CONCLUSION

A. ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES: A RESTATEMENT

There is a reasonable measure of agreement notably in the South Asian context that women's participation in work, especially in paid work, enhances their well-being. This proposition, propounded originally by Frederick Engels (1972/1884, pp. 137-8), appears to have attained an important place in the debate concerning women and development in the last three decades due to the pioneering work of Ester Boserup (1970), and continues to remain so at present. For instance, feminisation of the labour force — increased participation of women in the labour market due to both expansion of jobs or sectors that are traditionally dominated by, or typically considered to be having a niche for, women along with women's entry into jobs that were hitherto dominated by men and growing insecurity and flexibility in the labour market (Standing 1989, 1999; Elson 1996; Beneria 2001) — made this proposition as one of the focal points of debate at present, relating even such crucial but complex aspects as labour standards and social clause (Kabeer 2004).

Recently, the proposition assumed renewed vigour due to the empirical finding from India that women's employment enhances the survival chances of girls (Rosenzeig and Schultz 1982). Though studies remain divided on the process underlying such association and hence advance alternative explanations, they stand united by recognising the positive, beneficial potentials of paid work. Thus, it appears to have the rare privilege of having some backing — either explicit or implicit — from competing approaches that otherwise differ substantially such as Marxian and Neo-classical as well as 'Women in Development' and 'Gender and Development.' Besides enhancing their well-being, women's participation in paid work appears to have wider potentials in
regions, like South Asia, where social norms constrain women's access to economic resources and their participation in social spheres.

Equally, there is a fair measure of agreement that in many developing countries a large proportion of working women enter into the labour market mainly out of poverty. Most of these poor women, who also belong predominantly to disadvantaged social groups especially in the Indian context, suffer from pervasive capability deprivation such as illiteracy. While their little educational attainments and hence technical and managerial skills limit their scope for better employment opportunities and potential for upward labour mobility, their material deprivation dictates them to take up at once whatever menial or precarious forms of employment are available. Therefore, most of these poor women are absorbed predominantly in agriculture, other casual or informal, and assembly-line jobs. These jobs not only remain on the bottom rungs of the labour hierarchy, but also are irregular in nature, as they are influenced by the vagaries of season. More importantly, these jobs do not normally embody the central elements of decent work such as adequate rewards and benefits, job security, rights at work, social protection, and representation and voice (ILO 2000; Rodgers 2002). These aspects raise a number of important issues, which were discussed in the first and fifth chapters. Some of those issues, which are posed below, form the basis for the present study. Specifically, the present enquiry is centred around three interrelated issues.

- Does women's participation in paid work enhance their well-being?

- Since poverty forces many women to participate in the labour market, does poverty induced participation necessarily enable them to attain a higher well-being?

- Does the nature of work exert varying influence on women's well-being?

On the face of it, the proposition and the questions that follow from it assume significance in India, where women's well-being as also their participation in paid work is low and incidence of poverty is pervasive. Given the diverse
scenario of India in terms of variation in human development, economic growth and incidence of poverty, prevalence of cultural norms, and gender disparities in well-being, the nature and extent of association between women's work and well-being could be expected to differ between states. This, then, calls for the examination of these issues in different states having different regional and socio-cultural settings. The issues are, therefore, examined in four Indian states. The states are selected based on the following criteria. Using the macro-level indicators of female work participation on the one hand and of well-being on the other, all the major Indian states are classified into four groups: 1) States with both women's high work participation and high well-being; 2) States with women's high work participation but low well-being; 3) States with women's low work participation but high well-being; and 4) States with both women's low work participation and low well-being. One state each from these four groups — Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Uttar Pradesh respectively — is selected for detailed, multi-staged analysis.

