Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The present thesis has been inspired by the continuing feminist urge to understand women’s subordination within patriarchy, and to intersect the same with other systems of power/subordination such as caste, class, gender identity, sexuality and physical or mental ability. One of the questions this thesis asks is whether the concept of patriarchal honour can be used to understand how power and subordination are reproduced on a day to day basis through culturally sanctioned codes/norms and socially sanctioned behaviour. Since most attention has been focused on overt and violent manifestations of patriarchal honour, this thesis hopes to unravel a more nuanced understanding of honour; namely that it is not limited to certain ‘bad spots’ or cultures/religions but that the ideology persists even where crimes in the name of honour are not routinely reported. It stresses the fact that patriarchal honour operates not only during the moment to choose a partner, but that it percolates almost every moment of a woman’s life. Since it is imbibed since early childhood, akin to gender and caste, women’s embodiment of men’s honour just seems ‘normal’. This normalisation justifies discrimination and inequality among people placed on different and hierarchal intersections, namely: men and women; hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities; dominant and subordinated castes; acceptable and unacceptable livelihoods; fixed and ‘mixed’ gender/sexual identities; and, heterosexual and homosexual/bi-sexual preferences. The thesis also hopes to explore how patriarchal and caste honour affect differently placed women, and, how in turn those that are excluded or marginalised affect the concept and practice of this hierarchal and discriminatory honour. To do that, it uses the theories of Intersectionality and the Complex Matrix of Domination arising out of interlocking systems of oppression. Finally, by understanding multifarious ways of women’s individual and collective resistance to patriarchal honour and power, the thesis hopes to add to extant knowledge about the daily struggles in the lives of women. The underlying belief is that subordinated women have much to teach us in terms of theory, methodology and intervention as we address the violence of heteronormative and casteist patriarchy in India.
Section One of this chapter reviews existing feminist literature to argue that patriarchy cannot be fully understood unless it is contextualised within other structures of domination, and unless we recognise insider wisdom of subordinated groups (Guru 2002; John 2004; Moon et al. 2008; Jain 2011). It explores studies dealing with the intersections of oppressive structures of gender, caste, class and sexuality that abet the exclusion and segregation of women within the private and public spheres (Walby 1990). It shows how feminist research challenged gender-neutrality within anthropological as well as sociological traditions. It locates honour related crimes within the continuum of violence against women, gender discrimination and ultimately, femicide. It argues in favour of inter-sectional and inter-disciplinary approaches to listen to, and learn from the oppressed, including subordinated women.

Section One also deals with the ideology and practices of patriarchal honour (Chowdhry 2007) that precipitate gender inequality. It shows how social relationships built on defined notions of masculine and feminine operate through a combination of culture, religion, politics and economics. Operating through the notion of honour, inequalities of gender and caste surface when any norms of the family, caste, community or kinship are challenged. Brahminical patriarchy (Chakravarti 2003; Omvedt 2006) is discussed in this section. Finally Section One explores literature related to recasting private and public patriarchies; touching upon traditional and customary authorities, the medical system, academic institutions, and globalised workplaces. It highlights how the State recognises individual rights, but also abets the tyranny of the family and kinship when honour related issues come into the fore. Simultaneously, it records resistances to patriarchy from marginalised and subordinated groups, based on gender, sexuality or caste.

Section Two elaborates on the concept and practices of honour. Tracing the historical understanding of honour, it shows that the concept has been studied by philosophers, jurists, lawyers, theorists as well as practice theorists (Stewart 1994). It identifies the problems in answering the basic question “What is Honour,” and covers anthropological as well as feminist ways of dealing with the term. This section elaborates Stewart’s classification of honour, adding contributions of other

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1 See Dixit (2008) for a comparative study of the status of women in early Buddhism and Brahminism in India
scholars such (Pitt-Rivers, quoted in Stewart 1994; Welsh 2008; Wikan 2008; and Ewing 2008) as well. It also documents the ways in which feminists have looked at the phenomenon (Chowdhry 1996, 1997, 2007; AALI 2003; Welchman and Hossain 2005; Chakravarti 2005; AIDWA 2010).

Section Two also deals with literature related to honour as 'power and control,' and the ways in which women embody men's honour through elaborate cultural codes (Jafri 2008). Problems in theorising about the concept due to multiple meanings of the term; the gendered binary of honour and shame; and, its patriarchal, Islamophobic and anti-immigrant connotations have been covered in this section. Section Two argues that honour is not merely related to culture, but is linked to the political economy, upsurge of violent identity politics, backlash to women's agency, and to the concept of the nation-state.

Section Three also deals with the theories of ‘Intersectionality’ (Crenshaw 1991; McCall 2005; Shields 2008) and the ‘Matrix of Domination’ arising out of the interlocking systems of oppression (Collins 1990, 2000, 2002). It deals with the impossibility of understanding gender in a linear and simplistic manner (Davis 1981; Mohanty 1988; Niranjana 2004). It goes on to show that accepted stereotypes of the nuclear, heterosexual family have been adequately challenged by feminists, and that unless we realise the multiple axes on which people exist, it is not possible to understand the lived realities of women's lives. In order to engage with an emancipatory politics (Fraser 2000), we have to be wary of exclusionary, essentialist and single, victim-identity based politics. The importance of combining politics at the levels of personal biographies, community level cultural contexts created by various intersections, and at the systemic level of social institutions is stressed upon. Section Three argues that insider wisdom and women's lives realities are of primary importance when we strategise to challenge domination and subordination.

Section Four deals with literature related to women's agency and resistance. It shows how feminist scholarship and activism challenged the semantic binaries between agent-actor, and individual-collective agency (Emirbayer et al., 1998; Abrams 1999; Chacko 2001; Khullar 2003). It highlights the fact that resistance may not always be up-front, but that, in the face of domination, the 'tactics of resistance' can take multifarious forms, such as coping, misrepresenting, or evolving public and
private transcripts (Scott 1990). This section reiterates that, in spite of stifling structures women are not mere victims, and that even if their agency may not follow ‘feminist lines,’ we cannot decide on behalf of women. Section Four traces how women participated in struggles of liberation, yet that it was difficult to place women’s agendas into many of those struggles until the second wave of feminism surfaced in the 1970s and 80s (Sen 1990; Kumar 1993). The essentialising of women’s qualities was challenged by feminists through their interventions in domestic violence and sexual politics. Section Four further contends with women involved in honour crimes and violent identity politics (Sarkar 1995; Butalia 2001). It also shows how campaigns that were initially meant for strengthening women’s rights can get co-opted by patriarchal forces and can in fact adversely impact women’s mobility and freedom (Chakravarti et al., 2008). Backlash violence, mostly from the family and kinship, but sometimes even from vigilante groups results from women’s agency, especially in sexual matters, or when people transgress gender binaries and heteronormative patriarchy.

Section Five deals with Feminist Epistemology. It draws upon literature to show why personal stories are important to understand “situated knowledges” that are grounded in particularities. It simultaneously cautions against fetishising personal experiences. Standpoint feminism (Hartsock 1983; Harding 2004), that challenges the idea of a hegemonic notion of reality imposed upon subordinated people by those in power, and which recognises intersecting identities to understand women’s lived experiences, is explored in this section. Within India, Dalit women’s standpoint (Rege 1998) has been postulated to critique brahminical patriarchy and to draw attention to the fact that hitherto, the contribution of Dalit or non-Brahmin women has not received due credit (Kamble 2008; Moon et al., 2008). Similarly, an eco-feminist standpoint has been posited (Datar 1999) as a challenge to the neoliberal globalisation and modern development paradigm that depletes resources and displaces people. Section Five thereafter deals with the conceptualisation of power (Allen 2005), especially within socialist feminism. Key-terms related to power are explored, and the possibility of a feminist theory of power is propounded.
Section One

Intersectionality and Patriarchy: Reviewing Feminist Engagement

The “relentless examination of gender roles, privileges, and gendered social and economic arrangements” by feminist scholars\(^2\) has helped to create a

unique body of knowledge that has interrogated - and continues to interrogate -
the certainties of our individual and social relationships and roles, beliefs and
attitudes. The questioning of patriarchy thus helped and helps to produce
knowledge about it (Geetha 2007:9).

When feminist anthropologists in Britain and the US began questioning the social
and cultural importance of the family, fundamental inequalities between men and
women masked within this institution came up for discussion (ibid:45). The family
was recognised as a political unit in which “male power was played out, negotiated,
contested, and affirmed” (ibid). Further, the term “public patriarchy” was coined by
Sylvia Walby to point towards the shift in patriarchal power in Britain in the late 19th
century, whereby the public-private divide in women’s lives was retained by
denying them “equal access to public institutions and experiences” (ibid:90).

The emergence of Women’s Studies within the humanities transformed patriarchy
from being a descriptive category to an analytical tool; a way of describing as well
as comprehending the world (ibid:5). As women scholars began to interrogate
history, society, culture and tradition critically, caste, religion, customs and practices
come under the feminist lens (Sarkar et al., 2001; Moon et al., 2008). By the 1980s
and 1990s it became clear that on the one hand “it was through and in cultural
practices that patriarchal structures were made acceptable and rendered desirable”
but on the other hand “culture could also be an arena for resisting patriarchy”
(Geetha ibid:26-7). By constructing theories by and about women, and by
challenging myths about women’s realities (Chakravarti et al., 1988; Bhagwat
1995a), feminist analysis considers gender relations not as ‘natural’ or immutable,
but as “historical and socio-cultural products, subject to reconstitution” (Jaggar et
al., 1984 in Mandell 1995).

\(^2\) See Chakravarti et al., 1988; Tharu et al., 1993; Bhagwat 1995a.
Challenging all forms of biological determinism, feminist sociologists also disputed the notion that “sexuality is the most natural of human proclivities.” Instead, they saw it as “representing humanity at its most social” (Simon 1996:154 quoted in Jackson et al., 2010:13). In fact the “sexual area may be precisely that realm wherein the superordinate position of the sociocultural over the biological level is most complete.” Feminist engagement and contribution to the critical analysis of sexuality has been historically linked to their social location as men’s dependents and subordinates, as virginal daughters and chaste wives or as mistresses and whores inhabiting the margins of respectable society (Jackson et al., 2010:24).

This analysis has shed light upon the persistence of gender asymmetries in sexual conduct and sexual violence in spite of relatively greater freedom and increased separation of sexuality from reproduction (ibid). Not only did feminists challenge double standards of sexual morality but they also raised questions about what ‘sex’ meant. Myths, mostly reflecting male views about women’s sexual passivity within heterosexual relations were interrogated; further, the normalcy of heterosexuality was itself challenged (Kakar 1989). The fact that there still is no consensus within competing feminist positions on sexuality has lead to the term being used in its plural form, namely “sexualities,” to emphasise diversity in sexual identities, practices and lifestyles (ibid:26).

The concept of ‘multiple patriarchies’ has been useful to study the ways in which the intersections of class, caste and communalism generate different kinds of discriminations (John 2004; Jain 2011). Caste, class and gender determine the division of physical, reproductive and sexual labour, (Rege 1998; Irudayam et al., 2006; Moon et al., 2008; Kotiswaran 2012) whose overlaps and differences are structured. Black feminists in the US have argued that both sexism and racism are deeply embedded in class oppression; thus “neither can be eradicated without destroying the dominant patriarchal economic system” (Davis 2011).

Feminist research which combined theory with personal narratives and autobiographies shed light upon neglected areas within anthropological work, such as the experience of growing up female in a patriarchal and discriminatingly

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3 Gagnon and Simon 1972:15, quoted in Jackson et al., 2010:13
gendered society bounded by caste and religion (Dube 2001). The gendered impact of asymmetrical socio-cultural privileges, and the stranglehold of caste on women's lives could thus be studied also in the context of women's agency; that is, in maintaining, subverting as well as changing caste (Dube ibid; Singh 1997). Conceptualising the material and symbolic / ideological dimensions of diverse forms of kinship, and gendered implications of property, resources, space, marriage and children (Jain 2011b), allowed for a constructive critique of anthropological as well as sociological traditions. It created newer ways of understanding caste, kinship, gender and culture (ibid). Knowledge of patriarchy helped us to locate various forms of violence against women within unequal gender relations, since it is within the dynamics of gendered power that women's sexuality, behaviour and compliance are structured through material, ideological and symbolic control. Feminists therefore insisted that 'honour killings' should be located within the notion of 'femicide'; a misogynist killing of women, and as a form of sexual violence (Radford 1992:4 quoted in Welchman et al., 2005:7).

The diverse natures of multiple and unequal patriarchies need a complex conceptualisation and articulation, as no single cause theory or approach can adequately conceptualise or articulate the complexities of different patriarchies (John ibid:66; Gerhard 1966). While addressing the diverse ways in which subaltern genders relate to questions of power, we need to be aware that 'insider' wisdom, participation and leadership, if substituted by external theorisation or activism, can neither document nor analyse patriarchy as it intersects with other structures in people's lives (Guru 2002⁴; Sarukkai 2007; Moon et al., 2008). Such limited approaches can lead to problematic interventions, such as for example, forced rescue and rehabilitation of women in prostitution without any respect or recognition of their experiences, agency or rights (Chacko 2001; Sahni et al., 2008; Tambe 2009).

**Patriarchy, gender, sexuality and daily codes**

Women's studies focused on gender as a "category of analysis in the same manner that social scientists have studied class, caste, religion and status groups" (Chacko:27). This intersectional and inter-disciplinary approach has allowed for a

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⁴ Guru has similarly critiqued 'external' knowledge in the study of caste, arguing for lived experiences as essential when theorising about subordinated groups.
diverse understanding of the concept because “it sources information and perspectives from the informal, non-positivist arena - women, the subaltern, the oppressed, the hitherto unheard” (ibid). Feminist focus on the concept of honour has revealed it to be a gendered notion, as one will also find in Chapter 4 of this thesis, with men (especially from dominant groups) possessing intrinsic honour, but women only possessing shame. This gendered ideology produces inequality and hierarchy, with men and women embodying honour differently: woman as repository, and man as regulator of women’s conduct, because they pose the greatest danger to the loss of his honour (Chowdhry 2007:16). The ideology of honour is largely built upon the literary tradition and customary belief of the male providing the seed and woman merely being the fertile earth (ibid).

Women, conditioned since childhood about preserving the honour of the home and caste are raised not to make choices or demands both within the private domain (such as not speaking about domestic violence, or not making decisions related to their own earnings) and in the public domain (such as not demanding the right to decision-making as an elected panchayat representative, or not marrying outside the caste). We have routinely observed that sisters will write off their share of inheritance, and instead choose to get some annual, arbitrary gifts (locally called choli-bangdi) from the brother, so that they have some semblance of a maather (natal home) even after the parents pass away.

Naturally not all men are perpetrators nor are all women victims (Ghosh 2007:7). Neither do all women resist patriarchy always; some even become its agents, especially in the application of family and caste honour and in the agenda of violent identity politics of ‘othering’. It is thus not possible for women to be united merely on the basis of “systematic overlapping patriarchies” because they are divided on the lines of “caste, class lines and by their consent to patriarchies and their compensatory structures” (Sangari 1995 quoted in Rege 1998). The mediation of male authority or resistance to the same is dependent on numerous factors such as caste, class and religious contexts and identities, sexual preferences and gender identities (Geetha 2007:2). Patriarchy provides “comforting self-definitions and norms” that reward those who conform. The study of kinship ties and endogamous marriage serving as restricting structures for women in terms of mobility, residence,
property rights and access to resources helped understand “the distinctive nature of Indian patriarchal arrangements” (Geetha ibid:15). Patriarchy which rests on “defined notions of masculine and feminine, is held in place by sexual and property arrangements that privilege men’s choices, desires and interests over and above those of the women in their lives” (ibid: 8). Patriarchy is also sustained “by social relationships and cultural practices” which include heterosexuality, female fertility and motherhood on the one hand; and valorised “female subordination to masculine authority and virility on the other” (ibid).

Control of women’s sexuality remains to be one of the most powerful tools of patriarchy in most societies. In most societies, sexual agency or desire of a woman precipitates more violence in comparison to that of a man, especially if it challenges the norms of the caste / community and family or kinship codes (Chowdhry 2007:10). Sexual oppression is a combination of political, social and economic inequalities throughout the ages (Ilkkaracen 2000); thus, even though religion has been a powerful instrument of control (and is increasingly becoming so in many societies) with the goal of legitimising violations of women’s human rights (ibid), it is only one of the institutions through which domination is perpetuated.

Fuss (1991:2) quoted in Jackson et al., (2010) argues that “heterosexuality secures its self-identity and shores up its ontological boundaries by protecting itself from what it sees as the continual predatory encroachments of its contaminated other, homosexuality It does this through regulatory language and law which acts as its defence and protection (ibid; Collins 2009b). In that sense both these sexualities have a dialectic relationship, with each defining the other. The ‘othering’ of homosexuality by heterosexuality can also be seen as the effort of a hegemonic ‘honour group’ attempting to de-legitimise the other through signs, signals, norms, codes and sexual mores that are instilled on a daily basis from early childhood. Violence and discrimination against lesbians (Sappho for Equality 2011), transgender people (Grant et al., 2011) and effeminate men (Lahiri et al., 2007) are justified through this ‘othering’.

