



Metropolis As Patriarch

A Study of Youth Working and
Living in Hyderabad

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RESEARCH CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES

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A study of youth living and working in
Hyderabad

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Executive Summary

The conceptualisation of this project

The 2012 Delhi Nirbhaya sexual assault and the protests around it suddenly visibilized the phenomena of young and single migrant women in the city spaces and the metropolises. Although such migration has been on rise since the last decade the debate on women's place in urban India in general and migrant women in particular gained momentum during and after the massive protests. At this juncture, every metropolis including Hyderabad revealed itself to be either unaware of their presence, thoughtless about their needs if not deeply prejudiced about the place and space for migrant women. It is in this background that we took up this project to map the lives of young migrated women in the city of Hyderabad.

We set out to understand the conditions in which women are migrating to the city of Hyderabad for education and employment and map the pathways of women from different socio-economic backgrounds. We chose not to focus on the danger and risk that young women face in urban public spaces but on how the city enables a re-formation of migrant women's sexuality, aspirations, conduct and movement; the kind of negotiations that the migration to a metropolis entails for young women and the networks and institutions that mediate them in finding a place in the metropolis.

Hyderabad, with its long history of migrations, its location in India's industrial development trajectory as well as the centrality it occupies in the regional development processes has become a coveted place to migrate for work in the last three decades. As a centre for engineering, technology, medical and humanities education, health care and as a hub of information and technology has also made it attractive for migrants from different strata, also from interior Telangana, Andhra Pradesh as well as other states. In the stories from the migrant women, Hyderabad is a silent character, but its background is crucial to understand the place it occupies in their desires, dreams and aspirations.

Methodology

Sample

We focused on women entering Hyderabad alone (it included both single and married women, but those who had first migrated to Hyderabad without a partner or family) through and conducted in-depth, qualitative interviews with 50 women. Our sample included students, teachers, mall

workers, corporate office workers, business process outsourcing workers, doing small jobs in industries, nurses, administrative staff in hospitals and business women. They came straight from villages, *mufassil* towns and smaller cities. As we focused only on women who had completed 12 years of education and who exercised some choice in their coming to the city, we did not include distress migration or migration due to marriage and family. The period of stay in the city ranged from two years to 10 years.

Method

We conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews at a place of comfort for each interviewee, be it their home, hostel or in their neighbourhood. The interviews were done in English, Hindi, Telugu and Dakhani. All interviews were transcribed and translated into English.

Institutional Framework

Our framework focused on ‘institutions’ to analyze the migration trajectories of the women and their negotiations with-in the city of Hyderabad. While family and kinship form the primary institutions that shaped the decisions of the young women to migrate, either positively or negatively, their experience of the city was shaped in and through the institutions that they reached or joined or worked with after their migration to the city. We considered these - the educational institutions, workplaces and working women’s hostels or university hostels - the secondary institutions.

We examined the intra familial negotiations of the young women about migrating to the city, the family/kin and other networks that facilitated their migration to the city, the specificities of the educational, work and residential spaces that they came to inhabit, the nature of negotiations with the families, the new relationships at work or hostels that sustained them after their migration to the city, their habituation to and navigation of the public space of the city, the changes in their notions of relationships within the family, marriage and self.

Findings in brief

1. **Why did the women move and from where:** Young women in our study came from 15 states around the country, with the majority from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and had varied expectations and aspirations, often arising from their caste and class locations as well as specific familial context. Women from rural Telangana moved here as Hyderabad offered low end jobs for 12th pass that were absent in the villages. For slightly better off women from the same location, Hyderabad offered both educational institutions for higher education and coaching centres for competitive exams. Young women from small towns in coastal Andhra had to reach here for IT jobs and private medical care industry. The presence of three central universities, three state universities, hundreds of engineering colleges and many medical colleges attracted women aspiring for higher education. Women from abusive homes and nosy small towns found the anonymity and freedom of the city attractive.
2. **Factors that facilitated families to take this decision:** Migration has become integral to the social reproduction of families across castes and income strata as well as for upward mobility. Unlike for male children, families considered safety and security as major concerns for their daughters. Presence of extended kin, family members, family friends, hostels with strict gender segregation, timings and regulations eased their reservations for agreeing to their daughters moving out of their sight. Even the middle-income upper-caste families, where higher education is accepted as a goal, migration to the city was a contested terrain for young women.

3. **Reasons for young women wanting to move away from families:** Young women saw migration as a way out of strictly regulated sexuality and mobility by their parents and found innovative ways to leave home. And the young migrant women, economically and socially dependent on the family, were constantly renegotiating their relationship with their parents and family, whom they found both enabling and restricting. Migration created conditions to experience mobility without constant surveillance for these young women, even as the continuing long-distance regulation by the family sought to keep their mobility in check.
4. **Networks that facilitated women's move to the city:** Almost hundred percent of the women from the Dalit and other marginalized communities in rural areas took the help of family, relatives and friends when moving to Hyderabad for work. They needed a place to stay, access to information on possible institutions to join and other information about the city. They continued to be disadvantaged in the city because their networks were limited to a few spaces and professions. Nearly all the women from the affluent strata and privileged castes also needed support from others, but only when their family members were unwilling to send them to the city. Often, the support they needed was limited to simple information about a university, educational course or place of work.
5. **Institutions shaped their experience of the city:** Institutions that the young women arrived at significantly shaped their experience of the city. Workplaces, educational institutions and residential spaces determined the nature and extent of leisure, earnings and opportunities for growth in career, nature and quality of friendships, extent of access to public spaces, ability to use transport and lastly, exposure to new ideas, food and people.
6. **Escaping caste, acclimatising to class exploitation:** 80 percent of the 15 women from rural, poor and Dalit, backward class and minority background among our study participants reached workplaces such as shopping malls and hospitals with long working hours that left little leisure and financial resources for them. Nevertheless they found the city to be a liberating space compared to the narrow and caste bound rural space, giving them opportunities to taste new food, wear clothes that they would not have been able to wear in the villages and *muffasil* towns and pushing them to learn new languages and skills required for the workplaces.
7. **Public universities and the contradictory gender norms:** Public universities, on the other hand, whether state funded or centrally funded, provided the five first and second generation learners from Dalit, backward class and minority background as well as fifteen women from dominant caste background an opportunity to experience the city differently. Their low fee structure enabled access to higher education while the life in the hostel provided better access to information, networks about educational and work opportunities. University life offered an exposure to discussions on caste, gender, politics reshaping notions about marriage, dowry and career. Nevertheless, protectionist gender based curfew timings restricted access to libraries, sports facilities and life in the university reimposing the patriarchal norms. Community, region and language based student networking similarly restricted women students from forming friendships across these boundaries.
8. **Corporate offices and their gender discrimination:** Women joining corporate workplaces found the male centric offices that subtly and not so subtly discriminated against women with pre-existing prejudices about what women could or could not do. Offices continued without mechanisms to address sexual harassment complaints. Post-work culture was suffused with local-outside binaries that accorded caring attention to local women while considering outside women as not requiring such care. Those requiring and availing maternity leave face stagnation in their career, if they decide to continue in their career.
9. **Residential spaces for single women:** Working women's hostels, paying guest accommo-

dations, residential quarters - proved to be the most surveillance ridden spaces, assuming guardianship of the single women while constantly patrolling their movements and activities. Not only the owners, managers and other inmates but neighbours too kept guard over the women, making the women self-regulate themselves, friendships and lives. Even as they appear to take on this role of custodian for these single women migrants, actual provision of care was not given much priority. Care was understood as protection and regulation of women's physical movement sufficing as protection. Facilities like healthcare, hygiene in hostels and encouraging academic environment were minimal in nature. In other spaces such as hospital-attached hostels, basic facilities such as common washrooms, running water in washrooms and shelves for clothing were understood as care.

10. **City changes women:** All young women, without exception, drew attention to changes in clothing, language, food habits, travel, friendships, notions of marriage and relationships while reflecting on the transformation in their life after moving to the city. Transformations in terms of clothing, idea of self, the world, the relationship with family and even in their opinion of marriage and relationships were associated with several catalysts: teachers, administrators, colleagues, bosses, friends, partners, hostel mates, wardens, etc. Friendships
11. **Negotiations around autonomy:** While changes in self, habits, conduct often occurred without much reflection in many, any and all autonomy in choosing partners for marriage was a matter of careful negotiation for each woman. Helping the family financially, taking care of younger siblings' education and marriage, letting the parents choose the partner of their liking, making their own plans to use the 'dowry' constituted some of the ways of gaining autonomy and a say in the critical decisions of their life.
12. **City as the new guardian for the unregulated sexuality of migrant women:** Fear of unprotected/regulated sexuality of young women underwrites familial ambiguity about the migration of women to the city. They make sure that there is someone that can protect/keep an eye on their daughters. Secondary institutions such as workplaces, universities and residential spaces take over the regulation of their mobility and sexuality through gender specific curfews, segregation, disciplining and reporting. City's institutions thus replace family as the custodian of young migrant women, enacting the contradictory role of the Metropolis as Patriarch.



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1. Introduction

Women's mobility has historically and spatially been tied to marriage and sexuality in many societies, including India. A woman's place is considered to be at home and their unchaperoned movement without a clear purpose outside the home is seen as unwarranted and shameful. Such movement is seen as a manifestation of inherently uncontrollable female sexuality. While all women have this tendency, young women are seen as especially vulnerable to their sexual desires. Such sexual desires, if unregulated or not controlled, would invite danger to the honour of the family, as a family's honour resides in the sexual purity of its women. Unsanctioned sexual dalliances - either the violation of a young woman's body and her willing relationship with men not approved of by the family - both are understood as violation of the 'honour' of the family. A woman's natural guardians could only be the father/male siblings before marriage, husband/son after marriage (or older female relatives).

Restrictions of caste and community operated efficiently (and still do) to constrain their mobility within urban and rural neighbourhoods and settlements. Until the last century, it was perhaps the rare breed of mendicants who lived in the margins of the society who obtained autonomy or left, "free" to travel across places, as Pandita Ramabai¹'s life suggests (Chakravarti 1998). Physical movements of ordinary women are not merely monitored but regulated through means that include physical violence, as though where and how they move would indicate what kind of women they are and whether they fall within the bounds of respectability or not. Mobility, sexuality and status have been irrevocably connected for women in India, forcing feminist scholars to turn closer attention to the physical movement or mobility of women on a significant scale. Autonomous mobility and movement often, though not necessarily, has brought or accompanied the loosening of the patriarchal controls on the bodies and sexuality of women.

Given this context, it is not surprising that although women historically constituted the largest number of internal migrants in India—to other villages, towns and cities—almost all of the migration has been related to marriage (Tumbe 2018). We do not, however, have any studies of this phenomenon, perhaps because it is considered "natural" and unworthy of sociological enquiry. The migration of unmarried young women to garment factories and industrial towns, such as Tirupur was found to be related to impending marriage accompanying tight regulation of sexuality, enabling exploitation of their labour (Lessinger 2002) and (Veeramani 2017). Their hard work in these industries are used by the family to collect their dowry. Ability to migrate

¹She was an Indian social reformer who worked for women's education and emancipation.

came at the cost of even physical mobility. The rural women who migrate to Gulf countries often belong to a different demographic but are driven by the needs of the family and migrate out of distress.² It is only in the last decade that the autonomous migration of unmarried women for education and employment or work to urban areas began to be noticed and studied (Dutta and Shaw 2019), leading to a different set of questions about the structure of urban spaces. How far are cities, especially Indian cities, hospitable to women and their needs, especially women living without male relatives?

Urban studies research in India has focused on the planning of cities or the lack thereof, especially considering the impact of increasing population and unabated construction on their ecological fabric and the accompanying human-made disasters. Although critical issues of public transport, new migrations, accommodation or residence and safety in public spaces figure in these debates, there has been little attempt to link them to women and gender biases. There are few studies on how new women migrants to the metropolitan cities negotiate, cope with or deal with these critical issues.

Our study set out to fill in some of the gap by looking at women who had migrated to the southern Indian city of Hyderabad for education and employment. In addition to gathering women's experiences, the study wanted to compile an understanding of the way urbanization and migration to cities are changing the shape of women's aspirations and sexuality. By aspirations, we refer to the changing hopes and desires regarding social and economic mobility of themselves and the family. By sexuality, we refer to the way women express their feminine identity, their understanding of appropriate/inappropriate clothing, shape of the body, kind of marriage, nature of relationships as well as their hopes and expectations from friendships and relationships. We understand that any such expression is necessarily informed by the given social, cultural, political and economic milieu, consciously or unconsciously.

The study set out to explore the ways in which urban migration is changing the lives of different economic classes and castes of women moving from outside to inside a city, with the intent of understanding how their livelihood and educational opportunities could be improved. Rather than focusing on women's access to public spaces in urban areas or risks around this, the study examined the city as a structured and gendered space, though not fully predetermined, that enables the reformation of discriminatory and gendered norms around women's sexuality, marriage, dress and conduct. With a feminist analytical framework, we examined the nature of transformation that occurs in the lives of women during migration and through their engagement with workspaces, educational and other institutions, public spaces and within their families.

In particular, the study explored the emerging modes of conduct in this historical era of rapid changes due to the rural-to-urban migration. How does metropolitan culture and employment, in conjunction with these changes, affect women's understanding, desires and prospects for a more egalitarian life, including marital life? Hyderabad, as a rapidly expanding metropolitan city with deep connections to the surrounding hinterland, seemed a good environment for examining the differences in how caste, regions and socioeconomic background affect migrant women's opportunities.

This report begins with what previous critical studies found: a gap between the imagined and an actual city; the ways in which cities are structured to refuse and deny accessibility to a large section of marginalized populations; and the tenuous relationship between a city and women in both the imagined and actual spaces.

²Sister Lissy Joseph during a roundtable on the Anti-Trafficking Bill, Hyderabad, 5 December 2018.

1.1 Planners' city is not the actual city

In every city, two cities exist: one, conceived by the planners and the other as lived by its inhabitants. Certeau (1984), in his book *Practice of Everyday Life*, described how the city of planners is different from that of a walker. These two perspectives are sometimes in conflict with each other. Walking is a process that allows individuals to connect to different parts of the city. Struggling migrants also need to walk or travel in some form through the city for their work to understand, engage with and relate to the city. The way they map and negotiate the city is different from the way it was envisioned by the planners. It is important to thus understand how the planners of a city visualize migrants to the city and how it is in contrast with the way a migrant looks at the city (in this case, women migrants). Who exactly constitutes the city, what rights do they have and what are the conditions of being able to claim these rights?

1.2 Should modern democracies have the right to the city?

Henri Lefebvre's (1996) *Right to the City* argued for a radical rethinking of the city as a space and its modes of governance, whereby all inhabitants constitute the political community. Rather than coordinates of formal citizenship, it is the actual living in the city that should form the basis for a say in how the city is governed and run. In fact, Harvey (2008) argued that the right to collectively change or transform city spaces needs to be seen as a basic human right in modern democracies because, without such a right, the ability to foster collective change in democratic space in contemporary times might be inhibited. Before him, Fenster (2005) asked, where do marginalized sections of the city figure in these republican and democratic imaginations of the city? Homeless people are erased in the aestheticization of public spaces in a city, Mitchell (2003) pointed this out. All of these works underscore how ideas around who has a right to the city are determined hierarchies of ethnicity, nationality and gender identity.

1.3 Do women Have a right to the city?

Urban planners have historically lacked a gendered perspective (McDowell 1999) (Bondi 1992) (Bondi and Domosh 1998). Because most women do not feel entitled to the space even inside their own home, it becomes difficult for them to think of such a right in public spaces of a city. Any general right to the city is heavily compromised because patriarchal power and control stops women from accessing public spaces. Women's daily use of space is connected to the gendered divisions of household duties and shapes their sense of belonging to a city, which is entirely different from what men experience (Fenster 2005, page 223). The rights to use the city space and participate in city life are equally vitiated because of women's position in the hierarchy of gendered power relations. Ethnically and racially, certain women have even less access to city spaces.

Historically, the fear of "unregulated" sexuality has factored into the way urban spaces actually developed (Sen 2004). The right to the city is precariously placed on the societal construction of good and bad sexuality. "Sexuality" poses a threat to the "orderly" functioning as well as the imagination of cities, as Hubbard (2012) argued. Heteronormativity is projected as the "passed" sexuality of the city, and cities are ordered or reformed or planned to discipline the other diverse sexualities. City spaces thus become the structures to shape and control the sexuality of women and other "sexual dissidents" like sexual minorities, trans persons and sex workers (Hubbard 2012).

1.4 Gender, migration and city in the Indian context

Migration and the imagination of city

The way cities have grown in South Asia has been distinct from the West. Given the colonial history, the narrative of the city and its city life has been riddled with contradictions. It is seen as a land of opportunities and progress as well as a place of corrupt morals devoid of the comforts of traditional life (Nandy 2001). Men coming to the city and becoming modern or secular has been a popular trope in many Indian movies dating back to the 1970s. At the same time, folktales and folk songs often articulated the insecurity that wives felt when their husbands moved to cities to earn for the family. In the popular imagination, the city and its women are sexually liberated and they will lure migrant men, only to lead them astray (Narayana 2017).

The lack of narratives of women coming to the city in popular culture is noticeable. Earlier imaginations of migration to the city were limited to only men. The only mention of women in the story of migration is of women coming with a man or as being left behind, languishing for him. In the post-liberalization era, the narratives of women coming to the city on their own for jobs or education have begun to emerge. The contradiction of city life for traditional order is now extended to women as well. While city life is seen as important for “development”, “success” and the mobility of the family, the threat of the daughter becoming “corrupted” by the city is quite real. Women migrating to the city are fully aware of these contradictions and fears, and this study explores their negotiations with both.

Single women in cities and societal anxieties

In post-liberalization India with the rapidly expanding economy, more and more women workers were needed in the workforce. As the Arjun Sengupta Committee Report on Unorganised Sector (2008) discussed, while female workers constituted a large part of unorganized workers, they also kept joining the service and IT industries during the period of globalization. Shifts in the global economy in this time opened up new opportunities in India’s metropolitan cities to many young people with a modicum of English education to earn easy money (Deb 2011). Such an entry brought forth both unforeseen possibilities and issues, as Krishnamurthy (2018) described in her detailed account of working in an Indian call centre. This access to work without proper education, night shifts and a reliance on the private sector increased independence and faster growth in life for young women too. Indian society had to face the reality of “good women working in the night” and had to come to terms with its conflict with existing societal values and the possibility of their sexual freedom.

This is the context in which new questions about women’s presence and visibility in the public spaces of a metropolis were raised, such as access to those places and the nature of self-censoring that women adopt when in the spaces. But there are internal as well as external constraints that women experience when accessing a public space (Phadke, Khan, and Ranade 2011). While these regulations are a result of a gender perspective in city planning, the unequal access also arises due to the masculine nature of spaces created by our societal structuring. As a result, when women try to access public spaces on their own terms, it seems as though they are deliberately courting risk.

The processes of liberalization and globalization have brought changes in masculine and feminine self-presentation in the *mofussil*³ areas of Indian society (Lukose 2009), which are nevertheless shaped through factors of caste, class and religion.

Anxieties about women’s “unmoored” sexuality are most visible around residential institutions, such as hostels⁴, rented apartments and other living spaces that are vital to the sustenance

³Provincial and rural districts of India/Small town

⁴In India either universities or private players provide rented residential spaces to the migrant students or working

of single women in an urban space. The thorough and widespread surveillance that single women attracted that Melkote and Tharu (1983) described long back is found to be alive and well in this millennium. While more private and government hostels for female students and working women have emerged over time in urban spaces, they have become the sites where the anxieties of the society are directly imposed on single women staying alone in the city.

The Pinjra Tod campaign, which began in Delhi but has since spread to other parts of India, exemplifies the increasing tensions between independent women and severe societal control in the form of university administration, hostel authorities, paying-guest accommodation owners or other such residence providers.⁵ Movements like Pinjra Tod and Why Loiter have tried to push the debates of women in public spaces in India, questioning the existing culture of control and the policing and regulation of women in residential institutions in Indian cities.

Women and the city: Mediated through institutions

Each woman migrating to the city for education and employment does not migrate to an empty space but likely to an institution—corporate office, educational institute, hospital, shopping mall, etc. But she does not necessarily gain autonomy in the act of moving to the city on her own, either immediately or sometimes ever. Women's capacity and the possibility for gaining relative autonomy are heavily mediated in and through the institution of the natal family and the kind of institution that she migrates into.

Institutions are largely visualized as social organizations, established law and social practices. It can be argued that language forms one of the earliest institutions that humankind developed. Rules of grammar to speak any language, which makes it easier for people to understand and follow, help bind people together. Institutions are perceived as a “web of interrelated norms—formal and informal—governing social relationships” (Nee and Ingram 1998, page 19)

While a common goal to establish an order or structure is the primary basis for any institutional formation, the entrenchment of any institution is both an intellectual process as well as an economic and social one (Douglas 1986, page 45). As such, institutions are not merely formal or bound by well-laid out rules but also include legal and informal social norms, self-enforcing conventions or customs and taken-for-granted scripts, rules and classifications. (DiMaggio and Powell 1991, page 15) as cited in (Dequech 2006, page 479).

For this study, we conceived institutions at two levels—primary institutions and secondary institutions—to trace and map the journey of women migrants to the city. Family, marriage and communities, which are all community-based institutions that function on the basis of rule boundedness, are primary institutions. The rules of family, marriage and communities are not always written and laid out but are nevertheless considered important and thus abided. It is necessary for people who are associated with these institutions to follow the predetermined rules and regulations to maintain the sanctity of these institutions. We wanted to explore friendship in this category because we found it exciting the way friendship as a system is also shaped by spoken and unspoken rules and boundaries. Economic institutions, educational institutions, health care institutions, all of which are broadly guided by rules, scripts and classifications, are treated as secondary institutions.

Thus, this report traces and maps the journey of migrant women between the primary and secondary institutions and the resulting changes in their notions of career, relationships and self. It discusses the factors and constraints that the women from different socioeconomic

men/women.

⁵“The campaign against dorm rules began after one of the universities in the city, Jamia Millia Islamia, decided to cancel the two late nights that were allowed to the women in their dorm because of safety concerns. Student outrage followed immediately. What began as rants on social media quickly gathered steam.” See Rama Lakshmi, NDTV, 23 October 2015m, www.ndtv.com/delhi-news/indian-women-push-back-against-campus-curfews-1235460.

backgrounds encountered during their migration to the city; the ways in which the family and/or the community enabled or constrained them in this process; the desires and motivations that accompanied this migration; the ways in which the city and urban space challenged them and their negotiations with it in terms of clothing choices, moving around, and making friends or changing their ideas of relationships.

1.5 Methodology

The research set out to map the experiences of women entering Hyderabad alone and to look at how they interpret and articulate the challenges they faced and their consequent everyday negotiations. We conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with 50 women who had come alone⁶ to the city for education or employment.

In the first phase of the interviews, we interviewed seven women, using the snowballing method of finding them. In the second phase, we established independent contact with women in hostels, malls and workplaces. Initially, we went in groups of two or three researchers; in the second phase, each of us went alone seeking women to interview. In the second phase, we diversified our pool and approached different women in different spaces and professions, using purposive sampling as well as snowballing. The intention of finding varying participants was to gather a range of narratives of experiences to thus capture the complexities and critically examine intersections of caste, economic class and social capital. This sample is in no way representative or exhaustive.

We conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews at a place of comfort for each interviewee, be it their home, hostel or in their neighbourhood. We tried to collect narratives of women of varied backgrounds who migrated to the city at various points. Some of our participants were students, while others were employed as teachers, mall workers, corporate office workers, business process outsourcing workers, doing small jobs in industries, nurses, administrative staff in hospitals and business women. Our participants came from villages, *muffasil* towns and smaller cities. While a few of the participants had migrated to the city over the past decade, some had moved no more than a year before the interview. We did not interview anyone who had been in Hyderabad for less than a year, on the assumption that to notice and formulate any opinion about the city, a year of living in it was necessary. We limited the scope of the study to only women who had exercised some choice in their coming to the city and hence did not include distress migration or migration due to marriage and family. All the participants had at least a basic education, up to class 12.

All the interviews were audio recorded with the permission of each woman. The interviews were conducted in English, Hindi, Dakhani and Telugu. All the interviews were later transcribed and translated to English.

Experiences from the field

Some attempts to gain interviews were not successful. There were many women who initially showed interest but later refused to participate.

The interviews varied in length and quality. Senior students at a central university gave long, reflective answers, whereas women working as nurses articulated their experiences differently. Some of the participants were curious about our work; some were interested in knowing what will happen with the interview, where will it be sent and what will they gain from it.

Consciously practising a feminist methodology, we began to pay attention to power relations throughout the research process. What we present here is subjective, informed by our social

⁶By alone we mean that even though few of them were married, they had come to the city by themselves.

backgrounds and training in gender studies, which influenced the research questions and our interpretations of the narratives of our participants.

An unwillingness to talk

We came across many women from north-eastern India working in a shopping mall or beauty parlour. We established a connection with them but could not arrange an interview. When asked for their contact details, these women asked a male colleague to give his number. When we contacted the male colleague later, he asked us to call the woman's pastor, bishop or another person in her community. We even went to the church and spoke about our research project in front of the people gathered for the Sunday mass. The men were ready to give us interviews, but we could not manage to get the women to talk. The male members said they are the "guardians" for the women of their community and help them when they, the women, face any kind of problem in the city. We were also asked to come for a north-eastern sports event so that we could meet a large number of migrants there. We thought it would be a good opportunity, but when we started to enquire about the time and place of the event, our messages went unanswered. Later, we succeeded in finding women from North-East India willing to be interviewed; they were students at a central university.⁷

Defining Caste and Class

We classified the participants' family backgrounds into lower, lower-middle, middle and upper-middle economic strata. For the lower-income category, we considered women whose parents work as daily-wage labourers or on someone else's farm or are marginal farmers. For a lower-middle-income family, we considered the women whose parents work in a low-paying private job, own a small piece of land for farming or have a small shop. For the middle-income category, we considered women whose parents work in a government job or are middle- or high-level employees in a private establishment, own a shop or other business and have had a financially secure life. The upper-middle-income category covered women whose parents work as high-level employees in the private or public sector, have their own business or are politically influential. The majority of participants were from middle-income families (at 64 percent), with most of the others from lower- and lower-middle-income backgrounds (at 34 per cent) (table 1.1).