To conceptualise and measure well-being, the study employed the capability approach, propounded by Amartya Sen (1982), which defines well-being as the ability to attain valuable functionings. Progressively expanding the philosophical base and reach of the capability approach especially for gender justice, Martha Nussbaum (2000) has proposed ten central capabilities for assessment of well-being. The study examines three aspects of those ten central capabilities, referred to here as Autonomy, Physical Health, and Reproductive Outcome. Autonomy includes three elements: freedom of decision-making in the household, spatial mobility and freedom from domestic violence. Bodily health consists of the following three elements such as freedom from undernutrition, absence of anaemia and freedom from avoidable morbidity. Reproductive outcome includes absence of reproductive health problems, institutional delivery and current use of any modern contraception. The issues and assumptions underlying their measurement were discussed in detail in the fourth chapter.
The study approached these issues at both individual and household level. At the individual level, taking 'work' as the basis, all women were classified broadly into 'Currently Working' and 'Non-working.' Currently working women were disaggregated further into Earning and Non-earning women. Moreover, women's work was classified into Low, Medium and High based on social relations of production and technical content of job. At the household level, the study classified all the households broadly into Poor, Non-poor and Rich. This classification was based mainly on the index of standard of living, details regarding its construction and scores are given in Appendix Two. The analysis was confined mainly to the National Family Health Survey (1998-99) data, though attempts were made to compare and contrast with other sources of data, wherever appropriate. The macro analysis was complemented with intensive, qualitative fieldwork from Tamil Nadu, one of the four states selected for analysis.

B. FINDINGS: A RECAP

Two broad but contrasting patterns emerge from the analysis. To begin with, larger percentages of earning women tend to participate in decision-making in the household and seem to have freedom of spatial mobility than non-working women. Higher economic contribution to the family and control over income tend to increase earning women's participation in decision-making and freedom of mobility perceptibly. The multivariate logistic (binary) regression analysis indicates, well in line with the above, that women's paid work has a significant, positive influence on their participation in decision-making. Interestingly, the finding—participation in paid work enhances women's household autonomy—seems to emerge in both rural and urban regions of all the four states despite their varying socio-economic settings.

Do non-earning women (working women who do not earn an income) have higher autonomy than non-working women? Further, does participation in work without an income necessarily lower women's autonomy? Broadly speaking, non-earning women seem to have higher participation in decision-
making and freedom of mobility than non-working women. But, not only is the difference between non-earning and non-working women seem to be quite low, but also the association remains largely insignificant, as we have noted in the previous chapter. At another level, the analysis reveals that substantially larger percentages of earning women tend to participate in decision-making and have freedom of mobility than non-earning women in all the four states. The higher odd ratios of earning women than non-earning women (table 5.9 in the fifth chapter) seem to indicate that working women's autonomy may decline if they do not earn an income.

That being said, it is also important to add here that larger percentages of earning women tend to experience domestic violence than non-working women in all the four states. Further, relatively higher percentages of non-working women are seemed to be free from domestic violence than non-earning women. Among working women, incidence of domestic violence appears to be relatively lower among non-earning than earning women. Thus, higher freedom of decision-making and mobility tends to coexist with higher incidence of domestic violence. The finding that higher freedom of decision-making and spatial mobility coexisting with higher incidence of domestic violence may look like a paradoxical situation, and thereby invite a clarification. But before attempting to do that, it needs to be stated at the outset that the incidence of domestic violence not only exhibits the lack of bodily safety within the household and from life intimates, but also a blow to human dignity.

We would like to emphasise here, as we observed from our fieldwork, that women who tend to exercise their autonomy — women who dare to defy the social norms and express their dissent or disagreements — are subjected to domestic violence more often than those who do not express their opinion or do oblige to what is expected on them. Perhaps, women with higher autonomy are the ones who often express their dissent and deviate from the gender norms, and thereby subject to physical and mental assault. Therefore, absence of domestic violence per se does not necessarily mean women's higher autonomy. Viewed
against this backdrop, the coexistence of higher freedom on decision-making and higher incidence of domestic violence tends to convey that not only working women have higher autonomy but also they tend to exercise it. The analysis, if taken together, conveys that what is more important, in terms of both extent and pervasiveness, for women's autonomy is participation in paid work rather than in work per se. The broad finding emerging from the analysis lends some support to the theoretical claim.

