Chapter II

METHODOLOGY
CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Following the theoretical perspectives we have outlined in the previous chapter, we view women's health and work as socially produced and complexly constituted by economic processes and relations, structures of gender division of labour and unequal gender relations and their cultural and ideological legitimisations.

The health status of Garhwali women constitutes the key substantive area of inquiry of this research. Health is examined here as a complex concept encompassing biological, physiological, social and cultural dimensions. It is both an effect and an indicator of women's status. Determined by a number of conditions and factors - environmental, material and cultural, it bears emphasis that health like work is also socially constructed on the basis of pre-existing patterns of power and control. Political and economic forces, and patriarchal structures are important to understand women's bodily / material and mental emotional states. Health shaped by ideology is crucially linked to women's roles in the processes of production and reproduction.

As our conceptual review has shown, the analysis of women's work has been central to feminist theorisation on gender power relations and women's subordination. It is feminist scholarship that has brought women as actors in a previously genderless consideration of links between peasant production and subsistence sector (Kandiyoti, 1985). The study examines the gender division of labour as a key form and expression of Garhwali women's subordination and investigates it importance in ascertaining the status and value of their work. Further, it examines the context of and relationship between women's productive and reproductive labour, the cultural meanings of these labours and the ideological legitimisations and the position accorded to women in power relations of production.

This study addresses but also goes beyond issue of quantums and loads. It attempts an exploration of changes and shifts in the gendered structures of production systems, the gendered processes of production and reproduction, and patterns of gender division of labour. It examines the implications of all these changes for gender relations and women's position. This research will address the issue of complementarily or gender
inequality work relations by exploring the inequalities and equalities in work domain. It examines the conditions and control of labour process, resources, production and consumption. In the context of migration, household change and declining economy and changing labour patterns, do women function as dependants or as agents of control?

At a wider lever the study attempts an exploration of the connections between developmental changes in economy, migration, class formation and changes in household economies and relationships, gender relations. It attempts to understand the changing material basis of women's productive and reproductive work, the gender division of labour and their implications for gender power relations within the complex interweaving of women's men's lives. Does high participation in and cultural celebration of work necessarily translate into higher levels of economic, social and cultural power or greater economic and social control for women? In what ways and to what extent are women subordinated?

Given the agrarian crisis and their work burden, we further examine the relationship between Garhwali women's work and health, how patterns of health and illness are shaped by evolving modes of economic and patriarchal organisation and the gender division of labour. The specificities of women's health experiences, issues and problems in women's access to healthcare constitute the main scope of our investigation. The effort is to search out linkages by attempting to identify characteristics and features of societies, households and work lives that seem to affect women's health and the care that they receive in response to their ill health. What are the processes that shape women's health realities - how is their ill health created and sustained?

In hill society where notions of women's inherent biological inferiority have not operated to bring about their patriarchal exclusion from hard labour, it would be important to examine the specific connections between labour and health under the impact of structural changes in sexual divisions of labour and labour process. The dominant value system and gender ideology enjoin women to be mothers along with workers. Like the overwhelming majority of women in India, it is considered natural and important for Garhwali women to reproduce children. It would be crucial to see how reproduction
mediates production and reproductive ideology affects the relationship between work and health. The reproductive realities of women's lives and economic and social conditions - does it translate into the more obvious manifestations of reproduction related ill health. As our review has indicated, very little work has been done on relationship between the changing sexual division of labour and changing health status. In the context of the impact of economic and environment factors highlighted above, the understanding of Garhwali women's health leads one to consider the relationship between biological, social, cultural, economic and environmental.

As our review of literature has also shown, despite its obvious links to environmental degradation, work quantum, and declining food security, health is a neglected area of study in post independence scholarship of the hill region. In the light of studies that suggest that women's ill health is bound up with environmental and environment-linked material conditions, how and to what extent have the processes of development been illness producing for Garhwali women and how specifically have they been affected?

Women's own conceptions and perceptions regarding their illness and ill being, their whole approach to diagnosis and treatment and their lived experiences of illness constitutes the core of our enquiry. We attempt an examination of health and illness from women's perspective, privileging how they experience bodily symptoms and how they deal with them. What are women's relationship with healthcare givers and experiences of treatment. How does society respond to women's illness? And we explore how does culture influence illness experiences and their meanings. How do women exercise their agency or are they mere victims of the power of male dominant households, indigenous or modern medical systems. The concern is with unravelling social and cultural constraints to health as experienced by women as gendered, labouring subjects. As Doyal (1995) pertinently asks: How do their lives make them sick? Equally important is the issue of how women's perceptions and understanding of health has evolved in the context of their own lives (Qadeer, 1985; Banerjee, 1992).

Finally, a word on the conceptualisation of women's status. The concept of status is a vexed one in sociology and anthropology. Most researchers have attempted to develop
unitary constructs or spoken broadly of "high" or "low" status (Quinn, 1977). The approach taken here is to derive notions of women's status through understanding their conditions in the two domains of work and health, and through this understand the nature of gender relations that operate and the degree of female subordination.

Broadly this study aims at understanding how the hill women's status, economic role, her work and health are affected under the impact of ecological degradation, male out-migration, shifts in labour process, changing gender division of labour and family dynamics within the cultural ideology of gender and the socio-economic hierarchy of caste and class.

More specifically, the objectives of the study are:

1. To socio-historically trace the linkages between ecological destruction, decline of peasant subsistence economy and male migration in the hill region.

2. To examine changes in household economy of the study villages and household structures and composition under the impact of socio-economic processes, in particular male migration.

3. To explore the impact of these changes on the gender division of labour and on the nature, quantum, conditions and valuations of women's work.

4. To explore women's perceptions and lived experiences of ill health and health and ascertain the linkages between environment, work and health.

5. To ascertain the conditions of women's access to healthcare and identify the changes and constraints of women's dealings with illness.

6. To examine the relationship between women's work and health and its implications for women's status in household and society.
RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design addresses the stated objective using a range of strategies and methods. The study is conceived in two phases. The first phase constitutes a baseline survey of sample villages in the area. Keeping with the complexity of the research in mind, the second phase is an in-depth exploration of the problem in two villages. A systematic analysis of documentary sources and secondary materials forms an important component for providing the background and contextual understanding. It not only preceded the baseline survey, but also has been an ongoing process.

THE RESEARCH SETTING

The study is set in hill villages of Yamkeshwar block in Pauri Garhwal district of the newly formed Uttaranchal State. Based on criterions like low agricultural productivity, low level of industrial and social services development, inadequate infrastructure etc. Pauri Garhwal is regarded as one of the extremely backward districts representing the general backwardness of the Hill Region. This backward hilly district provides very little opportunity for local work and income-generation, leading to high rates of out-migration. Census Reports since 1961 onwards have shown Pauri Garhwal as a district with high incidence of net-out-migration. In the 1981 Census the migration rates was 11 percent. Being an extremely backward district with high incidence of net out-migration, Pauri Garhwal is purposively selected for the study.

