

'Girl Power', 'New Femininities' and Women's Attitudes to Balancing Work and Family: A Study of Indian Women Pursuing Higher Education in India

Rituparna Sarma¹

Abstract

It is well documented that as a result of the new economic reforms of the 1990s, India witnessed (and continues to witness) a rapid social, cultural and economic transformation. This transformation has prompted young, Indian middle class women to transform their identities, and pursue a career that includes work and family while (re)negotiating with the new and emergent socio-cultural spaces. Currently, much of the literature on Indian women has tended to draw on 'victim' dependency narrative of women and development. In contrast, this research explores young, Indian women's attitudes to career vis-à-vis their expectations to balancing a work and family. Using the notions of 'new femininities' and 'girl power', the research draws on 29 in-depth interviews conducted with women pursuing higher education. In particular, it draws on young middle class women's narratives to career aspirations. The findings suggest that majority of women bear an optimistic perception, confident about their future and dream of having a life that includes a career and family: interviews illustrate that many women aspire to sell their skills for jobs like fashion, advertising, private companies. However, career aspirations of a majority of women are embedded within the local cultural and family values, which continue to transmit powerful expectations associated with everyday family practices (such as moral norms and family obligations, parental/spouse aspirations).

Key words: *Girl Power, New femininities, Indian middle class women, career aspirations, higher education, new economic reforms, in-depth interviews, balancing work and family, India.*

Introduction:

An array of postcolonial scholarship have demonstrated that Indian women's subordination is well explained with reference to a biological 'naturalisation' of sex roles or dominant patriarchal structures in state, market and family relations, noting high rates of illiteracy (Drèze and Sen, 2013), focusing on patterns of inequality, especially the limited education of daughters (Azam and Kingdon, 2011; Pandya, 2013; Dutt, 2010; Sundaram and Vanneman, 2008); patterns of high fertility (Bhattacharya, 2006; Drèze and Sen, 2002; 2013) , the marginalisation of

¹ Executive Editor, Journal Space and Culture, India,
Email: rituparna.bhattacharyya@acsb.org.uk

women due to economic reforms (Drèze and Sen, 2002; 2013), and women as victims of male violence (Bhattacharyya, 2013a, b; Bhattacharyya, in press; Simister and Makowiec, 2008; Scharer, 2013). Arguably, the headline indicators of these scholarships reproduce a 'victim' dependency narrative of women and development. The key imperative of these scholarships are obviously to seek for women's empowerment by challenging the patriarchal norms. So far, however, there has been very little discussion on young Indian women's increased access to higher education, which is a parallel trend of the new economic reforms and feminisation of the labour force and of work in the organised sector (Bhattacharyya, 2009, 2013b; Budhwar et al., 2005 Sahni and Shankar, 2012). This research therefore, seeks to probe young women's attitudes to their career while balancing work and family life. By engaging a collage of ideas, thoughts and texts written by scholars on construction of 'new femininities' and 'girl power', this research seeks to explore as to how and to what extent women of my research desire for a new career, as driven by the opportunities of the new economic reforms. The theoretical insights underpinning this research is framed and informed by literature emanating from disciplines both within and outside India.

The key protagonists of this research are essentially urban middleclass, aged 18-30 years, stemming largely from the transformation of the new economic reforms (Fernandes, 2006; McGuire, 2011; Scrase, 2006). Locally known as the *grihasta bhadrakalok* or the *maddhyabito sreini*, the sample of women are generally career minded, self-confident and ambitious. The interview narratives clearly demonstrate as to how the women of my research use access to higher education quite instrumentally as a means of pursuing their own identity. Evidently, women are 'able to achieve' generation of Indian society: they are the active agents of transformation rather than simply being recipients of higher education. Unlike their mothers, they do not intend to become simply a homemaker (Bhattacharyya, 2009, 2013b). Importantly, alongside the changes brought in by the new economic reforms, these women have also been benefitting from the achievements of Indian feminist movement (Bhattacharyya, 2013b; Chaudhari, 2005; Kumar, 1993), albeit majority fails to uphold feminist attitudes. Nonetheless, they bear a positive attitude to life. First, though, I illustrate the theoretical framework that underpins this research.

Theoretical Insights:

As stated elsewhere, the research uses the writings on 'new femininities' and 'girl power' as lenses through which to probe Indian women's attitudes to balancing work and family. At the same time, it is important to shed light on Indian feminist movement as feminism in India has played and continue to play

a critical role in promoting women's education and the need for financial independence (Bhattacharyya, 2009; 2013b; Chaudhari, 2005; Kumar, 1993). Indian feminist movement, a heterogeneous movement is believed to be historically grounded in the India's nationalist movement. There remains a consensus that the movement occurred against a backdrop of liberal democratic values taking root in the West that was sanctioned by the British bureaucrats alongside the Anglo-American first-wave feminist movement. The first-wave movement of the West (late 19th century to the First World War) triggered by the Seneca Falls conference in 1848 and under the leadership of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony is known for suffrage campaigns to win women's formal equality with men, especially women's right to vote, within broader concerns about women's access to education, financial independence and sexual freedom (Walby, 1997). Coined by Marsha Lear, Second Wave feminism, that started in the 1960s in conjunction with anti-Vietnam war movement, civil rights campaign and Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* remains active (Kinser, 2004) to date. This movement sparked political campaigns in the 1970s on issues related to women's rights over their own bodies: pregnancy, abortion, maternity leave and so on. Influenced by postmodern and post-structural theories, Third Wave feminism (1980s-) emerged as a product of the increased discussions and writings on intersections of feminism and racism (Baumgardner and Richards, 2000; Heywood and Drake, 2000; Kinser, 2004). Scholars argue that Third Wave feminism is an extension of Second Wave (Baumgardner and Richards, 2000). However, Third Wavers have their own unique agenda, transformational capacity, alongside their own young culture, typically termed as the Third Wave that argues for continued importance of feminist politics, education, culture and personal empowerment of women (Bobel, 2010; Baumgardner and Richards, 2000; Reynolds, 2013; Synder, 2008; Synder-Hall, 2010). Arguably, Third Wave feminism has been developed by younger feminists for younger women; often characterised by a group of feminists coming from diverse backgrounds of class, cultures, gender and sexuality (Baumgardner and Richards, 2000; Heywood and Drake, 2004; Kinser, 2004; Reynolds, 2013).

