

**CONTROL OF FEMALE SEXUALITY IN
TRIBAL SOCIETY : A CROSS-CULTURAL
PERSPECTIVE**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of*
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

PUSHPESH KUMAR

**CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL SYSTEMS
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110067
1996**



जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110067

Centre for the Study of Social System

School of Social Sciences

July 19, 1996.

C E R T I F I C A T E

Certified that this dissertation entitled "**Control of Female Sexuality in Tribal Society : a Cross-Cultural Perspective**" submitted by Mr. Pushpesh Kumar in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** to this University has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other University. This is his original work.

We recommend this work to be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Dr. Tiplut Nongbri
Supervisor

Centre for the Study of Social System
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067

Prof. Dipankar Gupta

Chairperson

Chairperson
Centre for the Study of Social
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067

To
Amrita and Shweta
my female siblings

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to my supervisor Dr. Tiplut Nongbri for her guidance and constant encouragement without which the successful completion of this work would not have been possible. I always feel privileged working under her as she not only holds a grip over the theme but also espouses the cause of tribal women's empowerment. The words fall short to express my gratitude to Dr. Maitreyi Chaudhri whose illuminating responses have been of great help in my endeavours. She always let the class room discussions continue within the gender sensitive framework without any imposition! My few 'encounters' with Dr. Patricia Uberoi are really meaningful and I also hope to seek her guidance and encouragement in future. I extend my regards to Dr. Abhjit Pathak for his benign gestures and constantly 'exposing' us to the world of debunking and demystificatory Sociology; Dr. Anand Kumar whom I always find inspiring and friendly; Sanjay Wright Anand for always (positively) reminding me of my 'intellectual' limitations whenever I went overambitious; Supriya and Tribhu for being friends in more than one way; Madhuri for always showing concern and for her untiring patience to go through the first draft of the work, Namita who always remained a source of consolation in ebb and flow of my M.Phil. days and Firoz for always giving company from Dhaba to libraries, besides enlightening me on various issues and my senior Farah Yasmin for generously lending books. I should not remain unthankful to few intellectuals whose discouraging remarks have been taken by me as a challenge while pursuing to work on the present theme. Taking a clue from Foucault, who contends that "power is all pervasiv", I choose not to name them ! I recall my parents with a sense of gratitude whose contribution to the present endeavour albeit 'invisible' is nonetheless substantial and significant! Finally I can not forget to mention Kriti, Irfan, Sobha, Mohit, Bhup, Dhiraj, Nipa, Sushmita, Santosh, Samir, Raman, Sohaib, Shanlendra, Disha, Mani, Ravi Bhusan and lastly my younger brother Priya Ranjan and my nephew Babu, who deserve my special thanks.

PUSHPESH KUMAR



CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	
CHAPTER I The Myth of the Male Ethnographer	1-19
CHAPTER II Culture, Anthropology and Feminist Ethnographies	20-46
CHAPTER III Customary Practices and Tribal Women	47-88
CHAPTER IV Colonial, Post-Colonial and Ethnic Dimensions	89-115
CHAPTER V Women Have Their Future Tense !	116-130
BIBLIOGRAPHY	131-143

CHAPTER I

**THE MYTH OF THE MALE
ETHNOGRAPHER**

CHAPTER I

THE MYTH OF THE MALE ETHNOGRAPHER¹

"..... by focusing primarily on the world of men, as most of us have, at best produced lopsidedly viricentric accounts by largely ignoring one half of our subject population; at worst we have missed important dimensions of the situation and very possibly, in the process sometimes drawn research conclusions of highly questionable validity"

[Gregory, J.R. 1984, p.136]²

The excerpt above reflects Gregory's confession about his blindness towards gender issues in the fieldwork which he conducted among the *Mopan Mayan Indians of Southern Belize* in the years, 1968-69.³ This realisation about lopsidedness and viricentric account came about when he got the opportunity to teach a course on "sex roles and culture". He writes : "the experience for preparing for that course has led me to ask many (to me) new questions and look at many old question in new ways"⁴.

-
1. This title I have borrowed from James R. Gregory's article "The myth of the male ethnographer and women's world", where he argues that the traditionally accepted view regarding the inaccessibility of the women's world to male ethnographer is largely a rationalisation that justifies not collecting information about women. He says that this dimension of ethnographic experience is largely a myth. See, Gregory, James R. "The myth of the male ethnographer and the women's world", *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 86, 1994, pp. 316-327,
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Ibid.

The myth of the male ethnographer and women's world is well entrenched in the academia having its implications to the extent of shaping the ethnographer's research plans and expatiations.

This myth which *Gregory* had well internalised during his graduate study days, allowed him to largely ignore the world of women while collecting ethnographic materials. His fieldwork in Southern Belize was primarily focused on male role; the fiesta sponsorship which required the expenditure of substantial amount of wealth, in turn, influenced the extent to which a man would be asked to serve in the various offices of local government.⁵ Men were, by cultural definition and public acknowledgement, at the centre stage in every dimension of this complex of institutionalised pattern. The fact that wives and daughters regularly helped out in certain phases of farming cycle and were sole processors of products of farming, hunting, gathering, fishing and stock raising activities; that some unmarried adult women undertook many of these activities without the aid of men; that men's occupation of the more advanced position in fiesta sponsoring groups invariably involved the preparation of special foods and hosting of activities within their households — did not form part of the data ! The ethnographer saw nothing inappropriate in his collected data at that time because his ideas were highly conditioned by the 'myth of the male ethnographer and women's world'. The self realisation

5. Ibid.

on the part of Gregory led him to see many of the unnoticed things as *crucial* and he was able to bring these crucial issues at centre stage in his revised field work. The entire argument developed by Gregory in this article points to the fact that through sensible engagements an ethnographer (male) can transcend the mythical construction of his own self which blinds him to see the realities of what is called the 'women's world'. The problem faced by male ethnographers are diverse, real and significant. But it does not necessarily follow, reiterates Gregory, that male researcher must, therefore, forego getting information from and about women and end up with a set of field notes that is lopsidedly male centred.

In selecting this theme *control of female sexuality in Tribal Society: a cross cultural perspective*, I was not conditioned by the myth of male ethnographer as the title of the dissertation might suggest but I was commented upon by many persons including a sociologist (male) that the theme is not incommensurate with my gender. Though I have ample of arguments to counter their viewpoint, I feel it enough to suggest them to read this piece written by Gregory.

The term which needs explanation in this introductory part are **tribal, sexuality and cross-cultural**.

TRIBAL SOCIETY

To start with there is no acceptable definition of the term 'tribe', nonetheless it survives as a concept both at academic and administrative levels. We are informed that between four to five per cent of the present-day world population belong to a couple of thousand tribal communities.⁶ The academic discipline of anthropology is more or less exclusively concerned with tribal studies from its very inception, but the imprecise, inconsistent ambiguous and holdall usage of the term amply communicates the poverty of anthropological scholarship.⁷ The concept of 'tribe' ought to mean something different from other social collectivities and formations. To Andre Beteille, it was applied to people who were considered primitive, lived in backward areas, and did not know the use of writing.⁸ Beteille highlights that in the beginning nobody bothered to give a precise meaning to the term, tribe. This did not create much confusion, so long as the groups which were dealt with could be easily located and differentiated from groups of other types. By and large, this was the case in Australia, in Melanesia and in North America, the regions which were first studied by anthropologists.⁹

6. Pathy, Jaganath, "The idea of Tribe and the Indian Scene", *Man in India*, Vol.69, No.4, 1989, p.346.

7. Ibid.

8. Beteille, Andre, "The definition of tribe", in Romesh Thapar (ed.) *Tribe, Caste and Religion in India*, The Macmillan Company of India Ltd. 1977, p.7.

9. Ibid.

In Indian and African contexts it is very difficult to come across the communities which retain all their pristine tribal characters. In fact, most such tribal groups show in varying degrees elements of continuity with the larger society of India.¹⁰ The boundaries of the tribe as a society have been defined politically, linguistically and culturally by various authors. While many tribal societies, documented in various ethnographies have 'well-established' systems of government, there are certain tribal societies having segmentary political systems.

Example of the latter societies are provided by *Nuer* and the *Dinka* of Sudan and the *Tallensi* of the Gold Coast.¹¹ The possession of a common dialect is more than anything else considered as a decisive test in demarcating the boundaries of tribal society. Proximity to isolated hills and forests always forms the backdrop against which the idea of a tribe comes to mind but tribal societies have been known to flourish under all kinds of ecological conditions.¹² The ideal type to tribe which emerge out of the anthropological and administrative discourse is that tribal society is relatively unspecified, the relations of production are homogeneous whatever the mode of production followed, whether hunting, gathering or primitive agriculture. Tribal economy is undeveloped and non-monetised

10. Ibid. p.8.

11. Ibid. p.9

12. Ibid.

and they represent a particular stage of evolution. At the empirical level however, one may find lots of deviation. Hinting at the lack of unanimity regarding the definition of tribe, Pathy reiterates that no comprehension of the term is possible without examining the historical context of its emergence, the ideological currents associated with it, including racism, colonialism and unequal world system.¹³

To recapitulate the vast spectrum of debate regarding what constitutes the 'tribe' is beyond the scope of this paper. The areas which it exclusively selects to study is the **tribal kinship in the context of gender**. Anthropologists agreed upon the predominancy of kinship ties as the organising principles of tribal society. In Australian case, it is said that any member of a tribe could demonstrate his exact kinship relation with any other member.¹⁴ So strong is the force of kinship that in most cases an outsider can be admitted into the tribe only through the legal fiction of adopting him as kin to some member of it.¹⁵ The functional and structural-functional studies considered kinship link as egalitarian and non-exploitative, implying only reciprocal rights and duties. Since 1970s however, there has been a change in the approach; status inequalities even

13. Pathy J. op.cit. p.347.

14. Beteille, Andre, op.cit. p.13.

15. Ibid.

among the simple small-scale societies have been noted.¹⁶ Meillassoux argues that the relationship of men to land is most important to understand “primitive societies”. Among the hunting and gathering bands land is the “subject of labour” while for settled agriculturists, it is an “instrument of labour”. The first one is egalitarian and unstable with little concern for an ideology of biological reproduction, where as the second is a lineage society which produces a kinship ideology.¹⁷ This ideal type aggregate of tribe between these two categories mentioned by Meillassoux has its conceptual significance but what exists today are the “tribes in transition”. This includes different dimensions of colonialism, the more or less successful establishment of an overarching and/or centralised state, legislation and capitalist economy, new economic opportunities and mobility. The present study seeks to counter two widely prevalent notions : the static view of culture, community and the meaning of family on the one hand while on the other the separation of the **studies of gender kinship and economics**. It would show that the notion of altruism in domestic sphere and reciprocity of that of wider kinship relations, as against the self interest, the driving force of economics, does not always hold true.

16. See, for example, Meillassoux, Claude, “On the mode of production of the hunting band”, in P.Alexandre, (ed.) *French Perspective in African Studies*, Oxford University Press, London. 1973 and, Tiger, Lionel, *Men in Groups*, Random House, New York, 1969.

17. Meillassoux, C. *op.cit.*

SEXUALITY

Sexuality becomes an amorphous term unless placed in a particular or specific context. Within the wide spectrum of feminist discourse, it has been used against the backdrop of purposes and agendas at hand e.g. a lesbian feminist's theoretical handling of the term may not be the reference point in certain other contexts. In the present context 'sexuality' implies the *reproductive ideology* and its *regulatory effect*. The ideology is binding, coercive, repressive and exclusionary in 'bio-material sense' ; bio-material sense implies that it (the ideology) regulates women's body on the basis of the fact that they are biologically different from men. The cultural exaggeration of this difference becomes exclusionary and also violent in many ways. "Bio" here is primarily indicative of women's body, the regulation and control of which may take the form of forced pregnancies or clitoridectomy. This force and violence may be perceived as cultural symbols ! In the 'bodily' ('Bio') and material sense the cultural regulation has implications in terms of tremendous erosion of democratic space in the context of gender relationship, irrespective of tribal or "mainstream" societies. The "bio" aspect however has not been much highlighted in the present endeavour. The major thrust of discussion throughout the paper is on material aspect, that is, the relationship between kinship, gender, and economics in relation to determining power of reproductive ideology. In this respect 'property' however, is approached and whatever it's constituent

elements, is a crucial indicator of balance of power.¹⁸

It needs to be observed that, the relationship between women and men has been structured by an access to or control over and transmission of property. To what extent and in what respect women themselves and their offsprings constitute property?¹⁹ Ann Whitehead has suggested that our understanding of this phenomenon is enhanced if we look at how kinship system helps to construct women and men in different ways, as different sorts of persons²⁰. Examples of this is the way in which legal definition of property rights designates what is appropriate and permissible for certain categories of persons to do with certain types of property. Another example is the way in which one person may have rights over another who then becomes in some way the property of the first.²¹ Thus, to Ursula Sharma²² it is necessary to look at the specific nature of relationship which women bear to property. She points out (in the context of rural North West India) that women's effective exclusion from the inheritance of land is largely the basis of dependence upon men in villages and which may also be the

18. Hirschon, Renee, "Property, power and gender relations" in R. Hirschon (ed.), *Women and Property : Women as Property*, Croom Helm, London, 1984, p.1.

19. Whitehead, Ann, "Men and Women : Kinship and property : Some general issues", in R. Hirschon op. cit. p.180.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Sharma, Ursula, *Womens, Work and Property in North West India* Tavistock, London, 1980, p.11-13.

basis of their symbolic devaluation.

I 'possess' numerous items which are either pleasing or useful — a hairbrush, a non-pedigree pet cat, an electric coffee grinder, and a cheap portable radio — but they do not contribute to the creation of new wealth, they do not enable me to appropriate the labour of others, nor can they easily be converted into other forms of wealth, which might have these characteristics.

[Sharma, Ursula, 1980 p.13]

Land is without doubt the most important category of wealth generating property in an agrarian society.²³ But land can not be cultivated without certain tools and equipments, and so we must also consider cattle and farm machinery. Nor must we forget forms of property which can be converted into land or agricultural equipment e.g. gold, jewellery, accumulated cash savings.²⁴ Land cannot be farmed without the consumption of labour power and still there are areas where labour-intensive methods are used considerably. Therefore, where individuals or groups hold rights in labour power of others, these rights may also be treated as a category of property.²⁵

Having all these conditions in mind women in tribal societies are in a disadvantageous position. Their access to, control over and transmission of property are weak and fragile. They are in no case equal

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

vis-a-vis. their men folk, but their role in production and reproduction is substantial. In no case the share of task in the process of production and reproduction is less than that of menfolk. If the relationship between men and women is asymmetrical in terms of property relationship, then what are the ideological factors which let that relationship going. If we take kinship as structure, and try to find out the dialectical link between this structure and human agency (both men and women) the structure will be constraining for both men and women but the degree of constraint will certainly be differential on gender lines. Women are more constrained and this constraining factor will flow out from what is called the reproductive ideology. The reproductive ideology means that women's role in biological reproductions is discursively exaggerated at societal level in different ways in different contexts, the net result of which is to historically produce them as unequal subjects. Whether the division of labour by sex was initially decided upon or was stumbled upon accidentally, once established as a social norm it acquires the force of law being therefore not voluntary but forced.²⁶ The reproductive Ideology built-into the kinship structure may condition the perception of both men and women which may blind them to see many facts of life situation the recognition of which is essential for gender emancipatory politics. Literature abounds with cautionary examples of women who are defined as 'housewives' when they

26. Kelkar, Govind and Nathan, Dev, Women, Land and Forest in Jharkhand, Kali For Womens, New Delhi, 1991, p.3.

are actually involved in agricultural labour and small scale market production.²⁷ It is in this sense, that the term 'sexuality' has been employed, throughout. *We need to explore and demystify the patriarchal logic which simultaneously valorise and devalorise women's reproductive sphere*; these seemingly two contradictory processes (of valorisation and devalorisation) culminate in similar effect, to regulate female sexuality in a way that would exclude them from having an equal say in property and political decision making, but at the same time adding upto their responsibilities to carry and disburse, in order to keep the structure (in whatever form) going.²⁸

CROSS-CULTURAL

The major reason for using cross-cultural sample is that they allow the researcher to examine a much wide range of variation in culture and social structure than studies based on a single society. If we donot take full advantage of the available variations of cultures, we cannot be certain that the results and explanations we arrive at will be truly general. Shulamit Reinharz²⁹ mentioned four assumptions which guide the feminist cross-

-
27. Fruzetti, Lina, "Farm and hearth : Rural women and the farming community", in Haleh Afshar, (ed.), *Women, Work and Ideology in Third World*, Tavistock, London, 1990.
 28. This fact has been subtly brought out by Leela Dube. See, Dube, Leela, "Seed and earth: the symbolism of biological reproduction and sexual relation of productions", in Dube, E. Leacock and S. Ardener (ed.) *visibility and power : Essays on Women in Society and Development*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1986. pp. 22-53.
 29. Reinharz, Shulamit, *Feminist Methods in Social Research*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1992, pp.111-121.

cultural research:

1. the importance of cultural specificity
2. the necessity of intensive study
3. the possibility of commonalities among women of different cultures and
4. the need for a critical evaluation of study material

The insistence on cultural specificity represents a challenge to essentialism, a theory claiming from universal biological factors. At the same time, feminist cross-cultural research explores how women's lives in seemingly disparate societies actually have much in common. A major theoretical concern becomes whether, and how economic development alters the pre-existing sexual division of labour. To answer the question of whether development is good for women, comparative cross-cultural study and feminist theories are necessary. While recent feminist cross-cultural research forcefully cautions against over generalisation there are ways in which generalising in fact be appropriate; vulnerability to rape for example, is not an over generalisation, but an unfortunate universal fact.³⁰ In the present work tribes from India Africa and Australia have been taken for a

30. Ibid. p. 116.

cross-cultural comparison. *Garo & Khasi* from north east India, *Todas* of Nilgiri hills, *Ho* of singhbhum, *Yoruba*³¹ of South West Nigeria, *Tswana* tribe from Bostwana, the matrilineal *Akan* from Asante (Southern Ghana) and Australian aboriginals³² in general.

The dominant theme which informs this cross-cultural study is to see the role of reproductive ideology which acts as a mechanism to regulate female sexuality in ways, which excludes women in these various societies to exercise agency on their own behalf in the material and political contexts. These contexts in turn determine their position vis-a-vis men, wider society and in present day context the state. All the subsequent chapters point to the fact, that there is one arena where indigenous colonial and post-colonial conflate i.e. the reproductive ideology. Against this backdrop, the argument can be anticipated that women's (subordinate) position in societies either got reinforced or superimposed by the agencies which were instrumental in bringing about change in these different tribal societies considered here.

-
31. Yoruba are a 'Kwa' Speaking people who prior to the establishment of colonial rule in Nigeria occupied a territory which extended west-wards into the present day republic of Benin and Togo.
 32. For tens of thousands of years prior to the establishment by the British of a penal colony at Botany Bay in 1788, the Australians aboriginals, based their life and law on their complex relationship to land. Today plagued by ill health, chronic unemployment, a dependence on Social security, and a general feeling of powerlessness, many of the 200,000 descendents of the original owners of Australia live as Paupers, an enclave Population within a rich and developing nation of 14 million.

After discussing the terminologies which constitute the title of present dissertation, some important points remain to be highlighted. The historical perspectives which has been incorporated here problematises kinship and gender relations as dynamic and shifting structures rather than as unchanging principles, moving at the most from one fixed set of rules to another. Various macro economic and political processes enter the discussion. They include the dimension of colonialism and colonial rule. The motto is to see these process as *gendered* apart from other things. The macro-economic and political changes have influenced the position in various ways; women operated from within networks and marriages family and kinship and it was the position of women within these relationship that were subject to *reinforcement* or *change*. Whether the position got reinforced or changed the gender ideology went on mediating and conditioning. women's status, thier accessibility sustainability and vulnerability.

Three intertwined aspects central to the colonial enterprises are analysed to different degrees. These are the economic interests and policies of colonizers; the nature of colonial state in terms of governance through law and administration; and the social and moral value and norms, particularly in the arena of marriage and family, which the colonisers brought with them. While the first and second aspects have been much studied, the implications of family and gender relations have rarely been

explored.

Chapter two of the present work primarily focusees on the recent discourse in social anthropology regarding 'culture' the key symbol of the field. The once dominant anthropological sense of culture as a body of beliefs, habits, products etc. maintaining internal consistency and coherence is now dismissed and frowned upon. The anthropology of the recent decade is more obviously and transparently tied to real world events . The word shared is now replaced with the word *constitutive* which implies that when we speak of culture as "shared" we must now always ask "by whom", in "what ways" and under "what conditions". The most recent trend is the action-based approach which is best reflected in feminist anthropology. The politics of culture has been scrutinized from the disadvantaged groups perspective. For example the feminist anthropologists have been able to successfully unmask the notion of male - female complimentarity; a system of values founded on division is not unnecessarily founded on equivalence. The feminist anthropologists ask as to why the mainstream anthropology has been so recalcitrant in acknowledging that gender makes a difference to ethnography? Why have practitioners clung so tenaciously to a gender neutral paradigm or jumped on the postmodern bandwagon? Meanwhile the feminist questions have been appropriated and their experimental moments erased. Feminist anthropologists have been grappling with the notion of what constitute feminist anthropology and its practice,

ethnography? There does exist a difference or boundary line between the feminist anthropology of women; while the former is considered **radical** the latter is only **remedial**. The emerging radical trend in feminist anthropology calls into question many of the works of their own sisterhood. Lastly, kinship does not imply equality; nor the absence of power in kinship relations. While the second chapter highlights the inegalitarianism of culture particularly from a gender-sensitive perspective, **Chapter three** emphasizes as to how inegalitarianism (in this context, the reproductive ideology) was retained in changing society. Generally speaking, it is the reproductive ideology which provides a common platform where pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial conflate. In the lineage mode of production though the role of women in production and reproduction process was substantial, the point to be noted is that, in the subsequent transformations, men exploited their positions as guardians of family and lineage . The sexual division of labour within the household was inadvertently the basis for new structure . The answer to the question, that what gave men and not women an access to technology and capital lies in the control that men had over women's labour and reproduction in subsistence economy . This phenomena necessitates to study the customary practices and their determining effect in the context of gender as the transformation are not uncontaminated by pre - existing gender ideology . Gender (discriminatory) ideology is the integral part of all cultures cutting across tribes for our purpose what is important is to see that men's control of public decision making domain gave them critical influence over the

modification of legal and social rules when external conditions began to change in significant ways. As for **fourth chapter** it is pertinent to start with by quoting Henrietta Moore when she says that "the effects of capital on women were uneven and contradictory; while one strategy for survival is undermined (agriculture) another is opened up (the market place), overall, however, women are in anything, worse off".³³ Though the picture may not be exactly like this, in the sense that agriculture was replaced by market opportunities, situations may be of a mixed kind but what needs to be explored is that how the pre-colonial patterns of authority over basic resources were manipulated. Catalysed by expanding cash crop production, and with the active co-operation of colonial state men's supervisory rights over land were transformed into ownership rights. Under the same conditions, women's usufructuary and trusteeship rights in land, became increasingly threatened and vulnerable. A gender sensitive focus does not preclude attention to class, but does elaborate upon and develop a more pronounced class analysis. Women fit uncomfortably (if it all) in economically based class structures, devoid of attention to reproductive dimension of life. The responses of women to the capitalist transformation are clearly very varied and are in fact determined by their ability to control, utilize and dispose off economic resources and the product of these resources. These factors are in turn determined by sexual division of labour,

33. Moore. H., *Feminism and Anthropology*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1988, p.39.

the organisation of household and kinship, marital and inheritance pattern.

