

THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ECONOMY OF **SEX SELECTION**

Exploring Family
Development Linkages

MARY E JOHN

Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi with assistance from UN Women and UNFPA



United Nations Population Fund





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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSR	Child Sex Ratio	MCom	Master of Commerce
OBC	Other Backward Class	MSc.	Master of Science
PNDT	Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques	BCom	Bachelor of Commerce
SRB	Sex Ratio at Birth	BSc	Bachelor of Science
FASDSP	Forum Against Sex Determination and Sex PreSelection	MBBS	Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery
RWAs	Resident Welfare Associations	BAMS	Bachelor of Ayurveda Medicine and Surgery
UPSC	Union Public Service Commission	MD	Maharshi Dayanand University
MPSC	Maharashtra Public Service Commission	University	
SC	Scheduled Caste	NCR	National Capital Region
MPhil	Master of Philosophy	NET	National Eligibility Test
B.Ed.	Bachelor of Education	SET	State Eligibility Test
PhD	Doctorate of Philosophy	MBA	Master of Business Administration
IIT	Indian Institute of Technology	MCA	Master of Computer Applications
BA	Bachelor of Arts	NCRPB	National Capital Region Planning Board
MA	Master of Arts	GDP	Gross domestic product
M Ed	Master of Education	PPPS	Public Private Partnerships
LL.M	Bachelor of Laws	IMTs	Industrial Model Townships
NSS	National Sample Survey	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
MIDC	Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation	NSDP	Net State Domestic Product
NHFS	National Family Health Survey	NSS	National Service Schemes
PCPNDT Act	Pre-Conception & Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act	GSDP	Net Gross Domestic Product
DNTs	Denotified Tribes	EC	Economic Census
UCs	Upper Castes	BBBP	Beti Bachao Beti Padhao
BE	Bachelor of Engineering	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CHAPTER 1 • INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This is a study of the adverse child sex ratio (CSR) conducted during 2015–17, and builds on existing research on the subject, especially the study conducted by John et al. (2008) which investigated the adverse child sex ratio in five districts of north west India in the wake of the Census 2001 findings on CSRs. The sites of the study are entirely urban, in the towns of Rohtak and Jhajjar in Haryana, and Shirur and Beed in Maharashtra. Haryana is known for its long history of adverse CSRs while Maharashtra has received renewed attention after Census 2011 showed further declines.
- 1.2 The Methodology was multi stage and multi sited, involving both a survey and intensive semi-structured interviews. Approximately 800 female respondents with at least one child and no child above the age of 30 years were surveyed per state and 80 in depth interviews per state were undertaken, with a special focus on girl only families.
- 1.3 The field sites were chosen based on Census Ward information, with two wards per urban location, with different class and caste characteristics. The Haryana sites were more sharply divided by class and caste than in the case of Maharashtra. Haryana was almost entirely Hindu while the Maharashtra sites had small proportions of Buddhists and Muslims.
- 1.4 Caste distribution demonstrated the prominence of Jats in the better off Haryana sites and Scheduled Castes (mainly Balmikis) in the poorer sites. In Maharashtra caste distribution was more heterogeneous, with a prominent mix of Marathas, Vanzaris and Scheduled Castes (mainly Mahars).

CHAPTER 2 • THE STATUS OF THE FEMALE RESPONDENTS

The second chapter explores in some detail the various characteristics of the female respondents, focussing in particular on education, work and marriage as key indicators for setting the context for an analysis of the political and social economy of sex selection.

- 2.1 **Age of the respondents** varied between 20 and 60 years, with most of the respondents in the 20–40 years age group. Some Wards were “younger” than others.

- 2.1.1 **Area of birth and migration** revealed high levels of migration by the respondents from surrounding rural areas to the towns in search of better opportunities for themselves and their children. Maharashtra sites displayed small proportions of urbanisation in that some respondents were born in the same or neighbouring towns.
- 2.2 **Education:** Education occupies a very critical place in the lives of the respondents and is the most obvious indicator of change across generations. There are distinct variations across the sites and by class and caste, with very strong correlations by caste and education in the Haryana sites and less so in Maharashtra. Voices from the interviews bring out the degree of struggle involved for several women in gaining an education, with small numbers suffering the lack of basic schooling.
- 2.3 **Marriage:** All respondents were married.
- 2.3.1 In Haryana the number of those who reported marrying outside conventional norms were miniscule, including cases of separation, while a small number reported love and inter-caste marriage and separations/divorce in the Maharashtra sites.
- 2.3.2 **Age at Marriage:** Significant proportions in all the sites are marrying below the age of 18 years, which is corroborated by Census data at the macro level. This is noteworthy and a source of concern insofar as these are not states associated with low ages of marriage and the respondents are in urban locations.
- 2.3.3 **Voices from the interviews** articulated strongly held yet anxiety laden views that echoed social norms and conventions relating to marriage, but within a context of experiencing palpable change around them. Marriage is quite clearly perceived to be a compulsory institution, for almost everyone, even those who have known bad or violent marriages in their families. One significant sign of this tension could be seen around questions of choice and consent in marriage. While the former was widely rejected, the question of consent was perceived to be a valid one. The days of forcing a marriage were said to be over. These matters will return more forcefully in Chapter four on children.
- 2.3.4 **Male Marriage Squeeze:** No actual case emerged in any of the sites of the study, of men or sons unable to find local brides. Quite unexpectedly, the male marriage squeeze due to a shortage of brides figured much more prominently among upper caste respondents in Beed in Maharashtra than in Haryana. Haryana respondents referred to this as a problem in the rural villages they had left behind, where women had to be brought from elsewhere for some men who were poor, unemployed or over age. These women either stayed under adverse conditions or ran away.
- 2.4 **Work and Employment:** As is the case in urban India more generally, women's work participation rates are very low across all the sites. The largest proportion are housewives. The low work participation rates of women in urban areas is an extremely significant issue, including the very meagre range of options available. Teaching emerges as the single most common job among those who are employed in Haryana while teaching, tailoring and paid domestic work are shared across the Maharashtra sites. Casual self-employment was the largest type and nature of occupation across all the sites, for both the well off and poor.
- 2.4.1 **Housework:** The majority had someone to help them, but significant proportions of respondents in nuclear families with young children were doing all the housework themselves. Paid domestic work is only used to a very limited extent even among the middle-class respondents, so that women rely on other family members mainly daughters for help, followed by mothers-in-law.
- 2.4.2 **Voices from the interviews on women's employment** reveal the extent to which it was difficult to find jobs whatever their qualifications. For many of the poorer Scheduled Caste

women, working was done out of necessity, involving stigmatised labour such as sanitation work and paid domestic work. While for some it was normal to be a full-time housewife, and their time was spent entirely on household work and family care, others looked for avenues of employment, more so in Maharashtra. Contrasts in types of work are by class and caste, especially in Haryana.

- 2.4.3 **Husbands' Employment:** A small proportion of women who were widowed or separated did not therefore have husbands. Among husbands, very small numbers were reported to be unemployed. Men predominated in the category of self-employment across class, ranging from shops and business to petty self-employment. Other significant categories were social services, professional services and teaching, and industrial work. The major contrast with respect to employed women is that most men's work was regular unlike the high degrees of casualisation among those women having some kind of job fetching an income.

CHAPTER 3 • **FERTILITY AND THE GIRL ONLY FAMILY**

Chapter three moves from the background of the respondents to her family and more specifically to the number and sex composition of children. This is the context for beginning a detailed exploration of the adverse child sex ratios of the different sites and their variations by class, caste and education of the mother. The critical centrality of girl only families in understanding the problematic of the skewed sex ratio is introduced and explained in this chapter.

- 3.1 **Children and Family Type:** In these urban sites an interesting finding is the strong prominence of nuclear families in all the sites (more than half). Smaller proportions (about one fourth) are living with in-laws. In Maharashtra about 5 per cent are cases of the ghar jamai, where the family is living with the woman's parents, but this is all but absent in Haryana.
- 3.2 **Fertility:** Macro and Survey Data: Fertility patterns play a very central role in any discussion of skewed child sex ratios in the contemporary context. What is particularly critical is the close relationship between fertility declines and adverse child sex ratios. Against the backdrop of Census and NFHS fertility data on the urban districts of the study sites, it becomes evident that with average fertility rates between 2 and 3 in all study sites, the small family with its two child norm has arrived, in spite of all the considerable variation of class and caste that characterise the study sites.
- 3.3 **Number of Siblings in Respondents' Family:** Based on interview data moreover, significant drops are perceptible from the number of siblings of respondents to their own families, and the greatest drops are visible in the poorest sites.
- 3.4 **Mortality:** There are very low infant and child mortality rates in all the sites, with the exception of the poorest site in Haryana with excess male mortality. Mortality is therefore not contributing to the current sex ratio imbalance as has been the case elsewhere or at earlier times.
- 3.5 **Abortions and Miscarriages:** At the survey stage, respondents reported miscarriages and abortions due to health related reasons but not for reasons of sex selection. Poorer wards had somewhat higher rates.
- 3.6 **Son Preference and Daughter Aversion from the Survey:** Son preference and daughter aversion are posing new challenges in a situation where the small family of one boy and one girl is not just a norm but is being realised in practice. The seemingly egalitarian claim of one boy and one girl, hides more muted forms of son preference and daughter aversion, more visible in the Haryana sites than in Maharashtra.
- 3.7 **Sex Composition of Families:** Child sex ratios are very low or low in all the Haryana sites. Only the Maharashtra sites show a greater range where some sites have even more girls than boys.

The analysis of adverse child sex ratios is discussed from three vantage points: a) changes in trends from older to younger cohorts, where Maharashtra shows a worsening and hence a more recent trend compared to Haryana; b) worsening of sex ratios by birth order, especially if the previous birth has been a girl; c) correlations of CSRs with other significant indicators, namely caste, class and education of the mother; and d) exploring the sex composition of families, one boy one girl; boy only families; girl only; and so on.

In Haryana there are few significant differences by caste, class or education of mother given that CSRs are already low on average. In Maharashtra the Scheduled Castes have the best CSRs and the OBCs the worst. CSRs worsen with the educational status of the mother.

The central argument of the study focusses on the significance of the sex composition of children as an indicator of a skewed sex ratio.

- 3.8 **Avoiding the Girl Only Family:** In a situation where the two child norm is being increasingly realised in practice and most people want a boy and a girl, daughter aversion is taking a more nuanced form, namely the degrees of avoidance of being a family with only girls. This avoidance is more pronounced in the Haryana sites than in Maharashtra, going by the survey data. It is clear that hardly anyone is prepared to have a complete family with one or two daughters.

In Haryana, among illiterate and school going mothers it is the boy only family that has the largest proportion followed closely by one boy and one girl, while the reverse is the case for women with higher education. Maharashtra shows a small degree of acceptability of the girl only family, unlike Haryana. While the proportion of one girl and one boy families increases with education, the most educated also have slightly more boy only families.

- 3.9 **Girl Only Families:** Experiences from the Interviews: Extensive interviews with families with only girls (from those who were willing to be interviewed), revealed the following: Respondents find themselves either resigned to the fate that god has dealt to them or they provide various justifications for accepting their lot, including negative statements about sons who cannot be relied upon. On the one hand, families with just one or two daughters are still hoping for a son. In the case of larger families, especially in poorer Wards, it is evident that more daughters have been born than are wanted, who will suffer neglect and be married off early.

At the same time, there is also a sense that this may be a somewhat transitional situation, as the presence of daughter only families achieves more recognition among people. This can be gleaned to a greater extent in Maharashtra than Haryana, where a larger number of girl only families agreed to be interviewed and were also more forthright about their views.

- 3.10 **Sex Selection:** Views from the Interviews

It is only in the interviews that a further understanding of the place of sex selection in women's lives could be obtained. Respondents echoed a public discourse according to which sex selection has stopped and ought to be stopped, which is a shift from a decade ago. Most of those interviewed believed that the ban on sex determination testing was barely a few years old, which reveals that though the law has been in place since decades it has only very recently achieved some visibility via regulation and actions against a few doctors covered by the media. The vast majority were also in complete denial about sex selection. Some are closer to being disavowals, given knowledge of its possible criminal consequences if caught. People mostly provided politically correct or pat views as to why sex selection was a problem. With some probing, a small number did talk about sex selection, usually among other family members, colleagues and neighbours. A rare few also revealed their own experiences in considering or undergoing sex determination testing. It is evident that the practice has become more clandestine with rates having increased from around Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 30,000 in different places.

Chapter three shows that issues of fertility decline and the small family constitute the context within which families wish to exert some control over both the number and sex composition of their children. The egalitarian sounding claim of one boy and one girl conceals the complexity of current forms of son preference and daughter aversion, which is taking the form of avoiding being a girl only family. This avoidance cannot succeed without resort to gender biased sex selection, a practice that has now become clandestine in the sites under study. It remains to be seen whether the clandestine nature as well as the relatively high costs associated with availing of sex selective technologies from willing medical practitioners will have a sufficient impact on curtailing the practice. As of the time of this study, there is little evidence that this is the case.

CHAPTER 4 • **PLANNING CHILDREN'S FUTURES**

Chapter four takes the report further into questions as to how the respondents think about their children's futures, in order to obtain a sense of how "family planning" in a concrete sense is carried out. Given that families wish to exert some degree of control over the size and sex composition of their children, what more do they aspire for and to what extent in concrete form? This chapter looks at the three themes introduced already in chapter two in relation to the respondents' own lives, namely education, work and marriage, for daughters especially. Once again, the uneven relationship between these three in their interlocking nature becomes quite evident.

4.1 Education: Education – at least school education – has become normative if not compulsory for this cohort of children (aged 30 years or less) in comparison to their mothers, where there were significant levels of illiteracy as discussed in Chapter two. The gender differentials in terms of existing levels of educational attainment are particularly striking since they show overall higher levels of educational attainments among girls than boys, especially beyond high school. This is the case for both Haryana and Maharashtra.

4.1.1 How Much Education? Poorer Haryana families aspire for high school for their daughters, better off ones look for a college degree and if possible a postgraduate one. These degrees should be seen in relationship with girls' futures – planning for their marriages primarily, and are only vaguely related to possibilities of employment, as only a small percentage are looking for professional degrees (compared to sons). The pattern in Maharashtra indicates that what is most planned for daughters (more so than sons) is a graduate degree. Younger cohorts are much more active in this process with a significant gender gap at the level of schooling among poorer families, which is reversed at the graduate level and then reappears again at higher levels. Could it be that a graduate degree is considered the minimum qualification for marriage for families seeking upward mobility?

4.1.3 Daughters in Daughter only Families: While in Haryana it would appear that there is a slightly lower level of aspiration for daughters in girl only families, the opposite is the case in Maharashtra. This should be seen in relation with the fact that there are more such families in the Maharashtra sample, with some degree of acceptance.

4.1.5 Investments in Education: The majority in the Haryana survey did not wish to provide a figure for how much they were willing to set aside for their children's education, but amongst those who did, large sums were given and for both sons and daughters. In Maharashtra the majority saw the need to invest considerably in the education of both sons and daughters and to a similar extent.

4.2 Qualitative Views on Education of Children from the Interviews: The views obtained from the interviews open up several dimensions of the world of children's education and complement the statistical picture from the survey. Respondents talked about the kinds of schools they preferred for their children, the occasional gendering of these choices, from government schools

(largely denounced but not always), different kinds of private schools in both the Haryana and Maharashtra sites (with choice of medium of language being a significant issue in Maharashtra), to higher education and the lack of potential of their own cities and towns when it came to colleges and professional institutions. Distinctions of class are particularly stark across the sites, as has been seen on earlier occasions as well. Caste differences are sharp in Haryana with more heterogeneity in Maharashtra.

4.3 Jobs and Employment:

4.3.1 Existing Jobs for Children: Only small proportions of children had jobs given that they are below the age of 30 years, with huge gender differentials in chances of work between boys and girls, once again underscoring how deep the divide is when it comes to work. Daughters in Haryana who are working have hardly any opportunities apart from teaching, and only sons are finding work in the factories and companies of the National Capital Region. In Maharashtra the gender gaps are equally stark, with a mix of teaching, business and factory work for the few.

4.3.2 Future Job Prospects for Children: There appears to be a widespread desire for a definite type of employment – professional services, and this is more pronounced in the Maharashtra sample than in Haryana. Within this the most desirable job for one's child is a government job, with teaching as a second option. Given the close links of many families to agricultural incomes who have recently migrated from rural areas, no one articulated rural prospects for their children. The clear differences are those of class, caste and poverty, particularly visible in Haryana. Very few among the Scheduled Caste working class poor ventured to give expression to a desirable job whether for their sons or daughters.

The current developmental and economic context is not one that is enabling for making concrete and informed choices when it comes to jobs for children. Parents are investing in education to the extent they can afford it up to graduate and postgraduate degrees in the vague hope that a 'decent' salary in an urban job with status awaits at the end of the line.

4.4 Employment and Work for Daughters: Voices from the Interviews: It is clear from the interviews that future jobs are not on the horizon of families in the way that education is, especially when it comes to daughters. Anxiety around possible jobs for sons is offset in the case of daughters by considerations of marriage. So while no one was against the idea of daughters finding work, they also frequently indicated that this would be in the hands of future in-laws. Many also went on to say quite categorically that "there were no jobs" in their towns, beyond domestic work for those who were poor, factory work for those willing to endure the stigma, tailoring to augment family income and some often poorly paid teaching opportunities through clearing qualifying examinations. In the Maharashtra sample, there were more who articulated the middle-class desire for a "doctor and engineer" as good jobs for both sons and daughters.

4.5 Marriage: The question of marriage of children already entered prior discussions of education and work since these are intrinsically linked, especially, but not only for daughters.

4.5.1 Married Children and Age of Marriage: In the context of the survey, Haryana respondents did not express fears about the unmarriedability of sons, except perhaps for those who wanted to get them married early. No one openly reported that they wished to marry their daughters below the age of 18 years (though the interviews belied this, since some had indeed been married below 18). There appeared a sense of confidence among better off respondents with many saying that their daughters could be married at higher ages, up to 25 years. In Maharashtra imagined ages of marriage were higher, especially among younger cohorts.

4.5.2 **Existing Costs of Marriage:** In Maharashtra while there are those who claim next to no expenses or dowry payments at the time of marriage, a small proportion are prepared to mention large sums similar to those of Haryana respondents.

4.5.3 **Future Costs of Marriage:** In Haryana, the highest costs mentioned in the survey related to planned costs of marriage came mainly from respondents from the well-off Wards. So firstly, there is greater willingness to discuss marriage expenses and secondly, there is no major distinction between sons and daughters. Dowry for daughters is therefore not being offered as a distinct cost. In Maharashtra, the difference between sons and daughters is not much and there is no visible difference of dowry payments in the case of daughters. (Going by the answers in the interviews, it can also be surmised that dowry payments were not easily acknowledged in the survey format context). For those willing to make large payments for the wedding of their children, similar sums are involved whether it be a son or a daughter. So overall when it comes to marriage expenses there is a convergence between Haryana and Maharashtra.

4.5.4 **Views on Marriage from the Interviews:** Compared to the combination of uncertainty and vagueness in respondents' views on the employment prospects of their children, they were much more forthcoming and clear-headed about marriage. At the same time, their views often ranged far and wide, slipping from what they planned or expected for their own children to a more general commentary on marriage practices "these days". The marriage of children was by no means out of parents' hands, indeed, it continued to be the core mechanism whereby they completed their sense of responsibility towards children. The very small number who drew upon the language of individual choice as a positive development stood out all the more starkly. Caste endogamy, village exogamy (in Haryana), were the overwhelming norms, and the same prohibitions and permitted alliances (gotra prohibitions in Haryana and on going cross-cousin marriages in Maharashtra, for example) re-emerge in discussions about children. The question of consent for instance, was frequently mentioned alongside an acknowledgement that separation and divorces were now a reality in contemporary society. Hence the need to ensure as much compatibility in the "matching" of bride and groom as possible, for which the consent of the daughter and son were required.

Another finding from the interviews (which may be specific to families living in smaller towns) is that of marriage distance – many said that they wanted their daughters to marry nearby, often in the same town. Especially for daughters there is frequent discussion of the ideal son-in-law and across all the sites. Interestingly, among his first qualities is that he should have no addictions, which required careful probing into his background beyond the usual cross-checking of income, property and such like. In this context there is also the emergence of a new gender stereotype – that of the caring daughter, on the one hand, and the son, on whom no expectations should be placed, especially after his marriage, on the other. More importantly, the reasons for the need for a son have also undergone a shift: It is less in relation to parents (who even referred to "good for nothing sons") than for the sake of the daughter that sons are needed. The daughter, in other words, must have a brother, precisely because as parents they may not be there when daughters get older, and because in-laws are not an ultimate guarantee of future security and stability.

4.6.1 **Dowry:** Dowry and expenses related to marriage were quite a favourite topic among the respondents. Going by the range of views expressed, and with some differences across Haryana and Maharashtra, there is no obvious consensus around dowry. Given the kinds of pushes and pulls that characterise the marriage market which is so segmented by class and caste, it would be surprising if this situation did not find some reflection when it comes to

dowry, by which is meant, the range of payments in kind and cash that the bride's family gives to the family of the groom. On the one hand, many said that costs relating to marriage had gone through the roof, with dowries larger than ever. Indeed, dowry did not have to be transacted explicitly any more – the bride's side gave a combination of goods and cash without having to be asked. But, on the other hand, some said that dowry rates had come down and no longer being demanded. One respondent in Maharashtra even referred to money being given by grooms who were not faring well in the marriage market.

CHAPTER 5 • THE ELUSIVE LINKS BETWEEN FAMILIES AND DEVELOPMENT

The concluding chapter explores the notion of a social and political economy through the relationships that can be plotted between families and their decision making on the one hand, and the towns and regions within which they live, on the other. Minimal accounts are provided of the regions in question through the recourse to secondary literature by scholars and government reports.

5.1 Secondary Literature on Haryana: The background literature on Haryana provides some ideas in very broad strokes about its pattern of development. This is a state that saw considerable Green Revolution led prosperity, a lowering of poverty levels, and the rise of aspirations shaped strongly by urban desires. Yet the pattern of uneven and concentrated urban development has been quite mixed – on the one hand offering futures in the industrial and service sectors of the NCR Region, with corresponding migration and commuting, which in turn has spurred the high growth levels in the populations of Rohtak city and Jhajjar town. However, reductions in the dependency on agriculture are not being neatly matched by better jobs elsewhere. The city of Delhi itself is looking for ways to reduce further in migration and has been pushing many of its slum dwellers out of the metropolis. Even the dominant and largely better off Jats feel somehow cheated out of a better life, and are asking the state of Haryana to give them government jobs via a reservation policy. Government policies, while recognising the huge problem of unemployed youth, seem to be responding with promoting self-employment rather than avenues for more wage employment. This is the context within which the families in this study are planning the sex composition of their families and their children's futures.

5.2 Secondary Literature on Maharashtra: It is only possible to obtain a rather sparse sense of the local economies of towns like Shirur and Beed in relation to the larger developments of a major state like Maharashtra. Maharashtra, has, on the one hand, seen huge disparities in rural development as a predominantly rain fed region, while, on the other hand, it has been dominated by the financial and economic metropolis of Mumbai, and to a lesser extent of Pune. Shirur is a mid-sized town with its own industrial zone within Pune district, while Beed is the headquarters of a rural district in Marathwada known best for its sugar cane production, while having suffered several successive years of severe drought.

5.3 Respondents' Perceptions on Development from the Interviews: With some variation across Wards (with those from poorer wards much more pessimistic than those in middle class colonies), there is nonetheless a palpable sentiment that towns are not sufficiently developed nor offering their children the kinds of futures they are aspiring for. While towns may be relatively better when it comes to schooling and some basic facilities, they are found wanting at the levels of higher education and for job prospects.

5.4 Linking Families and Development: It is perhaps not coincidental that the secondary literature reviewed above on Haryana and Maharashtra (however sparse) and the views of ordinary women who live in the study sites mirror one another so closely. Links between families and development is discussed in three interconnected ways: firstly, the unequally interlocking spheres of education,

work and marriage in the life trajectories of mothers and daughters; secondly, the relatively new phenomenon of the girl only family in the era of sex selection; and finally, the emergence and crystallisation of a new gender stereotype around sons and daughters.

5.4.1 Education, Marriage and Work: The unequal and uneven relationships between education, work and marriage, already palpable in chapter two on the respondents are even more evident in the lives of children and planning for them. Education was the most positive development, often involving migration and determination, especially for daughters. Just how much education is possible is deeply structured by caste and class. The links between education and marriage are profound and multivalent – the right kind of education would help secure a good marriage. On the other hand, marriage could also disrupt an education to be married off. The weakest link of all is the one between education and work. For the very poor, work is a matter of necessity where education played a limited role. Even those armed with several degrees and preparing for qualifying exams often found themselves condemned to being housewives or obtaining small earnings through home tuitions and sewing. Even the few successful women interviewed such as one who owned a beauty parlour in Jhajjar and a head nurse in Beed, did not escape some element of stigma attached to their profession.

5.4.2 The Girl Only Family in the Era of Sex Selection: The arrival of the small family in actual practice as a consequence of economic conditions in most of the respondents' own families (to a greater extent in Maharashtra than Haryana) represents a new moment in the history of contemporary India. As shown earlier, the desire for one boy and one girl is not so much an end of son preference and daughter aversion, but needs to be linked with the avoidance of the girl only family in the era of sex selection. Very few families are openly accepting being a daughter only family, and it would appear in the towns under study that families had a hard time imagining a secure future for themselves and for their daughters if there was no son. The skewed child sex ratio patterns and voices from the interviews confirm the now clandestine resort to sex selection. Patrilocality did not appear as a strong norm in practice with more than half the families surveyed being nuclear, and little was said about the ritual necessity of sons. A new justification took the form of saying that in these troubled times, while marriage was a necessity for a daughter, brothers were also required in times of difficulty. That is also why hardly anyone interviewed spoke in favour of inheritance rights for their daughters since this would jeopardise relations with brothers and the natal family. So only a small beginning is palpable in all the sites as to the acceptability of girl only families.

5.4.3 The New Gender Stereotype: Bad Sons and Good Daughters: From several voices there emerged frequent statements about sons and daughters. Hardly anyone articulated conventional notions of biological gender in the form of strong sons and weak daughters. There emerged in several contexts widespread doubt about what one could expect from a son, who would, in all likelihood, not be able to live up to expectations. A range of disparaging descriptions across class and caste are indicative of a new stereotype around "bad" sons, so that cracks are appearing in the intergenerational contract that has assumed that parents can expect security in return for having "settled" them in life. When it comes to daughters there has been a long standing cultural place for good and loving daughters, given the harsh life that might well await in the in-laws' home. New elements are entering here as well, pertaining to the ongoing role that daughters might play even after marriage. Reductions in marriage distance, even in the same city or town, and more direct statements about daughters who would care for their parents in spite of the primary rights that in laws have over her, were made. These claims about sons and daughters are obviously not simply about gender, but are points on a larger canvas, indeed placeholders for the elusive links

between families and development. Sons must now provide stability and security in highly volatile times epitomised by the desire for that vanishing entity, “the government job”. Not only poorer families, but better placed families within this kind of social and political economy articulate the belief that sons will in all likelihood be failures. At the same time, this is also an economy in which daughters are even less likely to stand on their own feet. They must be settled through good marriages with the requisite amount of education, coupled with a more positive discourse of caring daughters who might do more for them in old age than any son.

5.5 Government Policies: Among existing government policies and schemes that directly address the adverse child sex ratio and the girl child, there have been various conditional cash transfer schemes in the state of Haryana, some of which have been discontinued. Survey findings indicated that very few families who are even eligible are aware of these schemes even though they are in urban locations. Among those who tried many were unsuccessful. In Maharashtra, it is scholarship schemes and free schooling for girls that were better known but only small percentages were availing of them. There was confusion in Maharashtra between bank schemes that offer lower interest rates for deposits in the names of girls and government schemes. The *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* campaign was very visible across the Haryana locations, (through large billboards and media events) but did not find much positive resonance among respondents, who saw it as more of a political slogan. When it comes to other larger government policies there appears to be very little that addresses towns specifically. Because of the Jat agitation in Haryana in the midst of field work in February 2016, it is reservations policies that in fact were a frequent point of reference, and to a lesser extent also in Maharashtra.

5.6 Recommendations and Policy Implications:

1. Government policies addressing the girl child in urban towns have not had much impact and there is a need therefore to see what schemes are being offered by government departments in urban locations and why, in spite of better facilities and levels of education, they are not being availed of. Conditional cash transfer schemes need to adapt and go beyond schooling and reaching the age of 18 years for marriage, as their goal.
2. There is a clear economic disconnect in current policies concerning major issues like employment. The central question of very low levels of work participation by women in decent employment in urban locations is an essential ingredient for improving the skewed sex ratio. BBBP is only focussed on school education (which is normative in any case across class and caste), and does not concern itself with the kinds of higher and professional education required; skill development must be linked to jobs. Promotion of entrepreneurship and self-employment among youth cannot be a sufficient avenue to address this urgent issue.
3. Towns are not receiving sufficient attention from the state and its policies compared to either metropolitan India or the visibility of rural distress. One of the biggest hindrances in towns is the lack of developmental avenues for women and girls which finds its outcome in the form of resorting to sex selection in order to avoid being a small girl only family.
4. The medically mediated technologies for gender biased sex selection have become more clandestine in nature following recent crackdowns on some clinics and erring doctors. However the practice has not stopped, but gone underground in these sites. The government must strengthen legal and monitoring mechanisms in the face of so much pressure from civil society in the two states of Haryana and Maharashtra.
5. Fertility data, both macro and micro, make it amply evident that families wish to have two or at most three children in urban India. This calls for a fundamental shift from state measures seeking to regulate fertility and family size (such as through the two child norm) to making the world right for girl only families not just to be acceptable but to thrive.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 • THE CURRENT CONTEXT

Gender biased sex selection continues to demand our attention at every level. The present study seeks to provide a picture of the current situation in two states that have had distinct histories of the problem of adverse sex ratios and attempts to combat it through law and policy — Haryana in the northwest and Maharashtra in the western region of India. The study concentrates on urban sites, or to be more specific on non-metropolitan cities and towns, which have been hubs of sex selection given the availability of the medical technologies required, but also by virtue of the factors shaping family building strategies in such contexts.

The problem of adverse sex ratios and especially child sex ratios has been on the agenda of the women's movement, civil society organisations, the state and international bodies since several decades. Scholarship on the subject has been growing all the time. In an overview undertaken prior to the onset of this study (John 2015), an account has been provided of the historical evolution of the issue in India, the range of scholarship in the last few decades and the growing international interest in the problem. Several modes of approaching the problematic can be found in this enormous and continuously expanding field (e.g., Guilmoto 2012; Klasen and Wink 2003; Chowdhry 2005; Kaur et al. 2016; Sangari 2015, to mention a few among recent works). At the time of finalizing this report, the Economic Survey 2018 has brought out a special chapter on Gender in which the adverse child sex ratio has been given prominence yet again, this time through notions of meta-son preference (Government of India, 2018). In the overview of John 2015, I proposed three broad orientations for framing the problematic of the adverse child sex ratio – those of “culture”, “violence” and “political economy”. The present study fits somewhat more closely in the political economy framework, but has nonetheless been titled the social and political economy of sex selection in order to show how the intricacies family dynamics and the concrete planning of children's futures must be connected to the larger development contexts of the regions in which they are to be found if a better understanding of the ongoing resort to gender biased sex selection is to be gained.



918/1000

The provisional figures of the 0–6 years CSR released showed a further decline from **927** to **914** in **2011**, but was then upwardly revised to 918

Historically in India, adverse sex ratios have been publicly recognized as far back as the colonial period when practices of female infanticide in parts of north India became the subject of British policy, and re-emerged as a problem after independence when demographers discovered a long term decline in overall

sex ratios from the beginning of the twentieth century. It became a central finding in the *Towards Equality* Report brought out by the Committee on the Status of Women in India at the behest of the department of Social Welfare for the UN Year of Women 1975. A new moment became palpable from the 1980s with evidence of the misuse of the newly introduced technology of amniocentesis testing for foetal abnormalities. This new technology was being turned into a method for determining the sex of a foetus with a view to aborting it should it be female. Though the practice was banned across the country via the Prevention of Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (PNDT) Act 1994 as a consequence of nationwide protests and campaigns, both macro evidence and local interventions demonstrated that the problem intensified and was by no means brought to an end. In the intervening years it was discovered that ultra sound technology, considered part of normal ante-natal care, had been surreptitiously turned into a method of determining the sex of a foetus. Census 2001 data sent out shock waves when the results revealed not just a deepening of adverse child sex ratios in regions with a longer history of fewer women and girls in their populations, but also showed evidence of its spread to new areas in the north, west and east. Census 2011 has added a further twist to the situation. The provisional figures of the 0–6 years CSR released showed a further decline from 927 to 914 in 2011, but was then upwardly revised to 918. These figures appeared to signal a possible peaking of the practice in regions like Haryana and Punjab in the northwest which had the worst child sex ratios, along with new declines in most other parts of the country.

Select macro data on sex ratios at birth (SRB) have their own complex story to tell. SRBs provide the most accurate data on sex ratio deficits caused by medical interventions into the sex of the child to be born, since it measures the sex of the child at the time of birth. Child sex ratios, on the other hand, include subsequent mortality after birth up to age six and may also be affected by problems of age reporting. On the other hand, however, SRBs are limited since these are based on select registration data and therefore do not have the total reach of other Census data. SRBs showed significant declines from the 1990s in various regions but especially in the north-west and west, which appeared to peak during the decade of the 2000s. This created optimism in some quarters, with speculation that there might now be a turn around. However, this assumption may well have been premature, since more recent figures post 2012 are showing a much more variegated picture, with several states including Haryana and Maharashtra once again showing declines in their SRBs. Table 1.1 gives SRB figures based on SRS Census data from 2009–11 to 2013–15. Note the clear downward trend after 2011–13, sharpest in urban Haryana, but also reflected in Maharashtra.

TABLE 1.1: SEX RATIOS AT BIRTH USING SRS DATA

Total	India & Select States	India	Haryana	Maharashtra
	2009–11	906	854	893
	2010–12	908	857	896
	2011–13	909	864	902
	2012–14	906	866	896
	2013–15	900	831	878

	India & Select States	India	Haryana	Maharashtra
Rural	2009-11	907	856	881
	2010-12	909	859	882
	2011-13	910	867	892
	2012-14	907	869	888
	2013- 15	903	836	871
Urban	2009-11	900	848	911
	2010-12	904	852	917
	2011-13	906	855	916
	2012-14	905	859	908
	2013- 15	890	821	890

The present study explores the current situation in select sites in two states, with different histories of sex selection, in order to get a better sense of what is changing and why. So far most studies have concentrated on regions which have had the worst child sex ratios, such as North West India and select districts of Tamil Nadu, where female infanticide was discovered in the 1980s. One such study conducted during 2003–05, published as a report *Planning Families Planning Gender: Adverse Child Sex Ratios in select districts of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab* (authored by Mary E. John, Ravinder Kaur, Rajni Palriwala, Saraswati Raju and Alpana Sagar and supported by ActionAid India and IDRC Canada, 2008) focussed on ‘decision making’ among families and the factors responsible for the adverse child sex ratios. The study involved both quantitative and qualitative techniques of investigation. The purpose was to survey significant social characteristics of households in selected urban and rural sites and relate these to their respective regional and local contexts, on the one hand, and to the ways specific families ‘planned’ the number and sex composition of their children. Under conditions of fertility decline, where the desired number of children ranged from one to three (with variations depending on the socio-economic condition of these families) both son preference and daughter aversion appeared to be at work.

The present study has been undertaken a decade down the line, where some of the broad contours of the problem of adverse sex ratios are better known. This would be a time characterised by the following features – greater awareness within the public about the issue, given media attention and campaigns against the practice of sex selection via misuse of ante-natal ultrasound in particular, and the extremely significant fact that there is a ‘sex selection generation’ that has come of age. That is to say, in places where sex selection was practiced from the 1990s, the children born then are now adults who have families of their own. What remains less clear is how the last two decades (associated with massive efforts to engineer economic growth at unprecedented levels) are impacting on families in relation to their aspirations for their children, and, indeed, how families themselves perceive their socio-economic prospects and futures. Thus it becomes all the more necessary to undertake comparative studies across genuinely different local and regional contexts. This is why this study has revisited Haryana where the earlier study had been conducted along with a new investigation in Maharashtra.

There are further aspects to the special focus of the present study, in its main concern to explore what is being termed as the social economy of sex selection, by examining the links between families and the development contexts in which they live. This is not easy to study, indeed, as this report will be demonstrating, many aspects of the wider economic context within which parents make their decisions, especially for their children, are not only a cause for anxiety and uncertainty, but are also

to a considerable degree opaque to people. How do parents, and especially mothers, think about the number and desired sex of their children in relation to the economic potential of their towns and regions? Is it possible to draw direct links between “family planning” and regional development and economic policies more broadly? This study is an attempt to push the boundaries of such questions by subjecting the views of mothers in contexts where sex selection has been a reality, to further economic analysis. As will become clearer in subsequent chapters and especially in Chapter five, the method adopted here is to recognise the economic underpinnings that are structuring what might be thought of as matters pertaining to gender. Moreover, when economic considerations have been brought into play in prior studies they are invariably about rural conditions, and especially foreground the negative effects of the current crisis in agriculture. Very little is known about urban scenarios, in spite of growing migration to urban areas and the growing influence of urban cultures on rural life more generally.

Equally critically, this study shows that the problem of adverse child sex ratios is not simply a product of son preference and daughter aversion. Rather, in a context of the desire for the ‘small family’, where families on the whole want one boy and one girl (and in that order), what most families are particularly averse to is the real possibility of being a daughter only family. Indeed, the argument of this report is that it is the proportion of girl only families in a given population in contemporary contexts of fertility decline that is the most robust indicator of the extent and nature of the problem of a gender imbalance. While the 2008 study did bring the very low presence of girl only families to light, its wider ramifications were not worked out, which the present study seeks to do. As will be seen, both Haryana and Maharashtra evince distinct pictures of the issue of sex selection and its consequences in the form of the prevalence or rarity of girl only families.

Haryana is one of the states along with Punjab with a long history of negative sex ratios that predate the accelerated child sex ratio declines seen from the 1991 Census onwards. According to Census 2011, some districts registered small improvements in their CSRs, while others have seen further declines. With Punjab showing a greater improvement from 2001 to 2011, Haryana now has the lowest CSR in the country at 834. Within the state, the district of Jhajjar has the lowest CSR of 774, with Mewat the only district with a CSR above the 900 mark, namely 903. It is therefore unclear what impact there has been by way of the central and state government initiatives in the form of various schemes and programmes to strengthen the position of the girl child, the role of the media, frequent reporting on the girl child deficit and sustained efforts and campaigns among civil society organisations. There is now a more visible “male marriage squeeze” in rural Haryana as a consequence of the longer history of gender imbalance with a growing number of poorly endowed men unable to find wives as per social convention. Haryana presents a picture of turmoil including honour killings of couples who go against community norms in their choice of partner (intra gotra and inter caste marriages) together with the relatively recent rise of Khap panchayats staking their claim to regulate social and political issues outside the purview of the state. Existing micro studies, invariably situated in rural contexts, point to increases in the actual age of marriage, considerations of education and employability as major criteria for girls’ marriage prospects, while urban residence, and employment preferably in the government are the criteria in the case of boys. Rising reporting on sexual violence has taken many forms from stalking and harassment to rape and gang rape, with Dalit women facing extreme violence from upper caste boys in a number of cases. The issue of security therefore occupies considerable space in public discourses and in people’s minds, with possible consequences on ages of marriage, especially among more vulnerable groups such as lower castes.

Considering the situation in Maharashtra, it is now largely forgotten that as far as the issue of declines in child sex ratios is concerned, this state was an early entrant into the debate and the field of activism in particular. In the 1980s, when the medical technology of amniocentesis was first introduced, the

Forum Against Sex Determination and Sex PreSelection (FASDSP) was formed in Mumbai and began a concerted campaign against the practice, urging the state to intervene to regulate and prevent the misuse of these technologies. Clinics in Mumbai openly advertised the use of the technology, casting the girl as a financial burden, especially in the context of dowry and expenses for her marriage. Due to the concerted efforts by the FASDSP, which not only had activists from the women's movement but also concerned doctors and other medical professionals, Maharashtra became the first state to pass a law in 1988 regulating the use of these technologies and to ban their misuse for sex determination. The Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, referred to as the PNDT Act, served as the model on which the national law in 1994 was based.

However, after initial concerted action and research on the issue in Maharashtra, there was a slide in both discussion and campaigning around the issue from the 1990s. Though the reasons are not clear, it may have been a combination of the fact that, especially with the Census 2001, focus shifted to the worse states of north west India, along with perceptions that Maharashtra was a much more progressive state on gender related issues. Renewed attention came its way especially after Census 2011 showed a dramatic decrease in CSRs in Maharashtra, with the relatively prosperous western districts, the sugar cane belt, also characterised by higher literacy rates leading the way. In Maharashtra too there were telltale signs of rising ages of marriage and fertility decline. Beed district now had the lowest CSR of 801 with an unprecedented drop of 93 points over one decade. In the wake of the 2011 Census the state also witnessed strong campaigns to implement the PC-PNDT Act. Widespread complicity between the state machinery and medical personnel came to the fore. Some of the first convictions of highly placed doctors was finally achieved due to persistent protests by women's organisations. Anecdotal evidence in Pune district suggests that following concerted attention on the issue and the crack-down by the state on sonography centres, the practice of sex selection may have moved away from urban metropolitan centres to smaller towns, such as Shirur and Baramati in the case of Pune.

According to Census 2011, Maharashtra has a CSR of 894, making it a close second to Rajasthan as the worst state in the western region, while Haryana's CSR is 834. Thus, these two states offer interesting if somewhat contrasting pictures of new declines in the case of Maharashtra versus stasis and even some minor improvement in the case of Haryana, while both have been receiving considerable attention from the state and by activists.

1.2 • **METHODOLOGY AND SITES OF STUDY**

The study was initiated in October 2015 in Haryana, and in December 2015 in Maharashtra, and field investigations concluded by August 2016. The study is a micro-level one carried out in multiple stages. The cities/towns chosen in Haryana were Rohtak and Jhajjar, within an 80 km radius of the National Capital Region. Thus, even though the larger economy of Haryana is agrarian, urban sites were chosen with close links to Delhi, whose urban populations have been expanding. In Maharashtra, the sites chosen were Shirur, a town about 100 kms from Pune, and the town of Beed, the headquarters of Beed district in the Marathwada region of Maharashtra. Shirur bears the characteristics of a suburban outgrowth directly shaped by Pune's economic development. Beed, on the other hand, is very much in the rural hinterland and invited special attention because it had seen the largest declines in Census 2011.

Two wards were chosen from each town/city, one broadly middle class and the other with a larger poorer and working class component in its population. In the case of Rohtak and Jhajjar both middle class wards were near the edge of their respective urban boundaries, spread out and expanding, while both the poorer wards were in the heart of the old part of the city/town, with houses clustered much closer together and with much worse facilities all around. Similar choices along broad class lines for

wards were made in Shirur and Beed, though these towns are much more heterogeneous and less spatially segregated by class and caste than Haryana.

The study involved intensive field based investigation, with teams of field investigators living in or close to the wards of the study in order to achieve rapport and trust over a period of six months. The choice of concentrating solely on urban sites was not an easy one because urban populations are much more difficult to study. Their everyday lives make them harder to find, and, more importantly, there is much greater disinterest if not suspicion towards researchers. However, both the teams in Haryana and Maharashtra overcame these

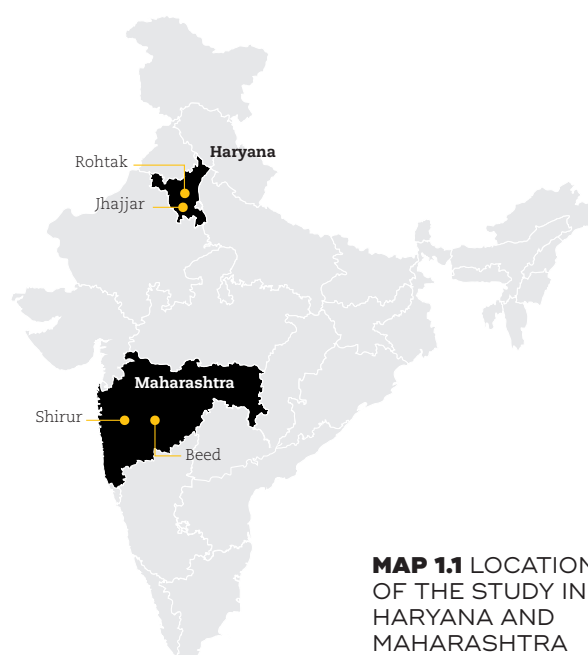
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obstacles as best they could in order to undertake this study, in order to open up non-metropolitan urban spaces to further exploration. The initial profiling of wards was followed by the selection of approximately 200 households for the first phase of study through a survey-based questionnaire. Families for the survey were chosen where there was at least one child, and no child above the age of 30 years. This choice was made in order to have families with children born between the late 1980s and the present, that is to say, spanning the period since the first resort to sex determination testing and sex selective abortions began. Only Ward 6 which had over 2000 households in the revised municipal scheme in Rohtak required further sampling by colony in order to select 200 households. In all other cases, about 400 households constituted a given site. Every second household was initially sampled and then a second round of households sampled in order to obtain 200 households with children of the requisite age range. Survey questions dealt mainly with quantifiable information – age and age at marriage of the respondent and her husband, place of birth and migration, household work, household information and family type, educational attainments, caste and religion, occupation of respondent and husband, income, fertility including details of all children and future planning regarding education, work and marriage, perceptions about sons and daughters, ownership of property, assets, type of house and amenities, type of locality. In relation to some questions more qualitative answers were forthcoming and investigators were encouraged to take extra information where it seemed relevant. On the other hand, when respondents were clearly reluctant to answer, no further probing was undertaken at this stage.

The second phase of study involved the selection of 20 families per ward for intensive interviewing based on a semi structured interview format. Families were selected in order to obtain a diversity in terms of size and sex composition of children (with a special focus on girl only families), class, caste and the work status of the mother. Rapport and the willingness to undertake the interview were also significant, especially in Haryana, where investigators encountered much greater resistance and disinclination from among families. The number of girl only families interviewed ranged from four to ten across each site, and was indicative both of the actual proportion of such families in a particular ward and the willingness of families to be interviewed. The survey questionnaire was canvassed in a door to door fashion and might be answered outside the respondent's house if the respondent did not wish to ask the interviewers inside. Undertaking interviews required greater preparation, checking in advance about the availability and willingness to be interviewed and at times needed more than one meeting. All interviews were recorded with the consent of the respondent, subsequently

translated and transcribed. Questions were more probing in nature and sought to obtain the experiences of the respondent on issues relating to her life and that of her children as well as her views on topics such as educational facilities, work, marriage practices, sex selection, local development and so on. The final phase concluded with ward based visits to educational facilities, clinics, and potential work places to get better profiles of the sites, to the extent possible.

Map 1.1 provides the location of the four urban towns/cities – Rohtak and Jhajjar in the north west in Haryana and Shirur and Beed in the west in Maharashtra.



MAP 1.1 LOCATION OF THE STUDY IN HARYANA AND MAHARASHTRA

Table 1.2 used Census 2011 data on the respective sites of the study. This was a point of reference prior to the onset of the field work. Census ward level data includes basic indicators such as number of households and population, children in the 0–6 age group range, Scheduled Caste population, literacy and workers, all differentiated by gender.

TABLE 1.2: CENSUS 2011 WITH SELECT DATA OF SITES

Haryana									
Town/Ward	T_HH	T_F	M_O6	F_O6	CSR	% F_SC	% F_LIT	T_WOR	% F_WOR
Rohtak	75,500	176,055	23,280	18,962	815	16	72	112,049	11
Ward_6	2,523	6,152	1,013	903	891	68	52	4,097	12
Ward_12	2,682	5833	668	482	722	3	81	4,203	23
Jhajjar	9,162	22,746	3,295	2,567	779	17	68	14,209	11
Ward_1	474	1,086	158	105	665	5	73	633	10
Ward_12	382	1,076	162	136	840	35	66	640	9
Maharashtra									
Town/Ward	T_HH	T_F	M_O6	F_O6	CSR	% F_SC	% F_LIT	T_WOR	% F_WOR
Shirur	8,030	18,108	2,561	2,167	846	13	72	12,394	14
Ward_2	389	804	117	98	838	9	70	624	17
Ward_14	412	992	151	130	861	7	58	679	17
Beed	28,940	71,143	10,765	9,189	854	10	74	47,386	15
Ward_13	644	1493	157	135	860	32	80	1,042	20
Ward_11	685	1795	296	253	855	2	75	1,155	13

In the case of Rohtak, due to the redesignation of Wards by the Municipality after 2011, there was no way to match the renamed Wards in the city at the time of fieldwork in 2016 with those in Census 2011 since boundaries had been redrawn, and numbering had been changed entirely. Even in the case of other wards there were discrepancies between municipal definitions of Wards and Census 2011.

The overall child sex ratios of Rohtak and Jhajjar towns, according to Census 2011, were 815 and 779 respectively, and therefore very low, well below that of urban Haryana overall at 834. The CSR figures for Shirur and Beed towns are 846 and 854, again very low in comparison to the average CSR for urban Maharashtra 899. In terms of other Census data there is little to differentiate the Maharashtra wards from those in Haryana (literacy rates are similar and fluctuate around 70 per cent), with the important difference that Maharashtra records higher proportions of women workers, though the figures are still on the lower side.

Table 1.3 gives equivalent data based on the survey conducted in the sites. As already mentioned (and can be verified below) there is absolutely no match between Census data and the site data in the case of Rohtak due to the renaming and redrawing of Wards. Due to discrepancies there was also no clear geographical match between municipal wards and Census boundaries in the other sites. As will be discussed in more detail later, given the small number of children in the sample, only limited weight can be placed on the child sex ratios at this micro level. (After all, just a small variation in the sex of children would make for a significant change in the CSR.) At the same time, we see that CSRs in Haryana are very low across three sites, and that in Maharashtra one site has even slightly more girls. The only noteworthy indicator here is that the proportion of female workers in the study sample is higher than that provided by the Census, a matter that will be discussed in more detail in the context of women's work.

TABLE 1.3: SELECT BASIC DATA ON SITES

Haryana								
Town/Ward	T_HH	T_F	M_O6	F_O6	CSR	% F_SC	T_WOR	% F_WOR
Rohtak								
Ward_6	206	528	55	45	818	3	374	24
Ward_12	209	625	103	81	786	25	267	29
Sub Total	415	1,153	158	126	797	15	641	27
Jhajjar								
Ward_1	210	518	54	49	907	6	303	23
Ward_12	204	572	71	51	718	14	288	19
Sub Total	414	1,090	125	100	800	10	591	21
Total	829	2,243	283	226	799	13	1232	24
Maharashtra								
Town/Ward	T_HH	T_F	M_O6	F_O6	CSR	% F_SC	T_WOR	% F_WOR
Shirur								
Ward_2	193	469	62	69	1,113	12	286	24
Ward_14	209	556	85	67	788	10	313	29
Sub Total	402	1,025	147	136	925	10	599	27
Beed								
Ward_13	199	511	56	44	786	8	269	23
Ward_11	204	572	59	58	983	10	286	19
Sub Total	403	1,083	115	102	887	9	555	21
Total	805	2,108	262	238	908	10	1,154	24

1.2.1 • FIELD SITES IN HARYANA

As already mentioned above, the two Wards chosen in Rohtak were in sharp contrast to one another. Ward 6 is a very spread out ward along the northern part of the city towards Sonapat, and now includes land acquired from nearby villages. Its many colonies are overwhelmingly Jat in population, of whom 60–70 per cent still own land and generate incomes from it as well (some through cattle and buffalo rearing for milk production and some cultivation), though this is on the decline. The rest are largely professional middle class in character, ranging from retired army personnel to doctors, lawyers and teachers. Only one colony within this ward stands apart which is predominantly poor and Scheduled Caste. The Ward is very well located – whether for transport, educational institutions, hospitals and the court. Ward 12 is in the heart of the old city, and amongst the very poorest. Houses are extremely crowded and were only regularised during the previous Congress regime – upwards of 80 per cent have yet to be registered with the state government. The population is overwhelmingly OBC and Scheduled Caste, and most of the work available is considered unskilled, including stigmatized labour such as maintaining piggeries, and municipal sweeping. It has no government schools or health centres within the ward, and water supply is a problem, so that residents have to rely on tankers. Some parts of the ward are in extremely poor condition, with muddy lanes that are hard to navigate.