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See Maggie Humm’s ‘The Dictionary of Feminist Theory’ for details on ‘language’.

See Section Two of this Chapter for a discussion on this concept
The intersections of patriarchy and caste

Caste has been theorised as a "material reality with a material base; it is not only a form but a concrete material content, and it has historically shaped the very basis of Indian society and continues to have crucial economic implications even today" (Omvedt 1982:14). Caste, class and gender interact and shape each other through endogamous marriage and notions of purity and pollution. Chakravarti argues that

the structure of marriage, sexuality and reproduction is the fundamental basis of the caste system. It is also fundamental to the way inequality is sustained: the structure of marriage reproduces both class and caste inequality and thus the entire production system through its tightly controlled system of reproduction. (Chakravarti 2003:27).

It is only when the institution of the family is seen as a patriarchal structure that we begin to challenge the anthropological construction of kinships as ‘natural’ or given ties between individuals based on blood descent or on marriage (Geetha ibid:76). This theorisation helps understand how the control of women becomes imperative to guard family and kinship honour.

The term ‘brahminical patriarchy’, to denote a structure unique to Hinduism was coined by feminist scholars to draw attention to the “inextricable links between caste and gender” (Chakravarti 2003). This form of patriarchy defines sets of rules and institutions within which women are crucial in maintaining boundaries between castes. “Patriarchal codes in this structure ensure that the caste system can be reproduced without violating the hierarchal order of closed endogamous circles, each distinct from and higher or lower than others” (ibid:34). Feminists pointed out the variations in the dominance of brahminical patriarchy by theorising both about caste and gender, challenging earlier writings which presented the caste system “as a system of consensual values - a set of values accepted both by the dominant and the dominated” (ibid). They argued that in fact, the caste system was fraught with internal, gendered tensions.

\footnote{See Tharu et al., 1993; Omvedt 2006 for more details}
Feminists also pointed out that the exchange of women as a structured act within the caste system is not based on emotional or erotic satisfaction within marriage. Marriage creates the backdrop for acceptable and ‘legitimate’ reproduction within the group that seeks to reproduce itself in terms of status and control over property. It then becomes an alliance between two families and kin groups involving a series of material transactions and counter-transactions, with emotions being subordinated to wider ‘utilitarian’ considerations. This makes reproduction or marriage a social rather than an individual act. Desire, choice, and love are thus separated from the institution of marriage, which is about social reproduction and not about individual needs and their fulfilment. Dominant morality in fact regards love and display of sexuality between couples with distinct suspicion (Chowdhry 2006:2).

Compliance of women through coercion and consent has been the ideological and normative premise of brahminical patriarchy that structured social relations which “shaped the dominant / hegemonic model of gender and caste in early India” (Omvedt 2006). This ideal is widely accepted even today, though such a total control over women’s sexuality has never been achieved in practice (ibid:78). The control of upper caste women’s sexuality and lives through child marriage, sati and enforced widowhood have helped to regulate and control any transgressions of boundaries, since women have always been as the “gateways to the caste system” (Ambedkar 1992:9 quoted in Chakravarti 2003). From sati (the actual death), to ascetic widowhood - the social death (Prasad 2007:162; Chakravarti et.al., 2001), women from upper castes have been systematically excluded from the social unit of the family due to their reproductive and sexual alienation after their husbands’ deaths (Chakravarti 2003:82), thus resulting in tremendous material and sexual consequences for women. Chakravarti (ibid:83) quotes Pauline Kolenda’s study in which enforced widowhood for Rajput women, and enforced cohabitation for untouchables was the rule. Inclusion into the Hindu caste system entailed giving up second marriages for women (Gatwood 1985). Some ‘in-between’ systems of control over a widow’s re-marriage, such as the karewa practice enforcing a levirate marriage upon her (Sreenivas 2009; Chowdhry 2006:89) exist in order to tie down her labour, reproduction, sexuality, the children and property (Agnes 2012:52-75) to the kinship. Once again it is through the intersections of sexuality, caste and the

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8 The control of women’s sexuality not only happens before and after marriage but also within marriage; this has been documented through focus group discussions in Chapter 4 as well in individual life-stories.
relations of production that we can make sense of ambiguities related to sexual control over widows.

Focus Group Discussions in Chapter 4 reiterate the fact that enforced widowhood with no possibility of re-marriage was originally an upper caste practice; that Marathas gave up re-marriage for women in their attempt to be accepted as an upper caste; and, that artisan and Dalit groups emulate Marathas in order to be treated as respectable people. Chakravarti refutes the claims that women are less oppressed within Dalit castes just because the burden of the *pativrata* (husband as one to be constantly revered and honoured) ideology is not high upon Dalit women; that Dalit women have less of a derivative social position than upper caste women; and, that the codes of *izzat* (honour), respect and shame do not allow upper caste women to speak out about their oppression. She iterates the need to accept the fact that patriarchies exist not only in upper caste groups but also among Dalit castes, leaving Dalit women to struggle at both ends (Chakravarti 2003:87).

The ideology of brahminical patriarchy has also shaped the way in which modern British law viewed guardianship matters within the family (Chowdhry ibid). Runaway marriages proclaimed as ‘inferior marriages’ by the high castes, and which had its roots in brahminical strictures were also accepted as such by British courts as “customary” law (ibid:42-43). Acceptance of parental, kinship and caste authority over the lives of women and young people has had severe repercussions on their sexual, reproductive and identity rights.

**Patriarchy, kinship and caste honour**

However central the family may be in socialising people into patriarchal and caste norms, the role of the kinship in subsuming individual or family will in order to maintain the *izzat* of the *biradar* and village cannot be underestimated (Chowdhry 2007:100-102). Kinship is not merely a relationship based on blood, descent or marriage. It affects relationships into a structure, assigning specific familial and social roles and responsibilities to men and women who are part of these relationships. In this sense, kinship ties are very important not only

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9 *'bhavki' in Marathi*
with respect to how families view themselves and each other, but also how male and female identities are constructed (Geetha 2007:76).

Dishonour results when other families view an individual or family as having failed to adhere to kinship expectations, and the fear or threat of ostracism or violence exists as long as the family is unable to remove the blemish to their (and thereby their kinship’s) honour. Women are additionally answerable to the norms of the caste and the kinship network, especially since caste boundaries and patriarchal control act together through endogamous and parentally approved marriage, and through the observance of women’s socially acceptable and honourable behaviour. Word travels quickly, and families can get ostracised for generations, usually on account of some ‘unacceptable’ behaviour or marriage by its members. These largely centre around women, namely re-marriage of deserted or widowed women, elopement, inter-caste (especially pratiloma - hypogamous) or inter-religious marriage, pregnancy outside marriage or a married daughter having returned to her natal home.10

Even ‘fictive’ kinships that are not based on blood, descent or marriage or caste when created within a patriarchal and caste mould can emulate these stifling structures. The well-known example of the caste / khap panchayats of North India illustrates how dominant kinships impose fictive brother-sister relationships among people of the same ‘got’, considering any romantic or marriage relationship among the group null and void, with severe punishment meted out to transgressor (Chowdhry 2007:123; also see interview with Rahul in Chapter 5). These kinship restrictions, which not merely encompass blood or caste related incest taboos but even geographical ones, are applied arbitrarily across castes by powerful families (ibid). Among the hijras,11 fictive kinships are elaborately structured between gurus and chelas; mother-daughter relationships within the community; gharanas; and, a hierarchal system of nayaks. Acceptance within the kinship is dependent on adhering to certain acceptable hierarchal occupations12 and “on the condition that they sexualize their relationships in public space and are willing to pander to its voyeurism and perversions” (Geetha 2007:85-6). Though the entire community is

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10 See Chapter 4 for details
11 males born with hermaphrodite genitalia, or ritually castrated men
12 dancing, begging for alms and sex-work
bound to each other asexually, kinship bonds are taken very seriously, with *chelas* observing subservience to gurus: handing over one’s earnings to her; often being vulnerable to violence and exploitation during the early years;\(^\text{13}\) observing temporary widowhood after her death; honouring all her *chelas* as one’s sisters; and, often accepting her religion as one’s own.

**Recasting Patriarchies: Public and Private**

Walsby’s formulation of the “exclusionary” nature of private patriarchy and the “segregationist” nature of public patriarchy helps us to distinguish between different forms of patriarchal strategy as well as to understand how they work in tandem.\(^\text{14}\)

While private patriarchy

is based on household production, with a patriarch controlling women individually and directly in a relatively private sphere of the home, public patriarchy is based on structures other than the household, although this may still be a significant patriarchal site. Rather institutions conventionally regarded as part of the public domain are central in the maintenance of patriarchy (Walsby 1990).

Institutions that govern women’s lives also have ways of instilling and operationalising codes of what is honourable or dishonourable. The interaction of informal and formal institutions within the public and private domains of women’s lives reinforces their subjugation and reduces their credibility and legitimacy in both spheres (Weber 1964). Chowdhry raises important issues for discussion by pointing towards

the degrees of internal strife, conflict, and internal cleavage in contemporary rural society, accenting the way in which a combination of forces are using traditional tools for traditional as well as modern political purposes (Chowdhry ibid:13).

When contentious marriages take place, the State on the one hand legitimises and abets traditional authority, yet seeks to undermine the moral authority of the traditional *panchayat* on the other. She argues that the high-handed resolutions by the caste *panchayats* in contravention of the law is based on a mythical equality and non-hierarchy within the village setting and which legitimises its actions “based upon concepts of izzat (honour), bhaichara (brotherhood), biradari (community)\(^\text{13}\) See interview with Zuleikha in Chapter 5
\(^\text{14}\) also see Srivastava 2004
and village aika (unity)” when in fact during the exercise of norms “differential treatment is meted out to concerned parties based upon caste and class affiliations as well as gender considerations” (ibid:13). Chapter 4 reiterates the gender, caste and class inequalities in the concept and practices related to patriarchal honour in rural setting in Maharashtra even where caste panchayats are not as powerful.

The connivance of the medical system with patriarchal attitudes is best exposed in the context of interventions after rape (Baxi P 2005:287). The undue emphasis on intact hymen tends to freeze women into judgemental and inaccurate binaries of virgin-whore; married-unmarried; habituated-innocent; and, victim-provocateur. While a woman’s earlier sexual experience is considered tantamount to ‘consent’ in rape, a ‘pleasurable’ ambience is created to evoke sexual fantasy\textsuperscript{15} for the extraction of the semen from the rape accused (ibid).

**Academic institutions** typically respond to sexual harassment by placing the onus on women to ‘avoid’ sexual danger as a matter of ‘honour’ for the campus. Responses from authorities tend to maintain the reputation of an institution,\textsuperscript{16} therefore, such complaints are considered a private matter, not be discussed in public. The definitions of institutional honour are male: honour is not lost when a woman is sexually harassed or raped, only when there is a complaint of this. The 1980s brought home the realisation that such a notion produces discourses of shame and honour that act to silence women (Chakravarti \textit{et al.} 2008:223).

The connivance of private and public patriarchy is evident even in globalised, export oriented workplaces. On the one hand families discard conventional notions of honour by letting women work outside the home, but continue to dominate them inside the home; and, on the other hand factories and sweat-shops exploit and degrade women (Swaminathan 2005:111). They are called witches (\textit{shaniyankal}), and humiliated when they ask for waste cloth if their periods start all of a sudden during working hours that have strictly rationed and monitored toilet breaks (ibid).

\textsuperscript{15} Upon being questioned by Baxi about whether the doctor herself may not become the object of the accused’s fantasy, the doctor laughed and said “That’s the doctor’s problem - the psychiatrist can manage that” (Baxi, ibid, page 278).

\textsuperscript{16} for institutional (patriarchal) honour related to prisons, see Chapter 5 for conversation with the DIG of a prison.
The fact that women have to hide their signs of marriage when only unmarried girls are wanted by the management is accepted by the otherwise conservative family.

**Patriarchy and the State**

In spite of the Indian State’s stand against discriminatory traditional and customary norms, its complicity in allowing traditional bodies to function, even at the cost of individual rights and the law of the land, is apparent when it recedes in the face of family or community honour (Chowdhry 2007:13). Chowdhry argues that in fact the State acts as an “overarching patriarch and acting on behalf of the male guardians of a woman, it (the state/legal system) criminalizes female sexuality, constructs it as essentially transgressive, illegitimate, and morally reprehensible” (ibid:14). No wonder then that customary practices triumph when there is opposition between culture, customary practices and rules and social norms on the one hand, and the State on the other (ibid:12). Though there is an occasional capitulation to State law in the “complex interaction of individual protest, familial or community control”, in the majority of cases “custom triumphs in complete defiance of modern legal norms” (ibid).

In many cases, the police are complicit in protecting the honour of the family and caste, tracing and bringing back recalcitrant couples (especially girls), charging the boy (or older lesbian partner) with kidnapping after claiming age-minority status for the “victim-partner,” and arresting and terrorising the boy if he is from a Dalit or Muslim group. Even in traditional societies where a public discussion of a daughter’s elopement precipitates dishonour, women are retrieved with the help of the police and the court because, if male honour has to be re-established, the men of the family “cannot afford to be seen as not acting in relation to retrieving their woman” (Chowdhry ibid:199). A blood related woman can be killed but can never

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17 Unmarried girls are preferred because they are perceived to have fewer family responsibilities; they do compulsory over-time work, they can work faster, they are considered docile; they are easy prey for sexual harassment; and, they do not have the means to adequately challenge the exploitative wage-cuts, or arbitrary and sudden termination.

18 This has been MASUM’s experience while intervening in inter-caste and inter-religious marriages. Though parents regularly get their daughters married before the age of 18, they claim under-18 status for daughters who elope, in order to establish parental guardianship rights over her in legal terms.
be disowned.\textsuperscript{19} Unless families make every effort to bring her back they can be taunted, ostracised or even driven to commit suicide (ibid).

Three women who feature in the in-depth interviews in this thesis served prison sentences of varying durations for having killed their violent husbands.\textsuperscript{20} All three encountered different variants of disbelief from the police. In every case it was 'someone else' that the police believed in, and the case depended entirely on how the police constructed the story, rather than on what the women (two of whom actually accepted the charge on their own volition) had to say.\textsuperscript{21} One respondent\textsuperscript{22} who feared for her (and her husband’s) life from her brother and mother was laughed at and scorned by the police. Yet, within weeks her brother and his friends had murdered her husband and most of his family, forcing 19 year old Ritu who was five months pregnant to go into hiding for many years. Later, a high court judge reduced the life-prison term of the brother saying that one needed to be sensitive to the burden of the youth because as a Brahmin he must have felt completely shattered when his sister married a lower-caste man.\textsuperscript{23}

Another respondent\textsuperscript{24} spoke of how the police only hiked their extortion fees from the brothel-keeper when they found minor girls working there. She also spoke of how the doctor, in spite of suspecting that young girls were brought for repeated abortions, did not ask too many questions when she was taken for an abortion at the age of 13 by her brothel-keeper, who pretended to be her mother. When she finally broke away from the grip of the brothel-keeper by bravely speaking out in court, she was sent to a rescue home, where her age was then decided upon by the State. Some other respondents\textsuperscript{25} have also mentioned how their names, caste and age were often ‘corrected’ by State authorities. Casteist biases have been revealed in another life-story\textsuperscript{26} within the prison set-up.

\textsuperscript{19} See Chapters 4 and 5 for more discussion on this aspect
\textsuperscript{20} see interviews with Ganesh and Pushpa, as well as Kaveri in the women's prison
\textsuperscript{21} this raises a methodological question of what reality is. See Chapter 3 for a discussion on this dilemma
\textsuperscript{22} see Ritu’s interview in Chapter 5
\textsuperscript{23} the reference to this judgement has not been given in order to protect the confidentiality of my respondent
\textsuperscript{24} see Naina’s interview in Chapter 5
\textsuperscript{25} see Aarti and Tina’s interview in Chapter 5
\textsuperscript{26} see Vinayak’s interview in Chapter 5
The Rupan Bajaj v. KPS Gill case brought to the fore how sexual harassment by a
highly decorated police officer was represented as normal, or helpless male
behaviour, and the discourse around the complaint centred around the outrage of
modesty. In spite of clear evidence of the harassment, there was an outcry from most
quarters (including sections of the media) about the perpetrator getting a jail
sentence of three months of rigorous imprisonment. Their argument was that the law
of the land looked “grotesquely odd and incongruous” to punish a

man who has done signal service to the country by ridding a state of the dread and
oppression of terrorism [and have him spend] five months in jail for a minute’s
exuberance provoked by the charms of an attractive working woman27 (Deccan

Challenges to patriarchy

Sexual conduct, however strictly scripted by tradition, power and wider non-sexual
social relations, is not completely fixed (Gagnon 2004 quoted in Jackson et al.,
2010:10) but is part of an on-going reflexive process. Jackson et al., quote Foucault
as he asks the moot question about not why one is sexually repressed, but rather

Why do we say, with so much passion and so much resentment against our most
recent past, against our present, and against ourselves, that we are repressed?
(Foucault 1981:8-9 in Jackson et al., ibid:17).

