CHAPTER 4

Life-worlds\(^1\) in Motion

NARRATIVES OF A ‘RUNAWAY WORLD’

In the global age, one's own life is no longer sedentary or tied to a particular place. It is a travelling life, both literally and metaphorically, a nomadic life, a life spent in cars, aeroplanes and trains, on the telephone or the internet, supported by the mass media, a trans-national life stretching across frontiers... Whether voluntarily or compulsorily or both, people spread their lives out across separate worlds.

-Ulrich Beck, 2001

Ulrich Beck (2001) identifies the above as being a characteristic of ‘living your own life in a runaway world’, the runaway world referring to the modern post globalization age. The ‘runway world’ – that of the model, ironically, duplicates this frenzied life.

This chapter explores the dominant themes that emerge from the narratives of women working in the glamour industry, and brings out some elements that distinguish their life-worlds as a group. In particular, we look at the centrality of travel to their everyday life, the unique ways in which women in the industry experience time, and their everyday negotiation with the demands of ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ that are invariably played out on women’s – their own – bodies. Their narratives provide us with a glimpse of the everyday experience of life in a globalizing India.

\(^1\) Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckman (1973) define life-world as:

“By the everyday life-world is to be understood that province of reality which the wide-awake and normal adult simply takes for granted in the attitude of common sense. By this taken-for-grantedness, we designate everything which we experience as unquestionable; every state of affairs is for us unproblematic until further notice. The life-world is the domain of people’s mundane, everyday activities, relationships, knowledge and resources (including technologies). The notion of a life-world is a description from the view of a particular actor; it is a ‘poetic’ in that it captures the experience of the actor.”
I. TALES OF TIME AND TRAVEL

Travelling: A Runaway/ Runway World

As I tried desperately to coordinate interviews with women in the industry, I came face to face with the impossible task of finding a slot in their busy travel schedules. While the more established ones would be zipping across continents almost every two weeks, and doing the Delhi-Mumbai route every week, less established models would be going to smaller towns and occasionally the Middle East, nearby areas for a shoot, or just going back to their home towns for a fleeting visit or a festival.

Dolly, around 30 years, is an established ramp model from the second generation, originally from Jaipur and now based in Mumbai. Dolly joined modelling after participating in the Miss India contest (in 1994, the fateful year that saw India win both the Miss Universe and the Miss World titles). She describes a day in her working life:

Most times, you wake up so early in the morning that you feel terrible about it. Take a flight to somewhere.... Fittings, then hair. Then make up. Then do the show. Then again next morning take flight back to Bombay. It is very hectic. There is lots of travelling - not too much abroad, only sometimes, but inside India... lots.

Neeti, 32 years, is from the first generation, a former Miss India and model; she was a well known ramp, print and TV commercial model through the 1990s. Neeti joined modelling after finishing school on the advice of a photographer when she accompanied a friend who was an aspiring model to a photo-shoot. She now has a two-year old child and runs her own business. Remembering her heydays Neeti says:

Life was out of a suitcase, I was so busy travelling.

Anurita, 22 years, is from the current generation and has been a fashion model for the last two years. She is originally from Guwahati, and came to
Delhi to pursue graduation; on winning a Miss North East title and an international model hunt, she left her graduation in her final year to pursue a modelling stint abroad, and joined the occupation 'full-time'.

She says:

In the last six months I went to Paris again. After that I went to Bali, Indonesia, and before I went for Singapore fashion week then before that I went to Dubai also for some show. In India, I went to Chandigarh for some designer show and I went to Kanpur, and then I was in Jaipur for the Abu Jani- Sandeep Khosla show...

Niharika, around 35 years, is from the first generation of models and has seen the changes in the industry over the decades. She continues to occasionally model today, although she has diversified into having other businesses and offering her services as a grooming consultant, choreographer and as a judge in various model hunt shows. Niharika feels that travelling is one of the rewards of the profession. Moreover travelling has a transformatory role to play in the life of a young model; she believes that it changes one's mindset, adds to one's confidence and maturity.

I travelled to a lot of places where I would not have gone even on holiday. And it's a big learning experience. I think that came so easily in modelling. Even when you spend your own money and do something you would think five times about it, as opposed to if it just happens to you and you are going on a trip - I went to see China, Africa, Dubai, Muscat, Bahrain, Maldives, Sri Lanka...Africa I might still have gone. But China and all these Middle East countries I would never have thought about it. It's great to have that kind of exposure. You're travelling alone... You have to do things you haven't done before. Learn to live with people in hotels. Alone. When you go with a group then also. Learning to stay with other people you need a certain amount of maturity, responsibility.

Roopali, 25 years, is a fashion and TV commercial model of the current generation who has been modelling for the last three years. She was formerly an air-hostess and compared her previous job with her current one.
Now it has become very, very hectic. Summertime is still okay because there is not too much work happening in this point of time in India. But otherwise, you know sometimes in winter you really travel back to back for twenty days or something like that. So then it becomes a little hectic. In fact, I was just thinking about it and I think sometimes you know it is more hectic than even my Singapore Airlines job because then I used to fly like at least may be one flight and then I get four days off or three days off. So I used to get my due break. Here there is no break and lots of work. You just have to do it.

Other than what sounds like a glamorous jet-setting lifestyle, even within the city, every model’s life is defined by the necessity of doing the rounds. The everyday life of a struggling model is one of waking up in the morning and setting out to travel through the city, dropping photos and CVs at different agents who may facilitate their getting work. Evenings may be occupied travelling again to venues or parties where they can network and gain access to information about work in the ‘market’. Much of the time, this local travel is done through public transport.

Kavita is a 23 year old Kashmiri woman from Agra. Kavita joined the Miss Agra contest when she was in Class 12 at the behest of her mother, who saw an advertisement in the paper for the contest. She won the Miss Agra title and became a local celebrity. The title provided her with an opportunity to compere local shows. In one such show, a “musical nite” (with Punjabi pop singers and other musicians, and other media persons from Delhi), she was ‘spotted’ and offered a scholarship by the director of a Delhi media training academy to join their acting course. While in the city she decided to try her hand at modelling. Kavita recalls her initial days of struggle:

I came here on my own completely, managing on my own, managing my house and everything. In the beginning I used to think that now I have a folio, so every, every day I am supposed to meet two or three new people. Whether, it had to be a choreographer, a designer or a coordinator, or any journalist... so I made an entire list, and started calling people, meeting them. Within a certain time frame,
systematically I could generate some decent work in the market. Now, I feel I don't really need to go for auditions and meetings as most of the people now know me and have worked with me. I just get up and say ok, this is what the shoot is about, this is the money and this is the place we are shooting. So whatever I did that time, a good six-seven months, that really helped. But it was, believe me, it was different, very difficult, roaming around the whole city and a model has to look presentable also and then so much of heat and one end to another end of the city... But one has to do that, it's part of the job. It's definitely not easy; you can't sit at home and just think that work will come like that. Not at all.

Travelling is so central to the process of seeking work that even decisions like taking up rented accommodation in the city are determined by the ease with which they can travel for auditions, or back from shows, wearing the kind of clothes that are required of them. For example, nineteen year old Mayuri came to Delhi from Assam to try her hand at modelling over two years ago. At one point she decided to shift out of a posh Greater Kailash accommodation with an Assamese family, who let her stay for a meagre rent despite the fact that her address added to her value in the industry. She found living in the area impractical as it was not easy to find auto-rickshaws and had to often walk long distances in her high heals. She had earlier moved from the locality of Lajpat Nagar because of the hostile responses from her neighbours to her late hours – again one of the demands of her job.

Women living in satellite towns such as Ghaziabad and Faridabad also recalled days of their struggles through anecdotes about their long arduous journeys from their homes into Delhi. The travel is made all the more tense because of the contradictory demands – the occupation requires the women to dress up in a certain way (with make-up, to attract attention), whereas travelling within Delhi on public transport is understood to require restraint in one's clothing and underplaying of appearance for the sake of safety. Ruhi, 27 years, is from the third
generation. She lives in Ghaziabad and has been modelling for the last six years. She remembers:

R: I used to get really frustrated when I used to go for meetings in buses...You need to dress up properly, but in a bus in Delhi, it's horrible when you travel. So I used to get a scarf to cover my face up. Going for a meeting, you need to carry a little make-up on yourself also...