Jhajjar is a much smaller town compared to Rohtak city, and has been growing considerably in the last decade or so. Ward 1 is quite similar in location to Ward 6 in Rohtak, being at the edge of the town facing Rohtak, many of whose residents have migrated recently and built themselves shiny looking ‘modern’ houses, some being still under construction. Class wise this ward is composed of a mix of business people, professionals, retired army personnel, and workers, some of whom commute to the factory belt surrounding Delhi. More than half the population are Jats, many of whom have migrated from surrounding rural areas, whether for themselves or for the education of their children. But other castes both middle and lower are also to be found (Baniya, Brahmin, Saini, Lohar, Balmiki and so on). This is a well-endowed ward with a number of nursing homes, clinics, private schools and coaching centres. Water supply is a major problem in all of Jhajjar because groundwater is brackish and cannot be used for drinking, and this is what is supplied by the municipality. People therefore rely on tankers as much as possible. Ward 12 is located in the heart of Jhajjar town and has the old main bus stand within it. Its population is mainly Scheduled Caste and OBC (Gujjar, Kumhar, Balmiki and Chamar) and a smaller proportion of middle and upper castes. Traditional caste based occupations have died out, with sanitation work, plying carts and rickshaws, and running small shops or petty trades being the main sources of livelihood. In terms of facilities there are only private schools and small private clinics. Both Rohtak and Jhajjar are quite strongly segregated by caste in the mohallas and colonies; in some there are separate temples, and separate cremation grounds. This part of Haryana is entirely Hindu, with just a handful of Muslim and Sikh families, and very small numbers of recent converts to Christianity.

1.2.2 • FIELD SITES IN MAHARASHTRA

Shirur

In Shirur, Ward no. 2 is more mixed compared to the more middle class Ward 14. Ward no. 2 has upper middle class housing colonies along with lower class and caste houses of a semi-pucca variety. The main roads are paved and tarred while many of the smaller roads are in the process of being tarred. This ward also has a small Muslim population, and mixed castes. The area bordering the arterial road in Shirur which falls under this ward is slumlike with mostly working class Dalit households. Professor colony which is a major housing colony in this ward, was established by college teachers,

though at present there are other professionals like doctors, ex-servicemen and lawyers along with a few business families who live there. Ramyanagari, also a middle class housing colony had more recent migrants into Shirur, with apartment blocks and flats. The Kumbhar lane which takes its name from the potter caste, doesn't have many households of potters at present, though it does have a big temple of the community in the area. On the road to enter the ward, there are several hospitals, maternity clinics and sonography centres. Ward no. 14 of Shirur is more predominantly middle class compared to Ward 2, with many schools, a corporation public park and sports ground all located within it. It comprises two major middle class colonies of independent bungalows, namely Yashwant and Chatrapati Colony. The caste composition of these colonies is predominantly Maratha, as is the case with Shirur in general. It also includes two government colonies – one of the Maharashtra State Electricity Board and the Maharashtra police. There are a few sonography centres and hospitals in this area as well. At one end of the ward is a relatively permanent settlement of the Pardhis, who are a denotified tribe. Apart from this one area, the rest of the ward is relatively affluent and presented the most amount of resistance to the survey. The colonies are quite well organized with Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs). The area has well-paved roads for the most part and a majority of the ward is a quiet, residential area with mostly independent houses and hardly any tall buildings.

Beed

Ward 13 in Beed city is a largely middle class ward. The city of Beed is clearly divided into the older and the newer part with the government offices including the municipality offices marking the centre. This particular ward is in the newer part of Beed town and its boundary is marked on one side by the state highway that connects Beed to Ahmednagar and further on to cities like Pune. The ward predominantly consists of stand-alone independent bungalows and societies comprising these bungalows. There are very few double or multiple storeyed buildings. There is only one pocket called Indira Nagar which is a slum in this otherwise middle class area. Except for the houses in Indiranagar, all houses are of a pucca variety, most of them with compound walls and gates. The roads are tarred with open gutters lining the street as is the case in most towns. The area has a large number of coaching classes for UPSC/ MPSC (central and Maharashtra state civil services examinations) and other competitive exams. Therefore many bungalows have rooms built on the terrace which they hire out to students. There are many small eating joints and monthly messes in this area. The ward also has a large number of hospitals and medical establishments. Most residents of the ward are retired or professionals like lawyers, doctors, teachers etc. There is also a sizeable number of government employees living here. This is the area of Beed which has been very recently incorporated into the city, so any new constructions which are coming up in Beed are mostly in this part. Ward 11 is a more heterogeneous ward in terms of population, with a sizeable number of Muslims, Dalits and is also of a more mixed composition in class terms. Physically also the ward shows diversity, in terms of a mix of very posh bungalows with high walls and gates, modest dwellings, some buildings which are 4–5 stories high, slum pockets with semi-pucca homes etc. This ward is closer to the older part of the city and is more chaotic and crowded as compared to ward 13 which is largely comprised of middle class colonies. This ward also has a police colony and other government residential quarters are part of it.

Basic Profile of the Wards from Survey Data of Households:

TABLE 1.4: SELECT HOUSEHOLD INDICATORS WARD WISE

Haryana											
Town/Ward	% Uc	% Hindu	HH Size	Total Monthly Income	% Four Wheeler	% Two Wheeler	% Refrigerator	% Property Ownership	Avg. No of Rooms	% Toilet Own Household	% Water Supply
Rohtak											
Ward_6	86	99	5.5	66749	41	83	89	89	4	96	5
Ward_12	3	98	5.9	18797	5	34	66	2	2	89	38
Sub Total	44	98	5.7	42773	23	59	78	45	3	92	21
Jhajjar											
Ward_1	51	98	5.2	33,126	30	79	92	93	3	99	99
Ward_12j	14	97	5.8	27,822	15	45	76	7	3	83	96
Sub Total	33	98	5.5	30,507	22	62	85	51	3	92	98
Total	39	98	5.6	36,632	23	60	81	48	3	92	59
Maharashtra											
Shirur											
Ward_2	36	71	4.8	2,2229	11	49	50	55	2	54	61
Ward_14	42	88	5.2	2,6507	14	60	64	83	2	74	77
Sub Total	39	80	5.0	2,4453	13	55	57	70	2	64	69
Beed											
Ward_13	45	85	5.1	4,3040	30	80	78	59	3	84	29
Ward_11	50	67	6.0	2,8002	14	62	61	70	4	80	46
Sub Total	58	76	5.5	3,5483	22	71	69	64	3	82	37
Total	43	78	5.3	2,9954	17	63	63	67	3	73	53

Table 1.4 provides further indicators on the social and economic status of the field sites. The columns provide information on the proportion of upper castes (in which Jats and Marathas are included), proportion of Hindus, average household size, average total monthly income of the households, proportion of households with a four wheeler, a two wheeler and a refrigerator, proportion of households who own any property (including their home), the average number of rooms, proportion of households with own toilet, and finally proportion of households receiving some water supply.

- The Rohtak sites show the widest differences when it comes to caste composition, asset ownership, and reported household income. Ward 6 is by far the most well off Ward with an average monthly income per household of Rs. 67,000, while Ward 12 is by far the poorest at Rs. 19,000. There is a close correlation between caste and class.
- Jhajjar sites are also differentiated though less sharply than Rohtak, with Ward 1 better off than Ward 12J. Here disparities are more pronounced by asset ownership than income alone. There is some correlation between class and caste.
- In Shirur in Maharashtra, the two wards show smaller variations in standard of living indicators, with Ward 14 slightly better off than Ward 2 by income, with more significant differences by asset indicators.
- In Beed, Ward 13 has a significantly higher standard of living than Ward 11 by income, less sharply matched by asset ownership.

- Due to the presence of both Muslims and Buddhists in Maharashtra, the proportion of families who define themselves as Hindu in the Maharashtra wards is lower – varying from 67 per cent in Ward 11 in Beed to 88 per cent in Ward 13 in Shirur. All the Maharashtra samples are more mixed in caste terms, with only very small differences in upper caste dominance in terms of numbers.
- There is no correspondence between child sex ratios and the overall economic characteristics of Wards. The better off wards are Ward 6 in Rohtak with a CSR 818, Ward 1 in Jhajjar with a CSR 907, Ward 14 in Shirur with a CSR 788 and Ward 13 in Beed with a CSR 786. At the same time, the very poor Ward 12 in Rohtak has a CSR of 786 and the relatively less well off Ward 12 in Jhajjar has the worst CSR overall of 718. Chapter two will be exploring the various dimensions of child sex ratios in the study.

1.3 • **NOTE ON CASTE DISTRIBUTION**

Caste wise, the Haryana sites overall – as is to be expected – are dominated by Jats, especially in Wards 6 in Rohtak and Ward 1 in Jhajjar, with Balmikis being the second largest caste group, mainly in Ward 12 in Rohtak and Ward 12 in Jhajjar. Overall the breakup by category is 39 per cent upper caste (apart from Jats, small numbers of Brahmins, Rajputs, Baniyas), 27 per cent OBC (Khatia, Saini, Sunar, Kumhar, Gujjar, Ahir) and 34 per cent SC (apart from Balmikis, there are some Chamar, Dhanak and Jatav families).

In Maharashtra there is some parallel with Haryana in the overall caste structure in that Marathas are the most prominent upper castes and Mahars the largest community among the Scheduled Castes.

The official break-up across all the Maharashtra sites is 43 per cent upper caste (apart from Marathas, some Brahmins, and Rajputs), 21 per cent OBC (Kumbhar, Sonar, Teli), 25 per cent Scheduled Caste (apart from Mahars, a few Matang and Chamar families), and 7 per cent Denotified Tribe (mainly the relatively prosperous Vanzari caste). In the Maharashtra sample the DNT group has been combined with the OBC due to smallness of the numbers. Though both Jats in Haryana and Marathas in Maharashtra have been demanding a change in their official caste status to OBC, the present study has retained their status as upper caste, following existing nomenclature.

With this introduction to the study, its methodology and the main characteristics of the field sites, the subsequent chapters will describe the main findings of the study.

CHAPTER 2

THE STATUS OF THE **FEMALE RESPONDENTS**

The previous chapter introduced the field sites as well as some of the broad characteristics of the sites drawing from household data. This chapter explores in some detail the characteristics of the female respondents in the study, that is, the mothers whose children will be discussed more closely in chapters 3 and 4. Mothers were profiled along the following vectors – age, place of birth and migration, education, age at marriage, household work, employment and employment of husband. This chapter therefore provides a picture of the status of women in the sample across the different sites. It also sets the stage for comparisons with the profile of their children.

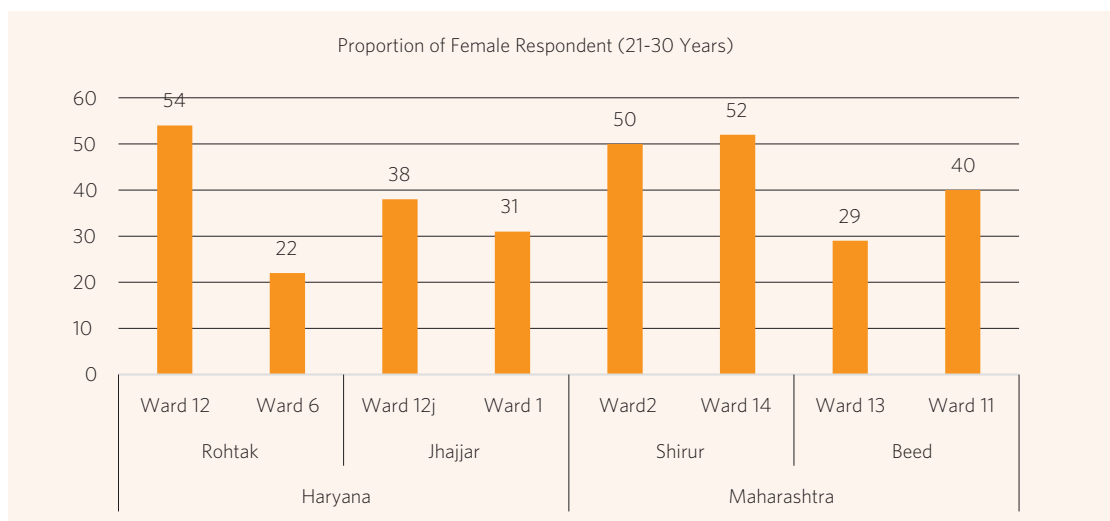
2.1 • **AGE AND MIGRATION**

The main respondent for the survey as well as those chosen for in depth interview were the mothers of the family. (At times husbands and other members present might also participate.) As already stated in the previous chapter respondents were chosen based on having at least one child, with the eldest child being below 30 years of age. This was in order to capture families with children who were born from the 1990s and after, that is the period since the onset of practices of sex selection.

2.1.1 • **AGE**

The interaction with respondents using the Survey questionnaire began by asking questions about their ages and the years spent in the current locality in relation to their places of birth. It is interesting that there are significant differences here across the wards. The age of the respondents varied from 20 to 61 years across all the sites, with most of the respondents in the 20–40 year age group. However, some wards were “younger” than others as the graph 2.1 below illustrates, by comparing proportions in the age group 21–30 years.

GRAPH 2.1 AGE OF RESPONDENTS FROM FIELD SURVEY



As the graph 2.1 indicates it is broadly the poorer Wards that also have a greater proportion of younger respondents (which is also corroborated by younger ages at marriage as will be seen shortly), with the poorest Ward in Rohtak have a high of 54 per cent in this age group and a low of 22 per cent from the most well off Ward 6 in Rohtak, with other wards in between.

Area of Birth and Migration

Interesting, too, are variations in the area of birth.

- ▶ The very high rates of migration from rural to urban areas is visible in Haryana – the highest proportion is in Jhajjar Ward 1 where 81 per cent of the respondents were born in a village, and the lowest were 63.5 per cent, shared by both the poorer wards (Ward 12 in Rohtak and Ward 12J in Jhajjar). Thus the old inner parts of both the Haryana towns have higher proportions of residents who are both poor and have longer years of urbanisation.
- ▶ Maharashtra presents a contrasting picture in that there is a much higher proportion of urbanisation among the respondents. Close to 60 per cent in Shirur and 47 per cent in Beed were born in a town or city.
- ▶ In terms of how long they have been residing in their respective localities, the picture is roughly similar across both Haryana and Maharashtra – with an equal spread among recent migrants and those who have been living there for longer.

Related to this is how far their current residence is from their place of birth.

- ▶ In Haryana, no one is in the same vicinity as when they were born, and with the exception of Ward 12J in Jhajjar they are roughly equally distributed across distances up to 100 kms. However, in the case of Ward 12J in Jhajjar 18.5 per cent have their birth places beyond 100 kms, which is 10 per cent or less in the other wards.
- In Maharashtra, small proportions of the female respondents were born in the towns where they were now residing – as much as 13.6 per cent in Ward 4 in Shirur and less in the others. At the same time, as much as one third of the respondents have come from longer distances beyond 100 kms in all the Maharashtra sites.
- So on the one hand, there is greater urban depth in the Maharashtra sample (even though these are non-metropolitan towns) and on the other, the circle of migration is larger, probably because Maharashtra is also a much bigger state.

2.1.2 • MIGRATION: VOICES FROM THE INTERVIEWS

The in depth interviews began by asking respondents about where they had come from, how long ago it was and the difference of their current location. Many answers tended to be stereotypical and common place, as the limitations of village life were contrasted to the relatively better amenities of where they currently lived. Or at times, there was also a reversal, as the availability of fresh vegetables and milk in their rural childhoods was fondly recalled. More interestingly, for several respondents their migration patterns were not simple.

What comes through these accounts is that for many of the respondents their struggle to improve their lives is deeply entwined within their accounts of migration. This is true in all the sites and across class and caste. The differences lie only in the degree of hardship that had to be overcome. Moreover, it is clear that these respondents imagined – either for themselves or their daughters – a different urban future through migration.

Voices from Rohtak

WARD 6

Consider one of the Jat respondents from Ward 6 in Rohtak, now with an MA in History and a B.Ed., two children (a son and daughter), whose father was a farmer. Due to his early demise, her first move was to the nearest town Panipat as a school girl where she finished her 10th, then to Karnal for the 12th and further (before marriage at the age of 23) to Rohtak for higher education. Migration for education for girls in rural Haryana is very common, especially among Jats: “I went everywhere for education” said another Jat respondent, now armed with an MPhil degree, who completed Class 10 in her village. Others from this well off Ward in Rohtak were married in their villages and moved afterwards, often with army or air force husbands. In another case in this ward, whose husband is into dairying, the respondent recounted that migration from the village became necessary both because property had been divided between her husband and his two brothers and also because she only had one daughter at that point. “She wouldn’t be allowed to study if we stay in the village. If we kept doing daily wage labour and our daughter had gone out for education people would have complained. But in the city this is possible.” In one unusual case for this Ward, who grew up near Bawana in Delhi, a Jat respondent was taken by her *bua* (father’s sister) when she was just in Class 5 to look after her aunt’s baby, suffered a poor education and was married off at the age of 16. Migration to Rohtak after marriage was her first experience of a caring family, even though she found Haryana backward compared to Delhi.

WARD 12

In Ward 12 in Rohtak, migration from the village was also the most common story among the respondents interviewed. However, in a few instances, the move to Rohtak had happened before marriage, as parents came to Rohtak in search of work, often daily wage work. Thus some of these women had their natal families in the city itself. Because of the extremely poor condition of large parts of this Ward, with no proper sewers or water connections, rampant alcoholism, drug use and some reports of sex work, migration was spoken of with resignation and a shrug of the shoulders, though the villages left behind had no work to offer. Some hoped for the day when they might find another place to stay. Only a few among the Balmikis spoke positively about moving to this area from elsewhere, because here there was a sense of community, given the significant numbers in this locality, with no other chances elsewhere.

Jhajjar

WARD 1

Ward 1 in Jhajjar has many similarities with Ward 6 of Rohtak in terms of migration patterns. Just as there were a few cases of marriage migration from Delhi's villages and poorer suburbs to Rohtak, in Jhajjar a few were born in Rohtak and moved to Jhajjar after marriage, looking to maintain a certain standard of living in a smaller town. For many of the respondents in this Ward Jhajjar has been the primary move from the village, usually after marriage when the husband found a job, or for the education of children. One of the few Brahmins in the sample whose family were farmers, explicitly referred to caste violence in her natal village as the reason for shifting to Jhajjar town. The furthest marriage migrants were from Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

WARD 12J

Ward 12J in Jhajjar is located in the old part of the town and is much poorer. One of the respondents who had migrated almost twenty years ago from the outskirts of Delhi recounted that at that time moving to Jhajjar was like moving to a village, "there were no facilities then". One of the respondents, a Balmiki who is now working in an *anganwadi* (government run crèche), said that she made sure that they left their village for her daughter's education, since there was nothing after Class 10 – "I didn't want her to suffer like me... Ask anybody. Nobody studies in a village. No facilities for tuitions, schools." Another rural migrant, a Gujjar, whose family worked in dairying, dropped out of school in Class 7 in her natal village ("where nobody cared for education") and was married at 16, and then moved to this part of Jhajjar town. One respondent complained that while Jhajjar town meant long lines for water, and bad experiences in government hospitals, nonetheless the village she left behind didn't even have electricity; but another saw little difference in the conditions of her village and Jhajjar. She moved because this was where her marriage was fixed and there was no work where she grew up.

MAHARASHTRA

Moving now to experiences of migration in the Maharashtra sample, there is a wider circle of migration including from other cities.

Shirur

WARD 2

One of the respondents from Shirur Ward 2, born in a village near Pune had other family members in Mumbai while she and her sister were married at a young age to two brothers in Shirur due to poverty. A few were born in and close to Shirur itself and married locally. One of the furthest migrants came from Jaunpur in Uttar Pradesh, which she described as a place of various religions and castes, Muslims, upper castes and lower castes. Her parents moved to Mumbai (where her father was a taxi driver) but she was educated in Jaunpur and married at a young age to a U.P. man whose family had also moved to Mumbai; it was her ill health that brought her to Shirur.

WARD 14

In Ward 14 in Shirur one of the interviewees also came from Mumbai and recalled the difference of moving to such a small place, including clothing styles – "there I used to wear dress, here only saree." (This mirrors what some of the Haryanvi women said about ghunghat, which was closely associated

with rural life or the presence of a father-in-law and much more optional in the town and city.) Others had moved to various places from the time of their birth and their education (in cities like Aurangabad or Nasik) before coming to Shirur for their marriage.

Beed

WARD 13

In Beed Ward 13, one of the respondents was from a rural Vanzari family whose father had moved out of necessity in search of work to Aurangabad where he was a carpenter. Her marriage took her to Beed since her husband too found work in this town. Others came from Pune and Ahmednagar. But here too the majority were rural migrants, with huge variation in their experiences depending on the social and economic condition of their families. One of the Mahar respondents who came from an acutely poor family and was illiterate, was married early and came to Beed with her husband in search of work. Another Mahar respondent completed 10th class and was able to study further after marriage and migration. One of the respondents had to struggle from her childhood due to an abusive father, worked in several locations including after marriage before arriving in Beed a few years ago with husband and children in search of work. Some respondents came from within a 5–10 km distance from Beed, with fathers who commuted daily to Beed for work and who were also educated in Beed before their marriage. A small number were born in Beed itself.

WARD 11

In Ward 11, the range in migration patterns are similar. Among those interviewed a greater number of the respondents were born in or close to Beed itself, or their natal families had moved to Beed as well. Hence their experiences were more confined to Beed with little to compare to – in one case, her mother lived right opposite to her own house. Others were from rural areas in the vicinity while one had come from Udaipur in Rajasthan. For several of those interviewed across all the sites the experience of migration was mingled with the shift from the maternal family to in-laws, the freedoms of childhood with the responsibilities of running a household in a new place.

2.2 • EDUCATION

Education occupies a very critical place in the lives of the respondents. It is perhaps the most obvious indicator of change across generations, as will be evident when women's views are presented, and later in Chapter four when the discussion turns to the education of their children. Education is approached as the most positive aspect of contemporary life upon which everything depends. At the same time, education is the greatest marker of status difference, economically and socially. Major contrasts across the sites are evident when it comes to what education meant to the respondents and what kind of education they were able to access. Patterns of education in Haryana and Maharashtra among the women present therefore very interesting if somewhat diverging pictures.

HARYANA

- ▶ The biggest disparities in the Haryana sites are in Rohtak – only 7 per cent are illiterate in Ward 6 compared to all of 26 per cent in Ward 12, with Jhajjar having intermediate figures. However, it must be emphasized that the majority even in the poorest sites have therefore had some kind of education.
- ▶ In terms of those with some degree beyond Class 12, 16.5 per cent have a graduate or postgraduate degree and 13 per cent a technical/professional degree in Ward 6 while barely 4 per cent have any post high school degree in Ward 12.

- ▶ When considering younger cohorts in contrast to older ones – that is those aged 30 years or less compared to those above 30 years – the picture changes quite significantly. Among those 30 years or less, in the poor Ward 12 in Rohtak, illiteracy is down to 14 per cent and higher degrees up to 7 per cent. Illiteracy has reduced to just over 4 per cent in Ward 6.
- ▶ But among older cohorts all of 40 per cent are illiterate, just over 2 per cent have a Class 12 degree and no one has gone beyond high school.

This would be an indication of the growing place that education has come to occupy in Haryana's recent history, one that has reached older cohorts in better off families but only much more recently that of poorer families. It is worth recalling, moreover, the high proportion of rural migrants in our sample. In other words, educational degrees are increasingly becoming important for marriage, in middle class families most definitely, but now also among poorer ones, where schooling is now more or less compulsory, even if anything more than that is beyond their horizon.

MAHARASHTRA

The picture is more complex in the Maharashtra sites. There are, predictably, better levels of education on average, which is to be expected, given Maharashtra's much longer history of social reform for girls and women, and across castes. But it turns out that older cohorts have more degrees in higher education than younger ones even though there is less illiteracy among the younger group, which is as expected.

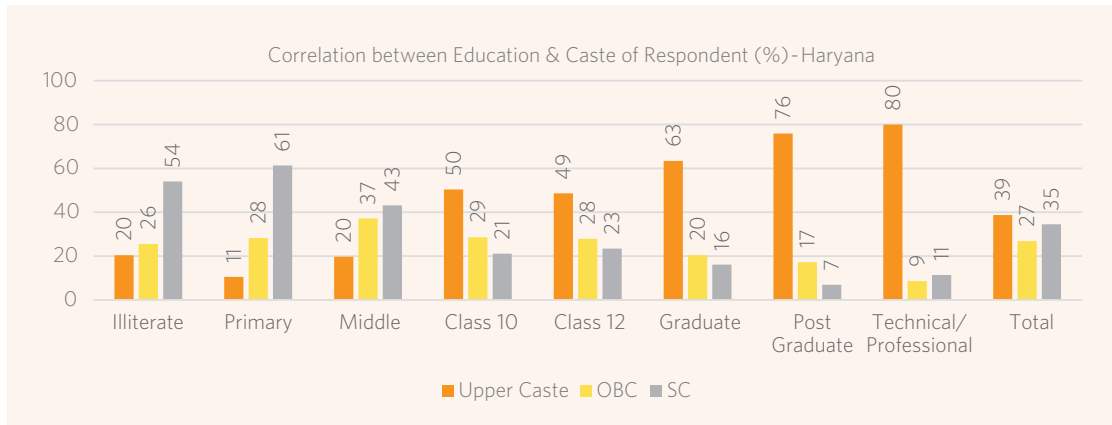
- ▶ Proportions of illiteracy are around 15 per cent in both the Shirur Wards and less in Beed.
- ▶ Ward 14 in Shirur has a larger proportion of mothers who have gone beyond high school for further education with 12.5 per cent having graduate or postgraduate degrees and as much as 15 per cent with technical or professional degrees.
- ▶ In Beed, the better off Ward 13 has as much as 33 per cent who are graduates or postgraduates, but very few with technical degrees at 4 per cent. Ward 11 has 20 per cent graduates/postgraduates but only 1 person with a technical degree.
- ▶ The surprising finding here is that when the cohorts are split into those aged 30 years or younger and the older group, while illiteracy is less among younger cohorts, at the higher end of the educational spectrum, older cohorts have more postgraduate and professional degrees in all the sites. While more among the younger women have gone to school and to a lesser extent to an undergraduate college (but even here, in Ward 2 in Shirur, the single biggest group of 38 per cent among the younger women have only completed middle school), it is only in Ward 13 in Beed that there are distinctly more graduates among younger cohorts as well.

This data on education meshes quite closely with that on age at marriage, which will be discussed in the next section. It also correlates very closely with caste in Haryana and to a lesser extent in Maharashtra, where the legacies of social reform among the so-called lower castes are much more visible in terms of less skewed educational patterns.

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN EDUCATION AND CASTE

HARYANA

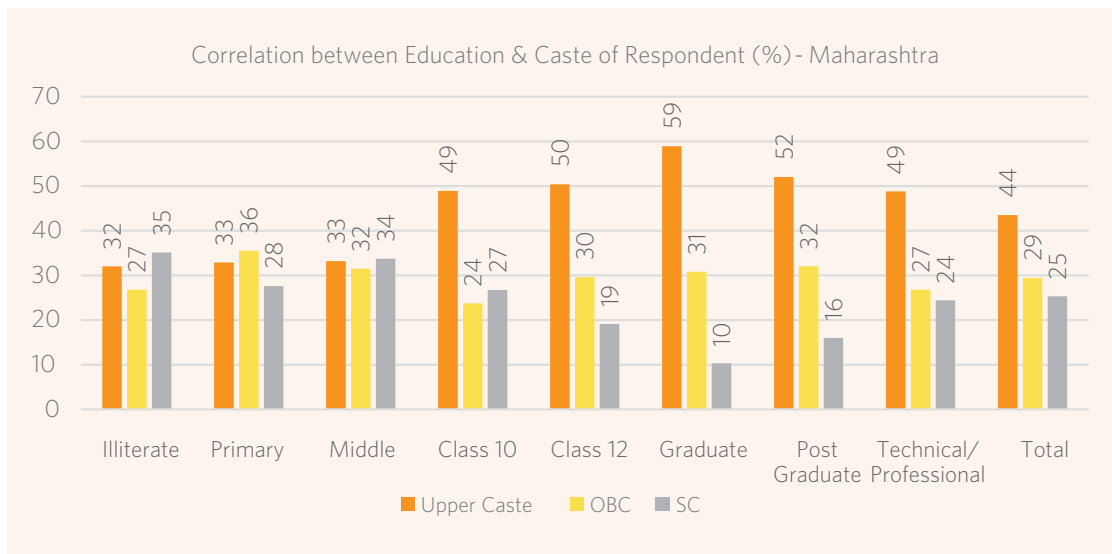
GRAPH 2.2 EDUCATION AND CASTE OF RESPONDENTS IN HARYANA FROM SURVEY



Graph 2.2 provides a snapshot of the correlation between education and caste of the respondents based on the survey for Haryana. The graphs are arranged by ascending levels of education from no education to post graduate for upper castes, OBCs and SCs. The last bar graphs provide the proportion of these groups in the study sites so that it becomes easy to see levels of over or under representation of these groups in the different educational levels. It is quite clear in the Haryana sample that upper castes are the most under represented in lower levels of education and dominate within higher education. Among Scheduled Castes it is the opposite as the majority crowd in the illiterate, primary and middle school levels. OBCs are in between.

MAHARASHTRA

GRAPH 2.3 EDUCATION AND CASTE OF RESPONDENTS IN MAHARASHTRA



Graph 2.3 provides the equivalent data for the Maharashtra sample. It is evident that the degrees of over and under representation by caste are not as sharp as in Haryana though the dominance of upper castes at higher levels of education continues to be the case here as well. OBCs are more evenly spread

across all levels of education and Scheduled Castes, while overrepresented among illiterates and at lower levels of schooling, are somewhat better represented at higher levels.

Caste discrimination appears to be much less pronounced in Maharashtra among the women in our sample in terms of educational attainments than is the case in Haryana where the differences are stark.

2.2.1 GAINING AN EDUCATION: VOICES FROM THE INTERVIEWS

Moving now to presenting women's views on education as they emerged through the interviews, there has already been considerable evidence of the significance of education in respondents' accounts of migration (many moved to the town/city for educational reasons, whether for themselves or their children). Much stronger links emerge in relation to marriage, to be discussed in the next section (which includes the fact that a few were able to continue their studies after marriage).

At one end of the spectrum, several talked about dropping out of school during middle or high school, and then being married off quickly, especially if they came from poor rural families, though this was also true of some of the very poor urban based respondents as well. At the other end, parents of the respondents, who might themselves have received little education, especially mothers, were keen to see their daughters have an education.

Striving for a different future through education, from school to higher education, respondents were prepared to leave home, staying in towns with relatives or in hostels. Already with this generation of respondents (and even more so when it comes to their children, as will be discussed in Chapter 4), there is a direct link between educational attainment and marriage prospects. Education is a key ingredient in the marriage market. At the same time, there were also those who worried about "too much education". While some said that it was really important to complete one's education before marriage, however long it might take, a few also articulated their reservations, whether over daughters-in-law who "talked too much" because of their educational levels, or, more critically, because being too educated could in fact lead to problems in finding an equally educated husband. Yet others, asked, sometimes bitterly, what the point was of accumulating so many degrees when there were no jobs at the end of it all!

Compared to the very strong relationship between education and marriage, the link between education and work in the entire sample is extremely weak.

Regardless of levels of education, the majority are housewives across all the sites (which will be discussed further in the next section.)

HARYANA

WARD 6 ROHTAK

In this well to do ward three women recall their experiences of gaining an education. It must be emphasized therefore that even here where the desire for an education was evident and shared by their natal families, the journey is not simple.

One respondent who came from a relatively poor Jat family recalled her struggle to get educated. Her father finished schooling with Class 10, joined the army and took on various jobs, her mother had never been to school. She studied and gave tuitions side by side in order to manage a B.Ed. with Mathematics. A second example, one of the few respondents with a salaried job, came from a family

where the father was a government officer and the mother a teacher. She had acquired MPhil degrees in Mathematics and Education and a PhD and now worked as a lecturer in a private institution:

I have not got a government job even after being so well qualified. It is so for men as well... People are so troubled that they have invested so much, put their time and days into this, but are not able to give their families anything in return. In my college, there is someone who has studied in IIT.

The third respondent came from an educated family where both parents were teachers with four daughters, the rest of whom “studied properly”. But she was married after her twelfth to a husband in the Air Force and was only allowed to do a BA degree. To the question whether she could have studied more, she said simply that her husband did not want women to work and therefore would not let her study any further. But then she was quick to add, “My sisters are so educated. It isn’t like they got a government job. They too are sitting at home.”

WARD 12 ROHTAK

As the previous statistical data has shown, this Ward has the lowest levels of education among the respondents. What comes through in their narratives is a kind of pincer movement and feeling condemned to poor quality and little education.

Some said there was little difference between a village with no educational facilities and the conditions of this Ward, where good schools were a distance away. Many came from illiterate family backgrounds, others said that there was no purpose in studying beyond high school. As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 on children, respondents also complained about the state of government schools — one of them said that they and their brothers rarely attended such schools — boys would be roaming around while girls sat on the walls. “What is the point?” A very perceptive respondent said that, on the other hand, there were so-called good schools which aren’t so good, because they remove students who are seen to be weak. “They ruin a child’s career over one or half a mark”. Yet so much was pinned on what children might yet achieve.

JHAJJAR, WARD 1

This is the relatively better off Ward in Jhajjar, with a high proportion of Jat migrants, many of whom had moved to this town for improving their educational prospects. Five respondents from economically secure families recall their educational histories.

The first example came from a well to do farming family with three brothers who studied till the tenth standard and continued to be zamindars on their land. She had done two years of BA when she was married, and then completed the degree, followed by an MA and B.Ed. afterwards when she first moved to Rohtak. Her husband, an engineer, who sat in on the interview said proudly that he supported her and provided the “right environment” for her education. Now she was sitting for various Haryana state qualifying exams in the teaching line in the hope of getting a service job. The second Jat respondent who had graduated and got a teaching job in a private school was busy doing her MA in the hope of improving her prospects. One of the love marriages in this Ward, the third example was a Jat woman married to a Yadav, who gave tuitions and hoped to get a government job with her M Ed and MPhil, but said there was too much competition “these days”. The other example of a love marriage in this ward was a Jat married to a Punjabi, who ran a showroom. She had done a fashion designing course after plus two, and was at home looking after her two daughters. In some other cases inquiries into the family background of the Jat respondents yielded family situations where brothers were less educated than sisters. One of the respondents who described her life as a struggle (her father

was a petty officer in the Navy) had brothers with basic graduate degrees doing odd jobs, while her sister had a PhD and was a Hindi lecturer. She herself had an MA and tried teaching, but ended up starting a health club instead.

WARD 12

This is the relatively poorer ward in Jhajjar whose direct correlate is much lower levels of educational achievement. In the three accounts below the lack of education is criss crossed with hardship, early marriage and the necessity of finding any kind of work for the family's survival.

The first example came from a Khaati family with elderly parents and high sibling mortality, who was married just a few days after her 12th exams. Her husband, a carpenter, went missing when she was just four months pregnant, and she was lucky, after several small jobs, to get a teaching job in the same school where her daughter was studying. The second respondent is one of the few Gujjar respondents, who recalled that she dropped out of school after the 7th class, while her sisters did even more poorly. With an unemployed husband she supported the family through tailoring, and was all for educating her daughter and son as much as possible. The third respondent, also from a Khaati family (with seven sisters and two brothers, whose father was a potter), recounted that while the two brothers were well educated with college degrees and relatively good jobs, none of her sisters had gone beyond middle school, and her marriage was fixed when she was just 11 years old. Indeed, especially among the Chamars and Balmikis in this Ward, the respondents themselves have only been able to receive little education (occasionally completing high school). As will be discussed further in Chapter four on children, such mothers have to juggle the new necessity of schooling for their children (including for daughters) with the compulsions of planning for relatively early marriages and finding possible work.

Maharashtra

SHIRUR, WARD 2

Moving now to the Maharashtra sample, each of the Wards is more heterogeneous in class and caste terms which is also visible in the range of narratives related to their levels and experiences related to gaining an education.

Several of the respondents in Wards 2 of Shirur were from poor backgrounds who were unable to complete high school, along with their siblings. A few among them did not dwell on the details but saw this as part of a life of deprivation and hardship. In some cases completing high school education was itself a challenge. In one example, a Maratha whose father died of cancer when she was just two years old, she was brought up in her mother's village. From 4th standard onwards she had to do the cooking, managed to study till 11th standard and was then married due to financial hardship. Though the in-laws wanted her to continue her studies she said that it was not possible to do the 12th as an external student.

A more unusual example among the better off respondents came from a Jain family whose father had a garment business and who now helped her husband in his shop. She was able to study till her MA in Aurangabad before her marriage and felt considerable freedom after marriage. While her sisters-in-law were all homemakers she had managed to make changes in the Jain community thanks to her education – from dropping the practice of *ghunghat* (veiling the head in the presence of men of the family) to curbing the everyday use of foul language by menfolk. But she managed a tailoring course and now did a bit of stitching on the side. One Brahmin respondent who grew up in Satara came from a family where all the children received higher education – she was a teacher married to college

lecturer, the brother worked in a bank, her sister had an engineering degree and had gone to the USA. There did not seem to be any hurdles in her life as she contemplated her son going to the US as well.

WARD 14

In Ward 14 in Shirur, once again several respondents shared histories of severe deprivation, including educationally – “there was no copy or pen... so I discontinued my studies”, said one respondent who dropped out half way through Class 8. In another case (from a Dhanak family) the respondent grew up in a joint family with 200 acres of cultivable land. There were lots of girls, who at most were educated till high school. Money was divided up for the education of brothers and male cousins, and some kept aside for girls’ marriage expenses. Among the well placed respondents, one came from a Maratha family where the father was a teacher (though the rest of the family depended on inherited agricultural land). She felt pampered throughout her childhood, being allowed to do things like swimming, forbidden to the elder sisters. This respondent had completed a bachelor in engineering course, her sister, who had trained as a doctor, was running her own clinic, and another sister, a housewife, was married to a land developer.

BEED, WARD 13

The respondents’ accounts of education in this Ward give a more differentiated picture of deprivation, where in some instances there could be significant differences among siblings due to financial hardship, even between sisters. Here too there is an instance where, thanks to government scholarships for girls from certain castes, it was the brothers who never attended school.

The first example from a very poor Mahar family was illiterate, as were most of her brothers and sisters. For her education was not the issue, it was work. Among the other Mahars in this Ward, one was able to study till the 10th and married right after that, while a sister was allowed to study till the 12th. Another respondent’s account was the reverse, with a sister not getting the same opportunities as she had. The big difference between completing the 10th and the 12th is that further education becomes more readily possible with the 12th after marriage, including professional courses like nursing, or the far more common graduate cum B.Ed. degree. One of the Mahar respondents was able to do an anganwadi course after her 10th, and tried other courses beyond that with the support of her in-laws to finally become a teacher in a private school. She herself added, “education is in our hands, not employment”. A Vanzari respondent from a poor farming family came first in Class 7 and got a government scholarship – “the government provided everything, clothes and food. I didn’t spend at all till I completed ITI.” But her brothers did not study at all. Another Vanzari from a better off family where everyone had been to college, did her MA in Hindi before her marriage and then a B.Ed. and her husband had a similar educational background. Both were trying for jobs and qualifying exams at the time of the interview, while the husband looked after the family farm elsewhere.

WARD 11

This somewhat better off Ward is also reflected in the more successful educational attainments among several of the respondents.

A Maratha respondent from a rural farming family recalled how supportive her parents were for her education and that of her sisters, allowing her to leave the village to study further. She had a double MA and BEd and had worked for a while as a guest lecturer, but was now devoting her time to her young children. The second example, a Mahar respondent also said that all her brothers and sisters were well educated with MA degrees (in Hindi or Marathi). Though she was married 20 years ago when she was just in the 9th, she was able to study further after marriage. She believed this was changing now for

the better. “Even women from rural areas say they will not get their daughters married till they have completed their education.” A third example from the Kumbhar caste (OBC) who came from a rural joint family recounted that once school was over, as a daughter she was not allowed to step out of the house. She did one year of college from home without attending any lectures, was married after that and did not study further. Her husband was a doctor preparing for UPSC exams. The fourth example, who grew up in Beed and was married there itself (a Maratha), reflected on her own experience of schooling and said that some of the well-regarded private schools in Beed discriminated against students based on caste. She was unusually aware and articulate about such issues. Teachers often being Brahmin would particularly look down upon “Harijan” students, who then reacted arrogantly. The fifth example, one of the only lawyers in the sample came from a Mahar family born in Beed who grew up in Aurangabad. Both her sisters were lecturers. She had completed her LL.M. and was now practicing at the district court while also being an assistant professor at the local law college.

2.3 • **MARRIAGE**

2.3.1 • **MARITAL STATUS**

As had been mentioned at the outset, the present study only includes women with at least one child, and all of them reported having been married.

- ▶ In Haryana a much more conventional picture emerged – only one woman in the entire sample reported that she was divorced and just four were separated out of 829 respondents overall.
- ▶ In terms of the kind of marriage, again the overwhelming majority reported that they had married as per traditional norms within their caste, with just four reporting a love marriage within the caste and eight a love marriage with someone from a different caste.
- ▶ In Maharashtra, on the other hand, three women were divorced and 17 separated out of 805 respondents.
- ▶ 20 reported love marriages within their caste and 28 love marriages outside their caste.
- ▶ The proportion of widows was roughly similar at 5 per cent in both the state samples.

2.3.2 • **AGE AT MARRIAGE**

The age at marriage of all the respondents in the study – both Haryana and Maharashtra – show some variations but also considerable commonality. It was surprising to discover high proportions among the respondents in both the state samples who had married below the age of 18 years.

In order to place this issue in perspective, Census data of age of marriage below the age of 18 and below the age of 15 years is being provided for comparison. Tables 2.1 and Table 2.2 provide data disaggregated by urban and rural location for the state as a whole as well as for the districts of Rohtak and Jhajjar, since this data is not available for the towns themselves. Thus the urban data in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 for Rohtak and Jhajjar would be the closest by way of comparison to the study data. It provides the proportion of all ever married men and women across age groups as well as the proportion of those married in the last four years (from the time of the Census in 2011), and is thus a useful figure for current norms around age of marriage among younger women and men.

Tables 2.3 and 2.4 provide similar data for Maharashtra, with Pune being the district in which Shirur is located.

TABLE 2.1 AGE AT MARRIAGE –HARYANA CENSUS 2011*

Age at Marriage Less than 18 years–HARYANA

State/ District	Total/Rural/ Urban	Proportion of Number of ever Married Persons		Married in last (0-4 years)	
		Males	Females	Males	Females
Haryana	Total	7.8	30.7	3.1	14.5
Haryana	Rural	9.2	34.5	4.1	17.7
Haryana	Urban	5.3	23.8	1.4	8.6
Rohtak	Total	6.6	33.8	1.4	12.4
Rohtak	Rural	8.3	40.7	1.8	16.1
Rohtak	Urban	4.4	24.5	0.8	7.3
Jhajjar	Total	8.1	36.1	2.0	13.2
Jhajjar	Rural	9.0	38.5	2.3	14.8
Jhajjar	Urban	5.6	28.6	1.1	8.3

TABLE 2.2 AGE AT MARRIAGE LESS THAN 15 YEARS-HARYANA CENSUS 2011*

State/District	Total/Rural/ Urban	Proportion of Number of ever Married Persons		Married in last (0-4 years)	
		Males	Females	Males	Females
Haryana	Total	3.4	13.3	0.6	2.4
Haryana	Rural	3.8	14.9	0.8	3.0
Haryana	Urban	2.6	10.4	0.2	1.2
Rohtak	Total	2.9	15.1	0.2	1.4
Rohtak	Rural	3.5	18.7	0.3	2.0
Rohtak	Urban	2.1	10.1	0.1	0.7
Jhajjar	Total	3.5	16.3	0.3	1.8
Jhajjar	Rural	3.8	17.4	0.4	2.1
Jhajjar	Urban	2.6	13.1	0.2	1.0

TABLE 2.3 AGE AT MARRIAGE LESS THAN 18 YEARS –MAHARASHTRA CENSUS 2011*

State/District	Total/Rural/ Urban	Proportion of Number of ever Married Persons		Married in last (0-4 years)	
		Males	Females	Males	Females
Maharashtra	Total	5.1	28.1	0.8	11.5
Maharashtra	Rural	5.1	32.4	1.0	14.5
Maharashtra	Urban	5.0	22.6	0.7	8.0
Pune	Total	4.9	27.1	0.6	9.8
Pune	Rural	5.2	35.1	0.7	14.2
Pune	Urban	4.7	21.7	0.5	7.4
Beed	Total	4.4	36.1	0.9	19.9
Beed	Rural	4.5	37.2	0.9	20.8
Beed	Urban	4.1	31.1	0.6	16.4

* Source: C-4 Ever married and currently married population by age at marriage and duration of marriage, Census 2011, Office of the Registrar General (RGI), India.

TABLE 2.4 AGE AT MARRIAGE LESS THAN 15 YEARS- MAHARASHTRA CENSUS 2011

State/District	Total/Rural/ Urban	Proportion of Number of ever Married Persons		Married in last (0-4 years)	
		Males	Females	Males	Females
Maharashtra	Total	3.4	12.4	0.1	1.4
Maharashtra	Rural	3.2	13.8	0.1	1.8
Maharashtra	Urban	3.6	10.7	0.1	1.0
Pune	Total	3.6	12.4	0.1	1.2
Pune	Rural	3.6	15.4	0.1	1.8
Pune	Urban	3.6	10.4	0.1	0.9
Beed	Total	2.6	15.2	0.1	2.5
Beed	Rural	2.5	15.5	0.1	2.5
Beed	Urban	2.8	14.2	0.1	2.3

Source: C-4 Ever married and currently married population by age at marriage and duration of marriage, Census 2011, Office of the Registrar General (RGI), India.

Note that for urban Rohtak the figures for all married women who have married below the age of 18 is 24.5 per cent and for young women who have married in the last four years to the Census it is 7.3 per cent. Equivalent figures for Jhajjar are slightly higher at 28.6 and 8.3 per cent respectively. Note also the equivalent figures for those marrying below 15 years which only becomes insignificant for the younger group.

In the case of Maharashtra according to Table 2.3, 21.7 per cent and 31.1 per cent are the respective figures of all women who have married below 18 years for urban Pune district and urban Beed district. For the younger cohort who have married in the last four years the figures are just 7.4 per cent for urban Pune district and 16.4 per cent for urban Beed. Note also the equivalent figures for those marrying below 15 years which are significant especially for Beed.

States not usually associated with low ages of marriage and that too in its urban districts are therefore still exhibiting significant degrees of low ages at marriage.

Haryana is a prosperous state known for higher levels of education and ages at marriage, and Maharashtra has had a history of social reform with a major focus on women and education. Moreover, the present study deals entirely with urban and not rural locations, leading to an overall expectation that women would be marrying at relatively higher ages.

The following Tables 2.5, 2.6, 2.7 and 2.8 and Graphs 2.4 and 2.5 provide broadly similar figures based on the sample of the study for all the sites, for younger cohorts (those aged up to 30 years) and for all the respondents (up to 60 years).

TABLE 2.5. DISTRIBUTION OF AGE AT MARRIAGE YOUNGER COHORT, HARYANA

Age At Marriage	Less Than 15	Less Than 18	18-21	More Than 21
Rohtak				
Ward_6	4.2	16.7	56.3	22.9
Ward_12	4.2	33.6	54.6	7.6
Sub Total	4.2	28.7	55.1	12.0
Jhajjar				
Ward_1	1.5	16.7	62.1	19.7
Ward_12j	9.1	37.5	42.0	11.4
Sub Total	5.8	28.6	50.6	14.9
Total	5.0	28.7	56.1	13.4

TABLE 2.6 DISTRIBUTION OF AGE AT MARRIAGE, ALL RESPONDENTS, HARYANA

Age At Marriage	Less Than 15	Less Than 18	18-21	More Than 21
Rohtak				
Ward_6	3.2	28.6	56.2	12.0
Ward_12	5.5	42.7	44.5	7.3
Sub Total	4.3	35.7	50.3	9.6
Jhajjar				
Ward_1	5.5	24.8	48.2	21.6
Ward_12j	8.5	43.9	35.4	12.1
Sub Total	7.0	34.5	41.7	16.8
Total	5.7	35.1	46.0	13.2

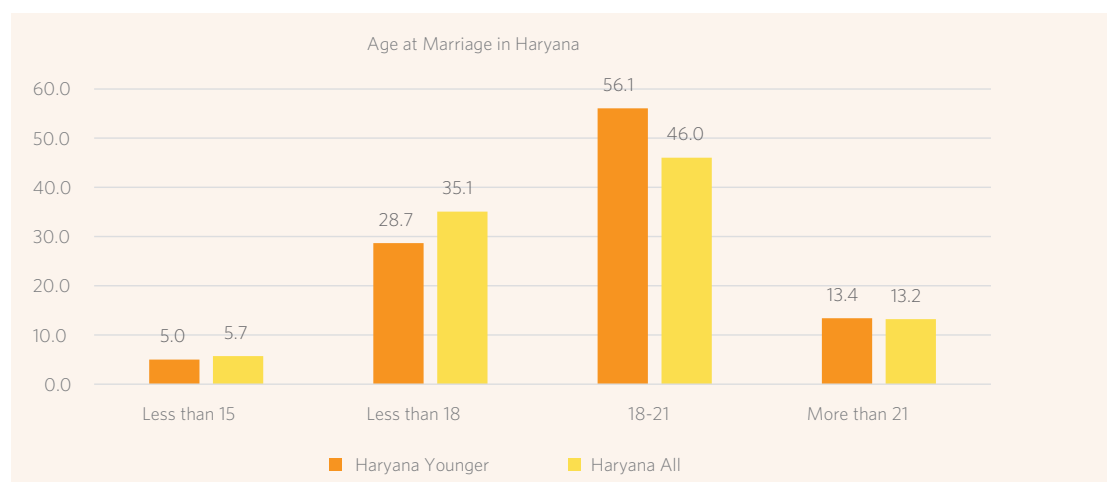
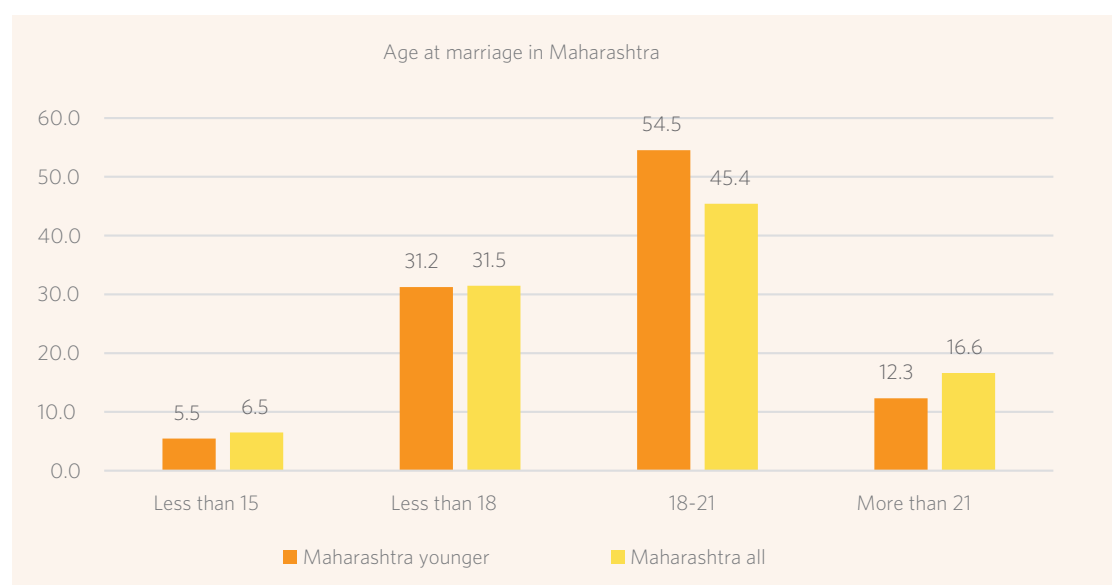
GRAPH 2.4. COMPARISON OF AGE AT MARRIAGE OF YOUNGER COHORTS AND ALL RESPONDENTS, HARYANA

TABLE 2.7. DISTRIBUTION OF AGE AT MARRIAGE YOUNGER COHORT, MAHARASHTRA

Age At Marriage	Less Than 15	Less Than 18	18-21	More Than 21
Shirur				
Ward_2	6.8	35.9	46.6	10.7
Ward_14	6.9	37.9	45.7	9.5
Sub Total	6.8	37.0	46.1	10.0
Beed				
Ward_13	1.7	13.8	62.1	22.4
Ward_11	4.5	28.4	55.7	11.4
Sub Total	3.4	22.6	58.2	15.8
Total	5.5	31.2	54.5	12.3

TABLE 2.8. DISTRIBUTION OF AGE AT MARRIAGE ALL RESPONDENTS, MAHARASHTRA

Age At Marriage	Less Than 15	Less Than 18	18-21	More Than 21
Shirur				
Ward_2	8.5	36.0	41.7	13.7
Ward_14	5.9	36.9	40.1	17.1
Sub Total	7.2	36.5	40.9	15.5
Beed				
Ward_13	5.2	21.4	50.0	23.3
Ward_11	6.4	31.2	50.0	12.4
Sub Total	5.8	26.4	50.0	17.8
Total	6.5	31.5	45.4	16.6

GRAPH 2.5. COMPARISON OF AGE AT MARRIAGE OF YOUNGER COHORTS AND ALL RESPONDENTS, MAHARASHTRA

First of all, it needs to be said that only limited comparisons can be made between the Census data offered and the Tables and Graphs above taken from the study sites, given that Census refers to the entire districts in question while the sample data is town and ward specific. Also, the field data covers 20–60 year old women for the whole sample and those aged 20–30 years for the younger cohort.