In similar lines, the Indian feminist movement gained inspiration from within the value system of its own society that focused on varied problems and myriad issues beyond women's rights, access and equity to education, violence against women, sexual harassment, reproductive rights, class, caste and other forms of gender inequalities (Kumar, 1993; Jayawardena, 1986). Therefore, Indian feminist movement too can be divided into First, Second and Third Waves in line with the West, first, to understand the greater depth, breadth, versatility and uniqueness of the Indian feminism and second, echoing on Kinser (2004: 129) "as a way of negotiating [Indian] feminist space". Hence, accounts of Indian feminist

movements typically distinguish between the first-wave (late 19th century to India's independence in 1947), the second-wave (1970-1980s) and the third-wave (1990s-) feminism. Notwithstanding, Mohanty (1991) argues that the parameters of western gender theories must be re-constructed in order to conform to the sociocultural specifics of India. Therefore, the distinction of these waves ought to be coded within the narratives of progress and development of Indian women (Bhattacharyya, 2009; 2013b; Jayawardena, 1986).

The Anglo-American feminist literature of the 1990s have developed the notions of 'new femininities' and 'girl power' (Baker, 2008 Charles, 2007; Heywood and Drake, 2004; Harris, 2004; Laurie et al., 1999; Thomas, 2008) as a manifestation of the politics of both Third Wave and post feminism (Gibson, 2004). The lexicon of post feminism is ill-defined and often rhetorically referred to (Gill, 2007). It invokes to the idea that it comes "after a women's movement"; it suggests that a women's movement is no longer needed for feminism to continue (Gillis and Munford, 2004: 60). Post feminism further insinuates that although feminism failed to succeed in all of its political aims, it has been largely successful in shifting the terrain of cultural politics (Garrison, 2004; McRobbie, 2004). Dominant discussion of post feminism finds mention in *Sex and the City*, *Ally McBeal*, *Desperate Housewives*, *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Gill, 2007 McRobbie, 2004). Arguably, post feminism has contributed to a backlash against feminist scholarship (McRobbie, 2004). In her article, *Muslim Feminism in the Third Wave*, Saadallah (2004: 219) argues that "post feminism is only a contemporary version of liberal feminism.... [that embraces]the diverse nature of feminism." While there remains a subtle but sophisticated recognisable difference between post feminism and Third Wave feminism, the emergence of the latter can best be understood in relation to the political object of post feminism (Garrison, 2004: 50). By contrast, Third Wave feminism is an ideology, a movement or the "newest recognizable phase of feminist thought" whose principles are grounded on the praxis of Second Wave feminism, yet differentiated by some cultural and political ideologies (Garrison, 2004; Howie and Tauchert, 2004: 37; Heywood and Drake, 2004; McRobbie, 2004). Arguably, Third Wave feminism and post feminism are hegemonic, Eurocentric and American. Nevertheless, the notions of 'new femininities' and 'girl power' cannot be regarded wholly as coherent hegemonic projects. The presence, roots and practices of these notions can be felt universally.

Raising popular consciousness, the notion of 'girl power' reflects on female self-empowerment, while emphasising on the power and agency of females. In contrast to the literature describing women as 'victim' dependency, passivity and vulnerability narratives, writings on 'girl power' and 'new femininities' encapsulates female confidence and assertiveness (Baker, 2008; Charles, 2007;

Harris, 2004; Thomas, 2008). Scholars argue that these two notions are manifestations of youthful feminine, an identity that needs to be “embraced, [eulogized and if possible], even profited” (Baumgardner and Richards, 2000; Thomas, 2008: 62). In an attempt to embracing their confidence and glorifying their sexuality, the popular media depicts these notions through the representations of ‘*Ladettes*’, the *Spice Girls*, the *Powerpuff Girls*, *Dolly Rockers* and the like (Gibson, 2004; Harris, 2004; Laurie et al., 1999; Munford, 2004).

Previous studies have reported the constructions of femininity in a global context (Baker, 2008; Laurie et al., 1999; Gill and Scharff, 2011). While examining their lived experiences, these studies have shown as to how the young women as ‘neoliberal subjects’ negotiates with their gendered identities while using the new social and relational spaces of opportunity and (or) oppression (with respect to education, employment, motherhood, domesticity) (Baker, 2008; Laurie et al., 1999; Gill and Scharff, 2011). In similar and yet a slightly different context, it is the purpose of the research to highlight on how the women tend to negotiate the socio-cultural space and norms associated with their everyday practices while aspiring to make most out of their lives.

More recently, the notion of ‘girl power’ have extended into the realms of public and international organisations such as UNICEF (UNICEF, 2011), United Nations Foundations (UNF, 2011) aimed at developing the positive self-esteem among the girls and young women. Importantly, the social, educational, governmental and even business corporates of India have started leveraging the notion of ‘girl power’. Along with awareness of the subordinate status of Indian women, it is evident that many women and girls (especially from the rural areas and urban poor) fail to avail opportunities largely as a consequence of deep-seated roots of socio-cultural norms and economic predicaments bestowed on them (Dutt, 2010; Drèze and Sen, 2002; 2013; Sundaram and Vanneman, 2008). Therefore, implementations of varied schemes and flagship programmes of the Government of India like *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (Elementary education for all) (Mundra, 2012; Dutt, 2010), *Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act* (Bhattacharyya et al., 2011; Bhattacharyya and Vauquiline, 2013; Holmes et al., 2011; Sudarsan, 2011), Self-help groups [for instances, Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA), *Samudayik Shakti*] (Swain and Wallentin, 2007; Ramchandrar and Pelto, 2009), all have been successful in narrowing the gender gaps to a great extent thus, increasing the self-esteem and aspirations of the young women and girls at the grass-roots level (Godrej, 2012). Chinton, a not-for-profit, non-governmental organisation (NGO) is another breakthrough in surging ‘girl power’ in India. The organisation champions for eliminating child labour especially young girls and getting them into school out of the trash heaps. Similarly, on 5 March 2014 the ‘girl power’ of Laxmi, herself an acid attack survivor has been recognised

universally, when Michelle Obama felicitated her for successfully leading the campaign, *Stop Acid Attacks*.

Within the landscape of Indian higher education, a plethora of academic research and news reports have shown as to how 'girl power' has been lassoed through university/college education to construct the identities and growing confidence of young women (Bhattacharyya, 2013b; Chanana, 2007). These studies have unpacked that sites of higher education continue to operate as spaces through which women mediate their gendered identities entailed within the broader discourses of 'girl power' that emphasises on personal aspirations and choices. These findings bear resonance with a number of Anglo-American writings (Baker, 2008; Charles, 2007; Harris, 2004; Laurie et al., 1999).