Pauri Garhwal district is divided into three tehsils and fifteen developmental blocks. There are a total of 1214 gram-sabha with 3565 villages and 8 towns (Districts Census Handbook, 1991). Yamkeshwar development block in Kotdwara tehsil is the most backward of the fifteen developmental blocks. Spread over an area of 644 sq.kms, it has

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1 The 27th state of the Indian Union, Uttaranchal was formally born on November 9, 2000. Its creation brings to an end the struggle for a separate state of Uttarakhand, carved out of Uttar Pradesh, comprising the hill region of Garhwal and Kumaon. Uttaranchal State today comprises of 13 districts of the Garhwal and Kumaon region.
2 Based on criterion adopted by Indian government for assessing levels of regional backwardness, the hilly districts of Almora, Pithoragarth, Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Tehri Garhwal and Pauri Garhwal are looked upon as extremely backward districts in government records.
3 According to migration rates shown in Census Report of 1981, Almora (17%), Pauri Garhwal (11%) and Pithoragarh (10%) are districts with highest incidence of net out-migration. This trend is there since 1961 Census. At the time of starting this research study, migration tables of the 1991 Census were not available; hence the migration data from 1981 Census was used for selecting the district.
8 Nyaya Panchayats, 90 gram-sabhas and total of 236 revenue villages out of which 222 are inhabited (Census 1991)

PHASE I: THE BASELINE SURVEY

OBJECTIVE AND RATIONALE OF THE BASELINE SURVEY

The first phase of the research study comprised a concise baseline survey of eleven villages in Yamkeshwar block. The broad aim of the survey was to gain familiarity with the region, its climate and topography and provide first hand exposure to village organisation, people, their culture and way of life. More specifically, the survey aimed at generating an overview of the economic and social composition of the villages in terms of caste, occupational status, landownership patterns, agricultural production, livestock and other resources of families. The survey specifically focused on establishing the incidence and patterns of out-migration from the region. Moreover the baseline data provided the background information against which the explorations of the in-depth study could be carried out. The baseline survey was further useful in selecting the two villages for in-depth study in Phase II.

SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Yamkeshwar block’s two hundred and twenty two inhabited villages have a total of 8401 households with a population of 40,566 and average of 4.8 persons per household (Source: Census 1991). These 222 villages were stratified in terms of three criteria relevant to the final selection: distance from the town; size of the village and the rate of inter-censal population growth (1991 – 1981).

The distance from a town is considered a determining variable for rate and type of migration patterns that evolve in a region. Therefore we grouped all the villages into the following four groups in terms of distance from the two towns, Rishikesh and Kotdwara (as given in 1991 Census).
Villages were further subdivided on the basis of the size of the village that was determined by number of households in each village. On the basis of this criterion we divided them into three groups:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Uptol0 km from town</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group II</td>
<td>11 to 30 km from town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group III</td>
<td>31 to 50 km from town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group IV</td>
<td>Above 50 km from town</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of these sub-groups was further divided by the rate of inter-censal population growth (1991 - 1981). Assuming that the rates of natural population increase (birth minus deaths divided by mean inter-censal population) are about the same in all the village and that in-migration is also negligible, those villages with relatively high rates of population growth may be estimated to have relatively low rates of out-migration, while those with relatively low rates of population growth would have relatively high rates of out-migration. This procedure is indirect and does not specifically identify areas of in or out-migration, but has been used as a rough indicator of migration in few research studies. Thus data from 1981 and 1991 Census was used to compute the rates of inter censal population growth of these villages. Based on this the villages were divided into two groups viz. high and low population growth villages which was assumed to reflect the relative extent of out-migration.

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4 See Punjab ILO survey by Oberoi and Singh, 1983. The method is regarded as suitable if the above two assumptions (i.e. rates of natural population increase are same in all villages and that in-migration is negligible in all villages) are determined to be generally acceptable.
High population growth villages: 
indicate low rates of out-migration 

Low population growth villages: 
indicate high rates of out-migration.

The distribution of the villages in terms of these criteria is given in Table 2.1. The classification gave rise to 24 clusters. Nine villages falling in Group I (upto 10 km) were excluded from the sampling frame since because of their proximity to the town the bulk of the villagers were daily commuters. Further we excluded 34 small size villages (upto 10 households), as we felt that including them would demand taking a large number of villages in final sample. Further since we assume that “high” and “low” population growth is reflective of out-migration, we decided to focus only on villages with low population growth i.e. high out-migration. With this method of exclusion we arrived at a sample of 87 villages. The final village sample was then selected from these 87 villages, which formed the universe of this study.

Table 2.1: Classification Of Villages In Yamkeshwar Block According Distance, Size And Inter-Censal Population Growth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance from town</th>
<th>I (upto 10 km)</th>
<th>II (11-30 km)</th>
<th>III (31-50 km)</th>
<th>IV (above 50 km)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size of village</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small (Upto 10 hh)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (11-60 hh)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large (above 60 hh)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>9(4)</td>
<td>73(33)</td>
<td>55(25)</td>
<td>85(38)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: (1) Distance from the Rishikesh / Kotdwara town as mentioned in 1991 Census (2) Size of village according to number of households (3) H=High population growth; L=Low population growth. This intercensal population has been calculated from 1991 and 1981 census. (4) [ ] Figures in parenthesis denote column percentages (5.) ( ) Figures in parenthesis denote row percentages

5 For total number of households in each of the 24-clusters, see Appendix TableA2.1
6 These 87 villages constitute about 39% of the Block’s population.
In terms of the size of the villages, 76 of these 87 villages (87.4 percent) are medium size villages and 11 villages (12.6 percent) are large size villages. According to the distance from the town they are further divided as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium (76 villages)</th>
<th>Large (11 villages)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 to 30 km = 6 villages</td>
<td>11 to 30 km = 25 villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 to 50 km = 23 villages</td>
<td>31 to 50 km = 3 villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 50 km = 3 villages</td>
<td>Above 50 km = 28 villages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of this universe, 10 percent of villages were selected by stratified random sampling. In this way, a total of 11 villages were selected for the baseline survey. All households of selected villages were surveyed, hence no sampling was required. Table 2.2 shows the list of selected villages.

Table 2.2: Villages Selected For Baseline Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village size/ Distance</th>
<th>11 to 30 km</th>
<th>31 to 50 km</th>
<th>Above 50 km</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medium size villages (11 to 60 HHS)</td>
<td>Ediya (39) Gomalgoan Bara (39)</td>
<td>Bunga (53) Kharduni Talli (56) Badune (54) Daurn (43)</td>
<td>Ranchula (51) Jai Damrada (45) Kolsi (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large size village (above 60 HHS)</td>
<td>Kuthar (68)</td>
<td>Kheda Talla (65)</td>
<td>* Not selected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * Village could not be selected from this cluster due to logistical problem. Figures in parenthesis show the number of households in each village.