It should be noted that the field data for the entire cohort shows higher proportions of under age marriage than the Census with the sole exception of urban Beed where the field data is somewhat less.

Haryana

- ▶ In Haryana, as might be expected, the proportions of those marrying below 18 are higher in the poor Wards, well above 40 per cent of the entire sample.
- ▶ Among younger cohorts the figures are only just below 30 per cent, still very high.
- ▶ As can be seen from Graph 2.4, among younger cohorts there is a 10 per cent rise in those marrying between 18–21 years compared to the entire sample, but no difference in the small proportions of those marrying above the age of 21 years.

Maharashtra

- ▶ The main finding in the Maharashtra sample is that the difference in the proportions of those marrying below 18 among the younger cohorts compared to the entire sample is much less than in Haryana.
- ▶ What is particularly hard to fathom is that in Shirur the proportion is slightly higher among the younger cohort, and only urban Beed shows a drop. The Beed sites also have fewer proportions of under age marriage than the sites in Shirur.
- ▶ As can be seen in Graph 2.5, another surprise is that while a larger proportion in the younger cohort are marrying between the ages of 18–21 years, a smaller proportion is marrying above this age compared to the entire sample.
- ▶ Small proportions in all the wards in both Haryana and Maharashtra are marrying below the age of 15, and here too there is very little decline among younger cohorts.

In any discussion on marriage it is equally pertinent to look at the age of marriage of the husbands. As expected, men do marry at relatively higher ages, but the difference is not large. In fact, a significant proportion of men are marrying below 21 years which is the legal age for men – the highest proportion is 30 per cent in Ward 12 in Rohtak, followed by 18 per cent in the Shirur wards. The lowest is 7.5 per cent in Beed. Moreover, a few men are being married below the age of 15 years in all the wards, which would qualify as a persisting form of child marriage. At the other end of the age spectrum there are small numbers of men marrying at ages up to 41 years.

Considering the overall spread of reporting on age at marriage, the modal age is 18 years for women (which needs to be interpreted with care since it is the legal age of marriage), followed by age 20 and age 17. Similarly, the modal age of reporting for men in Haryana is 21 years, followed by 22 and 24 years.

There is some decline in the proportion of under 18 marriages in the Haryana sample among younger cohorts, but very much less so in Maharashtra. Moreover, as mentioned above, there is no change in the proportion of younger cohorts marrying above 21 years in Haryana and even a decline in the case of Maharashtra.

In other words, there is both a sticky floor of persistent low ages of marriage and an even more sticky ceiling at the higher end when it comes to the ages at which women in all the study sites have been marrying.

The curious thing is that those sites with the highest levels of migration from rural areas like Ward 6 and Ward 1 in Haryana have better ages of marriage than those in the old parts of the city (whether in Rohtak or Jhajjar), as well as in Shirur, which had deeper levels of urbanisation among the respondents.

2.3.3 • MARRIAGE: VOICES FROM THE INTERVIEWS

The discussion on marriage so far has drawn from the survey data and its analysis. Marriage was a significant topic in the interviews, and some of the views of the respondents will be presented here. Respondents were often somewhat reticent about their own marriages or passed over this aspect of their lives altogether in the interviews. It should be emphasized that the discussion on marriage was shot through with doubt and contradictions, even while staying close to convention. This was especially in evidence in the Haryana sample. When it came to talking about their children, the discussion was replete with notions of what is changing and what is not, what is “right” and what is “wrong” today compared to the past. This section introduces those aspects of respondents’ views on marriage which pertained more closely to their own lives, while a fuller discussion on marriage can be found later in the report in Chapter 4 dealing with children and planning for their futures.

As already stated, **the respondents articulated strongly held yet anxiety laden views that echoed social norms and conventions relating to marriage.** At times, women respondents explicitly said that their beliefs about marriage had to be aligned to those of ‘society’. The values of an arranged marriage by parents were frequently stressed (and across all castes), and among the Haryana women, very few, even with a certain degree of rapport creation, wanted to talk at any length about their own marriages. They were much more ready to offer more general views – such as on what is the ideal age for marriage (for them or their children), necessary restrictions based on caste, whether by references to the *patrika*, i.e., horoscopes based on astrology (Maharashtra) and *gotra* (lineages in Haryana), or the problems of love marriages (“these days”). However, and this is an issue that will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 4 on children, **there is a deep uncertainty regarding living in changing times and its implications.** What stands out quite interestingly is a frequent distinction that was made between **choice** and **consent** – the former is overwhelmingly opposed (more so in the Haryana sample), while consent is acknowledged as being necessary in order that a marriage be a stable one, otherwise the girl may well return very shortly to her natal family. The present sample is of course entirely composed of women who have been married, given the nature of this study.

Hardly anyone questioned the nature of marriage or its necessity for both men and women – one might say that it was pretty much taken for granted. It was only the quality of a particular marriage, whether their own, that of a relative, or of others more generally, that elicited various views. The fact that respondents in Haryana were less forthcoming in their views compared to those in the Maharashtra sample could be for two interrelated reasons. Firstly, as mentioned above, there were more love marriages and separations in the Maharashtra sample, and secondly there could be a differential degree to which existing norms and discourses acted as a constraint in these two regions. Haryana has been saturated in the public domain with problems of “family and community honour”, elopements and their sometimes tragic and violent outcomes. Interestingly, the timing of the interviews in Maharashtra coincided with the huge popularity of the Marathi film *Sairat* (which is all about an inter caste love marriage between a Maratha girl and a Dalit boy, both of whom are murdered in a climactic finish by the girl’s family) so it is not accidental that a few of the respondents in Maharashtra also referred to the film.

Haryana

ROHTAK WARD 6

To begin with the women interviewed in Ward 6 in Rohtak, one of them said that she had two friends who had not got married. In each case, they only had sisters, and had deliberately remained unmarried in order to look after their parents. (Here is an allusion to what is perceived to be a problem when one is in a girl only family in the respondents' generation.) This requires special confidence and will power, she said. In fact, this respondent was remarkable for the kinds of contradictory beliefs she held. On the one hand, she was in support of Khap leaders and explicitly stated that the Hindu Marriage Act ought to be amended to make marrying within the village illegal (they are "brother-sister"). On the other hand, she was one of the very few who said that love must also be supported and that her own cousin was married to a Muslim. Some respondents refused to offer detailed views, saying that in their time many considerations and complications were not as evident as they are now. Another respondent said that not marrying would lead to other difficulties, having to cope with constant taunts for having some obvious "shortcomings". In this Ward the age at marriage among the interviewed respondents ranged from a low of 16 years to 24 years. Interestingly, some of them mentioned that when they were married during the course of their education (such as during college) they could complete their studies after marriage, through distance mode or as an external candidate. Others articulated ideas of companionate conjugality, saying that there were limits to what could be shared with parents and hence that the marriage relation was necessary. Many said that they were married too young and wanted to make sure that daughters or daughters-in-law, as the case may be, ought to be allowed to complete their education and be at least 21 or even 25 years before getting married. When asked whether marriage was necessary, they invariably answered in the affirmative. Some offered gendered accounts: Boys, according to one respondent, always needed someone to support them, their parents in childhood and a wife later on. Girls would be alone without marriage, and should have the experience of fulfillment that comes from managing a household.

ROHTAK WARD 12

In Ward 12 in Rohtak its overall poor socio-economic condition is amply reflected in the interviews when it comes to marriage. One respondent said openly that a less educated girl here would undoubtedly only end up with an unemployed and alcoholic husband. Yet another, a Balmiki, one of six sisters of whom three had died, and herself the mother of three daughters, said that she was keen to marry them off as quickly as possible. "Rich people don't have doubts about their own girl. Whereas amongst us they will question her even if she comes back with a child, if he is a boy." Others said that it was simply not safe to have a daughter of 16 who was not yet married. To which another added that girls have early love marriages and "no one gets to know". Respondents said that in fact in this area love marriages were quite common, some of which did not follow caste norms, and pointed in the direction of other houses where this was the case. One, from a Chamar family, gave the example of her own brother who remained single and then married a woman from a different caste who was a mother of three.

Jhajjar

WARD 1

In Ward 1 in Jhajjar respondents referred very little to their own marriages. On the question of marriage itself, one particularly forthright respondent said that since people needed sex, marriage was necessary. Another said that without marriage there would be live-in relationships, "but this is not for India". One respondent (now 45 years old) who was from a poor rural Brahmin family with six

siblings, recounted that one of her sisters was married when she was as young as 12 years along with an older sister, while she was the pampered one and allowed to finish Class 12 before her marriage. Another respondent who runs a successful beauty parlour in Jhajjar (and whose personal history and views will come up again later), came from a Jat family with many men in the army. She was married off when she was just in Class 10 to a man (in the police) who had been first engaged to her older sister, but then the sister died unexpectedly right after the engagement. This respondent not only completed schooling but got herself an MA after marriage. One of the few cases of a love marriage in the Haryana sample was from this Ward, but the respondent (who was interviewed in the presence of her husband) only referred to her marriage as follows: “no one found for me, I found for myself”. But otherwise the rest of the interview revealed no deviation from existing norms of caste and gotra. The second case of love marriage in this Ward was a Jat married to a Yadav – they did not wish to dwell on their situation, but it was evident that due to opposition in the village they moved to Rohtak, and that reconciliation with her family took many years. (They had two daughters.) Another respondent from a poor Manihaar family recounted that the first “rishta” arranged for her broke down (they discovered that the man was a drunkard) and it was possible to arrange a second marriage very quickly. She went on to say that the “wrong” first match didn’t only cause her suffering – the man’s father got him a wife from another state who tried to run away but was brought back forcibly by the girl’s father. However, this respondent was also unhappy in the second marriage, had to endure violence from her mother-in-law and went as often as she could to her natal home, which only made things worse.

WARD 12J

As one might expect in Ward 12J in Jhajjar, which has many more poor families, respondents were married at younger ages. One said that due to poverty, she (then 18 years old) and her sister barely 15 were married to two brothers so that there could be one wedding for them both. In another interview, the mother-in-law who was present said that she got her son married when he was just 18, and she did the same for his brother – though nowadays, the boys can be 25 or even 30 years old, she said. Yet another respondent (a Balmiki) said that because her 18 year old daughter looked like 25, she had to continue her education from home (to keep “honour”) and arranged her marriage during her first year of college. In what is the youngest case, another respondent recounted that she was married when she was just 11 years old along with her sister. But there was a *gauna* period of 5 years (when she remained with her own family) after which she moved to her in-laws’ household. They were Kumhars, though pottery as a livelihood (once common in this part of Jhajjar) was no longer being practiced.

Maharashtra

SHIRUR WARD 2

Among the Maharashtra respondents who agreed to do interviews, many more were willing to talk about their own lives and marriages. In Ward 2 in Shirur, a respondent from a poor Chambhar (SC) caste family said that in her case poverty delayed her marriage – her family worked under conditions amounting to bonded labour, receiving jowar in return for wage work, and so there was no money for her marriage till she was 18 years old. But her husband left her (he was a drunkard in any case) and married again, and she lived with her mother-in-law and three daughters in Shirur. Another respondent who worked as a domestic maid in several houses before stopping work temporarily to take care of her daughters, said that her problems were not financial but her drunkard husband who fought with her a lot. More than levels of education marriage must be done keeping in mind the compatibility of the couple, she felt strongly. In what is a very clear case of child marriage, a respondent from the Kaikadi caste whose parents were landless labourers, said that she could not remember when she was married, less than 11 years she thinks. (She did not conceive children till ten years later she says. She was 32 years old at the time of the interview.) But it was a very bad marriage, full of violence and

she was abandoned after three daughters were born. Another respondent, a Maratha, had married a Muslim – they were neighbours in Shirur itself. So she had shifted, in her words, from “jeans and top” to “burqa”, but at the same time she had Mohammedan friends since her childhood, and so did not feel that it was such a huge change.

WARD 14

In Ward 14 in Shirur a small number of the respondents interviewed were separated. One who was a domestic worker said “We both of us had separate thoughts. It was not about addiction or anything, we could not cooperate or take responsibility together.” A Maratha respondent said that she and her sister got married to two brothers to save on costs, cutting short her education at Class 8. Though she was told at the time of marriage that her education would continue afterwards, that didn’t happen as she had to take responsibility of the home. Several respondents also talked about their parents’ marriages, with examples of fathers who were alcoholics, and one who just left the home when too many daughters were born. In a few cases the parents’ marriage broke down soon after the birth of the respondent herself and the father then remarried. The two cases where respondents are the only child in their family were of this type. In another case of a rural Maratha respondent married at the age of 18 in the village, she said that her biggest problem was adjusting to her in-laws who were violent towards her, while her husband (with a B.Ed. but no job at the time) was helpless. She was happy that they had moved together to Shirur where he was now working as a teacher. Another who was in an inter-caste love marriage (OBC Shiwi) described that she had to struggle to manage – she restarted her undergraduate studies after marriage and then was nine months pregnant with her first daughter when she was taking her third year exams. She wanted just one child but her husband wanted a second, (a son), which added to her household burdens with no one to help.

Beed

WARD 13

In Beed Ward 13, a Vanzari respondent recounted that her parents had to sell their house to get her married at a minimum expense of 2 lakhs (“this was as small as we could have it!”). Among poorer families unable to educate their children, some marriages were arranged early – one respondent could not remember how old she was, probably 16 at the time, she said. Another Mahar woman who was illiterate said that she had a love marriage by eloping when she was 15 or 16 years old, with her neighbour. Her marriage was being arranged to another boy but he had “burned one or two girls earlier” according to her, so she ran away. However, ages at marriage could vary considerably within a given family – one respondent from a Mahar family who was the eldest said that she was married right after her 10th because she was sickly, while her younger sister was allowed to study much further and marry later. One of the Vanzari respondents was married when she had just completed 7th standard and was barely 15 years old to a man 12 years older, at next to no cost. She broke down early on in the interview because of the kind of control her husband exerted, never letting her leave the house or talk to anyone, though she was quick to add that he was never violent and good with the children. She left him for a month but then returned for the sake of her small children (a daughter and son).

WARD 11

One of the few professional respondents in Ward 11 was a nurse whose marriage was arranged when she was 24 years to the son of the head nurse (they are Vanzaris). At the time of the interview, the husband was unemployed – he had worked in an automobile shop and then in a mobile store. Unlike Vanzari norms, she was allowed to work before marriage and there was no dowry. Another respondent, a Mahar, divulged only at the time of interview that she had had a love marriage with

her college classmate, also a Mahar. It was a case of love-cum-arranged marriage, with members from both families present to fix the court marriage. She was completely in favour of making one's own choices and against their own practice of boys coming to check out a girl, asking questions and then rejecting the potential bride. "This is going to stop in future," she said firmly – parents will be informed and if they disagree then the couple should elope. Another respondent, also a Mahar, found that her husband (who was abusive and violent, and had deceived her parents about his job and property) remarried when she had gone home to have her second delivery (also a daughter). She had unsuccessfully fought for alimony in court and now lived with her mother. At the time of interview she had just got her elder daughter married to her brother's son.

2.3.4 • MALE MARRIAGE SQUEEZE

Most unexpectedly, several respondents in Beed spoke openly about the male marriage squeeze, that is, the shortage of brides, and much more so than the respondents in Haryana. In Haryana almost everyone acknowledged that brides were being brought from other states and there might be a few such cases in their own locality. But invariably, the Haryana respondents said that such cases were known to them from the villages of their natal or in-laws' families, where poor, older or unemployed men were unable to find wives.

Such women might be brought with money, and many times they would run away (sometimes taking valuables and cash with them), said a number of respondents. But they did not mention this as a problem they had encountered in their own families.

One of the Brahmin respondents from Ward 13 in Beed said that "there are no girls for Brahmins to marry. During our time, finding a Rigvedi (Brahmin sub-caste) for a Rigvedi was possible. Now finding a Brahmin itself is difficult." She went on to talk about her brother, almost 30 years old who runs a grocery store and does some farming, but is unable to get married. "Day before yesterday, a girl came to see him. The patrikas were seen. She is also a 10th grade pass but we haven't heard back from them yet."

In Ward 11 in Beed, a respondent from a poor Maratha farming family who was 35 years old at the time of the interview had an elder brother who was unable to get married. He sold cutlery on a cart in Pune, was depressed and had taken to drinking. This was another instance of explicit mention of a male marriage squeeze. Though her husband was 23 at the time of their marriage (20 years ago), she said that now ages had increased considerably among Marathas – 20–22 for girls and 30–35 for boys.

Across the Maharashtra sample, there were very contrasting patterns of marriage compared to Haryana. Not only was it possible to arrange a marriage within the same village, but cross-cousin marriages were very common, and in rare cases even direct first cousins. Rather than talk of "gotra" it was the "patrika" that had to be consulted to ensure that the match was a good one, especially among Marathas, Vanzaris and other Hindu castes. The other distinctive characteristic in the Maharashtra sample was that many Mahars were strongly Buddhist, opposed Hindu rituals and beliefs, and advocated court marriages. In one of the more unusual love marriages in the sample, a Vanzari found her husband during her hostel years ("we protested together and made demands") and discovered later that he was "Harijan". She was not happy to find this out. However, when they had a daughter and her mother asked her to just leave both him and the daughter and return home, she refused. ("Vanzaris are like this").

Overall, these individual voices and experiences complement what the survey statistics provided.

Marriage is pretty much a compulsory institution across all the sites, and women find themselves all too frequently aligning themselves in favour of societal norms, with some very notable exceptions, more so in Maharashtra.

The topic of marriage will recur in more detail again in Chapter 4 in the context of discussing parents' views of their children. The next section moves to questions relating to work and employment, which has already made an entry in the prior discussions on migration and marriage.

2.4 • WORK AND EMPLOYMENT

This section deals with the work status of the female respondents and their husbands. Together with the discussion on education and marriage, work is an absolutely vital aspect that determines women's socio-economic situation. In the survey, several questions were asked about women's work and employment status, and, for the purposes of this study, part time work was counted as participating in the work force.

As is the case in urban India more generally, women's work participation rates are extremely low across the sites.

The issue of work came up very briefly in the beginning of this report in Chapter 1, in the Tables 1.2 and 1.3, where Census figures were given for all the wards, and also the figures according to the study samples. As mentioned there, the sample figures were somewhat higher than those of the Census, probably because of the care taken to determine whether women were engaged in any kind of work for which either she or the family received an income.

In all the sites, by far the largest proportion of women are housewives, whose labour is to work in their own homes.

- ▶ These proportions vary from as high as 73 per cent in Jhajjar to 61 per cent in Shirur, with Rohtak and Beed in between. Or to put it the other way around, between 39 per cent to 27 per cent of the study sample were engaged in some kind of paid work for which they or their family received remuneration.
- ▶ Respondents were also asked if they had held a job before, even if they were not employed at the time of the study. 12 per cent in the Haryana sample said that they had been working before, while in the Maharashtra sample this was 13 per cent. These are not inconsequential proportions — some were working before children were born, and in some cases the work was temporary, frequently of a self-employed nature.

At a basic level the town of Shirur, part of the larger urbanisation of Pune, has more women in jobs than Jhajjar, though the latter is at the edge of the National Capital Region of Delhi. However, when it comes to the kind of jobs women in the urban sites have access to, the picture is quite depressing.

- ▶ **Teaching emerges as the single most common job among those who are employed in Haryana, whereas in Maharashtra overall the numbers were roughly equally shared for teachers, tailoring, and paid domestic work.** Ward 6 in Rohtak had the highest proportion of 14.6 per cent women who are teachers (which ranged from part time teaching, giving tuitions, to being a regular school teacher or, more rarely, college lecturer). In Ward 12, on the other hand, there was not even one teacher in the study sample, but the single most common occupation was daily wage work (8.6 per cent), followed by tailoring and municipal sweeping.

- In the Maharashtra sites the contrasts were not so stark – Beed, too, had more teachers, while Shirur had tailoring and domestic workers in slightly larger numbers. Very small numbers were spread across other kinds of occupations in all the wards – beauty parlour, clerical work, nursing, among others.

Only very few were industrial workers – whether in Shirur or Jhajjar, where these might have been more likely. In Haryana, only tiny numbers were engaged in cultivation, agricultural work or animal husbandry (even when their husbands were doing so).

TYPES OF OCCUPATION

The survey questionnaire also used the National Sample Survey (NSS) mode of classifying occupations across various categories – cultivator, agricultural labourer, artisan, industrial worker, construction worker, professional/executive services, clerical services, sales employee, own trade/business, education (teacher/assistant), social services, personal services, housewife, no occupation, seeking employment.

Apart from the housewives already referred to above, the single largest category here is that of own trade/business in both the states. This is of course a rather heterogeneous category, including those running a small shop, a beauty parlour, to those doing tuitions or tailoring at home.

In Haryana the next categories with a significant number were education and social service. In Maharashtra the pattern is similar with one interesting exception – a significant number of women from among the housewives (about 25 per cent) reported that they were seeking employment, while this figure was negligible in Haryana.

Only a small proportion of women were government employees – under 5 per cent in both Haryana and Maharashtra. Therefore in small towns such as these, the government offers only very limited opportunities, even if these are highly prized – from permanent municipal jobs among the poorer families in Haryana, to school teaching in the district government schools in Beed.

NATURE OF EMPLOYMENT

The other mode of categorisation is in terms of nature of employment – regular permanent, contract, casual direct employment, regular self-employment, casual self-employment or piece rated work at home.

Among those women with any kind of paid work, casual self-employment was the largest category in both the states.

In Haryana this category is followed by regular permanent, and then by contract, regular self-employment and casual direct employment. The regular permanent category would encompass both teachers in regular employment and workers such as municipal employees.

In Maharashtra the next category after casual self-employment is casual direct employment, then followed by regular permanent and contract based employment. This would indicate that while somewhat more women have jobs in the Maharashtra sites than in Haryana, and also women in Maharashtra are looking for work to a greater extent than in Haryana, their working conditions have been more casualised.

Greater casualisation in Maharashtra is corroborated when looking at women's actual earnings. More women in Maharashtra were confined to low levels of income than in Haryana. While out of all the

female respondents (including housewives) 23 per cent were earning Rs. 5000 or less per month, this was true for 16 per cent of women in Haryana. Approximately 5 per cent women were earning between Rs. 5000–10,000 in both sites and similarly 5 per cent in both states were earning more than Rs. 10,000.

2.4.1 • HOUSEWORK

Survey questions also asked about housework and who helped in doing the work at home. Here, too, there are interesting commonalities and differences between the Haryana and Maharashtra sites.

The majority said that they had someone to help them – 78 per cent across sites in Haryana and 70 per cent in Maharashtra, but this still leaves 22 per cent and 30 per cent respectively who are doing all the work by themselves. (As might be expected these are mainly nuclear families with young children.)

When it came to who helped it turns out in the Haryana case that there were practically no paid domestic workers even in the better off Wards in Rohtak and Jhajjar, at least in the study sample, just 2 per cent overall, while the figure for Maharashtra was 10 per cent. This means that **in smaller cities and towns, like the ones being studied, the proportion of even middle class families who have paid domestic workers is not as common as in bigger cities.** It is family members who are helping out to various degrees, whether on a daily basis or more occasionally, with cooking, cleaning, child and elder care, and so on. Interestingly, in both states around 50 per cent of the women reported that husbands helped them – fetching water was a common need, as well as being with children. Otherwise the list of who helps is headed everywhere by daughters (43 per cent in Haryana, 37 per cent in Maharashtra, who assist with cleaning, washing dishes and/or doing some cooking) followed by mothers-in-law, and a smaller number of sisters-in-law. The number of daughters-in-law mentioned are extremely small, possibly because these are younger families, where there would be much fewer daughters-in-law in any case. A small number of sons also find mention.

2.4.2 • VOICES FROM THE INTERVIEWS ON WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

Complementing this picture from the survey, the interviews provided further glimpses into the worlds of women's work across the sites. In the previous sections on marriage and education the voices of the respondents already alluded to labour and work – the difficulties in finding a job, whatever one's qualifications, has come up repeatedly. **Many of those interviewed were housewives regardless of social standing, husband's income or caste. For some, this was normal, they did not expect to work and were fully occupied in caring for family members.** Fulltime housewives in middle class families described getting up early for husbands and children, waiting for their return, organising study time and tuitions, play time and making sure they had the right values. Others were happy to be in a joint family with mothers-in-law to help. A few spoke more despairingly of sitting for qualifying exams in the hope of getting a job (usually in the teaching line) or complained of husbands and in-laws who would not let them work outside the home. Many of those working, especially in Haryana, were earning small amounts of money doing sewing and tailoring. The big contrasts in Haryana were by class and caste when it came to what kind of work women aspired for or could expect to get.

Haryana

ROHTAK WARD 6

In Ward 6 in Rohtak, one of the Jat respondents who is a schoolteacher with a three year old daughter said that she used to take her daughter with her to school but now that her mother-in-law had just

retired that weight had been taken off her. Another respondent from the Lohar caste who had spent most of her life in different parts of the country as an army wife and was now settled in Rohtak added to family income by doing sewing – she said every other house has women doing this kind of work, and there is not much in it. A Jat respondent, whose daughter was now growing up, was hoping to find some kind of teaching job (there was little else for women, whereas men, she felt, had more scope and fewer constraints). She might start her own tuition centre. A couple of respondents worked with their husbands – a Balmiki in this ward ran a small grocery shop and a Jat respondent whose husband had been in the army, started a small dairy business with 3–4 buffaloes to supplement the husband's pension.

WARD 12

The interviewed respondents in Ward 12 described life based on living with daily wage work, often intermittent and hard to sustain. Some husbands were out of work at the time of the interview (compared to the situation some months before when the survey was conducted). The very few Balmikis with permanent jobs as sweepers in the Municipality were supremely conscious that such jobs with pensions were vanishing. One Chamar woman with an unusually positive disposition said openly that now that her father-in-law had passed away she could “get out” and do whatever she wanted to. Her husband plied a vegetable cart which brought in no extra income. She had done some sewing jobs earlier and was setting apart a room where she planned to start a beauty parlour. But, on the other hand, another Balmiki municipal street cleaner said,

we never asked anything from anyone, we just had our broom with us and they tried to take that away as well. We have cleaned everything, including shit. The government has given this broom to everyone and took away our daily wage. This was said after the riots by Jats over reservations in 2016, and was also a comment on the central government's Swachh Bharat (Clean India) campaign.”

In one of the somewhat better off families in this poor Ward the husband had a permanent job at the Maruti factory in Gurgaon. The respondent preferred to be a housewife in Rohtak than to live in Gurgaon, but hoped to find a better place to move to, so that the children had a less quarrelsome environment.

Jhajjar

WARD 1

Ward 1 in Jhajjar had a similar range of interview experiences to Ward 6 in Rohtak, dominated by middle class Jat housewives, and a few teachers (some offering tuitions from home). The most interesting case in this Ward was that of a Jat respondent running a beauty parlour. She had been married when very young (barely after her 10th class), came from an army family with a husband who worked in the police in Delhi. She had two daughters now in their teens. She managed to study further and get an MA after marriage but found no work in Jhajjar where they were settled. She vividly described the opposition she encountered from in-laws especially at the very idea of starting a beauty parlour – hair cutting was a no-no (and thought of as a stigmatised profession for the Nais (barber caste) alone). However, she persisted and now runs one of the more successful beauty parlours in Jhajjar with two assistants. In the marriage season her income would run to a couple of lakhs per month and otherwise she could be sure of at least Rs. 20,000 if not more. She briefly tried the idea of shifting to Rohtak but found the competition too much and returned. She said there might be about five other beauty parlours in the town like hers run by Jat women.

At the other end of the hierarchy, one of the Balmiki women interviewed came from a family where the father grazed goats – among her several brothers she said that no one had a “proper” job, it was various kinds of daily wage work here and there. Married at 15 with three children born soon after, she then took up odd jobs before becoming a contract worker for the municipality to do cleaning work – though she was supposed to get Rs. 8000 she only received Rs. 7000 (with further cuts for any off days) and had recently given this up, because it was too onerous and exploitative. She did not see too many opportunities for women like herself and wondered whether the government shouldn’t open sewing centres.

WARD 12J

The relative poverty of Ward 12J in Jhajjar was reflected in the kinds of jobs and working conditions of the few women who were earning, while many were housewives for sheer lack of opportunity. Here too one of the respondents had a beauty parlour at home (she was a Jatav) but she had very few customers and it did not bring her a regular income. She had started it because her husband worked as a fruit seller with meagre earnings. A Balmiki respondent whose children had now grown up and were married, worked in an anganwadi before moving to Jhajjar, and managed to continue with this work. There were far too few opportunities for those who were poor with little education, she said. Some women in her area worked in the Panasonic factory outside the town, and commuted by bus, but it was not considered good work. Another respondent whose father became the sarpanch in a village near Gurgaon recalled her father’s accounts of being recruited “at the time of Sanjay Gandhi” with the then brand new Maruti factory. Her father claimed to have helped manage several companies. But even now this industry never has had jobs for women, she said. Some of the respondents from this ward who had moved from their village directly to Jhajjar after marriage at a young age with strong norms of seclusion said they simply found it very difficult to know anything much about their localities and its opportunities, especially when it came to work. They could only be housewives even when husband’s earnings were erratic, and placed all the more hope on different futures for their children.

Maharashtra

SHIRUR WARD 2

In Ward 2 in Shirur, a few respondents who were interviewed had working class jobs, born out of necessity. One Mahar respondent had worked as a mason after her marriage and then as a cleaner in a company. She began with Rs. 600 and now brought home Rs. 10,000 a month after 20 years of such work. Two were domestic workers. But there were housewives within this class as well, with one Mahar respondent married to an auto driver with two young daughters. She felt she was not like her younger sister who went to faraway places for her job, coming as late as 9 or 10 pm doing bank and computer work – one needed both bravery and education, she asserted. One of the Ramoshi respondents (DNT) was able to have free schooling in the very same school that her mother went to, completed Class 12 and now was an anganwadi worker earning Rs. 5000, while her husband was a driver at MIDC. One respondent, a Maratha who had married a Muslim, had been trying to start her own business, the most recent attempt being one for wax candles. But she was finding it difficult to make a profit – she said that given the drought going on, customers were hard to find.

WARD 14

In Ward 14, among the working class respondents interviewed, one was working in the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) zone. She had worked even before marriage and had a permanent job in one of the companies since 12 years, along with her husband. But she was finding

it difficult to manage housework and bringing up her two daughters with the demands placed on her time at work. Another respondent who was illiterate, had seen her father passed away and her brother commit suicide due to depression. She now lived with her mother and young daughter, since she was separated from her husband. Survival took the form of doing home based work preparing Khakra (a kind of snack food) and selling it at Rs. 20 per kg. Most were housewives who had to adjust to their new homes – those who came from bigger places like Mumbai said it was difficult, and everything depended on the husband's level of earnings, and relations with in-laws. A Maratha housewife whose husband was a labour contractor with links to the Shiv Sena said quite openly that though she wanted to work as a teacher her in-laws would not permit it. "Being the wife of a well known person has its drawbacks. You have to stay at home, it is a prestige issue," she said.

Beed

WARD 13

Ward 13 Beed in Maharashtra also had a majority of housewives, whether Mahar, Vanzari or Maratha. Among the Brahmin respondents two were school teachers. One had worked on contract as a lecturer, but since her son developed severe muscular dystrophy she was at home and a consultant for selling tupper ware. One Mahar respondent, who was strongly Buddhist, had done various professional courses after Class 12 including one in building construction and was now in charge of school admissions in a newly opened Buddhist International School in Beed. Two others had been domestic workers all their lives. Many of them spoke about the lack of development in Beed including for work, an issue that will be taken up at greater length later in this report, including Chapter 4 on children, and in the final Chapter 5.

WARD 11

In Ward 11 one of the respondents who was 28 years old at the time of the interview and married ten years ago with young children was now studying (BA third year) in the hope of finding some work. She said quite perceptively that in Beed people either do business or work in government offices – one has to be lucky to get a job. "I have given so many exams, filled up so many forms, but I never got a job anywhere."

In this Ward two Mahar respondents who were interviewed were domestic workers, one of whom lived with her mother and was separated from her husband who had remarried. One of them also had worked seasonally with her husband in the sugar cane fields in Kolhapur, earning around Rs. 50,000 for the entire period at the rate of Rs. 250–300 for both of them daily. Among the better off Mahar households, two of the respondents were teachers – one in a school and the other in a law college. One of the Vanzari respondents was a nurse, who was married to the son of the head nurse of the hospital where she worked – the son was now unemployed, so that this household was being managed financially by mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, against the kind of conventional patriarchal norms for which Vanzaris are well-known.

2.4.3 • HUSBAND'S EMPLOYMENT

Among the husbands of the female respondents the whole situation is considerably changed by the mere fact that most are working. First and foremost it is important to point to the presence of a small number of separated and divorced women in the Maharashtra sample. Unlike in Haryana, (apart from similar numbers of widows), slightly more women in Maharashtra did not have husbands to fall back upon. Both state samples also had small proportions (about 2.5 per cent) of men who were

unemployed or unable to work. 88 per cent women in Maharashtra had husbands who were earning, compared to 91 per cent in Haryana.

Overall, men too, predominated in the category of “own trade or business” in both states (35 per cent in Haryana and 31 per cent in Maharashtra). In Haryana this was followed by social services, construction work and technical/professional services, in comparison to Maharashtra where industrial work, social services and teacher were the other significant categories in descending order.

TYPE OF OCCUPATION

When looking at the types of occupation among husbands across the sites, some sharp differences emerge.

- ▶ In Haryana, in Ward 6 in Rohtak which is largely middle class and Jat dominated, the most common occupations (20 per cent) were police and army personnel (including some who had retired), owning a business was also 20 per cent, followed by teaching;
- ▶ Ward 12 was dominated by construction labourers (26 per cent) and municipal workers (20 per cent), with smaller numbers having small shops, plying carts, or working as artisans (masons, carpenters etc). Here too there are clear indications of the class and caste divide in this city.
- ▶ In Jhajjar, the class differences between Ward 1 and Ward 12 were not quite as sharp – in both Wards owning a shop or business was the single largest category at 24 per cent (though those in Ward 1 were on average better off), and both Wards also had construction workers – the differences are to be seen in the presence of more technical, sales and professionals in Ward 1 with more municipal workers and artisans in Ward 12.
- ▶ In Maharashtra, in Shirur the differences between the two Wards 2 and 14 are not sharp. Both have owning a shop or business as the single largest category (34 per cent in Ward 2 and 28 per cent in Ward 14), followed by industrial work (17 per cent in Ward 2 and 18 per cent in Ward 14). Smaller numbers are spread across all categories – teaching, government employment, social services, drivers etc.
- ▶ In Beed the differences are sharper. Again, owning a business is the single largest category – 30 per cent in the better off Ward 13 and only 18 per cent in Ward 11. Moreover, Ward 11 has some government employees, and in social services, while Ward 13 is more heterogeneous with some municipal workers, construction workers, as well as clerks and teachers.

NATURE OF OCCUPATION

- ▶ In terms of nature of occupation, in Haryana regular self-employment (from larger businesses to petty ones) was the single largest category (33 per cent) followed by regular permanent (22 per cent), and then contract and casual direct employment.
- ▶ In Maharashtra regular self-employment at 28 per cent and regular permanent employment at 26 per cent were the main forms of employment.

While male employment shares with female employment the prominence of self-employment, men are in regular work, compared to the high degrees of casual work among the small number of women who are earning an income.

- ▶ It is perhaps also not surprising that a much more significant proportion of men in the study samples have government jobs – as much as 22 per cent in Haryana and 20 per cent in Maharashtra. There are commonalities and differences – significant proportions of Haryanvi men are in the police and army (or recently retired from them). Otherwise municipal work is to be found across both states, drivers and conductors in Maharashtra, apart from teaching, and clerical jobs in district offices – especially in Rohtak and Beed.

EARNINGS

Men are also earning much more on average than their wives. (Around 10 per cent in each sample did not know or did not wish to report on their husband's income.)

- ▶ As expected, the lowest proportions of those earning Rs. 5000 or less are to be found in the better off Haryana wards (in Rohtak Ward 6 it is just 5 per cent and Jhajjar Ward 1 just 3 per cent), while all the Wards in Maharashtra are equal to or outstrip the poor Wards in Haryana -- Ward 2 in Shirur has 18 per cent earning no more than Rs. 5000, Ward 11 in Beed has 17 per cent, while Ward 12 in Rohtak has 12 per cent and 11.5 per cent in Jhajjar Ward 12. Some allowances may also have to be made for differences in reporting income, though it was expected that there would be much greater under reporting in the Haryana sites (in a state that has seen much more public discourse and reportage than the towns in Maharashtra, and where the women respondents have on the whole been less forthcoming on other matters).
- ▶ At the next levels of the income spectrum, the picture is quite different. 53 per cent of the husbands in poor Ward 12 in Rohtak are in the next income bracket Rs. 5,001–10,000, and much smaller proportions earn more than this; while in the well off Ward 6 54 per cent are in the much higher Rs. 20,001–50,000 bracket, which would be a middle class income. In Jhajjar there is more of an even spread, with the highest proportions in the Rs. 10,001 to 20,000 bracket (44 per cent from Ward 1 and 34 per cent Ward 12).
- ▶ In Maharashtra there is again a more even spread across the next income brackets with Shirur poorer overall than Beed. Thus, 40 per cent (Ward 2) and 36 per cent (Ward 14) are the largest proportions in the Rs. 5001–10,000 bracket in Shirur with smaller proportions above this. In Beed, Ward 13 is significantly better off with the largest proportion of 34 per cent in the Rs. 20,001–50,000 bracket; while the largest proportion in Ward 11 is 30 per cent in the Rs. 5001–10,000 bracket, slightly better off than Ward 14 in Shirur.

Therefore, the nature of occupations discussed above should be seen in conjunction with reported incomes to get a better sense of the range of economic status that husbands provide in these families. One ward each in Haryana and Maharashtra, Ward 6 in Rohtak and Ward 13 in Beed, appear with a prominent middle class section by way of income levels. Ward 12 in Rohtak is clearly the poorest ward in terms of those earning Rs. 10,000 or less (65 per cent), followed by Ward 2 in Shirur at 58 per cent.

To summarise, on the one hand, there are definite income and occupational differences within all the sites. But, on the other hand, there are clear indications (even allowing for differences in reporting), of relatively greater prosperity in the Haryana sites compared to small town Maharashtra.

Having entered the world of the respondents via the three axes of education, marriage and employment, the following chapters will concentrate more closely on their children.

CHAPTER 3

FERTILITY AND THE GIRL ONLY FAMILY

3.1 • CHILDREN AND FAMILY TYPE

In order to move into a discussion on children, this chapter begins with the survey questions on household size and family type. As was provided in Table 1.3 in Chapter One at the beginning of this report, the total number of members in the households sampled show small variations in terms of average size. In Rohtak, the lowest average is 5.2 (Ward 1 in Jhajjar) and the largest is 5.9 members (Ward 12 in Rohtak). There is more of a range in Maharashtra – the lowest being 4.8 in Ward 2 in Shirur and the largest 6.0 in Ward 11 in Beed. Therefore household size does not match purely with average income levels, though it is the case that the poorer Wards have slightly more members. In all sites the modal number is 4 members, closely followed by 5.

- ▶ In terms of type of household/family there is the strong prominence of the nuclear family across all sites, at over 50 per cent.
- ▶ In Haryana 22 per cent are extended nuclear with in-laws and an equal proportion are joint families, that is, with at least one sibling of the husband living in the same house.
- ▶ Other forms in Haryana are negligible including just 1 per cent families living with the parents of the female respondent.
- ▶ In Maharashtra there are 22 per cent families living with their in-laws and relatively fewer joint families at 14 per cent, with 5 per cent families living with the wife's parents.

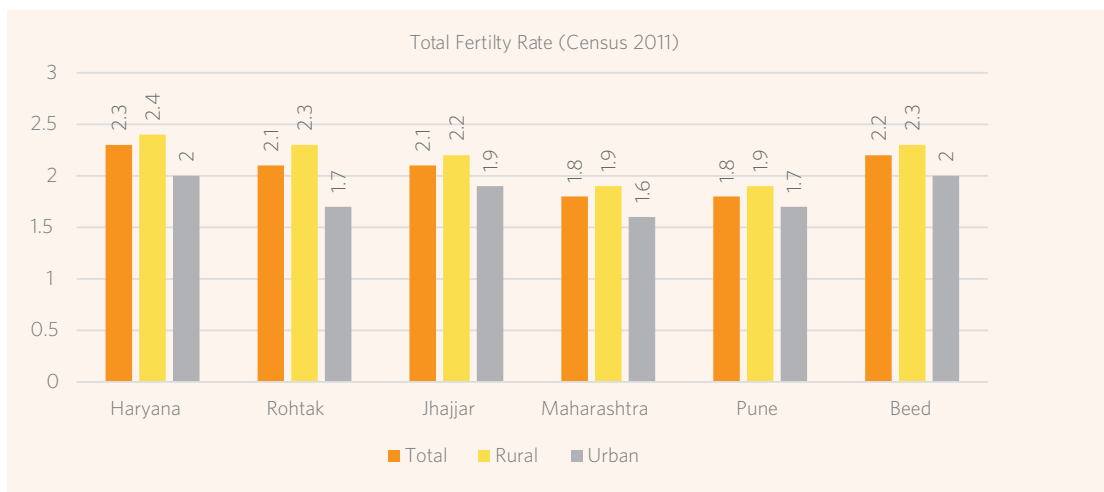
Therefore the “ghar jamai” (where the couple is living with the wife's parents) finds a bit more acceptability in actual practice in Maharashtra compared to Haryana.

3.2 • FERTILITY: MACRO DATA AND SURVEY DATA

A very central aspect in any discussion of skewed sex ratios has to do with fertility and fertility patterns. Much has been written on the population dynamics in countries like India and changing trends. In the context of this study, what is particularly critical is the close link between declining fertility rates and adverse child sex ratios. The size and sex composition of a given family is the outcome of a complex set of forces, within which one of the key issues has been the capacity among family members to take decisions and so actually plan one's family in some conscious if not deliberate way.

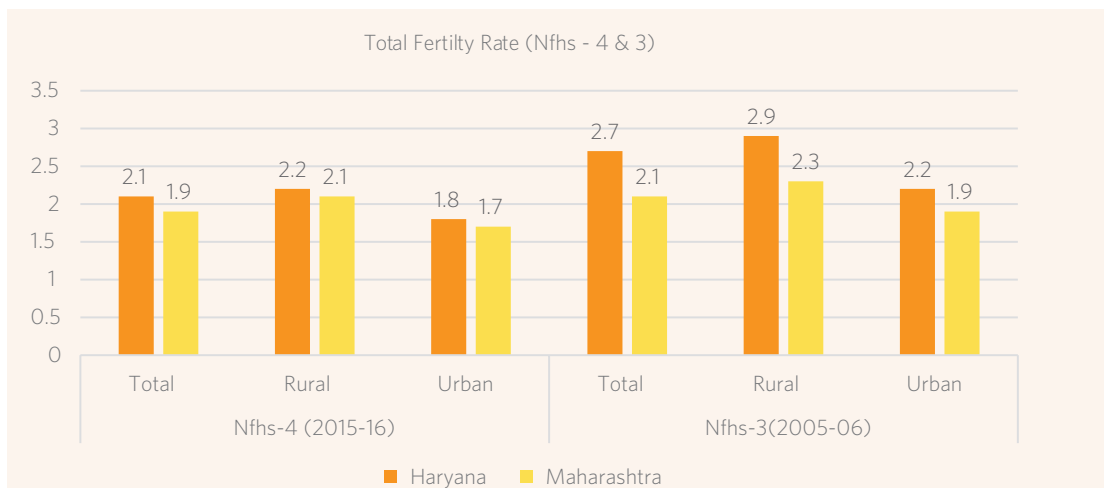
Since macro data on fertility are available from both the Census and the recent rounds of the National Family Health Survey, this data is also provided for comparative purposes.

GRAPH 3.1 TOTAL FERTILITY RATE (CENSUS 2011)



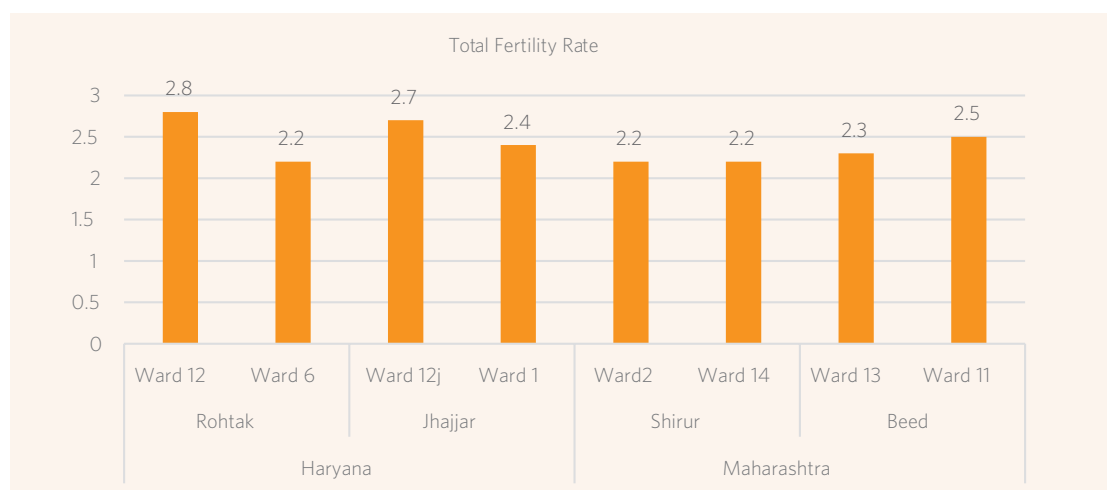
Source: F-9, Number of women and currently married women by present age, number of births last year by sex and birth order, Census 2011, Office of the Registrar General (RGI), India, ages 15-49 years

GRAPH 3.2 TOTAL FERTILITY RATE (NFHS-4 AND NFHS-3)



Source: National Family Health Survey, 2005-06 (NFHS 3) & National Family Health Survey, 2015-16 (NFHS 4), ages 15-49 years.

GRAPH 3.3 TOTAL FERTILITY RATE (FIELD SURVEY)



Graph 3.1 from Census 2011 provides total fertility rates for women in the age group 15–49 years at the state and district levels for the two states. The closest for the purposes of this study would be the fertility data on urban Rohtak, Jhajjar, Pune and Beed districts, where the highest is 2 for urban Beed and all others are below this figure. NFHS figures are only available at the state level and also show figures below 2 for urban Maharashtra and urban Haryana in Graph 3.2.

Graph 3.3 shows the total fertility rates for the samples of the study. As mentioned earlier, mothers are in the age group 20–60 years and have at least one child, with women without children having been excluded. This would explain the somewhat higher fertility rates which range from a high of 2.8 in the poorest ward 12 of Rohtak to a low of 2.2 in three wards (Ward 6 in Rohtak, Ward 2 and Ward 14 in Shirur).

- ▶ **Average total fertility across all the sites in both Haryana and Maharashtra is therefore less than 3 children.**

So there is little room for doubt – the small family with its two child norm has arrived in these places, in spite of all the considerable variation in terms of class and caste that characterize these wards.

- ▶ Allowance should be made for those families who have not completed their ideal family size, and that these are families where the eldest child is under 30 years of age. But this does not alter the basic picture, or the closeness with which the ideal number of children – invariably it is 2 as will be seen shortly – is being realized in practice.
- ▶ These figures are in broad congruence with existing macro data on fertility.

3.3 • NUMBER OF SIBLINGS IN THE RESPONDENTS' FAMILY: INTERVIEW DATA

In the interviews (which covered approximately 20 respondents per site, that is, 10 per cent of the survey sample), questions were also asked about the natal family backgrounds of the respondents, their parents and siblings. In the context of fertility, this provides a glimpse into changes in fertility patterns from the respondents' parents to the number of children they in turn have had.

In Haryana, Ward 6 in Rohtak, the largest natal family was composed of four brothers and three sisters (while the respondent herself had one daughter and a son) and the smallest had just one brother in her natal family. Average fertility was 3.1 for all the 20 respondents' natal families, and the total number of boys and girls among the 20 families were roughly the same at 30 sons and 32 daughters.

- ▶ Ward 12 in Rohtak had the highest average fertility at 5.7 with the largest family having 10 children (6 brothers and 4 sisters) and the smallest three. Here the number of girls at 59 outnumbered boys at 44, with several natal families having many more daughters than sons.
- ▶ In Ward 1 in Jhajjar fertility was 4.3 in the natal families of respondents interviewed ranging from 8 (four sisters and four brothers) and a low of two (brother and sister). (Sons were 41 overall and daughters 35.)
- ▶ In Ward 12J in Jhajjar average fertility was 4.9, ranging from 10 (7 sisters and 3 brothers) to 3. (Boys numbered 53 compared to 46 girls).

So what this suggests is that in the most well off ward 6 in Rohtak fertility among respondents' own natal families was already declining at 3.1 children. This was by far the lowest fertility in the Haryana sample for that generation, while the poorest Ward 12 had a fertility of 5.7 in the respondents' generation, with other wards in between.

In Haryana the greatest rate of decline in fertility is actually in the poorer wards, as the respondents were themselves having much smaller families on average compared to the families they had come from.

- ▶ In Maharashtra the equivalent figures gleaned from the interviews are as follows:
- ▶ In Shirur Ward 2 the average fertility in the natal families of the interviewees was 3.9, the largest having seven children (2 boys and 5 girls) and the smallest just one. (The total was 24 brothers and 51 sisters).
- ▶ In Ward 14 of Shirur the equivalent figures were 4.1 average, the largest family seven (one brother and six sisters) and the smallest one daughter. (The totals were 19 boys and 54 girls.)
- ▶ In Beed Ward 13 the average fertility in the natal families of the women respondents was 3.9 ranging from 7 siblings to just one child (34 sons and 43 daughters).
- ▶ In Ward 11, average fertility was 4.3 ranging from 8 to one, with 34 sons and 52 daughters.

It may be noted in passing that in Maharashtra these natal families tended to have many more girls than boys, especially in Shirur, but the sample is too small for any further significance to be drawn. In the case of Maharashtra, therefore, the fertility in the respondents' generation ranged from 4.3 to 3.9 (a smaller range than in Haryana).

When placed in comparison with the average fertility among the children of the respondents, which ranged from 2.2 to 2.5, there is a considerable drop in all the Maharashtra sites to the small family, especially in Shirur.

3.4 • MORTALITY: SURVEY DATA

Returning to the survey data for the entire sample of the study, in terms of mortality, it was found that in most of the Haryana wards mortality rates are low (98 non-surviving children out of 2125 births overall, with most of these were coming from Ward 12 in Rohtak).

- ▶ There is no excess female mortality in Haryana study sites, on the contrary, mortality is much higher among boys.
- ▶ The only particularly troubling data comes from Ward 12 in Rohtak, where 6.2 per cent boys and 2.7 per cent girls were not surviving at the time of the survey – half of these were infant deaths (born dead, died within a week, or the first six months) while the rest were older, and had died due to various illnesses and occasional accidents. Here again, the poverty of this particular Ward stands out starkly.

- ▶ Otherwise the highest mortality rates are 2.8 per cent in Ward 1 for boys (where mostly older children have died) compared to 1 per cent among girls, and the figures in the remaining wards are lower.
- ▶ In Maharashtra the figures are very much lower (39 deaths out of 1913 births).
- ▶ In Maharashtra the highest rates are in Ward 14 in Shirur at 1.7 per cent among boys and 1.9 per cent among girls.
- ▶ **In these study sites mortality is not contributing to the sex ratio imbalance, as has been the case elsewhere, or at earlier times.**

3.5 • **ABORTIONS AND MISCARRIAGES: SURVEY DATA**

Respondents were also asked about abortions and miscarriages in the course of the survey questions on fertility.

- ▶ In Haryana 254 cases were reported, out of 2125 births. In Maharashtra the figure was similar – 245 cases out of 1913 births.
- ▶ At this stage there was no probing about sex selection, and only very few referred to it. The reasons given were divided between spontaneous miscarriages and cases of terminating a pregnancy as ordered by the doctor “for health reasons”.
- ▶ Interestingly in Haryana 42 reported cases fell in the period 1985–1995, 91 cases between 1996–2006, and 90 cases during 2007–2016. In Maharashtra there were 22 cases from 1987–1995, 111 cases from 1996–2006, and 104 from 2007–2016. So, without openly referring to sex selection, one might consider that some of the increased incidence of cases in the more recent period might be related to sex selective abortions.
- ▶ It should at the same time be emphasized, however, that many of these cases appeared to have been genuine, drawing also from some of the accounts of the interviews.
- ▶ Certainly it was in the poorer wards that there were more cases of miscarriages, as there was also of heightened male child mortality.

3.6 • **BRINGING UP SONS AND DAUGHTERS: PREFERENCES FROM THE SURVEY**

This section uses survey questions about the desire for sons and daughters to explore the complex question of son preference at the present time. Son preference and daughter aversion are posing new challenges in a situation where everyone wants the small family of one boy and one girl. After all, what could sound more egalitarian than such a claim? However, the point is that this does not mean that parents no longer worry about whether they have a son or daughter. **Only in a situation where the sex composition of children no longer matters can one genuinely speak of the end of son preference or daughter aversion.** Therefore, it is a matter of detecting muted forms of such preferences compared to earlier situations, when with larger families there was more scope to realise one’s preferences and also to be discriminatory towards sons and daughters.

