

**GENDERED SPACES**  
*Craftswomen's Stories  
of Self-Employment  
in Orissa, India*

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**Dr. Polit Thesis 2003  
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*The cooler relational types may fill our textbooks, but the world is richer.*  
—Amartya Sen, 1987

*We have moved from seeing women as victims to seeing them as essential to find solutions to the world's problems.*  
—speaker at the UN Conference on Women, Beijing, China, 1995

*In fact, the issue of collective bargaining and collective action, when extended beyond the recognized space of the market, and covering negotiations not just over economic resources but also over social norms and cultural constructions of gender, opens up a whole new area of analytical work. While this cannot be examined here, it clearly has important implications for future extensions of theory and policy. Therein lies a challenge.*  
—Bina Agarwal 1997.

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## Abstract

The dissertation examines women's capability in the intertwining of gender, craftwork and space in self-employment in the cottage industries sector (handicraft and handloom weaving) and the implications for workspace and well-being. This research is based on field research in four craft production localities in Orissa, India: Pipili, Puri, Bhubaneswar and Bargarh and explores craftswomen's experiences and perceptions. Caught between old and new ways of labour demand and values in the commercial trade and tourist oriented crafts production, the gendered practices of women's work in the unpaid work sphere inside becomes an important link between the private domain and public sphere of workplaces and business transactions. While increasing number of craftswomen continue to work in gendered homes, workshops and cooperative societies, balancing work, mobility, wages, and domestic responsibilities with little help from the men—kinships, officials, stakeholders—they do, however, maintain an ongoing struggle to challenge embedded gendered spatial relations, gendered practices and economic strategies within the family and in the workplaces.

This research explores how consideration of a more coordinated and sustained embodiment contributes to an understanding of craftswomen's socio-spatial relations and processes of labour marginalization in unorganised self-employment; how bargaining for workspace occurs, what shape it takes, and under what circumstances collective actions may be successful, how marginalized experiences reinforce and challenge dominant notions of women's roles in self-employment (gender needs, economy, kinship relations, sexual division of labour, religious and commercial practices), and how do familial positions deprive women of full participation in development. Further, the research explores what individual stories inform us on how an ethically just, flexible and Indocentric value-based society may be achieved, how ideologies of religious spaces and social factors underpinning gender and labour identity in traditional craft productions (re)shape economic practices; how craftswomen challenge embedded patriarchal relations within market institutions, less regulatory institutional structures and networks of social relations at various spatial scale to negotiate protected workplaces.

The theoretical and methodological shift in the Gender and Development debates within postmodernist developmental, feminist economic, and cultural geography discourses during the postcolonial years reflects a more general cultural turn across the subaltern workers' studies—experiences on cultural and structural ideologies of economic liberalization practices—rejecting both positivists and its empiricists' legacy and the substantive, focus on the marginalization of female labour. The clearly-grinded narrative analysis presented here is intended specifically to challenge practice approaches within development and economic geographies to show the significance of the culture of socio-spatial relations in determining

and promoting marginalization of female labour and identity in self-employment and in presenting an alternative to capitalism.

The narratives situate and legitimate women's (homeworkers and self-employees) 'embodied knowledge' to reveal how local economic practice in Orissa establishes and maintains gendered ideologies that structure material opportunities and agencies differentially for men and women. To get an overview of the mutual embeddedness of local and global relations of capitalism in the gendered ideologies and discursive practices, the case studies and articles draw on individual narratives (14) and group discussions (205 craftswomen and 29 craftsmen) and their subjective perceptions and values towards spatial dimension of sexual division of labour, caste, access, control and well-being, paid and unpaid practices of workspaces, and institutional relations are analysed. The story of individuals is about their struggle to become successful businesswomen and highlights the interrelationship between their actions, their perceptions of work and the socio-economic spaces that they have to relate to. Craftswomen's voices on decent work possess a determination. They have begun to speak a language of subaltern capacitation. Their subjective perceptions, values and beliefs about the domestic division of labour, cultural-specific notions of appropriate producers, 'impurity/purity of the body', and 'dutiful wives', as well as the broader social and ideological underpinnings, underlie women's self-employment in Orissa.

Craftswomen's conviction that joint actions in cooperatives and trading should be facilitated succinctly capture the struggle of marginal women workers to overcome the sexual politics that play in the ideological creation on whose back crafts producers gain legitimacy. Their agency not only deconstructs their social world, but also for them to live their lives is to critique and unravel the day-to-day taken-for-granted sexual roles and labour processes in which they have been embedded. Narratives of craftswomen experiences reveal that self-employed women can act as role models for other women and contribute to capacitating women to undercut the private sector competitors (those who rely on clandestine labour). Apart from the local characteristics of place the success of crafts and weaving development lies in prioritizing women's agency by organizing their own. I demonstrate capacitating women must, build on a feminist framework that is rooted in 'Indocentric' values and workplace ideology.

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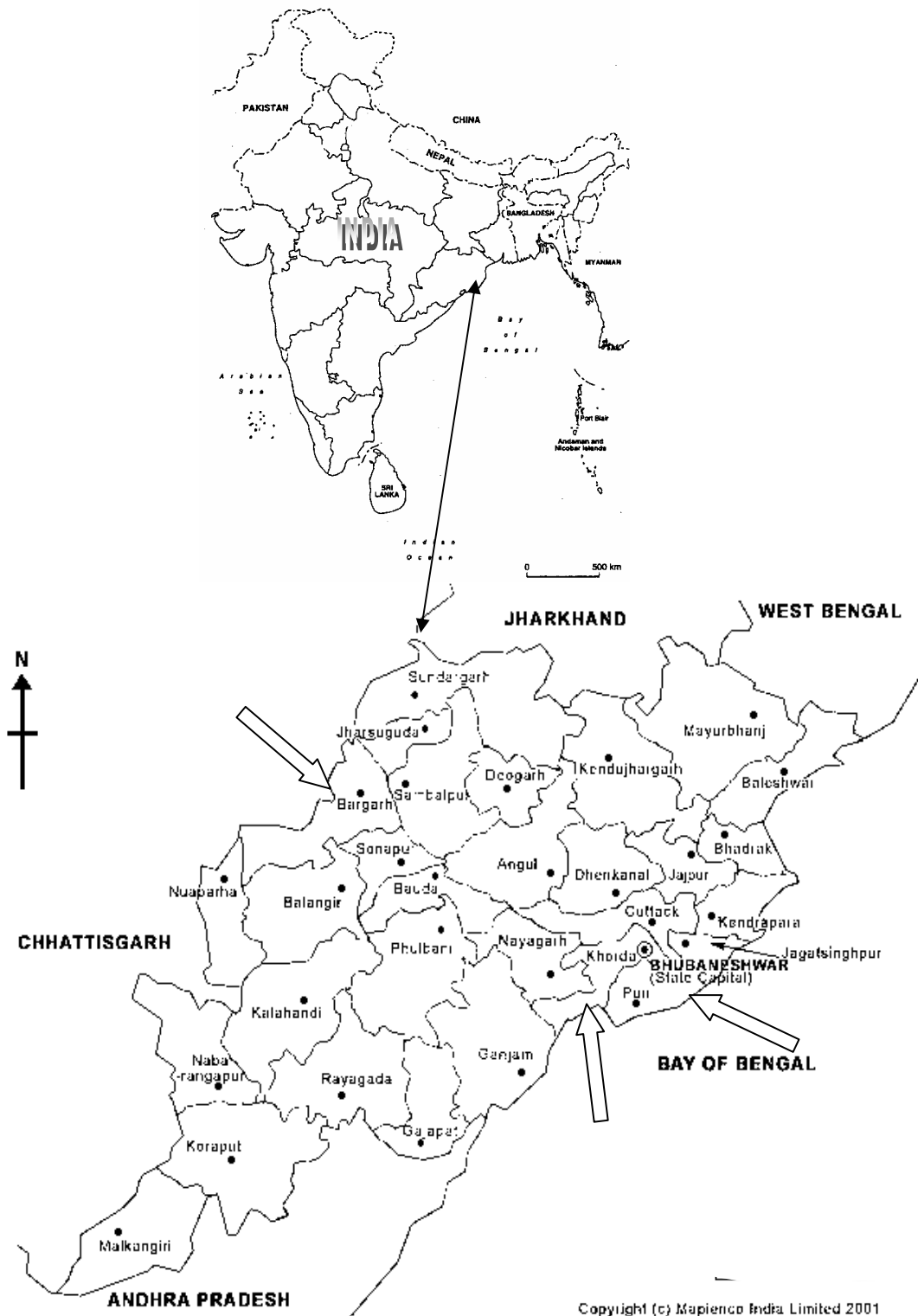
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Map 1 Location of Orissa in India and location of the studied districts Bargarh, Bhubaneswar in Khorda and Puri in Orissa.

## A poem

### CELIBRATING THE CRAFTSWOMEN'S PRIDE

I would celebrate the pride, dedication and relentless postures at work of craftswomen who are obedient, skilful village producers for the local and national market and then due to exploitative wage conditions and sexual harassment of stakeholders at domestic and marketplaces in Orissa are being marginalized.

I have never seen you  
Sitting empty hand at your home veranda and courtyard in groups  
With gold rings on your skilful fingers  
Wearing one of those *Sambalpuri* weaving sari covering your body  
Decorating some beautiful appliqué or *patta* paintings in your drawing room  
Unnerving local news! When, known one returned with dowry torture.

Craftswomen! I have seen you  
Flowing those nimble fingers, concentrating in weaving, paints and embroiders  
Pitching up a tent from sunrise till sunset  
Performing mundane multiple chores in a crowded wattle and daub hamlet  
Working on a craft workshop crew/home units with discriminatory wages  
Feeding carefully your little ones while embroidering with needle and thread  
Serving families and old all good food and care,  
Nothing left but your strained eyes, much back pain and depressing layers  
Seasoning your festivals with unrewarded fires.

I have seen you  
Dreaming for a sewing machine and a loan  
Fetching those piece-rate works from home based units to workshops  
Bargaining carefully with the owner at the market for your skilful work done  
Rejecting politely the few rupees offered to you  
With pride  
Saying, don't you have a mother or a sister in craft production?  
Covering yourself with a sari or *salwar* that have been mended so many times  
Tying its corner, murmuring to change those stakeholders  
To anyone who make minatory gestures in his four fingers  
And who looked at your production with lust...  
In his eyes....  
Embodying, 'how' and 'why' you are their victim and they are the exploiter  
Though, you all drink water of the same *Bhargavi* River,  
'We marginalize' .....  
Grappling with hope.....  
'Can't you do "something" with the government, how can we organize!!'  
Craftswomen, I have learned  
That explaining those ineffable is how difficult.....  
When domestic and external workplaces are insensitive and gendered..

## Women and craft-space for self-employment: a success story

My conversation with Mukta, one of several District level awardees, and the organiser of the Odisse coir craft Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) took place on a March morning in 2001. Mukta, aged 50- years, dropped out of the 7<sup>th</sup> level of schooling. Odisse workshop is located between Bhubaneswar and Puri District. Mukta represents the post-colonial economic reform generation of women for whom craft skills offer a realistic opportunity as a form of occupation.



Figure1 Workers producing the best quality coir wool, called golden coir, from the green coconut shells in a government-run coir factory.



Coir is a local resource, collected from the monsoon-fed extensive coastlands of Orissa (Figure 1). Mukta told me her story of how coir- craftwork has changed the mode of her feminine roles; it has become an important part of her way of life and not simply an occupation. In modern economic terms, however, she is self-employed. She said:

*When I was 15, I married a 19-year-old man from our caste. My father-in-law was a reputed Baidya (doctor) practising Kabiraji (Aurvedic: Hindu science of traditional medicine). When he died, my father-in-law's (kin) brothers took advantage of controlling joint family properties, land and savings, without considering our future. My husband, although he was the eldest son, was young and in at high school. The siblings and the widowed mother-in-law were unable to speak out against this injustice. No family elders were concerned about the devaluation of our economic backbone. I was worried though, normally "our" voice (i.e. the daughter-in-law's and widow's) has little effect in front of the elderly male. The tension and conflict worried me—how would the entire family survive and my three children grow up? It forced me to depend upon my natal family's support by staying with them.*

Mukta's husband was appointed as a schoolteacher in the town of Atharanala after studying for his master's degree in Hindi language. In 1976, the family then moved, together with their children, widowed mother-in-law and sister-in-law, from Anand village in Kalahandi District to the new town in Puri District. Teaching did not provide sufficient income for the entire family. Mukta told me that she is always in search of any work opportunity in order to make ends meet. Mukta's husband is proud of the steps she has taken on her own. He is also a poet and has a second master's degree, in Oriya language. He told me: *in 1977, Mukta secretly became a member of the Mangala, a grass-roots multipurpose women's co-operative society, in order to participate in the coir crafts work. I was reluctant, because being a teacher's wife and 'kula bohu' (eldest daughter-in-law) of a locally respected Baidya and of affluent family background (wealthy in land resources), I was against a petty occupation<sup>1</sup> that might degrade our "kula marjyada" (kinship-esteem).* Mukta's opinion illustrates that her 'choices' are based on intra-local gender value reasoning. Long-standing patrilocal systems play a greater role in their intra-household circles and women from this locality do not have much individual freedom in their intra-local mobility.

Mukta then tried to become a registered member of the local craft co-operative society under the District Industries Centre (DIC). Officials opposed her, as she did not have land or local residential identity. Fortunately, a Puri district DIC bank manager helped her to gain

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<sup>1</sup> Local norms of petty business work might degrade patriarchy values of womanhood: 'males' who cannot afford to support their family very reluctantly allow their women to undertake petty income-generating activities in public workplaces. Culturally, such piece-rate informal workers are from the lower castes/class who can sell their labour for a low wage, and who are flexible and mobile. In other words, women's entry to the low paid, unrecognised public jobs of industrial society is a threat to the proud family breadwinner in the patrilocal system.

membership by supporting her as his adopted daughter. When she was participating in the coir craftwork in the local society, she was taking on extra work and then distributing it among the women at home. Even her children helped in their leisure time. Mukta's late mother-in-law was a kind-hearted and sociable woman. Mukta felt sorry that *the local women are rarely fortunate to have a "sasu" (mother-in-law) like me (taking a large breath).*' When her daughter was three years old and her son was only four months old, Mukta's sister-in-law's husband abandoned her and she joined Mukta's family. The abandonment was justified by the family members and local friends who criticised him because he was not a *marda*<sup>2</sup> (gendered male). As Mukta says:

*His complicated behaviour was a threat to our family status and made me sceptical. I investigated why he was not satisfied when the land was in his wife's name. When finally the family decided to put the land in his name, he demanded that they should pay the registration fees. I warned my sister-in-law to consider the matter very carefully because he left home without taking any responsibility for his children too! We came to learn that he also had an affair with another woman.*

Craftswomen at Odisse know the sister in-law better than Mukta since she pays their daily wages. Mukta visits the places exhibiting her craftworks, observes piece-rate workers at the workshop, and attends Self Help Group (SHG) meetings and progress, while her sister-in-law takes on the household chores and financial management of the craft business. Mukta is proud of having given an interview with the *Samaya* newspaper<sup>3</sup>. The news heading was about a rare incidence of *Nanada-Bhauja* (sister-in-law) co-operation<sup>4</sup>. Although it advocated the importance of family ties it did not reveal how important it is to degender cultural ideologies. Mukta, however, appreciates that truthfulness among family members brings one self-worth and said:

*Justifying individual capability, we discuss each other's mistakes and decide differently from 'our husbands' or do no point fingers at each other. In contrast to many families in this locality, my in-law's and husband are cooperative. Notoriously, my*

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<sup>2</sup>This narrative suggests that men without 'appropriate' property and ownership 'rights' encounter this issue. The flow of dowry from the bride's family was blocked when the son-in-law stayed with the bride's family. In the Oriya patrilocal system there is the fear that ownership of land and resources by the wife, either her natal gift during marriage or from her earnings, is a threat to the man. However close relations may be, during conflicting and male-dominating situations the woman is rather seen as a competitor than complementary to the male status. As such, wealth with women would offer better options rather than sticking to the self-justifying access to resource and control over self-esteem.

<sup>3</sup>Samaya (literally, 'The Time'): an Oriya newspaper which reflects on some specific women's issues.

<sup>4</sup> According to Oriya vernacular, when a daughter establishes her new relations at the in-law's house her identity is defined according to the Hindu norms. Mukta calls her sister-in-law *nanda* (sister-in-law), while her sister in-law calls Mukta *bhauja* (sister-in-law). In addition, Mukta's experience has become a role model for those households in which the in-laws' conflicts have degraded family bondage. In relation to the patriarchal mode of societal attitudes, Mukta's family cooperation brings new meaning to the existing traditional kinship relations. Such positive aspects of in-law's family ties can bring solidarity and can lead to enhancing woman's capability. My intention in focusing on these aspects of Mukta's self-employment is to highlight the crucial agent of change that may provide the necessary impetus to shift the cultural ideologies in social relations that lead to capacitation.

*experiences of dowry torture, in-laws partiality, misunderstandings at work, and time distribution among female-male members, are the cause of these poor women's oppressions. Bonds of trust, loyalty, protection and help within the family are in a state of severe confusion. Its manifestations are actually threatening to the womanhood and devalue the Hindu tradition of kinship values.*

In 1995, Mukta's eldest daughter received the State award for coir craft for executing a *Pancha Mukha Ganesha* (five-headed auspicious deity). She married in 1999, and currently stays with her in-law family at Baleswar but works for the Odisse business. She makes the heads and faces of toys (work which needs skilled hands), particularly those toys desired by the foreign export market. Mukta uses the best quality coir, called golden coir, which is produced from green coconut shells (Figure 2).

She said: *still then, it is just coir work. If those faces were not lively enough why would customers buy them?* The craftswomen of Odisse make local mats, ropes, Indian animals, birds, wall hangings of small animals, and even Chinese dragons, which sell for Rs. 5000 each. They also use colourful woollen embroidery to make toys more attractive and more accurate representations. Mukta's younger daughter is 31 years old and gained a master's degree in Oriya language from Utkal University in 1999. She has used this craft skill as her sole occupation for the last five years. Mukta's only daughter-in-law is not interested in coir craftwork, although Mukta suggested to her that: *earning something of your own would bring greater fulfilment. I think the future of Odisse NGO management is with my daughters.*



Figure 2. Coir toys produced in a workshop from the golden coir for export market.

Craftwork is the main caste-based occupation for the local people. At present, however, there are 10 SHGs and a total of 195 craftswomen in Odisse, of which 40% are from other castes. Their SHGs are found in the Kendrapada Block and a few are located in nearby villages. SHG women do different craft work, such as *Pattachitra*, making bamboo-and-palm leaf containers for cultivation, thatched houses, mats, and bamboo partitions, depending on their local resources and craft skills. Odisse hopes that if the SHGs are well organised, they could acquire a NABARD<sup>5</sup> (National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development) loan for income-generating activities. Around 30 households weave saris and clothes similar to Sambalpuri<sup>6</sup> quality and better than the *tanti* (weaver caste) from Manika Patana weaving groups. These households to the north are within 8 kilometres of Satasankha town. Some artisans produce *beta* chairs and furniture, importing raw materials from Chennai market.

Mukta received an order from the Urban Cooperative Bank in the Delang Block to supply foot mats. Their requirement was that the Bank's symbol would appear in the same colour on the mats. Mukta's sister-in-law acquired knowledge about colour composition and few other coir craft skills, and her friend from Teisipur came to work with them. The Urban Cooperative Bank recommendation has given the women possibility to take orders from distant institutions as well. For example, New Delhi DIC accountants sent a coir crafts training grant for 30 students in Puri district. Under these circumstances Mukta registered with Biraja cooperative society, which provides training, but when they tried to supply foreign orders they found that contractors preferred to buy their products from the non-profit voluntary craft developers. Mukta said: *We reconstructed our society into as NGO in 1991-1992, named Odisse, with 10 members as the governing body. Gradually, we have been able to export some coir toys. First to the UK and Holland, then to Canada, and the order we are presently preparing is for France. We received a Rural Gramya Vikash Nidhi loan and repaid Rs. 100,000 already.*

Today's Odisse exists thanks to Mukta's family's collective struggles in negotiating a space for the Odisse and cooperative efforts of the co-workers from safeguarding it from a complex set of local aggressions. Mukta and her husband said that 10 years ago they had bought 9 decimal of land from the owner of their rented house for Rs. 20,000, but the seller could not give them possession because of conflicts between his brothers. The seller family

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<sup>5</sup> In India, NABARD introduced a pilot project for linking SHGs with banks in 1992, which proved successful. In the past few years there has been a massive scaling up in SHG activities. Based upon the success of SHG movement in India and other parts of the world, the Government of Orissa has launched *Mahila Samiti* (grass-roots women's cooperatives).

<sup>6</sup> Traditional handloom weaving in the Sambalpur, Bargarh and Sonepur districts are famous in both the local and world markets. These traditional weavers have earned several State and National awards and international prizes for their *Bandha kama* (tie-dye weaving) and colour composition skills.

still threaten their family as outsiders. So, Mukta's family live in the rented house adjoining their workshop and are trying to build their own house. They have used the profit from the coir craft business for their daughter's marriage, and are trying to save more to meet another two daughters' dowry demands and marriage expenses. Expenses for an extension of the Odisse craft workshop, to improve the sitting conditions of the craftswomen, is another priority.

The craftswomen at Odisse come from villages close by. At one stage they did not earn sufficiently meet their families immediate needs and were lacking the strength to confront the trap of exploitation in their daily lives. Without enough to earn during the slack seasons the black days continue to haunt them. Mukta compared them with her past family life and presented craftswomen's situation thus: *At least their skilled hands provide work that encourages them in earning a fair treatment. I train them. Some have received certificates and some have not. Few are working at their marital places. Some competitors have taken my skilled workers by offering high wages. I am also proud of it.*

I asked Mukta how she perceives her success and achievements and she answers:

*It all happened so fast, suddenly nothing was the same anymore. I want to produce better quality coir craft for the local and foreign market. I have not only created occupations for my daughters and sister-in-law, but also the women of this locality have a source of increasing their income. I am interested in organizing the local women's skills and social conditions if the government would support us financially. I taught group workers vocational training. Practicing craft enables workers to have a higher income. You see, I have gained weight. My craftswomen bring me peace of mind. Their skilful hand is our strength and success is the result of my way of training them. My identity comes from the way I created a working space for these women.*

Mukta's statement illustrates that her 'perceptions' and 'choices' are based on cognitive and emotional reasoning. Her ways of keeping traditional values as good moral values are mainly emotional. Mukta experiences her work as meaningful and does no longer feel that she has degraded her *kula marjyada* (status and caste) by starting her occupation as a petty piece-rate producer in a public space. In the Oryani context there exists socially constructed gendered spaces and gender relations in which Mukta has overcome caste and class boundaries. She, as a *kulin* woman (woman of upper caste family and local domain of gendered norms), has collaborated with SHGs, and petty businesswomen, and worked with low caste/class marginalized workforces. Coir rope and mats are produced by local craftswomen.

Mukta has certainly conquered the male bastion on many fronts by creating space for woman's work. Her autonomy or agency has acknowledged her participation in the family and

organisation, in decision-making and in owner-producer relations. She is also actively politicising craftswomen's awareness and self-employment strategies by being the *savanetri* (working co-ordinator) for the craftswomen's development branch of Kalinga Shilpi Mahasangha (KSM<sup>7</sup>). The overview of the gender distribution of craft artisans in KSM is shown in Appendix 1. In its first craftswomen gathering (where 600 craftswomen had participated) KSM declared that now female self-employment could develop through six newly formed economic development projects. All this has given a new meaning to the local women's work, mobility and contribution to the aggregate social product. At the same time, women's domain of intra-household and intra-local support systems for achieving new life spaces cannot be ignored. I asked Mukta what she dreamed of for Odise's future. She said:

*There would be no more drunkard husband's vulgar shouting at a vulnerable wife to be heard in the evenings around my tiny home-cum-workshop. Waking from my bed, I would spread mats for piece-rate female workers from villages around who come here after their household chores are done. I would care for their little ones, while instructing them in the ways coir toys would look if they were alive. I would heartily invite those who are stepping forward from the clutches of the household, kinship relations, and labour exploitation, and leaving behind their oppressive condition. I would encourage them to gain strength from their coir craft peer group producers for fearless voices and collective actions.*

Mukta insists that her interest in family well-being and economic opportunity are the most important reasons for becoming a self-employed, and admits that she considers the continuation of the crafts as important to empower women's skills and earning in this locality. She finds the local women's household situations and social relations oppressive, and only possible to challenge with an increased awareness about women's income in such workplaces. Amount of cash income they earn would add to their ability to think ahead and their collective actions would enable them to better understand their status and capability in the intra-local kinship and social situations.

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<sup>7</sup> A large crafts association created 15<sup>th</sup> October 2000. For details of the structure see Table 1.Appendix no 1.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*Let me tell you, when my labour is valued less, livelihood is shrinking, and social relationships and responsibilities are at the edge of patriarchy, how can I be a self-employed like a man in a place like this? Crafts work at home is a double burden, when man makes a side. The “panchayati raj” (local governance) system act nonetheless like a paper tiger. Our hard work is always on the run to make up the injuries from such cultural practices. Yet, justice covers all such desperados. Everybody is experiencing, but they (the men) would never tell you. Write all those conversations in your book: must show them our different needs, because we do not want to be at the receiving end. We want to do it collectively, because we can make it ourselves better and durable for all.*

This advice was given to me by 35-year-old Chandana, one of the handicraft self-employees I interviewed for this research project, when reflecting on gendered spaces and craftswomen’s self-employment in the unorganised production system in Orissa, India. The main objective of this thesis is to study the intertwining of gender, craftwork and space in women’s’ self-employment. By placing rural women handicraft and women handloom producer’s capabilities in the centre of inquiry, I explore their experiences and perceptions in both productive and reproductive activities. This enables me to identify the narratives of the subalterns’<sup>8</sup> spatial strategies for reconceptualizing the injustices and marginalization processes to which they are subjected. By viewing subalterns’ distinctive social ‘experiences’ and their collective resistances, I am suggesting a conceptual framework, which represents an alternative to the non-feminist discourses and texts on exploitation that obscure many dimensions of women’s lives and the distinctive nature of subaltern capabilities.

Today, the traditional craftswomen of Orissa experience the transition from religious ritual to commercial craft productions, especially through the emerging tourist industries that these trade policies generates. However, the structuring force of culture and gender ideologies still affect these disempowered women’s choices, and their social and economic activities remain invisible in spite of hard work and good skills. Why the subaltern cannot speak of her

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<sup>8</sup> Gramsci (1978 xiv) used the term ‘subaltern’ to refer in particular to the unorganised groups of rural peasants based in Southern Italy, who had no social and political consciousness as a group, and were therefore susceptible to the ruling ideas, culture and leadership state. Extending the terms of Gramsci’s original definition, Guha in his study defines the subaltern as ‘general attribute of subordination in South Asian society, whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way’ (Guha 1988: 35). In search of an appropriate methodology for articulating the impact of changing histories in India and struggles of disempowered groups, Spivak (1988) poses a more nuance, flexible, post-Marxist definition of the subaltern, informed by deconstruction, which takes women’s lives and histories into account.

## 2 Gendered spaces

exploitation does not appear mysterious (Spivak 1988: 288). Acharya & Lund (2002) reported that, though highly aware of their gendered position in society, and having become clever in pursuing strategies that do not confront norms and accepted ways of behaviour, the craftswomen from Orissa said: *we may easily lose our step unless we do not know how to walk, we have to measure a step and then walk only one fourth of what we could have done. We are passing through the biggest hurdles every day of our lives* (op. cit.: 208). In this view, gender ideologies are not simply a set of ideas about how men and women should behave, but a set of local ideologies and practices through which cultural construction of masculinities and femininities are performed in social/business relations.

In this work unorganised women's labour through self-employment (*swa-rojagar*) is understood as the *capability* of ordinary workers for *autonomous*<sup>9</sup> livelihoods. As will be shown in this thesis, the craftswomen's situations bring women's agency into the foreground, a new lens for understanding how inequalities are resisted and reproduced. In integrating non-economic factors of production and reproduction activities along with women's agency<sup>10</sup> in this research, interrogate how aspects of women's live beyond the economic reconstitute the sites of workspaces. In this context, the question is how we conceptualise and give meaning to the highly contested terms of 'capabilities' and spatial practices of 'self-employment'. How do we theorize on women's everyday experiences, practices, and ideologies of self-employment as their political project the centrality of rural Third World women workers – themselves a diverse and heterogeneous group/place – in the processes of development ideologies and postcolonial economic restructuring? To do this, a first step in thinking of a woman's self-employment is to get away from the mechanistic understanding of entrepreneurship that permits much of the mainstream development/economic geography literature (see Chapter 2 for a feminist discourse).

I have spent the last five years thinking about women's collective voices in the unorganised economic practices. How are they articulated and under what circumstances can subaltern voices be heard in and move from the margins to the mainstream economic agenda?

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<sup>9</sup> The autonomous people, in view of the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, are those who wanting to govern themselves, resist any source of domination, whether in a corrupted tradition of cooperative community or a modern world. Gandhi, autonomy requires two sorts of struggle in their local situations, one internal and the other external. Further, as self-governing agent, their sense of them is not measured by change and mobility but from the satisfaction that they are the beneficiaries of and contributors to the good life in their own local cosmos (*Harijan* 1 February, 1942, Nandy 1987: 156, Terchek 1998).

<sup>10</sup> The intention here is to show the unorganised women's workers individual and collective agential capabilities. At times, embodied actions and resistance capacitate them. Haraway (1992) and Latour (1993) treat 'agency' as a matter of attributing the ability to act. Human and radical geography emphasize 'agency' in visibility, legibility and consciousness. Feminism and post-structuralism draw attention to the spatiality of resistance and accommodations (Guha & Spivak 1988).



The rhetorical ways of representation of the gender, of womanhood, identity and collective self in Spivak's (1987) and Mohanty's (1991) accounts — the interweaving of the conceptual and political capabilities — offer us ways of imagining how experiences become major 'sites' where the social discourses and 'transformative potential' for subaltern empowerment should be located. Furthermore, as Agarwal (1994) argues, a bargaining position of social relations, which are justified by symbolic code, normative concepts and institutionalized practices have discursively transformed women's economic and bargaining positions in the dealings. Before I describe the bargaining of women's work, labour market exploitation and poverty in Orissa, five sets of key concepts are presented, which offer a way of imagining and understanding the marginalization of female labour.

### **Gender and ideology of body**

Early feminist social and political struggles have advanced the tradition of universal humanist thought by defining that the category of gender identity is not determined by one's biological sex; rather, gender is a social construct (Beauvoir 1947). For a recent anti-essentialist, feminist thinker, however, by leaving the biological category of sex unexamined, represents such as Beauvoir has failed to question the very scientific explanation (women's biological difference from men) that was used to justify women's oppression and discrimination (Scott 1989, Butler 1990, Braidotti 1991). Rather gender is itself constituted through body—embedded social relationships and a primary way of signifying a relationship of power (Butler 1993). According to Mohanty (1991) gender like class and race, is fundamentally a relationship.

Gendered ideologies are based on recognition through the bodily practices of women's homework, such as how they pool resources, talk, bargain, walk, and perform activities, cope, etc., with structural and symbolic meaning attached to the relationship of workspaces and market spaces. Niranjana (1997) claims that the way to restore both biology and ideology to the constitution of female identities is to conceive the body as being situated in space, time, and sexuality. In this research project, there are circuits of socially and culturally embedded body-reflexive practices at the face of women's world of work, kinship networking, handicraft institutions (cooperative society), markets and locally vested interests. However, craftswomen make evident that the complicity of family and kinship culture uses their body/sexuality; work and services (non-economic aspects of labour production) are invisible to the economic transactions that daily hurt, neglect and inflict on exploitation. The spheres of unpaid work become obscured and irrelevant to the norms and behaviour associated with market and paid work in Orissa, and is therefore not influential in policymaking.

***Experience of marginalized***

The growing importance of questions of experiences in the identity formation within cultural and development geography notes the significance of narratives to key debates on marginalization and the cultural construction of women's work. Feminists' turn to Mohanty's analysis<sup>11</sup> of Third World women's writings in 'Cartographies of Struggle' (Mohanty 1991: 2-4) allowed to engage with the subtle and marginal experience through narratives as a discursive practice. Life stories, testimonials and personal essays, on their own terms are generated from within a specific 'habitus', yet respect the subversive potential of the women's 'experiences'<sup>12</sup> and are conditioned by cultural practices, along with globally organized political and economic relations (Mohanty 1997, Narayan & Harding 2000). Lie & Lund (1999: 107) suggest that to view such processes of change in women's experiences we need to situate our study in such a way that we can study the relationship between the local and the global. This implies what we conceive as 'women' is a convergence between gender construction and women's perception.

Mohanty (1997) details the striking continuities between the 'sexualization of women'— 'the hysterization of women's bodies' (Foucault 1978: 104) — and the global sexualising of women's lives and process of labour marginalization. Insight to this is that, narratives of subaltern experiences may be a powerful means for Third World women to assert political and epistemic agency. However, a deeper and nuanced exploration of embodiment in a rural women's self-employment context shows the pattern and relationships inscribed in the organization of workspaces, circulated within family, community, market and state, that encompasses women's performances and social identity, in short, the benefit of material conditions of life that guarantees women's active and productive participation not just over economic resources but also over social norms and cultural construction of gender. I call this process embodiment of workspaces marginalization. By doing this, I explore their gender related variations, the alliances and challenges across class, race and national boundaries embedded in culturally sanctioned patriarchal relations of authority and ownership that trace and chart women.

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<sup>11</sup> See for example, 'Women Workers and Capitalist Scripts: Ideologies of Domination, Common Interests, and the Politics of Solidarity.' (Mohanty 1997: 3-45), Narayan, Uma & Harding Sandra 2000. *Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial, and Feminist World*. Indiana University Press. Bloomington.

<sup>12</sup> For instance, Harding values the experience that one gains by struggling against oppression (1991: 126-27); Mohanty values experience as a strategically chosen historical location (1982: 39-42), and Haraway reclaims visual experience as an embodied, critically positioned, multidimensional phenomenon (1991).

### *Socio-spatial embodiment*

The spatial dimension in the sociology of development is generally seen as a mere local or passive resistance (of poor and women) that allows complexities of historical experiences and the reciprocal relations to play themselves out. How do we understand marginalized bodies and the dialectical relationship of gender when the same bodies are at the same time objects of gendered social practices and agents in socio-spatial relations? To assert the ethical claim these women workers make, it is useful to understand how ideological constructions of gender influence women's ability to cope/compete with new economic practices. This addresses the need to explore women's emerging consciousness in cultural (in historical time) and structural contexts in place and time. However, in some ways, gendered practices are little more than the reaffirmation of the claims of everyday life, be it a marginalized or source of livelihood<sup>13</sup>, according to Mohanty (1997: 12) 'women's work is grounded in sexual identity, in concrete definition of femininity, masculinity and heterosexuality'. According to Thapan (1997), it plays strategically with time. Given what we know about the embodiment of labour-market relationship in a self-employment context encompassing Orissa, while ignoring women's other roles—as wives, social workers, activists and so on—which are difficult to discern, development has not been able to engage with the actual realities of people's lives, including gender realities. For example, the mobility of a weaver or a *patta chitra* woman, who works at home with domestic responsibility and who has culturally less access<sup>14</sup> to the market — is usually decided by husband, or a head of the household. This responsibility and restriction can mean, therefore, that it is the man who takes advantage of access to market, sale of crafts and control of money. Craftswomen's stories display that the exploitative structural practices and the systematic ways in which 'women' bodies and labour are idealized with family relations 'naturalize' their choices, desires and agency (Omvedt & Kelkar 1995, Mohanty 1997, Kandiyoti 1998). Hence, narratives of craftswomen's self-employment reveal the intertwined constructions of gender and self-employment as a project in time and place (Berg & Acharya unpublished data).

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<sup>13</sup> Livelihood is understood as the capability, socio-sexual cause of satisfactions, assets and activities required as means of living. Its sustainability depends upon how one copes with and recovers from stress and maintains or enhances capability and assets both now and in future, while not undermining the resources and sources base.

<sup>14</sup> The link between work, contribution and access to resources has been posed by Sen in his conceptualisation of access to resources as an outcome of bargaining (Sen 1987). Within this, he argues that 'perceived contribution' affects individual's ability to access resources. In the context of establishing a claim through bargaining, Sen points out that notion of legitimacy and reward affect an individual's access to resources. Sen also points out that what really matters here is that the *actual time worked* is not important, but the *value* attached to that work (Sen 1987), which shows whether or not the work is actually crucial to the family's well-being and survival, or in this research context, whether the labour and skills are actually crucial to the home business and market economy. Agarwal (1994) extends this conceptualisation to include 'self-perceptions'.