In Chapter 4 one finds numerous proverbs and idioms that are contemptuous of
transgressive behaviour, leading one to argue that their genesis necessarily lies in
past experiences of ‘unacceptable’ sexual behaviour, and that no amount of
repeating has been able to curb transgressions. Re-telling anecdotes and proverbs
merely provides a normative framework for how daily conduct ought to be. Though
the chastisement pronounced by elders maintains some moral law and order by
inducing fear, it also fans the desire to rebel.

The challenges to normative sexual paradigms have also been on-going. Sex-
workers’ collectives, nationally and internationally have urged us to re-examine the
ways in which we approach issues of trafficking, arguing that all trafficking is not
for sex-work and that all sex-work does not entail trafficking (Seshu et al., 2009).

27 Note how the term ‘working woman’ (rather than ‘his subordinate’) is used, almost as though this category of
women is in itself problematic, provocative and unduly belligerent.
The fixedness of heteronormative sexual identity was challenged by gay identities such as LGBT, and further emerging identities such as KQIH were added in the Indian context; pointing towards the constant challenge to the assumption of a unified sexual identity, including a homosexual one (Seidman 1997:93 quoted in Jackson et al., ibid:20). Butler talks about the provisional and contingent lesbian and gay identities which may be important for political mobilisation, asserting that even as she gathers under a political sign, say of lesbian, she would “like to have it permanently unclear what precisely that sign signifies” (Butler 1991:13-14 quoted in Jackson et al., ibid:20). The merits or relevance of queer theory have been debated, sometimes by its own proponents (de Lauretis 1994:297 quoted in Jackson et al., ibid:21-22), yet, it does de-stabilise not only the binary divide of heterosexual and homosexual, but also the gender binary, leading to the de-essentialising of identity. Butler argues that

identity categories tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes, whether as the normalizing categories of oppressive structures or as the rallying point for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression (ibid).

I would add that the role of structures of caste, class, patriarchy and culture in defining identities and binaries; creating or blocking individual choices; and, in rendering gender and sexual identities oppressive or emancipatory need to be addressed for identity politics to garner counter-hegemonic potential.

Fictive kinships also have a potential for challenging patriarchal structures, since they are not based on blood or caste relations. Their fluidity leaves them open to multiple interpretations, changes and emancipatory re-structuring. Chapter 6 shows the deep involvement of ‘social fathers’ towards children of women in prostitution. These fathers, usually favoured clients, are chosen by the women. Even though some patriarchal practices, such as giving the name, caste or religion of this father to the children; and, also getting the children married into the father’s caste exist, the fact that they are not biological fathers remains. They can be dismissed from the family unit at any time, with no fear of the woman losing the custody of her children or her economic assets. This clearly undermines the patriarchal hold of the nominated social fathers over the children.

28 lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender
29 koi, queer, intersexual and hijra
Chapter 6 also shows how a strong kinship bind emerges among working class women when they collectivise. The strong support they provide to each other at a personal as well as political level creates bonds that transcend caste and religious barriers. In one instance an activist from AIDWA\textsuperscript{30} has set up a home with her children, a second husband and the girlfriend of her deceased son, besides giving shelter to survivors of domestic violence, including a young woman who escaped honour killing. In another instance MASUM’s\textsuperscript{31} activists have not only encouraged inter-caste marriages, but also functioned as the ‘family’ of the ostracised family. In SANGRAM\textsuperscript{32}, older brothel-keepers have spoken of the young girls who work for them as daughters, sending them as emissaries to social functions on their behalf. Even among the highly structured fictive kinships among *hijras*, the asexual guruchela relationship overrides sexual relationships\textsuperscript{33} and lasts for years, sometimes even over a lifetime.\textsuperscript{34} However strict the inter-relationships between the group, one can change gurus (and thereby unofficially change one’s religious faiths as well) after settling financial liabilities; all relationships within the community are female oriented or matrilineal, and the observance of widowhood after the death of one’s guru is transient. New ‘relatives’ are obtained upon changing of guru or chelas, and one is free to maintain or disregard ritualistic bonds with earlier fictive relatives. Many *hijras* foster or adopt children; they also become mothers to men and women from outside the community. Fictive kinships have granted a “social coherence to *hijras* through history and enabled them to retain their marginal sexual status without feeling unduly stigmatised or alienated” (Geetha 2007:85-6). Though acceptance within these kinships is conditional, the networks grant “dignity and significance to their marginal lives. In doing so, they draw attention to both the kinship core that constitutes patriarchal social arrangements, as well as to its malleability” (ibid).

Once appropriated outside relationships based on blood, descent, marriage and caste, impermanent and kinships of choice have the potential to exhibit a progressive solidarity that is free of patriarchal and caste honour.

\textsuperscript{30} All India Democratic Women’s Association
\textsuperscript{31} Mahila Sarvangeen Utkarsh Mandal
\textsuperscript{32} Sampada Gramin Mahila Sanghatana
\textsuperscript{33} Though sexual relations with men are coveted and can lead to strong sexual jealousies being exhibited
\textsuperscript{34} observations about *hijra* communities are based on my personal association with members from the community and on Dr. Hemalata Pisol’s work with transgender people (2005)
Section Two

Honour: Concept and Practices

The concept of ‘honour’ has been studied since the sixteenth century by anthropologists. Stewart (1994) provides substantial evidence to refute earlier claims (such as that by Pitt Rivers) that, beyond the limited studies of the history of the concept in literature and some articles in encyclopaedias, not much work was done on honour before the social sciences recognised the existence of this concept in the mid-1960s. Stewart recounts philosophical work, compositions of Italian theorists of the 16th century as well as juristic work by German lawyers during the 19th and 20th centuries, to substantiate his argument that the work on honour has not only been voluminous but also very good.

Though originally an aristocratic code, honour continues to exist as cultural capital that belongs to a group in which individuals feel empowered not just by being part of the group but by “the consciousness that others do not belong”; thus this elitism is sought to be kept as a function of small numbers (Welsh 2008:xi). Positive connotations about honour operate in more modern times in western countries (especially southern Europe), mainly as providing norms or moral frameworks that provide a link between individuals and community, and acceptance in collective life. However, the concept of honour has also become associated with backwardness, crime and ‘otherness’ (Sen 2005:44), especially in the late twentieth century, when “western-led international attention came to rest upon the use of the concept of honour in societies outside the West, particularly in Islamic societies” (ibid).

35 The word ‘honour’ is contentious, especially in the context of crimes because it legitimises violence against women; because it relegates such crimes to certain cultures; and, because of its anti-immigrant and Islamophobic imagery. With good reason feminists either hesitate to use the term or use it within quotes. The debate around the term is as yet unresolved (Welchman et al, 2005; Terman 2010). Since this thesis deals with an exploration of patriarchal honour and power (and not necessarily with killings or crimes in the name of ‘honour’) I have used it without quotation marks. Further, I have used the English (UK) spelling, viz honour, but the English (USA) spelling, viz honor has been retained while quoting others verbatim.
36 Jeudon 1911; Terrailhon 1912; Reiner 1956; Bollnow 1962 and Hirsch 1967; quoted by Stewart 1994
37 Ersparner 1982 and Bryson 1935; quoted in Stewart 1994
38 Hirsch 1967 and Tenckhoff 1974; quoted in Stewart 1994
What is honour?

Even though honour has been studied during the past few centuries by anthropologists, philosophers, writers and lawyers, there is no single or simple definition of the term. Feminists even hesitate to use the term (see footnote above and also later in this Chapter for more details) due to its patriarchal and judgemental connotations. In India, the term is further complicated by caste overtones (Chowdhry 1997; 1998; Chakravarti 2003; Irudayam et al., 2006).

Since the 16th century, German literature has used the categories of “outer or external” and “inner or internal” kinds of honour. In English, these have been referred to as honour in its “public sense” and honour in its “private sense”, or sometimes as “subjective and objective meanings” of honour (Stewart 1994:12). Schopenhauer wrote in 1851 (probably “tongue in cheek”, as Stewart says) that “honor, taken objectively, is the opinion that others have of our value, and taken subjectively, our fear of that opinion” (ibid:14).

Thus ‘objectified’ honour may be understood as a person’s good reputation, and ‘subjective’ honour as the person’s sense of their own worth. This bi-partite theory, appearing in descriptive studies makes the same distinction, namely, of honour being “a virtue or set of virtues which constitute a person’s ‘honor’ but also of honor as being "public reputation.” Within the discipline of philosophy too it has been proposed that

Honour may mean the public respect that is due to a person because he has certain qualities of character or has accomplished certain things. But, when we say that a person is a man of honor, we usually mean that he has a specific character trait which can be described best as personal integrity. [Collins James (1968) quoted in Stewart 1994: 19]

Until the 18th century honour mainly remained a public phenomenon in Europe: the worth of a person in someone else’s eyes, whereby social recognition was considered more important than the individual’s sense of self, or being honourable. Since self-worth and social recognition are linked, they are usually considered as

39 Liepmann (1906;1909) quoted in Stewart 1994:14
40 Morel (1964, 625-26); Jouma (1968, 599, 607); Barber (1985, 13-14); Mckendrick (1983-313) quoted in Stewart 1994:19
two aspects of honour, even though the two are not always inter-dependent, because one may feel less or more publicly honoured as compared to one’s self-worth (Wikan 2008:53).

Technical literature refers to a dual theory of honour: with two distinct components - one internal and one external. Pitt-Rivers,\textsuperscript{42} fluctuates between the two aspect analysis, labelling honour as a sentiment as well as an objective social fact. He suggests that honour is a moral state, but at the same time it is also a means of representing the moral worth of others. Because honour “is the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of his society,” he suggests three facets, namely: “a sentiment, a manifestation of this sentiment in conduct, and the evaluation of this conduct by others.” (Stewart 1994:12-13). In his writing on the Kabyle of northern Algeria, Bourdieu\textsuperscript{43} also focused on honour as a sentiment in which “men jockey for self-respect and public recognition, both for themselves as individuals and for their families” (Ewing 2008:31). Pitt-Rivers suggests that that honour is a man’s estimation of his own worth, his claim to pride, but it is also the acknowledgment of that claim, his excellence recognised by society, his right to pride (Stewart 1994:13).

Stewart asserts that recent anthropological literature\textsuperscript{44} as well as the work of historians\textsuperscript{45} has failed to ask basic questions related to what constitutes honour. He suggests that we look at honour as a right, i.e. “the right to be treated as having a certain worth” such as the right to respect. He is not sure what honour is a right to in all cases, but his main concern is “to argue that honor is a right rather than that is it is a right to some particular thing”. He argues that

the contrast between inner and outer honor reflects the two-sidedness of the relevant notion of a right, for honor...is a claim-right, that is, ‘a right that something be done by another’. On the one side is the bearer who has something about him that gives him a right to respect; and the other is the world, which has a duty to treat the bearer with respect (ibid:21).

\textsuperscript{42} Pitt-Rivers (1966; 1968; 1991) quoted in Stewart 1994
\textsuperscript{43} Bourdieu (1966:197) quoted in Ewing (2008:31)
\textsuperscript{44} Gilmore 1987a; Fiume 1989; Peristiany and Pitt-Rivers 1991; and Gautheron 1991b and the collection of interviews on the subject of honour by Pitarch 1984; quoted in Stewart 1994
\textsuperscript{45} Farr 1088; Neuschel 1989; Stone 1990 and Trevisani 1991; quoted in Stewart 1994
Because Stewart conceptualises honour here as a 'personal' attribute, his theorisation about the "conferring", "allocation" and "losableness" of this right in a given society is restricted to rules and codes that deal with individual (principled/unprincipled) behaviour. When he traces the history of the term honour through German literature of the high Middle Ages, external structural characteristics begin to emerge; for instance, wealth, rank, physical strength, beauty and power leading to reputation (Foucault 2003), prestige, renown, standing or worth in the eyes of others. Until the 13th century the term 'ere' (German for 'honour') was rarely used to denote personal character traits (ibid:34) making it essentially externally determined. I ask whether this kind of honour which still exists within patriarchy could be useful to document how domination and subordination operate upon those at the bottom of the gender-caste power pyramid. Stewart concedes that the general tendency to view honour as an external trait existed for centuries in Europe whereby some groups of people (based on lack of 'legitimacy' of birth, stigmatised professions or guilty of "disgraceful misdeeds such as theft or breach of faith") were rendered 'ehrlos und rechtlos' (honourless and rightless) and were thereby precluded from judicial, inheritance and other basic civil-political rights. Honour as a sense of personal integrity or inner voice did not become widespread before the mid 18th century46 (ibid:40); thus Stewart argues that the shift from honour as "certain behaviour" or external qualities, to internal moral qualities such as "sense of honour" creates the possibility for the whole notion of honour (as it has existed until now) to be undermined (ibid:48). This formulation points towards the possibility of appropriating the concept of honour as an intrinsic right for all people. It encourages the search for instances within the struggle of subordinated groups and individuals as they respond (individually and collectively) to being socially excluded and being rendered honourless.

Stewart adds the dimension of horizontal honour to personal honour, which in short is respect due to an equal (ibid:54). This honour can only be lost, but not increased,47 since if one has a right to more respect than others, then the right is no longer to respect among equals (ibid:59). In order to maintain this honour and not to lose it, one is expected to follow certain rules that constitute the code of honour for a

46 Jones (1959,6) quoted in Stewart 1994
47 'Horizontal honour' is thus also called 'negative honour' by Stewart
specific honour group, namely “a set of people who follow the same code of honour and who recognise each other as doing so.” Stewart defines the code of honour as 

a set of standards that has been picked out as having particular importance, that measures an individual’s worth along some profoundly significant dimensions; and a member of the honor group who fails to meet these standards is viewed not just as inferior but often also as despicable (ibid:55).

In contrast to the logic of ‘equality’ however, within honour groups, the right to special respect is enjoyed by those who are superior, whether by virtue of their abilities, rank, services to the community, sex, kin relationship or their office. This vertical honour includes rank honour enjoyed by members of a superior rank, and through which ‘inferiors’ are firmly put in their place if they fail to show respect to the superior group (ibid; also see Chapter 4). Hierarchy is reinforced by forbidding members of the superior group closeness or familiarity with those considered inferior (ibid:59). Competitiveness, hierarchy and exclusivity are essential features of vertical honour that essentially negates equality, and strives for more honour within an honour group through acquisition of wealth or power. Hierarchical honour presupposes that the very nature of honour tends to make it exclusive and fiercely competitive because if everyone attained equal honour there would be no honour for anyone!49

Having made the above distinctions, Stewart concedes that these honours cannot be fully separated from each other because the code of horizontal honour forbids a superior to waive his privilege of vertical honour and conversely, the superior’s right to vertical honour is dependent on horizontal honour, namely his right to respect among his own equals. (ibid:63). He also points out that not all anthropologists subscribe to the two-aspect analysis of honour. Some view it as having a single aspect, saying that the word “might best be translated as esteem, respect, prestige, or some combination of these attributes, depending on local usage” (ibid:12-13). The fact that the word exists in all major European languages obviously means that honour has “far too wide a range of meanings” (ibid:29) and these variety of meanings reflect the long and complex history of this concept (ibid:30-31). Stewart deems that descriptive studies of honour deal mostly with generalisations, presenting

48 For this reason, Stewart classifies vertical honour as being ‘positive honour’
conclusions “without giving any very clear idea of the evidence from which they were derived. Verbatim quotations from the subjects, in the subjects’ own language, are few” (ibid:3). This gap points towards the need for understanding honour from the subjects’ point of view.

Lastly Stewart uses the concept of reflexive honour (or knightly honour; payback counter-attack) in which one is expected to avenge an insult or loss of honour, if required through violence or murder. Stewart associates reflexive honour with horizontal honour rather than vertical honour (ibid:65) because revenge is expected to restore the loss of honour among equals in order to be re-accepted within the honour group with full respect. This explains why even an otherwise indifferent person could be goaded into taking revenge in the face of insults, taunts or disrespect from those who otherwise support and respect him (ibid:71). Recent work with men who have committed murders or other crimes in the name of honour reiterates that the perpetrators felt that “they had no choice” but to do what they did (Onal 2008; Wikan 2008; also see interview with Rahul in Chapter 5). In societies where reflexive honour is important, it belongs to men; if at all women have honour, it is of a limited and secondary nature and is linked to chastity (Stewart ibid:107). Reflexive honour is also the prerogative of men when women’s honour has to be avenged (ibid). Since women are excluded from public life, their vertical honour is a reflection of their menfolk’s status. In turn, men lose honour when those who are close to them (especially women) are either disgraced or do something disgraceful (ibid:109).