Participants' economic status	No. of women
Lower	11
Lower-middle	6
Middle	30
Upper-middle	3
Total	50

Table 1.1: Distribution of women, by family economic status

Disproportionate representation

We refer to the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas in the study considered as upper castes in the Hindu ritual hierarchy. The dominant caste among the participants is the landed Shudras, especially in the context of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states, like the Reddy, Kamma and Kapu castes. The Other Backward Class, the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe are clusters of communities recognized in the Indian Constitution as discriminated and marginalized. These communities form the numerical majority of Indian population. Indian State is required to ensure their representation in all institutions and to mitigate their social and cultural discrimination

and marginalization. Some of the measures include reservations in educational institutions, employment and political institutions.

Half of the interviewed women were upper caste. With the majority of the interviews established through individual contact and the snowballing method, there resulted a smaller representation of lower-income and Dalit women in the sample, compared with the universe (table 1.2). To address this, greater emphasis was applied during the analysis to the experiences and voices of women coming from lower-income backgrounds and to Dalit women.

Caste or Religion	No. of women
Dalit	7
Scheduled Tribe	3
Other Backward Class	6
Upper Caste and Dominant Caste	25
Christian	3
Muslim	2
No Information	2
Total	50

Table 1.2: Caste or religion profile of women interviewed

General profile of the participants

All 50 women had completed a minimum of class 12 education and had lived for at least a year in Hyderabad and ranged in age from 19 to 45. The majority of the women were aged 22–30 years (table 1.3).

Age Group	No. of women
19-21	3
22-24	12
25-27	16
28-30	14
Older than 30	5
Total	50

Table 1.3: Age of interviewed participants

There were seven married women out of the 50 women whom we interviewed (table 1.4). Among these, two were married before coming to the city, but they came alone for jobs without their respective husbands. The other five women came to the city alone for work or education and then later married during their course of their stay in the city.

Marital Status	No. of women
Married	7
Unmarried	43
Total	50

Table 1.4: Distribution of women by marital status

The women participants came from 15 states around the country (table 1.5), with the majority from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Home State	No. of women
Andhra Pradesh	16
Telangana	6
Kerala	5
West Bengal	5
Assam	4
Bihar	3
Maharashtra	2
Rajasthan	2
Chattisgarh	1
Jharkhand	1
Jammu and Kashmir	1
Karnataka	1
Uttarakhand	1
Uttar Pradesh	1
Tripura	1
Total	50

Table 1.5: Distribution of women interviewed, by home state

Two-thirds of the women were working at the time of the interview (table 1.6). A low-income job was one that paid less than 10,000 rupees per month; lower-middle-income jobs paid between 10,000 rupees and 20,000 rupees every month, jobs paying more than 20,000 rupees per month were considered middle-income. About a third of the interviewees were students. Two of the women who had been in Hyderabad for a few years had established their own business.

Kind of engagement	No. of women
Student	16
Low-income job	5
Lower-middle income job	13
Middle-income job	14
Own business or enterprise	2
Total	50

Table 1.6: Distribution of women interviewed, by employment or student status

1.6 Structure of the Report

The findings are clustered into eight themes:

Chapter 2: **Migration and Development of Hyderabad.**

Chapter 3: **Reproducing the Family: Shaping the Future** in shaping, obstructing or enabling the migration of women for education or work, on the basis of caste and income status.

Chapter 4: **Building Social Capital: Networks of Support** that women new to the city relied on in terms of who and what constitutes that network, including friendships and people linked to the family or community.

Chapter 5: **Navigating Institutions in the City**, from colleges and universities to work-places in the form of malls, hospitals and corporate offices to hostels and rented flats. This chapter looks at the freedom or regulation experienced by the women in such spaces.

Chapter 6: **Gender in the Globalised Indian Economy**, including gender stereotypes in women's working lives, the way they negotiate between work and family and the meaning of economic independence for them (with working still perceived as family support more than economic independence).

Chapter 7: **Negotiating the City Space** of the city and how it is shaped by caste and economic status and how the women negotiate the realities, including perceptions of safe and unsafe places, socioeconomic factors that affect their mobility and the role of transportation.

Chapter 8: **Transformations and Transitions** and the self-described changes in the women in their dressing, lifestyle, travel, relationships with family members and their ideas of marriage and relationships.

Chapter 9: **Conclusion** and how women have made a new space in the city for themselves while Hyderabad is also changing because of these new demands.

See the annex for a brief profile of each person who was interviewed. The name of every participant was changed to protect her identity.



2. Migration and Development of Hyderabad

Each city tells its story in different ways: its history of people, places, buildings and culture; the changes it goes through and the politics behind it; promises that it makes and the stories of joys and broken dreams. This first chapter of findings gives a glimpse of Hyderabad's story, based on multiple histories. Migration and migrants had a role in all these histories, even as migration became contentious for the *mulkis*, or natives of the city.

Founded in 1591 by Qutab Shah kings, Hyderabad has been a capital for most of its existence (first in the kingdom and later the state). During the Asaf Jahi period, it was called the City of Nizams (or princes). After the police action 1948¹, when the Indian Army invaded to force capitulation, the erstwhile kingdom was made a part of India. Hyderabad became the capital of Andhra Pradesh State from 1956 until 2014, when it became the capital of the newly created Telangana State.

Hyderabad started receiving migrants in the 1850s as the state began to invite people from around the subcontinent in an effort to quickly modernize, then laying a foundation for its cosmopolitan nature. Under the reign of two Nizams, it rapidly modernized² with the development of educational and health care institutions and civic infrastructure, including a city planning board. The city developed a twin urban centre, Secunderabad, during this phase. After Partition in 1947, the state and the city received a large number of migrants from North India, and after the police action, many Muslims from neighbouring districts like Bidar and Gulbarga ran to the city to save themselves from the emerging communal violence. In 1956, migrants from other parts of the state settled into the city in large numbers. These numbers kept increasing over the next few decades due to the way the city occupied a predominant place—if not the epicentre—of development.

Andhra Pradesh State was formed by merging at least three distinct socio-cultural regions of coastal Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telangana. Interests of the coastal Andhra region (especially the four districts of Krishna, Guntur, East and West Godavari), which had already received assured irrigation and English education under the Madras Presidency (an administrative subdivision during British rule), always took precedence over the interests of the other two regions in the

¹Five days from September 17 to 21 are generally referred to as Police Action at the end of which the army of the Hyderabad State surrendered. The action of the Indian army continued against the Communist party cadres for till 1951 and Hyderabad State remained under the army rule till 1950.

²The seven Asaf Zahi rulers, commonly known as the Nizams, were the last rulers of the Hyderabad region before the princely states were abolished.

60-year history of the state. As the first linguistic state³, dominance of the coastal region gave rise to tension throughout its history over resource allocation in irrigation, education, health care, infrastructure, etc. But the city of Hyderabad kept growing at an exponential rate due to the city-centric model of development.

After 1956, Hyderabad became home to a number of heavy industries in the public sector as well as several scientific research institutions and the headquarters of the South-Central Railway. The majority of these heavy and labour-intensive industries and institutions were set up during the 1960s and 1970s (Ramachandraiah and Prasad 2008). The location of these industries created enormous employment opportunities and led to the in-migration of skilled workers and their families. A number of scientific institutes and industrial establishments of national and international importance were set up in the same period. Large stretches of land, sometimes far in excess of their requirements, were offered by the successive state governments to attract such institutions and industries. Many of the industries were labour-intensive and also created enormous scope for ancillary industries and informal employment. From the early 1970s, Hyderabad experienced a massive influx of people migrating from the surrounding districts in search of better living conditions and opportunities (Ramachandraiah and Bawa 2000). Scores of state- or region-specific colonies and settlements are still found across the city.⁴

This growth was further boosted with the city-centric model of educational development initiated in the late 1980s. Over the next two decades, Hyderabad became the centre of several public and private educational institutions, which attracted scores of students from around the state and the country. More than 100 engineering colleges and 16 universities now operate in the city. Around 70 per cent of all Bachelor of Technology and 80 per cent of all Master of Technology programmes lie within the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (table 2.1). Of the 87 nursing colleges, 54 per cent are in Hyderabad, and 16 of the 22 universities in Telangana State are located in Hyderabad (table 2.2). Several banks and financial institutions have their regional or national headquarters in the city. And it is a hub for health care, with many private hospitals operating.

Andhra Pradesh State had the highest growth in the information and communication technology (ICT) sector during the early 2000s (Kennedy 2007), which largely was concentrated in Hyderabad. This led to the increase of auxiliary businesses and services as well. The sector also opened up more job opportunities for women. To attract investments, Hyderabad (or certain parts of the city) were projected as a global city and outfitted with better roads and power access and other services. The state had a sizable educated skilled workforce waiting to be absorbed by the ICT sector, thanks to the growth of engineering colleges in the 1990s that were set up by the caste networks of Kamma- and Reddy-rich peasants, often with heavily subsidized land grants and other infrastructural support. With the growth of the IT sector and the outsourcing of services, “these private institutions were able to step in as the supply chain for technical labour for the global service industry” (Kamat 2011, page 194). Chandrababu Naidu, the Chief Minister in this period of expansion, was instrumental in ushering these industries to Hyderabad, which became known as HITEC City, and became the symbol of the state’s success.

Hyderabad has always attracted migrants, as noted, and not just from the country but from other parts of the world. Presently, about 24 per cent of the population in Hyderabad is composed of immigrants (GOI 2011). The migration question was extremely politically sensitive throughout the twentieth century and the first decade of the new millennium. While Hyderabad received migrants and developed, the fruits of its economic growth remained outside the reach of the

³In a multilingual country like India, states were delineated on linguistic bases for better administration and to reduce the possibility of regional conflicts.

⁴According to the 2011 census, the population of Hyderabad was 6,731,790. The present estimate of population in Hyderabad is 10,043,388 in 2020 (<https://populationstat.com/india/hyderabad>).

	Stream	Hyder- abad	Ranga- reddy	Medchal	Greater Hyder- abad Total	Grand Total in Telan- gana	Percent in Greater Hyder- abad
No. of Colleges	Engineering	19	54	47	120	201	59.70
	Pharmacy	12	26	20	58	125	46.40
	Master of Pharmacy	9	21	16	46	95	48.42
	Master of Technology	11	21	31	63	82	76.83
Seats (Student Places)	Engineering	9210	27013	29808	66031	94241	70.07
	Pharmacy	988	2125	1790	4903	9703	50.53
	Master of Pharmacy	354	501	510	1365	2720	50.18
	Master of Technology	966	1244	2568	4778	5996	79.69

Table 2.1: **Number of professional colleges and seats in Telangana, 2017–2018**

Source: Telangana State Council of Higher Education,
www.aicte-india.org/sites/default/files/Perspective

Type of university	Total in Telangana	Total in Hyderabad
Central	3	3
State	7	2
Deemed	2	2
Specialized	9	8
Technical	1	1
Total	22	16

Table 2.2: **Universities in Hyderabad city and Telangana State**

Source: Telangana State Council of Higher Education, www.tsche.ac.in/state-universities.

region overall. The several *mulki* agitations finally culminated in statehood agitation in 2009; as a result, the state of Andhra Pradesh became bifurcated into Telangana and Andhra Pradesh states. The cosmopolitan culture of Hyderabad, however, remained intact and visible, perhaps due to its 150-year similarly cosmopolitan history.

In the stories from the migrant women, Hyderabad is a silent character, but its background is crucial to understand the place it occupies in their desires, dreams and aspirations.



3. Reproducing the Family: Shaping the Future

Family is the primary site of social reproduction and structural violence against women. Socialization through families prepares girls to become the kind of women that society requires: subordinate wives, willing mothers and obedient workers. The government and the economy each have a role in determining the structure and functioning of families within the socioeconomic order. Families themselves consciously seek to rise up the socioeconomic ladder, or at least reproduce their socioeconomic status by acquiring social and cultural capital. This reproduction involves decisions ranging from which school to enrol their children and the kinds of careers they should pursue to who they should marry. Families make these decisions as part of the process to reproduce their caste and economic status. Families claim to do everything for the future of their daughters. This chapter critically looks at this understanding.

An abundance of anecdotal evidence vouches for how families project their aspirations on to their children, especially their male children (Uberoi 1993), although the processes and negotiations have yet to be sociologically mapped. Nor have differences among social classes been explored. Still unexplored as well is the process of how families create goals for daughters, especially in the context of rapidly changing attitudes towards women's education and work.

As broached in the introduction, the city-centred development model has led to a concentration of educational institutions and employment opportunities in cities, such as Hyderabad. The changing gender discourse of women's empowerment, combined with emphasis on the education of girls, has created a climate in which families higher up in the caste hierarchy as well as those aspiring to rise are encouraged to invest in female children's education. For example, in Telangana State, women students are given 33 per cent reservation (quota) in engineering colleges. This report's chapter on labour and employment discusses how the structural changes in the Indian economy are creating conditions for women to study and work away from home. Many working women's hostels have enabled this process. All these changes seem to have prepared families to send their young unmarried daughters away to study or work.

Given the role of family in social reproduction as well as the controlling of women's sexuality, how do families deal with the prospect of migration of young women to pursue education and/or employment? How does this process differ across the socioeconomic hierarchy? Is it always the case that families create goals and goal posts, or do children seek autonomy for certain decisions in their life, including migrating to urban areas? What are the factors that enable such migration?

This study indicates that migration to bigger cities is not limited to any particular socioeco-

conomic group. The sample contains women from different caste, economic class and religious backgrounds. And in each social category, there is no uniformity, with families and women doing what they can to make the best of their circumstances.

3.1 Families and women making the most of their circumstances

Most women from lower economic class and caste families in the study, especially Dalits and Other Backward Category families, came to the city out of necessity, but it was a necessity understood by their families, despite the initial apprehensions and fears. It was not only economic necessity but one created by caste discrimination and inequality in the village that prompted them to move away. The distress and inability of these families to exercise tight control on their daughters enabled them to gain some autonomy. While the neoliberal measure of student loans offered by banks helped some young women in migrating to the city to complete their education, others were enabled by publicly funded special schools.

Ana, the daughter of a Dalit marginal farmer, came to Hyderabad from a nearby district when her father's illness left him unfit for farming. Her childhood experiences were full of caste-based discrimination, and she realized that if she stayed back, like all her friends, she would never stand on her own two feet. Even though her parents wanted her to marry after class 10, Ana persuaded them to let her study nursing, which would take her out of the village and let her earn a regular income. Soon after the course, she found employment in the same hospital and chose to stay in the hospital-run hostel. Her family was initially apprehensive about her move to Hyderabad but soon began to appreciate and cherish her contribution as an earning member.

Another interviewee, Samantha, had a similar journey. The daughter of a Dalit Christian daily-wage labourer, Samantha took a bank loan to complete a nursing degree from an institute in Karnataka; she then joined a corporate hospital in Hyderabad. She moved to the city to improve her personal life and her family's financial condition, which they fully supported.

Sarada and Sirisha (sisters) stopped their education in their home communities around Hyderabad to migrate and work in the city. Following her brother, Dhanalakshmi moved to the city after her father's death to work and became a nurse. Her work earned her respect in her village community, but her family remained immensely concerned about the prospects of her marrying. Sarada and Sirisha migrated to Hyderabad from a neighbouring district, seeking employment after their higher secondary, when their marginal-farmer father fell ill; they found work in a department store for meagre salaries. They expressed the ambition to settle down in their job and the desire to study further to improve their employment prospects. Their family subsists on what they earn and is supportive of them. The journeys of Anjana and Ritty (both Dalits) from Kerala State and Swapna (Other Backward Category) from Andhra Pradesh State, are similar.

For the parents of these women, there was no alternative except to agree to the prospect of their daughter migrating to the city. Because their daughter would earn income and support the family, these parents disregarded their fears and apprehensions about the migration. Yet, even when migration is seen as inevitable, women's continued stay in the city does not seem to be fully in their control, as Dhanalakshmi's narrative about impending marriage suggests. Living and working in the city is still seen as only temporary, until they marry and/or until family debts are cleared.

3.2 Families with a plan for their daughters

In contrast, the slightly better-off families were far more supportive of their daughters' migration, despite small differences in opinions and fears. The families enquired about the best opportunities for further study and employment and reached out to their extended kin network. The daughters

in turn were grateful for the opportunity and tried to live up to their family's expectations. While they acquired self-discipline, they also experienced difficulties in meeting these expectations.

Rama from a relatively well-off rural family and Other Backward Category community was encouraged to pursue higher education in Hyderabad. She enrolled in a state university after staying in a hostel as a non-boarder¹ for a year and overcoming many financial difficulties. The transition from the village, where her father took care of everything that she needed, to doing things on her own was the most difficult adjustment for her. But she realized she had to let go of her old comforts to create a better and more comfortable life for herself and her parents. Thus, she set self-regulations that were important to help her achieve her life goals.

Geeta, a Dalit student at a central university, was appreciative of her parents' support and valued her university education as a big opportunity. She credited her parents for keeping her grounded and encouraging her to aim high in her life. As a hostel student of the Navodaya School², she had already lived away from home. She recalled how her grandfather would visit her every weekend, bringing goodies to help her overcome the homesickness. By the time she moved to Hyderabad for her higher studies, she had accepted that to reach her goals and repay the support of her parents, she needed to perform well.

Women from middle-income upper-caste families migrated to the city to study or work with even stronger support systems. These families knew the best career options for their daughter and encouraged her to pursue that path. They were generally supportive of their daughter's desire to have a career but they also wanted to choose the academic discipline or career path. In some cases, the women did exactly what their family wanted; in others, the family came around, after initial apprehension, to support the career path that their daughter chose.

Families sent their daughter to those cities where relatives already lived. Rafath, who came to the city from Bihar State to study in Maulana Azad National Urdu University, did so with the approval of her family, especially her father, because a cousin lived in Hyderabad with his wife. But also, as a second-generation educated parent, he knew that the reputation of a good institution and opportunities in a big city were necessary for his daughter's career. Although Rafath was hesitant due to her bad Urdu, which was the main requirement for the university, her father decided to send her to Hyderabad on the cousin's recommendation, overruling his wife's fears.

The existence of public institutions, where fees are affordable, gave many of the families the confidence to send their daughter for higher education. Most of the 16 students in the sample pointed out that affordable hostels and tuition fees in the central or state universities enabled them to pursue further study. It also enabled families to give their daughters extra cash, within certain limits.

Even when Pratima, Rajitha and Savita broke away from the usual career path of studying medicine or engineering that has become synonymous with upward mobility and status, their families came around to support their choices. All three, from second- or third-generation educated upper-caste families, were students of humanities in public universities. This level of support was cherished by the daughters, especially because the status-conscious extended kin, friends and community did not approve of "good students going to the humanities".

Family support was also crucial for the middle-income upper-caste women migrating to the city for work, including Meenal, Sangita, Bhanu and Radha. Their families had already adopted the liberal (patriarchal) value that daughters could work outside the home after finishing their higher education. Bhanu's brother helped her find a job in Hyderabad. The other women had similar stories. Although their journey was considered a personal ambition, it brought upward

¹Non-boarders are those who are officially not registered and yet stay in the hostel with friends without the knowledge of administration.

²Government-funded boarding schools with good reputation.

movement for the whole family. And while their own hard work was important, their family's support was equally crucial.

3.3 Moving out of the home created conflict with the family

Some of the women reported that conflict with their family arose when they insisted on pursuing their own life plan. They were largely second- or third-generation educated children from a dominant upper caste, though that did not apply to all of them. Even as the education of girls has become important for most middle-income upper-caste families, some of the women said their family had discouraged them from pursuing higher education. Some families wanted their daughter to study further but not in a different city, for the sake of safety and security—a narrative that has become all the more pervasive since the 2012 gang rape in New Delhi that made global headlines. Instead, they wanted them to study in the same or nearby town. Here, safety and security became the proxy for keeping a watch on the daughter and her unsupervised sexuality. When the daughters resisted this unspoken regulation, tension arose between them and their parents.

Dwiti had to navigate her family's displeasure because they did not like her decision to study in a different city. Her father was especially unhappy. Even though the parents eventually reconciled with her decision and extended support, their anxiety about her movements in a different city was palpable in their repeated calls every day:

“They would call constantly, almost every day. Sometimes it [was] irritating. Whenever I went out, they would be very scared, and I get to hear stuff like, ‘You are taking the liberty to go out very often and alone, why do you do that?’”

Farzana, a nurse in Hyderabad, had rebelled against her mother, who wanted her to marry after she failed a subject in intermediate college, and chose to pursue her education in nursing. She had to threaten her mother with suicide after a bitter fight and was only given permission to join a nursing college after a supportive maternal uncle intervened. Even though she lived independently in the city, she had to ask permission from her mother to go anywhere.

Such familial anxieties can be understood in an environment of increasing violence against women all over the world and concerns about safety and security that arose in India after the shocking 2012 Delhi rape incident. Savita mentioned that even her relaxed parents became more anxious after this incident:

“My mom called more and kept on telling me not to go to other places after the Delhi rape incident. My mother said that ‘it might not be your fault but such things happen’. I did not see this side of my parents when I stayed at home, as I always went out whenever I wanted. I had this pretty amazing freedom, but it was not that scary and now they have become. . . I don’t know.”

Such anxieties often stem from the fear that unmarried daughters will have premarital sexual relationships that are taboo in the society, and lead to stigmatization and ‘shame’ for the family. This fear drives families to marry off girls at the earliest, to avoid the possibility of this happening. One third of the 50 young women in the study moved away from their hometown to resist early marriage.

Pallavi, Gitika and Grishma (all upper caste) persuaded their parents to let them study in a different city. This involved gently putting forward their plan to their parents and negotiating for a few days or strategically deciding to take subjects that were not taught in their hometown. Grishma³, for instance, chose to forego her passion for Malayalam literature to move out of her hometown:

³After Chennai she later shifted to Hyderabad.

“I wanted to study Malayalam literature, but when the time came for me to move out of my hometown, I decided to study English literature. My mother was okay with it, but my father hated the idea of me moving out. So, with the help of a few family friends, I applied for colleges and moved to Chennai. Once I got admission, I sat down with my father and explained why it was important for me to move to Chennai.”

Both the ambition to study and to escape the tight regulation of the family prompted many women in the study to migrate to other towns. Both reasons created conflict between those women and their family. While the ambition to study conflicted with a family’s intention of marrying off their daughter, the desire to escape occurred even in families who were fully supportive of higher education but moving far away would put the daughter out of familial regulation.

3.4 Wanted to move out because of conflict with the family

Migration became an imperative for those women in the study who directly experienced abuse and violence in their family or kin group. As soon as they became older, they wanted to move away. Anindita, a sexual violence survivor from an upper-caste family, harboured anger against her parents:

“When I had gone through the sexual violence in my childhood, my parents did not take any significant step to deal with it and thought that I would forget about the incident as time passes. It was one of the main reasons why I started feeling distant from my parents and wanted to move out of the home. Although I was always connected with my family, the physical distance gives me a space of my own to think about my past experiences.”

Akanksha, a woman from an upper-caste family, was abused by her parents. She was an unwanted girl-child, and the family wanted to stop her studies and marry her off early. They even turned a blind eye to the sexual harassment she experienced at the hand of a close family friend. Although she later reconciled with her family and they now stake a claim to her income, she cannot forget the anger with her parents and why she moved away.

Shinjini and Vijetha, both upper-caste, faced stark challenges from their family. They each suffered from extensive harassment by extended family members, so much so that they ran away to another city to find refuge. Shinjini came into the care of her maternal grandmother and uncle soon after her mother died, after her father had abandoned them. Vijetha’s parents died in an accident; she and her sister then became dependent on their relatives. But along with shelter came day-to-day harassment and abuse. Shinjini ran away from her uncle’s house, with her grandmother, and managed to find a shelter for her grandmother at a shelter home, and for herself in Rainbow Homes, an institution for partly orphaned children. Vijetha’s sister is physically challenged. When she decided to leave her coastal district for the city, Vijetha had to leave her sister in the care of relatives. After she moved to Hyderabad and found a job, she eventually brought her sister to live with her.

For both, the horror of daily harassment and abuse was the main reason they decided to move away and live on their own. In both cases, despite suffering at the hands of their relatives, they sought to maintain a cordial relationship with them and did not harbour hard feelings in their heart. Vijetha was even asking for their help in finding a husband.

3.5 Summing up

The close examination of the role of families in the migration of young women to Hyderabad indicated that migration had become integral to the social reproduction of families across castes and income strata as well as for upward mobility. In some cases, the urban space seemed to offer refuge and a space to live and grow to the women running away from familial abuse.

Economic reasons influenced families and allowed the migration of women from poor, rural, lower-caste families to urban areas. The growing institutional infrastructure in the urban space was also ready to absorb them. The increasing need for a female labour force in the economy has enabled this migration.

Although the tight regulation of sexuality, physical movement and conduct of unmarried women has loosened, it continues to be a source of tension and conflict as families regulate women from a distance. Extended kin networks and friends begin to function as families for newly migrated young women.

The young women in the study from marginalized caste and economically deprived families saw migration to the city as a way of escaping caste-related discrimination in their home district as well as improving their economic mobility. Families extended their support for them, despite apprehension and fear.