The role of the Indian media must also be mentioned where a number of mega serials (soap operas) and reality TV shows continue to air the emerging confidence, the hidden power and the positive self-esteem of young women while highlighting the importance of higher education, and in this way, purchasing the principles of 'new femininities' and 'girl power' in India. *Mann Kee Awaaz Pratigya* (Our Mind's Voice-An Unbreakable Oath) is one such glaring example where *Pratigya*, the key character, a young middle class woman, fights for her self-respect and the tacit stigma that continues to prevail in parts of Indian society. *Diya aur Bati hum* (Lights and Lamps) paints the story of a 19-year-old, highly intelligent, middle class Rajasthani woman, who greatly aspires to become an Indian Police Service. However, after losing her parents in bomb blasts; she was married off to a confectioner by her brother in an extended family setting where higher education fails to receive no value. Needless to mention, two contrasting partners put on the same life boat, the story portrays the amount of support she receives from her husband to fulfil her dream. Another breakthrough, *Wife Bina Life* (Life without wife) highlights the importance of 'homemakers' and aims at transforming the personal attitudes towards 'marriage', one of the most sacred social institutions of India and thus, renew and strengthen the bonds between the spouses and child(ren). Here, 10 homemakers leave behind their husbands and children to go on holidays for six weeks, where the husbands are meant to juggle with household chores: cleaning, cooking, childrearing and even helping the children with homework(s) and preparing them for exams. Significantly, Raj Rani, the winner of reality TV show *Survivor India* is an embodiment of emerging 'girl power' and 'new femininity' of modern India. Nevertheless, the analysis of this research based on a close scrutiny of Indian women pursuing higher education with some already advancing into the labour market (while others have high aspirations to enter paid employment); and at the cutting edge of the challenge to shift in gender roles, could be considered to reflect an emerging trend of new and emergent

femininities circumscribed by 'girl power'. In the next section, I lay out the descriptive dimension of this research with respect to the new economic reforms of India and its connections to higher education and women's employment.

New Economic Reforms, Higher Education and Women's Employment:

It is well documented that India's economic growth since the late 1980s has been spearheaded by the service sectors (Bhattacharyya, 2013b). Importantly, this transformation bears connection to the system of higher education as this shift demands new and updated skills (such as knowledge of information literacy, business management, human resource management; media and mass communication, fashion technology) required in the economy (Bhattacharyya, 2009; 2013b; Chanana, 2007; Gupta, 2005; Sarkar, 2007; Valk and Srinivasan, 2011). Arguably, the structural adjustment strategies continue to develop the system of higher education into a knowledge-based economy (Dahlman and Utz, 2005). As a result, many private institutions continue to mushroom, opening up new disciplines such as management, media and mass communication, fashion technology; elevating these disciplines in the hierarchy of higher education (Chanana, 2007; Dahlman and Utz, 2005). Alongside, there has been significant growth in private medical and engineering colleges as well as "private vocational courses catering especially to the IT sector" (Kapur and Mehta, 2004: 4; Dahlman and Utz, 2005).

Sarkar (2007) reports that in India young women and men (between the ages of 15-24 years) are better educated and have an unprecedented knowledge of the world around them. Currently, the higher education system of India ranks third in the world embracing 14.6 million enrolments after China (26.7 million) and the USA (18.3 million). Yet, surprisingly the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of India in higher education is only 13.8%, when compared to China's 25%, United States' 83%, Japan's 52%, Germany's 50%, United Kingdom's 57%, Italy's 59%, Brazil's 34%, Russia's 77%, Canada's 57%, and Indonesia's 16% and world average of 26%. Despite India's low GER, what is most interesting is that, India has an unemployment rate of 9.2%, which is slightly lower than the European Union (9.5%) and China that stands at 9.8% (Agarwal, 2009a, Sarkar, 2007). The Department of Higher Education, Government of India aims to achieve a GER of 21% by 2016-17 and 30% by the year 2020 (DHE, 2014). Nevertheless, in terms of equity, access and quality, the system of Higher Education remains scourged – there are massive incongruity in GER – 7.5% in rural areas while 23.8% in urban areas; wide inter-state disparity with GER in Delhi being 31.9% whereas in Assam, it is 8.3%; while GER is 10.5% for females and it is 14.4% for males; and across the communities, for scheduled castes (6.6%), scheduled tribes (6.5%); other backward communities (8.7%) and for others it is 17.2%. In addition, the

system is abysmal with obsolete curricula and poorly-equipped libraries (for example, in IIT Mumbai, on an average 53 books are available per students while in other institutes, it is only 9 or below) alongside shabby infrastructure. Furthermore, most institutes suffer greatly from faculty shortages.

Notwithstanding, the transformation in higher education has of course, paved the way for changed occupational structure in the labour market, thus ensuing in a better division of labour that includes shifting of manual skills to intellectual activities (Agarwal, 2009a; Dahlman and Utz, 2005) at least in the organised sector. Strikingly and as stated above, increased participation of women in higher education in the context of the new economic reforms of India has been the driving force for feminisation of the labour force and consequent shrinking of gender gaps in the same (Bhattacharyya, 2009; Budhwar et al., 2005; Sahni and Shankar, 2012) – this feminisation is evident in the nursing and the teaching sectors where 80% women find employment (see, Common Wealth Secretariat and UNESCO, 2011). Evidence also suggest that India’s new economic reforms have created a considerable amount of employment opportunities for those women in higher education who possess managerial, business and marketable skills and talent (Budhwar et al., 2005; Chakrabarti, 2013; Chanana, 2007; Ghosh, 2014; Valk and Srinivasan, 2011). For instances – a survey by the Business Line from *The Hindu* (*The Hindu*, 2007) group shows that India dominates the Asia list in an increase in the participation of women in the top-level management, with India leading at 14% followed by Taiwan, while the Philippines and Hong Kong stand at 13% and 9% respectively. Evidently Indian women are gradually carving their niche by smashing the concrete ceiling in middle and senior management and professional roles (Agarwal 2009b, Chakrabarti, 2013; Charumathi, 2008; Ghosh, 2014; Mora et al., 2009; Valk and Srinivasan, 2011). Especially in the banking sector (both public and private), Indian women have occupied the topmost echelons across power corridors (Chakrabarti, 2013; Ghosh, 2014). These findings remain similar to many phenomena of the advanced economies of the West (Crompton, 1993, 1997; Walby, 1997; also Common Wealth Secretariat and UNESCO, 2011). Importantly, like in the West, this increasing presence of women at senior levels, particularly in bureaucratic roles in Indian companies/service sectors could be perceived as a direct threat to patriarchal management structures as well as the production and (re)production of gender inequalities in the workplace (Madhavi, 2005). However, occupational segregation (Hakim, 2000) remains rife within all sectors including middle and senior management and the highest legislative and political bodies (Agarwal, 2009b, Rustagi, 2004; Menon-Sen and Kumar, 2001). Nevertheless, the growing trend of Indian women’s employment pattern epitomises a significant transformation in their labour market behaviour and positions. Alongside rapid

developments, India is witnessing a continuing, though delayed, feminisation of the labour force (Agarwal, 2009b, Bhattacharyya, 2009; 2013b; Budhwar et al., 2005). These phenomena reinforce studies conducted in the Anglo-American world (Casale and Posel, 2002; Walby, 1997; Wajcman, 1998). In similar context, one of the key objectives of the research is to probe as to how Indian middle class women of my sample aims to build their own dreams and outshine in domains, which are hitherto discerned as male fields. In the next section, I discuss the methodological issues.