Welsh argues that for the notion of honour to be operationalised, the ‘Other’ is essential because there could be no personal honour if there was only one person on earth, nor would there be family or group honour unless there were other families and groups (Welsh 2008:xv). Such honour groups have continued to exist through history, and will probably continue to appear over time because it gives a group an identity. Therefore, even though honour may no longer be the prerogative of aristocrats or the upper classes in the West, it is certainly a “class thing, in that it is a

50 Stewart refers to his work with Bedouin tribes of central Sinai, south of the Mediterranean region
51 Chapter 4 discusses this vertical honour for women from dominant castes
52 Also see Baxi P. (2005), discussed later in this Chapter for more discussion on this aspect
53 Even ‘alternative’ or non-mainstream groups may expect certain politically correct talk or behaviour from their members to conform to its codes of conduct.
group thing” (ibid:xii). Welsh notes that historically women have never been regarded as members of an honour group, except in terms of their chastity being enforced by male members of the family (ibid:xv).  

According to Welsh the best recourse would be to replace honour with equivalent and current terminologies such as respect, self-respect, personal identity and meaningful integrity in which case honour need not be considered a relic of the past (Welsh 2008:x). He suggests that the term honour be replaced by the more neutral concept of reputation (ibid). However, the term ‘reputation’ is not gender-neutral; it signifies dangerous consequences for women. Minces (1982) asserts that of all the norms within a community, sexual purity of women is the most important reflection of a family’s reputation. A simple rumour about a woman’s conduct can shatter the standing of the family because their honour has been “trampled upon” (Wikan 2008:58). Reputation has symbolic and utilitarian functions in political and economic deals, as well as in the expansion of the patriarchal family, through marriages. Without challenging the very concept of honour as it is understood today, and in the absence of appropriating its meaning from patriarchal connotations, mere swapping of terms can hardly be useful.

It could be argued that honour, like caste helps groups to maintain distinct boundaries. Since the regulation of caste purity is maintained through endogamy and strict boundaries (Chowdhry 1997, 1998; Irudayam et al., 2006; Rege 2006), one could further argue that honour, largely centred on the behaviour of women becomes an important means through which these boundaries are maintained. Within casteist patriarchy, honour serves as the legitimate control over women because, as being the repository of men’s honour, they pose a constant threat to the purity of his seed through their behaviour and indiscretions.

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54 Welsh also notes that this notion has been changing and that honour now influences the behaviour of men as well as women (ibid:xv).
55 see Chapter 4
Honour as Power and Control:

Even though anthropologists studied and wrote about honour in great detail, it was the feminist lens that focused upon this concept as ‘power’ (Gerhard 1966). Honour concepts have since been considered useful to understand how patriarchy operates in order to maintain male authority over women, and to perpetuate male definitions and expectations of ‘appropriate’ female behaviour. Baker et al., propose three comparative areas related to honour systems, namely

the control of female behaviour, male feelings at loss of that control, and community participation in enhancing and controlling this shame. (ibid)

Radford suggests that central to this theory of patriarchy is sexual violence, a mechanism by which men maintain control over women. In her view, patriarchal oppression which manifests itself in legal and economic discrimination, like all oppressive structures is rooted in violence.

Codes of honour include complex rules of conduct and appropriateness, symbolising and projecting the integrity of a group (Jafri 2008:23). Though these “elaborate rules of conduct around hierarchies and genders” are not always explicitly apparent in specific language, they are deeply understood to mean that “good and evil are not disputable” (ibid:67). Such binaried notions, and the construction of female honour as passive, and male honour as dynamic, lead men to self-assertion and domination (Bourdieu 1998). In order to raise his family’s capital and status of his family in society, he is expected to protect the family’s name, which is “inextricably tied with honour” (Jafri 2008:23)

The concept of honour consists of a system of symbols, values and definitions, including codes for interpretation and action. The pragmatic components precipitate and catalyse normative and ‘honourable’ behaviour (mainly related to sexuality) with acts that resolve or terminate conflict in accordance with the directives of the code (Friedrich 1977 in Jafri 2008:284). The mostly informal codes of honour are laid out by a woman’s extended family, social group or community who will also decide if they are breached in any way. Women need to “tread carefully to avoid

57 Radford 1992:6, quoted in Welchman and Hossain 2005
transgression” because these codes “define the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and even thought” (Gill 2006:2). These daily, almost invisible codes have been mentioned by feminist scholars to be of paramount importance in the control of women; however, literature search indicates that these discreet aspects have not been addressed as much as overt manifestations of honour in the form of violence. It is the latter aspect that has received more attention until now, both nationally and internationally.

Problems in theorising about Honour:

- **Multiple meanings of the term**

The concept of honour may now have acquired an abstract connotation in western countries, but in other places it still is considered a personalised (or group) possession, such as “their honour” or “family’s honour” (Wikan 2008:59). Since literal translation of local words denoting honour into European languages is rather difficult, it renders the term subject to multiple (and inaccurate) interpretations and analyses. The term ‘honour’ may also carry different meanings, depending on the context.\textsuperscript{58} The concept of izzat / izzat is linked to honesty or the ability to show generosity and respect in some cultures,\textsuperscript{59} but carries a sexual connotation elsewhere. The term sharaf / seref means respectability, precedence or social status in Arabic societies whereby high-status people are exempt from honour based on sexual morality. Loss of ‘ard / ‘ird is understood as dishonour, mainly of a woman’s guardian, in some parts of the Middle East. Namus / namoos (also ghairat in Pakistan) may be linked to elaborate displays of sexual honour through a highly visible control and ‘protection’ of women’s sexual purity.\textsuperscript{60}

In some cultures visible body parts (such as the face or nose) may be used to denote honour; and when they are used in negative terms (blackened face; lost face; disfigured face; cut nose) they denote dishonour. Loss of honour could also be expressed as making covered body parts visible, such as rendering someone nude in

\textsuperscript{58} See Chapter 4 for multiple and contextualised local terms associated with ‘honour’.

\textsuperscript{59} Stirling (1965:231) and Magnarella (1998:167) quoted in Ewing 2008:234

\textsuperscript{60} Meeker (1976) quoted in Ewing 2008
public. This public display of what is considered private (or veiled) can render honour to be lost irreversibly in some cultures. Wikan makes an interesting observation in this context:

Body metaphors like “face” and “head,” are well suited to express exactly what honor is: an integral part of a person, and a part that is on show in public. “Private parts” must be shielded from view; all members of the honor group have an absolute duty to be loyal to each other and to their shared privacy (ibid:60).

This code enjoins families and communities to maintain an impenetrable silence about an honour related crime if group honour is in perceived to be in peril (Saxena 2006; Chowdhary 2007). Since it is the public discussion of a rights violation rather than the violation that is perceived to bring dishonour to a family or group, women’s groups or law enforcement agencies intervening in domestic violence are accused of causing loss of honour to the family.

• The honour-shame binary

The honour-shame complex within anthropology, and especially developed by Peristiany (1966) with reference to the Mediterranean region, became the oft-quoted yet stereotyped representation of gender relations as the “culture” of specific groups, and created artificial boundaries between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ societries (Ewing 2008:30). The challenge to this binaried complex came from Herzfeld who stressed that practices associated with honour varied even within a single community. He argued against understanding terms loaded with moral valuation outside specific linguistic and social contexts.

Since the language of honour cannot be translated across continents, Ewing argues that dishonour and shame cannot be simplistically conflated to mean the same. In the western context the concept of ‘shame’ is more recognisable in the form of minor or
major misdemeanours and thus is more ambiguous, whereas in other traditions having shame is not equivalent to having honour. She posits that the counterpart to shame would be pride, not honour (ibid:59). In some cultures the opposite of honour is without honour,\(^67\) a feeling that a weak word like shame cannot fully express. Wikan argues that someone can be less or more shameful; or less or more shamed, but ‘having’ honour and ‘losing’ it are either-or or absolute qualities (ibid:59). Jafri concurs with this binary, saying that either one has honour or one doesn’t. He claims that unlike virtue, “honour cannot be demonstrated selectively; it informs all conduct. Once lost it resists all claims to being recaptured” (Jafri 2008:25). While Wikan’s and Jafri’s observations may be true in their settings, my own observations in rural Maharashtra indicate that honour can be redeemed without killing or grave violence, and that there are numerous loopholes in the concept, especially when it is put into practice (Chapter 4). These are the specificities one needs to consider when dealing with notions and concepts that could have fluid and changing connotations in different historical or geographical settings.

- **Honour as male; Shame as female**

Shame can then be considered a gendered equivalent within the concept of honour rather than as its binary opposite. Jafri argues that “manliness and shame are complementary qualities in relation to honour; women thus must possess shame if the manliness of the men is not to be dishonoured” (ibid 2008:21). Kandiyoiti (1987) concurs that femininity (in Islamic society) is an ascribed status whereas masculinity is something achieved progressively, which can

never be permanently achieved because the danger of being un-manned is always present through female misbehaviour. In order to protect their shame and their men’s honour, women are expected to behave modestly. (ibid)

Since women possess shame on behalf of the menfolk, shameless women can throw the entire family into dishonour, and in order “to avoid being shamed, women must know how to behave with propriety, as prescribed in the code of honour” (Wikan ibid:61).

\(^67\) *be-izzat* as opposed to *be-sharam*, if applied to our local context
“Men of honour” and “chaste women” are likely terms, not usually reversible (Wikan ibid:49). In the Indian context Chowdhry (2007:16) notes that women do not possess an honour of their own; only men do. She lists negative terms such as sharm (modesty) and lihaz (deference) with respect to women’s sexuality because “the honour of every family is connected to its girl”. These observations resonate with my field work (Chapter 4) where terms denoting intrinsic honour are reserved for men, especially from dominant castes, whereas terms denoting women’s honour pertain to appropriate behaviour, codes of conduct and shame. Similarly, Haeri notes that in Pakistan izzat or honour is intimately linked with a man’s “natural right to possess and control womenfolk.” She also notes that it is men who possess this kind of honour, which means that women cannot own honour in the same way as men. Women “represent honor; they symbolize honor; they are honor.”

Wikan argues that a man is rendered ‘vulnerable’ due to this paradox. Though his own behaviour may be exempt from scrutiny, any departure from the norms of chastity and modesty by any woman of his extended family can make him a target of scorn and abuse (ibid:50). In every case, dishonour is a public phenomenon like shame which “becomes real only when it is disclosed because it is in the eye of the beholder” (ibid:61). For men honour is so much

a condition of integrity that, if violated accidentally or otherwise, must be responded to at once and with violence if reputation is to survive. The quality required of women in regard to honour is ‘shame,’ particularly sexual shame. Because honour is always something imputed by others, a woman’s honour depends upon the reputation that the community is willing to concede, not upon the evidence of facts. (Campbell 1964, quoted in Jafri:20).

Honour, sexuality and violence

Wikan traces European history where pre-marital pregnancies did not result in killing the girl but in abandonment of the baby. She notes that the protectionist focus on punishing the man who showed a sexual interest in one’s wife (through

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69 See interviews with Kiran and Veena in Chapter 5 for similar ‘solutions’ in case of pregnancy outside marriage.
70 The Indian law on adultery does not punish the woman; however a civil suit can be filed by the husband on the man with whom his wife is romantically or sexually involved. This is based on the understanding that the husband’s property is being sullied, as well as assuming that the woman is always a sexual victim. Such lawsuits
duels), has now shifted to punishing transgressing women (ibid:50,51). Even today, not all transgressing women are killed – a metaphorical death may be ordered by exiling or banishing the transgressor physically, or by erasing her existence from the family’s memory. In my field-work area, when a woman marries against the family’s will, they may declare a boycott by saying “She is dead to us,” and the patriarch may forbid all family members from keeping any contact with her thereafter. Any clandestine or open communication with her may result in censure of the recalcitrant family member, whereas failure to recognise the seriousness of the threat of exile can result in murderous attacks upon the transgressing woman from men in the family (Wikan ibid). Ironically, law enforcement agencies may not take women seriously when they express the fear that their lives are at risk from their own family members. 

When surreptitious negotiations of restoring honour, reputation, prestige or self-esteem within the family and kinship fail, codes linked to sexual behaviour may be enforced or retrieved through force or violence. Control over women from one’s family and kinship often results in ‘punishment’ being meted out by blood-related relatives; in fact, honour groups may actually denounce each other for not ‘defending’ their women enough. Even after marriage, perpetrator(s) may belong to the woman’s family of birth, because a woman’s dishonour tends to be linked to the failure of ‘her’ family in preserving her chastity (Sen 2005:46; Wikan 2008:73). One proverb in Chapter 4 suggests that in the case of a wife it is possible to reclaim lost honour because she is replaceable, but honour is irreversibly lost when a blood-related woman (such as a sister, daughter, niece or mother) transgresses. No wonder then that bloodshed is considered imminent and essential to erase the blemish of blood-related dishonour (Khan 2006), or that honour related crimes are often committed by the woman’s kinship rather than the husband or intimate.

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71 See interview with Ritu in Chapter 5
72 This disbelief was evident in Ritu’s case as well as in the life of Fadime whose life and death forms the subject of Wikan’s book
73 Kaya 2001 quoted in Ewing 2008:242
74 “boyko geli tur chyaat gele, lek / baheen geli tur naak gele” [a wife’s going is comparable to the loss of a pubic hair; a daughter’s / sister’s going is comparable to the loss of a nose]
partner.\textsuperscript{75} Once the decision to murder the woman or her partner has been taken, under-age men may be goaded\textsuperscript{76} to undertake the ‘responsibility’ of cleansing the family’s reputation (Onal 2008; Wikan 2008). By getting a young man to murder a blood-related woman he has loved until recently, the family ensures an escape from harsh punishment by the law (Connors 2005).

Even in the absence of severe violence, its symbolic and pedagogic lessons remain with women, compelling them to stay within normative boundaries (Sangari 2008:10,11). Honour normalises cultural violence making “direct and structural violence look, even feel, right - or at least not wrong”\textsuperscript{77} (Galtung 1990 quoted in Jafari:115). Such violence is considerably rooted in women’s reproductive (and sexual) functions; thus, in most societies, these are closely linked with her ‘character’; a term used synonymously with chastity, subservience and feminine virtue in general, and within a patriarchal, heterosexual context (Dhagamwar 2005). Such ‘normalised’ violence, whether inter-personal, intra-personal or collective (Fernandez et al., 2005:224) is justified through religious, cultural, legal, medico-psychiatric, institutional and community sanctions, against people’s dressing, behaviour, sexual orientation or gender identities that do not fit into the ‘normative’. These can result in overt violence, shaming, guilt or the constant threat of being subjected to discrimination, violence, rejection, humiliation, self-harm, suicide or homicidal attacks (ibid:228).

\textbf{The unresolved dilemmas around ‘naming’}

\textit{a) Patriarchal connotations}

The discomfort among feminists and women’s rights activists to use the terms ‘honour’ or ‘crimes of honour’ stems from the fact that these terms eulogise the crime, making them more acceptable than other forms of violence against women. The implication that women ‘embody’ the honour of males renders violence against women (including murder) ‘justifiable’. Besides masking the killings and abuse of women, this violence gets associated “with the ‘uniqueness’ of Asian cultures, with

\textsuperscript{75} though crimes committed by husbands and lovers in the name of ‘passion’ are also forms of domestic violence and femicide
\textsuperscript{76} See interview with Rahal in Chapter 5
irrational communities and aberrant and archaic patriarchal practices refusing to modernise” (Chakravarti quoted in Welchman et al., 2005:9). For this reason the gender neutral tone of the term “crimes of passion” has also been contested by feminists by labelling both types of crimes as “manifestations of femicide,” wherein cultural values that uphold male control mitigate the murder of women, whether in the name of 'honour' or 'passion' (Welchman et al., 2005:10).

The fact that honour is loaded with patriarchal and colonial legacy has led many feminists to use the term within quotation marks or reject it altogether. In 1994, the term 'honour' was interrogated by organisations working within the Palestinian community in Israel by encapsulating it in quotation marks, asserting that

it is not possible to give the term ['family honour'] a positive understanding, since it attributes all the maladies of society to women's bodies and individual behaviour, giving legitimacy to social conduct restricting women's freedom and development, using all forms of violence, the extreme being murder (quoted in Welchman et al., 2005:6).