Winding up, the present project is political as well as epistemological; ethnographic as well as anthropological; descriptive as well as analytical. In deed, these are not mutually exclusive or radically polar opposites. The major (political) thrust is that the tribal women everywhere ought to have a rightful place in the customary, changing and changed milieu. The state's "keenness", towards tribal development can be utilized but at the same time we can not make a hierarchy of oppressions i.e. to problemising tribal population as victims and not to see its gender dimensions.

CHAPTER II

**CULTURE, ANTHROPOLOGY AND
FEMINIST ETHNOGRAPHIES**

CHAPTER II

CULTURE, ANTHROPOLOGY AND FEMINIST ETHNOGRAPHIES¹

There is a growing tendency to move culture out of the realm of exotic custom, the festival, the ritual and the like into the centre of historical prolemetic or rather to recognize that rituals and festivals are sites in which larger and more dynamic fields of discourse, larger and more powerful hegemonies are being constituted, contested and transformed.

[Dirks, N.B. Eley G, and Ortener S.B. 1994, P.6]

Though rumours of anthropology's death is much exaggerated,² there is a growing consensus that the discipline faces a major turning point reflected in the 'crisis' situation that has led to problematising culture the key symbol of the field in new diverse ways. The sub fields (and sub-sub

I would prefer to use the term feminist ethnographies rather than it's singular form in view of the plurality of discourse within this tradition in both historical and contemporary contexts. In historical context we may include what Henrietta Moore says a dialogue between what are called, the 'anthropology of Women' and the feminist anthropology'. For this, see, Moore, Henrietta, *Feminism and Anthropology*, Polity Press, Cambridge, U.K. 1988, PP.1-11. In contemporary context, one can include the two contrary strands eg. Marilyn Strathern Vs. Ann Whitehead see, Strathern, Marilyn, *The Gender of the Gift : Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Malanesia* University of California Press, Berkeley, 1988 and Whitehead, Ann, "Women and men : Kinship and property : some general issues", in, Renee Hirschon (ed). *Women and Property : Women as property*, Croom Helm, London and Canberra, 1984, PP.176-191.

2. Josephides, Lisette, "metaphors, metathemes and the construction of sexuality : a critique of the new Melanesian ethnography", *Man*, (N.S.) 26, 1991, P.145.

fields) are increasingly pursuing their specialised interest, loosing contact with each other..... There is no longer a shared discourse, a shared set of terms to which all practitioners address themselves, a shared language we all however idiosyncratically speak.³ The claims of relative coherence and internal consistency of culture and expressions like “a system of symbols”, “a structure of relations” are frowned upon, dismissed. The plurality of discourse was never alien to anthropology as we have the British functionalist school in early twenties; in the decades of fifties and sixties the Symbolic Anthropology and Cultural Ecology schools made their inroads. While the British functionalists were engaged in waging their war against Victorian racism by extending the conception of rational humanity to the people in specific remote locations, the latter two streams of thought i.e. symbolic anthropology and cultural ecology schools were busy fighting among themselves; both intending to fetch justice to the people as the British functionalists but with different methodologies. To the cultural ecologists the symbolic anthropologists were fuzzy-headed mentalists, involved in unscientific and unverifiable flights of subjective interpretation, the latter considered cultural ecology to be involved with

-
3. Ortener, Sherry B., “Theory in Anthropology since the sixties”, in Nicholas B. Dirks, Geoff Eley and, Sherry B. Ortener, *Culture/Power/History : A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1994, P.372.

Diss
Y, 15-72: (S, 5)
N6

TH- 6142



mindless and sterile scienticism counting calories and measuring rainfall.⁴ Though both schools could luxuriate in the faults of the other, and not inspect their own houses for serious weaknesses, the common weaknesses they inherited in themselves along with the functionalist school was their *lack of any systematic sociology*. Lack of systematic sociology would mean an underdeveloped sense of politics of culture and lack of curiosity of these approaches concerning the production and maintenance of symbolic system.

Levi Strauss sought to establish the universal grammar of culture, the way in which units of cultural discourse are created (by the principle of binary opposition), and the rules according to which the units (pairs of opposed terms) are arranged and combined to produce the actual cultural production (myths, marriage, rituals, totemic clan arrangements and the

4. Ibid, p. 374-379. In symbolic anthropology school can be included, Clifford Geertz, and Victor Turner, Geertz's most radical theoretical move was his 'Interpretations of culture', Basic Books 1973, New York, in which he argued that culture is not something locked inside people's heads, but rather, is embodied in public symbols through 'which the members of a society communicate their world view, value orientations, ethoes.... Geertz was primarily influenced by Max Weber (Via Talcott Parsons) whereas Victor Turner was primarily influenced by Emile Durkheim. The cultural ecologists emphasized that specific cultures evolve their specific forms in the process of adapting to specific environmental conditions, and the apparent uniformities of evolutionary stages is actually a matter of similar adaptations to similar natural conditions in different parts of the world, Marshall Sahlins and Elman Service (1960) are included in this school whose predecessors were Leslie White (1943, 1949), Julian Steward (1953, 55) and V. Gordon Childe (1942), See, Ortener, S.B. Ibid P.374, 377.

like) that anthropologists record. Cultures are primarily systems of classification, as well as the sets of institutional and intellectual production built upon those systems of classification and performing further operation upon them. In practice structural analysis consists of shifting out the basic sets of opposites that underlie some complex cultural phenomena myth, a ritual, a marriage system and of showing the ways in which the phenomena in question is both an expression of those contrasts and a reworking of them, thereby producing a meaningful statement or reflexion upon order. In a number of fields like linguistics, philosophy, history there was a strong reaction against structuralism of early seventies Two interrelated features - the denial of relevance of an intentional subject in the social and cultural process, and denial of any significant impact of history and "event" upon structure - were felt to be particularly problematic.⁵

To Ortner, the anthropology of 1970s was much more obviously and transparently tied to real world events than that of preceding period. Starting in the late 1960s in both United States and France (less so in England) radical social movements emerged on a vast scale. First came the counter - culture, then the anti war-movement and then just a bit later, the women's movement. These movements not only affected the academic

5. Ibid, P.382.

world, they originated in good part within it.⁶ The implication of this radicalism in anthropology was to scrutinise the conventional conception of “culture”, that it is shared by all the members of a given society.

The word **shared** was now replaced with the word **constitutive** which implies that when we speak of culture as shared we must always ask “By whom” and “In what ways” and under “What conditions?”⁷

Before turning to feminism, what is worth spelling out is the new, expanded and more sophisticated understanding of the role and nature of “the political” (this understanding can be viewed as one of the lasting good of intellectual radicalism of 1960s)⁸ in social. This involves a radically deinstitutionalised understanding of the political process. Earlier the political process was only studied in the context of the conventional institutional areas like state and public organisations, but now this has been

6. Ibid.

7. At the core of this new challenge are new understandings regarding power and history. An influx of Foucauldian perspective has swept through the humanities and social sciences in the last decade or so. Foucauldian notion of discourse and Gramscian notions of hegemony emphasise the degree to which culture is grounded in unequal relations and differently related to people and groups in different social positions, connected to this point there has been an explosion of studies, while going through the more recent feminist ethnographies I have inferred it, and feminist scholars like Kumkum Sangari it got affirmed.

8. Dirks, Nicholas B. et al op. cit. p.4

rather extended from conventional into a variety of settings previously regarded as “non-political”.....including the family and the home.⁹ If “the personal is political” (the specifically feminist contribution to the shift of understanding) the wider sphere of everyday transactions are also political. Thus if one direction of social history, perhaps the predominant one, has been to *depoliticise* the social into a discrete and manageable object for study another has been to invest it precisely with political meanings¹⁰.

There is a major recognition of the degree to which power itself is a cultural construct, very subtly articulated by **Bourdieu** in his "Theory of practice".. The modes of expression, of physical force and violence are culturally shaped while force and violence in turn becomes cultural

-
9. Ibid, p.3, also see, Clark Alice W. (ed), *Gender and Political Economy : Explorations of South Asian Systems*, Oxford University Press Oxford, New York, 1993, P.7.
 10. One can see the whole conventional anthropology against the back drop of this stand point to guaze politics of power relations built into this whole exercise. The ethnographies' practice of assuming that the small scale communities they studied were both and territorially self sufficient had certain political motives intended or otherwise. This fact has been highlighted by Akbar Ahmed and Cris Shore. They point out that these conventional ethnographies replicated the nationalist consensus which prevailed in their home societies. Certainly Radcliffe Brown's theory of Social integration reflected the ideology, of a harmonious division of labour to which the rules of industrial states often appealed in the first half of this century. The virtual absence of historical investigation in anthropology, until recently has meant that cultural systems have indeed appeared timeless at least until ruptured by "Cultural contact". But as the anthropologists have began to adopt, at least partially a historical perspective, the durability of culture has dissolved, See, Ahmed, Akbar and Shore, Cris, (ed)., *The Future of Anthropology : It's Relevance in Contemporary World*, Atholne, London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1995, P. 52.

symbols, as powerful in their non-execution as in their doing. And of course, force is only a tiny part of power, so that much of the problematic of power today is a problematic of knowledge making, universe construction and the social production of feeling and “reality”.¹¹ In Bourdieu’s schema, structures to be found in cultural forms are “transformed misrecognizable form(s) of the real division of social order.” From this vantage point, Bourdieu had two principle objectives : to show how these real divisions become masked through the process of naturalisation, and to chart this process as it seeped into the people’s heads, bodies and self’s. The realisation of both objectives is to be found in practice. Thus the enterprise in practice theory in Bourdieu’s hands is largely a matter of decoding the public cultural forms within which people live their lives - the pattern and rhythms of working, eating, sleeping, leisure, sociability etc., that already encode the divisions, distribution and inequalities of society as a whole.¹²

The new trend which has been gathering force since the eighties, says Ortener, is a more action based approach and feminist anthropology is one of the primary contexts in which practice approach has been developing. Feminists have continued through 1980s to integrate a critical approach to

11. Dirks, N.B. et al, op. cit. p.5

12. Bourdieu, Pierre, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, translated by R.Nice, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977.

knowledge production with action,¹³ in a way akin to Harding's 'Stand point approach' and Mies' 'Conscious partiality'¹⁴.

Schrijvers who in 1989 developed a critical understanding of gender ideology whilst enabling poor Sri Lankan Women to determine and organise ways to earn an income more regularly and autonomously and gain respect, argues that *in each research situation, it is necessary to choose for whom, through whom, and how the research is being done and what changes you want to support with knowledge*^{14(a)}.

The action approach provides a backdrop, against which culture has been problematised by feminist anthropologist with a complete new sets of questions and agendas.¹⁵ The element of materiality is the touchstone

13. Ahmed, A. and Shore, C. op. cit. p.3,

14. Harding, Sandra, (ed) *Feminism and Methodology*, Open University Press, 1987, p.187.

14a. Mies, Maria, "Towards a methodology for feminist research", in G.Bowels and R. Duelli - Klein (eds), *Theories of Women Studies*, Routledge and Kagen Paul, London, 1983.

Schrijvers, J., *The Violence of Development : A Choice for Intellectuals*, Institute for Development Research, Amsterdam International Books, Utrecht, 1993.

15. Most practice anthropologists to date take the individual actors eg. Marjari Shostak's *Nisa*, or units of various types eg. "Women", "Commoners", "Workers", "Junior Siblings": etcetra. The analyst take these people and their doings as the references point for understanding particular unfolding of events, and processes in reproduction or change of some structural features. See, Ortener, S.B. op. cit. p.393.

for this approach. The material conditions, resources, possible means of producing and their distribution are basic premises which inform most of the feminist enquiry. The more 'culturally' oriented approach termed as **emic** view which has informed the mainstream anthropology (particularly in the context of gender) has become redundant and the **etic** view which concerns the material production and reproduction and the ideologies that further it has been embraced by feminists, in order to overcome the separation between the cultural and the political.¹⁶

Leela Dube deconstructs the metaphor of Seed and earth which refers respectively to the male and female contribution in biological reproduction. The metaphor makes possible the symbolic manipulation of gender having implications for tremendous erosion of individual agency and subsequently erosion of democratic spaces and human rights violations in present day context. She says that by expressing cultural understanding regarding the process of biological reproduction, it provides the ideological bases for legitimization of crucial principles of kinship and their operation in respect to property and production.¹⁷

16. Clark, A.W. op. cit, p.8-9.

The demystification of symbolical domain in the context of gender relationship comes out very subtly in Leela Dubey's article. See, Dube, Leela, "Seed and earth : the symbolism of biological reproduction and sexual relations of production" in Leela Dubey and Eleanor Leacock (ed), *Visibility and Power : Essays on Women in Society and Development*, Oxford University Press, 1986 ?

17. Ibid. p.3,

Getting back to Bourdieu, who tried to show as to how the real divisions become masked through the process of naturalisation and get seeped into the peoples heads, bodies and self's, feminist theory could not remain immune to this kind of theorization. In fact they have utilised and developed these theories to go deeper and deeper in unmasking the logics of patriarchies.¹⁸ The logic which time and again surfaces and resurfaces in popular discourse is that women also possess and exercise power in their own sphere. In her work on rural society in nineteenth century France, Martin Seglen tried to show very clearly as to how masculine authority and women's work, space and relations of couple with the community are structured; it is also visibly enshrined in the rituals and representations. Elsewhere, Annette Weiner, reexamining records which one can call archetypal (those of Trobriand Islands) and returning to familiar territory, observes from a new angle the exchange of objects traditionally belonging to women (banana leaves) at the time of ceremonies associated with mourning. Taking the interpretation of circulation of wealth used by anthropologists before her, she discovers an alternative social explanation founded on the role of women, an aspect hitherto ignored because it had

18. I prefer to use the term partriarches, rather than it's singular form, patriarchy, as women's position is mediated through class, caste, race, ethnicity etc. I also borrow this term from Sangari and Vaid, See, Sangari, Kumkum and Vaid, *Sudesh, Recasting Women : Essays in Colonial History*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1989, pp.1-26.

not been perceived clearly. This recent attention to women in this specific context represents a new insight.¹⁹

However, this emphasis on women's power, also typical of the early phase of anthropology of women carries the implicit danger of tripping over too easily or tending towards somewhat fallacious ideological uses. *To see women's power other than cultural is to see it from idallic perspective.*²⁰ Theoretical rigour can help us to steer clear of new stereotype, concealed in modern formulations. The notion of complementary functions is so well utilized in ethnographic studies that it connotes a distinct image of a division of space, of time, of daily activities of rituals between men and women; it presents a balanced way of life where roles and tasks are neither antagonistic, nor concurrent. Social life appears to be organised around two apparently equal poles, male authority at the one end and female power at the other. Even if at times, when it is shown that the divisions of task on the basis of sex is not fixed, and there are zones of intersection and exchange which throw into disorder the neat position between domestic work by women and labour for production by men, the notion of complementary retains many ambiguities.

19. For Martrin Seglen and Annette Weiner's views see, Perrot, Michelle, "Culture, Power and Women: a historiographical essay" (Tr. Narayani Gupta), in Maurice Aymard and Harbans Mukhia (ed), *French Studies in History*, Vol.II Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1988, p.187.

20. Ibid.

The domestic chores are clearly defined. Activities around water, fire and preparation of food are feminine task which men cannot undertake without loss of prestige. Besides both *materially* and symbolically men do not seek to conquer this domain. On the other hand tasks traditionally performed by men need the intervention of women for these tasks to be accomplished. In such cases women get no additional prestige from such work, *the feminine quality by it's innate nature disclaiming value in any qualification acquired by apprenticeship.*

If complementarity gives us a clear idea of reality, it blurs the fact that despite everything, the very distribution of task contains a negative and positive pole, and a system of hierarchical values. The roles are complementary, but one is subordinated to the other. In the case of agriculture, the division of labour between men and women (men plough and sow, women harvest and cut the hay) can be analysed in terms of complementarity, if one sees simply in terms of technology. But since peasant society codifies and evaluates this technological complementarity differentially, ploughing and sowing are regarded as superior and cutting the hay and harvesting as considered subaltern. Complementarity becomes the principle of hierarchisation of roles, and one can speak of a 'complementary opposition', this will not blur divergence and convergence of interests, inequalities of rights and contradictory relations between men and women within the complementarity. The researchers as well as others,

suggest the need to take into account not only the technological division of labour but also the values and symbols attached to it.²¹ This schema can be illustrated by other examples. If the trousseau is a long story of a tradition passed from mother to daughter and if the cooking of the blood of the pig is as essential as the thrust of the knife into the animal, no one can deny that there exists a hierarchical difference between masculine and feminine actions. It is a difference that can also imply a certain form of violence : killing the pig is a definite symbol of this. While cooking the blood represents a welcome, it is also an act which has to be seen as a whole and has no meaning without man's initiative and physical strength.²²

Michelle Perrot also makes analytical illustration through J.Gelis' book, 'The Night, the Lady and the Priest', he says that beyond the euridite compilation of the inventory of daily rites and ceremonies surrounding child-birth, the reader gets a strong impression of great violence of which the author himself is unaware. He does not seem to perceive its intensity, but his work shows how the woman during her confinement, finds herself regulated by the task she must do, both for herself and to guard against natural and supernatural elements, to achieve at all costs, a successful delivery. She seems burdened with the precepts which aim to put her in a state of harmony with the universe in order that she should succeed. She is

21. Ibid P.462.

22. Ibid.

tormented by the terrible fear of failure. She must give herself to incessant activities, so that God and nature do not betray her. The author describes a state of permanent disequilibrium which the woman is expected to remedy. She usually conducts the battle on her own so that she should not be found 'wanting'. No complementarity is possible on this basis. There is a fear of violence which structures ceremonies and the behaviour of women of which little amount is given.²³

The reassuring notion of complementarity puts the spectre of dispute at a distance, and disposes of this difficult question in advance so that modalities and specific traits can not be read into it. From a cultural definition of mens' and womens' spaces would emerge a real and symbolic equilibrium between two worlds from which confrontation and violence are excluded. Formulated thus, the realities of everyday life, harsh and full of contradictions, is masked. We glide from the notion of differences between sexes to the imposition of a binary structure of society without its sharp edges : a system of values founded on division is not necessarily founded on equivalence.

The political economy of the metaphor of seed and earth used for biological reproduction have to be seen in the context of a patrilineal kinship structure and an agrarian economy in which land is the principal resource,

23. Ibid P.464.

other being labour.” The mother’s blood contributes to the shaping of the child and the father’s blood that gives it its name, lineage and class imparting identity to the child. The foetus deriving its sustenance from the mother, is an obvious fact and the child’s physical closeness to and dependence on the mother during prenatal and postnatal phases is not only recognised but played up. Dube says that the physiological connection between the mother and child and the latter’s dependence on the former have been turned into the strongest moral obligation for the women. A woman going away, leaving her young child behind or neglecting it negates the essential and natural qualities of motherhood²⁵.

These above descriptions are indicative of the fact that by stressing the importance of role of women in certain areas of social life we cannot push aside the central issue of male dominance. *The history of women’s culture cannot relegate conflict and contradiction to the periphery. On the contrary, this must become a nodal point.*

The more recent ethnographies which apply gender sensitive approach get the theoretical boost from the present day feminist discourse; the discourse (feminist) of present day is marked by its dismantling practices

24. Dube, Leela, Op. Cit.

25. Ibid p.38

both of self ²⁶ and the other parallel discourses, cultural, academic or otherwise which 'intentionally' or 'innocently' put a gloss over the hierarchies and power. In an article published in *Signs*, the feminist journal entitled 'The post-modern turn in Anthropology : cautions from a feminist perspective', Mascia-Lees et. al. have reacted sharply against the authors of '*Writing Culture*'.²⁷ They not only develop a radical critique of *Writing Culture*'s claim of self reflexivity but also repudiate the politics which underlie this post-modernist discourse. The thrust of their argument in this article is that the post-modern focus on "style and form" regardless of it's sophistication, directs our attention away from the fact that ethnography is more than "Writing it up". There may be a considerable overlap between Postmodernism and Feminism eg. both are sceptical about the beliefs concerning truth, knowledge, power, self and language, but feminist theory differs from postmodernism in the sense that it acknowledges its' grounding in politics.

Marilyn Strathern, displays her suspicion about what she calls, the use of free play and jumble in Post-modern ethnography, to present many voices in flattered, non-heirarchical, plural text to employ "heteroglossia

26. Bhasin, Kamla and Khan, Nighat said, Some Questions on Feminism and it's Relevance in South Asia, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1986, P.2 & 3.

27. Mascia-Less, Frances E., Sharpe, Patricia and Cohen, Colleen Bellerino, 'The postmodern turn in anthropology : cautions from a feminist perspective, *Signs : JWCS*, Vol.15 No.1, 1989, pp.7-33.