M: How did you manage...?

R: You wear whatever you're wearing, and then on top of that I used to wear a jacket or a shirt. I think every girl faces a lot of problems, harassment, things like that. Sometimes even I used to get too frustrated; I would catch an auto rickshaw. And later I would calculate, ok how much money do I have? I would go part of the way by auto and part by bus according to how much money I had. Tell the auto driver, bhaiyya, drop me there, and from there I used to take another bus you know. Not just for money, even if sometimes someone bothers me at a bus stand I would take an auto to a few stops down just to get away from that stop. The problem is that if you're standing in a bus stand for a long time, people start noticing you, so what I used to do, take an auto for a stop or something like that and used to catch bus from there. I used to walk a lot also in lot of places, we used to go for meetings where buses don't go, so you can't afford to even take the auto - even for a kilometer or 2 kilometers you have to pay 10-20 rupees - so I said forget it, you need to walk. So you're walking with the heels on, people are looking at you and you know, you're getting so bugged, like oh God ...

First thing as you reach there, I never used to wear too much makeup on my face, I used to keep something, a wet tissue with me, something in my pocket before getting in, and just comb your hair, put some gloss, or maybe a lipstick. It depends where the thing is, for an audition or a meeting, you ask if there's a loo somewhere. If you go, there's anyways 2-3 girls before you so sometimes, you just go and see your face in the mirror and say, ok, I am ready for a meeting. But I think, yes, it really matters if you're going in a car. I used to think, ok, you know everybody is looking so fresh, and you're looking as if you're totally zapped, dirt on your face, sweat on your face, and hair a little messed up...
And the difficult problem is that you if don't have your own vehicle, how many things can you carry?! You're carrying your work profile, you're carrying your shirt, you need to keep it in the bag, and keep the scarf in the bag, so you have a BIG bag with you, a poly-bag or something and your own bag... so then walking with the heels with the bags, carrying in your hands, so it was little tough. But I never got totally frustrated, I never took any obligations from any of my friends, pick me, drop me, 'cause I never liked that, taking obligations from anyone. Even if I have to go and take a cab and pay from home, asking my mum to pay for me, I used to do that. But I never asked anyone to pick me and drop me, like other girls, and take obligations from men.

Travelling is also fraught with danger when going out of the city of Delhi or with a client for a shoot that one has never worked with before. Tina, 25 years, who is Delhi-based is from an upper class background, having led a protected life. She has been working in the industry as a fashion and commercial model for the last two years after being requested by a designer friend to model for him. She say:

For a long time I did only Delhi stuff. It’s a bit dangerous to travel when you are new and don't really know what people are like, what things 'mean' you know! Then there was this cover shoot for Sakhi this magazine in Neemrana (a fort heritage hotel in Rajasthan, about 2 hours drive from Delhi). The agency people and photographer were going, and it was a stay-over shoot. But I thought, no way am I staying elsewhere. So I would go in the morning, and come back in the night. There were some two guys, who were creepy, and one girl who was full into those guys and would do whatever they would say... I was not comfortable staying at the venue with them...

Moreover travelling to certain places 'means' certain things. This refers to the different kinds of fashion shows which women in the industry have to do in different cities – sometimes shows are less serious, less about clothes, and more about entertainment or an advertising gimmick for a certain brand as opposed to a show of clothes by a designer. Each encapsulates a different set of experiences. She continues:
I don’t travel a lot, I prefer to do Delhi based things. Yes Singapore and all is ok. Even Bombay. But not these shows in Chandigarh, Ludhiana, Amritsar (smaller cities)... I have done a couple of these shows but I really don’t like them at all. I have told my bookers, they say no for these kind of show offers that I get. I remember I went for one series, my sister in law was also part of those shows. And after it was over, she seemed to have enjoyed it a lot, and she said to me, “so wasn’t that fun!” I stared at her, quite horrified – I was like “Fun?” Drunk Punjabi men with red eyes leering at you, and even following you – or following your vehicle when you are leaving the show premises, knocking on the window of your matador trying to say some weird things – that’s not my idea of fun! That’s creepy (scary)!

Even within Delhi, the job takes Tina to places she would otherwise never have gone and forces her to experience the world outside of that defined by her class privilege. She says:

Then there was the time when this coordinator called me for a meeting to Daryaganj!! Do you even know where Daryaganj is? Have you ever been there? I had never been there, I didn’t know where it was. So I was a bit apprehensive... anyway still, I got up early in the morning... I took my driver and we went. All these little alleys and tiny crowded shops... I finally found the place, reached on time. And that fellow had not turned up!! I waited for him for an hour – tried to call him up, his phone was switched off. I was close to tears - in a strange place, not knowing where to go, what to do... then I finally got back into the car and left. I called my mum and started crying - it was so frustrating. I mean, I don’t need to do all that!! Not for some 10,000 bucks!

In the models’ lives, the characteristic state of constantly being in transit has its side effects. Abroad it is more pronounced, because models go under contract to say Paris, or New York from Russia or Bosnia or Brazil, and have to endure life away from their families, nations, cultures at an extremely young age, sometimes as young as 15.

Others locate health problems caused by this lifestyle, difficulties in managing a relationship, having children and a career at the same time. It
has a deep impact on the possibilities of leading a normal life, and throws their 'normal life' into disarray. Noelle is a 28 year old fashion model from the second generation. She is Anglo-Indian, her parents live in Allahabad and she had come to Delhi to pursue her graduation. Noelle was 'discovered' by a well known photographer in a city market about eight years ago and has gone on to do some prominent campaigns, music videos and fashion shoots. Here she talks about the sleep deprivation that occurs because of the constant travel:

All the flying around and this and that and the other can really get to you after a while. Like I know that now I need to sleep for the next ten days, everyday for 10 hours at least for me to feel normal because from the first of April right till I got back from Lahore on the 4th evening I was working everyday except for the 27th when I caught up with some sleep.

There was Fashion Week and there were a whole lot of these shows in April and May – you have to go for fittings, rehearsals or photo-shoots. It's very hectic, and kind of gets to you.

Neeti remembers how she was hesitant to join the Miss India pageant at one time, knowing that it may result in more travel and come in the way of her relationship.

I would think, what if I win, then I will have to travel and I was so much in love with my boyfriend that I could not imagine leaving him, I was too attached to him.

It was also one of the reasons she did not return to the profession after becoming a mother, as she was not ready to leave her child and travel for extended periods. She says:

A model's life is very erratic, and you have to leave the child alone for periods of time. if you want to continue working in that way... it's not impossible, but you have to mentally prepare yourself for it and that's not easy.

Shaheen, almost 40 years, was a prominent model in the late 1980s, who was known as 'the face of her time'. She is currently an entrepreneur and
has various creative pursuits – she is a style and design consultant to many fashion design schools and is also writing a film. She has two children, a 15-year old son and a 10-year old daughter. Shaheen is of the view that the inherent travelling makes the industry more suspect than other industries as travelling is commonly associated with having 'loose morals'. She adds that it is not an unfound allegation as it offers possibilities for liminal behaviour, behaviour different from that 'back home' and a license to be more adventurous.

It's easier to sleep around because we travel so much. You travel with twenty other male models, you travel with photographers, with beautiful attractive people to beautiful locations... it's not a regular job. So there is so much possibility which is not there in a regular job. If you are going to office everyday and coming back, how many things can change for you? But if you go out of town, you've slept with somebody and then come back, you think nobody will be the wiser... whether you do anything or not, everybody else presumes that anyway!