“Home”-cum-workplace for craft work in Orissa is therefore a set of body boundaries— cultural ideology towards women’s bodies constructed as lack of and partial integrity, mobility, skills, resources and sexuality, etc — that not only affect women’s work roles and business strategies but also obscure their performances and aspirations. Such multiple, interlocking forms of gendered oppressions in the economies of practice are internalised by the bodies (Mohanty 1997, Price 1999, Niranjana 2001). This situation reveals the self and collective accounts of body as vital markers of sexual/moral codes for conditioning ‘own’ boundaries in a sociality-spatiality nexus (Acharya 2003b). However, the subtle or direct experiences (through survival and resistance) of craftswomen do not just question the exploitative structure, but traces a more coordinated and sustained consideration of embodiment in socio-spatial relations. The transformation of bodies (agencies) in the creation of new organizational forms is structured, in part, dialectically to improve female worker’s capabilities.

### **Capacitation**

Capability<sup>15</sup> is primarily a reflection of the freedom to achieve valuable functioning ... a set of vectors of functioning for the enlargement of people’s choices (Sen 1992: 40, 49). This is parallel to Martha Nussbaum’s idea of translating *rights (political and civil liberties and economic and social rights: (2000: 97) to basic human capabilities* to function in that area. The capabilities approach became the backbone of the human development approaches and is operationalized in capacity building in development projects; while capacitation, or empowerment is associated with bottom-up, *alternative* approaches<sup>16</sup> (Sen & Grown 1989, Marchand & Parapart 1995, Rowlands 1997, Kabeer 1999, Razavi 2000, Nederveen Pieterse 2001). Women’s capacities are built over experiences and struggles and determines their ability to cope with the deeply embedded gendered power structures and material and cultural factors. However, such marginalized women’s (group) capabilities are not always publicly visible, nor are embodied experiences a purely technical matter that a researcher could perceive. This is particularly true in case where an entire community, exposed to a local-global world, is still occupied with the cultural ideological

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<sup>15</sup> ‘Capability approach’ was first advocated by Amartya Sen in the essay titled ‘Equality of What?, delivered as a Tanner Lecture on Human Values in 1979. Sen (1980) argues for the space of ‘capabilities’ – rather than that of income, utility, liberty, or primary goods – as being the appropriate space in which equality should be assessed. In Sen’s capability approach (1985), capability refers both to the ‘freedom to choose’ and to control of a set of commodity bundles’, i.e. to functioning’.

<sup>16</sup> In feminist literature, power is disaggregated into *power over* (domination), *power to* (capacity), *power within* (inner strength), and *power with* (achieved through collective action and cooperative alliance). However, feminists have argued that one person’s empowerment may be another’s disempowerment (Rowlands 1997). In feminist use of empowerment the emphasis is clearly not on ‘power over’, but rather on ‘power to’ and ‘power with’ to achieve greater capabilities.

construction in day-to-day crafts practices, labour market and local governance (leadership position).

The issues of coping capacity in this perspective is to understand the manner in which people contest, struggle and combat within an existing level of resources/consciousness and range of expectations in a given situation to achieve various ends (Blaikie et al., 1997, Lund 2000). Capacity<sup>17</sup> building carries significance in a gender bargaining situation, relevant for understanding the embedded knowledge of survival under oppression, dignity under duress, and strength as intelligent communication strategies ('capabilities' and 'power to') to support experiences of 'women's self-employment. The individual satisfaction and dissatisfaction that constitute critical local knowledge could embody their agential capabilities and self-reliance. Thus, the emphasis on culture as production simultaneously consider the participation of craftswomen in relation to both private and public domains and inquiring into the productive and reproductive roles and material opportunities instrumental in women's business capabilities. I prefer to use the word 'capacitating' interchangeably with 'empowering'(Rowlands 1997). When empowerment seems hierarchical, capacitation enables individuals to exercise the power within their self-controlled situation.

### *Casualised work and self-employment*

The phrase 'casualised work' in the context of the home unit to explain a self-employee is problematic (Mitter et al. 1994), because work that has been 'casualised' implies that it is barely unionised. Women's marginal relation to the cooperative society and infrastructures means that they have not been able to defend themselves against rising unemployment through officially recognised channels. In this perspective the notion of female self-employment refers to where woven threads of lived experience of livelihoods, subjectivity, agency, capabilities, and well-being underline the centrality and embeddeness of spatial cultural practices. The issues of gender ideologies in the intra-household dynamics include intimidation by spouses and kin, while at workplaces they include lack of vocational training, sex discrimination in hiring and sexual harassment in the market-driven mechanisms, as well as violence against women's equal rights regarding wages, association, mobility and religious liberty. I argue that women's control over

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<sup>17</sup> Here capacities describe the existing strengths of individuals and collective social groups. In every society there is variety of internal social structures that help individuals, groups or families through business networking and build-up, and which may be referred to as coping mechanisms. They are related to people's material and physical resources, their social position and sources, and their beliefs and attitudes (March, Smyth & Mukhopadhyay 1999: 79).

economic resources and self-employees' identities in this perspective are 'crucially mediated by non-economic factors' (Agarwal 1995: 264) of contributions and regards that are embedded in cultural ideologies. Beyond these mundane manifestations, struggles over resources as lived experiences are also affected by local-global cultural economic reproductions. According to Acharya & Lund (2002), what constitute female self-employment are a woman's individual resources (knowledge, activity and capability), her kinship relations, and the institutional and economic support for her activity.

### **Organisation of craft production**

In Orissa, traditional crafts may be produced in five ways. At one extreme, craft goods are produced for the local market, typically involving paid and unpaid family labour, operating at home, with the household head as a cast-based artisan remaining in control of the decisions about production, marketing and money, and with the goods being sold directly to the consumer and through mediation of stakeholders (*bepari*). At the other extreme there is a high volume of production of crafts for tourist consumption in India and abroad. For example, in the production of appliqué work, a large (700-1000 piece-rate workers), or small (200 piece-rate workers) factory, may employ 80% craftswomen of different ages, education and skills, who come to work within cast-based artisan communities and workshops.

In between there are household production units that combine family members and piece-rate (wage) workers (10-25 in appliqué, and 2-6 in handloom), but in which the household head remains in control of the production and marketing decisions. Samal (1995) defines these units as *small capitalist* producers or entrepreneurs who organize and mobilize their own labour and raw materials with paid/unpaid family labourers and wage workers and who work within the unprotected labour and economic environment. Another category is the businessman who holds the stake in the hierarchy of bargaining positions between the disempowered local producers. The local reputation attached to stakeholders is one of exploiters with feudalistic mindsets, known locally as *bepari*. The stakeholders and businessmen of such places never add real time, or the innovative skills of an artisan to the value. This is an indication of the deprived circumstances under which craftswomen live.

### *Homeworkers*

The homeworkers and self-employees are the main focus of my study. Between the piece rate wagers and the self-employed are the homeworkers of the unorganised handicraft and handloom sector. The women may work at home and at their own pace, yet they may be dependant on an enterprise that collects the product (or buys labour and skills), or provides raw materials and sometimes its own production technologies. This dependency on home units/private workshops makes it difficult to determine whether such women are self-employed, or wage workers (Weston 1987, Everts 1998). There are no written or oral contracts between the employees and wagers that are effective in the court of law or judiciary. The wage work is unprotected, irrespective of whether workers are regular, irregular, short-term or long-term. As will be shown in this research, the very existence and continuity of home units today is where the tenure of piece-rate workers, apprentices and hired skilled artisans is entirely unprotected. Instances of tourist production, availability of cheap female labour increasing the new forms of home units, and small and big capitalist producers/traders are types of invisible factories that take advantage of the cultural ideologies of work relationships.

Wages are determined on the basis of the informal networking of social and individual bargaining power, but no institutions play an effective role in the fixation of wages, or resolving exploitation and gendered practices. Two major deterrents are the fear of organised labour and the costs of compliance with factory legislation. A common way of bypassing the legislation is to hire master craftsmen and skilled artisans under who wage workers work, or to bribe the local officials, politicians and traders (Kalpagam 1981, Dhamija 1992). This local ideology is known as the *bethiani* mode of economic practice (females who work in exploitative labour condition with unfair wages). Women who protest for accessible trade union activities are regarded as deviant or an oddity (Acharya & Lund 2002).

However, some homeworkers with investment capabilities have turned their own households into workshops and work with the piece-rate workers (Samal 1995). Skilled/semi-skilled homeworkers who traditionally work at registered cooperative societies (including males) are now choosing to work independently. Mahila Samitis (MS; women's cooperatives) have developed training groups. NGOs either work with trainee groups or Self Help Groups (SHG) from different villages, or they work individually, but still exploitation of labour condition prevails. Here, some trainees (mainly men) succeed in serving loans, and subsequently become self-employees (one such case is Mami's story; Acharya & Lund 2002). Mies' work on the lace makers of Narsapur (1982) reveal that the expansion of production has led to an increased sexual division of labour, with men taking over the entrepreneurial functions. In such circumstances,

though similar in form, the constraints that Third World women face, as well as specificities of history, political and economic ideologies make the economic globalization and associated neoliberal trade policies oppressive and exploitative. Homeworkers are not only invisibilized from the census figures but rural craftswomen are increasingly experiencing that masculine definitions of property rights and social standing prevail.

### ***Entrepreneur or self-employed?***

The Standing Committee's definition of 'women entrepreneurs'<sup>18</sup> has been greatly criticised because of its rhetoric conditions, and the ILO's (1987) definition<sup>19</sup> was found inadequate in the Indian situation (Mukul 1998). Later in 1991, the National Commission on Rural Labour also tried to deal with homeworkers and suggested that whatever way possible, they should be organised into co-operatives. The principal employer should be responsible for the provision of their welfare. A separate legislation should be made on the lines of the *Beedi* (rural cigar) and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act. The National Labour Law Association, gives an account of the ILO instrument on home-based work, and tries to deal specifically with current needs in the Indian context<sup>20</sup> (Mukul 1998).

The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA)<sup>21</sup> led to break the conventional legislative status of homemaker through its trade union movements for the unorganised petty

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<sup>18</sup> In this study I take entrepreneur as both homemaker and self-employed for a cognitive understanding. According to this definition, (*a woman who owns and runs (administer) an industry is a woman entrepreneur. She should have a minimum financial interest of 51% of the share capital and should be giving at least 51% of the employment generated in the enterprise to women*). The first condition may not be satisfied when the unit is largely financed by a loan from a financial institution. The second condition may not be satisfied when the required female labour is not available. Therefore this definition needs to be changed according to the local activity place and gender relations.

<sup>19</sup> *A woman entrepreneur is one who is able to observe the environment, identify opportunities to improve it, marshal resources and implement action to maximise those opportunities to organise, manage and assume the risk of running the enterprises.*

<sup>20</sup> According to this document, the term 'homemaker' or self-employed is defined somewhat indirectly in the *Beedi* and Cigar (Conditions of Employment) Act of 1996. Similarly, the Contract Labour Act (Abolition and Regulation) and the Minimum Wage Act define the term 'out-work', which includes people who works at home. Mukul found that these existing definitions fulfil the ILO requirements to some extent, but there are some other qualifications that do not exist in the Indian Legislation, namely equality of treatment between home workers and other wage earners. Taking into account the special characteristics of home workers, issues related to hours of work, leave, welfare, social security, and health and safety should now be a matter for any government initiative (Mukul 1998).

<sup>21</sup> SEWA arose in an area where women had been organised as textile workers and also where Gandhi had mobilised the *harijans*, those groups who had been marked by the caste system as the 'untouchables'. Gandhi's emphasis upon the immeasurable value of sense of self-worth inspired Ela Bhatt, the founder of SEWA. The women homeworkers do not have any sort of worker identifier because they lack access to space (work and market) and cheap raw materials, and lack legislative power and reasonable credit. SEWA uses cooperative and trade union strategies to bargain with municipalities and people with power over resources, knowledge, financial institutions and land, and marketing channels.



workers. The effort – SEWA prefers the phrase ‘self-employed’ because the mobilising experience gained by the workingwomen in the unorganised sector – could challenge cultural marginalization and the social relations and sexual division of women’s labour (my conversations with the SEWA members in October 1998). Hence, survival and resistance are their very capacity to create new organisational forms, e.g. unions which are organised around conditions of work, and include extensive lists of welfare demands which enable workers to earn a living and improve their lives. SEWA describes how women act consciously and can integrate productive and reproductive of work to resists dominant gendered ideologies. However, peculiarly in my field area, none of the piece rate workers were aware of the ILO-SEWA conventions, and neither the private owners nor the government officials have made efforts to facilitate this basic convention.

Trade Union movement of SEWA (India) to the formulation of an ILO convention during the International Confederation of the Free Trade Union (ICFTU) when adopting a resolution by asking the ILO to pass a convention in 1995, considering ‘homeworkers’ as a topic. Finally, in 1996, the ILO Geneva passed a bill, the International Convention on Homeworkers, which in convention 177 define homeworking as: *Work carried out by a person in his or her home or in other premises of his or her choice, other than the work place of the employer, for remuneration, which results in a product or service as specified by the employer, irrespective of who provides the equipment, materials or other inputs used, unless this person has the degree of autonomy and economic independence necessary to be considered an independent worker under laws, regulations or court decisions.* The term ‘home workers’ and ‘homeworker’ have been further clarified (Mukul 1998). To rectify limited aspects<sup>22</sup> of the convention, verification no.184 made certain recommendations concerning homeworkers. In part, what matters here is the projection of a particular image of Orissan poverty in relation to the fair treatment of the real wage in the local (craft production) labour-economic relations. Reflecting on gendered spaces, the next section shows how it is imperative that the ILO-SEWA’s regulation on homeworkers be introduced into the cooperative and unorganised cottage industry sector of the economy in order for craft artisans to earn their real wages in Orissa.

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<sup>22</sup> If the convention is rectified it will be necessary to formulate a national policy on homeworkers and other wage earners, taking in to account the special characteristics of homeworker. The convention further specifies that equality of treatment should be promoted in particular in relation to the homeworker’s right to establish or join organisations of their own choosing and to participate in the activities of such organisations; protection against discrimination in employment and occupation; protection in the field of occupational safety and health; remuneration; statutory social security protection; access to training; minimum age of admission to employment or work; and maternity benefit. The convention also suggests a system of inspection, and adequate remedies, including penalties, in the case of violation of laws and regulations.

## Poverty and the real wage in craftwork production

In Orissa the subsistence system of agricultural productivity is hardly a source of livelihood. Orissa had the highest level of rural poverty among all India states in 1999-2000. The annual growth rate of per capita of 'state domestic products' in a six-years period (1993 to 2000) for Orissa state, as estimated by Deaton & Dreze (2002, Table 3: 3737) was Rs 2.34. It appears that the corroborated average per capita consumption expenditure was very low. There has been virtually zero growth of average per capita expenditure (and very little reduction, if any, in rural poverty) between 1993-1994 and 1999-2000. In fact, the 'pace' of poverty decline in India during the 1990s was fairly rapid. This was not the case in Orissa<sup>23</sup>. Deaton & Dreze (2002) observe that the precondition for substantial poverty decline, and to overcome rural and urban gaps, or, organized and unorganised occupational and gender disparities, might possibly be through the healthy growth of real wages<sup>24</sup>. I argue that a focus only on labour (wage) and livelihood overlooks the historically and culturally specific gendered meanings and values associated with the symbolic code, normative concepts (sexual division of labour and ideologies) and institutional practices that undermine the gendered relationship between owner (*bepari*) and workers (*bethiani*) to achieve fair wages. To make my argument, I focus on *bepari* and *bethiani* relationships on Orissa on the cottage industry of traditional handlooms and handicrafts sector. I believe that gender inequality is strongly related with feminisation of labour. Targeting real wages, however, may not essentially decrease socio-sexual inequalities (Wieringa 1998). While poverty combined with gender inequalities intensify the labour relations and affect women's real wages hardest, the result is acquitting failure of 'human capabilities'.

I also believe in the regime of economics which argues that different gendered workspaces relations and *value* regimes need to, and can, be brought together if we are to think about empowerment in new ways (Krishnaraj 2001). Female appliqué piece-rate producers

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<sup>23</sup> In Deaton & Dreze's (2002) new series (estimation made by 'adjustment' to the National Sample Survey headcount ratio: HR) of consistent poverty estimates for the year 1987-88, the HR below poverty line in rural Orissa was 50.4% and urban was 20.8%, while the all-India rural headcount ratio was 39% and the all-India urban ratio was 22.5%. In Orissa, in the year 1999-2000 rural poverty was 43%, and urban poverty was 15.6%, while the all-India rural head count ratio was 26.3% and urban count was 12.0%. It should also be noted that Orissa was hit by a devastating cyclone in October 1999. Thus, the 1999-2000 poverty estimates for Orissa are likely to be somewhat 'above trend', making craftswomen's situation in such households harder. For further information see the 'Orissa Development Report' released by the deputy chairperson of the Union Planning Commission in 1 May 2003, and reported in online 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2003, Dharitri.com.

<sup>24</sup> The Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Orissa 2001, charted wages and prices for the year 1997-98 in Khurda District. The average daily wages for a skilled carpenter (artisan) was around Rs 70, for male agricultural field labourers Rs 37, for female labourers Rs 33.13 and for child labourers, Rs 30. In other labour categories (in my research, case piece rate crafts work) the daily wage for men is Rs 37 and for women Rs 35.

located in 'domestic' spheres *per se*, receive a maximum of Rs 10 (=0.21 \$) a day. In the local handicrafts and weaving context, notwithstanding the large, skilful and varied amount of work done by craftswomen in the crafts productions, the men are seen as doing the major jobs. Even skilled female producers working with sewing machines and cutting designs in unregistered workshops do not earn more than Rs 750-900 a month. Their male counterparts do the same work and earn Rs 900-1200, and further, only males are found to be engaged in the technical skills and earn Rs 2200.

In the handloom and handicraft cooperative societies, where both male and female compete for the same types of job, the real wage for men has invariably grown more than in the female-centred labour in all craft productions, making women extremely vulnerable. This is found in appliqué embroidering, seashell work, making *patta chitra*, palm leaf engraving, yarn rolling, and tie-dying. The marginalization of female labour also means that the labour force is cheaply available. Men with the same skills demand a lot more in real wages. Given that the demands of livelihood are a critical part of craftswomen's everyday practices, it is not the only criterion for the craftswomen. Women tend to accept less payment due to considerations like location, mobility, timing, friends, and patriarchy pressure at the household fronts. In order to engage with such non-economic factors of economic practices it is necessary to discuss its culturally symbolic content of the local work culture. Raymond Williams (1960) defined the notion of 'culture' simply not as a set of habits or traditions, but as a way to comprehend how people actually live their lives – a structure of feelings dynamically related to the actions in it. In other words, as a form of production, culture has material as well as symbolic dimensions through which inequalities are created and challenged.

The relationship between the submersions of craftswomen's productive role within their familial role may be ascribed as 'nurturer'. At times, the performances and role practices of being self-employed and the piece-rate producers manipulate the symbolic capital to accrue more mobility and have more say in household income and decision matters. Extending the economic analysis beyond material processes to encompass any form of symbolic value, contribution and women's vulnerability are a matter of *recognition* of the 'perceived contribution' (Sen 1987) of work and visibility of their 'self-perceiving' *actions/voices* attributed to them by workplace hegemony (Agarwal 1994).

The discussion above leads to questions related to how a cooperative society as people sector workspace selects basic political principles with a commitment to treat each producer's capabilities, and how it may respond to its women weavers' immediate problems by setting up services that will meet their practical needs and alleviate their marginalization. When a craft

cooperative society is established to help improve skills and source of livelihoods, analysing only the 'supply side constraints',<sup>25</sup> would aggregate spatial situations without analysing the subordinate status by their acceptance of cultural, social and political practices that are unequal and unjust gender relationships. While production through a cooperative society, SHG, or NGO can certainly help reduce some sorts of livelihood and power imbalances, the thousands of skilled craftswomen in this sector who have marginally benefited bear testimony to the fact that co-operation (organising) is not enough. Supposing Bhagi a *harijan*<sup>26</sup> (untouchable caste) weaver as to say that she feels dissatisfied with her caste, and yet the collective voices and spatial identities of her co-workers were not recognised would she see the point of SBWCS for the *harijan* producer's development? Bhagi thinks her caste is an obstacle because women workers of her category/caste have been so 'downtrodden' (*dalit*) for generations that they do not go against the society. Kausalaya (a weaver) would say that she feels dissatisfied with her work designation (which is like a *kuli/coolie*<sup>27</sup>) on the ground. Her weaving skill is not valued as eligible for worker's benefit right in the Tara handloom centre' nor does she see what point there would be in registering as a co-operative producer. Similarly, each of my protagonists could raise some thoughtful questions that make us rethink and reorganise the gender and development practices. For example, had Kausalaya and her daughter had workers' benefits, a pension scheme and food ration co-operatives, they would have had different options for choosing shelter, self-employment or marriage, and their identity would not been invisible. However, such incongruities and dissatisfactions are not the necessary motivation for the government of Orissa to promote traditional crafts in the SBWCS and development policies for women through the DWCRA, or Sampurna Gramina Rojgar Yojana.

One of the significant causes of weak agency of most grass-roots businesswomen is the non-availability of institutional sources of power for the same structural and social inequality causes. It is not simply a question of access to so-called neoliberal capitalist 'mission', but of

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<sup>25</sup> Such constraints, according to Dreze & Sen (1995), are the variable elements of lives for which government does not have relevant information about liberty, economic well-being, health and education.

<sup>26</sup> Literally, the people of God; defined by the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, to abolish the scheduled caste untouchable syndrome from Independent India. Gandhi and his followers (social reformists) have stressed the conventional prejudices attached to the caste/religious/gender superstition and the feudalistic practice of the *jajmani* system.

<sup>27</sup> The word 'Kuli' (Oxford English Dictionary uses as 'coolie') is from the harijan weaver's communities. In western Orissa '*Kuli Meher* are local weaver cast that work as helpers for the high caste weavers. Local terms such as '*Kulibadi*' (casual labour at agricultural field), or *harijana* and poor people said their everyday '*kulibuta* or '*kulikabara*' (casual works for several work sites and social terms) sustain their livelihoods. Comparing her skilled weaving with a mere *Kuli* type of treatment, Kausalaya, a cooperative society weaver, wants to legitimate the rhetoric of SBWCS' micro-economic policy. However, in coastal districts of Orissa this kind of low paid, unfair casual work in the unorganised informal economy is termed *bethikama*, *mulia*, *gotikama* etc.

restoring and carrying forward a creative and empowered participation of craftswomen's activities and a dialectical relationship between workers' workspaces and exercise interactions.

## **Research questions and structure of the thesis**

The following research questions are central to the present thesis. The overall research problem is: how do economic experiences of marginalization and exploitation provide Oriyani homeworkers and self-employees with capability (dignity, humanity and autonomy)?

➤ How does consideration of a more coordinated and sustained embodiment contribute to an understanding of craftswomen's socio-spatial relations and processes of labour marginalization in unorganised self-employment?

➤ How does bargaining for workspace occurs, what shape does it take, and under what circumstances may collective actions be successful?

➤ How do marginalized experiences reinforce and challenge dominant notions of women's roles in self-employment (gender needs, economy, kinship relations, sexual division of labour, and religious and commercial practices), and how do familial position deprive them of full participation in development?

➤ What do individual stories inform us, about how an ethically just, flexible and Indocentric value-based society may be obtained?

Addressing the above research questions indicates the conceptual and empirical concern and main issues explored in this research. I discuss the concept of gender, body and sexualization of economic workspaces in the unorganised production sector in India, and argue that, so far, analyses of production of labour and economic practices have pursued a utilitarian and mechanistic understanding of cultural construction of work places and socio-spatial relationships.

Chapter 2 seeks to develop the links between pre-existing analytical resources in view of grass-roots women's capability in the gender and development discourse, especially to explore what it means to understand the workplaces in traditional craft productions from a feminist geography perspective. It forms the basis of discourse in later chapters in this thesis. I discuss the conceptual limitations that inform this discourse and argue for a culturally and geographically situated understanding of business spaces and spatial relationships.

Chapter 3 discusses how the research was approached methodologically through feminist narratives to understand how and why grass-roots women's embodiment is rendered inaccessible and inappropriate and in what ways their agential capabilities and objectification in social discourse could be transformed to reclaim their knowledge and appreciate its usefulness. Drawing

an epistemological and moral political position that I find implicit in Mohanty's argument (1991, 1997), I show how the ideological character of the value system is shaping and sustaining highly gendered socio-political economy practices.

To present an analysis of everyday speech and actions of women at the "sites" of "power relations", I illustrate the entangled relationships between craftswomen's identity and the Hindu notion of femininity and sexuality (material and symbolic) in Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 focuses on the experiences drawn from a group of several craft communities, societies, workshops, training hostel, State Handicrafts Training Institution and NGOs. Chapter 5 presents such tensions of labour and livelihood dynamics in the Tara weaving centre of Sambalpuri Bastralaye Weaver Cooperative Society. It critically reflects on the whole complex of institutional practices within which the workers inhabit and negotiate their bargaining (s) at the level of group, individual and bodily self. Weaver women and their experiences of survival and self-employment and resistance valorise women's capability with "other" (social relationship) to influence livelihood outcomes over institutions and agency over structure.

Chapter 6 introduces five articles, which are part of the same research project. In Article no. 1, entitled *Gendered spaces – socio-spatial relations of self-employed women in craft productions, Orissa, India* (Achary & Lund 2002), Mami's narratives demonstrate the issues of the division of labour: factors of production and the processes of constructing individual gender identity, which are embedded in the gender structure and remain invisible to the new social order. Situating the pattern of body use and bodily inscription within temple architecture and religious craft carvings in Article no. 2, entitled 'Contending Indian Religious Spaces: Embedding Gender in Temple Architecture and Craft Carving in Orissa, India', I argue that the socio-spatial relations of gendered spaces are also deeply embedded in the cultural construction of religious ideologies (Acharya & Lund 2002). Re-delimitations of 'gendered spaces' have shown the possibility of women becoming visible subjects in the gendered domains of power relations. Article no. 3, entitled 'Women's Well-being and Gendered Practices of Labour and Workspace in Traditional Craft Productions in Orissa, India' illustrates how, in Orissa, the identities of self-employment are constituted and always entwined with diverse social practices and culturally specific notions of 'appropriate producers', 'dutiful wives' and 'social workers', and promote exclusion of their agential capabilities (in terms of access and activities and as workers). In Article no. 4, entitled 'Embodying craftswomen's workspace and well-being in Orissa, India', the story of Chandana shows that places of production relations are not just social processes, changing through local and global relations of capitalism, but are discursively constituted by local politics of place and are constitutive of socio-spatial relations. In Article no. 5, entitled 'The place of feminist geography

methodologies and personal narratives in research on self-employment: the case of fieldwork in Orissa, India', the understanding is that studying entrepreneurs/self-employed persons means studying gendered beings in gendered places (Berg & Acharya unpublished data). Drawing on Mohanty (1991: 97) Madge et al. 1997 and Hanson (1997), the place of feminist geography methodology and personal narratives is discussed the case of fieldwork in Orissa, India.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by providing a discussion on a flexible, ethically and locally based feminist framework to organise and improve the sagacity of self-employment. The issues of craftswomen's agencies in negotiation of space are drawn from the preceding chapters for grounded and locally meaningful creation of new organizational forms offers new possibilities and actions.

## Chapter 2

### **Histories of crafts productions: Craft workers on feminist's scripts and global trading practices**

#### **Textiles and handicrafts: the colonial and postcolonial history**

For thousands of years India has had extensive handloom and handicraft trade networks<sup>28</sup>. Kalinga, (the old empire of Orissa), the Coromandal coast, Gujarat and the Indo-Gangetic valley were the most industrial regions, while Surat in Gujarat, Masulipatnam on the Coromandal coast and Hoogly in Bengal were the most outstanding commercial centres. According to Paul Baran (1957), India was one of the most developed<sup>29</sup> countries in the world in the eighteenth century and Indian handloom textile goods such as cotton, silks and calicos were in high demand on the European market. However, Indian business history has taken a different course from the European one. For hundreds of years, business networks were based on occidental economic ethics, such as the use of the abacus and indigenous forms of book keeping. The economic ethics (such as 'rationality') were based on kinship networking and the social mores in the notions of collectivist secularism, versus what Mies & Shiva (1993) call monoculture ethics, based on the individualist spirit of capitalism (Goody 1996). Yet, the decline of traditional cottage industries in India started during the 10<sup>th</sup> century, mainly due to two reasons, local unrest and British colonisers. Languishing local power and deteriorating organising capability further hampered the handloom and handicrafts activities in Kalinga, (old Orissa), where life was lived within the rhythm of seasonal craft production<sup>30</sup>.

There were pervasive attempts by the British to reorder the cottage industries in India, by channelling cotton and local resources to produce cheaper goods in modern English factories (after the Industrial Revolution), by introducing/forcing this use among the colonisers, or, by discouraging the traditional craft producers by changing the trade policy regulation.

Consequently, the present backwardness of India, according to Baran (1957), was caused by: *the elaborate, ruthless, systematic despoliation of India by British capital from the very onset*

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<sup>28</sup> A Roman trade document makes some mention about the trading of textiles from India to many European countries during the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Arab geographers have also maintained trading of spices, textiles, gold, handicrafts, and hand printed cotton textiles in various trading centres in India (Dhamija 1992: 4-5).

<sup>29</sup> The report of the Industrial Commission 1962-18 stated that 'India was famous for the wealth of her rulers and the high artistic skill of her craftsmen. At a time when the merchant-capitalists of the West made their first appearance in India, the industrial advancement of the country was not inferior to those more advanced nations in the West' (Samal 1995).

<sup>30</sup> First, the death of Emperor Aurangzeb in 1707 threw the country into religious and ruling confusion and spread insecurity in Indian trade and industry. Second, the wake of colonization of India by British became a crucial factor in handloom and handicraft activities.



of *British rule* (1957: 145). To safeguard its rural infant industries and to capture the world textile market at the same time, high duties and tariffs were imposed on Indian goods. The coding and transmutation in the British industrial sector led to the production of a hybrid variety of cheaper goods with high lasting quality, that flooded into the Indian market (Gadgil 1985). Indian products, which were mostly handmade and expensive, could hardly compete with them. The classical study by Paul Baran on the impact of colonialism on political, economic and cultural sphere makes clear that the colonial governments used the patriarchy system as a major instrument to administer and to shape the local society to fit their own interests. The East Indian Company and the British Parliament began a policy of *deindustrialisation*, which turned India into a cotton-growing nation for British manufacturing centres: *The British administration of India systematically destroyed all fibre and foundations of Indian society.*<sup>31</sup> *Its land and taxation policy ruined India's village economy and substituted for the parasitic landowner and moneylenders. Its commercial policy destroyed the Indian artisan and created the infamous slums of the Indian cities filled with millions of starving and diseased paupers. Its economic policy broke down whatever beginnings, and promoted the proliferation of speculators, petty businessmen, agents, and sharks of all descriptions eking out a sterile and precarious livelihood in the meshes of a decaying society* (1957: 149).

High duties and tariffs in the 1880s intensified the repressive practices of handicraft production and training; slavery, taxation and *bethi* marked the former feudalistic rules. Down-to-earth freedom fighters, born from many parts of Orissa, organised the local peasants collectively following Gandhi's non-violence movement and resisted the new ruler's unfair taxation and agricultural land policies, the *bethi khati* (forced labour), coolie (casual labour) system, and the caste/communal barriers of the *harijan*. Many everyday practices, such as forestry, fuel and fodder collections and craft production became punishable offences. Rulers and/or merchants exploited the native knowledge in evil ways, and even jealously disabled some famous master craftsmen and enterprises, by destroying their resources, source of equipment, and disabling their

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<sup>31</sup> Baran further elaborates that: *British [...] discouraged Indian manufacturers[...]. This policy was pursued with unwavering resolution and with fatal success; orders were sent out, to force Indian artisans to work in the company's factories; commercial residences were legally vested with extensive powers over villages and communities of Indian weavers; prohibitive tariffs excluded Indian silk and cotton goods from England; English goods were admitted into India free of duty or on payment of nominal duty. The invention of the power-loom in Europe completed the decline of the Indian industries; and when in recent years the power-loom was set up in India, England once more acted towards India with unfair jealousy. An excise duty has been imposed on the production of cotton fabrics in India, [...]* (1957: 149).

bodies in cutting off their fingers<sup>32</sup> (Mustaphiz Ahmad, in Panda 1992), and the disappearance of native Indian courts led to the loss of patronization of age-old handicraft goods (Gadgil 1985, Guha 1989, Meher 1994). This resulted in long-lasting effects, which are still experienced today, as craft and textile production became difficult to access, the productivity of traditional artisans remained poor and people became deprived of their ancestral ways of livelihoods (Gadgil 1985, Mama 1997). The ensuing pressure on livelihoods further exacerbated the outflow of artisans from the region in search of agriculture, forestry and employment by migrating into rural/urban areas and encroaching lush jungle. Within limited choices for women in the colonial practices, small-scale subsistence-oriented economic activities in which women were heavily engaged, were eroded (Mies & Shiva 1993). Slowly, but surely, the burden came to rest on women's sexuality and livelihoods. In this context, critical understanding of colonialism and postcolonial restructuring projects is a way of registering the complex vision of the effects, e.g. on the subaltern groups (Guha & Spivak 1988) of the colonialism/capitalism that are inherent within the colonial archives. Ashis Nandy (1987, 90) sees this authoritarianism and violence inherent in the project of development as having its roots in the evolution of modern science. Most conspicuous in this regard are questions that have been raised concerning what Escobar (1995) calls 'development discourse'<sup>33</sup>.

Closer attention to difference, which implies closer attention to place, leads Escobar (1995) to conclude that while developmentalism has already destroyed much (e.g. in Latin America), it has not destroyed everything, and the hybrid forms that place-based native traditions have forced on a universalist developmentalism may yet provide alternative ways of thinking about life and change against a development discourse that recognises no exterior (Bhabha 1994, Escobar 1995: 217-22). In this connection, colonial spaces are seen as heterogeneous spaces, and colonial discourse theory draws attention to the significance of 'mimicry, hybridity and transculturation in the coproduction of subjectivities and spatialities' (cf. Bhabha 1994, So 1996). The traditional cottage industries sector<sup>34</sup>, particularly the handicrafts and handlooms that had

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<sup>32</sup> Address notes by Mustaphiz Ahmad, former handlooms and weaving industry minister, Orissa, in 1992, see Panda, S.K. 1992. '*Bunakara bhai bhauni mananka pain pade*' (means in English a sentence for the weaver brothers and sisters) SBWCS, Bargarh, Orissa.

<sup>33</sup> Escobar (1995) argues that development discourse – assuming universality for its own particular definitions of poverty and wealth, stagnation and progress, and ultimately what constitutes a good life – has led to an invasion of the world by western capitalism, which ultimately has had destructive consequences for societies and nature. Gandhi acknowledged that even in the best political arrangements power can be abused and must be resisted. This is why he wanted the servants to teach civil disobedience (Parekh 1989).

<sup>34</sup> Traditional sector or decentralised sector during economic reform comprised *Khadi* (handspun cotton textiles), handlooms, sericulture, handicrafts, and coir industries. For the purpose of my research, I have taken the section of the textile sector where women are casually employed as piece-rate workers, casual labours and self-employed in large numbers, as well as coir and handicrafts work. These comprised three main areas: community handloom

declined in India during the British period emerged as an economic force in the country and a livelihood for the mass population. In this context, the next section of debate deals with how new structural change is a spatio-cultural hybridity, one that can only be understood best if one understands how skills and livelihoods in rural India survive coproductive pressures.

### **On feminist's scripts: the women workers**

[...] *women's bodies and labour are used to consolidate global dreams, desires, and ideologies of success and good life*'. (With local situational variations), *women are [...] defined in relation to men and conjugal marriage*' (and work is) '*grounded in sexual identity, in concrete definitions of femininity, masculinity, and heterosexuality*' (Mohanty 1997: 10 & 12).

Gender and Development (GAD) debates focuses on the cultural construction of 'women' in development agendas. It is argued that GAD practices are economistic and reductionist. Critical thought in the 1980s and early 1990s (Spivak 1988, Mohanty 1988, Collins 1991), more specifically post colonial and transnational thought, has made it clear that such ahistorical notions of the common experience, exploitation, or strength of Third World women or between Third and First World women serve to naturalize normative Western feminist categories of self and other. Within the field of Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD) and GAD approaches (see Lund 1993 for an extensive discussion), the latter in particular analyses women's labour exploitation and subordination, suggesting that access to markets through credit, incentives or income in itself play a relatively agential role in determining social opportunity for the poor and women (Bagchi & Raju 1993, Acharya 1994). When reinterpreting the positivists' and empiricists' legacy of market principle adapted by policy planners (Kabeer 1994, Dreze & Sen 1995), Third World women are seen as victims of their culture and those who need rescuing from the cultural practices (Visvanathan 1997, Narayan & Harding 2000).

