new forms of class relations have certainly emerged in the fisheries sector in both the Koliwadas. The Koli women do enjoy a higher-class status when it comes to employing migrant workers. However, the context of their situatedness such as patriarchal familial relations and roles, lack of familial support systems, illiteracy, and the complexities associated with the modernisation phase of fisheries, and the threat of never-ending economic losses and mounting debt, all make Koli women more vulnerable to diverse forms of livelihood risks and uncertainties.

6.1.6 Congested Spaces, Migrants and Conflicts in Versova

Versova is one of the densely populated Koliwadas in Mumbai. Apart from the Koli community, Christians and Muslims also reside in the Koliwada. Along with them, several migrant families are also staying on rent. The population of both native fisher-folk and migrant labourers has seen a gradual increase in the last two decades. The number of Koli households largely increased with the nuclearisation of joint families. Versova also has better access to water, electricity, transportation, schools and hospitals. The Koli women opine that all these factors have also attracted more migrants to their Koliwada, when compared to Patwadi. Simultaneously, the real estate agents also began to structurally redevelop the coastal land by constructing new houses and buildings. Many Koli families had sold their land to the real-estate developers and builders for building construction. These apartments have gradually become the space for the migrant population to settle down in the Koliwada. The Koli women do opine that some of these vertical constructions are also illegal.

The elders in Versova say that the Port Trust is the legal custodian of their drying land. They had released it to the Koli community towards sustaining the fisheries-based livelihood. With urbanisation and demand for land, these drying lands have also become pathways to high-rise buildings. In 2016, the state government had issued a legal notice to the people staying in these apartments to demolish their illegal constructions. The Koli families are now caught in-between the builders and the government. Most of them had handed over their land to the builders and now they find it difficult to reclaim its custodianship. This has resulted in intra-community conflict within the Koliwada as well. There are some privileged families who benefit due to their association with the builders. On the other hand, the builders seemed to have cheated many other Koli families. Some people have lost all their property and
wealth due to the malpractices of builders. The Koliwada has also become a very narrow, congested and over-crowded space due to the ad-hoc planning and constructions of these structures (Figure 6.4).

Figure 6.4 Shrinking spaces at Versova

Note: Narrow streets and congested spaces in Versova after the rise in construction of buildings and apartments. (Source: Reseracher, Fieldwork).

In this context, a Koli woman expressed her situation as follows. Devyani Bole is a 58-year-old Koli woman, who looks at these developments as narrated below,

“Versova has undergone considerable changes in the last 10-15 years. We have roads, electricity and transportation facilities. The population in the Koliwada has also increased considerably. Now, you will see more outsiders than Koli people in the Koliwada. Earlier, it was easy to recognise a Koli woman on the road. But, today you may hardly see a Koli woman on the road. There are many migrants from other states who are staying here on rent. Even we have given our other house on rent… But, now we are facing many problems due to these tenants. They came to live here on rent, but now they are not ready to leave our house. We had to call the police, but all our efforts to evict them have been in vain. They are arguing that
they had given us an advance of 25 lakh rupees and they are claiming that money back. From where will I will get that much money and how will I give it to them? These migrants are a threat to us in the market as well. Prices of fish have also increased. The fisheries business today requires a huge amount of capital and investment that families like mine cannot afford. Sometimes we wonder whether we should do this business or not. My skills to do any other job are also limited. "

According to Koli women, the numbers of migrants in Versova today are more than the native Koli community. Versova today has become a diverse cultural and religious space. The Koli women reflect that their cultural way of life has been affected by the intrusion of migrant culture to their life world. These women opine that they have lost their spaces to move freely in the Koliwada during festivals and other ceremonies. They also complain that with the influx of migrants, the quiet beach spaces have become noisier with loud music and other gatherings. The women also feel unsafe to move freely at night.Instances of theft have also increased in the Koliwada.

All the above factors namely increase in the numbers of migrants, pollution of coastal environment, and reduced physical spaces due to the ad-hoc construction of buildings have restricted Koli women from accessing their beach and other common spaces in Versova. There is a sense of lack of security and hygiene, which also prevents them from allowing their children to go to the beach. In the words of Anita Bhave, a Koli woman,

“Earlier I used to go to the beach on a daily basis to carry out my fisheries business. Today, it has become tough for us to even go outside our homes. There are many immigrants here. They are all outsiders living on rent. They have almost outnumbered us, and we are in a sense insecure. Earlier, we used to keep our doors open. These days, every now and then, we have to check and tell our children to shut the door properly. These days, I visit the beach area on the occasions of festivals only. I don't allow my children to go out or to the beach area as tall-congested buildings have occupied those spaces. ”

Having described the vulnerability contexts of Koli women in the two Koliwadas, the next section highlights some of the significant coping strategies of Koli women amidst the tradition-modernity challenges.
6.2 CONTINUITY, CHANGE AND SELF-ORGANISATION

This present section looks at the coping strategies of Koli women in Mumbai. Coping strategies are the self-adjusting processes individuals adapt to sustain their traditional livelihoods in the context of struggles between tradition and modernity. My observations show that asset-based coping strategies become an important element of the Koli woman’s day-to-day livelihood struggles. Their struggle is also therefore to enhance and sustain their livelihood assets largely physical assets (fishing crafts and gears), natural assets (the fish catch) and the human assets (the migrant workers who are employed in the boats and drying lands). However, the final outcome is always analysed in the form of their contribution to sustenance and enhancement of their financial assets (money to re-invest in the fisheries business). Such asset-based approaches do signify the crucial linkages between the livelihood transitions and capabilities of the population at risk (Bebbington 1999, Moser and Satterthwaite 2010).

The larger contexts of urbanisation, fisheries modernisation, market dynamics, government regulations, and the day-to-day contexts of access to basic livelihood assets determine the nature and success of coping strategies (Moser and Satterthwaite 2010, Kronic and Verner 2010). All coping strategies need not result in effective and equitable outcomes as well (Adger et. al. 2005). Moreover, as evident from the earlier analysis chapters, the fisheries-based livelihoods in both the Koliwadas have their own uniqueness and complexities that have the potential to shape the outcomes of individual coping strategies. Cultural belief systems and faith in their community gods and goddesses do play an important role in enhancing their coping capacities. To understand the coping strategies of specific population groups, if one could pursue the path suggested by Agrawal (2008: 16-18), then strategies such as mobility, diversification, storage, communal pooling and market exchange could be seen as important measures adopted by the Koli women as well. Mobility could be understood as livelihood strategies across space, while storage refers to as dealing with and reducing risk across time (ibid). Livelihood diversification involves spreading the source of livelihood generation across diverse assets and resources, and communal pooling largely refers to the sharing and cooperative behaviour of individuals, families and communities during times of crisis (ibid). The livelihoods of
Koli women are always rooted in market exchange. Table 6.1 describes the diverse coping strategies of Koli women in the two Koliwadas.