Travelling defines and leaves a deep impact on the worlds of women in the industry. Roopali talks about a particularly special journey that was an eye-opener, it not only showed her a different side of India (one that she had forgotten had existed in her fast paced lifestyle) but also showed her a mirror as to how the shine of glamour, represented by women in the industry, are often employed by others for their own benefit. In her words:

It is strange but my worst experience turned out to be my best experience. We had been invited to some function in Itanagar in Arunachal Pradesh, some inauguration or guest appearance – one of those things that we also do. There was me and two other models from Bombay. It was at an army base somewhere near Itanagar... the journey there, I will never forget. The untouched natural beauty of that area is something amazing. But there are no roads, nothing, it is really backward... That experience showed me another part of India, which I would never have seen otherwise, and we saw how that part of India is... forgotten... it is really sad, these places should also get the benefits of modern India like we do.
We got there alright, but consequently the area was flooded, and we were stuck in that place. Still we had to get back somehow, and so we undertook this journey back - a drive of more than ten hours in that situation and terrain, with whatever roads there were being in really bad shape. It was really scary. We were all scared, terrified, sitting in silence, praying... there were times when we thought that this was it... the end of us. We were weeping with relief when we managed to make it back.

But the event itself was a big disappointment, and also learning. What we had thought it would be was very different from what it turned out to be. It was some lottery type thing, we were to go, pick the lottery or something like that. We had thought it being an army base, it would be a motivational kind of thing, provide entertainment to the army type of exercise. But when we got there, we realized that it was a move by a political party, some strategy. We saw banners of this political party, promoting the party...it had been organized by some political family, as a precursor to the elections that were coming up. They had held this event with these 'glamour celebrities' to gain mileage from that... Moreover the junta there did not even know us!! They cheered and everything all right, but all they knew was that we were 'somebodies' from "there" (Delhi/ Bombay model types) – the glamour world! They would have been happy to see anyone from "there"! So basically, quite unknowingly, we had been used for some political gain by a political party, without having a clue about them or about it.

**A Time Warp**

Models often complain that a models' time is not seen to be worth much. Yet a 'model's time' itself is a unique experience. The interviews reveal a special understanding and experience of time shared by women in the industry. Time is stretchable and elastic, and full of tension. Like the wax and wane of the sine curve, it undulates, compresses, stretches periodically. Time is compressed in that its bandwidth covers an intense 'career lifetime' that begins at 20 or in their teens and ends at 30 years of age, so much so that at 30 they begin to feel the insecurities of ageing. We have already seen the secrecy that surrounds the revelation of age in the
industry. Priya, 26 years, from the second generation of models, is an established fashion model based in Delhi. She says:

 It's true to a certain extent that at 26, you are a dinosaur in the world of modelling ... As a model you're out. However as a supermodel, it could be the beginning! If you have established yourself and become a personality.

The exigencies of the profession cause women in the industry to experience time with an urgency while their youth is still in demand, and with fear that their career and life as they know it could end any time. Roopali, for instance, finds it difficult to answer the following question:

M: For how long you think you will be here?
R: Well, every year I feel the next year will be the last year ...because I know that I do not want to fade out slowly kind of thing and push it to the extreme. I do not want to do that. I'll probably do something where I feel that I can get into something, some related field, related to modelling or something like that. Actually, I see myself at least for the next two years here. Maybe.

Nancy, 26 years, from the third generation of models is from Nagaland and has been modelling for the last six years. She is more up front about the anxiety that underwrites their everyday life. She echoes others in her field when she ominously says:

It (my career) could end tomorrow - or it could already by over and you don't know it yet. Because people come to you to give you work, you can only sit and hope you will be selected. So you never really know which is your last assignment.

Kavita feels that those who plan their time well in the industry can still sustain themselves for longer periods. Her own strategy to ‘fill time with work’ has been to get into the television industry. She says:

You can't be a model for too long, although it definitely depends on how the girl carries herself and markets herself in the industry. Few models work for 3-4 years, 5 years and then they go. But some have been in the industry for a good 8-10 years. And still now, they have maintained so much. And then people you know, they give them first priority. The way they have marketed themselves! Otherwise how many years, 5-6 or 8 years? This was one reason I thought of
getting into television - television is something where there is no age limit, it is something that could work out long term.

Basically I feel if a girl is a ramp model, she has work only some times - in the seasons when there are ramp shows happening. But for me, I am busy throughout the month only because of this reason that either I have a fashion show, if not a fashion show then I have a shoot and if not shoot, then definitely my television experience is so much and that keeps me busy throughout the month. I have a commitment, like every Sunday there has to be an episode which will go on air, so I know that for every month I would be shooting, and I have to be busy for these, these, these days. Not everybody does this so they cannot sustain themselves in the industry.

Actually it is not that easy, one has to just really, really work hard to fill your time with some sort of work. I see models who start modelling and they work for 6-7 months and then they say we just can't do it, it is not happening. And they don't do it. I remember the girls who started modelling with me, now they are not doing anything, they have got married, they are doing some job, call centre, working in some airlines, whatever they got, and they stopped modelling.

Time stretches periodically as they wait, wait, wait during rehearsals and fittings and shoots, or for the phone to ring to tell them that they have been selected from the auditions they gave. Noelle speaks of one particularly excruciating wait during a fitting:

Some designers take forever to do fittings, which is annoying because it is a lot of waste of time. I have actually played four games of Scrabble during one day of fitting, that's my record - four games! And a single game takes you - with two people playing - at least an hour and a half. So that's how bored I've been after the reading, after doing crossword after everything I think let us play or do something more constructive.

Time waxes and wanes as the year dips into 'season' - an intense period of hectic activity before the winter wedding season - or off season - the summer lull when there are no shows held for months. Even within the space of a single show, the models feel the different paces of their
profession. Vinita is a second generation model of Indian origin based in Mumbai and former beauty queen of her native country. Vinita was spotted by an Indian photographer on the beach of her home town, and invited to India to model for a prestigious campaign in the early 1990s. She talks here about Fashion Week, which is an intense week of non stop work for the models, although the shows themselves have long periods of lull in the midst of hectic activity.

There's too much in Fashion Week. We have to do fittings for 19 designers that's just too much. Wake up at 8 in the morning, finish not before 9 at night. Then after all that, all you want to do is plonk yourself in bed and go to sleep. But fittings are more full days than the actual show days... otherwise there is too much waiting towards the end. You're just hanging around, lolling around from here to there, because once your hair is done, then there is base, then again wait... then its your turn finally for make-up... then again wait... that's the worst part. But it's only bit by bit that they build your look so you have to just bear it and wait... And then, once the actual show starts, it just goes by... whoosh... in the snap of a finger!

Women in the industry experience ageing differently too. Neeti, for example keeps reiterating that "I had my baby girl when I was quite old, at 30 years of age." Neeti’s narrative about her life barely covers the last fifteen years or so, yet it is a life-story that is complete in itself and encapsulates her entry and exit from the industry as well as various landmark experiences. She is 32 years old, and considers herself 'old'. This sense of ageing is peculiar to this industry (as well as other professions, such as sports). One can spot various concepts of time and age at work here (Plummer, 2001). Neeti’s chronological age (32 years) is not consonant with her the subjective age (how old a person feels - 'old' in case of Neeti). The interpersonal age (how old others think you are) is also an issue of concern, and the social age (the age roles you play – so you can act much younger or older than your age) has to be more or less constant in her profession. Her professional experiences start young, and it is an
intense, hurried, fast paced life. Her sense of being old comes very soon, and therefore gives the sense of a lived life.

II. WHEN A GREAT TRADITION GLOBALIZES

Milton Singer's famous study of Indian civilization, *When a Great Tradition Modernizes* (1972) revealed the hybrid nature of the process of modernization in India, which could not be explained by a classic break between periods of tradition and modernity. Instead, Singer found in India a situation where traditions "coexist with forces of modernization in innovative ways". Indian modernization is not an aping of the West but a highly selective process of borrowing and innovation. Singer shows that it is incorrect to equate the traditional with the stagnant and unchanging; he finds that Indian society has always adjusted itself to new forces and circumstances through history, evolved strategies of adaptation such as "compartmentalization, ritual neutralization of the work sphere, and vicarious ritualisation".