Young's (1993) transformatory potential of gender relations and women empowerment (crucial issues to Scoot 1989) carries with it an element of struggle against mainstream

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producers, producing saris, door cottons, bed-spreads, tableclothes, menswear and other such clothes, second, producers under cooperative societies and third, there are women in a variety of other areas, such as cotton growers, yarn re-winding, cotton-pod unsealing, reeling, and tie-dyed work.

economic approach. However, it does not tackle how to end male control over women's sexuality. Naila Kabeer (1994) analyses the limitation of the Marxist concept of social relation to focus on various forms of capitalist oppression and violence perpetrated against the women in various times and places. Kabeer avoids the universalist generalizations that characterize the structuralist approaches, and which see women's oppression as produced by the capitalist mode of production or by a global patriarchy (such as suggested by Mies (1986)). She adapts the comprehensive listing of Molyneux (1985) for policy makers and development planners, which shares the inability of historical materialists to deal meaningfully with the realm<sup>35</sup> of the symbolic and the sexual, though hardly analysing the realm of the symbolic processes of identity formation and the sphere of the male-defined politics (Wieringa 1998). Nonetheless, Moserian analysis (Moser 1993) of practical gender needs (concrete conditions) and strategic interests (engendered positions within the sexual division of labour) is criticised as pointing only towards the problem of accountability and representation (Nicholson 1995, Wieringa 1998). While feminists stress the fact of who (planner or beneficiaries) actually decides what are 'strategic' or 'practical' needs or interests, researchers such as Foucault (1978) warn that the distinction between practical and strategic interests is another attempt, not to explain reality, but rather to control and normalize it.

In the mid-1990s, Nicholson took the postmodernist debate one step further, for conceptualising gender as 'the social organization of sexual difference,' including 'the knowledge that establishes meaning for bodily differences.' For, she explains, our 'knowledge about sexual difference cannot be isolated from discursive context' (Nicholson 1995: 39). For, Nast (1998), gender absorbs and displaces sex. Craftswomen's work experiences show how 'body is a discursive site' of struggle, in which embodied needs and desires interface with cultural values (rationalizing the material and symbolic) and are lived. Indeed, as will be seen in this context, when complex gender relations under shifting and contextualized conditions revolve around subjective agency, identity formation and mobilization, the discourse<sup>36</sup> of gender identity in craft work claims a kind of ethics, justice and equality which questions its policies. The 'governmentality' (Foucault 1991) ideologies of the cooperative society, people-sector institutions like banks (SIDBI, NABARD), and agencies linked to the macro economy reinforce and regulate gendered attributes in the local-global trade networks. However, cultural ideologies

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<sup>35</sup> Such as 'legal reform, reproductive choice, employment promotion, access to new extra-household resources, organizational activity', while any analysis has on sexuality, politics and other institutionalised forms of discrimination.

<sup>36</sup> Norman Long (2001: 51) defines discourse as 'a set of meanings embodied in metaphors, representations, images, narratives and statements that advance a particular version of 'the truth' about objects, persons, events and the relations between them.'

that configure structural/gender inequalities imply a social constructive view (Mohanty 1991, Spivak 1996, Narayan 1997, Bhavnani et al. 2003, Visvanathan 1997).

### ***Women and empowerment***

Initially, the term empowerment was most commonly associated with alternative approaches to development (Sen & Grown 1987, Friedmann 1992). More recently, empowerment has become a popular, largely unquestioned 'new mission of the mainstream development agencies'<sup>37</sup> aspired to by such diverse and contradictory institutions (strategies<sup>38</sup> for the women empowerment), *per se*, in Orissa, as the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD), the *Mahila* commission and many gender development NGOs, and media, planners, scholars and activists engaged in conceptualising empowerment. The new 'Mission *Shakti*' (MIS) project targeted to empower the poor, and especially women's Self Help Groups (SHGs) development and cooperative societies, or Swarna Gayanti Rojagar Yojana (SGRY)-like processes in Orissa have thus become down-to-earth empowering strategies and unquestionable 'motherhood' terms, while DWCRA approaches under the Integrated Rural Development Programme failed to address the routine exploitation and transformative potential of the individual and collective skills/actions. However, empowerment lies in the experience of the capacity building for self-reliance of those beneficiaries for whom these development strategies are designed to benefit. Foucault's exposition of power over structure, people and resources reminds us that power is fluid, relational and connected to control over discourses/knowledge (Gupta & Ferguson 1997). The relative '*invisibility*' of women's productive work, working within informal boundaries as well as the bleak attitude of officials towards recognising them, and the concepts of women's

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<sup>37</sup> Their growing concern with alternative approaches (Sen & Grown 1987, Friedmann 1992) is for the local, grass-roots community-based movements and initiatives, and their growing disengagement with mainstream officials and top-down approaches to development. Friedemann's empowerment model (1992) that attempts to incorporate marginalised groups into the mainstream development process, identifies three senses of powers within the household: psychological, social and political power. Moser (1993) explores how women's empowerment/emancipation is achieved in order to obtain practical and strategic gender needs. Recent scholars, most notably Batilwala (1994), Kabeer (1994), Rowlands (1997), Afshar (1998), Wieringa (1998), (Visvanathan et al. (1997), March, Smyth, & Mukhopadhyay (1999) question the treatment of such a 'watchword' in developing institutions and scholars or transforming its effectiveness at local level women's development.

<sup>38</sup> One of the primary objectives of the popularly known Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002) in India is to create an enabling environment where women can freely exercise their rights both within the home and outside the workplace as equal partners along with men. It was no doubt a compromise between a variety of pressure groups such as international bodies and feminists, activists groups and their two-decades long struggle for affirmative action in favour of grass-roots women's needs and incorporating gender issues in policy planning. The Ninth Five-Year Plan document for women's empowerment states that this will be realised through early finalisation and adoption of the 'National Policy for Empowerment of Women'.

work and work roles are blurred. These changing understandings of socio-spatial ideologies, both in terms of capitalistic and non-capitalist contexts, propose broader ethical consciousness than existing moral theories of justice or fair treatment of women's capabilities.

The ideology of anti-feminist biases drawn from my own field of research showed that some official and NGO agents/coordinators, instead of performing a rigorous analysis of male domination, rest on a welfaristic approach of how men would benefit from gender development projects (as if they were not previously targeted as beneficiaries). In this system, no effort were made to recruit either trained (gender aware) males, or skilled females for the vocational craft training teacher positions (as if such conventional practices has already not controlled the agencies). Skilled women complained that their voices/actions cannot be heard when they lack opportunities of role negotiation in the area of the 'double day' of taxing crafts work and full responsibilities for household chores and childcare. Hence, empowerment projects fall far short of transforming women's capability. The textual ignorance is reinforced and realised through institutionalised practices (Kabeer 1999) where critical potential is limited to effecting unequal socio-sexual relations. Seen in this context, place and spatiality in any situation are essential to the critique of developmentalism, and finding alternatives to it. Nevertheless, Wieringa (1998) stresses the issue of heterosexuality (crucial to Rubin 1975) as the basis of the conjugal contract and as an attempt to rethink gender development in an interventionist way. For Niranjana (2001), in order to understand women's identity politics it is critical to focus on the potential of body-space orientation as lived practices. Yet, a 'model of interventionist practice' (Spivak 1988: 307) could transform the unequal power relations (normative and symbolic) to sites in which the context of subalterns' capability (needs and desires) interface with cultural values.

### **Gender and development – a spatial-cultural feminist narrative**

Theory of fixed human essence is problematic because it runs the risk of ignoring particular cultural differences in class, caste, race, sexuality, religion, ethnicity and identity, and place-based factors in the global order (Mohanty 1991). In this context, testimonials, oral histories, life stories, and written accounts are, according to Mohanty (1991: 33), *an important context in which to examine the development of political consciousness and self identities* (and are crucial in defining) *'third world women's engagement with feminism*. Part of the very reason of feminism is to look at subjectivity in relation to socio-cultural ideologies. Massey (1994), in an insightful essay, has argued that what makes a place unique is a 'particular mix of social relations'. Indeed,

by the 1980s, this formulation was developed in feminist geographies narratives<sup>39</sup> and radical geography to take into account the other perspectives<sup>40</sup>. Soja (1996) has contributed an emancipatory recognition of space within a plenary of ‘Third Space’. Given the embodied notion of this particular mix, a particular set of structures is generated that gives concrete meaning to social relations represented in the categories of class, gender, caste, ethnicity, etc.—and place itself, within the growing consensus that the impact of the new social relations is differentially experienced. Dirlik (1997) argues that to understand the complexities of categories is to conceive how these mediate through place, and how the place-based factors play a major role in the debates over the global and local hegemonic account<sup>41</sup> (Spivak 1988: 308). It has become possible that a focus on the embeddedness of life in socio-spatial context and locales is differentially experienced. For the vast majority of the Indian unorganised workforce — the grass-roots ‘marginal’ producers — given their marginal location in (re)productive labour and social relations, global capitalism becomes a condition of life and dissatisfaction with this situation has led to the questioning of the hegemonic implications of concepts divorced from places.

### ***Invisibility and anti-colonial interventions***

Deriving from Kristeva’s (1977) model of representing Chinese women’s livelihoods, Spivak (1987: 150) is sceptical towards cultural and class difference between women in representations that hardly incorporate feminist interests. Mapping the geography of female sexuality, Spivak (1987) charts a more sophisticated method of representation. In ‘Under Western Eyes: Feminist

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<sup>39</sup> See Acharya & Lund (2002: 208), The significance of narrative in the study of gendered space is discussed with regard to the socio-spatial activities.

<sup>40</sup> According to Lefebvre (1991) and Dirlik (1997), the production of place and its social constitutions need to be considered as intertwining, as both place-bound relations and place-based manifestations make sense of their social relations. Soja (1996) warned us that one must look at the historical-and-cultural specific gendered meanings and values associated within the ‘hybrid spaces’ that shape the gendered relationships.

<sup>41</sup> Against the classical Marxist notion of ideology as false consciousness, the Italian Marxist philosopher and political leader Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) proposed the more complex and flexible term *hegemony* to emphasise how people’s everyday lives and identities are defined in and through dominant social structures that are relatively autonomous of economic relations. In ‘Can the Subaltern Speak’ Spivak compares Bhubaneswari’s attempt at suicide to writing the *sati* text on the ‘hegemonic account of the fighting mother’ (1988: 308), during national independence struggles in India. In this case, the women, as Spivak sees them as heroes (encouragement) in the rhetoric of anti-colonial struggles. The account of the anti-alcohol campaign through women like Chandana and her co-workers’ is also hegemonic, because it directly addresses the everyday lives of real social workers for an ideal civil society, in order to persuade them to participate increasingly in antifeminist violence and oppression resistance struggles. There is no question that Chandana is a politically committed and courageous social worker, and a leader in the many women workers’ struggles for self-employment in Orissa. But it is a pity that her struggle is spatially constricted because the genealogy of the subaltern regulated by the neo-colonial cultural and global capital ideologies that relentlessly regulate the sexual and symbolic body boundaries. The community and kinship business structure is further effaced by the layered histories of postcolonial institutional practices and corrupted bureaucracy.

Scholarship and Colonial Discourses' Mohanty has criticised a tendency in western feminist scholarship to 'colonize the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the 'Third World' (Mohanty 1988: 66). By ignoring issues of the spatial dimension of sexuality (body-space relations) in the gender and development discourses, it is implied that these issues are not relevant to the South and that in those Southern parts of the world socio-economic issues are primary within Gender and Development politics (Wieringa 1998). In Mohanty's view, these 'assumptions of privilege and ethnocentric universality' can have a damaging effect on different women living in the Third World. In other words, that ordained through a 'supra-local' conception (economistic and mechanistic) of culture is made to stand in for the specificities of space. As I will show in Article no. 2 (2003a), contending Indian religious space and the considerations of the sexuality and the symbolic content of bodily practices in craft activities are not only interweaving—the body politics is the struggle for inclusion of their performance and representation within the structure of power (Mitchell 2000).

The lives and struggle of Third World women portrayed in this thesis are embodied experiences of self-employment in home-based working conditions. As Mami (Acharya & Lund 2002) and Chandana (Acharya 2003c) stated, the complex construction of the legally displaced female subjects within ideological codes and the postcolonial (structure/research) constitution of the liberalisation policies in India have subjugated women's capabilities into passive victims of patriarchal violence, all ignoring/not recognising their social and their political agency. It is in this context that I argue that despite much legal rhetoric and empowerment projects, subaltern worker's social agency and lived resistance in everyday practices have not filtered through the dominant system of political representation.

The empirical evidences of women who are nominally not heard are given: like Mami, when she made an effort to live alone and became a *role model*; when Chandana and her co-workers were awarded a social worker prize, and when Chandana proved herself as self-employed, a wife and co-ordinator of a craft project; when female weavers like Bhagi protested against votes and demanded workers benefits. Embodied activisms are not recognised, or are ignored because, so far, their work and their agencies as labourers have been culturally unprotected and workspace representations are anti-feminist biased. Such labour exploitation and discrimination at workplaces is the lived existence of the subaltern, although clearly they are represented as the social agents.

The highly poststructuralist description of the historical and political oppression of disempowered women termed by Spivak as 'the subaltern cannot speak' (Spivak 1988: 308) may be deemed as further contributing to women silencing. This has been argued by Bart Moore-



Gilbert (1997) by explicating clear historical examples of resistance of subaltern women in the colonial world<sup>42</sup>. However, the crucial point in Spivak's project 'Can the Subaltern Speak' represents the subaltern women as forever a disempowered group because of their political and discursive identities within historically determinant systems of representation. Narratives from Orissa have shown that the subaltern can rarely be dialectical/visible (unless researched), because the voice and agency of subaltern women engaged in productive labour are so embedded in Hindu patriarchal codes of moral conduct, sexuality, mobility and responsibility. Feminist ethnographer, Kamala Visweswaran, therefore observes: *Gayatri Spivak has asked the question 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' and answered with an unequivocal no. Speech has, of course, been seen as the privileged catalyst of agency; lack of speech as the absence of agency. How then might we destabilize the equation of speech with agency by staging one women's subject refusal as a refusal to speak?* (Visweswaran 1994: 69).

Craft weaver's collective voices on their housing and wage conditions constitute context-specific power that may question their situation and develop critical thinking. The interconnection between place-based manifestations and gender, race, and ethnicity, and the ideologies of work are context-specific gendered spaces that bring about a critical understanding of women's oppression and exploitation in culture and social relationships. Women's collective voices shift our essentialist discourses towards a focus on genealogy of sexuality (in culture, history, ethnicity, language, social class, and ability) between men and women and between 'women' inside by renegotiating the local values/voices.

The next section highlights the impact of global trading practices in the unorganised handloom textile and handicraft production and producers in Orissa, and shows how the hegemonic ideological relativism sustain the exploitative structures that thrive on them. Whether in its radical or reactionary guise, I argue that response to political downsizing calls for greater attention to the postcolonial structures of pluralism (links across authoritarian ideologies), and new kinds of social practices that embody structural and historical experiences.

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<sup>42</sup> Recorded examples in dominant colonial discourses are the resistance of women and men in places like Kumaon and Gharwal Himalayas against commercial exploitation of the forests, in which women staged protests, went on hunger strikes, and in a few instances hugged trees to communicate their commitment to saving their forest (Shiva 1988, Guha 1989). Chipko, SEWA, and "Bandit Queen" Phoolan Devi (Moor 1997), and also a few from Orissa such as the 'Anjana Mishra' case in Orissa today, even "role modelled" Mami (Acharya & Lund 2002), "social worker" Chandana and her community women's anti-alcohol campaign in 2001, (Acharya 2003 c) have all become emblematic of grass-roots environmental/economic/legal movements that were spearheaded by women. See Radha Kumar 1993 for a discussion on women's movement.

## **Global trading practices and gender development in the craft industries**

Gendered places have become visible through incorporation into the logic of capitalism in the contemporary global arena (Mohanty 1997, Mies 1998). When the World Trade Organisation (WTO) processed the General Agreement on Trade and Tariff (GATT) negotiations 1995, the South entered the race to catch up with the North, which has slowly, but, surely' started eroding the Indian industries and economy. Shiva (1995) has mapped the three phases of globalisation. According to Shiva (1995), the third wave of GATT/WTO trade liberalisation and imposition of intellectual property rights has been designed to move the control of fibres, food and forest production from the small farmers and producers into the hands of a few transactional corporations (PAN Asia-Pacific 1994). Trade has the potential to lift millions out of poverty worldwide, but the current structure of TRIPS (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property G8, 2003) fits well into the building of the 'free trade' order, which grossly favours rich nations and transnational companies, and denies protection to the farmers, biodiversity and genetic resources (traditional skills and native knowledge), and thus patterning of life forms. While ambitious in its rhetoric, its reform of unfair terms of trade has produced no relief (no opportunity to choose the political functioning), particularly for marginal groups and poor women workers in the textile and handicraft sector. In the Indian context, it is definitely not limited to a combination of impoverishment and enrichment of a capitalist class. In this research, studying craftswomen's strategies is not essentially effective in a long-term global political economy, but it becomes possible to understand the hegemonic characteristics of social imaginary — the processes of marginalization of labour and livelihoods — that systematically limits the possibilities of women's capability beyond it.

The Multi-Fibre Agreements of 1995, which restricted Indian access to markets in the North, governed the trade in this sector over a ten-year period and will be phased out by the end of 2005. The Trade Related Investment Measure (TRIM) treated the small, medium and large investors/industries on equal footing: the obligation to use local resources and the restriction on export local production, in which India had only a 0.56% share of the world merchandise (WTO 1995). If the well-established and organised industries in India productions cannot withstand the pressure of GATT/WTO, I wonder whether marginal craft producers, homeworkers and workers in the public/private<sup>43</sup> sector (society, cottage industries)<sup>43</sup> will be able to absorb the shock. However, to date analogy on local shock absorb strategies has been comparatively static in

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<sup>43</sup> The handicraft and handlooms production are defined as cottage industries and thus, workers are not protected by any union. Those who work under the co-operative societies are eligible for co-operative sector union protection.

economic terms and culturally confined. Women who are particularly located in these unorganised economies for their everyday livelihoods can only be understood from the marginalization (economist and mechanistic) and criminalisation that underlie the global celebratory image. In terms of the problematic of the local/global symmetry that is missing from most discussions, Latour (1993) asserts that the question of the local cannot be eliminated or marginalized without equal elimination or marginalization of the global. Yet Mohanty insists that the only way to understand local specificities is to 'pay attention to the commonalities of their/our common and different histories' (Mohanty 1997: 28).

### ***Feminists' agendas on voices from below***

Feminist geographers started to search for alternative methodologies, stimulated in part by epistemological questions raised by feminist and post-modern critiques of 'scientific method' in the early 1980s. How could one pursue the aim of 'giving voice' to the protagonists? Mapping the geography of female sexuality, Spivak (1987) charts a more sophisticated method of representation, the representation of the voiceless, that of the subaltern women as forever a disempowered group because of their political and discursive identities within historically determinant systems of representation (1988). Spivak has been increasingly vocal in her criticism of global development policies, which focus on women in the Third World. In a response to the United Nations Conference in Beijing in 1995, Spivak emphasised how women living in the Southern Hemisphere bear the brunt of global economic exploitation. With regard to exploitation of their labour and livelihoods, grass-roots women's experiences are developed more explicitly by Spivak: *The feminist anthology [...] overlooks completely this incredibly important issue of the most important example of gendering in neo-colonialism: women in homeworking – the women in export processing zones and export-based foreign investment factories, subcontracting areas* (1996, 72).

There now exists a veritable industry of gender perspectives on the impact of globalisation on the structural adjustment policy's goal. Political economics have been critically assessed and many social feminists have denounced the 'utilitarian' and essentialist version of household decision making choices (Agarwal 1994). In so-called 'first and second generation' feminism, significant attention has been paid to politicising Third World women's livelihood practices through gender lenses of economic needs, equality in the work place, reproductive rights, and through integrated development approaches and consciousness raising. In an effort to provide a corrective to the decentralization policy perspective, there is a consolidation of an alternative approach that assesses and analyses the gender politics as a way of transferring

resources, functions and authority to the periphery. However, owing to the existing interregional inequalities within developing state/district reform regimes, there has been a growing investigation into what impacts the new economic policies would have on women who constitute more than 50% of the workforce in the informal sector, and who survive in the margin of the economy, casualised within a fragile environment and resource pool.

Simultaneously, other sets of literatures shared commitment to resist the ongoing economic engagement and new economic policies' processes that have often been made at the upper level without reflecting on how they impact locally (Omvedt & Kelkar 1995, Bhatt 1996). Scholars, experts, and planners committed to the empowerment and upliftment of rural women's productive and reproductive activities through self-employment incorporate a gender perspective in debates on livelihoods and alternative economic development (Rowbotham & Mitter 1994, Banerjee 1998, Wieringa 1998, Nusbaum 2000, Acharya & Lund 2002, Sen 2002). Much of the feminist thinking however, has made it clear that women are no longer willing to play a 'moral gender' (Mies 1998, 20) within an immoral global system, where damage is done by patriarchal capitalist worriers. Mies pointed out that the new creations of capital and science are not just products of the ever-inquisitive human (male) mind. They are commodities to be sold and consumed, which simultaneously maintain the economic impoverishment (1998). Crucial to this claim to represent the political interests of Third World rural-based women, is that any attempt to change the infrastructural conditions must show the material realities of gender interests in workplaces.

Mohanty and Spivak like other leading contemporary intellectuals have indeed challenged the convention and boundaries of western critical inquiries about ethics, politics and culture in the postcolonial world. In view of the current development processes, the visibility of the grass-roots activism and women's voices from below have often come at the bottom of the policy agenda. Cosequently, their voices developed passive connection with feminist researchers/academia, and seem to be nothing but women's struggle falling far short of gaining equal space. Alexander & Mohanty (1997) criticise the western feminist passion for a global sisterhood. This idea of global feminism is unworkable because it defines women, but not in different geographical spaces. In place of global sisterhood, Alexander & Mohanty propose a more careful and situated approach, which they call transnational feminism, because such an approach crucially involves '*a way of thinking about women in similar contexts across the world, in different geographical spaces, rather than as all women across the world*' (Alexander & Mohanty 1997: xix). Situating women's social location in a transnational framework of political and economic practices, it has become possible to talk about a native sisterhood that is geographically embedded and discursively produced through personal narratives of the subjectivity of women's capability, such

as I have employed in this study. The critical endeavour, I believe, is unique to situating the language knowledge and to addressing ‘self-other’ cultural understanding to the material and discursive nature of power, and the local pattern of gender transformations that has occurred. However, native feminists, while being sceptical of global sisterhood in its limited research inquiries *per se*, are essentially romanticizing<sup>44</sup> the empowered and vocal group of native sisterhood towards building alternatives. Feminists who would support this rhetoric have been speculating on the growing polarization of work culture and social understanding of features in contemporary India (Banerjee 1998, Mukul 1998, Kalpagam 2002).

Stimulated in part by epistemological questions raised by feminists aimed at eliminating oppression, feminist geographies recognize the causal role of spatial context in the process of oppression (Nast 1994). First and foremost, self-justification in favour of textual analysis and objectivity, abandoning the grassroots situations is been accused for the fact that ‘too self-reflexive’ exercises amount to mere ‘naval gazing’ (Raju 2002, Kalpagam 2002) and as ‘badges’ worn by researchers in defence of rationality vis-à-vis postmodern critique (Sen 1992, Dreze 2002: 817) to prove their legitimacy (Wolf 1997) as ‘authentic researcher’. Individually positioned women can certainly belong to an overarching context, and despite their differences, there may exist a common problem among businesswomen because the processes of social positioning of men put women in a disadvantageous position. The degree of accessibility could vary according to factors such as assertiveness, skills, age, class, race, caste, and spatial designations (Raju 2002, Kalpagam 2002).

In an effort to explain the strengths and weaknesses of the methods chosen (dilemma encounters) on a research agenda, Lund’s (2002) study proposes that the relevancy of the chosen epistemology is intimately linked to the spaces (sites) and social relationships (structure of power relations). Given the forms of social differences in transforming agencies, in-depth interviews and group discussions in this research will show that individual struggle is not only confined

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<sup>44</sup> For example, women from wealthier/vocal groups within communities and relatively developed areas may align more with their class, status and ‘gendered contract/relations’ rather than with poor women, thus having little empathy for their poor, native/vulnerable sisters. I draw on one example from one of the craft villages in Puri. ‘A’ was satisfied that her son was recruited as the teacher for the female *pattachitra* trainees. However, ‘B’ felt that her voice was not heard, despite her having professional skills and interests and coming from a poor background, (I also observed that trainees often were asking ‘B’ for help with making corrections), but neither village committee took any action, nor was ‘B’s voice heard to negotiate in her favour at the official level in Puri. When ‘B’ questioned this in a women’s group, the group conflict heightened a gap between ‘A’ and ‘B’, rather than demonstrated any empathy. However, some women from this class may resent their treatment and thus they could conceivably affirm themselves with grass-roots, poor women’s capability on certain gender issues. I propose feminist narrative methods to explicate their daily lives and livelihood experiences in a way in which they could have transformatory potential. This is ‘a way of thinking about women in similar contexts’ (Alexander & Mohanty 1997: xix). Inclusion of grass-roots capability and collective actions along gender and class lines into feminism will assist them in challenging unequal gender power relations, and will contribute to women’s empowerment.

within the four sites of household, community, market and state, but also between women's capability recognition and ability to accommodate (Acharya & Lund 2002). Siriphant (1998) says that personal narratives are oral testimonies, which reflect the teller's interpretation of events, past and present. In Mohanty's account (1991: 33), Third World women's events are often used interchangeably with testimonials, oral histories, and life-histories to represent marginal female stories. Following Collins (1991), Siriphant asserts that narrowly defined concepts such as power, activism and resistance in the traditional research overlook the grass-roots level, and thus fail to capture (black) women's political activities (1998). According to Siriphant (1998), narrative construction is an act of mediation between a person and the social world. The 'counter narratives' in Siriphant's (1998) accounts are: *problem identification or the naming of the problematic; this involves making public what they see as anomalies or distorted realities; (b) cultural criticism which comprises theoretical understandings of the nature and complexities of social realities; this can be a production of a synthesis between personal social experiences and theoretical analysis of oppressions (c) the reaffirming of dominant meanings as new cultural possibilities.*

### **Situating cottage industry (handlooms and handicrafts) as the postcolonial people's sector**

In view of the capital-scarce economy, the Government of India has been involved in supporting the production of handlooms and handicrafts throughout the country. Colonialism, feudal order, liberalisation policies of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, and global capitalism provided the central paradigms of the cooperative movement of the traditional artisans and weavers in India. There is now a growing possibility of work opportunities for the skilled/semiskilled, impoverished, uneducated, landless, and unorganised sectors of the population. At the other extreme, there is a life-long survival strategy—a source of livelihood to meet the basic needs for the impoverished 'categories' of populations. Shanti, aged 65, is a self-employed appliqué workers from Pipili, said: *During the 1950s, my in-laws had been moving among local households to stitch the bed-sheets and umbrellas. They began to take orders from the babus (officials) and the landlords working collectively with the local master appliqué artisan. During the 1970s such appliqué work flourished, because of the cooperative society and transportation facilities for the tourists to visit Konark, Puri temple and the sea beach.* (Map 2).

Trade compulsion along with structural adjustment policies led to a number of changes in the economy, which had a profound impact on the unorganised local craft communities—the

handloom textile and handicraft workers—under the cooperative societies in Orissa. The All India Handicrafts Board (AIHB)<sup>45</sup> was created in November 1952 for alternative development through the income regenerating strategy. Halina Zealey and her husband Phillip Zealey were pioneers who occupied an acknowledge position for their contribution<sup>46</sup> to the crafts development in India, especially among the *patta* painters in Orissa. In 1992, the AIHB functioned as an advisory body and developed guidelines and schemes to be implemented at state level. Before we look at these guidelines and schemes, however, the structure of the system is outlined in Figure 3. The main premise underlying the post-colonial handloom and handicraft sector (constitutes of Government Corporations and Boards) and cooperative societies is the pre-eminent role of the unorganised producers. In the eyes of developers, planners and crafts specialists, traditional craft spaces in Orissa are fertile ground for self-employment and skill upgrading. A desire to preserve culture and heritage has meant that the Government has used several instruments<sup>47</sup> to mobilize the handloom and handicraft sector.

At national level, general schemes are developed to be implemented at state level. A scheme passes from the Development Commissioner of Handloom and Handicraft via the State Government Department of Handicraft and Cottage Industries to the Directorate of Handloom and Handicraft Cottage Industries. In theory, central schemes are rejected at the state level, and state plans at the district level, if either the DHCI or District Industries Centre (DIC) deems them inappropriate. However, in practice, central plans are adopted at State level and State plans at

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<sup>45</sup> Sanjaya Kathuria's (1988) study shows that the mandate of the AIHB was to advise the central government on the problems confronting the development and progress of handicrafts, including problems of skill formation, production, techniques, and marketing at home and abroad. The board was headed by a Development Commissioner and in 1988 it was still under the Ministry of Commerce (Kathuria 1988: 4).

<sup>46</sup> An American couple; Phillip Zealey was the director of a development project under the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), a private voluntary Quaker organisation founded in 1917. During the Zealey's three-year stay, they were involved with craft development and wrote two articles, what popularly known as 'Revival of artistic Crafts in Orissa' (1954), that published in *The Economic Weekly*, July 17. They first visited Orissa in 1952 and were amazed to see traditional stone carving and *patta* painting. Zealey's article reflects just how pervasive and strong the Indian handicraftmanship was already. Their main concern was to locate a market. As Zealey noted in her report *these paintings are certainly making an interesting and valuable contribution to the Folk Art of Orissa and deserve assistance and encouragement*' (Zealey 1953: 3). In search for more permanent outlets, Halina Zealey contacted the Bengal Home Industries Association and the Indian Institute of Art in Industry. She also enquired about the possibility of having showcases for the paintings. In August 1953 Phillip and Halina met the Governor of Orissa, Nabakrushna Chaudhary, to discuss with him the subject of market promotion for Orissan arts and crafts with a drafted memorandum for the setting up of a small artisan's craft marketing organisation. Not only renowned Chitrakarars of Puri district remember the Zealey period but also the widowed and Madhabi like craftswomen of several painting households recall it as the craft revival period, when Madhabi's husband received national award. For the villagers it had brought a strong hope for more labour opportunities in the future.

<sup>47</sup> One of these is the reservation of 11 textile articles, such as cotton and silk saris, dhotis, towels, lungis, bedsheets, shawals, blankets, etc., for exclusive production in the handloom sector, according to the latest policy on this issue, dated August 1996.

district level, among other reasons, because the centre provides 50% of the costs. Today the State provides 30% and SBWCS bears 20% of the costs. The plans are implemented via the DIC, a

LEVEL & SCHEMES	INSTITUTIONS
<b>NATIONAL</b> ↓ ↑	Ministry of Textiles, Development Commissioner of (Handlooms and Handicrafts) Government of India
<b>STATE</b> 1) A central scheme to implement ↓ 2) A joint project plan to implement ↓ 3) A State scheme to implement	Government Department of Handicrafts and Cottage Industries; Directorate of Handicrafts and Cottage Industries Orissa State Cooperative Handicrafts Corporation (OSCHC) <sup>49</sup> Ltd Utkalika# State Handicrafts Design Centre and Marketing Development State Institute of Handlooms and Handicrafts Training Orissa State Handloom Weavers Cooperative Apex Society Sambalpuri Bastralaye Weaver Cooperative Society (SBWCS) 4 Zone\$ Weaver's Service centre, New Associations <sup>α</sup>
<b>DISTRICT</b> ↑ ↓ 4) A district scheme to implement  <b>Local level</b>	District Industries Centre (DIC): <i>Khadi</i> , handloom and village industries Handicrafts and Weaver Cooperative Societies State design (Tie & Dye) and production promotion centre Hill Area based project Handicraft training institute (30) Integrated handloom (Bheden) and handicraft (Raghurajpur) village development Registered private Workshops, NGOs, Ashrams, Mahila Samitis (MS) Household units (family business units with piece-rate wage labour) Individual producers (women headed, deserted and widowed)

Figure 3 The Institutional Handloom and Handicrafts Structure\* in India, 1998.

**Notes:** (\*) The above model incorporates simple institutional structure relevant for a general argument in official crafts and weaving industries. Further details on the development strategies in the weaving cooperative society in district level schemes are presented in Appendix 2.

(#) Utkalika is a chain of shops under the OSCHC. A marketing channel is undertaken through the government of Orissa. Branches can be found in each district and in township and in capital cities like Bhubaneswar and mega city like New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, etc.

(\$) Such a cooperative society is the SBWCS in Bargarh, established in 1954 under the government cooperative act, and started by the efforts of the late *Padmashree*<sup>50</sup> Kutartha Acharya and devotion of the co-workers. It is the largest handloom cooperative society in India (Panda 1992) with 2490 selling centres in Orissa. Mr Panda (1992), one of the former directors in SBWCS, stated it was like the North Star

<sup>49</sup> Under the education system for the weaver population, accruing weaving skills in household units is (rather) more important than modern classroom education). Vocational training implies lack of eligible certificates for employment opportunity in the modern sector leading to availability of cheap female labour.

<sup>50</sup> A national award for fine and culturally appreciated art and crafts, and in other such disciplines. The ward denotes expertise in a profession for innovative colour composition, training, design and teaching in clothes.



(*Dhruba Tara*) of the Indian handloom textile industries. See Chapter 5 Figure 9 for a detail structure and discussion.

(२) Kalinga Shilpi Mahasangha (KSM) is one example of a large crafts and artisan association that emerged in May 2000 to unionise the Orissan producers. For a detail structure of the ration of male to female artisans in KSM (see Appendix 1)

government institution that deals with the local cooperative, home units, integrated village development, and individual craft artisans (personal communication DCH and SBWCS officials, 2001).

The spread of casualised work often arises from poor women's desperate need to survive outside the organised sector. In spite of bleak prospects<sup>48</sup>, it is home-based craftwork that has acted in the last decade as an important shock absorber against the economic crises of the developing world. As the trauma of the debt crisis and structural adjustment hit the stability of the official economy, workers have been forced to find their livelihoods increasingly in the unorganised informal economy. Dominant industrialisation has put heavy pressure on land, and unequal resource distribution has made weavers' families move towards the labour-intensive places like Pipili, Bhubaneswar and Bargarh, where handicrafts and handloom weaving are the major economic activities. The continuous flow of the workforce is from the densely populated urban fringe (Cuttack) and landless rural areas (Dhenkanal), where high wage instability and temporary working conditions prevail. The problems of migrant or local workers are more apparent when we focus on the situation of women's work and workspaces.

Significant demand from tourists and pilgrims for the handlooms and handicrafts, however, creates positive hope for the women and poor producers. When commercial-oriented craft producing places such as appliqué in Pipili, handloom woven clothes in Bargarh, or, *Patta* paintings in Raghurajpur and Bhubaneswar become so attractive they often generate grounds for labour exploitation, discrimination and money making in gender specific ways. Besides, the capitalist mode of production and relations in the private sector in India is geared towards foreign export. Semi-skilled grass-roots artisans, however, hardly have space to manoeuvre their talent in the private sector. Traders have little incentive to rely on for capital support and security and for their everyday survival.

However, in India much of the textile areas are still in the people's sector cooperative societies, workshops and NGOs. According to the Ministry of Textiles' annual report of 1998-99,

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<sup>48</sup> Under the education system for the weaver population, accruing weaving skills in household units is (rather) more important than modern classroom education). Vocational training implies lack of eligible certificates for employment opportunity in the modern sector leading to availability of cheap female labour.

handlooms provide direct and indirect employment for over 12.4 million weavers. In 1994, the handloom share was 21.5%, while the power loom share was 71%<sup>51</sup>. In 1994, the handloom industry employed about 9 million workers, whereas the power loom industry employed 1.1 million workers. The handicraft workers in the country were estimated at 5.8 million<sup>52</sup> in 1994, not including handloom workers. It is painful to document that Government census data is pitifully gender-and-place blind with regard to unregistered homeworkers from the traditional artisan communities who do not get regular work from any source. According to Ramakrishnan (1999), employment in the Village and Small Industries (VSI) sector<sup>53</sup> in India is estimated to have increased from 56.2 million in March 1998, to 58.5 million, by the end of March 1999, creating additional employment for 2.3 million producers. Growth of the small-scale sector (SSS) was 15.5% in 1998-99, and the VSI sector accounts for 65.6% in the country total exports from the SSS. Yet, we have data on outcomes, but do not have gender outcomes, which are also disaggregated by cultural relativism and individual experiences.

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<sup>51</sup> Ministry of Textiles, quoted in the *Financial Express* 16/10/94.

<sup>52</sup> All India Handicraft Board, quoted by *Dastkar*.

<sup>53</sup> Report presented for the year 1998-99 by the General Manager of Small Industrial Development Bank of India, Bhubaneswar during the Ninth Annual State Level Convention, held in August 1999 in Orissa in the Assembly of Small and Medium Enterprises (OASME). The value of production in VSI sector during 1998-99 is estimated to have increased to crore Rs. 631, 4 63 from crore Rs. 54 6,547 crore (1 crore = Rs. 10, 00, 000) during 1997-98. The estimate aggregate exports from the VSI sector in 1998-99 account for 65.6% of the country's total export.