The migrant women from middle-income upper-caste families, where higher education is accepted as a goal, saw migration as a way out of strictly regulated sexuality and mobility by their parents and found innovative ways to leave home. The evolution of notions of freedom or liberty continued after their migration to the city. And the young migrant women, economically and socially dependent on the family, were constantly renegotiating their relationship with their parents and family, whom they found both enabling and restricting. Migration created conditions to experience mobility without constant surveillance for these young women, even as the continuing long-distance regulation by the family sought to keep their mobility in check.



4. Building Social Capital: Networks of Support

Young unmarried women are migrating to cities with different purposes. Moving has become a compulsion for some and a matter of choice for others. But each woman requires support mechanisms, networks and structures, during and after their migration. In short, they require social capital. It is obtained in part through the family, schooling and kin networks, all of which facilitate their migration; part of it comes in and through the networks the women build for themselves during the process of the migration and by acquiring skills through education and employment in a new location. This chapter examines these support mechanisms and structures and how they enabled the young women to settle down in Hyderabad. The first section looks at the support structures that helped in the migration process. The second section turns to the support networks, mechanisms and structures that the women had established after making their move. Both consist of relatives, family friends, siblings and/or friends.

4.1 Support networks, mechanisms and structures during the migration process

Many of the women chose Hyderabad either because of the location of an educational institution or workplace they wanted or because a relative was living there. These women found support to make the move from extended family, kin and friends during the process.

Role of relatives and family friends in young women's migration to the city

Among the Dalit and other marginalized caste or income strata of the women migrants, relatives emerged as having had an important role in their migrating to the city. Ana, a Dalit nurse from Telangana, was helped by a cousin and her husband in Hyderabad. During Ana's first few days in the city, they allowed her to stay in their house and told her the options available to her as a nurse. After Ana settled and found a place of her own, she tried to stay in touch with her relatives on a regular basis. Sarada and Sirisha (sisters), also Dalit women from Telangana, were helped by their male cousin who was working in the city. They slowly became independent and started living on their own. Similarly, Swapna, another Dalit woman from Telangana, was helped by her female cousin who was working as a nurse. When Ritty, from a lower-middle-income Christian family in Kerala State came to Hyderabad to work as a nurse, she was initially supported by her sister, who was employed in a hospital. Farzana, from a poor Muslim family in Karnataka State, had a supporting uncle:

“I have a maamu [maternal uncle] here, and I was brought up by him. After [class] 10, I went to Karnataka to study in the intermediate [college]. I wanted to come here to join a nursing course, but my mother didn’t want me to. Then my maamu convinced my mother and brought me here.”

The middle-class women had better support networks and even managed to create their own reliable networks in the city. Whether from Other Backward Category or upper-caste backgrounds, they wanted to come to Hyderabad for opportunities and personal growth. People who helped them towards those goals became a part of their support network. In the case of many middle-income women, their immediate family helped them by suggesting a particular educational institution or specific courses or by providing emotional support for moving to the city.

Tanika, from an Other Backward Category middle-income family in a small village in Telangana, said that she migrated to Hyderabad only because of her paternal uncle. He was a professor in a women’s college and advised her to pursue a Bachelor of Science programme there. Rama, also from a middle-income Other Backward Category family, was searching for higher education opportunities after graduating from a small Telangana town college when she heard from her sister’s friend about Osmania University:

“I came and stayed with her in the hostel and prepared for the law entrance and got a seat in the campus college.”

Bhanu, from a rich Reddy family in Telangana, came to Hyderabad to escape the political atmosphere of her family:

“I was searching for a job in Hyderabad through my elder brother after completing my [Bachelor of Technology], and I got a job at my brother’s friend’s company.”

Rafath, from a Muslim middle-income family, came to Hyderabad from West Bengal State to study with the help of a cousin:

“I didn’t know anything about Hyderabad. My cousin got married into a family from Hyderabad, after which she did [a Bachelor of Education at Maulana Azad National Urdu University]. She told my mother that it is good here. So, my sister and I sent our applications to [the university].”

In a few instances, the immediate family was convinced to let go of their hesitations by relatives or family friends. Grishma’s journey, first to Chennai and then to Hyderabad, was one such instance. Her father wanted her to stay in their hometown, but Grishma was keen to study in a different city. Her father’s friend from Chennai convinced her father to let her go there. He and his wife became her guardians and helped her in her initial exploration of the city, where she stayed long enough to earn her graduate degree before moving to Hyderabad to pursue a postgraduate and doctorate degrees.

Friends, teachers and other people from their hometown

In several cases of migrating for education, the women were helped by friends, teachers or other acquaintances from their hometown. Geeta, a Dalit student from North India, decided to send an application to a central university in Hyderabad after hearing about it from one of her teachers. She followed her high school teacher’s suggestion to apply and was admitted into the graduate programme. Rajitha, too, found out about her university from a teacher; she then passed the

entrance exam and moved to Hyderabad. Sanobar, a middle-income Other Backward Category woman from Darbhanga, said her teacher encouraged her to apply for studying at Maulana Azad National Urdu University in Hyderabad:

“A distant relative of mine was doing a Bachelor of Education from the Darbhanga Centre of [Maulana Azad National Urdu University]. My teacher who guided me from class 10 onwards told me that I should send my application for admission here. My father also approved of the suggestion.”

Sonia, an upper-caste woman who had graduated from an engineering college in a small town in Andhra Pradesh, decided to come to Hyderabad along with eight of her female friends. They came together and enrolled in a coaching centre to prepare for the job market. They stayed together in a hostel. The closeness of having a group of friends was a source of strength for Sonia. Then the friends who found employment settled in different areas of the city. Those who did not find a job in Hyderabad moved to another city. Having grown accustomed to living with a group of friends, Sonia found another set of friends and even found a house that could accommodate them all. This support structure made her stay in Hyderabad easier and more comfortable. She lived with those friends until she married.

Among the women who had migrated for well-paying jobs, many of them (mostly from upper castes) came to the city only after they received their employment offer letter. A few women came on their own before being hired if they had some family member or friend already in the city. Of the women who migrated into low-paying jobs (mostly from Dalit and smaller Other Backward Category communities), their journey was facilitated by a relative or a friend already in Hyderabad.

There were references during the research to ‘agents’ in rural areas who helped bring groups of men and women to the city to seek work, but none of the women in the study mentioned using such an agent.

4.2 Support networks and structures after moving to Hyderabad

After moving to Hyderabad, the women were exposed to new ways of being. According to some of them, their new life had become more challenging; others talked of experiencing the fresh air of freedom. In both cases, people around them shaped their experiences of day-to-day life. Their new environment and interactions in it created a support network.

Role of immediate family and relatives declines

The women who lived alone initially kept regular contact with their family back home or relatives in Hyderabad. Dhanalakshmi, from Andhra Pradesh and working as a nurse in Hyderabad, maintained contact with her brother in Hyderabad, turning to him in times of difficulty (home sick). Padmini, also from Andhra Pradesh, drew on help from her relatives for shopping or navigating the city. However, after both women found full-time employment and started living on their own, their dependence on their relatives decreased.

A few of the women wanted to break from this pattern. Sabiha stayed with her relatives initially in Hyderabad but then shifted to a hostel because she wanted to live independently. She would visit with them periodically but felt that staying with them didn’t give her any space of her own.

Only a few of the women, like Vijetha, who ran a hostel while maintaining a day job, sought help from a relative in an emergency. Sometimes, Vijetha’s relatives helped her manage the hostel.

Teachers, office workers, landlords and hostel mates as support network

The young women also found support in their workplace, hostel, university or with their landlord, although these areas were also sources of trouble in some instances.

Geeta found her teachers' encouragement and patient attitudes to be a source of strength, helping her to focus on her studies. Ishita, an upper-caste, upper-income migrant student also found the support of her teachers encouraging. She said that she and her classmates used to seek help from them in case of any emergency and they were always willing to help.

Tara, who worked in a bank, said that one of her senior colleagues became a motherly figure to her. She relied on her when she needed suggestions or advice. Sarada and Sirisha, who stayed at a terrace room from a woman lawyer's house, found her to be their biggest support. She gave them free boarding and helped them with medical emergencies. The women who stayed in Vijetha's hostel found her to be a big source of support. She, too, helped them in times of emergency. In return, Vijetha felt more at home surrounded by these women. For Ana, her hospital management and colleagues became like kin, helping her in different ways.

Romantic relationships

In a few cases, romantic relationships had become a support structure for the migrant women and also enhanced their interaction with the city. Few wanted to come to the city as their partners were already staying here and few developed new relationships after coming to the city. For example, Sameera decided to seek work in Hyderabad from Nagpur city because of her boyfriend; he was living in the city and working as a map analyst and was looking to settle down here. In a few other cases, the women in romantic relationships became dependent on their boyfriend for their movement into the city as now a level of control of their movement was in hands of their boyfriends but in other instances, because of the 'support' and 'protection' being provided by their boyfriends, they moved and explored the city more.

Friendship as a support network

The process of making friends was not the same for everyone. While a few of the women (mostly the students) had the luxury of time and a university or college environment in which to make friends, the working women did not have the time nor the mental bandwidth to consider making friends. Nevertheless, we found a pattern among the migrant women turning to friends for many of the things that they had previously relied on family or kin for.

Friendships found randomly

Many women claimed that they did not have any criteria for making friends. They made friends randomly, without much thought about the process of making friends. "Friends" are those people who are around and provide support in day-to-day life. They could be colleagues, classmates, roommates or neighbours. Dhanalakshmi, working as a nurse, considered all her roommates and co-workers as her friends and support network. For Kamala, from an upper-caste middle-income family who worked as a real estate agent, all her flatmates counted as friends whom she regarded more as family.

Friendships among those with similar regional and linguistic backgrounds

Many of the women relied on shared regional backgrounds and languages to forge new bonds. The familiar language milieu enabled them to freely express themselves, share their thoughts and aspirations and search for better career opportunities. For example, Ana, Sarada, Sirisha, Rama and Tanika, who had come to Hyderabad with the help of relatives, were comfortable interacting with people from their own region. Relying on friends from their region who were already settled in Hyderabad also gave them the confidence that they too could be a part of the city and its systems. Adjustment to the city was thus a guided process for them.

With Geeta, who was a student at a central university in Hyderabad, the 10–14 other students also from her home state were her primary initial support network. She said that because they had all come to Hyderabad for the first time and were hesitant to speak in English and thus to meet or mingle with students from other parts of the country, they were comfortable only interacting among themselves. Over time, their confidence increased, and they started interacting with people outside their own regional group.

Formed support network away from their own community

A few women—mostly from middle-income upper-caste backgrounds—wanted to build their friendships outside their native regional or linguistic community. These women studied in closed/walled elite campuses of Hyderabad. For them, the regional groups became closed in nature and were thus limited. The women even spoke of surveillance and control by group members (both men and women). The women especially became targets and faced the brunt of the groups' value judgements. Grishma, who studied in two central universities in Hyderabad, said that she always tried to keep away from regional groupings because the support system came at a much larger cost of control. She had friends from her home state, but she did not always rely on them and formed friendships with people from other regions too.

4.3 Does friendship replace family?

Cinema as a form of popular culture in India has articulated the changing forms of friendships in the neoliberal era. The success of popular films like *Dil Chahta Hai* and *Zindagi Milegi Na Dobara* (*What the Heart Wants* and *Life Won't Come Again*) lies in their representation of these new modalities of friendship that seem to transcend family.

New technologies relying on the digital and Internet revolution through apps and websites revolve around friendship—whether it is Facebook, Orkut, Snapchat, WhatsApp—and are transforming the notions of friendships. It is quite common to find media campaigns with taglines targeting friendship. Airtel, a telecom service provider, famously used the tagline, *Har ek friend zaroori hota hai* (Each and every friend is indispensable). In this environment, where there is an incitement to make friends, new migrants to Hyderabad or any other city come with an awareness of the importance of friendships. Schools, colleges, universities, workplaces and hostels become sites where new friendships are developed. As (Parekh 2008, page 153) elaborated, “Friendship is a unique and complex form of human relationship. First, it is non-biological in the sense unlike parents or children or siblings, it is not based on the ties of blood or heredity. This is not to deny that parents and children or brothers and sisters may become friends, but rather that their natural relationship sets limits to the quality and depth of their friendship and that the latter is irreducible and autonomous in nature. Second, friendship is a voluntary relationship. Although it is not based on conscious—let alone rational—choice and often grows unconsciously and involves an elusive ‘mental chemistry’, it contains elements of deliberation, choice and decision.”

Although many friendships transgress social conventions and hierarchies, it is true that friendships also conform to socialization. People generally want to have friends with whom they can share their hopes and aspirations. Nisbett (2007) in an ethnography on the day-to-day life of friends in the city of Bangalore in the context of the changing notion of family and friendship among the middle-income class, tracked the ways in which aspiring young people share information within their group of friends and then use it to enhance their work and career.

For the migrant women in the study, friendship, even with its spoken and unspoken rules, became an important mechanism they used to settle into the new environment. In what ways did this happen? Additionally, not all the interviewees formed friendships or thought about related issues; many even preferred to be aloof, not making friends, because they did not want to become

dependent on them.

Friendships for building a new persona and new kind of home

Many interviewees saw friendship as an integral part of their journey to evolve into a different person. Friendship had a significant role in their new day-to-day life in the city. On the one hand, it shaped their way of life and, on the other, it also made them critical of existing social orders.

Sangita, Kamala, Meenal and others all agreed that their friends had made their stay in the city comfortable and liveable. They depended on their friends for many things. Their friends helped them navigate the city and facilitated their access to places, thus forming a crucial part of their support system in the city. More importantly, they relied on their friends emotionally.

For Sangita and Meenal, friendship meant being around like-minded people. They each had a group of close friends who all relied on each other. For both women, these friendships were also about creating a new way of social life. Meenal's male friends shared household chores during get-togethers, surprising her with their understanding of how tedious such chores are. Meenal traced her male friends' empathy for household chores to the nature of equality that had developed among the male and female friends in her circle. In turn, these friendships also strengthened her belief that she need not be limited to gender-assigned roles and could demand the same participation from her male friends. Sangita became so close to her friends emotionally that when they moved out, she decided not to share her flat with anyone anymore because she could not cope with the pain of another impending separation.

Friendship was integral to building a new life for women like Kamala, whose life was bound to her flatmates and friends. Even though they had their differences, they found their way back to each other. Many of her friends and flatmates identify with the queer community, which means that they not only shared a common perspective on society but also share experiences of discrimination; as a result, they try to be each other's support. Kamala mentioned how the small discussion groups and film screenings she organized had become a source of support for her friends struggling with their identity and sexuality. Their friendship, while built on sharing knowledge and experiences, became an integral part of building their identity in the larger society. It gave them the necessary support and space for their community.

Sangita, Kamala and Meenal all had high-paying jobs; their lifestyle revolved around their friends because they had enough time and energy to socialize. But their friendships were not empty or meaningless. Their small but strong groups created spaces that could provide emotional, financial and social support among like-minded people.

For the students among the women who were interviewed, friendship became one of the strong pillars of college life and was crucial for these women's integration into city life. Rajitha, Pratima and Geeta, all from rural middle-income (not just upper-caste) families, said that friendships in their university taught them several things and made them confident. Geeta, a Dalit woman, for instance, recalled that her friendship with people from her own region had helped her settle down in the university. She and her friends spoke a lot about the transformations in themselves in this process as they explored fashion, language, food and the city at large together. For Pratima, an upper-caste woman, friendship with different kinds of people made her aware of diversity and inequality, helping to shape her into a more sensitive person. She felt that many of the jokes that once seemed normal to her now were clearly insensitive because she realized how they could hurt her new friends. Rajitha talked of being dependent on friends and relying on them in bad situations and how they had helped her evolve into a better person.

Limits to a friendship

When designing the questions for the interviews, we assumed that whoever helped someone the most in the event of, say, a medical emergency would be called a "friend". Savita had clear

criteria about who her friends could be and responded that, while her close hostel mates helped her and she could call them her friends, “not all the people around us can be called friends”. She thought that while friends are necessary, they need to be carefully chosen and that it is not good to be overly dependent on them. There were other interviewees who valued independence and felt that friends encroached on their personal space. For some of the women, friendship was important but boundaries were more so.

Grishma pointed out the pattern of people seeking friends with similar regional backgrounds because it creates a familiar atmosphere. But this pattern did not work for her. She wanted like-minded friends and avoided friendships based on regional and language association.

Rajitha and Pratima firmly believe in having strong friendships but added that they did not like it when friends gave them unnecessary advice or preached to them. Relatedly, they mentioned that they tried to minimize how much they interfered in their friends’ lives. They tried to gauge situations to determine when it was appropriate to give advice. Ishita recalled how her friends had questioned her way of life and her friendships with men. Although she cared for her friendships, she disliked the way her friends sought to regulate her behaviour.

Most of the women who sought a space of their own after migrating to Hyderabad did not want it to be encroached by their friends. The consensus for these women seemed to be that friendships, although desirable, should not become too controlling.

Everybody around is a friend, but . . .

Many of the migrant women from rural and marginalized backgrounds formed friendships with every person who was a part of their daily life. They did not have strict criteria for friends. Their study and work objectives were closely linked to reaching their goals of getting a good job or earning enough. Anybody who helped in reaching these goals was a friend for them. But they did not let go of family members in the city. None of these women completely relied on their friendships; even though friendships were desired and maintained, many of them thought that they could not afford to be fully dependent on them. This could be because experiences of previous hardships in their lives had led them to conclude that they must stand on their own. Also, their circle of friends from similar backgrounds sometimes had few resources or social capital. In times of need, they had to rely on their family.

Dhanalakshmi had friends in her workplace and hostel, but she felt more connected with her brother who also worked in Hyderabad, and she helped him out in whichever way possible.

Sarada’s and Sirisha’s life together in the city had strengthened the bond between them. They worked in the same supermarket and were always together. They went out together to work, eat and shop. Every achievement was jointly owned by both of them. Their interview illustrated that, under the new and difficult conditions of migration, their relationship transcended from being sisters to close friends. Because they worked together, they had common friends with whom they hung out occasionally.

4.4 Summing up

Should we see these support structures as narratives of a few individual women or as a larger pattern? We believe they represent some generalizable patterns.

One, these support networks were formed on caste, economic strata and regional locations. Most of the women from the Dalit and other marginalized communities in rural areas took the help of family, relatives and friends when moving to Hyderabad for work. They needed a place to stay, access to information on possible institutions to join and other information about the city. Women from the affluent strata and privileged castes also needed support from others, but only when their family members were unwilling to send them to the city. Often, the support

they needed was limited to simple information about a university, educational course or place of work. To that end, a few women connected with people through social media networks, albeit in a limited way.

Two, friendships formed in the city became support structures for many women. They varied according to caste, economic strata and the work location. The women who worked in a demanding workplace, such as a hospital or shopping mall, formed friendships at their place of work, especially because they had no time to make friends outside of work hours. The women students or who were in jobs with more free time had greater opportunity to make more friends. These friendships were often only sustainable for the period of time in which the women were studying or in that workplace, especially if the friendships were forged by spending a lot of time together.

Three, women who had better support networks in Hyderabad were more engaged with the city. The strong support networks increased the women's mobility and their claims¹ on the city, which is discussed in the chapter on women in public spaces.

When we look at these women's paths to the city, we find that it is not just the economic factor but also awareness of the city and access to new knowledge and opportunities that helped in their staking a claim to the city. It is here that the social network or capital of a woman and her family becomes important. Social networking happens in similar socioeconomic groups. Often the family, large kin groups and family friends are involved in decision-making for their children. The women from the higher socioeconomic strata had a clear advantage because they were more up to date with the options available to them and had the resources to search for more information.

But the first-generation migrant women from the Dalit and Scheduled Tribe communities continued to be disadvantaged in the city because their networks were limited to a few spaces and professions. Many of the nurses followed the lead of their sisters in migrating and brought along cousins or friends. In a majority of these cases, the women and their family relied on meagre or recently formed social networks in which a distant cousin, a person from the village, school alumni or an encouraging teacher became the source of information about city institutions and ways to navigate. After the women arrived in the city, they in turn became conduits for further migration of sisters and cousins.

¹Here the claim to the city is the notion of asserting, right, sense of belonging to the city.



5. Navigating Institutions of the City

The city as a space was experienced by the migrant women in this study through the institutions that they had entered into. Such institutions included government offices, universities and corporate companies as well as all the links between the city and the migrant population, such as minor educational institutions, hostels, residential spaces, big and small private sector workplaces, including malls, small provision stores, job coaching centres, placement agencies, etc. The women's interactions and negotiations with these institutional sites and their cultures shaped their urban experience. This chapter singles out three of those sites and their respective cultures—universities, globalized work spaces and residential facilities.

5.1 Diverse educational institution cultures

Hyderabad, as previously noted, is an educational hub with hundreds of private educational institutions and a significant number of public institutions. The students in the study were enrolled in the University of Hyderabad, the English and Foreign Languages University, the Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Osmania University, local colleges, private nursing colleges and job coaching institutes. The culture of these institutions is quite varied in terms of what is taught, the efficiency of the administration and the space available to students to explore new ideas in and outside the classroom and the way in which they can interact with teachers and administrators. For instance, teachers are open-minded, helpful and progressive or they are strict, conservative and biased, which has an impact on the broader culture of these spaces. In a similar way, the administration is friendly or restrictive.

The constitution of the students also shapes the culture, again in different ways. Diversity of students creates different kinds of cultures of resistance or cultures of silence in the universities.

The University of Hyderabad, the English and Foreign Languages University, Maulana Azad National Urdu University and Osmania University have very different institutional cultures, born of their varying student bodies and histories. Osmania University, for instance, has had dynamic student associations whose politics have been directly connected to larger social movements resulting in a distinct political culture. With students from a largely rural Other Backward Class or Dalit background, caste discrimination no longer is a political issue, although gender discrimination continues to be a dormant issue. Here it needs to be noted that historically caste based discrimination and anti-caste movements have been part of the other three universities.

The English and Foreign Languages University and the University of Hyderabad attract

a more elite student population and a small proportion of Dalit students. Anti-caste student associations there have had to contend with suicides and caste discrimination, marking the campus culture with anti-caste protests over the decades. Both these institutions have also had women's student associations that fought against sexual harassment, infusing the institutional culture with degrees of feminist sensibility.

Hyderabad over the years has also seen teachers petitioning the courts to intervene after incidents of suicides by students from marginalized communities to institute certain safeguards against future situations. However, over the past few years, the administrations at the University of Hyderabad and the English and Foreign Languages University have increasingly resorted to disciplinary measures to deal with student unrest and have moved to favour more gender-segregated spaces.

In understanding the experiences of the migrant women within their educational institutions, it is important to keep the context and changing political milieu in mind for each place. For many of the women interviewed, the higher academic standards were a motivation to challenge themselves to become better students and scholars and aspire to a career in the civil service.

Freedom, self-regulation and external pressure on campus

Many of the students talked of how the city's educational spaces enabled them to develop new ways of looking at the world around them. Some of the women learned of caste, gender and religious discriminations as they became exposed to new ideas and debates for the first time. It helped them to dispense with their preconceived notions and biases about what women can or cannot do. For instance, Grishma spoke about how she had learned that women could safely walk around in the evening on her university campus:

"I used to walk around campus late in the evening. If my father called, I would tell him, and he would be surprised, 'At this time?' and would ask if it was safe. And then I would start thinking, 'Oh, is it safe?' [laughs] and then I would be like, 'Yes, I suppose it is safe, no one is around.' I don't know how it is now. But at that time, it was safe, really safe, like no one stared at you. It used to be a very safe, comfortable place. I would go to the canteen. And then I understood that actually there is nothing wrong with women having tea after 8 o'clock. You can have it."

Such a sense of safety inculcated confidence among the women students who had experienced the space as very different from the gender-segregated spaces that they had been used to. As Grishma explained:

"After coming here, I saw that it is very open and there is no difference between boys and girls. The year that I had come in 2011, boys were allowed to enter girls' hostels, so it was very new and different for me."

But there were others who had to reconfigure themselves to fit into the university milieu. Upasana, who thinks of herself as a fashionable woman, explained that when she came to her university, she noticed that her trendy dressing made her feel like a "bimbo" in front of the otherwise intellectual-looking crowd. She began dressing down and composing herself so that she did not look like a non-serious student. Such self-regulation in terms of clothing was also enforced by a few other women. Dwiti too shared how she decided to "dress down" because she did not want to attract extra attention.

A few students felt pressure to wear a burqa, which they were not used to wearing in their hometown. As Rafiya described,

“I myself have never worn a burqa. I began wearing this kaftan after seeing the mahaul [environment] of this university.”

Sanobar and Rafath also had arrived at the difficult decision to wear a burqa to blend in. While studying in university provided many good opportunities, shifting to Urdu as the medium of instruction was a challenge for Sanobar (as her earlier education was not in Urdu). She had to adjust with the language of the university to do well in her academics.

The general environment of the university space created varying levels of comfort or discomfort among the students. For some, the freedom provided by the university space was the first thing they noticed, while a few others had to cultivate a level of self-discipline.

Gender, living spaces and regulation of sexuality

University hostels, in the experience of the young women migrants, are not merely spaces of living but also function to regulate their mobility and thereby maintain “order” among the residents. Although university hostels are governed by similar principles as private hostels in the city (college hostels, private hostels, working women’s hostels and rented accommodations), they differ from the latter because they exist in the midst of a non-segregated campus and therefore allow or enable different levels of mixing or cohabitation. However, each university space is distinct and subject to change over time. The young migrant women’s hostel experience depended on their location and the period of time when they entered the campus.

For most of the young women, having a room of their own was new and startling. But the task of maintaining it appeared to overwhelm a few. For many, getting along with their roommate was the first big challenge they faced in hostel life. Pratima, for instance, spoke of how her roommate wanted to make decisions for the entire room, while she just wanted her own space. At the same time, roommate bonding also led to enduring friendship.