In their everyday lives, the collision of tradition and modernity is not as severe as in the imagination of sociologists. People are able to compartmentalize their lives, following a modern model in the work sphere, and a traditional one in their domestic sphere. As Singer says,

> An individual's daily passage between 'ritually neutral' public areas and private domestic areas subject to traditional ritual restrictions does not result in traumatic and schizophrenic emotional reactions... It results instead in an adaptive *modus vivendi* that I call compartmentalization.

By doing this, conflicts are reduced or avoided, and there is time and opportunity to innovate or reinterpret traditions accordingly. We see a similar tendency in the context of globalization.

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2 Inspired by Milton Singer's epic *When a Great Tradition Modernizes*, 1972
The narratives reveal strong undercurrents of this “compartmentalization” and a conscious divide between the public sphere of work which makes demands of ‘modernity’ and ‘globalization’ on the women – in appearance, behaviour, body structure, attire and professional attitude – and the private domestic family sphere, where traditional roles continue to be expected from her. Her everyday life is therefore an ongoing negotiation between these. This is all the more stark in the case of women who have migrated from smaller towns to the metropolis (development in India too has been deeply “compartmentalized”), and are compelled to maintain almost a dual existence.

Over two thirds of the women I interviewed were migrants, who had left small towns, hamlets, smaller cities to make their way to Delhi or Bombay to try their luck in the big, bad, modern city, away from their traditional moorings. Migration and journeys have always evoked romance, adventure, danger, dreams in popular imagination. A popular Bollywood film Bunty aur Babli captures this in a song, in which the main protagonists gyrate atop a train as they make their way to the city (‘the sea’) escaping their small towns hungry for a different pace of life, in pursuit of their dreams (wealth, glamour and fame), which loosely translated says,

\begin{verbatim}
From small small towns
From empty afternoons filled with boredom
Here we go, my bag of belongings and I
The rain here is only a drizzle
The rivers sluggish
From small tributaries
Here we go into the sea...
\end{verbatim}
The mighty train
Spews its smoke
Blows its whistle
Oh how it beckons me...

**Tradition: Experiencing Rupture**

Former Miss India and 'supermodel' Madhu Sapre had once famously said, "There are contradictions because of the fight between what I am outside and where I basically come from. I have many conservative values but since I lead a glamorous life, I don't know whether I am modern or not." Arjun Appadurai in his set of essays on modernity, *Modernity at Large* (1997), puts forth a 'theory of rupture' in which he too states that there is no single break between modernity and tradition. Instead modernity is unevenly experienced and the 'transnational flows' created by the mass media and migration equip people with the resources for a renewed imagination of themselves and their world. The glamour industry in a sense forces people in it to experience the rupture between tradition and modernity more acutely.

The women I interviewed travelled not only around the world or to different cities for work, but were constantly engaged in a clever to and fro between the compartments of tradition and modernity, as is popularly understood. When they return home to their places of origin, or to their

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3 The train has often been a symbol associated with modernity. One recalls a classic scene in Satyajit Ray's film *Pather Panchali* when Apu and his sister Durga while running in the fields go out a little further than usual and encounter the steam engine - a monster of a massive, roaring train - hurtling across the tracks through the fields. Stunned by its power and mystique and its irreverent intrusion into their idyllic landscape, Apu and Durga can only imagine what this monster may be. The train is a metaphor for modernity in the film (like Giddens' 'juggernaut called modernity', Giddens, 1990), it links the village and the city, and offers both a menacing glimpse of the power and destructive capacities of modernity, as well as facilitating a route of escape from poverty and backwardness.

4 I do not enter the semantics of the sociology of modernity here but use 'tradition' and 'modernity' in the popular sense as was understood and interpreted by women in the sample. For recent sociological readings on modernity see Alam, 1999 ('hybrid modernity'); Gupta, 2000 ('mistaken modernity'); Daedulus, 2000 ('multiple modernities').
families ('conservative' is a commonly used adjective to describe their families) or just 'home' in the same city, if they live with their family in that city, they are forced to engage with traditional gender role expectations on a daily basis. If their profession demands that they be 'modern' or 'global', their social survival and sustained relations in the family depends on how they accommodate tradition. In the clothes they wear, in the tone they adopt, in the persona they project, in the roles they quickly retreat into they acknowledge the demands that tradition makes on them and provide insights into the different worlds that coexist within a globalizing India. This is a generation on the move, stepping on and off worlds like at a busy railway junction, getting off a fast train here, alighting a slow mail carriage there, making its way through a nation changing in spurts at different turns.

Ironically the fashion industry is a modern profession that earns the major part of its income from the maintenance and production of tradition. It is the traditional lehengas and the sarees that are the main income generators for most fashion designers. Even the women in the industry get their biggest pay packets during the main 'season' which is during autumn every year, just before the wedding season when there are many shows by designers and in bridal wear festivals and exhibitions held to capitalize on the trousseau buying fervour of the wedding season.

Fashion universally has an intrinsic connection to tradition and modernity. Fashion in India has a deep connection with tradition - more than modernity as in the West - as dressing up is usually associated with special occasions, weddings or moments of traditional festivity. Although 'fusion' is a popular term that marks Indian fashion (blending of the Indian with the Western, for example, the case of the 'kurti' - a shorter version of the kurta that can be worn as a blouse with trousers) and the search for such garments is a dominant preoccupation of the industry,
women in the industry experience the oscillation between tradition and modernity differently.

Modelling traditional wear on the ramp is alright, but negotiating tradition in real terms for them often means living a dual life and playing a suitable role when they travel back home, or in the presence of members of their family. Kavita for example, encounters this duality while packing for her visits to her hometown Agra:

I have to really think when I pack my stuff for Agra. I make sure, like I wear a top with not tummy showing. And I make sure I don’t wear a top like I am wearing just now, I definitely can’t wear this in Agra, I just can’t wear it (sleeveless and fitted). So I make sure that I wear a top which is got like sleeves. I prefer wearing not too figure hugging or tight clothes you know, loose like a kurti top or a loose t-shirt or something and basic make-up also. I just tie my hair, finish, and wherever you have to go, just go and come back. No heels and all when I go to Agra - I just carry one flat shoe, I go, finish my work and come back.

It also means a mental journey of coming to terms with the demands of the profession, working on ways to be ‘modern’ as they understand it and battling deep rooted notions within themselves of what is traditionally acceptable. Negotiating tradition therefore invariably means negotiating with the family especially around the issue of marriage and shame and honour. The ‘Indian parent’ becomes a terror, a guardian of tradition, honour and community and a source of constant anxiety and worry in most narratives.

This is highlighted in the case of Shivani, the 24-year old woman from Benaras modelling for the last two years. Shivani came to Delhi after graduation to pursue an MBA diploma from an institute in Delhi. As she did not want to return to Benaras immediately after completing the diploma, and her father would not hear of her joining a job (because it went against their Baniya Agarwal ethos), Shivani joined the 3-month
grooming course at Elite modelling and grooming agency. For her family this was acceptable as she explained to them, that it would enhance her personality and improve her marriage prospects. It was also quite common for girls from her background to undertake these type of courses for a better married life, and so her family agreed to shell out the Rs.65,000 fee for the course.

The course, however, had many elements of modelling in it (rather than teaching household management or feminine social skills - which is what Shivani’s family had assumed) – styling, ramp walking, posing for photographs and so on. In the 'graduation show' at the end of the course, to which many media persons were invited, Shivani won the Best Catwalk Award. Following this, the model management section of Elite offered that she sign up with them, and try her hand at modelling. She recalls:

I asked my parents, they didn’t really react. They said ok till the time you don't get married... You can go ahead. But yes, you have some restrictions or limitations... please follow them. No videos, no albums, no movies, serials. Print it’s fine, ramp it’s fine. Till the time you don’t get married, you can do one or two assignments... Generally Agarwals are very backward you know. They don’t allow their daughters for the modelling thing.