Methodological Issues:

In this research, I advocated in-depth interviews from feminist scholarship. In-depth interview is an unstructured, open-ended method, used to uncover the meanings and insights that participants attach to their behaviour, thoughts, feelings and perspectives in depth (Berends, 2011; Lindlof and Taylor, 2011). In-depth interviews are exploratory and inductive in contrast to, large-scale questionnaire survey, which is confirmatory and deductive (Berends, 2011). The project on which I am drawing upon is to probe about Indian women's new career aspirations. Accordingly, I interviewed 29 young women pursuing higher education in India. I explored the extent to which these women in higher education viewed themselves as either career-oriented or domestic oriented, their personal aspirations and the relation of these to their present and future family roles— whether they pursued higher education as a personal preference or as an extension of family duty.

All the interviews were tape recorded. The interviews illustrate that many women of my sample aspire to have a career in advertising, media or private companies or work for the airlines industries. A significant proportion of those in the sample (12 out of 29) are already in paid employment as a function of their postgraduate training (in medical sciences and as college lecturers or teachers). In this way those pursuing careers in medicine are, like their western counterparts, economically independent through the stages of postgraduate training (Aveling, 2002; Hoffnung, 2011; Lepkowski, 2009). Pseudonyms are used for the interviewees and the details that may reveal their identity are not presented.

Higher Education in India:

Since India's independence in 1947, there has been a large-scale expansion of the system of higher education that has increased from only 27 universities in 1950 to 556 as on February 2011. In addition, there are 31,324 institutions including 2,565 women's colleges (UGC, 2012). Evidently, this trend bears connection to the growth of enrolments in different streams that increased from approximately 1% in 1950 to about 10% in 2009-10. Significantly, women's access to higher

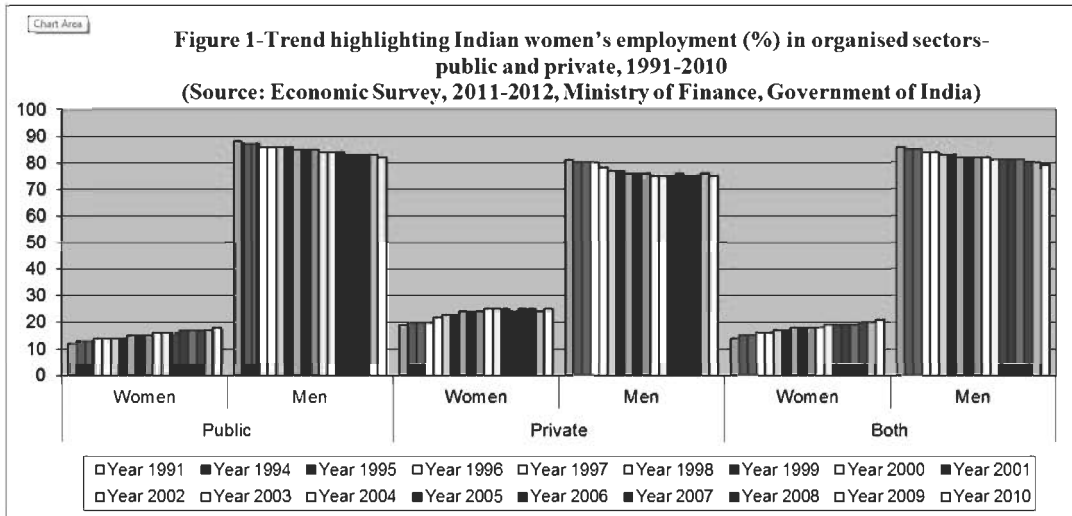
education increased from less than 10% of total enrolled students on the eve of India's independence, to approximately 41.40% in 2009-10, of which 14.72% are enrolled in professional courses (Raju, 2008). Surprisingly, contrary to the findings stated above, Indian women's entry to higher education is no more an urban phenomenon: "the growth in enrolment in higher education is much higher for rural women as compared to their urban counterparts— 13% as compared to 5% respectively —more than twice as faster for the rural women" (Raju, 2008: 79). Although clinching evidence of disparities with access to higher education remain (in terms of gender, inter-state, inter-religion, inter-caste, poor/non-poor), however, education gaps have been closing slowly between men and women. Access to higher education remains a success story for twenty first century Indian middle class women, where they have been able to equal or transcend their male counterparts in different areas of educational achievements (Bhattacharyya, 2009, 2013b).

Another significant change in India's higher education is the 'expansion' that has occurred through affirmative action or reservation practices in higher education (see, Basant and Sen, 2010; Bertrand et al., 2009). The affirmative action law reserves approximately 50% of the admission seats to students belonging to lower caste categories. This law succours the marginalised section of India to access higher education that was previously unavailable (Bertrand et al., 2009). In addition, a policy research conducted by Northwestern University of America (and jointly funded by the Ash Institute Harvard, Nike Foundation, MIT, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Yale University, and UNICEF) suggests that the law on affirmative action will pave the way to unlock the power of girls and young Indian women. This research however, does not address the issue of reservation and the resultant impact of women's access to higher education. Rather it unpacks that the new economic reforms of India enriches women's career aspirations: that Indian women have now been the beneficiaries of new job creations, thereby, gaining entry in 'male-type' and production process jobs—the more qualified an Indian woman is, the more likely she is to participate in paid employment and aspire to a career— there remains a positive correlation between educational attainment and career salience.

Women's Pursuit of Higher Education vis-à-vis New Career Aspirations:

As stated earlier, as a result of the new economic reforms and structural adjustment programmes, new career opportunities, increasing privatisation and a shift to a service economy has ensued increased job opportunities in trade and business (Agarwal, 2009b; Charumathi, 2008; Bhattacharyya, 2009; 2013b; Gupta, 2005; Mora et al., 2009). However, the impact of economic reforms have been highly uneven, reflecting a historic separation of employment in terms of

organised (or formal) versus unorganised (or informal sectors). In this research, I deal with women’s employment in the organised sector, because this is where most of my sample of Indian women is employed. The trend of Indian women’s employment in the organised sector (public and private) is shown in Figure 1.



Apparently, women represent only 21% of employment in the organised sector (Figure1): it is evident that growth of women’s employment remains higher in the private sector (25% in 2010) rather than the public (which stands at 17% in the same year). It is also evident that occupational segregation remains (Agarwal 2009b, Rustagi, 2004; Menon-Sen and Kumar, 2001). The key aim of this research however, is to unravel the extent to which women pursuing higher education aim to transform their identities in the newly formed social and economic spaces. In this way, it tries to draw connection between new femininities, girl power and Indian women accessing higher education.