(a utopia of plural endeavour that gives all collaborators the status of authors)". She contrasts this illusion of free play in Post-modernist anthropology with feminist writings. She observes :

"Much feminist discourse is constructed in a plural way. Arguments are juxtaposed, many voices solicited..... There are no central texts, no definitive techniques." Unlike postmodern writings, however, which masks its structuring oppositions under a myth of jumble, feminist scholarship has "a special set of interests : feminists argue with one another in their many voices because they also know themselves as an interest group".

[Marilyn Strathern, 1986]²⁸

Political scientist Nancy Hartsock finds curious the Post-modern claim that verbal constructs do not correspond directly to reality, It has arisen precisely when women and non-western people have begun to speak for themselves and indeed to speak about global system of power differentials.²⁹ In a similar vein, Sarah Lenox has asserted that the Post-modern despair associated with the recognition that truth is never entirely knowable, is merely an inversion of Western arrogance. She argues, when the western white males - who traditionally have controlled the production of knowledge - can no longer define the truth, conclude that there is not a truth to be discovered.³⁰ Similarly, Sandra Harding claims that "historically, relativism

28. Strathern, Marilyn, "Out of context : the persuasive fictions of anthropology", *Current Anthropology*, Vol.20, No.3, June, 1986, p.268.

29. Mascia - Lees et al, *op.cit.* p.15.

30. *Ibid.*

appears as an intellectual possibility and a problem only for dominating groups at the point where hegemony (the universality) of their views, is being challenged. [Relativism] is fundamentally a sexist response that attempts to preserve the legitimacy of androcentric claims in the face of contrary evidence.³¹ This social construction according to Hartsock, Lennox and Harding is the one that potentially may work to preserve the privileged position of Western White males. If so, then the new ethnography, in its reliance on Post-modernism, may run the risk of participating in an ideology, blind to its own politics. More than that, it may help to preserve the dominant colonial and neo-colonial relations from which anthropology and particularly the new ethnography has been trying to extricate itself.³² The recent focus in mainstream feminist theory upon the diversity of women's experience bears relations to the post-modern deconstruction of the subject, but it stems from a very different source : the political confrontation between white feminists and women of colour. The new ethnography draws on post-modernist epistemology to accomplish its political ends, but much feminism derives its theory from a practice based on material conditions of women's lives.³³

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid p.18

33. Ibid p.23

The anthropology of women which began in early 1970s spoke of the male bias in anthropology. This earlier trend (which is called the anthropology of women as distinct from feminist anthropology)³⁴ was involved basically in counter arguments.³⁵ In a famous study which discusses this problem, the authors analysed the different interpretations given by male and female ethnographers to the position of Australian aboriginal women. The male ethnographers spoke of women as profane, economically insignificant and excluded from rituals. The female researchers on the other, described the women's central role in subsistence; the importance of rituals and respectable ways in which women were treated by women. Women were present in both ethnographies but in different ways.³⁶ While Malinowski had claimed that in Australian aboriginal society 'the relation of husband to wife in its economic aspect is that of master to it's slave'³⁷, the other male anthropologists labelled them (the Australian aboriginal women) as beasts of burden, and therefore unlike white women. From the white western male perspective the release from manual labour

34. Moore, Heneritta op. cit.

35. Oakley, Judith, "Defiant moments : gender resistance and individuals", *MAN* (N.S.) 26, 1991. pp. 3-5

36. Rohrilich - Leavitt, Ruby et al, "Aboriginal women : male and female anthropological perspectives", in R. Reiter (ed), *Toward an Anthropology of women*, monthly review press, New York, pp.110-26.

37. Malinowski, B., *The Family among the Australian Aborigines*, University of London Press, London p.268.

and all external production was the ideal for the wife of the privileged. By contrast, feminist anthropologists of 1970's and later might seize upon this example from the aborigin as a counter to the universalising of women's physiological weakness. At the outset, Kaberry³⁸ is concerned to humanise aboriginal women and to envisage them an active social personality. Kaberry in her monograph on Australian aboriginal women argued that they were not subservient. Their labour in gathering food, in child care and domestic production are seen as indispensable. They have rights in land, they participate in a few rites controlled by men and have their own ceremonies.³⁹

To Henrietta Moore, correcting male bias could only be a first step. Just as many feminists found that the goals of women's movements could not be fulfilled by the "add - women and stir method", so women studies' scholars discovered that academic field could not be cured from sexism simply by accretion.⁴⁰ Feminist anthropology is not therefore, about adding women into the disciplines but about confronting the conceptual and analytical inadequacies of disciplinary theory. The task itself is a formidable one, but the most immediate question is one of how it should be tackled?

38. Oakley, Judith, *op. cit.* p.5

39. *Ibid.*

40. Moore, Henrietta *op. cit.* p.6

Moore, in her book 'Feminism and Anthropology' talks about the distinction between the 'the anthropology of women and 'feminist anthropology'. The anthropology of women was the precursor to feminist anthropology; it was very successful in bringing women 'back into view' in the discipline but in doing so, it was more *remedial* than *radical*. Feminist anthropology is more than the study of women. It is the study of gender, of the inter-relations between women and men, and of the role of gender in structuring human societies, their histories, ideologies, economic system and political structures.⁴¹ The emerging radical trend in feminist anthropology calls into question many of the works of their own 'sisterhood'.⁴² Phyllis Kaberry in 1930s attributed women's position to the importance of and their control over their economic contribution, and

41. Ibid p.6

42. This can be illustrated through Diane Bell ethnography on Australian Aboriginal women and how her assumptions and arguments have been countered, cross-checked and refuted by Judith Oakley. Second example which I have come across is the challenge posed to Marilyn Strathern's argument about Maleneslan gender relations by Ann Whitehead See, Bell, Diane, "Women's business is hard work : Central Australian Women's love rituals", *Signs*, Vol.7, No.2, 1981 pp.314-317.

Bell, Diane, "The politics of separation", in Marilyn Strathern's (ed) *Analysing Gender Relations in Malenesia and Beyond*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1987, p.112-129.

also see, Strathern, M. "Subject or object? Women and the circulation of valuables in Highlands New Guinea" and Whitehead, Ann : *Women and men : Kinship and properties : some general issues*, in Rene Hirschon, (ed) *Women and Property : Women as Property*, Croom Helm, London and Canberra, 1984.

their participation in women's rituals which were valued by both men and women.⁴³ Comparable points have been provided by Diane Bell in her recent ethnography of aboriginal women where she notes that mens' and womens' worlds are subsequently independent of each other in economic and ritual terms.⁴⁴ The result of this is that men and women have separate, gender specific, but equal power basis. Bell echoes Leacock when she argues that separateness and difference do not necessarily have to imply inferiority and subordination. However, Aboriginal ethnography also contains many references to male-female relations which are hard to fit in with this picture of autonomous complementarity. These are especially the accounts of male violence towards females. Judith Oakely, subtly remarks that the question of subordination of women is lost in Kaberry's focus on the indispensability of women's external production. This argument can also be applied to highlight the limitations of Diane Bell's account. Kaberry confirmed in detailed Malinowskian conclusions from various sources that women supplied the major proportion of subsistence through the gathering of wild fruits, honey etc. Men's contribution of meat through hunting was intermittent. The society could have survived on women's produce, but not on meat alone, despite the latter's greater ideological value.⁴⁵

43. Kaberry, P. *Aboriginal Women : Sacred and Probane*, Routledge and Kagen Paul, London, 1939 p.142-3, 277.

44. Bell, Diane, *Daughters of Dreaming*, Mephee Gribble, 1983, p.23.

45. Oakely, J. *op cit.* p.5

But pointing at economic necessity is not sufficient to deny subordination or exploitation. The Aboriginal women's potential control of the society's surplus and the total demands on their labour needs to be examined. First, the food from gathering was invariably consumed within the domestic unit. By contrast, meat was distributed as prestigious surplus by men beyond the domestic unit, and thus created and strengthened the political power⁴⁶.

Additionally, the gender division of labour was asymmetrical, women had to do a double shift of work. Along with gathering, women were responsible for major tasks of domestic production - fetching wood and water, tending the hearth, cooking and child rearing. Kaberry's defensive argument that men's hunting was more physically strenuous is vitiated by the fact that gathering demanded sustained effort and, together with domestic production was more time-consuming. Kaberry unwittingly draws on the stereotypes and the androcentric view that short bursts of physical strength are more valuable than sustained physical stamina. The latter has been ideologically undervalued. Without the duties of domestic labour, men were freed for the time and flexibility required for extra-domestic political activities. Kaberry does concede that men had a near monopoly in the political sphere.... Women could *influence* men's decisions, but could

46. Ibid, p.6

not make decisions, as such in their own right. The question of subordination cannot be ignored in Kaberry's monograph.

Whereas women's ceremonies documented by Kaberry are preoccupied with influencing specific males, the major ceremonies for men concern a more generalised identity, their masculinity and entry as adults into the society at large. These initiation rites are detached from any relations with specific women. Males are initiated into tribal laws and participate in the inter tribal gatherings. By contrast, women are excluded from these ceremonies and knowledge imparted. Here there is an asymmetry.⁴⁷ There is a veiled irony in Kaberry's observation that mourning ceremonies held when a woman dies are one of the few occasions when a woman albeit a dead one, is the object for an inter tribal meeting.⁴⁸

To wind up the chapter with Ann Whitehead's contention that whatever the nature of economic system described in terms of the nature of its production and exchange relations, women's capacity to act as fully acting subjects in relation to (object/property) or aspects of persons which may be treated as objects (rights in people) is always more circumscribed than

47. Ibid p.6, 7

48. Kaberry, *op. cit.*, p.57.

that of men. It is her further contention that in any general sense it is kinship or family system which serves to construct women as less able to act as subjects than male subjects do.⁴⁹

She illustrates this fact by her study of *Kusasi* of North East Ghana, which are sedentary hoe agriculturists with a formerly leaderless political organization. Agriculture is largely unmechanised, although about twenty percent of households own plough, and many own a handful of cattle which are used for farming and bride wealth. The characteristics of these societies are such that both women and men have an important productive role but the rights to communal property are *rarely* if ever the same, often because of the way in which the outcomes of critical options at marriage (residence, ritual status, 'group membership') has to 'affect men' and women differently :

Although they cannot be precisely the same, these rights may be expressed as equivalence.....both women and men may be quoted as having rights by virtue of a variety of kinship and residential statuses and there is little evidence of such rights having a form in which they are denied to women by virtue of their gender. However, my own researches in Ghana tend to suggest that these equivalence in the gender's access to land and other tangible resources have to be understood in the context of the implications of other aspects of communal property system.

[Whitehead, 1984 P. 183]

49. Whitehead, Ann in Rene Hirschon, op. cit. p.180

Hence, Whitehead challenged the notion of **equivalence** between genders in technologically simple societies by empirical observations. She says that in addition to there being a complete discrepancy in the size of men's private farms and those of women (several acres for men compared with one acre for women), women who are married from other communities, most often report that they cannot get land in the area.⁵⁰

Perhaps even more radically, the meaning of land use rights ('property ownership') has to be interpreted carefully in a technologically poor developed agriculture in which *human labour is the most important transforming input*. Rights to land is more or less meaningless without the labour power to work on it.

In course of the farming cycle Kusasi farmers make extensive use of the work of household members and of exchange labour parties within the community. Whitehead's study of 60 households showed that the use of exchange labour was particularly unequal. In terms of gender, the net effect is that it is difficult for a Kusasi woman to command the labour of social superiors, either within the immediate polygamous family unit or within the set of neighbouring agnatically related households. They rely on very juniormen, often young boys. They never mount the large exchange work parties which are so important for male farmers, especially household heads.

50. Ibid, p.184.

Equally relevant to the meaning of land-ownership is the form of ownership of crops produced on it. The Kusasis conceptualise the crops on private farms as being owned by the farmer who has grown them. *It is significant that Kusasis conceptualise men and women as behaving differently in relation to the disposal of food crops. Built into the idea that mothers care for the children is a strong ideology that they do not let their children starve. Thus stereotypical, women grow groundnuts 'for the children to chop (eat); men grow groundnuts for cash.*⁵¹

Kinship conceived in some rather broad sense, organises access to land; organises the labour processes in agriculture; and the meeting of subsistence needs and distribution of products. Thus kinship does not imply equality; nor the absence of power in kinship relations.

51. Ibid, p.185.

CHAPTER III

**CUSTOMARY PRACTICES AND
TRIBAL WOMEN**

CHAPTER III

CUSTOMARY PRACTICES AND TRIBAL WOMEN

We cannot radically separate marriage and family from production as Levi, Strauss tends to do, nor from property as Fortes tended to do. To operate at a level of abstraction that treats cross-cousin marriage or the lineage as 'things in themselves' is to adopt an approach in anthropology equivalent to linguistics that confined itself to phonetics.

[Goody, J.1990, p.11]¹

This oft quoted excerpt from Jack Goody echoes the symbiosis between the symbolical and the material. The question which crops up here is that, as to why we need to explore the domain of symbolical, when the process of modernisation' claims to have undermined it substantially. To many in the post pre-capitalist societies the kinship relations are replaced by juridico-political structures of state and the former becomes subordinated to the latter, while existing just as a cultural apparatus and loses control over production process.² "It must be kept in mind", says Marx, "that the new forces of production and relations of production do not develop out of nothing, nor drop from the sky, nor from the womb of

-
1. Goody, Jack, *The Oriental, the Ancient and the 'Primitive : Systems of Marriage and Family in Pre-industrial Society of Eurasia* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990.
 2. Pathy, Suguna, "Women, Kinship relations and beyond", *Man in India*, 73 (2), 1993, p.122.

self-positing ideal but from within and in antithesis to the existing development of production and the inherited traditional relations of production".³ While the role of State or politico-juridical domain along with changing mode of productions, cannot be denied, the application of an evolutionary model of this sort would cripple rather than help us to explain the complexities of change both in the context of politico-juridical and the mode of production thesis. It seems thoroughly problematic to treat the politico-juridical or the state along with the changing mode of production, uncontaminated by the ideologies eg. of gender and other hierarchies, and in many instances these ideologies are a carry over from the past.⁴

The emerging consensus between the feminist discourses indicates a continuity between historical and contemporary particularly in the context of gender ideology. While the earlier feminist, ethnographies eg. that of Ester Boserup, problematized the subordination of women in a way which culminated in the proposition that contemporary (i.e. the capitalist transformation) has led to the women's subordinate position in the society by letting them to be relegated to the private and the position enjoyed in hoe

3. Marx, Karl, *Capital Vol.3*, Moscow Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1958, p.278.

4. In other instances the created ideologies and hierarchies in terms of gender and class etcetera may be the work of solemnization of modernization. For example, one can cite the case study of Garo tribe of Meghalaya. See, Agrawal, Bina, *A Field of one's own : Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, pp.101-109.

cultivation (i.e. her participation in the public domain was seized).⁵ The implication of Ester Boserup's study can be felt in terms of "cleansing" the historical from gender discriminatory practices. Her assumptions have given rise to the tradition of explaining women's status chiefly in terms of degree to which females participate in production roles outside the home. However, the recent conceptual and methodological refinements provides the sexual division of labour as the effect of female subordination and applies the role of production and reproduction (biological and associated cultural practices) in both the historical as well as contemporary contexts.

In their reappraisal of Ester Boserup's Work Lourders Baneria and Geeta Sen, argue that Boserup ignores the significance of women's role in biological and social reproduction.⁶ This perspective has persistently dominated studies of women and development because little attention has been given to specify the relationship between production and reproduction.

The resulting gap in theoretical development has made it difficult for most researchers to reconcile women's low status in the domestic domain with their high participation in public domain.⁷ *Hence, in order to explain*

-
5. Boserup, Esther, *Women's Role in Economic Development*, St.Martin Press, New York, 1970.
 6. Baneria, Lourdes and Sen, Geeta "Accumulation, reproduction and women's role in economic development : Boserup revisited, *Signs : The Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 7, No.2, 1981, p.298.
 7. Afonja, Simi, "Changing mode of production and the sexual division of labour among Yoruba" *Signs : JWCS*, Vol.7, No.2, 1981, pp.299-313.

the relationship between cause and effect of female subordination, therefore, one must analyse the continuity between historical and contemporary.

To Simi Afonja, this is imperative in African Studies because the labels “the traditional” and “modern”, “colonial: and “pre-colonial” draw arbitrary lines through the historical process of change.⁸ Afonja, while assessing the role and status of Yoruba women of South West Nigeria delineates that the theoretical limitations (i.e. of Boserup’s variety) of the development approach exaggerate the status of these (Yoruba) women.⁹ The concentration of women in marketing, an economic activity outside the home, gave rise to the popular notions that Yoruba Women enjoyed considerable autonomy before colonial era, but what is missing in studies of Yoruba women’s economic activities is an explanation of how trade is integrated with other areas of production and reproduction in an economy characterised by low level of specialisation. The model which Afonja chose for study of Yoruba society is what she calls, the model of political economy, that is currently gaining wide acceptance in African social studies. According to Steve Langdon, the model emphasises the “intermeshing of so-called, political, economic and social factors of change in an on-going historical process.”¹⁰

8. Ibid, p.300.

9. Ibid.

10. Steve Langdon, quoted in Afonja S. op.cit.

This approach is considered an improvement over modernisation theory because it erases the arbitrary line between traditional and modern Africa and thus explains the realities of colonial and post-colonial eras in light of all major processes of two periods. In using this model to characterise this sexual division of labour within different Yoruba Socio-economic formations, she examines the social relations of production and women's role in reproduction during early trade with Arab World, in the period of Atlantic Slave trade, in the period of legitimate trade, and in the present :

By treating each mode of production as an articulation of different socio-economic formations I am able to demonstrate the continuity between traditional and modern Africa, according to this new model of political economy"

[Afonja, S. 1981, P.303]

The question at this point is, what was the pattern of sexual division of labour in the lineage based subsistence mode of production. The absence of mercantile relations within the self subsisting units make society's major goal the production and reproduction of material conditions of existence, of the community members and of the structural organisations. The relations of production and community organisations are based on control of means of production and reproduction (subsistence and women) as Meillassoux¹¹ suggests.

Before colonial rule, the Yoruba of South-West Nigeria were organised

11. Meillassoux, Claude, "From production to reproduction ; a Marxist approach to economic anthropology", *Economy and Society*, I 1975, pp.93-105.

into semiautonomous kingdoms in which centralised bureaucratisation was circumscribed by the segmentary lineage kinship structure. Agriculture was the predominant economic form. What is reflected in the household division of labour is that all members shared the task of agricultural production. Men were responsible for the 'heavy' work of clearing the bush, women and children participated in planting and weeding. Women harvested, processed and marketed the products, and contrary to popular opinion, female help on the farm was strongly institutionalised in the Yoruba social structure. Thus, women contributed to production and reproduction through farm work as well as through trading. However, women's services were controlled through bride wealth and through property rules that prevented women from owning land.¹² The point to be noted is that, in the subsequent transformations, men particularly in patrilineal households, exploited their positions as guardians of family and lineage values, status and resources. *The sexual division of labour within the household was inadvertently the basis for new structure.*¹³ In pre-colonial Africa women did perform most of the agricultural work.¹⁴ Robertson and Martin in their study note that women perform the more labour intensive task, not only in

12. Land a fixed instrument of production, passed through the men who also controlled the usufruct of land. Afonja, op.cit.

13. Ibid, p.306.

14. Robertson, Claire C. & Klein, Martin A. (ed), *Women and Slavery in Africa*. The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983. See, the introduction, "Women's importance in African slave system" by Robertson and Martin, pp.3-25..

agriculture but in craft work. Under African slavery, the slave women needed rice or spun thread for use of male weavers. In Zanzibar, men picked cloves, but women picked, separated and dried them.¹⁵ Men might have been more productive individually because they used higher technology but women probably did greater amount of work. Increasingly production in the African slavery system depended more on acquiring female labour.¹⁶

...Increasingly, production, then depended more on acquiring female labour. Meillassoux argues that "in slavery, women were valued above all as workers. We concur. This is the fundamental reason why most African slaves were women. (Robertson and Martin 1983, p.187)¹⁷

15. Ibid, p-9.

16. Ibid.

17. The sexual division of labour was also an integral part of African slavery system. Most slaves were female. Robertson and Martin say that labour recruitment was the basis of African wealth, and Kinship often set the terms for that recruitment. Among the facilitators of African slavery were "Kinship structures which allowed the transfer of rights over people which permitted the development of dependent relationships that in certain situations could lead to slavery. Thorton cites a number of cases of relatives being sold for petty violations in the Guinea - Bissan area in the seventeenth century. It was in a sense the very lack of opposition between kinship and exploitation that often allowed slavery to exist. The sexual division of labour exploited women in many instances and was justified by an ideology which assumed female interiority. Thus even being completely assimilated into a society as a free person did not necessarily ensure equal status for female ex-slaves. See, Robertson and Klien, op.cit. pp.3-25.

The nineteenth century is usually described as the era when primitive capitalism gained a foothold in Africa.¹⁸ Cash-crop production can be considered one of the earliest forms of African capitalism because West African controlled and organised new commercial agricultural ventures based on their existing economic formations. The traditional pattern in subsistence production was altered as the Yoruba moved into 19th century. Generally the men were involved in cash-crop production.¹⁹ Afonja says that *it is the male control of technology and capital that ensures the predominance of men over women in this area. But the question is, what gave men and not women access to technology and capital.*²⁰

The answer to this lies in the *control that men had over women's labour and reproduction in the subsistence economy, not solely in the opportunity given by colonial administration as Boserup suggests.*²¹

Traditional value persists because women's role in reproduction continues to be emphasized, and second, because men were able to take advantage of their control of capital, land and family labour in the subsistence economy, when foreign technology was introduced.²² Women's

18. Afonja, S. op.cit.p.307.

19. Ibid. pp. 310.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

limited participation in this sphere should, therefore, be explained in terms of institutional factors related to women's position in subsistence economy, factors which provided the basis for division of labour that ensued during colonial period.

