are thus a matter of pride for parents. This pride is not possible if a family opts for non-consanguineous marriage. Interestingly, marriage inside the family is not only a matter of pride for parents but also for their children. Women's pride in consanguineous marriages was apparent in my research, especially when they were married to their father's brother's son or mother's brother's son. Nobody articulated that directly; it was the way in which they talked by emphasising their relationship with their husband. For example, 22-year-old Khalida told me with much pride and emphasis that she was married in her father's brother's house.

On the other hand, a marriage outside the kin group can put the family in a very awkward position where they have to explain themselves to villagers time and again in order to satisfy them. People's perception plays an important role in the integration of consanguineous marriages. Usually villagers, particularly those from the same kin group, taunt those who marry their daughters outside the family; a non-consanguineous marriage raises doubts among people within the community and leads to gossip about the family. People speculate that the family is not considered respectable enough within the kin group. Thus, to women and their families in the villages of Khairpur, it is a matter of shame if they do not marry within the kin group. 30-year-old Razia told me about how villagers consider a family who ever had an exogamous marriage:

²⁹ Non-consanguineous marriage is seen dangerous and socially disruptive, as it is in this case.

Marriage outside the kin group is a matter of shame here. If parents marry their son outside the kin group, the neighbours think that the family was not considered respectable enough by the kin group, so they were not given any girl to be married to their son.

The level of comfort in consanguineous marriages plays a role in enhancing women's preference; a woman is familiar with her female cousins, who either live very close to her house or were raised with her in the large extended household/compound (*khandaan*) in which families of sons live,³⁰ and develops a strong bond of friendship with them. She finds it easy to marry within the family and be with her cousins rather than be married in a new place with new people. Moreover, a woman's familiarity with her future mother-in-law and sisters-in-law (HZs), who are also her aunt and cousins, makes her feel secure about her future life. Usually in non-consanguineous marriage, a woman remains uncertain and lives in fear of her future mother-in-law who may be unsupportive towards her. In contrast, marriage with a cousin removes that fear and secures her future because her mother-in-law is her father's or mother's sister and father-in-law is the father's or mother's brother; they take care of her like parents. They can be hard on women, but these women still consider them better than the parents-in-law in a non-consanguineous marriage; women often told me that if parents can be hard on them and scold them in their best interests, there was no reason why in-laws should not do so. The respondents in my research favoured consanguineous marriages because the affinal family was known. They were satisfied with the marriage to their cousins and felt at home. For them nothing changed much after marriage, except for the burdens of responsibility. They had the same environment as their natal family; they knew their in-laws before marriage, and it helped them to develop a loving relationship with them. The insecurity inherent in marriage outside the kin group and certainty of kin group endogamy contribute to the prevalence of consanguineous marriages.

Women's sense of security and comfort further increases if they marry close to their natal house and this can only be possible if a woman is married to her cousin; consanguineous marriages allow women to live close to their natal family as usually villages are small and people from a kin group live very near to each other,

³⁰ Large extended families sometimes live in a compound comprising households of brothers (*khandaan*) who have separate hearths (see Chapter 5). Three women in my sample who were married to their FBS were living in this situation; their natal family was living in the same compound but had a separate hearth.

sometimes in a large extended household/compound. 15-year-old Parveen, who was married to her father's brother's son, sounded very happy for two reasons: one, she was married to her father's brother's son, another, she was living very close to her natal family.

Apart from cultural and economic reasons, consanguineous marriages also fulfil the personal interests of both parents and the couple. Hussain (1999) notes that consanguineous marriages reduce the chances of embarrassment for parents; for example, if a woman is married outside the family, her future mother-in-law and sisters-in-law will visit her several times, they will inspect her and might refuse her at any time before the marriage takes place. This happens in all strata in Pakistan and becomes a source of embarrassment for the parents and the woman under evaluation. In contrast, consanguineous marriages are free from this strain for the bride is already known by the in-laws who are the bride's close relatives and sometimes share the same house. Secondly, the physical attributes of a woman are of primary importance in non-consanguineous marriages and can lead to the refusal of the proposal if the bride is not beautiful enough, but, physical attributes are given less importance in consanguineous marriages (Hussain 1999). Moreover, consanguineous marriages also help the family in adjusting to personal flaws; if a man is disabled and advanced in age, his disability and age can be ignored or if a man does not have any source of income or a job, the uncertainties regarding his future do not arise in consanguineous marriages because he has his kin group to support him and his family. I found many cases in which men did not even have a casual job, but they were married and had children. The main source of income, in these cases, was a father or brother who supported the entire family. This also applies to women who are less than ideal brides since consanguineous marriage provides both men and women with a set range of kin with pre-determined possibilities of whom they can marry, and therefore, it is hard to find any unmarried men or women in the setting. The two elderly women in Razia's household were not married because there was no proposal for them within the kin group at all and the idea of non-consanguineous marriage was next to impossible for women in the village. These left over women then continued to live in their natal house.

Religion is said to have a nominal influence on consanguineous marriages. Hussain (1999) points out that some people erroneously believe that Islam favours

consanguineous marriages. This might be because the Prophet (PBUH) was married to two of his close relatives, and he also married his daughter to his cousin. However, there is not any such imperative in the Quran. Besides, Hussain (1999) demonstrates that the only clan that strongly favours caste endogamy on religious grounds in Pakistan are *Syeds*: since they are believed to share their lineage with the Prophet PBUH, they do not want to pollute it through exogamous marriages. Alavi (1972) also found that there is no Islamic rationale for kin endogamy in rural Punjab. It is the local culture that requires marriages to be within the kin group. Similarly, the factor of religion supporting consanguineous marriages did not emerge in my study. Cultural and economic factors were central in enhancing the preference for consanguineous marriages in the villages of rural Sindh.

Exchange Marriages: ‘You keep my daughter happy, I will keep yours happy’.

Exchange marriage, the swapping of two women in marriage, is another form of marriage in Pakistan. Exchange marriages are commonly known as *watta satta* (literally, give-take), and form one third of all marriages in Pakistan (Jacoby and Mansuri 2006). Exchange marriages usually involve brother-sister pairs; a man must have a sibling available to be married for an exchange, but in a few cases, if a man does not have a sister to exchange, his niece or cousin is exchanged in the place of his sister.³¹

Exchange marriage is known as *dey wath* or *ewazo* in Sindh. In villages where exchange marriage is the norm, as in village six, if there is no woman available to be exchanged with another woman within the kin group, most of the time a marriage does not take place and parents find another family where they can exchange their

³¹ There are two other kinds of marriages that do occur in the villages but are not represented in my sample: one, in which a woman is married in compensation in settlement of a dispute known as *sang chatti deyan*. A family, if found guilty of a crime against another family, gives a woman in marriage to the other family as compensation. The purpose of this form of marriage is to settle the dispute in order to ensure the security of the family found guilty of a crime such as killing someone or abducting a woman. Another form of marriage that may occur in the villages is the one in which a bride price is paid to the family of the woman. This is known as *takan ewaz* which means in exchange of money. This sort of marriage is contracted where there is no woman within the close kin group available for the man and he opts for a non-consanguineous marriage or the man does not have a sibling or close female relative to be exchanged for his marriage. He then pays a bride price to marry a woman.

daughter. However, in my sample all marriages were consanguineous. The exchange of women is more important than their consent and comfort in exchange marriages. Parents often exchange their daughter without considering her happiness and marry her where an exchange is available. 30-year-old Basheeran, who was exchanged with her MBD, told me:

My parents refused all the proposals where they were not offered exchange of another woman for me. Those proposals were from my relatives in the village. They married me to my *marot* (MBS) who lived far away in a place without many basic facilities. They married me to him because they were offered my *marot* (MBD) in exchange to be married to my brother.

Exchange marriages can have both benefits and drawbacks. An exchange marriage is not just the exchange of two women; it is an exchange of securities or insecurities for both women because the system is generally regarded as reciprocal. If one woman is happy, another will be happy and if one woman is miserable, another will be miserable. These marriages are not usually a problem and work well when both parties are happy. Sometimes it can be a problem for one woman but not for the other, and when there is a difference clearly it becomes problematic for both; if one woman is not happy, another will be made unhappy as a result of her discontent. Therefore, people are often afraid of contracting an exchange marriage, the negative consequences often ruin both couples' lives even if one of them is happily married.

Jejeebhoy and Sathar (2001) highlight the prevalence of exchange marriages in Punjab, Pakistan. They note that exchange marriages reduce the burden of dowry for parents, but increase tension between the two families; if one marriage does not work, the other marriage will also suffer. Similarly, Sathar and Kazi (2000) found that many of the respondents in their research in Punjab were 'undergoing negative spin-off pressure because of problems in their siblings' marriage'[105]. However, Chaudhry (2010) regards this exchange as 'equal leverage to both families' where a woman has less chance of mistreatment by the in-laws but, the woman's life is affected if the marriage of her brother comes to be in trouble.

Exchange marriages are often also consanguineous marriages. Since people from one *biradari* live in the same village, normally the exchange takes place between them. The two of my respondents who had exchange marriages were married to their mother's brother's son and mother's sister's son. Sometimes when there is no

exchange available within the kin group, a simple consanguineous marriage can also take place in the family. For example, if parents want to exchange their daughter for a woman to marry their son, but there is no young unmarried woman left in the family where the daughter is to be married, a simple consanguineous marriage will take place. 20-year-old Safia from village two told me about her experience of non-exchange marriage:

People prefer exchange marriages here, therefore, the system is dominant. My father had died, and my mother and elder brother fixed my marriage. My in-laws wanted to exchange their daughter for me, but I did not have any unmarried brother and had no one for exchange. So we could not have an exchange marriage.

The rules and regulations of exchange marriages are so tight that if ever parents do not want to marry their daughter whose exchange marriage is already contracted or the daughter does not agree to the marriage, they have to pay a heavy price. The price is sometimes in the shape of the divorce of another couple. This pressurizes the parents to force their children into a marriage they do not want. 30-year-old Razia told me how a contracted exchange marriage can sometime be a forced marriage:

There is no consent in exchange marriages. Once it is fixed it is fixed. If a woman refuses to marry in exchange, the parents blackmail her emotionally. If the woman still does not agree, parents force her to marry.

Exchange marriages potentially entail more disadvantages to women than simple consanguineous marriages, such as limited education, age differences between the couple and so on. Since the marriage involves four people, parents find it difficult to maintain equality in terms of education or age among them. For example, a man has an elder daughter aged 15 and a younger son aged 10. He wants to marry the daughter into his brother's family to his 18-year-old nephew, his brother however does not have a daughter but his wife is pregnant which might be a daughter. So he decides to exchange his unborn baby (if daughter) with his brother's son who is now 10 years old. The marriage of the first couple is contracted, and the marriage of second couple is fixed to be contracted after 15 years. So the girl whose marriage had been fixed when she was in her mother's womb might be born disabled or may not agree to this marriage at all. Or the girl may be literate, but the boy has no interest in education or a job. In that situation, parents have to ignore everything and opt for the

marriage that was decided some years previously. Naseem, a woman in the focus group discussion, told me:

Neither consent nor compatibility of the couple is considered in exchange marriage. If the marriage is fixed, it has to take place whether the man is old, uneducated or has any other fault. Women in the family consider the compatibility of the couple and ask their husband to consider that before fixing a marriage that but men never care about that.

This type of union is more important than forming couples based on equality and compatibility. The system eases the life of villagers by offering them different economic and cultural benefits, and in order to avail themselves of those benefits, the compatibility of couples is overridden. The kind of benefits that can be gained through exchange marriage can only be made possible if villagers have women to exchange. In a strong patrilineal and patriarchal society where there is clear son preference, daughters are also needed for procreation and to ease the son's marriage. This may affect son preference because where exchange marriage is prevalent parents also need daughters in order to be able to exchange them with a wife for their son. In other words, a man needs a sister or a female cousin to make his own marriage possible. For simple consanguineous marriage as well, people need enough women in the kin group to marry their sons, but the rules of these marriages are not very strict for men – a man can marry outside the kin group if there is no woman available for him within the close kin group. In the places where exchange marriage is practiced, a daughter is required to provide a wife for a son to serve her natal family and ensure their future security by providing them with descendants and support in their old age.

Why are women exchanged?

The reasons for exchange marriages are purely economic and serve the economic interests of the parents who do not have enough resources for the marriage arrangements of their children. Although consanguineous marriage also serves the economic interests of villagers where they are exempted from bride price, they may have to pay the bride price for the woman they want to marry to their son if she is not from within the close kin group. Exchange marriage not only saves the bride price for both sides but also guarantees the availability of a bride which may not be

possible in simple consanguineous marriage. In consanguineous marriage, a dowry is also expected to be given, even if it is very small, but in exchange marriage, dowry is not essential. Therefore, it is more common among the poor rural population who lack means to invest in their children's marriages. I found exchange marriages common among the respondents who were very poor. For example, in village six, it was evident from the houses and the way of living that the villagers' economic situation was worse than others. Women from this village told me in the focus group discussion that exchange marriage was the only form of marriage known to them, but those marriages too were usually contracted within the close kin group. However, if the exchange marriage system is a strict norm in a village, as it was in village six people often opt for marriages outside the kin group because, in that case, the exchange is more important. Shaheen, a woman from village six, told me in the focus group discussion:

It does not matter whether marriage is within the kin group, it must be an exchange marriage. We do have marrying out here, but they too are exchanged.³²

Exchange marriages help poor people in many ways. These people usually live hand to mouth and have no other resources to arrange a dowry for their daughters or bride price for sons. In exchange marriages, the parents gain the other woman for their son for free which would otherwise cost too much. Although my sample did not include any marriages through bride price, women in village four told me in the focus group discussion about other women who were married for a bride price. The dowry of a woman and bride price paid by a man can vary from 50, 000 to 100, 000 rupees (Approximately £300-£600).³³ This means the poor parents should have approximately 100,000 rupees in hand to marry their son and daughter off. For the people who set the bride price for their daughter and marry her off in exchange for money, this exchange carries many financial benefits. Usually they are paid 100,000 rupees as the bride price for their daughter. With this money, they arrange a good dowry for their daughter and feasts for the marriage ceremony. This aids them in marrying their daughter in a good traditional way and enhances their pride within the

³² In village six, exchange marriage was more important than consanguinity, whereas in other villages, consanguinity was preferred over exchange marriage. Therefore, exchange marriage was less strict in other villages than it was in village six.

³³ It is economically more advantageous than simple consanguineous marriage; an exchange marriage not only reduces the burden of dowry but also bride price. So parents neither pay dowry nor bride price.

community. Exchange marriage is the best possible choice for poor people in different parts of Asia, for example, Zhang (2000) finds exchange marriages among the poorest families in rural China where it is used as an option for managing marriage expenses.

A simple consanguineous marriage of a woman can be a disadvantageous option for a poor parents; a young woman is a helping hand for her mother. She assists her family members with house chores, farming and babysitting at no cost. For her to be married without compensation results in a loss for her parents. The best option for parents is either to marry her for a bride price and pay the same bride price for a woman for their son, or to exchange her for another woman as a replacement.

Parents find exchange marriages more convenient because they do not have to waste their energies in looking for a woman for their son. This can enhance a woman's preference for an exchange marriage because she not only provides her family with a helping hand to replace her, but also a woman for her brother. It strengthens her position within her natal family. The support of her family, especially of the brother, remains with her throughout life. The same happens with the other woman who is exchanged.

Having a daughter-in-law and children ensures parents' security as people in the villages are cared for by women and their children. The situation for women in the villages of Khairpur is similar to that in northern Indian villages where a typical daughter-in-law is 'an unpaid family worker' whose labour migrates to the affinal family after the marriage (Jeffery et al. 1989: 43). The contract of marriage transfers a woman's labour power to her affinal family; she then has to provide her services as well as bear children for the family. Any marriage in a strong kinship system provides security for parents but exchange marriage guarantees this security; if a woman is marrying out, she has another woman in exchange to replace her and serve her parents. She knows there will be somebody to care for her parents in their old age. This can be possible in non-exchange marriages also but will involve energies and money. Exchange marriage not only saves money and time but also assures the parents of their own security in old age; the woman in exchange is bound to serve the family and keep them happy because otherwise any problem in her marriage may result in troubling her brother's marriage, which affects her natal family.

Zaman (2008) illustrates the major factors that strengthen the institution of exchange marriages in Pakistan. To him, security is one of the major motivations for parents to exchange their children in marriage. Unlike in the western countries where the state provides social security to all individuals, in Pakistan the family is wholly responsible for the security of its members. In that situation, parents make it possible to secure the future of their children by consolidating their ties within the kin group. The state's failure in providing social security, which might change traditional marriages, also forces social actors to stick to the old traditional social structure. They prioritise security over emotions, intimacy and compatibility. Thus, individuals may happily enter into exchange marriages that not only ensure their future but also their sibling's future. Jacoby and Mansuri (2006) see these marriages a way of providing welfare for both the parents and their children. The reciprocal relationship to the son-in-law's sister in exchange marriage facilitates the parents keeping a check on their son-in-law, which they cannot do in a non-exchange marriage. They argue that since exchange marriage has a lower percentage of violence, separation and depression than conventional marriages, it safeguards women's interests and protects their well-being.

My data also provide evidence of women's well-being in exchange marriages. Since the marriage is reciprocal, the way a family treat their daughter-in-law will affect how their daughter is treated; if they care for the daughter-in-law, their daughter will be cared for. But apart from women's welfare and well-being, exchange marriage can considerably increase women's influence within the family. In a group discussion 24-year-old Shabnam said:

I have married my *masat* (MZS), it is a non-exchange marriage, but my brother-in-law (husband's brother) had an exchange marriage. His wife is a moody woman and never fulfils her responsibilities properly. Nobody dares to say anything to her. All try to keep her happy because if she is not happy, my husband's and brother-in-law's sister, who is married to my sister-in-law's brother, will be affected. Nobody cares about me because I have not been exchanged.

Problems with exchange marriages

An exchange marriage, which is favoured for the welfare of women, does not always safeguard the interests of both women in the exchange, and can have more serious

consequences than simple consanguineous marriage. The majority of exchange marriages involve positive reciprocity, but in a few cases this breaks down. If a man is happily married and has children, but his sister, who is married to his wife's brother, is not settled, he would care less for the sister and more for his own immediate family. For one reason or another, a woman can suffer from the effects of the exchange she was made part of. 24-year-old Shahjahan told me her experience of a failed exchange marriage:

I have an exchange marriage that did not work. My husband is a disabled person and cannot do anything. Since he does not do anything, my parents-in-law do not care about me and keep taunting me. On the other hand, my sister-in-law who is in my exchange has a happy married life. I often complain to my parents and brother about my hard life. They console me and say that it is my fate. This makes me feel depressed and helpless.

Exchange marriages can be verbally fixed at any stage of the couple's life, but it is not necessary that both marriages are contracted at the same time as both pairs may not be of marriageable age at the same time. Therefore, a couples' age is considered before contracting these marriages and usually the elder pair marries first whereas the second marriage is contracted after a few years. Jacoby and Mansuri (2006) point out that the time gap between the first and second marriage can delay the marriage of the second couple. The first couple is married, but the second couple is either too young or may not even have been born. In that case, the second couple has a chance of escaping the marriage. I found similar evidence, where the first couple was married because of their appropriate ages while the second couple was too young. After a few years, one of the parents of the second couple changed their mind about the marriage. The time gap between the two marriages served as an opportunity to assess the success of the other marriage. This can enable one woman to escape a potentially bad marriage, but jeopardizes another's good marriage, and can cause differences between the two families. 25-year-old Shahul, whose sister escaped an exchange marriage, told me about its consequences for her family:

My brother was married to my *marot* (MBD), and in exchange my parents engaged my sister to my sister-in-law's brother. Both were very young at that time, so my parents asked them to wait until my sister reached the age of puberty. In a few years, my sister-in-law, who was married to my brother, could not settle and made many quarrels. This made my parents not marry my sister to her brother. In return, my sister-in-law's family broke their ties with my family. Both families are not on good terms now. See these kinds of relationships (exchange marriage) spoil the environment also.

This was probably the lowest price to be paid by a family who had broken ties. The situation can become even worse than this. Turning away from the fixed exchange marriage might carry heavy consequences for women; for example, if the marriage of the second couple cannot happen, the marriage of the first couple may also end in divorce. Therefore, when parents do not want to marry their daughter, who is already engaged in the exchange marriage, they find another girl, pay her price and marry her to the man who was engaged to their daughter.³⁴ This is how they save the first couple's married life, but if this settlement is not approved by the other party, this can threaten a woman's married life. For example, 26-year-old Sultana told me:

I was married to my husband, and in exchange my husband's sister was engaged to my brother. But after a few years, my parents-in-law changed their mind and refused to marry their daughter to my brother. This all put me under the threat that my marriage would also be broken if my parents forced me to leave my husband's house. I was very settled in my life and did not want to go back to my natal family. I then found a girl from another city, gave bride price to her family and married my brother to her.

Women's agency in dealing with the system of exchange marriages is evident; they accept these marriages for their long-term interests and security that comes from an exchange; for example, 24-year-old Shabnam told me that her sister-in-law is valued more as the result of an exchange marriage. 26-year-old Sultana used her agency in order to save her marriage. She not only bargained with the system but also succeeded in securing her future.

These marriages may carry more security and welfare if both couples are settled, but, where one couple's marriage does not work, it can end in the divorce of both couples. This brings considerable trouble for the second pair, especially if they have a happy married life and have children. The divorce not only brings emotional distress for the couple, but also puts the woman in an uncertain situation regarding her children's future. The couple's families mutually decide on the custody of the children; if children stay with the father, it becomes hard for the mother to see them. If children remain with the mother, it is optional whether the father sees them or not. The divorce of both couples strains the relations between the two families and the responsibility for the children's future is not mandatory for the father if they are with the mother. Narrating such an incident, Zohra told me in the focus group discussion:

³⁴ These are poor people, so they either take a loan or sell anything in order to pay the bride price because they have to save the first marriage at any cost.

My cousin had an exchange marriage. Her husband's sister was married to her brother. The woman in her exchange could not settle with her brother and the marriage ended up in divorce. In return, my cousin also had a divorce and was sent back to her natal family with her five children. See what is her mistake? She now has to do humble jobs to look after five children.

The primacy of kin relationships is very evident in exchange marriages; if one marriage does not work, parents are willing to call off the other marriage to make it even. Family relations are more important than an individual relational arrangement: 'if you are leaving my daughter, I will leave yours'. Here it is evident that a family is ready to sacrifice a happy marriage to maintain the kinship structure. A family's honour has to be satisfied if the daughter returns to the family as a result of divorce. This may be the reason why the exchange marriage system is declining in the villages of Khairpur. However, I found differences between the villages; in some areas it remained strong, but elsewhere women highlighted problems with exchange marriages. 30-year-old Razia, whose village was experiencing a decline in exchange marriages, told me:

We often do exchange marriages, but now there are many disadvantages, so parents do not prefer it anymore. If one couple is not happy, another couple's life is affected. If one couple's life is not settled, the woman comes back to her natal family after fighting with her in-laws. In return, the woman in her exchange (her brother's wife) has to go back to her parents as well.

Like their counterparts in rural areas of Pakistan, the consent of women in rural Sindh is irrelevant to their marriage arrangement. Given the early age of marriage, these very young women have very little chance of resisting this; a teenage girl is too weak to stand firm against her parents' will, and even if she resists, she is forcibly married according to her parents', and particularly male kin's, wishes. Young women have to accept the decisions of their elders even if the man selected for them is not appropriate. Most of women in rural areas accept elders' decisions without questioning them, but marriage based on inequality leads some women to question the choice of their parents and make a bold move if elders refuse to respect their wishes. For example, Zohra told me about such an incident that took place in her village:

A woman ran away from home yesterday, she was supposed to marry a man in exchange who she did not want to marry because he was very old. Her parents forced her a lot and told her that the marriage of the first couple (her brother and sister-in-law) will be broken if she did not marry the old guy. Her

sister-in-law is pregnant. The parents were helpless; they did not want to break the marriage of their son. The woman tried her best to convince them, but they did not agree, so the woman left home and ran away with the guy she was in love with.

However, these incidents are not very frequent because patriarchal control and fear restrict women, and they rarely have the chance to take any decisive action or to have control over their lives. Secondly, the fear of an unknown situation, which might be worse than the present, encourages women to surrender to their parents' decision. Moreover, the price of leaving her parents' home is very high, in that the woman is subject to mental torture and insult that she is likely to receive from her affinal family. A woman who flees from her parents' home loses the support of her parents who otherwise may exercise some influence over her affinal family and may provide moral and economic support in times of need. She also loses the trust of everyone as she is considered to be unreliable; one who can cheat her parents can cheat anyone. Therefore, the man's family will keep her under strict surveillance.

Furthermore, the other form of marriage – for a dispute settlement – was also practised in the villages. Although my sample did not include such marriages, the women did talk about them and their consequences. They told me that the lives of women who were married as a means of dispute settlement are full of pain and taunting. In that case, what is most important to the family is achieving a settlement that ensures their security, rather than the consequences of the arrangement for the woman being exchanged. The parents do not interfere in her life after her marriage because the terms and conditions of the settlement bind them not to do so. If they interfere, they will breach the agreement and the dispute will start once again. This keeps them out of their daughter's life. Therefore, a woman who is given in exchange to settle a dispute suffers more than the other woman; for every minor mistake, she is taunted for being exchanged in a dispute settlement. It brings much emotional distress, feelings of helplessness and depression in the woman's life. 24-year-old Shahjahan, whose family suffered a similar experience, told me:

My brother was in love with my *marot* (MBD). They both ran away and married. In return, my uncle, who was my mother's brother and the woman's father, kidnapped my sister-in-law (HBW). The situation got very critical, and my own marriage came under threat as he had abducted a woman of my

affinal family. A *Jirga*³⁵ was called to solve this dispute. A decision was made in the *jirga* in which my brother paid the penalty of 200,000 rupees and my sister was given in marriage to my uncle's son as a compensation to settle the dispute. My sister has a very bad marriage because she had been exchanged in a dispute. My own life is not settled because my mother-in-law keeps taunting me over the issue and has made my life hell.

No one gains from these kinds of situations; a forced marriage can not only result in destroying many lives but also weakens the solidarity of the kin group which is considered central for the welfare of the villagers. The kinship system that women live under leads to their life being controlled by and dedicated to others, particularly after marriage, which brings considerable responsibilities of housework, childcare and so on.

Consequences of Consanguineous and Exchange Marriages

The particular forms of marriage in the villages of Khairpur are favoured for the purpose of welfare and security for women as well as for their families. Although these marriages succeed in this respect, they carry many disadvantages for women, which often go unnoticed. For example, the preference for marriage overrides other options for women such as education. If a woman has reached the age of puberty and there is a man available for her in the family, the parents prefer to fix her marriage with the man as soon as possible. They do not consider her young age and they discourage her education, which might block her way to marriage. The majority of the women I interviewed discontinued their education either because their marriage was planned or because their fiancé did not want them to go to school. For example, 15-year-old Parveen, who was married at the age of 12, told me: 'I desperately wanted to get an education, but my parents did not agree on that. I was married when I was a child'.

All over the world, child marriage affects poor women the most. Where it is still practised, it is more common in rural than urban areas and more frequent among uneducated than educated women (Philip 2014). Women's education plays an

³⁵ A gathering of elders for a dispute settlement. In tribal areas, people take their disputes to tribal elders who then make a decision taking the evidence into consideration. People prefer *jirgas* over civil courts because of quicker decisions.

important role in delaying their marriage in South Asia (Cleland and Jejeebhoy 1996). Cleland and Jejeebhoy note that secondary level schooling has a positive association with increasing age at marriage. Secondary schooled women in all South Asian countries, except Nepal, marry two to five years later than uneducated women. However, primary schooling has no positive association with increasing marriage age. Except for India, the age at marriage for primary schooled women remains unchanged. All the women that I interviewed were either illiterate or had limited literacy. A few did not even go to school, and those who managed to embark on an education were forced to abandon it because their marriage was planned. I found that women wanted to be in education before and after their marriage but their parents or in-laws discouraged them, and this option was completely eliminated after the birth of children.

The common expectation in Pakistani society is that higher education is related with non-consanguineous marriages. The percentage of consanguineous marriages is higher among people with no education and lower among people with higher education (Nayab 2009).³⁶ Likewise, the prevalent prejudice against female literacy in the villages is that if a woman is educated, she becomes rebellious, gains the power to challenge male authority, and refuses to marry according to the decisions of her parents. Therefore, parents and future in-laws strongly discourage female education. 17-year-old Shabana, who had to quit her schooling under pressure of her fiancé, told me:

My fiancé did not allow me further studies after 5th class. He said if I were educated, I would not marry him. He is not a literate man. So he forced my parents to discontinue my studies. I was very young that time.

According to Qureshi (2012) parents', especially mothers', education in Pakistan has a very positive effect on children's education; it plays a crucial role in the continuation of their children's education. Unfortunately, in my sample, the women's mothers were not educated at all whereas their fathers mostly had limited literacy. Only a few of the fathers, who were literate up to 10th standard and had formal jobs, encouraged their daughters' education. For example, my intermediary in village two

³⁶ Nevertheless, Nayab finds an interesting point that the trend of consanguineous marriages among people with higher education has increased in Pakistan from 32.5 per cent in 1990-91 to 37.2 per cent in 2006-07. This challenges the common prejudice against female literacy.

was a literate man and had educated his daughters, another intermediary, Gul, was also literate up to 10th class and was educating all of her children. However, these instances are rare in the villages.

Another factor that discourages parents from educating their daughters is a woman's housewife role; it is her domestic management skills that help her strengthen her position within the affinal family. For this, parents start training them from a very young age; the mother starts involving her daughter in household chores, trains her in cooking, cleaning, and washing. Apart from this, a young girl also babysits her younger siblings to give her mother time to do the major domestic chores. The father and other family members appreciate this work. In such a situation, education becomes secondary. 25-year-old Bakhtiar, who discontinued her studies in order to assist her mother, told me with sadness:

I studied up to 5th class. I wanted to study further, but my parents discontinued my education. My mom had little children, she was unable to look after the home. So I had to leave my studies to look after the home.

Control over women's sexuality also has its implications for girls' schooling; for example, Chanana (1996) illustrates the cultural barriers for women in India. She notes that women's sexuality is controlled to safeguard the family's honour and their chastity. This ideology is widely prevalent in the villages of Khairpur and has serious consequences for women whose schooling is either denied or limited. Since parents want to keep the chastity of their daughters intact, they keep them under surveillance from childhood and it becomes stricter as they grow. This results in minimizing and limiting schooling opportunities for young women. Bachal, a man in the group interview, told me the reason why girls from his kin group were not educated:

Young girls from the vicinity go for schooling, but we do not allow our girls. We have seen young women from other cities who work in our village through non-government organisations. We did not like them at all. So we decided not to educate our girls. Some girls now study in the school here, but none of them belongs to our kin group.

The practice of keeping women inside the house from childhood leaves them with no other option than to rely on their parents for everything. In the matter of marriage, women do not have any other choice other than to accept what their parents have decided for them. Since the primary responsibility of a person's marriage lies with his/her parents, there is little room for romance or love marriages (Blood 1994).

Therefore, it is not surprising that only two – of all the respondents I interviewed – had love marriages. These two love marriages were also consanguineous marriages. A woman who wants to marry outside the family will generally not be permitted to do so, and remains single until the parents find a suitable match for her within the family.

Since most women in consanguineous and exchange marriage usually marry very young, another consequence is early maternity. That means women have to be prepared for pregnancy at the age of 15, which is an age that carries many risks for these less literate and malnourished women. According to PDHS (2012-13), the proportion of teenage mothers increases with age: 1 per cent start childbearing at the age of 16, this stretches to 17 per cent when they reach 19. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province has the highest incidence of early pregnancy (10 per cent) and the lowest is in Gilgit Baltistan (7 per cent). These teenage pregnancies pose a threat to the mother's and the child's health because the mother's body is not fully developed, she is already malnourished due to poor economic conditions and lack of awareness (Shah 2015). Some of my respondents had often experienced miscarriages or were unable to conceive because of malnourishment. 30-year-old Aisha's and 20-year-old Najma's babies died before the age of five. In addition, young maternal age further eliminates the chances of literacy for women. Even where parents-in-law support their daughter-in-law's education there are other factors that discourage women's literacy. For example, the new responsibilities after marriage followed by motherhood make it almost impossible to continue education. 22-year-old Shah Bibi who was educated up to 8th class told me:

I could not continue my education after my marriage. Although my parents-in-law asked me to continue, I was not interested anymore. I got pregnant soon after marriage and used to be busy in house chores the whole day. I did not have any time to spare for my studies. I also got busy in farming with my husband. I love feeding and looking after cattle.

Another woman, Asma (20-year-old), who had to discontinue her education after 8th standard, told me:

I studied up to 8th class and then I fell sick and discontinued my education. Soon after my recovery I was married. I now want to continue my education, but I cannot. I have a five-month-old baby, and I also had C-section for his birth. So I am unable to continue now.