## Chapter 3

# **Methods and materials on marginal workers' experiences – learning through the field inquiry**

### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses how to conduct research on cultural construction of craftswomen's work and self-employment marginalization while drawing on characteristics of feminist geographies and gender development methodology in a Third World perspective. The final section in Chapter 2 discusses how fieldwork has become increasingly contested terrain and ambiguously problematized in feminist studies. Consequently, in this chapter, I am at mapping and exploring the methodological and interpretive issues raised by a narrative perspective when attempting to develop knowledge about the processes of marginalized female workers and their self-employment. The representation given by women's personal narratives specifically aims at highlighting why and how the empirically informed subaltern workers' consciousness in Orissa, India, can contribute to developing nuanced understandings of the cultural practices, gendered relationships and capabilities, of those have to grapple with socio-spatial marginalisation as an inevitable part of capacitation. My observations throughout the seasons in four crafts localities encompassed the life histories, oral accounts of protagonists through in-depth interviews, group discussion and key informants. Reflecting gendered spaces, I situated their world of knowledge – specific type of consciousness valuable and reliable to them – that had I learned of during the fieldwork period not least when intersections of narratives, gendered places and self-employment were explored.

### **Craftswomen's self-employment – a place for feminist narrative?**

Conducting fieldwork in a developing state, like Orissa to unravel the female self-employment practices is challenging, because it is a highly sensitive issue of inequality and marginalization. In India, on a macro-micro level, and with increasing privatisation, liberalisation and globalisation and decline in the value system practically every aspect of subaltern labour and livelihood is gradually being reduced to matters of gain and loss. In recent years it has become commonplace to accept that it is unorganised workers in general and marginal women workers in particular who have borne the brunt of the effects of the economic crises (Acharya & Lund 2002). Oriyani

craftswomen are routinely exploited in multiple sites (Mohanty 1991), both in terms of North/South trade/technology exchange relations of post colonial restructuring and neoliberal policies, and in terms of gendered-based caste/class/wage exploitation within the kinship and social structure where they (re)produce their work. Despite race, caste, class, and regional differences, the factors that give rise to this condition are said to be the interlocking of massive wage discrimination and growing marginalization of female labour practices in local areas. Instrumentalist versions of empowerment programme in which unorganised sector workers derive their resources, hush up the oppressed and underprivileged communities in gender-specific ways.

Conventionally, investigating the household arena is not on the research agenda, as male members who work at home are unorganised and can monopolize their interest. The sexual division of labour in Indian society is primarily based on the socialisation of cultural practices and ideological separation of the institutional, cultural and capitalist activities (Agarwal 1994, Kabeer 1999). The spheres of production and reproduction are termed 'work' and 'home/homeworkers'. The former is considered the sphere of men and the latter that of women, with wages acting as the one of major mediating factors between the two spheres. However, the ahistorical assumption of home as 'naturalised' social and domestic division in this research is the contested terrain where craftswomen work and agencies as labourers are represented. In my view, the context in which to explore the craftswomen's self-employment patterns and prospects is the sexual division of labour (in relation to both the domestic productions spheres and local-global market economy practices), which stresses contextualisation of the previously ignored and unrecognised linkages with the socio-spatial relationships. I understand that studying a self-employed person's work and livelihood bargaining means studying a gendered individual's capability in gendered spaces at individual, group and collective level.

The in-depth interviews reveal how the subaltern group, especially marginalized women, can speak but not be heard (Spivak 1987, Acharya & Lund 2002). Even more importantly, collective actions through the SHGs/training will not be effective unless they considers the structural and cultural context in their spatial relationships in which the power takes place (Gupta & Ferguson 1997). However, to understand how the gender character of material and discursive forces transform gendered power relations, feminists argue that we need to understand the ways belief systems and cultural practices legitimise and reinforce material structures (Nicholson 1995, Weiringa 1998). Language/knowledge and power are recognised as central factors in development activities (of a practitioner/researcher) (Moss 1994), in problem definition and solution (Escobar 1995, Marchand & Parpart 1995, Rowlands 1997) and with respect to empowerment approaches,

which are embedded in the institutional structure (Kabeer 1999). These central factors of change are often seen as fundamental social transformation (Nathan & Kelkar 1997). Thus, it is imperative to understand the ways links between sites of memories come into play with these epistemic structures. This calls for an understanding of both the nature of the 'self-employment' experiences and that of the local conditions in which workers' daily resistance shape and reshape resource availability. Under such conditions, I needed to analyse individual (s) and inquire into the constraints and possibilities in resources and services management. The local knowledge pattern will be subjugated by ways of conceptualising and understanding the sites of accessibility, those who have the ability to access goods, services delivery systems and outreach programs and their linkages with the day-to-day bargaining in households and kinship networking and institutional infrastructure.

### **Archival and secondary sources in qualitative interviews**

The Indian atlas gives an essential sense of national-political identity representing the political division, and its administrative and state boundaries, while the underlying and overarching patterns of other categories, such as women's standing in local governance, violence against women, or participation rates of women in the informal labour force are often not in line with such boundaries (Raju 2000). In Orissa, the existing census data do not give the number of female workers in crafts productions and its material indexing system 'silences' the productive labourers in the informal economic. The State Weavers Cooperative Apex body has been gradually weakening, and the number of full-fledged working self-employed weavers is still degreasing. According to *Dharitri* (27 May 2003) newspaper the number of self-employed weavers was 10.5 million in 1991, but according to the government estimation perhaps it had fallen to 81, 440 by 2002. Nevertheless, the scarcity of data is never questioned at state level, or at least not for the situational analysis, for further implementation of development projects.

In the course of the 1990s, feminists continued to reconsider the need for archival research and extensive surveys, supplemented with secondary data analysis, when handling the structuring and creation of gender relation in the field (Bagchi & Raju 1993, Staeheli & Lawson 1994, Madge et al. 1997). This was partly, to push the research results in front of mixed audiences and to force issues onto the public agendas and change opinion, and partly to reveal patterns and trends of changes. In an effort to make an *Atlas for women and men in India*, Saraswati Raju et al. (2000) are the first to bring an anti-colonial image to forge ahead the way identities could be constructed and questioned about the essentialist notion of legitimising

nationalism excluding grass-roots participation. All of the chapters and articles in this thesis attempt to bring a qualitative understanding of women's multiple work roles and participation that have been historically, culturally, politically, and precariously colonised through 'official ideology'.

### **Divergence from conventional practices of methodology**

A conception of self-employment in this research is not only based on a material deprivation to satisfy the banks' need for collateral need or to undertake monetary decisions in the home but also as a distress that is caused by the constriction of workspaces, because they are as 'women', are illiterate, or because of their cultural identity in the gendered boundary and access<sup>54</sup>. An example of this occurred when a block level extension officer laughed at me in surprise when I asked for the list of self-employed female (self-employed is used to mean 'businessman'). So it is little wonder that craftswomen will generally think that research is about male issues, public spaces and conventional males' discussions at individual or village meeting, rather than about their (in) ability, experiences or voices. People in the community have frequently seen block level extension officers, *panchayati* (local governance) members, female health workers, and female teachers collecting census data, or have participated at Mahila Samiti meetings to form self-help groups, or have become acquainted with the cooperative society member, or university researcher. During my group discussions many people complaint that their method of approach has hardly brought any visible change in the conditions. Consequently, women questioned the benefit of their participating with me as a researcher: *'why are you interested in listening to our story (problems)? Is government ready to listen to us? Our pattern of living is "mamuli gnauli prakara" (ordinary indigenous types). Those who come before you with questionnaires, I told them that to know about our household income and expenditure, come when our men are available.*

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<sup>54</sup> We are influenced by an existing body of knowledge on the topic and develop 'positive' methodology or method, looking for evidence to either support or refute this knowledge. Most of the information gathered or discussed in the public arena by scholars is an externally produced situational analysis, particularly by the stakeholders; government agents from the cooperative societies, and *panchayat*/politicians are concerned with the issues which are regarded as problems for materialistic society and at the same time derive conventional ideology from the patriarchy mode of social comfort when it touches upon women's issues. Coverage of topics such as profit and loss, number of beneficiaries in poverty alleviation and disaster management programmes, loans and subsidies, block level assistance, and ideology of family planning are representation of discursive practices to satisfy the target of interventions. It is not difficult to imagine contexts of a culture in which women's embodied knowledge and discursive practices are mismatched with the later techniques of intervention.

By 'ordinary experiences' is meant the nature and value of share, property inheritance, care, service, ritual, norms, poverty<sup>55</sup>, violence and resources as well as how women cope with or collectivise their strategies. Instead of confusing the female craft artisans with my profundity, I listened to the ways they articulated the logic and phenomenology of the cause of their deprivations. In my view, listening to subalterns talk in their own terms about what has been significant in their lives seemed to me to be far more valuable (Lund 1993). Further, in my opinion 'inconvenient' facts surrounding their accounts gained a more holistic ground.

### **Locating 'selves' in fieldwork practices and encountering power relations**

In class, education, occupation, caste, gender, race, language and the ways in which one behaves (is acquainted with the local culture), the chief difficulty facing the fieldworker is in striking a rapport. At a basic level, the researcher's ability/inability to talk about the complexities is to do with the personal background and positionality. The theoretical frameworks, and the culture and language I deploy in my research are of paramount importance to at least minimise the gap between the researcher and the researched and to uncover the valuable and interpretive information for the particular research problem. I had to get past the few who were initially sceptical, as well as attempt to reconstruct my efforts. First, there were many middlemen, stakeholders (officials, politicians of the local governance and businessmen) who were uncooperative and obstructive. Others were just puzzled, as for instance when I met with a businessman (a stakeholder). On a busy, business morning in October 1999, I walked towards the Raghurajpur village, a well renowned art and craft village in Orissa. Giridhara a man in his fifties, quickly stepped down a staircase to greet me, even though I did not have any prior appointment. This outdoor introduction attracted a few of his neighbours who hoped to attract customers when I was seen entering Giridhara's house. He had a large collection of the *patta chitra*<sup>56</sup> and palm leaf carvings, such as the one shown in Figure 4, and almost all of them were wonderful.

Having been succinct in his description of some, Giridhara, with his twenty years of business experience, insisted that he might give 15% rebate if I were to buy more than five items. Puzzled by my insistence (was only observing, asking and listening to his explanations rather than bargaining like a customer), Giridhara interrupted me: *What do you research about us? Like you,*

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<sup>55</sup> See an interesting discussion of 'poverty as capability deprivation' in Sen (2000: 87-110).

<sup>56</sup> The *patta* (base) preparation is solely women's work. *Patta* is prepared by putting paste of tamarind seeds on the layers of clothes, which is then dried in sunlight, and then the surface is rubbed with a round stone and white chalk to make surface plain and glossy. *Chitra*: a picture, a traditional painting done by a traditional *chitrakara* (painter) in Orissa.



some foreigners have also discussed at length. What do you write about our business? What would I achieve in explaining to you about my family and me? I minded this less than I might have, because I loved listening to his initiation on the subject. Of course, I bought some fascinating *patta chitra* during our conversation. Like any tourist (foreigner, local tourist/customer, researcher) who comes to attend Raghurajpur or Danda *sahi* ritualistic festivals, or to buy a gorgeous *pattachitra*, I would never forget to ask the ethnic identity of the Chitrakara (producer caste) and their relation to the Jagannath culture. However, I had to discourage my curiosity, since it might have confused my identity as being one of a customer, rather than a researcher.

Giridhara settled in Raghurajpur village as one of the almanacas (*nahaka*). He started his *pattachitra* business in his forties, and since then has become known as one of their *pattachitra* businessmen of Raghurajpur. Those who adopt *patta* paintings as the main source of livelihood defend themselves as ‘master craftsman’, and relate their hereditary occupational story to how their position is relevant in the traditional caste/communal contributions, and business networking. They are reluctant to take on the identity of a mere stakeholder in front of their customers (foreign and local). Giridhara showed little enthusiasm for the existence of his ‘renowned master craftsman’ identity today and he could only collect revenue from his daughter’s contribution and his own poor piece-rate orders.



Figure 4 A *patta* painting showing *Panchamukhi*, (five-faced) Ganesha from Raghurajpur village

Father of four, Giridhara, a little hesitantly but avowedly said: *My eldest daughter is a skilled and innovative pattachitra artisan. She learnt from our village Chitrakaras and her siblings from her. I gave my daughter in marriage in our Brahmin caste at Puri when I heard*

*that one Chitrakara had fallen in love. I left her with a set of painting toolkits, colour and "patti" (canvas) in the dowry box. Her in-law's family do a different job. She does paintings at her in-law's house and I collect and then sell them here at Raghurajpur.*

Although Giridhara claimed to contribute *per se*, his daughter's *patta* painting profession allowed her to learn and even unlearn through self-employment, but at the same time they should not, of course allow others' to pollute the very Brahminical values/properties. Giridhara, like parents/in-laws in families within the conventional business environment, is up to, was guided by a full sense of patriarchal pressure or responsibility. The community environment attached to the 'castes' and 'female value' (and its control) precariously overlaps the inside gendered domains and tolls their identity. However, women who have internalised *patta* painting to form their livelihoods around master stakeholders are less threatened.

During our conversation, a white 'Ambassador' (famous Indian car) stopped at Giridhara's door. Two American ladies from New York visited his house with the intention of buying the *patta chitra* produced by a renowned craftsman. Giridhara whispered to me, *please don't mention the word "business" in front of them. What would they think about me (master craftsman position)? We may discuss in Oriya language only.* My role in between these two parties that time as seen by Giridhara was thus one of an intruder. While price bargaining was going on, Pratima, who is in her thirties, came from the neighbouring house to ask for the money she had expected to receive from Giridhara for the piece-rate work she had deposited with him a month earlier. Having panicked in her presence during the business transactions, Giridhara aggressively asked Pratima to come back after five days. His facial expression caused her to leave his place immediately. Thus, neither Giridhara was conscious of his ignorance towards his clients, nor was I able to control the outcome of the role I played. I then left with Pratima, and went towards the village to make more observations.

On learning the prices Giridhara fixes for selling items, Pratima might demand more from the patron businessman in future, or could disclose her system of selling to other clients. She said to me: *you know recently, villagers have made some business-related rules for all households. Amongst, one is that no villager is allowed to charge more than others.* However, in between these complex power relations, I became a responsive researcher rather than an intruder to Pratima, which might have been case if I had directly entered her home to conduct personal interview.

Some adult craftswomen initially maintained reservation on problems such as their daughters' abandonment of dowry, torture and household conflicts since such matters were not

normally disclosed to outsiders. They tested my ability to listen to them: *Could you tell us why those court, police or block officials ignore us, those in-laws and husbands threatened us?* Grinding economic necessity and demand for craft works compel the majority of women to work with frequent negation of their sexuality, chastity, and boundaries of ‘decency’ of the male as bread winner. Those who were tentatively receptive always asked what the use of inquiry was, even during mid-interview. Their initial queries revolved around: *but what it is for? If I speak to you, will you get us sewing machine, or a loan without much “hurdles” of the bankers? Of course we have no inherited properties to fulfil bank collateral.* They asked me why I was doing this, and why, when I was married, did I moving alone? Was it merely because of my ‘research’ interest, or because I was interested to learn of their skilful work? What would be the end result? Occasionally, they would ask half seriously: *what gain for me if I give my photograph and talk to you the utter truth of my life?* For many others, making time to talk to me was given because I was assisting them through my honest representation of myself.

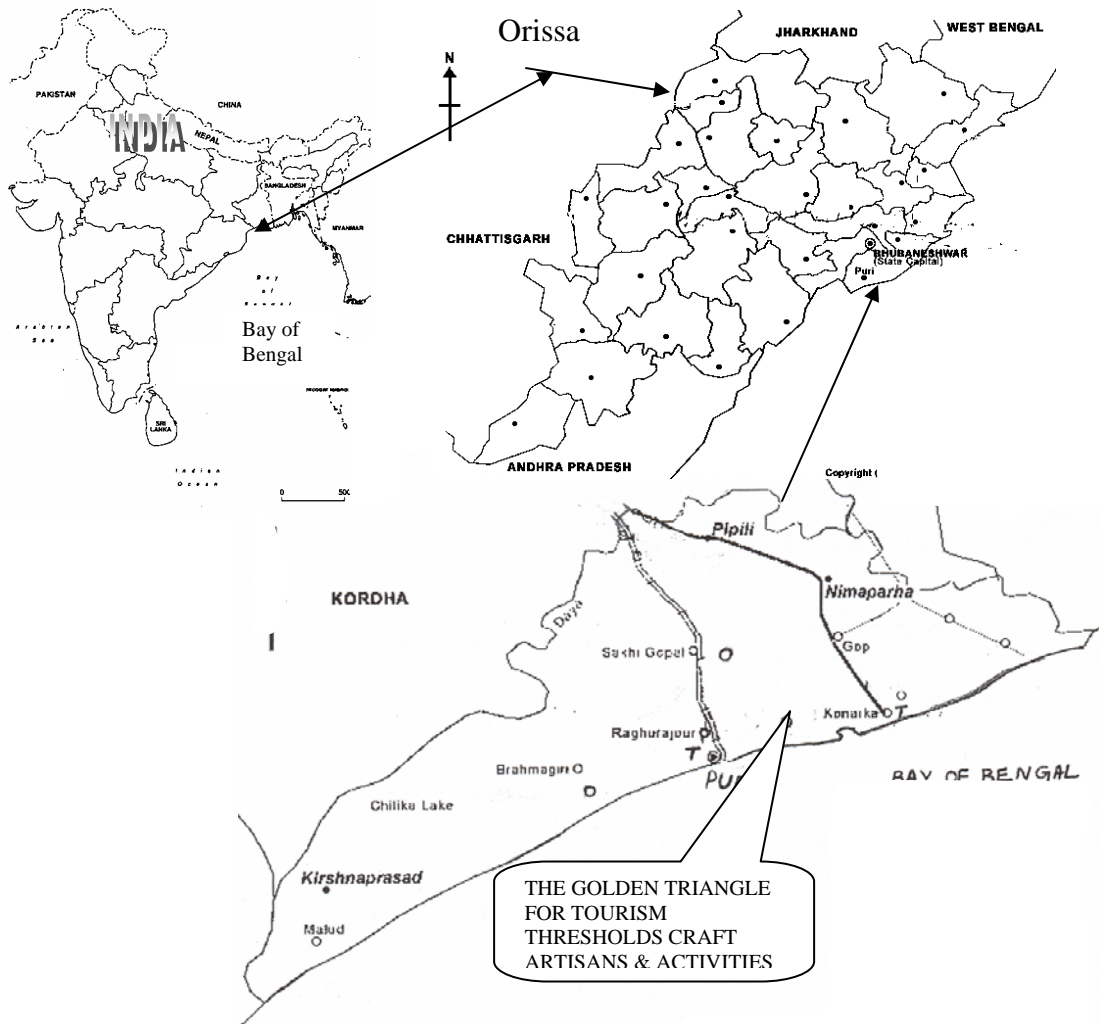
### **Study areas and the interview processes**

I grew up and completed my bachelor degree in Geography in the undivided Sambalpur district<sup>57</sup>, where I conducted field research on female weavers. I have spent over four years of my higher University study period in Bhubaneswar and later started marital life in Puri district and Bhubaneswar, Orissa. I spent 12 months in conducting ethnographic fieldwork in the localities of Puri, Bhubaneswar, Sambalpur and Bargarh districts (see Maps 2 & 3). The data collection itself started during the autumn of 1998 and was completed in autumn-spring 2000-2001. During my second fieldtrip, I was accompanied by my advisors and who have also co-authored of two articles I have written in connection with this research project. The protagonists from the four localities are piece-rate homeworkers, self-employed (own account workers), and wageworkers (work at home or worksheds) from the handicraft making and handloom-weaving sector. The narrative method encompasses tools used to make the study inclusive of all issues relevant to women’s self-employment activities. Archiv and secondary literature sources, and community-based survey encompassed the pre-structure of empirical data. Individual in-depth interviews also included observations, group conversations, interview of key informants, and revisiting the fields, all of which encompassed the narrative methods (see Appendix 3).

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<sup>57</sup> In 1990, Bargarh was separated from the Samabalpur district and formed as a new district, Bargarh district, in 1997.

My main instrument was the interview guide, together with the aid of a camera, a voice recorder and a polite appreciation for interviewees' representation and their interlocutors. I talked to them as a married woman from a neighbouring village. My sense of recognising their leadership qualities/positions during our conversations mirrored our perceptions and understanding of ideologies and practices on daily activities across locations and organisations. Interviews were conducted in Oriya (with local dialects, Sambalpuri and Khordha), which I subsequently transcribed and translated into English. Each article presented in this research has taken account the narrative methods to delineate life histories (Acharya & Lund 2002, 208). Article 5 (Berg & Acharya unpublished) also discusses the significance of using narrative methods in a broader



Map 2 Craft artisans from Bhubaneswar and Pipili, in the north west and Puri to Konark in the South east encompass the largest handlooms and handicrafts based tourist industries in Orissa.

Source: Maps adapted by author from [www.mapsofIndia.com](http://www.mapsofIndia.com). © Mapience India Limited 2001.

context while drawing on the characteristics of feminist geographies. I have called craftswomen advisors and travelled with some protagonists to other craft-producing communities, temples, priests, ashrams, workshops and exhibition grounds, crafts emporia and showrooms, NGOs and government institutions, as well as cooperative societies. This minimises attention to the hierarchical power relationships implicit in the interactive/face-to-face interview processes, pointing out the way in which the researcher is positioned as the educated/vocal/elite expert and the respondent as a passive subject. However, my interviewees were rather more protagonists than mere respondents.

### ***Seasonality study***

In coastal Orissa, during hot and high humid summer, starting from mid- March, through the heavy monsoon months until the end of July, business in craft industries is drastically reduced due to fewer tourists to the threshold of the golden triangle (Acharua 2003 c, Map 2). During the rainy season, local producers have fewer chances to sell their products and earn profits: craftswomen have to depend upon the men/middlemen. During these five months, piece-rate worker's payments are controlled the stakeholders. For the other seven months, all piece-rate workers are relatively busy, spending 8-12 hours at home on weaving, paintings and embroidering in addition to all sorts of domestic responsibility. I observed cyclical changes in the women's crafts activities, as well as commonly suffered diseases, and lack of mobility and availability of resource. I also observed that due to weak building materials and thatched roofs, the majority of houses had been destroyed by the October 1999 cyclone, and added a double burden to women's domestic work and their long hours of cash work. In such households men migrate to the construction sites without much government incentive, and left the continuation of craftwork to the women and children at home.

### **The in-depth interviews**

The purpose of the interview is to represents a way of being able to continue conversation, while simultaneously, enabling observant participation (Smith 2001). How interviews help to reveal data is not only important, but also the situational context in which one is able to reason about one's own potential/inability is dependent upon the ability of the researcher to understand the taken-for-granted common sense of marginal experiences. Intending to map how and why they think and act as they do, I analysed the lived embodiment at several spheres of everyday activities. I began to question what should be the insight of a story to make the experiences and

resistance, choices and judgement like subjects scholarly and theoretically enriching. How did I derive concepts from these contestable experiences of self-employment and socio-spatial relationship? Having struggled with the question of how much one needs to understand about someone else to feel what the nuance of context is, I began to narrate explicitly the fluidity (breadth and coherence) of the contexts (George 1997) within which protagonists negotiate 'self-other' relationships.

### ***Observation***

I generally spent time in conversation with only one group or did one in-depth interview a day, followed by observatory days. During these days I tried to help (engage) in quality and design of crafts, making sure the interviewees would assertive in their selling strategy and facilitating linkages with other groups. Engaging the 'self' with protagonist's everyday lives is, according to Lund (1993), generally perceived as the best way to achieve knowledge in a cross-cultural perspective, but in addition a local researcher also needs to be engaged in-depth to come closer to the narrative subjective perspective. The exploratory nature of the 14 in-depth stories was traced across the individual oral accounts (see Table 1). An interview guide is also used to check the primary informations (see Appendix 4). Conversations were dynamical and chronologically were free-flowing and open-ended, and linger over details of the periods spent in study areas. During the interviews the questions were increasingly stimulated by what an individual said, with answers leading to questions. I created an interactive (face-to-face) situation in which the craftswomen could questions me, but in order to avoid backlash against my objectives I started discussing their marital status, children, their childhood, education and craft skills, livelihood, marketing and selling strategies, and more, thus leaving it to craftswomen themselves to draw on their own experience and form conclusions about sexual life in their own way in due course. However, this does not mean being altogether silent about gender roles, and control of decision, particularly where domestic violence is concerned. I found that women experienced entrepreneurship to be a more liberating experience than being a housewife. Frequently, women who are otherwise ambitious about opportunity and profit making outside the home have found cultivating dialog as an attractive option when thinking in terms of improving their bargaining position against such odds. So, the dynamics underlying patterns of dawn-to-dusk housework activities, socio-spatial relations, and kinship business networking and the cultural environment settings in which the craftswomen operate and circulate create an epistemic space (intersubjective embodiment) in which the women could evolve politically.

**Table 1 Descriptive characteristics of the respondents for in-depth interview**

Case No.	Age	Marital status	Children No/age	Caste	Education passed	Craft status + piece rate workers	Crafts & occupational	Business transaction	Year work	Male Counter
<i>Place: Bhubaneswar, various craft workers, Khordha District</i>										
1.	30-35	Married	1/3	Karana	Class 10 +SHTI*	Registered unit + 12	Pattachitra SE	Local & foreign	5	SE*
2.	25-29	Married	-----	Brahmin	-do- + SA*	Home unit + contract	Pattachitra SE	Local & regional	6	Teacher
3.	25-29	Unmarried	-----	Brahmin	+2college + SHTI	Registered unit + 25	Pattachitra SE	-do-	6	Father, SE
4.	35-39	Unmarried	-----	Karana	Class 7 + training	Home unit +20	Appliqué SE	-do-	20	Father died
<b>Place: Pipili, appliqué locality Puri District</b>										
5.	50-55	Widow	2/30; 27	Gudia	Class 5	Piece rate worker	Prof. Appliqué	Workshop	30	----
6.	25-29	Separated	3/8;5;2	Darji	Class 7	Home unit + 25	SE	Father's shop	15	Father SE
7.	35-40	Married	4/21;20;18;15	Darji	Class 3	Home unit + 11	Prof. Appliqué	Husband's shop	17	SE
<b>Place: Badadanada sahi, pattachitra State Awardee (SA*) Puri District</b>										
8.	20-25	Unmarried	-----	Teli	+2 college +	Homeworker + 5	Pattachitra SE	Local + Gurus	8	Father Govt.
<i>Place: Raghurajpur pattachitra community, Puri District SHTI +SA</i>										
9.	35-39	Married	2/21; 14	Chitrakara	Class 5 + KSM	Home unit + 2	Pattachitra SE	Village + St	18	SE
10.	50-55	Married	3/30; 27; 25	Chitrakara	Class 5	Home unit + 5	SE	Village + trader	A	SE
<b>Place: Puri town, Puri District</b>										
11.	50-55	Married	3/28; 25; 23	Gudia	Class 5 + KSM	NGO + 10 SHG* 100 homeworkers	Coir SE	Local + regional + foreign	23	Teacher + NGO worker
12.	35-39	Married	2/16; 9	Karana	Class 7	Mahila Samiti + Reg.society + 20	Appliqué Sea shell	Local + regional exhibition	10	Business
<i>Place: Barhamunda Meher handloom weaver's community, Bargarh District</i>										
13.	35-39	Married	5/22;21;19;12	Bhulia	Class 5	Home unit + 4	SE	SBWCS +St	A	SE
<i>Place: Kusta parha, Handloom weaver's community, Bargarh District</i>										
14.	60-65	Married	4/41;38;35;30	Kusta	No	Home unit + 3	Helper	SBWCS + traders	A	NA

**Notes:** SHTI = State Handicraft Training Institute, SE = Self-employed, NGO= Non Government Organization, SBWCS =Sambalpuri Bastralaya Weaver Cooperative Society, SHG = Self Help Group, KSM = Kalinga Shilpi Mahasangha, A=Ancestral, *Pattachitra* = silk cloth & *patta* paiting & palm leaf engraving, for castes see abbreviations, **Time spent**= craft work + house chores altogether 12-18 hrs./day **St** = Stakeholder **Source:** Field work 1998 August and 2000December in Orissa, India.

I wanted to understand how with local situational variations women's subjective perceptions on values and beliefs in terms of their changing roles, burdens, voices and the demands in productive and reproductive work are shaping and sustaining a highly gendered social-political economy, which I call social mapping. Steps to comprehend the complex socio-economic reality of rural craftswomen included rapport building and problem sharing with kinship and community members. In doing so, I could further uncover men's (so-called heads and breadwinners, owners, stakeholders and officials) attitudes, values and expectations concerning women's housework, business work and role negotiation, demands for their paid and unpaid work (Acharya 2003b, c). I wanted to understand the masculine and feminine constructions of business and the traditional assumptions about the body and sexuality, which would reflect women's coping capacities within labour exploitation, violence/dowry torture, work, and household chores. Furthermore, the multi-complex religious ritual obligation, authority, dominance, dignity, and inauspicious/impure state of body as cultural characteristics, were thus defined to fix criteria for selecting sample at the *craft-scape* (see Chapter 7, Figure 15) and illustrate how marginal gendered subjects are produced through identity and invisibility (Acharya 2003c).

The topic and choice of field area determines primarily the information we receive. Why would the craftswomen from Orissa narrate their life experiences to us? Ann Oakley (1981) argues that the richness of material in her research on motherhood was due to the way she managed to reduce the hierarchical relation between herself and the women she spoke with. It is certainly less threatening to enter a village saying that you are going to promote better infrastructure, micro-finance and marketing than to say you have come to listen to your subjects experiences of control over income, or to focus on their division of labour or sex roles. My approaches towards craftswomen were accordingly very general, avoiding terms like violence, control over money, savings (amount), problems, difficulties, and instead talking in general terms about their opinions on these terms. In the course of our daily conversations at the craft places, away from in-laws, the market and males, the craftswomen – at temple spires and the sea beach, or even amidst the crowded crafts exhibition ground (where sounds drowned in the crowd) – often talked freely and very emotionally, gradually disclosing their life experiences. I am of the opinion that respondents control experiences if they feel publicly threatened. They are afraid to lose their respect and power (Batilwala 1994, Rowlands1997).

This whole process was time consuming and costly. It clarified my researcher role, however, as a negotiator and/or even troublemaker, making 'self-other' intimacy and new knowledge visible.



## Group interviews

Group discussions, as one of the methodological tools to explore the craftswomen's attitudes and their responses to the traditional self-employment in the handicraft and handloom practices, were held to enrich the representativeness of the dialogical data collected through interviews. Yet, putting together bits and pieces from different participants, I found that even the men, who were often reluctant to let their women talk, were informative (when) sitting with women at work in a common place. According to Bedford & Burgees (2001: 123) *[Focus] groups place the individuals in a group context, where conversations can develop and flourish in what could be considered more common place, social situations, people's opinions and beliefs and pertinent issues can be questioned and/or amplified by others in the group.* This dialogical characteristic of the focus group gives the researcher access to the complex-multiple social relationships in a specific area context as well as an understanding that characterises the social behaviour of gender. It has also proved useful to gain insight into convergent and divergent ideas and to add more information to the topic than one person could do alone.

Twenty-five group conversations were conducted with 234 craft producers (205 craftswomen, 29 craftsmen) from the four craft localities; training centres, home units, and at the craft institutions, as shown in (Table 2). Four group discussions were about dowry victims, and craftswomen's sisters, mothers, fathers, or brothers and few close kin participated (see Chapter 4). I gathered groups of women around me who wanted to know what I wanted and I used the interview guide as presented in Appendix 4.



Figure 5 On the left shows conversation with a group of appliqué workers in a home unit in Pipili and on the right a handloom weaver family unit in Bhulia parha, Bargarh.

Sometimes the respondents appointed a leader from their group and sometimes they chose me as the main actor with whom to exchange views, seeking justice and the veracity of the stories they

wanted to share with us. When organizing a group, the first question addressed to me was always: *Are you from government, to re-supervise the cyclone damages, or from the Mahila Bikash Nigam or any cooperative banks?* In short, was I a troublemaker, a spy, or part of a government survey, or simply a customer? Very soon I was to learn that I must not mention cooperative society staff, (from *Utkalika*), or block level cyclone management official at any cost, since there was still a great deal of anger towards such officials. Government promises for basic assistance for the 1999 cyclone-affected crafts households dried up before they had finished drying out their muddy unhygienic housing structure and basic infrastructure.



Figure 6 In left shows a group conversation with appliqué workers in one NGO from Puri and in the right a handloom weaver group conversation in Ambavona, Bargarh. (Photos: upper left by the advisors, lower left by group members and both right by the author).

I could not tape many interviews with kin groups, but elderly women held no gender/owner bars. In the temple veranda and courtyards, the elderly woman (widows and group leaders) evoked collective hardship and hiding pains, despite these places being open community spaces where both males and females work together for the local workshops and home units. It is in my opinion indeed aesthetics (Moss 1994) of subaltern voices/livelihood that are being experienced through daily practices of crafts. Women featured large, not only in worker's conceptions of stakeholders' vice, but also in their ideas of rural virtues and norms. However, their critical voices have increasingly challenged the policy practices that I have made on behalf of women's empowerment.

While tracing the limitation of *panchayati raj* as an effective vehicle for women development, our (researcher-researched) identity, relations, subjectivity and ethics in the field is constituted in and through 'knowledge productions' (Foucault 1991, Collins 1991, Kobayashi 1994, Katz 1994, Escobar 1995). In Khollar and Darji sahi, as in other communities (see Chapter

Table 2 descriptive characteristics of the group respondents participated in the extensive group discussion

No. Case & Place	Discussion held in	e	Mem-ber	Female /male	Married/Un /widow/S*	Crafts Work	Education	Years work	Group type	Work type	Business contact
1. Khellar	Courtyard	18	14	12/2	5/9	Appliqué	Class 8 + training	5	SHG*	PR*	Pipili market
2. Puri	Ashram	22	21	21	2/12/7:S	+embroidery	Class 10	2	Trainees	PR	Market, society
3. Puri	Workshop	17	12	12	3/9	-do-	Class 9	6	Villagers	PR	Workshop +St
4. Puri	NGO	22	25	24/1lesbian	3/15/2/2:S	Modern app.	Class 10 pass	1	Trainees	PR	NGO + society
5. Puri	NGO	33	7	7	1/5/1:S*	Coir	Class 3	10	Villegers	PR	NGO
6. Puri	Household	59	2	1/1	2	Pattachitra	Master artisans	A*	PR	SE*	NGO
7. Pipili	Workshop	25	6	6	3/2/1	Coir	Coir training	5	SHG	PR	Workshop
8. Darji sahi	Temple spire	35	8	5/3	4/3/1	Appliqué	Class 7	A	Villagers	PR+haired	Workshop
9. Pipili	Courtyard	21	9	9	2/4/1/2:S	Appliqué	Pre college	A	Villagers	PR+haired	Own shops
10. Raghurajpur	Home unit	19	11	10/1: teacher	2/9	Pattachitra	Pre college	7	Trainees	PR	Market + St
11. Raghurajpur	TC	29	18	17/1:teacher	10/8	Masks paint	Class 5	1	Trainees	PR	Center teacher
12. Badadandasahi	TC	23	4	4	0/4	Pattachitra	+2college +1:SA	1	Home unit	PR	Center teacher
13. Bhubaneswar	Home unit	29	12	12	0/12	Pattachitra	+2college + 2:SA	5	Home unit	SE+PR	Local contract
14. Bhubaneswar	Workshop	22	6	5/1:disabled	1/5	Appliqué	Class 3	5	Home unit	SE(1)+PR	+ Out State
15. Bhubaneswar	SHTI*	21	9	8/1:teacher	2/7	Appliqué	Pre college	1	Trainees	PR	SHTI
16. Bhubaneswar	SHTI	25	7	6/1	0/7	Pattachitra	Graduate	1	Trainees	PR	SHTI
17. Bhubaneswar	Exhibition	37	3	3	3	Sea shell	Class 7	6	SE	SE	Regional trade
18. Bhubaneswar	Ashram	32	3	3	1/3	Pattachitra	Graduate, SHTI	4	Contractual	SE	Stakeholders
19. Barhamunda	Home unit	27	5	3/2	3/2	HW*	Class 5	A	Household	SE	WCS*+trader
20. Kustaparha	Commonplace	35	7	4/3	3/4	HW	Class 5	A	Household	SE	WCS+FM
21. Bhulia parha	Home unit	40	7	3/4	3/4	HW	Class 5	A	Household	SE	WCS+ St
22. Ambavona	Commonplace	21	17	15/2:teacher	5/12	HW	Class 5	3	SHG	Coolie	Friday market
23. Tora	Colony	35	9	7/2:caretaker	5/1/1:S	HW	No	18	WCS*	PR	WCS
24. Tora	Center	38	5	3/2	5	HW	No	22	WCS	PR	WCS
25. Kustaparha	Home unit	31	7	4/3	3/4	HW	Class 5	A	Villagers	Helper	Local shops

**Notes:** TC = training center, SHG\*=Self Help Group, SE\*= Self-Employed, SHTI\*=State Handicraft Training Institute, HW\*=Handloom Weavers, WCS\*=Weaver Cooperative Society PR\*= Piece rate, SA\* = State awardee, S\*= Living separately at maternal home on dowry and in-law's torture ground, A= Ancestral, FM = Friday market, St = stakeholder **Source:** Fieldwork period 1998 August-January1999, 2000December-2001May Orissa, India.