The discussion and debate around the usage of the term 'honour' still continues: For example, in Pakistan, feminist groups such as Shirkat Gah have used the slogan “There is no honour in killing,” and the term 'dishonourable' has been used to denounce the perpetrators, thus attempting to destabilise the prevalent understanding of 'honour' and attributing a positive meaning to the word honour. Reclaiming of the term was also attempted by UK groups who proclaimed that "There was no honour in domestic violence, only shame". Referring to the dilemma of nomenclature, Welchman and Hossain (2005:6,7) argue that

recovering or reclaiming the notion of 'honour' would reformulate it as attaching to women as well as to men, designated qualities of respect, tolerance and inclusivity.

b) Islamophobic, racist and anti-immigration connotations

During the past two decades, a volley of literature that emphasises the relationship of honour crimes with Muslim majority countries has become tremendously popular. From detailed studies (see Goodwin 2003); autobiographies (Durrani 1995; Ahmed 2008) and assisted narratives of victims / survivors (Muhsen et al., 1994; Khouri 2004: Souad 2005; Mukhtar Mai 2007) to narratives from the 'outside' (Sasson
1993, 1994, 2000, 2004), the terrible nature of honour related crimes in the Muslim world have been amply highlighted. Similar documentation has not happened in other contexts.

Gill (2006) examines the way in which British media misrepresents ethnic minorities when they report on domestic violence or so-called honour based violence, and argues that a better understanding of the relationship between culture and morality is essential for the construction of a better nuanced human rights framework (ibid:1). She cautions against two dangers, namely of universalising merely western feminist ideas of morality, and, of tolerating human rights violations for the sake of multiculturalism (ibid). Similar observations have been made by feminists in different parts of Europe (Southall Black Sisters 2001; Razack 2004; Bredal 2005; Wikan 2008). It is true that in many South Asian groups, women are considered bearers of family honour and women’s behaviour is policed, so that they do not breach this patriarchal code (Gill 2006; Wilson 2006; quoted in S. Anitha et al., 2009:176; also see Sanghera 2007). The over-arching systems and networks of power and domination problematise the meaning of choice (Foucault 2003); yet women

actively negotiate different aspects of their environments and make deliberate strategic choices within structural constraints, in order to manoeuvre the grey areas between (relative) coercion and consent (Anitha et al., ibid:179).

Non-oppositional agencies need to provide better support to women who wish to express their subjectivity, while wanting to belong to their own communities (ibid:180). Feminists have argued in favour of positions that are both anti-patriarchal and anti-racist (Narayan 2000; Sen P. 2005:50; Terman 2010). They have demanded greater voice for those at the weaker end of the power balance within minority communities (Gill 2006:9), and with interventions that don’t negate the agency of women by treating them as victims who are incapable of resistance (Bredal ibid; Siddiqui H. 2005).
c) Beyond 'Culture'

The fact that in many parts of the western world, family or group honour is no longer of great importance has resulted in its re-discovery through the lens of crimes, and as a cultural phenomenon at the cost if ignoring other equally pervasive reasons. Questioning the stereotypical and unsubstantiated binaries of 'honor' with the East, and 'passion' with the West (Abu Odeh 1997:289 quoted in Welchman et al., 2005:4-5); or 'reason' with the global North and 'irrational male violence and female passivity' with the South (Baker et al., 1997: 173 quoted in Welchman et al., 2005:13) is thus important, both to theory and to activism on issues of violence against women (Welchman et al., 2005:13).

Using a historical materialist framework, and delving into reasons for violence against women that are perceived as honour-based, but are actually "beyond honour," Khan (2006) argues that, the evolution of terms and language, including the concept of honour developed within prevalent modes of production in agricultural societies, and found its way into various religious texts. She uses the metaphor of the male seed being implanted into the female womb to explain the material basis for control over women’s procreation and sexuality. She argues that such imagery found its way into Judaic religious sources as well as in the Qur’an (ibid:xii). The seed and soil concept is prevalent in many parts of the world. Delaney (1991) mentions it with reference to an Anatolian village in Turkey; Hindu mythology includes the concept of the ksheatri (farmer /owner), the kshetra (field / womb) as well as a bheeji (seed-giver) who, in the event that the farmer lacks the seed, can fertilise the field at the request of the owner, but without laying claim to the harvest (Gatwood 1985). Feminist scholars in India have used this trope to explain how control over a woman’s sexuality is considered essential to preserve the continuity and purity of the male seed that fertilises the female earth / field (Dube 1986; Chowdhry 2010).

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78 Khan mentions economic motives, materialist interests, religio-legal misogyny, social endorsement, lack of political will, patriarchy and structural violence as "some of the forces that play a major role in the occurrence of violence against women" (ibid:xxiii)
The religious fundamentalisms of modern times\textsuperscript{79} are religio-political projects that thrive in opportune local and global political moments. For example, in Pakistan, it was under the military dictatorship of President Zia-ul-Haq in 1977 that many oppressive laws against women were sanctioned through a political nexus between the army and the Islamisation crusade. These resulted in inversion of the few rights that women, in spite of the history of feudalism, had gained since Independence in 1947 (Zia 1994). The eleven year rule of Zia-ul-Haq was legitimised through a State sponsored religious drive following the military coup and martial law, that simultaneously encroached upon citizens’ private choices and inter-personal relationships, combined with the emotional appeal to ward off ‘corrupt’ western influences (ibid). The Zia regime evoked a connection between Islam and masculinity, to counter India at one end and the communists in Afghanistan at the other (Gul Khattak 1994). As opposed to the progressive “\textit{sufur}” (unveiling of the face; both of women and the country)\textsuperscript{80} project in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century in the Arab world, Zia’s military rule was based on curtailing women’s rights through the \textit{chaadar} and \textit{chaar divaari} (‘veil’ and ‘four wall’) concept. In order to avoid an international inspection of Pakistan’s nuclear energy plant, he extended this imagery to evoke national honour, claiming that the plant had to be kept in \textit{chaadar} and \textit{chaar divaari}, protected from the malevolent and polluting gaze of western eyes. The notion of keeping women ‘protected’ and veiled in order to avoid large-scale disasters is a reconstruction of religion (Slama 2004) in modern times\textsuperscript{81} whereby women’s “coming out” of the home (Kosambi 1994) has been represented in terms of the fear of an impending explosion (\textit{sphat}),\textsuperscript{82} complete anarchy, chaos and disruption of social stability (\textit{jina}) that women’s destructive powers and dishonourable behaviour can precipitate (Jafri 2008:72).

\textsuperscript{79} See interviews with Ganesh and Waseem in Chapter 5 for 20\textsuperscript{th} century reinterpretation of religions, as they justify gender, patriarchy and cultural nationalism.

\textsuperscript{80} Due to the presence of the Arab modernist movements, "...At the start of the 20th century sufur, meaning "unveiling of the face" was a magical word, an emblem symbolising progress and openness and that was applicable not only to women but to society as a whole...But fundamentalist movements that followed have, since the 1920s, opposed the women's liberation movement, asking women to veil themselves twice: by playing their traditional roles of mothers and wives, and by wearing the veil, which has now become fetishised.... (Slama 2004)

\textsuperscript{81} see interview with Ganesh in Chapter 5 where he uses 20\textsuperscript{th} century concepts of cultural nationalism to contrast 'modest' and 'modern' women

\textsuperscript{82} see interview with Waseem in Chapter 5 where he compares unveiled women to petrol leaking out of underground tanks
The political economy of crimes in the name of honour cannot be ignored. Female relatives may be killed for property, profit or to cover up another crime (Jafri 2008:2) by making allegations against them about inappropriate sexual conduct. Within traditional societies where sexual transgression (especially for women) could be considered punishable by law / custom, or where women’s unacceptable sexual conduct may be stigmatised and linked to men’s honour, such crimes may on occasion be overlooked, forgiven or even condoned. When the media whips up a frenzy around ‘honour crimes’ and links them to specific cultures, on the one hand it demonises that culture, but on the other hand it also generates more awareness of its criminal nature. To problematise further, this “increasing awareness of rights and women’s assertiveness may create a backlash in which ‘honour killings’ may actually increase” (ibid:7).

Thus what may seem like a cultural phenomenon could in fact represent the cyclical interaction between patriarchal structures, tradition, modernisation and women’s agency (Weber 1964). Those opposing honour crimes within societies in which codes of honour operate face the double risks of being accused of siding with former colonial powers (Docker 2008) and be subjected to violence from their communities (Sen 2005) even though much of feminist activism has combined resistance to local practices along with a critique of colonialism (ibid). In order to effectively respond to crimes of honour (and their relegation to culture), it is imperative that historical backdrops are identified, and that alliances between feminists, allies and social groups within societies with honour codes are built among similar networks of progressives outside the societies concerned (ibid:58-60).

Honour in a post-colonial economy

a) The threat to customary honour systems

Stewart (1994) as well as Wikan (2008) report many examples in the Middle East when transgressing women were not killed or divorced. Wikan claims that the use of violence to wash away shame is not wholly dependent on the act becoming “public,” but is precipitated when the family is confronted and openly challenged with their failure to exert any kind of control (ibid:62). Relating honour to power, Schneider calls it the ideology of a power-holding group “which struggles to define, enlarge,
and protect its patrimony in a competitive area.¹³ Honour not only heightens group identity; it also defines social boundaries which defend against the claim of "competing groups". Schneider argues that

the concern for honour arises when the definition of the group is problematic; when social boundaries are difficult to maintain, and internal loyalties are questionable (ibid).

Chowdhry (2007) relates the escalation of challenges to norms and customary practices to the changed political economy of post-independent India, which has resulted in defying and discarding traditional notions of honour. She argues that

the concepts of honour and shame operate to restore the male, familial, and communitarian domination considered to have been compromised and endangered by post-colonial legal empowerment of women (ibid:16).

As political democratisation and economic opportunities alter power dynamics and complicate relationships among members within a caste group as well as between members of different caste groups, conventional notions of honour, caste norms as well as sexual codes tend to be flouted (ibid:10). In this sense, violent resurgence in the name of honour can be considered a fall-out of the on-going tension between traditional / customary structures and modern laws, or increased agency and challenges to patriarchal and caste authority. As an example, Fadime, the protagonist in Wikan’s study, having imbibed the modern set-up of Sweden where she grew up, was unable to fully understand her immigrant family’s sense of traditional Kurdish honour (Wikan ibid), whereas the women respondents in my thesis,¹⁴ having grown up within traditional honour systems constantly grapple with the enticing and confusing forces of modernity (see Appadurai 1996). These actors, separated across continents are as far removed from each other as is possible to be, yet in essence they embody the on-going tensions between tradition and modernity. This tension is also evident in the ambiguities between people’s responses to ‘reel-life’ and ‘real-life’: on the one hand Hindi films where love always triumphs and where family pride and honour suffer defeat (Chowdhry 2006) receive thundering responses from

¹³ Schneider (1971:2, quoted in Jafri 2008:20)
¹⁴ see Chapters 4, 5 and 6
Indian audiences; but on the other hand, strong disapproval of such relationships continues to exist in real life.85

b) The upsurge of violent identity politics

Chowdhry (1997; 2007) demonstrates how the concept of izzat86 operates within caste and patriarchy in India as an expression of power, especially violent power played out through gender norms, and how this honour is redeemed through violence. Upendra Baxi forces us to re-visit the Gujarat carnage of 2002, especially through his analysis of political economy; of electoral politics; and, what he calls the rape-culture, where brutal sexual violence against women is normalised when this notion pervades governance as well as civil society. He warns about the way in which the Gujarati asmita has been constructed in violent terms, and has been used to silence women and minorities (Baxi, U 2005). Violent identity politics can at once keep the 'othered' in perpetual fear, as well as keep women (both 'ours' and 'theirs') under control both inside and outside the home; thus, ethnic 'cleansing' outside the home and control of one's own women within the home exist side by side.

Purity is a dangerous ethic for women. In extreme forms of patriarchy, men's honour is seen as depending on women's 'purity' to the degree that women who seek to escape this strict code, or who inadvertently fail or are dragged from it, may be killed by their menfolk with impunity (ibid).

The prevalence of such 'honour killings' in the context of communal strife in India has been vividly described by Urvashi Butalia (1997).87 For women in such circumstances, the threshold of war is lower than for men (Moser et al., 2001:19). Even though gang-rapes, brutal sexual assaults and killings of women of all ages happen during riots or conflict situations, out of reasons of family and group honour, rape was rarely reported or mentioned (euphemisms such as bura kaam – 'bad deed' were sometimes mentioned) in the First Information Report (FIR) with the police after the Gujarat carnage of 2002, leading to weak prosecution of the accused.

85 films may serve as an escape from the dreariness of marriages based on responsibility, rather than romance 86 similar to the concepts of 'irad, numoos or sharaf in the Middle East; ghairat in Pakistan and honour or nobility in the West 87 Elsewhere in this essay, (pages 99-114) Urvashi Butalia shares her interview with Sikh men who recalled how they had 'martyred' the women of their own household to save them from being captured by Muslims and being forced into Islam. (Butalia 1997)
(Hameed 2005). Unmentionable horrors were committed upon women’s bodies by long-standing neighbours, all with the connivance of the police, political machinery and the media. Women’s pleas “for their izzat” went unheeded. As they arrived in the relief camps and people tried to cover their naked and wrecked bodies with anything, including plastic wraps and newspapers, the displaced Muslim men could only avert their eyes as they threw their own shirts over the women’s bodies (ibid:325). A similar shame of men’s inability to have protected their women has been reported in the context of Dalit men after the naked parading of Muthamma (a Dalit - Golla woman) by Reddi goons (Kannabiran et al., 2002:57-61).

Sexual politics and notions of group honour pervaded most acts during the Gujarat carnage (Hameed ibid:328). With rumours being circulated in the regional press about varying number of Hindu / Adivasi women being abducted from the burning Sabarmati train, and being gang-raped in various places, including slums and madrasas, and their breasts cut off88 by Muslim men, the media became a weapon of war, with Hindu men swearing to take revenge. Ironically a liberal Muslim editor wrote about the 'honour' of the Muslim community having been violated through the attacks on Muslim women, rather than in terms of the integrity of Muslim women having been violated during the carnage (ibid). Later, the unrepentant Gujarat government appropriated the terminologies of honour; namely collective identity and pride (asmita and gaurav) to ensure business corporations that all was well in the state.

c) Backlash in the name of national culture

Enforcement of dress codes, protests against Valentine’s Day celebrations89 or the Ram Sene attack on young women in a pub in Karnataka state in January 2009 illuminate social anxieties around women “occupying public urban spaces as citizens, upwardly mobile professionals, and global consumers” (Govindan 2009). Such vigilante actions are as much provoked with the perceived ‘loose’ behaviour of women, as much as it is about them being ‘forward’. For lower-middle class or

88 The mention of this particular act of violent mutilation reminds people of the atrocities committed against women of all religions during the partition of the Indian subcontinent. In the Indian psyche this implies “by Muslim men upon Hindu and Sikh women,” the memory of which serves as a trigger for ‘belated justice’ for Hindu honour, justifying the rape of Muslim women today.

89 See interview with Ganesh in Chapter 5
immigrant youth with low career opportunities, honour may become a masculinist idiom for street gang fights.\textsuperscript{90} (Ewing 2008:242). On the one hand these actions may be interpreted as acts of caste / class outrages against the upwardly mobile, globalised middle class, or as backlash against ‘modern’ women. On the other hand, lumperisation creates further stigma for these young men because their criminal behaviour or disregard for parental expectations violates their family’s honour (ibid).

Islamophobic terms such as “love jihad” (holy war propagated through love and marriage) have recently been promoted by right wing Hindu groups, warning people that Islamists have been encouraging “charming young men to lure girls, converting them to Islam with promises of marriage” (The Telegraph, Friday 09 December 2011). The fear-mongering is about India’s Muslim minority posing a severe numerical threat to the majority religion in the near future.\textsuperscript{91} Some Sindhi leaders passed a stricture against girls using face-scarves\textsuperscript{92} (Parveez 2008:105), riding two-wheelers or using cell phones, arguing that their innocent daughters were at risk of being beguiled and seduced by lurking Muslim men in order to be converted to Islam. Parental anxiety about their daughters’ increased mobility and sexual agency is evident in a paradoxical reversal of the veil-code; a young Muslim woman reported\textsuperscript{93} how her uncle was opposed to his daughter wearing the burqua, because he suspected that she was using this anonymity to meet a boy after college hours.

Gendered and protectionist notions of honour can operate among the moral police as well. During the periodically enforced Operation Majnu\textsuperscript{94} whereby the police and enthusiastic vigilante groups sniff out young courting couples from secluded spots, the boy is often publicly humiliated, but the girl may be “punished” by notifying her parents about her indiscretion.\textsuperscript{95} The attitude of the moral police is condescending and sympathetic towards the parents, who now have a tainted daughter on their hands; and, the purpose of notifying the family is to put the fear of God into the girl.