The hostels are also about rules of movement, sexual regulation and segregation of sexes. We did not hear much about rules from residents at the University of Hyderabad hostels, but the students of the English and Foreign Languages University, Maulana Azad National Urdu University and Osmania University had much to say about their hostel’s curfew-related rules and other controls that they were subjected to as residents. A few newcomers agreed with the rules, but the older residents found them problematic. For instance, on the issue of male students being allowed to enter the women’s hostels in the English and Foreign Languages University, the women who were interviewed were divided in their opinion. Geeta, a newcomer from a remote part of North India, found such a prohibition comfortable and yet found the increased surveillance on the campus disturbing:

“At present, there are a few rules that I find good. Like earlier, boys were allowed inside the girls’ hostel and now they are not allowed. So, I like this rule. Girls do have their own privacy. Earlier, when we had to go to the gallery, I used to peep out and see the boy’s slippers outside the doors. So, some rules I like, but some rules I do not like. Like, I do not like cameras everywhere on the campus.”

Anindita, who had spent almost eight years in the same university, said that such restrictions were new and were met with resistance when they were first instituted. She said that one restriction led to another, and it became a never-ending story of curbing freedom of students. However it was welcomed by some students, talking about them she said:

“[We] allowed the administration, who were also ready to do it, to put these restrictions. We just held up our hands and asked them to cuff us.”

Savita agreed and said that the decision to not allow men in the women's hostels or vice versa constrained academic life on campus:

“It is actually a constraint. First thing, the campus is really very small, and we don't have any space to interact. Sometimes when we have group assignments or projects, we cannot really sit somewhere and discuss it. The only option left is those benches, and we don't want those mosquitoes to take us away. So that is one thing that is a major drawback here.”

The rules and regulations at Maulana Azad National Urdu University have always been strict. It has had an even stricter curfew schedule for women residents of the hostels. Female students are allowed access to the library only till 6 p.m., while male students can access the library till midnight. In a formal workshop organized by Anveshi Research Centre for Women's Studies, an alumnus of the same university (a woman named Khushnawaz) told us that she was thrown out of the hostel when she tried to raise the issue of unequal curfew rules for men and women. The administration was so high-handed with her that she was later barred from applying for a higher degree in the same university. It was appalling to hear that several other female students were intimidated to stop their complaining and Khushnawaz's condition was shown to them as an example. The university administration argued that family members of women students insisted on strict hours and rules for their daughters so that they are safe. Due to students' demand, the Maulana Azad National Urdu University administration extended the hostel curfew hour for women from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. after an extended struggle, but the library hour limit remained the same.

In Osmania University, the women students explained that although they did not have any hostel curfew, they must write their name in a register when they go out and return to the hostel. Not just the hostel wardens or other administrators but even the security guards sought to exercise control over the women students through their gaze. After completing their interview for this study, the two Osmania University women escorted the project team to the hostel gate but didn't step outside because the security guard kept a watch on the “way” of the women and they did not want to be seen out in “inappropriate dress” like pyjamas and T-shirt or salwar and T-shirt.

In other words, it appears that the control exercised by the family members on women and their sexuality transfers to the administration of these institutions. In the process of relocation through migration, one part of the “inner or familial” surrounds them in the “outer or public” space. The administration takes on the role of a “guardian” that keeps women in check. These regulations also functioned to regulate young migrant women's sexuality in these spaces in the name of safety and security.

Selective guardianship: Lack of basic infrastructure

This guardianship, however, was extremely selective and negative; women students were not provided with enabling conditions to help them thrive academically, which is why they entered the university space in the first place. Library and health care facilities were found wanting by many students.

The women enrolled at the University of Hyderabad, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Osmania University or the English and Foreign Languages University stressed that the health care facilities are poor. Health centres in these universities function only as a referral centre and lack proper services. Students are often referred to hospitals outside the campus. But the women students reported they faced many problems in accessing the hospitals alone and in getting treated. Anindita recalled:

“All the health centre [of the English and Foreign Languages University] ever provided was Dolo 650. If you are dying, take Dolo 650. If you are chumming

[having period cramps], take Dolo 650. If you have a headache, it's Dolo 650. If you have a dog bite, it's Dolo 650. That was all about the university health centre. But I have heard that many of my juniors have [urinary tract infection], and the university health centre will refer you to outside hospitals and such things, so that I have heard. That never happened to me; I never heard that this was also done. But they used to refer you out to the hospitals where you will be taken care of."

Sanobar made a similar observation:

"Health centre facilities here are zero. For every illness, they give the same medicine. If the leg is paining, then also the same medicine. And if the stomach is paining, then also the same medicine. And if there is fever, then also the same medicine. Same medicine for everything."

Rafiya had a health emergency in the night for which she went to the university health centre. The doctor there referred her to a hospital in the city. Even though women are not allowed to step outside their hostel after 7 p.m., in this case she was asked to go by herself at around midnight but she also needed someone to take her. Finally, one of her hostel mates accompanied her to the hospital.

Savita, studying at the English and Foreign Languages University, pointed to the starkly sexist attitude of the health care administration:

"The thing is, if somebody needs a gynaecologist, they don't depend on the health centre and immediately go out and consult one. Even if it is an emergency, we tend to not rely or depend on the health centre. There is nothing there, we know. One girl had this stomach ache and she went to the health centre and then they asked her, 'Are you sure you are not pregnant?' And then they told her, 'If it is not, then you just go and have paracetamol, you will be fine'."

Women students did not limit themselves to the classroom but wanted to occupy a variety of spaces in these universities and to claim full stake as paying patrons. They spoke of outdated books in libraries and having to wait to access the books they wanted. Dwiti, for instance, spoke of how she had asked her library to purchase the books that she needed for her research and how the process took time. Many of the interviewees complained of limited access to important academic journals. And women students at Maulana Azad National Urdu University complained about their lack of access to the library in general.

Pratima, Savita and Rajitha spoke about the lack of sports on campus and non-conducive environments for dance, music, theatre or cinema clubs. Anindita complained that the university administration screened films in a poorly maintained hall and yet collected 10 rupees contribution from students.

The women students, rather than being merely grateful for being granted entry into their respective university, wanted to access all available facilities they were entitled to as students. But some of the facilities they would have expected to find were also lacking. Women at Osmania University said that they do not have photocopy machines or a pharmacy in the vicinity and they have to rely on male classmates who have greater mobility to help them access these services. This dependence on male classmates thus was an inevitable necessity for the young women.

Community regulation, sexism and harassment

The students described two types of discrimination they contended with: Students discriminate among themselves on the basis of caste, gender or religion. And then there is the institutional

discrimination due to the policies, rules and regulations. Five to Six students spoke of active discrimination from other students or the administration on the basis of region or location. However, casual sexism seemed to be prevalent. For instance, Dwiti recalled a male friend's joking comment about the race of the children if he, from Tamil Nadu State, married her, from north-eastern India. That incident had hurt Dwiti because she had considered this man a friend; he crossed a line by not only sudden talk of marriage but also tried to make fun of her racial profile. Similarly, Pratima and Savita spoke of how friend groups formed on the basis of regional home and how it was difficult for people from other regions to have friends because these groups were closed in nature and closely kept a watch on the women within each group.

Along with "community" regulation and casual sexism, another major impediment that shaped the experience of the women students was the lack of functional redress mechanisms for sexual harassment. The women students spoke of the sexual harassment that they had experienced and the lackadaisical functioning of the anti-sexual harassment committee¹ on their campuses, which decreased the confidence of the students and made them hesitant to complain. Pratima described a friend who refused to approach the university committee despite enduring online harassment and instead reported it directly to a police station where she had to go through an ordeal as she had to face judgmental questions and insensitive approach to her case of online harassment.

Such a lack of confidence demonstrates the institutional apathy and indifference documented by the SAKSHAM² report, which highlighted the absence of anti-sexual harassment committees in many institutions of higher education, including Osmania University.

5.2 Workplace as an institution

The next chapter on women's work and employment goes into the nature of the workplaces where the participants worked. This section focuses on how the culture of the workplaces shaped the experiences of the participants in relating to the city. Scholars examining the new globalized workplace cultures have pointed to the phenomenon of new workers being "produced" (Radhakrishnan 2011, page 54) rather than new products alone. The question that interests us here is if women's experiences in these workplaces are "global" in nature.

The problem of being a non-local

We found that although multinational companies claim to function with a global outlook, the local emerges inevitably to stake a claim. 'Non-local' and 'local' women are separated with suitable protective/non-protective attitude. The latter encountered a sense of distinction between "local" and "non-local" employees combined with a fend-for-yourself attitude.

Sangita, a Bengali, working in a multinational company, thought that her English proficiency would come in handy but "did not feel included in the office culture" due to her lack of Telugu proficiency. Many times during office meetings, she would be left out of the discussion when everybody switched to Telugu. Prejudices about non-locals flourished too:

"They used to say that Bengali girls smoke and drink. I remember the time when for smoking I used to go 1 kilometre from my office so that I don't find any office people to judge me."

¹After the Vishakha judgement in 1997, all educational institutes and workplaces in India were asked to form anti-sexual harassment committees.

²University Grants Commission (UGC) task force report on the safety of women and programmes for gender sensitization on campuses, which was prepared by UGC along with a special team.

Courtesies given to “local” women, such as accompanying them when going home for their safety after late working hours or concessions (mentioned below) given to them, were not extended to Sangita because she was assumed to be a woman used to such late hours:

“If a Telugu girl has to go at 7 p.m., there will be a guy who will drop her home. If I have to go, they won’t care. They will say, ‘Arre haan tum to Kolkata se ho, tum to north Indian ho tum log ko kya hai!’ [You are from Kolkata, north India, so what is the issue of you going alone!]. Plus, the work pressure. . . the kind of work pressure they used to put onto me was 50–60 times more than what they used to put on a Telugu girl.”

Unending curiosity about women living alone posed additional problems, Meenal explained:

“‘Who cooks? Do you cook or do you have a cook? How do you guys stay? When do you go home? How frequently do you go home?’ There is a lot of curiosity from people who have never been outside Hyderabad in their entire life. They would want to know how a girl lives all by herself, who does the cooking for her, is she safe? How does she go back home?”

Equally annoying for Sangita were the queries that always gravitated towards her non-married status:

“When I joined this company, I was 27. Now that I am 29...colleagues have started saying, ‘See, now you are 29, you are not married.’”

These women working in multinational workplaces that purport to have a global outlook experienced repetitive queries about the language, dress, marriage and lifestyle of where they “came from”. Local curiosity takes over the professionalism towards work. These women’s desire to belong to the global workplace and have equal space is undercut by use of a local language, which has adverse consequences both for being treated as a non-local and for being “single”, or outside male supervision.

The workplace culture of Indian multinational companies

How do Indian multinational workplaces treat women? Sarada and Sirisha, who work in a supermarket are not allowed a break during the day because they are expected to be available to customers at all times, supposedly following given rules. Even toilet breaks are decided for them. Standing for long hours has brought about weight loss. They also are not allowed to purchase products from the department store where they work. When their shift is finished, they are expected to leave the supermarket and not shop around. Any form of engagement with the workspace other than work is discouraged.

What merits analysis here is the acceptance of these “standards” or norms of unrelenting work hours by new workforce entrants. Samantha, for instance, believes that new hires need to work extensively. She sometimes works two consecutive shifts, or 16 hours at a go. In such instances, she isn’t even given time to rest between the two shifts. But this did not appear to her as a violation of her rights as a worker. She said that she always thought this is the way it is for young workers. At a time when the Indian State has withdrawn most protections for workers, this internalization of the norm of neoliberal standards of unending work is perhaps to be expected.

Like Samantha, Sarada and Sirisha also accept the norm of unrelenting work and are not in a position to either recognize or do anything about the violation of their rights as women workers. We also found this to be true of a field that often highlights women’s rights but in reality practises similar norms and standards—journalism. Smriti, for instance, shared her experiences of working as a journalist and the forms of discrimination she experienced:

“In the media, men dominate. If we have work and have the patience to fight, then we will get peanuts. Professionally or salary wise, we get peanuts only, not equal status. We have more than 20 news channels, so we can’t see any women output editors. There is no [female] input editor, no output editor. In our newspapers also, we don’t have any woman editors till now... [even though] some women are there, but they [media houses] prefer men if we ask for political reporting duty. They think that if a woman reporter is there, she won’t be able to get any personal news, and they can’t move freely and frequently they can’t meet, they can’t go with their people...for midnight meetings and early morning meetings. But I don’t think that’s true actually... we have some [very] capable women reporters. Many women in our channel and our newspapers have proven that.”

Smriti’s experience cannot be seen in isolation because it is a part of the global gendered labour regime in which several Indian companies currently work. Even though more women are joining such a workforce, discrimination continues to be a day-to-day reality.

Is the situation in the government sector better for women? Deeksha and Jinju reported that they found it quite difficult to interact or work with colleagues due to their own inability to speak the local Telugu language, and thus they often felt excluded. The male colleagues would joke about them in Telugu, and they were not included in office conversations.

The migrant women interviewed, reported enduring frequent stares and queries for being “non-local” and single. Their work may come as a source of income and freedom from familial dependence, but the workplace is not exactly inclusive. They experience segregation of local and non-local and little protected for their labour rights, along with several other challenges discussed above. Despite these challenges, many migrant women working in highly demanding sectors, like health care, such as Padmini, Preeti and Dhanalakshmi, feel that their work provides them the life that they wanted.

5.3 Private residential accommodation for single working women: Issues and challenges

Most of the migrant women on their own in Hyderabad looked for affordable accommodation in hostels, as paying guests (PG)³, or in rented houses. But are there enough hostels for women who are migrating to the city? At the start of the research, we found many advertisements for private hostels scattered throughout the city. Some catered to students enrolled in coaching centres, preparing for competitive exams and English learning courses. Many targeted employees of multinational companies in the Cyberabad⁴ area of the city. Each of these hostels advertised the assumed needs of potential renters, but what we found in common was that they usually addressed the parents of young women. The advertisements sought to assure parents that their hostel would provide a safe and secure environment for their daughters. A variant of this theme was to address the women by saying that the hostel would provide “home away from home with high-class facilities”. Overall, we found few hostel advertisements that treated young women as independent adults.

The experiences of the women reflected the anxiety that the city developed in response to the presence of independent women staying alone. These anxieties were not always the creation of the migrants but seemed to be an extension of their families’ concerns and the kind of control the women faced in their home. This likely is why private hostels in Hyderabad target parents to highlight the “safety” that they propose to provide. Despite the migration of women being a

³Accommodation where people rent a room or one portion of a local’s house.

⁴Administrative area in Hyderabad designated for software companies.

source of profit for hostel owners, unaccompanied women seem to be a source of anxiety for the city. These hostels wanted to attract migrant single women but, at the same time, took it upon themselves to regulate the women to maintain “order” in the city.

How are you related?

Given this mixture of anxiety and profit motive, it was not surprising to hear from many women accounts of terrible experiences when searching for rental accommodation. Starting from the suspicious gaze to questions about character, habits, caste, religion and food preferences, landlords asked all sorts of uncomfortable and invasive questions. Anindita recalled how she could not find a house for a long time because most of the landlords suspected that she wanted to rent a house with her boyfriend. One landlord even asked directly, “*Rishta kya hai?*” (What is the relation between you and your boyfriend?) However, the monetary gain forced the landlord to move beyond his urge for control. Anindita was told that if she paid extra thousands of rupees, he would “ignore” her kind of lifestyle.

Sonia and Smriti reported that they were not confronted with uncomfortable questions because their parents accompanied them in the house hunting, giving them legitimacy. Monika decided to stay in a hostel after a bad experience in a rented flat due to the continuous comments and interference from her landlady. Sangita said she was constantly watched by her landlords because she lived alone or with other women; one landlady constantly preached about cleanliness and maintenance of the flat. Male landlords took advantage of the situation and tried to invade her privacy. One such landlord asked her to join a drinking session with his buddies because she seemed like “that kind of woman” who would agree to drink with strangers:

“There was a small room below our flat where the owner and his friends came to drink. When we were going downstairs, the owner came and asked, ‘Chalo madam join kar lo humlog ko’ [Come join us for drinks]. Earlier also, he had asked me, ‘Aa jao madam, pi lo hamare sath, aap log to peethe hi ho’ [Since you drink, come and join us for drinks.] He took us to be women who drink and smoke [with anyone].”

Thus, staying in rented apartments seems to generate a distinct set of issues for middle-income women who have a lifestyle of their own that is different from the norm.

Other interviewees experienced no challenge in renting accommodation. Kamala, who had lived in several locations, said she managed to keep her landlords happy because she greeted them and ignored the petty stuff. At the time of the interview she was staying with four flatmates who were closely bonded over a pet dog. They lived like a family and looked after their day-to-day chores as family members. Ananksha also became part of this group. Although she had bad memories of flatmates in Mumbai, who had stolen money from her and gave her a tough time, the flatmates and friends in Hyderabad made her feel at home.

Sarada and Sirisha shared a unique arrangement whereby they were provided a space to stay for free. It was their luck to find a woman willing to provide them a room and take care of them in emergency situations.

Hostel Options

Several of the women lived in private hostels. Pallavi, Meenal, Jinju, Dhanalakshmi, Samantha, Preeti and Padmini had stayed in different types of private accommodation that were neither rented houses nor university hostels but paying-guest accommodation, YMCA hostels, hostels attached to hospitals, etc. Some of the more economically well-off women tried different options before settling on one.

Most of the nurses in the study are content with the hostel accommodation provided by their hospital. As Dhanalakshmi explained, for the first time in her life she has a proper corner and bed

for herself, timely served food, clean toilets and water and has no complaints about staying in a hostel. Similarly, Samantha, Priti and Padmini stated their respective hostels were comfortable. They found it easier to commute to work because they lived nearby.

Paying-guest accommodation was characterized as not suitable by the women of economically better-off backgrounds. Meenal stayed in a paying-guest accommodation for a few months, where she had a difficult time because the woman in charge did not provide good-quality food. Jinju said that her initial stay in the YWCA hostel was difficult because the warden made her life difficult with restrictions on movement.

Pallavi and Sonia found hostels that would also accommodate their friends and charged reasonably. Even though each of them joined the hostel as a single resident, they managed to find room for friends in the same facility.

Hostel managed by a single woman for single women

As previously described, Vijetha, a single woman, operates a hostel for single women migrants with low-income jobs. She started it after her own difficulties to find a decent place to live when she first moved to Hyderabad. Vijetha struggles in operating the hostel and managing the meals, water, electricity and the safety of the residents while also working full time. Residents like Radha, Monika, Sameera, Bhanu and Sabiha described her place as more affordable and comfortable than their other options. As a single woman manager of a working women's hostel, Vijetha has needed police help due to the frequent intimidation from men who were curious or used to stalk and wanted to talk to the residents of the hostel.

5.4 Summing up

In their work Baxi et.al. (2006) Chowdhry (2004) and (2007) and Chakravarti (2005) have demonstrated that through the colonial interpretations of bodily rights and their custody, families are established as the true custodians of women. Until recently, interpretations of these laws were used in cases in which women asserted their right to marry or be in a relationship of their choosing. The experiences of women interviewed in this study - single women in metropolitan Hyderabad - reveal that the idea of a custodian is deeply embedded in institutional cultures throughout the city. As discussed above, the way hostels, educational institutions, or workplaces try to protect/regulate women and their bodies reflects this anxiety of being a custodian.

Even as they appear to take on this role of custodian for these single women migrants, actual provision of care is not given much priority. Care was understood as protection and regulation of women's physical movement sufficing as protection. Facilities like healthcare, hygiene in hostels and encouraging academic environment are minimal in nature. In other spaces such as hospital-attached hostels, basic facilities such as common washrooms, running water in washrooms and shelves for clothing were understood as care.

However, new women migrants without a social network in the city do not mind a strict curfew because it gives them a sense of security from various dangers possible in the city. Such regulations are found to be restrictive by women with such networks who want more from the existing spaces in the city. In short, the city is ready for those women who do not question the rules of custodianship but the city and its institutions are not yet ready for those women who want to occupy more space, care and facilities than they are given.



6. Gender in the Globalized Indian Economy

Migrant women joining the globalized workforce of Hyderabad is considered one of its many successes. The city has attracted women workers in many domains, from educational institutes to shopping malls and corporate offices to government institutions. Workplaces in the globalised world promise professional growth for everyone who has the requisite merit, is hardworking and ready to give their best, irrespective of gender and other socio-economic location. But do they really work this way and did these get an equal footing in these workplaces? In this chapter we focus on the experiences of women in these workspaces and their constant negotiations around it.

6.1 Lack of jobs in villages and small towns

Many of the study participants, like Kamala, Pallavi, Padmini and Jinju, talked about the lack of opportunities in their hometown, which relates to the state's development priorities after 1990. Cities became centres of job opportunities due to the unrelenting focus on them. Educated young people then migrated to these cities from *muffasil* towns and villages. Hyderabad, as the oasis of jobs and opportunities in the midst of vast regions of no development, became the obvious choice for many people from the *muffasil* towns across the state. In fact, going to the city itself became a marker of success, as Anika from Telangana pointed out:

“People in my hometown talk about their children: ‘My son is in Hyderabad,’ ‘My daughter is in Hyderabad.’ So, I had this passion—not just me, my parents also had it.”

But for women from upper-caste and middle-income families of Andhra Pradesh, like Sonia, moving to Hyderabad was something done without much thought:

“It is normal. Actually, from our place, Hyderabad is the nearest city for us, so everyone wants to move here for a job. They prefer this. Now we have Vizag [Vishakhapatnam]. Earlier everyone used to prefer Hyderabad.”

For the educated middle-class women, the lack of options to study anything except engineering drove them to Hyderabad. As Pallavi from a small district town of Andhra Pradesh explained:

“I wanted to come to a city. I didn’t want to study engineering [near home]. They do not have any colleges for Bachelor of Science, animation and multimedia.”

For women like Ana, Sarada and Sirisha who come from poor Dalit households, moving to the city was imperative for higher education or finding work other than farm labour; employment opportunities for young women were close to nil in the rural and *muffasil* areas. Ana finished her nursing course near her hometown but did not find good opportunities in her village or any nearby area. She shifted to Hyderabad and started working in a small private hospital. Monika’s family mortgaged their gold to help their daughter study for a diploma in vocational rehabilitation and to work with mentally challenged persons. Coming from Dalit households, these first-generation educated women were looking for a better life than their parents had who were farming or engaged in low-paying occupations.

6.2 Searching for jobs in the city

The 50 women who were interviewed described essentially three ways of coming to the city for jobs: Some of them came after receiving a job offer; some migrated and then searched for a job, and a few stayed on in the city after completing their university degree and looked for a job.

Sarada, Sirisha and Farzana, all from lower-income and lower-caste households, came to the city after finishing class 12. None of them had ever worked with a computer and thus did not know how to look online for opportunities. They used their kin networks to look for employment. Sisters Sarada and Sirisha’s cousins helped them find work in a supermarket. Farzana, who had joined a General Nurse Midwife (GNM) course, was helped by the *aaya*¹ of the hospital, who suggested that she apply in another hospital for work while still a student, which she did and was hired.

Many of the women saw their first job as a stepping stone and intended to move to a better job after gaining more experience in the city. Once Farzana finishes her midwife course, she plans to move out of her hospital where she was working. Lipika was not happy with the pay and the work but she looked at her job as an electrical engineer as a learning opportunity and hopes the experience will lead to a better job in engineering. She feels she has not achieved much success because she has lacked guidance. She talked of feeling that somehow she had lost her way and lost precious time:

“I think if you are going on a path and if someone comes and tells you the route, you can go easily. But if you don’t know the route, then you go but you have to keep asking and there are a lot of thorns and stones in that path. You have to face a lot of difficulty in going, and once you reach and you don’t get the destination, then how do you feel?”

At the time of the interview, she was still looking for her “big break”. Having learned her lesson from initial hardships, she is now eager to guide her younger sister onto the correct path.

For Sonia, Radha, Sarada and Sirisha, Hyderabad was the only option that would provide a suitable job for them. The medium they used for job hunting varied according to their socioeconomic profile and resources. Anika and Radha, from middle-income families and with university degrees, had some familiarity with the use of technology and were thus able to put their resumes on job site listings.

Radha came to Hyderabad alone from northern India, stayed at a friend’s place and then searched for work through different job sites. Sonia, who has a Bachelor of Technology degree,

¹Staff in hospital involved in patient care which includes bodily fluids.

came with eight of her classmates to look for a job. They joined a job-coaching centre² to gain an extra edge and kept looking through online portals. Sonia found a software job within 15 days of her arrival, but some of her friends were not as lucky and returned home after two months.

Jinju, Tara and Smriti each had a job offer confirmed before they came to the city. For them, the job was the priority and the city was secondary. However, the decision to locate here became easier because they all had a relative living in the city and found it easier to negotiate Hyderabad.

For these women, having a good education was not enough to find a job. The economic, social and cultural capital of women and their families all were integral in these women's search for employment in the city.

6.3 Did women have better career choices?

It is by now established that the arena of work is gendered, determining the “choices” that women make in their entry into and continuation in the workforce. These choices are closely related to women's assumed gendered domestic responsibilities as well as to the way households continue to be structured, with caring responsibilities falling on women. For instance, it is not accidental that most women with a high school education move into the care industry—nursing, teaching, etc.—because these areas of work are considered to be a natural extension of women's “caring” nature. Societal endorsement apart, women's lower educational and technical qualifications also push them into the crowded field of care work, which is low-paying. Despite the professional and merit-based workplace that the young migrant women had hoped to enter, their career choices, their rise up the career ladder and the work environment are suffused with a gendered division of what is possible, but sometimes in surprising directions.

For instance, the women nurses in the study believed that the care work they do is meant for women to do. Ana, a Dalit nurse from Telangana, said that women are more capable of caring for patients than men. Ritty, another nurse working in a corporate hospital, thought that male nurses had little staying power:

“...boys can't work up to 50 or 60 years in the nursing field. In our department also, brothers are there. They want to shift to another career. They don't like to work their whole life in nursing.”