Table 6.1 Coping strategies of Koli women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coping Strategies</th>
<th>Patwadi</th>
<th>Versova</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mobility</td>
<td>Women are largely restricted within the patriarchal spaces of the community. They have spread their sale of dry fish to many other markets across Mumbai.</td>
<td>Women attempt to spread their sales across different fresh fish markets of Mumbai.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Storage</td>
<td>Earlier investments were in the form of gold jewellery. Such strategies are eroding with their inability to cope with the challenges of modernisation in fisheries. Most of the women had to sell their gold to Compensate the losses incurred. Drying fish and selling them during monsoons or the lean seasons is in itself an important strategy.</td>
<td>Earlier investments were in the form of gold jewellery. Such strategies are almost absent today. There is lot of investments being made in the form of purchasing an additional boat, or in real-estate development and building construction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Diversification</td>
<td>Diversification of livelihood strategies is very minimal.</td>
<td>Diversified from dry fish vending to fresh fish vending. Diversified to income generation through rental businesses. Diversified to other service-sector based occupations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Communal Pooling</td>
<td>Collective sharing and pooling of resources during festival, marriage and funerals are an important strength of the two communities. Chit funds.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Koli women in Patwadi still procure fresh fish from the boats that land in the Koliwada, dry them and sell them to the wholesale dry fish markets. However, with the dry fish business coming to an end in Versova, the Koli women began to sell fresh fish that were landed in their coast. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, with delay in their own boats returning to the coast with the catch, the Koli women began to buy fish from wholesale merchants of other major markets in Mumbai and then sell them to various customers.

When it comes to the Koli women, coping as part of their day-to-day livelihood struggles is also about resisting diverse forces of patriarchy and capitalism that attempts to dominate them. This resistance and coping is largely carried out through a process of ‘self-organisation’. Self-organisation could be understood as a process where women collectivise around particular issues concerning their livelihoods, coastal landscapes and identity; and at the same time engage collectively in creating appropriate spaces for representation and recognition. Women’s self-organisation is essential to the struggle for both women’s liberation, where their emancipation must come from themselves. The Koli women’s oppression is a function of both their role in the family and their role in the fisheries business. The self-organisation of Koli women is not only to address certain sphere-of-production issues. Instead, they also aim at resisting and transforming the forces of patriarchy both within and outside their family. Thus, they tend to self-organise through issues that affect Koli women primarily as ‘traditional fish-workers’ and ‘women’ at the same time. Some of these characteristics of self-organisation among the Koli women are discussed below.

Though the scale and level of self-organisation is different in the two Koliwadas, the underlying causes and forces against which women in both the Koliwadas organise are the same. One important characteristic is that the Koli women have drawn adequate strength to self-organise through their collective agency, which is shaped through their traditional identity, negotiation and bargaining skills, and

| Exchange                  | Not entangled to a great extent to loans. | Entangled to a great extent to loans from banks and moneylenders. |
social network. At the same time, they are involved in framing organisational structures suiting the contemporary contexts of the modernised landscape. The women in Patwadi still experience restrictions from their male counterpart to work in another sector. As a result, those women who do not have direct accessibility to fisheries resources prefer to work in others’ drying land or buy dry fish from women and then sell it in the market. These small businesses help them to earn as a collective and at the same time counter the forces that are restricting them in some occupational spaces.

Recently, in Patwadi, 13 women have formed an informal women’s group named ‘Patwadi Mahila Mandal’ that operates a chit fund on a weekly basis. Such pooled money is used for organising tours to various places. As a result, they are able to explore and learn about different regions and cultures. Similarly, this informal group plays a significant role to help community members, if someone is in financial distress. This informal group also assists in marriage ceremonies or functions in the Koliwada. Such practices in the community also reduce the burden on respective families. In the words of Koli woman,

“If there is an engagement ceremony in the Koliwada, then we all go there and help to cook food, make arrangements, and serve the guests. We do all the work as we do at our home. If we all help each other like this, then no one will feel the burden of these functions” (Jayashri Patil, 40 years).

The Mahila Mandal has also begun to innovate new forms of enterprises such as undertaking catering services within their Koliwada. The idea was promoted when they volunteered to provide meals for the community members during their festivals. They took the initiative and started catering as a side-business. Apart from the drying business, now these women take catering orders of marriages and other functions. It is aimed at generating supplementary income. It was observed that they are in the initial phase of their new business and the venture is not very profitable. They are learning from their failures and trying to improve their business strategies accordingly.

The Koli women are also looking forward to enhance their participation in the local institutional structures such as the cooperative society and the Koliwada trust. In 1992, ‘Harbadevi Machhimar Sarvodaya Sahakari Society Limited’ was established in Patwadi with the help of Koli leaders Bhai Bandarkar, Motiram Bhave and local
leader Krishna Koli. Prior to this, the fishermen of Patwadi were members of the ‘Madh Cooperative Society’ at Madh Koliwada. Gradually, the fishermen felt the need for their own local cooperative society. They did not wish to access resources from other Koliwadas; and established the ‘Harbadevi Machhimar Sarvodaya Sahakari Society Limited’ in 1992. Currently, this institution plays an important role in the life and livelihood of the Koli community in the Koliwada. It provides diesel, ice and spare parts of boats to fishermen in the Koliwada. The men dominated the affairs of the cooperative society. However, in the last few years, women have become part of these institutional structures.

Earlier, these women did not even have time to attend the meetings of the cooperative society. Their entire time was engaged in drying fish and household chores; and major decision-making power remained with the male. Nevertheless, the policy of the government made reservation of women in local bodies compulsory, and thereby women in the Koliwada also got representation in the cooperative. As a result, two women are currently part of the decision making body of the cooperative society. Today, it provides transportation facility to women vendors to take their fish to the market. Earlier women had to carry heavy loads of fish on the head and walk a long distance. The Koli women collectively use the vehicle to transport their fish and share the fare among them. The experience of participation in the cooperative has also encouraged women to become members of other local level institutions such as the village trust and participate in meetings and the decision-making process of the trust. They mostly look after major festivals and programs in the Koliwada. A woman member said,

“I look after the work of ‘Patwadi Mahila Mandal’. It is a group of 13 women who belong to the Koliwada. I am also a member of the Koliwada Trust. This trust looks after the management of any festival or program in the Koliwada. We attend meetings of the trust regularly.” (Anita Patil, 37 years).

Women in Patwadi have displayed collective resistance when outsiders tried to encroach into their village space. Many builders and real-estate agents have their eye on the common land available in Patwadi. In 1984, builders attempted to occupy this coastal village for their construction, which people in the community resisted with the help of a local leader. Followed by which, they did not allow outsiders or
migrants to come and stay in the Koliwada. These collective action strategies helped them to maintain their traditional culture and fisheries business, as well as their common spaces. Even when the Indian Air Force tried to occupy their drying land, especially women in the community contested and negotiated with them. In the words of a Koli woman,

“The Air Force was preventing us from drying our fish. They wanted to relocate us from our land. They took our property and were not ready to give us a job or any other compensation. We are traditionally fishers, and we don't know any other business. Then where will we go? This land comes under the Port Trust. But customarily, it belongs to the Koli community. The Air Force started extending their compound and began to think that this land also comes under their territory. Once they came with the police force to terrify us. However, with the help and initiation of Bhaibandarkar (a prominent leader of the Koli community), we got this land back for drying. They are still trying to shift our Koliwada and houses. After the death of Bhaibandarkar, we had to face many problems and difficulties. However, so far and on many occasions, we women fought against them. Due to our collective resistance, we are able to dry our fish here. Otherwise, it would have been very difficult for us.” (Sita Patwadi, 45 years).