Within the service sector, the greatest expansion of new job opportunities have occurred in teaching (both private and government institutions be it schools, college and universities), private hospitals, airlines, telecommunications and the media. Because of market driven policies, a gradual trend towards a feminisation of the labour force has occurred not only in terms of increasing numbers of women workers, but also in the terms and conditions of employment (Bhattacharyya, 2009, 2013b; Gupta, 2005).

Nevertheless, like the West, in India too, much of the employment growth that has taken place are those areas that are characterised as ‘women’s work’ (for examples, education, retail, medical, clerical) either with respect to demand for

the so called *nimble fingers*¹ or in terms of female-type 'caring' professions that draw on skills of 'emotion-work' (smiling down the phone), which are naturalised as female qualities. Many of the qualities and skills demanded by the employers in the organised sector of India could be stereotypically associated with the female (Bhattacharyya, 2009; Budhwar, et al. 2005). Therefore, it could be claimed that femininity in itself be viewed as an essential quality in the 'job market'. This resonates with the previous finding of Woodfield (1998; 2007), where she argues that despite increased job opportunities in the West, gender differences in employment continue and women's participation in the labour market tend to remain concentrated in job roles that demand feminine skills. Given Indian women's higher educational achievements, the touchtone image around women's new career aspirations according to their abilities, skills and desires are discussed below:

There is ample evidence in the narratives to demonstrate the high degree of career orientation of women, and in many cases, high aspirations are endorsed by external support from parents or spouse. A college lecturer claims that the support she receives from her husband and her parents in pursuit of post-doctoral training overseas is rooted in them 'wanting the best for her'.

I have lots of support from my family and spouse and that is why I am pursuing my PhD. At times I have to compromise; they want that I should give them time too. They also want me to pursue my studies. They love me and so they want me. Otherwise, they are very much supportive to my career. I am highly career oriented. After my PhD, I want to do my post-doctoral degree in an overseas university....

Similarly, another respondent demonstrates considerable commitment and enterprise in her ambition to set up her own private school once she has secured her B.Ed. She claims that her husband does not hinder her opportunities in this respect:

My spouse has been very much supportive since my marriage. I got married when I was studying my Masters and was blessed by my child in the first year only. Together with the child, I gained my Masters and now I am pursuing my B.Ed. He [my husband] never expected anything, which I should do at the expense of my studies.... after some years, I think I will open a school of my own....

¹ Thesis that demonstrates that wage differentials in the market factories all over the world tend to be male biased. It also illustrates that nimble fingers are socialised skills and not naturalised (Elson and Pearson, 1981).

Superficially, these extracts suggest a strong individual preference for career, much in the way that human capital theorists claim that it is an individual 'taste' for career versus family (or an adaptation of work to family) which determines the supply of women's labour in any given situation (see for instance the international comparisons provided by Catherine Hakim, 2000). Yet, the narratives also demonstrate that this rising tide of career-mindedness is context dependent: it is almost always conditional upon the women accepting that domestic and family roles will at some point take priority. The case of a doctor respondent epitomises women's heavily circumscribed opportunities for an independent career:

My aspiration is to be a good daughter, wife, sister, mother and doctor – to make my family and husband proud of me and make everyone happy. I want to be a capable doctor in my field but never to pursue a career at the cost of my family's well-being. I am not so career-minded. I don't want a career at the cost of my family....

Yet another respondent who is expecting a baby, goes on to stress that while her academic studies are central to her identity at the present time, this is only until such the time she has her baby. She takes it for granted that once she has children of her own she will put family responsibilities first:

My family is very supportive till now and they give me ample opportunities for my career because they believe that once I start my family I won't compromise my family for my studies....

Similarly, another young woman views her ambition to build a career as complementing, rather than denying, those of a successful wife and a mother:

Yes, my family has been very supportive in building my career. The second point is important. I am career-minded but if the situation comes where I have to choose in between the two – for example: suppose there is an important conference for me to attend and at the same time my daughter has her exams then obviously my daughter's exams will gain priority and I will cancel my programme of attending the conference....

Career aspirations also vary across the sample from generally constructed 'feminine' type occupations (high school teacher, airhostess) through to white-collar professions (college lecturer, medical doctor, government official, civil servant), to a number of 'masculine type' occupations (engineering, airline pilot, politics). One of the respondent's ambitions to become an airline pilot perhaps best reflects the dramatic transformation of new career opportunities now open to educated Indian women. However, she wants to place a restriction on family size, even in situations where her husband or mother would wish them to have

more than one child. For her, the goal of one child is a clear compromise between the assumed 'worthlessness' of (or loss of female purpose in) a childless marriage and the loss of career opportunities that responsibility for more than one child would entail.

I am highly career oriented. My father passed away, when I was very young. My mother is a schoolteacher and she has brought me up to be very independent. I take tuitions during the evening hours but my aim in life is to be a pilot. After my graduation, I am taking the training in the flying club. However, unlike some modern couples of today, I am not going to follow DINKS [Double income no kids], instead I prefer to have only one child because I believe that marriage without children is worthless.... with one child, I will be able to make a perfect balance between family and work....

The narratives also illustrate quite clearly, that career salience cannot be viewed in isolation from moral norms and family obligations, however strongly the idea of a career is presented as a matter of personal preference and ambition. The narratives also reveal that individual agents bend to the moral demands of the family. It remains however unclear whether these obligations or norms become a site of power contestations. Nonetheless, it is clear that for majority of women access to higher education is both personally liberating as well as an extension of family duty. Therefore, while a widowed mother has encouraged her daughter to recognise the value of financial independence, another respondent whose mum is a divorcee will only pursue an independent career if doing so does not prevent her from looking after her mother, or denying what she sees as her feminine, caring identity:

During the final year of my graduation, I got a job in Gujarat through the campus interview. However, I did not like to leave my mother alone and go. I know after my postgraduation and the law degree, which I am pursuing, will help me to get a job somewhere here in one of the multinational companies.... I want to strike a balance between my career and potential family and of course, look after my mother....

It would be wrong, therefore, to over-determine the role of any individual agency in these women's participation in higher education and their career choice. The 'choices' these women make are not driven by personal preference alone but instead circumscribed by parental aspirations and local cultural norms governing what is deemed to be the best or proper path for a daughter or wife to pursue. This is illustrated clearly in the case of another respondent who is receiving private coaching to help her through competitive civil service exams explicitly to fulfill her father's dream of a powerful and prestigious career for his only daughter.

I am career-minded but my career is decided by my father and he wants me to take the IAS (Indian Administrative Service) examination. I know how tough it is, but at the same time, I also believe that it is not impossible. I am preparing for it and also taking commercial coaching for these exams. I want to get through it and fulfill my father's dreams....