A series of questions to get at perceptions and views on son preference and daughter aversion approached the issue from different vantage points to try and reduce politically correct answers to the extent possible. From the range of opinions that are discussed below it is evident first of all that all the sites display a strong one boy one girl norm. Within this there are differences, with Haryana displaying the most open son preference (especially its poorest Wards), while Maharashtra displayed the more muted forms. Signs of daughter aversion are also more easy to detect in Haryana but less so in Maharashtra.

SON PREFERENCE AND THE DESIRED FAMILY

The survey had a round of questions in relation to respondents' preferences and ideas about both family size and the bringing up sons and daughters. A standard question posed in relation to children is the simple one of how many sons or daughters are needed in a family according to them. The range of answers varied from 0, 1 or 2 boys or girls.

Haryana

In Haryana, in the prior study undertaken a decade earlier the most common preference was 2 boys and one girl as the ideal family, which showed palpable son preference.

In this study, 10 per cent said no sons were needed, 84 per cent one son and 5 per cent two sons.

The most well off ward in Haryana showed somewhat less son preference than the poorest ward, which had the greatest.

When it came to daughters, 11 per cent said no girl was needed, 86 per cent one daughter and 3 per cent two daughters. So there does not appear to be any perceptible difference regarding daughter aversion. Here too it was poorer wards that showed some daughter aversion along with greater son preference.

Maharashtra

In the case of the Maharashtra sample the two child norm appears even more firmly established.

Only one respondent (i.e. 0.1 per cent) said that no son was needed and not even one in the case of daughters, while 10 per cent said 2 sons were needed and 12 per cent two daughters. 89 per cent said one son and 87 per cent one daughter.

- ▶ In terms of variation across Wards the wards in Shirur had the highest proportion of preference for one son and one daughter, and the lowest of two sons or two daughters.

Overall the two child norm of one boy and one girl appears quite clearly in evidence as an idea.

Respondents were also asked if they wanted to have more children and if yes, whether they wanted to have a son or a daughter.

- ▶ In the Haryana sample 15 per cent said they wanted more children and out of these the break up was 48 per cent boy, 34 per cent girl and the remaining 18 per cent said it did not matter. The strongest son preference was displayed in the poor Ward 12 J in Jhajjar, and no one in either of the Jhajjar wards said that it did not matter.
- ▶ In Maharashtra, the trend went in the opposite direction. Out of the 20 per cent who said they wanted more children, 22 per cent said they wanted a boy, 48 per cent a girl and 31 per cent that it did not matter. So clearly son preference continues to flourish in Haryana. It cannot of course be conclusively drawn that the Maharashtra respondents display no son preference from these responses – rather they may also be more politically correct and circumspect in answering such a question.

IMPORTANCE OF SONS AND DAUGHTERS

Respondents were asked next as to how important it was to have a son or a daughter – absolutely necessary, important or not required.

Haryana

In the Haryana sample, there was considerable variation across the four Wards.

SONS

- ▶ On average 45 per cent said that a son was absolutely necessary, 43 per cent that he was important and 12 per cent that he was not required. The lowest in the absolutely necessary category came from the most well off Ward 6 in Rohtak at 31 per cent and the highest from the poorest Ward 12 at 80 per cent.
- ▶ On being asked further if the importance of having a son had become less over the last twenty years 38 per cent said yes. Here there was even greater variation – 81 per cent in Ward 6 said that it was less necessary to have a son than 20 years ago compared to 17 per cent in Ward 12 and Ward 12J in Jhajjar.
- ▶ Was it harder to bring up a son nowadays? Yes, said 44 per cent of the Haryana sample, with little variation across sites – 53 per cent said yes in Ward 6 in Rohtak and 43 per cent in the poorer Wards of Rohtak and Jhajjar.

DAUGHTERS

In relation to girls, just 19 per cent in Haryana said that it was absolutely necessary to have a daughter, 79 per cent that it was important and 2 per cent that a girl was not required. **So there is a certain expression of muted daughter dis-preference or aversion that, on the one hand, wants daughters but not at any cost.**

As one might be led to expect, by far the highest proportion who said that daughters were necessary came from the well off Ward 6 at 59 per cent, in fact all other Wards showed very low preferences on this scale, with just 1 per cent saying a daughter was absolutely necessary in the poor Ward 12J in Jhajjar.

On the other hand, when asked whether the importance of having a daughter had become less in the last 20 years, just 21 per cent said yes and 79 per cent said no, thus emphasizing the importance of daughters. Huge variations across Wards characterised the responses – 68 per cent in Ward 12 in Rohtak said that it had become less and they were an outlier, while just 1 per cent in Ward 1 in Jhajjar said that it had become less.

Was it harder to bring up a daughter these days? 54 per cent on average said yes in the Haryana sample.

In Haryana there is a greater sense of burden associated with daughters compared to sons, apart from other direct signs of son preference, within an overall norm that would like one boy and one girl.

Maharashtra

SONS

In Maharashtra, once again, son preference is not overtly expressed.

- ▶ On the importance of having a son, just 20 per cent said it was absolutely necessary, 42 per cent that it was important and 38 per cent that it did not matter. Here too there was some variation across Wards. Ward 2 in Shirur was the most divided with 35 per cent respondents saying that a son was absolutely necessary while 46 per cent said that one was not required. Other Wards had higher proportions saying sons were important.

- ▶ In terms of the importance of a son have become less in the last twenty years there was a half and half response in the overall Maharashtra sample, with small variations across wards.
- ▶ Was it harder to bring up a son? Yes said 58 per cent, with the highest proportions coming from Shirur.

DAUGHTERS

- ▶ On the count of daughters, there was an equal breakup between those who said a girl was absolutely necessary and those who said it was important, with no takers for her not being required.
- ▶ On the importance of having a daughter being less in the last twenty years, the answer was very similar to Haryana with just 24 per cent saying yes.
- ▶ Was it harder to bring up a daughter? 41 per cent said yes to this question, and the answer was similar across Wards.

In Maharashtra about half the respondents said that it was harder to bring up both sons and daughters, while showing more muted signs of son preference and daughter aversion.

3.7 • THE SEX COMPOSITION OF FAMILIES

This section explores the central theme of this study, which is the gendered nature of the composition of children. There are different ways of approaching this composition beginning with an examination of child sex ratios. Already in Table 1.3 in Chapter 1 the 0–6 CSRs had been provided for the household sample overall (while Table 1.2 had given the CSRs as per Census 2011).

- ▶ All the towns chosen for this study had low child sex ratios according to Census 2011 – Jhajjar (CSR 779) witnessed further drops from Census 2001, making it one of the lowest CSRs in 2011, while Rohtak (CSR 815) saw little change.
- ▶ In Maharashtra, too, low CSRs became more acute in 2011 according to Census figures – Shirur CSR 846 and Beed CSR 854.
- ▶ The Wards were chosen based also on Census 2011 figures, but it was found later that municipal Wards did not match Census boundaries, and in the case of Rohtak the Wards had been completely renamed and redrawn.
- ▶ Table 1.3 in Chapter 1 gave the 0–6 CSRs for each of the Wards based on the sample, using household level data from the sample.

CHILD SEX RATIO PATTERNS USING FERTILITY DATA

Analysis of the CSRs for various age groups and order of birth is based here on the fertility patterns of the families surveyed. This means that the figures discussed below are for the actual families of the respondents as distinct from that of the household sample of which they were members. Therefore, the numbers in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 are somewhat smaller than those given in Table 1.3 in chapter one, since the children considered here are only those of the female respondent and not of the larger (joint) family who might be sharing the household with her. Notice that though the numbers are smaller the corresponding CSRs are similar to those of Table 1.3, with very low CSRs in all the Haryana wards (only Ward 1 in Jhajjar had a better CSR 901 in Table 1.3 going by all children in the household). It should be noted also that Ward 12 in Rohtak continues to stand apart from the rest of the sample in having a proportionately larger number of small children, while Ward 6 has the smallest number. Ward 12 in Rohtak also had a larger proportion of younger mothers. In Maharashtra there is again a greater variation in the sample, with Ward 2 having a positive CSR 1090, and Ward 11 in Beed a less skewed CSR of 939, while the other two Wards have very low CSRs. (This was the pattern in Table 3 with household level figures as well.)

TABLE 3.1 CHILD SEX RATIOS 0–6 YEARS OF CHILDREN OF FEMALE RESPONDENTS IN HARYANA

Town		Male	Female	Total	Sex Ratio
ROHTAK	WARD_6	39	29	68	744
	WARD_12	93	71	184	786
JHAJJAR	WARD_1	51	38	89	745
	WARD_12J	57	48	105	842

TABLE 3.2 CHILD SEX RATIOS 0–6 YEARS OF CHILDREN OF FEMALE RESPONDENTS IN MAHARASHTRA

Town		Male	Female	Total	Sex Ratio
SHIRUR	WARD_2	44	48	92	1,090
	WARD_14	67	50	117	746
BEED	WARD_13	39	33	72	846
	WARD_11	49	46	95	939

This basic analysis of sex ratios will be taken forward using interrelated approaches.

- ▶ The first would be to see whether it is possible – within the constraints of the small numbers – to detect any changes in child sex ratios for families with older children compared to younger families. That is to say, is it possible to see whether CSRs have been improving or getting worse over the period of the 1990s to 2016 in the sample? This would be an obvious question to raise in the context of larger trends as well as discussions about changes in CSRs based on Census data from 1991, 2001 and 2011.
- ▶ A second approach would be to look at the sex composition of children in terms of birth order, to see the situation from the first birth onwards to lower order births.
- ▶ An interrelated issue that this study is especially concerned to emphasize is to explore the sex composition of children in a context where having two or maximum three children has become the norm – to see what proportions are boy/girl; girl/boy; boy/boy; girl/girl; and so on.
- ▶ As this study seeks to demonstrate, the most critical type of small family is the girl only family.

It is the proportion of girl only families in a given group (more than simply the skewed sex ratio) that offers one of the clearest clues as to whether the situation is improving or not in terms of son preference and daughter aversion, once the small family has become general practice.

- ▶ Finally, there will be efforts to correlate sex ratio patterns and family composition with other significant indicators – caste, class, and education of the mother.

TABLE 3.3 CSRS. 0–6 YEARS, 0–14 YEARS, ALL CHILDREN, HARYANA

WARD	0-6	0-14	All
Rohtak			
WARD_6	744	638	709
WARD_12	786	870	822
Jhajjar			
WARD_1	745	705	756
WARD_12J	842	898	853
Total	775	799	788

TABLE 3.4 CSRS. 0–6 YEARS, 0–14 YEARS, ALL CHILDREN, MAHARASHTRA

WARD	0-6	0-14	All
Shirur			
WARD_2	1,090	1,081	1,062
WARD_14	746	912	963
Beed			
WARD_13	846	920	1,080
WARD_11	939	757	860
Total	889	909	982

Tables 3.3 and 3.4 offer one kind of snapshot of child sex ratios for different age groups in the sample, based on fertility data from the female respondents. (This data was obtained by asking for the date of birth, and not just the year of birth or age, of all children. Barring an insignificant number of respondents who could not recall the exact date of birth of their adult children, actual dates of birth by date/month/year were obtained. Therefore, considerable weight can be placed on this data set, without the usual problems of age (mis)reporting.) Across all sites in each state there are approximately 2000 children based on this data, aged below 30 years. The Tables begin with the CSRs of the 0–6 age group, followed by children between 0–14 years (who make up roughly half the overall sample), followed by the sex ratio of the entire sample of children of all ages.

- ▶ In Haryana the CSRs are very low in all the age groups with small variations at the level of each site that show no clear trend in any particular direction.
- ▶ In Maharashtra the CSRs are – on average – better than Haryana in all age groups with one or two exceptions. Ward 2 in Shirur stands apart because it has more girls than boys in all age groups. Otherwise Ward 14 in the 0–6 age group and Ward 11 in Beed in the 0–14 age group have very low CSRs.
- ▶ According to the total CSRs in Haryana across all sites and across age groups there is no change – the picture is one of persistent low CSRs.
- ▶ In Maharashtra, on the other hand, the total figures show a clearer trend of worsening sex ratios as we move from the entire cohort (CSR 982) to the 0–6 age group CSR 889.

The figures suggest a longer history of low CSRs in Haryana compared to a more recent worsening of CSRs in the Maharashtra sites, which is corroborated from Census data trends.

AGE COHORTS AND BIRTH ORDER

In order to capture changes over time, families were also grouped according to the age of the eldest child. The entire cohort was divided between those families where the eldest child was born before 2000, and those born in 2000 or after. (This again roughly divides the cohort into two halves.) The idea here is to capture possible changes before and after 2000, whether due to “supply side” factors such as the availability of technologies for sex selection, or fears in relation to the greater implementation of PC-PNDT Act, or factors relating to families themselves and their decision making about the sex composition of their children. Due to the smallness of the numbers, these trends have been captured for each state sample as a whole, and not at the ward level.

- ▶ In the case of Haryana the child sex ratio of all children where the eldest was born before 2000 was 785, while for the younger cohort born on or after 2000 it is CSR 825. So there is a very small improvement.

- ▶ In the case of Maharashtra, the equivalent figures are CSR 1029 for the older cohort and CSR 924 for the younger one. Thus in Maharashtra there is no overall problem at this level at least in the older group, and a slightly low CSR for the younger group.
- ▶ However, according to the order of births from the first birth to lower order births, the picture in both states can be seen more clearly, including in Maharashtra.

Table 3.5 below gives the figures for the first four births since the very few births lower than this are insignificant. Note that this is not ward wise data but where all the four sites of each state are taken together and divided by cohort only.

TABLE 3.5 CHILD SEX RATIOS: ELDEST BORN BEFORE 2000 & 2000 AND AFTER, HARYANA AND MAHARASHTRA

Birth Sequence	Haryana before 2000	Haryana 2000 and after	Maharashtra before 2000	Maharashtra 2000 and after
1	863	926	1,187	1,095
2	894	771	1,051	829
3	702	705	819	738
4	480	667	889	375
Total	785	825	1,029	924

To take Haryana first, what is interesting is that while there is a better CSR among first order births among the younger cohort compared to the older one, the situation is markedly reversed when it comes to the second birth. Taken together, the first two births are the most significant given the fertility rates discussed above which vary from 2.2 to 2.8. So first of all, there are indications in the older cohort of the prevalence of sex selection at the very first birth itself in urban Haryana, given the CSR 863, whereas this is less the case in the younger cohort with the CSR 926. But the second order CSRs are 894 in the older group against 771 in the younger group. Notice therefore the huge drop in CSRs from the first order to the second order in the younger cohort. As for the third order birth, these are extremely low in both cohorts, as is the case with the fourth order where the numbers have dropped significantly. In Maharashtra, the older cohort shows an excess of girls for both first and second order births followed by significantly low CSRs in the third and fourth order. Among the younger cohort however, while the first order has an excess of girls, this changes quite significantly in the second order (CSR 829) and becomes much worse further down CSR 738, CSR 375). In both these states as far as this sample indicates, there has been significant sex selection happening beginning with the second order in recent years.

As would be expected, the sex ratio worsens considerably for the second birth when the previous birth has been a girl. In the case of Haryana in the older cohort if the first born is a daughter then the CSR of the second borns is 807, third born 644 and fourth born 548. Among those where the eldest is born on or after 2000, the CSR of the second born is 718 and third born 585, and when the first two are daughters the CSR of the third child is 583. Here too, we see a worse situation in the younger cohort after the first daughter has been born. The figures for the younger cohort when the first born is a daughter is CSR 841 for the second born and CSR 618 when the first two are daughters.

3.7.1 • CORRELATING CSRS WITH CASTE, EDUCATION AND CLASS

This section looks at correlations of the child sex ratios with other significant variables, such as caste, education and class. In the case of caste the variables are those of the governmental categories of OBC (in Maharashtra this category includes DNT), SC, and upper castes (which includes Jats in Haryana

and Marathas in Maharashtra). Education of the female respondent will be the critical variable when it comes to education, going by the broad categories of illiterate, those with schooling up to Class 12, and those with any degree beyond schooling (graduate, postgraduate or technical). Ownership of a four wheeler is the proxy being used for class, since such ownership is a good indicator of significant financial security well beyond poverty if not middle class status.

CASTE CORRELATIONS IN HARYANA

In Haryana, there are no good sex ratios among the children of the sample in terms of caste break ups – they are very low or low. The worst CSRs are among the upper castes, dominated by Jats, with an average CSR of 729 across all wards.

- ▶ The lowest CSR among upper castes is in the very poor Ward 12 in Rohtak (with 13 boys and 4 girls, and hence very small), and the highest is in Ward 12J in Jhajjar with CSR 868. Both the better off wards 6 in Rohtak and Ward 1 in Jhajjar also have very low CSRs for upper castes. The CSRs for all SCs in the Haryana sample is 815, and among OBCs is 874.
- ▶ Interestingly, the worst CSRs among SCs are in the better off wards, namely Ward 6 in Rohtak with a CSR 652 and Ward 1 in Jhajjar with a CSR 655, where there are small colonies of Scheduled Caste families in areas dominated by Jats.
- ▶ Among the OBCs the same is true – worse CSRs are in the better off wards 6 in Rohtak and Ward 1 in Jhajjar.
- ▶ In terms of the subsequent discussion regarding the significance of daughter only families for thinking about family building strategies and adverse child sex ratios, caste break-ups indicate the following patterns: By way of comparison in the overall sample, families with no daughters are 27 per cent and those with only daughters are 12 per cent in Haryana (see below). Among upper castes, the equivalent figures are 29 per cent and 11 per cent; and among SCs are 26 per cent and 14 per cent respectively. These are indicative of a worse pattern among upper castes compared to the Scheduled Castes, in terms of the avoidance of the girl only family.

Haryana

CORRELATING CSRs WITH MOTHER'S EDUCATION

When it comes to correlating the sex ratios of the entire cohort of children with the mother's education in Haryana the following picture emerges:

The overall CSRs of mothers who are illiterate is 824, that of children whose mothers have some schooling (varying from primary schooling to Class 12) is 775, and the CSR of children of mothers with education beyond high school is 870. Even though the sample contains about 2000 children, **it is unclear how much weight can be placed on the minor variations in CSRs with the educational level of mothers. What these figures indicate is that within low sex ratios there is a further drop among those whose mothers have school education, and only a small increase among those who have gone beyond high school.**

CSRs AND OWNING A FOUR WHEELER

Finally, the proxy for class, namely ownership of a four wheeler. There is no discernable pattern here – though in Ward 6 in Rohtak those families with a four wheeler have an extremely low CSR of 585. In Ward 12 there are only two such families in the first place, so there is no figure to offer. In Jhajjar, the better off Ward 1 has a good CSR among car owners of 1100 (33 girls and 30 boys) but in the poorer Ward 12 this drops to CSR 765, among the fewer families who own a car. The overall CSR in

the entire Haryana sample among car owners is CSR 788. Given that the overall CSR of our Haryana sample is 763, there is no obvious correlation to be drawn in terms of this proxy for class.

Maharashtra

Here are the corresponding patterns in the Maharashtra sample to see what kinds of correlations emerge in relation to caste, the education of the mother, and class. As is now clear from the preceding discussion, the Maharashtra sample does not offer the kind of overall low patterns in child sex ratios that is the case in Haryana, and some Wards have positive child sex ratios as well.

CORRELATING CSRS WITH CASTE

The overall sex ratios of all the children in the Maharashtra sample by caste are as follows: upper caste (with Marathas as the single largest caste) 907, OBC 903, and Scheduled Caste (with Mahars as the single largest group) 1138. Note that this includes all children of all cohorts from young ages to adult.

The sex ratios of all children in Ward 2 in Shirur indicates more girls than boys across all castes. Ward 11 in Beed on the other hand has very low sex ratios for upper castes (731) and OBCs (746) but a positive sex ratio among Scheduled Castes (1157).

So it would appear that Scheduled Castes in the Maharashtra sample are comparatively better than other castes “higher” in the hierarchy when it comes to adverse sex ratios.

CORRELATING CSRS WITH MOTHER’S EDUCATION

The data in relation to the education of the mother is rather interesting, though again too much weight cannot be placed given the smallness of the numbers. **The sex ratios of all the children get worse with increasing education of the mother** – from a sex ratio of 1123 among illiterate mothers, to 1012 for those from primary levels of schooling to Class 12, which then drops to 863 for those with any kind of higher educational degree (within this the worst are the postgraduates where there are 58 boys to 35 girls, a sex ratio of 603). This is a somewhat counter-intuitive finding, but it also corresponds to other studies indicating a greater recourse to sex selection among those with more education.

In Haryana, with low CSRs overall, the worst CSRs are among upper castes (dominated by Jats). By education of the mother, the lowest CSRs are for those with some school education. Ownership of four wheeler is not significant.

In Maharashtra, with better CSRs overall, once again Scheduled Castes stand apart with better child sex ratios, while OBCs are particularly low. Here the CSRs appear to get worse with the education of the mother.

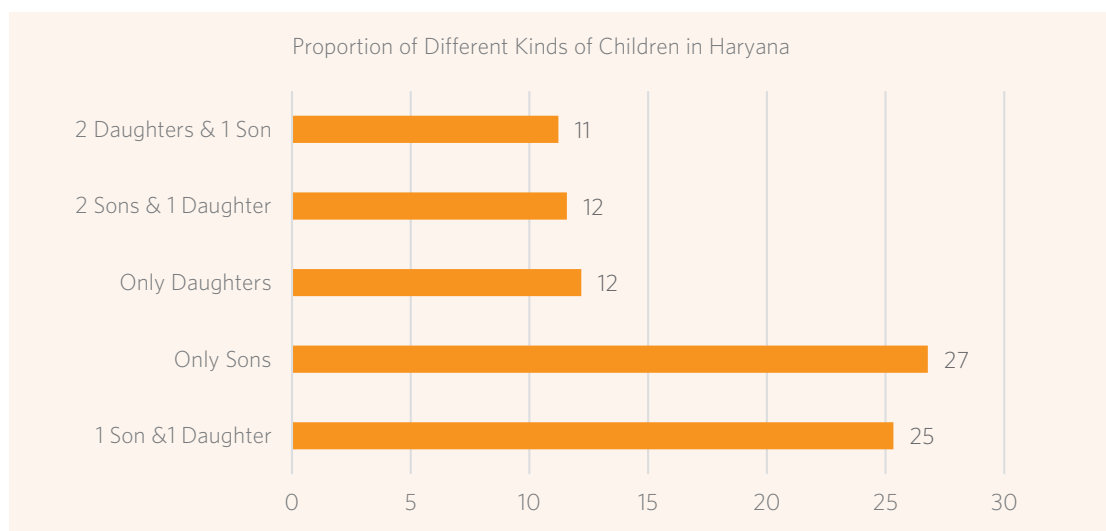
3.8 • AVOIDING THE DAUGHTER ONLY FAMILY

This section demonstrates the most important argument of this study, namely the significance of daughter only families for understanding the reasons for a skewed child sex ratio. In a situation where the two child norm has arrived and “everyone” wants a boy and a girl, daughter aversion is taking a more nuanced form, namely degrees of avoidance of being a family with only girls. It is already clear how widespread the small family has become across all the sites, even the poorest ones. The number of children varies from 2 to 3 for the vast majority, and in both Haryana and Maharashtra.

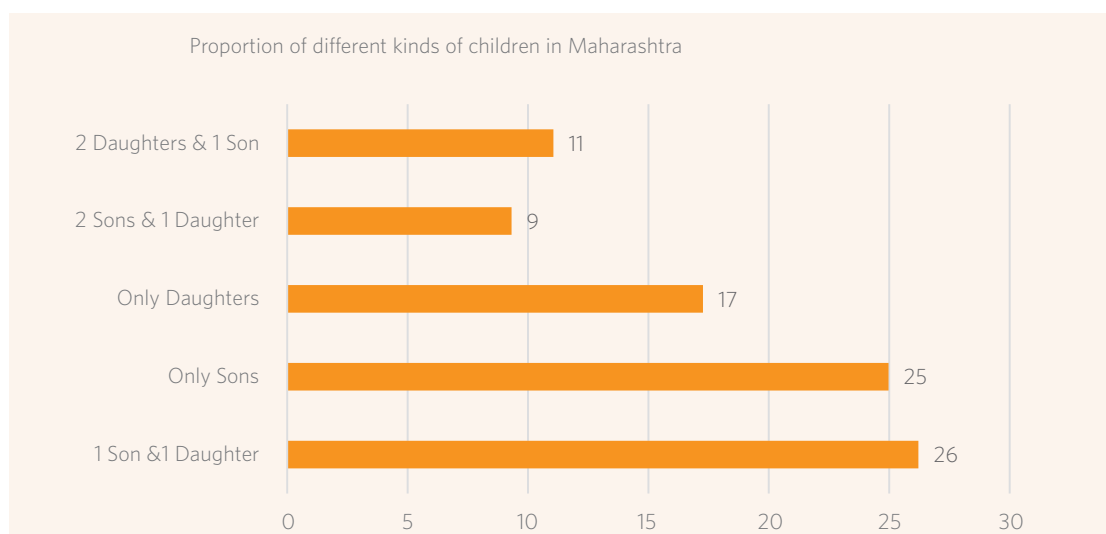
This critical issue is explored by paying close attention to the sex composition of families, that is to say, the proportion of families with different combinations of sons and daughters. The main question to probe is the actual number and proportions in the sex composition of their children.

Graphs 3.4 and 3.5 below provide field based data on the percentage wise proportions of different combinations of sons and daughters taken for each state as a whole.

GRAPH 3.4. SEX COMPOSITION OF FAMILIES IN HARYANA



GRAPH 3.5 SEX COMPOSITION OF FAMILIES IN MAHARASHTRA



Out of 829 families constituting the entire Haryana sample, 25 per cent are one son one daughter families, 27 per cent have only sons (one or more), and just 12 per cent have only daughters (one or more). (In better off wards the proportion of one son and one daughter families is also higher.)

The equivalent figures for the entire Maharashtra sample are 26 per cent one son one daughter, 25 per cent with only sons and 17 per cent only daughters.

Haryana

- ▶ In Haryana, out of 27 per cent son only families 9 per cent have just one son, and may therefore be incomplete. However out of 12 per cent daughter only families, 7 per cent have just one daughter, and are much more likely to be incomplete (with families who may well be planning to have a son in the second birth), leaving **just 5 per cent families with two or more daughters and no sons**.
- ▶ Even more telling, is that out of these 5 per cent daughter only families 1.7 per cent are large families with 4–5 daughters (hoping to get a son without resorting to sex selection). On the other hand, there are just 1 per cent families with 4–5 sons.

Taken together then a rather clear picture of revealed preferences emerges: What this indicates is something more interesting than simple son preference and daughter aversion.

On the one hand, there is the growing presence of the boy/girl family (whatever the order), if to a much greater extent in better off wards than in poorer ones. On the other hand there are clear signs that what should be avoided is not so much the presence of a daughter, but that of being a daughter only family.

As will become evident shortly, the prominence of son only families is not necessarily an ideal situation, but rather one that families are ready to accept, if such is their lot. They do not want to have more sons in order to have a girl. On the other hand, only a very small proportion of families are prepared to stop with a small daughter only family (that is, one or two daughters), and some within this group have more girls than they would like in search of a son, rather than to go in for sex selection. This also means that large families with more daughters are in the nature of “unwanted” daughters, born into relatively poorer families, who would be neglected or discriminated in some degree. In other words, even though more girls are being born in this case (thus “improving” sex ratios) these are not daughters that are desired for.

In combination with the previous discussion on sex ratios and birth order, Haryana families avoid being a girl only family most definitely at the stage of the birth of a second child when the first child is a girl, ensuring through sex selection if need be that the next child is a son. On the other hand, larger families with extra daughters in search of a son are unwanted.

Maharashtra

In Maharashtra, the picture is not as sharply drawn, though the skew derives from the exact same set of problems.

- ▶ As seen in Graph 3.5 boy only families are 25 per cent of the overall sample while girl only families constitute 17 per cent. Once again, allowing for incomplete families with only one child, 11 per cent have one son, while 9 per cent have one daughter, leaving just 8 per cent families with two or more daughters.
- ▶ Among large families with at least four children, there are once again, more girls than boys – 1.7 per cent families with 4–5 girls compared to 0.6 per cent with 4–5 boys, indicative of families who hope for a boy down the line.

So what can be gleaned with the help of the situation in Maharashtra is particularly interesting and important. As was seen earlier, Maharashtra even has sites with more girls than boys, and yet, this does not mean that there isn't an effective skew.

In Maharashtra too, the sex ratio imbalance is quite significantly shaped by the extent to which there is a short fall in girl only families, in a context when the small family

norm has become a reality. Doubtless the situation in the Maharashtra sites is more muted than in Haryana, but it is nonetheless present. Here too there is the phenomenon of larger families with unwanted daughters in search of a son.

3.8.1 • THE GIRL ONLY FAMILY BY CASTE AND EDUCATION

Given the arguments that have been made about the sex composition of families and the special focus on the girl only family, it would be necessary to see how the proportions stack up in relation to caste, and education of the mother.

CASTE VARIATIONS IN HARYANA AND MAHARASHTRA

- ▶ In the case of Haryana, there is little variation across castes, though, as one might expect, upper castes show higher proportions of boy only families and lower numbers of girl only families. Against an average of 27 per cent boy only families – UCs have 29 per cent, OBCs 24 per cent and SCs 26 per cent; against an average of 12 per cent girl only families, UCs and OBCs have 11 per cent and SCs 14 per cent.
- ▶ In Maharashtra there is much more variation, and interestingly the SCs once again have the best figures. Against an average of 25 per cent boy only families, UCs in Maharashtra have 28 per cent, OBCs 24 per cent and SCs 20 per cent. Against an average of 17 per cent girl only families the equivalent figures are UC 18 per cent, OBCs 13 per cent and SCs 21 per cent.
- ▶ So what makes this interesting, is that the more positive child sex ratios that were found among Scheduled Castes in Maharashtra are here corroborated by a higher proportion of girl only families, while OBCs have the lowest. At the same time, allowance must be made here that it is among these families that there are more daughters than are wanted.

VARIATIONS BY EDUCATION OF MOTHER IN HARYANA

What are the equivalent proportions by educational status of the mother?

- ▶ In Haryana, the proportion of families with only sons are as follows – 18 per cent among illiterate mothers, 28 per cent for those with some schooling, and 32 per cent for those with some higher education.
- ▶ The equivalent proportions for those with only girls are illiterate mothers 7 per cent, those with schooling 10 per cent, and higher education 22 per cent. Thus it is interesting to see that there is much more variation in these patterns compared to the child sex ratios. There is a progressive increase in the proportion of girl only families by education of the mother. At the same time, some of these are incomplete families with only 1 girl. There are no single girl child families among illiterate mothers, 6 per cent among those with schooling, and 14 per cent among those with higher education.
- ▶ **Therefore, the ultimate picture of families who are ready to have two or more girls looks quite different – 7 per cent among illiterate mothers, 4 per cent among those with some schooling and 8 per cent for those with higher education.** (As is to be further expected, families with 3 or more girls are only to be found among those with no education or some schooling.)
- ▶ Again, as might be expected, the desired family of one boy and one girl is increasingly realised according to the education of the mother – 16 per cent among illiterate mothers, 25 per cent among those with some schooling and 34 per cent for those with higher education.

In Haryana, taking all the figures together, there is evidence that among the illiterate and school going mothers it is the boy only family that has the largest proportion (closely followed by one

girl and one boy), while those with higher education have the girl/boy combination in the largest proportion followed by boy only families.

Maharashtra

- ▶ In Maharashtra, there are increasing proportions of the two child families with different sex composition by education of the mother.
- ▶ The one girl one boy combination break up is 19 per cent among illiterate mothers, 26 per cent for those with some school education and 30 per cent for the college educated.
- ▶ In terms of son only families, there are 16 per cent among illiterate mothers, 23 per cent for those with some schooling and the very high figure of 35 per cent for those with higher education, which is higher than that of one girl and one boy.
- ▶ As for daughter only families the figures are 6 per cent among illiterate mothers, 17 per cent among school goers and 27 per cent for those with higher education. **Thus with the exception of illiterate mothers (whose numbers are very small in Maharashtra), there are better proportions of girl only families compared to Haryana.** Once again, it is necessary to see how many are families with just one girl. Just 1 per cent among illiterate mothers have a single girl child, 10 per cent among those with some school education and 13 per cent with some college education.
- ▶ Compared to Haryana there are (with the exception of illiterates where the numbers are very small) a higher proportion of families with two or more daughters – 5 per cent for illiterate mothers, 7 per cent school goers and 14 per cent college educated. But these figures are considerably lower than those for son only families.

The Maharashtra sample works differently from Haryana given the prominence of son only families among those with higher education. Therefore, although Maharashtra shows a somewhat greater acceptability of the girl only family than Haryana, there are skewed child sex ratios, which get worse with the mother's education. This corroborates the CSR patterns seen in the previous discussion on child sex ratios.

OWNERSHIP OF A FOUR WHEELER

There is not much variation when it comes to owners of four wheelers, compared to the average. In Haryana 31 per cent families with four wheelers have only sons while 13 per cent have only daughters – recall that the average figures were 27 per cent (boy only) and 12 per cent (girl only). In Maharashtra the equivalent figures are 15 per cent daughter only and 29 per cent son only families among four wheeler owners – in comparison to the average figures of 17 per cent girl only and 25 per cent boy only, hence just somewhat worse.

Overall, the variable that seems to make the most difference to the composition of the family is the education of the mother, with contrasting patterns in Haryana and Maharashtra. Caste is not significant in Haryana in that all castes show only small variations at low levels (with upper castes having the worst figures), though caste is definitely significant in Maharashtra, with SC families having more girl only families and OBCs the lowest. Finally, class status as defined by the ownership of a four wheeler makes very little difference in both the state samples.

3.9 • GIRL ONLY FAMILIES: WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES THROUGH THE INTERVIEWS

In the planning of this study, one of the aims of the interviews was to talk at greater length with respondents having girl only families, given their critical place in the reasons for skewed child sex

ratios, when small families are not only the norm but are being realised in practice. (Other types of families that were chosen for interview were those where the first child was a daughter, families with only boys, and larger families with more daughters.) As the earlier discussion on sex ratios as well as family composition has made evident, the number of girl only families in the Haryana sample was considerably smaller than in Maharashtra. Moreover, the investigating team encountered some difficulty in accessing families for interview in Haryana and this included families with only daughters. In the end, in Ward 6 in Rohtak 5 interviews were with daughter only families; in Ward 12 the number of such families interviewed was 8; in Ward 1 in Jhajjar the number was 7; and in Ward 12J it was just 4. In the Maharashtra sample, there were 10 girl only families in the interviewed sample in Shirur Ward 2, 6 families in Ward 14; 8 daughter only families in Ward 13 in Beed and 9 such families in Ward 11. This section presents the views of the mothers of such families, Ward wise, beginning with Haryana.

Haryana

WARD 6 ROHTAK

Just to recall, Ward 6 is a middle class Jat dominated Ward with only one colony with working class families, mainly Balmiki. Among the 5 daughter only families interviewed, three had just one daughter (not all complete as will be evident, or unable to have more children for health reasons) and two had three daughters, who took more “chances” for a son. There is no one in this group who comes out as openly ready to have a small daughter only family. At the same time, as will be discussed at greater length after examining all girl only families across the Wards in the study, there are signs here and there that mothers are also preparing themselves to be in such a situation. The voices below reflect to varying degrees on how only having daughter(s) is part of the changing times.

The first respondent was a well-educated Jat woman with an MPhil degree, a teaching job and a good marriage at the age of 29 years, reported family income Rs 85,000. She has one young daughter. The ideal family would be two children, according to her – “doesn’t matter whether it is a son or a daughter, the child needs company.” The reasons she gave were quite simply economic (her mother was one of 8 and her father one of 7, and they suffered). Regarding sex selection, she had heard of cases when she was younger – an aunt had done it after having two daughters. There were many who had a son after a daughter, but “God doesn’t give this order of children”. Now sex selection had stopped, she said, as there was news of doctors who had been caught. She also saw more families with one or two daughters. She did not have expectations for her old age even though her job did not give a pension. They would save and manage something. She was also one of the few who said that when it came to marriage “there was a drastic change in society and it would only increase”, which was to be accepted.

The next respondent, a Jat woman now 42 years, came from a family where everyone was into teaching, reported family income Rs. 62,000. She had married at 31 years and her husband was a property dealer. She did not keep good health and felt that her young daughter (who was born premature) was already looking after her. Even having one child was difficult in her case and her husband was happy with a daughter. It was only other family members and in-laws who still asked her to try to have another child, not quite understanding her problems. As for sex selection, she felt that everyone did it, only in villages they were more open about it. Her own sister-in-law had made all her daughters-in-law go in for check-ups in private hospitals if the first born was a daughter. She believed that the main source of the problem was land – “people do not accept a son-in-law”. At the same time, her own beliefs veered towards the extremely conventional – she was the one who said that the Hindu Marriage Act ought to be amended to prevent marriages within the village, while acknowledging love marriages on the other. 10 lakhs had been spent on her marriage, and she did not think that women needed any property rights if brothers were there.

The third respondent, came from a Bania caste, 30 years old and married to a businessman at the age of 27, reported family income Rs. 80,000. They have one daughter about to join nursery. Two children were ideal, she said, but it did not matter which – her husband agreed, it was only the in-laws who said that a son was important. Sex selection was certainly familiar to her, from the news and through her friends' circle. She knew a teacher with two daughters who aborted the third, outside Rohtak "in a village somewhere". Her views on job opportunities for women in Rohtak appeared a trifle naïve, as she believed there were plenty these days – private sector, offices, police department, apart from teaching (which she hoped for her daughter), though her husband wanted her to become an IPS officer. Nor did she believe in notions of lineage through sons. When it came to marriages they should be love-cum-arranged, with the family's consent.

The fourth from this Ward, a Jat, came from a poorer family whose father did some contract and dalal work. Her husband had retired early from the army and was now running a pickle factory while she augmented the family income with sewing, the total reported family income being Rs. 56,000. Now 34 years old and married at 18, she had three daughters. "I wanted to have two. I had the third child in the hope of a son." She emphasized that this was very much her own wish – there was no pressure from the family and her husband did not want a third child. She knew of many cases of sex selective abortions and hinted that she might have gone ahead herself – but her husband refused, saying she couldn't kill her own child. Now she had got the operation (i.e. sterilisation) done. Her children went to private school, and she had hopes of sending the eldest to Delhi if she did well in the 12th, she was also good at chess. She then produced her version of the current gendered discourse of good daughters and bad sons: "Daughters are better than boys. They are the best. I have no idea why I wanted to have a son. In fact boys are more burdensome because we would have to construct a house for him and he might still throw us out when we are old."

Next there is another Jat, now 42 years old, who was married at 18. Her husband was in the Air Force and posted in several stations, now running a hardware store, with a reported family income of Rs. 40,000. She had three daughters. She did all the housework without burdening them to make sure that they could study properly and tried to give them whatever they asked for. The eldest had completed her M.Sc. and was now taking coaching to pass the NET qualifying exam to be a college teacher, and the next was in the 11th and attending Akash tuitions for the IIT, as per her own wish. According to the respondent, she actually only wanted one child but took "three chances". She even went so far as to get sex determination done. But since the entire family are *satsangis* (a religious sect) they are against female foeticide, so she only wanted to know "for peace of mind". Had there been a son to begin with, they would have stopped with one. She acknowledged that though officially banned, doctors do sex selection secretly by taking money. Referring to her own case and a very controlling husband, she concluded the interview saying that while a daughter might be perfectly capable, whether she would care for parents depended on the family she had settled into. So she did not want to have any expectations from her own daughters.

WARD 12 IN ROHTAK

This Ward, the poorest Ward in the entire sample, had a larger number of girl only families most of whom had 3 daughters, clearly hoping for a son. Only one family had a single daughter who had been adopted. Here families were more open and less inhibited about stating their preferences for sons. On the other hand, some of the respondents were also quite forthright in their views regarding the absence of any guarantees about such sons. It also worth noting the kind of investment such families, especially those who were particularly poor, wish to make for their daughters' futures, under the most adverse of conditions.

The first respondent, a Balmiki was 28 years old and 18 at the time of her marriage to a sanitation worker, with a family income of Rs. 10,000. She had adopted a daughter, now in kindergarten. She

was very keen that her daughter complete the 12 class, and if not college then go for “some kind of course”. There was no question of sending her out to another city, it was just too dangerous. She believed that education was key – the uneducated could only clean other people’s homes or work in the Municipality. But then again even the educated are left hanging, she added, with money and fate being major factors. There is a greed for boys, she felt, indeed she saw several families with only boys. But no one did sex selection in her neighbourhood. There were many problems in finding a son-in-law, due to lies and deceit by prospective in-laws. But choice marriages were wrong “The child walks the path that the parents have forbidden, so it ruins all their hard work”. Only if the parent’s honour is intact is a village safe. She was among those who did not believe that a girl deserved property rights in her natal family, when they have already undergone so much expenditure to get her married and she now belongs to her in-laws.

The next respondent was also a Balmiki, whose husband was a peon, had two daughters, with a reported income of Rs. 38,000. She was a housewife who hardly stepped out, and therefore felt reticent about answering questions. 26 years old at the time of the interview, she had been married at the age of 20. The economic condition of the household was better than most of the others in this Ward and they had recently got a new house constructed. She began by openly saying that she wanted the right kind of small family, but it wasn’t in her fate. Yes, she and her husband both wanted a son, but, she added quickly, her daughters were also like sons. She was among the very few who was forthright about sex selection. They had in fact tried in Sirsa, Rohtak and Sonapat – in Sirsa the rates were Rs. 30,000 and in Sonapat Rs. 10,000. They saved up some money but then got cold feet when there was news of some people getting caught trying to get the checkup done. In Rohtak they could get it done for free because her father-in-law had some position in the medical business. However, so far they had not gone ahead. She went on to say that both boys and girls roamed around, and don’t listen to anyone. But girls, she added, needed more attention since what she does brings dishonour to the family. If in-laws permit it, they could also look after parents. She also thought that with enough education girls could get jobs if they were willing to work hard – whether as officers, in private or else just become domestic workers. It was therefore clear that for this respondent having two girls was an unhappy situation (with some attempts to reconcile herself to fate), one that she was likely to change in the near future, with sex selection if need be.

The next respondent, also a Balmiki, was older – 45 years old, married at 17 to a sanitation worker in the Municipality, with a reported income of Rs. 12,000. She had three daughters and was herself one of 6 sisters with no brother. She had not made any strong plans regarding her children, only hoped that after two daughters god would give them a son, but accepted the third daughter as well. Small families were a necessity today, she said, because there were no jobs and the expense of marriage was also too much. She had managed to find marriages for two of them. It had not been possible to achieve much by way of their schooling since she herself did daily wage work – they had studied till Class 5. She first heard of sex selection about 15 years ago, which was after her time, and said categorically that this was absolutely wrong, and such machines must be banned. It was the better educated who were getting sex selection done. She also articulated a variation on the rather well entrenched gender discourse about sons and daughters, that will be explored more fully later in the report: Sons would not earn and end up destroying their lives, while daughters would always give respect. At the same time, daughters were a real cost – she had to borrow 4 lakhs for her daughters’ marriages, and was still paying off the debt. She was vociferously against children having choice in marriage and called such girls “whores”. In fact, better to marry off one’s daughters early. When asked about the effects of the declining sex ratio she said that it was clear that there was a bride shortage among Jats. They got brides from elsewhere to hide their caste. A Balmiki boy had also married a girl like this in their locality, who was getting beaten up by any man for no particular reason – she was from Bihar and had gone back last year.

The next respondent was 28 years old and married at 15, had three daughters and came from the Dhanak caste. Her husband was a construction worker, with a reported income of Rs. 12,000. Yes, there was pressure from in-laws to have a son. But she was focussing on her daughters and sending all three to private school. “Have you ever heard of anyone becoming successful who had studied in government school”, she asked. She had only heard of sex selection from TV reports and did not know of anyone. It was wrong: “Who will give us their daughter if we kill our own?” Yet she had also taken “medicines” (from a desi doctor – Rs. 700 for an injection) for having a boy when under pressure with the third delivery. But she also added that there were families who adopted girls because they were unable to have them. Boys were wanted for parents’ old age, but only a very few earnest ones fulfilled such expectations – when parents get old, sons shift to another house and leave them. Like the previous respondent she too opposed choice in marriage; she also worried about “too much education” in the younger generation who then sideline if not neglect less educated parents.

The next respondent, also a Dhanak, now 25 years old, was 18 when she married her husband who was a truck driver, with an income of Rs. 25,000. She had three daughters and had given one to her own sister. She felt that nowadays a small family was necessary given costs of living and to be “happy”, though she acknowledged that she still wished for a son. She denied any knowledge of sex selection (as was the case with the majority). Her interview had much more than the others about wanting to see her daughters well educated, become “independent” and bring honour to the home. But she had little idea about job opportunities, managing as she did on a daily wage rate of Rs. 200 (while men got Rs. 400 – she felt it should be equal or at least Rs. 300). As for sons-in-law, one would have to see whether their family would be good for their daughters; an important consideration is that it should also be an easy commute to the in-laws’ place. She was much more open about choice marriages and felt that parents should accept them – she mentioned a Dhanak boy who had married a Chamar girl and his parents came around.

The third Dhanak respondent was a construction worker, now 41 years old and had married at 25 years, with an income of Rs. 13,000. She had three daughters; her husband had married again with two more daughters from the second marriage. A son had been born after her first daughter but died at childbirth. She said she had got over this “by looking at society”. One of the daughters could at least be a son for them, become educated and take on the responsibility. There was pressure from all sides for a son though it was greatest from in-laws. Of course there were problems – they were poor people, sent their daughters to government schools and only hoped that they would at least finish school. Marriages would depend on finding a boy at the same level. On the question of sex selection she said they had never considered it. Balmikis were doing it, and she was aware of one case, who had an abortion at the time of the second delivery. On the question of sons, she articulated a view point that was also repeated several times. A son was needed less for the parents (they would in any case earn for as long as they could) than for the daughter – “sisters need a brother to support them in life”. But she was also one of the very few who believed that girls deserved their share in parental property, even if others felt that she would thereby get shares from both families. In her case it had already been consumed by her brothers. But marriages should be done within caste otherwise boys in one’s own caste would remain unmarried and might kill you. As for bringing brides from far away – her village was full of them, she said. Some did well and settled down but others ran away.

The next respondent, from the Kumhar caste, now 30 years old, had married for a second time. Her husband was a construction worker and she had two daughters, with an income of Rs. 9,000. She had hoped for a girl and a boy and wanted a son – everyone wanted one from all sides of the family. But for now she wanted her daughters to be as well educated as possible – her life had been ruined and she didn’t want the same for her children. Rohtak was fine in terms of schools but completely useless in terms of employment – soon work would come to end, she felt, seeing so many sitting empty handed.

On the question of sex selection she believed it was village people who were doing it secretly, and elderly neighbours kept telling her to get a check-up done. “But not anyone in her family”. She also articulated the discourse of sons who made one’s life miserable “those who have sons are unhappy and those who don’t are unhappy!” Such attitudes had to be changed. “However unhappy and far away the daughter is, she will come running if she hears of even the slightest troubles of the parents – this is the hope.” She was also one of the very few in this ward who articulated as a positive development that the government was changing ideas about marriage: one should be above 18 years and be able to find a husband out of choice. Moreover, there were so many problems – alcoholism, being duped by inlaws. Her older daughter, now in Class 9, said that she won’t get married – “she is very intelligent!” Recalling her own first bad marriage, she felt that one should move with the times, bow before the children’s happiness and counsel them. On the issue of property rights for a daughter she presented a dilemma: Her husband earned little and it was her brothers who were supporting her in everything. So demanding a share in property would end this relationship – only if they were giving happily should one take.

The next respondent was very rare in this study, a long distance bride, since she came all the way from a village near Ranchi in Jharkhand, from the Mali caste, and was married to a Dhanak who was a construction worker (whose parents lived in rural UP). Reported family income was Rs. 15,000. They had two daughters. She was reticent about her own marriage in spite of considerable probing – relatives had arranged it, she said, and others from her village had also been brought to Haryana, to Sonapat. She was 16 years old at the time of her marriage and her husband about seven years older. She brought about Rs. 40,000–50,000 for marriage expenses, was scared but went along with it all. Once a year she went together with her husband for about two weeks to visit her family. Her daughters were young still and she wanted a son. She had ultrasounds done but not to check the sex, she said emphatically. She articulated the most conventional views about sons and daughters – “the son will look after the house the daughter will leave after marriage.” He would also support the sisters. She was unaware of gotra in her caste and in Haryana (beyond not marrying within one’s own gotra). When asked whether she would bring more girls from Jharkhand given the shortage she said she would not because they run away from alcoholic husbands. The main problem at home is not alcohol but that there are no jobs.

WARD 1, JHAJJAR

There are 7 daughter only families who were interviewed in this more middle class ward in Jhajjar, out of which four had just one daughter. Not unlike Ward 6 in Rohtak, some families were either incomplete, or were unable to have more children. There is some ambivalence in most of those who declare that sons no longer matter, though there are a few voices that speak with some confidence about having only daughters.

The first respondent was one of the very few Brahmins in the sample, and the family was not well off. Her husband was a shopkeeper and she often helped out, having also worked earlier as a teacher, with a reported income of Rs. 15,000. Now 45 years old and married at 19, she had one daughter who was pursuing her M.Sc. at MD University in Rohtak. There should have been two children, she said emphatically – one boy. But she had been having problems conceiving a second child and was taking medication all these years. It was her decision, even though it was weakening her body and her husband said they had no need for a boy. However, looking at society, she worried that after their death there would no one “for the rituals, to manage everything”. But she also recounted that they got nothing from her in-laws, bought the shop with their own earnings and so wanted to see her daughter “stand on her own feet” (this was something of a stock phrase among most respondents when it came to education), and never have to be dependent on in-laws.

The next respondent came from the Manihaar caste (OBC), just 23 years old at the time of interview and 18 when she got married to a driver. She had one daughter, and family income of Rs. 15,000. Her life came across as full of conflicts – she left her daughter with the in laws when she was just over a year old to stay with her parents and returned a year or so later. Now she was not on speaking terms with her brothers. She seemed to want to spend more time with her parents but this was not possible. Her husband was the one who decided everything, she said. He was more knowledgeable about Jhajjar and its opportunities, since she was stuck at home. They might go in for a second child, and it would be good if it were a boy, but it was god's wish. She had a lot of difficulties with the first pregnancy and had a miscarriage before, and so had ultrasound check-ups done thrice. But not for sex determination. Now that their daughter was so endearing even the husband's desire for a son had changed. (She wanted her to go in for tennis!) "These days girls and boys are equal. These days parents keep a ghar jamai. He is better than a son." At the same time, she too vacillated – there should be a boy and girl in every home, so daughters also have a brother.

The next respondent was a 39 year old Jat housewife at the time of the interview, married at 22 into a joint family, and grew up in Rohtak. She had one daughter, they wanted a second child, and tried five times. Family income was Rs. 47,000. Each time the baby died right after birth, they were all sons, and the doctors couldn't figure out what the problem was. She was against sex selection, and did not know of any such cases in their locality. Their daughter had just finished the 12th. They were expecting her to go in for B.Sc./M.Sc., not medical or engineering degrees, possibly in a women's college outside Jhajjar. It was up to the daughter whether she worked after her education and up to the family she married into later. As for marriage, she was fine with marrying out of choice, including in another caste, only it was wrong to marry within your gotra, since they are brother-sister.

The second Jat came from a well-educated family and had married into a similar family, with sisters-in-law with Ph.D.s Family income was Rs. 50,000. She was 25 years and had one daughter. They believed in having two children. She claimed that it did not matter what the sex of the child was and was completely against the idea of sex selection. The time when sons were considered necessary have gone, she asserted. Now daughters took care of parents more than sons did, and notions of continuing the lineage were no longer important. Sons were just not matching up to expectations. Compared to her parent's generation her generation was given education – now her daughters' generation would be more independent, able to negotiate with in laws and also be there for their own parents, she felt. She wanted her daughter to study medicine, in Haryana itself.

The next example, a Jat, ran a very successful beauty parlour in Jhajjar (and has come up for discussion earlier in this report). Reported income was Rs. 65,000. She was now 38 years old and married at 19 to a policeman who worked in Delhi. They had two daughters, the eldest just finishing her 12th class. As was mentioned earlier, it had been a struggle to set up her beauty parlour and she was clearly proud of her achievements, even if the family was not. Interestingly, however, she did not see her daughter as a potential inheritor of her business. Rather, she hoped that she would study medicine, if not MBBS then BAMS, and was ready to send her to China if need be to get the degree, since she had heard that there were Indians now going there for their studies. She said that she only wanted one child, and had the second daughter after a long gap. She also had a third – it was a boy, but he died within two months. Yes, there was still pressure from the in-laws for a son, in fact, her husband brought it up even to this day. But there was no question in her mind – and if such demands persisted, she might decide to separate. This respondent thus presents an interesting case of someone who is extremely strong-willed, nonetheless succumbed to son preference from her husband and his family, but was now happy to have just daughters, even at the cost of breaking off her marriage.