'One or two' turned into much much more over the last year, as Shivani found startling success, very quickly. Her dusky skin, and exotic looks were lapped up by international clients, and Elite quickly found that it had a ‘hot property’ in its hands. However, because of Shivani’s restrictions it would seem that the only thing holding her back from a full blown shot at international fame and success is, her parents. In her voice:

I am not that career oriented, only for a time pass I am in this line... I don't wear anything revealing. My bookers never send me for such shoots. They know my restrictions, they know my limitations, they know that Shivani won’t do any shoot with bikini, or the cleavage showing or something like that. Because my parents are not like that. I myself don’t have a problem wearing... but ya, I like to
maintain my own dignity, my family values, because they expect so much. They have given me that much of opportunity, that’s a big thing... I am really obliged to them. So I have to keep that in mind... Still, I did one or two shoots where I was forced to wear a bikini blouse, but it came out properly you know, I wore the coat or something over it, so it wasn’t like that kind of (obvious) bikini shoot. Within Indian clothes only. (emphasis added) Or in one case – cover of magazine – there was shot of me in the swimming pool, but it was only a head shot till shoulders, with the body underwater. They were unhappy about it, but I had already done it...

This world is very different from life in Benaras. Not a single eating joint, no good hall, nothing... there is only family, my house, my dad’s shop, my few friends, that’s it. It’s a very slow life... but a very luxurious life. I don’t have a car here... you don’t have your parents, you don’t have good food... here it’s not that easy life. When I first joined, some things surprised me. Dressing sense, my god, actually surprised me. Girls used to dress up like ... too much, in fashionable clothes... of course for the first time it was very new to me. And girls smoking... (embarrassed laugh) even that surprised me. After that it was ok. Here a lot of people may get into smoking or parties or boyfriends... but not me. It’s all family values. I always feel that, what I am doing is not allowed in my family, they never wanted me to do this... they trust me so much so I should respect...

When I go back to Benaras I do dress differently. I wear suits (salwar kameez). Because in my shop, my dad says whenever you come to the shop, wear suit. Because you have the Muslim karigars and all, so you need to wear suit. My relatives and all... they just want me to come back... they said ke bahut ho chuka, now let her come back. It has been a long time for them. It’s not modelling which is a problem... they feel, she has stayed in Delhi enough, ask her to come back. Learn some housework, stay at home... My friends there say that we cannot believe that you are a model! Whenever they see a magazine or something, they call me up and say... we have seen you again.

Her agency feels helpless at this dead end that they feel they are coming to with Shivani. The agency’s director laments:

Trying to change the mindset of Indian parents has been the biggest challenge. I’ve got a girl from Benaras... who is so popular, so popular, I can’t begin to tell
you, for big shoots... every foreign agency that comes in wants to shoot with her, every foreign photographer that comes in wants to shoot with her... But her parents have different plans for her! There is pressure on her now to just come back to Benaras, get married, settle down... and I think, you know, she can only go that far. Because of the social pressures some will only go that far. And eventually what her parents have planned for her is what they have planned for her, it's out of my control. So they feel she needs to settle down in one year, and this will hamper her chances of finding the right match, there is nothing we can do.

It is indeed the prospect of marriage that is at the centre of the tension around Shivani's stint in the modelling world. Shivani talks at length about the expectations from her as a woman and as a good daughter and daughter-in-law, all of which she feels are non-negotiable and normal in her community, none of which will accommodate or tolerate her current profession. Her stint in modelling is only a hiatus granted to her from the powers that be, one that will be revoked immediately once the suitable boy is found.

There is no pressure on me as such for marriage. My dusky complexion is problem for the marriage, not the modelling! Everyone loves my complexion especially the international clients... they consider it "Indian". But for marriage, no! They say, ladki to kaali hain (The girl is too dark!) But ya, they wanted me to get married. So they are looking for a guy. The day they find I will leave modelling. That's what, I am not career oriented. Like they can find a guy tomorrow also, or maybe two months later. But they are finding. So I might leave in two days also, or two months. I feel somehow that love marriage doesn't go that well... so I prefer arranged. I can wear only sarees after my marriage if they say... so I am not at all particular. No, I won't have any problem with that, I won't think that it should be my choice.

About working after marriage, I think... uh, I will be married in a business class only. So I can help my husband in the business. Of course I won't do any job because I really don't want to do any job. I can't do... Either modelling, if they allow. It is unlikely but... If they don't allow, then I can help my husband in the business. That's it. So I don't have any high hopes or anything...
Ya, India is a male dominated society. My mom, if she says, ok go and get this thing from the kitchen... I say, no I don’t want to do, tell bhaiya to do it... she will say, this you will have to do after your marriage also. Right now I am doing for your bhaiya, after his marriage, his wife will do for him. But you have to do - always. So you should be in the habit of working – household things. It’s a natural thing, that girls do the work inside the home, boys do the work outside the home. You just cannot... My bhaiya can go out at twelve o clock in the night, why not me... like that, and she will say, its because you are a girl, you have to be back before dark, no night shows, nothing, you are not a boy... Because girls get raped not the boy.

I know that I should know how to do, what to do, what not to do, should know household things and all... Because men don’t have to do it. If woman doesn’t do, then maids do or whatever. But it’s not that man is doing and woman is not doing anything. You are just appreciated when you do work na. When you cook, you are appreciated for that. I think you should do it. If not every meal then at least one meal a day... but make your husband feel happy, make your family feel happy.

I am quite religious but I don’t fast. Except Shivratri fast. Because my mom has said that you are staying alone there, don’t fast... because if you can’t do properly so it is no use, better to don’t do. Because you are a kid... of course after marriage, you have to do. Which fasts? Even I don’t know... it depends on family to family. In my family it’s not that much....but ya, karvachauth, we have teej also... badi teej, chhotti teej, Ganesh chauth (north Indian Hindu religious festivals)...not much.

For Shivani, marriage is a watershed for her lifestyle. Her life can be divided into pre and post marriage – both completely different worlds, two distinct and well defined roles of ‘beti’ and ‘bahu’ (daughter and daughter-in-law) which she has been well socialized into. Her mode of resistance and negotiation with her parents are also pegged around this ultimate end – sometimes used subversively, such as in the case of using the grooming course for marriage purposes as an excuse to avoid returning to Benaras.
Shivani's sister-in-law has also been to Delhi and stayed with her in her paying guest accommodation for a month doing a grooming course with the Meyhar Bhasin Academy. It was a one month course in which she learnt things like table decoration, general grooming. I asked if these were things she uses back home? No, said Shivani, she does not use the knowledge from the course generally in Benaras, but it is only exposure to the world outside so it is good to have this knowledge. Shivani's friends and relatives back home often ask her to teach them about make up and things, they say, teach us how to do make up, or do it for us on occasions and so on. Shivani says that she sends all cheques home – she feels this is the right thing to do. Her family deposits it in her account in Benaras and she withdraws whatever she needs from the ATM in Delhi.

Shivani is also a carrier of certain elements of globalization to her home town. In the way her friends respond to her, or the grooming course attended by her sister-in-law, it is evident that the "city" and her profession makes her emblematic of all the knowledge in this globalized world. "Exposure to the world outside" becomes a valued quality for housewives in small towns – just like education in the 1920s was considered important for women to make good mothers. So while the 'beti' embarks on a contested career in modelling following the grooming course, the 'bahu' returns home with 'exposure' that will hopefully make her a better mother and daughter-in-law – thereby in a sense, employing modernity to service tradition.

Shivani lives a "compartmentalized" life: modifying her behaviour, dress code, attitude, between the demands of international clientele, life of a single woman living in paying-guest accommodation in Delhi, good homely Agarwal girl in Benaras, a highly rated professional model at Delhi's top modelling agency (their golden goose, in fact). Her passive, almost fatalistic acceptance of what life (her family) has in store for her is her own
resolution of the internal churning (of values, expectations, roles, duties of a good daughter and so on) that many of the young women in the industry experience. Relations between the Indian parent and the Indian child remain, for want of a better adjective, 'Indian'. Adulthood is not taken seriously, parents still feel they have the ultimate say over their offspring's life, especially a daughter. Moreover an Indian daughter remains less in a position to negotiate than the Indian son, and made to feel far more guilty for having transgressed set boundaries.