Although there are a few exceptions where women continued their education after marriage, that too was made possible because of parents-in-laws' support. Usually a woman can study at best up to 8th grade by the time she is married and any additional education depends upon her husband and his parents' support. The women who were educated up to 10th grade completed their education after marriage and their in-laws' support was important in them doing so. For example, 30-year-old Aisha, who was one of the two women who succeeded in continuing her education after marriage, told me:

I had studied up to 8th class until I married. I wanted to do matriculation after my marriage, but my husband did not support me. I then requested my father-in-law. He gave me permission and supported me for further education. I hid all this from my husband and had matriculation with the support of my father-in-law.

Some of the issues that I describe could also be true in the societies that have arranged marriages that are not consanguineous. Underage marriage, early maternity and illiteracy are all bound up with consanguineous marriage in the setting I am describing, but some of the issues, such as lack of choice, the control of in-laws, and barriers to education are also present in the societies where girls are married off very young in arranged marriages which are not necessarily consanguineous.

Life after Marriage

The husband's house is a woman's permanent location and she is expected to leave it only after her death. This message is conveyed loud and clear to all women upon their marriage. It carries two meanings; one, that she is responsible for her good or bad life in the affinal family, so she has to be as good as possible in order to keep them happy. Two, her place in her husband's house completely depends on her efforts; the more productive and useful she is, the stronger place she will have. It means that a woman has not only to adjust to her husband's family but also keep the in-laws happy. In order to focus a new bride's interests in her affinal family, she is not encouraged to visit her natal family frequently after her marriage. Frequent visits or longer stays may mean that she has not developed a strong bond with her affinal family; this may raise questions from other relatives and embarrass the woman and her natal family. In this kind of arrangement where the ups and downs of a woman's

life are associated with her husband, she finds herself with no option than to adjust to the affinal family. Sharing a common situation in her village concerning women's life after marriage, Sultana told me in the focus group discussion:

Once marriage is done it is done. Women then have no option than adjusting with in-laws. They very well know that if they are not happy and go back to their parents, they will not support them, and they have to return to their in-laws. Therefore, if there is any issue, a woman gets angry with her in-laws and does not talk to them for a while and then once again they are the same. This is how women adjust and make their space in the family.

Unlimited responsibilities and expectations make a woman's life difficult and leave her nostalgic for a relatively carefree life before her marriage. For the majority of the women I interviewed, life was better and happier before marriage. There were multiple reasons why these women spoke of their pre-marital life favourably. For example, quite a few women said that they had more free time and no responsibility before marriage; a young girl is not fully trained and skilled in house management and requires guidance for some time after her marriage. But unfortunately, she has to start doing many tasks soon after her marriage and by the time she is fully trained, she has produced two or three children which increases her burden. If a woman is unable to do a particular task on time, this can create trouble for her, and she can be answerable not only to one person but to many in the family. 30-year-old Aisha narrated the difficulties of life after her marriage:

Life before marriage was better because I was on my own. I only had to say my prayers and do whatever I liked to do. But now everything depends on my in-laws. I remain in fear that they might be angry if I do not perform my tasks on time. For example, if I cannot wash and press my husband's clothes for any reason, he will complain. He also taunts that he works whole day and when he returns, my work for him is not done. Therefore, even if I am not well, I do his tasks on time.

Controlled mobility is one of the factors that make women think that their life was better before marriage; a young girl can visit her neighbours (usually her relatives) where she can have fun or play with her cousins. She can experience less tightly controlled mobility until the age of puberty. She can also go out with her father to enjoy some food or do some shopping, but her mobility is subject to her in-laws' approval after marriage, and they do not like her to go anywhere and leave her household tasks. 18-year-old Asiya told me: 'I was happy before my marriage. I

roamed around a lot,³⁷ enjoyed good food. Now I cannot even visit my neighbours'. Women's mobility is curtailed depending on men's whims; for example, some of the women are not allowed to go anywhere except to their parents after marriage while others can visit their parents as well as siblings' families.

However, not all women consider their life after marriage worse; although a woman's life changes completely after her marriage, she manages to adjust to it and find happiness in order to keep herself content. Quite a few women I interviewed were satisfied with their lives after marriage. Despite the fact that responsibility of household and children keep these women over-burdened and busy, it is also the reason that women give for thinking that their life is better after marriage. For South Asian women, 'motherhood is the highest achievement in a woman's life. Marriage is the gateway to motherhood' (Dube 2001: 101). Marriage, husband and children enhance women's status; they see their children, husband and home as a source of security, a major source of their happiness. To them, life is made after marriage, bearing children is a good change in life which gives them a sense of completion. This, according to Kandiyoti (1988) is the cycle of women's empowerment; a complete family, particularly with sons, ensures a woman's future. Therefore, she internalizes the oppression she experiences and then reproduces it in her older age when she has her own daughters-in-law.

Interestingly, women as individuals do not think about their own happiness, they rather relate their happiness with the well-being of their husbands and children. A good day is one in which she does her tasks without fail and serves everyone perfectly and on time; this is what marriage means to her. Some of the women accept all the changes in their lives as natural and necessary. These women are well aware of the fact that their residence at their parents' home is temporary, and that their husband's home is their final destination. So they surrender before their parents' decision, knowing that they cannot live there any longer. Nasira stated the reality in these words; 'Life before marriage is really very good, but the fact is that how long can our parents keep us at their home?'

³⁷ Women often said that they were free to go outside home before marriage, which meant they were free to do so before the age of puberty.

Conclusion

Kinship in rural Sindh is based on the specificity and primacy of relationships, it de-individualises a person for the collective benefit of the kin group. Marriage is used as a means to achieve certain benefits. The forms of marriages prevalent in the villages of Khairpur, i.e. consanguineous and exchange marriage, serve particular purposes. These marriages not only benefit parents culturally and economically but also benefit women, for whom personal interest is also evident. Although parents prefer these marriages for the purposes of welfare and social security, women prefer these marriages for their ease and the comfort of being with close relatives. The data reveal that the current and prevalent forms of marriage in the villages of Khairpur in which parents control their children's marriage decision-making are strongly encouraged by villagers; they discourage love marriages (2 out of 30 respondents had a love marriage) and leave no option for women other than entering into a marriage contract decided by their elders.

Although on one hand there are benefits to these forms of marriage, on the other hand there are drawbacks; exchange and consanguineous marriages do reduce the economic burden of marriage expenses on parents, but these marriages have no strong correlation with women's well-being. My data provide evidence of the key consequences of these marriages, such as underage marriage, low literacy and young maternal age. These are aspects of both exchange and consanguineous marriages. Early marriage is the single most important factor that contributes to low female literacy and early motherhood. Availability of a groom within the family forces parents either not to educate their daughters or to discontinue their education once the marriage is planned, usually immediately after their first menstruation. These women are too young to resist such decisions and are put under the hierarchical control of their in-laws. Moreover, these young women, unequipped with education, find submission the best possible option for their survival.

Illiteracy and youth at marriage affect women and facilitate men's control over them. Life after marriage brings many responsibilities, but these young women manage all duties and continue to survive in this patriarchal stronghold. Nevertheless, women do strategize and make their space in the family. The silent strategy of adjusting to patriarchal control and enhancing the power of their position starts soon after their

marriage. I will investigate and seek to explain a central aspect of women's adjustment to life after marriage, their daily work, in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Household Work: Exploitation and Negotiation

Introduction

This chapter centres on women's work after marriage: both household labour and craft production for family use and for exchange. I start by discussing how women's lives change after marriage when they experience the pressures of multiple responsibilities. In this context, I elaborate on the gendered division of labour in the villages of Khairpur which burdens women in different ways, with activities such as childcare and looking after the elderly, in particular their fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law and *their* parents (if alive). This gendered division of labour binds women into multiple responsibilities, but liberates men from them; they are only responsible for financing the family's needs. I then consider household work, which is central to women's life and keeps them busy for almost 17 hours a day. Although women are supposed to do their assigned tasks themselves, their mutual support is evident in doing these chores in order for them to perform their work on time. I discuss less routine tasks that are also the responsibility of the women such as looking after cattle and serving guests. I then explain how women's work is valued, who controls it and who benefits from it. In this context, I take account of the appropriation of women's labour in households and discuss how women use their role as service provider to bargain with patriarchy; I argue that women's work is exploited by others and that others benefit from it, but that women also use this work as a means of making and consolidating a place for themselves in their affinal family. On one hand women are very much oppressed; they work for extremely long hours attending to the needs of many people, but at the same time they have pride in their work. I also demonstrate that despite their multiple responsibilities from dawn to dusk, women manage to create space for themselves that they utilize to earn some income through their craft work. Although they have strictly limited mobility, they have strategies that allow them to generate extra income by working from within their homes. This income helps them and their families in several ways and is central to their family's well-being.

Village life in Sindh is based on a subsistence agricultural economy; villagers rely on agriculture for a living and employment. They cultivate rice, sugar cane, wheat, cotton and other crops. Most of the villagers also own livestock to fulfil their dairy needs; those who have cattle can also sell surplus milk to earn some money. However, the date palm is the main cash crop on which the village economy survives; it not only provides men in the villages with employment opportunities but also provides women with material for handicrafts made from date palm leaves. The crop is known as the golden harvest for its colour and the benefit it gives to local people. Summer is the peak season for harvesting and processing the dates, and this is when monsoon rains come to Pakistan. These rains are very harmful for the dates which are still unripe until July. Therefore, the Holy Quran can commonly be spotted hanging on the trees in order to save the crop from rains, reflecting villagers' religious beliefs and the importance of the crop that makes their survival possible. However, usually Pakistan has a short monsoon season which is not as intense as in India, so these crops are often not endangered. During the summer season, villagers (both men and women) benefit most from the harvest and this is when I carried out my fieldwork.

Seasonal variations may also affect men's and women's work patterns; for example, after the peak season of date palm harvest, the processing begins to close down in September resulting in unemployment for many men and may also reduce opportunities for women to receive payment for craft products, some of which are mostly used during the summer. During that time, men might be engaged in the cultivation of other crops that require less work than the date palm. Seasons might also affect the handicraft work women engage in; for example, some of their products are required all year round, such as pots and plates, while other products such as hand fans or quilts are seasonal.

Men in the villages of Khairpur usually do farm work in three different ways: they either cultivate lands of the land-owning class which they take on contract, paying the landlord out of the income they receive after the harvest, cultivate their own small piece of land for a living, or if they neither take land on contract nor have their own, they work on others' farms and are paid in cash or kind. Most of the women I interviewed were living in families that owned no land, and their menfolk, if employed at all, were working primarily on other people's lands as labourers. Only

three women's families had some land to survive on. So marrying to a man who is either a farmer or a temporary labourer on others' land is the typical fate of these village women.

Ethnographers have been precise in discussing the Pakistani household and have tended to see it as rural male-dominated unit where resources are shared and wider links are maintained through kinship, marriage and locality (Donnan1997). In this context, the household is a specific category referred to as a *ghar* or *tabbar* in which people live together, act together, pool their resources together and use the same hearth (*chulha*) for cooking (Donnan 1988), as is the case in my sample. Households in my sample represent families who live and eat together (*ghar*), villagers also often live in large extended households/compounds comprising families of sons (*khandaan*).³⁸ Some of the families in my sample lived in compounds (*khandaan*) comprising families of sons; even in that situation, all women lived with their affinal families and shared hearths with in-laws, and those married to their father's brother's son did not live in the same family they grew up in; they lived in the same compound (*khandaan*) but not in the same household (*ghar*). Therefore, when I refer to household in this study I mean *ghar*, unless otherwise stated.

These households are often surrounded by agricultural lands or farms irrigated through canals from the River Indus. Ideally a household should have a father-in-law, mother-in-law, sons, their wives and children, making for a large household (median 11.5 individuals in my sample), but a house may not have the capacity to accommodate a large number of residents. Owing to this, separate rooms or compartments are built within the household or the family compound. This bigger extended family can be considered one household if their unit of production and reproduction is the same; they eat together, share their earnings as well as hearth. Other studies suggest that these hearths can be separated at any time due to conflict in the family (See Jeffery et al. 1989; Oldenburg 2002). In that case, the household remains the same, but each of the sons' family has its hearth separately. The separation of hearth involves separation of almost everything except for the common capital if the family owns land. The households I visited for my fieldwork comprised

³⁸ There is no specific word in Urdu or Sindhi to define the household in which families of senior brothers live in a compound and have separate hearths. The women called those compounds, in which senior brothers lived with their families and had separate heath, *khandaan*.

extended families sharing their living and hearths; this usually comprised husband, wife, children, husband's parents, husband's sister (if not married), husband's brothers, their wives and children. The men pooled whatever income they had to run the hearth. All of the households in my sample shared the same hearth and there was no splitting whether there were 5 or 26 people. However, there were signs of past separation; for example, separation of hearths was evident from the women who were married to their father's brother's son in the large extended households (*khandaan*) but did not share hearths with their natal families, while the women who were married to their father's brother's son but were living in completely separate households is evidence of the splitting of the household in the past.

Defining women's work in this kind of setting is a complicated task because their responsibilities vary depending upon seasons, presence of livestock in the family, size of the family, and their being new or established daughters-in-law. Generally speaking, women have a heavier load of responsibilities if they have separate hearths – in the village setting this term is called *dhaar*. However, women in my sample belonged to households where the unit of production and consumption was same and the hearth was shared. The household size matters a great deal in deciding women's workload. Households in my sample varied from 5 to 26; the smallest one was five which comprised the woman, her husband, his parents and his sister, and the largest one was 26 which included the woman, her husband, three children, her husband's mother, five of her husband's sisters, five of her husband's brothers, their four wives, and six children. So a typical household around the median size would include wife, husband, their children, husband's parents, his sister, his brother, brother's wife and their children. Living in such a household where villagers live and eat together often makes women's work tedious, in particular, when there is only one daughter-in-law in the family.

The Transition to Married Life

Life after marriage is all about doing tasks and fulfilling responsibilities. I often think that it is useless to marry. I hardly get any free time. (25-year-old Ghazala).

A woman's short stay with her natal family before her marriage is like a fairy tale for her. She often recalls that life as free from all responsibilities; she was taken care of

and was not forced to do major tasks because her parents knew that the life of a girl changes completely after marriage; she then has responsibilities to her affinal family and these responsibilities multiply once she has children. Parents, therefore, do not expect their daughters to do house chores as a regular duty, but they do encourage them to assist the mother in order to share her burden.

This assistance also aims at training the girl for her life after marriage. Parents sketch out a picture of married life for their daughter, well ahead of her marriage, in which the daughter has to be ideal not only in the role of a wife but also as a sister-in-law, daughter-in-law and as a mother. Parents and other relatives of the family continually advise the girl to keep her in-laws, especially the mother-in-law, happy and content and that this is only possible with a submissive attitude and unlimited service. A mother-in-law's satisfaction is the sign of the girl's achievement in her married life. Dube (2001) reports a similar tradition in India where, 'importantly, a girl is always socialized under the shadow of an imaginary mother-in-law'[229]. This imaginary mother-in-law is not only part of a young girl's daily life in the villages of Khairpur, but also her mother's; whenever a girl fails to do any job properly, she is told that she would face her mother-in-law's taunting if she cannot do chores properly after her marriage. In this way, the mother also assures her daughter's perfect training, because when a girl does not complete tasks properly, her mother's rearing of her is questioned. Thus, a girl's training has three purposes: one is to assist the mother in household tasks, the second is to prepare the girl for life after marriage and the third is to prove that her mother has fulfilled her responsibility. However, this life of training is far better for a young woman than the life for which she has been prepared.

A woman's life changes completely after her marriage. A young girl, who used to take household chores lightly before her marriage, now has to take complete responsibility for them. It is only in the initial few days of marriage that a young married woman does not do household work. Soon after the wedding festivities are over, the woman is required to start managing household chores, especially cooking. This usually starts with cooking rice pudding, called *kheerni* by the woman and distributing it among neighbours. This conveys a message within the neighbourhood that the new bride has started looking after the house. Slowly and gradually the responsibility of the entire household is shifted to the young married woman, for

example, Fakhra in the mothers-in-law's focus group discussion told me: 'We shift all household responsibilities to the daughter-in-law after the marriage of a son. She cooks, manages everything and looks after everyone in the family'.

Thus, a young woman enters her husband's house with an understanding that she is expected to manage her own workload and to keep her husband and in-laws happy, serve them properly and take responsibility for all household chores. The imaginary mother-in-law, who was an important part of her life before marriage, now exists in reality. However, the sudden transformation of her role from an assistant to the main service provider may still create problems for the woman. Despite being prepared for this shift to married status, women often find it hard to adapt because the situation is completely different from their natal home where they were treated as guests and were not burdened with major household responsibilities. Therefore, they may find it difficult to cope with it especially when they do not marry within the compound (*khandaan*); for example, Nazia, who had faced adjustment problems after her marriage, said in a focus group discussion:

Life after marriage was very tough in the beginning. It was difficult for me to live with a big family. I did not do much work in my natal family. But after my marriage, all of sudden, I had to do many things. I kept thinking all the time how to do all house chores, but thank God I made it.

Post marriage transition from the role of a daughter to the daughter-in-law brings many liabilities for a young woman and, unlike in the natal home, there is no compromise on the household work which then becomes a woman's major responsibility. Given the consanguineous marriage system, some women marry within the compounds where senior men live with their families (*khandaan*) and have separate hearths. Among my sample there were only three women who were married to their father's brother's sons and continued to live in the same compound, but for them this did not make their life any easier. The amount of work for the woman married within or outside the compound remains the same. This shift might affect the woman less if she is married in the same compound (with her FBS); because then she would be familiar with her affinal family members' food habits and way of life. In terms of household work, this transition would affect her because patriarchal rules for women do not change whether she is a father's brother's daughter or mother's sister's daughter married in the same or different household. The only difference is that those who marry within the same large extended

household/compound (*khandaan*) may receive some support from their natal family members such as a sister, but that too is temporary until the sister is married; her workload, however, is similar to that of other married women. For example, 15-year-old Parveen, who was married to her father's brother's son and carried on living in the same *khandaan*, told me:

I am very happy to have been married to my *sotr* (FBS), we had been living in the same house and I only had to go from one room to another on my marriage. But I carry out all household tasks like other women. The only happiness in this marriage is that my own family is living very close to me.

A young married woman often finds her new married life a struggle because of the sudden shift of responsibilities after marriage which causes difficulties for her. She is responsible for all household chores, cooking and cleaning, including looking after all family members by providing them with services that include washing and ironing their clothes, serving them food and so on. Sending men to work and children to school is also a married woman's responsibility. These responsibilities often multiply with the family size: the bigger the family is, the greater are the responsibilities. She then has more people to feed and more clothes to wash. The burden of household responsibility increases substantially with the birth of children. If there is the mother-in-law or younger sister-in-law (husband's sister), they assist the woman, but the woman has major responsibilities of the household. If the woman is the only daughter-in-law, she then has to do all household tasks herself. However, the burden of house chores varies with the number of daughters-in-law in the family. Interestingly, the size of family, which significantly increases the burden of house chores, can also be helpful for women in that they find support within the family. The large size of the family substantially increases women's work but it is more likely to have more than one married women to support each other. Therefore, if the woman is the only daughter-in-law in the family, she is going to have a heavier burden of workload on her, but if there are several daughters-in-law in the family, the workload will be lighter.

Women's position within the family is not homogeneous; they occupy different locations within the family hierarchy. The new daughter-in-law has a low position and is expected to follow the established daughters-in-law who exercise their authority over her (Jeffery et al. 1989). Research from other parts of South Asia indicates that relationships between daughters-in-law can be difficult and that

tensions between them sometimes lead to the separation of households (Oldenburg 2002). Although household tasks are allocated by the mother-in-law, it can be hard for her to maintain equality among the daughters-in-law; the favourite one might have to wash clothes or clean the house rather than cooking food in severe heat. For example, 24-year-old Shabnum complained about her sister-in-law (HBW) who was favoured because she had an exchange marriage and therefore had to work less (see Chapter 4). Women can also swap their tasks to support each other when needed, but I do not have data on how the allocation of tasks and sharing is actually negotiated. This is one of the limitations of my data; due to the scarcity of time and inability to spend whole days and nights in the villages, I was unable to document the allocation of tasks, how women negotiate the sharing and how they seek help from each other. My participants also belonged to households where they lived and shared hearths with their mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law (if any); 18 out of 30 households had multiple daughters-in-law, while the rest of the households had one daughter-in-law in the family. Therefore, I am unable to compare their situation with that of the women who had separate hearths or did not live with their mothers-in-law.

Women's struggle to adjust to their affinal family may make women recall memories of their natal family. I found that women had different opinions about their lives after marriage, some of them were happy while other had mixed feelings. However, the majority of the women were not happy with their lives after marriage and discussed their pre-marital life with a sense of loss and longing. For example, 30-year-old Hakim, who considered her life after marriage as an illness, told me:

There is no enjoyment in life after marriage. Life before marriage is far better and free from all tensions. I commonly say to everyone that I have caught a disease after my marriage. There is tension either from the children or from the house, and I am responsible for everything. I was very active and carefree before my marriage. After returning from school, I used to do house chores and enjoy it a lot. After doing that, I would make 7 *pindis* (plates made with date palm leaves) and was still energetic and active. I am no longer active now.

All the changes that take place in a woman's life after marriage can make her think of her unmarried life with a sense of loss. There are a few things that a woman loses with her marriage such as the love and care of her parents, but in my view, the most important loss is that of freedom from responsibilities. This freedom not only liberates young girls from house chores, but it also allows them to move freely

among their close relatives. Many women said that they were ‘on their own’ (*pahinjay paan*) before marriage. This phrase carried multiple meanings; for example quite a few women used this phrase in terms of household responsibilities. A woman has freedom from household tasks before her marriage; a marriage terminates this freedom and puts her under the burden of unlimited household work and responsibilities. So, when a woman said that she was happy before her marriage because she was ‘on her own’ this meant that she was free from tasks, and it was up to her whether or not to perform them. Some of the women used the phrase ‘on their own’ to describe the freedom of mobility before their marriage, which was not directed by anyone, rather they enjoyed it within the boundaries of their neighbourhood. Although women’s mobility is controlled before marriage, the limitations become stricter once she is married. An unmarried woman may go to her aunt’s or uncle’s house before she starts menstruating, play with her cousins, or her cousins may join her at her home, but after she is married, she is no longer allowed to do this (see Chapter 4 and 7). When women said that they were on their own, they meant that they could do things they liked, they had some independence of action, whereas when they are married, they are not allowed to do anything without their mother-in-law’s or husband’s permission. Therefore, nostalgia for their life before marriage was common among them.

Division of Labour

South Asian patriarchal household structures hold a man accountable for his family’s protection and provision, but the patriarchal social norms that regard men as breadwinners also facilitate men’s control over economic opportunities for women (Kabeer 1994). This arrangement is further assured by cultural practices of seclusion of women and patrilineal kinship. Noting the lack of female participation in economic affairs, Sen (1999) points out that discriminatory rules favour men in terms of ownership of property and capital, and make it harder for women to participate in economic opportunities, let alone start a small business. The traditional normative structure facilitates men’s participation in all social and economic activities outside the home, but limits women to household activities (Quddus 1995; Maqsood 2007).

Household structures in rural Sindh conform to this general patriarchal picture where men are regarded as breadwinners and women as service providers. This results in a strict form of gendered labour division; men go outside and earn their living and women remain inside households to provide whatever services others want or need. This gendered division of labour also excludes women from public arenas, considered irrelevant to them, and confines them in households where home management, under the supervision of the mother-in-law, is their primary responsibility.

This gendered division of labour burdens women with heavy responsibilities, as a household is the centre for numerous activities. Since all the household members start and end their day in the home, women's role in family management is essential; they serve all the members to enable them to start their day, men can go to work and children to school, and when they come back women serve them again. Moreover, looking after the elderly and sick is also married women's responsibility. These are difficult and time-consuming tasks, taking a whole day, and keeping them busy from dawn to dusk. For example, 20-year-old Asma, whose family comprised her H, S, HM, HF, HB, HBW, HBS, and two HBDs, described her daily routine in the following words:

I wake up early in the morning, offer prayer, make tea and breakfast and serve it to male family members and send them for work. I then do cleaning, wash dishes, cook food. After doing that, I cook food for my baby, feed him and make him sleep. I then wash clothes, take lunch and sew clothes. If I am not well I take rest, otherwise I continue my work. In the evening, I feed my baby, give him a bath, set cots in the courtyard, feed the cattle and milk them. I then make dinner and have it with family members, offer prayer and go to sleep.

In contrast, men work a few hours a day. They go out early in the morning to labour in the fields and come back in the afternoon. They may go out to purchase any groceries required from local shops, otherwise they socialize with their friends and return home in the evening. If a man is married, he can take his children out for some shopping, but this is not mandatory. The gendered division of labour that burdens women's lives with unlimited tasks spares men from many responsibilities even if they have time and opportunity to carry them out.

Throughout the Indian sub-continent, there is a strong gendered division of labour. However, it is more pronounced in some areas than others, for example, in Bihar, India; women and men are assigned tasks according to their gender. This prevents both men and women from assisting each other in their tasks, but despite this strict division, men and women share childcare equally (Sourabh 2007). The division of labour in rural Sindh is also very strict but unlike in Bihar, women in the villages of Khairpur are solely responsible for childcare with some limited support from the mother-in-law. Women feed the children, wash them, cook soft food for them and lull them to sleep when needed. Apart from this, women keep infants with them so that they do not cry. This burdens women in different ways; some of the women have to manage their time differently because of the childcare. Infants are with their mothers most of the time for breastfeeding. In that case, women either wake up early to do their tasks or do the tasks when their babies are asleep. For example, 25-year-old Rehana told me: ‘I get up very early in the morning to do house chores because I want to wind up everything before my daughter is awake’.

In many more developed Asian societies where women go out to work, childcare is organized differently, for example, childcare in China is integrated and supported by many agents other than the parents such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, close relatives, and day-care centres. Grandparents play an important role in childcare, and quite a few parents leave their children at their parents’ home. Close relatives’ help is also effective in childcare while day-care centres and maid services can also be sought. Thus, the Chinese socialist system provides childcare facilities to allow both parents to work, and that results in high labour force participation (Ochiai 2008). In Taiwan, childcare support is provided within the family and is usually done by grandparents or close relatives of a child. This includes close relatives of both of the parents of a child, and facilitates women’s employment (Ochiai et al. 2008). Similarly, childcare in urban cities of Pakistan is provided by different agents and varies from family to family; in the case of a joint family system, this support is mostly provided by in-laws, the mother-in-law in particular, but a working woman has to look for day-care centres if she has a nuclear family. For example in Karachi – the metropolitan city of Pakistan – private day-care centres are the biggest support for women engaged in various professions as well as for students who pursue their studies after marriage (Kamal 2013).

Since there is no regular childcare support in the villages of Khairpur and women do not go out to work, the full responsibility of caring for their children falls on them. Although mothers do most of the childcare, it is sometime provided by mothers-in-law. This childcare support within the family is temporary and includes the hours in which the mother is too involved in physical work to look after the child. The husband's sisters may also provide some support, but that is not regular because childcare is the sole responsibility of the mother. If the mother is busy in the kitchen, she will not keep the child with her; in that case, someone from the family, probably the mother-in-law would look after the child if s/he were crying. For example, 30-year-old Gulshan told me: 'Childcare is my responsibility. Sometimes when my mother-in-law or sisters-in-law see my child crying they look after him so that I can do my work'.

Unlike urban cities in Pakistan where childcare is supported to enable women to pursue their career (Kamal 2013), mothers-in-law in the villages of Khairpur give childcare support to facilitate women's household work. Therefore, mothers-in-law look after the children during the hours of cooking and cleaning in which mothers cannot keep their children with them. As soon as a mother finishes cooking, she has to look after her child. Moreover, a woman's natal family does not have any share in childcare support. Her mother has her own daughters-in-law for whom she provides childcare, and she knows that her daughter has her mother-in-law to support her.

In addition to childcare, looking after guests is also the responsibility of a married woman, but this is gender differentiated: what women are expected to do for a male and a female guest is different. If the guest is a woman, the woman's responsibility includes serving her with tea or a cold drink, and spending time with her. If the guest arrives during the time when a married woman is busy with house chores, the mother-in-law would spend time with her. The married woman would make tea, serve the guest and then continue her chores. If the guest comes to stay for a few days, the whole responsibility of looking after the guest falls on the daughter-in-law. The mother-in-law would only be with the guest to entertain her. Women's services to guests at their homes change from direct to indirect if the guest is a man. In that case, any male family member would spend time with him, but the responsibility for his food and comfort lies with the woman; the woman would cook for the guest but

would not serve him directly, it would go through the male family member. This prevents women from coming into contact with male guests.

Since the prevalent culture strongly discourages male-female contact, women cannot talk freely to young men even within their kin group. Men, except for their uncles and cousins, cannot frequently visit the house and talk to women. If any man within the kin group visits the family, the young woman would only come to greet him and leave for the kitchen to cook something for him. This is a way of avoiding the male guest. Whatever she cooks to serve the male guest, she hands it to any male in the family, and he serves the guest. Interestingly, the culture that emphasizes women's exclusion from the outside world, so that they do not come into contact with men, does not exclude women from serving those men within their homes.

Marital status and age are not central in gendered division of labour in some societies. For example, in Bihar, India, marital status and age have no strong association with the labour that men and women do. Unmarried women follow the same pattern of work as married women (Sourabh 2007). However, Sourabh finds that married and older women are responsible for some specific domestic tasks such as cooking and doing handicrafts. In contrast, marital status is more evident in the gendered division of labour in the villages of Khairpur where responsibility of all household tasks falls specifically on young married women; younger unmarried and older women are exempted from most of these responsibilities. Older women do not participate in household work because they have their daughters-in-law to do such jobs. If a woman does not have a child, she will keep doing household work until she is too old to do so. As the responsibility of household tasks is optional for young unmarried women, this increases a married woman's burden because unmarried women are free and may not support her. A married woman knows that her sister-in-law (husband's sister) is a temporary family member, so she treats her how she herself was treated before her own marriage. Moreover, a husband's sisters may not still be members of the family by the time a woman is married to their brother. Due to the early marriage system, a married woman may have only one or no unmarried sister-in-law.

The gendered division of labour in some parts of South Asia may provide women with some free time as men and women have their specific tasks and do not assist

each other. For example in Bihar, India, the division of labour is gender specific and it is followed very strictly. Household tasks do not keep women busy the whole day, so, they have free time, but in spite of this, they do not help their husbands with their tasks. Gender roles are fulfilled entirely separately and their violation is considered shameful (Sourabh 2007). Interestingly, the situation is the other way round in the villages of Khairpur where women not assisting their husbands is considered disgraceful. Women's support of their husbands is socially favoured and encouraged; therefore they do not miss any opportunity to give their husbands a hand. For example, if looking after cattle is the responsibility of a husband, his wife will also feed and milk the cattle whenever required, but on the other hand, the husband would never assist her because men assisting women is considered shameful. This assistance can be discussed between the husband and wife; if the husband is busy or unable to carry it out due to some other business, the wife would do it on his behalf. The wife may also undertake it voluntarily as in the account of 22-year-old Shah Bibi who enjoyed feeding and looking after the cattle with her husband.

The consequences of this gendered division of labour are unfavourable for women; their workload increases substantially and they hardly have any free time. On the other hand, men benefit from this as their workload decreases and most of the time women do the work on their behalf.

Although the gendered division of labour in the villages of Khairpur is exhausting for young married women, they do strategize to find some support within the household. This support does not come from the mother-in-law or husband's sister, but from the sister-in-law – another married woman in the family. The marriage of the husband's younger brother eases the pressure of household work of the eldest daughter-in-law who carries the main responsibilities of household tasks, but who now has another married woman with whom to share this burden. The new wife who enters the family has to do all the tasks that the elder daughter-in-law does, but since there are two married women in the family now, the burden of the household is divided between them. This load is further reduced with the marriage of the third and fourth brother-in-law, and all married women can now share household responsibilities among them; the more the daughters-in-law are in the family, the less the workload for individual women. It is now up to the married women to decide how they want to carry out household chores. They may decide to do them collectively or assign

different tasks to each woman according to each other's convenience; if one daughter-in-law is busy with the childcare in the morning, another can take responsibility for the breakfast or vice versa. This substantially reduces the burden of unlimited tasks for an individual woman. For example, 25-year-old Sakina, who also had sisters-in-law, told me: 'Duties of house chores are divided among the daughters-in-law in the family. I cook food, wash dishes and look after guests. I do not have any other responsibility'.