4) group conversations revealed much new information about increasing of female labour participation, and integration of the younger generation piece-rate craft producers and their resistance capabilities. Trainees from ashrams, Raghurajpur, and NGOs (see Chapter 4 and Article no. 4) voiced their animosity and anger against the male domination that impose the double restriction on their mobility. Marginal workers' experiences of resistance foregrounds productive epistemic and moral political practices that show us that they are not passively produced but are active agents whose choices and discourses are of fundamental importance in the formation of their society.

### ***Community based survey***

Although much information was collected through group conversations and in-depth interviews, I wanted also to gain satisfactory information from the local authorities. The community-based survey in 1999 at Raghurajpur added materials to the general understanding of traditional craft village livelihood patterns and the cultural constructions of power relations (Gupta & Ferguson 1997). During my second field visit I updated the household data for 2001 as shown in Appendix 5, and I collected information at the household level by visiting 45 households through a semi-structured guide (presented in Appendix 4). The guide was useful in many ways: to investigate the trends in male artisans' migrations from Raghurajpur, the expansion of the tourist industries, household bargaining on community-based business network, the role of cooperative societies, attitudes towards the processes of integration of other castes, poor migrants and female labour to the *pattachitra* activities, wage and labour conditions in a local-global business transaction, and so on. Community-based survey also established a good basis for further in-depth interviews and group discussions.

### ***Key informants***

I interviewed a number of resource persons; academic professors, local activists, government officials, NGO' teachers, coordinators, project assistants, a craft exhibition manager, and small and capitalist business stakeholders who showed particular interest. This resulted in some general, secondary and contextual information. A list of institutions, organisations and resource persons that I personally contacted outside Orissa State for archival sources and fieldwork purpose are listed in Appendix 3. However, I have retained anonymity of those stakeholders and key informants who provided me particularly sensitive information. One such key informants I presented earlier, is the case of Giridhara. Archives, news clippings and workshop reports are treated as secondary materials, and these sources are duly acknowledged in the References.

### **Assessment of the research approach**

Did I manage to develop grounding and a locally meaningful feminist method? Are the descriptions, mappings and judgement of correspondence experiences that I analysed, interpreted and wrote are sensitive to those voices that are meant to be represented comprehensibly? These questions are partly related to the general claim of producing reliable information (Smith 1991), and partly related to the ethical representation of the protagonist's voices and their local worldview (Spivak 1988, Moss 1994, Mohanty 1991). The dilemma encountered were, however, the ways that academic discourses engage in a particular kind of research sophistication. Rationalizing positionality, objectivity and theorization may provide little purchase into marginalized voices for whom rational thinking is a self-evident reflexivity (Dreze 2002, Raju 2002).

Validity in qualitative research can be obtained by divergence from conventional methodology practices. The validity is not necessarily obtained by aggregating the strange or familiar local situations, but by prioritising cautious inscription of the global impact on sensitive local language, and behaviour and actions of different groups and marginal workers. According to Shanti George (1997), explorations of new areas, the search for deeper meanings, encompassing difference and avoidance of simplistic explanations of the problem might result in the accumulation of details that are 'messier', as there are no all-purposes scientific techniques, and there is also a danger of losing purpose within conversations, which *can ramble, meander, return to the same point* (1997: 36). At times Shanti George admires that [...] *they also delineate perceptions, suggest nuances and capture experiences more vividly and profoundly than do the more streamlined, straight forward, concise—and dehumanised—modes of presetting data in the social sciences* (1997: 36).

Thus, the important point to be considered to make the research results more valid and reliable is the corresponding accuracy between the tools of data collection and the elaboration upon how data is transformed into concepts and reliable criteria. I discuss both dimensions of a feminist narrative method in the last part of this chapter. Baxter & Eyles (1997) emphasised that the potential value of the qualitative research approach is qualitatively credible, transferable, dependable and valuable *per se* to narrate the gender inequality processes and thus give better descriptions of marginal experiences. Feminist geographers, too, emphasize that to avoid the psychological reductionism that sees the individual moving in the society one should focus on the actions constituting the context that surrounds the principal actor (Acharya & Lund 2002). To some degree, this inadequacy may lie in the persistent criticism of qualitative/narrative research findings: that valid generalization cannot be made on the basis of small numbers, for example, in

the accounts of too few life stories, and thus that representativeness is an insurmountable evaluation problem. For instance, while recognizing the significance of individual resistance to workspace and the vital necessity of building confidence, inner strength and courage, without the collective struggle there is hardly any solution to individual tragedy. The descriptions as well as the analysis provided in the article and thesis are directly tangible with how the narrators perceive the situation, and in this case what are gendered issues and spatiality (Lund 2002).

The term 'gendered inequality' is no longer realist reporting, but tangible visible imaginative spaces of the marginal craftswomen worker's exclusive articulation of bits of personal memories. They were no longer faceless, but the protagonists for this research were much more, a narrative in place and times. During our close encounter, many of the SHG homeworkers and trainees working under those self-employed that I interviewed started to accept me as one of their *samiti* (society), and shared their experiences in group encounters. They asked me: *Are you going to continue your work with Chandana/Mami like 'bhaunis'* (working sisters/active mobilizers/coordinators, to whom they knew and trust)? They also wanted me to show how the research results would help their interests.

### ***Reflexivity in narratives: situated knowledge***

For the past two decades feminist geographic thinking about methodology has increased scholarly attention to the issues of reflexivity in a context of 'spatial perspective' (Nast 1994, Gupta & Ferguson 1997), that the individual narrative is faced with problems of representation, reliability and 'reflexivity' (Jones et al. 1997). A more nuance discussion about the relationship between gendered spaces within everyday practices lies at the background of one's positionality, the link between one's academic knowledge and history — gender, race, nationality, class, caste, sexuality, ability and other identifiers, as well as location in time and space, and affiliation, or preoccupations—will be reflected in one's work (Mohanty 1991, Harding 1991, Nast 1994). In embodied feminist narrative perspectives of self-employment and the understanding of socio-spatial relations, a field can be defined as a social terrain. Haraway (1991) reminds us that research is done on a group of people from one place, and the knowledge we gain from that research is applied only to that group and the particular place over time. What I reflected on in the gendered spaces and embodied narratives of my protagonists in this thesis, is what Haraway (1991) refers to as 'situated knowledge', when she argues that a view from a particular position may be more truthful than what she termed 'the view from no-where'.

The subaltern's marginal work experiences and my views (speaking and writing) not only ignore the different views of the earlier 'categories' (planner/researcher and men/women of

class/caste) from their position within the same locality/village, but also insist that the particular perspective is the general truth. In this situation, culture (native tradition) is always entangled with the social and political relations to produce the human suffering and oppressions under the real material conditions that were disavowed in Marxist theory (Spivak 1987). This 'situated knowledge' is understood as reflexive and researcher's knowledge: that we see the world from specific embodied craft-scapes. However, as Pratt argues 'it is often painful to confront the limits of our thinking, to recognise that what we think of as universal truth is a partial or particular position' (1992: 327). This focus on the constitution of a researcher's identity in discourse and ideology has transformed the terrain upon which knowledge is created (Gupta & Ferguson 1997), and its outcome as Rose (1997) says, depends on who its makers are. Harding points out that narrating the voices means in a manner that the researcher highlights the interpersonal nature in between, rather than hiding behind a distanced third person, which depersonalises the research processes (Harding 1987: 9). Feminist social scientists have to take the most vexing methodological questions that lie at the heart of our ability/inability with regard 'critical reconstruction of the contested meanings' (Hanson 1997: 123, Baxter & Eyles 1997) in validating embodied knowledge. Recent feminist geographies have seen the need for cross-cultural comparisons and advocate looking at a range of evidence that would support the oppressive effects of global optimising, especially for women workers (Mohanty 1997, Narayan & Harding 2000). They also advocate going beyond the conventional mode of representing the preconceived categories, and for more ethical and political engagement in addressing the institutional, geographical, and material dimensions of the researcher (Nagar 2002). I advocate that turning attention to understand how knowledge is made and circulated in women's embodiment is rendered inaccessible and inappropriate and I looked at in what ways they can be empowered to reclaim their knowledge and appreciate its usefulness. It depends on how critically one views, realizes and embodies 'women's gender interests' by drawing cautiously circumscribed oppressive effects of capitalist conclusions out of sensitive local world views in marginal, cross-cultural identities, while they are reproducing them.

### ***Ways of representing the marginal subjectivity***

The narrative of marginal experiences is framed as an understanding that there are power relations, ethical questions and dilemmas to face. Feminists argue that the alternatives of local women's resistance are to be reflected upon seriously as ways of representing their marginal experiences. Mohanty emphasizes that 'the point is not just 'to record' one's history of struggle, or consciousness, but how they are recorded; the way we read, receive and disseminate such

imaginative records is immensely significant' (1991a). In the light of her analysis, it should be emphasized that to achieve the disruption, it is not the discourse itself but our experiences of discourse and our reckoning with those experiences that need to be revealed. For Madge et al., 'what one can observe depends on one's own position vis-à-vis the object of observation' (1997: 90), and to challenge the research orthodoxy they propose four characteristics of the methodologies – '*ways of knowing, ways of asking, ways of interpreting and ways of writing*'. For instance, one of the common mistakes an interviewer makes is to put words in the respondent's mouth, either by *helping* the informant when s/he is search for words, or by asking leading questions: *don't you think...?* Instead I asked: *what do you think and how you think so?* What is represented in the given discursive categories depend on the ways in which researchers interpret the knowledge she has accrued through their language. It is the struggle to rethink and remember the tensions between our experience and our received language and emotion and the work of articulating the deeper and nuanced embodiment. In light of Mohanty's (1997) analysis, I have no regret about having abandoned a degree of 'irrelevancy' of reducing their experience into empirical evidence or to mere rhetorical consciousness constructions, since embodied knowledge and discursive practices propel our contradictions of experiences.

### ***Learning through fieldwork***

The validity of my data is entirely dependent upon the craftswomen reporting factually correct experiences, that they understood the psychology of the perpetrators of gender inequalities and my research interests, and that I interpreted their interest (agencies) correctly. As was stated in the last section in Chapter 2, and in the first section of this chapter, it is important to let the empirical data—embodied experiences—and own learning through the fieldwork inform and reflect the theoretical categories. In order to make visible the linkages between such empirical work to more public spaces each following chapters and articles starts and ends with reference to theory or otherwise, or to conceptual issues that have been used in the narration of marginal experiences (life histories), especially those entwined with the cultural construction of place, gender and self-employments' accessibility. The narratives reveal aspects of women's consciousness and self-expression and their attempts to bargain collectively at varying levels. In this sense, women were participants in the construction of a new identity.

Another way to secure the subaltern voices from the field has been to revisit the field and discuss with the women the results I derived from their stories. Fortunately, I was able to discuss with Mami, Chandana and few craft groups during my summer vacation visit in 2002. I found that not only are emotions an inherent and integral part throughout in-depth interviews but also



the processes of exchanging emotional conversations is an inevitable and unavoidable part. In Mami's (Acharya & Lund 2002), Chandana's (Acharya 2003c) and Pratima's (Acharya 2003b) provocative, open-ended style of representation, we do not find mere information, but we learn how workers promote the self-employment world and negotiate their workspace. We realize the complex interplay of socio-spatial construction that cultural ideologies have made possible. In such a way, previously taken-for-granted sexual roles therefore, could be conceived as constructed, and being narrated as models in the self-employed world. Workers agency not only deconstructs their social world, but also for them to live their life is to critique and unravel the day-to-day marginalization of women's labour processes in which they were embedded. I believe that the legitimate deconstruction of place-based manifestations might be a contradiction of my experience that have meaningfully facilitated the researcher and researched to discern situated cultural practices.

## Chapter 4

### Craftswomen's experiences and reflections in-group

#### Introduction

Group discussion is by no means a visual embodiment of a homogeneous and harmonious group and one, which is free from internal tensions. Through sites of memories, the diverse truths of my protagonists evolved and created feminist spaces, both subtly and directly. Such negotiations also involved transcending, class, caste and cultural obligations that are differentially experienced. Issues discussed were the means of livelihood, facilities available for women engaging in craft-making activities, collective bargaining power (Agarwal 1994) within house and market transaction and resources, social constraints affecting women's economic participation, wage discrimination, the decision-making authority of women in group participation, nominating SHG leaders and difficulties faced at the workplace. Experiential knowledge is evident from their ability to bring some basic clarity about local activism, and to understand the complex realism of the global societal structures, cultures and their oppressive effects on women's work.

#### Mapping crafts trainee's mobility in the town of Puri

Social networking and mobility are concepts used in feminist social geography to investigate gendered spaces. Together, they refer to the movement of individuals or a group between different levels of the social hierarchy and the establishment of relationships, usually defined in terms of broad occupational or social categories. Stakeholders (*per se* craftspersons) in Puri, who solely depend on the tourist industry have claimed that sustainability of their business depends upon the extraordinarily large floating population throughout the year, coming to the abode of Lord Jagannath and to the elongated beach, a recreational centre. The commercial greed of a section of people hob-nobbing both in and around the region and norms of the cultural ideologies and practices create a cultural landscape and social milieu that are more heterogeneous. Greedy commercial use of land for tourist hotels and unauthorized overcrowded settlements have now spread a spree of 'geo-political environments', dangerously damaging the urban landscape and the neighbourhoods (Mishra & Singh 1999). Promotion of tourist activities includes clandestine establishment of unhygienic food stalls, cabin shops, dealing with narcotics and fake curio items, and *dhabis* (mobile shops) that are engaged in importing and exporting undesirable materials, and

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also indulgence in anti-social activities and alcoholism in the sahis<sup>58</sup> around (Mishra & Singh 1999). Located at the heart of the town of Puri and barely a kilometre away from the beach though, the craftswomen's hostel bears a particular social identity that is some-where in between urban life and life in isolation: Palli aged 23-years-old, a trainee from the hostel said: *we have to live a life of "banabasa"* (living in the forest; literally, forceful isolation by restriction of their mobility).

Group discussion with 21 craft trainees who were living in a hostel atmosphere shed light on their experiences and advocacy for policy change, while negotiating the 'self' in an environment predicting masculine economy-gendered spaces. To understand what makes them stay in such a situation would involves exploring the level of cultural ideologies maintained in such training institutions. The craftswomen's hostel (an old ashram) is financed by the craft development scheme of the government for poor and destitute women. Around 40 trainees are recruited for 10 months and are taken care of by female officials from Puri. Deserted and/or divorced women are given priority. Unmarried girls from Cuttack, Kendraparha and Puri coastal districts have joined together with the hope of becoming skilled appliquéd workers and garment producers.

I asked the trainees how they would describe their hostel and their health in terms of the present accessibility, mobility and accountability. They depression from unsettled family disputes, social stigma surrounding their destitution, that conflict had arisen from the misunderstanding about the access and use of limited resources inside the hostel, the poor nutritional diet, and the unsocial, male-dominated environment surrounding their hostel. Describing their feelings they said: *We come from relatively backward areas. However we feel as if a monster is roaring around – a fear of public spaces caused 'agoraphobia'*. Here, the sexual and symbolic antagonism is taken different forms, and there is still a cultural gap in attitudes towards these changes. Male are not allowed to enter the ashram wall, and trainees are not allowed to go out to the market, recreation, or even to consult a doctor in case of illness without the guardianship of the superintendent. In order to bring discipline, the committee members reinforce some strict hostel rules and according to Biraja *mausi* (aunt: caretaker). These are preventive and promotive measures to avoid sexual assaults. The ashram denotes practical and symbolical significance to the craftswomen's work rather than a spatio-psychological freedom. The normative ideologies about these ashram dwellers are that some are remote from the culturally sanctioned womanhood and therefore, are deviant

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<sup>58</sup> *Sahi* is a structured village community of traditional Brahmanical social order, including all the traditional norms, values, sexual codes, cultural ideology, and gendered systems. With extended and nuclear family patterns, it is a large and heterogeneous community of diverse caste and cultural impact.

(Acharya & Lund 2002). The craft-training group find that this is rather an essentialist thought of patriarchy:

*They (the men) make unnecessary rumours. If something happened in history, that would not be a partial act, rather that might be under forceful circumstances. Still the black days are haunting us. Initially we hide from such talk but today we are able to show in confidence those unsocial men that we women always walk straight. No matter what else they say about us we are here to fight against social inequalities with our decent work, rather than lead the life of their myths.*

This search for mastery of their bodies and craft skills is to gain control over their lives through self analysis (within the other) in which their effort and their consciousness take root. Trainees' are experiencing 'agoraphobia' as a crisis of body boundaries in this public environment when they try to achieve craft training for a livelihood. Seclusion norms, sexual harassment and control over mobility effectively cut women trainees off from many spheres of knowledge interaction and activity, thereby curbing their agential capability. Being restricted within four walls and carrying out stereotypical work of embroidering *per se*, without any extra 'payment', craftswomen worry about the future.

The strategies they developed are explained by their desire to fit in their new 'activity space' (Lund 1993), using their bodies and beliefs as mirrors to reflect what was around them. Craftswomen perform morning and evening prayers, cook and work together, listen to each other's experiences, and share emotions, support and discipline. Their shifting identities are embodiments of larger spatial and common contexts: they participate in rallies, campaign against alcohol, stop dowry-related violence, and social injustices, celebrate National Independence Day and International Women's Day, and collectively voice against the unjust. Consequently, many have become critical, provocative, and skilled, and told to me that they want to organise themselves in a more concrete form. Such participation could help ensure their transformation, but only through further dialogues, workshops, seminars and other advocacy initiatives.

When I asked if any of their former friends had started businesses by taking an Rs.20, 000 loan, Supra, 35-years-old, deserted woman with a daughter aged 3, from Kendrapara said: *No, not exactly. We work independently or with someone's home business unit, but we know only one or two who have got a loan so far. You may ask the hostel superintendent. We hoped to get one sewing machine and basic capital. You know, having a loan or machine, our sisters and mothers are looking forward to join with our work.* Many interviewees referred to the difficulty of 'hiding' their experiences of their 'illness' and focused on their scepticism towards these norms in the functioning to establish women's development. During the 10-months training they do not acquire

sufficient skills nor is the monthly stipend (Rs 750) enough. The majority of trainees perceived that in order to establish their self-employment, their access to government loan schemes and hostel functioning should be transparent.

Sundara's craft centre (a local craft NGO) runs training for 40 women, of which 25 women practice appliqué. The group members said: *First batch trainees have not yet received any certificates. We work from 10 am to 4 pm and produce a lot (average Rs.1500) but we get nothing but a monthly stipend of Rs.150 and little to learn here. Our teachers (two unmarried girls in their thirties) who joined five years ago are still paid only Rs. 750 a month here.* The trainees felt that inside the house or at institutions like these, their labour/skill is 'lucrative', since a particular 'desired' feature (productive work) is attached to it. However, it is a pity that the true gender position (*bethiani*) is always jeopardizing their capability, and instils self-reliance amongst them instead. Greater accountability and transparency are necessary to create mutual trust between trainees and institutions to end agoraphobia, poverty and feeling of desertion.

### **New generations of handicraft trainees from Bhubaneswar**

I had a group discussion with Madhu-and-Bhanu like State award winners and highly skilled



Figure 7 A commercial *patta* painting from Bhubaneswar exhibition ground shows *Ratha Jatra* (traditional cart festival) (photo by author, February 2001).

palm leaf engraver and *patta chitra* professionals from the old town of Bhubaneswar. They had passed out from the State Handicraft Training Institute (SHTI) five years previously (see Acharya 2003b) and were working either under contract with Gurus or on their own account to produce the commercial *patta chitra* productions (Figure 7).

Here, our discussion concerns the female trainees' situation in SHTI, Gandamunda, which is one of the biggest government institutes providing 12 varieties of traditional craft trainings. Madhu sees that underachievement in craft knowledge is not due to trainees inability, but rather due to inflexible course design in covering such a vast traditional art skill: *The instructors have taught "tha tha kari"* (literally, from a round to a straight line, meaning 'just roughly') *at my class*. Trainees' work in groups and some students from the occupational castes may share their tacit knowledge with other classmates. However, the two-year training period has proved insufficient for women to start a business of their own. At times, societal expectation constraints the ability of the average woman to stand professionally.

SHTI female trainees in Gandamunda centre complained that it is rather embarrassing for them to use the bush areas within the compound wall as toilet, where 60% are male staff and students. When the SHTI moved away from Bapuji Nagar, at the city centre, to Gandamunda, 14 kilometres away and without proper transportation facilities, around 20% of the women trainees dropped out. The biggest hurdle is covering such a long distance during three months of hot summer (about 35-40 °C) and two months of heavy monsoon days. Apart from the intense heat, when the trainees arrive for an eight-hour craft training session in the SHTI, there is neither a toilet nor hygienic drinking water available. Tina, a terracotta trainee, aged 19-years-old, offered me her water, which was almost too hot to drink. Tina said: *If I forget, I have to drink the unhygienic well water*. Trainees also complained that several times a month some get sore throats, and some others have urinary track infections, or viral fever. Studying crafts skills is certainly not an elite hobby for young generation trainees under these working conditions. It is the sole profession that may secure their livelihood. Having work experience with their Gurus, they understand what an award could do in terms of establishing their own profession and becoming a self-employee.

### **Integration of castes? Women Self Help Group (SHG) appliqué producers**

I had a group conversation with the Khollar village SHG craftswomen in mid-April 2001. Khollar village is located between Konark temple and is 14 kilometres away from the appliqué market in Pipili. Alpana, the group leader, who dropped out of school at 10+ level, is a peace-rate appliqué

worker. All members of the Kholiar village SHG belong to *chasa* (cultivator) caste whose occupation is producing vegetables. Alpana asked:

*Could this research provide some facility for this female's appliqué work?* Alpana's beloved brother asked. He continued: *With commercial vegetable farming we need women's contributions even more, because we have a lot of physical work inside households and at the field at all seasons. After marriage women belong to their in-law's family. They would decide if appliqué work could bring enough earning for their future. The 1999 'maha batya' (super cyclone) left us with barren land, and whatever savings we invested for house repair for immediate shelter. At that time, we sold potatoes and brinjals, you know, just like fuel wood price (very cheap), because of no storage facilities'. The Government survey listed the cyclon-pronged people and material loss, but only a finger-count (i.e. a few) got some help. You know we 'producers' really want to choose the flavour of justice to overcome unspeakable difficulties.*

The above means that whether it is agriculture or piece-rate craft productions, exploitative labour conditions demand fair treatment in the form of recognising the value of work. Economic necessity and growing interest, however, compel younger generations not to leave appliqué work during the slack season when they have low earning potential without irrigated land. The harder part for young girls is, however, when they have to accept remuneration, that is not the real wage. Alpana's mother was the accidental founder of appliqué work for the younger generations of this village. She said:

*I was a health worker in 1995. Once I met some Brahmin women on the bus who brought piece-rate work from Pipili market. I asked them about their work and they introduced my daughter to the patron-businessmen at Pipili who knew could do appliqué. Some adult girls of our village came to my two daughters, and all then followed to learn the designs from the Pipili market and started embroidering'. In this way, the daughters of Kholiar agricultural community started appliqué work as one source of livelihood. Alpana added: yet Bhagmatipur craftswomen (middle-women) took our products and sold them at Pipili, creating a profit out of it. We investigated and went by turn for direct transactions with the businessmen.*

In 1999, the Alpana group joined the woollen carpet-training scheme organised by the Craft Training for Rural Development programme. The devastating cyclone of October 1999 brought death for approximately 10,000 people in Orissa and destroyed the northern coastal tract. Kholiar was also affected. The craftswomen's training centre was washed away, leaving only the teacher. Alpana said: *we were hoping for a certificate as we heard that it might be of help in*

*getting a DIC loan, but the new teacher did not know.* The group did not have any idea about any new female-targeted development programmes. Their two SHG appliqué producer's savings increased to Rs. 4000 under the Mahila Samiti (MS: women's society). The MS leader assured Alpana that they could help her to obtain a loan for those SHGs that could maintain regular savings, and organise meetings and craftwork. However, without government funding, the MS discontinued monitoring the SHGs' progress. Normally, the local MS's, or the few NGOs in Orissa, which have undertaken organizing women through the SHG in their local communities, perceive the government practitioners as 'crucial agents of change'. This has degraded mutual trust between the parties, and their collective productive values at 'sites of struggle' are gradually being constrained. Following discussions focused on how the micro-plan government strategy responded further when Alpana's village women decided to create their own MS to maintain the SHGs themselves, the women said:

*Our SHG tried to register as one MS at the Gram Panchayati (village council) level. Alpana was elected president of 25 female members and one married teacher from a distance village was elected as secretary. To register our society, block officers have to inspect papers. Coming to the final procedure took them two years, though. They left the work half-heartedly. As you know, those village people (whispered), those who hold the power for all, acted like 'many crabs inside one basket' and the pity were that some even made silly rumours against my sister. Being a brother how would I have felt? Government sanctions came at the block level, and 'we' never got a fair treatment. Confrontation with either village 'mukhias' (village headman) or official is not an easy path. On what could these women speak really?*

Being illiterate villagers and poor cultivators, patriarchy traditions leave craftswomen with the heavy burden carried out by women in agricultural activities and little space for negotiation with *babus* (boss; occasionally visiting) officials about their *samiti's* survival, or in the community decision-making processes. By criticizing and resisting such 'official ideologies' these groups created a feminist space that transformed their grievances. For instance, Alpana's group could have invested their current savings for appliqué production, but married members in both SHGs who had less time had been ignored. With some of my suggestions and ideas they agreed how the situation could be handled. Yet, the biggest hurdle that SHG members have experienced is that they have to depend upon stakeholders in Pipili. It also shows the extent of voice a piece-rate worker has within local market transaction. Alpana said:

*Several times we thought of our own raw materials and products. The problem was 'where' we could sell our products. If we sell directly to the orthodox stakeholders at Pipili, the*



*situation becomes worse you know. Frequently, they have warned us that they are at to make theirs and sell theirs. Appliqué, as you know, is one caste-based occupation of the Pipili tellers. You know, their bargaining is sexually provocative and culturally assertive.*

Gendered norms thus set the stage for the form that bargaining can take, even within caste-based occupations. They were reluctant to cross the patriarchy mode of production boundary to teach their cuttings and designs to the other caste women who earn a livelihood by this means. Despite growing confidence in their skilled productions, significant and visible participation in craft work and market place, wage exploitation of piece-rate workers is due to discriminatory bargaining. The local craft traders' ideology in Pipili was evident, when Alpana joined me in a group conversation with Muslim girls in the traditional tellor's community. Making a charge for flower-ornamented appliqué *per se*, the owner paid them 50 *paise* (half of a rupee), of which Alpana only received 20 *paise* for her improved quality, while, the owner sold it for 80 *paise*. Alpana complained: *we only get Rs 25-35 for three days labour; the shop owner sold the same work at Pipili for Rs 190.*

Mediated by gender, cast, mobility, and marital status, social norms often define how piece-rate workers should bargain themselves. The exploitative dimensions of labour processes, I have shown that the proportion of marginalized craftswomen among the working poor in the unorganised economy is much larger than the proportion of women among the poor non-workers. The gender dimension of the piece-rate workers is considerably more 'feminized' than that of the poor as a whole. Kholhar peasant-women have undergone changes from the traditional mode of production. However, experiencing no such transformation in comparison with 'men', because there is a deeply rooted cultural gap despite being integrated into appliqué work and having formed SGHs for collective action. They said: *We are curious to know what the officials and politicians are going to promise in the coming future. Over the years they had promised us almost everything! We hoped our discussion would have been promising if they could participate.* Collective attempts by MSs and SHGs, following democratic and transparent methods of functioning, would capacitate women for vigilant checks on village polity.

### **Issues of dowry and craftswomen survivors**

For dowry-tortured, abandoned craftswomen in Orissa, work in the traditional crafts often provides an opportunity to earn their own money, to survive the distress and partially free themselves from their cultural ideologies and not least, the ignorant attitudes of kinships.

I became acquainted with Latama, an interesting 52-year-old widow in March 2001, during a group conversation with two male employees of the Diamond appliqué centre, and a group of women from the tailor community in Pipili. All were busy with embroidering, sitting in the front of *Maa-Mangala* (the village deity) temple veranda under the shadow of a landmark, the old-Banyan tree. When I interrupted by asking her name, Latama replied: *I have no more maya* (affection) *for this place. I am almost prepared to join God's home with chalk and slate. What would you get in writing my name and age?* Latama works as a peon for a kindergarten and is a traditional appliqué worker by profession. In Latama's perception' the bad things happening to humankind are rooted in time and space: *This is the "Kalee-kala"* (popularly a time period of great invasion and struggle), *one step of dharma* (moral duty) *followed with three steps of "kalee"* (the monstrous nature of human behaviour). Latama evoked her hidden pain concerning her daughter's abandoned life to all of us, who were sitting and sharing with her in that communal place besides the Gramadevati (village deity) temple.

Latama perceives the increasing trend of male brutality, dowry demand and sexual harassment as overburdened with the economic-related modern phenomena. She asked me, *otherwise, how would my son-in-law be so brutal to torture my beautiful and innocent daughter for 'joutuka' (dowry)<sup>59</sup> and sexual harassment (man is living with his mistress)?* Latama herself was ready to inform the local police, the court and the *Mahila* (women's) Commission about the son-in-law's abuse, yet she explained:

*My daughter Sudha (aged 34) is opposing me. She has such a marahattiani (orthodox) mentality! I had taken a manasika (vow) in sending coconut to Maa-Tarini. If Sudha's drunkard husband would leave his kept mistress and begins to treat my abandoned daughter with dignity, I would then pay a darshna (visiting deities) to Maa, give hundreds of coconuts, and serve a feast for the village relatives. You know, they used to beat and send Sudha with her small children*

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<sup>59</sup> Nagwa Foundation Netherlands (<http://www.nagwa.nl>) is working with dowry issues. In India, in their estimates, 75 young brides are burned to death every single day. According to government statistics, 448 dowry-related deaths were registered in 2000 in Orissa, and charge sheets (CHs) have been filed against 384. Of the victims, 43 have committed suicide. In 2001, out of 427 cases, CHs have been filed against 344 accused. Out of 2027 crimes committed against married women in 2002, 52% were dowry-related incidences, and this included about 217 cases in Khurda district, including Bhubaneswar city. However, hundreds of crimes go unregistered. For example, only 1 of the 7 dowry-related abandonment cases in one appliqué community from my study area, had been reported. Another example is the reduction in the male-female ratio at the state level in Orissa, which is 1000:972. The male-female ratio of Khurda, which boasts to be the district having highest literacy rate, is the lowest in the state. The male-female ratio in the district is just 1000:901. The rate at which the gap between the male-female ratio is widening in various districts in the state, during the next census in 2021, the male female ratio is feared to be 1000:860. The female foeticide is said to be the main reason behind this decrease in the ratio. While the male female ratio in Puri, this is 1000:968, in Bargarh, this is approximately 1000:970. [www.Dharitri.com](http://www.Dharitri.com). (2002 July).

(aged 12, 5 and 3) *in order to achieve the dowry! The Brahman astrologer has told us that the bad period is only one more year. But the truth is that (she whispered) the girl's mother has done something to him, giving medicine from a tantrik perhaps. It is unfair that Sudha's old mother-in-law takes her son's side.*

When Shudha asked for justice, her in-laws, including her husband, convinced the local people that Shudha was a rather irresponsible (*daitwa hina*) mad woman, in order to hide her from public view. Dowry payment and dowry demands constituted a major share of discussions during group conversations and individual in-depth interviews. For the majority of crafts households it is a part of their everyday hindrance, full of intense struggle, discouragement and ridicule. Latama said: *the fates of most of the girls of this place are like this. Bohu (the daughters-in-law) to the Pipili have more happiness than our daughter. Since 'bohu' (daughter-in-law) come and sit with embroidering and appliquéd, earn independently, when our daughters lose their earning out in-laws home.* Social stigma and continuing dowry-related family problems take up their valuable time and thus limit their efforts to stand independently, while at the same time they have less mobility and independent choice decision to exercise traditional skills for married craftswomen and constrain their earning at their in-laws houses.

In another group discussion, Kali's unnerving oral accounts about her in-law's family revealed her successful escape from the vulnerability trap. Kali, a hard working craftswoman from Pipili is in her thirties and the mother of three children (aged 12, 7, and 4 years old). Three years previously, she had left her husband, a clerk at Bhubaneswar. Her sister-in-law, Bhumi, who had married Kali's husband's brother, had also been deserted. Both were treated as docile servants, at their in-law's house, and in effect were no less than bonded labour. Bhumi resisted such practices by being a little provocative. For this, she was sexually harassed and she was severely wounded. Her poor parents then had to collect her brutally battered body. Kali said to me:

*When Bhumi went I was burdened with double work. The doctor prescribed an x-ray to detect the chest pain, (but) they just ignored me saying that I was suffering due to a cold. Tears used to roll down my cheeks in pain, but I kept on cleaning the cowshed and clothes, cooking meals for all with cow dung smoke and praying to the Goddess, Ma Mangala, just let my father or brother come to see me. Well, I had complained in my home several times, but they were scared that the in-laws would demand money, or might not come Pipili to take me back. Maa Mangala did listen; at a very crucial moment my brother appeared at my in-law's house front. I held his feet tightly and weeping that I would leave that place, or take poison. Look at me now; I am just making a living from my old profession with the same people at home. I hope if I would get one loan in my name without any collateral it would be a great help.*

The crucial evening when Kali's brother came, Kali was due to be taken to a lawyer in the Old town to sign a legal paper to end Bhumi's story of vulnerability. At that critical moment, her brother came and rescued her. Her husband ran to hide behind the bush, and mother and sister-in-law pretended that they were about to go to the market to buy a sari for Kali. After that she returned with her children and lodged a police case and started her appliqué work in her natal house. Kali said: *At present, my in-laws often send messages, requesting to send me back to Bhubaneswar. You know why, when the court case starts both of their sons would be suspended from their jobs as they are government employees. Bhumi is even from a very poor family, and her father is biased. Thinking of leaving Bhumi to the in-laws, instead she joined us as a witness.*

The devastating October 1999 cyclone in Orissa destroyed a part of Kali's parental wattle and daub home and appliqué shop at Pipili market, in which her parents had invested all their savings. Her parents' support in the fight against the dowry case, which they had lodged prior to the cyclone, had diminished. Experiencing increasing violence and doubly victimized abandonment, craftswomen like Sudha, Kali and Bhumi also have to bear burden of their children. Craftswomen are worried that these anti-social practices are inflicted in the craft households all around. While upper caste Hindus perceive this norm as a dominant practice of their culture and even part of their tradition, the crafts households have followed a mixed 'bag' of dowry and craft-'skilled' daughter traditions. Some of the preventive measures adopted by the craft households involve amniocentesis tests and abortions, early marriage (at 15-20 years), widower marriages, and less investment in their daughters' childhood and well-being. To meet the excessive demands adult parents reported that they sell or mortgage part of their land, or inherited shopping space at the market (which may be sold at a commercial price), or gradually repay the borrowed money from their own business profit. Girls often leave their independent homemaker positions to work for moneylenders. The traditional household pattern is to encourage craftswomen's skills and their savings (in cash and kinds) from the crafts making with household chores. Therefore, this femininity qualification might become a dowry guarantee, making women attractive on the marriage market.

Generally, the cash demanded by the grooms' families is obtained. In such transactions the capital circulating between the two families is used to set up craft businesses. But, in none of the above situations is it the women who serve as the medium of transaction and exchange. More importantly, parents have hoped that dowry, including marriage expenses and gifts could be and probably is a parents' way of giving their daughter her share in their property (Agarwal 1994, Banerjee & Jain 2001). Kali's, Sudha's and Bhumi's stories, however, show that at times of abandonment, and distress in Orissa, the women at best escape with their own lives and the lives

of their children, personal clothes and ornaments, but with no part of their dowry money or assets. Under such patriarchy pressure, in households that are less aware of other alternatives it is believed that there is still no alternative to marriage, which is the chief cause of women's vulnerability and therefore of disfavour in the eyes of their parental families. While neoliberal economic works and entrepreneurship are overtly gender-neutral terms and practices, group discussions show that women and men from the same crafts households and business hierarchies have very different experiences as workers. In fact, the cultural practices in the craft trade and anthropocentric economic analysis in economic policy (Bakker 1998, Mohanty 1997) bring multiple oppressive structures into women's lives that are rarely recognised as being of significance to the women's development project. However, daughters in crafts communities those who have been abandoned or who have escaped from dowry traps, continuously try to be assertive in craft production and struggle to promote their skills. They believe that enhanced coping capacity will help ensure bargaining in their marital choices and lives.