\textsuperscript{90} See interview with Data in Chapter 5
\textsuperscript{91} The fear of Muslims taking over India through their high-fertility rate or through conversion is expressed even in informal conversations. See interview with Ganesh in Chapter 5 for what he terms the global “Islamic Conspiracy” Also see Noorani 2012 for a conversation on related issues.
\textsuperscript{92} *which* women wear to protect their hair and faces from pollution
\textsuperscript{93} in a conversation during my field-work in Pune city in 2009
\textsuperscript{94} (Majnu also known as Qais), the name of the tragic hero of the well-loved ‘Laila-Majnu’ saga is also a derisive term for love-struck boys and men
\textsuperscript{95} This does not preclude humiliation and molestation of the woman by police within the police station after being “arrested”
through socially sanctioned ‘disciplinary measures.’ Similar steps are taken when couples elope or start proceedings to marry under the Special Marriage Act, 1954. Groups owing allegiance to Hindu extremist organisations such as Baba Bajrangi and his followers in Gujarat act as moral police, ‘specialising’ in “rescuing Hindu girls from Muslim – and lately even Christian – boys” (Outlook India.Com Magazine, Feb 26, 2007) and by ‘retrieving’ girls when they attempt inter-caste or inter-religious marriages. Here, the disgraced or disgraceful girl who brought dishonour to her guardians\textsuperscript{96} is handed over to them, and the issue is expected to be resolved within the private domain in a manner they deem fit.

Even when the daughter is already dead, the desire to prevent further dishonour to the family may be considered a noble act. Pratiksha Baxi (2005) reports how doctors in Gujarat shared that they routinely conduct a genital examination of "young girls who commit suicide for trifle reasons". Their "academic" quest for performing such tests was prompted by the "liberalization that is slowly coming up" due to which young girls "from prestigious families going to prestigious schools" show signs of regular sexual intercourse. Findings related to sexual activity were neither written down nor reported "because these are embarrassing to the parents" and also because parents needed to be protected from having to face one more trauma, besides that of their daughter’s death. When questioned about the possibility of rape or blackmail on the dead girl, the doctor said "we don't go into that detail The examination on the cadaver thus was not to identify sexual assault (even as the cause of suicide) but to confirm the hunch that extra-marital and pre-marital sex was prevalent among women due to “the liberalization” (Baxi, P. ibid:286).

**Honour and the nation-state**

No fixed binaries of Hindu-Muslim or India-Pakistan exist where honour related crimes are concerned; similarities between caste council mandates and community-condoned fatwas exist across countries in South Asia (Sangari 2008:1). The impact of the partition of the Indian sub-continent on women has been documented by feminist scholars and activists in South Asia (Menon et al., 1998; Butalia 1997, 1998). In 1947, the use of rape as a weapon to humiliate and dishonour the ‘other’ religious community, and for the “forcible impregnation of the women of one

\textsuperscript{96} see the concept of 'ird in Ewing 2008 and Stewart 1994; quoted earlier in this Chapter
community with the 'seed' of the other community,' was followed by the "recovery" of women from both sides of the border of the newly formed nation-states on India and Pakistan (Butalia 2001). As expected, families refused to take back women who had been sexually polluted by men from the other community. Since the honour of the community as well as the nation was seen to reside in women, "the violation of their bodies therefore was tantamount to a violation of the body of the nation, of Mother India" (ibid:103). The nascent nation-state of Bangladesh responded similarly in relation to the mass rapes and forced pregnancies of women (ironically called the 'birongana' or warrior women) during the liberation war and the partition of Pakistan in 1971.

Speaking about the children born of the rapes Mujib-ur-Rahman [the 'father of the nation'] said 'Send the children, who have no identity of their father, abroad...I don't want to keep the polluted in this country (Mohsin 2003:78, quoted in Chakravarti 2007)

I believe that the concept of honour groups can also be applied to nation states, since they vie to differentiate themselves from others "on the basis of distinctive national cultural forms and a strong sense of 'us' versus 'them' - a sense of exclusive belonging." Even 'modern' States expect a certain kind of behaviour or compliance to be included as full citizens (take for example, the banning of the burqua in Europe). Ewing (2008) argues that the "sometimes invisible or implicit process of stigmatization is linked to intertwined national and transnational imaginaries that rest on a foundation of fantasy" and that a national imaginary is played out in the arenas by enacting fantasies associated with stigmatisation through moral panics. The national imaginary (Anderson 1991) is sustained by an on-going process of myth-making, with the State demanding loyalty from its inhabitants through identification with the nation and its specific forms of culture, a process of imagining a shared experience that simultaneously marks various forms of social difference (ibid).

98 Ewing defines national imaginary as a system of cultural representations that makes the contours of the nation-state emotionally plausible. Anderson (1991:51-52) has addressed the issue of emotional plausibility in his articulation of the idea of the nation as "imagined community" (Ewing 2008: 2)
99 See interviews with Waseem and Ganesh in Chapter 5, as they enunciate their respective organisation's mythical concepts of the Indian nation-state.
100 Barthes (1972) quoted in Ewing 2008
101 See Mridula's interview in Chapter 5 as she speaks of Christianity in the North Eastern states leading to a lack of 'belonging' to the Indian nation-state.
The hegemonic national imaginary includes the regulation of the most intimate details of individuals’ lives such as marriage, birth control\textsuperscript{102} or kinship relations, encompassing more than what might formally be called “the State” (ibid:6). It is reproduced through governmentality\textsuperscript{103} - or an array of practices by which the population of the modern nation-state is governed through institutions such as schools, the police or social service agencies, thereby influencing discourses, norms and even self-regulation through discipline and caring for the self (ibid:6). Any tendency to disavow norms is deemed transgression or resistance to belong or integrate, whether in the family, kinship, fictive kinship, caste or nation-state.

Yet “practice theorists”\textsuperscript{104} have pointed out that individuals, as discursively constituted subjects do have the agency to reproduce as well as transform existing structures by drawing upon diverse discourses and alternative cultural logics (ibid:10). Thus, these inter-generational struggles, sexual politics and similar ruptures exist alongside the hegemonic discourses that involve implicit agreement and coherence from its subjects (Bhagwat 2002). The anti-rape protest of women in Manipur, where twelve Meitei women confronted the Indian Army at Kangla on 15\textsuperscript{th} July, 2004 with their nude bodies and placards, saying “Indian Army, Rape Us, Take Our Flesh” (Arunkumar et al., 2009) is one such illustration that not only challenged the hegemony of the national imaginary, but also put an all-powerful masculinist army to shame in the face of women’s nudity. This poses a stark contrast to ‘campaigns against obscenity’ by feminist groups from mainland states of India, wherein women’s uncovered bodies were deemed more offensive than blatantly patriarchal advertisements related to religious rituals, marriage symbols, ostentatious weddings, heteronormativity and women’s subservience to men. It is no wonder then that anti-obscenity campaigns attract unstinted support from right-wing groups whose construction of women’s honour is based on chastity and veiling.

\textsuperscript{102} The incentive-disincentive based two child norm in India targets the poorest, Muslims, Dalits and women. Economic and political disenfranchisement excludes people that wish to or are forced to have more children. The ‘othering’ of Muslims by stereotyping them as resisting birth control reaches a dangerous crescendo during riots where the ‘ideal’ and mythical non-bigamous Hindu citizen is contrasted against the ‘problematic’ Muslim, unfit for citizenship rights due to polygamy and high-fertility. Slogans such as “We two, Our two; They five, Their twenty-five” have been raised during the pogrom against Muslims in Mumbai following the demolition of the Babri Masjid.

\textsuperscript{103} Michel Foucault (1991) quoted in Ewing 2008

\textsuperscript{104} Pierre Bourdieu (1997) and Sherry Ortner (2006), quoted in Ewing 2008
Section Three

Intersectionality and the Complex Matrix of Domination

Gender as an analytical category was the creation of second-wave feminism when the idea that anatomy is destiny was challenged. Eisenstein critiqued positing women's capacities to nurture, to affiliate with others or to work collectively as biological (rather than as cultural or historical), calling this tendency to essentialise "a betrayal of the feminist tradition" (Eisenstein 1983:xix). Viewed as a set of reified meanings, imposed stereotypes, and internalized roles that force us to be on one side or the other of this divide, gender quickly gained enormous explanatory power (Cornell 2004:37).

The concept originated as a reaction to the marginality of women and thus was initially faced with the challenge of formulating new ways of understanding that could account for the nature and organization of male-female relations and the ways in which these are imbricated in a larger context of power relations (Niranjana 2004:139).

Niranjana argues that the continued emphasis on gender exploitation in a series of binaries such as equality / inequality; male domination / female subordination "within a monolithic system of power exercise" was inadequate, and that "though gender has emerged as a major analytical category, it is marked by an interpretive hegemony wherein only certain questions can be raised in certain kinds of ways" (ibid:139-140). Niranjana's argument forces us to look for a more nuanced understanding of gender and patriarchy that is not bi-polar, especially as she draws lessons from later writings that firstly

patriarchal relations are neither homogenous nor unitary, varying across time, space and group location within the same society [and secondly there needs to be a] focus on the agential potentialities of women engaging with patriarchal structures. Both of these recognize the variability of the agents and arenas of power exercise, as well as the fact that these cannot be determined without knowledge of the local fields in which they operate (ibid:140).

The awareness that neither women nor caste or class groups are homogenous categories has led feminists to locate 'difference' in order to understand the specific way in which power, domination and gender politics operate. In Chapter 6, in-depth
interviews with women from progressive organisations nurtured by feminists, especially from the second wave of feminism, reiterate the need for ‘difference’ to be acknowledged without losing sight of broader structures of power and inequality. This finding validates Fraser’s (2000) argument that struggles for the recognition of difference during that phase were charged with emancipatory promise. Additionally, interviews with respondents in my field-work corroborate the assumption that identity politics ceases to be progressive when the assertion of a singular identity becomes an end in itself (Hines 2007). It also diverts resistance by “providing a sanctuary for people who do not want to acknowledge that they are oppressors” (Aziz 1992). While identity and dissent are essential components of any democratic structure, unless identity politics moves from mere recognition of victim categories on to inclusive struggles for egalitarian and emancipatory politics (Fraser, 2000) it runs the risk of becoming exclusionary, essentialist and fundamentalist.

During the first steps towards empowerment, temporary ‘safe spaces’ that are exclusionary may help in providing the opportunity for self-definition, as they allow subordinated groups to escape and resist “objectification as the Other” (Collins 2000:101). Collins is aware of the tension between trying to recognise diversity whilst being exclusionary in order to remain safe. She admits that although exclusionary in the earlier phase, the intent of these spaces is to produce “a more inclusionary, just society” (Collins 2002:110). Similar challenges are evident in the experiences narrated by some respondents in this thesis, when excluded and marginalised groups such as hijras, kots or sex-workers have organised for individual and collective rights. Fraser (2000:107) cautions us that ‘identity’ driven campaigns and struggles “cover a wide range of aspirations, from the patently emancipatory to the downright reprehensible (with most falling somewhere in between) She worries about so many movements having to couch their claims in the idiom of recognition in this era of accelerated globalisation, post the demise of Soviet-style communism (ibid:107). She attributes the displacement of the politics of redistribution by recognition-based identity politics to exacerbating economic inequality wherein respectful interaction is replaced with separatism, intolerance,
chauvinism, patriarchalism and authoritarianism (ibid:108). Reified group identities need to recognise the need to “accommodate the full complexity of social identities,” so that they “can be integrated with struggles for redistribution.” (ibid:109)

As we will see in later chapters, the categorisation of women as mere victims leads to a crisis both at the level of feminist theory and practice, because on the one hand we deny women agency and, on the other hand we are encountered with women that perpetuate violence against other women, men or children, largely based on intersecting identities of caste, class, religion, marital status, sexuality, age or ability. Besides, the victims of one kind of violence may simultaneously be perpetrators of another kind of violence (Ghosh 2007), such as a battered wife beating her children, a refugee husband abusing his wife, or a lesbian woman dominating another on the basis of class. Collins (2000:287) argues that such contradictions exist because single-identity approaches fail to recognise “that a matrix of domination contains few pure victims or oppressors.” She believes that the first step towards change in the inter-personal domain occurs when we begin with the intrapersonal journey of understanding our own oppression. However, unless we analyse the ways in which our own “thoughts and actions uphold someone else’s subordination” (Collins ibid), we cannot begin to challenge the interpersonal matrix of domination. Taking this step paves the way to resist identification with a single oppression (usually our own) and to build solidarity with those who are different from us.

**Intersectionality**

The very fact that 'gender' clubbed together all women's experiences led women of colour to question this artificial homogenisation of women's experiences, especially since the white feminist experience subsumes difference among women (Mohanty 1988; 2003). In fact, Martin and Mohanty argue that the present feminist theorisation of gender has not even acknowledged the heterogeneity among white women in terms of class and other identities. They conclude that the implicit assumption that feminism is “adequate to the task of articulating the situation of white women” has remained unexamined (Martin et al., 1986). “What was being considered universal to women was in fact US - and England-based white middle-class specificity” (Ray 2012:8). Butler (1990) claims that it is impossible to separate out gender
from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained" because it "intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities" (ibid:3). [She claims that the term 'gender'] fails to be exhaustive, not because a pre-gendered 'person' transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts (ibid).

A companion question that arose when academic feminists from the second wave focused on women's experience as women was "which women's experience?" (Shields 2008). Niranjana (2004) has critiqued the early studies of the status of women in India that invariably obscured the cultural and contextual heterogeneity of women, whose attributes and activities have varied in relation to the diverse intersections of class, caste, age, kinship, region and so on (ibid:143).

Instead she argues in favour of understanding the ways in which hierarchy operates, "not just within caste society, but in a number of other social junctures as well" (ibid:142).

Demonstrating the distinct oppression of women of colour through the intersectionality of race, class and gender, the powerful argument of understanding gender in the context of other intersecting categories of analysis, identities and experience was put forward by Mohanty (1988), Crenshaw (1991), Collins (1991; 2000), Davis (1981, 2011) and other feminists, compelling white American feminists to forego the notion that gender could be used as a singular category of analysis. McCall’s observations, drawn from Davis’ earlier work, that black women on the one hand seemed to achieve more equality with their men because they were expected to work at par with black men in slavery, yet that they were more vulnerable to sexual violence because they were not worthy of protection as “women” (ibid:1780) resonates with the gender-caste matrix in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

McCall states that ever “since critics first alleged that that feminism claimed to speak universally for women, feminist researchers have been acutely aware of the

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106 Risman (2004) sums up the impact that concern with intersectionality has had on feminist work: “There is now considerable consensus growing that one must always take into consideration multiple axes of oppression; to do otherwise presumes the whiteness of women, the maleness of people of color, and the heterosexuality of everyone” (quoted in Shields 2008:303)
limitations of using gender as a single analytical category (McCall 2005:1771). The insistence of feminist scholars for the acknowledgement of the “intersections of gender with other significant social identities, notably race” led to the origin of the intersectionality framework (Moraga and Anzaldua 1981; Hull et al., 1982; Dill 1983; quoted in Shields 2008:302-303). As “the mutually constitutive relations among social identities”, intersectionality became a “central tenet of feminist thinking,” transforming how gender was discussed at the level of theory (Shields 2008:301). It underscored the belief that gender had to be understood in the context of power relations embedded in social identities (Collins 1990, 2000); thus the “theoretical foundation of intersectionality grew from study of production and reproduction of inequality, dominance and oppression” (Shields 2008:303).

Intersectionality exposed the ways in which Black women’s experiences and lives were erased in the single-axis analysis of gender and race; both in antidiscrimination law in the USA, and which was also reflected in feminist theory and antiracist politics (Crenshaw 1991). Crenshaw critiques law, early feminist writings (for example of Betty Friedan and Susan Brownmiller) as well as later feminist politics, arguing that women’s experiences have been portrayed to date through the eyes and experiences of middle-class feminists from privileged sections of society. Crenshaw argues in favour of feminist theories and strategies including an analysis of race, and Black activism including an analysis of sexism and patriarchy (ibid:167). She cites the feminist discourse on rape in the USA as being race-blind because

rape statutes generally do not reflect male control over female sexuality, but white male regulation of white female sexuality. Historically, there has been absolutely no institutional effort to regulate Black female sexuality. Courts in some states had gone as far as to instruct juries that unlike white women, Black women were not presumed to be chaste (ibid:157).

...when Black women were raped by white males, they were being raped not as women generally, but as Black women specifically. Their femaleness made them sexually vulnerable to racist domination, while their Blackness effectively denied them any protection (ibid:158-159).

These observations are reflected in the FGDs in Chapter 4, wherein subordinated women are always expected to remain accessible to men from dominant sections
without much recourse to redress or justice in case of unwanted sexual advances (see Kishwar 1999). Yet, ironically women and men from subordinated groups are by default considered unchaste and dishonourable, and mere association with them can defile women from dominant groups, bringing dishonour to the latter’s families.