This also helps women in several ways; for example, a married woman may request the support of another married woman in time of need. If the woman cannot do any task for any reason, she does not tell this to her mother-in-law whom this might offend. The woman rather asks her sister-in-law (HBW) to perform the task on her behalf. The sister-in-law is well aware of the married woman's situation and is always ready to help her. This collaboration among married women is important for they often need each other's help; the married women have babies who might fall sick anytime and require their mother's care, or women may themselves fall sick and may not be able to work in the kitchen. Therefore, women do not refuse to support each other, in the knowledge that they might need their help reciprocated in a similar situation at any time. 20-year-old Asma, who collaborates with her sister-in-law, told me:

I usually do not delay my work, but when my child is not fine, I am unable to perform my duties on time. In that case, my sister-in-law does my tasks. Similarly, if my sister-in-law is unable to perform her duties for any reason, I perform her duties on her behalf.

Although women's assistance to each other in household tasks is evident in the villages, this mutual support has its limits: it is provided in the form of household tasks and does not cover childcare. The main reason for this is that all married women have their own children to look after, if they provide help in childcare, there is nobody to look after their own children. The time-bound support that comes from the mother-in-law does not reduce the burden of childcare for mothers. Thus, married women do not provide support to each other in childcare and do it exclusively themselves for their own offspring. For women who marry within the same large extended household/compound (*khandaan*), childcare can be supported by the mother and unmarried sisters. However, those cases are rare, and the support is not

permanent because sisters can marry any time and the mother might have her son's children to look after.

There may be absolute mutual support among younger married women, but there is also hierarchy. For example, marriage of the younger brother-in-law provides the elder woman with a person to share the domestic tasks. The elder daughter-in-law oversees the new daughter-in-law and explains the family living arrangements and household work. This hierarchy helps both of the women in different ways. For example, the elder daughter-in-law now has someone to support her; her burden of household tasks reduces substantially after the new daughter-in-law starts doing chores. For the new daughter-in-law, this hierarchy is a way of learning how to manage the household. The new daughter-in-law does not have much experience of having major responsibilities, and she needs someone's support at the beginning of her marriage, the elder daughter-in-law does it well. However, she does not have the authority of the mother-in-law, she has that influence only once she has her own daughter-in-law. The mutual support among women is not always amicable as noted by Jeffery et al. (1989) and Oldenburg (2002); married women often have fierce competition and rivalries between them, the other daughter-in-law may not follow the ideals set for her which affects family's harmony and may result in separation of hearths or household division.

Household Work: How it is Valued

Since the main characteristic in patrilineal kinship is a woman's temporary membership at her natal home, which terminates when she is married, the membership of the new family in which she enters at her marriage is conditional on her proper behaviour; it requires her to serve the entire family and keep them happy. Women are often driven out of their husband's house either for serious or small family matters (Dube 2001). The prevalent belief in rural Sindh is that an ideal daughter-in-law is one who takes on all responsibilities of the household, serves the family members, is good to all, produces sons³⁹ as heirs to her husband and keeps the

³⁹ A common belief in the villages is that if a couple does not have a male child, the woman is responsible. This often encourages the husband to enter into second marriage. Women without sons commonly experience taunting from other family members.

honour of the family intact. This is how a woman is supposed to make her permanent place in her affinal family. Failure in any of the above obligations can weaken her status and self-esteem, and she may be sent back to her natal family. A woman, therefore, needs to please her affinal family members to consolidate her position after marriage. For example, in a focus group discussion Razia said:

A woman makes her position in the family when she wins the hearts of her family members. She can win hearts when she gives love to family members, does their work etc. My sister-in-law (HBW) is newly married, we family members explain to her about house chores to do, this is how she can make her place here.

Keeping this in view, women strategize to enhance their status and self-esteem in their affinal family. They try to find out the best possible options for their adjustment because they know that they strengthen their position by proving themselves useful and indispensable to the family. By increasing family members' dependence on them, they create a situation in which no one could think of living without them. For this, a young woman who had a comparatively comfortable and carefree life in her natal family has to take interest in the heavy responsibilities of household tasks. For example, Maria said in a focus group discussion:

When a young married woman starts taking an interest in her affinal family and takes responsibility of household work, family members start respecting and giving her importance. They listen to her. Women's positions are strengthened this way.

A woman may find herself alone in this struggle as her contact with her natal family reduces after her marriage. However, parents do not disassociate themselves completely from their daughters. The system of consanguineous marriages keeps their daughters in the homes of their blood relatives. Although only three women in my sample were married within the same large extended household/compound (*khandaan*), women usually live very close to their natal family, and sometimes a wall separates their house from their natal house. So the parents may visit their daughters daily and help them if necessary. Parents also give seasonal gifts to their daughters and grandchildren. For example, if a father has a seasonal harvest of wheat or rice, he will send some of it to his married daughter. On Eid, parents buy new clothes for their married daughters and their children and give them some money as well. However, the support from the natal family is occasional and does not ensure a better life for women. In this situation, where support from the natal family does not

provide women with long-term security, they have to struggle to achieve an assured place in the affinal family, which is also conditional upon their submissiveness and unlimited service provision.

Figure 5:⁴⁰ Cattle inside a Household compound along with Large Containers for Storage



Women's responsibilities in the villages of Khairpur are not limited only to household work. They also play an important role in looking after the productive resources of the family. For example, cattle or livestock can be found in every house in the villages. These cattle are an important source of milk for the family's consumption. Although this is men's responsibility and does not fall on women directly, I observed that most of the women were also looking after the cattle or livestock of their household. Some of the women start their day with feeding and milking the cattle while others do it in the evening. It depends when a woman has free time to do this. However, they are not allowed to take the cattle out for grazing because of their controlled mobility; men perform this task.

⁴⁰ All the photographs are my own unless otherwise specified.

As the village life is based on subsistence economy these villagers usually produce what they consume. They only buy a few things that they cannot produce themselves. This saves their money, which they would otherwise spend on buying food items such as wheat or rice.

‘The patrilineage totally appropriates both women’s labour and progeny and renders their work and contribution to production invisible’ (Kandiyoti 1988: 279). All activities of production and consumption cannot be possible without women’s involvement. They facilitate men in doing their work, as has been observed elsewhere (see Delphy and Leonard 1992). Similarly, villagers’ work of production is not possible without women’s assistance. Although women do not directly go to the fields and help their men, they contribute indirectly in terms of preparing them for their labour. Women’s household work is central in maintaining the life of the male family members; a married woman not only provides food for them, she also provides them with services that include washing and ironing their clothes, and sends men to work. She keeps clean clothes ready for them once they are back from work. This is how a woman’s work is crucial for a man’s work. Once a man returns from his job, he would not move for anything that he wants; if he needs water, he would ask his wife, and she would serve him. Similarly, he would ask his wife for everything he wants such as food or clothes. A woman not only sends men to work, she also looks after what they bring back home. For example, at every wheat and rice harvest each household keeps surplus grain for the whole year’s consumption. The landlord often gives grain to his labourers as compensation for their labour, and it fulfils the whole year’s wheat requirement. This grain management is also the responsibility of women; they clean wheat grain, sun-dry it and then store it in a large storage container (see figure 5). A specific amount of wheat is withdrawn from the container when needed and sent to the machine for grinding into flour. Once the flour is ready, women keep it in a small container.

Other work that women do to create consumables for the family includes milking animals, processing the milk and boiling it, making yogurt, butter and *lassi* (drink made with yoghurt). Butter is made with basic equipment and may take around one hour to be formed. Usually a woman puts milk, salt, yogurt and water in a deep pot. A wooden butter churner is fixed with a rope for churning. Both sides of the rope are pulled one after another until butter is formed (see figure 6). It is then removed from

the pot and is served at breakfast or dinner. The drink left in the pot is called *dudh* and used in breakfast; this drink is also used frequently during the summer and is considered effective to counteract hot weather. It is worth noting here that women do this hard work to save men's money, which would otherwise have to be used to buy these dairy products from the market if women did not produce them at home.

Household work is central to women inside the households; it gives them a sense of importance and self-worth more than anything else (Holmeboe and Wandel 1991).

Figure 6: A Woman Making Butter



Courtesy: ©SM Rafiq

Holmeboe and Wandel discuss women's work in a Tanzanian community in which men and women live according to the idealised picture sketched for them by society. Therefore, women are always busy in their work, even in their free time they prefer to do work such as handicraft or more housework. This can be interpreted as the influence of gender ideology prevalent in the community, but men do not have to live up to an ideal and spend more time drinking (for confirming maleness), resting or talking. Similarly, women in the villages of Khairpur live their lives according to the idealised picture specifically sketched for them. A good woman is one who keeps working and serves family members on time. Despite long hours of work, which benefits the whole family, women's work is not valued as much as men's work.

In any particular region or time, any sort of work done by women is socially regarded as unimportant, but when men do the same work, it carries importance. For example, if men do farming and women do wage work, farming is considered more important than wage earning. But if men do wage work and women do farming, it is wage work that counts. Therefore, in any household, the tasks done by men are deemed more important and carry more value (Delphy and Leonard 1992). To Delphy and Leonard, hierarchy and valuation of tasks are not set independently but socially; it is not the nature or usefulness of the task, but the authority of the performer which determines society's valuation of the task. So when wives start doing any task, they do it under the subordinate relationship they have with their husbands. This causes their work to be regarded as having little value and prestige.

In western societies, the family is often considered to be one of the main sites where men exploit women's work (Delphy and Leonard 1992). Delphy and Leonard identify the characteristics and value of housework in western societies where housework is regarded as unproductive because it is done free of cost and without taking account a woman's contribution to the household. The particular contract of marriage assigns a woman to a master (her husband), and a woman performs all of her duties free of charge. If the same woman performs the same tasks for another house, she would charge a reasonable amount for her services. Thus, it is considered unproductive because it is done 'within particular social relations'. Although Delphy and Leonard discuss housework in the context of a capitalist society, this can also be applied to agricultural societies in Pakistan. For example, women are responsible for household management under the contract of marriage, they work for everybody else in the family. Although their work was labour intensive, the sense of doing nothing was apparent among the women because this housework is considered valueless in rural Sindh. For example, if you ask a woman about what she does, she would reply, 'I do not do anything'. Women see themselves as doing nothing, but in reality, men would not be able to do their work and the entire family would not function if women did not engage in household work.

These are paradoxes of the situation; women know that the work brings them esteem within the family, yet they see themselves doing nothing. Women's work is undervalued and they are told that they do nothing; they internalize these ideas, yet at the same time, they know they are working hard, they know that part of the strategy

of survival is to make themselves indispensable. Therefore, they know on one level that their work is important and on another level, that it is meaningless.

Household Work: Who Controls it and Who Benefits

Women's household work is important in the sense that there is more than one beneficiary of this labour; a woman benefits her natal family before her marriage and her affinal family after her marriage. The marriage of a daughter is a loss for a mother because she loses her daughter's assistance in household work. Even when women marry within the same large extended household/compound (*khandaan*) because of the consanguineous marriage system, as with three women in my sample, this does not help a mother. The contract of marriage moves the possession of a woman from her parents to her husband and parents-in-law, which means the mother-in-law would now become the 'owner' of the woman's labour. This loss of a helping hand can make a mother of a married daughter solely responsible for everything unless she has another daughter. Her interest is now to marry her son, if she has one, in order to bring a daughter-in-law whose services she can use into the home. For example, Farzana, who had a married son, told me in a focus group discussion: 'I am happy to become a mother-in-law. I now have someone to look after my home. My responsibilities are shared'.

According to Delphy's (1984) analysis of the appropriation of women's labour, the basis of this exploitation originates from home. To Delphy, men are the sole exploiters of women's labour probably because the French peasant households she studied were not as strictly extended as the households in Sindh. In terms of Delphy's model of appropriation by the men in the household, all family members appropriate women's labour in the villages of Khairpur, especially mothers-in-law who use this labour in various ways. The mother-in-law, however, exercises delegated authority: she does not have authority in her own right, but as the wife of the senior man and mother of the junior man. She, therefore, has a strong position in the household and expects her daughter-in-law to excel in housewifery. She does not wish for physical attributes, all that she wants from the daughter-in-law is for her to have proper house management skills in order to fulfil all responsibilities nicely and

serve all family members the way she (the mother-in-law) would do. The mother-in-law who has gone through the hard life as a servile daughter-in-law is now in a position to reproduce the same appropriation, and to have some relief from a life spent serving the family and raising her children. She now wants comfort and the only person who can replace her is the daughter-in-law. To make this possible, she also looks after her grandchildren, when the younger women are extremely busy, so that the daughter-in-law can do all house chores. Her role becomes more of a supervisor position.

The older women who play the role of supervisors or overseers of the house rarely show tenderness to the younger women, probably because they have also experienced the same situation. Some South Asian women, in this situation, can resist the power that controls their actions (Jeffery and Basu 1996), but the women in the villages of Khairpur, who experience their mother-in-law's control over their lives, tend not to resist. They know that the price of resistance can be very high for them; rather they prefer to strategize and negotiate. In accordance with Kadiyoti's (1988) views, the cyclic nature of power within the household is the basis of women's internalization of patriarchy where women reproduce their own subordination. A woman knows that after going through her hard-working time as household servant, she will eventually gain power, and will have her daughter-in-law to control. Young women therefore prefer to strategize quietly rather than to resist. They prefer to negotiate with the situation, rather than to confront it which might weaken their position. As women have to perform multiple tasks in a day, it is not always possible for them to carry out all of their chores without any delay. They know that delay in any job may infuriate family members, especially their mother-in-law. To address this problem, women often prioritise work over rest. For example, if a woman starts her day at 7 o'clock in the morning and faces any delay in her tasks, she might start waking up two hours earlier in order to perform these tasks on time. These additional one or two hours allow her to manage her tasks. For example, 27-year-old Shahjahan told me:

Only for doing all tasks on time, I always wake up early in the morning. Even if I have to do some *porhyo* (craft work), I finish my household tasks first then start craft work.

The mother-in-law usually remains away from the work site; she only supervises and does not generally provide any assistance. Her support is optional when she has more than one daughter-in-law, but this support becomes essential if there is only one daughter-in-law in the family. She would then provide assistance whenever needed. For example, 18-year-old Asiya, who was the only daughter-in-law, told me, 'If I am not well, my mother-in-law does house chores on my behalf'. The mother-in-law also provides support if the daughter-in-law has to see a doctor or visit her parents. If the married woman is unable to do chores for some reason, it will affect the whole family; no food would be ready, men would go to work hungry and so on. In order to avoid this, the mother-in-law takes responsibility until the daughter-in-law is in a position to resume her duties. A similar attitude could be expected from the mother-in-law when the daughter-in-law is in the process of childbirth; however, my data does not include the details about how help is negotiated during pregnancy and childbirth.

As the gendered division of labour prevalent in South Asia confines women within their homes for household work, the most important characteristic of this situation is that a woman can never control her own labour, nor can she benefit from it (Kabeer 1994). Kabeer (1994) referring Cain et al. (1979) discusses how cultural practices and norms connected with household and kinship create an environment in which women's control over their own labour power is curtailed. Women's obligations in the home are associated with marriage, family and kinship. In contrast, men do not have such limitations; they are free from social constraints such as veiling, and have the freedom to sell their labour power wherever they want to. Specifically in the Pakistani context, the gender ideologies are central to the gendered division of labour. This ideology forms gender identities (women as mothers and wives) and secludes women from the public sphere, limiting their opportunities to acquire skills or education. This creates women's economic dependence on men. Thus, the only way that a woman can survive in this situation is through the housewifery profession (Bari 1998). A woman unequipped with any professional skill has no access to formal economic opportunities. Her only site for survival is the household which is conditional on her marriage and which is socially associated with household work. According to Delphy and Leonard's (1992) analysis, marriage is not just the appropriation of a woman's labour, but the appropriation of her person. It is

particularly strong in the context I studied. A woman cannot have control over her labour because the contract of marriage assigns possession of her to her affinal family who in return are obliged to take responsibility for her maintenance. Those who provide her with economic support are the ones who control her labour and benefit from it. Moreover, this work is normative, and women perform as an obligation. As a result, the work is considered valueless and taken for granted and women continue to do it without any complaint.

Women's domestic labour in western societies cannot be used as bargaining power because this labour is considered valueless⁴¹ by the society (Delphy 1984; Delphy and Leonard 1992). What Delphy and Leonard theorise is very much applicable to rural Sindh except for their argument that domestic labour cannot be used as bargaining power. Women in rural Sindh do use their domestic labour as bargaining power; they perform housework without any delay and complaint knowing that this is how they can make their permanent place in the family. The amount of house chores that a young married woman does in her affinal family ensures her husband's and his family's dependence on her. This encourages the woman to perform all chores without fail and be an ideal daughter-in-law. However, this condition is not one sided; by making family members reliant on them, women ensure family members' support for them in terms of work that women cannot do. For example, provision of food for cooking or purchase of clothes for the wife and children is done by men. The woman cannot go outside alone, so she looks to her husband or the mother-in-law to take her outside. The husband or the mother-in-law cannot refuse her because they know that refusing her would result in her anger, which could in turn delay the house chores or lead to her losing interest in the family.

While women demonstrate considerable strength – by proving themselves superwomen – they also strategize from a position of weakness; a woman is expected to complete her assigned tasks on time, any delay can create a situation where the woman may find herself insecure. For example, quite a few women told me that if they cannot cook the food on time for any reason, they have to face rebukes from the

⁴¹ This labour is taken for granted under the contract of marriage in which women are supposed to serve the family and rear children. In return (not in return for their domestic labour), men only give something for maintenance. What women get in return for their work is not relative to how hard they work, so it is not a direct exchange such as wage exchange. However, whatever men give to women is in their own interest because women are then able to maintain themselves and thus continue to serve men.

mother-in-law or husband. Usually family members try to avoid the delay and may show patience, but quite a few women told that they face their family members' anger and taunting if they cannot make it on time. Usually it is the mother-in-law or husband who is more intolerant towards this delay. For example, 25-year-old Ghazala told me: 'My husband is very angry if there is any delay in cooking the meal. He enquires what I have been doing the whole day that the meal is not ready on time'. This situation is embarrassing for a woman when she is unable to explain the cause of the delay. This can affect her esteem in the family; close relatives might taunt her for being an imperfect daughter-in-law. Another woman, Naila, told me in a focus group discussion, 'I am used to doing chores now, so I do all chores on time. If I do not do these chores on time, what will people say about me, that this woman is lazy and useless?'

Women, therefore, know that if they do not work well, there are negative consequences for them within and outside the family. To avoid such a situation, women strategize from their position of weakness. They set their priorities among the household tasks and try their best to do these jobs, especially cooking before the male family members return from work. For example, 30-year-old Aisha told me:

I am scared of having any delay in house chores; someone from the family might scold me over that. However it has never happened because I wake up early in the morning, offer prayer and start doing my work. So I never make any delay. My husband returns from work at 9 pm and I finish cooking by 7 pm.

Women struggle to perform their tasks to a high level to establish themselves in the family and make everybody like them, they know that consequences of not fulfilling the requirements of their role properly will be devastating for them, therefore, they engage themselves consistently in work. Especially if there is an exchange marriage, a woman's failure to perform tasks properly would trouble another woman's life and might result in a family feud (see Chapter 4). Women's submission to patriarchy helps them adjust with the system; they are acceptable when they become what others want them to be.

Household Work: How it is Done

Women's time spent on household work varies according to their class, family size and the technology available to them. In India, poor women do not have to spend more time on house chores (Mencher 1993). Mencher, illustrating poor women's lives in India, points out that they have fewer clothes to wash and less food to cook as compared to their counterparts in the middle and upper classes. In contrast, the results of my research demonstrate a completely different picture. Women in the villages of Khairpur may have few options and choices for cooking food because of their poverty, but they do not have less food to cook or fewer clothes to wash. The extended family system is prevalent in the villages, these women live in big families where every family member depends on women's services. On an average about 12 people live within a household, including children and the elderly increasing the burden of responsibilities on women. Thus, women have more clothes to wash, more food to cook and more people to look after. Performing all of the required tasks in their households takes about 15-17 hours a day, including craft work.

The availability of technology also determines the amount of time women spend on executing household tasks, particularly in cooking. Provision of technology varies in the villages; the villages that are not well connected to main cities remain deprived of technology such as mains gas and water supply. Villagers, in the absence of mains gas, rely on cow dung or wood for energy. In some villages, I found women using machines for washing clothes while in others women were doing this work manually. The absence of technology makes the tasks more difficult and more time consuming; women then have to use basic equipment for cooking and washing which takes longer than the women who have technology available. Women's efforts in carrying out these tasks are usually taken for granted, as others do not realise how difficult it is for them to execute their assigned tasks, particularly in extreme weather and during power shut down. This matters because a detailed insight into how women do their domestic chores in the absence of technology and services not only provides information about what life is like for these women, but also demonstrates the hardships of life in the villages. It also helps to analyse how unavailability of technology affects poor women by consuming their time and energy. Life is more

arduous; it involves hard physical labour such as scrubbing clothes on the *seel*.⁴² Even if some women have access to technology like gas stoves, it is in rudimentary form; it involves manual work as well.

Most of the villages in the district of Khairpur do not have mains gas. Some of the houses I visited had gas cylinders,⁴³ others were relying on fires made from wood or cow dung. The houses with gas cylinders had gas stoves while houses without gas cylinder had stoves made with mud and straw. These mud stoves could be seen in the courtyard or an open place of the house, because they emit dark smoke, which darkens pots, walls and adjacent areas. Houses with mud stoves therefore had open kitchens surrounded by a small wall, whereas the kitchens with gas stoves were well covered (see figure 7 and 8). Wood used for energy can be collected outside the home whereas cow dung is available at home as almost every household in the villages has cattle. It is women's work to make cow dung into fuel; first they collect cow dung and paste it onto walls. Once the dung has dried, women remove it from walls and keep it in an open place or container and start pasting more cow dung onto walls. This cow dung is used thrice a day as fuel. Since the dark smoke emitted by cow dung or wood fuel darkens pots, women have to polish the big pots and mud stove frequently with clay.

Figure 7: Kitchen with Mud Stove



⁴² A seel is a rectangular slab or flat block of stone.

⁴³ Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) is used in these cylinders and is the main source of energy for cooking in these houses.

In South Asian societies, the provision of fuel varies depending upon the rigidity of the culture. For example, in central Indian villages, women are responsible for collecting wood and processing cow dung (Jacobson 1993). In contrast, women in the villages of Khairpur, who are confined to their households, are excluded from wood-collecting. For the women in central Indian villages, collecting wood is permissible because they also go out to work, but the stigma attached to young women's mobility in the villages of Khairpur plays a central role in excluding them from any work that is done outside the household. Thus, the provision of fuel is done by men on behalf of women when women use wood as fuel. If there is possibility of using cow dung, women do the work. Here too, they are at the forefront of supporting their family; they produce fuel from cow dung and this cow dung can be used as an alternative to wood. This releases men from wood gathering, but increases women's burden of tasks.

Normally, cooking takes four to five hours in a day but cooking with inferior fuel on a mud stove takes even longer (Bagchi 1993). The situation worsens during the summer when women spend most of their time in the kitchen because days are longer and food can quickly go off. The work is made especially difficult as it is usual for the family to have three fresh meals a day, which involves cooking curries, making breads and rice and cold drinks made from yoghurt in order to ameliorate the effects of hot weather. As women work with very basic equipment, the time spent on cooking and dish washing is multiplied.

Like fuel provision, most households in rural areas of developing countries are also deprived of direct access to a water supply. Therefore, the practice of fetching water from wells, rivers or lakes is common in these areas (Ilahi and Grimard 2000). In the villages of Khairpur, people depend on ground water supplied to them by hand pumps. Some of the houses had a hand pump installed in the compound while others relied on the water from the hand pumps installed outside their homes. These hand pumps are the major source of water supply for the villages.

In some of the South Asian regions, including in some parts of Pakistan, water transportation is done by women; they usually go to wells to fetch water in large heavy pots (Mencher 1993). In contrast, women in the villages of Khairpur are spared from this burden as their mobility is controlled, and everything that is

required from outside home for food processing is men's business. For example, water was supplied by men who brought it from hand pumps. All villages had hand pumps to provide ground water; men go and fetch water in buckets. However, in the houses where hand pumps were installed in the compound, women were pumping water and bringing it to the kitchen. This water was used in cooking, washing dishes and cleaning the kitchen (see figure 9). Interestingly, in this case, a technological improvement, which seems to facilitate women's work, increases their work and reduces men's work; if they have hand pump installed in the compound they are responsible for fetching water which is otherwise men's responsibility.

Figure 8: Kitchen with Gas Stove



Like the kitchen site, the hand pump area is also an important place; some of the tasks are executed here and women in the family can socialise and gossip while working. Women in some of the houses I visited were washing the dishes near the hand pump. For this, they first collect all the dirty dishes from the entire house, and check into every room to collect dirty mugs and glasses that men and children often leave after use. They also collect dirty pots and pans from the kitchen and gather them near the hand pump. To them, it is convenient to keep the dishes near the hand pump and wash because they can use as much water as they want. However, some of the women fetch water from the hand pump in a big bucket and take it to the kitchen.

They can use this water for multiple tasks. The task of fetching water and washing dishes is done three times a day.

Figure 9: Hand Pump in a House



Women also use water from the hand pump for washing clothes. The women who have a hand pump installed at home keep all the dirty clothes near the hand pump along with soap and buckets. If there is no hand pump at home, men fetch the water from outside the home. Most of the houses have a stone seel to be used for cleaning clothes, others have small metal tubs. Women spread clothes on the seel, wet it and rub with soap. Since men do rigorous labour, their clothes are very dirty and need intensive cleaning. If dirt is not removed with soft rubbing, women continue rubbing the clothes vigorously until dirt is removed. I observed that only a few of the houses had washing machines, which were very basic. In these cases, women cut the soap and put it in the machine with water and dirty clothes. Once the machine stops, women take all the clothes out and rinse them manually in a small metal tub (see figure 10). Women in the villages usually prefer to use soap rather than detergent powder; they think soap works well especially when rubbed directly on to clothes.

Women's daily routine involves arduous and heavy work, and it is difficult for them to find free time for rest, but still, they manage to engage in additional work for income generation within the home.

Figure 10: Washing Machine with a Metal Tub Beside



Women's Craft Work

Women's paid employment is culturally and religiously regarded as disgraceful in South Asian societies. This situation is more critical in Pakistan and Bangladesh than in India, Sri Lanka or Nepal (Bardhan 1993). The vicious circle of women's exploitation emerges from the gendered division of labour in traditional patriarchal societies where women are considered born for their reproductive and familial roles. Their status as mother and wife is privileged over other roles, and they are socialized and expected to have lower status and high fertility. Thus, a woman is encouraged to remain within the four walls of her home rather than going out to participate in active social life (Hakim and Aziz 1998). As a result, education is considered irrelevant to them, and this ultimately curtails their employment opportunities. The cultural practice of women's seclusion in Pakistan further intensifies the stigma attached to women's employment; women's participation in economic activities is not favoured, and that affects women's ability and willingness to work outside homes (Maqsood 2007).

Female employment in the villages of Khairpur is almost non-existent; the only employed woman I met was my intermediary Gul who was a policewoman. Elsewhere in South Asia, women's employment is stigmatized; this stigmatization can bar them from working, but once they enter into such labour, this stigma is not the main factor leading to their withdrawal from economic activities (Bardhan 1993). Instead, they might withdraw their labour from the public arena once the family's income has improved. South Asian households with lower economic status are generally more flexible with allowing women to work and withdraw it when needed. In addition, an increased demand for labour can expand the labour opportunities for both men and women. This phenomenon was witnessed during the initial stages of agricultural development (Raju 1993). Young women in Pakistan can also be allowed to work in the fields to financially help their families, but when it comes to socializing with their friends or relatives, it is strongly discouraged because it does not benefit the family (Naheed and Iqbal 1998). Thus, to address an economic crisis, households with lower economic status usually have women spending their time on income generating or saving activities. This is more common among uneducated women in economically stagnant regions. Involving women in laborious activities as a response to weak financial status within the family adds another heavy burden to their lives (Bardhan 1993).

In some parts of rural South Asia, women do not experience such stigma against their labour and often work with men in order to counter poverty. For example in central Indian villages, women's participation in work outside of their homes is prominent and necessary. Women assist men in important parts of daily life, from food production to house building. Their work outside the home is fundamental for the family's livelihood and prosperity (Jacobson 1993). In Khairpur, however, a high degree of stigma is attached to women's paid work in the public sphere, therefore, women can assist men only within the boundaries of their households. This does not mean that these women do not care or struggle for their families' well-being. Despite all the restrictions on them and their limited mobility, these women do consider strategies to improve their family's welfare and prosperity.

The likelihood that women will do wage work in Pakistan is associated with their economic status; women from the lower economic class are more likely to participate in economic activities (Naqvi and Shahnaz 2002). However, women in rural areas of

Pakistan differ from each other; they are less homogeneous in terms of caste, class and locations and therefore they have different resources, facilities and livelihood opportunities (Chaudhry 2010). Generally, women in Punjab and Sindh are considered to have more relaxed mobility than in other provinces (Gazdar 2008). In contrast, women in the villages of Khairpur are different from their counterparts in other regions of Sindh province; these women have strictly controlled mobility which curtails formal employment opportunities for them. The majority of people living in the villages are poor and rely on wage labour. Quite a few of the young men are jobless and live on their father's or brother's support. This leads women to consider options for them to have a better life and to bring some income to the family. Since these women cannot go out and work in the fields with men, they must find opportunities inside their homes. The majority of the women I interviewed were involved in craft work. Usually they make products from date palm leaves, quilts and sheets for sleeping, they also sew clothes. This includes clothes for their children and those they sew to sell on.

Figure 11: A Young Woman Making Mats from Date Palm Leaves.⁴⁴

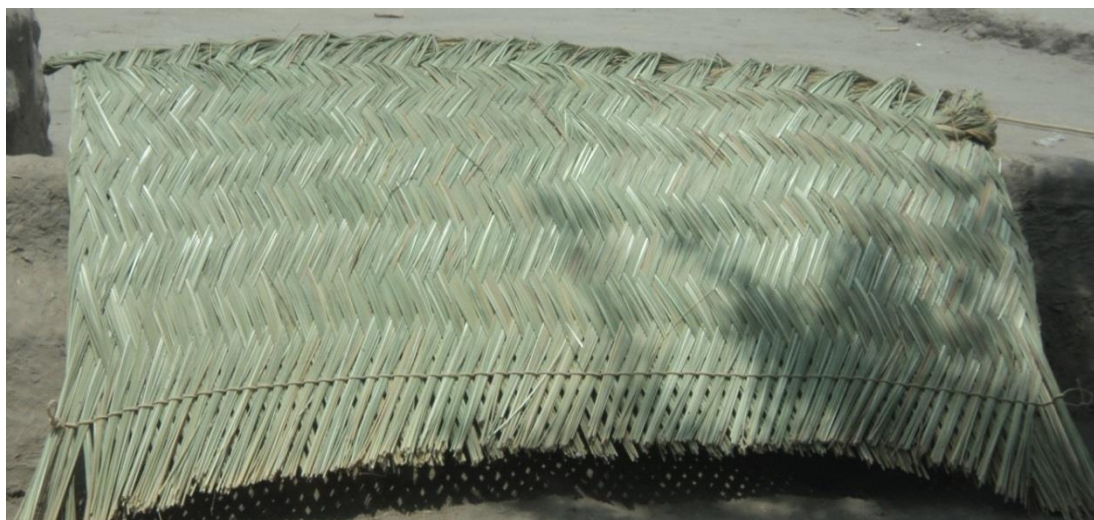


⁴⁴ These leaves are very sharp and can cut skin but women were making these mats using their bare hands.

The majority of women in the villages do craft work, which can either be used in the household or for exchange. The exchange takes two forms: barter within the village or selling goods for a cash income. The handicraft work can be used as a way of saving the family's income by making things for common household use. For example, women often make mats that are used for sitting on the floor as well as drying dates. This work saves family members' income, which otherwise would be spent to buy these mats from the market.

One of the purposes of this work is to barter with other women. For example, if A purchases some quilts from B on credit, B would not pay for the clothes that A sews for her. For example, 20-year-old Asma told me: 'I sew clothes and make *rillis* (sheets for sleeping). I sometimes sell them or sometime exchange them as barter. If a woman has done something for me, I would sew her clothes free of cost'. This benefits both of them; they not only use each other's services for free but also support one another.

Figure 12: The Mat is Ready to Use



The crafts that women make can also be sold for cash, this is the only way that women can earn some income, given that they are barred from working outside their homes. At the time when I was visiting the villages, women were busy making products from date palm leaves. Khairpur is famous for the date palm. Large industries for date processing and export can be found in the district. These industries give employment not only to the locals but to men from other districts, who come to work here. A large number of men are employed in these industries, but only a small number of women, and these are the older ones. These older women can go out and

work in these date palm farms with their family members. Young married women, however, cannot carry out any work outside the home, they participate in the date palm business indirectly. Date palms can be found near every house, women utilize date palm leaves in different ways to earn their living. Famous handicrafts from date palm leaves include hand fans, *pindi* (plates), *pindo* (pots for keeping bread) and mats for sitting on the floor. These mats are also used to dry dates (see figures 11 and 12). Since there is no industry for making these handicrafts, all of these things are made by women at home. This work not only involves young married women but also older women and young girls.