Across the sample, it is clear that exam results and qualifications often matter as much to parents as they do to the women themselves. Sometimes, as in the case of few respondents this reflects a sense of reflected glory and family pride:

They always expect me to come out with flying colours and then get a career – 'best job' whereby they can feel proud of me. As my family members always encourage me to take up my studies seriously to make a good career, I am always serious in this aspect.... I am doing my post graduation and engaged fully into it. Trying my best to come out with flying colours through which I think will be able to compete in the job market as getting a job is the ultimate aim of my life....

My family supports and helps me in every possible way for my bright career. I just could not imagine my life without my mother. Her love, support and encouragement helps me to shape my career. She does not allow me to feel low and encourage me in every way when sometimes I feel like failure. Her waking up late at night with me when I need to burn midnight oil helps me to feel confident. My father helps me to coping everything with positive hopes. He always encourages me never to lose hope and face everything with a smiling face. Since he himself is an engineer, he helps me a great deal in the subjects. Again, he also helps me in my crisis. After my engineering graduation, I want to work for one of the private companies....

In other cases, personal aspirations are bound up with pragmatic objectives such as to contribute towards a family business or replicate parental success. This is illustrated in the case of another respondent's ambition to establish a career in advertising – just like that, which her father enjoys:

My father is a film writer and producer – I have also the experience of helping him. Therefore, I want to establish my career in the advertising world for which I am working very hard and looking for various options to get into it....

In summary, the narratives reveal majority of the women's high aspirations, modern outlook and a high degree of a career orientation like their counterparts of the West (Aveling, 2002; Hoffnung, 2011; Lepkowski, 2009). Reaping from the benefits of Indian women's movement, these women enact feminism in their everyday practices through the jobs they do. The research narratives also unpack that majority of the women are strong and pragmatic in their outlook and true to

themselves as a woman (Chakrabarti, 2013). This outlook provides a lens through which to understand the choices and mediations these young women have made, and continue to make, in their everyday lives. This finding corroborates with previous research of the Anglo-American world (see, for instance, Baker, 2008; Laurie et al., 1999; Heywood and Drake, 2004; Thomas, 2008). Women in the sample are motivated not only by personal preference such as a 'taste' for economic independence, but are typically also encouraged by parents (or sometimes a spouse) to compete for powerful, status oriented, prestigious jobs as a matter of family pride. This encouragement may be interpreted as a manifestation of the pressures to maintain a high status through the accumulation of professional employment and qualifications. However, the role of new economic reforms in shaping the career aspirations of some of these women should not be underestimated. The women are confident and expect to be welcomed into a workplace and achieve in their career – the majority of the young women greatly aspire to sell their skills to multinational companies. It is suggestive therefore, that as a result of the new economic reforms; these women aspire greatly to harness modern career resources and options in order to build their modern identities. In a sense, these women enjoy greater flexibility in imagining their career trajectories than Indian women were ever endowed in the past.

Conclusion:

Interesting insights have emerged. The findings suggest a rippling emergence of 'new femininities' circumscribed by 'girl power' in contemporary Indian society stemming from changes in gender roles impinged on by cultural and economic transformation. Indeed, clear parallels can be drawn between the two. The narratives suggest that women pursuing higher education are able to make strategic choices: take control and ownership of their choices towards career aspirations, marriage and motherhood. Arguably, then, these women are able to assess their expected accomplishments to unfold biographic narratives.

The subtle narratives unravel that women are essentially modern, optimistic, and shaped profoundly by the impact of new economic reforms, privatisation and a shift to a service economy. These interpretations bear resonance to a number of Anglo-American studies (Laurie et al., 1999; Walby, 1997).

This research is based on intensive data collection through in-depth interviews, conducted among 29 women pursuing higher education. Whilst this small sample is insufficient to deliberate broader-ranging trends, the research could be considered a starting point for a more extensive study of 'new femininities' and 'girl power' in India: first, this study can be a basis for a further longitudinal study to probe the extent to which women's new career aspirations have been

fulfilled. Second, the findings suggest that majority of the women interviewed desire a career that includes expectations of marriage and motherhood. Therefore, this research can be used for further research to examine the extent to which Indian women who aspire to both work and parent juggle the expectations of integrating the dual roles and responsibilities. Further, this research can also be a basis to probe male students' attitudes towards higher education and career: the extent to which career aspirations of male students differ from their female counterparts, perhaps by advocating Gender and Development (GAD) approach. As such, this research produces a direction for future research, where it is suggested to include the male participants' more fully in in-depth interviews.

References:

- Agarwal, P. (2009A). *Indian higher education: envisioning the future*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Agarwal, R. (2009B). Effect of education qualification in information technology industry: A case study of India, *American Journal of Educational Studies*, 2(1): 73-95.
- Azam, M. & Kingdon, G. (2014). Are girls the fairer sex in India? Revisiting intra-household allocation of education expenditure, *Discussion paper series No. 5706*, 2011, [<http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:101:1-201105306294>].
- Aveling, N. (2002). Having it all' and the discourse of equal opportunity: Reflections on choices and changing perceptions, *Gender and Education*, 14 (3), 265-80, 2002.
- Baker, J. (2008). The ideology of choice: Overstating progress and hiding injustice in the lives of young women: Findings from a study in North Queensland, Australia, *Women's Studies International Forum*, 31, 53-64.
- Basant, R. & Sen, G. (2010). Who participates in higher education in India? Rethinking the role of affirmative action. *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLV (39), 62-70.
- Baumgardner, J. and Richards, A. (2000). *Manifesta: Young women, feminism and the future*, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Berends, L. (2011). Embracing the visual: Using timelines with in-depth interviews on substance use and treatment. *The Qualitative Report*, 16(1): 1-9.
- Bertrand, M., Hanna, R. and Mullanaithan. S. (2009). Affirmative action in education: Evidence from engineering college admissions in India, *Journal of Public Economics*, XXX: 1-4.
- Bhattacharyya, R (forthcoming), Understanding the spatialities of sexual assault against Indian women in India, *Journal Gender, Place and Culture*.
- Bhattacharyya, R. (2013A). Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013: Will it ensure women's safety in public spaces? *Journal Space and Culture*, India, 1(1): 13-27.