Even as she seems resigned to her life after marriage, she is changing her destiny. Shivani's obeisance to her parents and tussle with tradition is however one of the phases of the transformation that happens over the initial two years when a young woman joins the industry. It is part of the 'adjustment' to the industry, and reaching an equilibrium that each person has to come to according to her background and skills in negotiating with tradition and with their families. Besides, nothing succeeds like success, and once the young woman finds a certain level of monetary success, and celebrity status, the winds do change – and the young woman finds herself back in favour with her family and relatives, with enhanced ability to negotiate for more and more freedom. In Shivani's case also this holds true. One year after the above interview, despite the boundaries she had outlined for herself, she was doing TV commercials for a well known fairness cream and on the verge of entering the Bombay film industry, preparing to travel with her mother to shoot for her debut feature film in Europe.

Being in the glamour industry does therefore push some boundaries. Kavita for example feels that by virtue of her experience in the industry, she is now outside the boundary that tradition – her family and

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5 See Kakar, 1981 for more on childhood, parenting and the Indian psyche.
community - places on her sisters. She has flown away from the group, and cannot be made to return and adhere to deeply felt traditional requirements – in her case, a Kashmiri Pandit groom.

My parents in the beginning were very tense about finding a match for me. But one thing is there - they feel that the city has to be good for me. Because they will not send me to Meerut or Agra or Chandigarh. They know that now 3-4 years I have been living in a metro, so my lifestyle is like that, my thinking is like that... if I am married I should go to Delhi, or Bombay. Initially my mom was too much into finding a Kashmiri but now... there are not too many guys whom actually my mom feels that I can stay with. Ya, for my elder sister, for my younger sister, they can get a family type Kashmiri guy but not for me. I think if a marriage doesn't work out, better to separate and get divorced. I don't care about the world too much. Life is definitely more important.

Although her sisters also live and work “in a metro” she does not think they are removed from tradition. It is only her, by virtue of her profession and own internal transformation, that is outside this expectation from her parents.

Mary, around 30 years, has been an established fashion model for the last eight years. Originally from Kerala, she is now based in Delhi and London. She feels she has challenged tradition and the authority of her parents by living life on her own terms, made possible by the early financial independence and autonomy that she claimed by being a model. She says:

I think I have challenged traditional norms in every possible way actually. I think I lived in with my boyfriend much before anyone I knew lived-in. And I was ok with people writing about it and stuff. It wasn’t a big deal for me. Even though my parents couldn’t take it. I mean my parents couldn’t even take the fact that I was a model. They still can’t. They’re hoping still that it will quickly end and it will all be good again! It’s not about actively challenging tradition, it’s about doing your own thing, and if by doing it, it gets challenged, then let it. Here, everyone always has something to say. Other people’s opinions shouldn’t bother you. The kind of society we live in... modelling - not modelling, life can be really debilitating if we start listening to other people’s point of view.
Modernity: Experiencing The Gaps

Mayuri's case is an exception, yet demonstrates the struggle with modernity's slippery surface. Coming from the interiors into the modern city, trying to assimilate into a modern profession, 19-year old Mayuri drops out of school and embarks on an adventurous and sometimes disheartening journey of trial and error in an effort to become a successful model.

While one third of the women I interviewed came from smaller towns, Mayuri was the only one who claimed to be from a 'village' (although she distinguished herself from other "villagers" by saying that "we are not conservative like other villagers, maybe it is because my father was with the army and had exposure to other places"). Hailing from a village in the district of Naugaon in Assam (where she claims telephone lines were laid only five months back), Mayuri was discovered by an organizer of the North East Beauty Forum while she was going to school in a cycle rickshaw. The agent gave her his number and asked her to call him if she was interested in modelling. The dreams began immediately. Her first wide eyed big journey was to Guwahati to participate in the Miss North East India contest, where she had to stay for four days (she had never stayed overnight at the city before) at the venue of the contest ("for grooming, photoshoot, swimming"). After this experience, Mayuri came to Delhi with a cousin (who helped set up some accommodation for her in Lajpat Nagar, and helped get some photos of Mayuri taken to make a folio). She sourced the photographer and other contacts through Nancy, a previous winner of the Miss North East pageant, who had become a slightly established model in Delhi.

Initially she had severe language problems as she did not speak English or Hindi fluently. The city - and being alone in the city - paralysed her and
for two months she did not go out of the house to distribute the photos and get work. She had been in Class XI and left school midway when she came to Delhi. She somehow managed to get two small ramp shows, after which she went back to Assam as she was too scared to live in the city. Eight months later she returned to Delhi because she became depressed and uninterested in doing a computer course that her family suggested. She decided to come back and try again with renewed confidence. This time she returned alone.

Mayuri decided that these barriers – of language, being from a village, alone – should not matter in the light of all she had read in the fashion magazines, and heard from TV and fashion circles. She felt she should aim for some other level. Mayuri’s words reveal that in her imagination, there was no difference between New Delhi and New York in the world and profession she imagined herself to be part of. As she says:

I think for someone whose aim is to live in a city like New York or Paris, Delhi in your own country... it's nothing, nothing, nothing. When Gisele Bundchen came to New York she knew only Portuguese. Like this I found many examples. If they can do it, why can't I?

By and by, Mayuri grew to enjoy the liberties of being without supervision and in what she felt was a dizzyingly fascinating profession. She began to work on herself with the aim of becoming an international success – joining English classes, equipping herself with a Rapidex reader in her handbag, joining salsa dance classes and swimming classes to become freer with her body. Before this she had joined a grooming course, although it did not work out the way she had hoped. She says:

Actually I joined Meyhar Bhasin Academy when I first came. There are two sessions – Group A is grooming, and Group B is modelling. I did not join modelling because I did not need to learn that. What I needed was grooming, to be polished and sophisticated. But the course had no effect on me. There were 32 people from different different places... I would keep looking at them, listening,
trying to understand, sitting, waiting. I just could not understand what people were saying. I could not express myself, I was too scared to talk. What I am learning now on my own has more effect.

Mayuri recently went to Thailand on an assignment, which she got through the internet. She realized that abroad, people would take her to be from Mexico or other Latin American countries – not only because of her dark, Amazonian looks, but also because of her ‘different’ accent (not associated with Indians, who normally have a reasonable level of English). She says of the project:

It's a very big assignment. My travelling, air ticket, everything was given by them. They received me at the airport also. Payment was ok... I am a newcomer so it was not so much. But for me what was important was that I got a foreign trip contract.

Other than this, Mayuri gets work to her liking in Delhi once in a while (although she is regularly offered C-grade music videos and other dubious assignments, which she rejects). Her career is not picking up at the moment, although she feels this is the time that she can utilize to learn and groom herself to be more modern. As she says:

In this career it is important to be modern. In modern society English is very important. I could understand but my pronunciation was very bad. I have studied in a regional language medium school, and in my society nobody speaks English. Or Hindi for that matter. Only TV and newspaper. Nothing beyond that. So after coming here, I had to learn all that. To promote yourself it is very important to communicate. If you want to work in this field for a long time, then language is very important. Along with that, what is important is the special knowledge for the industry. I spend so much... I watch different TV channels, read international fashion magazines, see what is the latest fashion trend, which designer is doing what, which model is doing what... I can recognize these things now. I think good models need to have this kind of knowledge, also of things like which are the new mobile ring tones, about Hindi films, actors... where different countries are, geography and so on. I keep learning. By observing. Even after meeting you, I would have observed you and seen how you do some things, and learnt something
new. And I know a lot of things. But my talking... before that was a big problem. But now I don't mind only. If you don't understand, it's not my problem, it's your problem. Lot of my colleagues make fun... I keep listening, but my turn will also come. I am also watching them.

Back home things are too different! Baap re! (Goodness!) East and West! I go home wearing salwar kameez, but I don't feel bad about it, that is how it is there. If I wear this (tight top, pants, heels, make-up) then I will become a roadshow, a nautanki! People there are very ignorant, they don't know... they don't have any hairstyle as such, they have no knowledge of fashion, they wear whatever - no matching chappal (slippers), bag, just like that. Now I tell them, wear this with that, match this with that. First I was like that only, but I came here, and learnt here, na? They are very curious about Delhi though. If I reach home late at night, then in the morning when I wake up there will be many small small children gathered outside the gate to catch a glimpse of me. They keep sitting outside only! First time when I went back and people came to visit, we had to give them mithais (sweets)- the ones that cost Rs.5 each? My brother after that has to now buy the sweets in kilograms. I am a chhota-mota (small-time) celebrity there!