General interest in power that women gained, through market exchange has encouraged many writers to conceptualise West African trade as a homogeneous structure. However, the history of division of products, the availability of capital and the amount of income generated by trade exposes a trade structure with clear division by sex.²³

Women in subsistence economy controlled items of subsistence : food, clothes, pots et. cetera. Men controlled the most valuable products of the farms - particularly those that help to generate capital - and had exclusive control of long distance trade items until nineteenth century. Such differences in the types of items men and women traded were common in most African societies, as epitomised in an Akan popular saying : "it is business of women to sell garden eggs and not gun powder".²⁴

Samual Johnson shows that the Yoruba made similar distinctions. Men and women participated in the trade, but each sex had it's own line and

23. Ibid. p. 311.

24. Daaku, Kwame Y. "Trade and trading patterns of the Akan in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries", in the *Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa* (ed), Claude Meillassoux Oxford University Press, London, p.164.

this division partly explains the inequality between sexes.²⁵ The unequal structure of the trade suggests that physical presence of women at the market is not a sufficient indicator of their status in the community. The source of wares, the amount of the capital input, the value of the item for capital accumulation are neglected factors in evaluations of the impact of trade on African women's status. Women's economic power was also limited because the articles they produced possess mostly use value, rather than exchange value.²⁶

Men were, therefore, at advantage when they entered the Atlantic trade. Their dominant position continued into the twentieth century with the control of wholesale trade. Since, such large scale trade gave men, the opportunity to accumulate capital and managerial experience, they were able to take over from the European commercial houses after independence.²⁷ Women, however, continued to dominate retail trade, particularly as the sector expanded into the lowest tier in the hierarchy.²⁸ In the post-colonial phase women's placement in the occupational hierarchy is as important as

25. Samuel Johnson, quoted in Afonja, S. op.cit.

26. Ibid, p.311.

27. Ibid.

28. The capitalist economy now features three distributive channels : the open market, small retail shops and large scale department stores. The first is the domain of women, whether the products are farm or imported consumables. An increasing number of women now operate small retail shops as well, but men own the more capital intensive shops. Afonja, S. op.cit. p.312.

their unequal representation in labour force. Men are generally more skilled than women and they occupy the position of greater power and authority as well as the more highly paid jobs. This is reflected by the negligible power of women in the service sector where the majority of women employed are typists, secretaries, teachers and nurses. Only 2.9 percent of all professionals in Nigeria in 1966 were women. In 1968, only nine women held managerial position in private sector in comparison with 181 men.²⁹ A corollary of the small proportion of women in formal sector is their predominance in the informal sector, which is equally stratified. Although jobs in the informal sector are often said to be more adaptable to women's domestic responsibilities, women hold the poorest of these positions and have greater difficulty in maintaining a steady income because they must intermittently leave these highly competitive jobs to bear children.³⁰

The persistence of value structure that defines women's primary task in society as biological and social reproduction and that allocates higher rewards to production roles in the public domain continues to give men an

29. Ibid.

30. The entry of women into commercial agriculture, new forms of trade and informal - and - formal sector occupations are nineteenth and twentieth century developments that have not relieved women from their traditional responsibilities. Thus, women's task of reproducing and nurturing the family which were established in the subsistence economy have primarily determined their subordinate position in new production roles. Ibid, p.315.

edge over women. The double burden of assuming their traditional role as well as new continues to ensure women's subordination.³¹

...the transformation from a lineage mode to capitalist mode.....introduced the element of class into the 18th and 19th centuries. By examining cultural, economic and political factors, we can see that norms and values associated with production and reproduction in the lineage mode persist in twentieth century.

[Afonja, 1981, P.313]

This oft quoted excerpt from Afonja's study of Yoruba society of Africa certainly cautions the researchers as well as others to draw an arbitrary line between *historical* and *contemporary* of 'tradition' and 'modernity' particularly when analysing gender ideology. And if there is historical continuity, the role of culture or henceforth, the customary practices cannot be denied in terms of its, regulatory effects.³² *Change is 'observable' but historical continuity needs to be explored and highlighted.*

Like African, experience from the whole of Asia shows that kinship

31. Ibid.

32. In this context, Bina Agrawal, asks certain questions which are worthy of mention. She says that despite gender - progressive legislation, in practice few south Asian women inherit landed property, and even fewer control factors constraining woman in exercising their. legal claims, including patrilocal post marital residence and village exogamy, strong opposition from male kin, the social construction of gender needs and roles, low levels of female education and male bias and dominance in administrative, judicial and other public decision making bodies at all levels. The analysis....points to the interactive effects of economic factors, cultural norms and gender ideologies and politics. See, Agrawal, Bina, *A Field of One's Own : Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, P.XVI.

relations and values have been proved more binding. Kinship remains a powerful medium in expressing bonds of ethnicity, caste, class and religion and more prominently gender.³³ Kinship structure and functions maintains itself through certain customary practices. Clearly, what is at issue here is the conceptualisation of relationship between structures and agency and the exercise of power, Lukes³⁴ elaboration of concept of power is illuminating here. He critiques 'unidimensional' behaviouristic models of power, which focuses on decision making and on actual observable conflict. Power is exercised not only by individuals, says Lukes, but also by "socially structured and culturally patterned behaviour of groups and practices of institutions". Hence, while power is exercised in various forms and spheres, while persons 'have a certain relative autonomy and could not have acted differently' they nevertheless 'operate within substantially determined limits'.³⁵ Bourdieu's concept of 'doxa' is also worth noting here.³⁶ Doxa comprise those ideologies and practices which are accepted as natural and self-evident part of the social order, which goes without saying and not

33. See, for example, Agrawal, Bina, op.cit. Dube, Leela and Parriwala, Rajni (ed) Structures and Strategies : Women, Work and Family, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 1990. Sen, Ilina, A space within the struggle, women's participation in people's movement, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1990.

34. Lukes, S. Power : A Radical View, Macmillan, London, 1974, PP.22, 54, quoted in Dube and Parriwala op.cit. p.41.

35. Ibid.

36. Bourdieu, P., An Outline of Theory of Practice.

opened to questioning or contestation - the 'undiscussed, unnamed, admitted without argument or scrutiny'.³⁷ A good deal of, what is justified in the name of 'tradition' would fall in this category. In contrast to doxa is the 'field of opinion' - that which is explicitly questioned; 'the locus of confrontation of competing discourses'.³⁸ The acceptance of practices which include doxa also reflects the dominant perceptions of the needs and rights of people (say of women in relations to men or of younger people in relation to older), prevailing in a community, and *contestation* may be necessary to establish legitimacy both of alternative notions of needs and rights and of specific persons as contestants.³⁹ The interest of dominants group would be to maintain the space of doxa, while that of the dominated would be to reduce it by exposing the arbitrariness of taken for granted. In Bourdieu's schema, such change would come about 'when the dominated have the material and symbolic means of rejecting the definition of the real that is imposed on them'.⁴⁰

Gluckman looks upon customary forms in terms of the phenomenon

37. Agrawal, B. op.cit. p.58.

38. Within the field of opinion Bourdieu further distinguished between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. He does not fully spell out this distinction, but implies that orthodoxy would be at one end of spectrum and heterodoxy on the other, the latter representing several alternative systems of beliefs, Agrawal, B. op.cit. p.59.

39. Ibid.

40. Bourdieu, op.cit. p.169.

which first divide and then reunite men⁴¹. To him where custom divides in one set of relationship, it produces cohesion in a wider range of social life and the cohesion is stated in ritual terms. He observes :

I am interested, as throughout these lectures, in the extent to which African custom emphasises the conflict between a man's or a woman's interest and allegiance....a women's femininity is enhanced by menstrual and pregnancy taboo : menstruation and pregnancy are made into more than physiological functions. Their threat to her husband's virility and health mark her separation from him. The idea of impurity and ritual danger, to crops, which are believed to be present in marital relations of spouses. In central Africa, a man is not allowed to cook when he is in a village, though he may cook on a journey; in a village every man is dependent on some women to cook for him. This cultural exaggeration of the different complementary roles of spouses and their children is also present in the whole kinship system.

[Gluckman, 1955, P.60-61]

In many tribes marital intercourse is brought with mystical danger, and thus to be approached with ritual safeguards, while casual liaisons occur without customary inhibitions. When a wife is pregnant, she becomes vulnerable to many mystical threats; she herself may be dangerous to things virile. In all tribes when she is menstruating she is full of this mystical danger, from early infancy girls taboo certain foods to protect their future children. A mother's milk has sometimes to be cleared of ritual impurity before her child can drink it. Thus marital and maternal functions are given a cultural distinctiveness over and above their organic basis. [Gluckman, Ibid, P.54-55]

Gluckman says that he is trying to see the ways, these African societies which are just above the subsistence level of production exhibit conflict and estrangement which ultimately leads to co-operation and cohesion.

41. Gluckman, Max, Custom and Conflict in Africa, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1955, p.1.

Through these above mentioned excerpts it becomes obvious that Gluckman is quite observant about the cultural construction of social roles, networks and also gender relationships, but he is as has been acknowledged by him, explicitly concerned about the way conflict and estrangements lead to cohesion.

For our purpose, what is missing in the whole account is not to see the menstrual taboo and the idea of ritual impurity and danger through 'Women's perspective'.⁴² A man cannot cook while he is in village, whereas he can cook while on journey reflects the politics of reproductive ideologies and it is these ideologies which get filtered through the different phases of social transformation as is evident from Yoruba society studied by Simi Afonja. The observations of Gluckman though insightful, tends to become the representative of the genre in anthropology which saw marriage payments in terms of relationship they established between kinship groups, property holding units or household - entities which may or maynot overlap,

42. One can see Ursula Sharma in this regard, where she problematizes dowry and bride wealth both from feminist perspective. She says that treating dowry simply as form of premortn inheritance fails to specify many of the critical questions : What kind of property women inherit; how much control and what kind of control they actually have over this property; what their status is as property owners/controllers etc. See, Sharma, Ursula, *Women, Work and Property in North West India*, Tavistock Publications, London and New York, 1980, P.63. Similarly, menstrual and pregnancy taboos, the cultural exaggeration of role can be viewed against the backdrop of materiality. To give meaning to female sexuality in terms of dangerous and posing mystical threats would have a regulatory effect creating and maintaining hierarchies.

depending on circumstances.⁴³ Customary practices do have a power to produce 'cohesion' but the question is **at whose cost?**

Against the backdrop of this whole debate, it becomes imperative to make certain empirical⁴⁴ illustrations of the customary practices in (tribal) societies. For the purpose of cross-cultural comparison both matrilineal and patrilineal tribes from India and Africa have been selected (randomly) here. Away from the treatment of customs in a synchronic fashion, typical of the functionalist anthropology, the customary practices would be emphatically, examined in terms of its regulatory effect. Anticipating the argument it is to be maintained that in the context of tribal social organisation the customary practices in many of these societies may provide considerable liberatory space to women, while in others it may be marked by the conspicuous absence of the same.

But even in societies where women do have significant space to exercise agency in certain contexts, this 'freedom' may be counter balanced by other regulatory practices in certain other (and more important) contexts, eg. Women lack any say in public decision making bodies like tribal

43. Moore, Heneritta L., *Feminism and Anthropology*, Policy Press, Cambridge, 1988, pp.67-68.

44. The word empirical here has not been used in any positivistic sense, but implies illustrations through certain cross-cultural examples. For this the customary practices of some of the Indian and African to tribes have been compared in the specific context of gender.

Panchayats, even in matrilineal societies. Thirdly, women's exercise of certain rights eg. over land and other resources may depend on a number of contingent factors, in the absence of which they will lose these privileges'.

To escape the reproduction of available ethnographical accounts (as there has been no field work done by me) from gender sensitive perspective only those aspects which deal with 'control of sexuality' will be selected and further analysed or used for our purpose. The societies which have been selected (randomly) for analysis are *Garo, Khasi, Moplah of Malabar, Todas of Nilgiri, Ho Women of Singbhum* and in African context the *Bamangwato society of Central Botswana*, matrilineal and patrilineal societies of 'Southern Ghana' and the tribes of East African coast studied by Patricia Caplan, have been taken into account.⁴⁵

In this part the customary practices of these different societies will be dealt with in the 'traditional set up', before the penetration of colonial

45. I am particularly thankful to Bina Agrawal, Leela Dubey, Rajni Parliwala, Tiplut Nongbri, Govind Kelkar and Nathan for their insightful ethnographies from gender-sensitive perspective. Their studies are of great help to me in the absence of which one may land up into the trouble of not getting the 'resource' on themes like this. In Australian and African context one should acknowledge the works of Danie Bell, Marlin Strathern, Rene Hirschon, Ann Whitehead, Heneritta L. Moore and others. The Feminist journal **Signs** and the anthropological journals like **Man** and **Current Anthropology** have been of great help (as they provide space to gender issues in anthropology). This part of the chapter is primarily based on the accounts of these above quoted persons (and journals).

economy (as this aspect will be dealt with in the next chapter).

The motto is not to go Malinowskian and Radcliffe Brownian way to focus on synchronic analysis at the cost of historical and political which are vital for our purpose but to see the traditional set up against the backdrop of the theoretical discussions running through this chapter. Whether traditional tribal set up provide *liberatory space* to women in it's customary practices or did it conflate with the mainstream patrilineal and patriarchal societies in the context of 'control of women's sexuality'? Secondly, we need to explore as to whether there was any potentialities in the traditional custom or culture which led these societies to act in ways which became counter to women's interest in colonial and subsequent post colonial phase? In other words, was/is there any element of patriarchy in terms of gender ideology even in say matrilineal societies which had a regulatory effect on gender and when in the post-colonial phase the State became the sole legitimate agent, (side by side custom in this context), who got the right to speak in negotiating with the state. If men got this privilege then why and whether they ignored the interest of women? When the state legitimises or (re) codifies the customary laws who reaps the benefit? Certainly the whole discourse is gendered apart from the other things.

What was/is the relationship between women and men in terms of access to control over and transmission of property? To what extent and in

what respect do women themselves or their offspring constitute property! With the value premise that the tribal women everywhere ought to have a rightful place in the customary, changing and changed cultural milieu and their involvement is essential in all programmes of change and development, it is time that the status of tribal women is assessed as it is.⁴⁶ (or was).

Matriliny in particular has been described primarily in structural terms, rather than in terms of people's (especially women's everyday experience of it). Also there is much more information, on some groups such as Nayars, Khasis, Garos and Singhalese than on others. Nevertheless, some broad inferences can be drawn which although not definitive, are certainly indicative. (Agrawal, Bina, 1994, P.146)

Based on this excerpt from Agrawal, we have to delve into the *indicative* in the context of gender. At the turn century the Garo community of North-East India was practising Jhum cultivation, with a ten-to-thirty year rotation.⁴⁷ Women played a major role in crop production and gathering of forest produce. Their labour input in Jhum was greater than that of

46. Singh J.P. Vyas, N.N. and Mann, R.S. Tribal Women and Development, The MLV Tribal Research and Training Institute, Tribal Area Development Department, Udaipur, Rajasthan, 1985, PP. Viii, Xvi.

47. A two years agricultural cycle and maintained : a mixture of crops was grown in the first year and rice in the second, after which a new area was cleared. Cultivation was by simple implements such as hoe. A wide range of jungle products supplemented the crops grown. Family labour was supplemented by a variety of reciprocal labour exchange arrangements between households. In general, the Garos were self sufficient in food and also able to produce a surplus for sale. Trading was done in periodic markets held in foot hills. See, Agrawal, op.cit. p.104.

men, and their knowledge of crop varieties were extensive.⁴⁸ They controlled the household's food surplus and any cash they earned from the sale of small items in the village or the weekly market was considered exclusively thesis.⁴⁹ The Garo community at the turn of century had considerable equality in class and gender terms, although there were certain spheres of authority (eg. jural) which men alone enjoyed. The bride's and grooms' families were equal in status and no dowry or bride price was exchanged. All property (movables and ancestral house) other than land passed from mother to chosen daughter, usually the youngest.⁵⁰ In case of divorce, the husband could depart with his clothing but little else. Men as husbands and matrilineal kinsmen enjoyed considerable rights and control and *jural authority was vested in men alone.*⁵¹

The Khasis had complex system of local administration that extended beyond individual class. Settlements were formed into Khasi 'states' through the voluntary associations of groups of villages headed by hereditary or elected (usually male) chiefs who exercised judicial and

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid, p.102.

51. Ibid, p.103.

executive authority within multi-tiered councils.⁵² The family's ancestral property - land, and the ancestral house, and movables - passed from mother to youngest daughter (the heiress) who was essentially its' custodian.⁵³ In any case men had considerable control over the management of property as brothers and maternal uncles. Women and men enjoyed considerable sexual freedom before marriage, but *post marital sexual norms were stricter for women than men*. Adultery by a women was subject to heavy fine, could lead to divorce and could deprive an heiress of her rights to ancestral property. Men's adulterous affairs were tolerated; at worse they could lead to divorce.⁵⁴ Although divorce was common among the Khasis 'for any sufficient cause and often without any assignable reason except mutual dislike or want of issue, it was more frequent among heiress who also usually initiated it. Non-heiress daughters were usually more dependent on their husbands since they could expect only limited help from their

52. In 'Khasi' states with hereditary chiefs there was provision in theory for a woman to succeed to office in the absence of specified categories of men. In practice, the chance if this happening was small, given the long list of men who preceded her. Only in one 'safe' was the spiritual head, a woman -a high Priestess, Gourdon, 1907, quoted in Ibid.

53. Non-heiress daughters had usufructuary rights in ancestral land, a part of produce of which was earmarked for the maintenance of the ancestral home. A non-heiress daughter could, if she so wished, lease out her share of land with the consent of the heiress and leading male family members. Family members had the right of first refusal to such leases.

54. Nakane, C. Garo and Khasi : a comparative study in matrilineal systems, Paris and the Hagui ; Mouton, p. 107.

maternal *iing*.⁵⁵ The non-heiress daughters' marriage was more stable, heiress's *stronger fall back position clearly made heiresses less tolerant of the husband's authority or shortcomings*.⁵⁶ The Khasis traditionally practiced both settled (including irrigated and shifting agriculture).⁵⁷

In Khasi society, the rule that women alone can inherit ancestral property considered as being discriminatory toward men.... I shall try to demonstrate that Khasis ideas and norms regarding kinship and gender roles, which are apparently weighed in favour of women, are not so in fact.⁵⁸

[Nongbri, T. 1993]

Nongbri, explores the aspects of gender discriminatory practices which are the integral part of Khasi society in a demystificatory manner. She says, that because Khasi physiology stresses the centrality of the women in the process of reproduction, she is also seen as the centre of family circle. She is expected to be fully responsible for nurturance and care of

55. Agrawal, B. op.cit. p.107.

56. Ibid, p. 107.

57. The Khasis were not self-sufficient in food-grains and imported rice from outside, even at the turn of century. Their Jhum cultivation was more or less on privatized land, unlike the communal character of land held and cultivated under Jhum by the Garos. Unfortunately there is little information on the exact gender division of labour in settled agriculture among the Khasis, but women's role in Jhum cultivation is likely to have been important. Jungle products (gathered by women) and fishing supplemented cultivation. Trading was common and women were the primary traders. Agrawal, B. op. cit. p.107.

58. Nongbri, Tiplut, "Gender and Khasi family structure", in Patricia Uberoi (ed), *Family, Marriage and Kinship in India*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, 1994, p.177.

her children. She is the repository of family honour.⁵⁹ However women are central to Khasi ideology, they need to be protected and guarded by men.⁶⁰ The gender ideology and the role models of men and women are vividly brought out in their folk dances. The Khasi dance forms give salience to grace and discipline of women. During their festivals women dance in the centre of the circle with the eyes downcast in an act of modesty and restraint. Men dance, forming a protective ring around them holding either a sword or weed brush in hand.⁶¹ The sword symbolises protection and defence while, administration, guidance and advice are symbolised by weed brush. Hence the Khasi say '*war and politics for men, property and children for women*'.⁶²

This ideology is reflected in the fact that Khasi women are not allowed to attend traditional village and "State durbars" (customary, administrative and judicial councils). A Woman, who dares to voice her opinion on public

59. Daughters in particular should be chaste, obedient, polite and virtuous because family honour and the continuity of the family line depend on them. They are also the custodians of family rituals, Ibid, p.180.

60. Just as the women's role in reproduction and nurturance favours the mother, a man's physiological strength according to Khasi gives him authority over women. The saying 'man has twelve strength' (*U ranghad khandar bor*) highlights man's superior power and confers on him the role of protector and provider (*U nongbasa U nongbatrah*) vis-a-vis the woman who the nurturer and the holder (*ka nonghat ka nonglum*), Ibid. p.179.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid, p.180.

affairs is regarded as 'hen that crows' - a freak of nature.⁶³ Men jealously guard their political prerogatives by defining politics as an arena for mature and physically fit persons.⁶⁴

While the youngest daughter among Khasis has numerous familial and kinship obligations because she inherits family property, she does not possess *authority* commensurate with her duties and responsibilities.⁶⁵

Similarly, in the religious sphere women bear the burden as trustees of family rites and traditions as they have to ensure that family rites are organised in their due course but again, priesthood is a male vocation among Khasis. *The rights and privileges of women in Khasi matriliney turn out to be mere burden of some duties and responsibilities.*⁶⁶ By laying stress on kin solidarity the Khasi even play down the marital tie. To lose one's head over a women is considered to be a sign of weakness for a Khasi male. The Khasi say 'It's only a women' (*Sa Ka Kynthei*) to express their chauvinistic contempt of women's charm and sensuality.⁶⁷

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

65. She has little say in the control and management of property that she inherits; it is mother's brother who enjoys these privileges, Ibid.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid, p.182.

It is not only that men wield power and women are deprived of it, but also because the system is more lenient to men when there is a transgression of rules. A man's responsibility ends when he terminates his marriage. If he indulges in extra-marital affair or polygynous unions, his behaviour is not only tolerated but is occasionally encouraged. If a woman neglects her obligations to her matrilineal household, she may be even deprived of her property, but if her brother fails to meet his obligations, she is expected to take over his duties.⁶⁸ Hence many Khasi women are constantly working and trying to raise resources because in addition to their own duties they have to step in when men fail to fulfil their obligations.

The Todas⁶⁹ of Nilgiri are known for their overtly gender discriminatory practices. The male supremacist ideology gives the conditions of reproduction of Toda society by enabling the men to, on the one hand to appropriate the children of the women and on the other to appropriate subsistence goods from other Nilgiri tribes.⁷⁰ While all Toda

68. Ibid, p.184.

69. The Todas are a society with pastoral subsistence base. The conditions of the reproduction of Toda society are contained in the exchange relations that they maintain with the other groups in the Nilgiris. Hence, the Todas are not comparable to those Pastoralists who are self reproducing systems. See, Majumdar, D.N. and MADAN, T.N. An introduction to Social Anthropology, Mayoor Paperbacks, Delhi, 1994, p.249.