Figure 13: Raw Dates are Spread on Mats



Poor women of developing countries do not produce things according to their choice. Their production is rather associated with the purchasing power of buyers; they produce what the buyer can buy (Mies 1998). In the villages of Khairpur, women adopt similar a strategy: they produce what they think can be sold to help them earn money. For example, I did not find many women involved in embroidery work other than for themselves and their families. While it could potentially bring them good money in other markets, this work is expensive and majority of people in the villages are poor, so it is hard to sell this product. In addition, every other woman in the villages knows embroidery. The things that have importance and are in demand in the villages are baskets, hand fans, and mats, particularly for the date palm industry (see figure 11, 12 and 13). Women also make hand fans with date palm leaves as they are in demand to counter heat during long hours of power break down. Thus,

women make things that are affordable in the local community, and that could be sold and bring them some money.

Picture 14: Dates under Processing



Women in different parts of South Asia are paid less in comparison to their male counterparts. For example in India where women are involved in rice cultivation, difference in payment is maintained between men and women; women are paid less than men because they are considered less productive (Mencher 1993). Although women in the villages of Khairpur are not involved in formal labour with men, they do suffer from the phenomenon of low payment for their products which is due to the lack of resources and market opportunities. There are no markets in the villages where women's products can be sold. Their mobility is constrained by the local culture and these women cannot travel to the markets that are located outside their villages. They, therefore, have to rely on the middleman who buys their products and sells them in the markets. Therefore, the products that women make for a living are bought by a middleman who visits the women once a week and purchases hand fans, baskets, plates and sheets at very low rates, and takes them to local markets of nearby cities. Women have to sell these handicrafts to the middleman for a low price because they do not have any other option than being exploited by him; he controls the situation. For example, it takes one hour to make a *pindi* (plate), the middleman purchases a *pindi* for 15 rupees (approximately 10 pence), and these *pindis* are sold for 25-30 rupees in markets. That means the middleman profits considerably from

women's production. The women were well aware of the price at which their products were sold in the markets, but they were helpless in this regard. If the middleman did not buy their products, they would have no way to sell them.

As with household labour where men and women strictly follow their gender specified tasks, men do not support women in their craft work either. Even if a man is jobless, he will sit idle, but will not provide any assistance to his wife in craft or household work. On the contrary, women are not exempted from house chores if they have to do craft work; they have to manage their time so that their household tasks can be done punctually. Despite the fact that women need some free time for their craft work, they are not spared from the responsibilities of household management.

According to Delphy (1984), women's labour has not freed them from domestic work in European societies; it has increased their workload instead. Women, despite engaging in paid labour, are not free from the responsibilities of their household work and child rearing. Things have changed in Europe, but what Delphy had pointed out three decades ago is still applicable in South Asian societies. According to Dutt and Sil (2014), middle-class household activities in India still have great gender disparity; even if middle-class women are engaged in formal or informal labour, their household work is not less than that of full time housewives. Traditional gender roles have not witnessed transition in India and women's involvement in income generating activities in the public sphere brings more responsibilities.

Although the village women in Khairpur are not involved in formal employment, which requires freer mobility, they work from home. This craft work does not free them from their household tasks, and in this situation, where these women have to carry out both, the craft and household work simultaneously, they have to negotiate with the situation to create some extra space for their craft work. In this context, they first of all manage their time; they find afternoons suitable for this work as they have a break from household work. They finish cooking lunch by noon (*manjhand*) and cooking for dinner starts in the late afternoon (*ti-pehri*); other family members usually take a rest during the afternoon (*ba-pehri*), so women between *ba-pehri* to *ti-pehri* have some free time.⁴⁵ Instead of resting, women utilise this period for their

⁴⁵ A typical day starts with *asur* (sunrise), followed by *subhu* (morning), *manjhand* (noon), *ba-pehri* (afternoon), *ti-pehri* (late afternoon), *somahni* (sunset) ending in *saanjhi* (night).

craft work. This not only curtails their chances of comfort and rest, but also doubles their workload. This work is helpful to the women in several ways, but the return on this labour is not what these women deserve.

Women's craft work helps their families in different ways; they usually produce things for family members' use and by doing so they contribute to the family's savings because the money saved might otherwise be spent on paying for the items of use. If women did not make quilts and mats, men would have to purchase them from the market. If women did not sew clothes for their family members, they would have to pay for this service; this would cost them a great amount. This is how these women help their families with income saving activities. Moreover, the money that women earn from their craft work plays a vital role in maintaining the essential requirements of everyday life; this is spent on their homes, especially on their children. For example, quite a few women in my sample spent this on their children's clothing and food, a few of them used it for their own clothes and healthcare, while others gave this money to their husbands whenever needed. Women also shared their income with their parents-in-law; for example, 20-year-old Ruqaiya, who would often give money to her mother-in-law, told me: 'Whatever I earn I spend it at my home. I give some of the money to my mother-in-law as well because she is my and my husband's responsibility'.

Women's income from handicraft work is also central for their families' well-being. As quite a few men in the villages did not have any sort of job, they were unable to support the family. In that case, a woman's income matters a great deal to the family. Since the extended family system is prevalent in the villages, provision of food and shelter is mainly the responsibility of the father and the elder brother, younger men also contribute if they earn. So, if a man does not earn anything, he relies completely on his father and eldest brother who provide him and his family with food and shelter. Or even if the man has a job, he will not earn enough to support his family except for by providing them with food. Apart from food and shelter, there are other everyday needs, such as clothing, healthcare and so on which can be covered by women's income. This work increases a woman's value in the family especially when her husband does not earn anything; in that case, she does not have to look to others for her and her children's needs. Although these women are not forced to this labour, they know that if they do not work for a living, they will have to compromise

their children's well-being. This encourages them to do some craft work. 18-year-old Asiya was in this situation. She told me:

I make *pindis* and earn from this work. I buy clothes, shoes etc. with the money I earn from this work. You know my husband does not do anything; it is me who earns.

Women's craft work can also support the family in time of crisis; a woman generates surplus income from her labour, which can be used in case of emergency or need. In a situation where it is hard to make ends meet, some men may depend upon women's financial assistance. Another woman, 30-year-old Basheeran, would earn from making *rillis* and other handicrafts and that money was often taken by her husband in times of need. She added: 'Managing household finances is my husband's responsibility, he even takes money from me whenever he runs out of his money'.

Women's craft work makes them an indispensable part of the family without whom the family may face financial problems. Some women may have fewer house chores to undertake because of their craft work, which brings income to the family, but the majority of them are not exempted from their household responsibilities. This work does not increase women's autonomy within their households. Jejeebhoy and Sathar (2001) note that women working for a wage in India and Pakistan do not have a choice as to whether or not they will work, and they lack control over their income. Although women in the villages of Khairpur are not allowed to work outside their homes, the handicraft work that these women do from home is not forced. Even if the family is in an economic crisis, they would hesitate to allow women to work outside the home, seeing this, women themselves prefer to use their skills as income saving/earning work. Some of the women seem to be able to control this income and spend it on their or their own children's clothes or other needs as in the case of 18-year-old Asiya, while others give this money to their husbands. This suggests that husbands can also appropriate women's income. In any case, this income is used for the family as a whole; but even if women work from home and contribute to the family's welfare, this labour does not win them autonomy in a patriarchal system.

Conclusion

The patrilocal household structures are greatly influenced by the patrilineal culture in the villages of Khairpur. The notion of men as breadwinners and women as service

providers results in strict gendered division of labour; this not only confines women within their households but also burdens them with unlimited domestic chores. The gendered division of labour also exempts men from the responsibilities they can easily do, such as childcare and cattle rearing. Hence women find themselves under the pressures of multiple tasks. The in-laws, especially the mother-in-law, might provide childcare support, but that too is limited and is provided to facilitate women's household work. Due to the patrilocal extended family system, household size is usually large (median 11.5 individuals per household in my sample) which further increases women's workload, especially when there is only one daughter-in-law in the home. The absence of technology and services makes the situation more difficult for women, as they have to do all of their tasks manually because of the unavailability of water and gas supplies. However, despite the multiple burdens of house chores, women do strategize to enhance their status within their homes. In order to make them secure, women use their skills and services to increase their family members' dependence on them thereby making themselves indispensable to the family. Women's craft work, which they do for the benefit of their family, is also a part of this strategy. Women's mutual support is central in carrying out all household tasks as well as craft work so that they manage everything without fail.

Although women's labour inside the household is appropriated by all, the mother-in-law's structural location is important in this appropriation. The cycle of power – that helps the older woman (the mother-in-law) to reproduce the system of her control over the younger woman (the daughter-in-law) – runs through the household. The mother-in-law does not show a soft attitude to her daughter-in-law and makes her live the way the mother-in-law had lived at that time of her life. However, despite resisting this attitude, women strategize and negotiate with this situation and avoid quarrels, which might lower their standing in the family. In accordance with Kandiyoti's (1988) theory of bargaining, women do negotiate to survive under patriarchy until they achieve a delegated position of authority as mothers-in-law. This is also evident in their role and position in the distribution of power within the family, which I discuss in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Household Power Structure and Women's Negotiation with Patriarchy

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the hierarchical power relations within the extended family system in the villages of Khairpur, which place the most senior man at the top, and young women at the bottom, I explore how women negotiate and strategize to articulate their interests. In analysing this situation, I use Lukes' (1974, 2005) three-dimensional theory of power to investigate how power over women affects their lives and what they do that they would not have done if the power was not exercised. I start with the family's political structure and women's participation in this setting; I demonstrate that the patriarch has power over his subjects and his domination is so unquestioned that he enjoys authority and control in the household. In relation to this, I discuss decision-making as one of the indices of power, and look into women's participation in this process in order to analyse how they strategize to participate in decisions and, if they are excluded, how they manage to have their say. I argue that the one who has power over is the one who controls and affects others. Others may exercise power in a certain capacity, but since they do not have the overarching power that dominates decision-making, their limited control does not disrupt the family hierarchy. In addition to this, I take account of who controls household finances. I argue that controlling household finances facilitates the patriarch's domination of the family and maintains the status quo; even if he transfers finances to the eldest son or wife, it does not enhance their control over decision-making as compared to the most senior man in the family. Finally, I look at constraints on women's mobility and explain how age, marital and economic status affect restrictions on women's freedom of movement.

Power: A Theoretical Framework

The word ‘power’ can have different meanings. It is a dispositional concept related to when and how it is used (Helliwell and Hindess 1999; Lukes 2005). It is, therefore, a contested term, and there is always disagreement on its definition. In my research setting, I see power as the capacity to exercise control over others – power over. The power I deal with is hierarchical, where the person at the top enjoys immense power over all who are junior to him. In this context, I find Lukes’ theory useful because he defines power as the ability to control other people, which is what I am concerned with, because I am dealing with a situation where there is a very obvious hierarchy; senior men exercise control over junior men, men dominate women, and senior women influence junior women. Lukes focuses on power as the ability to get other people to do what they otherwise would not do, i.e. ‘A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B’s interests’ (2005:37). Lukes states that:

Power is explicitly relational and asymmetrical: to have power is to have power over another or others. (2005: 73)

According to Lukes (1974, 2005), power is a capacity to bring change and/or to resist it. He talks about power over; the power of dominance; to him, ‘the power of the powerful consists in their being capable of and responsible for affecting (negatively or positively) the (subjective and/objective) interests of others’ (2005: 68). So power as domination is a capacity to oppress others and inhibit them from living a life of their own choice. For example, A has power over B, A can make B do something that B would not otherwise do, which means B would have acted differently if A did not have power over B (Lukes 1974, 2005).

Lukes (1974, 2005) distinguishes three different dimensions of power:⁴⁶ the one-dimensional view of power involves whose decisions prevail in a situation of conflict. It focusses on direct power which is highly visible and can be seen in decision-making. The two-dimensional view applies to a situation where there is no conflict, or conflicts are kept off the agenda. This approach investigates the latent

⁴⁶ Lukes recognizes the first and the second dimension of power, but to him the most effective form is the third one in which power is hidden. This concealed power not only manipulates a group’s desires and wishes but also shapes their lives.

power that involves both decisions and non-decisions; the second dimension is less clear as a result of non-decisions. According to Helliwell and Hindess (1999: 76) this dimension of power ‘operates behind the scenes so as to exclude certain interests from direct public conflict in the first place’. The three-dimensional view of power focuses on power in the least observable form: the power operating when conflicts never happen at all because the powerless are prevented from recognizing their interests. So to Lukes, the real power is that which is less obvious and revealed, which may harm the powerless whether or not they are aware that they are being harmed.⁴⁷

Lukes talks about the subtle way in which power works. He seeks to uncover the process that authorizes and facilitates A to exercise power (Komter 1989). In this context, I analyse all three dimensions of power in the setting where I am working. I explore the power mechanisms through which the patriarch exercises his power over his subjects. What is done when his power is exercised, what does he make his subjects do and how do his subjects (women) manage to act autonomously. Exploring the answers to all these questions reveals the operation of power in very obvious and visible but also hidden forms.

Lukes’ theory of power has been applied to different contexts such as hidden power in marital relationships (Komter 1989). Like Komter, I also look at power in the private domain of the family, but unlike her I focus on decision-making because this is where power is most visibly exercised, and this is where the most opportunity for women to strategize in some way to negotiate with it possibly exists. However, the other two levels are almost impossible to challenge, for latent and hidden power is difficult to see in gender relations. It is very hard to challenge gender relations, and if a person does not realise how things are working against their interests, they cannot challenge or negotiate with the powerful. Thus, women are more likely to be capable of strategizing around decision-making and try to find indirect and subtle ways to influence men’s decisions.

⁴⁷ I have not drawn on Foucault because he conceptualizes power as dispersed and diffused. It is deployed from particular points but nobody possesses it. I deal with power as domination and Foucault is not much concerned with this. However, Foucault might have some relevance in this situation; as Lukes points out, Foucault-inspired works ‘begin to explore subtle forms of the securing of willing compliance, in which people are enlisted into wider patterns of normative control, often acting as their own ‘overseers’’ [2005: 106]. Women in the often act as their own overseers, in other words, they monitor their own conduct to avoid annoying those who have power over them and do not challenge the system.

Lukes, working on western societies, is concerned with power that is hidden, but in the context of the villages I look at, power is evident and overt and can be observed in the family's decision-making. Although I deal with a patriarchy in which the patriarch has power over his subjects, women can influence their decisions through others who fit into the hierarchical power structure below the patriarch. This, in many ways, underlines patriarchal power, but it does show that even in restricted political situations women find ways to articulate their demands, though within limits.

Decision-Making within the Household

In a patriarchal society like Pakistan, women experience tight controls in every sphere of their lives; their participation in family's decisions, their economic independence and mobility are subject to patriarchal authority. Different tools such as *purdah* (seclusion and veiling) and violence are used to control their lives, excluding them from the public sphere and restricting them to the private domain. However, in the private sphere, they are also given limited autonomy; they are only included in routine family decisions such as cooking and food purchase, but excluded from the family's major power distribution (Bari 1998; Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001).

The public/private divide has gained much attention in feminist debate (Sadiqi and Ennaji 2006). These spheres are associated with male and female worlds respectively, differentiating their roles in social life. The domestic domain refers to the spaces organized around mothers and their children while the public sphere is the domain where wider social life and communication take place. In simple words, the private sphere is associated with the business inside the household and the public sphere is linked to the affairs conducted outside it (Rosaldo 1974; Imray and Middleton 1983; Sadiqi and Ennaji 2006). In the communities I was working with, the public sphere was the world outside the home such as streets, markets and fields. Thus, it was men's domain and the private sphere was the household, women's domain. This public private dichotomy not only shapes gender identities but also facilitates uneven power allocation between the sexes (Khan 2006). The private sphere is the domain of the powerless, such as women and children, and the public sphere is the domain of the powerful, i.e. men. Women can exercise some power in

their private spaces from their various positions as mothers, wives or sisters; as a wife she might control her private sphere, as a mother she might control her matrifocal group, but they do not have complete freedom to exercise that power because it is subject to men's approval. This public and private division has its impacts on family power relations. For example in India, men's active involvement in crucial decision-making is encouraged because they are associated with the public sphere, and, therefore, they are considered wiser and more capable of making decisions. Women are associated with the private sphere, thus they are more capable of making general domestic decisions (Pant 2000). Hence men's control over all matters is facilitated by excluding women from the public sphere and segregating them in households (the private sphere), even if women may have access to the public sphere, they cannot move freely within it as men do (Saeed 2012).

The hierarchical power distribution in the extended family households in the villages of Khairpur gives the most senior man top position followed by other men in line. Due to his status as the head of the family, he exercises authority over everybody else. As in other areas of rural Pakistan, the public/private dichotomy is strictly maintained in the villages of Khairpur and impacts on gender relations. Women are segregated in the private domain, but major affairs of that domain are also controlled by men who make all decisions for themselves as well as for everyone else in the family. Women are usually not included in this decision-making and are expected to accept what men decide, for example 26-year-old Amina told me: 'Usually men decide about everything, women do not participate and accept what they (men) decide'.

The patriarch has the final say over all decisions for his family. Sometimes he may even make decisions on his own without consulting anyone, as 24-year-old Shahjahan, whose father-in-law was the senior man in the family, told me: 'My father-in-law is the head of the family, he makes almost all decisions'. Although the senior man may involve his sons while making a decision, as my participants told me, or may consult with them before taking any final decision, he is the ultimate authority and his sons rarely oppose him. This, according to Lukes (2005), represents the second and third dimension of power: the ability to seek consent by restricting the choices of subjects and their access to decision-making. The father-in-law has so much power that his subjects rarely oppose him. Thus, he achieves their compliance

regarding the decisions he makes, and does not have to consistently demonstrate his power to be able to make decisions. His seniority in the family entitles him to respect and obedience and his subjects are expected to support his decisions without resistance; in other words he can make his subjects do what they might not do otherwise. Although my data does not have evidence of how the patriarch's authority might be challenged, we should not assume that the father or his eldest son enjoys unlimited power without ever being opposed; literature on South Asia suggests that conflicts among men in the family do occur and often result in separation of hearths (See Chapter 5 and 7). My data reflect clear divisions in the households where senior men were either living separately from their brothers or had a different hearth, though I did not ascertain why, how and when this split in the family happened.

This seniority is not confined to the father-in-law only. In some families where the grandfather is still alive, he also exercises his authority because he is the most senior man in the family and has many powerful men under him such as the father-in-law and grandsons. The father-in-law would then ask for his father's permission to make decisions in important affairs, and decides in consultation with other men junior to him. For example, 20-year-old Fouzia whose father-in-law's father was still alive told me: 'The grandfather of my husband is the head of the family. He consults with my father-in-law about everything and my father-in-law consults with his sons. This is how decisions are made in my family'. However, this may not be the case in most of the families because elderly people often die by the time their grandchildren are grown up.⁴⁸ His son (the father-in-law) then becomes the boss of the house.

Although the patriarch controls decision-making, consultation in decisions with sons is central in every household because sons are the next authority after the father. They replace the father after his death and continue the lineage, then exercising the same authority as their father had. The eldest son is next in line because he is the second senior man in the hierarchy. Soon after the father's death or retirement, the responsibility for and authority over the household falls on his eldest son. Therefore, fathers keep their eldest sons with them and train them for their future role. This also helps the father to exercise his latent power and seek automatic consent from his sons. If a father is very old and unable to look after the family's affairs, he will tell

⁴⁸ Male life expectancy at birth in Pakistan is 64.9 years (Economic Survey of Pakistan 2013-14).

his eldest son that he is no longer able to manage the household, and ask him to formally take over this responsibility, or if the father is too busy to look after his family, he will hand over his family responsibilities to his eldest son. For example, 15-year-old Parveen's father-in-law had two wives; he lived with the second wife and transferred his responsibilities for the first family to his eldest son, Parveen's husband. This gave the son authority of the entire household long before his father died. The delegated authority from one patriarch to another in waiting enabled the eldest son to exercise his power over the entire family independently ahead of the actual time of succession. He then looked after everything that his father was supposed to; he made purchases and managed household finances. His delegated authority was apparent enough to prevent those junior to him from intervening in the decisions he made. However, the eldest son does not have absolute authority as long as his father is alive; he has to consult his father about all major decisions and purchases. In this situation, Parveen's husband would wait until the father was available and then they both made a decision; the son could not exercise all the powers of the patriarch while the patriarch was still alive.

Although the father-in-law's age or absence can provide his eldest son with all the authority of his father, if he is still alive, he is still an important part of the family's decision-making. His son consults him before taking any decision and respects his opinion. It is interesting to note that the father-in-law and son's consultation with each other is reciprocal. As the father-in-law cannot think of making any decision without consulting his son, the son can never make any decision without consultation with and approval of his father. In the majority of the houses where the eldest sons have authority like that of their fathers, they do not tend to exercise that authority on their own. They always consult with their fathers and execute decisions with their approval.

The eldest son's authority comes into action soon after his father's death. For example, Majida told me in a focus group discussion: 'A father-in-law is the head of the family; he makes all decisions. When he dies, the turban⁴⁹ is shifted to his eldest son who then takes all of the responsibilities and authority of his father'. The

⁴⁹ On the death of a senior man, a turban is tied on his eldest son. This is a ritual and done in a formal ceremony on the third day of the man's death when mourning ends. Tying a turban on the eldest son's head is a tradition through which a father's authority is formally shifted to his son.

decision that who will take the place of the father is off the agenda as it is decided automatically. Thus, keeping the sons in decision-making not only serves the purpose of training them for their future roles, but it also ensures the continuity of patriarchal power. The eldest son is groomed for the role of patriarch. He is ready to step into the position of authority as soon as his father dies. This latent power structure also prevents chances of any quarrel among the sons as there is a very clear line of succession. There is no contest for power amongst the sons. This transfer of power makes the patriarchal structure quite rigid; as an old man dies the next man in line takes over so that there is never a power vacuum.⁵⁰

In accordance with Lukes' second dimension of power, sons are not free to discuss and decide about the successor among themselves; that is already decided to prevent them from taking any action on this matter. Social norms and prevalent social rules in any given society facilitate certain decision-making without the direct exercise of power. Lukes' second dimension of power – non-decision-making or decisions being off the agenda – can often be seen in this context. For example, the marriage decision-making in most of the South Asia provides parents with the authority to choose their children's life partner. Thus, the question of who will make the decision is not on the agenda for discussion. These outcomes confirm the latent exercise of power as non-decision-making (Kabeer 1999).

The death of a patriarch transfers all his powers to his eldest son who may now make major decisions for the family, but often in consultation with his mother and younger brothers. For example, 20-year-old Najma, whose father-in-law had died two years previously told me: 'My father-in-law died two years ago. Now my brother-in-law, who is the eldest son, is head of the family. He makes all decisions in consultation with his younger brother (my husband)'. This gives immense power and authority to the eldest son over the family members; he can make decisions about everybody's life including those regarding education and marriage. For women like Najma, thinking about options for her own or her children's future is useless because her eldest brother-in-law decides everything. The three dimensions of power i.e. obvious, latent and hidden are often evident in this kind of situation. The head of the family has such naked power that he can make decisions about anybody's life without any

⁵⁰ This is a usual practice that when a father dies, his eldest son takes his place. If a man has no son, his brother will replace him in that case.

apparent opposition, his position as the head of the family is visible to all, preventing them from resisting his decisions and actions. On the other hand, the subjects are so used to his authority that they themselves facilitate him by providing their compliance where certain decisions are automatically made. The situation becomes so taken for granted that women often do not imagine that this life could be any other way. According to Lukes (1974),

‘.. is it not the supreme and most insidious exercise of power to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions, and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural and unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial?’ [24]

Some women may have a degree of power or influence; in South Asian households, power is not only unevenly distributed between men and women, but between the senior woman – the female patriarch – and junior women. The senior woman has more power because a woman’s decision-making capacity improves prominently with age, giving her authority over all other women who are junior to her (Basu 1996). In the villages of Khairpur, young women’s participation in this process depends on their household arrangement; some women can sometimes be found participating in some decisions within their household such as purchasing food items for the household while others told me that they do not have any say even over *nandha kam* (the smallest matters) of what to cook and when to do laundry. Their participation in family decision-making is influenced by a number of factors; such as the relationship with the husband, status of the husband, presence of mothers-in-law or fathers-in-law in the family, life cycle situation and status of being a new or an established daughter-in-law. According to Sathar and Kazi (2000), women’s participation in decisions regarding these small matters inside the household in rural areas is apparent as compared to the decisions regarding major purchases or involving money. In her study of Indian women, Pant (2000) found women in a similar situation where the majority of them were actively participating in general household matters, but their participation in crucial decision-making relating to household asset management was negligible. This power imbalance, according to Khan and Hussain (2008), is an integral part of socio-cultural norms which support male power over women in all spheres. Women, therefore, are trained to accept this power imbalance from a very young age where their brothers are superior to them.

A mother-in-law in the villages of Khairpur enjoys a similar position to her other rural South Asian counterparts; the status of wife of a senior man and mother of a junior man enables her to exercise control over the lives of other married women in the family. She controls their lives with the authority assigned to her by the husband and sons making her the head of all the women in the household. In some families, the mother-in-law is next to her husband in authority, and the father-in-law makes all decisions pertaining to domestic matters in consultation with her. In families where the eldest son is the head of the family, he gives much importance to his mother and always takes her advice before making any decision. In this context, a mother-in-law can be called a female patriarch, who does not make big decisions for the family, but maintains and exercises the patriarchal decision-making authority inside the household, particularly concerning the married women's lives. The male patriarch may not want to be bothered with trivial family affairs, or he may himself avoid communicating with junior women, he then transfers some of his authority to the senior woman. The delegated authority that a senior woman gains from the senior man enables her to exercise power over junior women. For example, 18-year-old Asiya told me:

My father-in-law makes all decisions, but if there is anything particularly regarding women then my mother-in-law makes decisions. For example, if there is any marriage ceremony among the relatives, my mother-in-law decides who should attend that.

Male power is not only limited to making or vetoing decisions, it also works through channelling the decision-making in ways that maintain male control over certain areas. For example, men exercise control over land, property and other assets; women may strategize to have control over some expenditure, but control over valuable and important things is non-negotiable (Pant 2000). In the context of Lukes' second dimension of power, women's issues are kept off the agenda because men do not even consider women making decisions or participating in any decision; power sharing to them is unacceptable. Men keep the power of major decisions-making to themselves to maintain the status quo, while women are granted the autonomy to make choices about trivial affairs, but that too is channelled through the most senior woman in the household. For example, my participants told me that petty affairs like what to cook, who will attend a marriage ceremony and so on are decided by the mother-in-law as the patriarch does not bother with these matters. If he gives some

authority to the female patriarch, it is only because those matters pertaining to household management do not challenge or threaten his male power, but by no means can women be part of major power distribution even in matters relevant to them.

Women in Sindh and Punjab usually do not participate in decision-making, but there is slight evidence of women's participation in collective decisions (Chaudhry 2010). Chaudhry believes that the everyday domain provides examples of how women negotiate with patriarchy in their everyday lives. This negotiation begins from their inner lives and is often expressed as a desire or dream. This suggests that women cannot absolutely be prevented from imagining raising their voice. Similarly, women in the villages of Khairpur do strategize to have their say in family's decision-making processes. Although their participation may be at a minimal level or may not be visible at all, it does not mean that they are completely excluded from the decision-making process. At a very low level and with minimum opportunity, they do strategize to find ways to have their say in family matters.

Autonomy, in simple words, refers to a person's decision-making ability regarding a specific matter. It also implies the right to make a choice and exercise that choice. Female autonomy does not mean unimportant choices, such as which groceries to buy. It is very much related to decision-making on matters that affect women's lives (Basu 1996). The autonomy of a woman operates at different levels and there are a few factors strongly associated with women's autonomy in Pakistan, such as age, marital duration, number of sons, nuclear family residence, and dowry. Age is positively associated with a woman's autonomy; older women enjoy more mobility, access to resources and participation in decision-making (Sathar and Kazi 2000; Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001).

In a hierarchical power structure where senior men are at the top and junior men are at the bottom, women are even lower down. A young married woman enters her affinal family only with the status of a daughter-in-law: a person with no maturity, strength or power. On the one hand, she sees her mother-in-law exercising considerable control and power, and on the other hand she sees women like herself without any autonomy. She then has to struggle to enhance her status. As a young woman, she may have autonomy to choose the order of her tasks; this autonomy is

operated from the bottom. With the passage of time and once she is older and has exercised her confined autonomy to choose, she would then try to establish herself in order to be in a better position to make decisions. It is like a ladder on which she has to start her journey from the bottom. Therefore, in the beginning of her married life she keeps away from decision-making and quietly observes the household arrangement. After a while she may start to have her say using different strategies (see Chapter 7).

Women in Pakistan are often said to be excluded from the decision-making process; for example, Chaudhry (2010) finds that Pakistani women have minimal decision-making opportunities. I argue that women do strategize to have their say in the family's decision-making process, but since this participation is indirect rather than direct, it is invisible. For example, 20-year-old Tasleem, who would often negotiate with male dominance, told me: 'Men in my family make all decisions; my father-in-law is head of them. Whatever I have to say I tell that to my husband, and he tells that to my father-in-law'. At the beginning of married life, a woman may find herself like a stranger in the affinal house; she needs time to understand household arrangements such as who controls the house, who makes which decisions and so on. Once she understands where the power lies within the family, she strategizes to have her say in family matters. She starts this indirectly because of her fragile position in the household which requires time and certain elements to be strengthened. Women, therefore, start with participating indirectly, as in 30-year-old Mumtaz's account:

My father-in-law makes all decisions, if I have to participate, I tell my father-in-law. If I cannot tell him, I tell my husband, and he tells to my father-in-law. If they think whatever I say is right, they accept it. But if they consider it wrong, they explain to me, so I keep quiet and accept their decision.

According to Lukes (1974), the hidden form of power is the most successful form because power is more effective when it is less visible. Lukes stresses the least revealed forms of power. In the villages of Khairpur, it is the hidden and the overt power that work together to make the power unassailable in the villages of Khairpur. The subjects go along with what the patriarch decides; they do not challenge his decisions. It is also non decision-making because despite being allowed to be part of the process, the patriarch's will prevails. This power seems obvious to an observer, but not always apparent to those who live within the system. Those who belong to the system have to do what patriarch decides; their acceptance of their exclusion

from decision-making and of the patriarch's will, and their often being unaware of his interests, demonstrate the operation of power that keeps patriarchy in its place.

This power not only facilitates the patriarch in controlling the lives of his subjects, but also provides the subjects with opportunities to strategize within certain constraints. Women in the villages of Khairpur may be ignorant of the hidden power of the patriarch as it is difficult to notice, and if you are unaware of something, it is hard to challenge or negotiate with it. But they are aware of his naked power and understand it precisely, therefore they don't contradict it. The most they can do is to negotiate with it.

Women's strategies for participation in family decision-making depend on the hierarchical power position of the family members. A woman may avoid approaching the most senior member directly, and first of all approach a less senior person. In order to avoid contact with the senior member whom a woman might be afraid of, she may begin to approach the father-in-law through the mother-in-law or the husband. If there is another person who is equally important like mother-in-law or husband, women contact them as well. 15-year-old Mukhtiar, who was married to her cousin (MBS), and lived with her grandmother in the same house, told me:

My father-in-law makes all decisions in consultation with my mother-in-law. I do not say anything in these decisions. If sometimes I have to say something, I make somebody say it on my behalf. I then ask my mother or my grandmother or my brothers-in-law or finally my husband who listens to me.

Although women do not usually say anything directly during family decisions-making, they do not remain totally silent if it is an important matter. In so doing, they have to take certain measures; for example, some of the women may judge men's moods first and then approach to them accordingly. If men are in a bad mood, women prefer to avoid saying anything; it discourages them. But if they are in a good mood, women do approach to them to put forward their views. However, women still remain cautious and do not say anything that may infuriate men, as this can affect their future participation, for example, 30-year-old Gulshan told me:

Men in the family make all decisions, I never participate, but if there is something urgent then I first see their moods. If they are in a good mood I talk, and they understand and agree. I never say something wrong or demanding before them.

In kin endogamous marriage systems such as that existing in the villages I visited, various commentators argue that the strategy outlined above does not actually help women at all (see Sathar and Kazi 2000). However, I argue that it does; if a woman's father-in-law is her uncle (MB or FB) or the mother-in-law is her aunt (MZ or FZ), they find it easier to approach them. The findings of my research demonstrate that consanguineous marriages help women to articulate their wishes within the household especially when a woman has a prior direct relation with the patriarch, such as him being the mother's or father's brother. A woman's blood relation with her in-laws is of central importance; if the father-in-law is her uncle (FB or MB), she would feel comfortable in discussing her concerns with him because she has been raised in his shadow. She prefers to use that agency to articulate her demands in the family's decision-making processes. Although women find it difficult to speak before their elders, especially before fathers-in-law, if the father-in-law is an uncle (from father or mother's side) women do overcome their fear and approach him. The majority of the women in my sample, who were married to their mother's brother's son or father's brother's son, directly approached their fathers-in-law about decisions that they felt the need to contribute to. For example, 30-year-old Razia who was married to her father's brother's son told me: 'My father-in-law makes all decisions with other men in the family. If I have to say anything, I tell that to him. He listens to me'. Others who were married to their father's sister's son did not directly approach the patriarch; those women used their mothers-in-law to articulate their wishes.