Their comments captured the gendered nature of the field of nursing in which male nurses are considered an exception and female nurses the rule.

Farzana, from a poor Muslim family, described how her mother wanted her to take [civics, economics and commerce courses] instead of sciences in the intermediate college, with the following rationale:

“Mother said if I train to be a doctor or nurse, it will be a waste of four or five years. If I study these courses, I can go into teaching and can get married soon. We will be relaxed.”

Geeta, studying for a Master of French degree, described how her family is worried that they won't be able to find a good husband for her due to her choice of education.

While marriage was the concern for Farzana's and Geeta's families, disciplines like media and transport were deemed inappropriate for other women because the public space is male-dominated and therefore unsafe for women. The continued prevalence of men in most professional spaces makes it difficult for women to enter into or progress in those fields even when they want to. Smriti, a journalist, talked about male dominance in the Telugu-language print media. In her

²Informal institutes providing training for competitive exams or jobs.

media house, only three of the 300 reporters are women. She pointed out that many of the regional media houses (newspapers) don't even have a single woman reporter. She noted that women rarely occupy senior positions. "In women-oriented [television] channels also, the boss is male. Even some women's programmes are also designed by men. If any women's programme is conceptualised by women, then they have a problem [in accepting]," she said. Despite being the best in her batch, having won awards and been otherwise appreciated for her work, Smriti was not allowed to be a part of the political beat as a television journalist. Her request was denied with the excuse that the field of politics is male-dominated. It took much negotiation with her new employer when she moved to another media house for permission to cover the political beat.

Women working in engineering encountered a similar situation when choosing their field of specialization. Some streams are considered suitable for women because they do not require interaction with the public domain, while those that require it are considered unsuitable. For instance, Sonia and Lipika were advised not to take up specializations that would require they "go out" among the public. As Sonia explained:

"When I got a [university placement], I preferred civil engineering because I like some kind of creativity, like architecture, that kind of thing. But again, my family members, I have a few uncles and they suggested, 'You are a girl, you cannot afford to go outside every time. So, if you take computer engineering, you can sit and work, and so it will be easy for you.' So [I decided], ok, I will go for that."

Similarly, Lipika shared:

"In electrical [engineering]...when I went to choose my field, people said, 'Arrey, why did you choose electrical? Electrical is not that good, one has to go out and have to mingle with men.'"

Sonia, from a Kamma caste family, buckled under pressure from her relatives and chose a subject she didn't like. She told herself that she would do other things, like multimedia and computer networks. Lipika, however, pursued electrical engineering because she always had the support of her father, who constantly reminded her that women are equal to men.

6.4 Non-availability of basic facilities in male-centric offices

Once the women began working, they found that even basic facilities, such as toilets for women, were missing because women are still considered either inessential or exceptional in the labour market. Smriti narrated the woes of women working in the field:

"We don't have facilities also. When we go outside, to the field, outside of the newsroom, we don't have any facilities to change the [sanitary] napkin or... Like any common woman, we used to suffer. We used to live with stomach pain and periods. We can't say that I am not going or I will not do this or that."

Even when toilets were present, its use was mediated by many factors. Sarada and Sirisha, working in a department store, described restrictions regarding toilet use. Other women in similar sales positions talked about their self-regulation in using the toilet when customers were present. In shops where there is a common toilet for men and women, the women prefer not to use them if it can be avoided. Some of the women working in these establishments also talked about not changing a sanitary napkin during work hours because they felt uncomfortable using the same toilet that the men used. All this may have an effect on their health in the long run.

6.5 Work conditions in the city

In the post-1990 period, many legal protections for the small formalized sector in the country were dismantled, converting it into the informal sector. Women entering into the workforce began to work predominantly in the informal sector, characterized by the lack of formal legal protection and rights and offering low wages and no social or even job security. The feminization of labour in some sectors is characterized by flexibilization and casualization that are built into the new international division of labour (Rege 2003). Even though industries redesigned to create more openings for women, the openings were concentrated in the lower rungs of jobs, where the work was more of a repetitive nature (Vanamala 2016) and (Neetha 2002). Women employed in the soft skills as well as areas requiring no skills continue to fall under the differential wage structure of the pre-1990 period. It is in this context the migrant women in this study entered the workforce.

Many of the young women from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana who were conversant in Telugu and had limited and working knowledge of English or Hindi found few opportunities for job entry and growth. While some of them preferred to stay in their comfort zone, some of the women learned a new language in their job and were proud of it. Some of the nurses learned to communicate in English after coming to the city and felt proud of being able to talk to their patients in English. Monika was trying hard to learn English at the time of the interview. She worked in a learning centre for autistic children as a behaviour therapist in Banjara Hills, an affluent locality of the city, where she needed to talk to the parents of the children. She described her state of mind:

“... how to improve my language? I asked God, ‘God I don’t know English, I don’t know Hindi, how? I want to learn, learn, learn.’”

All women reported that their working conditions are tough, long and without a break, especially at the lower-paying end, like in a shopping mall store or in a hospital. The mall workers had 10-hour work shifts in which they had only a half-hour break for lunch. They were required to stand most of the time, and their toilet break was regulated. They were not allowed the day off on Sunday either, due to the popularity of shopping in malls on Sundays and holidays. Their pay was cut if they took a leave without informing management.

In addition to low wages, the women were not paid what was initially agreed. Ana, a nurse, signed a contract for 12,000 rupees a month but received only 7,000 rupees. Farzana, who works in the same place, is paid 6,000 rupees per month; if she needs more money, she works a double shift. Two years ago, they both signed a contract for 7,000 rupees but were paid only 4,000 rupees then. In violation of overtime rules in which a worker should earn double pay for overtime, Farzana is paid the same amount, with only an extra 50 rupees for food.

The prohibition on saleswomen from buying anything for their own consumption, including sanitary pads, from the store where they worked is an effort to maintain the social class distinction between them and the customers. No union operated in these workplaces, thus there was no mechanism for raising the violations these working conditions represented.

The nurses were also on their feet all day. This constant standing, be it by a mall worker or a nurse, exacts a severe toll on the body. Sarada, who worked in the supermarket, had lost weight. The long hours, strenuous work without breaks coupled with lack of nutritious food resulted in this weight loss. All the nurses mentioned that they had lost weight after they started working. Samantha and Dhanalakshmi both lost 4 kilograms, for instance³. Yet, the women continued the work. Any declining health status was hardly acknowledged by the young women other than to ascribe it to staying away from home.

³Weight loss in these already undernourished bodies would lead to further health complications. Dhanalakshmi for example was 39kg when she came to the city and now she is 35 kgs.

Most women reported that their day off from work typically does not involve time for leisure. Most of the women either sleep or do needed chores. Anjana, who works as a nurse, described her day-off routine:

“That is the washing day for me [laughs]. I wake at 9–9.15 a.m., finish breakfast and start washing my clothes. Washing, room cleaning, ironing; after that, I bathe, head bathing; after that, lunch and the day will finish. I will take one or two hours of rest, that’s it.”

The leisurely pleasures of city life, such as shopping, seem out of bounds for the lower economic strata of women workers, as both the working conditions and low wages preclude these possibilities. Women working in the IT sector and other high-income jobs enjoy two-day weekends that afford them time for relaxation and entertainment after household chores.

From patronage to curious glances to harassment: Migrant women’s experiences in the workplace

At one end of the income spectrum, such as jobs in the hospitals, the employers seem to take up the role of guardians. Ana and Farzana pointed out that hospital management takes care of the needs of nurses like them. The management not only arranges for a rented room near the hospital for them but is willing to loan them money if needed. In both the small and corporate hospitals⁴, the nurses can turn to the hospital management for help of any kind. Taking on the role of patrons, these hospital managers take care of them in their hour of need and make them feel safe and secure, as if they are a family member. Having no other relatives and friends in the city, the women said they feel assured by the support from the management. As Anjana explained:

“My feeling is...it is a family environment and that is why I am still here.... Whatever...not only personal...whatever we are facing, any problem, I am going to the higher authority and immediately they will solve it. That is why I have chosen this and why I am here....”

Vulnerability in the outside world pushes these women to stay with their hospital employer in spite of the poor pay, primarily due to the comfort and support that the employers give them. The feeling of family gave Anjana and others a sense of community, making them feel comfortable and safe. At the same time, we could sense that this “familial atmosphere” is not conducive for raising issues of wages, sexual harassment or working conditions.

Although the numbers of working women has been increasing, and more women are seen in workspaces and public spaces, there is an anxiety related to their presence that manifests in various ways, from unofficial dress codes to actual harassment. Often, it is the extreme action of sexual harassment that gets attention. The working women in the study talked about the different kinds of uncomfortable situations in their workplaces, which cannot be categorized as harassment even though it affects the working environment for them, such as excessive curiosity and surveillance. But some also spoke of sexual harassment.

Working in a small and predominantly male office, Lipika says that the male colleagues in her department do not talk to their women colleagues. On her first day of work, she was asked to dress conservatively and was told, “This is not a glamorous field.” She pointed to her simple synthetic salwar kurta and said, “This is how I go to the office.” The small but significant instance exemplifies the anxiety and discomfort regarding women’s sexuality in global office spaces.

⁴The tertiary hospital is a large hospital providing specialist care and often referred to by primary and secondary hospitals.

Radha and Sangita found that they were being typecast because they are from northern and eastern Indian regions, respectively. Their colleagues look at them as different—more “modern” and thus “forward” in the sense of being open to liaisons. Radha described the way in which an enquiry about her evenings typically does:

“I stay here in a hostel, so people [colleagues] think that I can stay till late night outside. But I tell them that I have to reach my hostel before 8 p.m. Then they ask, ‘Accha, then what do you do in the 4 p.m. to 1 a.m. shift?’ I tell them I then inform the didi⁵ in advance that I have this shift. I tell this for my own safety so that people do not proposition me, ‘Accha chalti kya bahar.’[Will you be coming with me?]”

Ironically, Radha conjured up a restrictive hostel curfew as an excuse to avoid unpleasant situations.

Kamala, who had worked in the home loan division of a corporation, was considered successful: She recruited, trained and managed people and, in the 18 months of her employment, she was able to raise business from Rs 30 million to Rs. 200 million annually. Yet, it was not her performance at work but her sexuality that mattered. She encountered such a hostile work environment after her colleagues discovered her sexual orientation that she ultimately left her job.

Akanksha recalled the sexual harassment she encountered at an event management firm where she was expected to dress up and look glamorous. After-office parties were also a regular feature because they were needed to build networks. Her boss would insist on her attendance at the parties, during which colleagues indulged in cocaine use. Her boss was perceived as a womanizer and would touch her inappropriately. She finally left the job.

Other women in the study from the corporate and media sectors spoke of sexual harassment in the workplace that they had heard about, even though they themselves had not experienced it.

Progress, differential treatment and glass ceiling in the workplace

Once the women began working, the sexual division of labour in the domestic sphere combined with discrimination or the differential treatment in the workplace shaped their career-progression prospects. Smriti described the situation for women in the television media:

“Even if women work for years in the same designation, their salaries increase very little. But men changed from one organization to another frequently... their salaries inevitably increased, becoming double or more than double. The new upcoming television channels compete, and they offer more pay and opportunities to men.... One year a man is a beat reporter, the next year he will be the bureau chief in the news channel. But any news channel will not take women as a bureau chief or women as output editors because they do not change organizations like men. . . . it is because of women’s need for comfort, their family maintenance, house shifting, children’s education. The women are more responsible, no?”

Apart from the assumed and real household responsibilities that hold women back, the young migrant women also faced differential treatment in the workplace, difficult to access professional networks and being assigned “female roles”. In her male-dominated workplace, Lipika found companionship in the only other female employee who worked in a different department. Her male colleagues did not talk to her. Sonia, a corporate employee who was the only female member in her team, said that she felt the lack of women’s company because she could not share

⁵The word is used in India to call an elder sister. In this case, she was calling her hostel owner as didi.

things with her male colleagues. Lipika, who works in a small electrical company, pointed out that she was never sent out into the field due to the “lack of security” for women. She contrasted this with her experience of an internship in Sriharikota⁶, where she went into the field regularly because security was not seen as an issue. Vijetha pointed out:

“Men dominate over there [in her office], and even if the woman has talent, they do not give importance...we have studied so much, but still they do not give that much importance [to women’s work and experience].”

In contrast, the interviewees who had women colleagues bonded with them outside the office too. Nurses working in hospitals were not only colleagues but roommates and often became friends.

Attempts at correcting gender bias were often result of tokenism, as Meenal, a corporate employee, described:

“There was a time in our office, say some three years back, there was not a single lady in the C band [assistant general manager and higher]. Just because they wanted to show that they are very gender just, they promoted two ladies from our office. . . one lady got double promotion so that she could become AGM, just to show that they have enough females in their leadership.”

Maternity turns into a major roadblock to progress in a workplace for women. A majority of the women interviewed work in the informal sector, with no maternity benefits. The nurses and mall workers had no maternity benefit either. These women must leave their job when they are due for delivery; if they maintain a good relationship with the management, they may get their old job back. A friend and colleague of Ana’s (not included in the interviews) took a 25-day break from her nursing job for her baby’s delivery and then returned to the hospital. During that time, she received no salary. After her return, she was given at least a lighter workload.

Even in the formal sector where the maternity benefit is mandated by law, such a claim is seen as welfare and not a right. In Sonia’s office, as in most other corporate offices providing maternity benefits, women are given 86 days (approximately three months) of maternity leave. If a woman takes more leave, her salary is deducted. But women’s chances of appraisal are affected during this period, and this has an adverse effect on their chances of raises and promotions.

The ideology of formal equality has been strongly rooted in the new global labour market-place—so much so that women like Meenal begin to doubt their own feminist perspective and associate women’s lack of upward mobility to post-maternity decline in productivity:

“Like my boss just had twins, so I know how much unavailable she has become. The way she used to work hard before she had kids is completely different. So, I don’t know if I can entirely blame people also being gender biased. I don’t know whether it is to do with the gender or more to do with the situation in which people are in.”

None of the workplaces where the women worked provide any creche facility, forcing all the women with small children to fall back on their natal family and/or compromise on their work schedule.

⁶A town in Andhra Pradesh known for the satellite launch centre.

Allure of government jobs

The uncertainty, insecurity and poor working conditions of private jobs was largely the precursor for the hunt for a government job among the all women who sought out such a change. A government job seemed to give women some amount of bargaining power with parents. The parents of Tara and Jinju, for instance, would not have “allowed” them to come to Hyderabad if they had not secured a government job. Sameera, who is from a Dalit family and was working in a private multinational company, described the perception and aspirations around government jobs:

“Most of the girls’ families think they have seen the change in this generation. They have seen modern society, they think that in private [industry] there is no secure job, but in government there is. I don’t know about boys, but in girls’ families, like my family thinks that if I get a government job then it is okay. I have to get married in the future and get settled. If there is any economic crisis also, then we will be tension free. That is how they think, only for security they prefer government jobs.”

The discussions with women⁷ living in social welfare hostels also indicated a preference for government jobs. The residents mentioned that a good government job, because of its security and stability, would also help them land a good husband.

6.6 Compulsory marriage and working for income after marriage

As previously discussed, women’s education and employment continue to be largely dependent on the wishes of the family, both natal and marital—linked as they are to the social reproduction of the family (see table 1.4) . Given that marriage is typically not a matter of choice but is compulsory for women, we wanted to understand the perspective of the women who have made huge strides to find work and self-respect in the city about employment after marriage.

Some women strongly believe that after marriage women lose their freedom and therefore they need to work or study for as long as they can to delay the inevitable loss of freedom. Revathi wanted to escape marriage and so was studying, even though she was unclear what she wanted to pursue. Tara believes that marriage will mean the end of her freedom, so she wants to enjoy her life fully before marriage. She had been previously engaged but the relationship did not work out. She used that as an opportunity to convince her parents to let her study and work. She came to Hyderabad after getting a government job.

For some of the women, marriage is the primary goal; they aspire to have a good married life, which to them is a marker of stability and success. For women from the lower economic strata, employment is more of a compulsion to support their family and less of a choice. For instance, Dhanalakshmi, from a rural Mala community, said that she will decide whether she will work or not after her marriage. Another woman said that she didn’t want to work after marriage unless forced by the economic conditions. She was working at the time of the interview only because she did not want to be a burden on her parents, who had spent considerably on her education. Work for her is only a stop-gap arrangement while she waits to marry.

Deeksha, a middle-income woman, thought of giving up her government job after marriage. But when her husband continued to stay abroad and didn’t return, she continued working. She expressed her desire to resign as soon as her husband returns to India.

Farzana and a few other women were clear they want to work after marriage. Being that she is from a conservative rural family, she would need her husband’s permission to do this, which is why she plans to only marry someone who is comfortable with her working after marriage.

⁷During the pilot phase of the project our team had done few focus group discussions with women living in social welfare hostels. (See footnote. . . .)

The compulsory nature of the institution of marriage for women has shaped the migrant women's attitudes to work. Even if a woman is doing well in her career, she is considered successful only if she has a good marriage and then becomes a mother. Vijetha, who fought her way to survive after becoming an orphan, wants to marry as soon as possible because she feels her life otherwise won't have much meaning. This is not just a reflection of the society that she lives in but also her own desire to be "settled".

Thus, there seems to be no single factor influencing these women's opinions or necessity around work and marriage. The economic necessity, freedom at home, their idea of womanhood and the nature of their work or work environment has variously shaped their opinions.

6.7 Negotiating economic freedom

What women do with the money they earn and how they use their economic freedom were important questions for the study.

Repaying debts and loans and accumulating dowry

Many of the women in both the low-income and high-income brackets said that they send money home. The difference between the two categories lies in the proportion of income sent home. One of the nurses said that she sends about 80 percent of her monthly earnings to her family. Sarada and Sirisha, the two sisters working in a supermarket, earn a total of 16,000 rupees a month, of which they keep just 4,000 rupees for themselves and send the rest home, which is the primary source of income for their farming family. Farzana, who does double shifts while studying to qualify as a general nurse midwife, also sends about 80 percent of the earnings home.

The women in the high-income bracket are able to look into their individual needs even after fulfilling their household needs. Akanksha, who earns well, sends money both to her mother and brother separately. Ritty and Pallavi said that the money they are sending home is being saved for their weddings. This is quite contrary to the general understanding that as women gain more economic independence, they have a greater say in the use of their money. Few of the women felt comfortable talking about finances openly.

Many of the women in the study had taken a loan to pursue their higher education in the city. The women from rural, Dalit, small-farming communities, like Monika and Samantha, who borrowed money for their education. Samantha has been repaying a loan of two hundred thousand rupees ever since she started working a year ago. Monika's family mortgaged the gold they had and, once she started working, was able to get it back. Middle-class women like Meenal and Sangita also took a loan for their education and started repaying as soon as they had a job.⁸ This points to the fact that the private education sector charges a huge amount of fees. Women and men enrol in these institutes using a loan to pursue their education with the assumption that doing so will change their socioeconomic status and condition (see the final section of the report for educational aspirations).

⁸In India higher education especially in humanities, basic sciences and social sciences has been largely public funded while technical and medical education less so. Since 1990, the commercialization of technical/medical/para-medical/management/legal education speeded up, as Indian economy was liberalized. Bank loans for higher education in these courses began in the last decade. The fee charged in these educational institutions is often unaffordable for the majority of Indian families. For example, fees charged in a nursing course is equivalent to about two years of family income of an agricultural/ industrial worker. Similarly an management course fee would be equivalent to about two years income of a lower middle class family.

Does economic independence help women renegotiate patriarchal control in the family?

Many women attempt to negotiate between workspace and home once they gain some economic independence. Tara used her job as a bargaining chip to delay her marriage and also brought her brother to the city for his education, which she was funding. As noted previously, she feels that marriage means the loss of every freedom and found looking after her brothers to be a better deal:

“Life was going on. My parents said that once you complete two years, take a transfer and come home. . . . Then, they were like, fine if you have made up your mind and you have settled down there too, so fine...stay there. And at the same time, if your brothers can get their education, then it’s okay. Anyways, they are completing school this year, they said. Then the younger brother came here for his diploma.”

Along with supporting their respective family financially, Lipika, Tara and Ishita also are helping and guiding their siblings on their career paths. This has increased their status within the family because they now occupy the conventionally male domain of earning for the family. How this affects their familial relationships is an aspect that we did not go into deeper but would like to.

Some of the women initially had no control over their earnings. Akanksha, for example, had to hand over her entire salary to her sister-in-law (with whom she stayed at that time) who would then give her back a small portion of it. It was only when Akanksha was left stranded one day without any money that she snapped, taking control of her salary and her life.

6.8 Difficult negotiation—division of labour in the marital home

Most of the five married women in the sample managed both a job and household work, with husbands ‘contributing’ or ‘helping out’. Jinju brought her son to Hyderabad even in the middle of the academic year because it did not occur to her that she could leave the son with the husband and in-laws. Meenal, whose husband helps her out, feels that it lessens the burden on her because he does not expect her to do everything at home. Deeksha cheekily said her husband supports her housework “mentally not physically” and laughed, saying that she does not expect her husband to help her. Sonia, a software engineer, who is professionally more qualified than her husband, acknowledged that supervising the maids is her responsibility, along with the responsibility of housework. When no one is around, her husband takes care of their child, bathes her and drops her at school. She does not expect more from him.

These five married women depend on their mothers for their ability to keep working, apart from domestic workers. As Sonia explained:

“If my mom is there, I don’t have a problem. I just leave everything and go and do whatever I want to do.”

Jinju and Smriti also rely on their mothers to take care of their household and children when they go to work. As Smriti acknowledged:

“Without her, we can’t do anything...she manages the whole house.”

Smriti believes that this freedom at home keeps her stress-free and helps her do well at her job. A week before the interview, she had worked a 30-hour stretch, which would have been impossible without her mother and husband helping at home.

Without their respective mothers’ help, the married women would find it extremely difficult to manage both the home and their offices. None of them or their husband have a creche facility at their workplace, which would solve many problems for a working couple.

6.9 Summing up

The study found a degree of reorganization of patriarchy in the familial and working spaces is underway to enable women across caste and economic strata to migrate and work unsupervised in metropolitan cities. Women negotiate their choice of careers or living alone in the city within the limited space available to them. However, the socioeconomic backgrounds of the women affect the ways the different patriarchal, caste and economic strata restrictions play out in their career progressions.

Even though women enter into newer work spaces, it does not automatically translate into freedom in other spheres of their lives. The clause of “this far and no further” is operative, and they are contained mostly within their socio-cultural location. However, staying alone, working and earning in a new city has given the women a chance to move out of their natal home and develop new strategies to avoid familial control, experience some freedom and gain more self-confidence. Moving into the conventionally male domain of earning and taking care of their siblings and families has given many of the women better negotiating power within their family. Although in marital families, such negotiations continue to run into an impasse of entrenched sexual division of labour.



7. Negotiating the City Space

With the emergence of new working spaces in metropolitan cities, new forms of transportation have also developed, enabling more mobility for more women. While companies within the high-end globalized business process outsourcing (BPO) and software sector provide transport for their employees, in all other sectors, employees and workers must fend for themselves. Most of the women in our study belong to this second category. Finding safe and affordable forms of commuting is extremely crucial for the mobility of young migrant women living on their own, with public transport immensely important.

Safe transport emerged as an important public issue in the aftermath of the rape and murder of a call centre worker in Bangalore in 2005 and then increasingly more so after the Delhi gang rape and murder of a young woman on a bus in 2012. But, as Krishnamurthy (2018) discussed, the night shift, which needs men and women to commute during the late hours, causes discomfort to the workers as well as their family members. The fear of loss of respectability¹ of such women continue to be a concern for families as social taboos prevail around women being out at night, so much so that women are considered immoral or 'loose' if they are out at night. There is a pressure on working women to conform to the ideal of 'good woman' and not to fall into the category of immoral or loose woman, who could be exploited or violated at will.

It is in this broader context that we tried to understand women's anxieties around navigating and exploring the city. What are the factors that determine their ability and willingness to travel in the city? Does public transport enable their accessibility to the city? Do they get any leisure time and how do they spend it? Through a discussion of these issues, we hope to understand how women negotiate the public space in Hyderabad and the factors that have a bearing on this negotiation.

7.1 Mobility and transportation in the city

Access to public transport is a crucial factor that influences many decisions women take regarding their participation in public life. Most employed women and women college students rely heavily on public transport. Hyderabad has a good public transport infrastructure with buses, Multi-

¹Mathangi Krishnamurthy (2018) in her book has talked in detail on how women working in the night are faced with judgemental queries and attitude as work in the night is considered immoral.

Modal Transport System (MMTS) trains and now the Metro². Autos and aggregate taxi services, like Uber and Ola, also exist.

A woman's decision on which form of transport to use depends on various factors. What are the travel requirements for her job or education? What is her financial condition? Will she be traveling alone? When does she need to travel? In the long run, if their financial circumstances improve, women would prefer personal transport because they feel they cannot rely on public transport due to issues of access and safety, among other things.

Is public transport enabling?

Many of the women who use public transport mentioned an initial discomfort in using it. Kamala found it difficult to rely on public transport because she did not understand Telugu, the local language. Radha and Geeta had problems in understanding the numbers of the buses, especially the extra alphabets with numbers like 113K, Y or M³. As Geeta explained:

“I was never able to understand the bus system of Hyderabad. So many bus numbers, we had no idea which bus number would go from which bus stop. Since we used to go to Koti, we had memorized one bus number 3D. No matter how many buses go to that area, we had just memorized 3D and 3K! We would only take these buses.”