The Koli women in Versova use different strategies of coping, but, they are also largely through the process of self-organisation. Earlier, Koli women in Versova were found to help one another with the fish-drying activities. The drying land was a site where they used to share their personal matters. As drying business in Versova came to a halt, these sites also become non-accessible and the meeting spaces of women too vanished. Thereafter, the fish market has become a site for social gathering and sharing of their personal and emotional experiences. It was observed that these women help each other in business activities and support each other to solve personal problems. As spaces for mutual interactions are diminishing, these women have formed informal groups along each street in the Koliwada. These women’s groups organise meetings, collect chit funds, and arrange tours for women in the group. Moreover, these groups play a major role during times of accidents or if death happens to members in any of their families. These women come forward and help the affected family emotionally and financially. According to women, the life of the people in the community is unpredictable and risky. They believe it is their
responsibility to support the family during the occurrence of any crisis events. In the event of death in a family, they provide food and grocery for 12-15 days to the affected family. In the words of a Koli woman,

“There is one woman vendor in our market whose husband is suffering from brain haemorrhage. They have already invested more than twenty lakh rupees for his treatment. Even after consultation in many hospitals, his health remains in a critical condition. The women vendor is belonging to the women’s group that we discussed. The group decided that we should help them. Even if we contribute 1,000 rupees, ten women together can contribute ten thousand rupees. It will be helpful for them. We should help them in some other ways as well. This contribution may not be enough for them. But, it will give them some support.”

(Harsha Thapke, 45 years)

Just like Patwadi, Koli women are represented in the cooperative after the state directive on the reservation for women in these institutions. They also participate in the activities of the trust. However, women in Versova observe that the Koli men restrict them from coming together and engaging themselves as a collective. Even though women represent these institutions, it is a daily struggle for them to assert their presence and voices in these platforms. The narrative of Rajeshri Bhanji will help us to understand the struggles of Koli women in these institutional spaces. She is a 54-year-old married Koli woman, who stays in Versova since her birth. She is part of the Marol Bazaar Masali Vikreta Koli Mahila Sangh and has collectivised around 5,000 Koli women across Mumbai. According to her,

“We as women in the community never used to get a chance to come forward and fight for our rights. Though we were members of the society and participated in its meetings, men take significant decisions in these meetings. Those days, I used to sell fish in Marol dry fish market. After 1991, the value of this market space increased drastically. Many politicians and builders were interested in this space, and they were forcefully trying to occupy our space. Even they demolished our sheds in the market. As a result, women had to sell their fish in the open space under the scorching sun and heavy rains. But, no one took the initiative to do something for these women. Hence, I was forced to take the initiative, which resulted in the establishment of the ‘Marol Bazaar Masali Vikreta Koli Mahila Sanstha’ in 2007. Now, this market is officially registered and has developed its
own institutional identity in the city. After registration, we constructed sheds and basement in the market, provided light and sanitation facilities for women. Today, around 5,000 women are working with this cooperative society… Those days, many families didn’t allow women to go out and work or fight for their rights. Still, men in the community dominate women, but my husband always supported me. He believes in me that I can balance both household business and work of the market cooperative. Working in this male-dominated society is difficult. Marol market is the centre of attraction to big builders and industries. But, we all women decided not to leave this space. If we give this space to these people, then our livelihood will be lost. Our life is dependent on it. To show them, that we women are not deprived and we still have our own identity in this city, we arranged the Marol seafood festival. This festival gave a cultural depiction of our community. We got a great response from people, and we are spreading our voices through such platforms…that this space belongs to the Koli people only! We aimed to show them women-power and tell them that we know our rights and we will fight for our rights!… Big trawlers and mechanised boats mostly dominate the fishing business. They destroyed fish species with the use of purse seine nets. This type of fishing has stopped the productivity of fish. Many a time we have raised this issue with the authorities, but still no one took any action… Further at Bhaucha Dhakka, we are unable to park our boats due to the monopoly of some businessmen. There also, we had to fight against them for our rights to find space to park our boats. With the help of the cooperative society, we were able to provide sanitation facilities for women at Bhaucha Dhakka… We also contacted Maharashtra Maritime Board to clean the Versova creek. And they finally sanctioned four crore fifty thousand rupees to clean it. Our fight is to protect our environment. We had demanded to the government to stop the destruction of mangroves in Saat Bungalow area, Goregoan and Malad region. We spread awareness about it, and the government had taken notice of our work and further issued orders to stop it.”

Women face severe obstacles to collectivise for their rights. Self-organisation itself is a struggle for the women. They realise that their community’s identity itself is being threatened with the expansion of the city into their lived space. As a measure to reinforce their culture and identity, the Koli women had initiated the ‘Versova food festival’. During this festival, they prepare their traditional foods and showcase their traditional culture through performances of Koli songs and dance. For the past ten
years, they are able to conduct this food festival successfully. In the words of a Koli woman,

“We started the Versova-sea food festival a few years back. It was started with the intention that other people should recognise and be informed about our community and culture. In this festival, we arrange food stalls showcasing and selling different varieties of our traditional cuisine. We arrange songs and dance that reflect the Koli culture. During the days of the food festival, every one of us will wear our traditional attires. We also generate some income through this festival” (Manisha Bhungawale, 37 years).

6.3 CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

The present chapter gave insights to the diverse contextual factors that shapes Koli women’s struggle between continuity and change. The Koli women always have to be prepared to deal with shocks in their life owing to the uncertainty of their livelihood contexts. Single or widowed women are highly vulnerable. Along with that, the processes of urbanisation, environmental pollution and present forms of fisheries modernisation have reduced their resource accessibility including common spaces. The struggle of Koli women was quite visible in both the Koliwada. On the one hand, women in Patwadi are besieged and constrained within their traditional structures and practices, limited livelihood resources and gradual changes happening in the context of modernisation. On the other hand, Koli women in Versova are constrained not only due to reinforcement of the traditional structures and practices, but they also have to face a major and strong wave of capitalist modernity. In both the Koliwadas, self-organisation of Koli women is a key strategy for them to collectivise, represent themselves, raise their voices and gain recognition in their resistance to both patriarchal and capitalist forces. Thus representation and recognition becomes a key element of their self-organisation processes, which asserts their politics of identity to the political economy of class and gender, as well as interlinking these processes to concerns of social, economic and environmental justice (Fraser 2000, Fraser et. al. 2004).
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The present study examined the livelihood struggles of Koli women in two Koliwadas of Mumbai. The background of this study was largely shaped by the modernisation of fisheries and urbanisation processes that have been transpiring around the coastal landscapes of Mumbai. The livelihood struggles of Koli women were thus examined in the context of their ability to engage and negotiate with the structures and processes of both tradition and modernity. This study also analysed the vulnerability contexts and coping strategies of Koli women in the milieu of these transitions. The Marxist Feminist lens helped this research to explore how multiple forces of patriarchy embedded in capitalism shaped the livelihood practices of Koli women and their negotiation with these forces to access various livelihood resources. Such a perspective also helped to understand the gender relations embedded across diverse social worlds of Koli women and their subordination and self-organisation strategies as well.