These differences in modes of influencing decisions do not mean that the households of father's brother or mother's brother are more familiar to young wives than those of father's sister or mother's sister; it is simply a matter of the level of comfort with the opposite sex (the patriarch) that enables women to approach him with less fear. This becomes more of a challenge if a woman is married to her mother's sister's son or father's sister's son because in that case the father-in-law may not be as close as father's brother or mother's brother can be. Given the consanguineous marriage system prevailing in the villages, women usually live very close to their relatives and, while they are growing up, the chances of living closer to their father's brother or mother's brother are higher. Being men, these father figures might also visit their brother's and sister's families more frequently than their father's sister and mother's sister and their husbands, which results in an enhanced level of comfort with father's

brother and mother's brother because she has known them well since she was a child. Thus, women who were not married to their mother's brother's son or father's brother's son, because they knew their fathers-in-law less well, often preferred to approach their mothers-in-law rather than their fathers-in-law to articulate their wishes.

Another aspect of this involvement is that a woman's participation in decision-making through her in-laws, who are her close blood relatives, is the matter of degree. Having a prior relation with the patriarch enables a woman to join (indirectly) in the family's decision-making for he is the head of the family, exercising unlimited power, while sharing a prior relation only with the mother-in-law reduces her chances of doing so. However, she can still express her wants before the mother-in-law, who may take them before men on her behalf, but the woman then loses direct contact with the patriarch.

Some women may strategize to enhance the status bestowed on them via consanguineous marriages; for example, if a woman shares a prior relation with both the mother-in-law and father-in-law, it affects her participation within the family. Her relation to both sides may allow her to use her natal family to intervene in her family's affairs to their daughter's benefit. For example, 15-year-old Subhan who was married to her father's sister's and mother's brother's son, told me:

I do not participate in any decision. If there is anything regarding me, my father speaks on my behalf. Whenever I have any problem, I tell my father, and he talks to my family members. On my marriage, my father had told me to inform him if I have any problem. So whenever I have any problem I inform my father. Even if I have to say something in decisions, I tell my father.

Moreover, living closer to the natal family does have an impact on married women's lives; Subhan's case indicates that her father approached her affinal family when necessary to speak on her behalf. Nevertheless, not all women were able to articulate their demands successfully; there are some women who try to participate in the family's decision-making, but remain unsuccessful. Not all women have access to men who listen to them. In such a situation, a woman can do nothing but keep quiet and go along with whatever men decide. For example, 25-year-old Mariyam, who was not given a chance to speak in family matters, told me:

My husband makes all decisions in consultation with his father. I do try to participate, but they do not listen to me. I then keep quiet because they are my elders, and I cannot do anything.

The prevalent culture that regards men as breadwinners and women as service providers also requires women to be submissive to men. A woman is socialized in a way that she generally avoids discussing anything with male family members. She is expected to accept what her parents say as orders, and continues to be obedient with her in-laws after her marriage. If she maintains this submissiveness, she is regarded as a good wife and daughter-in-law. According to Khan (2006), the only way to be considered a good woman is through obedience, acceptance and conformity to the men's decisions.

Women's reluctance to face conflictual situations, which contributes to their disempowerment, results in their helplessness. Therefore, they find themselves left out of the decision-making process.⁵¹ However, they may be aware of all this and use their subordination to male authority as a means of negotiation, knowing that this can ensure their long-term survival (Shklar 1990, in Kabeer 1994). Men's control over family decision-making can discourage women, who consider it to be men's business, irrelevant to women. For example, 18-year-old Asiya told me: 'I never participate in family decisions; I have nothing to do with that. I am happy that I am away from this and do not participate'.

Since looking after the family's daily concerns is men's business, women find it convenient to keep themselves at a distance. However, if there is an important situation that is relevant to them arises, they do not hesitate to participate. For example, 20-year-old Fouzia who did not participate in decision-making, told me: 'I do not participate in decision-making, it is men's business. But if there is anything involving both men and women, all we women discuss it among ourselves and inform men about our opinion'. Women are well aware of the environment in which they live; they do not attempt to have a say in the decisions that are unimportant to them. In addition, they also know that involving themselves in anything not directly relevant to them would affect their lives if anything went wrong. They know that men are those with power and see them as capable of facing the consequences of any

⁵¹ They can only participate indirectly and this indirect approach does not count to them or to others as participation in decision-making.

decision they make. Women, knowing their status in society, cannot confront the consequences of a wrong decision. Considering this, women find it strategic to distance themselves from decision-making and participate only when required.

According to Lukes (1974), those who are harmed by the power exercised over them do not always have any idea of it because this power is not applied directly, rather via 'socially structured and culturally patterned behaviour' [22]. This explains that the socialization process facilitates the exercise of power in society. Therefore, the practice of power usually goes unnoticed by the victims of power (Helliwell and Hindess 1999). Women in the villages of Khairpur may not be fully aware of the extent of the power that oppresses them, they may not be able to imagine a world where they could be equal to men, only a world where they could have a little more influence. I would not see this as false consciousness since everyone's consciousness everywhere is a product of their circumstances. Moreover, the idea of emancipation – women's long-term interest – could threaten their short-term interest; it could endanger their own living which is protected by the same oppressive system (Molyneux 1985). The way women cope with the power structure reflects their realistic assessment of the social structure they live in, the situation they experience and the possible drawbacks if they opt for noncompliance. According to Agarwal (1997) a person's exit options determine his/her bargaining power if cooperation fails; women like those in my sample have a very weak fall-back position; they are aware that any noncompliance or resistance would be self-destructive and self-defeating and would bring shame and gossip and possibly result in loss of home. Although the women did not provide stories of their own non-compliance, they discussed other women who had resisted, such as the girl who fled to escape from a forced marriage. However, such incidents are not frequent as they involve more troubles to women's lives and discourage them from resisting the system as it would jeopardize their lives. The way these women told me these cautionary tales suggested that they regarded them as dreadful events and reflected their own analysis of the drawbacks of resistance. They acknowledged that noncompliance causes dissent between families and problems for the woman as well as the kin group. Thus, they did not admire the woman who had fled because they were aware of the troubles that the woman and her family were expected to face (see Chapter 4).

These women are aware that men are more socially independent and enjoy more resources than they do; men have access to jobs and enjoy greater support within the kin group. Cultural norms provide more opportunities to men than to women; their access and exposure to the public sphere gives them more experience than women in dealing with a wider range of situations. If anything goes wrong, men are more capable of sorting it out. The fear of taking responsibility also prevents women from participating. Moreover, due to their access to the public sphere, men are considered wiser than women; this affects women's confidence, and they then find themselves left out of the family's power distribution. The hidden power of preventing the oppressed from realising what their (strategic) interests are harms women in all aspects of their lives. Women's realistic assessment of their immediate practical interests requires them to distance themselves from directly participating in the family's decision-making, and they thus maintain and internalize the very system of power that excludes them from familial choices.

Women as a group have gender interests and needs that can be divided into strategic and practical interests and needs; the former are emancipatory and pursuing them would challenge the oppressive patriarchal system, whereas the latter do not challenge the gender system and are framed in response to immediate needs (Molyneux 1985; Moser 1989). The conceptualization of women's strategic interests and needs, as defined by Molyneux (1985) and Moser (1989) respectively, is relevant to the analysis of patriarchal power. When Lukes talks about hidden power preventing the powerless from realising their true interests he refers to what Molyneux defines as strategic interests. Hidden power thus prevents women from recognizing their strategic interests – achieving gender equality – so that women have no means of conceptualizing or identifying these interests. These strategic interests and needs are those that would liberate women from the system which oppresses them. In Lukes' term, if power keeps women from realizing these interests, the status quo is maintained.

Financial Decision-Making

Management and control of household finances are two different things; the latter is more strongly related with decision-making power. Control of household finances is a key element that defines the nature of marital power; power is located in earning and controlling the finances, not in spending and managing it (Pahl 1989). Financial decision-making, in the villages of Khairpur, is the most important part of a family's power distribution; the one who makes the financial decisions has great authority in the family. The general practice of an extended family can be analysed from what 30-year-old Razia said: 'The main earner makes financial decisions. Whatever other family members need, they tell him'.

Household finance managements in the villages of Khairpur vary from family to family, for example, family members may contribute to make ends meet; often the father-in-law – the most senior man – is the main breadwinner, and then his sons also contribute. Household arrangements in each house may not be the same, but sharing is common in almost every house, for many families live together in an extended household which increases the family size. If the father-in-law is the only person who is earning, his income may not be enough to feed the entire family. As soon as his sons have any formal or informal job, they are expected to share their money with their father.

This sharing of household finances can be combined or separate depending upon the individual arrangements of the household. If men in the family do not want to pool their earnings, they handle finances separately, but this is subject to the patriarch's approval; sons cannot do this against the will of the patriarch. If he does not have any objection to separate finances, he lets his sons keep their income and spend it separately. For example, 15-year-old Subhan told me in this regard: 'I keep whatever money my husband earns. My mother-in-law keeps whatever money my father-in-law earns. Sometimes she spends her money on household expenditures sometimes I'.

This seniority of the patriarch provides him with the privilege of controlling the finances pooled by him and his sons, but financial management is variable depending upon who earns what. In general, finances in these extended families can either be controlled by the patriarch or the next patriarch in line making the most usual pattern

clear – that men control all finances to hold all power. However, there are some exceptions: in principle, the father-in-law is head of the family; he is the major shareholder in the family finances as long as he earns. Whatever money he earns, he controls, and thus he exercises his power over the family, but he can share this responsibility with others as well. In most of the families, the father-in-law keeps all finances to himself, while in some families, the father-in-law gives his earnings to his wife who manages the money according to the family's needs. But in the majority of my participants' families, the father-in-law kept and managed all household finances. He may give money to his wife, but this does not necessarily shift his authority to her. His wife can hold the finances, but cannot control them. 24-year-old Fatima shared the practice of finance management in her family:

My father-in-law is head of the family. He makes all decisions and manages household finances. He takes money from all of his sons and spends on the home. If I need anything I tell that to my father-in-law or husband.

Keeping the family's resources under his control contributes a great deal to the power of a patriarch in the household, it also enables him to gain non-decisions in many matters; such as that he remains unchallenged in spending the money the way he wants to. Decisions of how to spend money are kept off the agenda, and nobody can question the patriarch about this. Interestingly, he can demonstrate his power if someone ever opposes him, but since the subjects develop a socially constructed behaviour of submission before the most powerful person, his actions are not questioned. Therefore, he automatically has everybody's compliance in almost all matters in the household, which indicates that the patriarch holds all the power and uses it according to the situation. For example, Shabnam, a 24-year-old woman, told me:

My father-in-law is head of the family and makes all financial decisions. Whatever he has to do he tells it to all family members, especially his sons. He never asks or seeks anybody's permission. He is a retired man. When he was in his job, he used to manage all finances himself. But now if he needs money for anything, he informs his sons and they give him money. They have jobs and give him shares in everything.

In the families where sons also earn, the father takes money from them as well. All of the earning sons are expected to hand in a monthly contribution (sometimes their whole earnings) to the father; he then manages all household finances himself and spends this money whenever required. According to Pahl (1989), in the west a

husband's earning power is strongly associated with his control and power within the family. The greater the earning power he has, the more control over finances and power within the family he enjoys. Although the patriarch may not have the greatest earning power in the villages of Khairpur, he normally expects his sons to pool their income so that he can exercise total control over the household finances. This helps him to keep a reasonable amount of money under his control in order to maintain his power when he is too old to contribute much financially; his sons might earn more than him, but he does not let them keep all of their earnings.

In families where fathers-in-law assign their duties to their eldest sons, this also applies to financial matters, but this does not mean that they hand over their power along with the finances. The patriarch's age or other responsibilities may sometimes not allow him to look after his family's finances, and he may find it convenient to transfer this responsibility to the next patriarch in line, but he actively remains an important part of the family's power distribution; the next patriarch is obliged to consult him before making any major decision. 30-year-old Basheeran, whose father-in-law was old and had transferred his financial responsibilities to his son, told me:

Although my father-in-law is alive, he has assigned all responsibilities to my husband. Now my husband makes all the decisions and keeps the household finances, but consults his father before making any decision.

If the father-in-law assigns his duties to the eldest son, the son manages all household finances. He then asks for his brothers' contributions, as his father would do. If the father-in-law still has some source of income, he will also contribute. For example, 30-year-old Mumtaz, whose father-in-law had retired and transferred all responsibilities to his eldest son (her husband), told me:

My husband keeps all finances. My father-in-law receives his pension and pays the utility bills of the house. My husband and I spend on other things from my husband's salary. If sometimes we are short of money, we take it from my father-in-law.

As the death or retirement of the father-in-law provides the eldest son with decision-making authority like that previously held by the father, this situation also provides the eldest son with the control over the household finances; after the father-in-law's death, the eldest son takes over the financial resources and controls the household income. However, consultation with younger brothers is mandatory after the father's death. Although younger sons do not always stay in the same household, as long as

the hearth is shared by the brothers' families, sharing of finances also continues. If the family has land from which they receive an income, in the absence of a father, the eldest son would control it in order for him to finance the household. If he has rented out the land, he would receive all payments or if the brothers keep the land and cultivate it themselves, the eldest brother would manage all the proceeds from it. In either case, the eldest brother spends on the family expenditure, shares money with his other brothers, and sometimes gives pocket money to the women in the family, as 20-year-old Najma's brother-in-law did. She told me:

My father-in-law died two years ago, now my brother-in-law, who is the eldest son, is the head of the family. He makes all decisions in consultation with his younger brother (my husband). He keeps all the money and manages finances. He gives me and my sister-in-law (his wife) monthly pocket money for us and for our children. All other things that we need, he buys them too such as *latto kapro* (clothes).

In the families where all brothers earn through their work, they give a monthly contribution to the eldest brother for household finances. 26-year-old Amina's elder brother-in-law manages the family's finances and her husband gives a monthly contribution to his elder brother. This practice of sharing among the land holding families and wage workers goes on as long as brothers continue to live in the same household. Under these circumstances, we should not assume that younger brothers calmly accept their disempowerment and that elder brothers' authority always goes unchallenged. Although my data does not have evidence of how long brothers continue to live in the same household and when they decide to split, literature on South Asia suggests several reasons why separation takes place such as rivalry or competition among married women (Oldenburg 2009). Jeffery et al. (1989) mention that problems in an extended family begin when another son is married; the competition and rivalries between married women are often the reason for separation. Sometimes, quarrels among men may also result in separation; then the unit of production and hearth divide simultaneously. In my sample, there is evidence of past splits as not all women who were married to their father's brother's son were living in the same household; only three out of ten continued to live within the same large extended household/compound (*khandaan*) but their father and father-in-law (FB) had different hearths, whereas the other seven were living separately in their affinal families.

Hierarchy in controlling finances within the family is of central importance. Whatever men earn they do not directly give to their wives who are junior in status. Rather they give this money to their mother who has a strong structural position and is the most senior among women in the family. If a father-in-law manages the finances, he would give some of it to his wife as a small household budget to spend on items of daily use because he is not home all the time. If a son is managing and controlling all household finances, he would give some or all of it to his mother. For example, a mother-in-law told me in a focus group discussion:

Usually mothers-in-law keep all finances given to them by their husbands or sons, they buy groceries or whatever is needed. It is then the daughter-in-law's responsibility to manage all things according to the needs. She should not waste resources.

A mother-in-law not only keeps the finances that her sons give her for household management, but she also controls these finances. Since she holds all the money, she is the one to decide about small purchases, food items, groceries and so on. It is her responsibility to give the family members the money provided they have a valid need for it. In the situation where the mother-in-law keeps and controls the finances, young women may find themselves excluded from the family's financial arrangements; mothers-in-law do not share any money with them unless it is very important. For example, a mother-in-law told me in a focus group discussion:

We manage finances and do not give all of the money to daughters-in-law. However, we always give them some amount as we are not home all the time. In case any guest comes, the daughter-in-law should have some money to serve the guest. It is about our respect.

The death of the father-in-law does not necessarily weaken the power of the mother-in-law for she is now the mother of the head of the family (the eldest son). She now has more respect and acquires the status of female patriarch who exercises substantial control over all family members. She becomes a figure of respect, especially for her sons who give her utmost importance after the father. The eldest son might decide about important things in consultation with her and give her household finances to manage. For example, 25-year-old Sakina, whose father-in-law had died, told me: 'My eldest brother-in-law makes all decisions in consultation with his mother. My mother-in-law manages all household finances'.

According to Delphy and Leonard (1992), the family is the main site where the exploitation of women's work takes place; under the particular contract of marriage, women are obliged to perform all duties for their husband free of charge. In relation to this, the family in the villages of Khairpur is not only the site of exploitation of women's work but also their subordinate status within the family hierarchy. Despite providing all services and being responsible for the family members' comfort, women in the villages have no control over family finances, to the extent that they rarely benefit from the income they earn from their craft work. They can be deprived of it if their husbands demand it or they are more likely to spend it on their children rather than on themselves. So in any case, these women spend their income on their families. The hierarchical nature of power that may sometimes facilitate women's participation in decision-making does not necessarily help them control household finances; they are generally excluded from this. If a woman receives a monthly allowance from her husband, which is either for herself or for her children, she is usually excluded from making or even suggesting big purchases. However, she can be consulted about small daily purchases such as food items.

The poor economic condition of the family may not allow the head of the family to distribute money among the family members. By the time he makes all the necessary monthly purchases, he might have spent almost all the available money. The uncertainty in receiving monthly cash from men motivates women to generate their own financial resources. This money helps them to fulfil the needs of themselves and their children, such as buying clothes, when the patriarch is unable to do so. For example, 20-year-old Ruqaiya, who had no say over any financial decision-making, told me: 'I usually do not participate in any financial decisions. If I have to buy anything, I use my own money that I earn from sewing'. Women do hold back some cash from their craft work; it helps them in financial crises facing the family (see Chapter 5).

According to Sathar and Kazi (2000) women's paid work is said to liberate them from economic dependence on their husbands. They argue that women's work in rural Punjab has a positive association with enhancing their autonomy and economic independence from husbands. Generally speaking, women's craft work in the villages of Khairpur does not completely liberate them from their dependency on men as the return on this work is very low and only makes a small difference to their

well-being. Thus, this work has no strong association with their autonomy within the household. Young women keeping cash is not common in the villages, let alone controlling the finances. The mother-in-law's control over everything usually overrides women's opportunities for autonomy until they reach the status of mother-in-law. However, I found some exceptions to this situation. A few women kept and managed household finances with their husbands, such as 20-year-old Ruqaiya:

I keep all finances of the house because I and my husband both spend on the house. My father-in-law and mother-in-law both take money from me. My husband, father and mother-in-law do whatever I want.

According to Kazi and Sathar (2000), women in rural areas have more economic autonomy, not because of their weak economic status, which is negatively associated with decision-making, but probably because they participate in income generating activities. Chaudhry (2010) also found a few women managing the household finances; these women generally belonged to the lower class of Punjab and Sindh. They would keep their husbands' earnings and would return them when the husbands needed it. This had increased their decision-making power within the household. However, this power was limited because of structural, material and financial constraints. In the villages of Khairpur, however, women do generate income, which is essential for the family's well-being, but this income does not help most of them to improve their autonomy in the household. It may be helpful for those who share their income with their husbands to make ends meet; this may improve their importance within the family, their voice can be heard in the family's decision-making processes or they may be asked for their opinion, but this may not increase their autonomy because of the power hierarchy, which is strictly maintained.

Women's Mobility and Access Outside the Home

Women in tribal areas of Pakistan are excluded from social life; they rarely go out except for visiting their relatives. Men do the shopping and provide all of the necessities (Ahmed 1997). There are certain determining factors that influence women's mobility in rural areas of Pakistan, such as the prevalent perception that women cannot move freely in the public sphere (Saeed 2012). Threat to personal security in underdeveloped areas, which constitute a major part of Pakistan, also

contributes a great deal to the restrictions on women's mobility (Hakim and Aziz 1998). Other studies (Sathar and Kazi 2000; Mumtaz and Salway 2005) demonstrate that life cycle, age and number of sons are associated indicators of women's mobility.

The factor of women's age in controlling their mobility is also evident in different studies that show how young women's mobility is curtailed due to their being young, and considered to be at a highly sexually active stage. There is a prevalent fear in rural Pakistan that women's free movement will encourage them to indulge in sexual contact with men which will violate the family's honour. According to Khan (1999), unmarried women in rural Pakistan cannot even visit the health centres alone; they are only allowed to do so with their parents, usually their mothers. Thus, veiling is a way of keeping women at a distance from men outside their families. This prevents women contacting any outsider or responding to sexual advances from him if she goes out of her household. This rule is not applicable to little girls or older women because they are not considered to have reproductive capacity. Therefore, young women's mobility, especially if it is not task oriented, is considered a threat to the family's honour (Khan 1999). 'Social attitudes that preserve and justify the status quo, are the most abstract means of controlling women' (Mumtaz and Shaheed 1987: 29). Culture encourages women's restricted mobility because it emphasizes the family's honour which is associated with women's chastity. Women in Pakistan can usually be found saying that they do not go anywhere unless there are unavoidable circumstances that require their movement (Mumtaz and Salway 2005).

Generally speaking, women's mobility is subject to their pre and post marital status in rural Sindh. Mobility of a married woman differs from that of an unmarried one and younger married women experience more restrictions than older married women, young unmarried women face severe kind of surveillance on their mobility due to the fear or threats to women's honour (Khan 1999). Similarly, women living in the villages of Khairpur face restrictions on their mobility before marriage. They are considered central to the family's honour; any damage to their reputation would not only bring a bad name to the family but also minimize or destroy their chances of marriage. Before the puberty, a girl is freer, but her chances to meet even her close relatives are curtailed on the onset of her menstruation unless they live in the same compound or very close to her natal house. Although women described their lives

freer before marriage, they were not freer in terms of mobility; they meant freedom from household work. Owing to the potential threat to the family's honour, young girls' freedom is curtailed, and they are confined to their homes soon after their first menstruation, as 30-year-old Mumtaz told me:

Oh! Mobility was very restricted before my marriage. The custom in my village was that girls after their first menstruation were not allowed to go outside their homes, so I was not allowed to go anywhere. I had never seen the city before my marriage. My father used to bring me things such as clothes and shoes.

However, unlike in other areas of Pakistan, the degree of this strictness is so high in the villages of Khairpur that most young unmarried women are not allowed to access the public sphere even with their mothers. Whenever there was an emergency, it was the father's responsibility to take the daughter out of the home not the mother. For example, 21-year-old Fahmida told me: 'Unmarried girls in my family do not go outside home. If someone is not well, she will go to the doctor with her father'. A young girl is at the mercy of the man who most of the time remains out of the house. If the father is busy, the girl has to wait for him. Once the father is back from work, he will take her to the doctor at his convenience.

The marriage of a daughter liberates her parents, especially the father, from the burden of looking after the family's honour which is associated with her; this responsibility is transferred to her affinal family after her marriage. Marriage can be considered a gateway to somewhat more relaxed mobility; although she is still not completely free to move outside the home, she can now visit her relatives and other places with her mother-in-law. This can make many women feel that they are freer in their mobility after their marriage. For example, 24-year-old Fatima told me: 'Mobility is freer and more comfortable now. Life was extremely strict before marriage'.

Marital status in rural Pakistan is the most important factor that determines women's mobility. However, marriage does not completely liberate a woman from the restrictions on mobility; stigma attached to women's unaccompanied mobility continues even after a woman is married. Therefore, she is kept under surveillance even after her marriage. The only difference is that she can now move outside the home when necessary, but this movement is conditional upon the company of a

family member, preferably male. For example, 20-year-old Ruqaiya told me: ‘I am not allowed to go out alone, I always go out with a male family member. Even if I have to buy something, I go with any male family member. I buy it myself, but a man must be with me’.

According to Mumtaz and Salway (2005) women in Pakistan have restricted mobility especially when unaccompanied. Women’s mobility with the *biradari* relatives does not necessarily require any family member’s company unless the place where she has to go is a distant one, whereas mobility outside the *biradari* relations requires a family member’s company. In contrast, young married women in the villages of Khairpur experience stricter circumstances; they hardly ever experience unaccompanied mobility. As young women’s going out alone is considered shameful for their families, they are always expected to be accompanied by someone depending upon the distance. For example, if a woman has to visit a nearby house, such as that of her parents, she can take any older woman along, but if she has to visit a distant place, a man must accompany her. As 20-year-old Asma, who always accompanied someone while visiting any place, told me:

I cannot go outside the home alone; I always go with some family member. If I have to go to some nearby place, I go with female members, but if I have to go far, I go with my husband. For example, if I have to see the doctor or to the market for shopping, I go with men because it is out of the village. If I have to visit my natal family, I go with my mother-in-law because it is close to my house.

Some studies (See Naheed and Iqbal 1998; Sathar and Kazi 2000; Mumtaz and Salway 2005) suggest that economic status has an impact on women’s mobility in rural Pakistan; generally women from poor families can go outside their homes freely because their economic activities require their independent movement. Therefore, they are more mobile than their well-off counterparts. In contrast, poor women in the villages of Khairpur experience restricted mobility despite poverty. The cultural practices dominate the financial needs and bars women from entering the public domain. Their access to the public sphere alone is considered disgraceful for the family. Shazia told me in a focus group discussion that it is a disgrace for the family if their women go out alone frequently. This stigmatization not only prevents women from taking an active part in economic activities, but also makes their access outside the home difficult. Young married women have to secure company and wait

for an appropriate person and time to conduct their urgent visits. For example, 25-year-old Mariyam told me, 'Going outside home is very difficult for me; I have to check who is available to accompany me'.

In addition to this, a young married woman's mobility is also conditional to the patriarchal authority; women's going out for anything involves seeking permission from more than one family member. Like decision-making, this is also a hierarchical process that women have to follow. If a woman has to go anywhere, she would ask for the permission of the head of the family. If he permits her, she then asks for the permission of the mother-in-law. If the mother-in-law does not have any objection, the woman then finally seeks permission from her husband. When these three power holders allow her, she can go out with her mother-in-law or husband. In some of the families where women avoid contacting the senior man, they request the mother-in-law to seek permission for them. Such as 20-year-old Asma, who would normally go through this lengthy process, told me:

My mother-in-law and father-in-law are head of the family. If I have to go anywhere, I seek their permission. I first ask my mother-in-law; she seeks permission from my father-in-law. If the father-in-law agrees, the mother-in-law informs me and then I go outside (with a family member). I do not seek permission directly from the father-in-law. I am just scared of contacting directly the head of the family for this; therefore I cannot dare.

Another woman, 30-year-old Basheeran, who was not even allowed to throw bins outside the door, told me about the strict conditions under which she lived:

We never go out alone and always need permission of many people before moving outside. For example, if my husband is not home, I have to seek permission from my father-in-law if he is not home, then I have to ask the brother-in-law. The situation is very strict here.

Women's mobility in the villages of Khairpur is controlled through *purdah*. A woman is not allowed to move outside without covering herself completely so that nobody can see her body, especially her face. Therefore, women usually wear the *burqa* while going out. Some of the close families live in a way that if their women visit each others' houses, outsiders cannot see them. In some cases, young married women are allowed to go out unaccompanied: if their relatives live in the same compound or live very close to their houses. Women can then visit them alone after seeking permission. The homes of close relatives are well connected with one another, and a small space like a street is kept so that women can move to each

other's houses conveniently (see figure 15). This increases women's ability to visit their relatives without anybody's company and women can reach their house within a few seconds. Since houses are adjacent, family members do not worry about sending the woman out alone for the distance is very short, and nobody can see her.

Figure 15: Houses Built very Close



Houses are built in such a manner where next door neighbours are often close relatives. These houses have high walls and curtains to shield women from outsiders.

Houses in the villages are built in such a way as to maintain a family's privacy. A thick cloth curtain is fixed at the door when it is at the centre of the courtyard because having the main door at the centre makes the house and family visible to outsiders. Therefore, the curtain on the main door prevents outsiders from seeing inside the house, particularly from seeing the women. The doors that are located on a corner do not usually have curtains because their position hides the people inside a household. In any case, whether the main door is at the corner or the centre, women usually avoid going close to these doors because men outside the house might see them and that can cause conflict. These houses are connected with the streets especially designed for women's mobility. These usually are 'women only' streets⁵² and are meant for their convenience, allowing them to avoid appearing on the main roads that men use. In some villages, most of the houses have two doors; one opens

⁵² I call these streets women-only because the main purpose of these streets is to facilitate women's access to other households so that they reach there without any man's sight.

to the main road or the main street, and the other (usually the back door) opens into the women only street (smaller streets linked to the main street or road). Women normally use back doors. Men can also use these streets, but they are commonly used by women.

Figure 16: Women-Only Street



Women in some areas of Pakistan are allowed increased mobility to visit certain places. For example, women in the Punjab province of Pakistan are more likely to go to the fields alone than other places such as health centres and markets (Sathar and Kazi 2000). However, this free movement of women in different areas of Pakistan has its pros and cons and creates a threat to women's honour and chastity (Mumtaz and Salway 2005). Generally, women in the villages of Khairpur are not allowed to go anywhere alone. Men keep the women under strict surveillance, and any visit anywhere is subject to many questions from male family members. Some young women may experience a higher degree of restriction on their mobility than others, such as 15-year-old Subhan who told me her situation: 'Men in my family are very bad. They do not let us go anywhere, not even to relatives. We go to relatives when there is a death and other ceremonies'.

Men's power to limit women's mobility is enhanced by how it is socially regarded. Some men may not have problems with older women accompanying young women while visiting their relatives because usually villagers live very close to each other. This can make men feel that their women are safe, but other relatives living in the same village may see this as something which is not culturally permissible. Their own women might question other women's free movement and may ask for men to ease their restricted mobility as well. This can threaten the whole village with a situation in which women cannot go outside their homes at all. Thus, they taunt the family for leaving their women free or for having no control over them. This can discourage men from allowing women more freedom of movement. For example, Shaheen shared a common practice of her village in a focus group discussion:

Even if family members do not have any problem with women's mobility, other people do have. They taunt a lot, therefore, family members do not allow women to go outside home frequently and alone.

Although my data does not provide the evidence of how women subvert this rigid system which confines them to households, I cannot exclude the possibility of women evading the control on their mobility to visit their natal homes. The proximity of houses should be taken into account in this regard; since women usually live close to their natal families, they may have the opportunity to make short visits. I did not see any rooftop routes, but there were backdoor routes and women only streets which might have helped women to escape surveillance. The most likely times when this might be possible are when menfolk are busy in the fields or when the family members are resting during *ba-pehri* after having their afternoon meals.

Age and seniority in the family affects women's mobility; with the passage of time, a married woman establishes herself in the family and also provides the family with heirs which ultimately gains her respect and eases restrictions on her mobility. This is apparent from different studies that hold that age has a positive association with women's free movement; an older woman is more mobile inside and outside her village (See Mumtaz and Salway 2005). According to Saeed (2012), women above 60 and below puberty have greater freedom of mobility in northern Pakistan. Nevertheless this freedom is not equal to the freedom that men and boys enjoy. Similarly, young women's mobility in the villages of Khairpur begins to be relaxed with the passage of time especially when they have spent time in marital relationship

and have provided heirs to the family. This was evident in the villages; older women not only had more freedom of mobility, but they could also move without company. For example, 30-year-old Gulshan was a woman of a mature age who had five children. This had enhanced her family's trust in her and she could visit her relatives without older women's company because her children would accompany her most of the time. She told me:

I visit nearby houses alone, for that I only have to seek permission of my elders. But if I have to go to market, my husband accompanies me. All my close relatives live nearby my house, so I do not have any problem in visiting them alone.

A clear divide between young and older married women is maintained in relation to work, where age plays an important role in determining a woman's mobility. Older women can work in the fields and have access to the public sphere, as opposed to younger women who are greatly restricted to their homes. For example, 30-year-old Aisha, who had many restrictions on her mobility in comparison to the older women in her family, told me:

Wherever I have to go, I need to have permission first. I cannot go outside alone; my eldest sister-in-law or my mother-in-law accompanies me. However, my eldest sister-in-law can go out alone because she is an elder woman and has grown up children. But when we go outside the village we wear *burqa* then go.

Another woman, Naseema, said in the focus group discussion:

All work outside the home such as buying groceries falls to the mother-in-law. She also takes cattle for grazing because young women cannot go outside for all this. Even if the mother-in-law is not well sometimes, she has to go out for all this work because she does not want her daughter-in-law to do that.