Whatever I am doing, I am doing with my own effort. I see in my village only. Some of my relatives. They spend so much time and effort, half their life, in studies, getting a degree and all... and still, they do not find jobs. It's so difficult. I don't know... mujhe paap lagega (it's a sin)... me, without doing any studies only, in a city like Delhi, I am not asking for money from home for last few months... Maybe someday I will send money home instead. Although now, the money finishes just like that - on clothes, movies, party! For a girl like me, for my photo to come in Delhi Times or HT City, it is not a small thing. But I am not proud, not blind, not an ostrich. I can see that I am getting less work and there are barriers. Still, I am young and I will learn. In Guwahati, there are so many like me, maybe more talented than me. But nobody had the courage to come here, try, struggle, all alone. I have matured all on my own.

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1 This means that many visitors come to see her when she returns to the village, so many that it is more economical to buy sweets in kilos rather than per piece.
Mayuri’s learning is the new kind of knowledge that a young consuming global citizen associates with being modern and urban. It is a knowledge that is aspirational, and that is freely available to anyone who wishes to be part of the consuming masses. Mobile ringtones, about different countries, fashion trends, swimming, salsa and of course English. Mayuri has not studied beyond class XI but she recognizes these as the valid knowledge in today’s ‘modern’ world, that could help determine her success in the field, and enable her social mobility.

Mayuri’s return after a brief escape – to recoup from the harsh experience that a city can be, and absorb and come to terms with the demands of the profession – is also a pattern. About 20 per cent of the women I interviewed were in their ‘second round’ in the profession. They had mostly discontinued from the profession a few months into joining – because being young and impressionable, they could not handle the constant scrutiny, the insecurity of the job (not knowing whether they were going to get another job this month or not), or the demands of living alone in a big city, or falling prey to addiction and substance abuse. After returning to their places of origin (unsure that they wanted to persist in their struggle in the industry), they would take a break for a few months, and return more mature and with a new resolve. The city and the profession are both about nerves as much as anything else, and those who can withstand the stress and insecurity are at an advantage.

Mayuri is also not protected by the safety nets offered by an agency like Elite (who do not find it profitable to have someone like Mayuri on their list, neither can she afford at this point to buy their interest) leaving her vulnerable to exploitation at different levels.

Despite her positive outlook and hope, Mayuri is not getting much work. While Pragati – who is from a Hindi medium school in East Delhi and has
managed to successfully enter the profession - and Shivani manage to create a niche (being from within Delhi or a satellite town respectively) Mayuri's obstacles are still too prohibitive. The inability to communicate (and the Rapidex reader that she consults to help her in public view), the over-eagerness, the complete unfamiliarity with city/metro life, the unreal expectations of the glamour industry, buying into the media hype and image of the industry, as well as the first flush of being alone and free in the city all combine to create an image of her as someone who is 'out of place', 'trying too hard', 'desperate', or dreaming beyond her capabilities (in the words of her colleagues, who would often refer to her as a sad case of small town girls who come to make it big). Besides the disadvantage of cultural and class distance, she is subject to another kind of vicious class system of the industry, in which there is not enough tolerance for those who are more than ordinarily disadvantaged with regard to English, modernity, urbanity and so on.

Mayuri has also caught onto this rejection, and therefore, hopes to bypass this class system, by aiming instead (like others before her) for the international modelling scenario - where those very qualities that bring condescension and derisive smirks in India (accent, being from a village, her 'tribal' looks and her colleagues' perception that she is dreaming beyond her capabilities), will be seen instead (and applauded) as exotic. While she tries to close the starting gap (by learning, observing and so on), she simultaneously dreams of a rags-to-riches fairytale success story like the international models she has heard of.

The difference between Pragati and Mayuri is a matter of degrees, but those degrees do matter (even to agencies like Elite). Even the grooming class she attends at the beginning of her joining the industry requires a certain level of understanding and knowledge to begin with. Mayuri was not at that level, and inspite of paying about Rs.20,000 for the course, was
unable to learn anything from the grooming class. The grooming class also chose to ignore the starting gap between Mayuri and other students, and demonstrated that in reality, the industry does not have the patience or the space for people who are that different. It is this starting gap, that Miss India organizers say they are trying to address when they began the month long training period prior to the actual contest and enable all the finalists to compete on a level playing field. That this does not happen (again, the experts train in English, or assume a certain level of knowledge and sophistication) is played out by the fact that winners at the pageant are usually city girls, or those from armed forces backgrounds who already have an edge in the grooming department.

Kavita, although having made it herself feels that others from her hometown Agra may not be so lucky, because of similar kinds of disadvantages. She says:

Lots of people ask me how to enter the industry. There are no agencies in Agra but last when I went to Agra, there were a lot of journalists who said to me - good news, all the new girls in Agra and guys, they want to get into modelling, please help them. I said look, all I can do is tell them the photographer, advise them to get a folio done, give them the people's list, they can go and meet them. It entirely depends on them how they deal, how they generate work from the market. I can't go door-to-door for them. Besides to be honest, I don't know how well they will do. I feel that in Agra the boys and girls are not so open because they are not very well educated. You know I met lot of girls, they are very beautiful, but one thing is missing, what we call 'class'. That was lacking in them. And that is one thing which I feel if they come to Delhi, that they have to really struggle, and they have to work on themselves a lot. Pretty looking girls with good figures but you know she studied in some public school, some chota-mota school, probably Hindi medium, can't speak English properly. It then becomes very difficult to operate in Delhi, where everybody talks in English, and if you speak in Hindi they say, oh she is a ganwaar, a villager. I guess, education does make a difference. And it does, really, really it does. Because I was from Convent of Jesus and Mary, the best school in Agra, so I think it makes so much of a difference.
These cases show us that in some professions, which promise unimaginable wealth and fame, even one instance of 'success' is enough to drive thousands to try the route. The infrastructure (such as the grooming course) that has emerged to support the glamour economy may not cater to a Mayuri yet, but if more Mayuris flow in, new infrastructures to cater to their specific needs may well crop up.

**III. LEARNING TO TRANSFORM**

The glamour industry demands not just the transformation of the way they look in their everyday work sense of dressing up or putting make-up to perform different roles, but also a radical alteration of one's personality. This transformation occurs at various levels. The external transformation is of course very important (see chapter 6), but an internal transformation is also necessary. To be actively in the race in the industry every young woman needs to transform in various ways – she needs to 'grow up quick', she needs to become a certain kind of woman (and not child-like), she needs to become 'modern', she needs to be sensual and she needs to be feminine.

Pragati, who is now with the Elite modelling agency, speaks of her experience:

I am a completely different person now. At that time I was such a shy introvert girl that my father said that this profession is not for a girl like me. I used to be so shy and conscious, that even if my father would speak to me, even if he uttered my name, call out to me say “Pragati”, I used to shrink and look down in embarrassment. I never really used to talk to him or communicate much with him. I was really conscious and shy of male- female thing. They felt that I would not be able to survive in this kind of a profession. But I am a very adaptive person. And determined also. I adapt very easily to all circumstances, all situations. If I have to be like this it is ok, I will be like this. I used to look very
different also, I did not know how to wear clothes, *maaro* style and all that. Nothing. I was a child.

Inspite of doing the rounds, giving my photos, I did not get work. I think also I was very *gharelu* type of *ladki* at that time (homely girl). I used to just go for an audition dressed simply, with my hair just like a child's. The first time I went for an audition after the photos were circulated, they dis-selected me immediately. They saw me and said, no she will not do. I think because they wanted a mature woman and I was looking just like a child! I was very disappointed. Rejected. I thought that maybe this profession is not for me, or I am not made for this profession. By now it was very frustrating because I was not making money, I was feeling that I am only putting in whatever little money I can, even to travel to auditions and make photos – it was very difficult. But when I woke up in the morning I would think, no, let me give it one more try, maybe something happens.