70. Channa, Subhadra, "ideology, production and reproduction : pre-capitalist social formation of the Toda" The Eastern Anthropologist, Vol.43, No.1, August, Sept., 1990, pp.109.

men are ritually more pure than their women, there is no essential difference between men except by age.⁷¹ The sacred dairies with sacred buffaloes and all associated sacred objects are operated by the dairymen priest. This office is assumed by all adult males, at least once in a lifetime.⁷² The Toda conceptual universe clearly divides the world into pure and impure, the male and female. All activities and objects connected with buffaloes fall in the realm of sacred (or pure). Women are excluded from all these activities. Not only herding and pasturing, even the processing of milk products is the prerogative of men. The milk in the sacred dairies is churned by dairymen priest. The buttermilk is collected by ordinary men (or boys) and distributed to the women for domestic consumption. Butter is prepared into *ghee* and sold. These activities take place in the back of the house which is pure/sacred and into which women are not allowed.⁷³ Waterways, pathways and houses are divided into pure and impure. All pathways, associated with sacred dairies are pure and no women can walk on them, neither can a woman walk in front of a sacred dairy. Walker cites an interesting example :

71. Ibid, p.113

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

The mountain railway from the plains passes, just before it reaches Ootacamund and, in front of Toda dairy. Toda say that no women of their community has ever ridden the train over this stretch of track; rather the lady must alight one station before Ootacamund and either walk or take road transport for the rest of Journey.⁷⁴ [Walker, Anthony, 1986, p.187].

The most ritually impure occasion among the Toda is child-birth, consistent with their ideology. But for the continuation of patrilineage by which a Toda has access to means of production - land, water and buffaloes - as well as for demographic reproduction of their society, the men must appropriate women's children.⁷⁵ There are two important social mechanisms applied by Todas to maintain their demographic balancers; these are : *Polyandry* and *female infanticide*.⁷⁶ Among the Todas women have absolutely no property rights. All resources are jointly held by the patrilineage for the benefits of its male descendants alone. Polyandry has a direct effect on limiting the number of children.⁷⁷ Since the Todas are almost entirely dependent on the milk of buffaloes for subsistence, the number of female buffaloes in the society must be greater than that of human population.⁷⁸ Hence, it is necessary to curtail the human population.

74. Walker, Anthony, The Toda of South India, Hindustan Publishing Corporations, Delhi, 1986, p.52.

75. See, Channa, S. op.cit, P. 116.

76. Ibid.

77. There being only one women of child bearing capacity between several brothers. It is this effect of polyandry - of limiting overall population - that is important for reproduction of the Toda Society, Ibid. p.117.

78. Ibid.

Inter-related to some extent with Polyandry is the practice of female infanticide.⁷⁹ Inter-related with these practices is the exclusion of women from productive activities. Because of the extremely marginal role of women in productive activities, it is economically viable for a number of husbands to share a wife.

Verghese has quoted, both Berreman and Murdock to say that, "It has been observed that polyandry is related to sex specialization in which women make only an insignificant contribution to subsistence".⁸⁰ One can ask here, as to whether women make (voluntarily) an insignificant contribution to subsistence or they are forced to do so and in this whole process, they are being produced and reproduced as docile subjects (or objects). To quote Rosaldo⁸¹ as she clearly states, "in many patrilineal ideologies, women are seen as unnecessary or superfluous, yet at the same time vitally important to men : they are needed as wives, as sisters to be

-
79. Levine, talking of the Tibetan Nyimb clearly emphasize that the effect of polyandry in limiting the population is not to be explained as the cause of polyandry : "the reasons for it's existence be elsewhere in the kinship idiom, in domestic management and in the ideologies pertaining to male and female work, see, Levine, Nancy, *The Dynamics of Polyandry, Kinship, Domesticity and Population in Tibetan Boarder*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1988.
80. Verghese, I, *Polyandry in Kota Society : an Appraisal*, in M.N. Raha (ed.) *Polyandry in India*, Gian Publishing House, Delhi, 1987, p.334
81. Rosaldo, Michelle, "Women, culture and society : a theoretical overview", in Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (ed) *Women, Culture and Society*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1974, p.22.

exchanged for wives and as procreators who produce workers and heirs for the group. Because, they are important, they are powerful, yet theirs is a power opposed to formal norms..... In such situations, culture may elaborate the idea of her pollution a women's activities are circumscribed by calling them dangerous, by making them something to fear".

Against this backdrop, the Toda society can be viewed from the perspective of women whose offsprings are appropriated and who are systematically excluded from productive process and forced to be confined to the domain of impure.

The *adivasis* of Jharkhand⁸² are divided into two main linguistic groups - this includes Santhal, Ho and Munda. The other are tribes that speak of language of Dravidian group - this includes Oraon and Chero. The phenomena of witch-hunting among the Adivasi communities has been much noted and commented upon.⁸³ A women when without husband and father, has a residual life interest in land. She can dispose of the produce and income from the land as she wants. This life interest of a widow restricts the property rights of male agnates of the deceased husband, whose use of this land, for accumulation or for consumption has to wait till after

82. Jharkhand does not exist as a political entity recognized by the Indian State, but there is a movement in this region (now split up between Bihar, Bengal, Oriss and M.P.). The Jharkhand region is mainly in Chotanagpur plateau.

83. Kelkar, Govind and Nathan, Dev, Gender and Tribe; Women, Land and Forest in Jharkhand, Kali for women, New Delhi, 1991, p.93.

the death of the women.⁸⁴ Witches are almost entirely women, that too widows without support of children.⁸⁵ Such widows have a life interest in lands which, after their death, will pass into the hands of male agnates of their husbands.

Such women being denounced as witches and then driven away or killed, would result in the lands immediately passing into the hands of husbands' male agnates. This economic interest has been veiled in mythology which justifies the practice of witch-hunting. The categorization of women and men into witches and witch-finders respectively provides the fertile ground for witch-hunting.⁸⁶

Switching over to African tribes which have been selected for comparison the start may be made with Francien Van Drief's⁸⁷ Study of Bamangwato society, of central Botswana. In the social and economic organisation of Bamangwato, a Tswana tribe in central district of Botswana,

84. In the case of a widow with children, the heirs are her own children. The economic stake of the widow in this situation is much less - it is not a life interest in the entire land, but simply a maintenance (Khorposh) right, Ibid.

85. Ibid, p.85.

86. Ibid,

87. Van Drief Francien, Marriage from rule to rarity? Changing gender relations in Botswana", in Rajni Palriwala and Carla Risseuw, (ed) Shifting Circle of Support : contextualising Gender and Kinship in South Asia and sub-saharan Africa, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1996, pp.51-78.

the head of the household was a man and gendered spheres were clearly demarcated. A collection of households under the leadership and authority of a hereditary headman formed a ward, the principal political unit. The ward mostly consisted of a patrilineally organised kinship group.⁸⁸ Both exchange of women through marriage and the loan of capital functioned as a means of maintaining and strengthening the cohesion of the population. Women, youngmen and foreigners generally stood outside the centre of power. At best they were spectators, at worst they were exploited.⁸⁹ The separation of members of households was also along gender lines : the land was the domain of women, who tilled the fields with the help of children, whereas cattle were the domain of men, who supervised the herding of cattle by young boys and serfs.⁹⁰ The women's provision of grains, wild fruits and vegetables was not a marginal economic activity. On the contrary, they supplied the family and community with staple foods, while men supplemented the diet with milk and meat. But the women *depended on the men for the allocation of land*.⁹¹ About the age of 10 or 12, girls were apparently supposed to be producers on their own account.⁹²

88. Ibid, p.53.

89. Ibid, p.55.

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid.

92. Kinsman, M. "Beast of burden : the subordination of southern Tswana women, ca, 1800-1840", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 10, No.1, 1983, pp.47-48.

The two-month period of initiation took place between the ages of 10 and 13 about every four years. During the female rites, the obedience and servitude of women as food producers, housewives and mothers for the community was glorified and women were thoroughly prepared for her their ultimate destiny : marriage.⁹³ With the political arena virtually closed to women, they depended on the goodwill of men to defend their interests. Female dissatisfaction with the existing social order was expressed via songs and acts during the female initiation rites and sometimes on the sidelines during court meetings, scolding men for their laziness and their failure to work for their families. These acts of discontent, however, were merely symbolic and hardly heard by men.⁹⁴ Individual women who rebelled against their subordinate position were severely beaten and sorcery was the sole means of effective female revenge. The only real escape from harsh and obnoxious circumstances was to flee and either return to the parental compound or live a life in destitution, leading to beggary. Ultimately, male hegemony in repressing women was more effective than female means of resistance and elderly women assisted men in disciplining younger women.⁹⁵ The whole complex of land allocation, socialisation, inaccessibility of the political arena and channels of repression forced women into subordinate role as servants of the community. Although

93. Van-Deif, F. op.cit.P.56.

94. Kinsman, M. op.cit.P.49-51.

95. Ibid, P.52.

women had a secondary position women's labour and procreative capacity were nevertheless highly valued. The prestige of a household rested on it's size and, more importantly, on the number of workers it contained.⁹⁶ Women's work in the household fields and in those of the chief, was essential for the production of staple foods such as sorghum and maize and, hence, crucial for the survival of the community.⁹⁷

Dzodzi Tasikta's⁹⁸ Survey of matrilineal and patrilineal tribes of Southern Ghana is also illuminating. She says that in the distribution of landed property, among the Ewe (a tribe found in south - eastern Ghana forming 13 per cent of the population) sons received larger portions than daughters.⁹⁹ There is no law to address the distribution of resources in customary divorces. The customary law of both patrilineal and matrilineal groups, doesnot recognise non-monetary contributions to the acquisition of property during married life.¹⁰⁰ The Gold coast colony and Ashanti were home to matrilineal Akan. Precolonial Ashanti and it's neighbours, though

96. Wylie, D, *A Little God : The Twilight of Patriarchy in a Southern African Chiefdom*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johanesburg, 1990, p.30.

97. Van Driel, F. *op.cit.*P.57.

98. Tasikta, Dzodzi "Gender, Kinship and Control of resources in colonial southern Ghaha" in Palriwala and Risseeuw, *op.cit.*, pp.101-131.

99. *Ibid*, p.112.

100. *Ibid*, p.115.

lineage based, had significant class and gender differences which were clearly visible during the 19th century.

Patrification in the Ashanti kinship system in the social and ritual recognition of a father's role based on the belief that, a person spirit (*ntoro*) came from her/his father, while blood (*mogya*) was from her/his mother. The father thus named the child, and in case of sons provided professional training and played a key role in marriages of children.¹⁰¹ It is important to point out that apart from patrification, practices such as mother's brother control over his sister's children and the husband's right in relation to his wife show that matrilineality in Akan society was not synonymous with female dominance.¹⁰² The most crucial determinant of men's and women's rights in land was the sexual division of labour in both patrilineal and matrilineal areas. The clearing of land - the mode of establishing usufructury rights in lineage land - was assigned to men, thus preventing the majority of women from acquiring such rights in forest land.¹⁰³ A wife's duty to labour for her husband, without any reciprocal duty on his part, tended to sabotage women's attempts at farming for themselves and therefore their use of available land.¹⁰⁴

101. Ibid, p.129.

102. Mikell, G., *Cocoa and Chaos in Ghana*, Paragon House, New York, 1989, pp.110-12.

103. Tasikta, *op.cit.* p.117.

104. Ibid.

Patricia Caplan's field-work which she carried out on Mafia Island, (East Coast of Africa) Tanzania, between 1965 and 1967 and again in 1976,¹⁰⁵ brings out important facts about the gender relationships. In this area communal forms of property held by descent groups, and private property held by individuals, both exist. She says that it is precisely because such units are not *corporate* property owing groups, but rather property is owned by *individuals*, both women and men, that women have a fair degree of autonomy in this society.¹⁰⁶ This group is organised as cognatic descent group which means that a person traces his or her descent through both male and female ancestors : children inherit their land rights and their descent group membership through their fathers and mothers, which may well mean that they had access to the land of more than one group in a village or even in several villages.¹⁰⁷

What is more important that both women and men hold membership in their own right, and so both have access to land. Descent group membership in this situation is not restricted either by a unilineal principle, nor, as in some other cognatic societies, by residence or some other social

105. Caplan, Patricia, "Cognative descent, Islamic law and women's property on the east African coast", in Renee Hirschon (ed), *Women and Property : Women as Property*, Croom Helm, London and Canberra, 1984, pp.23-43.

106. *Ibid*, p.23.

107. *Ibid*.

interaction. People can and do choose to cultivate with different groups in different years.¹⁰⁸

But this society again has elements of gender bias in the distribution of more valuable property. Coconut trees (and the considerably fewer cashewnut trees) are a very different category of property.¹⁰⁹ These trees are inherited according to Islamic law, which means that a woman gets only half of a man's share, and she can never be a sole heir (if for example, she is an only child).¹¹⁰ Men own more than three times per-capita as do women, and thus have a much higher cash income from the sale of copra.¹¹¹ Men have more ways of making cash and investing in capital than do women. They can trade or fish, and in addition a few of younger men migrate to look for work on the mainland, usually in Dar es salaam. Women on the other hand have few opportunity for acquiring cash. The produce from coconut trees apart, virtually their sole means of earning money is by making the plaited grass mats for which the island is famous and selling them to male traders from their villages. Although all women, from very young girls to great grand-mothers plait their grass strips and sew them into mats on every conceivable occasion, they only make a fairly minimal

109. Ibid. p-27.

110. This disadvantages women, but nonetheless in Northern Mafia, women do inherit the trees to which they are entitled, and there is no attempt made (as in other Islamic societies) to prevent women from getting their rightful shares. Ibid, p.28.

111. Ibid.

income from all this activity. Nonetheless it is usually this income which enables divorced and widowed women to manage on their own and supply their cash needs, albeit meagrely.¹¹² *Since maintenance is very rarely paid and women usually take the children most divorced women are relatively poor.* Divorce is very easier for a man than for a woman. A man can divorce his wife by repeating the formula; after three times it becomes irrevocable. A woman, on the other hand, must either persuade her husband to divorce her, or else seek a divorce through the courts.¹¹³ A man can take more than one wife, even without the consent of the first. And while adultery is a sin for both sexes in Islam, an aggrieved husband can divorce his wife, while a wife would have to take her husband to court and seek a divorce on grounds other than adultery.¹¹⁴ But the strictures of Islamic law are mitigated by the concepts embedded in the customary *mila* complex.¹¹⁵ In many senses, a household is a group of property owning individuals; there is very little property that is owned by household as a unit. A woman, like a man, retains her property eg. Coconut trees, on marriage and this is one of the most important rights which Islam confers upon women. Furthermore, a woman's property is hers to do with, as she pleases.¹¹⁶ For crops which are

112. Ibid, p.32.

114. Ibid.

115. This recognizes a much greater freedom in sexual matters for both women and men, Ibid. p.33.

116. Ibid.

cultivated by the joint labour of husband and wife the situation is a bit more complex. Generally such a food is eaten by the household, but in theory a woman has a right to a portion of it to use in other ways if she wants to. *It is not intrequent to couples to divide the crop of harvest and store it separately.*¹¹⁷ People are very clear about who owns what within a household.¹¹⁸

To assess the gender relationship through this cross-cultural data, we can say that women's contribution to the household economy through agricultural work was not less valuable than that of men's.¹¹⁹ Among Bamangwato society of Central Botswana agriculture was the exclusive domain of women. The common pattern which emerge from this cross-cultural comparison is that the customary institutions with jural power (such as tribal and caste councils) were monopolised by men not only in matrilineal communities but also in the bilateral ones. In the bilateral societies such as tribes of east coast of Africa studied by Patricia caplan, although land rights were defined on an individual and not joint family

117. Ibid. P.321.

118. Patricia Caplan mentions that during her fieldwork, at one occasion she ventured to remark to one women that her husband has already purchased a similar item, she looked at caplan in amazement and asked what his purchases had to do with hers? Ibid. P.321.

119. Todas may provide exception in this case because they donot practice agriculture as such, here women were systematically excluded from productive processes which is based on dairy.

basis and women could exercise greater control over land management, jural power and authority in public decision making bodies still rested with men. Among matrilineally inheriting communities, this meant that despite men's restricted access to property ownership, their rights (as a gender) of control over that property on the one hand, and their access to public bodies on the other (with links between two domains) often enabled them to consolidate social prestige and political power.¹²⁰ Although they have/had rights in landed property, their virtual exclusion from property management (in some groups) and from jural and overall public authority (in all groups) circumscribed the power they could derive from those rights. This suggests that we cannot predict the full advantages of women having land rights for gender relations merely by examining women's position within customarily matrilineal and bilateral communities.¹²¹ The politics of 'equivalent' (rights) have been subtly analysed by Ann White head in her study of *Kusasi* of North East *Ghana*,¹²² [mentioned in chapter : 2 of this dissertation]. In certain ways, the important differences which can be of great importance from gender sensitive perspective can be seen from the structural features of 'mainstream' society and tribal society and also in the context of patrilineal and matrilineal societies. For example, in matrilineal society

120. Agrawal, B., op.cit.P.151.

121. Ibid.

122. Whithead, Ann, "Women Kinship and property" in, Hirschon, R. op.cit. pp. 176-192.

there is a gender divergence between property ownership and its control while in patrilineal set up, there is none : *men as gender both own and controlled the property*. The divergence between ownership and control may provide some space to exercise agency which (the space) may be absent in the patriline. The patrilineal society of Toda and the Bamangwato social organisation of central Botswana does not provide any space to women while in Garo and Khasis the heiresses daughters commands the right to divorce. Taking account of the culture, we can say that in certain ways and in some cases it does provide liberatory space, but this space is often counter balanced by other discriminatory practices. Gender (discriminatory) ideology is the integral part of all cultures cutting across tribes. For our purpose what is important is to see that, men's control of public decision - making domain gave them critical influence over the modifications of legal and social rules when external conditions began to change in significant ways, especially under British colonial rule, and subsequently in post colonial phase. Dodzi Tasikta¹²³ finds that in colonial and post colonial Ghana the gender discriminatory practices got reaffirmed as the colonial policy was 'necessarily makeshift'. Diane Bell describes the period 1970s which was a period of intense legal - political activity for aboriginal rights in Australia. She highlights the masculinist bias in the framing of rights and the structuring of institutions of self determination movements.¹²⁴

123. Taskita, D. op.iit.

124. Bell, Diane, Caplan, Pat and Karim, Wazir Jahan (ed) *Gendered Fields : Women, Men and Ethnography* Routledge, London and Newyork, 1993, P.5.

Special purpose legislation, statutory authorities, aboriginal legal aid services and land councils gave shape to the demands for self determinations. Here, says Diane Bell, that Aboriginal men of authority spoke to white men of authority (lawyers, anthropologists, bureaucrats and clergy).¹²⁵ During the nationalist rumblings in Kenya the nascent Kikuyu Central Associates (KCA) which had started to protest white seizure of Kikuyu lands “made Clitoridectomy a political matter by including it among several tribal customs for which they canvassed support in the reserves. Their argument was that the culture of tribe was threatened and it’s traditional structure in danger of being broken up”.¹²⁶ Reference can also be made of recently passed “Arunachal Pradesh protection of customary laws and social practices Bill” which seeks to codify tribal custom without eliminating many oppressive features pertaining to women.

125. Ibid.

126. Skinner, Elliot P. “Female circumcision in Africa : the dialectics of equality”, in Randolph, Richard R., Schneider, David M. and Diaz, May N. (ed) *Dialectics and Gender : Anthropological Approaches* Westview Press, Boulder and London, 1994, p.206.

CHAPTER IV

**COLONIAL, POST-COLONIAL AND
ETHNIC DIMENSIONS**

CHAPTER IV

COLONIAL, POST COLONIAL AND ETHNIC DIMENSIONS

Gender as we see it, is central to any and all efforts to conceptualise the "modern" state, whether it be its historical origins, current composition or the management of extraction and distribution of resources. Whether in its indigenous colonial or modern forms, the state has been overwhelmingly controlled by men-----.

[Parpart and Staudt, 1989 p.1]¹.

"States are only human organisations", absorbing the values, biases and prejudices' of those who "man" them. [Ibid, p.5]

In both mainstream political science and classical Marxism, state action has been explained in terms of the state-society interaction. In the liberal pluralist conception, states are viewed as neutral umpires, reacting to diverse interest groups and the electorate. In the classical Marxist variant, the dominant class controls the state and uses it for its own purposes. Relative autonomy of state sparked a flurry of theoretical development. Structural Marxists view the state as dedicated to the preservation of the coherence of capitalist society, which occasionally necessitates opposing the dominant class in order to cope with inherent contradictions and to maintain societal cohesion.² In none of these approaches gender conflict

-
1. Parpart, Jane L. and Staudt Kathleen (ed.), *Women and State in Africa*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder and London, 1989, p.1.
 2. Ibid, p.5.

or male domination of the state are central or even peripheral to analysis. Women fit uneasily in all of these approaches, women are more than an interest group in a decidedly unneutral setting and they fit uncomfortably (if at all) in economically based class structures, devoid of attention to reproductive dimensions of life. In these approaches, theorists pay little heed to the dominance of men in state structures, both in historic and contemporary times. Yet such dominance matters enormously for women. Margot Lovett problematizes class formation in East, Central and southern Africa, during colonial period as a gendered process³. The precolonial patterns of authority over basic resources were manipulated and/or invoked by men during colonial period to justify the gendering of rural class formation. In particular, catalyzed by expanding cash-crop production, and with the active co-operation of colonial state, men's supervisory rights over land increasingly were transformed into ownership rights.⁴ As land owners, men also received modern agricultural inputs. Under the same conditions, however, women's usufructuary and trusteeship (for their sons) rights in land became increasingly threatened and vulnerable. The land reform programmes of 1950's witnessed the culmination of this process⁵.

3. Lovett, Margot, "Gender Relations, Class Formation, and the Colonial State in Africa", in Parpart and Staudt op.cit, pp. 23-46.