According to the 1991 Census a total of 563 households in these villages had to be surveyed. Table A.2.2 in the Appendix displays the distribution of the 563 households in each strata / cluster.

TOOLS OF DATA COLLECTION

A semi-structured interview schedule, a village information schedule and discussions were the three primary tools of data collection in the baseline survey. **Semi-structured interview schedule** was administered to all households in the eleven villages. The aim
was to do a house listing and to seek baseline information through questions with both structured and open-ended response categories (see Appendix Table AS 2.1). Information on some selected socio-economic indicators like land ownership, cultivation, sufficiency of produce was sought and an attempt was made to gather data on rate and pattern of out-migration from the villages. A village information schedule was developed to make a profile of each study village on the basis of information on land use pattern, forests, amenities, government schemes being implemented in the village etc (Appendix Table AS 2.2). Discussions were planned with varied groups of people to gather information on ecological set-up, developmental issues, to ascertain the penetration of market etc. In addition, review of secondary literature was used to develop a broad historical view of the area. Details of this are given along with the secondary sources used for Phase II.

**PROCESS OF DATA COLLECTION**

These eleven selected villages were scattered all over the Yamkeshwar Block ranging from an altitude of 1100m to 2100m (see Map 4.3 in Chapter IV). We started the data collection from southeast of Yamkeshwar Block from Kolsi village (four hours from Kotdwara) and we moved systematically to extreme northwest of the block. The last village to be surveyed was Ediya (four hours from Rishikesh). Before climbing to the village, we would often halt at roadside teashops. Informal discussion with people assembled at teashops, near the village bazaar and so on would provide us a lot of general information on the villages and the developmental issues pertaining to that region. Invariably we met some residents of the village we were scheduled to survey, or sometimes the pradhan, schoolteacher etc. They would take us to the village and generally introduce us. We usually had to stay for a week in each village to administer the semi-structured interview schedule on all households. This stay provided us innumerable occasions to have discussions with different groups of villagers, meet the village pradhan (head), village chowkidar (guard), schoolteacher and sometimes the patwari (revenue officer). These interviews yielded data on the Village information schedule and also provided insights, which were useful in designing the second phase of the study. Besides this we took formal appointments with various government officials like the Yamkeshwar Block officials, the BDO, PHC staff, Ayurvedic dispensary staff
etc. and we conducted several interviews with them related to the problems in the Block and programs being implemented there. The baseline survey took a total of five months to complete.

**PHASE II: THE IN-DEPTH STUDY**

To study the complex interconnections between the key macro structural aspects and micro reality of women's lives, work and health, the second phase of the research necessitated a qualitative paradigm of research. This research focuses on complex relational and ideological aspects of social life as they affect women, as also women's perception of their life, status, experience and situation. Since we wished to look at the correlates of health and well being, we required intensive qualitative data to understand the changes that have occurred over time in the villages vis-à-vis the agriculture, forests and other economic activities. We also needed to study the forces of migration, modernisation such as markets and their influence and the developmental processes and their implication for women's lives. The study thus demanded elaborate and detailed gathering of data on contexts, events and experiences to yield an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under study. Therefore, this phase of the study had to be largely anthropological in nature.

It was therefore decided to conduct an intensive study of two villages, which would yield detailed valid and authentic data in the difficult areas chosen for exploration. Due to the complexity and depth of the data to be collected, several visits to the research sites were required. The study also required adoption of multiple tools for data collection. It is our understanding that more authentic, rich and comprehensive data, even if it covers a limited sample, is more important from the point of view of addressing the complex connections that we are seeking to make in the study.

**SELECTION OF VILLAGES FOR IN-DEPTH STUDY**

The criterion for selection of villages for in-depth study derives their logical rationale from the research problematic and specific objectives. Keeping in view the need to understand macro-micro linkages between structural and larger developmental processes,
women’s work, life and health we developed the following criteria of selection which cover all crucial variables like migration status, caste and landownership of the households:

- Villages with the highest number of households reporting out-migration but also having a fair number of non-migrant households.
- Villages that have a presence of all three major caste groups and ideally those that have more or less even caste distribution
- Villages in which land ownership has a wide range

Analysis of the baseline survey data yielded information which assisted in the actual selection of the two villages from the eleven baseline villages. Table 2.3 below lists the identified five villages that were meeting the above criteria.

Table 2.3: Villages That Fulfilled The Selection Criteria For The In-Depth Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>11-30 km</th>
<th>30-50 km</th>
<th>Above 50 km</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medium (11-60 households)</td>
<td>Ediya (30)</td>
<td>Bunga(61)</td>
<td>Daurn(41)</td>
<td>Ranchula (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large (above 60 households)</td>
<td>Kuthar(63)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate total number of households in each village.
This household data is based on analysis of baseline data and not the Census of 1991

In our final selection of villages for in-depth study, we decided not to include Ediya and Ranchula because they are relatively smaller villages and the distribution of castes in these villages is skewed. This is despite Ediya having the highest percentage of out-migrant households (76.7%). Kuthar village could not be considered for selection because it is located close to the Neelkanth Mahadev temple, which attracts a large number of tourists. Due to this tourist economy the whole character of this village has changed and hence it was not very representative (for details see Appendix Table A2.3).

Bunga and Daum villages have a maximum range of landholdings and an adequate all-caste composition. They also have a large number of migrant households (70.5% and
52.5% respectively). Bunga has 44.3 % female-headed households while Daurn has 30.3% such households. Daurn and Bunga also are part of the same gram sabha and are located relatively close to each other. Hence we select Bunga and Daurn villages for the Phase II.

SELECTION OF HOUSEHOLDS AND OF THE WOMEN RESPONDENTS

The second phase of the study used a three pronged strategy. First a detailed survey of all households in both the villages using a household interview schedule. Secondly, living, observing and interacting with village folks and documenting their lives (more intensely qualitative). And thirdly visiting the PHC, sub-centre and other health facilities, meeting with government officials and use of hill-based libraries, archives etc. All these three were going on simultaneously. But in order to give a more coherent account of the process, we can say that data collection comprised of three on-going levels.

For the first component of Phase II, we decided to cover all households in the two selected villages through the household interview schedule in order to develop a detailed household profile. For the second component or more intensive study, a sub-universe of women was identified from each village. The sub-universe of women was identified based on several criterion: land ownership, caste and migration status of the household, headship of households, woman’s age, seniority in household and her relationship with the migrant, period/duration of migration and finally her role as primary or supportive worker. This selection was done after the majority of household schedules had been administered and we had basic household data. For the third component purposively key informants were selected and interviews were carried out and secondary data collected.

TOOLS OF DATA COLLECTION

The study demanded gathering of detailed, sensitive data using a number of methods to fulfill its complex objectives. Given the variety of data that was required for the study, we drew tools from different disciplines, depending on our requirements. Several data
collection methods were combined over the course of this Phase\(^7\). The following tools were utilised to generate the required data:

(i) Semi-structured interview schedule I (for heads of households).