Intersections create oppression as well as opportunity, with people gaining benefits through certain intersections and losing out through others (Shields 2008:302). This potential of “multiple and conflicting experiences of subordination and power” needs a “wide-ranging and complex terrain of analysis” (McCall ibid). Even though intersectionality has emerged as a major paradigm of research among women’s studies, there has been little discussion on how to study it. This poses a methodological challenge (McCall ibid: 1771). Crenshaw’s insistence about “placing those who currently are marginalized in the center” being the most effective way to resist efforts to compartmentalize experiences and undermine potential collective action” (Crenshaw ibid) not only guides the methodology of this thesis but it is also a validation of my involvement with inclusive politics over the past few decades.

The Matrix of Domination

Collins was among the first feminist scholars to demonstrate that issues of intersectionality of gender, race, class, and nation are not distinctive social hierarchies, but that they mutually construct each other, making it imperative for gender to be theorised in the context of power relations embedded in social identities (Collins 1990). Addressing the intersections of the family, gender, race and the nation (Collins 2001), she challenged the normative conjecture of the white traditional family as a heterosexual couple, producing biological children and functioning under the authority of the earning father, with women performing gendered roles within the private domain. She refuted the idealised notion of the traditional family as a model of equality with the strong caring for the weak, and each one contributing and benefitting according to each member’s capacity and needs. Instead she quotes McCintock (1995:45) to argue that the family creates “hierarchy within unity” and thus becomes
indispensable for legitimising exclusion and hierarchy within nonfamilial social forms such as nationalism, liberal individualism and imperialism (McClintock 1995 in Collins 2001:64).

The collaboration of the family with formal institutions, and the ‘naturalisation’ of hierarchy in the public domain as an effect of socialisation within the family, masks socially constructed arrangements of race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, nation and social class as ‘natural,’ because of one’s upbringing within the family (Collins ibid). My field-work (especially Chapter 4) highlights how children are socialised into gender and caste roles through observations of inter-personal dynamics within the family and village. Patriarchy, caste and other systems of domination become ‘instinctive’ to people from all sections of the village.

Collins’ analysis about white people being treated as intellectually developed adults and people of colour as underdeveloped recalcitrant children needing control is also applicable to caste and gender relations within my village setting. Pervasive violence, whether against women within the private domain or against subordinated groups in the public domain is ‘naturalised,’ and the actual or implicit use of force to maintain unequal power relations is justified. Questioning the legitimacy and right of subordinated groups to speak in public, or unleashing backlash when women strive for equality are part of this village-family honour syndrome, pointing to similarities between caste-segregated public spaces and gender-segregated private spaces. While dominant groups have a strong ‘family boundary’ into which people can enter only by invitation - or else they would be intruders (ibid:67), subordinated groups do not have this ‘privilege’. Thus the gaze of dominant groups can easily penetrate into the homes of the subordinated, but the reverse would constitute a serious breach of caste and village honour.

The geo-politics, whether of the home, the village or the nation state thus form a continuum within which ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ are determined on the basis of gender, caste, religion, occupation, gender-identity or sexuality. Segregation, exclusion or discrimination of the latter is thereby rationalised. The distinctness of families, castes, religions and nations being dependent on blood-purity, makes women from all groups the ‘natural’ and primary bearers of responsibility in

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107 see Chapters 4 and 5
108 see Louis Dumont for more information on caste hierarchies, and M.N. Srinivas on religion and society.
maintaining clear boundaries between the above categories. This end is achieved through the vigilantly controlled sexual conduct of women and endogamous marriage (Ambedkar, quoted in Rege 1998). I suggest that norms and codes of honourable behaviour abet the ‘othering’ of individuals, castes and religions,\(^{109}\) by pointing out dissimilarities in blood-lines; by evoking ancestral history; and, by jogging inter-generational memory to identify instances of sexual transgressions and ‘blood-mixing’. Inter-caste/religious marriages as well as elopements are considered dangerous because they blur the boundaries of Self and the Other, making social control over women and subordinated groups difficult.

Collins refers to the interlocking systems of oppression resulting into a complex ‘matrix of domination,’ in which each distinct system of oppression is part of one over-arching structure of domination (Collins 1990). She argues against using any one category (in this case gender), and then merely adding in other variables such as age, sexual orientation, race, social class and religion. This paradigm shift allows one not only to understand the intersectionality of domination, but also that of resistance (ibid: 221). New ways of knowing “allow subordinate groups to redefine their own reality” (ibid: 221) and this wisdom adds to our own understanding of social relations of domination and struggle. Collins explains this phenomenon by pointing out that

\[\text{In addition to being structured along axes such as race, gender and social class, the matrix of domination is structured on several levels. People experience and resist oppression on three levels: the level of personal biography; the group or community level of the cultural context created by race, class and gender; and the systemic level of social institutions (Collins ibid:222)}\]

\(^{109}\text{see Stewart 1994 for the concept of ‘honour groups’}\)
Section Four
Women’s Agency and Resistance

Understanding Agency

As the feminist movement consolidated itself (Chacko 2001; Khullar 2003), the semantic differences between agent (as a representative, having close link with the structure / institution) and actor (signifying the dialectical relation between the structure and agency) as well as the public-private dichotomy between these terms began to be questioned. The notion of individual and collective agency became acceptable.\(^{10}\) Abrams (1999) understands agency in the context of group-based oppressions, especially when she argues that “agency manifests itself in various forms of self-definition and self-direction” and that it should not be understood as only being collective in nature. Besides it can be “directed towards cultural, political as well as individual targets Proverbs, songs and many forms of cultural idiom encountered during field work suggest that women consciously or unconsciously shuttle between understanding their predicaments as an individual experience, and also by the fact of ‘being woman’.

Emirbayer et al., (1998) conceptualise human agency as a process of social engagement which is informed by the past in terms of experience or habit, and oriented towards the future (in terms of imagining alternative possibilities) as well as towards the present in which past habits and future projects are contextualised “within the contingency of the moment.” (ibid:963)\(^{11}\) People constantly engage in a “practical evaluation” of what one can do or not do, such as choose among the lesser evils, for instance. Thus, acts

are never accomplished once and for all, but rather are subject to continual reevaluation in light of the shifting and multidimensional character of human motivation and social relationships (ibid: 989).

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\(^{10}\) Conversation with Sharmila Rege, January 2010

\(^{11}\) the actor’s relationship to the past is based upon a characterization of a given situation against the background of past patterns of experience; and the relationship to the future is characterized by deliberation over possible trajectories of action, in which actors consider alternative hypothetical scenarios by critically evaluating the consequences of implementing these within real-life situations (ibid: 998).
Chapters 5 and 6 highlight ways in which people pretend to conform, misrepresent their agency, or work around the system when they cannot face it headlong. When collective power is gathered they seize the opportunity to shake up the structure. Scott argues that historical and archival evidence favours hegemonic accounts of power relations because “short of actual rebellion, powerless groups have...self-interest in conspiring to reinforce hegemonic appearances” (Scott 1990: xii). The forward and backward journey of confronting structures with contemporary acts of transgression or resistance, documented through Chapters 4-6 takes place because the process of domination generates a hegemonic public conduct and a backstage discourse consisting of what cannot be spoken in the face of power (ibid).

Scott cautions us about the need to examine the social sites where resistance germinates because “ideological resistance can grow best when it is shielded from direct surveillance” (ibid:xii). Scott refers to such disguised “tactics of resistance” within diverse contexts of subordination such as patriarchal and caste domination, slavery, serfdom, colonialism and racism, to show that subordinated groups maintain an official or “public transcript” in the presence of the oppressors and reveal the “hidden transcript” only to insiders or whom they trust. The cryptic codes of behaviour among hijras (Chapter 5) and the whispered sneers of subordinated groups in Chapter 4 when their son marries a girl from the dominant group exhibit this careful double-speak.112

**Recognition of Women’s Agency**

Contrary to prevalent belief, women are not silent victims, but rather, they constantly engage in myriad ways to address patriarchal power and honour. Women’s agency may not always follow ‘feminist lines’, yet most women do survive and cope through the difficult situations in their lives through various combinations of negotiations, transgressions, manipulations, compliance, silences, collaborations and whenever possible, rebellions. Chakravarti (2003) encapsulates what has emerged out of feminist enquiries and interventions, stating that it is fairly evident that that women are not passive recipients of forces acting upon their lives but deploy their agency in a variety of ways....we need to remember

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112 also see interview with Malan in Chapter 6 for misrepresentation of agency
that agency does not exist in a vacuum; to a large extent ideological and material structures shape the way agency can be expressed (Chakravarti ibid:144).

Political agency of women within most movements from the left to the right wing in India as well as in nationalist struggles is well known through the work of feminist scholars and activists (Evans 1979; Sen 1990). Kumar (1993) has examined the foregrounding of the ‘women’s issue’ during the reform and nationalist movements, and its subsequent disappearance from the agenda public debate until the post independence period of the sixties and seventies when it surfaced again. In some instances, such as in Bodhgaya in Bihar, or Shahada in Maharashtra, a strong women’s agenda was added to the struggles of peasants and landless people (Sen 1990; also Vindhya 1990). Yet, while women have participated to the fullest extent in liberation movements, their issues have not been central to most struggles in India (Ray 2012; Sen 2012). In fact women’s issues, especially feminist ones have been viewed with suspicion and disdain, and have been regarded as being divisive and irrelevant to the Indian context (Sen 1990). Restrictive sexual mores and the control of romantic or sexual behaviour have been part of many movements, with political groups taking on the role of the institution of the family in terms of maintaining the honour of the group - arranging or breaking up marital alliances, deciding upon the number of children of their cadres, or about placing ultimatums upon women members to decide between raising children or giving them up, and joining the frontier of the struggle (ibid). Many movements have essentialised women’s nurturing qualities, romanticised women’s intrinsic relationship with nature, or for that matter, peace (ibid).

Feminist consciousness came largely through working on domestic violence, sexual politics - within the political group as well as inside the family, and through the realisation that class or caste analyses didn’t provide adequate answers to women’s oppression within the home or in intimate relationships. Ironically, individual grief, loss and the experience of (often lost) motherhood created bonds with other women, sometimes from the enemy ranks as well. Issues that affected women differently also created solidarity amongst women from diverse party lines. Whatever be the reason for politicisation, the involvement lead to an irreversible change in their own

\[113\] Chipko movement as well as Vandana Shiva
personalities, resulting in never wanting remain 'just' a housewife or mother anymore. In India too, political parties of all shades have mobilised women, both as cadres and as voters; thus women's agency has grown through the efforts not only of feminist groups, but also of gender-neutral or anti-feminist tendencies (Choudhry 2008).

All agencies may not be progressive. Butalia (2001) contends that as feminists we need to accept the fact that the increased polarisation between religions and communities has resulted in women and men seeking protection from within; often trading rights for security.\textsuperscript{114} She also argues that we can't put conditions on women's access to public spaces, even if they are being dangerously constructed through identity politics.\textsuperscript{115}

In the context of crimes in the name of honour especially, where we find women's active connivance before, through and after the crime, we are forced to accept that agency can also actively collaborate with the structures of gender, caste or religion. Butalia notes how communalism, in spite of being a patriarchal ideology, gives women a sense of agency, drawing them out in great numbers to participate in the agenda of divisive and violent hate politics (Sarkar 1995). The ideology of 'othering' and social exclusion based on religion (see Patel 1987) or caste helps in keeping women in their designated roles by fear-mongering "about the dangers they suffer from the 'other' community" and the necessity therefore of preserving the boundaries of their own community (Butalia 2001). The mass involvement of women in right wing violent politics has made it clear that there is no "overarching commonality of experience" that unites women because they are divided along the lines of caste, class and religion (Butalia 2001:102). Sisterhood solidarity came under fire when thousands of women marched to denounce the protests by secular women's groups against the so-called sati of Roop Kanwar, a young woman in

\textsuperscript{114} Razia Patel (2009) found this feeling to exist among Indian Muslim women post 1990s, when they said that the most pressing needs for them now were safety, security and life

\textsuperscript{115} Women in conflict areas are widely known to join the ranks of insurgents and militants, and women in Kashmir, mainly widows have resorted to becoming prostitutes or couriers for the security forces (ibid 2001:111); both of which have their own dangers. Women also get caught between the army or para-military of the state, often having to pay for the involvement of their menfolk in militancy. On the other hand, they are targeted by the insurgents for 'siding with the enemy'. Nationalist movements place the markers of their nascent identity through dress, behaviour and sexual codes upon women, punishing transgression with abduction and even death.
Rajasthan. Similarly when Muslim women marched in large numbers on the streets in the 1980s to protest\textsuperscript{116} against the Supreme Court's judgement to grant maintenance rights to Shahbano, a 75 year old Muslim women, it became clear that women from different religions were taking a stand in favour of their 'culture and tradition' and were questioning, in a very strident and violent manner, any interference in the same (ibid:105). Feminists may have labelled this mobilisation of women as being misguided or coerced by the men and male spokespersons from their communities; yet, right wing women have officially existed in India for decades, and women have also participated in violent campaigns, in spite of being victims of communal politics themselves.

If we believe that agency or resistance in one area of life has the potential of triggering off another site of rebellion, then it is imperative that as we study or intervene, the voices and agency of women are not stifled, nor interpreted in ways that silence or disempower the subjects themselves. Raids on sex-workers and gross human rights violations in the name of rescue and rehabilitation\textsuperscript{117} are a case in point (SANGRAM 2007). Interviews with girls in rescue homes in this thesis are replete with expression of frustration and anger against authorities that keep young women in joyless confinement for years, even after having attained the age of maturity "for their own good". Bredal (2005, 2011) while citing the example of state and feminist 'package' interventions against forced marriages\textsuperscript{118} (and similar honour related violations) in immigrant groups, notes how the acceptance of discrimination in the name of multi-culturalism on the one hand, and the lumping and stigmatising of most practices of immigrants on the other, leads to disempowerment of victims, as well as justifies policing group behaviour and stricter immigration control (ibid). She asks European feminists to be aware that the women's rights discourse can be made use of for racist and discriminatory purposes (ibid:349).

Ambiguity about women's agency, and its innate tension with patriarchy and the State (Gandhi \textit{et al.}, 1992) are likely to affect campaigns that were initially conceptualised for women's rights. They may have unintended 'side-effects', such as

\textsuperscript{116} They claimed that the court had not right to interfere with Islamic law and that in the first place Shahbano should not have gone to the court regarding a matter that should have been guided by Islamic law

\textsuperscript{117} See Chapters 5 and 6 for experiences related to forced rehabilitation

\textsuperscript{118} See Gangoli for 'Understanding Forced Marriage: Definition and Realities' in Gill (ed.) 2011
for example the undesired control on women’s access to safe abortion in the name of curtailing sex-determination of the foetus (Gupte 2003). Chakravarti et al., (2008) narrate how the enforcement of the law against sexual harassment of women in the campus of Delhi University took an unlikely turn, with authorities relying on segregation of women, rather than on creating safe public spaces! Similar institutional honour was evoked when women medical students agitated in 1996 against sexual harassment by their thesis supervisor in Delhi. The matter was sought to be resolved quickly and privately; the complainants were chastised and dismissed from their jobs; and, the health minister of the state was reported to have scolded the complainants for sullying their own reputation in the marketplace (ibid:225).

**Agency in the context of patriarchal and caste honour**

Are the boundaries and structures governing caste and gender honour impermeable or flexible? Chapters 4-6 document the uneasy relationship and mixed feelings amongst men and women placed on different locations on the gender-caste matrix. Mutual uneasiness among wealthy urban women and their male domestic help have been reported, because the latter are alternately considered subservient and dangerously masculine (Chopra 2007). Such precarious encounters have also been documented in the context of black men and white women in the USA. In fact, the presence of so many proverbs that denote sexual inter-mingling, and the deep connections between casteist and patriarchal slurs are proof of the fact that sexual encounters women from dominant groups and subordinated men do occur. Kannabiran et al., (2002) also acknowledge that romantic or sexual relationships between upper caste women and lower caste men exist. Adding a twist to gender relations within caste and patriarchy, Dalit men who “having gained access to power, decide to adopt the methods of the upper castes in exercising this power.” (ibid:66-67) The attack on girls in pubs in Mangalore by working class boys from Ram Sene could be partially interpreted as lower middle class boys getting back at ‘modernised’ globalisation and upper castes, making “westernised” women from these groups the soft target, since a collective resistance to class and caste is not possible119 (The Hindu 2009). Conversely, the contempt of women from dominant

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119 In a personal conversation, Prof. Vibhuti Patel (Head, Dept. of Economics, SNDT University, Mumbai) reported what she had heard about the Mangalore attacks. The vandalising and molesting youth had said “What
castes for men from subordinated castes was evident in the anti-Mandal agitations, where female students carried banners about “their future husbands” being unemployed (Chakravarti 2003), implying that their husbands would necessarily come from their own or other upper castes.