This research was based on a qualitative research approach and adopted a comparative feminist ethnography in two Koliwadas, namely Patwadi and Versova. The feminist ethnographic method enabled me as a researcher to closely examine the social worlds and livelihood practices of Koli women, rich with narratives of their specific experiences, memories, strengths and aspirations. The ethnographic nature of my fieldwork helped me to make sense of the complexities involved in exploring the tradition-modern and rural-urban continuum in the everyday lives of Koli women (Jeffery and Heath 2010, Govinda 2013). It also provided me adequate space to explore the trajectory, contestations, and contradictions of various dominating forces interfacing with the everyday lives of Koli women. This research was thus an opportunity to explore the lived experiences of Koli women along the tradition-modernity continuum.

The research design was not only aimed at describing the similarities and variations in the two Koliwadas, but also aimed at critically interpreting the underlying structures of domination over women. Adopting a gender lens to my study was crucial, as women experience gender-differentiated risks as individuals, groups,
and community members (Govinda 2013). Moreover, when compared to men they possess specific experiences and understanding on processes of change, and make meaning of these changes through their interactions with a changing environment (Rocheleau et al. 1996, Code 2006). Such a gendered lens helped me to explore the situated understanding and experiences of women in their day-to-day livelihood struggles and the power relations embedded in them (Harding 1992, Code 2006). The comparative analysis also helped to capture the diversities in the vulnerability contexts and coping strategies of Koli women located across the coastal landscape. Oral history, in-depth interviews and observation were the primary methods of data collection. Data was collected through semi-structured interview schedule, interview guide and observation checklist. These were supported by secondary sources such as photographs and videos as well. On-site data analysis was carried out manually, while the summative analysis was done using Atlas.ti software. Field notes and memos guided the analysis. Several themes corresponding to the objectives were identified, coded and analysed. Some of the key findings of the study are discussed in the following section.

7.1 KEY FINDINGS

The Koliwadas of Patwadi and Versova typically resemble urban villages. While urban villages like Versova are located at close proximity to the city, Koliwadas like Patwadi are situated at its periphery. Studies have attempted to understand the phenomenon of urban villages from a socio-economic, cultural and spatial context (Bell and Jayne 2004, Bell and Jayne 2006, Khanna 2001, Mehra 2005). However, there are very few studies that have explored the lived experiences of women in these urban villages.

- The coastal landscapes of Patwadi and Versova depict the crucial inter-linkages between a particular community and its natural environment.

- It also indicates the intricate linkages between the historicity and geographical specificity of socio-ecological systems; environmental change and livelihood transitions of communities depend on natural resources for their survival.

Patwadi and Versova are located on the two opposite sides of the Malad creek. The creek and mangrove forests along the coast were crucial resource systems in
sustaining their fisheries-based livelihoods. Patwadi is located farther at the extreme end of the peninsula. This geographical location has made it sensitive to strategic security issues of the country and is always prone to surveillance by the Air Force and other armed forces. This has also created a sense of constant fear of being displaced for reasons of national security and coastal development. At the same time, their access to other opportunities and resources provided by the adjoining urban landscape has been limited. The resettlement experiences of Patwadi post-independence has also slowed down its development potential as well as increased the insecurities of connecting to the outer world. In contrast, the physical landscape and location of Versova such as the presence of a natural harbour (that favoured the commercial navigation of big cargo ships) did prove advantageous to its development in terms of immediately transacting fishery resources harvested from the sea or the creek. Versova’s geographical specificity and its direct linkage to the main land fostered a long history of marine trade and entrepreneurship among the Koli community.

- It was found that the initial stages of modernisation in fisheries and the surrounding urban development did certainly benefit the Koli community in Versova.

- They were able to harness the opportunities thus provided to access and add value to diverse forms of livelihood assets.

Capital was induced to mechanise crafts and gears to exploit the available natural resources, build physical infrastructure, diversify livelihoods and improve living conditions. The coastal landscape of Versova still paves pathways for major economic activities. The Versova fish market is one of the most important wholesale fish market in Mumbai. Similarly, the ferry services that ensures the to and fro movement of a large crowd from Versova to Madh Island has become an important source of revenue generation for people in Versova. The long stretch of beach area in Versova is also attracting many tourists, providing new income opportunities to the people in Versova. In contrast, Patwadi has been relatively gradual in its approach to co-opt the benefits derived out of modernisation and urban development.
• In this regard, the historicity of the coastal landscape does matter determining whether each phase of modernisation could turn out into a moment of advantage or disadvantage for the respective Koliwada.

• The isolated nature of Patwadi and the frequent threats of displacement did foster a mind-set of enduring strictly to their tradition and thereby retaining their identity.

Perhaps, one should then look at tradition as which gets born (and re-born) in the time of modernity, where the past is mobilised again and again in the present to address the insecurities of the Koli community in the here and now (Benjamin 1999, Govinda 2013). Such a culture of modernity and development does oppress Koli women from accessing the basic livelihood assets and opportunities to improve their wellbeing. Their mobility is mostly restricted due to lack of roads, connectivity, and transportation or else they have to further depend on the men in their family to travel to the main land.

• One cannot neglect the negative consequence of fisheries modernisation and urbanisation on the coastal and marine environment.

• Industrialisation along the coast has polluted the creek and coastal water bodies with chemicals, wastewater and sewage.

• Coastal commons such as drying lands are concretised or reclaimed for the construction of buildings.

• Many among these constructions violate the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) norms and extend up to the beach.

• Vast stretches of mangrove forests and fish breeding habitats have disappeared from the coast.

Many fish varieties that were earlier available have become extinct in this specific creek ecosystem. The creek and the fish resources were a major source of livelihood for small-scale fisher-folk during the lean season. Rampant coastal development and construction of infrastructures have also reduced the social gathering spaces of women and children.
• If women in Patwadi are unable to access their drying lands due to such constructions, women in Versova have stopped accessing these spaces due to safety and security reasons.

The Koli women are thus the primary victims of environmental degradation and transitions in the coastal landscape (Agarwal 1992). The vulnerability of Koli women has worsened further with the overexploitation and the resultant scarcity of marine resources. Their regular access to fish has been highly reduced. The changes in the ecological subsystem has not only deepened the layers of women’s vulnerability, but also has affected the entire social subsystem of the Koli community (Nayak et. al. 2014).

The livelihoods of Koli community are dependent on various assets that are interwoven across natural, human, physical, financial, social and cultural resources. The marine and coastal environment formed the base for their natural assets. These natural resources helped them to evolve their fisheries-based livelihood. However, the Koli community in Patwadi were largely dependent on sustainable forms of fisheries owing to its small-scale nature. Further, the time period for them to evolve into a purely capitalist society has been very short due to their histories of displacement and relocation post-independence. Till few decades ago, these people were living in darkness due to lack of access to electricity and were completely dependent on local resources for their day-to-day survival. In contrast, the Koli community of Versova has been living in the same place since ages, and it has provided them adequate time cushion to create a strong capitalist base. The close proximity to the urban spaces and economic processes of Mumbai also favoured its fast paced development. This capitalist base helped them to appropriate, modify and reinvest resources to enhance their livelihood assets.

• The modernisation and technological transitions in the fisheries sector has helped to improve the livelihood assets of Koli women to some extent.

• Initially, these processes helped them in improving their livelihood assets, but gradually it affected their access to crucial resources.