Contrary to the above finding, earning an income does not seem to enable working women to attain health and nutritional functionings and reproductive outcome similar to, if not higher than, that of non-working women. The only exception is earning women's advantage over non-working women in the use of any modern contraception. The advantage is pronounced in the younger age group: women belonging to 15-30 years. The picture is almost the same as far as between non-earning and non-working women are concerned. Non-working women continue their advantage over non-earning women as well in the physical health and reproductive functionings in all the four states of our analysis. Is participation in paid work more important than mere participation in work, as we have observed in autonomy, for women's physical health and reproductive outcome? Unlike autonomy, the answer is inconclusive. The analysis and the logistic regression results seem to indicate that participation in paid work may not in itself enable women to attain a better physical health and reproductive functionings than participation in work without an income.

Does control over income enable earning women to attain better physical health and reproductive functionings than non-working women? Control over income is especially important because many earning women often hand over their income to the spouses or other members of the family, who, then, exercise control over it. Lack of control over income implies no effective reduction in their economic dependency even if they earn an independent income, as they continue to depend on others' consent to meet their day-to-day requirements. The analysis suggests that earning women's participation in the household
decision-making and freedom of mobility tends to increase perceptibly high, if they have control over the spending of their income. However, non-working women maintain their edge in absence of domestic violence.

Also, earning women’s control over income tends to go with an improvement in both bodily health and reproductive functionings in all the four states. But, the improvement does not seem to be sufficient enough to make their functionings similar to that of non-working women in most of these states. However, the difference in physical health and reproductive functionings appears to have narrowed down in all the four states. Needless to mention, the advantage of earning women in use of modern contraception not only remains but also gets expanded. Within earning women, those having a control over income tend to have higher well-being than those who do not have a control in all the three states except Kerala, wherein the latter seem to outperform the former in physical health and reproductive outcome. The broad finding emerging from the analysis that participation in paid work does not enhance women’s health and nutrition and reproductive functionings does not seem to be well in line with the theoretical predictions.

The findings, thus, do not provide a total empirical support to the theoretical claims nor invalidate them fully either. The coexistence of contrasting patterns raises a number of important questions. For instance, why does women’s participation in work, especially in paid work, seem to have differing influence on different aspects of well-being? Why do working women seem to have lower health and nutrition and reproductive outcome despite their higher autonomy? Herein, some of the structural issues, elaborated in the first and fifth chapters and also highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, assume relevance. We have shown in the fourth and fifth chapters that relatively larger proportions of working women belong to poor households, in terms of material deprivation, in all the four states. It is likely that material deprivation might be compelling them to enter into the labour market and disabling their ability to attain a better well-
being. This, then, calls for a disaggregated analysis of well-being between earning and non-working women with similar household living standard.

These two contrasting patterns do not undergo any significant change among poor and non-poor women. Among poor households, relatively higher percentages of non-working women seem to have better bodily health and reproductive outcome than earning women. Among non-poor households, though non-working women seem to maintain an edge over earning women at a broader level, symptoms of change — indicating the latter's advantage — are also seen in a couple of indicators. Nevertheless, the difference between non-working and earning women seems to be relatively smaller among non-poor households when compared to poor households. However, the patterns do undergo some change only among richer households. In the Northern states, earning women tend to outperform non-working women in all the three aspects of well-being including both physical health and reproductive outcome. In the Southern states, though the picture is not favourable to earning women like the one noted above, they do, nonetheless, outperform non-working women in some of the indicators.

Why are earning women unable to attain higher well-being than non-working women even with similar economic condition? We have already seen that working women, especially earning women, suffer from pervasive capability deprivation such as illiteracy. Literacy is important on women's well-being both as an end and also as a means. As discussed already in the fifth chapter, a number of studies identify the probable ways through which literacy can enhance women's well-being. Additionally, the capability approach, in an attempt to restate poverty as capability deprivation, accords centrality to literacy as an integral aspect of women's well-being and also an important means for attaining other valuable ends. Therefore, a disaggregated analysis of women's well-being between earning and non-working women with similar educational attainment was carried out.