- Bhattacharyya, R. (2013B). *Are we empowered? Stories of young Indian working women*, Saarbrücken. Germany: Lap Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Bhattacharyya, R, Vauquiline, P & Singh, S. (2003). Towards a socially sustainable India: An analysis of National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, 2006. S.K. Singh, Raj Kumar, H.P. Mathur, N.B. Singh and V.K. Kumra (eds). *Energy Resources, Alternative Search and sustainable Development*, New Delhi: Shree Publishers. 73-88.
- Bhattacharyya, R. (2009). Examining the changing status and role of middle class Assamese women: lessons from the lives of university students, *PhD thesis*, UK: Newcastle University.
- Bhattacharyya, R. and Vauquiline, P. (2013). A mirage or a rural life line? Analysing the impact of Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act on women beneficiaries of Assam. *Space and Culture, India*, 1(1): 83-101.
- Bhattacharya, P. C. C. (2006). Economic development, gender inequality, and demographic outcomes: Evidence from India, *Population and Development Review*, 32(2): 263–291.
- Bobel, C. (2010). *New blood: Third wave feminism and politics of menstruation*. USA: Rutgers University Press.
- Budhwar, P. S., Debi, S. & Bhatnagar, J. (2005). Women in management in the new economic environment: The case of India, *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 11(2): 179-193.
- Chanana, K. (2007). Globalisation, higher education and gender-changing subject choices of Indian women students, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 590-98.
- Chaudhari, M. (2005). *Feminism in India* (Issues in contemporary Indian feminism). New York: Zed Books.
- Charles, C. (2007). Exploring 'girl power': Gender, literacy and the textual practices of young women attending an elite school, *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 6 (2): 72-88.
- Charumathi, S. (2008). Women join hands for a better media. India Together. (<http://www.indiatogether.org/2008/may/med-nwmi.htm>).
- Casale, D. & Posel, D. (2002). The continued feminization of the labour force in South Africa: An analysis of recent data and trends, *South African Journal of Economics*, 70(1), 156-184.
- Chakrabarti, R. (2013). Women bankers through in India, BBC News Business, 12 November. (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-24867346>).
- Common Wealth Secretariat and UNESCO. (2011). *Women and the teaching profession: Exploring the feminisation debate*, London: Pall Mall.
- Conrad, L. (2011). Third Wave Feminism: A Case Study of BUST Magazine, Thesis, Master of Arts in Mass Communication, California State University, Northridge.

- Crompton, R. (1993). *Class and stratification: An introduction to current debates*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Crompton, R. (1997). *Women and work in modern Britain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Datta, A. (2007). Samudayik shakti: Working-class feminism and social organization in Subhash Camp, New Delhi. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 14 (2), 215 – 231.
- Derne, S. (2001). The Indian women's movement and feminist theory: An assessment of Mackinnon's model, *Man in India*, 81(3/4), 251-262.
- Dahlman, C. & Utz, A. (2005). *India and the knowledge economy: Leveraging strengths and opportunities*, Washington DC: World Bank.
- Drèze, J. & Sen, A. (2002). *A, India: Development and participation*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Drèze, J & Sen, A. (2013). *An uncertain glory: India and its contradictions*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Dutt, S. (2010). Girls' education as freedom? *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 17(1), 25-48.
- Elson, D. & Pearson, R. (1981). Nimble fingers make cheap workers: An analysis of women's employment in Third World export manufacturing, *Feminist Review*, 7, 87-107.
- Faludi, S. (1992). *Backlash: The undeclared war against American women*. London: Virago.
- Fernandes, L. (2006). *India's new middle class: Democratic politics in an era of economic reform*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Freedman, J. (2002). *Feminism*, New Delhi: Viva Books.
- Garrison, E. K. (2000). Contests for the meaning of Third wave feminism: Feminism and popular consciousness, in Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie and Rebecca Munford, (eds.) *Third wave feminism- A critical exploration* Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. 24-36.
- Ghosh, P. (2014). Shattered Glass Ceiling: Indian Female Executives Thriving in Banking Industry, but Ordinary Women Need Greater Access to Loans, *International Business Times*, 26 February 2014. (<http://www.ibtimes.com/shattered-glass-ceiling-indian-female-executives-thriving-banking-industry-ordinary-women-need>).
- Gibson, P. C. (2004). Introduction: Popular culture, in Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie and Rebecca Munford, (eds.) *Third wave feminism- A critical exploration* Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. 137-141.
- Gill, R. (2007). Postfeminist media culture: elements of a sensibility. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10 (2), 147-166.
- Gill, R. & Scharff, C. (2011). Introduction, in Gill, R. & Scharff, C. (eds.) *New Femininities: Post feminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity*. Hampshire: Palgrave.
- Gillis, S. and Munford, R. (2004). Interview with Elaine Showalter, in Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie and Rebecca Munford, (eds.) *Third wave feminism- A critical exploration* (60-64).

Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

[<http://dasra.org/n/forwebsite/dasra/Reports/girlpower.pdf>] (18 January 2012).

Gupta, K.R. (2005). Liberalisation and globalisation of Indian economy, in K R Gupta, (ed.) *Liberalisation and globalisation of Indian economy*. New Delhi: Atlantic. 304-314.

Hakim, C. (2000). *Work-lifestyle choices in the 21st century preference theory*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

Harris, A. (2004). *Future girl: Young women in the twenty-first century*. New York: Routledge.

Heywood, L. and Drake, J. 2004. It's all about the Benjamins': Economic determinants of Third wave feminism in the United States, in Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie and Rebecca Munford, (eds.) *Third wave feminism- A critical exploration*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan: 13-23.

Hoffnung, M. (2011). Career and family outcomes for women graduates of single-sex versus coed colleges, *Sex Roles*, 65: 680-692.

Holmes, R., Sadana, N. and Rath, S. (2011). An opportunity for change? Gender analysis of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, *Project 53*, Overseas Development Institute: 1-4.

Howie, G. and Tauchert (2011). A Feminist dissonance: The logic of late feminism, in Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie and Rebecca Munford, (eds.) *Third wave feminism- A critical exploration*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan: 37-48.

Jayawardena, K. (ed.). (1986). *Feminism and nationalism in the third world*. London: Zed.

Kapur, D. and Mehta, P.B. (2004) Indian Higher Education Reform: From Half-baked Socialism to Half-baked Capitalism, *Working Paper No. 108*, Centre for Development at Harvard University. [<http://www.cid.harvard.edu/cidwp/pdf/108.pdf>] (20 July 2007)

Kinser, A.E. (2004). Negotiating spaces for/through Third-Wave Feminism, *NWSA Journal*, 16(3), (Fall): 124- 153.

Kumar, R. (1993). *The history of doing-An illustrated account of movements for women's rights and feminism in India, 1800-1900*, New Delhi: Kali for Women.

Laurie, N., Dwyer, C., Holloway, S. and Smith, F. (1999). *Geographies of new femininities*. New York: Pearson Education.

Lepkowski, C.C. (2009). Gender and the career aspirations, professional assets, and personal variables of higher education administrators, *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal*, 27(6):1-15.

Lindlof, T.R. and Taylor, B C. (2011). *Qualitative Communication Research Methods*, London: Sage.

Maan Ki Awaj Pratigya, (Our Mind's Voice-An Unbreakable Oath) [mega TV serial (now finished)] Star Channel, Star Plus, 22: 30.