The normative assumptions of fisheries policies in our country are based on the belief that any kind of technological advancement in the sector will directly improve the
economic conditions of the traditional fisher-folk. In contrast, one could see that the mass implementation of these technological advancements and modernisation strategies without bringing in equitable socio-economic and structural changes will benefit only certain classes of the society who have the capital and power to access these resources.

- The subjugated classes in the community can be further marginalised without having the capabilities and authority to access their essential livelihood resources.

These structures and process further alienate marginalised groups from their traditional livelihoods and supporting environmental base (Ramdas and Ghotge 2007, Nayak 2017). Further, one could see the widening disparities in the development of these fishing villages. Though surrounded by rapid urbanisation and modernisation processes in the neighbouring landscapes, the Koli women in Patwadi are still struggling to access basic livelihood resources.

- Creation of physical infrastructure need not always serve its original purpose, unless appropriate institutional processes and cultural sensitivities suiting specific contexts back them up.

As of now these processes are found lacking in Patwadi, and therefore negate opportunities for women to access these resources. These women still struggle to access water, fuel-wood, transportation, education and health care.

- Further, one can talk about access, if and only when assets are created. In the absence of meaningful assets, the discourse of accessibility itself remains void.

Metaphorically, these Koli women of Patwadi are thus situated in a remote village within a city. In contrast, the livelihood struggles of Koli women in Versova have become more complex after a particular phase of modernisation, which were also accompanied by rapid changes in coastal and urban landscapes.

- Several contextual factors have forced Koli women in Versova to diversify their livelihoods from dry fish selling to fresh fish buying and vending.
Contextual factors such as family structure, technological changes, intervention by state government, market, and resource scarcity could significantly influence sustainable fishing practices and the embedded gender relations within these practices (Santha 2009). Earlier, when their spouse or father brought the fish to the land on a daily basis, the Koli women had some control and access to the fish resources. Most of the upper class Koli women (whose spouses or parents owned boats) in Versova did not have the need to buy fish from elsewhere. The poor women used to buy dry fish from these upper class women who had considerable stocks of fish. However, with men spending long durations at the sea, even the upper class Koli women had to go to other wholesale markets to buy fish. They also had to simultaneously shift from the dry fish to fresh fish business.

- The transition from the ‘owner’ of fish to ‘buyer and seller’ of fish is in itself an important characteristic of capitalism in an urban landscape. The Koli women in Versova are thus in the process of transitioning from a natural resource-dependent livelihood practice to a market-dependent livelihood practice.

The burden of domestic work has also increased for the Koli women, as the labour of women is controlled through marriage practices, social constraints and intense forms of discipline (Velaskar 2016). The traditional support systems to manage household chores have also reduced with the disintegration of joint families. At the same time, many Koli men do not allow their wives to go for any other work. If not fisheries, these women are restricted to household chores and domestic work, and this is often considered as ‘unproductive’ labour. This itself is a characteristic of capitalism in the Third World, where women are often retained in the traditional forms of production and their work is also rendered invisible (Bryceson 1985, Gwon 2005, Salmi and Sonck-Rautio 2018).

- Thus, there is also an erosion of Koli women’s financial autonomy and agency to be involved in ‘productive’ work. These processes again reinforce patriarchal power relations resulting in the subjugation of women.

It was found that changes in the traditional division of labour in the Koli community have also altered the decision-making rights in the economic affairs of the family. The role that Koli women used to play earlier are now transferred to Koli men and have
made Koli women even more dependent on them. For, working women are less persecuted than non-working women, as they are economically independent (Friedman et. al 1987). The transitions in livelihood practices have also led to the erosion of local ecological knowledge among women.

- In Versova, most of the Koli women have lost their knowledge about the sea and marine life.

This has largely happened because of their gradual disconnect to the ocean and coastal environment. Today, active fish vendors in Versova have a rich repository of knowledge on how the wholesale and retail fish markets work, but not necessarily on the ecological knowledge of their coastal landscape. Only a few elderly Koli men in Versova remain as the custodians of this knowledge base.

- In contrast, both Koli women and men in Patwadi still continue to regularly interact with their coastal and marine environment. Therefore, their local ecological knowledge is also quite rich.

- On the other hand, the social and political awareness of women in Versova are relatively evolved and organised when compared to the women in Patwadi.

This awareness could have co-evolved with the emergence of modernity, exposure to wider social worlds including different types of markets, education and regular interaction with migrants and other non-Koli communities.

- Moreover, social and political awareness has become a necessity for these women to retain their livelihood spaces in the context of the complexities and contradictions that capitalism and modernisation presents itself with.

The lack of social and political awareness among women in other Koliwadas of Mumbai is still a major concern among fisheries activists in Maharashtra (Peke 2013). The labour relations have evolved quite differently and uniquely in both the Koliwadas, and the implications of these transitions are largely felt on women’s labour and their social position in the community. The men in Patwadi forces women to engage in traditional business as there is insecurity of losing ones traditional livelihood. The men in the community used to remain in the sea and women used to look after fisheries practices on the land. However, men control women through the
traditional division of labour and patriarchal system. Due to the sexual division of labour, women have to experience more domination (Friedman et. al 1987). The dominating structures bind Koli women in traditional practices and restrict their access to resources.

- In Patwadi, one could see a complete feminisation of labour happening in the drying land. Some women who are in a better economic situation are able to employ workers in their drying land. But this does not mean that it has reduced their labour. Instead, the employment of additional labour is intended only to compensate the additional workload that mechanisation of fisheries has brought about. Higher the quantity of fish harvested, greater is the labour required to dry the fish. Thus, the mechanisation of fisheries and the sexual division of labour in Patwadi have ensured that Koli women are restricted to their traditional roles and their boundaries are maintained.

While the drying land becomes the site to understand the dynamics of labour relations in Patwadi, the boat and the wholesale markets acts as sites to witness these class relations in Versova. With large-scale mechanisation of crafts and gears, the Koli men have been employing migrant workers in their fishing boats. They manage the operations from the land.

- And women end up as the ‘feminised labour’, responsible to transact the fresh fish in the wholesale markets of Mumbai. And often the financial burden of ensuring that the boats return to the sea for fishing becomes the sole responsibility of the Koli women. The men manage the workers, but women’s labour is crucial for both mediating and sustaining that relationship. Nevertheless, this contribution of women is ‘invisible’ and often unrecognised.

With the transition in fisheries, the livelihood practices of Koli women have also changed. In Versova, women had to move to fresh fish vending or diversify their livelihood practices. Many women were forced to leave fish vending and look after domestic work. Patriarchy insists that women are allocated only those works that are denoted as ‘women's work’. Often, these kinds of work are considered to be less dignified than men's work. In this regard, household chores and domestic work is accepted as women's work and are considered as most suitable for them (Friedman et.
Similar studies among women sea divers in Jeju Island, Korea has shown that the changes in labour relations are largely shaped by the interface between economic transformation and the cultural context of gender relations (Gwon 2005). Similar to the present research, Gwon (2005) also shows that the gender hierarchies embedded in culture are deeply interrelated with the status of economic participation of women and their evolving social positions in the market. Research also shows that changes in women’s labor force participation are mediated by the social institutions of family and religion, patriarchal ideologies of female domesticity and the state’s endeavors to constitute women as entrepreneurial actors who take responsibility for the economic well-being of their households (Aswathy and Kalpana 2018b).