The next case, a Jat, had married a Punjabi. It was a love marriage, and some of her views have come up earlier in this report. Just 24 years old at the time of the interview she had married at 18, and had two daughters. Reported family income was Rs. 38,000. When asked how many children she had wanted, she said both she and her husband wanted just one, because of cost of living, “but now this is where we are”. She openly said that her mother-in-law wanted her to get an abortion (implying probably that they knew that the second pregnancy was a girl) and had to listen to talk of sons many times. But she was clear that they had stopped with the second daughter. Barely six years old, plans were on to make the elder one a doctor, take her to Delhi. Education was everything in this generation and in order that girls be independent, it would be a safeguard for whatever kind of family a girl may get with marriage. She couldn’t really fathom why parents didn’t want girls, with either husbands or mothers-in-law forcing the wife to go in for sex determination. What will boys do in the future if there are no girls? (This was a standard response to the consequence of the current shortage). The idea that all girls must have a brother was an outdated view and had to change, according to her. So here in the context of a love marriage there appears to be greater acceptance of being a girl only family.

Another love marriage in this Ward was a Khaati, whose husband was a Yadav. She worked as a teacher and had two young daughters, with her mother-in-law to help look after them. Reported income Rs. 26,000. They had moved to Jhajjar because of hostility from her family in particular, and it appeared that the situation was only just getting a bit better. Here, too, the couple were busy planning their children’s future at an age when they were just starting out in school. Gymnastics was the husband’s pet idea. As for sex selection, they were in denial about its current existence believing that it had completely stopped since the government had taken stringent measures. They did not consider dowry or difficulties in raising a girl to be a problem – perhaps other people did. Moreover, some people did not know how to deal with the ways in which girls and boys mix in college nowadays, and therefore didn’t want a daughter. Once again in the context of a love marriage both husband and wife appear ready to have only daughters.

WARD 12, JHAJJAR

This poor ward posed great difficulties in finding girl only families – partly because there were much fewer in this ward, but also because only four were willing to be interviewed.

The first respondent, from the Khaati caste, was 37 years old when interviewed and 18 at the time of marriage to a carpenter, who went “missing” when she was 4 months into her first pregnancy. It was a girl. She lived in a joint household with the mother-in-law and brother-in-law’s family, with an income of Rs. 8,200. She had wanted two children, an only daughter was not safe and needed company. But she was happy to have a girl – “who knows what a boy might become, and if genetics has any role to play he might have turned out like his father.” She taught in the same school at the nursery level where her daughter was now studying. Her aim was to make sure the daughter did not suffer like her, that meant at least a BA or MA, and possibly coaching since she was not a topper or anything. As for sex selection, she was aware that families went in for it after they already had daughters in order to keep the family small – nowadays maximum family size was 3–4 children. She also said that the ban was having a negative effect, because doctors now did it secretly for very high rates.

The next example, a Balmiki, had grown up rearing buffaloes and her husband ran a piggery. Just a year ago he could give this up (it was such dirty work) and with a lot of difficulty become an auto driver. She was 28 years now and 18 when married. She had a girl who was seven and wanted a second child. Everyone, especially the mother-in-law who visited occasionally, taunted her on this point. She had heard of sex selection but had never come across it herself, yet did not give an answer whether she might get the next pregnancy checked. For now, she wanted to concentrate on her daughter and help

her to study as much as she wanted, BA or even MA. She was only aware of one Chamar family nearby who had just two girls.

The next respondent, a Balmiki had four daughters, the most of any girl only family in the sample overall. She was 30 years old at the time of the interview, married when she was 20 to a clerk. Family income was Rs. 22,500. “I wanted only two children, but I ended with this,” she said laughing sadly. It was her wish to have a son, especially when she had to listen to all the talk from the neighbours, though her husband didn’t think so. Interestingly for a relatively poor family, both she and her husband were extremely focussed on the children’s education – a good “basis” in a private English medium school, and some professional course after the 12th. They were one of the only families who mentioned the government’s ladli scheme (a conditional cash transfer scheme) in which the girls had been enrolled. They hoped that with education they might find decent work, not just sewing or factory work and also husbands who were “equally educated, religious and not addicted”.

The final respondent in this ward, a Balmiki was just 22 years old when interviewed and 18 when married into a joint family. Her husband had recently got a job working at a petrol pump station, with an income of Rs. 8,200. She already had three daughters, and was trying for a son, “if god wishes”. A son was needed for parents and especially for the sisters later. At the time of the third pregnancy her husband wanted her to go in for sex determination testing but she refused, and instead took some potions given by her mother-in-law. They were aware that people were getting caught and heard there was a one lakh fine too. It was tough to be a daughter-in-law – everything depended on the kind of family one got in marriage, one was always being chided and always had to listen. There was no worked out plan for their daughters, only that they were sending them to private school. They had taken out a bank savings scheme for the middle daughter but the other schemes like Kanya Kosh Yojana, demanded a deposit of Rs. 21,000 and they were unable to do that. Later, perhaps they would find one son-in-law who could be given special treatment as a ghar jamai – her husband’s younger brother was one such in the village and enjoyed high standing.

Maharashtra

The number of girl only families was relatively more here compared to Haryana, as already discussed earlier based on survey findings. Moreover, families were also more prepared to be interviewed and spoke more frankly about their situation. There also appear to be a few who accepted having just daughters, which was more rarely the case in Haryana.

SHIRUR WARD 2

In this mixed ward with relatively more poor families, the number of daughters varied from one to three, with a number of two daughter families, indicative of a greater degree of acceptance.

The first respondent came from a Jain business family whose husband was a shop owner. Family income was one and half lakh rupees. She was 35 and married at 23, with one daughter, and had two miscarriages, one before and one after the daughter’s birth, both of which were boys. Her husband was happy with a daughter, since running a shop could be done by anyone, he said. Given her health there was no pressure from other family members either. Moreover, she was very happy with her daughter, who was studious and disciplined and a source of joy – who knows, a son might only have wanted to study and go to a faraway country. The daughter was in English medium and improving everyone’s language skills at home – she wanted to be a teacher when she grew up. There were no fears regarding old age, she knew of daughters who were more caring than their brothers, and she felt they might simply move somewhere close to the girl’s home if need be.

The next respondent came from the Wadar caste, had grown up in a poor agricultural labouring family, and was now running a shop. Reported income was Rs. 10,000. She had become active in the local Congress' Mahila Committee as Vice President. She was 28 and married at 18, her husband worked in Bombay Dyeing. She had just one daughter and that is all she wanted, she said. She emphasized that this was very much her decision, and that, while it was tough, it was possible to bring the in-laws around. She did not believe in sons, who only belied people's expectations; nor did she wish to divide her love for her daughter with any other child. As for sex selection, doctors, especially private doctors, who practiced this should be shut down. There was time to plan for the future, though she hoped her daughter would become a good class one officer. With no claims of either miscarriages or health problems, this would be the first example of someone happy with a single daughter.

The next respondent from the Chambhar caste (Scheduled Caste) now 52 years old, came from an extremely poor family that had to work under quasi bonded labour conditions and was married at 18. She had three daughters and continued doing daily wage work as a mason (getting Rs. 175 daily) with a husband who was frequently unemployed and contributed little. She wanted to stop at two but her father insisted that she try again for a boy. After the third delivery she got herself sterilised. Her husband left and had a second wife, while the mother-in-law continued to live with her. Her account is one of unmitigated struggle and hardship. She had to marry all her daughters before they completed schooling, and the youngest who did some tailoring work had problems with her husband (who since remarried) and had returned to live with her mother. The field researchers noted in their interview that while she had become tough to the point of managing without any male help, this was not the case with the daughters.

The next respondent, a Mahar who grew up in Mumbai, now 30 years old, was 22 when she was married – her husband was an auto driver. Reported income was Rs. 3,000. She had two daughters. She actually only wanted one child, she said – the first was a still birth, after which she had a daughter. The second “happened”, and she felt it was ok – so that the first daughter had some company. After this she got herself sterilised and informed the in laws – life was just too expensive, and she wanted her daughters to have a secure future. At the time of the first still birth she learnt about ultra sound as a method for testing the health of the baby. Other patients told her that one could get the sex checked too, but she was against the idea, even when her mother suggested it. What mattered to her was her own physical health, though she could understand others who, because of their deprived condition, went in for sex selective abortions. She was putting all her efforts into the daughters' education, they should be able to speak English, and she hoped the older one (who had just begun school) would join the police. If a good son-in-law was found he could be a *ghar jamai*, she thought, otherwise they would ensure that the daughters are well settled and they themselves would adjust, return to her father's village if need be.

The next respondent came from a Khumbar family and had two daughters. When recounting her own family history she mentioned that when the fourth girl was born her father “ran away”, and this was what her mother told them, apart from his being an alcoholic. She was just 22 years old at the time of the interview and 18 when married. Life was better now after her marriage. Reported family income was Rs. 25,000. Her husband wanted girls as there were none in his family, he and his family were biased towards daughters. “He said he wanted a cricket team!” But she felt that one son should be there, even though the husband felt otherwise, her daughters needed a brother. But her husband even gave examples of big names like Sharad Pawar who only had daughters and who would inherit all his property. She also heard “everywhere” about sex determination (she used the English word), right here in Shirur people kept going for abortions, including her own neighbour in the 7th month of pregnancy. Yet she felt that she could not breach her husband's trust at any cost. Now she was

thinking of the girls' education, that they study more than she could, till they were independent and marry only when they were ready.

The next respondent was very poor, a Mahar, who had two daughters. Reported income Rs. 6,000. She was 26 years at the time of interview and 18 when she married. She came from an illiterate family though her father had a government job, but passed away due to excessive drinking. She worked in several houses as a domestic worker while her husband worked in a lottery shop. She loved children and wanted more, but since she had caesareans both times did not want to take any further chances. Her mother-in-law was keen for her to try and get a son, and told her that if the third turned out be a girl then she could get herself sterilised. She did not appear to know much about sex selection though her husband had asked her to find out the sex of her last pregnancy. She had mixed feelings, but was now happy that she had girls and wanted to look after them, a son might have turned out like her own father.

The next respondent came from the Kaidali caste (Scheduled Caste) and had three daughters. She was 32 at the time of the interview and just 11 when married (she had no education, was dark, she said, and was just married off with no prospects). (Her case has come up in Chapter two). Her husband abandoned the family after the third daughter was born, and she made ends meet as a domestic worker. Family income was Rs. 16,000. Her desire was for a son and daughter, but said that god thought otherwise. She had wanted to "do the operation" after the second child itself, but both her mother and mother-in-law prevailed on her to try once more – so she got herself sterilised right after the third delivery. Now everything depended on what kind of education her daughters could get to make sure their lives were not wasted as hers had been.

The next respondent was a Mahar, who with some difficulty managed to do her B.A., her husband was a field engineer. Family income was Rs. 24,000. She was 26 years old at the time of the interview and 20 when she married. They had two girls. Both she and her husband believed in family planning and wanted a son and a daughter. Now that it was illegal to check the sex of the foetus they had not done so and had daughters. She would probably get herself sterilised soon, and manage to convince the in-laws. She believed that the practice of sex selection had now stopped. Never regretting having two daughters she also believed that they would take care of her when she was old.

The last respondent in this ward was a Maratha who had married into a Muslim family. Family income was Rs. 17,000. (Her case has come up in Chapter two.) She was 27 and had married at 17 when she fell in love with a boy from her locality. They had two young daughters, and she had herself sterilised after the second birth. She had known a large family as had her husband, but both had lost siblings. They believed in having a small family and reported a lot of evidence that there was no point in expecting anything from sons. They neglected their parents to the point of abandoning them. It was the daughters who stepped in to save their parents from penury. As for her own daughters, they should "first become something" then marriage might happen. If the daughters wanted to work they should be allowed to do so, but if the in-laws were sufficiently rich then she should not need to work.

SHIRUR, WARD 14

Though this Ward is on average more middle class than Ward 2, many of the families interviewed came from harsh backgrounds both economically and socially. The daughter only families interviewed here also appear to be more resigned about the situation they found themselves in compared to those from Ward 2.

The first respondent was a Mahar with one daughter. She was 24 when interviewed and 21 at the time of her marriage to an MIDC worker. Reported family income Rs. 8,000. She had completed a nursing course, and worked before moving recently to Shirur. They have one daughter. She wanted to have

a second child but said that it did not matter whether it was a boy or girl. As for sex selection, as a nurse she was quite aware that families did it. Moreover, when women came to the hospital or clinic for an abortion they would not say anything so they did not know. Late abortions also took their toll on the mother. She was already planning to put money into the Sukanya Scheme for her daughter's education, and another account for themselves.

The next respondent, from the Wadari (Scheduled Caste) had one daughter. She was 35 years old and 27 at the time of marriage. She had a very hard life, losing both her father and brother early on. Her marriage also turned out to be a bad one, with quarrels with in-laws and she separated from her husband. Income was Rs. 4,000. She wanted a son and daughter but had to live with the reality of one daughter "for which there was no treatment". Now she lived with her mother. Yes, many times people had abortions when the pregnancy was female, but not in her family – her own sister had five daughters. She had no expectations, hoped that her daughter would have a good family when she was married and she would manage on her own.

The next respondent from the Nhavi caste had one daughter. She was 37 at the time of interview and married at 18. She had married her own cousin (father's sister's son) – she worked as a teacher while he owned a hair salon. Reported income was Rs. 9,000. Her daughter suffered from a physical disability at birth and therefore they did not take a second chance. The doctor advised them against another pregnancy since they were close relatives. Moreover, she added that a son might take everything and not look after his sister. Her daughter had completed her BSc with a lot of support from teachers. She had not seen any sex selection in the neighbourhood. All she hoped was that her daughter would manage a respectable job and had no expectations for herself. They would manage with small savings.

The next respondent was a Maratha with two daughters. She was 30 at the time of interview and 20 when she married. Both she and her husband worked in MIDC as operators. Family income Rs. 14,000. She wanted a small family and that was agreed by the rest of the family, so they stopped after two daughters. As for sonography it had only been banned in name and continued, with people going in for check-ups to know the sex of their pregnancy. But this had never been brought up in her family, and it would be like killing your child. There was no assurance of security from having a son, so they were saving both for their daughters and themselves.

The next respondent was a Navbuddhist and had three daughters. She was 37 years and married at 18. Her husband was a building contractor. Reported income Rs. 18,000. They were a joint family (with a brother-in-law married to her own sister, who drank and did not care for the family). She herself was not keeping well and had kept one of her daughters with her mother. She was effectively also bringing up the three daughters of her sister. The elder one had not cleared final exams of Class 12. Interestingly this niece did not want to marry but preferred to grow old with her aunt. She had wanted to get sterilised right after the first child but due to pressure from the mother-in-law had two more children in the hope for a son. With her husband's consent she had the "operation" done later. Later in the interview it emerged that she had a fourth pregnancy, secretly got herself checked and went in for an abortion when it was a girl. It was entirely her choice and decision she said. Though she felt bad initially she no longer experienced the need for a son since her third daughter was just like a son. Now she felt that doctors should not communicate the sex of the foetus and should be punished for doing so. Girls needed education followed by fruitful and respectable work.

The final example from this ward was a Maratha who had three daughters. She was 23 and had been married very young at 14 when she just completed 7th standard, due to poverty. She had learnt and changed a lot in the context of her life, as she felt that a woman "is just an asset that men use for their good". Her husband was an autorickshaw driver with an income of Rs. 10,500. Her children had come too early. Left to herself she wanted just one daughter but was forced by her husband to have

more children. At the time of the fourth pregnancy she says that without checking she went straight to Mumbai for an abortion and had herself sterilised. This angered her husband and made him violent. There was plenty of sex selection in the neighbourhood and she knew of several people who spent Rs. 2030,000 just to know the sex of the child. That is why she did not bother to find out when she was pregnant the fourth time but just went in for an abortion. The family survived on the earnings of the mother-in-law, who was more than a mother to her. The husband hardly brought in anything from autorickshaw driving. She wanted her daughters to get a good education even though with the shortage in girls it was boys who were having a hard time finding a girl to marry.

BEED, WARD 13

Ward 13 in Beed was a more middle class ward with the exception of one slum cluster. There are a number of respondents with just one daughter (three of whom are Brahmin), including a case where the second pregnancy was aborted because it was a girl. The respondents are open about either wanting a son or a second child, and how they came to terms with their situation.

The first respondent, a Brahmin, had one daughter. She was 40, married at 22 to a civil engineer. Family income Rs. 47,000. She had wanted to have two children, but the second pregnancy had problems and had to be aborted, it was male. As a single child, her daughter was too pampered, and was now doing a diploma in engineering. She couldn't say about job opportunities since one had to pay large sums to get a job. Though things were changing, she believed that a son was necessary in the family, but since her brother-in-law had a son, the lineage would continue. She was also the person discussed earlier in the report who said there was a huge marriage squeeze in the Brahmin community due to bride shortage.

The next respondent, also a Brahmin, had one daughter. She was 38 and 23 when she married – her husband worked as a medical representative and she had found work as a teacher in the district school. Family income was Rs. 75,000. She said she used to want a second child but had let go of that wish, her daughter was already 12 years old. There was no room in their working lives for another child. There was plenty of sex selection happening both in the town and in rural areas where she was working but because of all the publicity in catching people, it had gone down now. People believed that they needed sons, often it was the women who created the most pressure, even though it was obvious that most sons moved out with their wives after marriage. She recognised that her daughter would have too many expectations later, from their side as well as husband and in-laws.

The third respondent was yet another Brahmin with just one daughter. She was 45 years old, a primary school teacher and married at 20. Her husband worked as a clerk. Family income was Rs. 25,000. Her daughter was grown up and had become an engineer. She is one of the very few instances in the sample who openly acknowledged that she had an abortion when the second pregnancy turned out to be a girl. After that everyone in the family said no, enough, there was no need for more. Now she felt it was a mistake, that they didn't realise it at the time. "I'm a woman and a woman killing a woman is wrong". It used to be done openly at the time of the second or third delivery. Interestingly, like most respondents, she believed that the ban against sex selection had only been introduced after 2011. She spoke of marriages being arranged from elsewhere in the Vidharba region for Brahmin men in Beed, where the caste of the girl was unknown. Whether girls could look after parents, she was not sure. "Society chides the girl from both sides".

The next respondent, from the Nhavi caste (OBC), has a two year old daughter. She was just 21 and married 3 years ago – her husband had a hair dressing salon. Family income was Rs. 16,000. Though he had done B.Ed. he was not able to clear the qualifying exams and now enjoyed this work. When the daughter reached the age of five, they would consider having a second child – whether boy or girl, no

preference. They had seen how the number of girls was going down, and with everyone having a son they wanted a daughter. She didn't know of anyone who went in for sex selection, it was god's will. But she also admitted that it would be best if the second were a son, then there would be "no more tension". Sons were needed in one's old age, when one would be beset with different illnesses.

The next respondent, a Rajput, also had one daughter. She was 42 now and 21 at the time of her marriage, and her daughter was now in class 8. Family income was Rs. 28,000. She had health problems which would have required expensive treatment, and so it was difficult for her to have a second child. Everyone was happy with one child. Sex selection had been banned and in her locality she only saw girls. People have changed, have recognised that boys and girls are equal and that some families will have only girls or only boys. At this point they had no expectations from her regarding their future, it would depend on her wish, and they would try and take care of themselves.

The next respondent, a Vanzari, had two daughters. She was 28 now and 20 when she married. She had to find work out of necessity for a while, but stopped because her husband didn't like it. Her husband too was looking for a better job and managing expenses was becoming difficult, with Beed having no opportunities. Income was Rs. 15,000. There was pressure to get sex determination done with the second pregnancy but she resisted, even though her mother-in-law had gone on fasts so that she would have a son, and became upset. She was prepared for more anger should the third also turn out to be a girl. A boy and a girl would have been best, she felt. She would love to go to her natal home in Aurangabad, her father had contacts and could get his son-in-law a job, but her husband thought it was low to stay like that, and her father-in-law threatened to break off ties.

The next respondent, a Mahar, had three daughters. She was 34 when the interview was conducted and married at 18. Her husband was a teacher, mother-in-law worked as nurse, and she had found a job in a school helping out with admissions. Family income was Rs. 26,000. She had got sterilised and did not plan for more children. There were no girls in her in-laws home, so they were happy with daughters, and felt alright being a medium sized family, which was one more than they had planned. She believed that sonography for sex selection had been completely stopped in Beed since a few years ago. (This was echoed by many respondents). Also the attitudes of people were beginning to change towards having girls. She felt a good education – like nursing, or teaching or even becoming a doctor, was possible for girls nowadays. The daughters could even settle abroad – America, or Japan, because it was a Buddhist nation. She also believed that neither boys nor girls should have to look after their parents in their old age. "We've decided that we'll not be a burden on anyone and look after ourselves".

The last respondent in this ward, also a Mahar, had two daughters. She was 32 years now and married 15 years ago. Family income Rs. 10,000. She had severe health problems with asthma at the time of her second delivery. So apart from the costs of more children her health would not permit it. Education for the daughters might mean paying for professional courses like nursing (1–1.5 lakhs for the course and another 1–1.5 lakh for a job). It was up to her husband, who worked as a journalist, to manage. Without education people became like garbage, she said – they would have to go for sugarcane harvesting or work on farms. As a mother, she had no future expectations, only that the daughters marry well and within the same caste, otherwise there would be conflicts.

BEED, WARD 11

In this mixed ward, 10 mothers with daughter only families agreed to be interviewed. What comes through particularly strongly is the two child norm as the right kind of family, along with a range of perceptions and experiences about having just daughters.

The first respondent, a Mahar, had one daughter. She was studying for her final year BA, at the age of 28 and was married ten years ago. It was a love marriage. Family income was Rs 60,000 and her husband was a contractor. Her daughter was nine years old. Ideally one should have two children, she said. It would be better that they are boy and girl, but that is not something one could do anything about. She was aware of sex selection, but insisted that she had never done it nor anyone among her relatives. Her husband did not believe that a son was needed and she agreed to everything he said. She mentioned campaigns like *Beti bachao*, but also believed that the new generation would be giving a lot of thought to what is right and what is wrong, and so it would be stopped. Her own mother was an only child who lived with her natal family and she had a very understanding father. But mostly she did see that girls got caught between the natal and conjugal family.

The next respondent was from the Mali (OBC) caste and her husband owned a medical shop but with modest earnings. Income was Rs 10,000. She was 33 years old and married when she was 25. She began by saying that she had two abortions apart from her daughter. But she immediately clarified that it was because of the health of the fetus, and had nothing to do with sons. Sonography was no longer being used for sex determination, only for the health of the baby, she asserted. Finding out the sex of the baby in order to abort her was like murder. She believed that mindsets about son preference and unwanted daughters were changing. Nor did she want to burden her daughter, still very young, with expectations and was planning to send her to Marathi medium school.

The next respondent was a Kumbhar (OBC) and had one daughter. She grew up in a very restricted environment and could not go to college, but studied from home, married when she was in a second year BA to a doctor, a district level health officer, who was trying for the UPSC. Income was one lakh. Though she came from a large family (two brothers and four sisters) nowadays just one or two children was enough. Everyone among her in-laws wanted her to “take another chance”. But there was no talk about having a son, or going in for sex selection. In fact, her husband took the lead in closing down the sonography centres where sex determination was taking place. It was elders who believed that a son was needed to continue the family name, but this was no longer the thinking. Girls needed to be saved, they had every right to life and could look after parents in their old age. “Girls are more responsible... Even after marriage, a girl looks after two houses.”

The next respondent, a Maratha teacher, had three daughters, 30 years old. She herself was an only child, and had a love marriage with a student during her ITI days when she was 18. His family was Punjabi but hailing from Madhya Pradesh, with the father coming to Beed for work. Income was one lakh. The eldest daughter was in Class 8 and the youngest just 5 months old. Yes, there had been pressure to have a son, “this is a patriarchal society where sons are necessary”, which is why they had tried after quite an age gap. She felt this was her own thought process. But the whole family was so upset, that there had been no naming ceremony and were planning to drop the hair shaving ceremony. The husband was very bent on a son – his cousin brothers had supported him in everything, but he had no faith that their children would be such support to his daughters. She was 100 per cent sure that the pressure would continue but she wanted to stop now. Yes there was pressure to get the sex of the third pregnancy checked but she refused. As she put it, the entire process would cost Rs 60,000 so wouldn't it be better to put this money in a fixed deposit for the daughter's future? So he did not bring it up again. Yes there was sex selection around her, both among relatives and her madam in school had got it done. Because she was an only child her mother lived with them now. She said she was proud of her husband, who was ready to be a son-in-law and looked after her mother as though he were a son. So she was not sad that she did not have a son.

The next respondent, a Mahar, has two daughters. She was 30 years and 20 at the time of her marriage to an advocate. Her daughters were still young, and it was up to them what they wished to study later,

but left to herself she would want one to become a doctor and the other an engineer. She did wish for a son, but hadn't thought about it too much – once daughters were married they got busy with their own lives so a son would be good. She was very reticent and did not wish to say very much – yes she wanted a son, everyone wanted one. But it was not right to kill a foetus because it is a girl. She repeated that as a housewife she was not well informed on matters (she did not know her husband's income) but wanted a simple Buddhist wedding for her children when the time came.

The next respondent, a Mahar, also had two daughters. Now 40 years old, married when she was just 12, she was a domestic worker who had been living with her mother in the slum section of this Ward since her husband left her when she was pregnant for a second time. (Her story has come up earlier in this report. He remarried and the second wife had a son and a daughter.) Family income was Rs. 3,000. Her eldest daughter was married to her brother's son when barely 17 because she felt under too much pressure, but the younger one had completed nursing, through paying one lakh by way of fees. She had never even thought of sonography, others did it secretly by going outside Beed and not letting on. But for her there was no difference between a son or daughter. "People want sons to perform last rites. To verbally abuse people, to physically attack daughters-in-law people want sons. People cry because they don't have a son. I used to think the same way when my elder daughter was married. I was afraid of the loneliness that I would eventually face when both my daughters go away." Her own daughter had a son and daughter and would now get herself sterilised. But she never thought of her daughters as a burden, after a lifetime of labour and cleaning other people's floors and dishes.

The next respondent, a Mahar, had two daughters. She was 28 and 20 when married into a joint family, her husband had a job in the district health department. Income was Rs. 35,000. The husband said that sex selection was going on in areas around Beed, but now it had stopped entirely due to strict implementation of the law. His wife said she didn't know much about it. The government needed to provide more protection so that parents were not skeptical about having daughters. They believed girls should be given complete freedom for selecting their own partners and inter-caste marriage were even better.

The next respondent, a Maratha, was now 27 years old and 22 when married and her husband worked in an agricultural agency. It was his second marriage. Family income was Rs. 13,000. They had two daughters, and both of them were happy. The in-laws were interfering, wanting them to have a son, ideally a son and daughter would have been good, but she considered both equal. They were very keen to do the best for their daughters' education, and send them later to Pune, Aurangabad or Mumbai. In any case they had taken out insurance policies since there was no guarantee that children would look after them.

The next respondent, a Mahar, had two daughters. She was a school teacher and her husband a college lecturer. Family income was Rs. 1,10,000. Now 35 years old she was married at 20. She witnessed caste discrimination towards another poor Dalit child when she was young which left a strong impression on her. She believed that there should be two children, irrespective of their sex together with parents – that was an ideal family. But she had to deal with considerable pressure from sisters-in-law who kept insisting that she try for a son. But if she had a third pregnancy that would mean having an abortion if it were a girl, and she was strongly against sex selection. "I don't agree that sons keep the family flame alive. I am very aware of what kinds of flames boys ignite these days", she said laughing. She was not even sure if government policies like scholarships for girls, or cash schemes for daughters was the right path as it could make people want girls out of greed for money, instead of the rights of survival for girls.

The last example from this ward, from the Khetri caste (OBC) had three daughters. She was 49 years old and married at 22 to a bank peon, who was 12 years older. Family income was Rs. 20,000. She

had been born in Andhra Pradesh, into a poor family, and managed her marriage with a lot of family support. The eldest daughter was adopted by her husband's elder brother (she had done a BE degree) so she considered that she now effectively had two daughters. The elder daughter was doing her third year B.Sc. because she could not make it to engineering and the younger had made it to medical college. In the course of the interview it emerged that the respondent was the second wife, the first wife (with two sons) had gone back to her natal family. As for sex selection, she said that Beed had been leading in the number of sex selective abortions but it had gone down. No one in her family had done it, but she knew of neighbours who had. She believed that Narendra Modi's Beti Bachao Andolan would make things change.

By way of summing up, it is clear that being a daughter only family is not a happy situation across all the sites. Respondents find themselves either resigned to the fate that god has dealt to them or they provide various justifications for accepting their lot, including negative statements about sons who cannot be relied upon. On the one hand, families with just one or two daughters are still hoping for a son. In the case of larger families, especially in poorer Wards, it is evident that more daughters have been born than are wanted, who will suffer neglect and be married off early.

At the same time, there is also a sense that this may be a somewhat transitional situation as the presence of daughter only families achieves more recognition among people. This can be gleaned to a greater extent in Maharashtra than Haryana, where a larger number of girl only families agreed to be interviewed and were also more forthright about their views.

3.10 • **SEX SELECTION: VIEWS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**

It is only in the interviews that some further understanding of the place of sex selection in women's lives could be gleaned. Some issues relating to sex selection have already emerged in the previous sections. This section examines experiences and views around sex selection in greater detail. First and foremost, it is clear that sex selection is closely intertwined with the desire for the right kind of small family with one boy and one girl, or two sons (though mothers with only sons made quite a noise about having wanted a girl). Many interviewees spoke of having been spared "by god's grace" of having to get their pregnancy checked when a son was born, especially when the first born was a son. Moreover, it must be recognised that there was no evidence of the small family being enforced as an external imposition via the government policy of a two child norm. Mothers themselves said over and over again that the cost of living and the present times demanded a small family. One might perhaps say that the two child norm has been fully internalised under current economic conditions.

At the same time, what emerged without any doubt is that there is now a public discourse that largely believes that sex selection has stopped, and secondly that it ought to be stopped. This stands in marked contrast to the situation about a decade ago, when the practice was openly referred to by respondents in the study of John et al. (2008) and, moreover, where it was often viewed as "alright" or at least as relatively uncontroversial, since it was being provided by medical practitioners through their clinics and via new technologies. Not too many among those interviewed in the present study talked about traditional medicines, potions or fasts to beget a son – occasionally they mentioned that some kind of medicine had been given to them by a family member or neighbour. But this method did not seem to hold any deep significance in our sites with some women even scoffing at the belief that such medicines could have any effect on a pregnancy.

What is particularly noteworthy is that an overwhelming number of those interviewed were not at all aware that sex determination testing of the foetus had been banned by law as far back as 1986 in Maharashtra and 1994 nationally. Most of them said that it had been banned “a few years ago” and some actually suggested that it ought to be banned, and so revealed a fundamental ignorance of the state of the law. Perhaps then, a more fruitful interpretation of such a situation both ten years ago and today would be to say that one has to think of the law differently: A law like the PC-PNDT Act is as good as its actual implementation. In other words, one might say that a decade ago when respondents were willing to discuss the matter openly (often informing investigators as to which clinics offered the service, and without any qualms) the absence of any effective implementation of the Act by agencies of the state made the law to all intents and purposes invisible to the point of being nonexistent. The current publicity in the media (many respondents said they had heard about sex selection and people being caught under the law on TV), with talk about low child sex ratios and sex selective abortions, the closing of some clinics and a few spectacular cases against doctors that became front page news (especially in Beed), the campaign slogan *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* (from 2015), and possibly the activism of several organisations and NGOs, has at least had this effect: The urban public in cities like Rohtak, Jhajjar, Beed and Shirur mostly believe that sex determination happened till quite recently in the past, but is no longer being practiced, at least not openly.

The vast majority of those interviewed were in complete denial about sex selection. They had never practiced it, nor had anyone in their own family or neighbourhood done so. Some of these outright denials appeared closer to disavowals, given that the matter was now clearly viewed as problematic, as an act carrying criminal consequences. Several did not want to talk about it. Many had rather pat answers as to why this was a problem: How could the world survive without women? Where would men find wives? Some, on the other hand, distinguished between the need for ultra sound to check the health of the foetus and getting to know the sex of one’s baby. In a few cases, as will be seen shortly, women shared their experience of undergoing an ultrasound for the first time in their lives to discover that the foetus was abnormal or unviable. On the one hand, there were those who were poor and working class who said that it was the rich who indulged in such practices, while, on the other hand, there were the educated middle classes and professionals who believed that it was only among the less educated in the slums and villages that sex selection was still happening. There was also a tendency among some to view abortion as such as a problem – it appeared that any kind of termination of pregnancy within the womb was a wrong doing, not just that of an unwanted daughter. Only a tiny number offered some kind of justification of the practice – whether in terms of son preference, or the problem of having too many daughters. On the whole, respondents were more willing to discuss sex selection in Maharashtra compared to Haryana.

However, there is no getting away from the small number in both Haryana and Maharashtra who were honest enough to share their own experiences of going in for sex determination testing, which in some cases did not result in the decision to abort. There is even one case who said that she had aborted the very first pregnancy when it was discovered that it was a girl, and that too when it was very late in her pregnancy. Even more telling is that the costs of getting oneself “checked” have shot up from earlier reports and are now in the region of Rs. 15,000 – 30,000, depending on where it is being done. Clearly, in the face of all the publicity around the practice, charges have risen correspondingly.

Who decides to go in for sex selection? This question was raised in the earlier study (John 2008 et al) as well, where it was pointed out that agency and decision making in getting to know the sex of one’s child with the intention of eliminating a female foetus is diffuse and multiple. It involves various members among the in-laws and at times even the natal family as well. In this study too,

the accounts given below demonstrate complex processes involved which cannot be pinned down, say, to the “mother-in-law” alone, though this figure does make its presence felt when it comes to son preference. There were cases where husbands figured both as those who expressed their desire for a son, or who, on the other hand, stoutly refused. Then there were those respondents who said, “it is my decision and mine alone”. Some respondents said that if it cost as much as Rs. 30,000 to do the test and the abortion, then why not instead put this into a fixed deposit for the daughter’s future? Several more were ready to talk about others in their world – a sister, aunt, neighbour, school principal – but not themselves. Among poorer and working class families two kinds of patterns are discernible – there are those who are prepared to have larger families with many daughters in search of a son. But there is also clear evidence that here too families are aware of sex selection and are on occasion availing of it, even when costs and risks have gone up, including being prepared to have a late abortion.

Haryana

ROHTAK, WARD 6

An upper middle class Jat respondent said that she heard much more about sex selection when she was younger. “I would get to hear that this aunt of ours had got a check up done after having two daughters. I would see so many sons after a daughter, but god doesn’t give this order of children. But now when I look around I see a lot of people having a daughter or two daughters, so I guess they are not succumbing to the urge of having a boy”. (Jat housewife, income Rs. 2 lakhs, one daughter)

“Female foeticide shouldn’t happen. One should accept whatever god gives them. At least two children should happen whether a son or a daughter. What shouldn’t happen is that if one had a son, then they pack up their shop. At least two children should be given birth to. Only the law can’t address this. One has to change one’s thinking”. (Jat dairy, income Rs. 27,000, one daughter, one son)

“So many raids happen all the time. People need to be fine with two children, whether they have two daughters. Our children are already grown up. But I think the new thinking will have an impact on the new generation. Like my older daughter has had a girl and her inlaws are very happy about it.” (Jat dairy, income Rs. 41,000, three daughters, one son)

“My colleague at school had it done. She had two daughters and tried for a third child and got an abortion because it was a girl. Mostly it is done by class four employees but now upper class people are doing it too.” (Bania housewife, income Rs. 80,000, one daughter)

“In my natal family by god’s grace everyone got one boy and one girl so they did not need to get it done. And in my in-law’ family they would have many children, so they didn’t need to either. But I have seen so many families where there are only sons. So they have found some way to be like this.” (Jat housewife, income Rs. 57,000, boy, girl)

“My husband’s younger sister had a daughter and they put pressure on her to get an ultrasound done. She refused on her next pregnancy and had a daughter. With the next two pregnancies she was tested, they were girls and they were aborted. Next time she got a son. She herself accepted that it was wrong but what could she do.” (Jat housewife, income Rs. 57,000, son, daughter)

ROHTAK, WARD 12

A Balmiki respondent (aged 26 years, income Rs. 38,000) with two daughters said that she and her husband had tried to get her pregnancy checked – in Sirsa, Rohtak and Sonapat. “We were being charged Rs. 30,000 in Sirsa and so said no. In Sonapat it cost just Rs. 10,000. We saved the money but then my husband stopped me because some people had got caught in trying to get sex selection done. In Rohtak we can get it done because my father-in-law has connections in the medical field – so I may still try. Sometimes my husband can be slightly off when in conversation with me and I think it is because there is no son yet.”

“I have three granddaughters and I have never asked them to get sex selection done. But there is one more thing – those who don’t have a brother find it very difficult to get married. People don’t like sisters who don’t have a brother.” (Balmiki housewife, income Rs. 48,000, with four sons and a daughter)

“I almost agreed to get a check-up done. I have too many daughters and even the anganwadi does not accept them. This was five years back for my youngest daughter. In

Jhajjar it cost Rs. 14000. It was discussed in my natal family, husband did not pressurize so much but my mother-in-law wanted it. She died just before my son was born (laughs).” (Prajapat (OBC), income unknown, five daughters, one son).

“People secretly get ultrasounds done and then abortions. People say it to me, well I listen to everyone and then decide what I want. Neighbours who come and sit for a chat, especially the elderly ones. But not my family. Yes there is pressure for a son but not to get a check up done. We saw about it on TV and now we don’t even have a TV.” (Kumbhar housewife, income Rs. 9000, with two daughters)

“We have gone on protests from our college in Panipat with teachers and the principal and shouted slogans about female foeticide. But yes, since you ask, I know of a family in my neighbourhood who are doing well, both have jobs and they had three girls. So they went and got it done somehow. Big people do this, not the small ones. My husband never even said that we should have a son.” (Brahmin housewife, income Rs. 14,000, one daughter one son)

“When I had my second son, after two children, then I didn’t tell my mother-in-law. I told my husband in the 5th month. To tell the truth, he was saying, get an abortion. The doctors said that you have two, one more is fine. Whichever way it is a gift of god. I didn’t want an abortion. Now people are having daughters more. My sister-in-law has had a daughter. They have had all the rituals that are done for a boy. This is because they didn’t have a child and were very happy to have one. They didn’t find out the sex beforehand either.” (Chamar runs a small beauty parlour out of her home, income Rs. 14,000, son, daughter, son)

JHAJJAR, WARD 1

Most of those interviewed in this Ward completely denied either knowledge of sex selection or that it happened in their neighbourhood. The voices below acknowledge that at least some sex selection continues.

“Yes we have knowledge of sex determination but have not got it done in our family. It is still going on in private clinics. (Khaati, income Rs. 30,000, two sons)

“I had heard that they say ‘it’s a boy’ but it is still a girl. These are all lies, machines don’t do anything. Whatever has to happen will happen.” (Jat married to Punjabi, income Rs. 36,000, 2 daughters)

“We know our own neighbour has got abortions done. She was herself a lecturer and got it done many times. Everyone knew. But I have always been a social person. Even when my third daughter was born I distributed sweets at school and to my neighbour as well.” (Jat housewife, income Rs. 32,000, three daughters, one son)

JHAJJAR, WARD 12J

Here too, the overwhelming response was denial. It was prevalent before, but no longer, said most of the interviewees. But here again some accounts would indicate that sex selection has taken a more clandestine form, where it is not uncommon to find out the sex of a foetus, especially after having daughters.

“One used to hear much more about sex selection earlier. The reason is that you already have a daughter. No one gets themselves checked at the first pregnancy. Before people had large families but with rising costs these days it is not possible to bring up even 3 children.” (Chamar, income Rs. 60,000, 1 son, 1 daughter)

“There were some doctors who would get ultrasound done but they got caught. There was this woman doctor who charged Rs. 15,000 for the ultrasound and told the parents that they were going to have a boy. However, they ended up having a girl. So they decided to go to the police. These parents ended up having four doctors. It was god’s wish that this girl was going to come into this world.” (Balmiki anganwadi worker, income Rs. 25,000, 1 daughter, 1 son)

“Yes I know that Jhajjar is the worst in Haryana. People want to have sons. They get ultrasound done and get it cleaned up if it is a girl. There are not many people who want to have a girl.” (Khaati housewife, income Rs. 12,000, two daughters, one son)

“A lot of people get it done, especially if they have two daughters. Ultrasound used to be out in the open earlier. Now it has changed and is being done quietly and still raids are happening.” (Chamar housewife, income Rs. 11,000, two sons, two daughters)

“When I kept having daughters I got myself checked. My husband told me to and I got it done, even though it was banned. It only cost Rs. 5000. In the end I didn’t do anything, since it was a son. My own sister-in-law had two daughters and then got four abortions before having two sons. This was 15 years ago in UP.” (Gujjar housewife, income Rs. 8000, four daughters, one son, one daughter).

“Yes we have heard about it. It shouldn’t be done. Our guruji is against it, he made us take an oath not to do it. Modi started his Beti bachao campaign, but our Guruji started this many years ago. This has been implemented in the Dera Sacha Sauda for a while.” (Khatri tailor, income Rs. 5000, 1 daughter, two sons)

“There is no morality in Jhajjar, Rohtak, Sonapat, the whole Jat region. Foeticide, cheating, corruption, crime, all this is happening here. If you remember the testimony of the State Home Minister that people of North India enjoy breaking the rules, and this is the main community at the top.” (Khaati married to engineer, income Rs. 5 lakh, 1 son)

Maharashtra

SHIRUR WARD NO. 2

“My sister who works for a hospital in a village told me about how people can use ultrasound to check whether it’s a boy or a girl. This was after I had my second girl. There were patients who would come and talk about this. But I never thought like this. I did not want to check because I wanted the child.” (Pardesi, income Rs. 3000, with two daughters)

“I think sex selection is still going on secretly and the law is banned only on paper. I get this information from my social life and my shop. Even some Jain families are doing this. There are 5 or 6 doctors in Shirur who provide the service for huge amounts of money. I even know of a case where a woman had a sex selective abortion against her will, she was given an injection and put to sleep, and the abortion was done to her great distress.” (Marwadi, runs a shop, income Rs. 1,50,000, one daughter)

“I believe that depending on one’s financial situation, we should have the right to check the sex of our unborn child. In this we have become modern in our thinking. I checked for the third and fourth delivery. Fourth delivery I was prepared but luckily it was a boy. This is my thinking and not something forced on me by my husband.” (Maratha tailor, income Rs. 20,000, three daughters, one son)

“I had no idea about using sonography to check the sex of a child. When I had my second pregnancy immediately after the first one I wanted to abort the child because it would have created complications. It turned out that this child was a girl. But no one pressurized me in either of my families and I have never heard of sex selection being done.” (Dhore housewife married to brick kiln owner, income Rs. 30,000, one daughter, one son)

“I was just 17 when I had my first child (20 years ago). I was curious and wanted to know the sex but my husband was strong and refused. We decided to go for a second child and then for the operation [i.e. sterilisation]. We were not looking for a boy or anything and no one put pressure.” (Vadari housewife, income Rs. 10,000, one daughter, one son)

“I heard everywhere about sex determination (using the English word). I was also pressurized, but my husband was strong so I never felt worried. People around me either had sons or when daughters were there they kept aborting. They told me about doctors and said, ‘let’s go’. My own neighbour she aborted a seven month old foetus and the next child was a son. Being a girl killing another girl is a big sin. Earlier girls’ parents had to go look for the boy’s family. Now the boy has to look for girls.” (Kumbhar housewife (age 22), income Rs. 25,000, two daughters)

“My husband asked me to get to know the sex of my unborn child but I refused. It did not matter to me whether it was a girl or a boy. People need to realise that there will be utter chaos without girls and other women must see that they themselves were girl children once so they demand less for a boy.” (Mahar domestic worker, Rs. 6000, two daughters)

“Other family members should not be involved, only husband and wife should decide about their children. After the first daughter I wanted to get sterilised or else I wanted to be able to abort if necessary, but they would not let me. So I had a second girl and after waiting for 7 years, my son was born.” (Ramoshi tailor, income Rs. 25,000, two daughters, one son)

SHIRUR WARD NO 14

“I never took a chance with sex selection. It is true that after our first daughter was born I wanted the second to be a son. I cried when the second girl came but my husband took her in his arms and said it’s fine if we have a girl again – she is just like her father! So I became relaxed and happy. Everyone knows that my husband is stubborn. But when I had my first pregnancy my mother (who is a nurse) thought this may not be a good time to have a child as he was jobless. So she took me to a gynaecologist who said it is not good to abort the first pregnancy it might create problems later on. But my mother never discussed female foeticide with me ever.” (Maratha runs company, income Rs. 20,000, two daughters, one son)

“I wanted only two children. The first child died, then I had a girl, then we took another chance and it was also a girl. There were illegal sonography centres for sex determination. So we checked for the third child and it was a girl. But I then decided not to kill this child. My father-in-law also supported me. When she was two years old my periods stopped so I never realised till late that I have a fourth child in my womb! Then we went for sex determination as I had decided that I could not manage any more. I tried to abort naturally by lifting heavy things and even hit on my stomach. We had no money for an abortion. Then I gave birth to a boy and everyone was happy and I got myself sterilised.” (Teli from UP, tailor, income Rs. 17,000, three daughters one son).

“I had my fourth pregnancy aborted since it was again a girl. No one pressurised me, it was completely my thought and decision.” (Buddhist, 38 years old, income Rs. 18,000, three daughters)

“Yes my husband forced me to check the fourth time and without checking I aborted the baby. They were ready to spend Rs. 20,000 on the test and I said, give me that money and I will save it. Even my own parents were involved in that process, and from that day my own parents do not speak to me. This is happening a lot among relatives. What can women do? I know a case where all three daughter-in-laws have been asked to check the sex of their baby and have spent Rs. 20–30,000 to do this and then abort if it is a girl.” (Maratha, aged 23 years married at 14, income Rs. 11,000, three daughters)

BEED

In Beed the overall responses were clearly shaped by all the recent publicity surrounding the exposure of several doctors undertaking sex selection as well as the huge decline in its CSR in 2011. Most of the respondents denied knowing anything about sex selection, especially when it came to themselves and their families, or else insisted that it was a thing of the past. But a few voices did provide glimpses of an ongoing practice and the kinds of pressures at work.

WARD 13

“3–4 years ago sonography was very prevalent. But now it has stopped. The rules have become very strict and they cancel the license of the sonography centre if anything is found. Nowadays it is only used to check for the health of the foetus not the sex.” (Mahar school clerk, income Rs. 26,000, 3 daughters)

“Yes I myself got tested. After my first daughter (now ten years old) I took another chance. But the next was a girl so I got an abortion done. It was five years after the first one. Then

everyone said no, don't try again, why do we need more." (Brahmin primary school teacher, income Rs. 25,000, one daughter)

"People are still getting it done. Her brother got it done just two years ago." (Mother-in-law of Vanzari housewife, income Rs. 30,000, one daughter, one son)

"Two-three friends have gone in for sex determination. There was no pressure from in laws. They wanted a son." (Brahmin anganwadi assistant, income Rs. 11,000, one daughter, one son)

"I have got sonography done. It is needed to see about the health of the baby. Whether there is enough water in the womb. When I was pregnant with my daughter, I got it done three times in one day to make sure baby was fine. But never for sex determination." (Vanzari housewife, income Rs. 43,000, one daughter, one son)

BEED, WARD NO 11

"I have never done it, but yes sex selection is common. There are many cases among my relatives and even my madam at school. If they don't do it here in Beed they go outside and get it checked elsewhere." (Maratha school teacher, income Rs. 95,000, 3 daughters)

"My sister had two daughters and was pregnant again in 2008. Her in-laws had forced her to try once more. She got herself checked and knew she was having another daughter, but an abortion would have had a bad impact on her health so the pregnancy was continued. She got herself sterilised after the third child. She is extremely god fearing, never eats non vegetarian food. Special offerings were given to Renuka Devi in Deogaon. She observed fasts and everything. What difference did it make? She has nice daughters. I work in a civic hospital, where such cases do not happen. But in private clinics there would be almost 20–25 cases per day. Now nobody has the daring, not since 2013. These days everyone avoids the topic." (Vanzari nurse, income Rs. 40,000, one daughter, one son)

"No one in our family has gone in for checking their baby. You will see we have very few sons. Nowadays ultrasound is done 3–4 times in a pregnancy – second month, fourth month, seventh month and ninth month at least once." (Mahar housewife, income Rs. 60,000, one daughter)

"I got my daughter married to my brother's son. In our daughter's case, she had a son first. I was very happy. Then she had a daughter. Then she didn't take another chance and got sterilisation done. We did not need to go in for any checking because she had both a son and a daughter." (Mahar domestic worker, income Rs. 3000, two daughters)

"For a person who is hell bent on having a son, sex selection is an issue. But for me ultrasound is a test to determine the health of the baby. Using the test to know if it is a girl and aborting it is close to committing a murder." (Mali house wife husband medical shop owner, income Rs. 20,000, 1 daughter)

"I work in the health department. It used to happen before but has stopped for the past 6–7 years. Most cases were taking place in Parali. Before people were doing it on the sly, but now the government is being strict about the law." (Maratha husband, wife teacher, income Rs. 95,000, two daughters)

“My natal family is Marwari and they follow the rules of non-violence and are therefore against abortion. But in my conjugal family (Marathas) there has been a lot of sex selection. I consulted a Lahane doctor in the first pregnancy itself. My mother-in-law made me abort the fetus when I was seven months pregnant. They induced pains and made me deliver the fetus and then killed it. She was of the opinion that both I and my husband were jobless at the time and had no secure future. This happened 15 years ago. But even today daughters are not so easily accepted in the family. Our neighbour’s daughter-in-law who is pregnant after giving birth to a daughter is under tremendous pressure to have a son. Now I do not know what they will do. I feel now that the government has become too strict, with a lot of unnecessary rules”. (Teacher, incomes Rs. 55,000, one daughter, one son)

This chapter has shown that issues of fertility decline and the small family constitute the context within which families wish to exert some control over both the number and sex composition of their children. The egalitarian sounding claim of one boy and one girl conceals the complexity of current forms of son preference and daughter aversion, which is taking the form of avoiding being a girl only family. This avoidance cannot succeed without resort to gender biased sex selection, a practice that has now become clandestine in the sites under study. It remains to be seen whether the clandestine nature as well as the relatively high costs associated with availing of sex selective technologies from willing medical practitioners will have a sufficient impact on curtailing the practice. As of the time of this study, there is no evidence that this is the case.

CHAPTER 4

PLANNING CHILDREN'S FUTURES

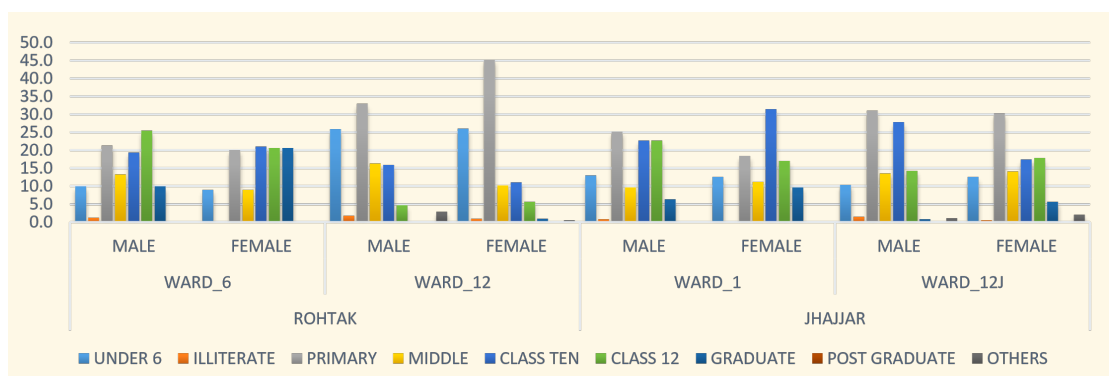
Having discussed family composition, child sex ratios, sex selection and the girl only family at some length, Chapter 4 will now probe further into how parents plan for their children. It is the contention of the present study that much more exploration into “family planning” is required than simply recording fertility patterns and sex composition. What more do they aspire for and to what extent in concrete form? This chapter looks at the three themes introduced already in Chapter 2 in relation to the respondents’ own lives, namely education, work and marriage for daughters in particular. This study asked the female respondent further questions about her children – their educational levels so far, and what levels of education she hopes they will attain. Questions were also asked about what kinds of jobs were desired. How much were families willing to pay for educational expenses, for jobs and for marriage? Obviously such questions address somewhat speculative preferences and desires, including highly variable degrees to which women were prepared to answer these kinds of questions. As has been the methodological mode of presentation in the previous chapters, these issues are first presented through the survey questionnaire. They are then fleshed out through the interviews with the smaller number of respondents. As will become evident, in spite of constraints and limitations, certain important patterns did emerge which will be presented here.