The women who could afford other means of transport also found buses difficult. Rama was scared of the crowd and traffic and tried to avoid it. Meenal said:

“I pretty much like travelling. It is just that I have not travelled that much on buses or the public transport system. I have hardly taken MMTS and taken buses a few times when I had to go to Secunderabad. They are mostly very crowded. It has nothing to do with the safety aspect—that I feel unsafe travelling in a bus. I just avoid it because of the crowd and then there are other means of transportation, like you can take shared auto and all. This area of the city has a shared auto system.”

For women with low-paying jobs or from the lower-middle class, the main concern was affordability. Many of the women spoke about the unease they feel in poorly lit bus stops and railway stations, which discourage them from using public transport, especially in certain areas of the city. But many women prefer the safety of buses while travelling alone; Rafath explained that she feels unsafe alone in autos and cabs and feels like the presence of other travellers acts as a safety net.

The newly introduced separate compartment for women in buses was welcomed by many of the women. Rafath, Sanobar and Nalini mentioned that it made them feel safe because men did not enter into the women's section, even in the night. The partitions in the buses were just like women's compartments in the MMTS trains. As Anindita noted:

“I always get on the ladies' compartment because I think in the general compartments, I won't say everybody is a potential molester but, I mean, probably I have also become paranoid right now because I have been molested so much on the streets.”

²During the time of these interviews, Hyderabad Metro was not yet functioning. It has been operating for more than a year now and its impact on the mobility of women is impressively visible. It has changed the travel pattern of many women and has increased the safety levels considerably.

³Bus numbers in Hyderabad have numbers along with alphabets assigning to particular routes that they take. Many migrants find these number-alphabet models confusing.

The Metro rail started in Hyderabad in 2018, after our interviews were conducted. The amount of space in the Metro corridors and having well-lit spaces, boards and arrows, maps and other pointers makes it easier for people to access it, although this accessibility comes at a higher price because the Metro fares are higher than other forms of public transport. The higher ticket price also makes the Metro alienating and intimidating for many passengers. The presence of radio cabs in recent years has helped women who have the financial resources to pay for them.

Changes in use of transportation

As women gain experience in navigating the city and their financial condition improves, their modes of transport change. Pallavi and Smriti initially relied on buses but later bought scooters. Geeta, a student, got a two-wheeler after her first year in the city. Kamala too bought herself a motorbike when she started earning well and had saved some money. But when she has to travel long distances, she prefers the use of radio taxis. Sonia, an engineer who works in the software sector, does not like using the buses because she breaks out in a rash due to the heat and crowd. She likes using auto rickshaws, but after marrying she now only uses radio cabs because her husband insists on it.

Harassment as a major problem in public transport

In both the state-owned and private-public transport, women have experienced sexual harassment. Smriti spoke of an incident when she was travelling on a bus at about 10 p.m.; a young man sitting behind her tried to touch her back. She turned around and harshly reprimanded him. She was about to strike him when he jumped off the bus. Deeksha, whose job involves travelling to different districts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, said that she is increasingly reluctant to travel due to the fear of sexual harassment. In these situations, the need for safety becomes important, and many women (working in middle-income jobs) see it as a right that employers should provide safe transport after women work late-night shifts. Women staying in Vijetha's hostel helped illustrate this aspect particularly well. Vijetha stressed the need for pick-up and drop-off facilities for women working late-night shifts, which would assure her that women going from her hostel to work at night would be safe. Pick-up and drop-off provision by companies have also been criticized due to women being harassed or encountering other forms of violence in this service as well.

Women's understanding of safe and unsafe places

Residents of any big or small city mark safe and unsafe places based on their day-to-day interaction with the city or by following advice given by others. The marking of safe and unsafe spaces of the city is a heavily gendered experience because what is safe for men can be unsafe for women. At the same time, the notions of safe and unsafe spaces could be based on subjective opinions.

Many of the women in the study marked out comfortable or uncomfortable areas in Hyderabad in relation to familiarity of language, peoples or socioeconomic milieu associated with an area. For example, women who migrated from rural areas of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh were more comfortable in areas of Charminar, Koti and Ameerpet, which are part of the older Hyderabad, but feel lost in the areas like Hitech City, which is new in its demeanour. The language and landscapes of older Hyderabad do not intimidate them, but the huge buildings and the predominance of English in the newer parts of the city seem intimidating. This, however, is not the case with all the migrant women from urban areas of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. All those who worked in the newer parts of the city said that they were more comfortable in those areas. Familiarity with space obviously is an important factor.

The women who had migrated from northern parts of India, from Hindi-speaking areas were

more comfortable in the new city areas, or in few of the old city areas because of their comfort with the language. In the areas of Hitech City like Madhapur and Gachibowli, they felt that it was easier to interact with people and navigate spaces. -

Comparing Hyderabad with her hometown, Rafath finds the city to be safer. She used to live in a small town and because her college was far away from her home, she travelled daily by train, where many women like her used to experience inappropriate touching and rubbing against them. She said that she had not seen such crowded trains and buses in Hyderabad and thinks that men in the city do not behave as badly towards women. But Rafath also thinks that Golconda, the older part of the city, is unsafe due to a few bad experiences when she would have to go there for a teaching stint and she encountered young men singing lewd songs and passing inappropriate comments near her bus stop.

Jinju, Ritty, Meenal, Upasana, Sangita and Pratima also find Hyderabad safer than their hometowns. For Jinju and Ritty, Hyderabad seemed safer compared to the Kerala towns where they previously lived. Meenal, having lived for many years in Hyderabad, feels that people's ability to understand different languages is something that helps the outsiders in Hyderabad:

“In Hyderabad, I have never faced that. Even though there has been a little bit of ‘eve-teasing’ here and there, still you know I have that confidence that no one will do something. There have been nights when we have walked from road number 10 Banjara Hill to road number 12 Banjara Hill to our place at 12 in the night. People are also very helpful. Even though they have a regional language which is Telugu, they do not insist on speaking in Telugu. You can be the boss and say, ‘I don’t understand Telugu, you better speak to me in Hindi or English.’ That is what has been my experience here.”

Upasana judged the city on the basis of the types of harassment she had encountered. She thought that, in Hyderabad, women get ogled at but nobody dares physical harm to a woman. She compared her experiences in Hyderabad with Delhi and Guwahati:

“I think it’s pretty safe, compared to Guwahati or Delhi for that matter. I have found a big difference there. Like old city mein, Secunderabad mein, I did get ogled, but nobody really tried doing anything more than ogling or passing a comment or whatever. Because at 3 or 4 in the night we’d go out, go for rides, and it’s so safe. Delhi mein, Guwahati mein [in Delhi, in Guwahati], can’t even think about going out after 9–10. My parents would freak out whenever I’m in Delhi or even Guwahati. Here, it’s so chilled out.”

Sangita also compared her experiences in Hyderabad with her hometown:

“It is better than Kolkata. Hyderabad is very safe in that respect. I have also gone to Bangalore and went clubbing but by 12 o’clock the roads become very empty. I experienced that we got into a taxi in Bangalore and that fellow was an asshole. In Hyderabad generally people are nicer. So, Hyderabad generally is safer than other places in India.”

Pratima agreed:

“In that way, it is very safe. The place from where I am, it is not at all safe. We are not allowed to leave our house after 7 p.m. It’s evening so do not leave your house. Here it is actually like at 3 a.m. we are hungry and we go to the bundi [small food stall] and have bonda [a snack]. That wouldn’t happen back home. See, it is really

safe. In the sense that, again, when you go back to the old city, you have to dress up in a way. There is a code that if you have to go to the old city, you have to dress up in a certain way. You can't go to the old city wearing shorts."

Nalini feels that although people stare, they do not harass, perhaps because she looks too alien. This was her personal take and was not shared by a larger section of women interviewed:

"Yes, people do stare sometimes but they do not harass. This anyway is pretty common in all places."

Nalini said that the crowded places in the new cities, like Madhapur and Ameerpet, are safer because people there are mostly migrants. The presence of IT companies, malls and parks also render it safe, and she considers outer areas, like Miyapur and Bowenpally, unsafe.

Smriti, from Andhra Pradesh, however, is constantly alert when in any public space and feels neither safe nor comfortable:

"It is not such a bad city, but we have to take care of ourselves, we have to protect ourselves. In each and every minute, we should be careful. We can't go anywhere fearlessly in any corner in the city. I watched one man on a bus and I wrote one article about it also. He was watching a blue film on a city bus in Hyderabad. How dare he was doing this. I didn't ask him, and I don't know why I didn't ask him. I felt very shy and embarrassed. As a journalist, I felt it was a very terrible thing. After a week, I wrote an article about why rapes are going this fast in India. The reason behind this is this kind of blue film, Internet porn sites and all."

Geeta echoed the sentiment while sharing several experiences of being harassed by other bikers on the road who seem to want to make a woman driver uncomfortable. There are also instances of women walkers being pushed around, as Anindita recalled:

"I mean, I have seen a girl walking with her father being pushed by a guy, and then the father glares at the girl [as if saying] stay close to me."

Feeling safe and comfortable on the city roads and transport services relates to gender, economic class and caste. We observed these factors were able to enhance the degree with which women asserted their agency in public spaces and transport. Accordingly these factors shape the kind of impression that is given out to scare off the potential harassers on the road, the kind of transport that one could take, or the kind of relaxation or outing they could think of.

Leisure and relaxation: What and how?

As noted, women working in low-paying jobs only have one day off each week. With hectic schedules and demanding physical labour during the week, they want to spend it on household chores and resting. They also feel unsafe eating outside their hostel or home. When they feel like having food from outside where they live, they tend to get taken away and eat in their room. For shopping, they prefer going to Koti or the General Bazar, which are markets that fit their budget.

Going out for them is restricted to doing essential shopping or visiting nearby religious places. Friends are often the reason for going out, but rarely do all the friends get the same day off in a week. The women working in the malls work on Sundays because it is the most hectic customer day. Having different days off and different shifts, in the case of nurses, interfered in their going out together. Most importantly, access to the city for these women was severely restricted by their financial situation and limited social networking.

7.2 University students

Among the university students' perception of leisure, three categories emerged: One, students stay inside the campus and then explore the city. Some of them like roaming around on their own, without any company. They can describe the places known for good food, food at night, shopping and the places that look especially beautiful at night. Middle-class students from the English and Foreign Languages University and the Hyderabad Central University prefer hanging out in the shopping malls. Students in the second category do not like to go out and prefer to hang out on campus, like Anika and Nina. They believe that going out is a waste of time and that education is more important than exploring the city. They step outside of their hostel only to buy essential items. Students in the third category want to go out in Hyderabad for work or leisure but in a limited way.

A few students said that they prefer to stay inside the campus because going out requires money. Some do not want to go out into Hyderabad because they do not have many friends and they feel unsafe going out alone. Parents' anxieties regarding the safety of their daughters also have created fear and tension around going out.

Due to the curfew⁴ in public and private hostels, the women students' physical movement is restricted. While some students did not want to get into trouble by being late, some women imposed their own curfew according to their perception of safe and unsafe hours. As Savita explained:

"I know that it might not be safe for me to move alone out of the campus after 10:30 p.m., so I try to ask help from any boy to come with me or I try to not go outside of the campus at all."

Pratima, Rajitha and Dwiti also said that they sometimes regulate their movement outside their campus if they realize that it won't be safe at night. They wanted to avoid taking any risks because their parents worry about their safety. Women staying in a closed/ gated campus feel safe there and never restrict their movements within the campus.

7.3 Women in corporate employment

Unlike the nurses, mall workers and university students, most of the women working in well-paying positions in the corporate and government sectors enjoy a two-day weekend that they mostly used for household chores and to relax. Their idea of relaxing depends on whether they are with friends, their economic condition, the family situation and other factors.

Deeksha, who is in government service and travels to different districts during her five-day work week, prefers to stay at home with her toddler and parents.

Meenal, married and earning well, goes out regularly to enjoy and explore Hyderabad. She lives in the newer side of the city and thus has easy access to malls and movie theatres. When she was in training for her work, Radha made many friends and would go out regularly for movies, shopping and other entertainment; she even travelled to Araku (hill station in Andhra Pradesh) with friends. After beginning her job, her weekends changed and she has stopped going out. Now she likes sleeping in her room and occasionally going shopping in a nearby mall or to a North Indian food joint.

Friends are important for Kamala as well. She discovered a new life with friends after coming to Hyderabad, especially when she shifted from a job of a door-to-door marketing sales to a business process outsourcing employee and then to real estate. She felt spoiled for choice

⁴Curfew is generally used in the context of hostel hours, where a fixed time is decided, after which hostel residents can't come in and go out.

when she first got the two-day weekend. She discovered a new life, learned to go to malls, eat out in expensive places and enjoy parties and drinking.

Sonia's idea of fun and relaxation changed over a period of time. In her initial days in Hyderabad, during her first job, her understanding of fun was limited to going for movies and to malls for shopping. As she progressed in her career and switched jobs, her friends also changed from single individuals to married colleagues, which meant fun office parties or going to restaurants and bars for drinks. After her own marriage, she no longer goes out much because her husband prefers being at home.

A few women from middle-class backgrounds, like Nalini and Ishita, said that they like to explore old monuments and roads and the old city. Women who are more in tune with technology and gadgets, like to explore the Internet for their shopping needs. Anindita said that she "did not care much about the urbanity of the city as now my interests lie in the virtual world more than the real".

7.4 Summing up

Two factors seem crucial for migrant women's access to the city and its public spaces. First, the public culture of the city in relation to women. Based on the interviews, it seems the presence of women in public places is highly scrutinised. Although women try to access different spaces in groups, the possibility of a woman moving around alone is still rare.

Second is the socio economic circumstance of the individual women. Women's access to the city and its public spaces are dependent on their own geographic as well as socioeconomic circumstances. Universities, hostels and workplaces and the rules and regulation of these institutions determine if and when they can go out. The socioeconomic circumstance becomes an important factor in deciding the ways and means to access the public spaces in the city. Of course, the pressure of being a "good woman"—imbibed with years of training and through external pressure from family and friends—continues to determine migrant women's navigation of the city.

A close-up photograph of a woman with dark hair tied back, applying mascara to her eye. She is looking down and to the left. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. A semi-transparent blue banner with white text is overlaid on the bottom part of the image.

8. Transformations and Transitions

For each of the women in the study, migrating to and experiencing the city enabled the formation of a new self: in the way they conduct themselves, their thought process, their aspirations in terms of their career and relationships and in the changes in their relationship with their family. This chapter brings together the varied transformations that the women described and discusses the larger implications.

8.1 Clothing

Clothing represents and reflects a person's religious, regional, economic class and caste status. They are seen as a marker of a woman's modesty and therefore indicative of the respect she deserves. In such a context, clothes transform into the outermost layer (like skin) of a person that engages with the social world, speaking to the world even before an individual opens their mouth. Clothes, therefore, become an integral part of a person's identity.

Our question on whether the women changed their style of clothing after coming to Hyderabad received varied and extensive responses. The participants either used clothing as a tool to express themselves or to adjust comfortably in the city. Some also said that these changes were a continuous process. Many regulated their dressing sense while others felt free to wear different kinds of clothes here.

The women who had migrated from small towns and villages, such as Sameera, Ana and Bhanu, explained that their dressing style changed to follow new trends in the city and that the first-time possibility of wearing anything of their choosing had made them more confident. Sarada and Sirisha, who moved to Hyderabad from a nearby village, said that although they started wearing jeans in the city, they do not wear them when they go back to their village.

Changes in personal style have helped some of the women fit in better in their new workplace. Ritty said that she had become better groomed after coming to the city, which had, in turn, helped her look more professional. A few others have made the transition from wearing half saris to wearing leggings or even shorts and pyjamas.

The students in closed/gated university campuses, such as the University of Hyderabad and the English and Foreign Languages University, said that after migrating they gave less importance and attention to their appearance and clothing. Anindita stated that she went from the "prim and

proper” kurta to the more casual and relaxed pyjama¹ and T-shirt. Upasana mentioned that she feels pressure to dress soberly to better fit into the academic atmosphere in order to be taken more seriously.

Even though they had never worn a burqa before, Rafiya and Rafath also felt pressure from their university community (peers and teachers) to wear one. While they don’t regret the decision, they did not like the pressure put on them.

The city, in a way, contained such transformation and even sought conformity from more ‘outrageous’ dressers. Lipika described the kinds of restrictions that were levied in her village. Because she is from a Brahmin household, her appearance was heavily regulated. Coming to the city gave her limited freedom; her office is full of men from rural backgrounds whose ideas of clothing and propriety were similar to the ones propagated in her village. Given a choice, she said she preferred wearing jeans, a top and lipstick. She also wanted to cut her hair. Sangita said she began growing out her hair and wearing more feminine clothes after she started working.

Nalini and Radha, both from northern India, felt judged for their earlier style of clothing and said that they changed it to suit the cultural milieu of the city. Dwiti, from the North-East, spoke of the kind of attention she attracted in her usual style and how she changed it to something less fashionable. She was also angry because people often expected her to wear short and bright clothes, which is an old stereotype of north-eastern women.

Clothing also connotes ideas of the authentic self and femininity. For instance, Saraswati and Upasana emphatically said that although they have noticed others change their clothes, they have stayed “authentic” to their previous self. Interestingly, for both of them, being true to themselves meant very different things. For Saraswati, it meant that she did not fall prey to the allure of Western influence; for Upasana, it meant her Western clothing was not something she picked up after coming to the city. She differentiated herself from those who started wearing Western fashion after moving away from their natal home.

For Grishma, the change came with becoming an income earner. She began to explore different styles and items of clothing, even with things she would have never previously worn. Clothes serve as an expression of her changing understanding of femininity as well. She understood that there is no different correlation between a certain style of clothes and a certain kind of femininity. To illustrate this point, she explained how during her stay in Chennai (before she moved to Hyderabad) she saw women in *bottus*² and sarees fiercely fight with men on many occasions. From then on, being “womanly” in traditional wear no longer meant being demure and silent.

8.2 Ideas of self

Before migrating to the city and living on their own, most women saw themselves as daughters, sisters and community members. But once they started leading autonomous lives in the city, they started looking at themselves as individuals with identities dissociated from their familial ones. In this process, they began to reflect on their lifestyles in the past, their aspirations for the future and their relationships with their families.

Bhanu declared that to understand oneself, every woman should stay alone for a while. Grishma, Hadasy, Pritibala, Anjana, Shinjini, Anindita, Smriti and Tara all stated that they gained a wider outlook on the world after moving to the city as they gained confidence and freedom and started to question what counted as ‘normal’. While Shinjini started questioning caste structures and its associated food habits, Smriti’s political views changed as she went from being a Lord Krishna devotee to an atheist leftist.

¹Pyjamas are loose bottom wear originated in Indian subcontinent. During the colonial period this clothing travelled different parts of the world and became used as night wear.

²The vermilion mark that women put on their forehead.

Freedom was intensely felt in small gestures: for Anika, it is the ability to wake up when she wants to, while for Ishita and Grishma, freedom tasted like having tea late in the night. Pritibala and Hadasy said that coming to the city and living alone freed them from the crippling fear of being left alone³. Now they feel confident that they will only settle down if and when it suits them. Pritibala asserted that the “pressure to be with somebody” was not more than her “will to be free”.

Smriti shared that she was able to question the markers of marriage that a woman is supposed to bear. Over the years, she said, she has stopped wearing bangles and *mangalsutra*, which used to feel mandatory. When she worked for a leading Telugu newspaper, she had to maintain her long hair because everyone was encouraged to be “traditional”; she has since cut her hair short. Ishita, Grishma and Kamala liked that they live in an environment in which they can freely mingle with people of other gender identities.

The intermingling of gender identities did not have a uniformly positive response, however. Deeksha, an employee in the corporate sector, pointed out that hanging out with men in her work team became uncomfortable because it would incite too much gossip. There were others for whom such openness was shocking. Geeta, who came to the city from a mufasil background, said:

“In the beginning when my father had come for my admission, girls on campus were protesting that boys should be allowed in the girls’ hostels. This incident gave me and my father a cultural shock. The hostel in Navodaya was so good, and it was secure. Initially, even I had felt like that. But then it stopped in a year, and I also understood that I have to stay and adjust in such a situation.”

8.3 Career and aspirations

City life also meant new kinds of exposure for the women. Apart from access to a better education, coming to the city helped many of the women in their career. Pallavi, who initially came to study animation and is now a graphic designer, believes that it gave her “exposure”. Rama, an LLB⁴ a student aspiring to the Union Public Service Commission, which is India’s premier central recruiting agency for government services, thought that she had the necessary resources to prepare for the competitive exams in Hyderabad. Geeta, who did her masters degree in French, said the city offers much scope. What they were essentially referring to are the informal knowledge networks, valuable acquaintances and friendships. They saw their coming to the city and the subsequent transformations as helpful for advancing their career ambitions.

Geeta, Dhanalakshmi, Sarada and Sirisha said that coming to the city and interactions in their workplace helped them acquire better and more refined communication skills. They all expressed that they often felt scared talking to new people before but now feel at ease. Rama explained that one possible reason for the lack of refined language and behaviour in her village could be because few people are formally educated. Knowledge of new languages, especially English and/or Hindi, gave them all a new sense of confidence.

Some women said that networking, both interacting with new people from diverse backgrounds and the formation of new networks of information, helped them enhance their career progression. Savita moved to Hyderabad to study language at a university, but she also had a passion for music that she did not pursue as a career. In Hyderabad, she happened to cross paths with people who shared her interest and hence was contemplating the possibility of taking it up professionally. Lipika said “interacting with different people is good”. Many of the women also

³They had developed a notion that women can’t and shouldn’t stay alone. They always need to be with somebody.

⁴Bachelor of Legislative Law.

talked about how, after coming to a city and having to live alone, they were better at handling unfamiliar situations and interacting with different people. Living in the city has, in one way or the other, made them more worldly and wise in some sense. As Nalini put it:

“I learned a lot. When you come out of your family. . . in a family everybody gives selfless love, but when you come out and stay in a hostel, you interact with people from different places. You listen about new things and think about new things, and you do conversations that give you an experience. So, I have learned a lot. I take inspiration from each and everything. If I find something nice, I want to learn it—why not!”

8.4 Lifestyle

Although some participants could not think of any lifestyle changes they had made since coming to the city, many others shared interesting narratives of their changed lifestyle. Kamala said that moving to the city and working in a corporate job exposed her to a new lifestyle, joking that she was introduced to pizza, for example.

Sonia, Savita, Pratima and Anika shared their experiences of drinking alcohol for the first time after coming to Hyderabad. They initially tried it as “something fun”, they said. Although they said nothing more, it suggested the potential role of peer pressure in these women’s decisions. At the same time it also suggests their curiosity and openness to exploring new ideas and spaces.

For women in elite universities and high end jobs exploring the city and its surroundings became part of their lifestyle. Dwiti, for example, said that she enjoyed traveling around and recalled many details of her adventures in places off the beaten path. For other women, the circumstances of life in the city are taxing and time-consuming. They make time to go out for important utilities but don’t otherwise see or feel compelled to see the city.

Moving to the city was often matched by changes in these women’s moral lens. The moral values that stood unquestioned at home were challenged after coming to the city and coming across people with a variety of worldviews. Kamala, for example, explained that after moving to Hyderabad she saw people living happy lives outside traditional set-ups, like live-in relationships. This made her confront her own notions of right and wrong and adjust her notion of morality. She credits coming to the city for her own reconciliation with her sexual orientation.

For Sonia, the anonymity that she enjoys being a migrant to the city gave her the freedom to try drinking alcohol and spending time with men, which she could never imagine in her hometown. The same was true for Anindita, Meenal and Sangita; they realized they were carrying moral baggage that they then shed to try new and fun things that were impossible to do in their hometown.

Geeta and Bhanu said that coming to the city had made them more accepting of other people’s choice of style, relationships and lifestyle.

Grishma said that had she not moved to Hyderabad after living in Chennai, she would have still been a naïve “village belle” with prejudices and moral baggage. Back in her women’s college in Chennai, many of the teachers were unmarried. She said:

“Back home, we can’t imagine a woman not married in her 40s. You are not married till then, that means your life is gone. But there I saw my teachers living awesome and fulfilling lives. I was like, wow, they have more of a life than me.”

As noted already, supermarket workers and nurses suffered weight loss because of the long working hours without a tea or even toilet break. When asked if the bodily changes bother them, they said that working and earning was far more important than wasting their time thinking about their weight.

8.5 Reviewing family

One of the most remarkable parts of the interviews was the participants' reflection on their changing relationships with family members. Almost all the interviewees expressed an evolution in their familial relationships. Moving away from the natal home had brought most of the migrant women closer to their family members. As Savita explained:

“There is trust that has grown between us. They think that they have sent me, so I am not going to do any such thing that will harm me or them, so I think the trust has grown stronger. With my sibling, my brother, it is more or less the same.”

For Radha, there has been a decrease in the day-to-day interactions with her parents and other family members; the love between them, however, has not dampened:

“Already my mother and my bond was good. But after coming here, if I feel some problems I don't tell my mother, thinking that now she is so far off, she cannot do anything so why to tell her and get her tense. So, I don't tell her if I have a fever or some health issue. She understands [I'm not well] when I talk, but still I say that I just got up from sleep, like that.”

For these women, the changes were not limited to themselves. Moving to the city helped them reflect on their relationships with their family. The distance helped some to see their familial relationship as abusive; some even found the courage to criticize the role of their parents in dealing with sexual abuse that they had previously experienced. Anindita, for example, was resentful and convinced that her mother did not do her best to protect her from sexual abuse. Shinjini, Anindita and Grishma shared stories of domestic and sexual abuse they had experienced—stories that had only been told to a handful of people. Both Anindita and Grishma said that moving away from the family helped them articulate their experiences.

Akanksha now can see the gender discrimination in her family, demonstrated by their reluctance and refusal to pay for her education but their willingness to spend lavishly on educating her brother, who was far less serious than she about education.

Grishma said that leaving her natal home and living alone helped her to see her mother as an individual and identify with her as a woman. Kamala, Ishita and Anindita said that they were able to see the role their mothers had in holding the family together. Kamala stated that she could now see the invisible labour of love that her mother had put into the family.