Women's mobility is often associated with their autonomy and economic status. For example, Sathar and Kazi (2000) link women's mobility with their autonomy. They illustrate women's lives in peri-urban and central Punjab who have more autonomy than their counterparts in southern Punjab; these women are more mobile and more likely to participate in decisions inside and outside the household. In contrast, women in southern Punjab have restricted mobility influenced by *pardah*. They are also excluded from any kind of decision-making. However, Naheed and Iqbal (1998) and Mumtaz and Salway (2005) do not associate women's mobility with their

autonomy or strength; rather it is an outcome of a specifically economic necessity. My study demonstrates that women's mobility does not have much association with low economic status. Almost all of my participants belonged to the lower economic status, but they were not allowed to work in the public sphere. Since their economic participation was indispensable for the family's well-being, they were working from home (see Chapter 5). My data also reflect that the degree of mobility that women are permitted cannot strongly be associated with their autonomy; if one woman enjoys more autonomy than another, she may not necessarily enjoy unrestricted movement. So even in households where women's mobility is less tightly controlled, it is less likely to be associated with their autonomy. I argue that age has a significant impact on women's mobility; even if a few young married women are more autonomous in the villages, they are not mobile because they are young and vulnerable, and any sexual attempt on them would bring a bad reputation to the family. If older women are more mobile, it is because of their age, for older women are not deemed sexually at risk. Thus, women's mobility is not directly associated with their autonomy; it is rather strongly associated with their age which is further associated with mobility. Autonomy cannot directly be correlated with mobility because an older woman may not always be autonomous, but can often be more mobile than younger women, similarly, a younger woman may be somewhat autonomous, but cannot be as mobile as older women are. Therefore, it is age which has a significant impact on mobility.

Restrictions on mobility affect young married women in different ways: some women may lose their interest in the world outside their homes and avoid going out unless there is some emergency, while others may keep themselves completely cut-off from the social environment. The complicated process of seeking permission discourages women and they refrain from the exhausting process and prefer to remain at home. This restriction can also affect a woman's confidence, and she may find it difficult to go out alone; she feels as if there is a big threat waiting for her outside and only someone else's company, particularly that of a man, can protect her. The restriction on mobility also increases women's dependence on men. Even if a woman lives in an area where only her blood relatives live, she would avoid going outside her home alone and would prefer a male family member to accompany her. For example, 30-year-old Razia told me:

Although women here can move outside home because this whole village is based on blood relations, women themselves find it difficult to go outside alone. They are not used to it, so they prefer to go out with men.

‘When there is no knowledge of another way of living, there is no comparison; when there is no comparison, there is no dissatisfaction’ (Khan 2006: 165). Some of the women internalize this structure and the strictness surrounding their mobility becomes a normal and integral part of their lives. They are socialised under these restrictions where their mobility is curtailed from a very young age, they continue to absorb such norms and become complicit to the system so much so that these restrictions are taken for granted as a normal part of their lives. For example, 24-year-old Shahjahan, when asked about her mobility, told me:

There is no restriction on my mobility; I go out as I wish. I just have to take any woman along with me and ask permission from my elders. I go myself if I have to go to my next door neighbours, if I have to go to the doctor or market, I take any woman along.

What might seem to an outsider as restrictions on mobility are often seen as normal to these women; for example, Shahjahan does not see this situation as restricting her in any way, but for someone like me, who does not belong to this situation, women look like frogs in a well⁵³ that can move inside it freely but will never avail the freedom to see and experience the world outside it.

According to Lukes:

A may exercise power over B by getting him to do what he does not want to do, but he also exercises power over him by influencing, shaping or determining his very wants. (1974: 23)

Keeping women under strict control from their childhood helps the patriarch to maintain the status quo; women absorb the patriarchal values and restrictions from their childhood and onwards and are unable to realise how oppressed they are. They are taught that they are free within certain boundaries, and these boundaries matter. They are free to move within the house, free to attend ceremonies that seldom take place, free to visit the market with men once in a while. This limited freedom is a woman’s maximum freedom in the villages, but to an outsider like me, it is a prison where you are free to drink water as many times as you want, free to talk to your fellow prisoners and so on, but in fact this is the freedom which is equal to no

⁵³ This is a common proverb in India and Pakistan but it is also the title of a book written by Patricia Jeffery (1979).

freedom at all. Ahmed, a patriarch, who had two daughters-in-law and seemed to be aware of what I was thinking about the women, told me:

To you our women might be like prisoners, but to us they are free. They are free to attend marriage ceremonies, visit their relatives etc. We only accompany them because we do not want them to move alone. We take them to markets, and there they are free to buy clothes of their choice. We are very nice to them.

‘Gender systems at the village level are significant predictors of women’s autonomy’ (Sathar and Kazi 2000: 108). The life that women have is a reflection of the prevailing gender system in the villages of Khairpur; it is purely patriarchal where women’s submission and subordination are demanded. This situation is further compounded by the extended family system. Sathar and Kazi (2000), referring to their own earlier research (Kazi and Sathar 1996), note that a family’s structure is strongly associated with women’s autonomy. Women living in nuclear families have more autonomy than women who do not. The presence of in-laws in an extended family curtails women’s autonomy and prevents them from gaining any meaningful control or power in their households. This is in accordance with what Kandiyoti (1988) has said, holding the patrilocal extended family system mainly responsible for the reproduction of classic patriarchy.

In general, women’s powerlessness in the context of Pakistani society is the result of exploitation and oppression that they suffer. Conflict between law and culture is the most important factor that contributes to this powerlessness; women are given equal rights in written law but local cultural practices do not favour equal rights for them (Shaheed 1998; Maqsood 2007). The cultural practice of seclusion of women in the villages of Khairpur add to their powerlessness; they are not encouraged to have an education and are simply not allowed to participate in economic activities, which increases their dependence on men. Thus, the cyclical nature of women’s exploitation does not only harm women but it also strengthens patriarchy.

The only place where women can have some autonomy is in the kitchen. Their household work from dawn to dusk can make them feel somewhat autonomous, in that they can choose what to cook and how to cook. For example, Saima told me in a focus group discussion:

Whoever is head of the family makes all decisions. What my husband earns he gives that to his father. So my father-in-law and mother-in-law keep all finances. My father-in-law buys all groceries, but he brings me whatever I want. I am free to cook and eat whatever I want to.

Interestingly, this can make one feel that everyone has power within certain domains; men have control over all women, but not over senior men, the mother-in-law has power over all women junior to her, but not over men, women have authority in the kitchen which is their domain, but the only person whose dominion has no boundary, at least in principle, is the patriarch. He not only exercises his control and makes decisions according to his own interests, but also does not let anyone interfere in his power against his wishes. His rule over his subjects enables him to make decisions and gain the compliance of others, usually without objection or conflict.

Patriarchal constraints also affect men because they are also required to follow expected roles defined for them, but the spaces available for them to negotiate these roles are greater than those of women (Shaheed 1998a). In principle, the patriarch is in charge of everything; however, I do not know how much negotiation goes on among the men because I did not spend time with them. My data does not provide information on the extent to which sons might challenge the patriarch and his authority. Women also might not be fully aware of this because men's discussions do not take place in women's presence. What might look to the women like 'unlimited authority' might not be unlimited in actuality. To the young women, the patriarch might appear like a god whom everyone should respect, but the reality might be different.

Conclusion

The power of domination, in terms of Lukes' three perspectives, operates in accordance with patriarchy, which ensures the status quo in the villages of Khairpur. These aspects usually facilitate the patriarch in seeking the unopposed compliance of his subjects in everything and enforcing his decisions. The latent and concealed forms of power often are not visible in this situation, but dominate women and shape their lives. Women, in this system of domination, experience very limited autonomy; the situation varies depending upon a woman's status in the family hierarchy. The younger the woman is, the more restrictions she faces. In this situation, young

women can only strategize with the power that is obvious as at least it is visible; invisible power is difficult to negotiate.

Hierarchy is strictly maintained in all aspects of autonomy giving more power to elders. In that sense, the patriarch exercises power over everyone under him, sometimes with consultation, for he is at the top in the hierarchy; he makes all decisions, keeps financial resources and distributes them according to his preferences. His eldest son replaces him after his retirement or death. A mother-in-law is next to the patriarch who enjoys delegated authority and indirectly controls the house. Although she cannot exercise power over men because she is a woman, she exercises substantial power over more junior women in the household. This power over women shapes their lives; it discourages them from participating in decision-making, affects their confidence to move outside the home and leads them to adopt submission as a means of survival. Nevertheless, married women are not completely powerless; they strategize in various ways to articulate their demands in the family's decision-making processes. Similarly, women, who are also deprived of all financial resources, strategize to generate their own financial resources through their craft work. In terms of mobility, women experience many difficulties, some of which they might not be aware of, but they do manage limited access to the world outside home with someone accompanying them. Women remain unaware of the power that dominates them and curtails their freedom. To them, access is more significant than the difficulties they face. This internalization of patriarchal values is one of the ways that women survive the stronghold of patriarchy – I discuss other ways, in which they survive, in the next chapter.

Chapter 7

Bargaining with Patriarchy: A Game of Patience

Introduction

This chapter centres on how women survive within the patriarchal system that prevails in the villages of Khairpur and the extent to which they are able to employ particular strategies. I start by discussing different ways that women can enhance their worth in the eyes of others; the most important of these, in which women have no realistic control, is to produce sons. Sons are strategically important in a patrilineal and patriarchal society and although women cannot successfully strategize to produce them, they can try to increase their chances of bearing a male child in various ways. While the girl child is also useful for the family, especially when she assists her mother in various tasks, cultural and social expectations attached to the male child and the multiple interests of family members make him invaluable. For women, having sons not only softens husbands' and mothers-in-laws' attitudes towards them, but it also ensures their future security and power as a prospective mother-in-law. I then discuss the extent to which women are able to enhance their status in the family in other ways; there are strategies they can use within the narrow confines of their lives such as pleasing others, especially the mother-in-law. I argue that while young married women are in powerless position and accept the status quo, they are capable of reflecting on their situation; it is in women's own immediate and practical interests to avoid any kind of conflict with family members because discord can destroy their image in front of others, who might brand them as bad women, which affects their standing in the family. Women, therefore, apply the strategy of patience and wait to become a mother-in-law; they know that they are part of the cycle which eventually empowers women as they grow older; therefore, resistance serves no purpose; it is futile and can only undermine their position further. Finally, I argue that, despite the extent to which women strategize, they do not succeed completely in improving their lives; women's wishes for their daughters are reflections of their own lives, women wish for a better life for them because they do not want their daughters to suffer like they have.

Women's Strategies for Negotiating with Patriarchy

In the previous chapters, I have discussed in detail women's survival under the patriarchal stronghold and their negotiation with patriarchal power. In this last analysis chapter, I specifically examine the extent to which women strategize to improve their social status within a system that exploits them, but also potentially offers them a pathway towards the position of female patriarch.

In economics, bargaining models focus on how an individual's opportunities outside the marriage, such as employment or education, play a role in meeting his or her needs. The more resources a person has the less likely he or she is to compromise, and hence will have more favourable outcomes (Kantor 2003). In the South Asian context women depend financially on their men; they serve men in order to maintain their relationship with them. In so doing, women tend to avoid openly bargaining through their economic status and prefer to compromise (Kabeer 1999). Kantor (2003) highlights the gap in economic bargaining models that do not problematize the effects of social norms on bargaining power. This gap is identified by Agarwal (1997), who stresses the importance of social norms that can limit or determine one's degree of bargaining power.

According to Pant (2000), bargaining between family members largely depends on members' perception of their own significance, which determines their bargaining power. Therefore, a person's assessment of his or her self-worth in the household is central in regulating his or her bargaining power. However, Pant does not take account of power structures or different resources that people bring to the family. Our self-perception is formed according to how others evaluate us (Cooley 1902). I argue that it is not women's perceived self-worth that determines their bargaining power within the family; rather it is how their worth is perceived by others that has the most significant impact on women's standing. Women's self-esteem cannot strongly be associated with their bargaining power, rather, their bargaining power is strongly associated with how the family perceives them. For example, an older woman, particularly the mother of the patriarch, will have a higher opinion of herself because of her actual position, in which she is able to influence everybody in the family. Conversely, if a woman is the youngest daughter-in-law, she finds herself at the bottom of the hierarchy and is more likely to have a low opinion of herself

because this is how she is seen by others. It is women's position in the family that determines their value. Saeed (2012) indicates that the value of a woman and hence her bargaining power depend upon certain factors. For example, women's status and influence within the household is determined by the number of sons they have. I argue that number of sons does enhance a woman's self-esteem, but only because the family holds her in high esteem as she has now provided them with heirs and also ensured their strong future position in the kin group. Therefore, women's survival strategies under a patriarchal stronghold are also impacted by their standing with their families, for example, when a woman has a low opinion of herself, she tries not to offend anybody which is basically her survival strategy.

The strategic importance of sons

A woman's social status in South Asian societies is strongly associated with the number of years of marriage and number of children; numerous children, sons in particular, enhance women's social status significantly. Women as mothers, especially mothers of sons, acquire more influence as compared to their roles as wives and daughters-in-law (Blood 1994; Basu 1996; Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001; Khan and Hussain 2008; Saeed 2012). The birth of a son opens the corridor of power to the woman as she secures the future of the lineage (Oldenburg 2002). For a woman in rural Pakistan, the only way to gain power in the household is through sons; her social prestige is enhanced and she can have some influence over the family's decisions. Women, therefore, prefer sons over daughters for sons are the source of authority for mothers (Mumtaz and Shaheed 1987).⁵⁴ In this section, I first discuss the importance of a son and then I move on to the extent to which women try to control the production of sons; I highlight the local strategies for ensuring the birth of a son in South Asia in general.

In patrilineal societies, men inherit the property and monopolize the power, especially the eldest sons. All the major work in this patrilineal society is associated with men. They not only have access to the public and the private spheres, they also control both. Their access and influence in society increase their value; people

⁵⁴ Although this is an old study, little has changed in rural areas of Pakistan where sons are still preferred over daughters because daughters leave their natal family after marriage.

therefore always desire a male child and celebrate his birth with pomp and show. For example, Farida said in a focus group discussion:

We do not mind whether the child is male or a female, but we are happier when a son is born in the family. It is only because of the society which is male dominated, we, therefore, prefer sons.

A male child holds an important status within the family, and therefore, the birth of a son is celebrated and his death is an irreparable loss. The family faces the threat of discontinuity of the lineage in the absence of a male child even if they have daughters (Khan 2006). This increases the value of a male child who not only continues the family's bloodline but also saves his parents' name from elimination. In patrilineal societies like Pakistan, the concept of seed and field (as discussed in Chapter 4) grants a man the status of providing the family with an heir, and his son will continue the lineage through his own sons. This norm substantially reduces the girl child's value; she is regarded as a guest and is considered someone else's property because she has to leave her natal house after marriage. As 20-year-old Asma told me: 'I need sons to continue my bloodline. A daughter is someone else's property, sons are ours'. Women, of course, have no real control to ensure the birth of a son, but there are certain strategies they try to influence this.

The sexual division of labour also exacerbates son preference; men go in to the public sphere, do wage labour, earn money and run the family. Families by and large are sustained through men's income making them indispensable for survival. Even if they do not earn much, they have status that is recognized in many different ways. For example, being a man in a patriarchal society entitles him to be a future patriarch; society recognises him as the representative of his family. His presence is essential to the family appearing strong as he is expected to defend the family against external threats; his existence sends the message that the family is protected from any security concerns. This matters greatly when provision of security from the state is almost non-existent in these areas. This may lead to the belief that life without sons in the family would be precarious. The majority of my participants emphasised their wishes for sons; for example, 21-year-old Fahmida said:

People here want sons because they are males, they go out and earn. They support the family and continue the lineage, so they are preferred. I want a son for myself. There is no life without a son.

Parents' preference for sons cannot be associated only with continuation of lineage or providing income; a son's existence is culturally linked with different norms, such as the expectation that he will secure the family's honour. Men safeguard the honour that rests with their women. Thus, the presence of a male not only ensures that there is someone to protect the family's honour but also relieves the parents from the burden of their young women's security. Men outside the family would think many times before indulging in an affair with a woman who has adult elder brothers; a man's presence in the family not only prevents outsiders from involving themselves with its young women, but also discourages women of the family from pursuing a love affair; both the man and the woman would fear that the woman's brother would go to any lengths to punish them if the family finds them guilty of having an affair. A man can go to any extent to safeguard his family's honour.⁵⁵ Moreover, the presence of a brother also reduces a girl's insecurity, as young men in the village might otherwise target her.⁵⁶ It also ensures her future social security because the brother would look after her in difficult times once her father is dead. This makes a son's existence imperative for the family. Najma, a 20-year-old woman who wanted a son for the family, told me:

I have three daughters, I want sons now because it is my support. They are the heir of the family; daughters also need brothers for them. People who do not have sons, their life is meaningless'.

From childhood a woman observes the importance of the male child in the family where her brothers are preferred over her. She reproduces this attitude after her marriage, which substantially reduces the girl child's value in the family. Owing to this, some women may even express the extreme view that they do not want daughters at all. For example 15-year-old Subhan, who did not yet have any children after two years of her marriage, said:

I do not want daughters. This is common in my tribe that parents do not want daughters. They prefer sons because sons continue the lineage and earn

⁵⁵ Honour-related violence is common in this area, but honour killing is not as common as in other areas such as the districts of Jacobabad and Larkana.

⁵⁶ However, having a brother does not increase a girl's potential mobility. Her mobility is strongly associated with the father because the brother is not old enough to be in charge of her movements, and by the time he is grown up, the girl is married off.

money to run the family. I have visited many shrines and have prayed for sons.⁵⁷

On the other hand, the sexual division of labour, which enhances a male child's value, also makes the girl child important for the family especially for mothers. Women's confinement to the private sphere means that young girls involve themselves in household chores; they start assisting their mothers from a very young age. Since these young girls are discouraged from going outside their homes, the only pleasure left is to be at home helping their mothers with household tasks. Slowly and gradually young girls start taking on bigger responsibilities and also look after their younger siblings. This not only increases a woman's dependency on her daughter but also makes the daughter very useful for the family, as 20-year-old Asma told me:

Daughters are good for bad times. They assist us in everything. Even when I am not well, my daughter will be with me. Sons are free, they go out in the morning and return home late; they do not have any timing. Daughters are always at home.

The economic status of a family is also related to the desire for daughters. Apart from assisting their mothers in house chores and childcare, young girls also help mothers in their craft work. A woman is able to manage her unlimited household tasks (see Chapter 5) alongside craft work when she receives some kind of assistance, and most often that assistance comes from the daughter. For example, Sakeena told me of a common practice in her village:

If parents are poor, they want daughters because when daughters are grown up they work with their mothers to earn money for the family. Sons do as they please.

In almost every household I found young girls helping their mothers in making hand fans, pots and mats. Some of the girls may sacrifice their free time and involve themselves completely with their mothers. If a family is very poor and men in the family do not earn, mothers can make ends meet with the help of their daughters. Naseema, who with her daughters was able to finance her family, told me in a focus

⁵⁷ The women who are unable to conceive after their marriage often visit shrines of religious leaders or the spiritual leader with their mothers-in-law. The spiritual leader is called *saeen* and his *dua* (blessing) matters a lot for the entire family especially for the woman who then completely relies on his blessings and thinks that only his prayers can bestow on her a male child. A similar practice was part of rural Taiwanese culture in the 1960s and 70s. As reported by Wolf (1972) if the mother-in-law could not tolerate her daughter-in-law's delay in producing a child, she would take her to the *tang ki* (a religious practitioner) who was believed to have direct contact with god. People often contacted the *tang ki* for sickness or for help in finding lost items.

group discussion: 'My daughters make plates and mats with me. We run our house with the money we all earn from our work'. This strengthens women's desires to have daughters who can support and assist them in difficult times. This may be contrary to the common belief that sons are preferred, but the reality that the girl child's existence is important cannot be ignored. Mariyam, a woman who wanted at least one girl child for herself, told me in a focus group discussion:

When I was pregnant I prayed for a daughter. My mother scolded me a lot that why do you need a daughter? If you have a son, he will remove your all worries and solve your financial problems.

Thus, multiple interests in the male child make him invaluable for the family.

However, what I understand from this is that having a son is more a matter of social security than the continuation of lineage; access to the public sphere endows a man with capacities such as earning a formal income and financing the family's needs. This money is a vital source for the family's survival. A woman may contribute to the family through her craft work, but that source of income is not regular or substantial. When a man works, it is formally recognized in the society and has value; it is paid and thus helps the family in many ways. Although women in my sample also earn money through their craft work, this income is undervalued and does not often help to run the hearth; except Naseema, none of the women in my sample were able to finance their families.

Moreover, men support each other in their wider family. For example, if a man or woman is in crisis, s/he can receive financial support from a brother who has a job and a source of income. For those who belong to the lower class, financial crises increase their dependency on their relatives earning more, and those who are financially better off than others never hesitate to help relatives in need. Thus, financial need further strengthens the bond between the siblings and men are the major source of maintaining this bond; within the patriarchal system, they control the money and have the authority to spend whenever and wherever they want. Therefore, people usually want to have more than one son for their family. For example, 22-year-old Khalida told me: 'I have one son and one daughter; I now want one more son because he should have his brother for support'.

In addition to providing the family with social security, men are the source of social networks; bonds of kinship (as discussed in Chapter 4) continue through them.

Women cannot be the focus of the kinship network because they are temporary members of their natal family, and importantly, they cannot form social links within the kin group due to their limited mobility. In order to form networks they would need to go out, but they hardly have any opportunity to meet even women from their closer or wider kin groups. Men can do this easily by going out, hanging around and meeting men from other families. Being a permanent member of his natal family, a man starts his social networking as soon as he is capable of earning; he tries to maintain good relations with his blood relatives, especially brothers who are a source of support in times of trouble, this also ensures his children's future prospects of marriage to his nieces and nephews.

Influencing the valuable also increases a person's value, not only for him/her but also for others. A woman knows that having an effective hold on male family members will improve her position in the household. Influencing the father-in-law and the husband is next to impossible for her because they are already influenced by older women. In that case, she is only able to influence a son and later on exert influence through him. Therefore, women feel blessed when they have sons; this ensures their future prestige and social status. For example, 25-year-old Sakina told me the importance of sons in her life:

Having an offspring is a blessing especially if a woman has sons; my position in the household would have been even lower down if I did not have children particularly sons.

As Sakina implies, children can also consolidate a woman's place in her affinal family; the husband who considers his wife a commodity that can be changed or discarded, starts minimizing the discrimination between his wife and mother after she has been blessed with children. His wife is now the mother of his children, and the children are completely dependent on her. So if there is any quarrel in the family, he might prefer to settle the matter rather than accusing or abusing the wife, which he can easily do if the woman does not have children. For example, Asiya told me in a focus group discussion:

Once a woman has children, she gains some status in the family. If mothers-in-law complain to their sons against daughters-in-law, it does not result in a huge quarrel because sons tell them that these are our children's mothers, we cannot throw them out of the house. Sometimes when mothers-in-law fight with daughters-in-law, men intervene, enquire and settle the matter.

The mother-in-law's heart may also soften towards the daughter-in-law after she produces children. Although she cannot compromise on house chores and wants the daughter-in-law to do her tasks on time, she is more understanding if the daughter-in-law has children. The majority of my participants told me that their mothers-in-law were more flexible towards them after they had children, especially sons; delay in household tasks like cooking a meal also becomes more tolerable. For example, 21-year-old Shehzadi, whose mother-in-law was accommodating to her after she had children, told me:

My mother-in-law knows that I have to look after three children, so she is flexible with me. She has a soft corner for me because of my children.

Absence of a child increases a woman's insecurity. A woman's inability to produce children causes strains and she often faces taunting words from her relatives regarding the fact that their son has no heir. This often increases tension between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. The older woman lives in fear that her son could die childless without leaving an heir to keep his name alive. For her, the possible solution is to marry him off to another woman.⁵⁸ This situation is stressful for the woman who lives under the threat of losing her husband if she is unable to produce any children. Wazeeran, who waited for several years for children, told me:

I did not have any children until seven years of my marriage, during that time I would feel as if I did not exist; life was meaningless. My mother-in-law would taunt me and would often threaten me that she would marry off my husband to another woman; she would have done that if she were financially strong.

All this strongly affects women's desire for a male child. A son not only enhances their social status but also provides social security. Therefore, women see this as a way to survive in the affinal family, which enables them to enhance their influence and exercise it later. In this hope they continue to have children, which increases the problems relating to having numerous children and looking after them, but securing long-term interests matters more.

Therefore, if a woman had to choose between having a male or a female child, she would prefer a male child. There is no denying that daughters bring benefits to families. Not only are they very supportive to their mothers, helping them with

⁵⁸ In the case of a second marriage the first wife loses her prestige completely. The second one, who is junior to her, gains importance and receives more respect if she produces babies.

household work and childcare but, given the consanguineous marriage system, a daughter can also strengthen the kinship bonds of her natal family, especially if she is married to her father's brother's son. Her existence becomes more important where exchange marriage is still practiced because in that case parents need a woman to be exchanged for a bride for their son,⁵⁹ but no matter how useful a daughter is for the family, sons are always preferred and given more importance. Even if a woman has many daughters, it will not enhance her worth in the family; only a son can fill the gap and save the family from the discontinuity of lineage, provide them with security in old age, open the door of power for the mother and so on. For example, 20-year-old Safia, who wanted daughters for herself but accepted the importance of sons, told me:

I want daughters for myself; to look after me and my house, sons cannot do that. What we can ask from daughters we cannot ask from sons. Daughters are the source of relief for parents. But we want sons to continue the lineage. It is not a matter of jobs or earning because not all men earn in the village. It is the matter of having an heir to keep the family's name alive. Here the woman who has only daughters keeps praying to God for at least one son.

Given the importance of sons, the birth of a male child is thought to be ensured through certain medical and spiritual practices in the sub-continent; in some parts of northern India people are known to have employed medicines that are supposed to guarantee a boy. For example, this practice was found in Bijnor where women often used tablets that were believed to change the sex of the baby in utero, the practice of using medicines (*seh palatna*) was common due to the local belief that the baby's sex is not determined until the end of the third month of pregnancy (Jeffery et al. 1989). The preference for a male child and the desire to be rid of unwanted female children in the family was manifested differently in another northern Indian village (Wadley 1993). The green revolution and modernisation changed the work patterns for the community; excessive dowry demands and lost opportunities for female employment encouraged families to neglect female children to the extent that they died (sex-specific mortality) in order to ensure the maximum number of males for the family's well-being. More recently, the practice of sex-selective abortions also exists in India where termination of pregnancy was made legal in 1971 (Arnold et al. 2002). Both sex-selective mortality and selective abortions have been attributed to the dowry

⁵⁹ Although the exchange marriage system is declining in the villages due to its negative consequences, in the areas where it is still practiced, daughters are important to provide the family's heir (her brother) with a wife and children and his mother with an unpaid domestic worker.

system in India (Oldenburg 2002). These practices, however, do not guarantee the birth of sons, but help parents to rid themselves of surplus daughters. As in other Muslim countries, abortion in Pakistan is illegal unless it is performed to save the woman's life. This makes access to safe abortion difficult, particularly in rural areas. Those who have access to healthcare facilities in rural areas, go through scans (ultrasound) in the sixth or seventh month of the pregnancy in order to check the progress of the baby, which is where a baby's sex becomes known, but by then it is too late for an abortion. In the situation where abortion is not permitted, the rate of induced abortions in the country is hard to trace because women are highly unlikely to report it (Sathar et al. 2007). However, this does not mean that restrictions on sex-selective abortion make it less frequent in Pakistan. In a recent report, Zakaria (2015) estimates that over 1.2 million⁶⁰ sex-selective abortions were carried out in Pakistan between 2000 to 2014, an average of 116,384 abortions per year⁶¹ – a rate higher than many countries. Child bearing in Pakistan is a fraught issue; even in the educated families, the possibility of producing a son is linked with a woman and those unable to bear a son rely on misinformation and secrecy.

Despite the common notion of men being the seed providers, it is women who face taunting and rejection for not producing a son. This taunting can be related to the perception that the field (women) could not transform the seed into the male child and thus they are responsible for their inability to produce sons. My data did not provide any evidence of *seh palatna* in the villages, but women in the villages do rely on spiritual methods to maximise their chances of producing a male child. For example, it is a common practice in the villages to obtain a specific prayer (*dua*) from a religious leader or some specific verses (*vazeefa*) from the Quran to ensure the birth of a son. These verses can be recited for several days until the sex of the baby is known. Women may also visit the shrines of saints who are believed to have special contact with god; a wish has higher chances of being granted if it is taken to god by the saint. Thus women who do not have a child or a son often visit shrines with their mothers-in-law (like Subhan in my sample). In this regard, a vow can also be made (*bas basan*) to distribute sweets or food to the needy people should their

⁶⁰ However, this figure is controversial and medical experts argue that these abortions could have been carried out to limit the family size, but there is no evidence that these abortions were sex-selective (see DAWN 2015). It is also very likely that poor rural women are not represented in these figures as it is usual for data from remote villages to go unrecorded.

⁶¹ 'The numbers are calculated using census numbers and life expectancy and then projecting the natural ratio and noting the disparity between what should be and what is' (Zakaria 2015).

prayers be answered. Another common practice in rural areas of Pakistan is to place a baby boy in the lap of the bride on her wedding so that the first child she is to have should be a boy. More commonly, if a baby boy is born within the kin group, women with no sons are made to visit the birth celebration (*chatti*) of the boy. This event takes place on the sixth day after the birth where women from *biradari* are invited. The woman who has no male child is made to sit beside the mother of the newly born boy and then takes the boy in her lap. The women sitting around then sing a song as if the woman who has no son has given birth to the baby. This ritual is considered to maximise the chances of the woman bearing a male child.⁶²

Strong son preference not only tends to increase a woman's fertility but also results in excessive female child mortality such as in India (Gupta et al. 2003) or sex-selective abortions (Arnold et al. 2002). In rural areas of South Asia, such as the one in which I was working, inaccessibility to safe abortions could lead women to have additional numbers of unwanted children, mostly girl children, in the hope of bearing a son. Giving birth to a large number of children jeopardizes a woman's health and ultimately increases her workload in terms of childcare responsibilities along with other household work, thus consuming her time and energies and further undermining her own health. In this situation, the only thing that can be compromised is a woman's own well-being. Although my study does not deal with the issue of high fertility and how it affects women's health, it does reflect the large size of households, women's unlimited tasks in relation to their family responsibilities and women's own accounts of regarding life after marriage as an illness.

Pleasing others

Gender relations are characterised by both cooperation and conflict, and ... their hierarchical character in any given context is maintained or changed through a process of (implicit or explicit) contestation or bargaining between actors with differential access to economic, political, and social power (Agarwal 1994: 52).

Gender hierarchies not only affect relationships between women and men, but also among women and among men. For example, in the patrilineal societies of South

⁶² My colleague Inam, who was from village four, confirmed the prevalence of such practices in his as well as in other villages.

Asia, such as in Pakistan, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law are tied in a relationship of dominance and subordination; it is a struggle for power in which the mother-in-law has the advantage from the beginning (Dube 2001). But how the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law relate to each other is very much affected by their relationship with their men (Agarwal 1994).

Within the patriarchal extended family, daughters-in-law are well aware of the fact that behind this patriarchy, there is often a senior woman (the mother-in-law) who is the enforcer of patriarchal norms in the family (Lieven 2011). The cyclic nature of power encourages women to internalize and reproduce patriarchy because this is the only way they can gain power in later life (Kandiyoti 1988); this benefits a woman when she becomes a mother-in-law and has a junior woman to control – her daughter-in-law. She then uses the delegated authority from her son to control the daughter-in-law the way she herself was controlled when she was a young woman. Age and number of sons therefore play a central role in this cycle (Khan and Hussain 2008); if older women have sons, one will replace their father and become a patriarch, and will perceive their mother as a figure of respect. She then exercises substantial power in the family and enjoys more freedom of movement and opportunities for work. In a study of another Asian society characterized by classic patriarchy – rural Taiwan – Wolf (1972) describes how a woman builds up her power by creating her own family, especially when she has a son and he marries. She then has her own matrifocal group (in Wolf's term a *uterine* family) which gives her power. These are characteristics that Asian patriarchies have in common. How patrilineal family structure positions women is a structural issue which is evident across a wide swathe of Asia. It has changed in some societies as a result of modernisation, just as it has changed in urban areas of Pakistan, but in rural areas, where most of the population live, women's position is changing at a very slow pace.