4.1 • EDUCATION

To begin with education, Graphs 4.1 and 4.2 provide information about the current educational attainments of all the children of the respondents. (These are therefore not just the children currently residing in the household but of all children based on fertility data, including those who have left home to study, work or marry elsewhere.) It should be recalled that this data set consists of children up to the age of 30 years, as per the design of this study, and roughly 2000 children per state sample. In the further analysis this sample will be divided into two cohorts, as already discussed in Chapter 3 – those families where the eldest child is born before 2000 and those born on or after. Broadly speaking this yields two sets of families in terms of sex selection, that is, those where at the time of the birth of the eldest child sex selection had not reached the status of a major public discourse with correspondingly active monitoring agencies and those where this is more closely the case.

TABLE 4.1. HARYANA: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENTS OF ALL CHILDREN

ROHTAK			JHAJJAR						TOTAL
Education	WARD_6		WARD_12		WARD_1		WARD_12J		
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	
UNDER 6	9.8	8.9	25.8	26.0	13.0	12.6	10.3	12.5	15.1
ILLITERATE	1.1	0.0	1.8	0.9	0.7	0.0	1.4	0.4	0.9
PRIMARY	21.2	20.0	32.9	45.1	25.2	18.4	31.0	30.2	28.4
MIDDLE	13.3	8.9	16.3	10.2	9.6	11.1	13.5	14.1	12.3
CLASS 10	19.3	21.1	15.9	11.1	22.6	31.4	27.8	17.3	20.7
CLASS 12	25.4	20.5	4.6	5.5	22.6	16.9	14.2	17.7	15.8
GRADUATE	9.8	20.5	0.0	0.9	6.3	9.7	0.7	5.6	6.1
POST GRADUATE	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
OTHERS	0.0	0.0	2.8	0.4	0.0	0.0	1.1	2.0	0.9
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

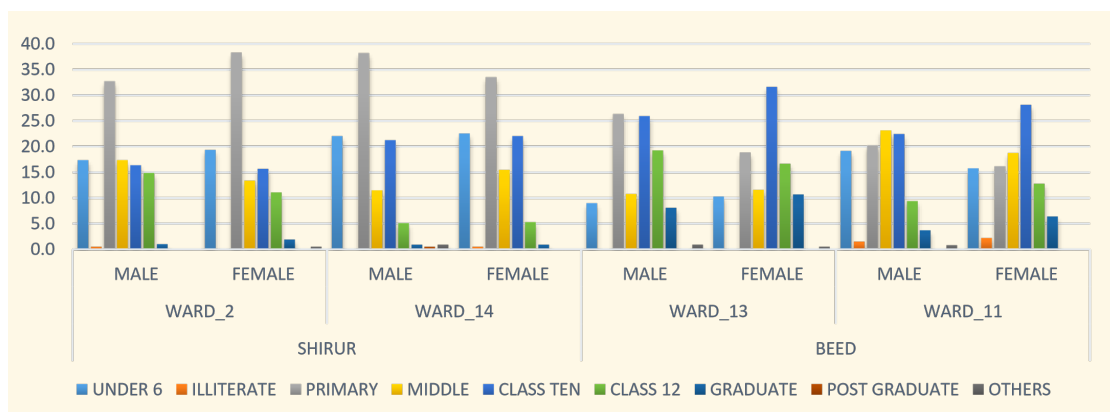
GRAPH 4.1 CHILDREN'S EDUCATION, HARYANA

MAHARASHTRA

TABLE 4.2. MAHARASHTRA, EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENTS OF ALL CHILDREN

SHIRUR					BEED				TOTAL
Education	WARD_2		WARD_14		WARD_13		WARD_11		
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	
UNDER 6	17.3	19.4	22.0	22.5	8.9	10.3	19.1	15.7	17.0
ILLITERATE	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	1.4	2.1	0.6
PRIMARY	32.7	38.2	38.1	33.5	26.3	18.8	20.2	16.2	27.6
MIDDLE	17.3	13.4	11.4	15.4	10.7	11.5	23.1	18.7	15.4
CLASS 10	16.3	15.7	21.2	22.0	25.9	31.6	22.4	28.1	23.1
CLASS 12	14.9	11.1	5.1	5.3	19.2	16.7	9.4	12.8	11.7
GRADUATE	1.0	1.8	0.8	0.9	8.0	10.7	3.6	6.4	4.2
POST GRADUATE	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
OTHERS	0.0	0.5	0.8	0.0	0.9	0.4	0.7	0.0	0.4

GRAPH 4.1 CHILDREN'S EDUCATION, MAHARASHTRA



The information on educational attainments of all children taken together is quite interesting, especially from a gender dimension. Beginning with Haryana, what is noticeable first of all from among the very small proportion of illiterate children (that is, children above the age of 6 who have never been to school) is that there are only boys, in all the wards, and no girls in this category. (These number 17 in the entire sample of 1978 children).

It is clear that education – at least school education – has become normative if not compulsory for this cohort of children (aged 30 or less), in comparison to their mothers where there were significant level of illiteracy as discussed in Chapter two.

Secondly, what is particularly prominent are the differences between the Wards in terms of the proportional levels of educational attainments among the children. The relative levels of advancement and deprivation of these wards is visible in that proportionally more children are reaching high school or going into some kind of higher education in the better off wards, with the very poor Ward 12 in Rohtak having the lowest levels of education among children. This is only to be expected.

The gender differentials across educational levels are particularly striking, since they show overall higher levels of educational attainments among girls than boys. This is particularly noticeable beyond high school, in all the wards.

In Ward 6 in Rohtak (the most middle class ward in the Haryana sample, dominated by Jat families) only 9.8 per cent boys have gone beyond high school, while this is true for 20.5 per cent of the girls. Even the poorest Ward 12 in Rohtak has a small number of girls going for further education while no boys are doing so. (This unusual pattern was noticed in the earlier study by John et al. 2008 as well).

In Maharashtra, the number of children who have never been to school is equally negligible, and here includes both small numbers of boys and girls in different wards as can be seen from Table 4.2. In the Shirur wards children have hardly gone beyond high school, while some are doing so in Beed. Here, too, the gender skew is working in favour of girls, with greater proportions of daughters attending higher education compared to boys, though the differences are not as sharp as in Haryana. Thus in Ward 13 in Beed, 10.7 per cent of daughters have attended or are attending college compared to 8 per cent of boys.

4.1.1 • HOW MUCH EDUCATION?

The next question posed to the respondents for analysis was as follows: How much education did they envisage for their children? Respondents answered this question in various ways, some with greater

assurance and others less so. Much depended also on the age of their children. As one might expect, the younger the child the more vague was their answer (e.g., some college education), while with older children respondents gave much more specific answers (including type of degree, what kind of professional institution they hoped their child would manage to get a seat in and so on). As has been done in the previous chapters with some of the questions, the families were grouped according to those where the eldest child was born before 2000 and those born between 2000 and 2016. With the former, there would be a larger proportion of adult children while in the case of the latter most of them would still be school going if not younger.

PATTERN FOR HARYANA

A distinct aspect in the Haryana data is that, compared to Maharashtra, a higher proportion of female respondents, especially from the poorer Wards, did not know how much education their children (both sons and daughters) would require. Also, among the older cohorts there were those who believed that the education already received by their children was sufficient and hence no further investment was needed.

RESPONSES FROM OLDER COHORTS

- ▶ Among older cohorts where sons are concerned, 26 per cent had no answer and 22 per cent said that no more education was needed.
- ▶ Interestingly enough, however, among those who did want more education for their children, smaller proportions were satisfied with high school, compared to Maharashtra. Just 6 per cent (mainly again from the poorer wards in Rohtak and Jhajjar) did not plan an education beyond high school. 16 per cent wanted a graduate degree (out of which 9 per cent were satisfied with a basic college degree, and small numbers for a professional degree in engineering, law or medicine), and 28 per cent a post-graduate degree, again predominantly MA/MCom/MSc.
- ▶ It is noteworthy that when it comes to daughters, the proportions of those who say they do not know how much education would be needed (24 per cent) and that no more education is required (19 per cent) are slightly less than in the case of sons. Even more remarkable is that just 4 per cent think high school will do (and this is coming entirely from Ward 12 in Rohtak), 15 per cent want her to graduate and as much as 34 per cent want a postgraduate degree. However, only very small numbers among these are imagining a professional degree for their daughters (with BA/BCom/BSc and a Masters degree being the overwhelming choice).
- ▶ A greater educational investment for daughters is already palpable in the older cohorts, but it is of a general nature.
- ▶ There is a gender difference in aspirations where a straightforward university degree (with teaching as a possible job opportunity) predominates for daughters against professional aspirations for sons.

RESPONSES FROM YOUNGER COHORTS

Among younger cohorts the picture is rather different again.

- ▶ When it comes to sons there are still those who say they do not know (10 per cent) and would leave it to them (14 per cent), especially from the poorer Wards.
- ▶ But the proportions of those who say that high school is enough has risen to 21 per cent, once again coming overwhelmingly from the poorer Wards in Rohtak and Jhajjar. 25 per cent want their sons to have a graduate degree and 27 per cent a post-graduate one. But now there are more who are looking for professional degrees – 14.5 per cent are satisfied with a basic college course

while 11 per cent want a professional degree at the graduate level, and at the post-graduate level the figures are 20 per cent and 5 per cent respectively.

- ▶ When it comes to daughters only 10 per cent say that they would leave it to them and 9 per cent that they do not know.
- ▶ 30 per cent say that Class 12 is enough, and once again it is female respondents from the poor Ward 12 in Rohtak and Ward 12J in Jhajjar who dominate this category. 20 per cent want her to have a graduate degree and this is reflected across all the Wards (11 per cent a college degree and 9 per cent a professional degree), while 31 per cent want a post-graduate one (22 per cent any Masters degree and 9 per cent a professional degree), and this category is dominated by the well to do wards, especially Ward 1 in Jhajjar.

Taken together we see here a sharp reflection of class and caste difference in the Haryana sample. The Jat middle classes who predominate in Wards 6 and Ward 1 aspire for postgraduate degrees for their daughters while the poor Scheduled Caste and OBC families in the other wards cannot imagine anything beyond high school.

The Haryana sample reflects a complex situation. Overall there is a muted display of gender discrimination in educational aspirations. At the same time this is deeply intersectional and there is considerable disparity by class and caste, against the backdrop of a longer history of persisting low child sex ratios that has penetrated to all groups.

Poorer Haryana families aspire for high school for their daughters, better off ones look for a college degree and if possible a postgraduate one. These degrees should be seen in relationship with girl's futures – planning for their marriages, primarily, and are only vaguely related to possibilities of employment, as only a small percentage are looking for professional degrees. Gender disparity takes the form of a somewhat greater investment in professional degrees for sons compared to daughters.

Maharashtra

OLDER COHORTS

- ▶ In the Maharashtra sample, among the older cohorts, 18 per cent of the respondents said that could not answer and about 2.5 per cent said further that it was up to the son to decide. These were spread across all the Wards though a larger proportion of these answers came in particular from Ward 13 in Beed.
- ▶ 10 per cent said that high school (that is up to Class 12) was enough education for their sons and 4 per cent that even reaching class ten would do. But most mothers wanted at least a college degree for their sons – all of 25 per cent wanted a BCom, BSc or BA, 10 per cent an engineering degree, and 6.8 per cent a medical degree (varying from MBBS to BAMS). 12 per cent wanted him to get a postgraduate degree. These answers were distributed relatively evenly across all the Wards.
- ▶ If this is compared to how the older cohort answered the same question for their daughters, a distinct difference emerges. All of 24 per cent did not have an answer and 1 per cent said that it was up to her to decide.
- ▶ 10 per cent said high school (Class 12 was enough) and 8 per cent that Class 10 would do. As far as going to higher education is concerned, 11.6 per cent said that a BA/BSc/BCom was best, 6.5 per cent a degree in engineering, and 5 per cent a medical degree; while 10 per cent went as far as a postgraduate degree.

So what is telling here is that in spite of (or because of?) the fact that the actual levels of education discussed just previously showed a slightly higher proportion of girl children going into higher education, the story is reversed when it comes to planning their future. **There are greater signs of gender discrimination in planning future education for older children, compared to Haryana:** There is a 6 per cent difference among mothers who did not have an answer when it came to their daughters; a 4 per cent difference when it came to answering Class 10 (though Class 12 had the same proportions of 10 per cent), and significantly smaller proportions were planning for a higher educational degree for their daughters (even though all together 40 per cent wanted their daughters to have some degree in higher education compared to 58 per cent for their sons).

YOUNGER COHORTS

Is there any difference in this pattern when it comes to younger cohorts? First of all, there are much greater aspirations compared to older families. Secondly, gender discrimination becomes significantly less visible in this group, even though it still exists.

When it comes to those who see schooling as the outer limit of education for their children, the figures for boys are 2 per cent for Class 10 and 11 per cent for Class 12 compared to 4 per cent and 15 per cent for girls. So at this end of the spectrum (which would be poorer families) there is a definite gender gap in aspiration for sons and daughters.

However, when it comes to higher education the picture changes to the point that now a higher proportion of mothers want their daughters to have a graduate degree – 49 per cent for daughters compared to 43.5 per cent for their sons, and this difference exists across different degrees from the basic college degree to professional degrees. Only at the postgraduate level is there once again a gender skew in that 25 per cent see this as the horizon for their sons compared to 16.5 per cent for their daughters.

Much smaller proportions do not have an answer to this question and they are quite similar – 4.7 per cent for sons and 4.2 per cent for daughters.

So overall, younger cohorts in Maharashtra are much more active in planning for their children's educational futures across gender, and within this, the gender gap is significant at the level of schooling, is reversed when it comes to the graduate level of higher education and once again is visible at the post-graduate level.

So what makes this even more interesting when comparing these patterns with child sex ratios is that the worsening of the sex ratio skew among younger cohorts that was evident in Chapter 3 in the discussion on CSRs in Maharashtra correlates with the greater willingness to invest in a girl's education than among older cohorts. So here there is further evidence of how greater gender discrimination in education in somewhat older families (that is where the eldest child was above 16 years of age) correlates with less sex selection, while being willing to invest more in one's daughter goes together with a worsening of the sex ratio. That is to say, the burden associated with a daughter for whom a good education has become necessary is now greater.

Within this, the above pattern in Maharashtra indicates that what is most planned for daughters (more so than sons) is a graduate degree. Could it be that this is what most parents aspire for when it comes to their daughters since this would be the minimum good qualification for marriage in an upwardly mobile family?

These questions will be supplemented shortly by direct questions about how much money families are willing to invest in the education of their children.

4.1.2 • CORRELATING CHILDREN'S EDUCATION BY EDUCATION OF THE MOTHER

How is a woman's capacity to plan for her children's futures affected by her own educational levels? This is an interesting question to pose for both the samples, given that significant proportions of mothers were illiterate or had only a school education, compared to those who had accessed higher education or even professional degrees. As one might expect, as the educational level of the mother increases so do her aspirations for her children.

Haryana

- ▶ In the Haryana sample, a larger proportion did not feel ready to answer or did not know, and this proportion declined from almost half the children of mothers who were illiterate to about one-fourth of those with some school education, and dropped to insignificant numbers for those with a graduate degree or more.

SONS

- ▶ For illiterate mothers the most common answer at 26 per cent was that high school was enough for their sons followed by 19 per cent sons who were expected to reach a graduate degree, with just 10 per cent expected to get a degree beyond this.
- ▶ Among mothers with primary education, the most common answers were high school (33 per cent) and graduate (27 per cent) for sons but with middle school education mothers' aspirations had already significantly shifted upwards with larger proportions 33 per cent of sons now expected to get a graduate degree and 25 per cent a postgraduate one.
- ▶ Mothers with Class 10 now expected as much as 44 per cent of sons to get a degree above graduation and 22 per cent sons to get a graduate degree. These figures are 35 per cent sons to get a graduate degree and 41 per cent a postgraduate one for mothers with 12 years of schooling.
- ▶ Mothers with graduate degrees expected 60 per cent among sons to get a postgraduate degree and this increases to 65 per cent for those with postgraduate degrees.

DAUGHTERS

- ▶ When it comes to daughters, the proportion of illiterate mothers who did not wish to say or did not know was 36 per cent (compared to half in the case of sons) – and is indicative therefore of the strong aspirational desire for the education of daughters.
- ▶ 37 per cent of daughters of illiterate mothers were expected to at least complete high school and 12 per cent to be a graduate.
- ▶ Among daughters whose mothers had primary education, the significant proportions continue to be high school (41 per cent) and graduation (20 per cent) for daughters; with middle school education mothers are already shifting expectations towards a graduate degree for 24 per cent of their daughters, with 33 per cent content with high school and 20 per cent a graduate degree.
- ▶ Mothers with Class 10 want 44 per cent of their children to have a post graduate degree and this jumps to 56 per cent for those with Class 12, 62 per cent for mothers who are graduates and 76 per cent to those who are postgraduates themselves.

In Haryana there is as much and at times a greater investment in daughter's education on the part of mothers, and mothers keenly desire to see their daughters do that much better than themselves.

Maharashtra

In Maharashtra, mothers are, as was seen earlier, much more willing to offer views on their children's future education.

SONS

- ▶ 40 per cent of sons of illiterate mothers are expected to at least complete high school, equal proportions of getting a graduate degree, and 18 per cent a postgraduate one.
- ▶ When it comes to mothers with some schooling there is the expected shift upwards – 43 per cent of sons are expected to become graduates, 60 per cent of those of mothers with middle school education, 50 per cent of those with Class 10, and 61 per cent of those with Class 12.
- ▶ The equivalent figures for postgraduate degrees are 24 per cent of sons of mothers with primary education, 29 per cent of those with middle schooling, 28 per cent Class 10 and 24 per cent of mothers with Class 12. Half the sons of graduate and postgraduate mothers are expected to have a postgraduate degree.

DAUGHTERS

- ▶ When it comes to daughters, illiterate mothers in the Maharashtra sample appear to have slightly less expectations of their daughters than of their sons – 53 per cent daughters are expected to complete high school, 31 per cent to get a graduate degree and 10 per cent a postgraduate degree. Thus compared to the break up for sons, there are fewer expectations at the level of higher education.
- ▶ Now looking at expectations among daughters to get a graduate degree the figures are 30 per cent among mothers with primary schooling, 54 per cent middle schooling, 59 per cent Class 10 and 52 per cent Class 12.
- ▶ The equivalent figures for a post graduate degree are 21 per cent girls of mothers with primary schooling, 23 per cent middle schooling, 26 per cent Class 10 and 40 per cent with class 12. 53 per cent daughters of graduate mothers and 62 per cent daughters of postgraduate mothers are expected to reach a postgraduate level of education.

The gender differences here are negligibly different when it comes to mothers with school education, though there is a visible jump in favour of daughters among mothers who have completed high school that their daughters do that much better than them and get beyond graduation. Also mothers with higher education appear to place stronger aspirations that their daughters will do likewise.

Compared to Haryana in Maharashtra there is also a strong investment on the part of mothers that their daughters do better than them when they have only attained some schooling, and considerable desire to see them do at least as well when they themselves have gone beyond high school.

4.1.3 • DAUGHTERS IN DAUGHTER ONLY FAMILIES

The information on the education of daughters could be further analysed by looking at daughters in daughter only families in comparison to those in families with sons as well. It should be recalled here that the sample of daughter only families includes a significant proportion of incomplete families with young children, who are planning to have more children, and possibly sons. Therefore, when it comes to existing educational attainment levels, the girls in daughter only families in both samples have higher proportions of girls who are at lower levels of schooling compared to the daughters in mixed families. Thus 37 per cent of girls in daughter only families were in primary school compared to 27 per cent from mixed families in the Haryana sample; in the Maharashtra sample as much as 50

per cent of girls in daughter only families were in primary school compared to 28 per cent of girls from mixed families.

This makes the question of how much education mothers envisaged for daughters in daughter only families in comparison to those from mixed families even more interesting.

- ▶ In the Haryana sample, among those mothers who offered their views, the picture for future levels of education for girls in daughter only families was 31 per cent high school, 23 per cent graduate degree and 46 per cent postgraduate compared to 21 per cent high school, 35 per cent graduate and 44 per cent postgraduate levels for girls in mixed families. There is here in fact a slightly lower level of aspiration for daughters in daughter only families in Haryana.
- ▶ But in the case of Maharashtra, the break up for girls in daughter only families is just 7 per cent high school, 51 per cent graduate and 35 per cent postgraduate. Compare this with 23 per cent high school, 46 per cent graduate and 26 per cent postgraduate in the case of mixed families. There appears to be a clear increase in the aspirational levels for daughters from daughter only families (of which there are also more in Maharashtra than in Haryana).

4.1.4 • EXISTING COSTS OF EDUCATION

The question of how much parents invest in the education of their children was also probed directly by asking them about the costs they incurred over the last year for each of their children who were still being educated.

Haryana

In the case of Haryana, only about half the respondents chose to answer the question, and curiously more of them gave information about the costs of their daughter's education than of their sons. In all cases the answers given were divided into groups ranging from very low costs on education, with free tuition (implying therefore government schooling, scholarships or state aided schools) to greater than 50,000 Rupees a year.

- ▶ In the case of sons, just 5 per cent incurred costs up to Rs. 5000, 5 per cent in the range of Rs. 5001-10,000, 33 per cent up to Rs 20,000, 37 per cent in the next bracket up to Rs 50,000 and 34 per cent above Rs. 50,000.
- ▶ But when it came to daughters the spread was somewhat different – 16 per cent with costs up to Rs. 5000, 8 per cent in the next bracket of up to Rs. 10,000, 31 per cent in the bracket up to Rs. 20,000, 27 per cent in Rs. 50,000 bracket, and 15 per cent in the highest bracket.

Parents in Haryana are spending more on their sons than on their daughters, whatever their stated aspirations may be. These results are consistent with the prior finding above that proportionately more parents aspired for professional degrees for their sons compared to their daughters, for which they are also prepared to pay more.

Maharashtra

Comparatively, overall costs of education in Maharashtra in our sample were much less for both boys and girls, and are indicative of the greater presence of viable government aided institutions in Maharashtra compared to much higher levels of commercial private education in the Haryana sample.

- ▶ Thus 33 per cent of boys had educational expenses in the lowest bracket up to Rs. 5000, 20 per cent in the next bracket up to Rs. 10,000, 17 per cent in the Rs. 20,000 bracket, 17.5 per cent in the Rs. 50,000 and 8 per cent in the highest bracket above Rs. 50,000.

- ▶ When it comes to daughters, interestingly, there is no significant variation compared to sons. The equivalent proportions are 35 per cent up to Rs. 5000, 21 per cent up to Rs. 10,000, 16 per cent up to Rs. 20,000, 15 per cent up to Rs. 50,000 and 7 per cent above Rs. 50,000.

Interestingly, in Maharashtra, where costs of education are not as high as they are in Haryana there is no visible gender discrimination in the actual fees being paid.

4.1.5 • FUTURE INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION

How much were families willing to invest financially for a year's fees (or related expenses to get a seat) in their children's educational futures was the next question put to female respondents.

Haryana

As was seen above in the Haryana sample, similar proportions who had said that they either did not know or that children's education so far was sufficient, also did not answer this question about future costs of education. And as before these were overwhelmingly from the poorer Wards 12 in Rohtak and 12J in Jhajjar.

- ▶ From the overall sample of 1000 sons, only about one-fourth gave concrete answers.
- ▶ 14 per cent from the entire sample of 1000 boys were willing to pay up to 5 lakhs and they came from the well off wards, but also to some extent from the poor Ward 12J in Jhajjar.
- ▶ 4 per cent were willing to pay even more than 5 lakhs.
- ▶ When it came to daughters similar proportions (that is half the overall sample) did not know or said that the education daughters had received so far was sufficient.
- ▶ Another 22 per cent said that they believed that costs would be required but could not give a figure.
- ▶ 10 per cent were prepared to give up to 5 lakhs and 3 per cent above this amount. Once again these came from the well off wards and to a small extent from Ward 12J in Jhajjar.

In Haryana the majority did not wish to answer the question of costs of education one way or another – but amongst those who did, large sums were given, and for both sons and daughters.

Maharashtra

In the Maharashtra sample, respondents in Shirur were more willing to answer this question than in Beed, and for both sons and daughters.

- ▶ When it came to sons, in Beed 13 per cent said that they did not know and 20 per cent did not wish to say (in Shirur this last figure was 13 per cent). It is also in Beed that 14 per cent said that they did not see the need to set aside anything for their sons and would depend on government education (compared to 3 per cent in Shirur). (As was seen above a much larger proportion in the Maharashtra sample gave very low expenses for the education of their children.)
- ▶ But interestingly, when it came to the remaining respondents much more were willing to plan very large sums for investing in their education, and for both sons and daughters, with only a small gender gap. Here the distinctions between the wards and towns was not significant. Overall, 7 per cent were willing to invest up to Rs. 20,000, 10 per cent up to Rs. 50,000, 15 per cent up to one lakh, 26 per cent up to 5 lakhs and 7 per cent above 5 lakhs for sons.
- ▶ When it came to daughters the equivalent figures were 11 per cent who declared that no money would be spent, 2 per cent in the up to Rs. 5000 category, 3 per cent up to Rs. 10,000, 15 per cent up to Rs. 50,000, 14 per cent up to one lakh, 21 per cent up to 5 lakhs and 6 per cent above 5 lakhs.

In Maharashtra, the majority see the need to invest considerably in the education of both the sons and daughters and to a similar extent, while a small but significant section (about one fourth approximately) did not answer.

4.2 • QUALITATIVE VIEWS ON EDUCATION OF CHILDREN FROM THE INTERVIEWS

The views obtained through the interviews open up several dimensions of the world of children's education, and complement the statistical picture offered above. Respondents touched upon the kinds of schools they preferred for their children, with occasional gendering in these choices, from government schools (largely denounced but not always), different kinds of private schools in both the Haryana and Maharashtra sites (with choice of medium of language being a significant question in Maharashtra), to higher education, and the potential of their own cities and towns when it came to colleges and professional institutions. Distinctions by class are particularly stark across the sites, especially as has been seen throughout this report, in Rohtak and Jhajjar.

Many respondents are evidently planning their children's future via the extent to which they are able to invest in their education. The resigned voices of those whose daughters did not even complete high school contrast with those who think of Delhi or Mumbai/Pune as desired destinations for their daughters. Since this is not a study of education per se, it is not possible to dwell at any length on the many related issues raised by mothers and fathers – on the quality of schooling, on discrimination within schools, and the massive hierarchy that currently shapes schooling in India.

Gendered differences emerge in some of the accounts – from clear biases in favour of sons (who can study anywhere, even abroad, while limits are given to how far away a daughter can go), to fears that sons are not doing as well as they ought and therefore need extra attention. Deeply held views about the value of education (“standing on ones own feet”), with education providing a resource in the face of the uncertainty nowadays of stable and good marriages, are also voiced, sometimes in direct contrast to the limited opportunities that mothers themselves struggled against in their own families.

The vignettes below begin with daughter only families and move on to families with daughters and sons.

Haryana

WARD 6, ROHTAK

Most of those whose views are provided from this well off Ward demonstrate how their class advantage translates into higher aspirations for their daughters, including allowing daughters more choice to decide for themselves. When it comes to types of schools, respondents, on the whole, were happy with the choices available, along with some critical views, by parents who were teachers themselves. It is only when it comes to higher education that respondents saw definite limitations in Rohtak and imagined better cities like Delhi for their daughters.

“There are some fields where there is not enough educational scope in Haryana. In engineering, for example. And for good educational institutes, one has to go out. Right now my daughter is in play school and I have no tension about finding her a good school.”
(Bania, housewife, Rs. 80,000, with one daughter)

“Education has made it possible for daughters to look after their parents. With education, they are earning unlike earlier when they were dependent on others in the family. Rohtak

has plenty of schools and colleges.” (Jat housewife, family income 2 lakhs, with a son and daughter)

“Once you leave farming, education is the only resort. I want my daughter to become well educated, go to Delhi university after 12th if her marks are good enough. May be marry when she is around 25–26 years old.” (Jat housewife, income Rs. 50,000, with a daughter and a son)

“The whole family sits and discusses our daughter’s education, even the uncles. Earlier we wanted medical line, but it was too expensive with all the tuitions. So now she is going for commerce. (Jat, dairy work, income Rs. 27,000, one daughter and one son)

“School fees are Rs. 8,000–9,000 every three months and we expect them to increase by 10–20 per cent each year. Entrance fees were Rs. 35,000. However, as a teacher I can see that there is much that is lacking in education. Teachers only have degrees, but no clarity when it comes to concepts. Though both our jobs are in Jhajjar we came to Rohtak for schooling. Now we are thinking we may have to move to Delhi.” (Jat lecturer, income 1 lakh, one daughter and a son)

“School fees for my children is 2–2.5 lakh for both them annually. My husband is willing to pay. See, in this school the children are not of *desi* type, they are even more high level than us. We feel that we are relatively low level. I can’t speak in English but when my daughter does I feel very happy.” (Gosain (SC) housewife, husband ITI business, income Rs. 1,25,000, one daughter, one son).

“With three daughters I suffered taunts and comments in the village. I decided I was going to educate them a lot. I did everything on my own, even at the cost of being beaten up. My father used to take me to the doctor. My youngest daughter is starting her MA. Even if they do not get a job they can start their own work from home according to their education. My other daughters have given tuitions. (Jat, dairy work, income Rs. 40,000, three daughters and a son)

“Yes, I know all the good schools in Rohtak but if my children cannot study in them what is the point? They charge such high fees. I myself am uneducated. So when they don’t study I get angry, hit them and make them sit down. My daughter is managing but not the younger sons.” (Sheikh, works in beauty parlour, husband a labourer, income Rs. 11,000, one daughter and three sons).

WARD 12, ROHTAK

Ward 12 once again is the site of experiences of deep deprivation which directly feed into limited chances in the sphere of education. The poignancy and indeed injustice of a system where parents can only imagine a possible better future for children through education, but which is not realised in practice are starkly visible. At the same time, there are those who, in spite of so much hardship, have somehow managed to see their daughters go well beyond anything that parents have known in their own lives. But as a few voices also reveal, there can also be the problem of “too much education” in poor and lower caste contexts, which could potentially derail their marriage prospects.

“After 5th class I sent my girls to government school. But my husband, his brothers, said who will take them and pick them up from school. I said that I can’t do it as a daily wage labourer. After this they left school. See, such things are difficult for poor people, rich

people have no doubts about their daughters. Whereas amongst us, we will question her if she comes back with another child, if he is a boy.” (Balmiki labourer, family income Rs. 12,000, 3 daughters.)

“I have never heard of anyone becoming successful who had studied in a government school. We have sent our children to local private schools – though the results completely depends on them, how they study. If our daughter is educated she will be able to provide for herself, who knows what kind of mother-in-law she will get?” (Dhanak housewife, husband construction worker, income Rs. 12,000, 3 daughters.)

“This is not a good environment for children, so we will consider moving elsewhere, both for our daughter and son. These days it happens that the girl doesn’t find a good family in marriage and has to do a job. She should be able to stand on her own feet and not ask anyone for money.” (Dhanak housewife, husband technician in Maruti factory, income Rs. 22,000, one daughter, one son.)

“I have five daughters and a son, due to pressure from in-laws. Three daughters are going to government aided school, and fees have just been increased to Rs. 100. It will become difficult to manage. My younger girls were refused access to the anganwadi because I have too many daughters. I don’t want my children to live in this environment, it is full of abuses. Here I have “saved” so many daughters for the government, but the government is not helping at all. Girls should be educated to understand about accounts, to know which bus goes where. I would like to educate my daughters as much as possible – who knows what kind of man they will get.” (Chamar housewife married to construction worker, income not known, five daughters, one son.)

“My eldest dropped out after her 9th. Two are in government school and the younger ones, including the boy, are going to private school, where fees have been waived for now. We can’t blame teachers, it depends on the children and how invested they are. I don’t know much and everyone does daily wage work around me. All I can say is that the children’s desire for education should be fulfilled.” (Dhanak housewife, husband daily wage worker, income Rs. 25,000, 5 daughters, one son.)

“We got my children admitted where my husband has studied. They say that schools that look good aren’t good. A child’s career is ruined when they take him out for one or half a mark. They told a 9th class girl that she may not get a chance, so she de-enrolled herself. Many children have been removed like this. So three teachers appealed on behalf of my children, that they are good in studies. Who knows on what basis their names get put down as a problem.” (Chamar, beauty parlour worker, husband vegetable vendor, family income Rs. 14,000, son, daughter and son.)

“I have a large family due to pressure from my mother-in-law. The eldest son, poor boy, stopped after 5th. My only daughter studied till 10th but her brothers would not let her study further because of the environment. Also if a girl becomes too well educated then it creates difficulty in finding a marriage for her – there will be no one who can be considered her equal. This has happened to my brother’s daughters who are too old now to find someone at their level.” (Balmiki housewife in joint family, income Rs. 45,000, five sons, one daughter).

WARD 1, JHAJJAR

Jhajjar echoes the range of views encountered in Rohtak, with the added emphasis on the relative lack of educational opportunities in this smaller town. Especially when it comes to higher education, Jhajjar has very little offer to those with greater aspirations. Therefore for upwardly mobile families in this Ward in particular, it is commonplace for parents to be willing to send their daughters away once they have completed high school.

“We were poor. My daughter studied in the school I worked in, her fees were waived. She did a three year lab technician course in Rohtak and is now doing M.Sc. from MD University. There is no scope after schooling in Jhajjar. We think she should also do a B. Ed., so she could get a teaching job. Alongside we are looking out for her marriage.” (Brahmin, retired teacher, Rs. 15,000 income, one daughter).

“Our daughter has just started play school. We are prepared to send her out later to Kota, Rajasthan or Delhi, especially for MBBS.” (Khaati, takes tuitions, income Rs. 26,000, one daughter)

“Government schools are packed with employees with government contacts. I want my children to go to private schools where there is discipline, where teachers implement what parents want. My daughter is in the 8th class. It is too soon to plan her future. But we will take her out of Jhajjar after the 12th depending on her interest – Rohtak, Rajasthan, Delhi. I want her to experience hostel life.” (Jat husband, engineer, income Rs. 50,000, one daughter, one son).

“We selected this school because other parents told us it is good, as the students here get the best results. In the parent teacher meetings we raise the problems from home – too much TV, playfulness, since at this age they will listen more to teachers than to parents. Our daughter is going into 10th and we want her to take the medical stream.” (Khaati housewife married to a salesman, income Rs. 20,000, two daughters, one son)

“I studied in a government school but that was a different time. The District Magistrate’s daughter was my classmate. The private schools today have only one aim – to make money. It has become a compulsion to send children to private schools. My daughter just gave the 12th and she did the medical stream. This too was compulsion as she is good in arts, but no schools were offering arts. I will send her out for her BA now that she is mature, Gurgaon or Delhi, depending on her marks.” (Jat husband, retired headmaster, income Rs. 32,000, three daughters, one son.)

WARD 12, JHAJJAR

Voices from this poorer Ward articulate hopes for daughters through education from the acquisition of English to a very different future with more opportunities than mothers in this ward have known in their own lives.

“We are living in the age of competition. English has become very important because most of us are behind. My daughter studies in the same school where I teach and gets 50 per cent reduction. I want to make sure that the same things do not happen to her that happened to me.” (Khaati, school teacher, separated, income Rs. 8200, one daughter)

“We are sending our daughters to a school that is English medium, so that they have a good basis for the future. My eldest is in 7th and I will try for some professional course for her after 12th.” (Balmiki housewife, income Rs. 22,000, four daughters)

“This school was asking for one lakh at the time of admissions for all five children in our joint family. No one even in this locality goes to a government school. We are putting some savings into Sukanya scheme for our daughter’s education and government also gives money for girls’ education”. (Chamar housewife, husband contractor, income Rs. 60,000, one son and one daughter)

“We moved from the village to Jhajjar for our children’s education. I wanted to make sure they do not suffer like me. We married our daughter when she joined first year of college.” (Balmiki anganwadi worker, family income Rs. 25,000, one daughter, one son.)

“My eldest daughter is doing B.Com. in Jhajjar itself. Education is meant to make people stand on their own feet – after marriage she can take better care of her family. If she has a job, even better – she will not be a burden on anyone. But in this environment I do not think she will find anything.” (Jatav, husband fruit seller, income Rs. 16,000, two daughters, one son).

“The children can tell you about government schools. The madam sits in one room and leaves the children and their teaching to these girls [trainees]. It has been many days since they started class five but they have not got their books yet. Nor are they given any work. They certainly get their food and come back. I wanted to study a lot but my grandmother had narrow views. It isn’t like you will become a minister after studying she said. But my uncle forcibly enrolled me and I studied till Class 5. So I want my daughters to be educated. If anything untoward happens after their marriage, they will not put up with it.” (Balmiki housewife, husband labourer, income Rs. 5,000, two daughters, two sons).

“Education is more necessary for daughters. As a girl, she will be forced always to be subservient. Whereas if she is educated, and that too has a job, she will be independent and wouldn’t have to listen to anyone. She can provide for herself.” (Gujjar, tailor, husband unemployed, income Rs. 2,000, two sons.)

Maharashtra

SHIRUR, WARD 2

In this mixed Ward with families from both working class and well off middle class backgrounds, respondents speak about the enormous weight they place on the education of their daughters. Unlike Haryana where government schooling is basically written off as offering next to nothing nowadays, here respondents do not only see their future in the English medium schools that charge the highest fees. The limitations of opportunities of higher education in Shirur can also be overcome for some in the neighbouring city of Pune. Occasional voices also articulate views about to what extent, in what field and at what expense they are prepared to educate daughters.

“I am very happy with my daughter. Education is important for so many things – to teach manners, talk to others and gain in personal development. Families benefit from educationally aware children. I will send my daughter to Pune after the 10th because she is extremely talented and needs the correct environment in which to grow and progress. She should live in a hostel and not at her uncle’s place (as my husband would prefer) so that

she will become more self-sufficient.” (Jain housewife, married to shop owner, income one and a half lakhs, one daughter).

“If it’s written in her destiny she will go to a good school. We should be able to speak in English, it feels good when we talk to big people in English. If nothing else, we can tell them we are educated. If our daughter studies she can take us forward.” (Pardesi housewife, husband auto driver, family income Rs. 10,000, two daughters)

“For us poor people education was about clearing one class after another. No questions like why study, what to study, how to study. Now my daughters will definitely be educated but everything depends on how they score after the 10th class. We don’t want to scare them (we heard on TV about a girl who hanged herself because parents were expecting higher marks from her). If they wish to go outside Shirur to study, as far as Mumbai is ok, but Delhi is too far. Graduation, post-graduation -- they should study more than us, that is important.” (Kumbhar husband who is land surveyor, income Rs. 25,000, two daughters)

“My daughter is just completing her graduation in commerce instead of science due to the high fees and now lives with my sister. We also did not want to have to send her to another city for science education. My son is in 2nd class and we are ready to send him anywhere, even abroad.” (Maratha tailor, husband Dhoover (SC)), Amul dealer, income Rs. 15,000, one daughter, one son)

“My daughter is in second year B.Com. and both I and my husband feel that this degree is sufficient for her. It is not only about expense, we feel our daughter is of average intelligence and it would be too much for her.” (The daughter who was present at the interview was asked and said she wanted to do M.Com. But parents are planning her marriage once she graduates.) (Vadari (upper caste) housewife, husband runs a tempo, income Rs. 20,000, one daughter, one son)

“We wanted just one child, but two more happened by accident, then I got the operation done. The eldest is in 6th. We want them to know English, Hindi, Mathematics. There are no good colleges here (we also heard about bad incidents between boys and girls at the local college) so after 10th class they may have to go out. All three are already going for tuition for Rs. 300 each per month. If necessary we can move with them, stay in a flat.” (Ramoshi (SC), tailor, husband accountant, family income Rs. 25,000, two daughters, one son)

“My eldest daughter has done MSW, the second is in second year B.Com., and the third is in first year. My son is in Class 10 and loves cricket. I don’t think educational facilities are that good in Shirur. I have good expectations from my daughters, they all want to find jobs. I am ready to send them up to Pune but not beyond, but am prepared to send my son wherever he wants.” (Maratha, tailoring, husband bus conductor, income Rs. 20,000, three daughters, one son.)

SHIRUR, WARD NO. 14

In this Ward the aspirations of the mothers from modest lower middle class backgrounds with limited income underscore the variable weight placed upon education, in relation to both possible jobs but more centrally with regard to the marriage of daughters.

“I have two young daughters, and school fees are Rs. 10,000 annually. After 5th we will shift to a better school, from what I have heard. I would like one of them to do engineering,

though it is up to them what they wish to do later. I do not know that much given my MIDC job but if there is a good match them we would not mind getting them married.” (Maratha MIDC operator, income Rs. 20,000, two daughters).

“Both my children are in a school where students are very intelligent and all my sisters-in-law studied there. But now we are planning to shift as standards have been falling and teachers are careless. Their higher education will be in Pune or Mumbai. For my son we are thinking of Symbiosis in Pune where fees are 3 lakhs for the first year. I wanted my daughter to become a doctor but she wants to be a teacher. Let’s see, I will send her to Mumbai.” (Maratha housewife, husband labour contractor, family income Rs. one lakh, one daughter, one son)

“We tried to get our daughter into what is considered to be the best school but when she was four years old her name was not on the list. She is 9 years now and we will still try for her admission in that school. Both children we will send to college in Shirur where my husband studied. We do not mind sending them to Pune, especially if my daughter develops confidence. I would like them both to do MBA.” (Maang housewife, husband government employee, income Rs. 40,000, one daughter, one son)

“Ours was a love marriage. Initially we planned for a single child, whether girl or boy, but then we had two girls and wanted a boy. When money comes in your life you feel that there should be a son to share this luxury. My eldest daughter is just passing out of 12th and we will have to look for admission. She wants to do MBA. We don’t have any idea where she will get admission. I am more worried about my young son who is not taking much interest in his studies. So we are thinking of a boarding school for him. (Maratha, widow, runs husband’s company, Rs. 20,000, two daughters and one son)

“I think education is important because everything no longer depends only on marriage as it was in previous generations. I could not study further (was married when in 9th). We have to get residence proof and many certificates, only then our children will be given subsidized education. Education is not meant for the poor. But if they are dull in studies (like my younger daughter) it is not necessary to think of getting a job, and we will get her married.” (Bania (teli) from Uttar Pradesh, tailoring, husband has fruit cart, income Rs. 17,000, three daughters and a son.)

BEED, WARD 13

In the views expressed below the limited opportunities for further education in Beed are visible, as are the difficulties of poorer families in giving their daughters the education they would have liked.

“Because we have just one daughter we are having no difficulties raising her. She completed polytechnic course after schooling in semi-English. There should be more opportunities in Beed. The only engineering college is not good and there are no medical colleges.” (Brahmin housewife, husband civil engineer, income Rs. 47,000, one daughter).

“I teach in a district government school but put my daughter in a trust school, semi-English. The government schools are far away and the parents are illiterate. Everything depends on tuitions. The educational scene is not good in Beed. If medical and engineering colleges could increase it would be good and students would not have to go out. Hostels are risky. We will send her somewhere where we have relatives, Aurangabad, Pune. (Brahmin primary school teacher, income Rs. 75,000, one daughter)

“We had to shift our elder daughter from an English medium school to semi-English (i.e., some subjects taught in Marathi) because of the high school fees. She no longer gets individual attention now. But we want the best – if she wants to become an engineer or doctor we will send her to Pune.” (Vanzari housewife, husband agricultural inspector, income Rs. 15,000, two daughters)

“I have two daughters. The older one says she wants to do a nursing course, the younger one hasn’t said anything yet (in Class 6). I’d like them to become teacher, engineer, whatever they want. Future depends on marks and money. I would have to pay 1–1.5 lakh for nursing education and the same amount again to get a job in a hospital.” (Buddhist, housewife, family income Rs. 10,000, two daughters)

“My son and daughter are in semi-English schools. If children have only English medium they go far way and it is for the rich. One can study in Marathi and still be smart. My daughter wants to study engineering – anywhere, like Aurangabad. I want them to be independent, not listen to others’ taunts. The Maratha mother-in-law never forgets that she is a mother-in-law.” (Maratha housewife, family income Rs. 30,000, one daughter, one son)

“My eldest daughter wanted to become a doctor but didn’t score well enough. She is doing her BSc nursing in Aurangabad in a private college. The younger one wants to work in a beauty parlour. I wanted her to try for more but she said she couldn’t handle further studies and finished with 12th. She’s done a beauty course as well. Over my life I shifted to many villages and got all kinds of jobs in order to reach where I am now.” (Sonar, hospital attendant, income Rs. 13,000, two daughters, one son.)

“We would have liked our daughters to study a lot but we couldn’t. Three were married after 10th grade. The fourth is now in 11th grade. Textbooks were given by the school but we had to provide for notebooks. If we bought uniforms, we couldn’t afford something else.” (Mahar domestic worker, five daughters, one son)

WARD 11

“My daughter is still small. I want to send her to a Marathi medium school rather than English medium. We do not want to burden her with our expectations. According to me there is no age limit for education. I would like her to take courses after schooling so that she could work before marriage – like in the food and technology college in Beed.” (Mali housewife married to shop owner, family income Rs. 20,000, one daughter.)

“We want to relocate from Beed for the education of our daughter, but not sure where as my husband has a transferable job as a government lecturer. I would want her to be independent and to have more freedom than in Beed, in a place where one can move around freely.” (Kumbhar housewife, family income Rs. 1 lakh, one daughter)

“My elder daughter is in Class 3 and the younger has just started school. Girls these days like to make their own decisions. I would like one to become a doctor and one an engineer.” (Mahar housewife, income Rs. 20,000, two daughters)

“We want to relocate elsewhere. Now we will put our girls into an English medium school. But later we must think of places like the University of Pune for the kinds of opportunities that it offers. While there are comfortable jobs for women, I want my daughter to become

an air hostess!” (Maratha housewife with teaching degrees, family income Rs. 31,000, two daughters)

“I have big dreams for my daughters. I really want the eldest to do nursing or teaching since that is the best way to serve people. But she wants to do a cooking or beauty parlour course, so if that is really what she wants after 12th we will support her. My second daughter says she wants to become a collector at such a young age! She is very different from the rest of our family. Even though I am a Maratha married into a Punjabi family I will do what I can to develop my children according to their wish.” (Maratha teacher, income Rs. 1 lakh, 3 daughters.)

“My children are studying in the same school where I studied as a child. We are prepared to educate them but we are poor. We are insecure – doctor, engineer, teacher, all this we can imagine but....” (Mahar, domestic worker and sugarcane labourer, income Rs. 8,000, 3 daughters and 1 son)

“After I had our children our financial situation worsened. We managed without any support from anyone. My eldest daughter scored slightly less marks in Class 12th so we discontinued and got her married. My second daughter failed in English in Class 10 so we got her married when there was a good proposal. Third is doing her BA, fourth has cleared 10th and my son is in Class 9. I wanted my daughters to study more but my husband was against it. He used to say we will spend so much on our daughters only so that the in-laws reap the benefit. Even I have to agree – how can we keep our son hungry who is going to stay with us to educate a daughter who is going away?” (Mahar housewife, husband pan shop owner, family income Rs. 15,000, four daughters, one son)

4.3 • JOBS AND EMPLOYMENT

4.3.1 • EXISTING JOBS FOR CHILDREN

To begin the discussion on how families thought about employment prospects for their children, this section begins with an account of the small number of those who did have a job at the time of the survey.

Haryana

- ▶ In Haryana, 15.5 per cent out of all the male children (from a total of approximately 1,100) had some job at the time of the survey compared to just 5.6 per cent girls (out of 880). So this is stark confirmation of the hugely different chances for work in Rohtak and Jhajjar for young people by gender based on the study sample.
- ▶ Moreover, there are huge differences across our Wards – among boys, the better off Wards 6 in Rohtak and Ward 1 in Jhajjar dominate with 68 per cent of all male jobs going to sons in these wards.
- ▶ As far as types of jobs are concerned, 19 per cent are in factory or company work, 14 per cent technical, 13 per cent own business, and 12 per cent sales, with smaller proportions in government service, army, construction, teaching or clerical work. 7 per cent sons were reported as being unemployed at the time of the survey.

- ▶ Among the girls who were working, teaching jobs dominated at 30 per cent, followed by health 8 per cent and professional jobs 8 per cent. Tiny numbers were in sales, technical, clerical jobs and hardly any girls were in factories or government service.

So among children in Haryana it can be said that the factories and companies in the NCR region are offering some jobs to young men, but none to women, who are stuck with very few opportunities outside of some teaching.

Maharashtra

In Maharashtra, 13.7 per cent boys had some employment (out of 950) and just 5.3 per cent girls (out of 900). Thus there is an equally stark gendered picture here that is not very different from Haryana.

- ▶ Even more remarkable and surprising is that between Shirur and Beed, more job opportunities were in Beed than in Shirur. 66 per cent of all jobs for boys were in Beed as were 62 per cent of all jobs for girls in our sample. This means that for all that Shirur is a growing town in the outer fringes of industrialised Pune district, it has fewer job opportunities than the district headquarters of Beed town in the drought prone rural hinterland of Maharashtra. The more urbanised space of Shirur offers less than the one more dependent on a rural economy.
- ▶ Among male children, 21 per cent have some kind of professional job, 18.5 per cent business, factory 14.5 per cent and clerical 10.5 per cent. Smaller proportions are distributed across teaching, government service, health and sales. It is Beed that offers more professional, teaching, clerical and health related jobs, while business and factory work are to be found across all the Wards.
- ▶ Among girls, teaching, business and factory work have a few more than professional, health, clerical or technical jobs, though the numbers are all small.

4.3.2 • FUTURE JOB PROSPECTS FOR CHILDREN

With this as the context, how did female respondents answer the question as to what job they hoped their children could get? This section is particularly revealing because the kinds of answers speak more of the desire for the “good job” than of actual jobs.

Across both the samples, and for both sons and daughters, mothers articulated today’s ideal job – a permanent professional job with a decent salary. If one were to speak of “mindsets” then this is the mindset of urban families in the twenty-first century of what is most desirable.

It should be kept in mind that, as was seen in Chapter two, the most common form of employment among husbands was self-employment in Haryana, and this was very prominent even in the Maharashtra sample. But the idea of self-employment (think of all the emphasis given to entrepreneurship by the Indian state) did not figure in their plans or imagination of a good future prospect.

Haryana

- ▶ In the Haryana sample among older cohorts, 18 per cent did not know what job their son might get (predictably more of these answers came from the poorer wards), while half (49 per cent) wanted a professional service job for their son, followed by a job as a teacher (21 per cent). Barely 4 per cent thought of a business job.
- ▶ Where daughters are concerned the answers are remarkably similar – 21 per cent did not know, 44 per cent wanted a professional job and 22 per cent teaching.

- ▶ Among the younger cohorts, the proportion of those who did not know because their sons were still young was greater at 33 per cent, though once again this answer came mainly from Ward 12 in Rohtak and Ward 12J in Jhajjar – for daughters the figure was 34 per cent. 43 per cent wanted a professional job for their son compared to 33 per cent for their daughters. Teaching jobs came second – 15 per cent for sons but as much as 25 per cent for daughters among the younger cohorts. Business prospects were just 2 per cent for sons and other possibilities were negligible including industrial work.

Maharashtra

In Maharashtra, even greater prominence was given to a professional service job across gender and across age cohorts.

- ▶ Compared to Haryana, much fewer said that they did not know or would rather leave it to their children to decide – 8 per cent for sons among older cohorts and just 5 per cent for daughters.
- ▶ All of 66 per cent wanted a professional job for their sons and 67 per cent for their daughters, followed by 8 per cent and 7 per cent for sons and daughters in teaching. Going for a business did find adherents – 8 per cent for sons and 8 per cent for daughters, but other options including industrial work was much less.
- ▶ Among younger cohorts, the desire for a professional job shot up even further – 75 per cent for sons and 72 per cent for daughters! Teaching stood at 8 per cent for sons and 10 per cent for daughters and all other choices were negligible. Interestingly there was not much variation across wards or between Shirur and Beed.

First and foremost there appears to be a general desire for a definite kind of employment – professional services, and this is even more pronounced in the Maharashtra sample than in Haryana. There is some qualification within this broad category – a few mentioned the most desirable form of work within this, namely the “government job”, some also (especially in Haryana) referred to the army and police, when it came to sons. Teaching also figures as a second option, more so in Haryana than in Maharashtra.

It should be noted that no one articulated any desire or prospects for rural futures for their children, whether in agriculture or animal husbandry. In Haryana in particular many families are first generation urban dwellers and some have strong connections to rural incomes, and are still dependent on them. Beed is the district headquarters of a basically rural economy. So it is clear that these families see no future outside of an urban professional context. Furthermore, there is very little difference across gender except that in some cases teaching figures more prominently for daughters.

The most important issue to keep in view here is the background context from within which these aspirations are being articulated. First and foremost are the huge gender disparities in terms of work for women – most of the female respondents themselves are housewives; secondly there are sharp disparities in how many daughters have some kind of job compared to sons. Nor does there seem to be much by way of a differentiated picture when it comes to the prospects for sons in relation to their own particular situation.

The clear differences are those of caste, class and poverty, most starkly visible in the Haryana sample by way of Ward wise contrasts. Very few among the Scheduled Caste working class poor ventured to give expression to a desirable job whether for their sons or daughters. Otherwise the vast majority were simply articulating a desire for stability – permanent service related employment with good status and salary, whether for sons or daughters.