Hadasy, Savita, Pratima, Dwiti and Grishma even started questioning the narrative of love and safety that comes with family. To that end, some women decided to lead an independent life in the city and avoided obligatory interactions with their relatives.

Most of the working women reported that they took over a share of responsibilities towards their families. As noted already, women working in the corporate sector as well as the nurses and mall workers send a portion of their salary to their parents. It was evident that the percentage of their income sent was related to the financial reality of their home: most of the low-salaried women sent back a major part of their earnings to support their poor family. Tara, Ishita and Lipika had taken responsibility for younger siblings and wanted to expose them to new ideas.

8.6 Thoughts on marriage and romantic relationships

Marriage as an institution holds an important place in Indian society. A woman's socialization process revolves around her becoming, first, a good daughter and then a good wife. Marriage as an institution also serves to maintain caste hierarchies in Indian society⁵.

⁵Sharmila Rege argued that “the essence of the caste system according to most sociologists is the practise of endogamy or marriage within the sub-caste”. Hypergamy can be practised, but hypogamy is severely punished. She

Marriage arranged within the caste system keeps the women of the family under control. Women are encouraged to become educated to a certain extent because it makes them more desirable and a better match for well-to-do families. With the ongoing process of modernity in India, marriage has taken a modern turn, but its traditional core remains intact. With the shifts in economic policies towards liberalization and the opening up of Indian markets, international brands see the Indian marriage market as a big one to capture and have thus designed advertisements to capture a large stake in it⁶.

Market and marriage go hand in hand. Media and cinema in India have given importance to arranged marriages and to self-arranged marriages. Since the 1990s, films like *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* and *Hum Aapke Hain Kaun* have focused on the imagination of large-scale weddings that seemingly were based on choice but always with the approval of parents and/or extended family.

Every participant in the study was asked to share her idea of marriage and romantic relationships.

Marriage should be decided by the parents but having a choice matters

Many women believe that it is a parent's duty to get their child married. These women—studying or working in a new city with ambitions of their own—clearly had thought through the idea of marriage. In fact, their prompt replies made us realize that they had considered the process of marriage carefully to conclude that their parents will call the shots.

Most of the nurses said that it is their parents' responsibility to get them married. They also asserted that they have a good connection with their parents, and the parents understand what kind of man will be suitable for them. As Padmini said:

“Choice has to be mine. Even though they select also, I have to give my choice and my own preference. I won't select on my own whatever my parents select, I will pick from that.... First, they will think of my preference.”

Saraswati, Farzana, Sarada, Sirisha and Samantha also explained that their parents would decide for them, and they had full hope that their parents would find the most suitable match. One line repeated by them was “parents know best”. Ana thought it would be better for her future if she married someone from the city. At the same time, she feared that because her family lacks money and resources, there is a possibility that if her parents find a match with a man working in the government who is powerful and from a rural background, her parents will ask her to marry him. Ana was clear in her head that, in such a situation, she would have to agree.

The small negotiations that these women are making regarding marriage decided by parents are evident. They want their parents to choose (as per the norms) but at the same time they want their “opinion” to be counted as well. Saraswati was ready to settle for an average-looking man selected by her parents but wanted the man to have a good job, which for her is a secure job. Samantha asserted that she would prefer if her parents selected a man who is not in the medical profession because she thinks that it would be boring if both husband and wife are in the same profession. These negotiations were part of the imagination of their lives. They know they cannot avoid arranged marriages but they want their opinions to be heard and to be taken seriously.

further pointed out that, what appears through the practise of endogamy is that, women were and are the 'gateways' (Das 1988) cited in (Rege 1995) to the caste system. Leela Dube also elaborated on the role of marriage in maintaining the caste system (Dube 1997). Marriage within caste is the requisite of the reproduction of same caste order from generation to generation.

⁶Volkswagen, Forevermark and Tanishq (to name a few) have advertisements focusing on the importance of arranged marriages.

A few of the women had married by their parents' choice and even though they were experiencing problems within the relationship, they were under the compulsion to maintain it because breaking it would affect the family and parents. Sonia, for instance, liked a man from another caste but was not able to assert her love and had married someone else of her family's choosing. She was having compatibility issues with him, but after having her daughter, her focus became providing the best life possible for the girl:

“Once marriage is done, everything is done. We have to adjust and make them understand. First, I have to adjust, and I thought that, ok, let me adjust and later on he will understand what I am losing or what I want he can understand one day. Right now, we have completed four years by November. We have completed four years now, by next two years or 10 years he will understand, right, ok.”

Pallavi's take on marriage and dowry is interesting. She works as an animation graphic designer and wants to marry someone whom her parents choose. She also wants her parents to give a good dowry so that she can use that money to set up an organic farm, which is her dream. She thinks that by marrying someone of her parents' pick, she will then get the support of her husband and her family members in her organic farming and in this way she can fulfil her dream.

Sanobar, a student in an Urdu university in Hyderabad, is in a romantic relationship with a local man. She wants to marry him but she does not want to anger her parents by taking the lead in choosing her life partner. She hopes that her parents will agree. Because the man is from a good family and that his proposal is so good she believes her parents will surely agree.

Women from a variety of caste and economic backgrounds described marriage as an institution that they need to enter with the choice of their parents. From the nurses and mall workers in low-paid jobs who had minimal education to the university students and corporate workers with university degrees, their perceptions for marriage entailed an ideal daughter who respects the boundaries set by family members. Even though they lived on their own in the city and questioned societal restrictions imposed on them, they still accepted the traditional notion of marriage.

It seems the importance of “honour” of the family and the balance between modern life and traditional roots have been internalized by these women. The socialization process making them custodians of family and community honour seems something they accept. Yet, with the changing times and changing understanding of “choice”, the women also want to negotiate their say in the arranged marriage. They do not want to leave their work unless and until they really have to. They want to maintain the tightrope walk between work and marriage. Their stay in the city and exposure to a different lifestyle has changed their way of life, dressing and aspirations, about which they feel proud and content. With this in mind, they want to negotiate a larger stake in their marriage decision.

Open to love, choice of marriage, idea of relationships and can fight for it

A few of the women are open to self-chosen relationships and want to marry someone of their choosing. These women said that they gained this confidence after observing several other women asserting their choice in marriage and relationships. Smriti, who liked a man in her class, took the initiative to express her love, even though he was from another caste. She eventually married him. She recalled:

“He is BC Yadav, and I am of another Caste Kshatriya. And on both of our sides, my mother and his parents do not have any caste feelings like that. Now we both have progressive mindsets. We are living very very happily. After falling in love, I fell in love within a month of coming to Hyderabad when I saw Prasad. Till I met

him, I didn't think marriage is a suitable system for me, my mindset. I didn't expect it, but after seeing him I immediately fell in love and I announced it like anything. Yes, I am in love, we will get married!! I enjoyed it a lot when I was in love."

Similarly, Anindita was in a relationship with her classmate and later married him. She shared that her otherwise conservative parents agreed to their marriage as her partner also belonged to the same caste. She said that caste was not an issue in their marriage but, rather, it was their wish to have a secular and non-religious marriage that her parents reacted to. She reflected that it was a clash of ideology. Finally, her parents had to agree for a simple registered marriage. Anindita also shared that now that she is married, her parents always question her ways in which she talks to her husband or the way she is not having kids even after a few years of her marriage. She understands these contradictions as part of ongoing negotiations with her parents.

Tara, who is working in the city and is trying to avoid marriage by keeping her brothers living with her and paying for their studies, feels that if someone marries after being in a relationship, it creates a special bond. She reflected:

"It's not like if you do arrange marriage it will be successful. You want to do a love marriage, then do it. You are in a relationship for a year or so, and you continue that turn into a marriage. So that relation that you build for two years, that will count. Not the one that you build after marriage."

These women who are questioning the hierarchies of the society and believe that marriage by their own choice would be better for them gained this confidence due to their own caste-class circumstance as well as independence gained from education and employment.

Questioning the whole idea of marriage and companionship

While these women are not against the idea of marriage, some of them objected to the forced nature of a marriage propagated by society. They wanted to go with the flow of their life and were even questioning the whole idea of being in a relationship as "cool". Savita, who doesn't want to marry, had told her decision to her parents and had a bitter fight with her mother. She recalled:

"The thing is, if I am not doing anything behind their back, they will support me. This is a big deal for my parents, who themselves had an arranged marriage. So, supporting me like this will not be that easy, there will be little struggle, but I think it will be fine."

Rajitha, who is in a relationship with a man from a foreign country, knows that her parents will never agree to her marrying him. She continuously feels pressure from her family to marry though. She feels she cannot be hurried into a marriage just because her parents or relatives want it:

"So, now my parents are, like, you do anything you want to do after marriage. I am like, dude no, that is not going to happen. Practically speaking, I do not want marriage as such. I don't at all want to get married. As those concerns for having kids and all that is bullshit, there are so many ways to achieve that. I can adopt children. I can have test-tube babies. But then they do not get it, and they will tell me that I have to. Every time I try to talk to them, they will tell me to go and talk to my grandfather... I do not want someone to control me. I do not misuse my freedom. At times I do, but I have done it before. When I say I do want to get married because of my current relationship, it is not going to happen. He is from

abroad and Muslim, and my parents are strict Hindu kind of people. They tell me that they will disown me and all that. That was one of the reasons that I do not want to get married at all."

As arranged marriages go, Pratima said she would have to marry someone from her region, which she didn't find appealing and therefore wanted to avoid it. Akanksha, Dwiti, Upasana, Hadasy and Pritibala had had previous bad relationships and wanted to take their own time to decide about their future relationships and marriage. They believe that it is not necessary to be in a romantic relationship or marriage to seek validation from society and that such relationships should only be made when it feels right to do so.

8.7 Summing up

Not all the women have gone through a similar pattern of change or even want to recognize that they have changed since moving to the city. Transformations in terms of clothing, idea of self, the world, the relationship with family and even in their opinion of marriage and relationships were associated with several catalysts. The interactions the women have had with teachers, administrators, colleagues, bosses, friends, partners, hostel mates, wardens, etc. triggered much of their transformation.

While families have been enabling for some of the women in terms of their future possibilities, for others the family has been a hindrance. Similarly, the educational or workplace experience has been enabling for some women while for it has led to more hardship for some women. Interactions with the city as a whole have not been uniform. It is important to understand why these experiences are different for different women. Their caste, class, religion and region have been important in terms of their access to institutions. But they have not always been a limitation, at least when someone of generous spirit stepped in to help out. It would have been difficult for them to manage in the city with so little money, but the help in terms of free accommodation gave them the support to think big in a big city. Such examples make us think that even the city and its people are not homogenous. Uneven development of the city also creates different experiences that women have in the city.

These experiences and the women's circumstances influence the way they respond to issues of surveillance and negotiate with their families and other institutions in the city and also back home. The chapter demonstrated that this is not uniform and is an outcome of complex interaction of multiplicity of factors.



9. Conclusion

Hyderabad's consistent growth as a result of the development model adopted by the state of Andhra Pradesh since the 1950s depended on the steady stream of migrants, qualified and unqualified, male and female, Telugus and non-Telugus, to the city over decades. From the 1990s, the steady decline of agriculture and rural employment pushed families and allowed the migration of women from poor, rural, lower-caste families. The increasing impetus for a female labour force in the service economy further fuelled this migration. Migration to a globalized Hyderabad with a blooming software industry became a giant step in the path of upward mobility for Telugu families across the state and for the increasingly mobile Indian middle classes as well.

Unlike the historic and ongoing migration of single men, both out of rural distress and for a better career, female migration to Hyderabad outside of marriage, for better career opportunities, has noticeably increased only in the past two decades.

Networks to facilitate and ease the migration and transition of men to the city are well oiled by now. The city has become habituated to short-term and long-term migration of men from nearby and far-off places and has developed residential and recreational spaces accordingly¹. It is not unusual to find large groups of single working-class men spending time in Irani *chai* shops or toddy shops or at a *chourasta* or watching television in a public place before heading to their lodges to sleep.

Women's migration to the city operates in a different register. The networks that facilitate their migration, the challenges that they face to find accommodation, the ways in which the urban and residential spaces respond to these migrant women, the ways in which their natal family and impending marriage shape their experience of the city and the way in which they help shape the city space tell the story of how specifically gendered the urban spaces are in twenty-first century India.

In discussing these issues, we are well aware that villages, towns and other *muffasil* spaces are also gendered; that women's place in the social structure determines the kind of space that they access in the public sphere; and that at no point in history has the relationship between women and space been linear or progressive or one directional.

The migration of young women to Hyderabad from rural districts in Telangana and Andhra

¹In industrial cities like Kolkata, during the 60s-70s several small lodges and such residential spaces had started coming up to accommodate migrated men who were part of the workforce of the city. One can find documentation of such spaces in several films and literature.

Pradesh states is here to stay due to the expanding employment opportunities in the metropolis and continued underdevelopment of the *muffasil* areas. While expanding sectors like health care, higher education and software industries concentrated in Hyderabad, the city's expansion included the creation of space for young migrants over the past few decades. What used to be mostly male migration until two decades ago now encompasses a rapid rise in the number of women due to the ideology of women's empowerment, the loosening of tight familial regulation of sexuality, physical movement and conduct of the unmarried women in the upwardly mobile classes. Safety concerns apart, such regulation continues to have a role in mediating decisions about migration. Often, natal families concede, accept and enable their daughters' migration to Hyderabad where the extended kin networks, friends and workplaces begin to function as surrogate families or offer safety, protection or regulation for newly migrated young women.

These are the social support networks through which women move to the city and which are often formed based on caste, class and/or regional hometowns. Most of the women in this study who are from Dalit and other marginalized communities relied on family, relatives and friends to move to and settle down in Hyderabad for work or education: for a place to stay, for information about possible institutions to join and other kinds of basic information about the city. Even though the women from somewhat affluent backgrounds and privileged castes in the study also needed support from others, they sought it only when their family members were unwilling to send them to the city. But even then, their needs tended to be limited to simple information about a university, educational course or place of work.

The women's paths to the city were not just because of economics but awareness of what the city offered and access to knowledge and opportunities also attracted them. Once in the city, the social network or social capital of the woman and family became important. Social networking tended to transpire within similar socioeconomic groups. Often, the family, larger kin groups and family friends were involved in decision-making for their children. The women from the higher socioeconomic strata had a clear advantage in that they were more up to date with the various options available to them and had the resources to seek more information.

While the young women from marginalized caste and economically deprived families clearly saw migration to the city as a way of escaping caste-related discrimination in their home village as well as improving their economic mobility, the women from the middle-income upper-caste families—where higher education is accepted as a goal—saw migration as a way out of strictly regulated sexuality and mobility exerted by their parents. For both, the evolution and/or exploration of notions of freedom or liberty continued after their migration to the city. The young migrant women, whether economically and socially dependent on the family or not, felt compelled to recalibrate their relationship with their parents and other family members. Enabled by the process of migration, they formed new networks and gained experience of living without constant surveillance. So now they were able to experience new freedoms, understand and exercise their rights and realise their experience to a certain extent.

The young women's experiences in Hyderabad were mediated not only through their caste, class or regional circumstances but also through their institutional location. Depending on the kind of educational institution or the workplace they migrated to, their opportunities and career progression changed as well as their worldviews and perspectives. However, a common framework that seemed to bind all institutional cultures is the idea of being a custodian to women. Educational institutions and/or workplaces try to protect and regulate women and their conduct, mostly through the framework of protectionism. While the new migrants in the study without much of a social network in Hyderabad did not mind the protectionism and sometimes even welcomed it, many of the women who experienced less regulated and non-binary residential arrangements in the university hostels articulated it as life changing, in addition to the exposure to new ideas of social, caste and gender equality.

9.1 Strategizing and negotiating patriarchal social order: Creating disturbance 88

We found that, for most women, friendships and networks formed after reaching the city became crucial for navigating the city, negotiating with families and even exploring the city. Varying according to caste, class, work location and leisure time, they too became critical of young migrant women's experience of the city. Those who had strong support networks could be more mobile and could feel more confident in navigating the city. The first-generation migrant women from Dalit and Scheduled Tribe communities continued to be disadvantaged in the city, with their networks limited to a few spaces and professions and with friendships mostly formed in workplaces.

Not surprising, we found that the global workplaces expected women to work non-stop even as they expected women to follow local customs, imposed standards of respectability and did not offer much protection against sexual harassment or for maternity needs. Equally important, even as women entered into new workplaces, attained independent income and enjoyed autonomy in the city, for those who got married, it was still difficult to achieve autonomy in the marital family. The caveat of "this far and no further" is operative, and they are contained mostly within their socio-cultural location. Many women bargained with their natal family to delay marriage by continuing their education, taking on familial responsibilities and educating younger siblings. In the marital families, we found that women didn't have much success with such bargaining; the sexual division of labour looked quite entrenched and few structures for childcare have been created.

We end with the two critical issues that stand out in our study of the migration of young women to the city of Hyderabad: one, the small and big negotiations of women with the patriarchal social order to migrate and settle down in the city; and two, the ways in which the city is responding to the migration of such numbers of young women. We also speculate on the implications of these issues in the long run.

9.1 Strategizing and negotiating patriarchal social order: Creating disturbance

Each of the women not only had to struggle with institutions but also had to negotiate and strategize—explicitly and implicitly—to convince their parents, to take help from supportive friends, to seek support of the relatives and teachers or to adjust to and counter the rules and regulations through which they were entering the institutions. Such negotiations in turn depended on how they had imagined their life, how much they were willing to adjust and how far they were willing to stretch themselves at each point. Most of the migrant women were aware of the conscious and unconscious strategizing that they were doing and the changes that they were undergoing due to their migration. Not only did their understanding of the family, friendship, relationship and marriage change but so did their understanding of the meaning of "self" because of their migration journey. For a few women, eating a packet of biryani from their hard-earned money that they also sent home sufficed to satisfy the "self". For a few others, new habits of eating and drinking that they adopted meant an exploration of the self. For some, it meant wearing "forbidden" clothes. For others, it meant to study and choose a career of their own choosing. And for others, it meant to resist the marriage or regulation that the parents wanted to enforce. It is the life in the city that provided them the place and space to make these assertions, regardless of the form they took. These women realized that their life in the city provided them a window to peep into different worlds.

Such self-assertions, big or small, were necessarily linked to their social positioning. For Dalit women struggling to support their ailing parents and trying to make a life of their own, buying a new pair of jeans, a packet of biryani or flaunting their English ability as a newly gained tool was a mark of assertion. Many of them feel that marriage is something that is not their concern and that it will happen when it has to happen. At the same time, young women from the

dominant caste and class backgrounds were conscious and anxious about their clothes, education, transportation, accommodation, relationships and marriage. Experiences and desires within the city as well as their agency are inflected by the class and caste positions of the young women migrants.

A city and migration to a city have become part of the reproduction of the familial and social structure of which they are part. The young women arrived in the city as an element of this process. While they are limited by gender, their caste, class and religious circumstances enable them too on a certain level. Their mobility in turn strengthens or at least reproduces their family's position in the social order. Migration to the city, their mobility after reaching the city and their recalibrating the relations within the family in terms of regulations and restrictions holds some promise of disturbance in the existing order within their own families and communities and thereby would contribute to the disturbance in the social order that they are part of.

9.2 How does Hyderabad receive young women migrants?

Hyderabad is a city built on the labour of successive waves of migrants that is reflected in its cosmopolitan ethos. Many young women in the study found the city habitable and liveable, learning to get around and liking its *biryani*. Most found a suitable place to live, matched for their income, in working women's hostels, in shared apartments, in rented accommodations near a university or in a gated community once they begin to work in a well-paid job. Everyone had explored the local markets, like *Sultan Bazar*, the Old City or *Numaish* or the city's many malls for shopping. Most of them had experimented with different kinds of clothing. Many formed friendships that became their main source of survival, coping and strength to live in the city. The city with multiple educational institutions offered a window into another worldview if they landed in a university where they became aware of their caste and class privilege as well as their difference. It changed their lives in innumerable ways and fulfilled the aspiration of those few women who wanted to migrate to Hyderabad for their own identity and autonomy.

However, their experience of arrival, social networks, friendships, residential spaces and workplaces was profoundly gendered in a specific sense. While they experienced the same problems that the male migrants in their social class and caste experienced, the city of Hyderabad treated them differently on one count—that of their sexuality. Each of the migrant woman's experience of the urban spaces was suffused with the idea of protection-care-custody, be it a hostel warden, manager or a house owner. Cities, including Hyderabad, are accustomed by now to the movement and migration of married women but still seem to find it difficult to understand the movement of unmarried, single women who are seen as potentially sexually active. As unmarried women outside the custody-care-protection of the family, there is either an urge to control their sexuality, conduct and behaviour or to take advantage of their status—to demand a higher rent, to invade their privacy, to impose unwanted surveillance and/or to assume custodianship.

Because single, independent women who are not part of any household were seldom imagined inside Indian cities, they remain anomalous to the imagination of Hyderabad. The city accommodates them almost as an aside, without conscious thinking and active planning. Migrant women must fit into this scheme while becoming residents of a city that lacks space for them. Increasing migration has compelled the city to create some space to accommodate migrant single women, but it caters only to women who are socially and economically mobile. There are many spaces for different kinds of male migrants, from *irani* cafes to public parks and street corners, etc., that are not available for women of different caste or economic class. Except for markets, bazaars and film theatres that require some spending capacity.

Those who assume protection and custody often lack care or protocols of respect. Rather than the provision of service, it is the ideology of protection that takes precedence. Be it

university hostels, private hostels or residential spaces and even the city at large, they all attempt to become a custodian of migrant women. The consumer-service provider relationship is not readily available to women, even after paying additional sums of money. It often works like protection money. Rather than alleviating the problems of young women who need to conduct numerous negotiations with the family to migrate to study, work or access the city on their own and thus providing them appropriate care—health services, security, equal access to spaces, good transportation facility and a life without fear—the emphasis remains on their protection. Attempts to breach the barriers are also met with discouragement and questions about their character. Not only do educational institutions and workplaces function as regulatory mechanisms, but the city itself functions as a giant regulatory mechanism for young migrant women.

Vijetha's experiment with the working women's hostel as well as Kamala's non-kin based living arrangement in a city apartment offer a tiny ray of hope to imagine a city from a migrant woman's perspective.

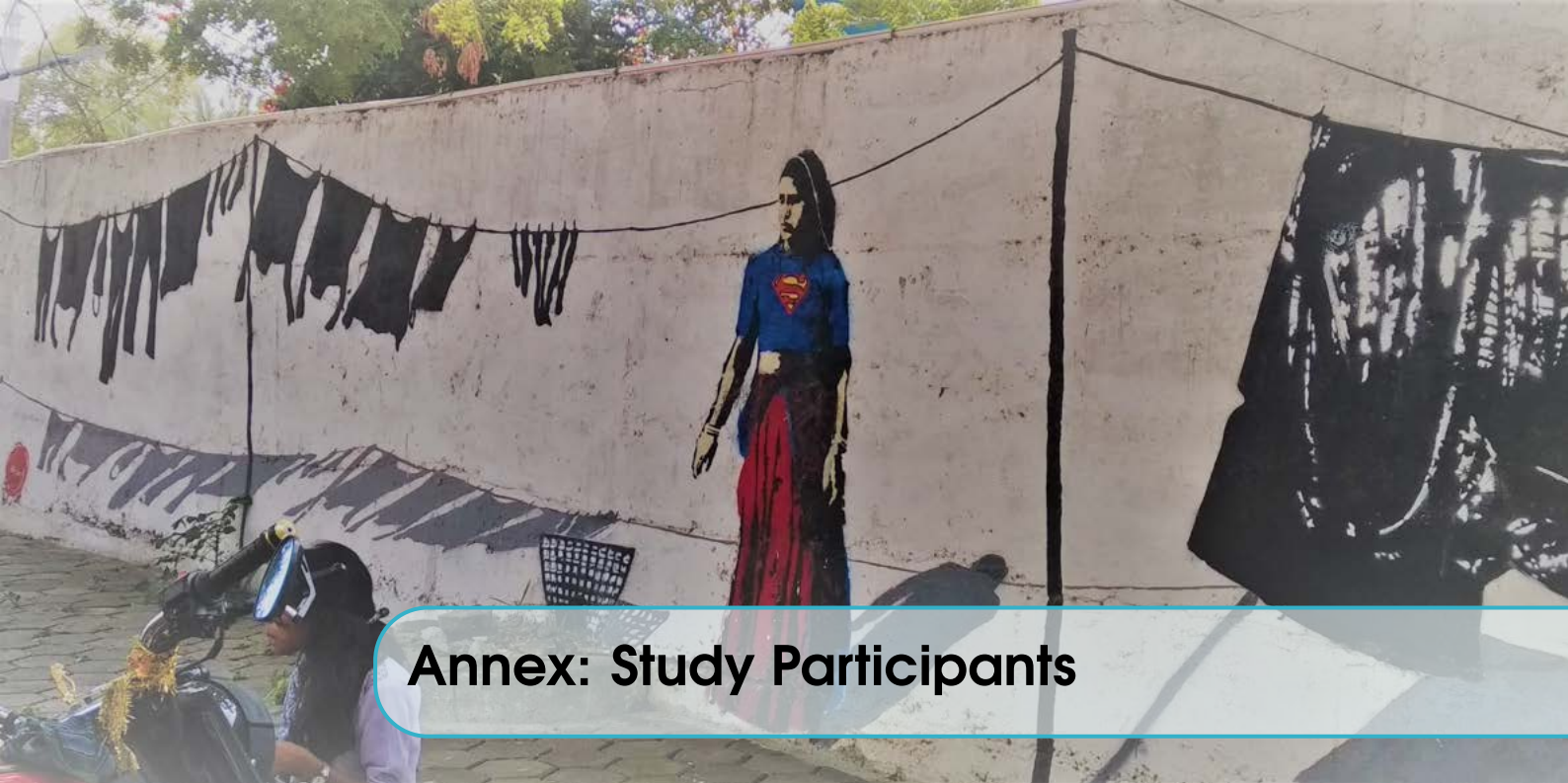


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Annex: Study Participants

1. **Akanksha, 26:** She is from an upper-caste family in central India. Her parents migrated and she grew up in a city in Orissa. Her father was in the construction business and her mother is a homemaker. She has two older sisters and one younger brother. While growing up, she endured severe restrictions from her family; when her parents refused to pay for her university education, she moved on her own to Mumbai to look for employment and pursue further education. She chose Mumbai because one of her older sisters lived there. She began doing odd jobs to pay for her education. Then, after several gigs in event management, she started to work as an assistant project manager in a media house. After not being able to cope with the pressure and sexual harassment she faced, she took a job in Hyderabad. She has lived here now for more than a year. She felt betrayed by her family for paying for her brother's education but not hers. She also reflected on how initially, without the support of her family, she experienced much hardship. Having overcome it, she now feels a great sense of self-confidence and pride.
2. **Anika, 26:** She is from a district town of Telangana State and is a member of the dominant Kapu caste. Her father has a government job and mother is a homemaker. She has two brothers and one older sister. She and her parents had a passion for Hyderabad and so, in spite of getting admission in a university campus in her district, she came to Hyderabad to enrol in a local college for her graduation. Her health deteriorated with the hostel food and she shifted to a private low-budget hostel. She continued to stay in the hostel after her graduation and the start of employment. Even after seven years of staying in the city, she doesn't like travelling alone.
3. **Anindita, 30:** She comes from an upper-caste family from the outskirts of Kolkata. She studied in a central university in Hyderabad. She is teaching in a women's college in Hyderabad. Her parents are well educated and prioritized her education, although they always wanted her to study close to them. Control of her movement and ideas were sometimes subtle and sometimes visible. She was discouraged to talk about the sexual abuse she experienced in childhood. Her interview was an insight to understand the journeys of people who want to run away from a dark past, come to a new city, find love, friendship, new ideas and vocabulary and then look back at their past and seek answers from people involved in that past. She is married but lives alone in a rented apartment because her husband works in a different city.