Mack-Canty, C. (2004). Third-wave feminism and the need to reweave the nature/culture duality, *NWSA Journal*, 16(3) (Fall): 154-179.

Madhavi, C.V. Invisible at the Top. The Hindu, 9 December 2010.
[<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/mag/2005/12/11/stories/2005121100310400.htm>].

McGuire, M. L. (2011). How to sit. How to stand: Bodily practice and the new urban middle class, in Isabelle Clark-Decès, (ed.) *A companion to the anthropology of India* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell :117-136.

McRobbie, A. (2004). Post-feminism and popular culture, *Feminist Media Studies*, 4 (3): 255-264.

Mehra, P. (2002). Women managers: To the top and beyond, *The Hindu Business Line*, 27 April. [<http://www.blonnet.com/canvas/2002/04/27/stories/2002042700020100.htm>].

Menon-Sen, K. and Shiv Kumar, A K. (2001). *Women in India: How free? How equal?* Report Commissioned by the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in India, New Delhi: UNDP.

Mohanty, C. T. (1991). Under western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses, in Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Anna Russo and Lourdes Torres, (eds.) *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press: 51-80.

Mora, Sowjanya, Saradhi K. Gonela and Nagendra V. Chowdary, (2009). *Indian women in banking industry: Breaking glass ceilings?* IBS® Case Development Centre, Asia-Pacific's Largest Repository of Management Case Studies.
[http://www.ibscdc.org/Case_Studies/HRM/HRM0061.htm (3 March2012)]

Mundra, S. (2012). Education-The inclusive growth strategy for women empowerment in Indian context, *Developing Country Studies*, 2(1): 36-44.

Pandya, N. (2013). Girls education, child marriage, & gender justice: A study of *Balika Shivir* educational camp, Rajasthan, India: A Capstone Project, Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at Syracuse University.

Patil, V. (2001). Striving to break through the glass ceiling...*The Tribune*, 14 October.
[<http://www.tribuneindia.com/2001/20011014/herworld.htm#1>].

Raju, S. (2008). Gender differentials in access to higher education. *Higher Education in India: Issues Related to Expansion, Inclusiveness, Quality and Finance*, New Delhi, University Grants Commission: 79-102.

Ramachandar, L and Pelto, P J. (2009). Self-help groups in Bellary: microfinance and women's empowerment. *The Journal of Family Welfare*, 55(2): 1-16.

Reynolds, C.S., (2013). Breaking codes: Making theories on menstruation accessible through Third wave feminism, *a Report*, Submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of Master of Science, In Rhetoric and Technical Communication, Michigan Technological University.

Rustagi, P. (2004). Significance of gender-related development indicators: An analysis of Indian states. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 11(3): 291-343.

Saadallah, S. (2004). Muslim feminism in the Third Wave: A reflective inquiry. In Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie and Rebecca Munford, (eds.) *Third Wave feminism- A Critical Exploration*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan: 216-226.

Sarkar, T. (2007). Higher educational reforms for enhancing youth employment opportunity in India, Educational reform and employment opportunities, Centre for International Private Enterprise, US Chamber of Commerce, *International essay competition*.

[http://www.cipe.org/programs/women/EssaysForWeb/Education_Sarkar.pdf]
(7January 2010)]

Sahni, R. and Shankar, V. K. (2012). 'Girls' higher education in India on the road to inclusiveness: On track but heading where?. *Higher Education*, 63: 237-256.

Sarma, R B. (2009). Feminist political economy. In Kitchin R, Thrift N (eds) *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (pp. 79-86), Oxford: Elsevier, 4: 79-86.

Scharer, P. (2013). *An international approach to challenging violence against women in India*, Claremont Colleges Scholarship @ Claremont, CMC Senior Theses.

Scruse, T. (2006). The 'new' middle class in India: A re-assessment, *Conference Proceedings*, 16th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia in Wollongong, 26- 29 June.

Sharma, R.B. (2008). Marraige, motherhood and career salience: Young women in contemporary society of Assam. In A.K. Ray and BD Ray (eds.) *Women emancipation: Focus North East India*. New Delhi: Om Publications: 163-182.

Simister, J. and Makowiec, J. (2008). Domestic violence in India: Effects of education. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 15(3), 507-518.

Sudarshan, R. M. (2011). India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act: women's participation and impacts in Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Rajasthan. *Research Report 06*, Institute of Development Studies, Centre for Social Protection: 1-24.

Sundaram, A. and Vanneman, R (2008). Gender differentials in literacy in India: The intriguing relationship with women's labor force participation. *World Development*, 36 (1): 128-143.

Swain, R. B. and Wallentin, F.Y. (2007). Does microfinance empower women? Evidence from Self Help Groups in India. Department of Economics, Uppsala University, *Working paper*, 24. 1-30.

Synder, R. C. (2008). What is Third-Wave feminism? A new directions essay. *Signs*, 34(1): 175-196.

- Snyder-Hall, R. C. (2010). Third-Wave feminism and the defense of 'choice'. *Perspectives on Politics*, 8 (01): 255-261.
- The Hindu, More Indian Women in Senior Management: Survey (2007, March 28). The Hindu Business Line
[<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2007/03/28/stories/2007032802251000.htm>] (3 December 2007)
- Thomas, Mary E. Resisting mothers, Making gender: Teenage girls in the United States and the articulation of femininity. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 15(1), 61-74.
- Tong, R. (1997). *Feminist thought: A comprehensive introduction*. London: Routledge.
- UGC, (2012). Higher Education in India-Strategies and Schemes during Eleventh Plan Period (2007-2012) for Universities and Colleges
[<http://www.ugc.ac.in/pub/stategies/HEIstategies.pdf>] (8 March 2012)
- UNF, (2011). Girl Power Unites DC [<http://www.unfoundation.org/news-and-media/press-releases/2011/girl-up-unites-dc.html>] (12 December 2011).
- UNICEF, (2011). Celebrating Girl Power, UNICEF [India
http://www.unicef.org/india/media_3720.htm] (12 December 2011) and
[http://www.unicef.org/adolescence/index_girls.html] (12 December 2011).
- Valk, R. and Srinivasan, V. (2011). Work-family balance of Indian women software professionals: A qualitative study. *IIMB Management Review*, 23(1): 39-50.
- Walby, S. (1997). *Gender transformations*. London: Routledge.
- Wajcman, J. (1998). *Managing like a man: Women and men in corporate management*. Cambridge: Polity.
- "Wife Bina Life" (Life without wife) [reality TV programme (now finished)] Star Channel, Star Plus, Saturday, 20:30 to 21: 30.
- Woodfield, R. (1998). *Working women and social labour*, RUSEL Working Paper No.33, Department of Politics, University of Exeter.
- Woodfield, R. (2008). *What women want from work: Gender and occupational choice in the 21st century*. Hampshire, Palgrave.