The current developmental and economic climate is not one that is enabling for actually making concrete and informed choices when it comes to jobs for children. Rather, parents are investing in education to the extent they can afford it up to graduate and postgraduate degrees in the vague hope that a 'decent' salary in an urban job with status awaits at the end of the line. Very little of the actual opportunities of the NCR region in Delhi or the context of Shirur and Beed figure in the answers given.

This very significant situation will be discussed at greater length in Chapter five in the report.

4.3.3 • COST OF GETTING JOBS

As in the section on education, questions were also posed about costs relating to getting a job. No one offered information on whether costs were incurred for the few who already had jobs. With regard to future jobs the majority were not willing to speculate in the case of Haryana, but the opposite was the case in Maharashtra.

Haryana

- ▶ In the Haryana sample, taking all sons overall, 10 per cent were willing to spend up to 5 lakhs, with smaller proportions both below and above this when it came to their sons.
- ▶ The numbers were even smaller when it comes to daughters – just 2 per cent gave the figure of up to 5 lakhs and tiny numbers were below and above this.
- ▶ The field investigators reported a distinct reluctance to enter into this question in particular, and did not wish to probe further. It was as though while been quite conscious of how difficult it is to get a good job and the kinds of payments that can be involved, they wanted to decline from offering any further opinion.

Maharashtra

- ▶ In the Maharashtra sample, about 25 per cent across all wards in both Shirur and Beed either did not know or did not wish to say. About 25 per cent again said that they did not believe that any money needed to be set aside for getting jobs for their sons – this figure was particularly high in Ward 13 in Beed where 50 per cent said so, while the lowest was 9 per cent in Ward 2 in Shirur.
- ▶ Interestingly in Shirur there is a spread from very low investments to very high – from 4 per cent in the lowest category of up to Rs. 5,000 to 2 per cent being willing to invest above 5 lakhs with the largest group of 23 per cent giving sums of up to one lakh.
- ▶ In Beed, (considering that about half the entire sample either did not know or said that no money would be set aside), 10 per cent said they would pay up to Rs. 5 lakhs, and 6 per cent each in the other categories including above 5 lakhs.
- ▶ There is no gender gap when it comes to daughters, with significant variation across Wards. Very small numbers were in the lowest categories, 11 per cent overall were in the Rs. 50,000 to 1 lakh bracket, 13 per cent in the 1–5 lakh category and 6 per cent were prepared to pay more than 5 lakhs. In the 1–5 lakh category Ward 14 in Shirur had 21 per cent respondents in this group, and 10 per cent or more from other wards were in this category.

4.4 • **EMPLOYMENT AND WORK FOR DAUGHTERS: VOICES FROM THE INTERVIEWS**

As one might be led to expect from the survey responses, employment and work occupied the most uncertain place in the interviews as well, especially – but not only – when it came to their daughters.

To put it at its most general, no one, but no one, spoke as though future jobs were clearly on their horizon in the way that education so clearly was. For the women especially, many of whom were themselves housewives, thinking about the future prospects of their daughters was criss-crossed with concerns about marriage. While for sons the need for jobs was clear (though surrounded by considerable anxiety) with daughters there was always a question – did they as parents see future employment as central to planning their daughter's future? Most of the time, answers prevaricated. While no one was against the idea of a daughter who could work (at least no one articulated this directly during the interview) there was considerable variation as to how much emphasis one could give. This was not just about the centrality of marriage in almost all of their thinking about daughters, but because in many of their views, having a job was more in the hands of the future in-laws. So it was only a small number who could say with any firmness that they wanted their daughters to work before their marriage.

The question was also what kind of work they imagined or wanted for their daughters. Some of them said that they could not speak for children, especially if those children were still young and school going. Many said that they did not want to impose their “expectations” on their children. It would depend on how well their children studied and what their own choices were. But some said quite categorically “there are no jobs”. Very few had a clear sense of what kinds of jobs were available in their localities or towns, beyond “stereotypical” employment like domestic work for those who are poor, factory work for those willing to endure the stigma, tailoring for augmenting family income, or teaching. In the Maharashtra sample, there were more respondents who articulated the more middle class desire for a “doctor and engineer”, a typical characteristic of western and southern India.

ROHTAK, WARD 6

This Ward with its middle class character had some respondents articulate the appropriate job for a daughter who was performing sufficiently well in her studies or whose parents believed that she had it in her – doctor, followed by teaching, or some service sector job. Interestingly it is only in this Ward that a few imagined that girls could get into business or open a shop.

“My daughter's options after finishing 12th depend on her. My husband wants her to be a doctor, but only if she is good in science. We don't want to pressurize her or fulfill our wishes through her.” (Jat housewife, husband property dealer, income Rs. 60,000, one daughter).

“I want to go into business!” said the daughter who was present at the interview of her mother. She is going into the 10th and her parents are prepared to send her to Delhi University if she does well enough in the 12th. When asked further whether she (daughter) knew how to go about getting into the “business line” she said she didn't know yet, though her mother said she would have to take commerce. The mother added that perhaps the best future would be to send both her son and daughter abroad”. (Jat housewife, husband runs a school, income Rs. 50,000, one daughter, one son)

“Everyone, including uncles, discussed my daughter’s education. We could not afford medical line, so she is doing B.Com. She might do M.Com. but I cannot say what will come afterwards. It depends on what the father thinks. The options I can think about are tuitions or opening a shop.” (Jat dairy work, income Rs. 27,000, one daughter, one son)

“I myself have a Ph.D. but could not get a government job. For my daughter (still in school) I can only try to give her the best. I concentrate on her and my husband looks after my son. Naturally a lot of effort will have to be given, she can explore elsewhere too. But we cannot foresee what space will become available.” (Jat lecturer, income one lakh, one daughter, one son)

“My older daughters are working in a refund company while being in college, studying commerce. But we can’t say much about future opportunities. We are prepared for them to study further, M.Com. if they want.” (Balmiki runs grocery shop with her husband, income Rs. 27,000, three daughters, one son)

“We left the village for our daughters’ education. All of them finished from a government school. My eldest is already married and she was going to get a job in a bank for Rs. 20,000 but her husband didn’t allow her. Girls have more opportunities now – they can even start a parlour.” (Jat running a dairy with husband (retired from army), income Rs. 42,000, three daughters, one son)

ROHTAK, WARD 12

In this, the poorest Ward, respondents spoke out more fully about the absence of options.

“For the uneducated, there are many problems. They can only clean homes or work in the municipal corporation, what I mean is they will only get cleaning work. But many times even the educated are also left hanging.” (Balmiki housewife, husband municipal sanitation worker, income Rs. 10,000, one daughter (adopted))

“Yes I would like my daughters to work before marriage. But one cannot get a government job without bribery. In our neighbourhood there is illicit liquor business and a few may have jobs in factories. Women can find work cleaning other people’s homes.” (Balmiki housewife, husband peon, family income Rs. 38,000, two daughters)

“There are no jobs. Children are studying so much even when there are no jobs. I have married my own daughters. Of course there are jobs for poor people – karmchari (daily wage work)”. (Balmiki housewife, income Rs. 12,000, three daughters)

“The poor in this area have very few jobs. But elsewhere in Rohtak there are employment opportunities – banks, schools, colleges, medical. So well-educated girls can get jobs.” (Brahmin housewife, family income Rs. 14,000, daughter and son)

“Most boys here end up doing daily wage labour. They also work in factories but less people last out because if you work for 10 days and then sit for 5 days at home or drink you will be thrown out. So there are more outside people working there. I am educating my sons in the hope that one might get a government job. My older son is not that sharp and he gets help from his aunt who is a nurse.” (Chamar housewife, husband machine operator, income Rs. 25,000, two sons)

JHAJJAR, WARD 1

Some respondents voiced the desirable if elusive government job for their daughters (and sons or sons-in-law), though with considerable uncertainty.

“My daughter is doing M.Sc. in Rohtak. I am saying she should do B.Ed., then she can get a job as a teacher. Alongside we are looking for a boy since both can be done together. He should have a government job.” (Brahmin housewife married to shopkeeper, income Rs. 15,000, one daughter)

“See generally nowadays people think boys and girls are equal. But if we had a son we could have sent him anywhere. One cannot send girls outside for work on their own. I am sitting at home after education. Though now people want their daughters to do a good job when they have become educated. Once she finishes 12th I want her to prepare for MBBS.” (Ahr housewife, husband teacher, income Rs. 26,000, one daughter)

“I managed against great odds to run a successful beauty parlour in Jhajjar. I want my elder daughter to go for medical – if not MBBS then BAMS. I know she is not intelligent enough to clear the medical entrance exams. We are prepared to give donation. Recently my niece became a doctor and looking at her it seemed that she was getting a lot of respect. [My family has not given me respect for doing the profession of a nai/barber].” (Jat beauty parlour owner, husband in Delhi police, income Rs. 70,000, two daughters)

“There are no jobs in Jhajjar, neither private nor government. I want my children to get interested in IAS preparation. It’ll be an A class government job. If they don’t do that they’ll do business.” (Jat husband, computer engineer starting his own business, wife teacher, Rs. 50,000, one daughter, one son)

“My older daughter is doing M.Com and younger is in first year. Son is doing M.Tech. at Kurukshetra university. I hope my daughter can get a private, if not a government job. Let us see what comes up, we might have to send our younger daughter elsewhere. How much they may work also depends on in-laws – some like it and some don’t.” (Khaati housewife, husband salesman, income Rs. 20,000, one son, two daughters)

“Our elder daughter is in 10th and we are already preparing her for medical stream. We have started coaching classes now itself, she goes Saturdays and Sundays. Our younger daughter is in 7th, very sharp in studies, but we have to wait and see. Students are giving lakhs in donation and doing MBBS. We can’t afford this. I do not see much scope for jobs in Jhajjar.” (Jat housewife married to junior engineer, income Rs. 36,000, two daughters, one son)

JHAJJAR, WARD 12

Working class wards such as this ward provide a window into what it means to have to keep falling back on stigmatised manual labour done out of necessity, whether by men or by women. The voices here, therefore, speak anxiously about whether any alternative to the work they already know might be available to their children.

“My daughter is average. With such children their line gets decided in 11th or 12th. She might get a teaching job but I don’t think one can consider it a good job to sustain oneself. In ANM (nursing) one hears that it is not decent to work during night shifts.” (Khaati teacher, separated, income Rs. 8,000, one daughter)

“I want my daughters to become well educated and self-sufficient with a good job. Though I do not get outside of the house, so what can I say? We will try Jhajjar first, then Gurgaon.” (Balmiki housewife, husband clerk, income Rs. 23,000, four daughters)

“Girls who are educated can become teachers and those who aren’t can always become domestic workers. And while domestic workers must be getting paid Rs. 3000–4000 at least, there are teachers being paid only Rs. 2500. My daughter-in-law is also teaching for Rs. 7,000. She is being paid this much after three years”. (Mother-in-law of Chamar housewife, husband contractor, income Rs. 60,000, one son, one daughter).

“Now my eldest daughter is doing B.Com. in Jhajjar. Without a secure source of income we cannot plan for the future beyond what we are doing right now for their education. ...See my husband is running an egg stall. But I have seen even the most educated people running their own stalls. I can show you people who have done 12th or B.Com. and they are doing this work.” (Jatav housewife, income Rs 15,000, two daughters, one son.)

“My eldest daughter is working in a bank in Gurgaon and stays with her uncle there. We are fixing her marriage. The second has done a staff nurse course and one exam is left. She has also done accounting and computers. She might even get government service. The third is at home, she did not want to study after 10th or do anything else and my son is in 11th. He failed in maths so now he is in arts. We are trying our best but in Jhajjar there is no scope for earning.” (Chamar housewife, husband garment factory worker, income Rs. 22,000, three daughters, one son)

Maharashtra

The job opportunities of towns like Shirur and Beed figure significantly in the views expressed in the interviews apart from what individual families can hope for. Compared to Haryana, the differences by caste are not as sharply drawn, as even some better educated Scheduled Caste families imagine good jobs for their daughters in ways that was hardly envisaged by their counterparts in Rohtak and Jhajjar.

SHIRUR WARD NO. 2

“My daughters could become a “madam” (teacher) here in Shirur, police too I think. Doctor is possible too I guess. But these jobs are not in this locality and only if they learn well.” (Scheduled Caste (Pardesi) housewife, husband rickshaw driver, income Rs. 5,000, two daughters)

“My husband thinks my daughter should become a lawyer because of all the injustice the poor go through. I think she should be a doctor because people run where they see money, and poor people have no one to take care of them. The husband should allow her to work if she wants. This should be decided and discussed before hand.” (Kumbhar housewife, husband land surveyor, income Rs. 25,000, two daughters)

“I have seen a lot of Marwadi people who study various things but at the end join the family business. For us education should bring jobs and financial stability. For girls in clothing showrooms, or in hospitals as nurses, maybe in MIDC. There should be opportunities after studying for a degree to earn on one’s own.” (Maratha tailor married to Dhover (SC), Amul dealer, income Rs. 15,000, one daughter, one son)

“Yes there are only few jobs available in the market. All my daughters are in higher education – one of them wants to work in a bank. I think we must look at marriage prospects along with job search. We should find in-laws who would allow my daughter to work even after marriage. I would like my son to become an officer but am not too hopeful about him.” (Maratha, husband bus conductor, income Rs. 20,000, three daughters one son)

SHIRUR WARD 14

“I would like my daughter to become an engineer. We are sending her to a good school now and are ready to send her elsewhere like Pune for further education. If she is working before marriage we have no problem and as a mother I will support her afterwards also, though it is up to her and the in-laws.” (Mahar nurse, family income Rs. 18,000, one daughter)

“I have heard a lot that people are not getting jobs. My daughter wants to become a teacher and is completing 12th. She has not been keeping well. Even the doctor looking after her said that it is difficult to find jobs. If such educated people say this what can we say who are not that literate?” (Buddhist housewife, husband construction contractor, income Rs. 18,000, 3 daughters, in joint family with three more girls)

“My daughter is doing M.Sc. computer science in Pune. She could have become a doctor while never having to take tuitions. She says she will take NET and SET (national and state eligibility tests for colleges and universities) and become a professor. I feel she should do PhD, but it is entirely up to her. Marriage will happen afterwards.” (Maratha housewife, husband farming family, income Rs. 35,000, one daughter, one son)

“I had an early marriage and my in-laws were into farming, and I had to suffer some violence from them. Then we left the village and came here. My daughter (in Class 9) wants to become an IAS officer! After B.Sc. agriculture she can go to Pune to study for UPSC or MPSC. My son is still young but we want him to do engineering, something that will pay well.” (Maratha tailor, husband school teacher, income Rs. 24,000, one daughter, one son)

“My elder daughter wants to do either MBA or MCA – let’s see how her interest develops. Job is a must. But unless someone gives the opportunity only then one can get the experience. It is the responsibility of the government to provide job opportunities, is that not correct? My daughter is a terror. She used to say to me that after marriage she will do a job and send all her money to her mother”. (Maratha widow, manages husband’s company after his death, income Rs. 20,000, two daughters, one son)

BEED WARD NO. 13

“You have to pay 10 lakhs for a job. Middle class people can’t afford it. Even after that you will not get a salary. Better to put that money in the bank and earn interest. Our daughter is doing engineering diploma but who is to say about the future?” (Brahmin housewife, husband civil engineer, income Rs. 47,000, one daughter)

“Because this is not an industrial area there are no jobs, for both boys and girls. Only a few can get government jobs. So though we have expectations from our daughter it is a difficult situation.” (Brahmin primary school teacher, family income Rs. 75,000, one daughter)

“The older one says she wants to do nursing, the younger hasn’t said anything yet. Our wish is different but they should want to listen to me. Teacher, engineer...” (Buddhist, housewife, husband journalist, income Rs. 10,000, two daughters)

“For girls there is nursing, girls seem to do well. If they don’t get government service at least they work in private clinics. There is Diploma and B.Ed. for school teaching and some could become doctors.” (Mahar school clerk, husband teacher, income Rs. 26,000, three daughters)

“My daughter wants to become an IAS officer. She is very smart. I have more hopes for her. Not so much about my son. His interest is more in sports. We’ll get her married once she has a job and the boy is of the same stream and level.” (Vanzari housewife, husband teacher, income Rs. 30,000, one daughter, one son)

“There are no companies here. I haven’t even tried to find employment for my daughters. They got married in the 10th grade and left everything.” (Mahar domestic worker, husband mason, income Rs. 9,000, five daughters, one son)

BEED, WARD 11

“There are no opportunities for women in Beed. There are many Dip. Ed. and B.Ed. without jobs. So though we would like our daughter to get a job after education we cannot say what job. My husband has a transferable job so we may move elsewhere.” (Kumbhar housewife, husband doctor, income Rs. one lakh, one daughter)

“We do not see much here apart from teaching or nursing. We will have to go elsewhere for opportunities for our daughters.” (Maratha housewife, income Rs. 13,000, two daughters)

“I want my daughter to do MBBS but finally she has to select the field of her choice. I want her to work right after she completes her education. Even I did not want to get married before I had a job.” (Vanzari nurse, husband unemployed, income Rs. 40,000, one daughter, one son)

“My daughter has done engineering for which there is no opening in Beed. We are gathering courage to send her to Pune and in the meanwhile she is doing her M.E. Here she would get a lectureship in a private institution paying Rs. 8,000 as salary, and that too won’t pay for 2–3 months”. (Muslim college lecturer, husband estate agent, income Rs. 60,000, two daughters, one son.)

“Women don’t have employment opportunities. We can only dream of doctor and engineer for our children.” (Mahar domestic worker and sugarcane labourer, income Rs. 8,000, three daughters, one son)

4.5 • MARRIAGE

The next major theme (that has already crept into the previous discussions to some extent) about planning children’s future concerns marriage. Here again, as in previous sections of this chapter, description and analysis is taken first from the survey and followed up with views gleaned from the interviews. In the survey, the first main question put to the respondents was when they expected to get their sons and daughters married if they had not done so. As one might expect, a few were

already married at the time of the survey among older cohorts. On the whole respondents did not feel ready to provide an answer as to when they expected their children to marry. It is possible that respondents felt that it was not prudent to speak openly about something like providing information as to when exactly such an expectation would be fulfilled. It is also possible that respondents were being particularly circumspect about talking about age of marriage, considering the high proportions of those respondents who had been married below the age of 18 years (refer Chapter two). (However, as we will see shortly, they were much more ready to venture into views on expenses relating to marriage)

4.5.1 • MARRIED CHILDREN AND AGE OF MARRIAGE

Haryana

- ▶ In the Haryana sample, 6 per cent sons and 8.5 per cent daughters were already married out of their respective samples.
- ▶ 1 per cent of the sons were married between 19 and 21, with 5 per cent 22 years and above. (Thus under age marriage for sons is not unknown today even if the numbers are very small.)
- ▶ Among daughters there was an even spread from 18 to 25 years and no reports of marriage before 18 years.
- ▶ Interestingly, among older cohorts a tiny number (0.2 per cent) said they wanted to get their sons married before 21 years, while the majority (60 per cent) said at least till 25 years.
- ▶ There was no open evidence of worry over the marriage of their sons, in a context where unmarried sons has been a phenomenon in rural Haryana and has been in the news, due to the adverse sex ratio and consequent fears over shortages of brides and the male marriage squeeze.
- ▶ Where planning of daughters' marriage was concerned, small numbers (3 per cent) saw 18–20 years as the right age while most gave ages from 21–25 years.
- ▶ Among younger cohorts, 11 per cent wanted an early marriage for their sons (18 to 20 years) while most (49 per cent) said 21 years or above. This is quite surprising, and leads to wondering whether the desire for such an early marriage is a disguised worry about a son's marriageability. Moreover, as one might expect, these answers came from the poor Wards Ward 12 and Ward 12J.
- ▶ Among daughters on the other hand, just 8 per cent said they would marry then between 18 to 20 years while the rest looked to higher ages, including 25 years.

In the context of the survey, Haryana respondents did not express fears about the unmarriageability of sons, except perhaps for those who wanted to get them married early. No one openly reported that they wished to marry their daughters below the age of 18 years (though the interviews belied this, since some had indeed been married below 18). There appeared a sense of confidence among respondents with many saying that their daughters could be married at higher ages, including 25 years.

Maharashtra

- ▶ In the Maharashtra sample, 50 sons were already married (that is 5 per cent out of the male sample) and 130 daughters (14 per cent). While the age of marriage of sons varied from 20 to 26, that of daughters ranged from 18 to 22 years.
- ▶ Among older cohorts with adult sons who were unmarried, female respondents predominantly gave ages of 25 years or above as the “right” age, along with statements such as need to complete education, get a job and “settle”.

- ▶ For daughters of older cohorts answers were equally distributed at different ages – 18 years, 21 and 25 years. Only about half of this sample were prepared to give a specific answer, while the rest said they could not say.
- ▶ Among younger cohorts, interestingly, respondents were more ready to offer an answer even though their children were much younger. Sons would be married around 21 years for 11 per cent of this group, 58 per cent said by the time they were 25 years, and 23 per cent said above 25 years.
- ▶ For daughters 14 per cent said they might get their daughters married by the time they were 18 years, 29 per cent by the time they were 21 years, 33 per cent by the time they were 25 and 14 per cent above 25 years.

In Maharashtra, imagined ages of marriage was higher among younger cohorts.

4.5.2 • EXISTING COSTS OF MARRIAGE

Questions were also asked about costs related to marriage.

Haryana

- ▶ In Haryana, only about half of those who said they had married sons answered this question, namely 3 per cent. Interestingly, there was some willingness to mention significant expenditures with half of these giving figures above 5 lakhs while others mentioned amounts below this.
- ▶ For daughters, information was forthcoming on all the 8.5 per cent married daughters. Half of these gave figures between one lakh and five lakhs and a little less than half mentioned more than five lakh – not surprisingly these came overwhelmingly from the most well off Ward 6 in Rohtak, while others were distributed across all the Wards.

Maharashtra

In terms of costs of marriage, the first questions pertained to those children who were already married. Once again there is a difference overall between Maharashtra and Haryana. Where Haryana displays a willingness to refer to large sums of money this is not the case in Maharashtra, and indicates and unwillingness to speak on this.

- ▶ Among sons, two thirds of those who were married mentioned tiny sums by way of costs – under Rs. 5,000! About one-third mentioned sums between a lakh and five lakh, but no one went above that figure.
- ▶ When it comes to daughters, about 25 per cent said emphatically that they did not give anything at the time of marriage, 25 per cent mentioned again the incongruous figure of less than Rs. 5,000, 15 per cent mentioned sums from one lakh to five lakh and 10 per cent above five lakh.

In Maharashtra while there are those who claim next to no expenses or dowry payments at the time of marriage, a small proportion are prepared to mention large sums similar to those of Haryana respondents.

4.5.3 • FUTURE COSTS OF MARRIAGE

When it came to future costs of marriage, female respondents were more confident to speculate about willingness to spend, whether on sons or on daughters. In considerable contrast to the silence evinced by female respondents on the subject of costs of education and especially costs of getting a job, especially in Haryana, they were much more forthcoming on the subject of future costs of marriage for both sons and daughters. In all likelihood, this is because questions of marriage are much more

directly within their experiential world compared to something like a job about which they had little idea.

Haryana

- ▶ About 30 per cent did not know or did not wish to say.
- ▶ While very small proportions mentioned sums below Rs. 50,000, 11 per cent mentioned sums of up to 1 lakh, 35 per cent up to 5 lakhs, and 17 per cent more than this when it came to sons.
- ▶ For daughters, similar proportions did not offer their views or did not know.
- ▶ 8 per cent gave amounts of up to 1 lakh, 34 per cent up to 5 lakh and as much as 20 per cent above this.

In Haryana, the highest figures related to planned costs of marriage were dominated by respondents from the well-off Wards. So firstly, there is greater willingness to discuss marriage expenses and secondly, there is no major distinction between sons and daughters. Dowry for daughters is therefore not being offered as a distinct cost.

Maharashtra

- ▶ In the Maharashtra sample, 12 per cent did not know (and there was not much difference across Wards) and miniscule numbers of 1 per cent said no money would be spent on their son's marriage along with 2 per cent who explicitly mentioned court marriage.
- ▶ 42 per cent of the sample were willing to pay up to Rs. 5 lakhs, 20 per cent up to one lakh and 15 per cent above 5 lakhs. So in contrast to what Maharashtra respondents were willing to say about existing married sons, there was far greater willingness to mention large sums of money, and only insignificant numbers either referred to no cost marriages or insignificant amounts.
- ▶ When it came to daughters, the number of those who did not know or did not wish to say was 18 per cent with no significant differences across Wards.
- ▶ Here too large sums were offered – 46 per cent overall were willing to give up to Rs. 5 lakhs, 12 per cent up to one lakh and 15 per cent above 5 lakhs.

In Maharashtra, the difference between sons and daughters is not much and there is no visible difference of dowry payments in the case of daughters. (Going by the answers in the interviews, it can also be surmised that dowry payments were not easily acknowledged in the survey format context). For those willing to pay for the wedding of their children, similar sums are involved whether it be a son or a daughter. So overall when it comes to marriage expenses there is a convergence between Haryana and Maharashtra.

4.6 • VIEWS ON MARRIAGE OF CHILDREN FROM THE INTERVIEWS

Compared to the combination of uncertainty, hope, ignorance and vagueness that was evident from respondents' views on the employment prospects of their children, they were much more forthcoming and clear-headed about marriage. At the same time, their views often ranged far and wide, slipping from what they planned or expected for their own children to a more general commentary on marriage practices "these days". As already seen in the discussion in the previous chapter around their own marriages, there was little room when talking about their children's future for anything other than marriage. But – with some important exceptions – one of the ways in which respondents noted a shift from their lives to that of their daughters (and sons) was around changes surrounding the institution and practices relating to marriage, though this was not as marked as

in the case of education. Respondents did not use the language of tradition and modernity to mark such change. Moreover, marriage, as already stated, continued to be viewed as compulsory. Not only that. The marriage of children was by no means out of parents' hands, indeed, it continued to be the core mechanism whereby they completed their sense of responsibility towards children. One can only speak of some variation with regard to the extent to which they saw themselves as playing the central role. As already mentioned in Chapter three, the shift could be discerned in the use of terms like "consent" more often than of "choice". Most of those interviewed wished to see their children marry when they were "ready" and "mature", had "completed" their education, and sought the clear consent of their children to parental decisions in the matter. However, as we will see in some of the excerpts from interviews below, for families vulnerable due to their caste and class, early quick marriages for their daughters (often below the age of 18) was justified as necessary, indeed, was a strategy to pre-empt the immature sexual agency of the young. This came out particularly strongly in Haryana but also, if in more muted form, in Maharashtra. The very small number who drew upon the language of individual choice as a positive development stood out all the more starkly. Caste endogamy, village exogamy (in Haryana), were the overwhelming norms, and the same prohibitions and permitted alliances (gotra prohibitions in Haryana and cross-cousin marriages in Maharashtra, for example) reemerge in discussions about children.

And yet there are distinctly new elements as well. The question of consent for instance, was frequently mentioned alongside an acknowledgement that separation and divorces were now a reality in contemporary society. Hence the need to ensure as much compatibility in the "matching" of bride and groom as possible, for which the consent of the daughter and son were required. Many spoke of the difficulty "these days" of finding good matches. It was, surprisingly in Maharashtra more than in Haryana that respondents spoke of bride shortages in their own communities. In Haryana on the other hand, everyone knew that there were such shortages in the villages, with brides being brought from other parts of the country. But curiously, it did not seem to be an issue that was affecting their own worlds, or the prospects of their family members, but one that was identified with the rural contexts that they had left behind. Another finding from the interviews (which may be specific to families living in smaller towns) is that of marriage distance – many said that they wanted their daughters to marry nearby, often in the same town, if marriages had already happened or were close to being negotiated. (Whether or not this breaches norms of village exogamy is unclear as perhaps the families forming the alliance did not hark from the same ancestral village)

Especially for daughters there is frequent discussion of the ideal son-in-law and across all the sites. Interestingly, among his first qualities is that he should have no addictions, which required careful probing into his background beyond the usual cross-checking of income, property and such like. There was considerable duping going on with regard to the economic status of sons and their families, several families asserted. So problems of alcoholism and to a lesser extent drug use appear to be quite widespread – indeed there was frequent mention of alcoholic fathers in the interviews of several respondents, especially in Maharashtra, which at all costs had to be avoided for their own daughters. The difficult chances of finding someone who was decent, with a steady job (urban based preferably government service), with in-laws that would respect the daughter-in-law and treat her well, were quite evident.

A particularly significant element in the new discourse around the marriage of children and particularly that of daughters was the question of how children related to their parents after marriage, especially when parents were older and in need of care. The starkest aspect here is what one might call the emergence of a new gender stereotype, versions of which have already been encountered earlier in this report – that of the caring daughter, on the one hand, and the son, on whom no expectations should be placed, especially after his marriage, on the other. Of particular interest for this study was

the consequent articulation by several respondents of the real possibility that daughters could look after their parents. Sometimes this would take the form of hyperbole “the daughter will fly to her parent’s side at the slightest sign while the son is busy elsewhere”. At the same time, this did not directly translate into a greater acceptance of the daughter only family, though it did on occasion result in mention being made of ghar jamais, that is sons-in-law who were prepared to move in with the wife’s family.

More importantly, (as will come up again in the next chapter) the reasons for the need for a son have also undergone a shift: It is less in relation to parents (who even referred to “good for nothing sons”) than for the sake of the daughter that sons are needed. The daughter, in other words, must have a brother, precisely because as parents they not be there when daughters get older, and because in-laws are not an ultimate guarantee of future security and stability. So girls need the protection and care of a brother for their own futures!

4.6.1 • DOWRY

Finally, as will be seen in some the views below, dowry and expenses related to marriage were quite a favourite topic among the respondents. Going by the range of views expressed, and with some differences across Haryana and Maharashtra, there is no obvious consensus around dowry. Given the kinds of pushes and pulls that characterise the marriage market which is so segmented by class and caste, it would be surprising if this situation did not find some reflection when it comes to dowry, by which is meant, the range of payments in kind and cash that the bride’s family gives to the family of the groom.

On the one hand, many said that costs relating to marriage had gone through the roof, with dowries larger than ever. Indeed, dowry did not have to be transacted explicitly any more – the bride’s side gave a combination of goods and cash without having to be asked. Gifting a car as part of a good dowry found frequent mention. But, on the other hand, some said that dowry rates had come down and was no longer being demanded.

One respondent in Maharashtra even referred to money being given by grooms who were not faring well in the marriage market. Some of the Mahar respondents in Maharashtra also stated strongly that they did not believe in dowry, along with rituals and wasteful expenditure in marriages, but as Buddhists practiced a simple court marriage. A common statement by respondents (especially those with both a son and a daughter) was that they were perfectly ready not to demand a dowry for their own son, what they really cared for were the qualities of the bride. But how could they behave this way when it came to their own daughters, they asked? It was for the other side to say they were not interested in dowry. So this meant that families had to be prepared to give well to ensure the stability of the marriages of their daughters.

ROHTAK, WARD 6

“Children are becoming scared of marriage these days because marriages don’t last. Girls have also started to not compromise at all. The more education is coming, the less the girls are adjusting. The fault is on both sides... Girls should be at least 24–25 years and boys 28–30 years. I believe that the Hindu Marriage Act should be changed to prevent marriages within the village – they are brother-sister. I am also saying that if you have the resources then you should give according to what the girl may need. 10 lakhs was spent on my marriage. Girls are less for those boys who are useless. There are not many girls left who will marry such boys.” (Jat housewife, husband real estate developer, income Rs. 62,000, one daughter)

“We would rather educate our girls than give much gold or dowry. We will get them married into simple families. Normal weddings need 5–6 lakhs and if you give a car then 15 lakh. If a boy is in a good post then we give a car. He must have a government job, come from a good family.” (Jat housewife, husband has hardware store, income Rs. 40,000, 3 daughters)

“We will fix our daughter’s marriage with the help of a bicholiya (relative as go between). But we have to be careful as people lie a lot about how much land they own, what job the son has and so on. We want a boy of the same status as ours, which means they expect dowry with their mouths wide open. It would be 25–30 lakhs.” (Jat housewife, husband runs school, income Rs. 50,000, one daughter, one son).

“Marriage shouldn’t be like earlier when child marriage would happen. Children should be mature. As for expectations, we have none. Sons become totally busy in their own lives, they are not looking after parents. Wife also goes out for work, children roam around outside and the grandparents are left alone to look after themselves. Due to this some people don’t even want to have sons, they wish that god gives them two daughters.” (Jat dairy work, family income Rs. 27,000, one daughter, one son)

“My children are busy with work and studies, they are not thinking of such things as love. I want a boy who does not have any addictions for my daughter – even if he earns 2 lakhs we wouldn’t marry such types. In my community girls are married off at 18, I want to wait till 25–26 years and boys should wait till 30. Among us at least 3 lakh is normal marriage expenditure including for boys. Everything depends on whether the other side is decent or not.” (Balmiki, runs general store with her husband, income Rs. 45,000, three daughters, one son)

“My elder daughter did B.Sc. and M.Sc. and got a husband with a good government job who earns Rs. 35,000–40,000 a month. Her dowry came to 5 lakh, the husband’s family did not demand anything. We just gave gold and furniture. In my time, parents wouldn’t go to their daughter’s place and if they did, people would look down on them. Now if I go, it is not minded at all and I am treated with respect. This change may only be in the cities and the opposite may be true in the villages.” (Jat dairy, husband security guard, income Rs. 40,000, three daughters, one son)

ROHTAK, WARD 12

“It is becoming difficult to get the marriage fixed. The boys don’t work and have become useless. They leave their parents and find girls like them. If the boy is good anyone is willing to spend. Even distance does not matter if the boy has a good job.” (Balmiki housewife married to peon, income Rs. 38,000, two daughters)

“We keeping thinking about our future with just two daughters. We will educate them well and make them independent so they can support us a little by giving money. In any case sons do not fulfill expectations. Even if he is simple and earnest he can still go the wrong way after marriage. And if he is already useless then he wouldn’t support his parents.” (Dhanak housewife, husband truck driver, two daughters)

“I got my daughters married early and nearby – I had got offers from Rewari and Panipat but wanted them closer. I had to borrow 4 lakhs for my daughter and still have to pay off the debts. My heart sinks when I hear of the things that are happening these days. There

is no modesty or patience to wait for their parents to find someone for them. A girl should listen whether her parents have married her to a disabled or even unemployed person. They will remain unhappy if they marry out of their own choice – such girls are whores. Looking at today's world, while it is said that girls should wait till 18–19 years, I married them at 16–17.” (Balmiki daily wage worker, income Rs. 12,000, three daughters)

“I don't have time to think about the future. In daily wage labour I leave in the morning and come back at night only. What will I think anyhow, I am a labourer and these kinds of plans are meant for big educated people. We will not go for any expensive marriage. I strongly feel that one shouldn't marry into a family that is above you because it will only bring you sadness.” (Dhanak construction worker, income Rs. 25,000, 5 daughters one son)

“Marriage distance should be somewhere neither too close nor too far away. If it is very near we will be accused of going over every day and if it is far off then it will become difficult to help with all the ups and downs. The biggest problem for my daughter is that there aren't any good boys around. They are either alcoholic or don't have a job. They don't study.” (Balmiki housewife, husband sanitation worker, income Rs. 47,500, five sons, one daughter)

JHAJJAR, WARD 1

“These days they ask for a fully educated girl for marriage. Because a girl illuminates two families. The second thing is what if the girl finds a good for nothing boy. That is why her education and job are also important. We'll get by in our old age from what we have. If she marries into a good family we will find support, otherwise we will look to my sister's sons for support. We hope to find a family who understands what it means to have just one daughter.” (Brahmin housewife married to shopkeeper, income Rs. 15,000, one daughter).

“Marriage depends upon education. These days marriage is not necessary as before. One can become independent, support oneself. There are so many orphans to adopt. Only if a girl can't study and become that educated then you set an age limit and start looking. Then we have to make the girl and boy meet, if their thoughts match and they consent then yes otherwise no. (Yadav mother-in-law, love marriage by son with Khaati daughter-in-law tuition teacher, income Rs. 25,000, two daughters)

“For our son (now studying M.Tech.) we want someone with similar thinking so they will be compatible. She must be educated and have a service job, who would take care of the home. My elder daughter is 23 right now and studying, we can wait a few more years. We would like to have her nearby. We marry in our own community and check for three generations of gotra. Love marriages bring dishonour to the parents and we lose all respect in society.” (Khaati housewife, husband salesman, income Rs. 20,000, one son, two daughters)

“Love marriages blow away like the breeze. They are only amongst the very educated who live abroad or in big cities and don't have relations in the village. We will look when our children are mature. The boy should be capable enough, her equal if not higher. Girl should be minimum 25 and boy 28–30 years. We want them to settle within 50–60 kms, so they are within reach. We are more interested in values than in being fair or good looking, five and half feet tall, etc., which is what other people are only interested in.” (Jat husband, junior engineer, income Rs. 36,000, two daughters, one son)

“It is becoming very difficult to find girls for marriage. It has become common that girls are older and the boy one is finding is younger. Love marriages within gotra or village is not a good thing as no one is going to accept it. But with so many difficulties, may be inter-caste marriages are ok. See, I would prefer to have a girl from a poor family. Dowry is not a must.” (Jat teacher, husband unemployed, income Rs. 8,000, one son)

“We wanted a son to make the family complete, so that a sister gets a brother. But we got two sons only. We want our son to become our support pillar when he grows up. Inside of us we still somewhere think of these things.” (Khaati husband, clerk, income Rs. 30,000, two sons)

JHAJJAR, WARD 12

“We will look for a boy nearby, like 50 kms. This will keep expenses down. On average marriages cost 7–8 lakhs. The groom should be educated, religious and have no addictions. We want an arranged marriage but will accept a love marriage if the situation is out of control.” (Balmiki husband, clerk, income Rs. 22,000, four daughters)

“I migrated to Jhajjar for my daughter’s education. But I married my daughter early when she was in the first year of BA because she looked like 25 years. Jhajjar is not that developed and we have to think of honour and respect. Sons can also bring dishonour. I don’t like love marriages because you are going to court from the beginning. And then if it doesn’t work out she will immediately go to the court because you have already been there.” (Balmiki anganwadi worker, husband Maruti worker, income Rs. 25,000, one daughter, one son)

“What matters in a marriage is whether a girl has a job or not. If she doesn’t she will only be made to clean the house. There are categories in these matters. If the boy has a very good job then he will want the girl to be in service as well. If the boy is in the army then for sure the girl would have to be from science, like B.Sc. or M.Sc. My husband wants to get my eldest daughter married but she is refusing and wants to do M.Sc. and guaranteeing that she will find some job after that. She will be 25 when she finishes so we can only hope, because if she gets older we will not be able to find a match for her”. (two daughters one son, no. 4035 Anup Devi – check forms)

“Since I have only one son I have no expectations. If I had two perhaps then. For my daughter, I just want the boy to be decent and have a good job. It need not be a government job. Also I hope there is no secret demand for more dowry. I have seen the boy’s side demanding a lot even after marriage. Then beating up, fights over it.” (Khaati housewife married to motor mechanic, income Rs. 12,000, two daughters, one son)

“What can I say after educating all my children? The elder has done plus 2 and does not want to study any more so we have to look for her marriage. I have more hopes for the younger daughter. Then there are cases where there is an only son and he betrays his parents. It is not written in stone that he will look after them. Marriages should be a mix between your own choice and what the parents want. The children should tell their parents and if the parents don’t like it then think about going ahead. As for dowry, I would want to give a car or at least a bike if the boy has a government job. But for my son, if it were up to me, I will only get the girl and nothing else. See, if the other side says that I only want your girl then obviously I will only give the girl. They have to take the first step because we are giving our girl in marriage and we cannot take the chance of them taunting us if we don’t

give anything with our girl.” (Chamar housewife, husband unemployed, Rs. 12,000 family income, two daughters, two sons)

“My own wish is that when I get my son married I won’t ask for anything [nowadays there are luxury expenses – 8 DJs instead of 1, helicopter instead of car...]. But when it comes to my daughters I can’t guarantee that I will get somebody like that. Already we have seen two prospective grooms and they did not work out. One had a building construction business with his father, the other is the only boy with seven sisters and they all had expensive marriages, so we did not pursue it further. They would have eased the burden of their seven marriages through us.” (Muslim tailor married to Rajput, runs sexology clinic, income Rs. 30,000, two daughters, two sons)

“I have seen *atta satta* marriages (exchange of daughters) in my community. See, if both the daughters have been exchanged we feel better about the condition of the girl. Also there are those where the boy does not have any job and is unable to get married. If he has a younger sister *atta satta* might happen there as well. But if they marry out of choice, then a girl in our community can get killed if she comes back home. I have also seen cases where girls are brought from elsewhere and are not even allowed to step out of the house. I just hope that I will find a daughter-in-law to support me in my old age. Already my eyes are getting weak. These days girls have become educated and more demanding, so they would refuse to go to a village.” (Gujjar tailor, husband unemployed, income Rs. 2,000, two sons)

Maharashtra

SHIRUR, WARD NO 2

“Now parents know what their children want, earlier they were busy. Especially mothers who have suffered a lot when they were children, they know. Now every parent has expectations, desires. They want to do everything.” (Wadar (upper caste), runs a shop and has political leanings with Congress, income Rs. 10,000, one daughter)

“Sometimes I feel that I will not marry off my daughters. I will educate them and ensure that they are independent. All I want is that they are happy and look after me that’s all. Love marriages involve people – and if it is an inter-caste marriage then you should live together till the day you die.” (Pardesi, husband auto driver, income Rs. 3,000, two daughters)

“I married off my girls when they were 17, 18 and 19 years. I only gave money – Rs. 25,000 to the eldest, Rs. 90,000 to the next and 2–4 lakhs for the youngest one, wedding expenses were borne by the in-laws. Now my youngest is back at home because her husband has gone and married his cousin. I tried to find boys who were educated and lived in cities. A woman must get married. But then I look at myself, I earn Rs. 10,000 per month I do not need my husband at all.” (Chambhar (SC), Cleaner in a company, income Rs. 10,000, 3 daughters)

“I have three daughters (felt I needed a son). I think they should marry in good families. But I may not marry the youngest one. Or there should be someone ready to be a *ghar jamai*, so I can live with her. Even other caste is ok, I married in my caste and see what happened to me (separated). I will not let anyone waste their lives. I looked after my mother against my husband’s wishes”. (Kaidaki, Christian convert, domestic worker, income Rs. 16,000, three daughters)

“For my son, if he does not bring someone, I will have to look then. I usually suggest that these days, leave caste and all aside. If you know anyone from a known family get your son married to a girl from such a family. I am from Brahman samaj, and it is difficult to find girls these days. With education girls are expecting more from boys. But what I see around me I also do not accept. Girls are taking up bad habits just to show. Such a girl would be unacceptable to me.” (Brahmin teacher, husband lecturer, income Rs. 15,000, one son)

SHIRUR WARD 14

“I want both my son and daughter to marry from a poor to middle class family, not rich family. Especially girls from such families have tantrums and too many expectations. I feel girls are taking care of their parents and boys are not even bothering in what condition they are in. Patrika must be consulted in our caste while making a match.” (Maratha housewife in farming family, income Rs. 35,000, one daughter, one son)

“I will not think about my elder daughter’s marriage until she is settled well – has completed her MBA and found a job. She can then also help with the education of her sister and brother. I have more expectations from my daughters than my son.” (Maratha widow, runs company, Rs. 20,000, two daughters, one son)

“My daughter was in 9th when we got a good match. She gave her 10th exams from her marital home. Her husband is a farmer, and with the second daughter it was likewise – he is B.Com. and they have their own land. My third daughter has completed 6th standard and did not want to study further. So I did not send her to school after that because people from outside and in school do take advantage of such girls. She now helps me at home. There is a lot of teasing that happens and I have heard that men grab girls inside their car and rape them”. (Maratha housewife, husband autorickshaw driver, income Rs. 13,000, three daughters, one son)

BEED, WARD 13

“In our community if a girl is educated we do not have much dowry. Our daughter is 25 and we will start looking for her. The family must be good, we must see their behaviour, everything. Whether the boy has addictions, his work. We’d like a boy with a job in a company or a government job. And if possible in Pune. Girls do look after their parents these days though I do not like it. We will have to change our thoughts. But there are cases where girls don’t look after their parents. Society chides from both sides.” (Brahmin primary teacher, husband medical representative, income Rs. 75,000, one daughter)

“Nowadays age for marriage is 22–23 years for girls minimum. Whoever studies more the age increases and expectations as well. Girls don’t find boys at their level. It goes up to 27–28 even 30 years. Patrikas must match. Usually relatives bring matches but most don’t want to fall into this in case something goes wrong later. If the boy is rich but has addictions people don’t want to give their daughters. Since ours is an only daughter we will get a big wedding done. Love marriages are only ok if the boy is from the same caste, has a good job and parents agree.” (Brahmin housewife, income Rs. 47,000, one daughter)

“There are additional problems for girl only families. If the girl doesn’t find a job, she won’t find a match and the boy won’t be from a good family. The father should look out for them. No love marriages and certainly not inter-caste, it only leads to conflicts. We

don't need anything from her – if she visits once in six months it is sufficient.” (Mahar housewife, income Rs. 10,000, two daughters)

“Our condition is not so good. If my son is able to get a government job he will get a girl. I have been looking a lot for a match. Our community is big, but still I am prepared that because of the shortage of girls we may get a girl from another caste, like Navi caste. Even dowry rates have gone down because there are no girls. We would like it that our children look after us but that may not happen no? They will go where there are jobs.” (Maratha housewife, husband clerk, income Rs. 30,000, one daughter, one son)

“We have three daughters so we understand the problems of parents with more daughters. Because the girl's side has to pay for the wedding, people think about aborting their daughters. We have married two of them, at 5 lakhs each (gold and cash). The in-laws don't let my daughters work, one has done MA in English. Once my son is older I will think of his marriage and with his consent, I am not interested in dowry. We hope he will look after us. If he is going to have a love marriage then it has to be within our caste.” (Vanzari housewife, husband assistant teacher, income Rs. 32,000, three daughters, one son)

“Our biggest problem is employment – there are no jobs. We have already got three daughters married when they were in high school. The husbands have studied till 10th grade and have jobs in companies. We have no expectations from them – they should manage their marriage and be happy. As for our son we cannot say. Some boys look after their parents and some don't.” (Mahar domestic worker, income Rs. 9,000, 5 daughters, one son)

BEED, WARD 11

“I feel like having a son. Once my daughters are married they will be busy with their own lives. A son would look after us in our old age.” (Mahar housewife, husband advocate, Rs. 20,000, two daughters)

“We believe in court marriage, and in giving an educated daughter and not dowry at the time of marriage. Women do not participate in the marriage negotiations. It is also true that some men would remarry if they did not get a son. Till now boys would come to see a prospective bride, ask her questions and then reject her, then another boy and another. This is going to stop in future. No one will ask anyone not even parents. The children will make their own choice and inform at home. At most they will ask if parents will get them married or they should elope.” (Mahar housewife, husband contractor, income Rs. 60,000, one daughter, one son)

“In our community minimum dowry is 7–8 lakhs. For doctor or engineer the rate these days is 15–16 lakhs. This needs to stop. It is creating problems for both boys and girls who are unable to marry. Things will change a lot by the time of my daughter's wedding. (I had 1,000 wedding guests including MLAs and MPs). Perhaps neither my son or daughter will even ask for my consent. Anyway the change has started. I have a friend with well qualified daughters and she wants to marry them outside the Vanzari caste because of too much dowry to Vanzari boys.” (Vanzari nurse, income Rs. 40,000, one daughter, one son)

“My eldest daughter got a good proposal so we got her married and didn't make her having a job a condition since the family was good. My next daughter is doing her ME in engineering – we have been getting proposals but they are not compatible. The boy

should have a decent job and education.” (Muslim college lecturer, income Rs. 60,000, two daughters, one son)

“We don’t believe in horoscopes. We also allow inter-caste marriages with Marathas, Guravs and Kumbhars. We will never take dowry for our son – my husband never took dowry. But if there is a demand for our daughter what will we do? Besides we are giving our educated daughter who would bring earnings. I feel dowry should be demanded not from the bride but from the grooms. In fact, this is already happening in our village. Since there were no girls to marry, money was given to the bride, one lakh for each son – they were Maratha boys whom no girl wished to marry.” (Mahar domestic worker and sugar cane labourer, income Rs. 8,000, three daughters, one son)

“I can’t say how things will change by the time my son grows up. More dowry will surely be demanded – now it is 10–15 lakhs and by then 25–30 lakhs will be asked. I was married when I was 14 and my husband 23 years, now for girls it is more like 20–22 and boys 30–35 years. Boys have to have good habits and jobs to get married. Our situation is not that good and so far my son’s education is not great. When he is grown up and mature we should be able to manage the finances.” (Maratha housewife, husband tailor, income Rs. 30,000, one son)

“Now age of marriage has gone up because boys are not finding jobs that easily. It is often 30 years. Arranged marriages are fixed within relatives, like maternal uncle or cross cousin is very common. Dowry has gone down because people just want a good girl. However even inter-caste marriages are ok, what matters more than caste is people’s attitudes and mind set.” (Mahar housewife, husband junior college teacher, income Rs. 30,000, two sons)

This chapter has complemented chapter two in bringing to the fore issues relating to the education, work and marriage of children as planned by the respondents. It takes forward the picture presented in chapter three on the number and sex composition of children to probe how respondents think about their children’s futures. Differences between Haryana and Maharashtra, and between better off and poorer families are palpable in terms of the kinds of aspirations respondents had for their daughters and the degree to which these could be articulated. Undergirding all these differences, however, the economics of the family are starkly visible. Chapter five will bring all these considerations to a provisional conclusion.

CHAPTER 5

THE ELUSIVE LINKS BETWEEN **FAMILIES AND DEVELOPMENT**

The present study bears the title “the political and social economy of sex selection: exploring family development linkages”. Prior chapters have opened up various dimensions in the lives of mothers (Chapter two) – their education, marriage, work and employment and the employment of their husbands, and subsequent chapters three and four looked into family composition, child sex ratio patterns, and future planning for children. Survey findings were complemented with interview based views of respondents. What has emerged is a wealth of perceptions and experiences. Chapter three had a special focus on sex selection and avoiding a girl only family with Chapter four exploring the ideas and constraints shaping investments by families in the education, marriage and job prospects of their daughters and sons.

This concluding chapter offers some routes to bring the issues raised in the previous chapters together to a provisional conclusion. It explores the notion of a political and social economy through the relationships that can be plotted between families and their decision making, on the one hand, and the towns and regions within which they live, on the other. To begin with, some minimal descriptions will be offered based on a selection of secondary literature on the economic development in the states of Maharashtra and Haryana and more specifically in the districts of Rohtak, Jhajjar, Pune and Beed where the urban sites of the study have been located. It should be stated at the outset that no scholarship has been found that specifically studies the sites of our study and their urban character. Very little research appears to have concentrated on non-metropolitan urban locations in the Indian context more generally. Articles on urban development and state policies invariably focus on the problems and prospects of India’s metropolitan cities and their governance structures (e.g., Sivaramakrishnan 2011; Pethe and Lalwani 2006). While for Haryana a small number of research

articles were located with some direct or indirect lessons for its urban development, there was much less to be found for Maharashtra in relation to the field sites. Government reports such as economic surveys and development reports have been the other source of information.

5.1 • **SECONDARY LITERATURE ON HARYANA**

As is well known, Haryana is amongst India's most prosperous states led by its pattern of growth in agriculture. Sheila Bhalla writing in the 1990s, like others, acknowledges the major impact of the Green Revolution from the 1960s and 1970s both in terms of patterns of rural prosperity for the dominant castes, namely the Jats, and significant reductions in rural poverty in the initial decades. But she has also pointed out that economic improvements did not automatically translate into social gains, whether in the field of health or sex ratios. She also referred to changes in rural Haryana itself due to reductions in the level of direct and indirect dependence on local agriculture and allied activities following some diversification in rural activities. (Bhalla 1995). High levels of irrigation and the widespread adoption of new farm technologies, however, have been insufficient to enable either comparable levels of occupational diversification and certainly has not reached the strata of those with the lowest incomes. Already in the 1990s, Bhalla highlighted a "crisis in Haryana" with the rise of unemployed educated youth, one that cast into even deeper shadow the limited prospects of manual workers from the landless and backward castes. Like most scholars, Bhalla concentrates on rural Haryana. However she also noted the nature of development of Haryana's industrial sector. Writing before the rise of the massive investments that created the National Capital Region, she focuses on places like Faridabad, which were initially established by 'outsiders' with little political backing by the state itself. "The notion of dispersed and balanced industrial development with local rural linkages has given way to the notion of concentrating industrial activities at a few selected points with a cluster of ancillaries around larger units". Since the 1980s, political interest in the development of industrial and tertiary sectors has grown, since agriculture could not be relied upon to absorb labour sufficiently. Rural infrastructure upgradation and diversification became stated goals. This shift, she goes on to note, led to a substantial change in the aspirations of village and small town residents, with growing commuting from these places by residents to industrial and tertiary sector units nearby.