In the context of the diverse vulnerabilities that Koli women are facing, this study has explored their diverse coping strategies as well. Coping strategies are the self-adjusting processes individuals adapt to sustain their traditional livelihood in the context of struggles between tradition and modernity. The prominent frameworks of coping strategies usually elaborate the individualised strategies to deal with vulnerabilities, livelihood risks and uncertainties (Agrawal 2008, Scoones 2009). These individualised coping strategies are certainly present and relevant among the Koli women in both the Koliwadas. For instance, livelihood diversification is a key strategy of Koli women in Versova. Livelihood diversification is one household strategy, where members of fishing households often become involved in different economic sectors to smooth the effects of fishery resource variations (Khan et al. 2018: 146). Nevertheless, diversification can emerge as a barrier for several households who consider fishing as a caste or cultural activity, a way of life, rather than an economic pursuit (Nayak 2017: 18).

- Such mind-sets were very evident in Patwadi, where women were restricted from any scope for diversification.
- Moreover, all Koli women in Versova also did neither have the equal opportunity nor capability to rely on diversification as a key strategy for their survival.

Specifically, illiterate women had fewer opportunities to diversify than educated women. Educated women gain opportunities to expand their boundaries of work, while illiterate women are often restricted to the boundaries of traditional livelihoods.
and household activities (Rajgopal 2007). Thus, factors such as age, marital status, class, and human capital determine women’s ability to cope with risks and uncertainties in their day-to-day life (Adger et al. 2007). Similar studies have shown that gender intersects with caste, class, geographic specificity, age, and household membership to create heterogeneous coping experiences and knowledge among fisherwomen in the context of socio-economic and environmental change (Khan et al. 2018). However, while these studies have observed out-migration as a key coping strategy, this was not very evident in the case of my research.

Studies show that fishermen have better opportunities to cope with livelihood risks and uncertainties. For instance, Nayak (2017) has documented a diverse range of coping strategies among men such as taking loans and credit, mortgage and sell assets, and intensify fishing activities. Such intensification strategies also have negative consequences on the carrying capacity of the resource system (ibid).

- In contrast to men, the opportunities for women to cope with risks and uncertainties are relatively limited.

For instance, in Patwadi Koli women had very less capabilities to diversify their livelihoods. Lack of knowledge, illiteracy and limited resources to adapt to new skills and technology requirements force women to stick on to their traditional fisheries sector (Joshi 2007, Thamizoli and Prabhakar 2007). These factors along with patriarchal structures force them to take up jobs that help them to look after their house and work together (Jha and Pujari 1996). The failure of these individualised coping strategies often forces women to remain in deprived conditions (Joshi 2007). However, what emerged prominently in my research are their collective coping strategies through sharing, cooperation and self-organisation.

- The study has found that Koli women use their identity and vulnerability situation as a focal point to be organised and face diverse challenges as a collective. Women are able to forge this connection among them, as they are able to empathetically understand the vulnerable situation and strengths of other women and identify that with being ‘a woman, a Koli woman and as fish-workers’.
Social support systems through their network of kith and kin relations are a major support system to fisherwomen (Samanta and Dutt 2007). Earlier these networks were limited to their village boundaries and work sites within the village. The patriarchal structures did restrict the mobility of women.

- One significant contribution of modernisation in fisheries was that it required women to move out of their traditional boundaries to other fish markets and avenues to sustain their fish trade. With the transitions in the socio-ecological landscape and cultural practices, women’s social boundaries have also expanded. These also facilitated women to collectivise, engage and negotiate with the dominating structures using their inherent skills and social network. As the boundaries of Koli women expanded, they also began to self-organise and ensure their representation in both formal and informal spaces.

Their traditional business of fish selling provides Koli women more flexibility and they value their independence in the fisheries sector (Thara 2016). Nevertheless, as women began to lose their common spaces of interaction such as the beaches and the drying land, they also realised the need to interact with other fellow women, share their ideas, ventilate their frustrations, and sometimes just talk to one another. They had to organise against those dominating forces that are individualising women and families. The Koli women of Patwadi realised that the informal women’s groups such as Mahila Mandals are the best platforms for the same. Women's participation and involvement in an informal organisation is more liberal than formal institutions. They share their views and ideas freely in an informal organisation, as they feel that the rules and regulations of formal organisations, along with the socio-cultural norms could restrict their agency (Kulkarni 2007). Any form of collective action should therefore be recognised as important and meaningful, the direction of which depends on a negotiation between conditions rooted in the particular context and situatedness of actors (Alonso-Población and Siar 2018). Studies have also shown that the preliminary experiences of organising through an informal group will give women the confidence and a self-realisation of their organised power to deal with government officials, moneylenders and outsiders (Pant 2007).

- The Koli women make use of their self-organisation capacities to collectivise and resist various dominating forces. Basically, their self-organisation
strategies help them to claim their rights over basic resources and raise their voice against the violence (Krishna 2007).

- The Koli women in both the Koliwadas have been collectively resisting, protecting, and securing their livelihood sites.

The Koli women in Patwadi resisted the interference of the Air Force officials, builders and migrants from encroaching their living and livelihood spaces. Similarly, women in Versova collectively organised and resisted politicians and builders to protect their age-old fisheries market in Mumbai. When compared to Patwadi, Koli women in Versova are more socially and politically aware of their circumstances. Therefore, they have formed multiple informal organisations in the Koliwada, gained entry into otherwise male-dominated fisheries cooperatives and have also facilitated the establishment of an exclusive fisheries cooperative for women in Marol market to fight for their rights and sustain their livelihood practices.

Studies commissioned by international organisations such as Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) have recognised the importance of leadership and collective roles played by women in fisheries (Alonso-Población and Siar 2018). However, their recommendations mostly cater to enable support from external actors such as the state and civil society organisations (Alonso-Población and Siar 2018, Ford 2002). Recent studies also show that organising fisherwomen has been difficult due to divisions among fisherwomen (Aswathy and Kalpana 2018a).

- In contrast, the present research demonstrates the possibility of fisherwomen to self-organise based on their own identity and agency. While this study does not discount the need for external agents to support women’s collective struggles, it locates foremost emphasis on the women’s internal strength to self-organise.

Similarly, rich case studies on fisherwomen’s endogenous mobilisation and self-organisation have been reported from different parts of the world (Gerrard 1995, Kim 2003, Alencar et al. 2015 as cited in Alonso-Población and Siar 2018: 20-21). All these case studies show how women were able to counter both patriarchy and capitalist forces to secure their identity, knowledge systems and livelihoods. These rich experiences also provide hope for the Koli women who are in the pathways of
self-organisation. Any attempt to strengthen the coping capacities of women and their collective action should take into account the context specificities of women in specific coastal landscapes and due attention has to be given to the interwoven power structures and gender relations in fisheries (FAO 2015). Such an approach could provide women a greater say and control over fisheries resources and their life decisions as well. Having discussed some of the key findings of this research, the next section would reflect on some of the key theoretical insights that this study has been able to derive.

7.2 THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS

For the outside world, the Koli women are known for their autonomy that they ‘seem to have’ in their community and at their work. They are considered as more ‘liberated’ than other women. Nevertheless, like many other marginalised women in other societies, the inherent patriarchal structures dominate the life and social worlds of Koli women.

- This study has found out that Koli women are not only dominated through a complex web of patriarchal structures, but are also exploited by the subtle capitalist structures of modernised fisheries.