Does attainment of basic education (treated here as having ten years of schooling) help earning women to attain higher well-being? The two contrasting
patterns do not differ here among illiterate and literate women having ten years of schooling. Larger percentages of illiterate non-working women tend to have better physical health and reproductive outcome than illiterate earning women. Though literate (up to ten years of schooling) non-working women seem to retain, by and large, their advantage over literate earning women in physical health and reproductive outcome, indications of change - which deserve a mention here - manifest especially in health and nutrition. For instance, marginally higher percentages of literate (up to ten years of schooling) earning women are free from anaemia than literate non-working women in three states except Kerala. In Kerala too, a similar marginal advantage is seen in absence of morbidity. Also, the advantage of earning women tends to widen in absence of undernutrition in Uttar Pradesh. It is important to add here that earning women continue to have higher autonomy than non-working women with similar educational and economic characteristics. Further analysis among women having more than ten years of schooling reveals an inconclusive picture in physical health and reproductive functionings: neither a definite advantage to earning women nor unfavourable to them either. The analysis indicates that higher household standard of living and higher education can help enable earning women to attain a higher well-being.

We have already argued that many working women take up precarious forms of employment due to poverty, illiteracy and other such structural constraints including, but are by no means confined to, caste, place of residence, and so on. These jobs may fetch them an income that is neither sufficient to take care of the survival needs of their family nor regular in nature, as these jobs are often subjected to the vagaries of the season. Furthermore, these jobs may not be associated with higher levels of social interaction and greater access to knowledge and resource that are expected to help enhance women's well-being. Therefore, what is far more important is the type of occupation or nature of work that would both fetch women relatively higher and regular income and carry other economic and social benefits. Therefore, the nature of work, as we
have already argued, is likely to exert differing influence on women's well-being. To assess the differing influence of nature of work, women's occupations were trifurcated into Low, Medium and High. The classification was based essentially on social relations of production and technical content of work, which were delineated in chapter five.

The analysis shows that the hierarchy in nature of work tends to go together with a hierarchy in women's well-being. Earning women at Higher nature of work seem to have a relatively higher well-being than those at Medium nature of work. The latter, in turn, tend to have relatively a higher well-being than those at Lower nature of work. This hierarchy manifests without much variation in all the three aspects of well-being in all the four states. Thus, the results seem to convey that nature of women's work is likely to have a varying influence on women's well-being. How far such hierarchy enables earning women to outperform non-working women? The analysis also indicates that non-working women tend to have an advantage over earning women engaged in Low nature of work in health and nutrition and reproductive outcome. Though the former continue to maintain, by and large, their edge over earning women at Medium nature of work, the advantage not only tends to weaken but also the latter outperform in certain indicators of health and nutrition and reproductive outcome.

On the contrary, a comparison between earning women at High nature of work and non-working women reveals a reversal of the patterns noted so far during the course of our analysis. The analysis shows that earning women at High nature of work tend to have a relatively higher well-being than non-working women. The advantage of the former not only manifests in all the three aspects of well-being, but also emerges uniformly in all the four states. The regression results broadly reinforce these findings. Thus, the findings indicate the varying importance of nature of work and the relevance of higher nature of work for women's well-being. Additionally, the regression results reveal the significant influence of a number of other factors, which seem to have a bearing on policy.
These aspects will be related and discussed, wherever necessary, in the next part of this chapter, which is devoted to discussing the policy implications of the findings.

C. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

We have seen in the previous chapter that a complex process underlies the association between women's work and well-being. Specifically, the positive influence of women's earning on their well-being is subdued by a number of factors, of which poverty, illiteracy, household gender hierarchy are important. It emerges reasonably clear from the analysis carried out in the fifth chapter and also from our micro enquiry that poverty induced employment need not necessarily enhance women's well-being. Indeed, not only earning women from poor households have a relatively lower well-being (mainly physical health and reproductive functionings) than non-working women from poor households, but also poor earning women have a very lower well-being in general. We have argued already and shown in the previous chapter that poverty tends to weaken the positive influence of paid work. How does poverty weaken the influence of income earning on women's well-being? It does so in at least two, interconnected ways.