4. Ibid, p. 25.

5. Ibid.

A gender sensitive focus does not preclude attention to class, but does elaborate upon and develop a more nuanced class analysis. Every where, the political elite is largely male. Just as state mediates class and international conflict, so also do we expect that state mediates gender conflict⁶. For all the variations in states — weak or strong, more or less autonomous — one constant is that women are *never* central to state power. Rayna Rapp calls for analytic attention to state formation in “the bloody laboratory of colonial penetration”⁷. From the early colonial period we can garner insights about how the prevailing capitalist world system affected dependent economies through state institutions. All the feminist scholars agree that colonialism and capitalism restructured traditional economies in a way which had a profound impact on women's economic activities, on the nature and sexual division of labour and on the kinds of social and political options which remained open to women⁸. The responses of women to the capitalist transformation are clearly varied and are in part determined by their ability to control, utilize and dispose off economic resources and the product of these resources. These factors are in turn determined by sexual division of labour, the organisation of household and by kinship

6. Parpart and Staudt, *op. cit.*, p.5.

7. Rapp, Rayana, "Gender and Class: an Archaeology of Knowledge concerning the origin of State", *Dialectical Anthropology*, Vol.2, 1977, p.309

8. Its's (i.e. the impact), however, is difficult to unravel and will always require historical and social specification.

marital and inheritance patterns⁹. Henrietta Moore,¹⁰ subtly formulates two inter-related steps through which the anthropological analysis moves forward; first, the stress should be on inter-relations between kinship structures and state structures in order to emphasize the mutually determining nature of kinship state relations and secondly, it perceives women as located in a boundary between kinship relations and state structures in a way in which men are not. This is particularly clear in the example of women's self-help group in Kenya, where the success of the women's groups and their utility for the individual women involved, depended crucially on women's ability to negotiate both with their husbands or male kin and with the representations and institutions of state. Men also have to negotiate with the representatives and institutions of the state, but their ability to do so is rarely structured by their relations with their wives.¹¹ Another important dimension, which is equally important is to see the contradictory constitutive elements or institutional practices of the state. Constitutional equal rights may co-exist with institutionalised male privilege; policies to promote female emancipation stand alongside those fostering female dependency. Western feminists have long argued that the state tends to promote a particular 'family' household structure : the male

9. Moore, Henrietta, L., *Feminism and Anthropology*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1988, p.82.

10. *Ibid.* p.134, -44

11. *Ibid.*, p. 155-171.

wage earner with dependent wife and children.¹² Writers have pointed to the ways in which state regulations governing wages, taxation and social security benefits combine to reproduce the segregated occupational structure of labour force and sexual division of labour within the family. These policies are not necessarily designed with the intention of oppressing and discriminating against women, but they are designed according to prevailing notions, assumptions and ideologies about the role of women, the nature of family and proper relations between men and women. The end result is that state policy may be extremely contradictory¹³. The state does at least give women some legal protection in the face of opposition from husband and kin. This protection is however, contradictory and is frequently frustrated by social cultural and economic constraints which prevent women from taking recourse to law, even while it exists. Some feminists have argued that the state laws maintain the "family" as a private world in which state hesitates to intervene.¹⁴ Another area which needs our

12. Wilson, Elizabeth, *Women and the Welfare State*, Tavistock, London, McIntosh, Mary, "The welfare State and the Needs of Dependent Family" in S. Burman (e.d.) *Fit work for Womens*, Croom Helm, London., 1977, 153-72.

13. Regulations which are enforced with protecting mothers and children can end up discriminating against them if their lives do not conform to the assumed set of social practices and belief upon which state policies are based. The state then has a role not just in regulating peoples lives but in defining gender ideologies, conception of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' determinig ideas about what sorts of persons women and men should be. See. Moore, H.L. op.cit. 'p. 129.

14. Ibid. p. 137.

attention is the contemporary identity politics in which state gives legitimacy to a particular community by defining it as a monolithic entity with an irreducible interest in self-identity. This whole discourse, seeks to negate and suppress divergent interests and rights of individuals and collectivities. The extent to which state policy may change in response to popular and communal pressure have serious implications for women. In the case of Muslim identity politics in India, Hasan delineates as to how community and state legitimise and reproduce each other¹⁵. She highlights the mutual complementarity of state and religious leadership in reinforcing community identity, as also in subordinating women. The cultural 'rights' and traditions are advanced as grounds to deny reforms in particular laws and the gender biased notions contained therein. The question may be asked as to whose interests are being served by existing practices and cultural norms?

It now becomes clear that the experience of colonialism is not just a historical question, but an issue of continuing consequences,¹⁶ as the effects of colonialism did not end with political independence. Interventions by the colonial and post colonial states, particularly in legal and economic

-
15. Hasan, Zoya, (ed.) *Forging Identities : Gender, Community and State*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1994 See, the introduction, pp. vii-xxiv.
 16. Risseuw, Carla and Palriwalla Rajni (eds.) *Shifting circle of Support : Contextualising Gender and kinship in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa*, Sage Publication, New Delhi, p.33.

spheres and the complex processes of social and cultural change which these set in motion, eroded customary practices which granted women considerable autonomy and equality in marital relations and economic and social security eg. in matrilineal and bilateral societies. In Srilanka, where in the past marriage tended to be viewed as contract, the sacramental element has gained influence under the impact of colonial 'Christian, Victorian' and Hindu 'values'¹⁷. Goonesekere describes how in middle class Sri Lanka; 'divorce' is currently explained as an alien phenomenon to be rejected as one of the dangerous developments of modernisation. This is ironical, for divorce procedure in pre-colonial Srilanka were relatively simple, marriage being linked to property systems which guarded the interests of individual (including the women) to a higher extent than the so-called 'civilised' arrangements of today do not¹⁸. As to how state sanctifies and naturalises these regressive mores is reflected in its policy measures. Goonesekere further elaborates on the effects in Sri Lanka of the combination of the withdrawal of welfare measures and the non-recognition of children born outside marriage (non marital children)²⁰ both

17. Goonesekere, Savitri "Gender relations in the family : Law and Public policy in post-colonial Srilanka", in Palriwala and Risseeuw (e.d.) op.cit. 302-330.

18. Risseeuw and Palriwala, op.cit, p.28.

20. Similar instances have been cited by Nongbri, in the case of North - East tribal belt of India. The influx of outsiders heralded by development has resulted in a high incidence of intermarriage between tribal women and nontribal men and also increasing incidence of unwed mother. Apart from the economic pressures associated

resting on the dominant notion of legal family and a male bread winner. Interpretation of family in state policy can become norms with which to discredit and ignore not only variations in living arrangements and differences in power and responsibility within the family, but also changes taking place in the domain of marriage, family and kinship. Economically successful members (generally men) of a kinship network can base their withdrawal from kinship obligation on state policy measures and the legal system may be blind to such withdrawals. Francien Van Drief demonstrates the phenomenon of men's withdrawal from networks of responsibility in Botswana which is occurring on an expanding scale.²¹ This is reflected in the growth of women headed household in Botswana which now account for nearly 50 percent of all existing households.²² One can speak of a new family arrangement for which infrastructural and legal provisions are still absent or inadequate²³. Van Drief mentions the whole complex of factors

with singleness they are also subjected to severe social criticisms which are often accompanied by discriminations towards their children. This does not raise only difficult questions about their identity, it also threatens to deprive them of the benefits of constitutional policy of protective discrimination see, Nongbri, Tiplut " Gender issue and tribal development" 1995, Unpublished.

21. Van Drief, Francien, "Marriage from rule to rarity? : changing gender relations in Botswana, in Rajni Palriwala and Carla Risseeuw, ed., *Shifting Circle of Support : Contextualising Gender and kingship in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, p.70, 74, 75.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.

which contributed to the emergence of unmarried motherhood as a widespread social phenomenon. The encounter with colonial economy which was instrumental in transforming the subsistence economy of Botswana into a cash-based economy undermined the role of women who were the food providers in traditional economy. The introduction of 'hut tax' in 1899 by the colonial administration in cooperation with local authorities, which was imposed on men of 18 years and older, forced people to find a regular sum of money every year²⁴. Around 1902, however many of the new income sources started to vanish as the railway replaced the wagon trade²⁵. With the decline in local labour opportunities and the growing demand for labour in Union of South Africa, wage earnings through migration began replacing local income sources. The final result was that a fairly prosperous state was transformed into one of the labour reserves, exporting mainly male labourer²⁶.

The dependence on cash has been met with a continued migration, while much of the exchange and non cash systems has fallen away. As a result men no longer need women as food providers as they did in the past²⁷. The weakened responsibility of men makes unwed mothers who stay

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

in village increasingly dependent on family members who in turn are rather reluctant to support them²⁸. The final outcome is that these women very often must provide for themselves and their offspring, not supported by anybody with the resultant poverty²⁹. Significantly women have never been provided for by men; men on the contrary, who predominantly relied on the economic contributions made by women, no longer do so³⁰. Here, the disturbance brought about by colonial economy is understood but the explanation of 'feminisation' of poverty and withdrawal of male responsibility from kinship network can only be explained against the backdrop of reproductive ideology. This ideology is one arena where both colonial and indigenous conflate. The question which needs explanation here is that what led to a large number of male migration and not the female migration, when dependence on cash increased? Secondly why the burden of looking after children fell exclusively on women with no access to cash? The establishment of control over Garo Hills in the second half of nineteenth century led to substantial changes in economic and social fabric which were carried further by post-independence policies. Many of these changes adversely affected the community in general and women in particular³¹. Bina Agrawal shows as to how wet cultivation was

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Agrawal, Bina, *A Field of One's : Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p.155.

superimposed by colonial administration culminating in inter and intra-village differentiation and also there was a significant change in gender division of labour³². Wet cultivation required substantial changes in agricultural techniques : land preparation for wet rice needs more care than for *jhum* rice since ploughing and levelling are often necessary, requiring new skills and draft animals.

In irrigation, ditches and dikes have to be built around fields located near an assumed water supply' (e.g. perennial streams). The crop usually has to be transplanted (and not merely sown with the dibble stick method as in *jhum*)

Its harvesting requires sickle and threshing has to be done with cattle etc.

Agrawal makes a very significant point here which is indispensable for our purpose. She says," in themselves these changes need not reduce women's contribution to production, but they have tended to do so since the new skills are taught mainly to men"³³. The British and after independence the state government, began to grant *pattas (titles)* to individuals, and so accelerated the shifts to settled cultivation and privatization. The *battas* are typically granted in male names.³⁴ Parents want to bequeath some private

32. Ibid, p.158.

33. Ibid,

34. Ibid, p.159.

land to sons, since sons became familiar with wet rice cultivation techniques by working with fathers in their fields³⁵. The spread of Christianity while associated with the advance of education for both sexes, had also led to a decline of customary, communal and ritual practices - women's sexual freedom has declined.³⁶ To Agrawal, the histories of northeastern matrilineal tribes strikingly illustrates how the shift from land as a communal resource to land under individual possession has been associated not only with well recognized process of class *differentiation* but with equally critical gender *differentiation* among the peasantry.³⁷

Dzodzi Tsikta³⁸ talks about both the change and continuity between the precolonial, colonial and post-colonial Southern Ghana and their implication for gender relationship. The customary law of both patrilineal and matrilineal groups, does not recognize non-monetary contributions to the acquisition of property during married life. What a man is required to do after a customary division is to give the woman a 'send off' if the divorce is through no fault of her own. the value of this 'send off' is discretionary³⁹. The courts have similarly maintained - in relation to

35. Ibid, p.159.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid, p.165.

38. Tasikta, Dzodzi, "Gender, Kinship and the Control of Resources in Colonial Southern Ghana" in Palriwala and Risseeuw op.cit. pp. 100-131.

39. Ibid, p. 113.

ordinance-marriages that house keeping is a marital duty and therefore, does not bring rewards such as a share of the property acquired by the husband while the marriage lasted. In order to succeed in any such claims, spouses must show a substantial contribution beyond the call of duty⁴⁰. Precolonial Asante.⁴¹ And its neighbours, though lineage-based, had significant class and gender differences which were clearly visible during 19th century⁴². Rights in land in precolonial Ghana and the ability to exercise them were affected by many factors. While both men and women did have access to lineage land in patrilineal as well as matrilineal groups, among some groups, women's rights were limited by marital residence and gender bias in the size of land given to them⁴³. It has been suggested that

40. Ibid.

41. the Gold coast Colony and Asante were home to matrilineal Akan and to which patrilineal groups migrated for economic reasons. The groups considered under this study by Tasikta are the sedentary matrilineal Asante and Borong cultivators in Asante, migrant patrilineal groups such as *Guan* and *Akwapim* and the *Krobo Shai*, *Ga* and *Ewe* from other parts of the colony. Since Asante and its neighbours were largely subsistence agricultural societies, land was the most basic resource. There was also some mining and trading across the Sahara that predated European contact. European commercial contact with the coast in 15th century displaced this trade and speeded up the development of a generalised exchange economy [See, Tasikta, op.cit, p. 115]

42. Ibid.

43. The most crucial determinant of men's and women's rights in land was sexual division of labour in both patrilineal and matrilineal areas. The clearing of land-the mode of establishing usufructuary rights in lineage land were assigned to men, thus preventing the majority of women from acquiring such rights in forest land. A wife's duty to labour for her husband without any reciprocal duty on his part, tended to sabotage women's attempts at farming for themselves, and therefore, their use of available land. [Tasikta, op.cit. p.117.]

colonial policy was necessarily “make shift” because the state had to respond to situations it could not completely control⁴⁴. The precolonial land relations were reaffirmed in spite of earlier acknowledgement of change⁴⁵, and this reaffirmation had serious implications for women as the lineage mode of production was biased against women. Though it seems logical to an extent to reaffirm the preexisting structure as the colonial administration was guided by expediency⁴⁶. but what forces worked behind the explicit colonial policy to keep women out of bureaucracy⁴⁷. The colonial authorities were very active in the development of Cocoa industry supplementing the efforts of the brief missionaries by sponsoring selected males for training in Cocoa culture, distributing seedlings, setting up

44. Phillips, A., *The Enigma of Colonialism*, James Currey, London 1989, p.11

45. Tasikta, D., *op.cit.* p.118.

46. Phillips says that the colonial policy was “necessarily makeshift” because the state had to respond to situations it could not completely control. see Phillips, A. *op.cit.*, p.11. The pace of land privatisation was considered problematic by the state for a number of reasons. The successes of Cocoa had shown that production was safe in the hands of the peasantry on small plots of lineage and stool land. This circumvented the concentration of labour and capital required for plantation agriculture. It also shelved the need for land reform, thus averting the risk of alienating the chiefs and land owning groups. see, Tasikta, D. *op.cit.*, p.117-118.

47. Economic Commission for Africa, *Law and status of Women*, prepared by T. Manuh, Addis Ababa. 1984, p.56. Also see Mensah.Kutin, R. *Women in wage labour : A study on Ghana*. Institute of Social Sciences, The Hague, p.39. Colonial policy was centred on agricultural experts, trade and mining. Jobs were created in the mines, the bureaucracy in the construction industry. Formally educated persons were able to take advantage of job opportunities in the bureaucracy keeping women out of bureaucracy was explicit colonial policy. See, Tasikta, *op.cit.* p.119.

demonstration farms, providing extension services and allowing the export of cocoa duty free. Most of the beneficiaries were male because women were not regarded as proper farmers⁴⁸. For the peasantry, cocoa was a new source of income and also of stratification. Class differences emerged, based on creditor/debtor relations and ownership/labour arrangements⁴⁹. Women formed what has been described as a “parallel hierarchy” to men, in owning farms and employing labour⁵⁰. However, they mostly owned food crop farms or had smaller cocoa farms than more farmers did. The reason for this included their duty to labour of husbands' farms without reciprocity and their general lack of resource to hire labour⁵¹. There is general agreement that cocoa had different implications for women as lineage members and as wives. As lineage members they were involved in the distribution of resources through the lineage, whereas as wives, they had no property rights in resources acquired with their labour⁵². Even as lineage members women suffered disadvantages. They were adversely affected by the customary law dichotomy between women's property and men's property in both patrilineal and matrilineal areas which in apparent equality, favoured men

48. Mikell, G., *Cocoa and Chaos in Ghana*, Paragon House, New York, 1989, p.101

49. Tasikta, D. *op.cit*, p.121

50. Vellenga, D.D. , “Matriliney, Patriliney and class formation among women Cocoa farmers in two rural areas of Ghana”, in C. Robertson and I. Berger (eds.) *Women and class in Africa*, Africana, New York 1986. p.71.

51. *Ibid*, p.76.

52. *Ibid*, p.63.

inheriting from men and women inheriting from women. However, self acquired property of significant value passed through males even in matrilineal societies⁵³. The customary law has changed little over a span of almost half a century. Tasikta cites the example of an Akan widow who brought an action for a piece of land and a building on it claiming that she had rendered monetary and other assistance to her late husband as a result of which she had been given part of the building during her husband's life time; the appeal court rejected her claim on grounds that even if it was the deceased's intention to give her the piece of property, it had not been properly done according to customary law⁵⁴. Farm labour, house-work, biological reproduction and other forms of marital support were not considered as contributions which created rights in self-acquired property of a spouse. Customary rules governing marriage and the sexual division of labour thus worked to deprive wives of resources in situations of divorce and the intestate death of husbands⁵⁵. This attitude to the customary law continues to influence the decision of post-colonial courts⁵⁶.

Patrica Caplan⁵⁷ carried out her fieldwork on Mafia Island, Tanzania

53. Mikell, *op.cit*, p.124.

54. Tasikta, *op.cit*. p.126.

55. *Ibid*,p.127.

56. *Ibid*.

57. Caplan, Patricia, "Cognatic descent, Islamic law and Women's property on the East-African coast", in Renee Hirschon(ed.), *Women and property : Women as property*, Croom Helm, London and Canberra, 1984, pp.23-43.

situated at the East coast of Africa between 1965 to 1967 and again in 1976. She examines some of the recent state directed changes in the area of property holding and their possible implications for women. Most anthropologists who have worked on the East coast comment upon the relative lack of importance of domestic unit or household⁵⁸. Tanner, writing about the Pangani district in 1961 comments that the married family is very impermanent and does not form an agricultural unit---- most of them (women) prefer to cultivate separately⁵⁹. All commentators remark about the high divorce rates and stress that marriage is seen primarily as a contract which may be broken. Divorced women can and do live alone with their children or with other female kin, independently of a man⁶⁰. In the Mafia Island, house hold or family is not equivalent to a corporate property-owning group under the control of a male head. Instead it is a loose co-residential and commercial group in which individuals hold private property while also holding rights to communal property via their membership of descent group irrespective of gender. Caplan seeks to show that it is precisely because such units are not property owing corporate groups, but rather property is owned by individuals, both women and men, that women have a fair degree of autonomy in this society. She says however, that this

58. Ibid. p.38.

59. Tanner, quoted in Caplan, Ibid. p.39.

60. Caplan, op.cit. p.-39.

situation does not appear likely to continue. To her, “the state is now impinging upon this area more than at any other time in its history. In its construction of an entity which it terms ‘the family’ and in its assignation to such a unit of co-residential productive and reproductive functions, and above all in its assignment of property holding functions to this unit, the state seems likely to erode even further the autonomy which women previously enjoyed”⁶¹. A new word has been drafted into the Swahili language—*familia* from the English ‘word’ family and it is not surprising perhaps that a frequent context in which it is used is ‘a man in his family’ i.e. his ‘dependents’. Families which do not fit into such pattern that is families in which there are no adult males, are likely to be seen as problematic⁶². This change brought about by the state is particularly worrying as it works against the liberatory space provided to women by customary laws.

Madhu Kishwar writing about *HO* women of Sighbhum argues that most attempt at tribal development have essentially meant furthering their subjection and pushing tribal society into a completely male dominated and hierarchical mould. The present troubles of the *HO* women are not all due to traditional custom “Their traditional strengths are being eroded but

61. Ibid, p.42.

62. Kishwar, Madhu, “Toling women without Rights: Ho women of Sighnhum” EPW, Jan, 17 1987, pp.24-31.

new strengths are not allowed to emerge or grow^{62A}. The emulation of Hindu peasant norms had led to the erosion of such features which have positive consequences for women. As it is taboo for women to plough, if there is no male member in the family a woman has to hire a male for this work. While a woman cannot meet her survival need without male help her labour cannot be substituted by hired help⁶³. Ho women cannot sell or mortgage a piece of land as it is not in their name”⁶⁴.