One of the disturbing features of ‘honour’ related crimes is the complicity and active participation of women in rumour mongering, tension-building, abetting as well as in committing the crime (Karokhel 2006; Wikan 2008). The connivance of women in perpetrating these crimes upon other women provokes us to look beyond the fixed binaries of male oppressor / female victim. The fact that Dalit men and non-hegemonic masculinities are targeted in the name of honour also leads us to re-examine the caste-gendered-religious connotations of crimes in the name of honour.

Even in the absence of overt physical violence, women participate in controlling, monitoring and in punishing deviance or exercise of choice by younger women of the household, especially daughters and daughters-in-law, or even grown up sons. Women are also known to be mean to subordinated women and men especially those located on a lower class and caste hierarchy (Khare 2006). The rise of right wing women all over the world, including India and the violent politics and actions of women in times of riots, conflict situations, wars, terrorism or insurgency are issues that we as feminists are forced to grapple with all the time. Being aware that agency is constantly kept in checks and balances within dominating structures, we need to be aware that women’s violence is not an indicator of equality at all (Sjoberg et al., 2007). They argue that “the interests of women’s advancement will only be served when it converges with the interests of men in power, and will stop when it threatens male dominance.” Thus what might seem to be counter-hegemonic discourses may actually only “allow the hegemonic to decrease the appearance of hegemony (and thus the dissatisfaction of the subordinate other) without losing any power, dominance, absolute or relative” (ibid).

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120 During a gender training session, participants mentioned that a woman might feel reflected power and relief when her husband beats up or rapes someone else, for a change. We have seen women encouraging the men in the household to beat up other women, such as the daughter-in-law, sister-in-law or co-wife. Women pass sexually derogatory comments such as “I’ll put you under my husband” (“mahya navrya khaali ghaadin”) during quarrels with other women. Collaborating with him in a crime that could have put him in jail may increase her sense of power, and a hope of belonging and comradeship with her husband.
Section Five

Feminist Epistemology

Since 1970 feminists have theorised and challenged the assumptions of social sciences, freely crossing boundaries and giving shape to a new social criticism concerned with the difference of race, class, ethnicity, nationality and sexuality (Clough 1997). Personal narratives have been used by feminists (Sonalkar 2009) to explore the diversity and complexity of women’s reactions and perceptions to their own ‘life-worlds’ (Sizoo 1997). Established understanding of “objectivity” has been challenged by feminists (Haraway 1988), calling instead for “situated knowledges” grounded in the particularities of “limited” locations.

This thesis begins with the acknowledgement of the importance of standpoint feminism as theorised by Hartsock (1983) and Harding (2004), which is based on the Marxist ideology of production, arguing that one’s identity is linked to what one does (Hartsock ibid:154). Standpoint feminism challenges the hegemony of extant masculinist knowledge and posits that feminist social science should be practised from the point of view of women, especially subordinated women (Collins 2000). It allows women to challenge the idea of an essential truth, or the hegemonic notion of reality imposed upon by those in power upon the subordinated groups (Hartsock ibid; Durkheim 1956).

Standpoint feminism which claims that examining systemic oppressions is made possible through the lived experience of those that bear the oppression, came up for questioning by post-modern feminists, who argue that the lived reality of women is so diverse that it is impossible to generalise. Many proponents of standpoint feminism acknowledge this difference (Narayan 1989) and it is from here that the theories of intersectionality become pertinent and central to this thesis. Crenshaw’s challenge to legal, theoretical and strategic blind-spots of Black women’s lives realities, and Collins’ formulation of the ‘interlocking systems of oppression’ which form a ‘complex matrix of domination,’ remind us of the theorising by feminists in the 1980s in India on the double / triple burden and oppression\textsuperscript{121} of poor Dalit women. Rege 1998 postulates a Dalit feminist standpoint that is at once embodied

\textsuperscript{121} the triple oppression / burden of class, caste and gender
with the individual and collective life-experiences of the subject.\textsuperscript{122} Rege’s formulation resonates with the theorisation of intersectionality and interlocking systems of oppression formulated by Black feminist academicians, and allows for a subjective as well as objective understanding of experiences of racism theorised in the context of broader social inequalities. She points out that in India, the contribution and intervention of non-Brahminical women (see Bhagwat 1995b; Kamble 2008; Moon \textit{et al.}, 2008) that had the potential of anti-hierarchical and pro-democratic collective aspirations of the lower castes (including the massive participation of women in the anti-patriarchy and anti-caste movement of Dr. Ambedkar), were ignored in the “historiography which is dominated by narratives of nationalism” (Rege 1998). The intersectional analysis and theorisation of the intrinsic linkages of caste, patriarchy, sexuality and control over knowledge, so evident in the life-missions and writings of Jotirao and Savitribai Phule, and Ambedkar have not received adequate attention, both at the level of theory and strategy, leading to the absence of an analytical framework to “view caste hierarchies and patriarchies as intrinsically linked” (ibid). Rege stresses that it was through the assertion of autonomous dalit women’s organisations at both regional and national levels in the 1990s (which drew debates and responses both from left party-based as well as autonomous women’s groups) that “several crucial theoretical and political challenges, besides underlining the brahmanism of the feminist movement and the patriarchal practices of dalit politics” were thrown up. She emphasises that “the assertion of dalit Women’s Voices is not just an issue of naming their ‘difference’ as that would lead to a narrow identitarian politics. Feminist politics can be completely lost in the obsession of dismantling and deconstructing differences among women (Alcoff 1988 quoted in Rege ibid), unless accompanied with an analysis of the structures of racism, patriarchies, international division of labour and capitalism (Rege ibid). Using intersectionality and the complex matrix of domination as an analytical tool unravels the overt and nuanced ways in which domination operates, and underscores the need to reformulate our strategies for collective, emancipatory politics (Fraser 1989). In India this re-conceptualisation would necessarily include a critique of brahminical and upper-caste patriarchy.

\textsuperscript{122} also see Irudayam \textit{et al.}, 2006
However, the employment of standpoint theory is not without its own problems and limitations. Internal contradictions such as the difference amongst Black women on the basis of class, sexuality, ability or education cannot be subsumed; neither is a ‘pan African-American’ experience realistically probable while constructing a Black Feminist Epistemology. Similarly there is no one Dalit feminist standpoint (the term Dalit itself being contentious due to the political nature of the term and its unfixed caste, class, gender or sexual identity). As Datar (1999) in response to Rege’s article of 1998 argues, an ‘ecofeminist’ standpoint has equal or more liberatory potential than Dalit standpoint, because it challenges the very paradigm of modern, resource depleting development. She asserts that unless movements “interrogate industrial, technological paradigms which encourage urbanisation and centralisation” they would remain mainstream. She also cautions against considering Dalit feminism as being essentially more emancipatory, unless its struggle to abolish old hierarchies also includes resistance to the forces of globalisation and fundamentalism and loss of livelihoods because of environmental degradation (Datar ibid).

It is clear that no one standpoint can stand the scrutiny of like-minded as well as adversarial critics. This thesis uses standpoint feminism in order to resist considering individual life-stories and subjectivity as ‘the’ only valid experience on the one hand, and being indifferent to that experience on the other. People within a given culture would tend to see their culture as a taken for granted reality, and in order to interpret women’s experiences through transformative feminist methodology, women’s experience itself would need to be critically interrogated and reflected upon (Krishnaraj 2006).

This thesis has used the above theories as a methodology to understand different experiences in order to enrich feminist debate around strategy and practice, so that an inclusive and collective struggle against the domination of patriarchy and allied structures can be envisaged. It has used daily cultural codes to understand how this power affects differently placed women, and hopes to learn ways of resisting from those who have the individual and collective experience of doing so.

123 See Jasbir Jain (2011a) ed. ‘Women in Patriarchy’ for more insights on cross-cultural narratives.
Towards a liberatory and collective feminist power

Allen quotes From Max Weber to Robert Dahl (1957), and Foucault\(^\text{124}\) (1983) to explain how power has been understood as “power-over” someone in terms of its actual exercise; that is, to ask how free the other individual would be to carry out her / his own will in spite of resistance (Allen 2005). Some others have postulated power as capacity or potential, defining it as “a potentiality, not an actuality – indeed a potentiality that may never be actualized” (Lukes 2005 quoted in Allen 2005).

Often caste and gender relations exhibit power that is not always overtly stated, but imbibed through socialisation since childhood, and enacted through ‘normalised’ and almost invisible codes of acceptable or unacceptable public conduct.\(^\text{125}\) That power is a relation of domination (and unjust or oppressive to those over whom it is exercised) has been conceptualised by phenomenological feminists, socialist feminists as well as post-structuralist feminists (see Allen 2005, ibid for a detailed overview of these approaches). Allen argues that it is possible to identify three main ways in which feminists have conceptualised power: as a resource to be (re)distributed; as domination; and, as empowerment; both individual and collective. The first approach, mainly used within liberal feminism conceptualises power as a resource that has been unequally distributed amongst men and women; the goal being to redistribute this resource so that women have equal power to men (Young 1990:31, quoted in Allen 2005). Young critiques this way of understanding power, arguing that power cannot be possessed as a thing, but that it is a relation. It is not dyadic or atomised, but located within broader social, institutional and structural contexts. Contesting the distributive model of power, Young claims that power exists only in action, and thus must be understood dynamically, as existing in ongoing process or interaction (Allen ibid). Young’s critique of power being conceptualised as a static phenomenon, resonates with one of the major themes of

\(^{124}\) Feminists have also critiqued Foucault as being unable to explain why domination ought to resisted. Allen quotes others and argues that his “claim that the subject is an effect of power is incompatible with the demands of feminism as an emancipatory social movement”, and his “analysis of power fails to adequately theorise structural relations of inequality and domination that undergird women’s subordination”. She further says that “his analysis of power is not a theory of power for women because it does not examine power from the epistemological view of the subordinated”(Fraser 1989,13; Alcoff 1990; Benhabib 1992; Benhabib et al., 1995; Harstock 1990 and 1996 – all quoted in Allen 2005).

\(^{125}\) See Chapter 4
this thesis. All the three field work chapters resoundingly point towards the constant dynamics between oppositional agents and actors, and the ways in which power is negotiated.

Socialist feminists, mainly from the second wave moved beyond the traditional Marxist account based on the model of class exploitation, supplementing it with the radical feminist critique of patriarchy, resulting in a 'dual systems theory,'\textsuperscript{126} that accepts the presence of two distinct and relatively autonomous systems (namely capitalism and patriarchy). This has the potential to lead towards "a more unified theory, a truly feminist historical materialism that would offer a critique of society and social relations of power as a whole" (Young 1990b:24, quoted in Allen 2005). Young postulates that comprehensive socialist feminism identifies five faces of oppression: economic exploitation; socio-economic marginalization; lack of power or autonomy over one's work; cultural imperialism; and, systematic violence (Young 1992). Being subjected to any one of these forms of power is sufficient to call a group oppressed; however, most subordinated groups suffer more than one of these manifestations of power (ibid).

In spite of the fact that most feminist theorising deals with power as domination (namely the masculinist notion of 'power-over'), feminists from a variety of theoretical backgrounds have also argued for a reconceptualisation of power as a capacity or ability; specifically, the capacity to empower or transform oneself and others. They understand power also as ‘power-to’ or ‘power-with’ (Allen 2005). Allen offers a 'feminist conception of power' by weaving together insights from Michel Foucault, Judith Butler and Hannah Arendt, emphasising "a dialectical relationship between subjects who are endowed with the capacity to act and the discursive and non-discursive forces to which they are subjected" (Allen 1999:121). She argues against the oppositional ‘power-as-domination’ and ‘power-as-empowerment’ models that yield one-sided views of power, contending that all the key "power terms" may be present in the same situation\textsuperscript{127} (ibid:128-129). Finally Allen reiterates the need for more and continued feminist work on power, especially

\textsuperscript{126} Eisenstein 1979 and Hartmann 1980 quoted in Allen 2005

\textsuperscript{127} See Chapter 6 for more discussion on this aspect
in order to continually refine feminist conceptions of domination “in the light of the ever-changing social, cultural and historical circumstances” (Allen 2005).

The life-experiences of activist respondents associated with progressive women’s organisations show how they have used this approach in their strategies for collective action, in order to challenge and reject the hierarchal and hegemonic male-dominated power structures within their communities. Hartsock (1983) refers to the understanding of such power “as energy and competence rather than dominance” and as “the feminist theory of power.” This conceptualisation, in Hartsock’s view helps us understand why women’s accounts of power differ in specific and systematic ways from those put forward by men….such a standpoint might allow us to put forward an understanding of power that points in more liberatory directions (ibid:226)
Section Six

Need for present study

The terrible nature of honour related crimes has precipitated interventions both from the State as well as from progressive organisations. The main focus of feminist activists and scholars in India has been on the violent aspects of honour [PUDR 1993; Chowdhry 1996, 1997, 2007; AALI 2003; Prakashan (AIDWA) 2004; Chakravarti 2005; Hameed 2006; MASUM 2006; Dasgupta 2008], even though most have been conscious of the intersection of honour with caste, gender, class and other systems of domination. Most work has happened during the past two decades; in fact, except in studies on the partition of India, the term ‘honour’ does not feature in the indices of most texts, including in early second wave feminist studies related to embodiment of violence. Studies and interventions have focused on family, caste and community honour, especially when women’s autonomy in the realm of sexuality or heterosexual marriage has been threatened (AALI ibid). Much of this work has been conducted in specific locations in Northern India. As of yet, we have no data to show the prevalence of honour related crimes in India (Chowdhry 2007), but we know that such crimes and abuses\textsuperscript{128} occur in most parts of the country.

Since most studies focus on violent episodes, they may lead the reader to perceive the protagonist as a quintessential victim. Similarly, though individual or collective feminist interventions have been documented, individual stories about the survivors or conscientised women’s agency have not been adequately documented. This thesis is therefore based largely upon life-stories of people, and it is through those vignettes that a relatively ‘whole’ person would have the possibility to speak out not only about victimhood, but also about agency and collaboration.

More work is needed to understand covert manifestations of honour related violations on a day to day basis. Does adherence to culturally understandable codes of behaviour actually deflect the need for overt violence from patriarchal institutions? What role do ‘non violent’, mundane transactions play in strengthening material and ideological domination over women within patriarchy? Can honour be studied to understand insidious patriarchal power as it operates in almost invisible

\textsuperscript{128} these may range from emotional rejection, emotional blackmail, verbal abuse and locking up or starving a person to physical violence, rape or murder.
ways that seem innocuous, but have enormous consequences for women throughout their lives? Is the concept of honour a useful one to understand patriarchal controls as they intersect with caste, class, sexuality and other structures of domination, to dispossess, disenfranchise and de-legitimise people’s existence? Further, it is possible to appropriate the concept from its patriarchal connotation to denote personal conduct that is governed by an internal, ethical code of conduct; one that is intrinsic to all human beings? Wikan asks provocative questions, namely whether honour has now become ‘old-fashioned’ or redundant, and whether it would be possible to replace it with more contemporary words such as respect and recognition, that would suit women as well as men (Wikan 2008:54). Is it possible to envision the existence of an emancipatory and egalitarian notion of honour within the struggles of collectives of subordinated and marginalised groups that question the hegemony of oppressive structures? The search for such a non-hierarchal and ethical honour seems exhilarating and worth undertaking.

Based on the literature search, I argue that it is important to understand honour within the context of power, control and domination and not as a mere cultural phenomenon. When studied beyond marriage, sexual engagement or crimes, we may be able to comprehend how it operates even on a day to day basis, through ideological domination. Honour needs to be studied in its intersection with patriarchy, caste, class, sexuality and other systems of domination if we wish to understand it as a concept. Honour simultaneously needs to be understood in the context of the subjects’ lived realities (Stewart 1994), through their life experiences, their world-view and resistances. Wikan recommends more empirical observations in the field to understand what happens in practice with relation to honour. She notes that honour has been studied more in the abstract rather “than as a living reality,” and since honour is a matter of deeds rather than words, she considers the social sciences as being “novices” when it comes to study honour in practice (Wikan 2008:62). Equally important is Burawoy’s call for a ‘public sociology’ that meets “the challenges of new and old patterns of inequality and domination,” and which brings academics and audiences beyond the academy into an “open dialogue” (Burawoy 2000, 2009). This thesis combines feminist theory that has transformed sociology by recognising what women do in their personal lives by making the “invisible visible,” (Burawoy 2002) with reflexivity, public accountability (Burawoy
2003) and an epistemology that is derived out of women's lived realities (Collins 1991).

The aim of the thesis is not as much to resolve but to problematise the ways in which we look at honour; the ways in which it affects people within gender and caste; and, the ways in which people respond. The work would reiterate the fact that binaries don't explain but in fact blur understanding, and that agency is possible even within the worst forms that subordinating structures take on. By attempting to apply the theories of intersectionality and matrix of domination to Indian patriarchies, the thesis is expected to be of some value for feminist practice, especially that related to violence against women.