When poverty compels women to enter into the labour market, they are forced to take up whatever menial or precarious forms of employment are available to them. Most often, many of these physically demanding jobs, whose availability is also influenced by the vagaries of season, fetch them meagre income and carry far fewer benefits. Undeniably, women's income, however low, becomes a crucial addition to the limited resources available to the family to fulfil the survival needs of its members. Empirical studies from India as also our field observation suggest that under resource constraints, households are likely to exhibit discriminatory practices in the allocation of resources favouring male members at the expense of female members (Behrman 1988; Browning and Subramaniam 1994). Admittedly, a complex web of factors besides poverty breeds and sustains such unequal intrahousehold resource allocation (Bardhan
1974; Agarwal 1997). But what needs to be stressed here is that such unequal resource allocation, in which poverty plays an important role, is often to the disadvantage of women. This is despite the fact that unlike men, who retain a portion of their income to meet their personal expenses, poor women contribute almost their entire income, as has been shown by Mencher (1988) and Kapadia (1995), to meet the household’s basic needs.

These poor working women are further disadvantaged as they bear not only the primary responsibility for domestic maintenance activities and caring labour, but also they have little access to services and facilities that ease their work burden. They tend to balance the triple responsibilities of breadwinning, domestic maintenance, and child and elderly care often at the expense of their health and leisure. Admittedly, this triple responsibility is also related to, or partly the outcome of, the gender division of labour, the norms and perceptions associated with it, and the hierarchy arising out of it. However, poverty not only depletes the health and nutrition of women independently, as we have demonstrated already, and by limiting the access to alternative facilities and services, it tends to additionally reinforce the gender division and hierarchy. Therefore, due to poverty — which is closely aided by the household gender hierarchy and social norms underlying intrahousehold resource allocation — women’s well-being, including health and nutrition and reproductive functionings, not only becomes secondary to the survival of the household but also to the well-being of male members.

Though women’s participation in paid work enhances the food security of the household, such an enhancement occurs often at the expense of their well-being. It appears, therefore, that if women’s participation in paid work is to enhance both their well-being and household food security together, the household should not bear the brunt of poverty. Hence, poverty eradication assumes crucial importance, as it would not only enable the household to help free its members from hunger and malnutrition but also allow women to have some income at their disposal which can be used to meet their personal requirements.
including healthcare needs. Additionally, freedom from hunger and lack of material deprivation might give women a certain degree of leverage or freedom, in terms of allowing them both to wait for some time or to acquire skills and training that would help them, to take up relatively better jobs and earn higher income. The better jobs and higher income, as we have seen in the previous chapters, have an important effect on their well-being and have a bearing on policy, and hence it will be discussed separately later.

Admittedly, though poverty conditions women to attach less importance to their well-being than to household survival, it does so only partially. Part of this lesser concern for well-being emanates from, and is reinforced by, their yet another capability failure such as illiteracy. We have already found that except in Kerala more than half of the working women are illiterate in the other three states. Notably, the incidence of illiteracy is much higher among earning women. A vast number of studies have already established that female literacy is an important means to attain progressively a number of valid ends that have a bearing on women's well-being such as reduction of infant mortality, including the excess mortality of girls, fertility, and a host of other factors (Caldwell 1986; Murthi, Guio and Dreze 1995). As we have elaborated earlier, higher fertility not only depletes the health and nutrition of women but also leads to higher infant mortality. The greater child loss would increase the demand for surviving children, which, in turn, would inhibit the use of contraception. This would further lead to frequent and less-spaced pregnancy, delivery and lactation which not only would deplete the health and nutrition of mothers but also lead to greater child loss.

Given the focus of the study, female literacy assumes significance as an end in itself. We have already mentioned in the previous chapter that many women consider education as a central element to lead a dignified life besides as a valid means to participate in the labour market and earn an income. We have found already from the logistic regression analysis that female literacy has a significant, positive influence on all the three dependent variables in all the four states. We
have noted in the previous chapter that literate women have both far higher autonomy and evince greater readiness to use adequate and timely healthcare to attain better physical health and reproductive functionings. Additionally, the compulsion to take up menial forms of employment is also related to some extent to this capability failure. We have seen in the previous chapter that factory employment, which is found to have a relatively higher positive effect on women’s well-being than agricultural jobs, requires some years of schooling. More than that, by denying access to requisite skills and knowledge, illiteracy not only puts women at the bottom of the labour hierarchy and contracts their opportunities for upward labour mobility, but also disendows them of their right to take up employment of their choice. Thus, female literacy assumes significance through multiple ways.