The recent upsurge of identity politics or cultural rights movements in different parts of the world both in "tribal" and "mainstream" societies have been proved disadvantageous for women. However the documentation of this phenomenon in the context of tribal society has remained relatively unexamined. Terence Ranger in his essay on the invention of tradition in colonial Africa talks about the use of 'tradition' by men against women⁶⁵. Denise Paulme's *Women of Tropical Africa*, though concerned to refute a stereotyped European image of oppressed African women hood, nevertheless brought out very clearly two things. The first was the practical breakdown under colonialism of many customary institutions regulating

62A. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

65. Ranger, Terence, "The invention of Tradition in Colonial Aftica" in, Ranger and Eric Hobsbaum (ed.) . *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge Press, 1992, p.257, 259.

the relationship between the sexes, a breakdown almost always disadvantageous to women. The second was constant appeal by men to tradition⁶⁶. African men were quite prepared to appeal to colonial authority to enforce custom upon women once it had been defined⁶⁷. The experience of different ethnic movements would show that the discourse of ethnicity is always gendered. The dominant in the community automatically get the right to define the custom in their own way and the state in turn codifies this defined in certain cases invented 'traditions'. Invented here may connote the process through which the cultural input may be borrowed from others eg. Caste norms or Christians mores, but claimed as natural order of the things. And this process of naturalisation may take place with the simultaneous erosion of democratic elements from within the culture. From a gender sensitive perspective one can say that the dominant voice which is often decisive in political sense as it 'automatically' represents the voice of the 'community' is often the *male voice*.⁶⁸ Nathan and Kelkar delves into the patriarchal discourses which inform the political movements like Santhal rebellion during British period and the more recent Jharkhand

66. Ibid, p.257.

67. Ibid.

68. One cannot deny the hierarchy among men themselves, but in this specific context of gendered dimension of any ethnic discourse, it (the discourse) always unites, 'men' irrespective of differential class interests as a common interest group to keep the 'women's voice' unheard.

organisations⁶⁹. The discourse at a later stage culminated into what is called the house-wifisation process⁷⁰. Like the Christian Church, the JMM (Jharkand Mukti Morcha) took up a programme of teaching domestic crafts to women such as cookery, stitching, embroidery, etc⁷¹. In the name of preventing the “sexual and moral corruption of tribal women by non-tribal men”, women either divorced or separated, working in collieries or engaged in petty trade, were first warned that they should marry. If they refused to obey, they were beaten up and even married off to some are chosen by the cadres and sent away from their homes and worksites to distant areas where the new “husbands” resided ⁷². This is a novel form of devaluing women under the guise of enforcing sexual morality and has given rise to corrupt practices. Women willing to pay Rs. 1000 per month were spared.⁷³ Corruption apart, what is important to note is that, clearly patriarchal norms of control over sexuality and movements of women, and their house-wifization were an integral part of the JMM movement⁷⁴. Nathan and Kelkar quote a Jharkhand Kranti Dal (JKD) activist saying 'our aim is socialism. So we are opposed to the demand of land rights for women. The demand

70. Ibid. p.155.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.

will always lead to tension within the Jharkhand movement⁷⁵. In certain tribal society women are perceived as a threat to the ethnic identity⁷⁶. The influx of outsiders heralded by development has resulted in a high incidence of inter-marriage between tribal women and non-tribal men. Such unions are not only highly disfavoured, particularly by the male members of the community, they are also viewed as a threat to their descent group and ethnic identity⁷⁷. Among many tribes selders are expressing their concern not only at increasing incidence of inter-marriage between tribal women and non-tribal men but also at the large number of unwed mothers who bear children fathered by the latter⁷⁸. Apart from the economic pressures associated with single parenthood, they are also subjected to severe social criticisms which are often accompanied by discriminations towards their children. The latter arises, because in patriarchal society children born of a tribal women and a non-tribal man are often not accepted as tribals as they are expected to belong to their father's patrilineage. This does not

75. The fact is that there does now exist individual male ownership, though with restrictions on alienation, and that even where there is some form of village ownership, the land is still possessed by individual males

76. Nongbri, Tiplut, Gender Issue and Tribal Development, 1995 Unpublished.

77. Ibid.

78. Most of these women are lured into liasion with the nontribal men by the prospect of marriage. They however ended up as objects of sexual exploitations as they are unceremoniously discarded by their suiters because the latter are either already married or prefer to marry women from their own community. [Nongbri, Ibid]

only raise difficult questions about their identity, it also threatens to deprive them of the benefits of the constitutional policy of protective discrimination⁷⁹. While the state has yet to respond to this regressive process of the degradation of tribal women, tribal men are taking equally regressive steps to protect their ethnic and economic interests. Recognising that women are vital to their interests they have come up with strict normative codes to regulate their conduct⁸⁰. For example, among the Ho, a woman who has sexual liasion with a non tribal is disposed of her rights to land⁸¹. Nongbri mentions that in many parts of North-East India women are not only strongly discouraged from having intimate interaction with non-tribal men but are also threatened by their community men. She cites an example, in a press release issued by the publicity secretary of a newly formed

79. Some non governmental organisations are taking up the cause of these women by demanding that children born of such unions should not be discriminated and be given full leagal rights as tribal children. Many tribal women resented this as they felt that this would not only erode their cultural identity it would also facilitate the access of non-tribes to their productive resources through benami unions with tribal women. Significantly, with increasing investments in tribal development programmes by the government tribal men tend to view women as means through whom outsiders could gain access to the special resources earmarked for their development. Not only is there a distinct gender bias in this perceptions it is, also an extremely serious problem which requires immediate legal and socio-economic solutions. There is no denying the fact that tribal women are vulnerable targets of sexual and economic exploitation by some non tribals, because of their social and economic backwardness. The state, how ever, has yet to come up with appropriate policies that could protect the dignity and interest of these women. Nongbr, Ibid.

80. Ibid.

81. Kishwar, Madhu, op.cit.

political front presented to the state government for its consideration , one of then deal specifically with this issue of the twelve demands that the Front has listed nine states : in case women are found engaged in prostitution, drunkenness, go around with non tribals or wear indecent clothing a fitting lesson would be given to them⁸². These pronouncements are primarily directed at women. Moreover the kind of attitude towards women is not confined to extremist groups only. Even among the so called enlightened and educated middle class prejudice against women is deeply entrenched⁸³. In matrilineal state of Meghalaya cited earlier, men's attempt to restrict the freedom of women even went to the extent of seeking for a drastic change in their kinship system⁸⁴. As early as 1961 efforts were made by some men to mobilise public opinion to change the inheritance pattern from matrilineal to patrilineal⁸⁵. In recent years the call to change the

82. While the Front did not define what it exactly meant by indecent clothing, an examination of incidents occurring in the state capital in recent times shows that tribal girls who wear Mini skirts, sleeveless tops, and Salwar Kameez have increasingly become targets of attack Nongbra op.cit., also see *Rupang*, Shillong, Vol.7. June 1995, p.198.

83. Nongbri cites another example which highlights the mindset typical in a gendered society. Recently in a consultative committee for the formulation of tribal policies a tribal gentleman recalled the anguish he experienced when a female candidate (who attended an interview held by the Union Public Service Commission where he was in the panel of experts) professed that she was a tribal but failed to suitably attire in the costume of tribe. Significantly, at the time of narrating his experience, the gentleman in question was clad in a fashionable Safari Suit. (Nongbri, Ibid, p.15.)

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid.

inheritance law and suspend rights to women married to outsiders has been intensified. Spearheading the movement, Ka Synghong Rympi Thymmai (SRT), an urban based organisation that comprises primarily of students, business-men and civil servants drew up a three-pronged plan of action, that is geared towards a systematic consolidation of patriarchal control in the family⁸⁶. According to this plan :

1. authority over wife and children should be given to the father,
2. that the children be incorporated into the clan of the father and property divided between the son and daughter; the daughter however would loose the right to the property if she marries outside the community (emphasis is original)
3. that parents should be cared for and live with sons.

This change if effected would not only give men complete control over female sexuality, it would also provide them direct access to property⁸⁷.

86. Ibid, p.16.

87. Ibid.,

Here it needs to be emphasized that matrilineality per se does not make men subordinate to women. On the contrary, in matrilineal system while descent and inheritance are transmitted through women, jural authority is vested in the hands of men - however, in contrast to the patrilineal system where authority is vested in the hands of the father, in matrilineal system it is located in the mother's brother. This arrangement however, poses problem for men in exercising their authority because the principle of exogamy prohibits marriage between (consanguinal) kins. Thus while a man has authority over sister and her children he has little control over her sexuality as she marries a person outside the descent group.

Although these ideas have yet to gain wide acceptance the strategy adopted by the SRT has dangerous portends for women. By knitting kinship rules with ethnicity it not only seeks to produce an ideology that puts heavy constraints on women's behaviour it also gives legitimacy to the state to extend its control over the family⁸⁸. That this control is directed primarily at women, as indicated by its demand to suspend inheritance rights to the female who marries an outsider and the corresponding silence on the male, calls for a serious examination of the matter. This exercise is crucial because the demand for reforms in the rules of descent comes alongside the official moves at codification of tribal laws and customs. Indeed, speculation about codification of customary laws have been going on for over a decade in some of the North-Eastern state. Recently, the Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly took the lead when it passed the Arunachal Pradesh Protection of Customary laws and Social Practices Bill, in November 1994. The Bill raised the ire of several womens organisations in the state who expressed their concern not only at the undemocratic manner in which the Bill was introduced in the state Assembly without any debate, they are also highly distressed that the Bill was passed without removing the many oppressive features pertaining to women⁸⁹. The enactment of the Bill for

88. Nangbri, op.cit. p.17.

89. It may be mentioned that in April 1992 the Arunachal Pradesh Women's welfare Society made a representation to the governor seeking his intervention in initiating measures for the protection and welfare of women in the state Besides highlighting some of

the protection of customary laws and social practices not only strongly suggest that the state is grossly indifferent to the problem of women it also gives the impression that it has a vested interest in legitimizing and reinforcing women's oppression⁹⁰. The view that the state is deliberately compromising the interests of women gains further credence from the surreptitious manner in which the Bill was humbly introduced and passed in a one-day session of the State Assembly allegedly summoned without proper public notification⁹¹.

the social evils namely, child marriage, forced marriage, Polygyny, Prostitution and rape of which women are the unfortunate victims, the memorandum also drew up a broad action scheme directed at the proper development and socio-economic uplift of women. To achieve the objective the APWWS also presented an Appeal to Chief Minister (in January 1994) for the constitution of Women's commissions in the state in accordance with the National Commission for Women Act, 1990. The appeal however, appeared to have fallen on deaf ears as so far no concrete steps have been taken for the improvement of women. Nongbri, Ibid p.19.

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid.

CHAPTER V

**WOMEN HAVE THEIR
FUTURE TENSE !**

CHAPTER V

WOMEN HAVE THEIR FUTURE TENSE!

“It is as if ‘women’, who have been erroneously or ignorantly represented, might yet, reconstructed, come into their own..... If ‘women’ can be credited with having a tense, then it is a future tense.”

[Riley, Denise, 1995, p.225]¹

While women, in this context tribal Women, were misrepresented in the past the contemporary also betrayed them; they were denied subjectivity in the ‘tradition’ which was contained through subsequent transformations. The *praxis approach* which informs the present endeavour tends to proclaim that future can still be theirs ! This approach stands in sharp opposition to state-centric approach which is *remedial* and *ad-hoc*. For the state, ‘women’ and other sociological categories, arrayed in groups are like figures in a geographical landscape rather than episodes in history having their conscious past. The reformist assumptions are incapable of articulating the aspirations of an emancipatory agenda; as a category it turned out to be inert and unilluminatingly reductive.

In the tribal societies surveyed here, having both matrilineal and Patrilineal descent and inheritance systems there do exist mechanisms to

1. Riley, Denise. “ Gendering the social “ in Patrice Joyce (ed), class, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1995, pp. 225.

control female sexuality, even though the extent and *modus operandi* differ from society to society. Here, it is desirable to reconsider the term 'sexuality'. Sexuality in this specific context means the reproductive ideology and its regulatory effect. This ideology is binding, coercive, repressive and exclusionary in *bio-material* sense; bio-material sense implies that it regulates women's body on the basis of the fact that they are biologically sexed differently from men. The cultural exaggeration of this difference becomes exclusionary and also violent in many ways.

The exaggeration is exclusionary in material sense having implication in terms of tremendous erosion of democratic space in the context of gender relationships, "Bio", here primarily is indicative of body (women's), the regulation and control of which may take the form of forced pregnancies or clitoridectomy. This force and violence may be perceived as cultural symbol ! The "Bio" aspect, however, has not been much highlighted in the present endeavour. The major thrust of discussion through out this paper is focused on more material aspect, that is, the relationship between gender, kinship and economics. In this respect 'property' however it is approached and whatever it's constituents, is a crucial indicator of the balance of power between women and man. The several questions addressed here are, in what ways have the relationships between women and men been structured by an access to, control over and transmission of property? To what extent and in what respect women themselves and their offsprings constitute

property? In other words, the effect of gender ideology and their material consequences is the focal point . The reproductive ideology is taxing for women in two ways: it excludes women from exercising control over productive and reproductive resources of the society, while it organises women's role in production and reproduction in such a manner that their (Women's) contributions in the latter two processes become substantial. This substantial contribution, however, may not be noticed or may remain 'invisible' because of the cultural construction of self or person and the way this process shapes perception. The literature abounds with cautionary examples of women who are defined as 'housewives' when they are actually involved in agricultural labour and small-scale market production, in addition to their household maintenance and child care². This 'invisibility' again is generated through the reproductive ideology which in turn becomes a justification for 'less reward-less control', and an unequal access to resources, deciding the woman's (subject) position in hierarchy and power relations. It is in this sense that sexuality has been defined and used throughout the paper.

Henrietta Moore subtly remarks that kinship systems are essentially about the ways in which men could gain access, to or arrange for other

2. Fruzetti, Lina. " Farm and Hearth : Rural Women and The Farming Community " in Haleh. Afshar (ed), *Women, Work and Ideology in Third World*, Tavistok, London, pp. 37 -65.

men to gain access, to resources including women³. Women certainly have rights in kinship system but systems of marriage, residence, descent and inheritance are rarely organised in such a way as to guarantee women's access to resources and/or allow them to *secure* access for other women. It has long been argued that matrilineal systems are not different in this respect from patrilineal ones. If patriliney creates ties between father and wife's sons⁵, then matriliney creates ties between mother's brother and sister's son,. It is sometimes thought that matrilineal systems necessarily involve a more equal relationship, but as Audrey Richards said of matrilineal Bembas : "This is a male dominant society and even though descent is reckoned through the mother, the wife is very much under the control of her husband, even while he is an outsider in his wife's village"⁶.

Among our samples taken for cross-cultural comparison the example of matrilineal Akan from the Gold coast colony and Ashanti presents the some what same picture as the Bemba, mentioned by Richard. Apart from patrilineation, practices such as mother's brother's control over his sister's

-
3. Moore, Henrietta, *Feminism and Anthropology*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1988, pp. 45.
 5. Meillassoux, Claude, *Maidens, Meal and Money*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981, pp. 23.
 6. Richards, Audrey I. "Some types of family structure among the Central Bantu ", in A.R. Radcliffe Brown and Daryll Forde (eds), *African system of Kinship and Marriage*, Oxford university Press, London. 1950, P.225

children and husband's right in relation to his wife show that matrilineality of *Akan* society was not synonymous with female dominance. A wife's duty to labour for her husband without any reciprocal duty on his part tended to sabotage women's attempt at farming for themselves and therefore their use of available land. Dzodzi Tasikta's⁷ survey of matrilineal and patrilineal tribes of Southern Ghana shows that there is no law to address the distribution of resources in customary divorces. The customary laws both patrilineal and matrilineal groups, do not recognise non-monetary contributions to the acquisition of property during married life. Of course, in other matrilineal societies like *Garo* and *Khasis*, the structural features of Kinship organisation are such that they provide women with control over their own sexuality; neither the husbands, nor the brother can be concerned about it, as in patrilineal societies, but this freedom is counter balanced by lack of exercise of choices in other more crucial spheres e.g.. women are debarred from having any say in political decision making. This feature cuts across tribes whether patrilineal or matrilineal. The gender discriminatory practices which flow out from reproductive ideology was and is the integral part of all the societies taken into account which found continuous expression in subsequent phases of transformation as is evident

7. Tasikta, Dzodzi, "Gender, kinship and control of resources in colonial Southern Ghana" in, Rajni Palriwala and Carla Risseuw (ed). *Shifting Circle of Support: Contextualising Gender and Kinship in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa*, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 1996. PP.101-131.

from the example of *Yoruba* society. Not only that the male control over public decision making domain gave them the critical influence over the modification of legal and societal rules when external conditions began to change in significant ways, the agencies which were instrumental in bringing changes were themselves guided by patriarchal principles. The two different trends that can be discerned from the cross-cultural comparison are that, either the gender discriminatory practices got reaffirmed or were superimposed by the agencies of change in colonial and post-colonial phase. Tasikta shows in the case of tribes of southern Ghana as to how the pre-existing gender bias in customary practices got reaffirmed as the colonial policy was necessarily 'makeshift'⁸; while on the other hands in Garo case, the relative egalitarian tribal society was transformation through conscious efforts' into a class and gender differentiated society, by the colonial state. The *pattas* were granted in male names and the new techniques of agriculture were taught to men alone because women were not perceived by colonisers as 'proper farmers'.⁹ That this kind of assumption or perception on the part of state agency may lead them to initiate certain "welfare measures" which in turn would lead

8. Ibid. P.125-127

9. Agrawal, Bina, *A Field of One's Own : Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994. p.225.

TH-6142

to a further erosion of democratic space. Patricia Caplan's¹⁰ field work on *Mafia Island* of Tanzania examines some of the recent state directed changes in the area of property holding and their possible implications for women. In the Mafia Island, household family is not equivalent to a corporate property owning group under the control of a male head. Instead, it is a loose co-residential and commensal group in which individuals hold private property while also holding rights to communal property via their membership of descent groups irrespective of gender¹¹. To Caplan, it is because such units are not property owning corporate groups, rather property is owned by individuals both men and women, that women have a fair degree of autonomy in this society¹². This situation does not appear likely to continue, as state in its 'welfare measures' discursively constructed an entity called 'family' which is quite alien to this society. Its assignation to such a unit of co-residential production and reproduction function and in it's assignment of property holding function to this unit, the state seems likely to erode even further the autonomy which women previously enjoyed¹³. The assumption behind this move is that of a male head and his family.

10. Caplan, Patricia., "Cognetic Descent, Islamic law and women's Property on the East African Coast" in Renee Hirschon (ed) *Women and Prosperity: Women as Prosperity*, Croom Helm, London and Canberra, 1984, PP.23-43.

11. Ibid. p.38.

12. Ibid. p.42

13. Ibid.

Hence it becomes obvious that the reproductive ideology is one arena where local/indigenous and alien, in this context, colonial conflate. The evolutionary model of changing mode of production, i.e., one mode of production say 'feudal' replaced by 'capitalist as envisaged by classical marxist, will not solve our purpose. What we need to see is that, in the changing modes of production, how the hierachical principles are both created and are carried over from the past. This process, apart from other things is a gendered one.

The process of change affected men and women in these societies, but differently. The underlying reason was that the women's position was strongly mediated and determined by their ability to control, utilize and dispose off economic resources and the product of these resources. These factors are in turn determined by *the sexual division of labour*, the organisation of household and *kinship*, marital and inheritance patterns. In the illustration cited in the third chapter, of Yoruba society, it has been shown that the male control of technology and capital in the subsistence mode of production ensured their predominance in the cash-crop production when the subsistence production was altered as the Yoruba moved in 19th century.¹⁴ In other words, the answer to this lies in the control that men had, over women's labour and reproduction in the subsistence economy,

14. Afonja, Simi, "Changing mode of production and Sexual division of labour among Yoruba" *Sings: JWCS*, Vol.7, No.2, 1981, PP. 299-313.

not solely in the opportunity given by colonial administration.¹⁵ Another, illustration in chapter four, in a way contradicts this generalisation. That is, Garo society of north east India, where it was not the complete control over women's labour and reproduction that created gender hierarchy but, it was the colonial administration which superimposed the gender and class hierarchy. This observation in the process of change as documented by Bina Agrawal¹⁶ is significant, but we cannot deny the gender inequality in the traditional set-up in terms of women's treatment as legal minors; as among the Khasis women could not voice their opinion regarding political issues because they are portrayed as *hen* in the cultural idiom, who are not supposed to *crow!*.¹⁷

The inference drawn from the discussions throughout, point to the fact that women's position in tribal society was not equal. Their subordination; ideological, material and political cuts across regions and tribes, the degree of the subordination, however varied from tribe to tribe, also depending upon the mode of Kinship organisation in structural terms e.g. Patrilineal or matrilineal. While in the examples from Indian north-east matrilineal tribes, women did have freedom to an extent which was by no means insignificant, the matrilineal *Akan* from Ashanti and Gold coast

15. Ibid, P.187

16. Agrawal, Bina, op.cit.

17. Nongbri, Tiplut, "Gender Issues and Tribal Development", 1996, Forthcomming.

colony of sub-saharan Africa does not provide any liberatory space to women in their kinship organisation; both mother's brother and husband exercised authority in this case.¹⁸ Since the relationship between Kinship, economics and gender has been problematized as a dynamic and shifting process rather than static, the changes were also reflected either in accentuating or reinforcing the existing gender hierarchy or creating and superimposing new gender hierarchies along with the other. Hence, the justification of the title of this chapter, *Women have their future tense!*

Feminist scholars have cautioned against treating women as passive victims and have tried to document the ways women express their resistance. Bina Agarwal while delving into the covert forms of resistance in women's speech and action also points out to the material constraints on women's overt resistance.¹⁹ To understand women's perceptions, writes Agarwal, it is necessary to penetrate the surface of behaviour, taking cognizance of covert acts of resistance and probing the obstacles to overt resistance.²⁰ The appearance of compliance need not mean that women lack a correct perception of their best interests; rather it can reflect a survival strategy stemming from the constraints on their ability to act overtly in pursuit of those interests. Compliance need not imply complicity.²¹

18. Tasikta, Dzodzi, op.cit

19. Agrawal, Bina, op.cit, p.429.

20. Ibid.P.430.

21. Agrawal mention, how some women looked upon stealing from the family's granery as taking their just dues. Ibid, P.431.

Women are not necessarily complacent about their own oppression, and that their existing levels of conscience could provide a basis for building more organised overt resistance.²² At the same time, these are unlikely to constitute a sufficient condition for effective change. *Ilina Sen* in her edited book, “*A space within the struggle*”, documents women`s participation in the broader mass movements. In these mass movements women have participated in significant numbers and they have contributed a special women`s viewpoint to the discourse of their various movements²³. Women in these movements do not strive for autonomous or independent articulation of only their women specific demands. At the same time their articulation of demands and issues exert a pressure on these movements to take cognizance of the movement in their mass base²⁴. *Ilina Sen*, here, criticises the conventional feminism or a separate women`s movement as `narrow` and `one dimensional`. She emphasises on the `space` which is created from within these movements which is utilised by women to articulate their oppression and hence pressure comes up for change in that process — a struggle within the struggle.

22. Ibid. P.436.

23. Sen, *Ilina* (ed), *A space within the struggle: Women`s participation in People`s Movement*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1990. See, the introduction, PP.1-18

24. Ibid. P.4

The movement of *adivasis* and the growth of Sharmik Sanghathana in Maharashtra's Dhulia district was a movement of restoration of social and economic dignity of the disinherited tribal peasantry of Sahada whose lands and assets had been appropriated by settlers from outside. The frequent sexual violations of the tribal women was a symbol of humiliation of the tribal. The Shramik Sangathan's militant struggles led to a change in this. Initially, the main focus in the Sangathan's work with women was their mobilisation. Along with the attack on their violation of women's dignity from outside community - which fitted in very well with the focus of the entire organisation - the presence of outside activists was responsible for the injection into the movement of issue of domestic violence, alcoholism etc. that challenged patriarchal relations within the tribal community and it was through efforts of women's front that systematic exposure of subordination of women in customary tribal law became available. In discussions it became clear that the tribal did not wish to opt for a common civil code. Rather they preferred to reform tribal law while at the same time fighting for the changes within.