A mother-in-law's complete dependency on her son increases her fear of losing his support.⁶³ Therefore, she tries to weaken the bond between the son and the daughter-in-law so that she is still the primary figure of her son's affection rather than his wife (Wolf 1972; Kandiyoti 1988). She does not let the daughter-in-law strengthen her own position and reports her son's wife's faults to him, which can be a cause of

⁶³ The only threat that a mother-in-law faces is the daughter-in-law who has the potential to weaken her authority; thus the mother-in-law tries her best to keep the daughter-in-law under her authority and deals with her firmly (Mumtaz and Shaheed 1987).

violence within the family (Blanchet 2001, in Saeed 2012). The mother-in-law's main aim in inciting discord in the family is to remind their sons of their wives' proper place which is lower than the mother-in-law (Khan and Hussain 2008). Therefore, mothers-in-law continue to provoke their sons just to safeguard their own position. Women in the villages of Khairpur experience a similar situation. My participants were from households sharing their hearths and usually men pooled their income to run the extended family; all of the women lived with their husband's parents, and in the larger households with other people such as husband's brothers, husband's brothers' wives, husband's sisters (if not married), and husband's brothers' children. The women told me about mothers-in-law who would often give their daughters-in-law a tough time. For example 17-year-old Shabana, whose mother-in-law played a central role in fostering tension in the family, told me:

You know quarrels are part of every family. My mother-in-law is not good to me; she gets harsh with me on tiny matters. Even if my husband fights with me, she blames me for that. She often remains angry with me, complains to my husband against me and he starts fighting me. I tolerate all this because she is a tough and difficult woman and I also have to save my relationship with my husband so whenever there is any quarrel in the family I have to tolerate it. I do not do anything and listen to whatever she says to me.

According to Chaudhry (2010), the power that older women have makes younger women dependent on them. I argue that the mother-in-law does not have this authority on her own; she receives this delegated authority from her husband and then from her son. The son is first of all her son and then the daughter-in-law's husband. In other words, the daughter-in-law is the last one to claim some ownership of her husband because he has prior relationships as a son and brother. Her influence over one of the powerful persons in the family line (her husband) is enjoyed by someone else (the mother-in-law), as a result, the mother-in-law receives power from the son and the daughter-in-law has very limited autonomy as long as the mother-in-law is alive or until the daughter-in-law has grown children.

The power hierarchy among the married women also affects the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship; the eldest daughter-in-law is more important than other married women in the family. According to Wolf (1972), even if a mother-in-law had a bad relationship with her own mother-in-law, she tries to maintain a good relationship with the eldest daughter-in-law. The eldest daughter-in-law has more

importance for she is the wife of the future patriarch/head of the family; her husband is the first of the power hierarchy and will replace the father-in-law after his death. Usually eldest sons begin to earn first and help their fathers fulfil their responsibilities, therefore, their wives acquire more importance among other daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law are more tolerant towards them. For example, Sarah, who was the eldest daughter-in-law, told me in a focus group discussion: ‘My mother-in-law is very good to me. She treats me like her daughter. She provides me with whatever I need. I am the eldest daughter-in-law’.

This power hierarchy has its pros and cons for both the youngest and eldest daughter-in-law. The eldest daughter-in-law has to make many compromises until she becomes the female patriarch, until then she has to concede because her husband is the eldest son; he has more obligations than his younger brothers, he invests more in the household, spends more and fulfils more responsibilities and his wife has to stand by him. The mother-in-law also tries to influence her eldest son which has side effects for the eldest daughter-in-law, but she also wants to have a flexible relationship with the daughter-in-law knowing that she is going to replace her and hold the power. Similar findings were reported by Wolf (1972) in rural Taiwan where people were reluctant to marry their daughters to an eldest son, but eldest daughters-in-law experienced a more tolerant attitude from their mothers-in-law. On the other hand, the youngest daughters-in-law, who are at the bottom of this hierarchy, are in the least advantageous position. They usually suffer from the mother-in-law’s harsh attitude; she hardly shows any kindness to them knowing that the youngest daughter-in-law’s position in the family would never undermine the older woman’s authority. The youngest daughter-in-law may also offer minimum benefits to her, such as doing house chores and raising children, and she has to continue to perform her household tasks whether or not her mother-in-law treats her well. Shabana, who was the youngest daughter-in-law, complained against her mother-in-law’s unequal treatment in these words: ‘I am the youngest daughter-in-law; my mother-in-law supports her eldest daughter-in-law and fights me because of her’. So it is not always harmonious relationship as it may seem. Women in my sample quite often complained about their mothers-in-law who either gave them tough time by scolding them over little delays or showed more favour to the elder daughter-in-law.

According to Jeffery et al. (1989), the mother-in-law often lives peacefully if she has only one daughter-in-law, unless men in the family decide to split. The problems begin when another son is married; the competition between the two daughters-in-law or rise in family's expense due to the marriage of another son may create a conflict resulting in the separation of hearths. Women are also held responsible for this split as the daughter-in-law may create rivalry between the other daughter-in-law and the mother-in-law or may not follow the ideals set for her and resist her mother-in-law, creating a space for separation, but the separation is subject to her husband's approval and depends on whether or not he is willing to establish a new hearth. Although I have no data on the consequences of rivalry among daughters-in-law, the literature on South Asia indicates the potential for fierce competition among married women in the family, which negatively affects the harmony and makes solidarity difficult (Oldenburg 2002). However, my data clearly indicates past splits between households and among senior brothers; senior brothers did not live in the same household with their junior brothers or if they lived in the larger extended household/compound (*khandaan*), they had separate hearths.

The hierarchy among daughters-in-law has long-term implications; some women reach the position of ultimate female patriarch later than expected if they are not the wives of the eldest son. Since the younger men are not destined to be the patriarch unless they separate, these women cannot reach the status of the most senior woman in the family unless the household is divided, where they can enjoy power by influencing their husband and sons. Younger women cannot gain the opportunity to have an influential role in the family's power structure as long as they continue to share the hearth with their husband's parents and brothers. Although they can control their own daughters-in-law, that is just a segment of the family; they do not have much influence over the patriarch (the eldest brother-in-law) because his own mother and wife will influence him. The younger daughter-in-law is never going to be the ultimate female patriarch, as long as she shares hearth with her affinal family members, unless the eldest son of the family dies and all responsibilities are formally shifted to the younger son or at some point the household segments and the younger son and younger daughter-in-law find their own independent household. So, women cannot become senior women unless their husbands are frustrated with their elder brothers or their own disempowerment, and this certainly happened in the villages; the women married to their father's brother's son and continued to live in the same

larger extended household/compound (*khandaan*) did not share hearths with their natal family. This suggests that a woman does enjoy an influential role of a female patriarch, which is conditional on the household division.

Women's status within the family is also strongly influenced by their husbands' income. The majority of my participants told me that if husbands do not earn and bring in money, their wives are not valued. If a husband earns well, the mother-in-law tries to keep a good relationship with his wife because then he is the major contributor to the family's finances. A woman is often considered to carry less value if her husband earns less or does not earn at all; her worth correlates with her husband's usefulness. For example, 25-year-old Rehana, whose husband had a very humble job, told me:

Well I do not have a happy life in my affinal family. My mother-in-law suspects and objects to everything I do. She gives priority to other sons, their wives and children but not mine because my husband has a humble job, he cannot look after me and my children. When I was pregnant the first time, my mother-in-law asked me to terminate the pregnancy because she thought that she would have to take responsibility for the baby as her son does not earn much. So she sent me to my parents' home for the delivery. Actually my father-in-law is dead, and my mother-in-law gets his pension and manages household finances. She looks after children of her other sons but not mine. It is only because of my children that I am living here and tolerating everything. It often happens that my mother-in-law fights with me and sends me to my birth family, then after a few days she tells me that if you stay at your parents' home, I will not fulfil your responsibilities. I then come back to my home, but she never gives me anything. This makes me go back to my parents again.

Consanguinity has a positive association with mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship in a sense that these women may experience less violence than the women who have non-consanguineous marriages.⁶⁴ If the mother-in-law is the woman's aunt (MZ or FZ), she shows a less rigid attitude towards her.⁶⁵ The women married to their mother's sister's son or father's sister's son referred to their mothers-in-law as *pehnji* (my own) and were satisfied with how they were treated by them. Even though these women told me that sometimes their mother-in-law was hard on

⁶⁴ In the situation where FBs and MBs are better as fathers-in-law and FZs and MZs are better as mothers-in-law, it becomes difficult to find an ideal home where a woman can share a smooth relationship with both parents-in-law unless they and their spouses are double cousins.

⁶⁵ In my sample, three women were married to their FZS and two were married to their MZS.

them, they considered her better than *dhari* (outsider); they tolerated it because to these women the mother-in-law was their own (*pehnji*), and was better than typical mothers-in-law who are often responsible for domestic violence against women. If she is married to her father's sister's son or mother's sister's son, the chances of her being ill-treated by the mother-in-law reduce substantially because the older and the younger woman consider each other mother and daughter respectively. The relationship is likely to be reciprocal in which both the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law show a flexible attitude to each other, but the daughter-in-law, due to her weak position within the hierarchy, is more accommodating. Although there is no compromise on household tasks and the young woman would have to perform her duties the way other women do, she will experience a more accommodating attitude from her mother-in-law. As 24-year-old woman Shabnam, who was married to her mother's sister's son, told me:

My mother-in-law is my *masi* (MZ), she is rarely angry with me because I myself never give her any opportunity. I do all chores on time. Even if she is angry sometimes I never argue with her, I consider her as my mother.

The account of Shabnam suggests that consanguinity that may contribute to a harmonious relationship between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law ultimately contributes to the reproduction of patriarchy; the mother-in-law's strong position in the kin group can make the daughter-in-law more likely to accept her authority. She is the woman's mother's sister or father's sister and this can discourage the younger woman from mistreating or resisting her. Older women do not compromise on standards, they may be more flexible and kinder towards the favoured daughter-in-law – the one who is the eldest or the one whose husband has a good earning – but they do not compromise on power sharing. These younger women defer to the mother-in-law and do not challenge her power because their father's sister (*phupi*) or mother's sister (*masi*) is equal to their mother. So, it is the younger women who compromise within the consanguineous marriage system, not the older women. For example, Nazeeran told me in a focus group discussion:

See! These days it does not matter whether the mother-in-law is *pehnji* (our own). Mothers-in-law keep scolding daughters-in-law, but if daughters-in-law start arguing, it will be a quarrel. If the daughter-in-law is good, she will adjust with all and will also tolerate the attitude of the mother-in-law. Usually in our villages mothers-in-law who are *pehnji* (our own) do not get along well with their daughters-in-law, but daughters-in-law tolerate them.

This suggests that consanguinity further increases women's subordination; it discourages them from spoiling their relationship with the mother-in-law who is also their mother's or father's sister. A woman's parents would not tolerate it if the mother-in-law complained to them against her; in that case, they would usually hold the young woman accountable for this bad relationship, as they believe that a woman is responsible for whatever kind of relationship she has with her in-laws. An unstable relationship between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law would also affect the ties between the woman and her natal family, which would further add to the woman's miseries.

According to Dube (2001) the relationship of dominance between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law may be reversed, and the daughter-in-law may hold the power from the beginning owing to her personality and nature. Similarly, Chi (2011) highlights the situation of mothers-in-law in Taiwan where society has changed as the result of modernization. Older women feel very aggrieved because as daughters-in-law they were totally downtrodden, but now that they have become mothers-in-law they do not have the power that they might have expected to enjoy, due to the decline of the patriarchal family structure in Taiwan. These older women played the waiting game expecting their future daughters-in-law to compensate them for their sufferings, but young Taiwanese women are no longer willing to be subordinate members of the family.⁶⁶ In this case the traditional patriarchal bargain has broken down because of social change. The data from the villages of Khairpur, however, hardly show evidence of the traditional family breaking down; rather, the mother-in-law holds power from the beginning and while she is alive, a daughter-in-law can do little to influence her mother-in-law or resist her. The most that the women in these villages can do is to respond to the mother-in-law or the husband in order to justify their position in a conflictual situation. It does not mean that they try to resist or fight back; they merely attempt to clarify misunderstandings in order to avoid a potentially worsened situation. In so doing, they try their best not to lose control of the situation and prefer to remain silent if they sense that their argument is creating tension. For example, Zainab, a woman in a focus group discussion, told me:

My mother-in-law often scolds me on tiny matters; I sometime argue with her, but I do not let the situation turn too bad.

⁶⁶ Most Taiwanese women refuse to live with their mothers-in-law which undermines the mother-in-law's power.

However, despite all of the good and bad aspects of a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship, the existence of the mother-in-law is very important for a married woman. Marriages in the rural areas are usually arranged by the parents, young women do not have much idea about their future husbands as unmarried boys and girls have very little communication after puberty. Even after marriage, women's shyness discourages them from communicating with their husbands and thus they do not ask questions. A mother-in-law who has raised her son knows him very well and controls him in different ways; for example, her structural location as a mother enables her to persuade her son away from any bad company which might lead him into bad habits such as drug addiction or gambling.⁶⁷ She can also check her son if he is not happy with his marriage and mistreats his wife. This makes the mother-in-law indispensable for the family. Shameem, explaining the importance of a mother-in-law in rural life, told me in a focus group discussion:

In-laws', especially mother-in-law's, support matters a lot in a woman's life. If a woman is not happy with her husband, her in-laws support her to live her life.

A game of waiting, tolerance and least resistance

The life that young married women live in the villages of Khairpur is limited by social and cultural constraints they experience; although this situation makes them unable to influence the situation, it also offers them some avenues for enhancing their survival in the system. Everyday forms of resistance that subordinates practice are often subtle, for example passive noncompliance, hidden damage and deception (Scott 1985). Scott argues that such forms of individual resistance are characteristics of peasants and slaves and their way of responding to their oppression. This is important because considering subordinates as merely obedient can result in missing subtle but strong form of resistance. As subordinates, women can also employ covert resistance. For example, rural women in Bijnor, North India, sometime struggled against their oppression through noncompliance, or by spoiling the food. They also often made mockery of their in-laws in their songs (Jeffery and Jeffery 1996b). However, women's resistance is conditional on the social structure in which they live; it channels and limits their resistance. Women are often aware of the destructive

⁶⁷ Young boys in some of the villages often get involved in drug addiction or gambling. Among the villages I had visited, the fourth village had many young men who were drug addicts and people claimed that they turned into drug addicts through bad company (their friends).

consequences of their resistance and therefore it is their last and least favoured choice until they are brought to the limit of their endurance.

In relation to this, the extent to which a person can bargain is determined by the strength of options s/he has (Agarwal 1997: 4). Therefore, a person with weak or no outside options is less likely to involve him/herself in a conflictual situation which can further weaken his/her position. Women in the villages of Khairpur, who have a very weak fall-back position, tend not to involve themselves in any conflict which can jeopardize their situation further – the cost is too high. Thus, their strategy of surviving patriarchy through submission can be seen as actively chosen behaviour; it involves a realistic assessment of the situation in which they live, in which the cost of active resistance is unaffordable and in which tolerance, passivity and waiting is what results in their long-term benefit. Although I have no data on women's covert resistance, it is possible that such resistance occurs. The women in my sample did talk about quarrels within their families in which they preferred to back down from the argument in order to avoid trouble. More importantly, they talked about the incidents where two women resisted their forced marriages and fled from their villages, but these incidents are rare as they jeopardize women's lives further.

Bargaining strategies are regulated by social norms; these social norms not only limit women's ability to bargain but also make bargaining difficult, as some norms are justified by tradition and go unchallenged. These social norms are affected by gender, age and marital status and usually determine an individual's conduct within the family. 'In many societies, behavior which is assertive and loud is much more tolerated in boys and men than in girls and women, assertiveness is more accepted from older women than younger ones, from mothers-in-law than young daughters-in-law, and from daughters then daughters-in-law' (Agarwal 1997: 17). Similarly, people's expectations of a young married woman matter a great deal in shaping her attitude; a woman is regarded as 'good' on condition of certain specific behaviour towards her elders. For example, she is expected to adjust within her affinal family instead of expecting them to adjust to her, she should mould herself in a way that everyone in the family finds comfortable, she must be tolerant enough to face all difficulties and should never complain whatever the circumstances. Rasool Bux, a father-in-law, told me what he expected from his daughter-in-law:

A good daughter-in-law is one who listens to her husband and does what he wants. She should be patient and capable of adjusting into the family. She should not complain about minor things and try her best to win the hearts of her in-laws. This is what we advise our daughters on their marriages. I know only a husband can stand by a woman in difficult times, therefore, I want women to be good with their husbands. I also tell my sons to be good with their wives and do not do them any injustice.

According to Khan and Hussain (2008), an aggressive woman is characterized as a bad woman especially when her married life has just begun. This label of bad woman not only raises questions over her upbringing but also decreases her sisters' marriage prospects. Women in the villages of Khairpur experience a similar social attitude which discourages them from resisting or raising their voice against the discrimination or exploitation taking place in the family. However, this does not mean that they do not strategize to survive under this exploitation. It is almost impossible for them to reduce the exploitation they experience, therefore, they strategize to minimize anything that could jeopardize their survival in their affinal family. For example, the majority of the women prefer to adopt toleration and patience as strategies for avoiding conflict and surviving in the family. By so doing, they are not only regarded as good women, but may also strengthen their position within the affinal family. This strategy also facilitates them in maintaining a smooth relationship with the mother-in-law, for example Mukhi, a mother-in-law, told me in a focus group discussion:

I have one daughter-in-law, she has four children. She looks after everything and does all house chores. I look after her children when she is busy. She is good to me and respects me a lot, even if I scold her sometime, she never argues with me.

A good marriage seems to be solely a young woman's responsibility; everybody expects something or other from her that she has to oblige. For example, all mothers-in-law require their daughters-in-law to be submissive, composed, patient, a homemaker, perfect in house management and so on. All of the mothers-in-law with whom I held the focus group discussion had a very demanding attitude towards their daughters-in-law. For example, Sakina told me about her expectations of the daughter-in-law:

A good daughter-in-law should be loving, caring and should know how to manage a house on a small income. Parents-in-law always like a daughter-in-law who is not extravagant and saves the family's resources. She should

respect us and do house chores. Apart from this, she should also engage in handicraft work such as making mats or sewing.

The mother-in-law's expectations of her daughter-in-law may often be enforced by the son; older women also associate the attitudes of daughters-in-law with how effectively their husbands control them. A man is considered strong if he controls his wife. What is meant by 'controlling' is that he would make her do what his parents, especially the mother, expect from her. In other words, the mother-in-law first of all tries to control the daughter-in-law by influencing her son. For example, Mona, a mother-in-law, told me:

A daughter-in-law's being good to the family depends on the son. If the son is good, he will make his wife respect his parents, do chores and serve all.

In a patriarchal society where men control everything, including women, and then older women control younger women, it is almost impossible for young women to resist discrimination. Some women may have to think through different ways of dealing with their mothers-in-law to avoid making mountains out of molehills. For example, if a woman cannot cook a meal on time, she will have to think about a good excuse or justification to keep herself safe from the mother-in-law's anger. Even if the daughter-in-law were delayed in her work for some specific and valid reason, the mother-in-law would not tolerate it because other family members may question the mother-in-law's supervision. This situation can be conflictual if the daughter-in-law does not behave with patience. 20-year-old Safia, whose mother-in-law often remained angry about delays, told me:

My mother-in-law is often angry with me when there is any delay in house chores. Obviously she is my elder, and it is her duty to enquire about the delay. I explain to her or sometimes I just make any reason from my side to cool her down.

Another point is that young women in their households are deprived of any support when they are facing problematic situations in the household. They are not powerful enough to contest a situation in which they are innocent, but are considered guilty. There is nobody to support them. Rather, all will blame them, including their parents who always discourage their daughters from causing any discord. This leaves women with no recourse but to tolerate every kind of exploitation and discrimination against them. Usually they behave as if nothing has happened, continue doing their household work and act as if they are indifferent to a violent situation. Shabana, a 17-

year-old woman who usually experienced quarrels around small issues in the family, told me:

Usually there is quarrel when I cannot cook food on time, all family members start scolding me. What can I do in that situation? I just remain quiet and do my work.

Another woman, Shahul, who considered patience as the main component of a woman's happy life, said in a focus group discussion:

If a woman has patience, she gets on very well with her family members. If ever I cannot cook food on time, my husband gets angry, but I remain quiet. My husband understands that there must be something that delayed my cooking. When he has cooled down, I explain to him the reason, and he understands.

Harmony and peace within the family is maintained through different stakeholders; women play the central role, but because they remain invisible in doing so their efforts are not appreciated. The credit for keeping harmony within the family and running family affairs smoothly is often claimed by senior women because they supervise the household. Older women think that if their families are running smoothly, the credit goes to them. If daughters-in-law are good, it is because mothers-in-law treat them well. If daughters-in-law do all tasks on time, it is because mothers-in-law make them do so. In actuality, young women's contribution to the harmony within their families often goes unnoticed. For women, it is not only matter of their survival but also of respect. Because of that they maintain peace within their families, sometimes very wisely. Shahida, who would deal her in-laws tactfully, told me in a focus group discussion:

If a woman is aggressive, short-tempered and inflexible, she is often beaten. See whenever I see there is any problem that has made men emotional, I keep quiet and do not say a single word. I know they will be ok after releasing their anger. Therefore, it is better to keep quiet and wait. Men usually get angry when food is not ready on time. If the woman is sensible, she will not say anything and will keep cooking the food. But if the woman starts arguing with the man, she will definitely be beaten. A few women argue a lot with men. Sometime they tell their men 'so what if food is not ready on time, you do not have to get to the office'. This infuriates men.

Women know that if they do not follow what is expected of them, they will have to pay a high price in the shape of violence and abuse. This will further reduce their self-esteem and affect their long-term future interests because then these women will be recognized as bad women. Therefore, it is better for them to adopt patience and tolerance as a short-term strategy until their children are grown up and they marry them off.

Certain factors like a person's available options and social and legal legitimacy define his or her bargaining power. A person with good external options and legitimacy defined by culture, caste and kinship would have advantages (Agarwal 1994). Within the household, culture influences women's ability to bargain; for example, Tibeto-Burman women in Nepal do not observe purdah, enjoy considerable free mobility and actively participate in economic activities that also include agriculture and trade. Nevertheless, these women experience certain invisible aspects of gendered behavioural norms that affect their bargaining and prevent them from negotiating their material rights (Agarwal 1997).

Women in the villages of Khairpur do not have any outside resources with which to bargain. Therefore, they have to think through different ways to negotiate options from within the family for their survival. They know well that the price of resistance against exploitation would be too high for them and would also devalue them before others, therefore, strategizing from their weak positions within the family is the only option left for them in dealing with an unwanted situation. For example, 20-year-old Ruqaiya, who often dealt with her husband tactfully whenever there was any quarrel, told me:

Quarrels in the family infuriate all but if I see that my husband is angrier than me, I keep quiet in the fear that he might start beating me. He never beats me though. If I have done something that has made him angry, I do not argue because he might beat me, which is not good for me. He scolds me, calls me dumb, deaf etc., but he never calls me names. So I let him say whatever he wants to, once his anger is released, he is ok.

Women understand the situation so well that they prefer never to resist any discrimination against them. They know that the result of resistance would be to decrease their worth in the eyes of others, and they will only receive taunting and abuse in return. Nobody is there to support them because they are required to be submissive, tolerant and calm, and they have to fulfil that expectation no matter

what. So if there is any quarrel or fight, they are the ones who should deal with the situation, cool the other party down even if they are not guilty and never argue with in-laws. For example, Asiya said in a focus group discussion:

See if a man is angry and woman also gets angry, what will happen? There will be serious fight. A man brings [marries] a woman to serve him. If the woman does not do her husband's work and starts arguing with him, he will definitely beat her, but if the woman explains to him when his anger is released, he will understand it.

Women's Wishes

Women are often considered responsible for their subordination, but it is the system that is behind the reproduction of their subordination (Delphy and Leonard 1992). The patriarchal structure in the villages of Khairpur not only facilitates women's subordination, it also makes their lives very difficult for a long period, during which they lack the care and respect of others. The cyclical nature of women's autonomy empowers older women in one way, but on the other hand, it exploits younger women. These young married women suffer for such a long time that their reflections on their lives clearly show dissatisfaction, particularly when they did not have anything to take pride in, such as education or employment. Their wishes for their own daughters, for whom they want a better life, suggest that these women did not want their daughters to suffer like they had. For example, 20-year-old Najma told me:

I want to see my daughters happy and settled in their life. Their life should be better than mine. What is in my life? No education, no awareness, I want them to have an education at least.

In the family domain, young married women are not only dominated by men, older women such as mothers-in-law or sisters-in-law (HBWs) also intervene in young women's lives (Shaheed 1998b). The pattern of social life in which women live in rural South Asia prevents them from being openly critical of their situation, there are, however, ways in which their exploitation is reflected. For example, the devaluation of a woman as a wife is reflected in many women's songs in northern India; these songs are sung from the perspective of a wife and express awareness of the kinship system where women as wives are at the bottom. In many women's songs, the

marital bond is prioritized where they seem to be envisioning a change in family's power relations (Raheja and Gold 1994). Women can sing such songs to make mockery of their husbands and in-laws (Jeffery and Jeffery 1996b). This indicates that the expression of women's suppressed feelings is expected in this kind of situation where women indicate substantial discontent through indirect communication. Although there is a great stigma attached to women's direct articulation of their discontent, there are occasions that provide women with opportunities to express the oppression they go through, though indirectly, by singing the songs that represent their situation or by discussing other women's plight. Women in my sample also avoided directly communicating their discontent with life, but they talked about their wish for a better life for their daughters which was indicative of their feelings about their own lives. Similarly, some women pointed to problems in women's lives in general rather than directly discussing their own experience, which also highlighted problems in their own situation. Other women did vocalize some discontent when talking to me. For example, Rehana clearly expressed how cruel her mother-in-law was; she would send Rehana back to her natal family to avoid the expenses and care related to her delivery. 24-year-old Shabnam also complained about her mother-in-law who was more caring towards another daughter-in-law. These were some instances where women openly discussed their discontent.

Women's suffering in their married lives helps them to realise the causes of their unhappiness. For example, women in the villages of Khairpur understand that early marriage is not good for girls while education is. Mukhtiar, who was married at the age of 12, expressed her wishes for her daughters in these words:

I want to educate my children. They should have all the luxuries of life like good clothing. I do not want to marry my daughters at an early age. They should have some education and sense before marriage.

Economic disparity also makes women's lives difficult. Apart from serving the family members, these women have to engage in craft work for their family's well-being; this makes their lives even more difficult as they hardly have any time for rest. To them, the labour they do to support their husband in maintaining the family is more important than their health, but at some point in life they do realise that they are caught in a vicious circle that they cannot escape. It is due to this that they do not

want to see their daughters experiencing the same miseries. For example, 20-year-old Ruqaiya, who had only one daughter, told me:

I have one daughter. I want to marry her into a prosperous family so she may not face financial problems like me. She should have good food to eat and money to spend. Her life should not be difficult so she may not curse her parents afterward that they made her life hell. It is because of this reason that I never wanted daughters. Girls' lives here are full of pain. I have seen many women in my neighbourhood who have a very unhappy life.

Like many other women Ruqaiya does not talk about her own life being miserable; she talks about other women. Despite the complaints that these women had against mothers-in-law, they did not give the impression of being thoroughly downtrodden by the patriarchal system. They complained about their mothers-in-law but seemed to cope with it. They did not thoroughly reflect on their lives' difficulties, but rather talked about the unhappiness in terms of women in general, and yet what they wish for their daughters indicates that they were aware of the injustices they had faced. It is interesting that these women were amazingly uncomplaining about their awful lives. When I first interviewed them one of the striking things was that these women, who in my view led a very miserable life, seemed in many ways quite happy, although they hoped for a better life for their daughters.

Conclusion

Young women in the villages of Khairpur use various ways to negotiate with patriarchy. Of all the approaches that women use to improve their position, producing children in order to have sons has utmost importance. Although women have no real control on ensuring the birth of a son, they strategize to rely on spiritual methods to increase the chances of a son. A son, in this patrilineal society, fulfils many important interests for the family such as continuing the lineage, fulfilling the financial needs of the family, providing the family with security and so on. This increases the preference for sons, and women who do not produce sons soon after their marriage live in fear and stress until they succeed in doing so. The girl child is also important and benefits her family in terms of household and craft work, but because of social restrictions on young women, they cannot provide the family with as many advantages as sons do. Although it takes a great deal of time for a son to

grow up and be in a position where his mother influences him and becomes part of the power structure in the family, women's son preference is usually apparent in their lives. Producing a son and raising him can be seen as a long-term approach to enter the power corridor, until then women have to wait with patience and tolerate the exploitation they experience within their affinal family. Women prefer to accept this situation against them because the cost of resistance is too high and may further disempower them; social norms limit their bargaining power and they cannot afford the price of resistance. Therefore, they adopt the strategy of pleasing others with tolerance and patience to maintain good relations with their in-laws, especially the mother-in-law – the female patriarch. Women try to give their family members little opportunity to initiate any discord in the family, but by doing so, they have to travel a long road of exploitation and subordination until they reach the status of the mother-in-law and reproduce that same subordination by controlling their own daughters-in-law.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

This final chapter centres on the key findings of my research and my contribution to understanding the lives of rural women in Pakistan. For me, the journey of writing this thesis was a novel encounter in terms of my own experience. Part of the novelty was accessing villages and observing what was going on there. Since I did not hail from the region where I conducted my research, and was born and bred in a completely different environment from what I had observed in the villages, a sense of discovery always accompanied me throughout my fieldwork, which began as soon as I entered the first village. This was the first time I had observed the conditions of life for rural women. I gained practical experience of the extent of deprivation that I had known of on an intellectual level; despite having known that these women were poor and downtrodden, spending time with them and observing how constrained their lives were was an illuminating experience.

Collecting data from the villages was a difficult task in terms of extracting women's experiences, and analysing the data in order to illustrate exactly what was happening was a challenging task. In making sense of the data, I found Kandiyoti's (1988) theory of patriarchy fitted perfectly with the situation I had researched, but I also found Walby's concept of 'private patriarchy' (1990) or 'private gender regime' (2011) relevant to my observations. I also applied Lukes' (1974, 2005) theory of power to the way patriarchal power works in the villages. Kandiyoti fits well with Asian forms of patriarchy; a number of people have used her theory in such a context, whereas Lukes' theory has not been used in similar research. So, my use of Lukes is more original than my use of Kandiyoti. Application of these theories was an innovative idea in one way or another: for example, exploring women's lives in rural Sindh through Kandiyoti's perspective, which proved to be particularly applicable to the women in this region, and exploring a family's power distribution among its members, using Lukes' theory, was a new application of that theory to a rural setting. Hence, I want to highlight some significant elements of the study that I can claim to be the key findings of my research. In doing so, I am not going to elaborate upon the important elements chapter by chapter; I would rather extract the

main findings of the whole thesis and discuss them in detail, because all of them are interrelated in one way or another. These important aspects of women's lives shall indicate how the study as a whole has dealt with the critical situation of women living in rural areas, and how these women, with their available resources, struggle for their survival.

Women in Sindh can be divided into three main categories taking the shape of a pyramid; the first category of women, who live in big cities with modern facilities, constitute the top of the pyramid, the second category comprises those living in towns with moderate social services who belong to the middle part of the pyramid, and the third category or bottom part of the pyramid are the women who live in villages without any proper social services. These women form the majority of the pyramid but are far removed from basic social rights and opportunities. The social group I was dealing with belonged to the bottom of the pyramid. There are other inequalities that intersect with these, for example in cities and towns, there are both rich women and poor women and their lives are very different from each other, but in the villages, a huge majority of women are underprivileged. These women are almost universally poor.

The women I have researched are the most deprived and oppressed in the country. They live under a particularly rigid form of what Kandiyoti (1988) calls 'classic patriarchy'. Kandiyoti argues that in spite of restrictions imposed by patriarchy, women strategize to survive and negotiate with it; I wanted to analyse my participants' lives through Kandiyoti's conceptualization. I had been living in the region where classic patriarchy was prevalent, but I was not much affected by it for two reasons; one, I was born and bred in a nuclear family and secondly, I had an exercisable right over my father's property. I cannot therefore generalize from my own experience and do not represent the majority living at the centre or the bottom of the pyramid. Although classic patriarchy was prevalent in my hometown and women living in towns were affected by it, it was not as rigid as it was in the villages where women were living their lives in a constrained environment. I therefore explored the dense base of the pyramid through Kandiyoti's conceptualization, but I first assessed women's lives through what Walby (1990, 2011) has classified as 'private patriarchy' or 'private gender regime'.

The limited existing knowledge about the lives of rural women in Pakistan presents an extreme picture; one can imagine, through studies and media reports, that women are very oppressed. While this is probably the case, their lives and situations do not seem to be significant enough to be the focus of much research. Various studies, such as Sathar and Kazi (2000) and Jejeebhoy and Sathar (2001), present quantitative analyses of women's lives and draw conclusions in numerical terms. Such studies offer an overview of women's disadvantaged position, but present little insight into their day to day experiences at different stages of their lives. They reveal descriptive information about how disadvantaged women are, but the most important knowledge about how women struggle and continue to survive in disadvantageous situations, with limited opportunities, has not gained much attention from researchers. Unlike the previous studies that present the situation of women living in rural areas from the surface and mostly through statistics, my research presents a qualitative analysis of women's lives; it is in their lives under the surface where women endure and suffer.