4. **Anjana, 26:** She is from a *mandal* town in Rayalaseema and is from *Kuruva* caste (Other Backward Category). She has been working as a nurse in a private tertiary hospital in the city for the past six years. Her father works as a truck driver and her mother is a housewife. She has one older brother whose education she financially supported; he is now a doctor. She got a nursing seat in a government college and then came to Hyderabad with encouragement from a friend to work in this hospital. She likes the hospital—it feels like a family and she is proud of her work. She sends a large part of her salary home. She stays at the hostel provided by the hospital and feels that the hostel provides more freedom than her home environment.
5. **Ana, 28:** She is a member of the *Madiga* (Scheduled Caste) community and from a village in Mahaboobnagar, Telangana State. She is the third child among nine siblings in her family. She studied in a school run by a private trust in her village and then came to Hyderabad for her intermediate education. After completing the two-year programme, she went back and did a nursing course near her village. She returned to Hyderabad to work as a nurse in a private hospital. She is happy living in the city and wants to marry someone from here so that she can remain living here.
6. **Bhanu, 27:** She is from the upper-caste Reddy community. Her family is from a small village in Telangana State. They are engaged in politics and enjoy a certain social and class power. After completing her engineering degree at a college near her home, she moved to Hyderabad for a job. She has been working as a software engineer for the past three years.
7. **Deeksha, 30:** She is from the Other Backward Caste community in a town in Kerala State. Her father was a government employee who is now retired; her mother is a homemaker. She completed her undergraduate and graduate degree in education in Kerala. She passed the SSA (State level competitive exam) exam and got a government job in Hyderabad in 2009. She initially lived in a YMCA hostel. She then rented an apartment with few friends. She married in 2013. Her husband works in Dubai. Her parents moved to Hyderabad because she has a baby and needs help taking care of her child. She eventually wants to go back to her hometown because she feels her mother is suffering here because she doesn't know any language other than Malayalam.
8. **Dhanalakshmi, 25:** She is from a Scheduled Caste community. Her father died from illness. Her brother also works in Hyderabad in a small company. She is working as a nurse in a renowned private hospital. Both siblings have the support of their family. She feels very proud of herself because she can speak in English and is living an independent life in a metropolis. At the same time, she wants to marry soon so that she can lessen the load on her family.
9. **Dwiti, 27:** She is from one of the most prominent cities in Assam and is a member of a Scheduled Tribe community. Both parents work, and she has one younger sibling who has just finished his education. She finished her graduation from her hometown. She always wanted to move away from her home and go to a city to study. Her father was always tense about her moving out because he was concerned for her safety. She is pursuing her PhD at a central university in Hyderabad. In her interview she spoke about the gaze of other city residents as she explores the city as both a tourist and a resident. She likes to be part of the cultural spaces of the city and, in doing so, stakes a claim to the city.
10. **Farzana, 24:** She is from a Muslim community in a small village in Karnataka State. She is the eldest of nine siblings. Her parents are daily-wage labourers in agricultural fields. Her parents were pushing her towards marriage, but she wanted to pursue nursing in Hyderabad. She finally had to threaten to go to the police so that she could migrate. She is pursuing a general nursing and midwifery course in Hyderabad. She is also working as

- a nurse in a small nursing home to finance her education.
11. **Indira, 37:** She is from a religious town in Uttar Pradesh State. She shifted to the city after getting a job in a central university in Hyderabad. She is currently living with her husband. Her understanding of her life in a city is from the lens of a working woman who is raising a family here and at the same time wants to be a cultural part of the city. Her interview was full of continuous comparisons she made about her day-to-day life, her ways of living and the attitude towards women in North and South India.
 12. **Geeta, 26:** She is a member of the Scheduled Caste community in a town in Rajasthan State. Her father is a retired army man and now runs a small business. Her earlier education was from Sarvodaya Vidyalaya (a reputed boarding school), which taught her the importance of a disciplined life and how to stay away from home. Her interview helped in the mapping of migrations of people from their home state who move together and, even after coming to the new city, form a supportive network for each other.
 13. **Grishma, 27:** She grew up in the municipal town of the Malappuram District in Kerala State. Her parents, both activists, had an inter-caste marriage. Given her parents' communist ideology, she grew up identifying herself as non-religious. She had always wanted to move out of the small town she grew up in, which she finally did after finishing class 12. She came to Chennai for her undergraduate degree and then did a masters programme with a central university there. She is pursuing a PhD from a university in Hyderabad. In her interview, she largely reflected on her internal journey after leaving home.
 14. **Hadasy, 32:** She grew up in one of the bigger cities in Tripura State. Her father was an elected member of the parliament for three terms. Her mother is a homemaker, manages their estate and is also active in politics, although she has never run for office. Her elder brother is a dentist. As a member of the *Kokborok* community, she is classified as Hindu. She persuaded her parents to let her move to Delhi for her undergraduate studies after securing a first division. She then completed a PG Diploma from a reputable college in Delhi. She said that it was only after moving out of her home and living on her own in the city that she was able to shed her small-town shyness; she started to follow pop culture, made male friends and began to explore the city. She worked for a few English-language dailies for the next four years in Delhi. She is in Hyderabad to pursue her PhD in English. She is a member of the North-East Students Association on her campus. Having lived so long outside her hometown and enjoying the freedom of living alone, she doesn't want to marry despite it being a disappointment for her family.
 15. **Ishita, 45:** She is from an upper-caste family. Although her family was financially stable, she and her siblings were taught in their childhood to be self-reliant. She grew up in the capital city of one of the northern states when her family migrated there for her father's job. She said that even as a young woman, given her upbringing, she was vocal and assertive, sharing several examples to illustrate her point. Her journey of coming to a central university expanded her worldview and made her much more attuned to the many inequalities in society. In her interview, she reflected on the changing gender equations in educational spaces of Hyderabad.
 16. **Jinju, 30:** She comes from Ezhava community (Other Backward Class) and grew up in a city in Kerala State. She finished her MA in economics. She then got a job in the Census Office and was placed in Hyderabad. She married a man also from Kerala who still lives there. He runs a small business and is also active in politics. Given the nature of his job and her old and ailing parents, her husband could not move to Hyderabad with her. She moved anyway because she thought a government job brings financial security. She initially lived with her relatives, but eventually shifted to a place of her own because her daily commute was too long. After working for a year, she became pregnant. She now has

two children and lives with her parents as they moved to Hyderabad; they take care of her children when she goes to work. The freedom of living alone in the city does not appeal to her as much as the opportunities the city offers. She likes her job and thinks the city is a good place for her children's education, even though she misses her husband and often finds it hard to manage everything on her own.

17. **Kamala, 37:** She is a member of an upper-caste family and from a central Indian state. She came to Hyderabad after living in several cities. Through hard work, she found success in her professional life over the years. In this process, she also came to terms with her sexuality. She is engaged in activism for the LGBTQ+ community and provides support to several young queer-identifying professionals. In her interview, she also traced the gradual emergence of Hyderabad as an IT sector hub and, with that, the increase in malls, pubs, multiplexes and so on.
18. **Lipika, 25:** She is from a village in coastal Andhra Pradesh State, from an upper-caste Brahmin family. Her father works in a low-paid private job. She is the third of four sisters. Her father had always stressed the importance of education as a way to improve their lives. She was always a good student and earned a seat in engineering through the state competitive exam. After finishing her engineering degree, she took an internship in a prestigious national institute in Sriharikota. She later tried for GATE coaching and spent a year in Hyderabad, after which she went home for a year. She returned to Hyderabad, unemployed and beginning to feel depressed after being subjected to snide comments, implying that she continued to waste her time despite all the studying. She finally got a job, albeit an unsatisfactory one, and currently stays in a low-budget hostel and walks to her office every day.
19. **Meenal, 32:** Having migrated during the Partition, her family now lives in Kolkata. Her family runs a business, allowing her to take a student loan and pursue her MBA in Hyderabad. During college, she lived in a hostel, eventually moving out and living in private hostels and rented apartments once she got a job. Now working in a multinational company, she is married to a man of her own choice and lives with him. She knows other cities might promise something new or exciting, but for now, Hyderabad, its environment and her circle of friends give her comfortable space, her "home".
20. **Monika, 21:** She is from a village in Andhra Pradesh State and is a member of a Christian community. Soon after her sister and her studied, staying in a social welfare hostel, her parents, who work in other people's farms, were worried about her shift but continued to support her. They mortgaged their gold, allowing her to come to Hyderabad to obtain a diploma in mental health from a renowned institute. Soon after she graduated, she began working in a centre for autistic kids. She is incredibly passionate about her work and wants to learn more. She believes that the experience of living in a city is essential for her growth, personally and professionally. She proved her success when she was able to retrieve the family's mortgaged gold.
21. **Nalini, 27:** She is a member of a Rajput community and her family, consisting of her father, a member of the army, her mother, a homemaker, and her two siblings, reside in a town in Uttarakhand State. After completing her undergraduate degree near home, she came to Hyderabad to pursue her MBA. Her primary focus has always been her career, even when growing up. Campus placement secured her a government job in a bank. While she missed her quiet hometown in the mountains, she enjoys the city and goes out for fun.
22. **Nina, 22:** She grew up in a large town in Warangal District of Telangana State, where her father was a railway employee and her mother a homemaker. They now reside in a village with her older brother close to that town, where her father looks after agricultural land. She came to Hyderabad to pursue a law degree from a state university, following the

tradition of her family: the men pursue engineering, whereas the women pursue medicine or law. She claims her father is liberal and supports her education. However, she worries whether her family will go so far as to support her right to choose a man for marriage. While she feels free in the city, she misses the familiar comfort and security of home.

23. **Padmini, 22:** She is from a small town of Andhra Pradesh. Her father works and her mother is a housewife. She is employed in the logistics department of a well-known private hospital in Hyderabad. She likes her work but wants to pursue a PhD; to achieve big, she realizes she has to work harder. She expressed the desire for more from the city, and she knows she can achieve it. She also wants to be guarded by her relatives in the city as she likes that comfort zone.
24. **Pallavi, 25:** She comes from an upper-caste Reddy family in a small town in Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh State. Her father has a construction business and her mother is a homemaker. She has a younger sister. After completing class 10, she did her higher secondary education from Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh State. She came to Hyderabad after her intermediate programme because she wanted to pursue animation and graphic designing. Convincing her parents to allow her to come to a city proved challenging, but they gave in eventually. She says that she always wanted to be different and didn't want to do engineering and get married soon after. She enjoys her job and her stay in the city. She has lived in Hyderabad for the past five years. She enjoys her financial autonomy. She lives in a paying-guest accommodation and is also saving up money for her marriage. Though she isn't very keen about getting married, she knows that it is the norm expected from her and therefore an inevitability. She also hopes that her future partner will support her organic farming ambitions, which is not something that her parents support.
25. **Pratima, 23:** She is a Bengali whose family stays in a district town of Bihar State. Her father is a schoolteacher and her mother is a homemaker. She has one sister. She came to Hyderabad for her studies in a central university. Staying in the hostel was her first experience of living outside her home. Her interaction with the city has largely been about her experience of staying in a closed campus and experiencing new things.
26. **Preeti, 23:** She is from a coastal town of Andhra Pradesh State. Her father is a veterinary doctor and her mother is a housewife. She is working in the logistics department of a well-known private hospital of Hyderabad. She sends money home to support her family. She thinks of Hyderabad as a place where she can achieve big dreams and sees it as a stepping stone to reach the United States, which is her ultimate dream.
27. **Pritibala, 28:** She grew up in a railway town in Assam and is a member of the Dimasa tribe and identifies as Hindu (there are Dimasas who identify as Christians). She is a single child. Her father works in the autonomous district council. When growing up, her town was quite cosmopolitan but that changed when ethnic conflict broke out in 2005, after which her parents decided that it would be best for her to pursue higher studies elsewhere. She says that she was lucky to have parents who were liberal and allowed her to pursue the career of her choice. She did her intermediate, undergraduate and graduate studies in a prestigious college in Guwahati, Assam State. She then taught in an undergraduate college. A year later, she enrolled in a central university in Hyderabad to pursue a PhD in politics. Living in the city, away from her close-knit community, gave her an opportunity to reflect on marriage as a restricting structure. It also fuelled her interest in political activism.
28. **Radha, 24:** She is from a small town in Uttar Pradesh State where her father owns a small business started by her grandmother. She is the only sister of four siblings. Her elder brother joined the family business; her other brothers are younger and are studying. She studied while staying in a hostel from class 8 as her town did not have good higher education. Later she did her undergraduate degree in technology but only because everyone

- else was doing so. She worked for some time to save money because she did not want to ask her father for permission to go to a new city. She tried her luck in getting a job in both Delhi and Hyderabad, finding success here. She informed her father after coming here although her mother knew about her plans. Now she is working in a business processing outsourcing company and lives in a low-budget hostel. She likes her office but has language problems at the hostel. She doesn't like being judged because of her North Indian origins. She is a member of an upper-caste Gupta community.
29. **Rafath, 30:** She is a Muslim woman from to a district town in West Bengal. Her father is a government employee. She has four sisters and one brother. She came to Hyderabad to do her undergraduate degree in education from a central university. She has been in Hyderabad for the past three years. She is now pursuing a masters degree in English at a central university. She likes the city of Hyderabad because she feels that public transport is safer here.
 30. **Rajitha, 23:** She is from a small town in Maharashtra State and from an upper-caste family. At the time of interview, she was pursuing a masters degree at a central university in Hyderabad. She left before completing the programme to join a multinational company in Hyderabad. Her life in the city at the time was about her campus experiences, the importance of rebelling against her family and enjoying the freedoms she had.
 31. **Rama, 25:** She is from a small village in Telangana State and from an Other Backward Category community. She has four siblings. Her parents are farmers. She came to Hyderabad to take coaching classes to write exams for the much sought after government employment, and now she is enrolled in a legal course in the city.
 32. **Rafiya, 29:** She is a Muslim woman from Kashmir. Her father was killed when she was only 3 years old. Her mother is a government employee. She has a sister and a brother. She did her schooling and graduation (Bachelors) from Kashmir but wanted to move away due to the political instability affecting education. She wanted to finish her education as soon as possible to get a job. She came to a central university in Hyderabad for a masters degree in philosophy. She went back to her hometown afterward and taught for two years in a local college. She then returned to Hyderabad to pursue a doctorate degree. She finds the university space more regressive in terms of dressing when compared to her home state, where wearing a burqa is not a necessity. She says the amenities of this city are better than those in her hometown.
 33. **Ritty, 25:** She is from a village in Kerala State. She works as a nurse in a corporate tertiary hospital in Hyderabad. She has one older sister who also used to work in the same hospital. She came to Hyderabad after her schooling to do her general nursing and midwifery course here, after which she was hired by this hospital. She completed further studies in Bangalore. She came to Hyderabad because higher education in Kerala was more expensive. She likes being and working here, even though she feels homesick sometimes. She sends most of her salary to her parents who are saving it for her marriage. She stays in the hostel provided by the hospital. She is a Christian.
 34. **Sabiha, 26:** She is from an upper-caste Muslim family in a district town of Maharashtra State. Her mother is a school teacher and her father runs a business. Her older brother works in Pune. She did undergraduate studies in engineering despite her disinterest in that because her parents insisted. She then came to Hyderabad to look for a job. She eventually learned web designing and found a job in that field. She says her family is modern, especially because her father encourages her to do things on her own. In Hyderabad, she visits many places. She prefers to commute using auto rickshaws and cab service instead of trains and buses.
 35. **Samantha, 22:** She is a Christian from a small town in Kerala State. Her father is a daily

- wage labourer. She completed her nursing degree with the help of an education loan. She is now working as a nurse in a renowned private hospital in Hyderabad and repaying her education loan. She stays in the hostel accommodation provided by her hospital. Her interaction with the city is limited to shopping and going to church.
36. **Sameera, 23:** She is a member of Mahar community (Scheduled Caste) in a city in Maharashtra State. Her father is a government employee and her mother is a government nurse. She has a sister. She completed her engineering undergraduate degree in Maharashtra. Her decision to come to Hyderabad was largely based on the fact that her boyfriend had migrated to Hyderabad. She moved here under the pretext of employment four years ago. Although she wants to work as a software engineer, during the time of the interview she was working as an analyst in a reputed website company.
 37. **Sangita, 29:** She is from an upper-caste family living in the suburbs of Kolkata. Her parents are separated, and she was raised by her mother. She is now working in a multinational company in Hyderabad. She has lived in several types of accommodation in Hyderabad, ranging from an educational institute's hostel to a rented flat. She is now living alone in a rented flat. She financially supports her mother. She loves the city and feels at home here. She is sometimes perceived as an outsider, which troubles her. The anxiety of landlords and co-workers about her being unmarried and her lifestyle also bothers her. She has forged some deep friendships in the city that have become a source of comfort.
 38. **Sanobar, 28:** She is a member of Muslim (Other Backward Category) community from a small village in Bihar State. Her father runs a small-time business in Kolkata. She is the eldest of four sisters and one brother. She finished class 10 in her village, after which she and two of her sisters went to Patna University for their undergraduate degrees. She came to Hyderabad to pursue a masters degree in education at a central university. She prefers living in Hyderabad because she thinks that it is comparatively nicer than places like Delhi and Patna. She supports her family financially.
 39. **Sarada, 30:** She and her family are part of the *Madiga* community (Scheduled Caste) in a small village in Telangana State. She completed high school in her village. With two younger siblings and an unwell father, she came to Hyderabad for work. At the time of the interview, she was working 10- to 12-hour shifts as a cashier in a supermarket. She was on the lookout for another job where she could work only eight-hour shifts. Her sister is Sirisha whom we have also interviewed.
 40. **Saraswati, 24:** She is from a village in a district of Andhra Pradesh State. She is an upper-caste *Kamma* woman and her father has farmland. After her class 10 graduation in her village school, she shifted to a nearby town to finish her two-year intermediate education. Then she moved to Hyderabad where she obtained an undergraduate degree and then she moved to Visakhapatnam city, Andhra Pradesh where she completed her masters degree. Her older sister is married and her sister's husband encouraged her to move out of her hometown. Her younger sister is working in a software company in another city. She works in a corporate tertiary hospital in Hyderabad. Many of her relatives are in the city; in fact, she found her job through someone she knew in a good position in the hospital. She stays in the hostel provided by the hospital.
 41. **Savita, 19:** She is from a small town of West Bengal. She belongs to an upper-caste family. Her father works and her mother is a homemaker. She came to Hyderabad to study for an undergraduate degree in English at a central university. Though she is focused on her studies, she seeks recognition as an artist. She sketches and sings, and coming to Hyderabad has given her the opportunity to explore these interests outside her formal studies. Her interview was about her curiosity as a young adult to explore her freedom and enjoy new experiences.

42. **Shinjini, 23:** She is from a small town in Andhra Pradesh State. She comes from an upper-caste family. Her mother endured domestic violence and died when Shinjini was still a child. Her grandmother then took care of her. The two of them lived with her maternal uncle, where she endured abuse from both her aunt and her uncle. Her grandmother and she ran away from her maternal uncle's house to Hyderabad, where she moved into a childcare home, which meant she had to part with her grandmother, who was shifted to a shelter home for old people. She says the move brought a lot of positive change in her life. She was able to get an education with the help of this organization. Her journey in the city was a different one: she first met the city at a time of crisis. Her childcare home provided her with care and support in a time of need and allowed her to find different networks and groups in the city. She chose a profession in which she could reach out to and help other children like herself.
43. **Sirisha, 25:** She is a member of a *Madiga* community in a small village in Telangana State. She has two siblings. She finished class 10 in her village school. She came to the city to earn money so that she can study further. She is working in a mall as a sales girl. She is Sarada's sister who was also interviewed for the study.
44. **Smriti, 29:** She comes from a district town in Andhra Pradesh State. Her father left her mother when she was 6 years old. To make a living, her mother began to work in factories. When she was in class 7, her mother opened a small shop after pawning off all the gold she had. During this time, she worked as a labourer to supplement their income. She came to Hyderabad when she was selected for a job in a big media house through a competitive exam after her graduation in 2007. She now works as a journalist in visual media. She is passionate about her job and feels strongly against the gender discrimination in the industry. Although she is an upper-caste Kshatriya woman, she married a man from an Other Backward Category community (Yadav) by choice. She lives with her husband, their son and her mother in a rented apartment.
45. **Sonia, 29:** She is an upper-caste *Kamma* woman from a coastal district in Andhra Pradesh State. Her father was a photo technician, the only person in their town to work on computerized printers, until his speech and hearing become impaired. She has one younger brother. She passed the competitive engineering exams and after completing her undergraduate degree, she came to Hyderabad with her friends. Within the first 15 days of her move, she found a job. She changed jobs a couple of times since then. Due to pressure from her extended family after her father died, she had an arranged marriage. She was active socially up until her marriage. She lived in a couple of good private hostels and then moved into a rented house. Since the marriage, she has lived with her husband and their daughter in a newly purchased flat. She plans to go abroad to work to pay off her debt because of a home loan.
46. **Swapna, 25:** She is a member of a Scheduled Caste community and is from a small town of Telangana State. Her father is a farmer. She, along with her sister, came to study nursing in Hyderabad. She has a cousin who lives in Hyderabad who became her primary contact in the city. She has been in the city for more than three years. She works at a private hospital as a nurse and her sister works in a government hospital. She enjoyed studying more than working as a nurse. Now, she and her sister are supporting the family.
47. **Tanika, 19:** She came to Hyderabad to pursue an graduate (Bachelors) degree at a famous women's college in Hyderabad. Her father's cousin, who works at the college, helped her with the admission. She is the oldest of four siblings, who are in school now. Her father is the school principal and her mother is a school teacher. They are all members of an Other Backward Category community.
48. **Tara, 26:** She comes from an upper-caste family in a city in Jharkhand State. Her father

used to work as an autorickshaw driver and her mother is a homemaker. She has two younger siblings. Her parents are conservative and almost got her married when she finished her schooling. But she managed to convince them to let her study. She finally passed the Bank Provisionary Officer's exam and joined the State Bank of Hyderabad. Though initially reluctant, her parents let her migrate to the city. She has lived in Hyderabad for the past four years. She enjoys her freedom and financial independence; her ability to financially support her parents and siblings gives her greater agency at home. She also enjoys staying away from her parental scrutiny by living in the city.

49. **Upasana, 23:** She was born in a small town in Assam State and then grew up in the state capital. She is a single child. Her father works in the public health department of Assam and her mother is a homeopathy practitioner. She lived in Guwahati until she had completed her undergraduate degree. She then worked for an NGO in Meghalaya for a year because she was desperate to escape an abusive relationship with a man back home. She came to Hyderabad to pursue a graduate degree in sociology from a central university. During her interview, she reflected on violence in intimate relationships, freedom that a university campus offers, in contrast to living in the city, as well as how her love of clothing is at odds with being taken seriously in academia. She says that judgement is not limited to the outside world—stereotyping is active even in the liberal world of academia.
50. **Vijetha, 29:** She is from a coastal district of Andhra Pradesh State and is an upper-caste Reddy. Her parents died when she was 2 years old. She has a sister who lives with disabilities. They were raised by their relatives, but they were not treated well. Vijetha first came to Hyderabad when her relatives brought her to help them in the household. Being a good student and having the support of her teacher, she completed her class 10 exam. She followed with a diploma course. To finance it, she had to sell the small house that belonged to her parents. She then came to Hyderabad for a job and brought her sister to live with her. When she was unable to find a good hostel to live in, she and a friend started their own low-budget hostel for working women. After her friend quit, she took up the sole responsibility of managing the hostel by herself. She also works in an office full-time because the profits from the hostel are often unpredictable.



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