[Sen, Ilina, Ibid, p. 7 -8]

This excerpt echoes what Ilina Sen points to argue, that a separate women's movement headed by groups of women's activists who are structurally linked to the feminist group of west, have often remained circumstantially distant from the actual lives of poor women, even when they have made conscious efforts to articulate their needs²⁵. While the strength of the 'space' created within these struggles as documented by Sen cannot be denied, it is also indispensable to see the weaknesses of these kinds of movement. Nathan and Kelkar's study of Santhal rebellion during colonial period and the recent Jharkhand movement, already cited

25. Ibid.

in chapter two and three of this dissertation, point to the fact, as to how the rebellions have been taking the community in the direction of strengthening or establishing male domination in political and social sphere²⁶. The patriarchal intent in the whole discourse of the movement led to the 'housewifisation' process²⁷. Women were not allowed to go out of the village to work on the fields resulting in assaults on women attempting to go to work, by the village volunteers²⁸. Ilina Sen, while talking about the Assam movement of 1979, herself acknowledges the limitations of these movements from gender sensitive perspective. She says that while great importance was attached in this movement to women's mobilisation, equal stress does not seem to have been given to the articulation of women's special issues or a separate women's platform.²⁹ Nongbri's documentation of the engenderisation process of tribal ethnicity, cited in chapter four, highlights not only the limitations of these movements from gender sensitive perspective, but the repercussions inflicted upon the women folk of these respective societies³⁰. So, while we acknowledge the space created within the struggle to utilise it for gender equality, one needs to be aware

26. Kelkar, Govind and Nathan, Dev, Gender and Tribe : Women, Land and Forest in Jharkhand, Kali for Women, New Delhi, P.151.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Sen, Ilina, op.cit.P.9.

30. Nongbri, T. op.cit. P.9.

of the other side also. In a socio - political reality where patriarchal practices run from start to finish, the visionaries of gender emancipatory politics will have to create possibilities at different levels not only from within the struggle but also outside it. Bina Agarwal highlights the catalytic role often played by middle class activists with gender progressive views in giving shape and direction to peasant women's demands and in group mobilization³¹. She cites *Chetna Gala* who has played an important role in both the *Bodhagaya* and *Shetkari Sanghatana* struggles in helping to shape the demand for women's land rights³². Women's voices from many different organizations across South Asia affirms the significance of group strength in improving women's fall-back position and empowering them in a number of ways : in negotiating better treatment within and outside the family ; in more firmly resisting family pressure, especially from husband ; in pressurising the government for improvements in law and their implementations and in standing up to community censure especially in ideological terms and to bringing about changes in how they are perceived by others and also how they perceive themselves. Group organisation empowers women to confront existing sources of oppression. *Nongbri*³³, cites the example as to how Arunachal Pradesh Protection of Customary Laws and Social Practices Bill, Which was passed by the State Assembly

31. Agrawal op.cit, P.453.

32. Ibid.

33. Nongbri, op.cit.

in November 1994 raised the ire of several women organisations in the state who expressed their concern at the undemocratic manner in which the Bill was introduced without any debate and without removing many oppressive features pertaining to women. When the appeal to the political leadership in the state failed to evoke the desired response the APWWS (Arunachal Pradesh Women's Welfare Society) reached out to women's organisations at the centre for their support. She says, that it is perhaps for the first time that tribal women who are located in India's periphery (both in cultural and spatial terms) came forward to forge their links with mainstream women's organisations in their struggle against gender exploitation. In this context it is pertinent to recall Agarwal's observation:

The State has the power to enact laws and formulate policies and programmes; to allocate financial resources for reducing gender bias access to production resources, employment ----- to counteract the force of 'doxa' by influencing discourse on gender relations in specific directions through media and educational institutions and so on. All these are potential areas of co-operation between state and women's groups.

[Aggarwal, 1994, pp. 77.]

Winding up, the present endeavour is not conclusionary, but exploratory. Despite the increased yield of recent research the factual vacuum on these topics is still enormous. The inferences drawn on the basis of available resources magnify the need for additional case-studies and for the expansion of geographic scope of such research.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adepoju, Aderanti, *Patterns of migration by sex* in C. Opong, ed., *Female and Male in West Africa*, George Allen and Unwin London, pp. 54-66.
- Agarwal, Bina, *A Field of One's Own : Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994.
- Ahmed, Imtiaz, *Family, Kinship and Marriage among Muslims in India*, Manohar, New Delhi 1976.
- Barens, J.A., *Kinship studies : some impressions of the current state of play*, *Man* n.s. 15, pp. 239-303, 1980.
- Bauman, Richard and Sherzer, Joel, ed., *Exploration in the Ethnography of Speaking*, Cambridge University Press Cambridge, 1974.
- Bhasin, Kamala and Nighat Said Khan, *Some Questions on Feminism and It's Relevance in South Asia*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1986.
- Bell, Diane, *Daughters of Dreaming*, Mcphee Gribble, Melbourne, 1983.
- *Women's business is hard work: Central Australian Women's love ritual*, *Signs*, Vol.7, No.2, 1981, pp. 314-317.
- *The politics of separation* in Marilyn Strathern's ed., *Analysing Gender Relations in Malenesia and Beyond*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1987, pp.112-129.
- Benedict, Ruth, *Patterns of Culture*, Routledge and Kagen Paul London, 1935.

- Beneria L. and G. Sen, *Accumulation, reproduction and women's role in economic development : Boserup revisited*. Signs, Vol. 7, 1981, pp. 279-98.
- Blumberg, R.L. , *Stratification : Socio-economic and Sexual Inequality*, C. Brown Company Publishers, Dubuque. 1978.
- Boserup, Esther, *Women's Role in Economic Development*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1970.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, translated by R. Nice, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977.
- *The reality of representation and the representation of reality*. in Patrick Joyce ed., *Class*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1995, pp. 99-103.
- Bozzdi, Belinda, *Marxism, feminisim and South African Studies*, Journal of South African Studies, Vol.9, No.2, 1983, pp.139-71.
- Burja, Janet, *Women and field work*, in *Women Cross-culturally : Change and Challenge* ed., Ruby Rohrlich-Leavitt, Mouton, The Hague, 1975, pp. 551 - 557.
- Caws, Peter, *Identity : cultural transcultural and multicultural*, in David Theo ed., *Multiculturalism : A Critical Reader*, Basil Blackwell, Goldberg, 1994. pp. 371 -387.
- Chhachhi, Amrita, *The state religious fundamentalism and women : trends in South Asia*, EPW, March, 18, 1989.
- Channa, Subhadra, *Idiology production and reproduction : pre - capitalist social formations among the Toda*, Eastern Anthropologist, Vol.43, No.1, August - Sept. 1990. pp. 100 - 122.
- Chie, Nakane. *Garo and Khashi : A comparative Study in Matrilineal System*, Mouton, Paris. 1967.

- Christian, Barbara, *Diminishing returns : can Black Feminism(s) survive the academy*, in David Theo ed., *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader*, Goldberg, 1994, pp. 158 - 179.
- Clark, Alice W, ed., *Gender and Political Economy: Explorations of South Asian Systems*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi 1993.
- Cladwell, John, *African Rural Migration*, Australian National University Press, 1969.
- Clark, Alice w. (ed). *Gender and Political Economy : Exploration of South Asian System*, Oxford University Press New Delhi, 1993.
- Clifford, James and George E. Marcuse eds. *Writing Culture : The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, University of California Press, Berkeley. 1986.
- Clifford, James, *The Predicament of Culture : Twentieth - Century Ethnography, Literature and Art*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1988.
- Clough, Patricia Ticineto, *The End(s) of Ethnography : From Realism to Social Criticism*, University of Illinois, 1995.
- Cohan, Bernard S., *Anthropology and history in the 1980`s* , *Journal of Inter-disciplinary History*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1981, pp. 227-52.
- Collier, Jane and Rosaldo, Michelle Z. *Gender and sexuality in simple societies*, in S.B. Ortener and H. Whitehead, ed., *Sexual Meanings : The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1981.
- Comaroff, J. ed. , *The Meaning of Marriage Payments*, Academic Press, London, 1980.

Cordell, L.S. and Bekerman, S., ed., *The Versatility of Kinship*, Academic Press, New York, 1979.

Declich, Francesca, *Gendered narratives, history and identity : two centuries among the Juba river among the Zingula and Shanbara* , *History of Africa : A Journal of Method* Vol. 22, 1995. pp. 93 - 122.

Dirks, Nicholas B, Eley, Geoff and Ortner, Sherry B., ed., *Culture/Power/History : A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1994.

Dube, Leela, *Seed and earth: the symbolism of biological reproduction and sexual relations of production*, in Leela Dube, Eleanor Leacock and Shirley Ardener, ed., Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1986, pp.22-53.

Engels, F., *The Origin of The Family, Private Property and the State*, printed in *The Union Soveit Socialist Republic*, 1977.

Ericksen, Karen Paige, *Female genital mutilation in Africa* , *Behaviour Science Research* , Vol.23, 1 - 4, 1989, pp. 182 - 204.

Flax, Jane, *Post modernism and gender relations in feminist theory*, *Signs : J.W.C.S.* Vol.14 No.1 Autumn 1988 , pp. 196 -200.

Gardener K. , *Songs at the River's Edge*, Macmillan, London, 1991.

Gluckman, Max, *Custom and Conflict in Africa*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1955.

Godliar, Maurice, *Perspectives in Marxist Anthropology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977.

Goody, Jack, ed., *The Developmental Cycle in Domestic Groups*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1971.

----- *Kinship : Selected Readings*, Penguin Books, 1971.

- Production and Reproduction : A Comparative Study of Domestic Domain., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976.
- The Oriental the Ancient and the Primitive : Systems of Marriage and Family in the Pre - industrial Societies of Eurasia. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990.
- Goody, Jack and Tambiah, S.J, *Bridewealth and Dowry*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1973.
- Gregory, James, *The myth of the male ethnographer and women`s world*, *American Anthropologists*, 86(2), 1984, pp. 316 - 27.
- Haraway, Donna, *Primate Visions : Gender, Race and Nature in the World of Modern Science*. Routledge, New York, 1989.
- Harding, Sandra, ed., *Feminism and Methodology*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1987.
- Hasan, Joya ed., *Forging Identities : Gender, Communities and State*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1994.
- Hirschon, Renee, ed. , *Women and Property : Women as Property*, Croom Helm, London and Canberra, 1984.
- Huizer, G. , *Research-through-action : Some practical experiences with peasant organisation*, in G. Huizer and B. Mannheim, ed., *The Politics of Anthropology* Mouton, The Hague, 1978.
- Izzard, wendy, *Migrants and mothers: case studies from Botswana* , *Jouranal of South Africaan studies*, vol. II, No. 2 pp. 258-8.
- Jaquette, J. S, *Women and moderazation theory: A decade of feminist critisim*, *World Politics*, Vol. XXXIV, no. 2, 1982, pp. 267-84

- Johnson, Samuel, *The History of Yourbas*, Church Missionary Society , Legos, Nigeria, 1980.
- Joshephides, Lisette, *Metaphores, methathems and the construction of the new Malanesion ethrography*, MAN: The JRAI, New Series, Vol. 26, 1991 pp. 145-161
- Kabber, Naila, *Reversed Realities : Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1995.
- Kaberry, Phyllis, *Aboriginal Women : Sacred and Profane*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1939.
- *Women of the Grassfields*, HMSO Colonial Office, London, 1952.
- *Malinowski`s contribution to Fieldwork Methods and Writing of ethnography* in R. Firth ed., *Man & Culture*, Routledge and Kagen Paul, 1957.
- Kelkar, Govind, & Nathan, Dev, *Gender and Tribe : Women, Land and Forest in Jharkhand*, Kali For Women, New Delhi, 1991.
- Kinsman, M. "Beasts Of Burden : The Subordination Of Southern Tswana Women, Ca, 1800-1840," *Journal Of Southern African Studies*, Vol.10, No.1 , 1983 PP.39-54.
- Kishwar, M., *Toiling Without Rights: Ho Women Of Singhbhum*. EPW, 22 (3), PP.95-101 , 22 (4) PP.149-55 , 22(5), PP. 194-200.
- Koso-Thomas, Olayinka, *The Circumcision Of Women*, Zed Books Ltd. , London And New Jersey, 1987.
- Kuper, Adam, *Anthropology And Anthropologist*, Routledge And Kagen Paul London,1983.
- *Wires for Cattle : Bridewealth And Marriage in Southern Africa*, Routledge And Kagen Paul, London, 1982.

- Laughlin, Bridget.O, *Mediation of a contradiction : why M'bum Women do not eat chicken*, in M. Rosaldo And L. Lamphere, ed, *Women Culture And Society*, Standford University Press, Standford, 1974.
- Leach, E.R, *Aspects of bride-wealth and marriage stability among the Kachin and Lakher*. *Man*, 57, 1957, pp. 50-7.
- Leacock, Eleanor, *Myths of Male Dominance*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1982.
- Levine, Nancy, *The Dynamics of Polyandry : Kinship, Domesticity And Population In Tibetan Border*, The University Of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1988.
- Lukes, S, *Power: A Radical View*, Macmillan, London, 1974.
- Maharaj, Zarina, *A social theory of gender : Conell's gender and power*, *Feminist Review*, No.49 Spring, 1995 .
- Majumdar,D.N, and Madan, T.N, *An Introduction to Social Anthropology* , Mayoor Paperbacks , Delhi 1994. .
- Mann, K. , *Tribal Women in a Changing Society*, Mittal Publications , Delhi , 1987.
- Marcus, G.E. and Fisher, M.J, *Anthropology as a Cultural Critique : An Experimental Moment in the Human Science*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1986.
- Max, Karl, *Captial Vol. 3* , Moscow Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1958.
- Mascia-Less, Frances E, Patricia Sharpe, and Colleen Ballerino Cohen, *The post-modernist turn in anthropology : cautions from a feminist perspective*, *Signs*, 15, 1989 PP. 7-33.
- Meillassoux, Claude, *From production to reproduction : a market approach to economic anthropology*, *Economy and Society* ,1 , 1975 PP. 93-105.

- Mikell, G, *Cocoa and Chaos in Ghana* , Paragon House, New York, 1989.
- Moore, Henrietta, *Feminism and Anthropology*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1988.
- Nakane, C, *Garos & Khasis : A Comparative Study in Matrilineal Systems*, Mouton, Paris and the Hague, 1967.
- Nash, Kate, *The feminist production of knowledge : is deconstruction a practice for women?* *Feminist Review*, No. 47, summer, 1994.
- Needham, Rodney, *Rethinking kinship and Marriage*, Tavistock, London, 1971
- Obbo, Christine, *African Women : Their Struggle for Economic Independence*, Zed Press, London, 1980.
- Ogbu, John, *African bridewealth and women's status*, *American Ethnologists*, 5 (2), 1978 , pp. 241-62.
- Omvedt, Gail, *On the participant study of women's movements : methodological, definitional and action considerations* , in G. Huizer & B. Mannheim, ed , *The Politics of Anthropology* , Mouton, the Hague, 1978.
- Ortner, Sherry, B., *Is female to male as nature to culture ?*, in M. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere, ed., *Women, culture and Society*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1974, PP. 67-88.
- Paige, K.E. and Paige, J.M, *The Politics of Reproductive Rituals*, University of California Press, 1981.
- Palriwala, Rajni & Dube, Leela, ed., *Structures and Strategy : Women Work and Family*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1990.
- Palriwala, Rajni & Risseuw, Carla, ed., *Shifting Circles of support : Contextualising Gender and Kinship in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa*, Sage Publications, New Delhi , London, 1996.

- Parpart, Jane L. and Staudt, Kathleen A. ed., *women and the state in Africa*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder & London, 1989.
- Pathy, Jaganath, *The idea of tribe and the Indian scene*, *Man in India*, Vol.69, No. 4, Dec.1989. pp. 346-58.
- Pathy, Suguna, *Women, Kinship relations and beyond*, *Man in India*, Vol.73, No.2 1993, pp.117-124.
- Perrot, Michelle, *Culture, power and women : a historiographical essay*, Trns. Narayani Gupta, in Maurice Aymard and Harbans Mukhia, ed., *French Studies in History*, Vol. II, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1988.
- Pritchard, E.E. Evans, *The Position of Women in Primitive Societies and Other Essays in social Anthropology*, Faber and Faber Ltd, London,1965.
- Randolph, Richard R., David M. Schneider, and May N.Diaz, ed., *Dialectics and Gender: Anthropological Approaches*, Westview Press, Boulder and London.
- Ranger, Terence, *The invention of tradition in colonial Africa*, in Ranger and Eric Hobsbawm, ed., *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge university Press, Cambridge, 1992, PP. 211-262.
- Riley, Denise, *Gendering the Social*, in Patrice Joyce ed., class, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1995 PP. 225-229.
- Robertson, Claire C. and Klien, Martin A. ed., *Women and Slavery In Africa*, the university of Wisconsin Press, 1983.
- Rogers, Susan Carol., *Female forms of power and the myth of male dominance : a model for male / female interaction in peasant society*. *American Ethnologist*, 12, (4), 1975, pp. 727-56.

- *Women's place : a critical review of anthropological theory*, comparative Studies In Society and History, 1978, PP. 123-62.
- Rosaldo, Michelle, Z., *The use and abuse of anthropology: reflexions on feminism and cross-cultural undustanding*, Sings, Vol.5, No.3, 1980, PP.389-417.
- Sacks, Karen, *Sisters And Wives*, Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn 1979.
- Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, Vintage Books, New York 1979.
- Sandy, P.R. *Toward a theory of the status of women*, American Anthropologist, 1973, Vol.75: 1682-1700.
- Sangari, Kumkum, *Cosent agency and rhetorics of incitement*, EPW, May, 1, 1993.
- Sangari, Kumkum and Vaid Sudesh, ed., *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1989.
- Sangren, P. Steven, *Rhetoric and authority of ethnography : postmodernism and the social reproduction of texts* , Current Anthropology, 29, No. 3 June, 1988.
- Schegel, Alice ed., *Sexual Stratification : A Cross-Cultural View*, Columbia University Press, New Yark, 1977.
- Schneider, David and Gough, Kathleen, ed., *Matrilineal Kinship*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1961.
- Schneider, D, *A note on bride wealth and the stability of marriage*, Man, 53, 1953 PP.55-7.
- Schrijvers, Joke, *The Violence Of Development : A choice for Intellectuals*, Institute For Development Research , Amsterdam International Books, Utretch. 1994.

- *Viricentrism in anthropology*, in *The Politics of Anthropology* ed., Gerrit Huizer And Bruce Mannheim, Mouton, The Hague, 1979, PP97-115.
- Sen, Ilina, ed., *A Space Within the Struggle*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1990.
- Sharipo, Judith, *Anthropology and the study of gender*, in E. Langland And W. Gove, ed., *A Feminist Perspective in the Acedemy*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1981.
- Sharma, Ursula, *Women's Work, Class And Urban Household*, Tavistock, London, 1986.
- *Women , Work And property In North East India*, Tavistock Publications, London, and New York, 1980.
- Shimizu, Akitoshi, *On the notion of kinship*, Man, the JRAI, N.S.26, 1991, PP.377-403.
- Sing, J.P., Vyas N.N. & Mann, R.S. ed., *Tribal Women And Development*, The MLV Tribal Research and Training Institute, Tribal Area Development, Rajasthan, Udaipur,.
- Srivastava , Rahul, *Anthropology as a cultural criticism*, EPW, Feb.11 , 1995 PP.312-14.
- Staud, K, *Agricultural productivity gaps : A Case study of male preference in government policy implementation*, Development And Change, Vol.9 , No.3 , PP. 439-57 1978.
- Strathern, Marilyn, *Out of context : the persuasive fictions of anthropology*, Vol.20, No.3, June, 1986.
- *Culture in a netbag : the Manufacture of A subdiscipline in anthropology*, Man: The Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute, New Series Vol.16, 1981 PP.665-88.

- The Gender of Gift : Problems With Women and Problems With Society In Malenesia, University Of California Press, Berkely, Los Angeles, London.1988.
- Dealing with Inequality : Analysing Gender Relations in Malanesia and Beyond, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987.
- Taylor, Charls, *The politics of recognition*, in *Multiculturalism And The Politics Of Recognition'* ed., Amy Gutmann, Steven C. Rockefeller, Michael Walzer And Susan Wolf, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1992, PP. 30-42.
- Tinker, Irene, *New technologies for food-related activities : an equity strategy*, in R. Danber And M.Cain ed., *Women And Technological Change In Developing Countries* , Westview Press, 1981, Boulder And Colarado, PP.51-88.
- Uberoi, Patricia, ed., *Family, Maniage and Kimship in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1994.
- Urdang, Stephaine, *And still They Dance : Women, War and the strggle for change in Mozambique*, Earthscan Publications Ltd., London, 1989.
- Van Drief, Francien, *Marriage from rule to rarity? : change in gender relations in Botswana*, in Rajni Palriwala and Carla Reisseuw, ed., *Shifiting circle of support : contextualising Gender and Kinship in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa* Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1996, PP. 51-78.
- Verdon, Michel, and Paul, Jorion, *The hords of discord : Australian Aboriginal Social Organization reconsidered*, Man, New Series, Vol.16 1981, PP. 90-107.

- Verghese, I, *Polyandry in Kota society : an appraisal*, in M.N. Raha ed.,
Polyandry in India, Gian Publishing House, New Delhi.
1987.
- Vidyarthi, L.P. and Rai B.K, *The Tribal culture of India*, Concept Publishing
Company, New Delhi, 1976.
- Walker, Anthony, *The Todas of South India*, Hindustan Publishing
Corporations, Delhi, 1986.
- Watson, H, *Women in the city of the Dead*, Hurst, London 1992.
- Wilks, I, *Asante in the Nineteenth century*, Cambridge University Press,
Cambridge, 1975
- Wylie, D, *A Little God: The Twilight of Patriarchy in a Southern African
Chieftdom*, Witwatersrand University Press,
Johannesburg, 1990.