Yet another important factor influencing women’s well-being, which also has a bearing on policy, is the nature of work. The extent of economic recognition earned by women within the household would depend crucially on the nature of their work. For instance, lower nature of work not only fetches much less income and carries far fewer economic benefits but also is irregular in availability. The low income and economic insecurity associated with these jobs create a vicious cycle of poverty and translate into precarious lives (Lim 2002, p. 2), and would convey and reinforce the notion that women are secondary earners, thereby reinforce the gender divisions of labour (United Nations 1999; Beneria 2001). Here, we would like to recall and discuss the finding that earning women who contribute more than half of the income do not have a higher well-being. Two aspects need to be mentioned here. One, many of the women who earn more than half of the income not only come from poor households but also these households crucially depend on their income for the very survival, if not decent and dignified survival. Two, for reasons already explained, their well-being not only becomes secondary to the survival of the household but also gets much less attention than it really deserves. Even if we view through the narrower prism of returns to investment, it is rational on the part of the household to accord
primacy to women's well-being and hence invest relatively high when compared to other members of the household, since women's well-being is crucial to continue to earn an income and ensure the survival of the household. This, again, increases the relevance of poverty alleviation implicitly.

Against this backdrop, the higher nature of work, that would give women not only a higher and importantly regular earning, and thereby make them as the equal earners but also carry other crucial social benefits as well, assumes significance. Many of these higher jobs, for instance, also necessitate, if not facilitate, growing degree of social interaction in terms of increased mobility, access to information and knowledge, and so on. The higher economic and social recognition would help possibly enable them to attain higher well-being. Thus, the extent of economic rewards and social standing — which crucially determines the strength of the relation between women's work and well-being (Sen 1990a, p. 144; Dreze and Sen 1995, p. 160) — would depend crucially on the nature of women's work. We have already found from the last two chapters that higher nature of work leads to higher earning, better perception on well-being and fetches them social recognition and also enables women to attain higher well-being.

A couple of related aspects invite attention here. One, as we have argued already in the fourth chapter, higher nature of work, which is associated with higher degrees of authority and responsibility, requires specialised managerial and technical skills. Also, we have observed from the fifth chapter that earning women having higher education not only outperform non-working women with similar educational attainment in the Northern states, but also come closer to the latter in the Southern states. Additionally, the regression analysis suggests that higher education has positive and significant influence on all the three dependent variables and also the influence increases in line with an increase in educational attainment. These together underline the need for both women's education in general and greater access to higher and technical education and specialised skills and training in particular. Thus, women's education, especially
higher education and access to specialised skills and training, which is noted by Boserup as early as in 1970, gains added significance.

Two, it emerges from the second chapter that globalisation has led to an increase of women's participation in paid work. However, the feminisation of the labour force, as it appears, is partly an outcome of growing flexibility as well as insecurity and precariousness in the labour market (Standing 1999). Studies claim that in both the existing and new employment, the extent of insecurity and precariousness tends to be relatively higher for women than men (Beneria 2001; Ghosh 2002). We have already found that mere participation in the labour market may not in itself enhance women's well-being. Instead, if the gains of increased participation are to be realised for women's well-being, it should be associated with higher rewards, better working conditions and other necessary benefits. Therefore, rather than growing access to paid work, what is far more important is women's growing access to work which is associated with seven forms of security (noted by Standing 1996, 2002), including income security. Herein, the decent work proposal, and especially 'more and better jobs for women' put forth recently by the ILO (2000), assumes crucial importance.