Slowly I learnt, everything. How to talk to people, what people mean when they say certain things, how to be aware of your surroundings, how to manage things, how to understand people. I learnt it all.

About wearing revealing clothes, well, I am very adaptive. I just changed my attitude. How? It was easy. I just did it. **I don’t think that my wearing a bikini I am showing my body, or showing my skin. I am just showing the feel of the garment.** *(emphasis added)* This is the change in thinking that happened inside me. I stopped seeing it as skin show. Yes of course my parents said, oh this is wrong, you should not be doing it. But what can we do now, both me and my sister - we have done it already! Now there is no point saying anything. Yes I did feel embarrassed first time. I was very embarrassed, I thought my brother can be picking it up and looking at it... but then I told myself... I am not showing off my body, just the garment. I told you, I am a completely different person now!

Pragati therefore transforms into a woman from a child, actively and reflectively changing her attitude to sexuality, and learning to express her sexuality in front of the camera to represent a certain kind of womanhood that is constructed as model-like. Most of the women felt that they were not as feminine to begin with, yet as they joined college, or joined this
profession, they began to consciously adopt markers of femininity. Roopali, who models for brands targeted at women, such as jewellery and women’s wear, says for instance:

I was always very tomboyish, never feminine. Feminine is the word that is being attached to me now, which you know now that I have started doing modelling! The change happened gradually. I think I’ve got very conscious about me being very tomboyish in college, college time I would say. In my hometown in Bihar I used to be in my dad’s shirt all the time, because I would hate wearing those girly clothes which he used to get for me. Then when I moved to Delhi I realized that I don’t fit in! I was really...Because all the girls, and especially in hotel management, which is also an industry which is related to glamour. That is when I got a little conscious about my look. That is when actually it happened like I slowly started to... dress up. That was the phase when I was transforming. And when I went to Singapore again as an airhostess, there I started wearing more skirts and all that. After that it kind of all came together when I joined modelling full time.

Tina is from a wealthy Punjabi industrialist family living in Greater Kailash with her parents. She is from the British School in Delhi, and her friends comprise designers and ‘page three’ people. In her view the profession demands that you ‘better grow up quick’.

I would say some of it was a struggle... people take you for granted as a new model – they don’t pay you, people owed me up to Rs.70,000 at one time! There are so many coordinators in a place like Malviya Nagar – and none of them care for you, they are all impersonal – they don’t take care like my agency does. I remember there was a call once for some shows in New York! My friend Roxanne and I were quite excited and we decided to go for the meeting... we went to the address and it was a dingy room in the basement in some strange part of town ... it was quite creepy, there were some weird men, and we couldn’t believe that this was the set up for some show in New York! We just got out of there, thinking everything wasn’t all right! Things like that happen, you grow up faster in the industry! You are so protected at home... but here you better grow up quick.
Tina's stint in the industry also forces her to step out of her sanitized air-conditioned environment and journey across 'class zones'. Her experience below is an example.

I remember a disastrous shoot for Nokia. It was really tough. First the call time was 4 am. So in order to ensure I woke up in time, I didn't go to sleep at all that night. So I also overdid it. So anyway, I get there and things don't start before 8 am, although I have to start getting ready and everything. By afternoon I was almost passing out. It was a really HOT day, and we were shooting continuously. It was a Sunday and so the AC was not on in the building we were in. I didn't get that but whatever. The heat was really getting to me, and by 3 pm I just could not perform under the circumstances, I was that close to passing out.

Then it got delayed, and they were like just last few shots, then you can go. Even though I could barely stand, I was trying to keep my calm. I mean from 4 am to 4 pm, it was like being a slave worker. Finally I cracked. I said, please get me a cab RIGHT NOW. I am leaving. Finally somehow I did the last shots, and waited for the cab. The cab had no AC in it. By now the heat was just terrible and was affecting me badly. I broke down and started crying. It was quite sad – I mean, here I was working so hard for them and they were not even considerate enough to get me an AC cab? Again I found I was telling myself "I don't NEED to do this..." (for the money.) That day, everything kind of got to me. I even called my bookers from there and told them what a horrid experience it was turning out to be. So these things do happen and it's tough when it does.

Tina's string of such experiences - a trip to Daryaganj, hunting for coordination agencies in dingy alleys, shooting covers for middle class women's Hindi magazines, the experience of shooting all day in a non air-conditioned studio that almost gives her a fainting spell show that she is forced to emerge out of her class position and in some little measure, interact with the world outside.

'Growing up' was part of Pragati's transformation also, not just in age, but 'up' the class ladder to emulate the dressing style and behaviour of upper class chic and sophistication – as models are usually duty-bound to
represent. We can see an osmosis of sorts (of cultural/class knowledge) happening at a superficial level: while Pragati learns of international fashion labels like Gucci, Tina learns of Sakhi - a Hindi, middle-class women's magazine for whom she does a photo-shoot.

This internal transformation, Anurita feels, is part of the automatic journey that the profession pushes you to undertake because of the high levels of confidence it demands. She recalls:

It wasn't difficult at all. I was shocked because you know, I was never that confident when I was in college. I used to be a very shy person. in school also, I hardly used to talk. I was only into my studies. I was a very different person you know. Then I joined the industry, had to walk the ramp, look glamorous, meet people, market myself... and suddenly, I changed. Just changed. And it happened so fast you know, even I don't know what happened.

**IV. SPAWNING NEW 'TRADITIONS'**

As we know, women are made to be the bearers of culture and tradition. Women also become the medium through which modernity is projected. In the case of the fashion and modelling industry, the profession represents all that modernity or globalization stands for. It is framed in terms of a lifestyle that exemplifies globalization – a culture of travel, a ruptured sense of time, an intimate connection to the media, and participation in a seamless global arena of images and fashion trends.

The industry also represents the transformation (or the possibilities for this transformation) of the local self into a global persona. Women who undertake these miraculous transformations appear to be embodying how a nation too can transform or globalize or get a "makeover"; like Pragati can emerge as a swan with newfound 'global' knowledge, so can India.
Models at the centre of this industry are expected to embody these elements of globalization. Like one of Singer's adaptive strategies, the "enclavement of foreign imports" (where "foreign elements" are separated from society into a ghetto), the fashion and modelling industry is a site for such an enclave. Modelling as an occupation embodies an enclave of Western ideals and expressions, as a result of which women who enter the industry are compelled to be 'modern', speak English, express an aggressive Western sexuality, in popular imagination as well as in the imagination of those within the industry. This clashes with the culture and tradition that the women in the industry embody generally, as women, as a result of which negotiating the demands of both becomes a part of their everyday lives. The modelling and fashion industry foregrounds the "compartmentalization" of elements of tradition, modernity and globalization more acutely.

It is also because of this embodiment, that the industry draws criticism from various quarters who are threatened by imminent Westernization. The fear is that while performing these Western ideals women in the industry will themselves become "Western" and therefore out of the controls of traditional/ cultural patriarchy.

In the narratives we can also see the reinterpretation of tradition but in the paradigm of globalization and consumption, giving rise to new forms of 'tradition'. Shivani's insistence that her "bikini blouse" is part of "Indian clothes only" shows how Indian clothes are being revamped to suit international (and marketable) styles – whether it is the "re-interpretation" of the blouse, choli or bra-top (all worn as upper wear in a traditional lehenga attire) or the churidar as tights. In the garb of "wearing Indian only", the women get away with a lot of things with their families. Other 'traditions' are also revamped, such as the institutionalization of spirituality, yoga and ayurveda to suit the paradigm of increased
consciousness of the body to the extent that it becomes a central part of the training programme at the Miss India contest, or the traditional Indian wedding which becomes reborn as a consumer fest, again giving rise to many ancillary supporting industries. In the service of global capital then, globalization spawns new 'traditions'. Like always, it is then enacted through the inevitable embodiment of these values by women, especially women at the centre of the glamour economy.