(ii) Semi-structured in-depth interview schedule II (for women)

(iii) Women’s Schedule III (women with maternal history in last five years)

(iv) Interview guide for women (on a range of sensitive issues, process of change and inter generational shifts).

(v) Key informant interview guide.

(vi) Group discussion on important issues

(vii) Observations

(viii) Case reports / case studies

**Primary Data Collection Tools**

*Interviews*

Interviews allow the researcher to understand meanings people hold for their everyday activities and in-depth interviewing as a data-collection method is relied on quite extensively by researchers to generate data, which may otherwise get eclipsed in more structured methods of data collection. We used the technique of *semi-structured interview* for all the households in the selected village. This method was deemed most useful as on one hand it allows to produce quantifiable data set, and at the same time it encourages the respondents to speak fully from their own perspective. A semi-structured interview schedule (Semi-structured interview schedule I) covering socio-demographic profile of the household, questions of land ownership and land use, agricultural

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\(^7\) This sort of triangulation helps to overcome limitations in one method as they can be compensated for by the strengths of a complementary one.
production and income, process of migration and related issues was administered to generate data on all the households in the selected villages (see Appendix AS 2.3).

Another semi-structured in-depth interview schedule (Semi-structured in-depth women's interview schedule II) was administered to all households. Adult women who were either the primary or supportive workers of their household were selected as respondents for this schedule. Through this schedule we covered information pertaining to work pattern, sexual and familial division of labour (related to agricultural, animal husbandry related and domestic tasks) (see AS2.4). Health and illness of family members and related issues like perceived illness, utilisation, access, decision making and support related to healthcare services were covered in another schedule (see Appendix AS 2.5). A separate interview schedule was administered only to women who had conceived, aborted or delivered in the last five years. The reproductive history of these respondents was noted down. The mothers were interviewed about their last pregnancy and details of help and care given during this period was accounted. Questions were posed for last-born (alive) child (see Appendix AS 2.6).

In-depth interviews in the tradition of the *oral history method* with the use of an interview guide were conducted with a sub-universe of women viz. women of migrants and non-migrant households of different duration of migration of their husbands and sons (see Appendix AS2.7). Women in different age groups and representatives of the older generation of women were interviewed to collect data to describe the subtle dimensions of "change" and to understand the process of change over time through the individual’s lived experience, lending the exploration more depth and substance. This interview guide also addressed the issues related to household food production and distribution patterns; women’s work and time distribution, migration and its impact on women's work participation and family dynamics; women’s mobility and access; women’s autonomy and decision making. These women were encouraged to articulate their experiences and ideas on a range of sensitive issues or problem areas that were identified in the course of the in-depth interviews. The interview for example, often addressed issues in the areas of family status, family power relations, social discrimination, oppression, work and health. Based on these interviews *case reports* of select women were made. Through case
reports, detailed study of their work and leisure was made to understand the linkages between their labour, power relations, hold on resources, role in decision-making. Women’s own perceptions regarding their work and those of others in the family was also probed. Focus was on understanding women’s status, role and changes in them.

Key informants were also interviewed using the interview guide. Researchers, administrators, other government officials, health services personnel and the NGOs working in this area were interviewed to contextualise this study and to understand the link between the micro and macro issues.

**Observation**

Interviews and other tools of data collection mentioned were integrated with observation. Developed mainly through the discipline of cultural anthropology and qualitative sociology, observation is both an overall approach to inquiry and a data gathering method. Observation entails systematic noting and recording of events, behaviours, processes and artifacts (objects) in the social setting chosen for study. It is especially useful to learn about behaviours and meanings that are difficult to be expressed/verbalised and can be unobtrusively gathered. The method allows for a greater amount of flexibility and provides opportunities to encounter unexpected circumstances that may provide crucial insights. Though observation is a fundamental and critical method in all-qualitative inquiry and helps in discovering complex interactions, it is however a method in which the researcher faces the difficulty of managing a relatively unobtrusive role, facing uncomfortable ethical dilemmas and trying to identify the “big picture”. The study therefore used non-participant observation technique. In the early stages of qualitative inquiry, the researcher entered the setting with themes and areas of interest, without any predetermined categories or strict observational checklist. But after early analysis of the field notes, once some patterns of behaviour and relationships were identified and described, more focused observation covering specific settings and time schedules was done in later stages. For focused observation, checklists that were more appropriate and context sensitive were developed to help analyse themes in detail, to lead to holistic description of events, behaviours, processes, and so on (see Appendix AS2.9).
**Group Discussions**

Group Discussions were conducted with different groups of people on some sensitive issues, which the researcher felt, lent themselves better to group rather than individual interviewing. No specific effort was made to create artificial groups, but whenever naturally a small group of people gathered, informal discussion was started. Care was taken to ensure that these discussions are held with variety of groups that constituted people from different economic class and caste groups, different age groups and both sexes.

Thus the study, relying more on qualitative data, required meticulous registering and maintaining of data. The use of multiple tools, field diary, daily notes, continuous updating and consolidation of data was found essential for valid and reliable collection of data.

**Secondary Sources Of Data**

**Documentary Research**

Other than data collected first hand from respondents, for certain sections of the present study, a great deal of reliance has been placed on a variety of historical materials for reconstructing the past. Valuable information about Garhwal and Garhwali society came from review and analysis of records/ chronicles / gazetteers / settlement reports compiled by British administrators and other archival data, records, reports and documents, (published and unpublished) available in government offices. The sketches of Garhwali society made by British officers gave us a valuable picture of certain aspects of this society in the nineteenth and early twentieth society. Of particular mention are the various Settlement Reports, Gazetteers and codes of customary law and land tenure (Traill, 1928; Batten (ed.), 1851; Atkinson, 1882-6; Ramsay, 1874; Stowell, 1907; Walton, 1911; Lall, 1921). These general descriptions, though often doubted for strict accuracy by scholars, were found to be useful in understanding politics, kinship, social structure of this society, particularly in the absence of other serious anthropological work done on this society, till almost the middle of this century. Then there are the histories of
Kumaon & Garhwal (Raturi, 1920; Sankrityayan, 1959-60; Patti Ram, 1916; Datmal; 1964; 1967-71) and of special customs and religion (Smith, 1836; Atkinson, 1882-6; Lall, 1911); descriptions of the economy (Pant, 1935; Bose, 1960); folklore (Upreti, 1894, Pande, 1962) and customary law (Joshi, 1929). Some important information is contained in the various census reports, the more important of which are Eyde (1923) and Turner (1935).