## **Conclusion**

During the group conversations we constructed a complex set of individual stories and experiences, which together provide knowledge about conventional practices in unexpected ways. Their collective situations stimulate women to negotiate feminist spaces in policy issues. At times, they exercise the unequal identities, or the inequalities of the oppressive, indigenous, social structures that the subaltern workers inhabit. The contentious relationships and differing opinions that have been negotiated by me/group members have shown the relationships of power between the gendered places and self-employment struggle that continue to exist. While savings potential in workplaces has been demonstrated, the activity has clearly suffered from a lack of field staff support and from inadequate provision of information for women groups/trainee members. Although everyday resistance to the forms of oppressions reflect their capabilities, in such a patriarchy system, the marginality of the native male craft workers has brought double marginality for the poor craftswomen in the craft communities. Embodied marginal worker's changing consciousness and construction of a new identity impact two distinct spaces: in academia/research and in local activism—the former lends visibility, legitimacy and relevance to organic knowledge, while the latter provides goals and meaning to achieve practical needs and strategic interests at local levels.

## Chapter 5

# **Cooperative society movements within the craft sector: the case of Bargarh handloom weavers**

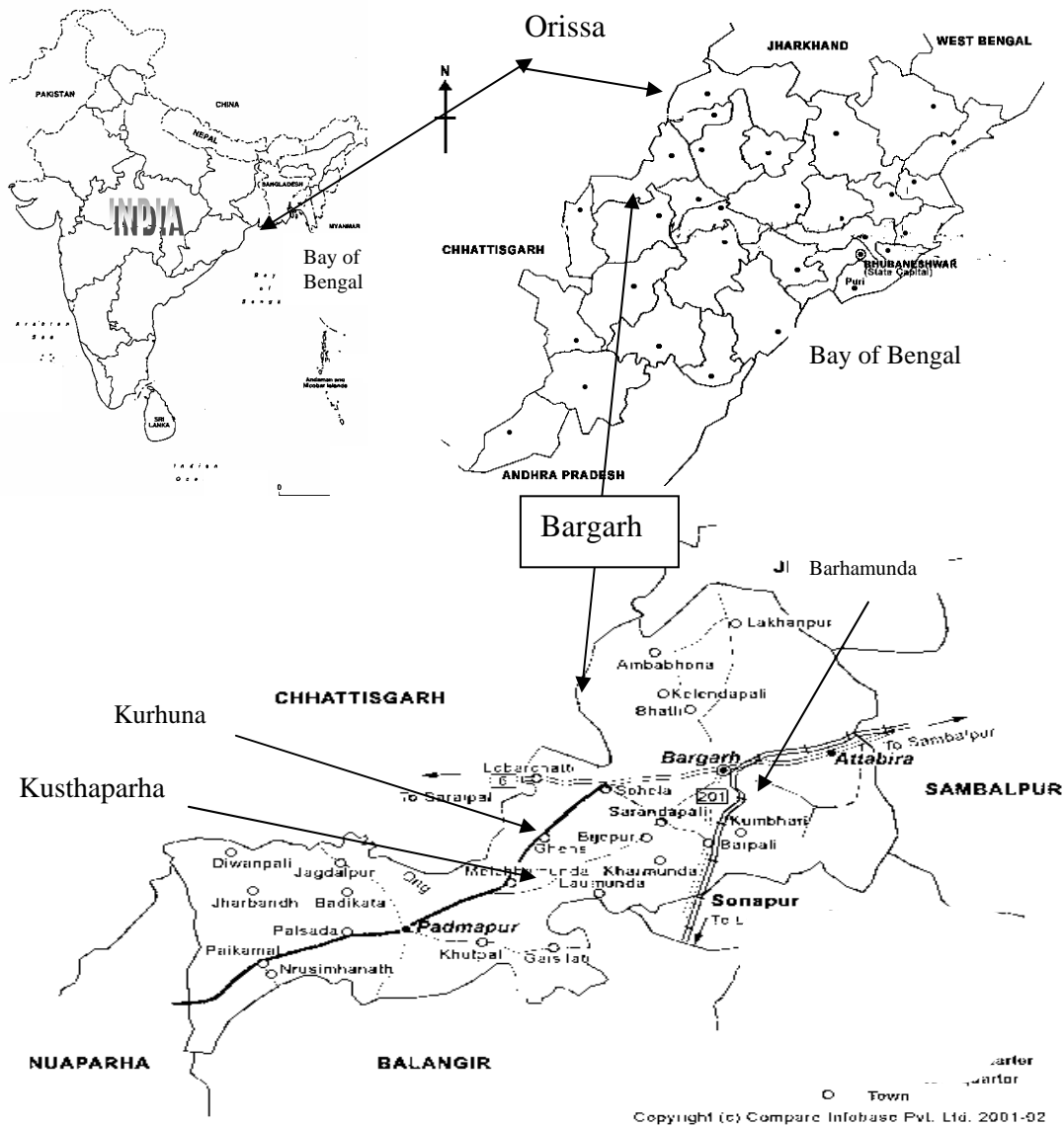
### **Introduction**

Upon hearing about my aim, field of interest and source of funding for this study, Mr Meher the weaving production development officer of Sambalpur Bastralaya Weaver Cooperative Society (SBWCS), delightfully told me about a recent visit from the Visiting Professor from Oslo and how in Oslo around 200 people have learned this type of weaving as just a hobby. Mr Meher and the professor from Oslo had been to Sonepur district silk and the cotton cloth weavers' villages, to the Bheden weaver's community, Mr Meher ancestral village, and also to the SBWCS's tie-dyed colour composition centre. During our conversation Mr. Meher showed me some visiting cards from Germany, Italy, Japan, Thailand and elsewhere, to demonstrate that SBWCS activities not only meet the needs of its clothes lovers, but post independent cooperative movements (like SBWCS) have created knowledge and experiences for a global civil body.

My study of how the SBWCS impacts on women weavers, however, does not only concern their economic needs and survival but also explores the complex gender, social and institutional relations, and access and mobility to skills and technology used that shape the identities of female workers at different junctures in their work and activities. Given the broader social and ideological underpinnings, which underlie women's self-employment in Orissa, I argue that a focus only on the weavers' relationship with their cooperative society is viewed through the lenses of a narrow economism that adopts a mechanistic understanding of everyday production practices, labour and resources use. Being a step outside *harijan* and women development through SBWCS alone, we can see that it is a legitimate category of democratic politics and essentially a patriarchal nation-building strategy. I show that the debate over cooperation must recognise the dynamics of place-based factors and question the oppressive effects of local-global optimising, especially for women weavers.

Embodied local gendered relations of uncooperation and unavoidable tensions of labour practices doubly burden weavers who are seeking their own organization for greater well-being. I focus on the SBWCS in Bargarh in India, but I believe the discussion (changes within the textile cooperative movement) bears relevance for public sector organisations other than cooperative societies and in other parts of India. However, before examining how the SBWCS responds to the large majority of local weaver populations the SBWCS needs to be situated in its historic and cultural context.

Bargarh district is one of the most western districts of Orissa State. It consists of 12 Blocks and 1177 inhabited villages, with a total population of 1,34,6000 (2001 census) of which 18.55% are Scheduled Caste (SC) and 19.56% are Scheduled Tribe (ST). Bargarh district is situated on the left bank of Jira River at a distance of 383 kilometres from the State Capital, Bhubaneswar. The SBWCS is located in Bergarh town and is 59 kilometres from Sambalpur. The place is a flourishing centre for tie-dyed handloom clothes and related garments industry, and also for agro production (notably grain and vegetables) due to the Hirakud Dam canal that passes through the town. A large number of merchants belonging to



Map 3 shows the location of the studied area Barpalli and arhamunda, Kurhuna, Tara waver Cooperative Society and Kusthaparha in Bargarh district, Orissa, India.

the Marwari (North Indian) community reside in the heart of the town. According to the local historian (field note 2001) *Rani* (queen) Mohan Kumari was a puppet ruler under the British in Sambalpur. Moore-Gilbert (1997, 80) explains how Rani of Sirmur was a subaltern; Spivak (1987) has extended the scope of the term 'subaltern' to denote a broad range of disempowered social groups and their positions. Spivak (1987) traces how the complex colonial ideologies of the class and historical practices on material and economic focus overlook the local, especially the role of women in the transition, in the period from colonialism to national independence in India. In this sense, rather than defining the women's agency, the British colonial administration used the body and position of women in Indian society as an ideological battleground for colonial power (Spivak 1988: 300). In doing so, the British were able to justify colonialism, or the systematic exploitation and appropriation of territory, as a civilising mission. Although the modern concept of nationalism was not an activating force, the spirit of freedom, based on Gandhis' non-violence addresses and hatred of foreign rule was reflected in the tolerance of the subaltern workers' and heroic sages (renowned freedom fighters in Western Orissa). This connects history to the present day structure and context.

### **Samabalpuri *bastra* (cloth) and its weavers' castes**

Tulasi Meher and her husband from the Barhamunda weavers' community, located four kilometres east of Barghar town, said: *Meher surname is "tanti" (weaver) caste. Our ancestral occupation through generations was weaving for the locals. During the last three decades of weavers, weaving has been extensively for the national and international export markets. We are four main categories of weavers according to our caste identity, such as, Bhulia meher, Kustha meher, Kuli meher and Harijan weavers. Kustha and Bhulia meher are the upper categories in the caste hierarchy and according to their skills. They are proud of their ancestral weavers' contribution to the Sambalpuri design and technical development and to the weaver society as a whole. For example, Padmashree Kutartha Acharya, the SBWCS founding father, was an excellent developer of tie-dye design.*

The weavers use different coloured threads to produce some of the most delightful designs in multihued tones, with motifs drawn from the richness of the nature and *Shakti* (feminine power) cult (see Figure 8). Some master craftsmen from this caste are still alive; their handmade saris sold for Rs. 45, 000 a piece in 1992. Out of 18 national awardees between 1967 and 1995, all 13 outstanding awardees were males and had Meher surnames. Being in the top caste hierarchy, Kustha and Bhulia Meher, are not allowed any kinship relations with the Kuli and Harijan weavers, only weaving-related work practices. For example, they do not exchange



food and goods, allow marriage to their daughters into their families. In this section, I will show how the structure of handloom production processes in SBWCS Bargarha is not only the sources of livelihood but is also a critical cultural space that enables weavers to perform in culturally and historically specific ways. Weavers in these localities weave three varieties of cloth for three purposes: general (*sadharana*) clothes, rural clothes<sup>60</sup> (*palli bastra*) and popular (*Janata*) clothes<sup>61</sup>. In Bheden, 98% of the weavers are skilled and around 40% weavers produce high quality artistic cotton and silk yarn clothes with complex tie-dye (*Bandha Kama*)<sup>62</sup> design.



Figure 8 Sambalpuri silk sari in a variety of colours, displayed by the State Handloom cooperative society at the February 2001 winter exhibition ground at Bhubaneswar.

<sup>60</sup> The rural clothes for daily use are woven for the native consumers such as peasants and ordinary people. Their clothes are rarely *bandha kama* (tie-dyed work). Tribal and scheduled caste women like to wear a colourful, or a plain sari, but with two faces, while most upper caste women wear one face saris with high quality borders and body design, depending upon their investment capacity.

<sup>61</sup> Most of the old who could not concentrate on tie-died design any more, or as Panda notes (1992), SC and ST weavers made Janata clothes-weaving projects their main source of survival. Afterwards some could work in complex tie-died weaving.

<sup>62</sup> The very old tie-dye technique in the Sambalpuri cloth was the Maga *bandhi* (tie), and the saris are produced using this technique are Saptapar, Vichitra and Satchipuri. The double-*ikta* (tie-and-dye) *tani* (pool) *bandha* and cross-weaving design are named as *tini khuntia pura* (TKP: three-pillar pour). One such sari is named Susama. Here a cloth is woven by methodically exchanging the three sticks. The new one is the Volpura techniques, where the weaver no longer has to use the two sticks (within the three pillars) for the *chhur* (stick method) to save time during the course of weaving. (conversation with the retired design and technique development officer in SBWCS, 2001).

The double-*ikta* (tie-dyed) designs from Sambalpur and Bargarh are highly valued, as are the gold/silk embroidered ones from Sonapur district. The Bomkai iktas have motifs developed from the Shakti (feminine power) cult.

Mr Kapil (weaving production development officer) is from Bheden community and belongs to Kustha meher caste. When Mr Kapil joined the SBWCS as an employee, his wife stopped weaving. However, all the other family members, such as the brother's wife and daughters and his sisters continue to assist and do mostly the tie-dyed works. The Kuli meher (historically working as a coolie for the upper Meher castes and during the colonial period), as evident from their social designation, are the ones who work as helpers and wageworkers for the upper two categories. Of the Harijan weavers in Bheden, only 20% have knowledge of simple tie-dying. The others solely depend upon the Meher castes for skill and investment or work as coolies (including in agriculture and on construction sites). In the cultural ideologies with all the changing local gendered attributes, the scheduled caste unskilled weavers are historically backward in their social standing. Limited access to the high caste weavers' houses forced them to survive as docile helpers or *dalits* (downtrodden). Being SBWCS beneficiaries has, however, brought changes to their labour and livelihood situations.

### **Situating *harijan* and female weavers as SBWCS beneficiaries**

Before examining the *harijan* weaver's labour and livelihood under the Tora cooperative society, however, the structure of the official system of the SBWC is outlined in Figure 9. As described in Chapter 2 (Figure 3), at national level, the Ministry of Textiles, and the Development Commissioner of (handlooms and handicrafts) are to implement Government of India's development policy state and district level. In theory, and sometimes in practice<sup>63</sup>, the central schemes are rejected at state level.

With the influx of the Tora production centre, like the other 55 cooperative societies under the SBWCS, Bargarh district has been providing a large pool of cheap *harijan* female labour since its inception in 1954. The annual report for the SBWCS Bargarh District shows that as of September 2000, its 18,165 cooperative members (those who actively make transactions with the SBWCS), 54% were Scheduled Caste (SC) and 2.5% were Scheduled Tribe (ST), hence

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<sup>63</sup> At present (2003) there are about 1200 societies in the state. About 100,000 employees are working in these societies. Dindayal handloom promotion integrated project with Rs 20 crores (1 crore } 10,00,000) sanction from the Central Government has been activated since 2000 for states weavers' economic development. However, the State Government has not adopted this project for its weaver's beneficiaries. This is created grave situation in the handloom industries. Trade-related liberalization policies have brought a tough competition among local weavers at the face of global market competitors. In this situation, however, proper implementation of the Dindayal project for the needy beneficiaries could have brought some relief. However, the integrated development project, which was initiated during the 1980s in the weavers' cooperative societies has been mostly liquidized. (26 May and 10 July 2003, Dharitri.com).

56.5% were *harijan* beneficiaries. For the different categories of weaver members, 80% of the looms are given to the general caste (*Kustha meher*, *Bhulia meher*) by the SBWCS, while 90% SC and 98% ST have inherited a handloom. Of 96 Weaver Cooperative Societies (WCS) under SBWCS Bargarh, 53 are under general caste producers, but while 23 are functioning, 29 have been liquidated and one has been closed due to monetary litigation. Further, of 96 WCS, 43 are *harijan* producers, of which 34 are functioning efficiently, 3 have been liquidated and 7 are not functioning. This shows that *harijan* weavers supply output transactions to the SBWCS have somehow increased.

The SBWCS's report did not give the figures for female. Mr Bhoi from the SBWCS said: *of course there are some, but within five to seven percent perhaps, so it is not calculated from the voluminous register notes.* According to this data, in 1996-97, the registered weavers members were 20,545 in the SBWCS Bargarh Zone. Of these, 70% were *harijan* (SC+ST (1%)) and 6% constituted female weavers from all castes. The 2000-2001' February data shows that of its 19,720 weavers, 75% were *harijan*. At times, the unregistered *harijan* weavers at village level represented poor, semi-skilled and dependant categories. Female

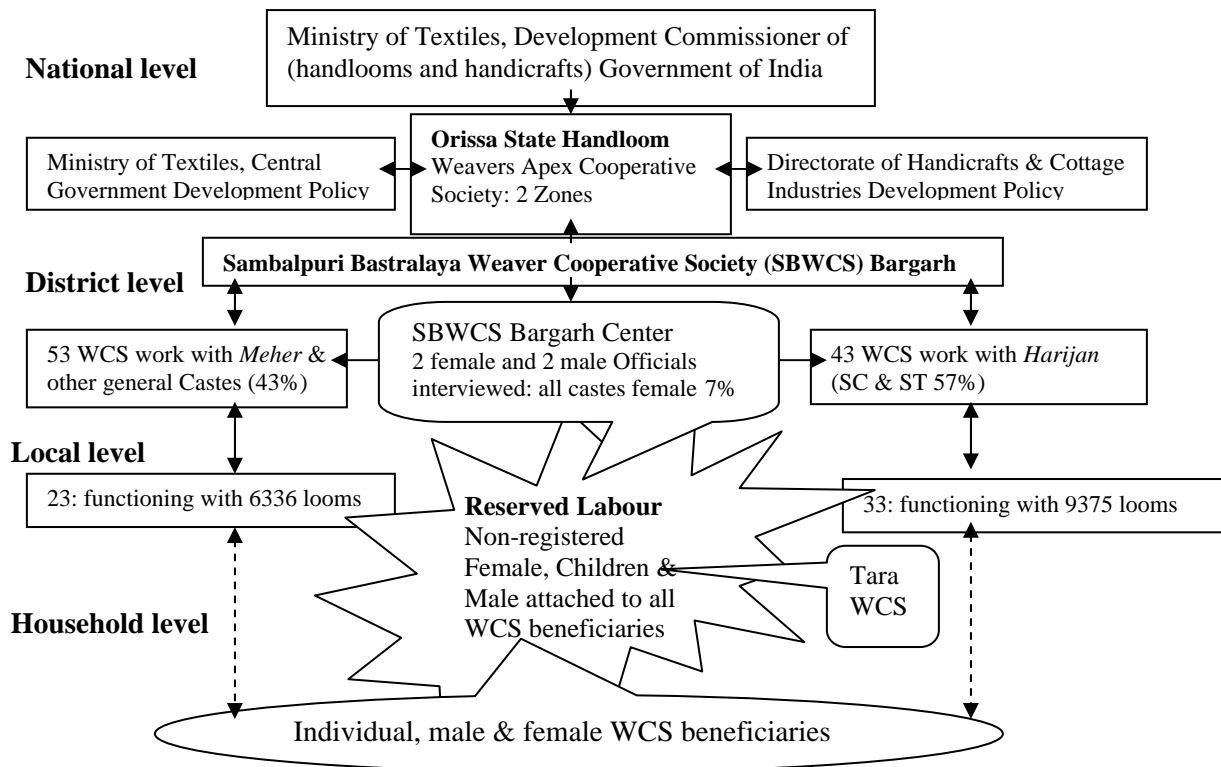


Figure 9 Official SBWCS structure in Bargarh District, Orissa, September 2000 with room for maneuvering all-caste females', *harijan*'s and reserved labourers' labour benefit issues.

weavers constituted 7%. The interesting point is that the weaver figure for the general castes, which was ~25% in 1997-98, had reduced into 18% by 2001. It means that the visible number

of withdrawals is always from the general caste, male members. While increasing in the number of *harijan* weavers, the SBWCS bears extra expenses to supply members with toolkits and give proper training. This has adversely affected the growth ratio. Weaver members work at their local WCS. In 2000 there were 96 WCS but those too had reduced, to 77 in 2001. Further, the average annual income per member from the SBWCS Bergarh zone (Appendix 2) during 1996-97 was only Rs 11656. This increased to Rs. 13929, but fell to Rs. 6500 during 1999-00.

*Meher* weavers from Barhamunda informed me that some had been waiting for their payments for six months. The SBWCS staffs have their own business transactions with the community people, like stakeholders in between. During the community-based conversations with the handloom weavers it became clear to me that if the SBWCS is the main source of income there are some other sources of selling strategies. On the other hand, a decreasing trend in the general caste of weavers in the cooperative society is due to their transactions with private traders supplying the world market. The Friday handloom cloth bazaar (see Figure 10) consists of 62% *bepari* and is where weavers come to sell their products directly. While for the semi-skilled and unskilled weavers it is difficult to compete at the local market, some home-units believe that selling to the *bepari* is less time-consuming, though only for those males who can bargain. Skilled weavers, directly contract with the private emporia, showrooms and commercial traders in and around Bargarh, Sambalpur and other such commercial termini.



Figure 10 Shows the oldest and busiest *Sukrabara tanti hata* (Friday handloom cloth bazaar established in 1954) at Bargarh town.

Official responsibilities at present are concerned with the loss and recovery of money borrowed from NABARD through its various schemes for the individual weavers, but only the

registered cooperative society members are eligible. Previously, the government was bearing 50% of the costs for each item, but at present the expenditure is divided between societies (20%) and the government (30%). In this process, fewer attempts have been made to encourage the *harijan*'s and women's participation, which constitute the most marginalized beneficiaries. Mr Sankar, a retired design and development officer from the SBWCS, argued that in the past there had been a door-to-door relationship between the staff and weavers but over the last two decades this has disappeared. At present, staffs confront the needs and strategies at the local weaver level by putting demands on the SBWCS. If the SBWCS really means that they want to decentralise and distribute the profits among the weavers, officials should visit the workers and tell them about how to production quality could be improved, or how to avoid the cheaters (official staff and *beparies*), and how to develop the selling strategies (Panda 1992). When the SBWCS started to adjust staff returned from the 55 liquidated WCS, the society had to depend upon the profit it could make from running the WCS.

I asked Kustha and Bhulia *Para* (community) weavers how they managed to supply handloom clothes to so many channels, if only male weavers are involved in production. They answered that it depended upon how many capable members there were at home, not on how many males. Yet, for the weaver family, it is not necessary that all capable members, particularly women and children should register in the society or banks as beneficiaries. Moreover, as will be seen, bureaucratic norms about the household led, in some cases, to the acceptance of application forms from women only if the forms were co-signed by their men — husbands, sons, or father



Figure 11 A National awardee from Kustha parha Bargarh and his family at work, but no female weaver from this family was in the SBWCS member list.

in-laws. Those women whose relations with their men were ignored were generally not registered as independent beneficiaries of the SBWCS, except in the case of 'distress/strained' relations (women-headed households, widows, those without adult sons, and those divorced). People from different weavers' communities, namely Bheden, Barhamunda, Kurhuna and Behera Pali, said that weaving skills are passed on from generation to generation in the families (see Figure 9: reserved labour), and the business depends upon the community network. Females are also responsible for preparing the starch, reeling threads and tie-dying yarns in addition to their house chores. 40% of the upper/middle class women however, only reeled threads. Despite effort of their earnings contributing to family well-being, both the cultural and policy structure excluded women as market-oriented actors, hence their access to looms and finance are constrained.

Men tend to argue that the SBWCS is not going to provide extra assistance for a family if their women go out to register. It is their workplace (the area at home) that determines how many handlooms they could place there. Female weavers, however, insist that they shoulder unfair burden of work in return for no self-benefit/savings/participation. It means that normatively, the man is the one who goes on depositing the family work, avails himself of cooperative assistance/accessories and deals with marketing and monetary activities. But destitute women and widows also come to the market to sell, or to sell a *bepari* at a loss. Even better-off weaver families are also dependent on working for the SBWCS, but they are always invisible from the main production development practices. This shows that most of those people, women and men, lack choices in exercising 'self-perception' on the gender dimensions of their workplaces and how they may become self-reliant.

### **Gendered practices of labour and livelihoods in the SBWCS handloom cooperative**

*... although we try to forget our caste, it is impossible to forget.*

*A harijan female weaver from the Tara handloom production society.*

On a hot, humid March afternoon, I visited the Tara handloom weaving production centre, a branch of the SBWCS in the Remonda Block of Bergarh district, together with Mr Kapil, a production development officer from the SBWCS Bargarh. When I first entered the Tara production centre, around 50 male and female weavers were busy with handlooms, weaving cotton saris of different colours for daily use. Shanti, a frail woman now in her forties, recalled how, twenty-three years earlier and when she was newly married she had moved here together

with two other families from her locality in Cuttack on hearing that the probability of getting weaving work in Sambhalpur district was high. They all belonged to the weaver caste (*tanti*) and their sole occupation was weaving. These families approached the President of the SBWCS Bargarh to supply them with weaving work. Then they were sent to Tara production centre/weaver society. They started their weaving at only 3 rupees a sari and 35 *paise* (100 *paise* =1 rupee) to roll a bundle of yarn. At the turn of the twentieth century their labour was waged at Rs. 35-50 a sari and Rs. 2 for a yarn bundle (see the current wage chart<sup>64</sup>). Weavers in Tara centre sit on the cement floor in front of the wooden ‘framed loom’, stepping, (as shown in Figure 12) and weaving continuously, for as long as they can with the 40-watt bulb hanging from the asbestos roof. Beginners and semi-skilled (mostly *harijan*) weavers weave *Janata* cloth and *palli bastra* with number 2/20, 2/40-80 threads, which are coarse threads, while the skilled weavers weave with number 2/80 [length + breadth/fineness of the thread] or 2/220 threads, which are fine cotton and silken threads.



Figure 12 A female cooperative society handloom weaver at work.

Shanti said weaving is repetitive and painstaking work for women:

*Look at me, I sit on this pillow and change my side to relax a little. I made it from some old turned clothes. Shoulders hurt, legs are nearly paralysed and during menstruation or delivery period it is very difficult. We just keep on weaving, weaving and listen to the sounds that come*

<sup>64</sup> The daily wages/per sari or bundle of yarn *per se*. However, a caretaker at Tora centre told me that they pay Rs 50 a sari and Rs 4 per bundle, and Basanti-like weavers said they receive Rs 35-50 per sari and Rs 2 per bundle of yarn, from which the production centre keeps Rs 5 as monthly deposit and Rs 10-15 from those who borrow money in advance.

*from these 80 looms around us. If I leave a little early, I have to come home empty handed or wait for the next day's wage.*

Shanti's only son died in his twenties due to severe fever. Shanti's husband and her two grown-up daughter have all work in the Tara centre.

### **Visualising gendered practices of living conditions and weaving spaces**

I walked towards the Tara's *harijan* colony for a group conversation with the weavers' families. Mr Kapil (the production promotion officer) and the caretaker from the production centre also joined me. Having completed the loom work at the production centre, most of the workers were relaxing with a cup of tea or reeling the bundles of yarn, while their daughters had started to prepare a fire for cooking their evening meals with leaves, cow dung they had collected and some wood which they had bought. Mr Kapil suggested to the female producers that they should wash their mouths before talking to me, as they were chewing marijuana (*vanga*) when I approached them for a conversation. Bhagi Kununa, a frail woman in her fifties, called Mr Kapil from a distance: *Sir why don't you then tell my name?*

For these *harijan* families moving from their ancestral place nearby, to the Tara colony, was to avoid the risk of frequent poisonous snake attacks in their wattle and daub homes. In their village, three houses had been damaged totally during attempt to catch snakes inside. Non had cultivated land and only eight families had a homestead area. The SBWCS soon started to establish a *harijan* weaver's colony. Nine local *harijan* families from Tara joined three families from Cuttack, not only for training and piece-rate production, but also to share shelters. They live in a row of small and elongated houses adjoining the production centre wall in front. Each family is provided with a single room consisting of eight square metres while the courtyard space is common for all. Lack of a sewage system and toilets, only one tube well and frequent power cuts have congested the whole living environment. Janaki, a mother of four daughters and in her thirties said: *Look at our single room, either six or four members, we have to share only this much space. Our life is only for adjustment.*

Janaki was in favour of family planning, but she felt powerless to exercise her reproductive choices. Janaki was carrying her fifth child because her husband's wish to have son, who would take care of them in their in old age. The main interests and framework within which women like Janaki are bound are of 'family' pressure and religion. Still, Tara female weavers said that, girl now-a-day do what boys were expected to do for their parents. In Janaki's case, the doctor recognised that she did not have the minimum haemoglobin level required for safe birth. She could still weave one sari a day, but carrying the child, and taking



care of four other children meant that she could only weave half of what she used to, which was equal to that of her husband. Janaki finds it difficult to work full-time when there are no support structures like rural crèches. She shares responsibility for the house chores with her eldest two daughters, who had dropped out of school at junior level. Janaki said: *We need childcare, crèche services, education for our young and health care for all.* When craftswomen talked about the accessibility, meanings, resources and practices of self-employment, it is never about only their self-employment networks/infrastructure and self-only. They perceive self as being entangled with their gender roles, for example, the co-existence of their children (their care and study) and old aged (health and services), which take a substantial part of their everyday business time. Hence, they have the above-mentioned demands.

Like Shanti and Janaki, female weavers in Tara society competed with each other to inform about their labour and living conditions, production relations and identities are constituted through everyday labour and livelihood practices at the Tara production centre and in the crowded colony provided by the SBWCS. These female weavers have some important reasons to accuse the SBWCS. After thirty years of work relationships with Tara production centre, families like Janaki's hope that they could build a home from their pensions. Their hope is based on their awareness that the new beneficiary aspects of the SBWCS, such as housing schemes, loan credit incentives, central government-sponsored marketing development assistance, money for destitute weavers, group saving insurance, and health and bonus project package schemes (Appendix 2) essentially cover some economic needs.

Furthermore, their experience shows the historically and culturally specific values associated with these types of institutions that undermine their interest/agency. Yet, they were not sure whether or not their category of workers should be excluded from these scheme implementations. They have used the official's rationalisation axis of uncooperativeness to organise themselves. In this context, I proceed to focus on the words, memories, and stories of female weavers who work under the cooperative system in the Tara production centre of the SBWCS as piece-rate workers. The pressure from the SBWCS regarding working status, waged work conditions and the feeling of living in a temporary colony may have increased the weavers' need for a shelter of their own. Kausalya, in her fifties and a responsible mother of an abandoned daughter and granddaughter, said that when her elder daughter got married they had no choice but to share the same room. Kausalya's and Bhagi's statements in the presence of the staff, such as Mr Kapil and the caretaker, articulated such of urgent needs for more permanent workspace and living quarters. As Kausalya Chatar said:

*My three children and husband also weave here. I do only "tana" (reeling yarn) threads for two rupees a bundle, since my eyesight became weak. My husband could no longer*

*weave one sari per day, due to cataracts in his eyeballs. Our savings are not enough to acquire a small thatched house. You ask these “Babus” (SBWCS staff and boss), how many times we have been requesting that we need our retirement like them and we also need a monthly pension. As you know, we have been working our whole life. These “babu” threatened us that they might not give shelter to those who could not work. Tell me, to whom are we to complain that we became old in serving their society, but when it comes to our shelter and old age they have nothing for us!*

Kausalaya daughter’s family moved to her husband’s house in Nuasara. There, she could not earn from weaving. Her son-in-law then demanded a dowry that Kausalaya could not afford. The man then abandoned her daughter, the mother of two children. Her daughter was able to return home bringing only her granddaughter, but not her grandson who belonged to the husband’s family. They heard that the husband also kept a mistress. When Kausalaya’s family requested their daughter’s mother-in-law to renegotiate the marital problems, the mother-in-law accused the daughter of leaving her of husband’s home. But Kausalaya’s daughter argued that on top of their torturing her, her mother in-law was expecting her to serve them life-long, regardless of whatever happened in the marital arrangement. Kausalaya’s family, though aware of the fact that the dowry practices are punishable by law, refrained from making a police case, as they felt that a complicated procedure and current bribe practices might degrade their long-term survival. This whole situation transformed Kausalaya’s daughter, into a vulnerable woman in her locality. In general, dowry hazards have not only become a cause for women’s destitution but also a method to enable men to abandon their wives in the absence of proper dowry procedures.

Bhagi showed me her retired husband’s award certificates, which he had earned as the oldest weaver in the Tara production branch of the SBWCS. For the last two years, Bhagi has demanded (with legally approval) a service pension of Rs. 2500 a month from the SBWCS, but has not yet received it. Golakha, a male *harijan* weaver, who had been awarded a certificate for his mastery in 200 designs expertise, is also victimized. In 2000, Mr Kapil went to the Ministry of Textiles Weaver’s Service Centre at Bhubaneswar with the 12 selected members<sup>65</sup>, including the 200-design expert. They hoped that their participation might enable them to earn an award and an old age pension scheme. Mr Kapil regrets that the governor has decided nothing about it. The SBWCS has awarded the skilled artisans with a ‘peaceful certificate’ (*swantwana patra*) only, which is insufficient for a pension recommendation.

Bhagi remembers how *harijan* weavers received a small amount of bonus each year in the presence of the late president, *Padmashree* Kutartha Acharya. Janaki’s and Bhagi’s

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<sup>65</sup> Amongst the others there were the three oldest weavers, three oldest tie-dyed experts and one new designer who had submitted their names for the next state award selection procedure.

husbands also received certificates from *Padmashree* Acharya for their skilled work, which they showed to me. All of the weavers in Western Orissa respect the Acharya as their Guru and believe he is a superb craftsman too. It was during this period (1960s-1980s) that the SBWCS expanded towards the interior areas, with new techniques and designs for the handloom development for those who had adopted weaving as their major source of livelihood. During the last three years, the new President of the cooperative has not given the weaver any more bonuses. Mr Kapil explained to us that it is because the whole society is running at a loss and he said to Bhagi: *You know, bonus in Sambalpuri* (spoken in local dialect, as if she could only understand English) *is “labhanssa”* (a share of the profit). *But when we do not have profit at all, how can a share be distributed among the workers?* With the experience of thirty years of cooperative society service, Bhagi opposed Mr Kapil’s statement in my presence: *Listen to me Sir, how come all the co-operative “karmachari”* (employees) *get a bonus, but “we” are not eligible at the same time? We ask you if it is for our production incapability that your society is running at a loss?*

The feeling of Tara weaver’s voices thus revolved around collaborative exchange of labour and benefit matrices between cooperatives and co-producers, unlike the stakeholder ideologies of its staff at the higher-level. The incongruencies between blue print and practice in the handlooms weaving is shaped and reshaped in the terrine of gendered institutional labour relations. To show how labour relations and institutional negotiations are reshaped through embodied narratives of labour practices, and collective bargaining, especially the women workers’ identity within officious ideologies in the SBWCS, I find it conceptually productive to think of the cooperative society as a workspace with conditions constructed out of embodied practices and gender relations.

### ***Dalit* or a skilled handloom weaver?**

The collective bargaining of the female weaver groups under the Tara working conditions are inscribed bodily and as social constructs of inequality that inhabit caste-based mechanisms of exclusion. Similar to other situations of marginalization of women’s labour under this cooperative society, however, Tara weavers have experienced decreasing esteem, due to the working conditions and gendered-biased wage distribution, that shape and reshape their identity as *dalit* (downtrodden)(Omvedt & Kelkar 1995), even when they are skilled weavers. Kausalaya compared the skilful weaving with this casual labour and said:

*It is just like thirty years ago when we were trainees, without a promotion! They (officials) never ever thought to promote us from the unskilled to the skilled designation and then count*

*us as employees. Tell me, what is the difference between a “Kuli/coolie” in the paddy field or construction site and me?*

Female weavers at the Tara centre felt that because of their increasing skill they weave more and better, and with a competitive spirit. Skilled female craft workers like Kausalya increasingly experience much of the ‘ill’ cooperativization by not getting fair treatment for their work and self-esteem. Kausalya said that unlike the painfully monotonous weaving, the traditional shared labour also brings some pleasure from the movement of the body and from talking while working. Still, competition for casual labour is high among unskilled community workers because paddy field work involves seasonal labour. To make the situation clear to me, Kausalya and Bhagi explained: *Look at us, like today, the whole summer afternoon we are just sweating and working. We work for “atha kali bara masi”* (literally, for the whole 12 months, and even during the 8 important local festivals time, with all festivity performances), *but they count us nonetheless as coolie. And on top of that, Mr Meher, like official bodies, says, that they are just “karmachari”* (registered workers), *while we could have been the “malik”* (boss) *of our production centre.*

Mr Kapil, the production promotion officer, pointed out that without these weavers’ contributions the society might not function. Paradoxically, the SBWCS By-law<sup>66</sup> classified the registered weavers as the ‘A’ class members who have the right to vote for the society’s elected body, while its employees are ‘B’ class members who do not have right to vote. While the officials tend to undermine these weavers’ contributions to their cooperative society, the female weavers insist that it is their hard work that keeps the centre productive and profitable. Because of the food ration, the community weavers could accumulate more resources than the *harijan* weavers living in the Tara colony. Much to the dissatisfaction of the female groups, the man from Tara *panchayati* (local governing body), who is responsible for the food ration card matters has been assuring the weavers’ families for the last two years that they have been given priority on the ration list. This was an insurgency to their condition, the weavers’ felt, since because of their payment from the weaving these officials do not take their request seriously. They said: *we demand service and food-rations in exchange for our labour.*

Bhagi, with whose voice I have shown the weaver women’s resistance, did not talk much about he views the decency of the SBWCS’s official staff, but instead discussed the pain which weaver women bore, the discrimination in payment, the ignorance affecting their very hardship, and the pressure they endured as wage workers, wives and mothers. For alternative strategies, craftswomen demand that: *Our bodies are our wealth, knowledge and skill, and our*

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<sup>66</sup> *Upabidha*: SBWCS regulation act book, based on the Registration Act of 1954.