Surinder Jodhka has also written extensively about the changing rural scenario in Haryana (Jodhka 2014; 2012). He too emphasizes employment diversification and aspirations among different sections of the rural population in relation to the neighbouring urban settlements. In a district like Karnal which he studied since the 1990s, even the boundaries of the rural and the urban have become blurred. While dominant castes grounded themselves in the market economy through cultivation and aspired for social and cultural mobility, Scheduled Castes and (to a more limited extent) backward castes saw some positive change via reservations policies in lower level government jobs and some mobility through education. For the dominant Jats, "the surplus they generated from agriculture went into education, urban trade and other non-agricultural activities" (2014: 6). While revisiting the villages in the early years of the twenty-first century that Jodhka had studied 20 years earlier, he noted considerable changes in caste and class configurations and relationships, undergirded by an all-round disenchantment with agriculture as an occupation. While families might still prefer to live in their villages due to the higher cost of urban life, they were no longer subsisting on the local agrarian economy, with richer castes leasing out their land or selling to industry and the state. Unfortunately, these very suggestive accounts do not tell us much about the growth of urban centres in a state like Haryana. A few other studies do point to the high growth in urban centres in Haryana in the most recent decades – out of 92 urban centres since independence 60 have grown during the 1991–2001 decade alone (Sangwan 2014). While urban populations in the state constituted 25 per cent in 1991, it grew to 29 per cent in 2001 and 35 per cent in 2011 according to Census figures, which is a higher rate of increase than the rest of the country. At the same time, there has been a growing concentration of

urban centres, with mid-level towns like Jhajjar and cities like Rohtak growing at a faster rate than smaller towns. This urbanization has been associated with the concentration of industries along the highways and especially with the development of urban agglomerations within the NCR region. Besides industrialisation, the growing administrative functions that district headquarters perform account for the higher rate of urban growth of urban centres like Rohtak and Jhajjar, with Jhajjar being carved out of the district of Rohtak as a new district much more recently.

Government Reports on Haryana: The other source of information for this study was from government reports – the Haryana development Report 2009 (prepared by the Planning Commission some years ago), the Economic Survey 2013–14, and Reports dealing with the National Capital Region (Apex Cluster Development Services 2015, NCRPB 2016, Delhi HDR 2013). The Haryana Development Report (2009) celebrates the structural shift from the primary to the secondary and tertiary sectors: If in 1993–94 the relative shares of the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors in the state's GDP were 42.5 per cent, 26.2 per cent and 31.3 per cent respectively, by 2004–05 these figures had altered significantly to 28.2 per cent, 27.4 per cent and 44.4 per cent. It also highlighted the huge rise in the number of production units since 1991, with a jump from 206 fully export oriented units in 1991 to all of 1260 such units in 2006. However, the report also concedes the problem of unemployment among the youth. "Unemployment is one of the major concerns of the State. The annual growth rate of employment is not sufficient to absorb the additions to the labour force, let alone reducing the piling backlog" (2009: 265). Thus for all the talk of a shift from primary to tertiary sectors in terms of GDP, when it comes to employment it is the primary sector that continues to provide the major share of employment with insufficient improvements in the share of employment elsewhere. If in 1987–88 the respective employment shares from primary to tertiary employment were 58.9 per cent, 12.7 per cent and 28.4 per cent, in 1999–2000, the figures had moved to 45.2 per cent, 12.4 per cent and 42.4 per cent respectively (ibid.: 27). Unemployment rates are at their highest among the youth in the 15–29 year age group – 8.1 per cent for rural and 8.3 per cent urban. The state's declared aim to solve this problem is "vocationalisation of education, expansion of job oriented technical and professional education at college level and financial and marketing support for the promotion of non-wage avenues of employment" (ibid.: 266). The last reference is therefore to possible opportunities of entrepreneurship and not to what most young persons and their parents look for – namely a job with a salary. The report concludes that agro-based industries, tourism, small-scale industries, retailing and IT communication-enabled services have the most employment potential.

The Economic Survey 2013–14 comes across as a gilded advertisement for Haryana's progress, and is only laudatory. It claims that Haryana is doing better than the rest of the country in developmental terms because of the higher growth rates of its tertiary sector, even while the primary sector is not being left behind. In the industrial sector the state has promoted public private partnerships (PPPs) where the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium industries joined with IMTs (Industrial Model Townships) for skilled manpower and employment opportunities. IMT Rohtak with an investment of 100 crores is mentioned. The state has also come up with a land pooling scheme whereby, since 2012 "the landowning farmers have been given the opportunity to become partners in the development process. For each acre of land acquired, a landowning farmer has been given the choice to opt for a developed industrial plot of 1,200 sq. yards" (Survey: 49). Further infiltration of a market economy into agriculture is advised through shifting from cereals to agro-based products like oilseeds or to activities like dairying. Dairying in particular is promoted as a self-employment scheme. Much is made of the figure of 1007 unemployed youth being provided with self-employment during the year 2012–13.

NCR REGION

When it comes to reports on the National Capital Region (NCR), that include the districts of Rohtak and Jhajjar in its periphery, the Economic Profile of the National Capital Region 2015 advertises the NCT as a manufacturing hub largely composed of small scale and low skilled industries making it the preferred destination of migrants from the neighbouring regions. However, it then projects a change in orientation – the NCT should now be promoting more high skilled work opportunities to cater to the local population and manufacturing should be spread out to sub-regions in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan (automobiles, electronics, handlooms, marble, leather). The sub-text is to slow down the in migration of low skilled workers from the surrounding areas. Only the central region of NCR (Delhi and its spread into neighbouring areas like Gurgaon, Faridabad, Bahadurgarh, Sonapat and Noida) are to continue to be manufacturing hubs for those populations who live there. Rohtak and Jhajjar have much smaller proportions of employment compared to other districts like Gurgaon, Faridabad, Sonapat and Panipat, and it is hoped that investments along the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal Corridor will address such unequal industrial development. The Report on Livelihood and Empowerment shows declining trends of population growth in Delhi due to a slowdown in migration with more low skilled migrants now settling down in the peripheries of the NCR rather than Delhi proper. Moreover slum demolitions in the city have ensured that such populations are finding it harder to sustain themselves, and are even being forced out. A study by Ram Singh Bora on migrant informal workers in Delhi and satellite towns confirms that Delhi is becoming a difficult state for migrants to find decent work and living opportunities. The kinds of jobs available are at the bottom end of the service sector such as masons, construction workers, maids, security guards, gardeners and so on. (Bora 2014).

THE JAT AGITATION 2016

Midway during the fieldwork phase of this study in February 2016, the very sites of the study in Rohtak and Jhajjar were rocked by a violent agitation led by Jats who demanded their inclusion in the list of Other Backward Classes by the State in order to be eligible for government jobs and seats in state supported higher education. Here was a dominant caste, owning most of the land, now laying claim to “lower caste” status hoping thereby to have a clear quota in state subsidized higher education and especially to have a right over that most desirable of occupations – a permanent job with a pension. Commentators made sense of this agitation (not unlike similar demands in Maharashtra by Marathas, or in Gujarat by Patels), with analyses such as the following one by Christophe Jaffrelot:

These dominant castes do not see their future in agriculture because of the attraction exerted by the city and because of the crisis in village India. The 2014 –15 Economic Survey showed that the wages of rural India were increasing at 3.6 per cent only (when the inflation rate was above 5 per cent), against 20 per cent in 2011. Those who had land next to big cities could sell it to developers and even became rentiers sometimes. But most of the migrants who left their village to try their luck in the city are disappointed by the job market. In contrast to the middle class inhabiting urban centres for generations, they have not received the kind of English-medium education that gives access to the services sector (especially in IT) offering opportunities. While they have sometimes run heavy debts to get some private, not-so-good education, they have to fall back on unskilled jobs. These jobs are precarious and badly paid. In the private sector, the average daily earnings of the workers was Rs. 249 in 2011–12, according to the Labour Bureau, and those of the employees at large, Rs. 388. By contrast, in the public sector, the figures were respectively almost three times more at Rs. 679 and Rs. 945. Recently, the Seventh Pay Commission

recommended an increase of the minimum monthly salary from Rs. 7,000 to Rs. 18,000.”
(*Indian Express* February 23, 2016)

This article goes on to say that little has been done to improve the conditions of workers in the much publicized private sector of the NCR Region. For instance, Maruti workers themselves have been largely on contract at abysmally low levels, which led to the Maruti workers’ strike. Even the low sex ratio finds mention here, with the argument that the marriage squeeze created by the shortage of brides has elevated grooms with a government job to becoming the most prized catch.

Taken together, this background literature on Haryana provides some ideas in very broad strokes about its pattern of development. Here is a state that saw considerable Green Revolution led prosperity, a lowering of poverty levels, and the rise of aspirations shaped strongly by urban desires. Yet the pattern of uneven and concentrated urban development has been quite mixed – on the one hand offering futures in the industrial and service sectors of the NCR Region, with corresponding migration and commuting, which in turn has spurred the high growth levels in the populations of Rohtak city and Jhajjar town. However, reductions in the dependency on agriculture are not being neatly matched by better jobs elsewhere. The city of Delhi itself is looking for ways to reduce further in migration and has been pushing many of its slum dwellers out of the metropolis. Even the dominant and largely better off Jats feel somehow cheated out of a better life, and are asking the state of Haryana to give them government jobs via a reservation policy. Government policies, while recognising the huge problem of unemployed youth, seem to be responding with promoting self-employment rather than avenues for more wage employment. This then is the context within which the families in this study are planning the sex composition of their families and their children’s futures.

5.2 • **SECONDARY LITERATURE ON MAHARASHTRA**

While it has been somewhat possible to locate the Haryana field sites in Rohtak and Jhajjar within the regional economy of Haryana and the National Capital Region through the secondary literature, this was not so easy to achieve in the case of the towns of Shirur and Beed. The state of Maharashtra is extremely different – it is the second largest in the country, with enormous economic differences and disparities both rural and urban. Shirur town belongs within the district of Pune, in the region of Western Maharashtra while Beed is part of the Marathwada region of eastern Maharashtra. Existing studies concentrate on the rural development of the state and disparities between regions (e.g., Mohanty 2009) and urban studies tend to focus especially on Mumbai, given its crucial identity as the commercial capital of the country and its unique place in India’s history more generally. Within these limitations, a few points can be made.

First of all, the development of agriculture in Maharashtra stands in marked contrast to north west India and Haryana in particular. This is a region that has been largely rain-fed, with only some regions under irrigation. In an article written in 1990 Ashok Mitra provides a useful backdrop, outlining the near stagnation in the early post independence years till the 1970s, followed by some uneven growth in select products in the subsequent decade of the 1980s. Sugar cane production, with heavy inputs via irrigation in the district of Pune, is one of the few examples of high growth, but other major products across the state like cotton and groundnut witnessed very unstable patterns of growth. Mitra predicted a “crisis on the food front” (1990: A 163) in coming years. What was needed was not necessarily more irrigation, but rather policies that would more fully address the needs of low rainfall drought prone regions. Beed certainly is one of those districts to have been repeatedly affected by

drought. Other writers have gone further to question the heavily water dependent model required for growing sugar cane itself, showing that when the costs of the high inputs of water are accounted for, the profit margins of this crop reduce vastly, and become unsustainable.

More recently, development and economic survey reports highlight the relatively strong position of the state in the secondary and tertiary sectors, thanks to the dominance of Mumbai and its agglomerations. The Maharashtra Human Development Report 2012 (Government of Maharashtra (2012) prepared with assistance from UNDP) uses human development indicators to discuss trends in the state, focussing on uneven patterns within it, and especially the problems faced by its poorest districts. Between the period 1999–2000 and 2008–09, the respective growth rates of the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors have been 3.3 per cent, 7.6 per cent and 8.6 per cent. At the same time their relative share in the net state domestic product (NSDP) have been 11.4 per cent, 25.9 per cent and 68.7 per cent. Maharashtra is therefore a state displaying high rates of decline in the agricultural sector and high growth rates in non-agriculture, including high rates of urbanisation. Maharashtra is second only to Tamil Nadu in urbanisation trends in the country. District wise there is an enormous degree of variation from the richest district of Mumbai, closely followed by Pune at the top of the list and districts like Washim and Nandurbar which are the poorest, at the bottom. Beed occupies an intermediary to lower position. This is also the case when it comes to HDI indicators, with Pune being consistently in a high position while Beed has been somewhere in the middle. By way of per capita net domestic product the district wise figures are as follows for the year 2012 – Mumbai Rs. 89,343, Pune Rs. 79,968, Beed Rs. 33,672 and Washim Rs. 23,628. But Maharashtra is not all that different when it comes to issues relating to employment. Recent decades have seen sustained declines in employment in the primary sector and near stagnation in the secondary and tertiary sectors. In 2002, while non-agricultural sectors were contributing 88 per cent in terms of income it was less than 50 per cent when it came to employment. In 2009–10 rural work participation rates were 48.8 per cent and urban 35 per cent overall, which is still better than the national average. Female urban work participation rates fell from 16.9 per cent in 1993–94 to 15.9 per cent in 2009–2010 (using NSS data), which is a decline, but not as severe as the national average declines, while male urban rates improved from 52.6 per cent to 57.5 per cent.

The data of the Economic Survey of Maharashtra 2014–15 is overwhelmingly state centric with only occasional district level data provided. Much of this data is therefore skewed by the “high performing” districts of Mumbai and Pune. According to the provisional results of the Annual Survey of Industries 2012–13 released by the government, the state is at the top position in terms of gross value added, fixed capital and emoluments to employees. Overall, the ‘Agriculture & Allied Activities’ sector was expected to fall at (–)8.5 per cent over the previous year, due to drought. The industry sector was expected to grow at 4 per cent with a major contribution from growth of ‘Electricity, Gas & Water supply’ at 16.3 per cent and Construction sector at 10.4 per cent. The manufacturing sector was expected to grow at 0.5 per cent over the previous year. The Services sector was expected to grow at 8.1 per cent. Overall, the economy was anticipated to grow at 5.7 per cent during 2014–15. The major contributors to state income were Mumbai (22.1 per cent), Thane (13.3 per cent) and Pune (11.4 per cent). These districts together contribute 46.8 per cent to GSDP. The maximum share in Agriculture & Allied Activities sector of GSDP comes from Nashik (10.4 per cent). Mumbai, Pune and Thane, together, were contributing nearly 50 per cent to the Industry sector. In the Services sector, the share of Mumbai was highest (27.4 per cent) followed by Thane (14.1 per cent).

According to the Sixth Economic Census (EC) provisional results, the number of establishments in the State was 61.3 lakh with an employment of 143.8 lakh. The State has been ranking first in employment amongst all states. The role of the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) in allotting plots to entrepreneurs is well known. In the present study Shirur also had an MIDC. As of

March 2014, the total number of MIDC units in the state stood at 40,870, worth Rs. 1.13 lakh crore, offering employment to 10.35 lakh employees. Pune district has the highest number of such units of any district in the state at 9,754 units employing 4,21 lakh people. Shirur's MIDC is home to 1115 units. Shirur also has one Special Economic Zone with 30 hectares of land, 127 industrial projects worth Rs. 8181 crore. (District Social and Economic Analysis Pune 2014).

Shirur town is the taluka head-quarters and, as already stated, belongs in Pune district. It is the largest town of the taluka and along with two others had an urban population of 63,770 as per Census 2011; while the rural taluka had as many as 117 villages with a total population of 3,21,644. Therefore while it is part of the wider urban agglomeration surrounding the city of Pune, it too acts as a hub in relation to the villages around it. Beed town in contrast is the district headquarters, one of 8 towns and 1,357 villages according to Census 2011 (District Social and Economic Analysis Beed 2014). Approximately 40 per cent of the district's urban population is in Beed town, and 80 per cent of the district is rural. It is mainly known as a hub for sugar cane production with 7 factories run on a cooperative basis as of March 2012 (though at the time of this study in 2016, several of these had closed down due to persistent drought conditions). As of 2012 there were 192 registered factories in the district with 158 in working condition employing 9916 workers. 5 cotton mills and 9 sugar factories are in this district. By virtue of being the district headquarters it also has government offices, courts, schools and related facilities.

Therefore, it is only possible to obtain a rather sparse sense of the local economies of towns like Shirur and Beed in relation to the larger developments of a major state like Maharashtra. Maharashtra, has, on the one hand, seen huge disparities in rural development as a predominantly rain fed region, while, on the other hand, it has been dominated by the financial and economic metropolis of Mumbai, and to a lesser extent of Pune. Shirur is a mid-sized town with its own industrial zone within Pune district, while Beed is the headquarters of a rural district in Marathwada known best for its sugar cane production, while having suffered several successive years of severe drought.

5.3 • **RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON DEVELOPMENT: VOICES FROM THE INTERVIEWS**

Against this backdrop, this section looks at what respondents had to say about issues related to development in their towns and regions. What were their views about the economic prospects of the places where they lived, especially for their children? This section is therefore looking at respondents' perceptions and levels of understanding. These views emerged from the interviews and are qualitative in nature.

Haryana

ROHTAK, WARD 6

As different chapters have repeatedly demonstrated, this is the most well off Ward, composed mostly of Jat families where fathers have some rural linkages, may be retired from the army or police, have professional jobs, run businesses and shops, with only a smaller proportion of working class families managing a dairy and such like. When asked about their city and Haryana more generally, answers focussed on the relatively good water and sanitation facilities, the range of schools available, and so on. Some also said that Haryana was well developed compared to other states like U.P. or Bihar. While a few went on to say that there were more opportunities for women "these days" in banks or malls, apart from the more traditional avenues of teaching, the more perceptive respondents articulated a sense of disquiet. What kinds of jobs were there really? Hadn't something also gone very wrong

in Haryana's development process? Given the fact that the Jat agitation had just happened in their own city, this too found reference in a number of responses. Here are two very different views on what is wrong about the policies of the government by Jat respondents, both of whom had two sons. The first, by a housewife of a lower income earning family, presented the beleaguered Jat position in particularly stark terms.

"Jats are very unhappy. All the SCs and OBCs and the Muslims are happy. Because the government is giving them education, food, pakka housing, facilities. Why would they have to go out and earn nowadays? Even if he studies, a Jat's son can get 90 per cent and still stay behind. But any SC/OBC will stand ahead of him after getting 50 per cent. So such children aren't even scared of failing anymore."

Here is a different voice, by another Jat who was a widow working as a clerk in an agriculture department: "Much more needs to be done about agriculture. After so much work, what profit is there for the peasant? There is something wrong with the government's policies – the mandi fee has shut down, and there is no regulation of prices. Only those in the government with very high posts are benefitting with new pay grades, while those lower in scale have not benefitted at all. I only see those who are higher going higher still while making the one who is low lower. I also see so many women trying to earn from their own homes. They are trying and very hard working."

ROHTAK WARD 12

The voices from this ward, the poorest overall, were mostly in contrast to those of Ward 6. Beginning with basic facilities, respondents pointed to the dilapidated condition of their Ward -- open drains, muddy lanes and general filth, and lack of water supply. When asked about Rohtak as a city, one of the Balmiki respondents, who worked as a daily wage labourer said "Rohtak is very good on the other side, but there is only sadness on this side. I have become tired of filling up water." What jobs are there, was repeated by practically everyone. For some women there might be bank jobs or joining the police, others said, but for them there was just the nut and bolt factory or cleaning the streets and other people's homes. One woman, a Balmiki who had recently become a Christian, said that men were at best getting contract work, if not daily wage work – no government jobs were available. Interestingly, one of the few respondents in this ward whose husband was a permanent worker in the Maruti factory in Manesar (he commuted daily) said that they did not have any expectations from their children, but were ready to depend on his pension. Development among these respondents was best exemplified through the security that comes from good employment. Even the more perceptive ones who commented that sex selection was more among richer people said that the solution was that at least one person in each family should definitely get a government job.

JHAJJAR, WARD 1

Respondents from this Ward were on the whole content with their locality – found it clean and 'decent', and Jhajjar a nice quiet place whose amenities had improved in recent years. These were often the voices of people who had migrated from nearby villages. Some spoke in glowing terms of the NCR region and Jhajjar's own contribution via the newly installed power plant, the Panasonic factory, and easy access to companies in other areas. When it came to Haryana, some felt that in spite of the success of agriculture peasants were losing out and finding their work unviable. Several referred to the recent Jat agitation, and (mostly being Jat themselves) believed that "class should replace caste" for reservations. But most agreed that there were no government jobs in Jhajjar and that, while they were happy to settle here, their son's futures were limited to jobs like lab technician, or joining the army. The husband of one of the respondents pointed out that many army people had settled or retired in

Jhajjar and that nowadays people had become more particular about what kind of posts were on offer, whether in the CRPF or the police.

WARD 12J

In this Ward which had a larger proportion of poorer families, mothers' typical responses to the condition of their town was "we are surviving". Yes it was better than the village they had left behind, but many amenities were very poor in this Ward. Slightly better off families with greater aspirations, articulated the limited opportunities in Jhajjar especially for girls, apart from issues of safety. Most women had to be housewives as there was little that they could do to earn more money at home. The only good companies were far away in Gurgaon and girls could not travel that far. Local factory work was also looked down upon by upwardly mobile families – only working class and lower caste people would work there. Some factories were so bad, such as a local cardboard factory, that only Bihari outsiders were working there. According to the husband of one of the respondents, the owner of this particular factory had women with children working and living there, with very little interaction with the outside world. A few respondents mentioned young unemployed youth without much education from among castes like the Gujjars who roamed around the town. They were from families that had sold their land in the village, built houses in Jhajjar town and may have some source of income like owning a shop.

Maharashtra

SHIRUR WARD 2

Respondents in this Ward gave a range of views about the state of Maharashtra, Pune district and the town of Shirur. Some of the younger women felt tongue tied, saying they hardly stepped out of the house and did not know anything. Others referred quite often to rural conditions, and a number spoke of the farmer suicides that came in the news. Pune and Mumbai cities were frequently points of reference as well, as places that were rich and prosperous. Shirur town needed more development, slum areas were there, with unstable water supply in some parts of the town. More jobs were needed said many. "Where is prosperity? Where are the jobs? There are no government jobs. Everyone is doing something of their own, earning a little here and there, that's all." This response came from an anganwadi worker with one son. Among the Marathas and Brahmins there were those who strongly articulated that government policies only benefited 'category' people, with those in the 'open' category being now left behind.

WARD 14

Here too some respondents said they could not say much about development in the state. A few mentioned the MIDC outside the town as a sign of development, and the work of the municipality in building a good hospital. But work opportunities were limited. One respondent who was a tailor mentioned home based work involving the stitching of one thousand buttons for a mere Rs. 120, for those who had nothing at all. She had asked the government for a loan of one lakh to expand her tailoring business run from her home, but nobody trusted women or understood how honest they were, she said. Others pointed to

Pune where there were probably more opportunities, and to Mumbai where facilities were so much better. Even the location of the MIDC was criticized by several as being hard to get to since it was not within the limits of the town.

BEED WARD 13

This is the more middle class ward with pockets of slum clusters. Opinions were divided over the condition of their locality with some saying that it had improved with good water and drainage, and others saying quite the opposite. Interestingly, many respondents compared Beed with other districts when offering in their views, but invariably in the negative. Marathwada region more generally was backward compared to Western Maharashtra and politicians were responsible for this. Aurangabad had many more companies than Beed – Beed was a town of district offices, trusts and schools, said another, and little else, certainly no companies. Much was made of the lack of a railway line, which had been talked about for many years. Even in terms of education it only had a dental and BAMS college, not even a proper medical college. Rural development was sorely lacking, with no dams and heavy dependence on sugar cane.

BEED WARD 11

In this more mixed Ward similar views were expressed about Beed as a district headquarters and the region itself. It is noteworthy that two of the respondents had worked as sugar cane labourers in neighbouring rural areas and recounted the hardship and highly exploitative nature of their work, which involved getting up as early as 4 a.m in the morning and receiving the bare minimum in daily wages of around Rs. 250. Living in a town was any day better they said, compared to the cruel life they had known earlier. Others pointed out that several jobs were available in government institutions for both men and women, and there was not necessarily any strong discrimination against women in the district schools, government health centres or offices. But corruption, nepotism and payment for jobs were rampant, according to some of the respondents. A few Maratha and Brahmin respondents also articulated their opposition to reservations for other castes, including the Vanzaris who come under the category of Denotified Tribe (DNT). Like their counterparts in Ward 13, they pointed to the limited quality of education and the absence of industrial development, so that those with aspirations for their children looked to a future elsewhere – other towns (Latur, Ahmednagar, Aurangabad) apart from the obvious magnets of Pune and Mumbai, even if they themselves might not move from where they were now.

With some variation across Wards (with those from poorer wards much more pessimistic than those in more middle class colonies), there is nonetheless a palpable sentiment that towns are not sufficiently developed nor offering their children the kinds of futures they are aspiring for. While towns may be relatively better when it comes to schooling and some basic facilities, they are particularly found wanting at the levels of higher education and for job prospects.

5.4 • LINKING FAMILIES AND DEVELOPMENT

It is perhaps not coincidental that the secondary literature reviewed above on Haryana and Maharashtra (however sparse) and the views of ordinary women who live in the study sites mirror one another so closely. The very gaps and “crises” acknowledged in existing academic writing and government reports, often appeared quite acutely in the views of the respondents, whether over the loss of viable livelihoods in rural areas, or the lack of industrial and service related development in their urban locations, in spite of considerable economic growth in both states. The class and caste differences of the respondents obviously shaped their views, including the conditions of the localities within which they lived.

This is a study on the adverse child sex ratio and its persistence in the urban sites of Haryana and Maharashtra that have been chosen for the study. Having laid out the development scenarios above

– via the secondary literature and the responses of respondents themselves – the question becomes how best to look for links between the findings of the previous chapters and the broader economic context. This will be discussed in three interconnected ways: firstly, the unequally interlocking spheres of education, work and marriage in the life trajectories of mothers and daughters; secondly, the relatively new phenomenon of the girl only family in the era of sex selection; and finally, the emergence and crystallisation of a new gender stereotype around sons and daughters.

5.4.1 EDUCATION, WORK AND MARRIAGE

Both Chapter Two on the female respondents and Chapter Four on children took up the issues of education, marriage and work. In fact, it was often not possible to keep these issues separated from one another, especially in the lives of women. To put it more strongly, it is their interlocking nature, however unequally, that kept emerging, even when only one particular issue was in focus. This interlocking quality is a useful way to think about the social economy of families – whereby institutions like education and marriage that are thought of as “social”, are directly affecting and in turn affected by the possibilities of work and employment available in particular contexts, in this case, the economies of smaller towns and cities.

Education in particular, requires a much more nuanced analysis than is often provided in many analyses. This is especially true when it comes to adverse sex ratios and sex selection. The older study of John et al. (2008) had already shown evidence of several contexts with strong correlations between relatively high levels of education of girls and women (sometimes even higher proportions compared to boys/men) and low child sex ratios. That study had posited that social processes, including providing a good education, could contribute to the sense of burden represented by the birth of a daughter. In this study chapters two and four have shown how mixed the relationship is between the education of mothers and sex ratios, where higher levels of education have not translated into an improved situation. **It would be unwise to treat parents’ positive investment in their daughter’s education as a robust indicator, much less as a trigger, for solving practices of sex selection. Hence the need for a more interlocking analysis of education, marriage and work.**

Already in Chapter Two the uneven and unequal relationships between education, work and marriage in the lives of the respondents was palpable. It was evident that education was beginning to occupy a larger place in the lives of the women respondents in comparison to their parents, and especially their mothers. Education was overwhelmingly viewed as a positive development, indeed, it was the avenue to a new future, once village life was left behind, often being the very reason that was offered by those who migrated from rural areas, sometimes with considerable struggle. At the same time, just how much education and what kind of education respondents could avail of were fundamentally shaped by their caste and class backgrounds. The links between education and marriage were profound and multivalent – on the one hand, the education of daughters, the “ability to stand on one’s own feet” through the right kind of education, had its clearest purpose and outcome in a good marriage. On the other hand, marriage was able to disrupt an education, at times with impunity, as respondents recounted being taken out of school or just dropping out even before reaching high school to be married off.

The discussion on age at marriage revealed disturbingly high levels of marriage below the age of 18, and a significant proportion below that of 15 years among the respondents. This data was analysed against the backdrop of Census data which corroborated the picture at the macro level. Moreover, the analysis on Chapter four of children and planning for their marriages revealed a complex picture. On the one hand, survey data indicated that parents did not openly wish to marry their daughters before

they were 18 years old, even among poorer families. However, the interviews revealed that there were a few who had in fact done so, when further education for daughters became not only pointless, but a dangerous burden where the chances that the daughter might return home with the “wrong boy” loomed large. At the other end of the age spectrum, 21 years continued to be the modal age of marriage that was planned for. This is why a sticky floor below the age of 18 years and a sticky ceiling around 21 years appeared palpable within the marriage market for girls, in spite of the politically correct talk of higher ages of marriage.

The weakest link of all was the one between education and work. For the very poor, work was a matter of necessity, as many respondents in both Haryana and Maharashtra attested, where education played little to no role. At the same time, in these urban contexts, most poor women who were married to working class men (many of whom had intermittent and poorly paid work) were at home, with few opportunities to step out. This was preferable to engaging in daily wage work or cleaning other people’s homes. Even those armed with several degrees and preparing for qualifying exams often found themselves condemned to being housewives, or obtaining small earnings through home tuitions and sewing. The few who should have been proud of their achievements as working mothers, such as the respondent from Jhajjar running a beauty parlour or the nurses encountered in Beed continued to feel some stigma attached to their work.

Shifts are palpable in Chapter four that is focused on the children of the respondents. This is most obvious in the world of education – illiteracy has all but disappeared among the children of this study, indeed, in the poorest Wards in Rohtak only a few sons had never been to school. And yet, the clear need – and desire – to get daughters more educated than their mothers had been, did not easily translate into more job opportunities. As Chapter four showed quite unequivocally, most of the poorer respondents could not even express their desire for the “good job”, whether for daughters or sons. It was left to the better placed or the upwardly mobile to articulate the most desirable of jobs – permanent service employment, preferably in the government, with a pension. Parents were willing to spend considerable amounts on the education of children – with some gender disparities in Haryana and less so in Maharashtra – in the hope that a job would arrive at the end of it all. What the National Capital Region of Delhi, the environs of Shirur or a district like Beed had to offer remained nebulous and elusive. Respondents in Maharashtra, in typical middle class fashion, spoke of “doctor and engineer” as the most sought after occupations for children, while in Haryana the most ambitious might strive for the “medical” line, with teaching as the more common fall back position. Once again, within a situation of considerable change from one generation to the next, the institution of marriage continued to assert itself as essentially compulsory for a daughter’s future. A good education would help make a girl more able to take on possible problems in a marriage, and hold her own among the in-laws, asserted many mothers. The days of forcing anyone to marry were said to be gone – there had to be consent to the decision of the parents for a marriage to be stable. Very few were open to the idea that marriage was no longer the responsibility of elders but should be left to the young to decide and choose for themselves. In fact, the sexual agency of the young was most feared among lower caste and working class families; it had to be prevented by taking them out of school and marrying them before they were adult if need be.

While most mothers welcomed the idea of their daughters finding work, much of what they could say remained rather vague, and for good reason. There was no way of being able to depend on getting a job, especially for girls, which only reinforced the fact that marriage remained the main source of future security for daughters. Having a job was caught between the uncertainty of finding one in the first place, on the one hand, and as a matter that in any case would have to be sanctioned by in laws, on the other. At best it could provide some fall back security should a daughter’s marriage run into problems.

Therefore, while it was clear that much had changed from one generation to the next, jobs continued to be the most elusive aspect in the three way relationship between education, marriage and work even in the current generation.

A considerable source of anxiety in marriage negotiations and prospects is the boy. It was remarkable to hear in both Haryana and Maharashtra that one of the first qualities of a good match was that the groom be “without addictions”. Not to be duped by false claims of jobs and property by prospective in laws was another big problem. At the same time it was surprising that the marriage squeeze due to a shortage of brides found less direct mention in Haryana (where it was spoken of only as a well known phenomenon in rural areas) than in Maharashtra.

5.4.2 • THE GIRL ONLY FAMILY IN THE ERA OF SEX SELECTION

It is with this background sketch of a skewed political and social economy that the sex composition of families needs to be understood. As the fertility patterns across all the sites demonstrated, the small family is not only universally preferred but is also being realised by the vast majority in practice. This is confirmed by Census data as well. The modal number of children ranged from 2 (especially among better off Wards and families) to 3, and large families invariably were ones with more girls, with strong indications that such families were only having more children until a son was born. While in poorer wards in Haryana there were significant numbers of families with 3 children, this was much less the case in Maharashtra, where the two child norm was more pronounced across caste and class. In Chapter Three a comparison was made between the size of families (the number of siblings) of the women respondents who were interviewed and their own children, which revealed significant reductions over one generation. The highest fertility levels were predictably to be found in the natal families of the poorest respondents and it was also among such families that the rate of decline was the greatest. Over and over again it was reiterated that the economic conditions of life today are such that – whether rich or poor – no one wants more than two children. Many respondents looked back at the larger families that they had grown up in to mark the contrast with the present.

The next important point to be made in any discussion of the sex composition of families in the sites of this study (and one that could, in all likelihood, be generalized further) is not only the widespread desire for two children, but that it takes the form of one boy and one girl. In all the sites of the study, the combination of a girl and a boy is almost always the most common family in actual practice, with a larger proportion in better off Wards than in others.

The emergence of the desired small family with a son and daughter certainly represents a new moment in the history of contemporary India. It is not the case, however, that this can be simply read as a sign of the end of son preference and daughter aversion, much less as proof of gender equality, or at least not in the study sites. Parents are not indifferent as to what children are born to them, “as god wishes”. Rather, as the study has demonstrated, the current situation is throwing up a somewhat different challenge in the era of sex selection and the small family – the avoidance of the daughter only family.

After all, when small families become the desired norm, a certain proportion are bound to have girls as first born and then as their second born children. In an earlier time of larger families with more sons being desired, daughters too would have been born, and possibly discriminated against to a greater or lesser extent. Under the regime of the small family extra sons are also not wanted – given so much uncertainty over “settling” them economically -- though a two son family might be quite tolerable. As some cases among respondents attested, families unwilling or unable to opt for sex selection (invariably poorer) had more unwanted daughters in search of the desired son. But for

a larger number of families the hard question – across class and caste – was what is to be done when one daughter (or more) had been born and another one was on its way.

How much intervention were families engaging in to prevent the birth of further girls and wait for the son to be announced? This study revealed a new phase in the resort to sex selection. From the testimony of informants it became evident that sex selection had shifted to become somewhat more clandestine and certainly considerably more expensive. Most respondents denied any knowledge of its prevalence, and strongly asserted that in the last few years a ban was in place. This also revealed widespread ignorance about the fact that the PNDT Act was three decades old in Maharashtra and over two decades in Haryana. In the study of John et al. (2008) conducted a decade ago, sex selection was found to be quite widely resorted to across caste and class in the urban sites in the districts of Kangra, Fatehgar Sahib and Rohtak. Only a very small number in the current study admitted to getting the sex of their foetus checked, while several more knew of others in their circle who had done so. But the very low prevalence of girl only families in Haryana (with several such families that had been identified through the survey refusing to be interviewed), and the somewhat less skewed picture in Maharashtra are a clear indication of an ongoing resort to sex selection.

Very few families appeared to openly accept being a daughter only family. More often than not other factors had intervened (miscarriages and still births, health risks in the mother, separation) such as to make a particular mother accept her daughter(s) as her fate. In Maharashtra compared to Haryana the situation was not as stark, and for a few at least, having only daughters was acceptable even if not desirable. (As discussed in Chapter Three these differences also matched the fact that Haryana had much worse child sex ratios than the Maharashtra sample.) In terms of caste, Jats in Haryana had the worst sex ratio patterns, but other groups were not much better. In Maharashtra one caste group, namely Scheduled Castes (especially Mahars and neo Buddhists) stood apart both in having a positive child sex ratio and in their greater acceptance of the girl only family, though what also must be factored in is that among SCs there were more families with larger numbers of unwanted girls (hoping for a son).

Certainly in the towns that were studied it would appear that families had a hard time imagining a secure future for themselves and for their daughters if there was no son. With patrilineal marriage an ongoing norm, there could be no assurance placed on daughters alone for the security and happiness of parents. Patrilocality did not appear as a strong norm in practice, with more than half the families surveyed being nuclear. Interviews also attested further that no weight could be placed on sons staying with their parents. So, on the one hand, there appears to be some kind of shift here on the duty of sons in relation to parents. Moreover, very little was said about the ritual necessity of sons, or even that sons were required to carry on the family line. Rather, there was another kind of justification that many respondents offered. As several mothers emphasized, they believed that their daughters themselves would suffer if they did not have a brother. While marriage was a necessity, nonetheless in these troubled times brothers were also required in times of difficulty. This was also why hardly any of those interviewed spoke out in favour of inheritance rights for their daughters. They genuinely believed not only that enough was already given to daughters at the time of their marriage, but more importantly, that demanding one's share in the natal family vis-à-vis brothers would result in a decisive break with no future recourse to the natal family possible. One of the respondents in fact explained her dilemma in no uncertain terms – with a husband frequently out of work it was the brothers who had stepped in to help. Why then would she want to ask for her share in parental property?

In times of so much economic volatility and uncertainty it was crucial to maintain positive ties with natal kin, especially a brother. Here, once again, the near absence of

women's own economic viability such that her security lies either with her husband and in laws or male siblings and close kin is underscored.

And yet, as the next section will attest, there is a further twist in this tale of the small Indian family in the twenty-first century. A new gender stereotype appears to have crystallised around sons and daughters in the accounts of the respondents.

5.4.3 • THE NEW GENDER STEREOTYPE: BAD SONS AND GOOD DAUGHTERS

From several voices among the respondents in Chapter four, there emerged frequent statements about sons and daughters. It must be said that almost no one articulated a conventional version of biological gender, in the form of strong sons and weak daughters. As already mentioned, when it came to social roles, conflicting and changing views emerged over a son's patrilineal position in carrying forward the family lineage, and on the question of patrilocal residence, that is, living with parents after marriage. A small number said that a nephew (husband's brother's son) could cover carrying forward the name of the family in the absence of a son. Certainly, when it came to patrilocal residence, it was common to hear that the nuclear family was the new norm (which was the most frequent family form among the respondents as well). Sons would want to move out with their wives, and not stay on with their parents, said many.

But most important of all, there was widespread doubt about what one could expect from a son, and the extent and repetitive quality of the statements made about sons, who, in all likelihood, would not be able to live up to expectations, can only be called extraordinary. When, over and over again, sons are referred to as "good for nothing", as "betrayers", "useless", "simply sitting at home", "loafing in the streets" (in working class families) or, in better off families, as requiring "extra attention", "without any guarantees", "one upon whom no expectations should be placed", in relation to whom parents were busy saving and making plans of their own – then one can see that something quite significant has happened in the public discourse of families. This must be analysed in the context of a culture that assumed that what parents have been prepared to give to their sons in order to "settle" them in life required a subsequent response of filial duty in return. Something in this intergenerational contract is no longer seen to be working, and the epithet of the "bad son" is an articulation of this.

When it comes to daughters there has been a long standing cultural place for good and loving daughters. Indeed, the loving daughter, who must be pampered if need be, knowing what a harsh life might await her when she moves away after marriage to become a daughter-in-law is something of a staple in Indian patriarchal society. Much of this was in evidence in the present study as well. However, here too, there were certain new elements. To begin with, marriage distance for families living in urban locations and not in villages was frequently articulated as preferably close by. "Not more than 50 kms" said some of the Haryana respondents, so that one could easily visit and return in the space of a day. Nor did looking for a possible match in the same town or city breach norms of village exogamy in Haryana. In Maharashtra, there were cases where mothers were indeed living in the same town as the respondents. In any event, marriage norms in Maharashtra (including marrying cross-cousin and maternal relatives) did not preclude looking for boys close by.

What is interesting and new is that all this led to frequent statements about daughters who would in fact care for their parents even after marriage. Several variations on this theme were articulated – some were undoubtedly hyperbolic and articulated in direct contrast to bad sons: Daughters would fly to the side of their parents at the slightest sign of need. Others were more circumspect, with some recognising that daughters would be caught between families and that one should not be too

demanding. There was no getting away from the fact that the in-laws had primary rights over her. But the overall refrain was that “a daughter will steady you while a son would betray you”.

These claims about sons and daughters are obviously not simply about gender. Rather, in the light of this study, they are points on a much larger canvas. They are place-holders of a sort for the elusive links between families and development that this chapter has been exploring. Sons must now embody not just traditional familial expectations. They should be able to provide stability and security to their parents, who in turn will be facing all the vulnerabilities of old age in a situation where neither the state nor the market has enough to offer those with limited means. As has been seen in previous chapters this translates into the desire for a permanent service job with a pension, “the government job”.

Parents are prepared to pay as much as they can afford by way of education, tuitions, seats in professional colleges, sending a son far away if need be to accomplish this dream. Poorer families already feel defeated here. The better placed can only hope. While an individual family may only express distress at sons who invariably fall short, this chapter would suggest that it is rather the developmental context, the larger political economy, that is the source for so much worry and anxiety. This is a political and social economy within which most sons can only be failures.

At the same time, this is also an economy in which daughters are even less likely to “stand on their own feet” through decent employment. As a consequence, good daughters must do what they can through their kinship relationships, and place their greatest hopes on a steady and secure marriage on the one hand, and ongoing ties to their natal families, on the other. The latter can include care towards their parents after marriage (that is to say, a desire to be there for parents, and not only view parents as sources for further demands such as dowry). It also translates into maintaining positive relations with a brother, who might be called upon when there are problems in their marital homes (which also means that parents do not believe in inheritance rights for daughters since this would jeopardise longer term claims on such brothers).

To sum up, parents inhabiting such a political and social economy who are clear that in today’s situation a small family with two children is essential, are not indifferent about the sex composition of their children. They want a boy and a girl, and especially want to avoid a girl only family. However, in a context where local urban economies are fueling desires for a better life but able to offer too little, the desire for a son is offset in a discourse of sons who are unable to fulfill expectations. Daughters must be settled through good marriages which calls for corresponding investments in their education, along with a more positive discourse around caring daughters, who might do more for them than any son in later years. The ongoing adverse child sex ratio in Haryana and the more recent emergence of such a decline in Maharashtra must be understood in this light.

For genuine improvements to take place, there must not only be strong action on the supply side via the regulation of technologies of sex selection, and against the medical establishment flouting existing rules. In the study sites such a supply has become clandestine and has not disappeared in the face of public action against erring doctors and the closing down of some clinics. The more enduring answer has to come from addressing the demand side, that is, to create a context where girl only families would be more acceptable.

The next section looks at what government policy is seen to be doing to address this in the universe of this study and the experience of the respondents.

5.5 • GOVERNMENT POLICIES

When it comes to government policies and schemes that have a bearing on the adverse child sex ratio and more specifically on the girl child, one set of schemes stand apart for its specific targetting of daughters. These are the various conditional cash transfer schemes that have been launched since the 1990s in various states. The state of Haryana has had a number of such schemes at various points of time. Haryana is also one of the states where the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Campaign was launched in 2015 with much fanfare. In the survey questionnaire, there was a concluding round of questions about such schemes. In Maharashtra there was initially some confusion because it was unclear whether there are any such conditional cash transfer schemes being run by the government. On the other hand, various bank schemes such as Sukanya and Bhagyashree which offer incentives for putting savings in the name of a daughter have been frequently advertised of which several respondents were aware.

5.5.1 • SCHEMES FOR THE GIRL CHILD: SURVEY FINDINGS

The first question in the survey dealing with government policies towards girls was whether the respondents were aware of scholarship schemes for girls. In Haryana about half the respondents had heard of them. With some variations across Wards, more respondents in Ward 6 and in Jhajjar were aware and less so in Ward 12 in Rohtak. This is curious and unfortunate since most schemes are meant for families below the poverty line, and many families in the poorest wards of Rohtak and Jhajjar would have been eligible. 36 per cent said that they had eligible daughters in terms of being school going, but only 8 per cent had availed of any government assistance with 3 per cent saying that they had tried but were unsuccessful. 62 per cent had heard of one or another of the conditional cash transfer schemes in Haryana and 19 per cent thought they might have an eligible daughter. But only 6 per cent had actually enrolled and 5 per cent tried and were unsuccessful. 88 per cent had heard of BBBP but 70 per cent said quite frankly that political leaders were making campaigns, with a lot of “tamasha” but they did not see any further benefit. Only about 10 per cent said that this was an important campaign to stop sex selection against girls.

In Maharashtra, about 57 per cent had heard of scholarship schemes for girls and 18 per cent thought they had eligible daughters. There was not much variation between wards in Shirur and Beed. 10 per cent had availed of scholarship assistance for their daughters and 2 per cent tried but were unsuccessful. 22 per cent had heard of bank schemes for girls (there being no other government schemes, and there was confusion therefore about this) and 10 per cent had eligible daughters. But hardly anyone at 3 per cent had put any savings into such schemes. 59 per cent had heard of the BBBP campaign from the news but it was not a campaign in the state of Maharashtra.

These views were confirmed in the interviews. Only one or two of those interviewed had availed of the ladli scheme for their daughters. A few more spoke of Bank Schemes that offered a slightly higher interest rate if money was deposited for daughters. Others from the poor Wards in Haryana even said that because they had several daughters they were declared ineligible for government assistance including in the local anganwadi.

Of all the larger policies of the state regarding the development of their town and region, there was little by way of knowledge of any government policies, whether in rural areas, or for urban towns. Many said that the government should start employment programmes for women. But the one policy that did get frequently talked about, more so in Haryana, but also in Maharashtra, was the reservations

policy for Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes. Since violent agitations led by Jats had rocked both Jhajjar and Rohtak midway through the field work it had to come up for discussion and has been referred to earlier in this chapter. Ironically, it was through reference to a reservations policy that had been historically created to counter caste discrimination and exclusion in Indian society, that several dominant caste respondents in the study articulated the fundamental shortfall in government policy – decent jobs that provide some security for a life time, now crystallised around government employment.

5.6 • **RECOMMENDATIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

In an overview report “Sex Ratios and Gender Biased Selection: History, Debates and Future Directions” (John 2014) conducted prior to the present study, the overview concluded with future directions of research. It identified three broad orientations or perspectives, briefly summarised as “culture”, “violence” and “political economy” – that were identified as the main frameworks adopted by researchers in most existing studies on the topic of adverse sex ratios. None of these frameworks are exclusive from one another but have been so named because of where they have placed their main emphasis -- on issues relating to culture (kinship and social practices especially), violence (experienced by women as a continuum in their lives) or political economy (work, development policies, intergenerational transfer of resources). Seen in this light, the perspective offered in this study would fall more closely within the contours of “political economy”, one that makes “enough room for structural factors including economic ones, in understanding the forces that are shaping family dynamics and sex ratio patterns”. Such a frame directs attention to “the dynamic and conflicted nature of the process across generations as they strive to ‘match’ resources with family size and gender in their struggle to survive or aspire for a better life. This is a quintessentially economic issue buffeted no doubt by social practices and norms.” (John: 42–43). The current study has been called “the political and social economy of sex selection” in order to probe more closely into the relations between families, their planning and the developmental context within which they live.

The present study has been a purely micro level one concentrating entirely on towns to the exclusion of villages or metropolitan cities. This was a deliberate choice due to the paucity of studies on urban locations, in spite of the fact that urban sites (especially towns or suburban outgrowths of larger cities) have been hubs of sex selection in India and continue to display some of the worst sex ratio imbalances (with surrounding rural areas then showing a tendency of ‘catching up’). Along with a rural bias in most studies so far, existing scholarship displays a bias towards studying poorer populations as distinct from the non-poor or even affluent classes. This study has chosen sites within the towns selected that stretch across from the very poor to the well to do.

The study has also chosen to focus on two states -- Haryana and Maharashtra -- that have been receiving considerable attention from the state and civil society organisations in relation to the adverse child sex ratio. The state of Haryana has been implementing several schemes in recent decades such as conditional cash incentive schemes (with earlier ones such as *Apni Beti Apni Dhan* being discontinued towards the end of the 1990s and a central government *Dhanalaxmi* started but also discontinued in 2014). Since 2014 the central government’s campaign *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* (BBBP) has been launched in this state with considerable publicity. According to reports it is being launched by the government in all districts of the country. Maharashtra on its part has been in the news for the recent declines in the 2011 Census in several districts and because certain cases of doctors who were caught practicing sex selection received considerable media coverage at the time.

In the light of the broad issues raised these are the recommendations that require further attention:

1. According to the views of the respondents about existing government policies relating to sex selection and the girl child that were discussed in the previous section, it is evident that existing government schemes are not having much impact in the sites of the study. This is true even for families who are eligible for such schemes. There is even a hint of dissatisfaction if not cynicism towards certain schemes or campaigns whose promotion is seen to be mainly for political gain but with little by way of actual benefits. There is further confusion in respondents' minds in both states regarding bank schemes that offer certain incentives in the name of the girl child but which involve no financial inputs by the government nor do they have any relation to state sponsored schemes. The lack of presence and impact of government schemes for the girl child is a serious matter and calls for further probing by state officials and all concerned. It is possible that current schemes are mostly addressing rural families and not urban towns even though there is sufficient evidence of the need for schemes that would address urban populations. Moreover, in other respects urban populations would be at an advantage for accessing government programmes.

Therefore, the first recommendation of this study is the need to find out what kinds of schemes are actually being offered by government departments in urban locations when it comes to the girl child, and further more why they are not being availed of in urban locations.

It should be recalled that even at their best, the “ladli” conditional cash transfer schemes are about keeping girls in school and offer a financial incentive so that they do not marry before the age of eighteen. They have been popularly called *dahej* or dowry schemes. Recent reviews of such schemes undertaken by UNFPA (2015) bring out clearly that some innovative rethinking is needed to make such schemes work better, especially for families that are not BPL. One of the suggestions is to give greater weightage to education up to high school and beyond, including technical education, and to reduce the focus on marriage at the age of 18 years as the perceived goal. Further calibration is urgently required for urban contexts such as those studied in this report. While more educational incentives are a positive addition they need to be linked to employment opportunities.

2. The second recommendation follows from the first and is fundamental to this study. The report has provided considerable evidence of the extreme significance of economic considerations in the planning of families and the future of children, and how this contributes to the skewed child sex ratio. The dynamic relationship between issues of education/work/marriage have been highlighted. The shifting roles and uncertainties regarding sons and daughters' care of their parents has also been brought out. It is very evident that parents place considerable weight on their economic responsibilities towards their children, on the one hand, and have mixed expectations of “returns” when they become older, on the other hand. The respondents were also quite aware of the relatively inhospitable developmental context within which they are making these kinds of decisions.

This makes it all the more urgent to address the economic disconnect in current policies concerning major issues like employment and related costs in the education of children. Current schemes related to the girl child are only addressing some aspects regarding costs of schooling in states like Maharashtra. **Existing policies in government documents look only to self-employment and entrepreneurship as panacea, which cannot be the only direction to take, especially for women's chances in a labour market that has been so segmented and exclusionary.**

Nowhere is the central question of the very low levels of work participation in decent jobs being addressed as an essential facet for improving the skewed sex ratio.

The catchy slogan BBBP (save your daughter educate your daughter) focusses solely on education. Of course, there is no question that education is vital and this study has focussed on children's education quite extensively. **But a sole focus on education of girls remains relatively short sighted, considering the extent to which families are indeed heavily investing in their daughter's education, depending on their capacity and economic situation. In fact, the data in both states showed a complex picture – often girls were studying further than boys** from the same group or ward, though there continues to be discrimination when it comes to the type of courses at higher levels, with boys receiving greater prospects of professional training than girls.

3. **Thirdly, and related to the previous two recommendations, is the whole question of the status of towns in current government policies and schemes.** The fact that towns are often hubs for the practice of sex selection is not simply a matter of the availability of medical technologies such as ultrasound for sex determination testing. It is also demand driven by virtue of the lack of development of towns in a context where families are striving for the small family and are led to avoid the girl only family as described earlier in this report.

It is a matter of some urgency in any perspective on India's development path to look into the lack of vibrancy in its towns, one which finds direct reflection in the lack of avenues for girls and women, for whom towns offer little by way of a different and better future.

The next recommendation concerns the supply side, namely the technology required for sex determination testing via ultrasound and possible other techniques. The study showed that there is no excess female infant or child mortality even among very poor populations in the study sites, so that skewed child sex ratios are entirely due to the elimination of the female foetus before birth. In spite of increased efforts, especially from vigilant women's and health activists to catch erring medical practitioners, the practice of sex selection continues today in a clandestine fashion. The sex ratio at birth data available from the Census shows recent drops in SRBs in both these states.

The government must strengthen its legal monitoring mechanisms beyond what it is doing, after so many years of pressure to implement the PC-PNDT Act.

Finally, by way of a concluding recommendation, a word about family planning and population policies is called for in the light of the findings of this study. Much has been written about India's population policies and the two child norm. This study shows without much ambiguity that the two child norm is a reality in small town urban India. Indeed, everyone wants what the government has been proclaiming – one boy and one girl. Families no longer need to be pressured into conforming to an external norm when fertility rates are dropping to such a remarkable degree. Instead, families need to feel that in their aspirations for a small well cared for family they do not have to avoid the girl only family – either by having more girls than they would want in the search of the son that is eluding them, or via sex selection. This basic fact calls for a fundamental shift from measures seeking to regulate fertility and family size to making the world right for girl only families not just to be acceptable but to thrive.

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