Finally, an important structural factor, which has a long lasting effect on the well-being of women and also of men, needs to be discussed here. We have noted on several occasions and especially in the second chapter that a gender division of labour exists at the household level. For instance, domestic maintenance and caring labour continues to be almost the sole responsibility of women in almost all regions of India. We have already shown, in the second chapter, that time use studies from India inform that not only do women spend more time in general, but also spend disproportionately higher time — around ten times higher — than men in carrying out the domestic maintenance and caring labour. These activities limit women's employment opportunities, career prospects and acquisition of human and social capital (Elson 1999; Anderson 2001). Women's participation in the labour market is an addition to, rather than the substitution for, the maintenance and caring work. This gender division of
labour is associated with varying social status and household power structure. The domestic maintenance and caring work are not only unpaid but also looked down on by male members as less esteemed and feminine activities.

Further, this division extends to aspects relating to the arena of decision-making and freedom associated with that, and hierarchy and power structure within the household. For instance, in most parts of South Asia purchase of food and other items of household consumption, and decisions related to children's health appear to fall within women's arena of decision-making. Decisions related to education and marriage of children, and market transactions in major assets tend to be largely the responsibility of males (Kabeer 2000b, p. 38). Moreover, these separate gender domains go in tandem with varying levels of access to and control over economic resources, and thereby create varying power relations within and outside the household. As shown by Agarwal (1994), this differential access and control extends to such crucial aspects as arable land and property in general. We have noted on several occasions that the lower well-being of women stems partly from, and is also an outcome of, the social norms underlying gender division of labour and the hierarchy and power relations associated with it.

On the face of it, this gender hierarchy and social norms may look innocuous. But they have the potential to dissipate the impact of the efforts to attain women's well-being and gender equality. Herein, not simply women's access to resources but rather rights to resources (Agarwal 2000) assumes critical importance. Even if women participate in the labour market and contribute economically and socially towards the well-being and development of the family, the gender hierarchy and power relation does not dissipate fully. Instead, it manifests in new and varying forms. We have found in the previous chapter that men, mainly older and illiterate, show greater reluctance to share the domestic maintenance and caring responsibilities. Nevertheless, literate men do acknowledge that these activities are taxing and also help share some of the caring work. Herein, along with female literacy, literacy in general assumes
some importance. Along with literacy, concerted and sustained efforts to educate men and boys regarding the contribution and significance of these activities and the need to respect and share them mutually should be made.

Further, the oft-repeated suggestion that grater provisioning of basic amenities such as water, electricity and fuel and institutional childcare facilities also merits a mention here. Such provisioning is most likely to reduce the domestic work burden of working poor women and the time they are spending in these activities, since they are disadvantaged far greater level from having access to such facilities. The inability or failure to address these problems impinges on various aspects both explicitly and implicitly. For instance, women's participation in the labour market is contingent, to some extent, on the amount of time they have to expend on these activities. Further, the drudgery and the physical burden of these activities affect adversely women's health and leisure, and thereby their freedom to attain better well-being. Since women bear the burden of these aspects unequally more than men, the governmental inattention in addressing these aspects would, therefore, lead to and reinforce gender inequality (Desai and Jain 1994).

We have seen that women's — especially poor women's — participation in paid work does not enable them to attain higher well-being. Let us ask that what would be the likely situation, if they do not enter into the labour market? Will a withdrawal or temporary absence from the labour market enhance their well-being? In our opinion, these options may not improve their well-being either. Rather, these would, most likely, lead to a further deterioration in their well-being. Since many of the working women are entering into the labour market mainly out poverty, absence of their earning would imply hunger and malnutrition for them as also for other members of the household. Their plight would likely to be, therefore, far worse than their present situation. Thus, the opportunities available to them do not offer much room for manoeuvre. Rather, they are forced to encounter a situation, which, in some sense, parallels the infamous 'Hobson's choice.'
To conclude, the findings and the ensuing discussion tend to convey that participation in paid work in itself need not necessarily enhance women's well-being. Rather, the strength of association between women's work and well-being would depend crucially on under what conditions women enter into the labour market and what sort of jobs they get. This does not imply, however, that paid work per se lacks the potential to enhance women's well-being. What we intend to underline here is that the significant influence of paid work on women's well-being is undermined by a number of structural constraints. Wedded together, these constraints — poverty, illiteracy and social norms, to name only a few — give birth to and reproduce a situation that conditions women to aspire for a reduced and limited life and undermines the influence of paid work. Thus, working women encounter a number of difficulties in converting their paid work into a definite source of better well-being. Therefore, attainment of certain capabilities such as female literacy and freedom from hunger, creation of more and better jobs as also sustained and systematic attempt to educate men and women to share the domestic maintenance and caring labour assisted by provisioning on such services and facilities become almost a prerequisite, if women's earning is to yield expected beneficial effects on their well-being.

**NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The analysis and the findings emerging there from impinge on, and thereby call for further and detailed study of, a number of aspects, and some of these aspects invite a discussion here. However, we will confine our discussion to aspects that emanate directly from our analysis. To begin with, we have observed the coexistence of the contrasting patterns — higher autonomy, lower nutrition, and so on — and multiple levels of outcome within these aspects (for instance, higher freedom of decision-making but lower freedom from domestic violence). While we have attempted, through micro enquiry, to understand the process underlying these complexities in one of the four states of analysis, it is also important to extend such an enquiry into other states. Besides help identifying the state specific factors and process, such a comparative attempt would also
reveal the commonalities and contrasts in the extent and direction of influence of the factors.

Second, we have analysed the influences of paid work and also a number of other factors including nature of work on each of the three aspects of well-being, such as Autonomy, Physical Health and Reproductive Outcome, separately and independently of each other. As we have already discussed, these three aspects are closely knit and may contribute to or complement each other. While micro attempts would be of definite help here, understanding the causal connection or interaction between these three aspects of well-being toward each other would also require systematic and meticulous examination employing advanced techniques such as Instrumental Variable Analysis or Two-stage Least Square method. Such an attempt is of some relevance, as it would reveal the contribution of these aspects towards each other. The nature and extent of such mutual contribution may also complement the insights from micro-level enquiries and help explain contextually the co-existence of the contrasting patterns and multiple levels of outcome. Such an examination, therefore, assumes importance.

Third, we have observed a varying influence of nature of work on women's well-being. The feminisation of labour and the changes in labour market associated with economic liberalisation calls for, and increases the relevance of, further research on nature of work and their varying influence on women's well-being. The analysis could possibly be carried out and extended at least on two levels. On the one hand, a detailed examination on various aspects, mainly the presence or absence of various forms of security that were mentioned in the second chapter, associated with the new kinds of jobs, such as factory employment, information and communication, and so on, and their possible implications for women's well-being both at the micro and macro levels. At another level, a comparative analysis between these new jobs and the kinds of jobs that are considered to be traditionally dominated by women and their differing extent and levels of influence on aspects of women's well-being may be of some relevance. The contesting claims and arguments regarding the possible
impacts of these new jobs when compared to the traditional jobs, as we have seen in the second chapter, seems to increase the relevance of such examination in India.

Fourth, we have disaggregated, while discussing the measurement issues in the fourth chapter, non-working women into three kinds. But, due to lack of information, we have considered them as a single group. As we have already mentioned, this three-fold distinction is important in the capability perspective. For instance, lack of freedom to participate in paid work due to cultural norms or caring work is different from unemployment (non-availability of paid work) or unwillingness to engage in paid work even if it is available. Similarly, due to lack of information regarding the reasons of women’s employment, we have made some assumptions on the reasons behind women’s entry into the labour market. These not only seem to limit our analysis to some extent, but also — and more importantly — necessitates the need for collection of information on the reasons for entering or not entering into the labour market. Analysis with respect to women’s actual reasons of work participation or otherwise, and the influence of these factors on their well-being may yield new and valuable insights.

Fifth, we have based our analysis to quantitative aspects of well-being. As we have noted in the third chapter, well-being consists of more aspects and elements under each of these aspects including qualitative dimensions. A recent empirical examination reveals that different people perceive well-being differently and therefore value different aspects of well-being rather differently based on their personalised experience and socio-political environment (Narayan, Chambers, Shah and Petesch 2000). Besides informing that perception of well-being is likely to differ on differing contexts, it also raises the need for a systematic and careful collection of information on both qualitative and quantitative dimensions of well-being. In addition to yielding a broader understanding of well-being, it would also enable us to assess whether paid work exerts varying influence in these varying aspects of well-being.