*house is our workplace. To produce crafts, we need to appropriate our wealth and workplace networking.* It is difficult for weavers to ask for their independent share of the profits from the productions as long as they are dependant on the society. The profit is perceived as that of the officials' efforts. The cooperative society has not kept written accounts of cases of homelessness, inability, old age, sickness, delivery, or divorce. No clarification exists on the type of benefit required. Female weavers pointed out that as there are no shelter and benefit laws in the cooperative society, the only option would be for them to leave the place empty-handed during sickness/old age. Female weavers said: *What we need within this Tora cooperative society is that raw materials, credit, producers' benefits, and artisans' cooperative union of our own.*

In response to my query about the loan and incentives to support these categories of workers in self-employment, officials presented me with a copy of the SBWCS's annual report for 2000-2001 (Appendix 2) with a new project package scheme to undertake the development of an integrated weaver community. The official response, however, was not to disburse loans to *dalit*, because they lack seed money and the basic capacity to manage their projects to meet deadlines. In fact, what one 'wageworker' earns a day is equal to the spending on her/his basic consumption. So, they are essentially labelled as dependent 'wageworkers'. Unlike Tara society, throughout the other 55 production centres under the SBWCS there is no alternative cooperative regulation so far. Avowedly, it is that they have to resign from the present weaving conditions and fulfil the collateral<sup>67</sup> for access to the SBWCS loans and other benefits. I find that comparatively upper caste wealthy *mehers'* who have home units are capable of fulfilling such conditions. The emerging resources within the *harijan*, however, are only their weaving skills, collective actions and the fact that they represent the majority of the SBWCS producers.

### **Can the subaltern vote? <sup>68</sup>**

The *harijan* weaver's stories show that many female weavers relied on the Tara cooperative branch for fair treatment of labour and long-term securities, instead led to exploitation: an experience intensified by the increased pressure on female labour inside the family and at the production centre, and also according to a particularly gendered terms of behaviour that curb

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<sup>67</sup> This accounts for the required amount of fixed assets, such as land and housing conditions, to keep looms and accessories during the rainy season, workspace, flow of capital to buy threads, colours, selling strategies and repayment of loans on time, including a potential litigation-free guarantor to support the money lender.

<sup>68</sup> Unlike Spivak (1988), my intention here is to reflect on how the SBWCS responds to the *harijan* women to exercise their decision-making power in a situation like voting. They were not heard at official level, which indicates that such a range of ideologies in practices made invisible them from the mainstream activities.

their agency. Labour acts in the people's sector give weaver beneficiaries a number of rights and guarantees to promote their livelihoods in paper. However, I find that a big gap exists between the guarantees and the ground realities.

I asked Kausalya and Bhagi whether they had discussed these matters with the SBWCS's higher officials in charge. In such a gender and caste communal elimination process, as described above, subaltern women hardly have room to manoeuvre political and economic capability. In 2000, a group of female weavers from Tara produced a written account of their problems to the SBWCS main official. They also asked for their bonuses. Bhagi said to me:

*Oh, we wondered! Being a high-class officer and from the same caste, how could he treat us with such vulgarity! We felt so embarrassed when he told to us in front of his employees that Tara men could sell their women for a little alcohol and meat. Why did we come to him? We should go to the man to whom we gave our vote instead. Oh, don't you know, with us they just play "chhur chheka" (literally, a game that relentlessly problematizes one's life).*

Such are the anguished experiences of *dalit* female weavers. Patron-client relations and local politics of cooperativization are re-delimiting in the terrain of craft-spaces authority. Hence, the ethics of wonder from subaltern *harijan* voices was about how to re-delineate the meaning of the co-operative and collective. According to these weavers, they had an important reason not to give their vote for the leading politician. They said:

*It happened before the election that one weaver among us went to SBWCS to ask that "babu" for some help to complete his mother's "Sudhi kriya" (funeral rites – after completing these rites a Hindu returns to his/her normal activities). Babu replied to the weaver to go on begging from SBWCS up to his village, which would be enough for his "Sudhi kriya". Tell us, how one could vote for a person with such low understanding. Those "babus" underestimate us, not only because of our caste and class; they don't even think of us as good women.*

The officials who came with me did not expect that those 'women' would seek to challenge them about their higher-level staff or would put them in such an embarrassing position in front of a female researcher. The 'babu' and his underestimating statements revealed the voting power and the consequences of regulating subaltern choices. During our conversations, Bhagi got unanimous support from the other weavers to critique and reject the decentralization claims of cooperativization and subaltern development. Gendered relations of the subjugation systemic and institutional ignorance are operating through multiple social practices and consistently deny weavers an employee position. Given that handloom weaving production is intimately tied to the life worlds of the *harijan*/female producers, relations of inequalities, and productivity relations of the sociable, feminised sense of self are articulated and constituted through 'cooperative' society and reshape locally-gendered attributes. Tara

women's collective experiences, too, indicate a range of processes that have marginalized their labour and livelihood. Disclosure of exclusion does not really play a role in weaver's lives; their exclusion from employee status is visible official ideology while in denying their application. Further, official ideologies signal to the Tara men that 'they might have lost their control over their women's' decision', or treat the vulnerable as beggars or such prevalent types of local behaviours. Women weavers, having more inclusive non-economic strategic values to promote their economic well-being, said (laughing): *How could we see that our men's conscientization regarding what we are doing and how it helps in aggregate productions at workplaces (home, societies, communities and local market) is increasing!*

Officials revealed some corruption and discrepancy at higher bureaucratic level that essentially draws a line between the regional and local boundary, Western and Eastern Oriya knowledge, upper and *harijan jati* (castes), crafts and handlooms, and producers and owner employment relations within a society. The SBWCS staff's response to me was that skilled craftsmen from Western Orissa, particularly the tribal and *harijan* workers, never get a fair chance at the craft award competition in the capital city or at national level. Those who can communicate, advertise, and satisfy the big business and the higher-level authorities have taken the advantage. There is much scepticism towards regional Government staff who come in deputation to the SBWCS, to the extent they can hardly handle the ongoing crises and the local weaver's unrest. Accordingly, Utkalika (the largest government emporia) is blacklisted for their irresponsibility. The SBWCS accounts for 65% of the traditional handicrafts export industry in Orissa. Yet the selection board is hardly interested in recognising and acknowledging some of the renowned tribal weavers. Mr Sankar estimated that each year 10 master weavers from this region are eligible for reward and encouragement. Within 46 years under the SBWCS, there would be 460 master weavers, who would qualify the state pension scheme. Mr Sankar thinks that: *It is just like bana malli banare phuti maule* (Literally, flower in the jungle devours without much use of its fragrance).

## **Conclusion**

Division of sexual labour and mobility of gender is reflected in the low participation rate of women in the cooperative society and household weaving matters. There is a socially sanctioned double standard in mobility that constricts the woman as active producer and as recipients of the social benefits, and which is hardly challenged. The differential mobility and control among men and women, men's notions of women's contributions at the home front and from weaving are all highly important in this seclusion. Social norms and differential control on

labour and mobility indicate the social power relations and gender hierarchies. These effectively cut women workers off from many spheres of knowledge and accessibility to represent their views, new skills, and technical know-how and market information, thereby curbing their agency. I argue that short sighted institutionalisation processes sabotage the female weaver's capacity progression, despite the SBWCS annual activities in their plan reports, the balance sheets submitted to the DHHC or NABARD tending to undermine weavers' access and voices, and women weavers insisting that it is their embodied hardships that have shown the officious ideologies. These *babu*-like 'male practitioners' in society inhibits the *poor/harijan* weavers from taking advantage of income-generating opportunities within the cooperative society, which in turn characterises the present mode of consumer/export-oriented handloom weaving and handicraft production development.

Embodied Tara society experiences reveal the diverse ways in which women with discriminatory status challenge the definitions of cooperation in the workplace and in employment and reclaim them as a site of struggle. Indeed, the SBWCS provides critical sources of livelihood for thousands of weaver producers in its cooperative branches/networking, but as it became increasingly clear to me during my fieldwork, weaver cooperatives, like other organisations, are also political-economic sites through which everyday social relations of patriarchy, gender, structure of domination and authority are dynamically communicated. The SBWCSs' which otherwise have little concern for *dalit* as active participants, nevertheless find it in their interest to 'domesticate' themselves in terms of their patriarchy/capitalist operations. In any case, they promote the ideology of actively organising strategies of local weavers. What is more important is that the Tara women, in turn, advertise their voices. They transform the cooperative secret circumstances of caste/authority (place-bound and potentially harmful effects) into the public archive of postcolonial studies (Visweswaran 1994). The recollectivising strategy is surely a postmodern phenomenon (Nathan & Kelkar 1997): that a weaver community, collectivised in the womb of colonialism, but privatised under the so-called reform regime (cooperative-society), mobilises in response to the pressures of incorporation into subcontracting (market channel links to the global capitalism), only to go ahead and organise. Their recollectivisation against the limited SBWCS goal, in itself a political goal, marks the difficulties of appropriating their collective voices by assimilation.





## Chapter 6

### Introduction to the Articles

This doctoral thesis incorporates five articles, of which three are published in international journals, one has been accepted for publication, and the fifth is in the process of publication. All of the articles are related to the same project, *Gendered Spaces: Craftswomen's Stories of Self-Employment in Orissa, India*. To base the thesis on articles has been a fragmented and lengthy process, and publishing the articles has created its own challenges. When I started narrating the craftswomen's stories, placing them at the centre of the analysis in these articles, I started on a long voyage of discovery, or rather a voyage of rediscovering the analysed materials. As the articles to be formatted are independent units of work, and also aim to address foreign readers, some of the background information tends to be repeated in order to situate the craftswomen in the multiplicity of the Oriyan context. The suggestions, comments and insight of Professor Ragnhild Lund in the first draft of all articles are gratefully acknowledged. As each article poses a different set of questions and has its own theoretical approach, I introduce and summarise the articles below.

The first article in this dissertation on craftswomen is entitled 'Gendered spaces – socio-spatial relations of self-employed women in craft productions, Orissa, India'. It is co-written with my main thesis advisor, Ragnhild Lund, and was published in *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift — Norwegian Journal of Geography*, 2002, 56(3): 207-218. The article concerns female self-employment in craft production in Orissa, India. Although industrial policies in India have attempted to address some of the socio-economic problems in local craft production through cooperative societies and subsidies, issues of the division of labour, factors of production and the processes of constructing individual gender identity are embedded in the gender structure and remain invisible to the new social order. Socio-spatial relations of gendered spaces are also deeply embedded in the traditional Brahmanical social order. The analysis is based on the individual story of one female businesswoman. The significance of the individual narrative is discussed with reference to feminist geographies and the self-reflexivity of the researchers. The story of Mami is about her struggle to become a successful businesswoman, and highlights the interrelationship between her actions, her perceptions of work and the socio-economic spaces that she has to relate to. Her story reveals that self-employed women can act as role models for other women and contribute to increasing their power in local and place-bound situation.

Keywords: *crafts, gendered spaces, Orissa, socio-spatial relations, women's self-employment* (Acharya & Lund 2002).

The second article is entitled 'Contending Indian Religious Spaces: Embedding Gender in Temple Architecture and Craft Carving in Orissa, India', and is published in *Nordisk Samhållsgeografisk Tidskrift* 2003, 36: 82-106. This article explores how consideration of religious architecture and traditional craft production can contribute in reshaping the gendered domains of body-space relations in Orissa, India. The embodiment of craftswomen raises questions about women-specific issues in cultural and material interrelationships: how religion views women's subjectivity, how masculine desire is expressed in the religious space, and how religion is intrinsically embedded within the everyday carvings/craftwork of women. Situating the pattern of body use and bodily inscription within temple architecture and religious craft carvings, I analyse how this delineation of 'ideal spaces' may explain the possibility of women becoming visible subjects through the domain of gendered spaces. Craftswomen's narratives illuminate and visualise the spatial in the Brahmanical social order. Such a view of body-space dynamics, it is argued, is critical for a grounded and locally meaningful understanding of how body-space relations are operationalized in space, and for insights into thinking about women's agency in local craft productions.

The third article is entitled 'Women's Well-being and Gendered Practices of Labour and Workspace in Traditional Craft Productions in Orissa, India', and is forthcoming in *Gender, Technology and Development* 2003, 7(3): 333-357 (in press). Caught between old and new ways of labour demand and values in the commercial trade and tourist-oriented crafts production, the gendered practices of labour and self-employment of women in the unpaid work sphere inside becomes an important link between the private domain and public sphere of the workplaces and business transactions. This article explores how the gendered nature of the multiple roles of craftswomen in domestic workspaces is valued in the religious and commercial oriented paintings. By focusing on the significance of narratives and oral accounts of the craftswomen engaged in *patta* paintings, I show that places of production relations are not just marginalization processes, changing through local and global relations of capitalism, but are discursively constituted by local gendered ideology and socio-spatial relationship: Craftswomen's subjective perceptions, values and beliefs about the domestic division of labour, cultural-specific notions of appropriate producers, 'impurity/purity of the body' and 'dutiful wives', as well as the broader

social and ideological underpinnings, all underlie women's self-employment in Orissa. The article emphasizes that a grounded and locally meaningful understanding of women's capability and well-being cannot afford to ignore such complex body-space dynamics, within which they negotiate their identities.

The fourth article is entitled 'Embodying craftswomen's workspace and well-being in Orissa, India,' and is published in *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift — Norwegian Journal of Geography* 2003, 57(3): 173-183. This article examines the gender and workspace marginalization processes in the unorganised production debates in India and argues that analyses of gendered production of labour and economic workspaces have pursued a utilitarian understanding of gendered workspaces and socio-spatial well-being. By focusing on gendered practices of workspaces, narrated kinship, institutional relations, and embodied experiences in the craft-spaces of the state of Orissa, this article discusses the conceptual limitations that inform this discourse and argues for a culturally and geographically embedded understanding of work and well-being. Based on a personal narrative, the story of Chandana shows that places of production relations are not just the sites of marginalization processes, changing through local and global relations of capitalism, but are discursively constituted by local politics of place and socio-spatial relations. In Orissa, the identities of self-employment are constituted and always entwined with precarious social practices, and based on culturally specific notions of 'appropriate producers', 'dutiful wives' and 'social workers'. Such precarious body-space dynamics, it is emphasised, are critical for a grounded and locally meaningful understanding of spatial gendered relations and for insights into thinking about marginalization of women's labour and well-being. Keywords: *embodiment, well-being, workspace marginalization.*

The fifth article is entitled, *The place of feminist geography methodology and personal narratives in research on self-employment: the case of fieldwork in Orissa, India.* It has been written together with my co-supervisor Nina Gunnerud Berg, and is in the processes of being submitted for publication. The article argues that feminist geography methodologies and personal narrative analysis brings understanding of the intertwined constructions of gender and entrepreneurship as a project in time and place. First, we discuss the main principles of feminist geography methodologies. Second, we explore the place of personal narratives in feminist geography methodologies. Third, we examine the arguments raised in recent years about how a narrative approach can inform and support entrepreneurship research. Fourth, we show how the

principles of feminist geography methodologies and personal narrative analysis pose challenges to a study on self-employed craftswomen in Orissa, India (Berg & Acharya unpublished).

Craftswomen's experiences are influenced by a range of gendered ideologies and critical consciousness in spatial praxis that have marginalized them in self-employment. In turn, their conscious voices may lead to rethinking the dominant market-led approaches embedded in local and global development practices. I learnt that studying women's self-employment is not only about a host of connected gendered issues, and it has become clear that the multiple issues with women's lives cannot be fragmented and delimited to specific disciplines. I find that the economies of cultural practices in the traditional craft production of four small craft-scapes in this research enable analyses of how the phenomenon of self-employment is gendered in its discursive spaces. Embodied processes of labour marginalization and workplaces are shown as inherently both spatial marginalization processes and outcomes. In this way, I have identified why it is that narratives are so crucial for revealing the tension between so-called non-modern voices/knowledge systems, and as resource processes constructing epistemologies for collective emancipation, which often can lead to valuable conceptual innovations.

## Article 1

# **Gendered spaces – socio-spatial relations of self-employed women in craft production, Orissa, India**

JYOTIRMAYEE ACHARYA & RAGNHILD LUND

Gendered spaces–socio-spatial relations of self-employed women in craft production, Orissa, India. Acharya, J. and Lund, R. *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift–Norwegian Journal of Geography*, [www.tandf.no/ngeog](http://www.tandf.no/ngeog), 2002, Vol. 56, 207–218. Oslo. ISSN 0029-1951 by permission of Taylor & Francis AS.

Article 2

**Contending Indian religious spaces: embedding gender in temple  
architecture and craft carving in Orissa, India**

Jyotirmayee Acharya

2003, in *Nordisk Samhällsgeografisk Tidskrift* (means in English *Scandinavian journal of critical human geography*) 36(3): 82-106.

Article 3

## Women's Well-being and Gendered Practices of Labor and Workspace in Traditional Craft Productions in Orissa, India

(In *Gender, Technology and Development* 7 (3), 2003. Sage Publications New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London, under proof-reading stage by permission of the editor)

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JYOTIRMAYEE ACHARYA

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Article 4  
Embodying craftswomen's workspace and well-being in Orissa,  
India

JYOTIRMAYEE ACHARYA

*'Embodying craftswomen's workspace and well-being in Orissa, India', Acharya J.  
Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift-Norwegian Journal of Geography 2003, [www.tandf.no/ngeog](http://www.tandf.no/ngeog), Vol. 57, (3):  
173-183. ISSN 0029-1951 by permission of Taylor & Francis AS. S.*

Article 5

The place of feminist geography methodologies and personal narrative analysis in research on self-employment: the case of fieldwork in Orissa, India.

Nina Gunnerud Berg and Jyotirmayee Acharya

Department of Geography, Norwegian University of Science and Technology,  
7491 Trondheim, Norway (under publication stage)

## Chapter 7

### **Narratives of craftswomen—a model to improve sagacity**

This thesis began with Mukta's successful dream and Chandana's suggestions. By placing the embodied experiences in culturally specific ways, I have followed their voices to challenge the prevailing invisibility. I have shown these subaltern, as skilled workers and self-employed (*swarojagari*) in their own right and efficient agents of change in the localities. Chandana, like many other craftswomen discussed how even though female artisan capability might be in a position to provide them with a comfortable life style, oppressive socio-spatial relations, structural conditions and historical meaning attached to their sexuality, often intimidated female from staying stable (assertive and active) with their business mind. The emphasis is on learning and earning, preferably depending on the 'man' they marry (who bears the Brahminical caste identity in religious rituals), the Guru from whom they learn, the stakeholders, or the officials (GOs or NGOs). The paradoxes of globalisation and government efforts directed towards facilitating women's participation, and gender-equitable workspace programmes have become 'watch-places'. Invariably, schemes and trade contracts from the home-based units, Mahila Samities (MS) craft workshops and even the NGOs have been set up to create more work for craftswomen. These have come to be exclusively identified as women's space and represent a gendered tradition of Orissa. However, patriarchal pressure and instability in the regular economic structure have forced 'self-employed' women to work on a casual basis, often as piece-rate producers, with a peripheral sphere of workplaces. Although workplaces provide additional work for women there is no agenda for improving the gendered relations and quality of the jobs. The situation has resulted in a large number of appliqué, *pattachitra* workers, weavers, and other capable craftswomen, typically being deprived of real wages, state loans, incentives, technology, workers' benefits, institutional positions, and more importantly, of exercising their own capability.

The traditional craft communities, like the Raghurajpur, and even the most marginalized, impoverished communities, like the Khollar or Tara *harijan* colony, are affected by entrenched local non-economic factors and oppressive market-based global manifestations (Mohanty 1997). The craftswomen's stories have demonstrated just how hard the multiple and shifting roles of women actually are, for as I demonstrated in coastal Orissa, the identities of self-employment are constituted through, and always entwined with, everyday cultural practices in the craft production work and culturally specific notions of appropriate producers. The notions of 'impurity/purity of

the body' and 'dutiful wives' are imprinted in the overlapping domains of domestic and business craft-space identity.

Craftswomen have largely rationalized the 'unfair' expectation of their role in the family and work, and have accepted the religious position and ideological domination that defines the 'men' as earners and craft producers. However, despite the heightened attention to the small micro-businessmen, petty stakeholders and small capitalists of Orissa, as well as the bureaucratic corruption in development planning and implementation of 'gender-sensitive' policies, women working in the informal homework economy continue to unequally bear the burden of livelihood. Chandana-, Mami- and Bhagi-like role models and social activists, or Mukta-or Pratima-like crafts artisans, show how embodied experiences utilize local gender relations to address both gendered processes and, eventually, the outcomes of workplaces. They exerted that where craftwork is undertaken at home, in home units, workshops, or cooperatives these are gendered spaces that extract women's productive labour, and disempower them to the benefit of men and the market economy. There is a lack of protected workplaces where women can acquire skills, bargain, network, organise a sense of their autonomy, raise consciousness about their similarities and differences, and create a discourse that challenges the more complex and difficult institutional processes and men's power to bring about change.

Madhu's and Bhanu's situations (see Article 4 & Chapter 4) suggest that their earning not only has the greater positive impact in supplementing household investments but, from point of view of efficiency, what is important is that the social rate of return of investment could be greater when awareness of faire treatment of wage for the piece-rate producers is aroused. Craftswomen trainees from ashrams and NGOs have shown that, if we have to prevent more informal women workers' work in the informal economic practices, then it will not be possible under such working conditions. I emphasise that if that is to be done, the at least better workspaces where non-economic factors of women's labour, their bodies and their capacity are given must be ensure.

The main reasons behind first incidences of dowry violence are fear of women's chastity and illicit exploitation of their sexuality. However, some women interviewed pointed out the flaw in the existing Dowry Prohibition Act (DPA)<sup>67</sup>, which may punish the taker as well as the giver. They felt that the DPA in its many forms has failed to grasp the socio-sexual reality. Yet, craft workers who were mothers believed that their daughters could resist and resort to a craft-space to

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<sup>67</sup> The Dowry Prohibition Act was passed on 20 May 1961 and on 8 March 2002, Sumitra Mahajan, Minister of State for Human Resource Development said: 'The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women adopted by the government is also committed to eliminating the incidence of all forms of violence against women, including those arising from dowry customs.'

survive. Campaigns such as the ones in Bhubaneswar and Puri (when female grass-roots activists rallied as part of an anti-alcohol campaign) could also have mobilised local women to raise issues such as dowry-related matrimonial disputes, ageing, deaths and violence and how craftwork could be contingent on such situations. Others who do not speak and mobilise would speak if gendered power relationships, resource use and institutional inequality did not create obstacles.

The problem is that this is not peculiar to the people's sector in Orissa, but describes the complicity symmetric of nation-states' structure. However, the very legitimacy of incongruity between the heightened attentions of governmentality that has been paid to women's empowerment and economistic and mechanistic understanding of their capabilities has been undermined. The question is, how many Oriya policy makers, planners, coordinators and intellectuals will be in favour of such processes?

Viewing social embodiment as an ideological process, the pattern of female economic marginalization therefore remains a dominant socio-economic aspect of twenty-first century Orissa, producing what, in feminist geographical literature, is known as the precarious position of female workspaces—located at the margin and critical edges of receiving ends (Mohanty 1991, Massey 1994, Katz 1994). While effective strategies to deal with such problems will no doubt be context-specific, my consideration of Oriyani craftswomen's experiences affords useful evidences linked to the local cultural ideologies that facilitate the far-reaching exploitation and commodification of female labour under regional structure and global capitalism. I have argued that effectiveness of gender development and capacity building is at risk if it does not untangle the intricate complexity of the mechanistic networking and utilitarian support processes (production, marketing level) that often inhibit the ability of the workers to address the challenges of progressive grass-roots transformation.

The important interlink factors of the local and global nexus as shown in Figure 13 are a) cultural and colonial histories and experiences, b) impact of global and local capitalism, aid agencies and its compatibility, c) sexual violence, dowry and wage work deprivation elimination, d) feminist movements through local trade union and cooperative strategies in practice, and e) women workers' organisation in place-based capitalist manifestation.

In order to reduce the inequalities and enhance the transformatory potential of individual and collective experiences feminists need to interlink the intricate complexity of the local-global boundaries through strategies that seek to open up rather than foreclose possibilities available to women. Conscious and sincere collective participatory efforts of MSs or practitioners with the Self Help Group members in Khollar have not been instrumental in finding out whether these

members' work is sufficiently productive to give women real bargaining power. Today, growing village politics are intermittently exploitative, and exacerbate passivity to women's capability.

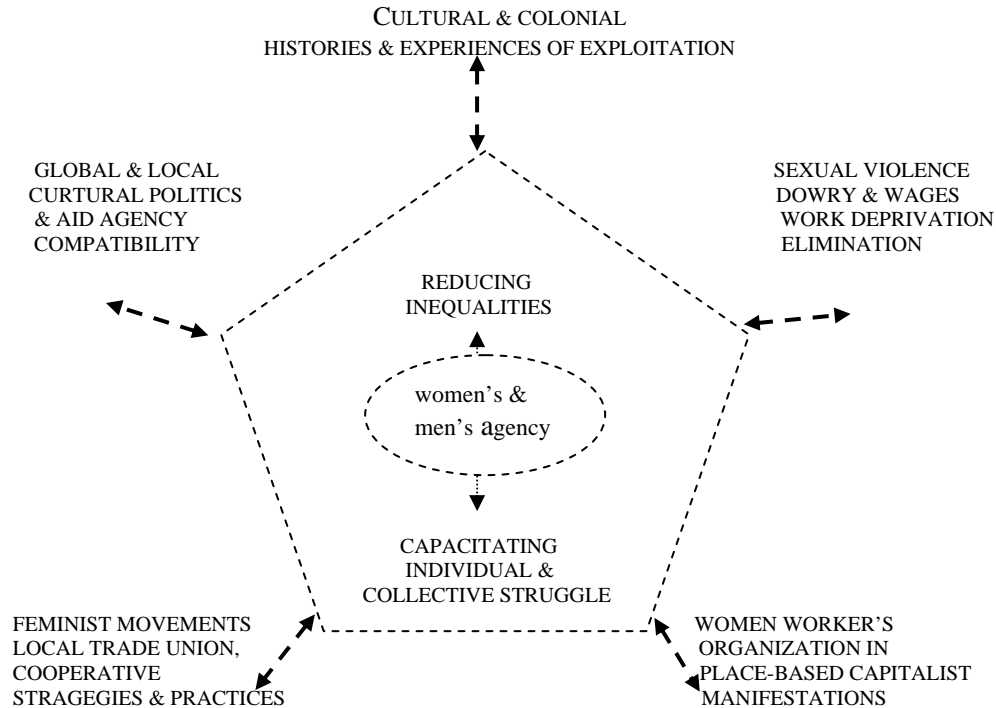


Figure 13 Linkages of critical factors with embodied socio-spatial relations.

Engagement with local political/official ideologies to advance their own power has thwarted grass-roots' growing collectivism and even women's 'own' space. Most cooperative members or MSs, however, have come to the sad realization that, although they are running many micro-level projects the historical and cultural politics of place and structures that determine power and resource allocations — local, regional, global — remain largely intact. However, gendered social relations can hardly be understood and resisted through localized actions and immediate institutional interventions unless contextual knowledge of how sexual violence, dowry and wage work deprive individuals and groups collective strategies and how it diminish women's voices, and hence their agential capabilities are not articulated.

One of the most significant causes of the weak agency of Tara female weaver groups, and the homeworkers from Puri and Bhubaneswar is lack of leadership and command over resource management due to low levels of engagement within those institutions. Working in such a conservative socio-spatial relation, the methodological interventions by various institutions are

bound to fail in creating fundamental social change to enhance and secure women's long-term interests. While striving for women's capacity building in which a society might lead to a substantial shift in historical gendered relations, norms, values and to a degree of social disintegration institutions might face moral and ethical dilemmas as well. Notwithstanding their diversities and indifferences, however, narratives open up debate, particularly on the extent to which the present institutional structure can take collaborative attempts to illuminate women's agency. Craftswomen revealed that it is their workplaces where the most creative and transformative collective organizing against wage exploitation have occurred — 'insecurity' at their workplaces, kinship and official ideologies and the complicity of the state and leaders from the local governance (*panchayati*) who have internalised the culture of developmentalism. In this context, development as freedom has major role to interpret social worth for human labour and transformation of local resources against the threat of stakeholders and global capitalism.

### **Towards reorganising and sustainable solutions**

Although it is true that demands of self-employment are a critical part of women's everyday networking to the kinship and institutional support, embodied workspace marginalization has corroborated that body-space constitutes many body-spaces. Embodying this heterogeneity as social production is best seen through forms of individual and collective struggles of women workers' narratives. I have illustrated that places of female work are not just about paid labour, but are expressive domains of social power relations—culturally specific sets of meanings, relations and identities that discursively make and remake the workspace as a gendered 'terrine' of power. Giving voices to the voiceless may solve power inequalities, yet we know that the marginalized, especially women, can speak but not be heard. Such embodied situations allow us to highlight the issue of structure and agency in a particular cultural history. They also provide and encourage experiences of self-perception/resistance as well as women's ability to work and organise collectively, which can lead to politicising capability with others, in order to bring about change. Women's voices hold that the biggest challenge for cooperatives [GOs/NGOs] agencies/sectors is to hear their ways of creative knowledge, and of endeavours to create transparent mechanisms for judicious use of resources and sources at workspaces. Moreover, speaking is not always a source of power, unless that power is discursively established in its material/dialectical relationship (Viseswaran 1994, Rowland 1997). It can also disempower women's collective agencies if they are not aware of the structural and cultural contexts in which speaking takes place.

The question is how do *harijan* weavers women or Khollar village appliqué women, many with little contact with organizations (cooperative and Mahila Samiti) and movements and little support from men reflect on and contemplating the politics of possibility. Organising their ability to disseminate their knowledge would effectively challenge the established power divisions (division of labour, real wages, work and workplaces, access and control over resources and knowledge) along gender lines. During our conversations each of the studied groups, individual craftswoman and weavers, discussed at length the strategies they had in mind for organising self-employment work. I asked almost all of them, how they perceived their self-reliance, and how they could more effectively become visible in society and efficient in craft production. Their desire for equal treatment and dignity on the basis of quality and non-economic factors of work and long-term demands were expressed in this way: *Organizing is our strength. Our collective voices should be heard. Joint actions in cooperatives and trading should be facilitated. Government and societies should actively hand over strength to the producers.* The dialectical engagement in strategizing self-employment that unfolds their everyday need for organizing their capability at workspaces is shown in Figure 14.

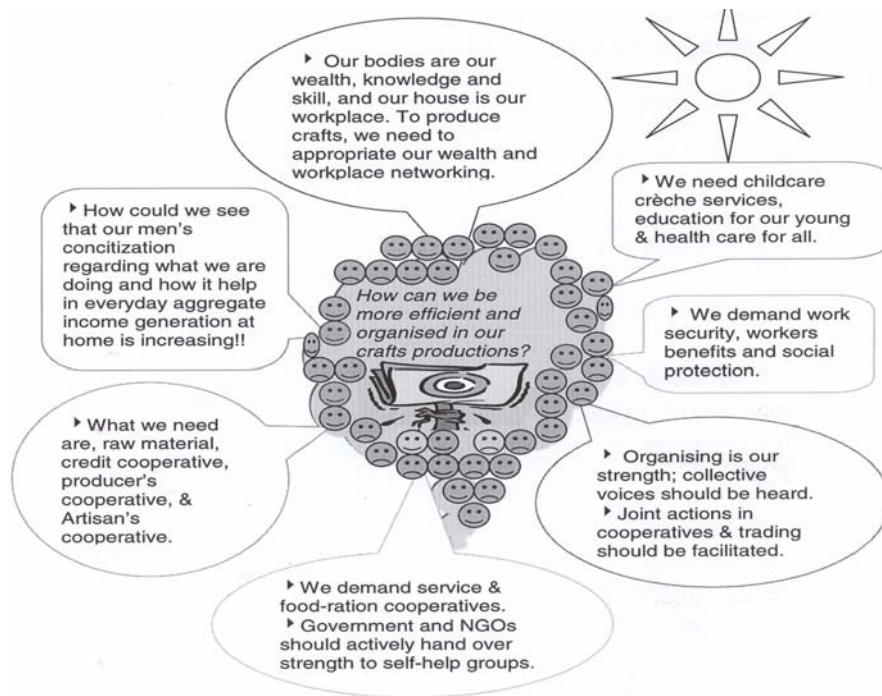


Figure 14 Craftswomen's voices for a collective struggle in the four studied communities.



Craftswomen's voices of decent work possess a determination. They have begun to speak a language of subaltern upliftment and self-reliance through co-operative actions. Their conviction that 'joint actions in cooperatives and trading should be facilitated' succinctly captures the struggle of marginal women workers to overcome the sexual politics that play in the ideological creation on whose back crafts producers gain legitimacy. They defined their resources and sources to secure and sustain their livelihoods, through organizing.

Unorganised women workers bear the brunt of increasing commodification of social relations through global capitalism processes, a context in which production and market relations make local structures more restricting (Mies 1998). Effective participation is restricted to those local stakeholders that possess capabilities in a global context. Although capacity building is a process whereby women and men experience, challenge and subvert power relationships, it takes place in institutional, material and discursive contexts. I believe that within these processes craftswomen are likely to face more gendered-based oppression in Orissa, India.

I have shown that the relationship between post-colonial economic reforms and gendered practices were only guided by the material needs of their demands and resource distribution. The role of the cooperative movements in the construction of proactive procurements in the civil society may be romanticized. In contrast, the craftswomen believe that social oppression and marginalization of their labour are constitutive of changing officious ideology and business trade relations in everyday practices materialize in ways that they do not want. It can be seen at the Tara production centre that relationships are not only gendered and articulated and enacted upon in the 'conventional business ideology', but also ideas, meanings and relations of economic spaces are neither universal nor generalizable.

Essentialist understanding of the economic-specific gendered meanings undermines values associated with the cultural-specific change that craftworkers bring to workspaces. I argue that mechanization of rural skills and a lack of infrastructure are not the only causes of feminisation of labour and impoverishment, but also an essentialist version of civilization. I have shown that unstable work security hits women's social productive value hardest under the renowned co-operative society, SBWCS. Any discussion of women's self-employment under the umbrella of cooperative movements or 'gender and workspaces' must therefore attend to the specificities of the micro-politics of place that shape the complex economic cultural politics of worker's organisation and constitute the many meanings of cooperatives (collective actions).

Craft productions in Orissa and export-import transactions enforce these labour relations, working as extenders within a local as well as a global context. Local craft communities, in turn,

advertise themselves so as to get in on the pathways to global capitalism. So, places such as craft communities like Raghurajpur, Bhubaneswar, or handloom weaving villages like Bheden, or Barpali in Orissa are no longer where one lives, but also a commodity to be marketed. Apart from the local characteristics of the weavers and the market, the secret to the success of crafts and weaving development lies in prioritising women's agency. Strong trade union movements are needed in the areas of devise strategies through fair treatment in terms of wages, technology and skills development, direct marketing channels, and most importantly, to undercut the private sector competitors (those who are relying on clandestine labour).

### **Gendered craft-scapes: an explanatory framework in local development practices**

When the individual defends her/his cognitive limitations in the face of the complex spatial parameters to negotiate ethical and instrumental places, what happens to those subaltern craftswomen/subjects who have peripheral accessibility across the gendered spaces? Recently, feminists have argue that woman's vulnerability and invisibility in development rhetoric must be understood with respect to more complex social relationships in its spatial hierarchy (Mohanty 1991, Lund 1993, Rowlands 1997, Weiringa 1998). The discourse in the accounts of both North and women workers in the South helps to redefine subject of knowledge and methods to analyse the multiple and often conflicting identities of women. Their situations vary according to factors of culture, place, race, sexuality, age, class, and other histories (Mohanty 1997, Narayan & Harding 2000, Kalpagam 2002). Cultural construction of gender relations, and relations in a hierarchy of power are critical aspects of development that subordinate women to the will of men — that marginalize their freedom of choices in every place (Sen 2000, Bhavnani 2003). Berg expresses this, as both places and people are gendered (1997). In order to explore issues of structure and agency, both physical and discursive through individual and collective capability (specificities of oral accounts, words, memories) and to develop theoretical issues this research calls for a careful, contextual analysis framed in the broader forces at play in global, national and local contexts. The axiomatic of the micro-macrology practices in traditional craft industries activities are named as the gendered *craft-scape* as illustrated in the explanatory framework shown in Figure 15.