Written material like novels, newsletters, magazines available in personal collection of some individuals were also scanned for use. Another important source of knowledge about the 'past' was the evidently rich Garhwali folklore. It has, however been used with great caution and only when other more direct source has corroborated it. All these materials in English and Hindi enabled us to view Garhwali society over time in a manner, which the anthropologist cannot always adopt. These were rich sources illuminating the past and at the same time provided a body of information against which data collected through fieldwork could be checked. We have combined these sources with the material from the fieldwork to interpret the present as well as the past.

**PROCESS OF DATA COLLECTION**

I began the data collection for this phase in September 1999. Living and collecting data from Bunga and Daurn villages took a total of about twelve months. The first period of data collection lasted from September to November 1999 and again from February to July 2000. One more visit was made to the villages between September to December 2001.

The initial effort was to establish credibility with the villagers, get to know them and also explain the purpose of research to the people. I first administered the detailed Household Schedule and the Women's Schedule in all households of the two villages. Despite having gone from house to house for the baseline survey, I felt it will be useful to administer the schedules first as it will help me to get more familiar with the villagers, especially all female members of the villages. It not only helped me to establish rapport with them, but also gave them an opportunity to satisfy any curiosity they had about me and my work.
Through the first part of the household schedule, I not only collected the household census data, but also collected data on land ownership, agricultural production, livestock and other resources owned by the family. Income and expenditure data was also collected. Besides this, detailed migration histories were noted for all migrant households including information on migration patterns, family structure, patterns of remittances etc.

Collecting accurate data on land ownership was not easy. Many women particularly did not know how much land they owned. They merely pointed out to the fields they knew belonged to them. The official revenue records collected from the revenue officer were *patwaris* who provided information regarding land tenures, size of the holdings etc. But since the land records were seldom updated, the exercise was often more confusing. Eventually, the researcher had to rely on the information given by the villagers which at best was cross checked from a government booklet given to all villagers titled ‘Krishi-Bhitti” which contained agricultural revenue records. Attempt was also made to cross check data regarding land ownership, immovable wealth, birth and death figures, percentage of school going children etc with school records, birth and mortality registers (from Binak sub-centre) and the records available with the *pradhan*.

Part II of semi-structured interview schedule (women’s schedule) contained questions on work participation and health profile of each household. In order to develop a schedule which would detail each and every agricultural activity involved in crop production, few villagers (both men and women) were asked to describe in detail the various processes involved in growing and harvesting rice, wheat, mandua, jhangora and other crops. The agricultural processes listed include all operations from repairing the terraces up to storage of the food grain. Similarly the section on animal husbandry and domestic tasks was carefully developed.

Data was thus collected directly from the 102 households with a structured interview format, permitting quantitative analysis. Married women over age 20 or female heads of the households (usually migrant households) were identified to be respondents for this schedule. These women were identified as respondents because of their overall role as responsible adult members of the household and their functioning as major workers for
the household. Women were asked about pattern of labour performed within the entire households according to age, gender and relationship to the household head. Information pertaining to agricultural, animal husbandry and domestic work was recoded separately. The information gathered reflected the actual division of labour in the household. Women were also asked to identify the primary workers and those who assisted them in doing each task. Work, which was done by hired workers, informal work groups (like relatives, relative reciprocal) or by sharecroppers was also documented. Time taken to complete each task was also recoded for the households.

The second section of the schedule focused on the general health profile of family members. Instead of concentrating on measurement of disease (types of symptoms, severity, frequency of illness episodes or agents of causation etc.), the focus was on collecting heath data on perceived illnesses. We began by asking the woman to tell us about cases of minor and major illnesses in her family. Minor illnesses were defined as illnesses, which had occurred in last two weeks, whose duration had not affected their usual functioning. Major illnesses were illnesses of longer duration (at least three weeks and above) which had affected their usual functioning, making them unable to perform their routine work. For major illnesses we collected data of past and present cases of major illnesses. Cases of hospitalisation and accidents in the family were separately documented. Woman’s perception of the major health problems in the village and their changing profile was also collected through open-ended questions. Additionally women in each household with occurrence of a pregnancy, delivery or abortion in the last five years were interviewed separately. Their reproductive history was noted down in a separate schedule. We came across 25 such women.

This household level data collection process certainly helped in establishing a rapport with the village folks. By the end of it, I had roamed in all hamlets, met a lot of villagers and had tea and innumerable discussions with several of them. Now I felt I was ready to move to the next more intensive phase of data collection through focused interviews using different interview guides.
Since the focus of our study was women's health, we decided to interview women from both villages, cutting across caste and class and migrant and non-migrant household. Care was taken to include both younger and older women. Initially the interviews were greatly unstructured, informal and free flowing. Women were given full freedom to speak. The aim was to get a more comprehensive picture of women's life in these villages. Slowly the common experiences became a regular part of the interview guide. The effort throughout was to constantly look for newer insights, the hidden aspects and for unchartered area that women would give expression to.

Women were probed to understand issues related to women's status in the family and society. Their work routine and burden were discussed. Migration histories were developed. In the course of the interviews women were asked about their lives and health since childhood, menarche, going through pregnancy and childbirth. Their health experiences, both past and current and pregnancy periods were discussed and details of individual circumstances were probed. To capture "change" some of the oldest women in the village were interviewed. The basic premise was that the women knew best their own suffering, as they experience these everyday and throughout life. It should also be emphasised that the health and childbearing related data is obtained through careful questioning and interviews of women and not by doing clinical examination.

Though our main focus was on understanding women primarily as in their roles as wives (or women married into this village), in order to understand women in different roles and to give a picture of total socio-cultural context within which they live, we had to understand them simultaneously in multiple roles as daughters, sisters, sisters-in-law, daughters-in-law, mothers-in-law, and as workers through their different phases in life.

Such interviews were done. Each interview was done through several sittings. The interviews generated case studies and oral histories of three generations of women in the village. However, we have taken the precaution to change the names of the women given in the lists and tables, or quoted in the text, to maintain the anonymity of the respondents.

Doing these interviews did not stop me from having free flowing interviews and informal conversations with several other men, women, boys and girls of the village. The
interviews proceeded simultaneously with active observations of events that happened in and around the household/village. My research questions brought me out of the private spheres of their homes, into the fields, forests and to the local RMPs, traditional healers, to Ayurvedic dispensaries, PHCs and to the hospitals at Rishikesh. In brief, I simply followed the women (and men) of Bunga & Daurn in their everyday lives, struggles, hardwork and resilience. These innumerable conversations, discussions and observations have also been put down as data as they gave more insights into the situation.

Throughout the data collection process, constant field notes were maintained and formal interviews were recorded which were also transcribed during the stay in the field. All the interviews were done either in Hindi or Garhwali and were later translated into English.

Apart from in-depth study of the two villages, I also visited the local ayurvedic dispensary frequently, observing and interviewing the OPD patients and staff. I also met all the traditional healers around the village and the private practitioners in the vicinity. I made a few visits to the PHC at Yamkeshwar where I interviewed the doctor and the other staff at the PHC. Some information was also collected at this PHC and analysed. I also interviewed the Gramin Vikas Adhikari (Rural Development Officer) of this Gram Panchayat and met whichever government functionary I could in this area. Maps and land records were obtained from the local land revenue offices or Patwari.