Modernisation in fisheries accompanied by the processes of urbanisation in the coastal landscapes of Mumbai has changed the fisheries-based livelihood practices of fishermen. These practices exploited marine resources extensively and reduced Koli women’s access to fish resources. On the one hand, traditional norms and practices restricted control of these resources, while the new structures of modernity reduced their access to these resources. The root cause of women’s subjugation is thus not only the patriarchal system but also capitalism that shapes and reshapes this system (Friedman et. al 1987, Ebert 2005). Amidst all the transitions due to modernisation and urbanisation, the forces of patriarchy still control the livelihood practices of Koli women and their access to resources.

- One could thus see that the livelihood struggles of Koli women are always a tussle, which reflects their day-to-day engagement and negotiations with the dual forces of patriarchy-embedded-capitalism.
In this regard, certain familial and community norms, beliefs and customary practices reinforce the patriarchal elements of tradition in both private and public spaces.

- These elements are so much embodied and routinised in the social world of Koli women that often, they themselves emerge as the gatekeepers of tradition.

While these processes are obvious in Patwadi, it is relatively subtle in Versova. However, this also showcases the fact that the present nature of modernity has not completely overcome the characteristics of traditional society.

- Instead, the structures and processes of capitalism have paved way only for faster and large scale transactions of goods (e.g. fish, land, buildings, knowledge etc.) to create more profit. Towards this purpose, these very same structures and processes dilute those patriarchal norms and practices that act as a barrier to economic transaction without eliminating the basic fundamentals of patriarchy.

The obligation of continuing the traditional norms, beliefs and practices in the Koli community is mostly vested with the Koli women. The enforcement of traditional norms, beliefs and practices induces a kind of feminine role of tolerance and self-restraint among women (Dube 1988). Further, the risks and uncertainties associated with the fisheries based livelihoods forces them to rely on these practices even more. When Koli men used to sail off for fishing, women at the land were always entangled with the uncertainty of their safe return. Their only source of coping with these uncertainties was to rely on their culturally induced belief systems and practices. For instance, Koli women used to offer their right hand’s bangle to the sea to protect their husband from natural calamities. Similarly, they strictly practice not touching or entering the boat while they are menstruating. The violation of norms of purity is anticipated to be bad for the family and the community. Samuel (2007) emphasises that the ideology of women’s dependence on men remains always strong even though

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20 According to Punekar (1959), there are other practical reasons behind the rituals of throwing away the bangles. As these women have to cut fish with a heavy knife, there are chances of getting hurt, if they wear glass bangles. Instead, they wear silver ‘wala’ on the right hand. The practice of offering glass bangles to the sea is no more practiced in the two Koliwadas.
fisherwomen work and earn for the survival of their family. These practices also make them believe that their sources of resources are only through their men in the family.

- A key determinant of women’s vulnerability is their lack of access to livelihood assets and decision-making structures.

The Koli woman’s authority over the coastal resources is very limited, and they hardly yield any control over their income (Kulkarni 2007). The men in the community mostly control their livelihood assets and women have to be dependent on men to access it. The access to the drying land or the beach is also transactional and dictated by the family or community norms. Accessing resources through these cultural mediation does neither guarantee the rights nor security over these assets (Agarwal 1998). The traditional community norms and practices do not provide women authority and ownership of livelihood assets and raises crucial concerns on the livelihood security of women (Datar 2007). The differential accessibility to these assets also results in new forms of class relations (Chakravarti 2001). Women do not have property rights over land or the boats. To provide economic security for women, there is a need to secure their claims for property rights over both land and boats (Agarwal 1998).

- Nevertheless, even the common lands (such as the drying land) that nurture the inclusion of women are disappearing in both the Koliwadas.

While national security interests threaten the common lands of Patwadi, commercial interests threaten the remaining drying lands and market spaces of Versova. One should not undermine the role of the everyday state in shaping these patriarchy-embedded-capitalist spaces that plays a crucial role in negating access to ‘state resources and power’ to women (Waters 1999: 162). And on many instances the role of the state will be to legitimise the claims of the people in power (Agarwal 1992).

The patriarchal structure in the Koli community enabled men to dominate women through the traditional division of labour. Koli women have to engage in the post-harvest sector and at the same time look after household and childcare responsibilities. The men in Patwadi still force women to work in the dry fish business and restrict them from working in another sector. These men know that women’s close interaction with nature and their traditional knowledge are crucial for
the sustenance of their small-scale fisheries (Ramdas and Ghotge 2007). Quite differently in Versova, men have become more dependent on women towards sustaining their fisheries business in the context of modernisation. The men themselves seemed to have moved away from their traditional fishing practices, but have overburdened women with fisheries and household responsibilities (Samuel 2007, Hapke 2001). Earlier studies on agrarian communities in urban spaces of Delhi also show similar findings, where Jat men started to rely on rental income for their livelihoods, but ensured that women continue with their traditional livelihood practices (Khanna 2009, Govinda 2013). Few men in Versova still do not allow women to work in other sectors.

- These men do not allow women to diversify in to another sector, as they realise the crucial link that women play in facilitating the commercial transaction of their harvested fish with the market.

Govinda (2013: 5) through her research also cautions that such men who are no longer involved in productive spheres do not withdraw into private spaces (or so-called women’s spaces); and instead develop newer strategies to retain their hegemonic masculinities and thereby maintain the prevalent gender asymmetries. Moreover, narratives of some women also indicated how these ideologies could lead to domestic violence, where women become the victims of their resistance to continue with the fish trade or run their household chores.

- I observe this phenomenon of domestic violence as an increasing tendency among men who do not have any labour to do, but reap the benefits of women’s hard labour.

There are similar findings that were reported among other agrarian communities in urban spaces of Delhi, where Jat men who withdrew from paid employment sector began to involve in eve-teasing, wife-beating and other acts of violence (Govinda 2013). I have also come across those families in Versova, where men have shifted to other livelihood sectors (mostly professional and service sector). These men demand that their wives should only take care of household chores and childcare. These women are thus restricted to the boundaries of their own home. In such households, the Koli women do not have any autonomy on economic affairs of the family and women have to be exclusively dependent on men to take important decisions. At least
to the outside world, this is not the picture that one would have imagined about the life of a Koli woman.

- The transitions associated with modernisation and urbanisation has also excluded a large number of Koli women from deriving the benefits out of the same.

Although modernisation and urbanisation processes have given more scope to diversify women’s livelihood practices, the inherent patriarchal structures embedded in the day-to-day lives of women still subjugate them. Modernisation and urbanisation along the coast of Mumbai is characterised through the processes of mass mechanisation of fishing crafts and gears, industrialisation, coastal development and technological transitions. These processes have certainly helped the city to evolve as a major economic hub. However, the impact of modernisation has neither been equitable nor equal on traditional societies such as Koli communities. While the Koli population in Versova became literate as well as improved their standard of living, those in Patwadi did not have the same privilege. Education certainly did help the younger generation of Koli women in Versova to enhance their awareness and acquire new livelihood skills. Though the younger generation now prefer to take higher education instead of working in the fisheries sector, it requires considerable financial and emotional support from the family and community (Samuel 2007). This support system is however limited when it comes to girl’s education in Patwadi. Thus the modernisation and economic transformation of fisheries has necessarily not transformed the social status of women and girl children in Patwadi. Their experiences show that economic development need not always bring about gender equality or improve the social standing of women (Gwon 2005).