The factors of analogous include physical and material resources, links to the cultural (symbolic capital) political, and social practices and institutions that capacitate (beliefs and

attitude) woman's agencies in its local and global manifestations. The genealogical<sup>68</sup> (power-focused) conditions of craft-scape reveal the epistemic and multiplicity of ideologies and political practices of paid and unpaid labour values that circulate across the local and more distance region of global optimism. The households, craft villages, home-based units, workshops, the cooperative societies, markets, exhibition grounds, religious spaces and new economic institutions which are being shaped by discourses and relations that cut across the spatial scale—the local and the global gendered spaces – become entwined. At a craft

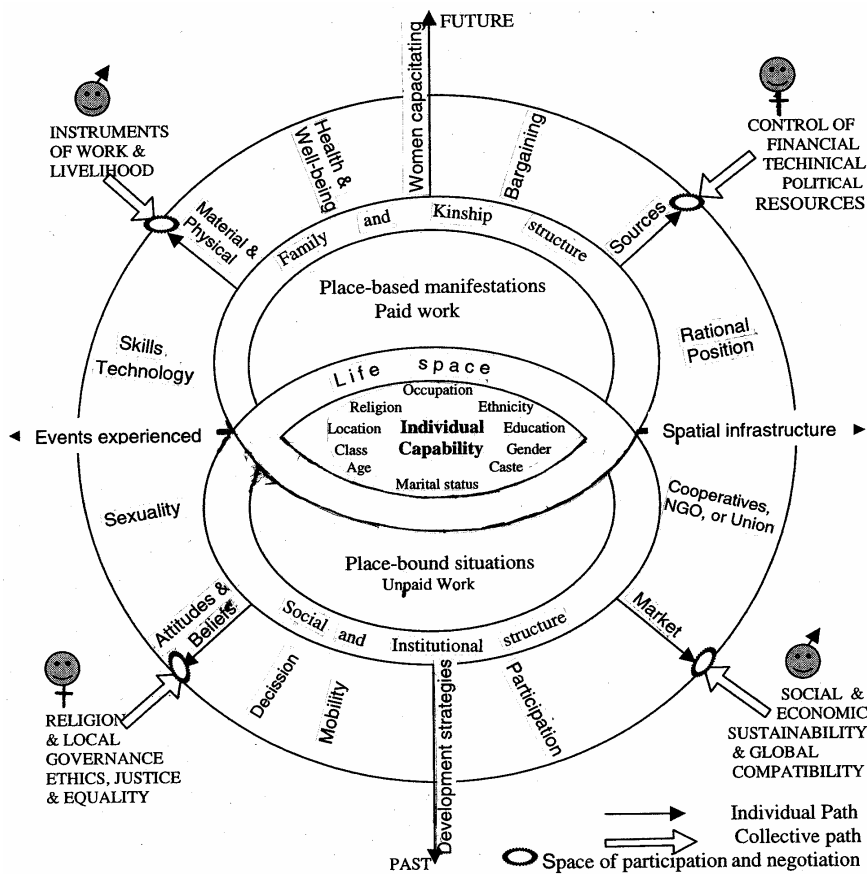


Figure 15 Gendered craft-scape.

community level, factors such as social, economic and cultural composition of the local, its socio-spatial relations, marketing practices, leadership position, and links with the external agencies, are the key determinants of women's access to material and non-material resources, livelihood

<sup>68</sup> Foucault's genealogies are based on the claim that power is not necessarily concentrated in the hand of the monarch, the state, or a particular class, since, he argues, 'power comes from everywhere' (1986) and freedom is a practical and intrinsic-strategy to overcome these subordinated relations (1986). See the collection of essays, *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* by Alexander & Mohanty (1997).

sources and ability to function as an end. Analysis by local activists, civil society [NGOs], researchers and planners may produce a valuable explanatory framework to this, based on transformation variability with respect to sexual division of labour, caste, class, skill, capability, and access. However, each of these elements illustrated in the craft-scape are continually constituted and reconstituted by the spatial dimension of domination and subjugation as everyday practices and dialogues.

The multiplicity of issues and dilemmas of the dialectical nature of women's agency as labourers (also as a condition of democratic dialogue and coalition) are placed in the analytical framework (Figure 15) to explore the existing strengths of individuals. Embodied narratives of the workers situate the exploitative structures that thrive on the marginal craft producers. Narratives of marginal experiences in this research have revealed that individual sites of struggle differ also in terms of skills development, resource management, assertiveness to exploitation, decision-making and enhancing the inner/outer market transaction roles and agency itself within community/workshop/NGO training and piece-rate working groups. As conceived by Gupta & Ferguson (1997: 6), it is 'less as a matter of "ideas" than of embodied practices that shape identities and enable resistances'. Situating the empirically informed, interpretively narrated experiences of marginal workers' capability/resistance to a whole hierarchy of factors that influence women's life-space at the centre of craft-scape in this research, one could inquire, as do Gupta & Ferguson (1997:19), how resistance as a form of experience constructs and reconstructs the identity of subjects and is 'profoundly transformative'.

Situational analogies of craft-scapes, offering an ecological analogy of structural apparatus to encounter how everyday needs and interests are mutually constituted, producing meaning for marginalization of female labour, and at times enabling space for negotiating gendered workplaces. I situate the formations of craftswomen's life-spaces (agency) as processes of spatial marginalization. The situational analogies on the ways work, livelihoods, sexualities, risks and responsibilities are conceptually and methodologically produced provides a range of evidences that demonstrates the oppressive effects of place-bound and place-based manifestations, especially women's work and roles.

By foregrounding embodied experiences of *harijan* female weavers and women handicraft producers and presenting their oral accounts of coolies and weaving, livelihoods, working conditions, work benefits, and moral responsibility, I have simultaneously tried to transform the spatial strategies of craftswomen and how they cope with gendered spaces. I have gradually moved from a negative emphasis on the impossibility of representation towards a

situated articulation of the concrete material lives of the subaltern. For instance, male weavers' affirming attitudes towards Tara female weavers' decision not to vote, and other such actions, can be seen as effective strategies for redefining 'womanliness' (Nandy 1998, Kaul 2000). Hence, there is a need to recollectivize agency to organize minority groups.

### **Empowering craftswomen's self-reliance: flexibly, ethically and locally-based**

The chapters and articles in this thesis illustrate several themes for rethinking and practices in enabling or capacitating. By presenting an aesthetic and political dimension of representation through embodied narratives, and the oral accounts of Bhagi, Chandana- and Mami-like female agency in the post-colonial world brings us to a historical and cultural understanding of global-(that holds a set of economic and institutional processes)-local (grass-roots labour exploitation) relationships where subaltern development has always been a political goal. One can, however, conclude by mentioning that things are changing, and the twenty-first century will perhaps witness major shifts when '*harijan/dalit* (oppressed)' 'women' and other marginal groups will transgress the gendered boundaries, which have been imposed by historical and cultural ideologies in order to effectively keep them out. The beginning of this processes, as this study has shown is visible through the collective decisions of women like Bhagi, to distribute pensions and oppose voting, or, community members in Puri to select Chandana as the council members. This will not only mark major shifts, when we incorporate such agencies into mainstream processes, it will also provide a new direction for organising. Though the evidence is largely from craft-scapes in Orissa, some generalizations advance a broader understanding and inform research and debates on the role of new economic reforms, cooperatives, SHGs, MSs and notable NGOs [ORUPA, KSM, CYSD or GRAMBIKASH; see abbreviations] in Orissa promoting women's capacity. Working within the grass-roots and subtle strategies for organizing women however, requires long-term commitment to achieve empowerment.

I have consciously tried to portray the mutual embeddedness of the boundaries between economic practices and socio-spatial relationships and their implication for capacitation. In the literature and empirical analysis, I noted how place-based factors erode boundaries, while place-bound social practices strengthen boundaries of capitalism. Alternatively, at times, women's experiences of crafts labour practices and sites of struggle remain a challenge to the gendered boundaries to transform their 'own' spaces.

Gender equitable answers lie in working out systems whereby cooperative societies, cottage industries and government institutions can bear the costs of the socio-economic services required to keep craftswomen working on an organised basis. A more inclusive formal system also needs to welcome and acknowledge the kinds of non-capitalist strategies and collective actions that many craftswomen will probably continue to undertake. At the same time, better links between informal home units, workshops, MSs, NGOs and formal cooperatives, other women/gender development institutions, and global civil society might encourage more women to legitimate their voices and capabilities. Such active participation and movements of women in a cultural-economic centred approach ensure that women's agency is visible and that they would outline a workspace for themselves. The sources of institutional development vary, however, including transparent relationships between female producers and employees, participatory problem definition, networking among civil society groups and local producers.

I have contextualised all the themes in a seemingly empowering feminist methodology known as narratives. Thus, local craftswomen have been given a voice and utilize local knowledge in ways that ought to address both local-global processes and outcomes. Individual and collective voices unpack the many dimensions (dilemmas) of power relations. Most importantly, the craftswomen workers' history of self-employment and their agential abilities have been documented in grass-roots' and indigenous women's embodiment. In this thesis, I draw upon the oral accounts, meaning and memories in diverse ways, under which activities can acquire an ethically and transparent use of the terms 'empowering' (Rowlands 1997), which is interchangeable with 'capacitating' or 'enabling', to highlight marginalized crafts and weaver women, voices of the poor and their coping capacities. Thus, we learn that coping capacities emerge from within with a sense of personal autonomy apart from, not an elimination of, cultural and kinship relationships, and to the privilege of men in such spaces. We understand that power relations are exercised in action, dialogue and resistance at the workplaces.

All-pervasive cultural and religious values often devalue new generations of girls and women's sense of the power, rather than enabling their voices to be heard. The craftswomen of Raghurajpur, Pipili, or Tora society are artisans, but most discourses, policies, and officials constructs women as a kind of adjunct worker, even under the guise of 'women's development'. In order to articulate their specific oppression power within the subaltern women must create their own resistance through a language that is powerful to exert their expertise, voices and redistribution of development resources. This research has revealed that articulation does not always happen through the mechanistic collaboration of training centres, NGOs, or cooperatives',

though committed to developing a public language of subaltern's shared experiences. Rediscovering the complex gender ideologies that structure material opportunities and mobility for women workers made me encourage individuals' consciousness to organise a union of their own. Their conversations with me have enabled them to evolve from an aggregate of individual issues into a cohesive collective, in which they can look at themselves and their gendered spaces in new ways, develop a positive self-image, recognise their strengths, and explode sexual misconceptions. I agree that the category of feminine identity is a social construct. Therefore, in an analysis of women's collective action, upon which gender planning programmes and policies should be discursively reflected in view of identity formation and subjectivity, account of gendered forms of grass-roots collective agency should be undertaken.

### **Suggestions for future research**

Research questions within a research project lead to other questions and this process of creating/adding/updating the situated knowledge is incremental. Based on my research, some future research directions are suggested. The narratives of craftswomen in this study pointed out that the relationship between gendered practices of dowry issue is not only a cultural ideology but also a development issue affecting women and men. While acknowledging the complexity and difficulties of capacitating/empowerment as a concept and a practice, I believe that a key strategy in capacitation lies in mobilizing dowry victims. We need to bring a broader analytical perspective to the discussion of gender and dowry-like practices. Hence, inclusion of victim's voices, especially women workers' fall-back, can also be seen as a outcome that can be measured against expected accomplishments.

In Orissa, as well as in other parts of India, there exists many such micro- craft-scapes with specific struggles over time and place, and they too are facing marginalization processes. Gendered exploitation of work, underneath access to resources and control over life and outcomes, require attention to situate the specificities of embodiment knowledge and in relation to the power and labour relations in the development practices of the institutional structure. As has been done in this study, a similar study in different communities could be made to assess the implication over time and come up with cross-cultural understanding. Personal narratives in different geographical spaces combined with group biographies of a community's situation could play a vigilant role and call to account its own members' subjectivities.

Another implication for future research stemming from this study relate to its partial and temporal nature. One could revisit the same village communities in Orissa to document further processes of change that could be made to reflect the changes in their life affirmation, their direction and enhance their looks. There should be focus on the impact of changing gender relations in craft works, markets, institutions and global arenas, assimilating group conversations with various stakeholders to explore inter-relationships between various issues. I have carried out some initial work in this direction in both analysing and developing framework in Figure 13. Indicators such as in Figure 15 is also have emerged from this research and can be further developed. Attempts to measure outcomes are important as a means for keeping development practitioners and policy-makers honest and alert.



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## **Appendices**

## Appendix 1

### Overview of the gender distribution of craft artisans in Kalinga Shilpi Mahasangha (KSM).

Crafts	National award		State award		General		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1. Stone Carving	11	--	10	--	256	26	277	26
2. Appliqué	--	--	1	--	24	127	25	127
3. Patta paintings & Palm leaf carving	15	--	7	3	131	86	153	134
4. Dhokra (Brass bell)	3	--	--	--	55	3	58	3
5. Art Textile Crafts	22	--	4	--	32	2	58	2
6. Wood Carving	3	--	3	--	22	2	28	2
7. Carpet Making	--	--	--	--	--	20	--	20
8. Cane Bamboo & Golden Grass	--	--	--	--	26	39	26	39
9. Horn Craft	--	--	--	--	28	--	28	--
10. Terracotta	1	--	5	1	8	8	14	9
Total	55	--	30	4	582	311	661	362

Source: group discussion with 3 Women Artisans and Craftswomen Working Society (WACWS) of KSM. (Directories of KSM, 2001).

*Note:* The KSM's WACWS constituted with 27 committee members, and they are belong to especially from Puri (5) and Bhubaneswar (15) and Baranga, Cuttack (1), Nabarangpur (1), and Barhampur (2). Coincidentally, some members are my interviewees.

## Appendix 2

### Handicraft in Orissa and handloom production in SBWCS, Bargarh an overview.

*Source:* Directorate of handicrafts and cottage Industries. Bhubaneswar, Orissa.

Orissa is known for its excellence in silver filigree, appliqué, stone carving, brass and bell-metal goods, horn carving, terracotta and *pata* paintings etc. The directorate of Handicraft and cottage industries provides administrative, managerial and financial support for promotion, revival and diversification of these traditional industries through various schemes. During 1990-01, 22,392 cottage industries have been set up in the State with an investment of rupees 4064.68 lakh for providing employment to 37.571 lakh persons. Data on the growth of cottage industries in the State over the years is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Growth of Cottage Industries in Orissa

Year	Number of Established	Investment (rupees in lakh)	Employment generation (number of persons)
By the of 1996-97	13 96 262	41 98 7.74	24 28 42 9
1997-98	45 60 2	48 86.16	82 94 1
1998-99	50 60 7	58 69.00	92 82 2
1999-00	18 37 0	29 56.73	32 83 5
2000-01*	22 39 2	40 64.68	37 57 1

\*Provisional

*Source:* Directorate of handicrafts and cottage Industries. Bhubaneswar.

At present 297 Handicrafts cooperative Societies with a membership of 21491 are actively functioning in the state. These societies provided employment to 60 85 artisans and produced handicraft articles worth rupees 525.16 lakh during 2000-01 as against rupees 383.08 lakh in the previous year.

In order to strengthen the artisan base of enterprises in the handicraft sector, 30 Handicraft training Centres are functioning in different districts of the State. During 2000-01, 367 persons were trained in the centres. A woollen carpet weaving training programme is being conducted in collaboration with an Export House in 21 centres with facilities to train 13 20 persons per batch. During 2000-01, 761 persons have been trained in these training centres.

The Orissa State Cooperative Handicraft Corporation is engaged in strengthening the production base, enlarging marketing opportunities, encouraging exporters, and introducing new design and technology in the handicrafts sector. The Corporation provides assistance to Primary Handicrafts Cooperative Societies, voluntary organisations and individual artisans for improving the marketability of their products. The corporation procures a wide variety of handicraft products and markets these both inside and outside the country through its sales outlets popularly known as 'Utkalika'. The corporation is also running a craft Development centre at Jeypore in Koraput district, for providing a package of services to a culture of craftsmen under a single umbrella for

development of handicrafts. The corporation is implementing the Woollen Carpet Weaving Training Scheme through its four-training centres at Banapal, Kendrapara, Koraput and Gabkund. During 1999-00, the Corporation conducted handicraft exhibitions both inside and outside the state besides participating in IITF' 99 (second Trade faire) New Delhi. During 1999-00 the corporation has exported handicraft goods worth rupees 22.16 lakh.

### Annual Plan for SBWCS Bargarh District (2001-2002)

The annual plan for SBWCS Bargarh District stated that handloom is an important cottage industry in the Bargarh District. Situated in Western part of Orissa, it has tremendous potentiality and provides a large number of employments being next to the Agriculture sector as presented in the following.

Table 1. Sambalpuri Bstralaya Weavers Cooperative Society: Bargarh Zone

Years	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01/2
No. of WCS*	71	72	74	74	75
No. of Weavers	20 54 5	20 94 0	21 15 0	21 18 0	19 72 0
Male	19 36 1	19 72 1	19 76 6	19 76 6	18 30 2
Female	11 84	12 19	13 84	13 84	14 18
Scheduled Caste	14 09 8	14 17 8	14 31 1	14 35 3	14 39 8
Scheduled Tribe	21 6	22 2	23 2	23 2	41 7
Income per Weaver/Annum	11 65 6	10 91 7	11 62 2	83 79	13 92 9
Annual Production in WCS	226186000	201028000	202290000	188608000	162603000
Production per Loom	28 66 3	25 53 3	25 92 4	24 45 6	37 57 0
Skilled	15	16	16	16	17
Non-skilled	56	56	58	58	58

Source: Mr. Meher, the production and development officer (Interviewed in 2001).

Table 2. Handloom Activities of SBWCS in Bargarh District (as September 2000).

General Information	General Caste	S.C	S.T.	Total
No. of WCS	53	43	NA	96
No. of Working WCS	23	34	NA	57
No. of Liquidated WCS	29	03	NA	NA
No. of Organised	NA	NA	NA	NA
No. of Revised	NA	NA	NA	NA
No. of Members	7816	9888	461	18165
Total no. of Looms	6336	8921	454	15711

### Appendix 3

**Overview of fieldwork periods and various activities using the research methods in four craft clusters.**

<b>Time period</b>	<b>Methods use/activate</b>	<b>Types of information/informants/Institutions</b>
<b>August 1998</b>	Preliminary survey	Selection of the study area, Informal talks with craft shops, keepers, visiting craft exhibitions, workshops and cooperative society
<b>September 1998 - December 1998</b>	Visiting resource persons (please see the acknowledgement list) and Research Institutions & collecting literature & secondary information	CYSD Library & Baipariguda, Koraput branch, Xavier Institute of Management, Library, EDII, Ahmedabad, Library, (20 days) Gandhi Labour Institute, Gujarat, IRMA, Anand, SEWA Trade Union, ISEC (14 days) Bangalore, AWKE NGO Bangalore Staying at the research institutes for formal discussions with likeminded NGO personnel, Professors, and doctoral students.
<b>December 1998- January 1999</b>	Observations	Communities activities, daily business transactions, leadership and female bargaining positions
	In-depth interviews	5 life histories: from Pipili, Bhubaneswar, Raghurajpur, Puri, and Kusta parha. (Table 1 )
	Group conversations	7 Craftswomen's group (Table 2), photographic recording, visiting with them to the workshop and shops, temples
	Interview with key informants	2 Craft teacher, 2 Community discussion, 5 NGO Female workers and coordinators, 4 Mahila Samitis, Banks, Block offices
<b>December 2000- April 2001</b>	Revisits	Revisiting the local market, craft communities and protagonists
	Observations	Changes in community activities, Government programmes, new shops, loans, society, strategies, contract and change in gender related behavioural attitudes, transformation processes in various gender related aspects,
	Surveyed Raghurajpur village	
	In-depth interviews	9 life histories: Pipili (2); Bhubaneswar (3) Raghurajpur (1); Badadanda sahi (1); Puri (1) and Barhamunda (1)
	Group conversations	25 Craftswomen's groups: from the above related communities, Mahila samities, NGOs, Ashrams, home unit and workshop
	Key informants	Stakeholders, Businessmen, shop owners, government staffs, female activists, leaders, coordinators about their perceptions, responsibilities. Photographic recording
<b>June-July 2002</b>	Collecting secondary information	Kalinga Shilpi Mahasangha, DHHC staffs, Craft societies coordinator, National awardees, State awardees, SHTI teachers
	Revisiting the field	Revisiting few interviewers, contact on phone, few institutions

**Source:** Fieldwork in Orissa, India 1999 and 2001.

## Appendix 4

### **Interview guide used in four craft village group discussions in Orissa.**

#### ***References***

Time and place of interview; how I got to know the informant, in what capacity does she represents a particular craft artisan and businesswoman?

#### ***Personal background***

Age, caste, religion, craft, birthplace, family (in-law's, husband, children, sisters, brothers, parents); how kinship groups livelihoods related to respondent

*Marital status:* when married; where she is from

*Children:* preference for which and why; age; school; work; marriage; taboos relating to the welfare of the boys and girls, family expectation of the boys and girl.

#### ***Own childhood and craft learning stories,***

Family members help in the homework and craftwork, performance of religious rituals in the house and community

*Crafts training:* motivation for artisan; interests; need; training; savings; status of home in neighbourhood; kinship; stories on friends networking; ownership; love; marriage;

*Education:* schooling; vocational training

#### ***Image of daily life at home***

Description of a normal day

Time devoted to craftwork; time management

Time devoted to different activities: cooking, water fetching, cleaning, leisure, recreation, servicing, caring, participation in community and religious activities, mobility

Coping capacity and resistance; ability/inability

Year craft work started; business started; location of workplace, piece-rate, household and business financial decisions.

#### ***Marital home, husband and in-laws***

In-law's and husband's help on house and business work, role negotiations, house chores, craft work, access to resources, control over body and earning, decision, fall back position, cooperation and bargaining, ritual activities and craft works, commercial productions, reasoning and perceptions.

#### ***Craft skills***

Own position in the craft skills group; at home in the and community; how they changed the techniques and design to make them unique and therefore a better bargain; higher transaction and mobility,

*Institutions:* membership, loan, rations and other benefits

***Local stakeholders and business networking:***

Stakeholders and business transactions; behavioral attitudes towards their protagonists; work and price negotiation

*Wage conditions:* increment and rewards.

***Institutional & organisational networking and benefits***

***Changes***

Brought by the women development programmes, NGOs, society etc. on the issues related to marginal gendered subjectivities inside marketing, credit, infrastructures, training, unequal gender relations, cultural change, equal work opportunities and workplaces and how craftswomen perceive them; commercial trade and tourist industries' attitudes toward women's labour, flexibility at work; attitudes of men in homespaces.

Issues of identity in the local governance, leadership positions and responses to their ways of organising.

***Challenges/negotiation in the conflicting situations***

Business-related obstacles, in the family, conflict situations, the main strategies/challenges encountered by the protagonists in undertaking role conflict, decision making, business activities and household chores, lessons learned, gendered obligations, authority, dominance, replication, dignity, inauspicious/impure, negotiation and honour in traditional activities and craft business.

Craftswomen's perceptions towards values and beliefs system, patterns of housework allocation, socio-spatial relations, kinship business networking and the socio-cultural environment in which they operate, men's (so-called heads and breadwinners, owners, stakeholder and officials) attitudes, values and expectations concerning housework, business work and women's role, as well as how women cope within labour exploitation, violence/dowry torture, ignorance regarding household chores and children, and also the institutional passivity.

***Capable and success***

Measure of own and collective success: how the success varies according to the life-course inside home and outside and at organizational level if any at all; what her viewpoints are on the source and resource support system

***Summing up***

Multi-layers of cultural and political structures and their power relationships inside and outside shaping and reshaping the gendered relationships at gendered places and enabling/visualizing female agential capability to function as an end through organising.

**Interview guide used for the business stakeholders/cooperative society manager in Orissa.**

***References***

Time and place of interview,



Type of duty and responsibility,

***Everyday challenges they handle***

What negotiation they faced from their piece rate workers every day; how they think about this; how they handle these conflicting situations: civil society, labour union, and government interventions on their workshop/shop/workers; where they collect resources and sources from to run the factory: distance, transportation, convenience, profit and loss, trade roots and labour forces, competence level; how they think about the alternative feedback from the beneficiaries to improve the project quality; feed back.

**Interview guide used for the Government/Non government officials in Orissa.**

***References***

Time and place of interview.

Type of duty and responsibility,

***Project status***

Comparative status of the programme in relation with other old and new project, At the household level who often come to interact with them? How often female beneficiaries do respond like male counter? In case of single female artisan how often one come to approach?

***Official perception*** and opinion about the changes in the condition and position of craftswomen, craftswomen's participation rate, type of work opportunities, responsibility before and after their programme implementations, Non Government Organisation strategies, cooperative society, marketing, resources and raw materials availability, credit and accessibility for women and men.

***Alternative feedback from beneficiary of the projects***

What are the alternative feedback from the beneficiaries to improve the project quality, and how do he perceive about these (change) in his/institutional capability? Potential persons influencing the feedback, How do they perceive the business power relations, at community level project implementation?

In which way you are depend upon the female beneficiary direct approach to render help/training/autonomy What are the important responsibility you are performed (at individual and collective level) to increase the efficiency of female beneficiaries flexibility.

Other local and structural issues.

Feed back.

## Appendix 5

### Community Survey: Caste wise population in Raghurajpur ideal craft village, Orissa, 2001

<b>Castes</b>	<b>Traditional Occupation</b>	<b>Number of Households</b>	<b>Adult member</b>	<b>Below 18</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Percentage to total</b>	<b>Average Members</b>
<i>Brahmin</i>	Priest	2	3	6	9	1.24	45
<i>Brahmin</i>	Beetle farmer	1	5	10	15	1.37	5
<i>Chasa</i>	Cultivator	37	127	105	132	32	6.27
<i>Dudia</i>	Confectionary	2	14	10	24	3.3	6
<i>Tanti</i>	Weaver	6	36	18	54	7.44	9
<i>Oatera</i>	Stone carver	1	2	6	8	1.1	8
<i>Badhei</i>	Carpentry	2	12	5	17	2.34	8.5
<i>Nahaka</i>	Astrologer	3	12	10	22	3	7.33
<i>Bania</i>	Goldsmith	13	49	39	88	12.13	6.76
<i>Chitrakara</i>	Painter	26	106	84	192	26.48	7.38
<i>Keuta</i>	Fisherman	5	15	9	24	3.3	4.8
<i>Shiala</i>	Toddy maker	4	8	5	13	1.79	3.25
<i>Sundhi</i>	Alcohol maker	1	3	3	6	0.8	6
<i>Teli</i>	Oil man	1	2	2	4	0.39	4
<b>Total</b>	15 types	108	410	315	725	100	6.71~7

Source: Field Survey 2001

## Appendix 6

### List of key organisations and resource persons visited

Faculties and friends: Utkal University Vani Vihar Bhubaneswar

Officials: National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD)

Staffs and self-employee members in the Association of Women's Artisan's in Karnataka (AWAKE) Bangalore, India

Staffs and resource persons, Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD), Bhubaneswar

Officials: Development Commission for Handloom and Handicrafts (DCHH), Bhubaneswar

District Industries Centre, Puri and Bhubaneswar

Resource person, Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII), Ahmedabad

Resource person, Institute of Rural Management, Anand (IRMA), Ahmedabad

Resource persons, Institute for Socio Economic Change (ISEC), Bangalore

Accountant, Orissa, Assembly of Small and Medium Enterprises, Bhubaneswar

Staffs, Orissa State Cooperative Handicrafts Corporation, Bhubaneswar

Rural Gramya Vikash Nidhi (RGVIN), Bhubaneswar

Staffs (Retired design and production officer) Sambalpuri *Bastralaya* (cloth emporia)

Weaver Cooperative Society (SBWCS), Bargarh District

Mahatma Gandhi Labour Institute, Ahmedabad, Gujarat

Friends of Women's World Banking (FWWB), Ahmedabad

SEWA, self-employee members, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India

Faculties: Xavier Institute of Management (XIM), Bhubaneswar

Resource person, Gandhi Labour Institute, Gujarat

Centre for Women Development Studies (CWDS), New Delhi

Secretary and self-employees members, Kalinga Shilpi Mahasangha (KSM),

State Handicraft Training Institute

Mahila Vikash Nigam, Bhubaneswar

Tribal Development Research Centre, Bhubaneswar.

## Appendix 7

### List of abbreviations and local terms

AIHB	All India Handicrafts Board
AWAK	Association of Women's Artisan's in Karnataka
CWDS	Centre for Women's Development Studies
CYSD	Centre for Youth and Social Development
DCHH	Development Commission for Handloom and Handicrafts
DIC	District Industries Centre
DPA	Dowry Prohibition Act
DWCRA	Development of Women and Children in Rural Area
EDI	Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (Ahmedabad)
GAD	Gender And Development
GLI	Mahatma Gandhi Labour Institute, Gujarat
GATT	General Agreement on Trade and Tariff
GOs	Government Organisations
HHS	Handicrafts and Handloom society
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Union
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IRMA	Institute of Rural Management
ISEC	Institute for Socio Economic Change (Bangalore)
KSM	Kalinga Shilpi Mahasangha
MIS	Mission Shakti
MS	Mahila Samiti
NABARD	National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development
NGO	Non Government Organisation
OASME	Orissa, Assembly of Small and Medium Enterprises
OSCHC	Orissa State Cooperative Handicrafts Corporation
RGVIN	Rural Gramya Vikash Nidhi
SBWCS	Sambalpuri <i>Bastralaya</i> (cloth emporia) Weaver Cooperative Society
SEWA	Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA )
SC	Scheduled Caste
SGRY	Sampurna Gramina Rojgar Yojana
SHG	Self Help Group or <i>Mahila mandal</i> (women's group)
SHTI	State Handicraft Training Institution
SIDBI	Small Industrial Development Bank of India
SSI	Small Scale Industries
ST	Scheduled Tribe
TRIM	Trade Related Investment Measure
TRYSEM	Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment
U. Co. B	Urban Cooperative Bank
URMAS	Urban and Rural (crafts) Management Association
Utkalika	A Chain of Government Cooperative Society
VSI	Village and Small Industries
WCS	Weaver Cooperative Society
WHO	World Health Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WWH	Women Work and Health

XIM

Xavier Institute of Management

<i>Ahir</i>	Cobra
<i>Anabasara</i>	A ritual patta painting to serve (no. 87) rituals at Jagannath temple
<i>Astras</i>	Weapons
<i>Athara thara</i>	Eighteen times
<i>Atma</i>	Self
<i>Anukula</i>	Auspicious beginning of the year
<i>Ayurved Kabiraji</i>	Hindu science of traditional medicine
<i>Badhei</i>	Carpenter
<i>Bania</i>	Goldsmith
<i>Baidya</i>	Doctor
<i>Bandha Kama</i>	Tie-dye
<i>Behera</i>	A designation for the painter who does <i>anabasara</i> painting in Jagannath temple
<i>Bepari</i>	The private traders/businessmen who hold the stake in the hierarchy of bargaining position between the disempowered local producers
<i>Bethiani</i>	Work in exploitative labour condition with unfair wages
<i>Bhauja</i>	Sister in-law
<i>Bhauni</i>	Sister
<i>Bohu</i>	Daughter in-law
<i>Chanchala</i>	Cleverly act
<i>Chasa</i>	Cultivator
<i>Chhur</i>	Stick method
<i>Chhur chheka</i>	Literally, a game that relentlessly hurdling one's life
<i>Chitrakara</i>	Painter
<i>Crore</i>	Ten million
<i>Daitwa hina</i>	Irresponsible
<i>Dalits</i>	Downtrodden
<i>Darshna</i>	Visiting
<i>Dhabis</i>	Mobile shop
<i>Dharma</i>	Duty, natural law, right conduct
<i>Dhobani</i>	Washerwoman; an untouchable caste of Brahmanical order
<i>Dhruba Tara</i>	North Star
<i>Drushya</i>	The consecration is accomplished by the creation or opening of its eyes
<i>Goonda</i>	Ruffian
<i>Grama Devati</i>	The indigenous village deity
<i>Gudia</i>	Do confectionary items by caste
<i>Guru gosain</i>	Teacher of Sanskrit and ritualistic knowledge
<i>Gurukula ashram</i>	A community united by spiritual goals, this is a living and working place for the craft trainees arranged by their Guru.
<i>Guruma</i>	Female guru/guru's wife
<i>Harijan</i>	Gandhi's term for the untouchables; literally child of God.
<i>jajmani</i>	Occupation
<i>Janata</i>	Popular
<i>Jati</i>	Caste
<i>Jatri patties</i>	Pilgrim paintings
<i>Joutuka</i>	Dowry
<i>Kalee</i>	The monstrous nature of human behaviour

<i>Kalee-kala</i>	Popularly a time period of great invasion and struggle
<i>Kalinga</i>	The old name of Orissa
<i>Kali-sadhaka</i>	Priest of the powerful feminine figure of Hindu mythology goddess Kali
<i>Kalyadalana</i>	Krishna trampling the snake Kaliya
<i>Karana</i>	The third of the fourth caste businessmen/writer
<i>Karmachari</i>	Employees
<i>Keuta</i>	Fisherman
<i>Khadi</i>	Hand-spun cloth
<i>Khatti/adda</i>	A man's place to politicise own activities is available in this part of Orissa.
<i>Khetra</i>	A holy place
<i>Kula bohu</i>	Eldest daughter-in-law
<i>kula marjyada</i>	Kinship-esteem
<i>Kuli</i>	In Oxford English dictionary used as coolie
<i>Kulibadi</i>	Casual labour at agricultural field
<i>Kulikabara</i>	Casual works for several work sites and social terms
<i>Labhanssa</i>	A share of the profit
<i>Lakh</i>	A hundred thousand
<i>Lekhani</i>	Sharp iron pen to carve
<i>Maa</i>	Mother goddess Kali
<i>Maa Bhuasuni</i>	Literally mother of prosperity and fertility
<i>Maga bandhi</i>	Fish shaped tie-dye techniques
<i>Mahila Samiti</i>	Women's grassroots society
<i>Malik</i>	Boss
<i>Mahabharat, Ramayan &amp; Krishnaleela</i>	Sacred ancient epic ostensibly about war and conflict between good and evil, moral and immoral acts painted and carved in traditional craft works.
<i>Mahatma</i>	Great sole
<i>Manasika</i>	Vow
<i>Marahattiani</i>	Orthodox mentality
<i>Mana-maryada</i>	self-esteem, dignity
<i>Marda</i>	Gendered man
<i>Maya</i>	Affection
<i>Meher</i>	A surname from Western Orissa who are mainly <i>belongs to (tanti)</i> weaver caste such as <i>Kusta meher, Bhulia meher, Kuli meher and Harijan weaver</i>
<i>Mithuna</i>	Union through intense lovemaking
<i>Mukhias</i>	Village headman
<i>Mukti Mandap</i>	Literally, solace place for sole
<i>Mulia, gotikama</i> etc.	For these kind of low paid, unfair casual work
<i>Nahaka</i>	Astrologer
<i>Nanada</i>	sister-in-laws
<i>Paise</i>	Half of a rupee
<i>Palli bastra</i>	Rural clothes
<i>Pancha Mukha Ganesha</i>	Five headed auspicious deity
<i>Panchayat</i>	Popularly elected village council
<i>Panchayati raj</i>	Local governance Note: while the Central government is allocating Rs 3100 billion for the development of the panchayati raj bodies in the annual budget every year, the Orissa govt. has failed to utilize its share properly. As a result of this, the money has returned back to the Centre.

This has been stated by All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary 26 July 2003).

<i>Para</i>	Community
<i>Patera</i>	Stone Carver by caste
<i>Patta chitra</i>	A picture drawn in a <i>patta</i>
<i>Poda mnuha</i>	Shameless face
<i>Prana</i>	Breath-life
<i>Purusottama</i>	The best male by character
<i>Raj</i>	Rule
<i>Rani</i>	The queen
<i>Rig-Veda</i>	Ancient Sanskrit script of Hindu philosophy
<i>Sadhana</i>	Devotion
<i>Sahi</i>	It is a structured village community of traditional Brahmanical social order, with all the norms, value, sexual codes, ideology and traditional systems. With extended and nuclear family patterns, it is a large and heterogeneous community of diverse of caste and cultural impact.
<i>Samanta</i>	Ruler
<i>Santa</i> if male &	Lord, boss, owner
<i>Santani</i> if female	
<i>Sambalpur</i>	Local dialect of Sambalpur and Bargarh Districts
<i>Sasanas</i>	Patron Brahmin village
<i>Sasu</i>	Mother-in-law
<i>Sastra</i>	Earlier Hindu scripture, literally, knowledge
<i>Shiala</i>	Toddy maker
<i>Shudra</i>	Labourers, lowest castes
<i>Slokas</i>	Spell
<i>Snana purnima</i>	Full-moon bath-day
<i>Sowbhagyabati</i>	Bestowed
<i>Sudhi kriya</i>	Funeral rites
<i>Sudra</i>	low castes
<i>Sukrabara tanti hata</i>	Friday handloom clothe bazaar established in 1954
<i>Sundhi</i>	Alcohol maker
<i>Swantwana patra</i>	Peaceful certificate
<i>Swa-rojagari</i>	Self-earner, independent earning from own business by ruling own
<i>Tani</i>	Pool
<i>Tantrik</i>	Act of mantras by a <i>Sadhaka</i> (devotee of Goddess Kali).
<i>Tassar</i>	Raw silk cloth
<i>Tanti</i>	Weaver caste
<i>Teli</i>	Oil man
<i>Tini khuntia pura</i>	Three pillar pour
<i>Vrata</i>	Rigorous act/worship