What one heard, found and observed in Bunga and Daurn was counter checked by brief visits to nearby villages. The generality of these findings was established through brief spells of fieldwork in other parts of the area, particularly few other villages in the Yamkeshwar block. Villages like Diuli, which is the nearest, relatively big market place and Kuthar, a village frequented by tourists attracted to the popular Neelkanth Mahadev Temple and Badoli village where the Block Development Office and the Primary Health Center of Yamkeshwar block are located were covered under the brief spells of data collection.

I also wanted to understand the contemporary context of health and development processes initiated by the government and NGOs in this region. Hence visits were made to various government officials and NGOs in Kotdwara, Rishikesh, Pauri, Dehradun,
Srinagar, Yamkeshwar etc. Rishikesh, is the closest town to my two field work villages (located at approximately 28 to 31 km from Bunga and Daurn). While Kotdwara is the Tehsil headquarters, the sub-district court and the Command Hospital are also located here. Both Rishikesh and Kotdwara have large markets, government and private hospitals and centres of higher education (undergraduate and post-graduate colleges). In many ways these two towns may be viewed as a centre of modernisation and these are places most frequented by my villagers. I visited the Tehsil, Mahila Samakhya staff, Forestry officer, and examined written records and reports and related block/district level data.

Besides this short visits were also made to Srinagar, the University Township of this area and to Pauri, which is not only the district head quarter but also the nerve centre of all political and administrative activities of this region. Information from the Computer Data Centre at Pauri and the Chief Medical Officer (in Pauri) were collected to get an overall picture of the health situation in Pauri Garhwal. The only NGO working in my village and delivering RCH services through a mobile van and health camps in my field villages called Himalayan Institute Hospital Trust (HIHT) with its head office in Jolly Grant, Dehradun was also visited. During these brief periods of field visits, interviews were conducted with personnel from administration, NGO-activists etc. This was done to gauge the range of responses to several developmental issues and to understand the factors behind it, particularly for the study of "change".

**DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS**

Qualitative data recording and analysis overlapped considerably. All through the period of data collection, “deep” qualitative data was analysed simultaneously. Daily notes and field recording were continuously updated, consolidated and analysed. Data gathered through the interview schedules was sifted for relevance and quality, coded and processed using appropriate methods. Data gathered through the interview schedule was later processed using appropriate methods. Wherever required and feasible, data processing using SPSS computer software program was done. Open-ended qualitative data in the scheduled was processed and analysed manually.

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8 Rishikesh is a religious town for Hindus and has an influx of foreigners who visit and stay here to study Hinduism. Most villagers come here for higher education in Sanskrit, or even the conventional education system.
METHODOLOGICAL AND ANALYTICAL ISSUES

1. Determining landownership

Collecting accurate data on land ownership was not easy. Many women did not know how much land they owned. They merely pointed out to the fields they knew belonged to them. The official revenue records collected from the revenue officer (patwari) provided information regarding land tenures, size of the holdings etc. But since the land records were seldom updated, the exercise was often more confusing. Eventually, the researcher had to rely on the information given by the villagers which at best was cross checked from a booklet given by the government to all villagers called ‘Krishi-Bhitti’ which contained agricultural revenue records. Attempt was also made to cross check data regarding land ownership, immovable wealth, birth and death figures, percentage of school going children etc with school records, birth and mortality registers (from Binak sub-centre) and the records available with the pradhan.

2. Economic classification of the households

One of our purposes of collecting such details on land ownership was to use it extensively for identifying various economic classes in study villages. Land is an important asset, which traditionally reflects the economic status of the household. Though land ownership traditionally reflected correctly the economic status of the household, but in last three to four decades landholding alone could not sufficiently bring out the differences between the households. Although almost all families in the village cultivate small plots of land, but land does not any longer make all that much difference in their way of life. Nowadays, the more important variations in wealth between households stems less from the amount of land held, and more from the amount of cash earned by male members of the households usually employed outside the village. For many households, remittances from migrant family members alone may form the main income of the household. Thus with increasing male migration from the households, land cultivated/operated along with remittances better reflected the economic status of the households. Migration status of the household hence was an important economic criterion.
for categorising the households. All the households in the sample were classified on basis of their migration status.

The study had three caste groups - Rajput, Brahmins and Schedule Caste (Dom). Caste being an explicit, discrete criterion, the collection of this data was not difficult. Although caste to a great extent reflects and overlaps with economic status, but the operation of migration does create differences even with the castes. Hence, while analysing the data finally four different economic groups and three categories namely land owned, migration status and caste were simultaneously used for analysis. These three categories were further crossed with gender to bring out the differences in gender relations and sexual divisions of labour in migrant or non-migrant households.

3. Income data

Additionally, not only has migration become increasingly important, a large section of the population is getting dependent on non-agricultural sources of income for their survival. Other sources of income are various other forms of labour, not strictly speaking wage labour, but some labour, which may be governed by the traditional socio-economic systems like working as a priest or doing other caste-specific labour. It may include artisan's work or earnings through labour such as assisting in building a house or ploughing someone's field etc. Though attempts were made to classify the households according to the distribution of the main sources of income, this again is not a precise, but a rough indicator. Each household was asked to ascertain what were their different sources of income annually and tell us approximately their total annual earning under these various heads.

4. Female-headed households

With a large percentage of the households being classified as migrant, there was a high probability of large number of households in our villages to be managed by females. It thus became necessary to carefully study these migrant houses to identify who really headed them. The Census of India defines "household" as an entire group of persons who commonly live together and take their meals from a common kitchen unless the
exigencies of work prevent them from doing so, and the "head of the household" was one who bears the chief responsibility of maintenance of the household, is the chief economic provider and the chief decision maker. This definition used by the Census leaves enough scope to include and be identified as head, even the out-migrated person of the household. This is because it relies heavily on "who is the chief provider". The out-migrant by remitting a large amount, even though not regularly, may turn out to be the chief provider. But by being away from the place of residence of his family, he may not be influencing the day-to-day decisions of the households. It is another matter that major decisions may be taken either in his consultation or when he is present. In that event, considering him as the head of the household just because he is the chief provider would in all probability misconstrue the picture. In his absence anyone else, a female or a male would be the head of the household. But in case of our patrimonial social system, acceptance and recognition of women as the "head" may not be possible. Even the concerned woman will hesitate to declare herself as the head. As a consequence such female heads go unreported or unidentified under this definition.

Urban migration of men in search of wage labour creates conditions wherein headship of the household falls on women, particularly in the absence of another elder male. But ambivalence on part of the woman herself as to her own status often hides the real situation. This was very evident during our fieldwork. In all migrant households, even in the absence of men, male headship was assumed, except where adult male was absent due to death, divorce, separation or desertion.