- Technological transitions that accompanied modernisation of fisheries have reduced the workload of Koli men, but not necessarily of the Koli women. Instead the women are overburdened with work.

Modernisation has happened in the harvest sector only, so as to boost production. The nature of technological changes in the post-harvest fishery is very minimal. Thus, women are left out of the design and intend of the modernisation process. Koli women still have to be dependent on their traditional resources and do manual work. For instance, research shows that experimentation of solar dryers in Madh and
Palghar proved to be too expensive for Koli women to access and also did not deliver the required product quality (Peke 2013). Similarly, other technological advancements at land were also oriented to the benefit of men than women. These changes have also deepened the dependency of women on men. For example, only men in Patwadi are able to access and own vehicles, and drive them. While men commute in these vehicles, women have to walk till Madh with a heavy head load. If they want to use these vehicles they have to depend again on men. Thus, due to lack of transportation and commutable roads, the lives of women further gets marginalised (Datar 2007). From the above discussion, one could see that women in Patwadi were largely deprived of any benefits accruing from the modernisation process. They still survive on limited livelihood resources. It has been a daily struggle for them to access fish, water, fuel-wood, transportation, school, hospital and the market.

- Socio-demographic factors such as age, employability, class, marital status and geographical specificity determine the nature and extent of women’s vulnerability.

For instance, widowed or single Koli women are more vulnerable than other women, as they practically have no means to sustain their livelihoods. In a similar vein, studies have shown that single women headed household are in more vulnerable situations due to lack of resources such as landed property, and fewer opportunities for their income (Samanta and Dutt 2007). On the other hand, women in Versova had to face newer kinds of challenges. Many Koli women in Versova had to shift from dry fish to fresh fish business. In a similar vein, several Koli women across numerous Koliwadas of Mumbai also shifted to fresh fish vending. This livelihood transition in the fisheries sector led to a drastic increase in the number of women involved in fresh fish vending business. However, the fish markets in Mumbai were not capable of absorbing this increase in the number of fish vendors. Consequently, many women did not get space in the market to sell their fish. Further, the entry of many new actors in to this livelihood space has also increased the competition in the market. These new entrants (mostly men) are today trying to dominate both dry fish and fresh fish markets in Mumbai. Resource scarcity and increase in competition are also creating new forms of conflicts between the Koli women and these new entrants in the landing yards and market spaces. Similar situations of conflict were also reported by other
contemporary studies along the coast of India (Santha 2007, Aswathy and Kalpana 2018a). The processes of modernisation have other contradictions as well.

- In Versova, the Koli’s traditional culture has fused with an urban heterogeneous migrant crowd creating a crisis of insecurity over one’s own identity and existence, casting ripples over their livelihood resources, traditional livelihoods and unique culture.

There are similar studies that show how the intermixing of heterogeneous migrant population in urban villages has changed the characteristics of traditional agrarian societies, kinship and family ties, and churned new crises of identity (Mehra 2005). However, the analysis of such changes was seldom explored from a gendered lens (Govinda 2013). With the rise in standard of living, the economic costs to maintain these standards also became higher. The traditional fishery sector in Versova was not sufficient enough to meet these costs. Traditional ceremonies and festivals are being commercialised.

- Their traditional skills and artefacts are being transformed into commodities that can be commercially transacted.

- At the same time, one could also witness the erosion of traditional knowledge systems among women.

Disconnect between traditional livelihoods and the local environment could result in the vast erosion of local ecological knowledge among women (Agarwal 1992). This is a matter of concern for the sustainability of the larger coastal landscape as well, as women as custodians of knowledge also emerge as protectors of fragile ecological landscapes.

7.3 FUTURE PATHWAYS

By studying the livelihood struggles of Koli women in two Koliwadas of Mumbai, this research has attempted to provide a gendered understanding and experiences of tradition and modernity along the coastal landscape of Mumbai. One could see that these coastal landscapes are spaces where elements of urban and rural are bound together and co-exist with a kind of patriarchy-embedded-capitalism. As discussed in the methodology chapter, I was completely unaware of Koli culture and community. This research exposed me to some of their day-to-day life experiences. However, I
should be honest to admit that I was unable to involve deeply into the thick constructions of Koli’s culture and traditions, as and when they were practiced. Being, a non-Koli woman (who also do not speak or understand their language), there were specific boundaries delineated for me as well, which was quite distant from their social and cultural boundaries.

This study has aimed to capture the situated and subjective experiences of Koli women from two Koliwadas, namely Patwadi and Versova. The scope of this study is restricted within the interpretation of the lived experiences of my women respondents in these two Koliwadas. My intention has been never to generalise my insights gathered from this research to a larger landscape. Similarities and variation can be drawn with transitions happening in other neighbouring coastal landscapes of Mumbai. However, I render that discretion to the respected readers of my work.

The dominating capitalistic structure and mode of production has the potential to create new class societies with different class hierarchies in urban spaces (Velaskar 2016). Studies on the transitions from a subsistence-based economy to a capitalist urban economy have proved the specific implications of these processes on gender relations and dynamics between men and women, and between different communities, and how development, marginalisation and resistance tend to exclude women in such spaces (Govinda 2013). In this regard, my research also raises crucial concerns such as ‘will the present process of modernisation and coastal development uproot Koli women from their traditional livelihood spaces forever?’ and ‘if so what will happen to the identity of Koli women, as their identity is closely associated with their traditional livelihood spaces and practices?’ Perhaps, the Koli women are also engaged in similar thought processes, which I hope would motivate them to self-organise and eventually fight for their rights.

Future research could dwell deeply in to the dynamics and discourses on women’s self-organisation. My research has also not examined the role of every-day state in shaping the livelihood struggles of Koli women. This is an important research arena that needs to be explored further. In addition, future studies could also examine how Koli women who are moving away from fisheries-based livelihoods are adapting to other livelihood sectors in the urban spaces; and how do they then engage and negotiate with patriarchy both in their private and public spaces. During the end phase
of this particular research journey, I also realise the need for exploring new frontiers of feminist political ecology, which could help future researches to find meanings to some of the concerns raised above. There is a need for a feminist political ecology that would locate the multiple standpoints and situated knowledge of women along the changing coastal landscapes. Such a study could also then explore the intersectionalities between caste, class and gender among the Koli which the present research has not explored in-depth.

At the policy level, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda emphasises on some of the key elements that this research has also highlighted. Firstly, environment and livelihood sustainability can be addressed only if appropriate mechanisms are in place to counter inequality and exclusion between men and women (UNESCAP 2017). This also underlies the need to integrate gender concerns into policy making in fisheries, coastal development and urban development. Gender disparities exist in today’s coastal fisheries, where women have limited access to livelihood assets and have benefitted the least from modernisation programmes. Such gender disparities need to be addressed, and this requires meaningful and context specific efforts towards gender mainstreaming in implementing policies and programmes associated with fisheries modernisation, coastal and urban development, and environment protection. In this regard, the role of Koli women’s local knowledge in framing development has to be given due recognition. Equally important is to recognise women’s work in the fisheries sector as ‘visible work’ and give due credit for the same while formulating policies and designing modernisation strategies.