Quantitative studies conducted in Pakistan (such as Sathar and Kazi 2000; Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001) usually address what women do or do not do, but the findings of my study give detailed answers to *why* women act as they do. For example, Sathar and Kazi (2000) indicate women's lack of participation in family decision-making; they present statistical data about the distribution of power within families, but they do not critically assess why women are excluded from power. Most importantly, women's own views about family's power structure have been ignored by all studies. Although my study also has few limitations due to the specific time period for fieldwork, it still represents more insight into women's lives than other quantitative studies. My study brings rural women to the forefront and explores their lives from their own perspectives and through their own accounts. Thus, the main findings, which I outline below, contribute to deepening understanding and knowledge of the situation of rural women.

Social Insecurity and the Perpetuation of Patriarchy

Pakistan is a poor country which for long has been failing to provide its citizens with social protection (Gazdar 2011). The country does not have an integrated system of social services and the limited facilities available in rural areas are often inaccessible

to villagers due to bad governance and violations of the constitution that ensures equal social protection for all citizens (Syed 2004). In addition, irregularities of law and corruption make it difficult for common people to receive justice. Life in the villages of Khairpur is far from being of a good standard due to poverty, and lack of governance and service delivery exacerbate this situation; people cannot access proper employment, they do not enjoy social services provided by the state or even receive financial support in time of need. Villagers often complained about not receiving help from the state in time; in the fifth village, there was no health clinic and villagers had to travel to the main city for medical treatment. It becomes very hard for them if any medical emergency takes place during the night. In other villages, young men were mostly unemployed and not drawing any regular income; the families who received a little financial help from the government under the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) also complained about the irregularities in the payments. In a situation where the state fails to provide social protection, it is not just the individual who suffers but the entire family. This encourages villagers to build their own localized institutions, such as consanguineous and exchange marriages, embedded in the local culture, to ensure their security and safeguard their future. Villagers not only take these institutions for granted but also favour them strongly as ways of preserving their life-long social security. In other words, the institution of consanguineous marriage is designed to serve the interest of the family as a collective group, which in turn reinforces patriarchy.

Poverty is strongly associated with the perpetuation of patriarchy in the villages of Khairpur. The oppressive patriarchal system prevalent in rural areas is reinforced through poverty and low standards of living; both exacerbate the stranglehold of male dominance and contribute to its maintenance. To the villagers, close kin endogamy seemed a reliable solution to the problems of social insecurity and may save the family's time and energies, but it is an introverted solution; it is an inward looking way of addressing a problem in which kin stick very closely together. This may help them in achieving their specific interests, in terms of receiving timely support from other kin who live very close, but limits their access to wider networks of support. There are other ways of organising kinship in other societies; for example, clan exogamy in China aims at creating alliances between clans (Wolf 1972), and in Africa exogamous marriages are encouraged due to their political

significance (Goody 1976). In these contexts, exogamous marriages can be used as a means of strengthening ties and seeking the family's security in time of local emergencies and crises such as flood or famine through spreading their alliances. Close kin endogamy, on the other hand, not only restricts the villagers' opportunities to form wider alliances but also endangers their lives should any local emergency occur.

In the patriarchal setting of the villages of Khairpur, family is more important than individuals; men and women make sacrifices for the sake and long-term interest of the family and do what is expected of them. Once they are older, their own children follow the same cultural norms to fulfil their parents' expectations, to please them and protect the family. This also creates respect for elders among the younger generation, because elders are considered to have struggled their entire life and made sacrifices for the good of the family. Therefore, these localized institutions are accepted by all, for the long-term interest of the family, without any question. This is cyclical; a person follows and supports the localized institutions in the hope that in future s/he will benefit from them when their own children come to follow the same cultural patterns.

The situation suggests another issue for a possible future study – men's bargaining with patriarchy. In the context of prevalent cultural practices that ensure villagers long-term social security, there is no denying that men as well as women make compromises in the family's interest; there may be educated men who want to marry educated women, but due to the rigid culture and consanguineous marriage system this may not be possible. Similarly, a man who wanted to pursue education could be married off at a young age, become a father and have familial responsibilities before he can fulfil his dreams of higher education. A younger son who cannot succeed to the position of the patriarch may remain subordinate to his brothers unless he is able to found his own household. In a strongly patrilineal and patriarchal setting where women find themselves making compromises at every step, this in a way also applies to men.

The inability of the state to provide social security increases the need for male children. The male child provides security in many ways, such as economic security, old age security for his parents, a guarantee of the continuation of lineage and so on.

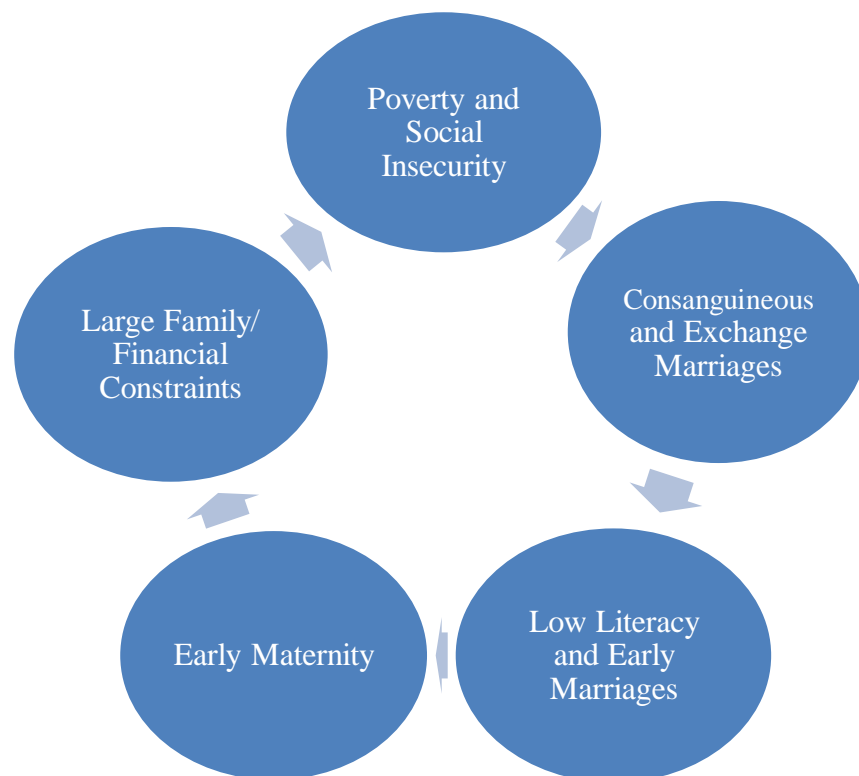
Moreover, he is the one who is the source of social networking within the kin group as he is a permanent member of his family. Social expectations attached to male kin make him indispensable to the family. Therefore, a woman with numerous male children is respected when she is young and gains much power in old age. However, in the strong consanguineous marriage and exchange marriage system, where it is practiced, a girl child is also needed in a way that she can ease the way of strengthening her natal family's ties in the kin group through her marriage or can provide a bride for her brother through exchange marriage. Contrary to the common belief and practice prevalent in Pakistani society, women also want a girl child for themselves. It is only the daughter who supports the mother through thick and thin before her marriage, but women are helpless before the culture that entitles a girl to only temporary membership of her natal family and holds a male child as invaluable. Ultimately, they prefer males over females.

The social insecurity that strengthens the desire for a male child is the main reason behind consanguineous marriages; in a situation of extreme economic deprivation where people live hand-to-mouth, they try to find the best possible options for assuring that they do not have to spend large amounts of money on their children's marriages. Consanguineous marriages save money for both of the families who otherwise would have to take loans or sell some precious things to meet the financial requirements of the marriage. A consanguineous marriage reduces the burden of dowry from the parents of a woman; parents usually give their daughters useful everyday items as a dowry, and in-laws accept the woman with whatever she has been given. For young men, these marriages not only exempt them from the burden of bride price but also give them assurance that the woman they are marrying is modest and a virgin, since they know that their family's women live under strict surveillance. Therefore, men and women generally prefer consanguineous marriages because they smooth an otherwise difficult path for them and their families.

Reasons for consanguineous marriages and why women accept the system have never been fully researched in Pakistan (Hussain 1999); a few studies were conducted but they either present a generalized picture of Pakistani women, ignoring ethnic differences between the provinces, or specifically focus on the Punjab province (see Alavi 1972; Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001; Sathar and Kazi 2000; Chaudhry 2010); in Sindh specifically this topic has never been examined. My

research not only provides an insight into consanguineous marriages by explaining how and why people prefer this system, but also describes the unseen picture of the kinship system in rural Sindh. The condition of women under the kinship system, which rests on consanguinity, has also been assessed through my study. Aspects of the situation I observed in the Khairpur region might also apply to other rural areas of Pakistan because the majority of the population lives in poverty in rural areas. Therefore, a general picture of the kinship system and women’s position in rural areas of Pakistan can be deduced from my study, but it is also necessary to recognize cultural variations, and, therefore, to conduct similar studies in other regions.

Figure 17: The Cyclic Nature of how Social Insecurity Affects Women’s Lives



The Pattern of Underage Marriage

Underage marriages were prevalent among the women I interviewed, and this is closely related with the practice of consanguineous marriages. The legal age of marriage for women in Pakistan is 16, but according to government statistics about 13 per cent of women marry before the age of 15 (Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2006-07). Given that most of the people in rural areas do not actually know

how old they are, the official statistics for underage marriage probably underestimate its prevalence. This may be the case in my study as well; the age that the women I spoke to gave me was not precise but an estimate, and therefore it may be the case that they were even younger than stated when they married. In the group I was dealing with, 15 women told me that they were married before the age of 15, and the median age for marriage was also 15. Having no record of one's age is very common in villages; since women usually deliver babies at home and villagers do not keep any written record of their children's births, it becomes hard to memorize when every child was born. Therefore, they often guess their children's age or compare it with another child who was born at the same time. Women usually estimate their ages using the time of their first menstruation. Their national identity cards (NIC) are created based on the estimation of their parents. If a woman had her first menstruation at the age of 11, she and her parents would not remember the exact age of her first menstruation and would estimate it at around 12-13. This indicates that underage marriage is probably more prevalent than official statistics suggest. Villagers generally guess a woman's age at two or three years older than she actually is.

Young age at marriage is not necessarily a result only of consanguineous marriage; there are other underlying reasons that make underage marriages prevalent in South Asia. For example, according to Dube (2001), the notion of women's status as a guest at her parents' house or 'someone else's property' and that a woman's permanent place is her husband's house is central to early marriage.

Commodification of women and economic disparity can also be related with child marriage where a woman's marriage ensures her natal family's security (Khan 2006). In the villages where I was working, early marriage was associated with consanguineous marriage because the kinship system pre-selects a daughter's future husband (or a small range of options), often when she is still a child, so that marriage can be quickly arranged as soon as she reaches puberty.

Age of puberty [first period] is a determinant of a woman's marriage; as soon as a woman has her first period, her parents start preparing for her marriage. However, the practice seems to be less prevalent in families where girls' schooling is encouraged. This is in accordance with the common notion that a girl's schooling delays her marriage, but unfortunately, the families that encourage women's

education are very few. Only five women in my sample had secondary level education up to 10th grade and married at a median age 17, one out of the five women continued her education after 14 years of marriage. This lack of education indicates that the problem of underage marriage will persist as the rural areas of Sindh have a very low female literacy rate, which is rising at a negligible pace.

Consanguineous marriages are strongly associated with underage marriage; these marriages provide parents with suitable options for their daughters. Girls and boys are paired off when they are quite young children so they know whom they are going to marry. Since the parents already have a man available for the daughter, they do not waste time in fixing her marriage and shedding their burden. This also decreases women's chances of having an education because marriage is *sine qua non* and education is considered irrelevant to them. Thus, marriage sidelines the option of schooling for woman, and the chances of gaining an education are further reduced once she enters into the contract of marriage and produces children. Her life is then burdened with household tasks and looking after children, and the option of having an education is eliminated.

Women's literacy is considered a threat to patriarchy. Villagers think that education makes a girl rebellious and powerful enough to resist the decisions of her parents and to question cultural practices. One form this resistance might take would be in choosing her own future partner, or in refusing her parents' choice if she does not approve of their selection. This could be a great threat to patriarchal power, and if one woman were to do it, others would follow. Therefore, fearing the destabilization of their culture, villagers prefer not to educate women. Secondly, educating a woman would also delay her marriage which is not acceptable to her natal family or to future in-laws as marriages are central to a family's social networking.

In a recent positive move, the Sindh government has proposed to improve its long-standing Child Marriage Act, which has been in force since 1929. According to this act, a person found guilty of involvement in child marriage can be sentenced to three months imprisonment and a fine of 1000 rupees (Approximately £5). However, decision makers should understand that they need to improve other social conditions to rid society of underage marriage. The amendment to the old act would not make the expected impact unless the core issues supporting child marriage are addressed

(Agha 2012). The practice of child marriage is embedded in poverty; to the villagers, social security and survival are more important than laws. The provincial government needs to implement improved programs for poverty reduction as well as bringing proper employment opportunities to the region, otherwise young women in the villages will be used to ensure their families' secure future.

Consequences of Consanguineous Marriages for Women

Consanguineous marriages are the most common and preferred kind of marriages among people in the villages of Khairpur involving both costs and benefits for women; for example, unequal marriages are more likely to take place, such as a union between an older man and a younger woman. Limited options available within the kin group minimize the chances of finding a suitable partner; an educated girl can be married off to a man with little literacy, or if the man were not literate, his family would discourage their prospective daughter-in-law's education. In that case, the parents arrange the marriage of their daughter because marriage is more important to them than her education. Some of these problems may not be due to consanguineous marriage per se but may be due to other factors associated with it such as early marriage. Since my sample does not include any non-consanguineous marriages, I cannot compare the consequences of each.

Generally speaking, consanguineous marriages as a rule affect rural women's education. The majority of people in the villages of Khairpur are poor and cannot afford to educate even their male children to a high level. Therefore, people have to involve their young sons in paid work. Despite going to school for a few years, boys start engaging in formal labour from a very young age in order to support the family. Parents think that since education will not provide their men with formal jobs, it is better not to educate them, while the reality is the other way around; these young men do not have enough education to acquire a formal job. Whatever the case, the low literacy of men directly affects women's literacy, since men are not educated, they discourage women's education. Since women's schooling is considered a potential tool to be used to undermine patriarchal control, parents and future in-laws of a girl would never encourage her education if the man engaged to her is not

educated. Therefore, they try to discourage her education by pressurizing her parents and the girl would end up leaving school.

One form of consanguineous marriages – exchange marriages – is declining in this area of rural Sindh for exchange marriage offers more disadvantages than advantages. It exacerbates inequality among couples and often results in destroying the lives of four persons. Although it serves the economic interests of two families, its drawbacks have discouraged people in the villages where it is witnessing decline. Exchange marriages are reciprocal; if one marriage does not work, it may affect the other marriage and the net result is hatred and broken ties between the two families which are often those of two brothers. Therefore, people prefer to safeguard good relations between siblings and avoid exchange marriage which can threaten their relationships.

On the other hand, consanguineous marriages can, with their pros and cons, help women in channelling their wants to the patriarch through the husband or the mother-in-law, because their in-laws are usually aunts and uncles. Marrying close kinsmen not only eases the adjustment to the affinal home because in-laws are known, but also helps women to channel their wants through their husbands who are their close kin or their mothers-in-law if they are their mothers' or fathers' sisters. Therefore women themselves favoured these marriages. This often creates a way for women to gain some influence in the family's decision-making. Fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law are strong authority figures and are also known to the women, therefore women might be able to do what they want through them. However, these authority figures are highly respected because they are uncles and aunts and women see them taking the place of their parents. Thus there are two different sides of consanguineous marriages from women's point of view; on one hand they are marrying into a family they know, which gives them a chance to negotiate when they need something, but on the other hand, because they are very close kin, aunts and uncles actually have a position of strong authority. It is precisely because of that close relation that these women have to deal their in-laws with a great deal of respect. Therefore, they cannot resist being exploited by their own aunts and uncles, who exercise power over them. A minor gesture of resistance can put women in an awkward situation, in which they would be blamed and labelled as 'bad' women. Therefore, they prefer to tolerate exploitation and then reproduce it in their later life. Although economic and cultural

factors strengthen approval for consanguineous marriages, women seem to prefer these marriages partly because of their own convenience, but mostly because they do not have any exposure to life outside their kin group. Their fear of the unknown discourages them from even thinking of marriages outside the kin group. In the enclosed life that women live, anything external can be terrifying for them.

Consanguineous marriages accommodate both parties well, but women have to pay a big price in the long-term. Consanguinity accommodates and encourages power of domination in order to maintain power hierarchy. The ultimate authority, at least theoretically, rests with the most senior man – the patriarch; the power is further delegated downwards according to a hierarchy in which junior women occupy the most subordinate position. The women who are wives of younger sons find themselves out of the power corridor and do not enjoy ultimate power as long as they share hearth with in-laws. There is strict gendered division of labour where the responsibility for all household tasks falls on women. They have to do hard physical labour, look after their children, the elderly, the sick and guests; looking after cattle and livestock is also their responsibility. They lack control over resources as well as the way they wish to pursue their lives. The sexual division of labour influenced by the culture not only facilitates men's control over all resources but also confines women to the household where they are the centre of all activities. Men's labour cannot be compared with women's labour; men work for a few hours a day while women work long hours with no support from men. Since the sexual division of labour is followed strictly, it results in the asymmetry of gendered tasks; tasks related to women are regarded as feminine and men's involvement in feminine tasks is considered disgraceful and antithetical to masculinity. Women can help men in whatever men want them to do but men are not supposed to support women even if women want them to.

Women's Survival Lies in Pleasing Others

A girl child's existence is generally less favoured in rural areas, despite the fact that she pleases everybody in her family more than her male counterpart. Whether it is in the matter of marriage or other duties, she is the one who never thinks of saying NO

to her elders, and she continues with this apparently passive attitude of meeting others' expectations throughout her life. No matter how overloaded she is with these requirements, she always tries her best to fulfil what is expected of her in order to please others because therein lies her survival. Similarly, the work that women do for long hours as part of their duties makes others happy; this is how they are respected and ensure their life-long survival in the affinal family. In spite of this, women's work is seen as having no value because their labour is taken for granted under the contract of marriage; it is seen as unproductive labour that society does not recognize. This, according to Delphy and Leonard (1992), is a culturally rooted phenomenon; it is not that this work is intrinsically unproductive, it is simply culturally defined as unproductive because it is performed under the contract of marriage. My study confirms the same phenomenon in the villages of Khairpur where women, in spite of working several hours a day, do not see themselves as doing anything because their work is not valued. Although their work is seen as unproductive and valueless, it is essential for all family members, and, therefore, they are indispensable to the family.

Moreover, the lack of financial resources within the family encourages these women to engage in craft work to generate some income. Most of the things that women produce are also used by their family members, who would otherwise have to spend money on such items; for example, they sew clothes and make quilts and mats for the family. They also produce these items for sale which contributes to the family's finances. Contrary to how women's work is socially seen, it is central in maintaining the family members' lives and contributes to the welfare of the family.

Actions are not the only measures for assessing agency, speech practices of individuals may also provide evidence of the practice of agency as conditions of severe oppression make it hard for individuals to resist actively (Madhok et al. 2013). Madhok et al. (2013) point out the limitations of understanding agency and argue for a conceptual shift in order to 'pay attention to the sociality of persons and to the peculiarities of social and historical circumstances in which persons fulfil their moral obligations and pursue life plans and choices' [106]. Just as Madhok et al. (2013) shift the focus from action to speech in analysing displays of agency, I argue that agency can also be displayed through conformity rather than resistance through either action or speech. The very system that oppresses women may provide the

opportunity to them to fulfil their obligations and demonstrate agency through conformity. Women told me that they worked from dawn to dusk and tried to complete their tasks on time to avoid the mother-in-law's rebukes. They disclosed what happened to the women who were not obedient. They told me that delays annoy men and the mother-in-law and that they would be scolded if they did not do their tasks on time (see Chapter 7). Women also said that if the mother-in-law was offended, they would make any excuse to save themselves. They thus demonstrated a degree of awareness of their situation and a conscious decision to comply with others' demands in order to survive, which illustrates agency through conformity rather than resistance.

These conditions are usually simply seen as evidence of women's subordination, but these are also actively adopted strategies for survival. Women are oppressed and therefore they work from dawn to dusk, but they also realize that if they work well and please others, it will win them approval. That is how they advance their interests within the system. Families appropriate women's labour, but women do not resist as they use this labour as a strategy to negotiate with patriarchy. They prefer to be experts in household-related responsibilities to maximize the family's dependence on them; this not only makes them indispensable to the family but also increases their value before others. Knowing that this is the only way to win approval, these women leave no stone unturned to adjust well within a patriarchal system even if they have to take on the burden of multiple or unlimited tasks.

Women strategize to manage their workload inside the household through sharing or delegating duties; other married women – sisters-in-law, who are in the same situation – might typically assist them. The young married women distribute household tasks among themselves thus enabling each other to have some free time to be utilized for another activity, usually craft work. However, if there is only one young married woman in the family, she has to perform all the tasks by herself, in which case she may receive assistance from her mother-in-law. In the absence of technology and services, all the tasks from cooking to washing clothes are usually done manually by the women. This not only demonstrates the consequences of the lack of services and utilities but also highlights the difficulties of life in the villages. Women suffer most for they are the ones who carry out all the tasks. The unavailability of technology makes these tasks more time and energy consuming,

such as fetching water from the hand pump and lighting fires from cow dung and wood instead of modern methods. It is unfortunate that their family members hardly realize the difficulty that these women have to face in order to provide them with services.

Behind this appropriation of their labour, these women receive no validation of their personal worth except what approval they can gain inside the family, which can only be gained by doing what they are required to do and doing it well. If women work long hours, it is because people appreciate women's complete involvement in household management; they like to see their women working, and thus women remain busy to enhance their perceived value. If women continue to please others, especially the mother-in-law, it is because the women who please others are respected by the family. Similarly, if women do not resist their exploitation, it is because of their weak fall-back position; they would be regarded as 'bad' women, which would devalue them before others. A woman's life in rural areas is not lived for herself, it is specifically lived for others; for the natal family before her marriage and for the affinal family after her marriage.

Reflexivity cannot be in play only in resistance, it can also be witnessed in conformity. A slave needs to have a high degree of reflexivity in order to meet the expectations of his/her master. Thus, the oppressed can be as reflexive as the master or need to exercise great deal of reflexivity in order to survive (Jackson 2011). Women's acceptance of patriarchy is not mere subordination, there is also a degree of reflexivity there, the reflexivity which is in play when they are conforming, because they are seeing themselves from others' perspectives. Women in the villages of Khairpur are not just passive victims of their lot, they actively negotiate with patriarchy; they work to embrace the system and try to perform well. In so doing, they exhibit a high degree of reflexivity and agency, both of which are actively in play. For example, women tolerate their exploitation in hope that one day their life of subordination will end, and they will have their own daughter-in-law to control. This, in Kandiyoti's term, is a cycle that empowers a woman in older age, but, according to my analysis, it is also an active negotiation with subordination that women use partly because they do not have any other option, as they are equipped neither with education nor access to the public sphere. Thus, women consciously adapt themselves to patriarchy. The data suggest that these women are not beaten into

submission, they are actually reflexively aware that their survival lies in accommodating patriarchy; the more they adjust the better they survive. This benefits them in later life where they dominate junior women, therefore, women prefer to reproduce their own subordination rather than to resist it.

‘Power Over’ and the Perpetuation of Patriarchy

In chapter six, I specifically discuss the family’s power structure in rural settings where power over others is the power that safeguards patriarchy. In other words, the one who keeps the overall power over others controls decision-making and ensures that things continue to run in the traditional way. Assessing power through Lukes’ (1974, 2005) conceptualisation of the power of domination, I explain that naked power is obvious but latent and hidden power are also operational in the villages of Khairpur. The power operational in the villages is maintained through following the family hierarchy strictly so that nobody would think of challenging it. This hierarchy helps the family in different ways; for example, hierarchy clarifies the order of power distribution so that everybody knows who is next after the patriarch. This avoids potential competition for power positions within the family, which could become a source of conflict, as it is already decided that the eldest son of the patriarch is the next patriarch in line. Thus, there can be no conflict about it. The normative culture facilitates the most senior man, the patriarch, in maintaining his power over the entire family. He has come to fill this powerful position through an established hierarchy, which helps him seek the family’s automatic consent through non-decisions and maintaining the status quo. Thus, the most senior man enjoys power over others and then transfers it to the future patriarch who is next in the hierarchical order.

This hierarchy is maintained because it not only provides the patriarch with power, as he is the most senior man in the family, but also keeps younger men hopeful that one day they will have their time to enjoy the same power. In this scenario, the youngest men in the hierarchy are the most disadvantaged because they cannot enjoy the highest level of power as long as they continue to live with their parents and brothers; the authority of the patriarch is transferred to his eldest son after his death. If the eldest son dies earlier than expected his younger brother would then acquire this power, otherwise this authority would be reserved for the son of the eldest son of

the patriarch. This indicates that patriarchal authority transfers to the eldest son and his eldest son, and the younger son remains deprived of it unless the household segments and he sets up a separate household. In the South Asian context, the segmentation process sometimes begins from competition among married women that often turns into a fierce quarrel and affects peace and solidarity of the family (Oldenburg 2002). Disputes among brothers could also lead to division and result into partition of property and hearths (Jeffery et al. 1989). My own data show that family splits have happened in the past as some of the women married to their father's brother's son were living in separate households.

Although this research discusses the transfer of patriarchal power, more research is needed to explore how younger men who are deprived of power cope with patriarchy as I did not have opportunity to explore it fully. How are their lives different from their elder brothers' lives, how is life itself for the men who do not experience ultimate power unless they establish separate households? How do younger sons bargain with patriarchy and deal with their own disempowerment, and under what conditions are they able to found a household of their own? An in-depth research on such issues would present a more detailed picture of how patriarchy affects younger men and therefore a fuller account of how the patriarchal system operates.

Three Intersecting Power Hierarchies

Three intersecting hierarchies run together in a patriarchal extended family: men's power over women, senior men's power over junior men and senior women's power over junior women. They all intersect and interact with each other. The power hierarchy among the women depends upon which man they are attached to, and that has to do with the power hierarchy among the men, as well as with the power hierarchy of men over women, because women derive their position in the family from men. This power hierarchy among women benefits some but not all. The eldest daughter-in-law is the most advantaged woman among all of the daughters-in-law; her husband is the eldest son, who will become the patriarch, and after him her eldest son will take over her husband's position. Therefore, the eldest daughter-in-law remains advantaged because of her husband's position in the power hierarchy. On the

other hand, the younger daughter-in-law is not as privileged as the eldest daughter-in-law; her husband is the younger brother who will never experience the power of the patriarch in the same household, so she will never enjoy the delegated authority of the patriarch as will the eldest daughter-in-law, unless, of course, the eldest brother-in-law dies before the current patriarch or the younger son can form an independent household. This must be possible because there were senior men who were brothers but lived in separate households. Some of the women continued to live in the same compound in which they grew up but did not share hearth with their natal family; not all women who were married to their father's brother's son lived within the same household (*khandaan*), which indicates that at some point two brothers do split and have their own separate households. The conditions under which a household separates need to be investigated, as my data do not allow me to explore how and when this happens.

In the scenario where the eldest son is the patriarch and younger brothers live with him in the same household, his younger brothers and their wives can never enjoy ultimate power. My study opens the door for future research in this area. The eldest daughter-in-law becomes the ultimate female patriarch when her mother-in-law dies; she then uses the delegated authority of her husband and son to influence all junior women. In such a situation, the lives of junior women, the women who will not become the senior mother-in-law in the family if they do not have a household of their own, are worth researching. How do these women's lives and approaches differ, how do they influence their matrifocal groups and what are their wishes in life if they are not on track to become a female patriarch in the presence of other senior women in the household?

Patriarchy in rural Sindh confines women to the private domain making it the only space for them. In other areas of Pakistan women's mobility is tightly controlled (Sathar and Kazi 2000; Mumtaz and Salway 2005), but women in the villages of Khairpur experience even stricter constraints on mobility where they are not even allowed to go out and work in the fields; their mobility is further controlled through *pardah*. This confinement has negative impact on women's social life. They consider life outside the home completely irrelevant to them; what happens outside the four walls of the house is men's business. They lose interest in public life and completely disassociate themselves from it. The only place outside the home that they want to

visit would be another household, the natal family, where women go to see their parents, and these visits too are not very frequent. Similarly, women disassociate themselves from the family's decision-making. They closely observe that they are kept away from major decisions within the family, and the mother-in-law deals with other trivial matters. Therefore, they opt to disassociate and distance themselves from decision-making. Although they are not totally excluded from the family's power distribution, they prefer to stay away, considering this area as irrelevant to them. However, if something important to them arises, they adopt different ways to channel their wants through others. They take care of men's moods before conveying their wishes to them. Nevertheless, whatever strategies women adopt to negotiate with patriarchy, they often find themselves helpless in front of cultural norms that support patriarchal authority. If they do not participate, they know that it is men who have the major say in all decisions, so distancing is better. The best possible strategy for a woman in this constrained space is to patiently wait to reach the top level of the hierarchy and to perpetuate the status quo.

The concepts of women's interests and development needs in the context of third world countries is central in evaluating the situation women live in as well as for translating women's interests and needs into planning to improve their lives (see chapter 6). For example, Molyneux (1985) and Moser (1989) differentiated between women's strategic and practical interests and needs. Strategic interests and needs derive from women's subordination and are seen as real interests as they are concerned with overcoming women's subordination to male domination; these interests focus on overthrowing the entire patriarchal system which oppresses women. Practical gender interests and needs derive from women's existing position within the sexual division of labour. These interests and needs are formulated by women themselves and tend not to challenge the oppressive system from which practical interests and needs originate. These interests and needs are used in responding to immediate situations and do not aim for women's emancipation or equality. In this context, women's accommodation to patriarchy should be analysed in terms of women's practical interests and needs. The pursuit of strategic interests and needs, of women's emancipation, is beyond rural Sindhi women's imagination; if women were to struggle to realize these interests and needs, it would cause a rift and they would put their home, shelter and family at risk. Thus, the situation requires

a careful assessment of the setting in which they form their interests based on their needs where, rather than risking their survival, they prefer conformity over resistance.

A family's peace and harmony cannot be achieved without a woman. She is the one who compromises in everything; a good marriage and peaceful family are her contribution, and she maintains that tranquillity despite suffering exploitation and working hard to make ends meet. One of my surprising findings was that these women seemed remarkably content with their lot, partly because they did not know any other alternative; they were not connected with the world outside, they did not know of any difference between their lives and the lives of women living in different areas. They were happy when their mother-in-law was nice to them. A woman may hope for a better life for her daughter, which is actually a reflection of her current life, nonetheless few words of complaint are to be found on her lips.

Appendix A

DEMOGRAPHIC FORM

Pseudonym: _____

Age: _____

Education: _____

Family size: _____

Number of children: _____

INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Interview Guide

Condition of women in households

How do you start your day?

Tell me who lives in your household.

Tell me about who does what in your household.

What do male members of your family do?

How much land do you own?

What are your responsibilities inside the household?

How do you get on with family?

Who do you get on with well?

Who do you not get on well and why?

Tell me about how your marriage was arranged.

Tell me about your life before marriage.

Tell me about your life after marriage.

Did you get your dowry/share in property from your father on/after your marriage?

What role did this play in your life?

Whatever (gifts or favour) you get from your natal family does it make any impact in your personal life?

What role does your mother in law play in your life?

How do you negotiate with your mother in law?

Women's bargaining power

Tell me how decisions are made in your family.

How you participate in household decisions?

How do you enhance you participation in household decisions?

Who controls household finances?

Do you have any control on household income? If yes, how do you enhance this control?

Fertility and sexuality

How many children do you want?

Tell me about your aspirations for sons and daughters.

What would you like your sons and daughters to be?

How do you want to see them?

What sort of life you want for your daughter in future?

Mobility

Tell me about your access outside home.

How do you access to health facilities, markets, and friends?

What difference do you feel in mobility before and after your marriage?

Control

How are you expected to perform your duties?

Tell me about the reaction you face if you cannot perform duties on time.

How do you manage with that situation?

Is there any other important thing or event in your life that you want to tell?

Focus Group Guide (for mothers-in-law)

How do you feel about being a mother-in-law?

What difference do you feel when you were a daughter-in-law and now when you are mother-in-law?

How would you describe an ideal daughter-in-law?

Tell me how closely your own daughter-in-law matches with this.

How can a young woman make a good marriage?

Focus Group Guide (for men)

How do you want to see your women and why?

How do you feel about the domestic work conditions of women in households?

How much freedom you think should women have?

How can a woman make a good marriage? Can you share your ideas?

How would you describe an ideal daughter-in-law?

Tell me how closely your own daughter-in-law matches with this.

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