During our fieldwork we found that in households where there were no migrants, the eldest male was easily identified as the head. This person was not always necessarily the chief economic earner of the household, but on the basis of cultural traditions and practices, the powerful force of authority was vested within the eldest male. He was reported as the head of the household simply by virtue of his age / seniority and because of his legal control over land. In households with out-migrants, if one such elder male was found residing in the village headship fell on him. Again, this head may not be the principal earner and often may not play any active economic role, but his headship is linked with the cultural notion of authority vested in him due to his power position.
There was another group of households where women had to assume the responsibilities of the "head", due to the migration of their men in search of jobs / wage labour. But such women did not perceive themselves as the head of the household. They identified their migrant son or husband as the "head". In such cases we had to ask several questions to correctly identify the headship of such houses. Such female-headed households were identified through probing at the stage of data collection and were again checked during data processing. In households where more than one adult woman (for e.g. mother and wife of the migrant) was present, the elder woman was recognised as the head on basis of the link between seniority and authority in our cultural setting. Thus every effort was made to accurately represent female-headed households.

5. Studying Women's Work

The concept of work includes production and reproduction activities of women. Though we agree with the argument of Beneria and Sen (1986) and Mies (1980) that the two are closely linked in subsistence economy, we make this distinction as a heuristic device as well as for systematic study. The former refers to use-value productive activities of agriculture and animal husbandry and gathering and also petty animal and non-farm income / wage earning activities. The concept of reproduction includes biological reproductive (child-bearing and early nurturing) and generational reproduction (care and socialisation) and daily reproduction of household work activities like cooking, collecting, washing, cleaning etc.

The concept of gender division of labour is used to describe the socially defined allocation of all tasks between women and men in peasant households. It is extremely difficult to study quantums of labour required to till a given area of land or to produce a given quantity of grain. There are crucial factors such as size of the field, the quality of the soil, distance from the settlement, the availability of water etc. that must be taken into consideration to talk of the 'average' amount. In order to capture this, informants from each household were asked to reflect on the fields they cultivated and tell me who were the men/women/from family, relatives or hired help who took up the main responsibility or secondary responsibility of performing all the tasks. They were also asked to give an
estimate of how many hours/days/ it took to complete each specific task in one agricultural cycle of wheat crop. These estimates were then checked with other informants and also checked by observation. This cross-checking suggested that the information was reasonably accurate.

Similarly it is extremely difficult to gather amount of time on these other occupations, on animal husbandry, water and wood fetching, cooking food, and growing vegetables and other subsidiary crops, and building. It is difficult, for example, for anyone to calculate how much time they spend on fetching water or grass. The problem is further complicated by the fact that people fit the pace of the work to the amount of time they have in which to do it. Thus the estimates are bound to be very rough. Though "over-simplified averages", they provided us estimates that were needed to describe the work burden, time taken and sexual division of labour.

It is extremely difficult to demarcate work/leisure in such a society. Both seem to mingle with each other making estimation of time a difficult task. Additionally a somewhat arbitrary distinction has to be made between necessary and unnecessary labour. A certain amount of basketwork and rope making is still performed. It is not "necessary" economically, but it has a useful social function as such and occupies the time between more important agricultural works.

Another problem which arose when analysing data was that several households did not engage in some of the specific tasks in question (agricultural or livestock related), which were reported as "not applicable". A "not applicable" response caused the denominator to shift from one activity to the next when data were aggregated. Thus in calculating participation rates, individuals or households not performing a certain task had to be excluded from the denominator for that task, reducing the base numbers, so that the resulting rates could be properly compared.

Knowing that females or males perform a certain task predominantly however, does not tell us about the conditions or work. It also simply describes the division of labour in relative terms, telling us nothing about the absolute labour contribution of each gender group. It also conceals important information on internal variations of age, gender and...
kinship but also of caste and class differences in patterns of labour allocation. Moreover unless such data is collected over a long period of time, in all seasons, in combination with other techniques of data collection, one cannot probably get an exact picture of what women’s labour. Thus, this data collected through structured questionnaire was further strengthened by drawing upon personal observations through different seasons, insights, conversations with a variety of informants selected from different social strata, age-sex categories etc. This qualitative data offered a wealth of information on the intricacies of the sexual division of labour in the village.

6. Capturing the state of health and illness

Since we have decided to study beliefs and perceptions of illnesses that people had/are suffering from, without going into the illness episodes\(^9\) (in terms of morbidity measurement), the approach is yielding perceptions of “real” illness that “connects” loosely with the actual occurrence of illness as in biomedical terms. Hence our health documentation deals with how elemental, physical changes in the body are sensed, perceived, labelled and interpreted; and how they shape the health seeking behaviour of the person ill. The household schedule revealed that the villagers associated major illness with \textit{bari bimari} ('big' illness) which is fairly close to our biomedical understanding of sickness as disease. But when the respondents were asked to tell us about minor illnesses they articulated them in general terms like \textit{bukhar} (fever), \textit{pair mein dard} (pain in the legs) etc. Hence it was difficult distinguish between complaints that should be classified as “illness” as opposed to “not feeling well”. We thus noted the responses in verbatim, seeking clarifications when necessary. The data was later analysed by classifying these complaints into broader categories. The reported symptoms were categorised on the basis of their systemic origin. While analysing this data, effects of age, sex and migration status of the family were seen. The data was analysed and structured on basis of the above categories.

\(^9\) In terms of types of symptoms, severity, frequency of illness episodes or agents of causation etc
ENCOUNTERING THE 'FIELD'

Since I wanted to concentrate more on the women in the village, I had to interact with them the most, to gain familiarity, to be able to learn about their lives, work and health. I knew that probing into these issues could only proceed gradually, and would therefore be time consuming. Hence I had to take residence in the village for a long duration. Throughout the period of my fieldwork, my headquarters were located in Bunga village. Luckily I had good residential facility in Bunga village. I stayed with a migrant family, which consisted of the migrant's wife and her two daughters who were educated upto graduate level. Living with this family and my familiarity with the local language “Garhwali” was very helpful for my fieldwork. They were the most educated girls of this village, highly respected and welcomed by all households. With these girls I was able to familiarise myself quickly with both Bunga and Daurn village. I was easily accepted by the villagers and soon knew my way around in the village. As the familiarity between us deepened, they not only accompanied me in many of my data collection trips to far away villages and hamlets, but also they became my chief respondents. The trips turned out to be both very enjoyable and very informative. With them I entered into the world of the young Garhwali girls and the older Garhwali women at the same time. Soon I got to know all the inhabitants of the village and could speak and interact with them on a personal basis.

Most villagers were in awe of my educated and employed (emphasis) status. To a small number of men and a few educated young girls the word research and Ph.D. were not a novelty. But most could not fathom what I was doing in this remote village. Seeing my painstaking, exhaustive probing with each woman respondent of the village and the strenuous exercise in noting down each bit of information carefully in the field diary, the women wanted to know if it was some kind of employment which required me to do this work. Or was I under some kind of training as a health worker or for some other form of employment? Initially I found it difficult to explain to most of them that through my work in their village, I simply expected to obtain a degree in the same way as students (like their own children) study and pass an examination to obtain a degree. Not surprising were queries about what I would gain from this tiresome, slogging exercise, as some
called it later. None ceased to marvel at the amount of work that was to be done to gain all the information I needed.

When I explained to them my job as teacher of Masters of Health and Hospital Administration program, the nature of employment also perplexed them. If I taught students, many of whom were doctors and nurses, how was I not a doctor? Many even till the end were not fully convinced that I was not a medical doctor. I had carried a small kit of medicines for common ailments, which I had to often dispense under circumstances where no other medical help was available. These acts of mine, along with the "queer" nature of my job, and my collection of information primarily on women's health issues, labelled me as a doctor, for at least the villagers of Bunga and Daurn!

As a woman, I was drawn to the experiences of women, and their lives were initially more open to me than the private world of men. With the objective of wanting to learn about the lives of women and of wives in particular, women became my "informants and confidants", research "subject"- for most part of my study. They shared information on their families, domestic and conjugal arrangements, migration, work and health histories, their hopes and aspirations for themselves and their families. To capture "change" some of the oldest women in the village were interviewed. Their obvious seniority to me in age was sometimes a barrier in discussing more intimate topics. But I felt I was able to overcome this barrier by reminding them of the fact of myself being a teacher who taught students who were often doctors and most importantly me being a woman. My total participation with them and living with them in their homes helped to develop a kin feeling with all. They appreciated my being one with them without reservation, knowing fully well the relative comforts I was used to. The women’s concern was evident in that they tried to give me the cleanest bed sheet to lie upon or providing me the best charpoi in their house. In the course of this research study I learned how essential long-term research was to understand lives of women who struggled valiantly at times to raise their families, look after their homes, cattle and fields and manage to stay "alive" themselves.

Even though women were gracious and willing "informants", they soon became restless with the interviews and with the monotony and repetitiveness, which the data collection
often necessitated. Despite explaining my purpose of visit and extended stay in their village, my presence raised several questions, expectations and hope. Though mostly women understood my basic lines of inquiry, and many did not consider the questions I asked irrelevant, but still many wanted to know precisely what I was going to do for them. Many wanted me to open a clinic or to get them a doctor to open a clinic there; some wanted me to assist them to get piped drinking water in their village. Each time they approached me with their requests, I found myself helpless and backing out. I tried to explain to them that I am not trained as a doctor, that it will be illegal for me to give them any medicine. But my arguments were not convincing for them. They would be often hurt and angry. How could I refuse them medicines when they so much needed it? Didn't I care about them personally, their lives, their inabilities, their struggles and pressures? “What is all this note taking about? What is this taking interview anyway to us?” they often taunted.

I felt compelled, often emotionally to act as a "barefoot doctor"- to devote my time listening to them, often giving them basic medicines. This continued throughout the period of fieldwork, and this new role left me always uncomfortable, with guilt and conflicts. But due to this role, I got ample opportunities to interact with men folk of these villages. Friendship with them took me into the "public" world of these villagers - into the market place, gram pradhan’s meeting, schools etc. Consequently, my understanding of the community was enriched.

It was challenging to do such an intensive research. By now I am well accepted by the village women and am considered a part of their village and family. Many of them even offered further co-operation if there was still more work to be done or something left to be learnt for my research work. It was reassuring to know I had a few more friends and another home.

But this work is essentially women-centred. Women dominate these pages, as I found them numerically dominating the life in Bunga and Daurn. I am shedding light thus on
culture, society and their public grievances and private discontents\(^\text{10}\). I am also conscious that even though both the intensive study villages have all the three caste groups, I spent most of my time with the 'higher' caste as I usually lived with them in whichever hamlet I visited. Moreover my own caste undoubtedly had a good deal of influence on the nature of my material since it tended to restrict in many ways my contacts with people of the very 'lowest' castes - the Doms would not allow me to stay with them, nor would the upper caste permit it. Though few of my closest friends and best informers were \textit{aujis} (doms) - a 'scheduled caste' - it was otherwise the case that my longest and most intense contacts were with the people of 'higher castes', primarily the Brahmins living in the Brahmin hamlet of village Bunga. The wide dispersal of hamlets in this difficult terrain made daily, close contacts with other hamlets very difficult in the relatively limited time that was at my disposal. To overcome this probable bias in data collection (particularly of thick ethnographic data), efforts to stay for a few days in other caste hamlets were done. I feel that my long stay in the study area and by mixing with the villagers of all caste groups in the fields, water source, forest and observing them through their daily routine and having numerous informal discussions with them I was able to overcome, this limitation. Slowly I felt there was no hesitation on their part to talk to me and their responses to my queries were genuine. But I still feel that much of what I write is primarily that as seen through the 'upper' castes. Nevertheless the Brahmin view of 'lower' castes did educate me on the subtle operation of caste practice in the supposedly more egalitarian hill society.

There is another consideration that I would like my readers to heed. Over these two years certain contacts and acquaintances were developed with residents of many neighbouring villages. Though throughout the period of my fieldwork I was located in Bunga and Daurn villages; but in addition to doing intensive fieldwork in these two villages and the baseline in eleven villages, I made a series of more cursory visits to various other parts of the district. I became quite familiar with the Yamkeshwar block. But here I write primarily about the locality I know well, and cannot claim with confidence that all my

\(^{10}\) However, I have taken the precaution to change the names of the women given in the lists and tables, or quoted in the text of my script, to maintain the anonymity of my respondents.
data are equally valid for the whole region. Therefore when I speak of "Garhwali culture and society", I request the readers to bear this qualification in mind.

Being a lone researcher with intricate data to collect, the work was overwhelming at times. Difficult terrain and gruelling climate added to the difficulties. Interruptions occurred sometimes. Onlookers or inadvertent coming and going of people often hijacked interviews. Discussions had to be often halted as it concerned intimate and often embarrassing issues such as childbirth and the women's relationship with her husband and family. The tape-recorder and camera were used extensively in my data collection work. They helped me in capturing the field and recording field situations, which were useful while rewriting field notes. Also, I could go back and cross check anything said in a past interview about which I had any doubt. But initially it had created too much curiosity and sometimes its use had to be curtailed.

This work is by its very nature heavily based on empirical evidence and therefore issues of subjectivity must be addressed. I have tried to get the "facts" as accurately as possible. But all facts are necessarily perceived and interpreted. And this holds true for the subjects of the study as much as for the researcher. Our effort therefore is to present accurately and frankly the views of our respondents, our own observations and the analytical categories we used. In addition our perspective necessarily influences our understanding. Hence, even though I make no claims to "scientific neutrality," I do offer a fair description and analysis of events and relationships, as I have perceived them.