

**THE IMAGE OF THE MOTHER IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA :
A STUDY OF KUNTĪ AND GĀNDHĀRĪ**

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

UJJAYINI BASU RAY

**CENTRE FOR HISTORICAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI-110 067
INDIA
1993**



JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

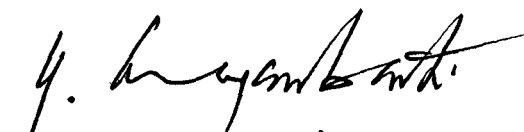
NEW DELHI-110067.

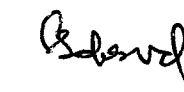
Centre for Historical Studies

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled.
"THE IMAGE OF THE MOTHER IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA: A STUDY OF
KUNTĪ AND GĀNDHĀRĪ" submitted by UJJAYINI BASU RAY in par-
tial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the
degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY of this University is her
original work and may be placed before the examiners for
evaluation.

This dissertation has not been submitted for the award
of any other degree of this University or any other Univer-
sity to the best of our knowledge.


Kunal Chakrabarti
SUPERVISOR


Satish Saberwal
CHAIRPERSON

PREFACE

The definition of a good woman according to the Āpas-tamba Dharmasūtra (I.10.51-53) is one "Who pleases her husband, gives birth to male children and never speaks back to her husband".

Much has been written on women in ancient India, especially on the one who pleases her husband and never speaks back to him i.e., the wife. But, surprisingly, considering that themes of motherhood and sexual reproduction are central to peoples' conception about women, little attention has been devoted to the one who gives birth to male children, the mother, barring the article of Sukumari Bhattacharji. By and large historians have tacitly tended to accept the conventionalized eulogy of motherhood found in the epics and Dharmaśāstras and other brahmanical texts. Thus, motherhood came to be regarded as "constant", as unchanging and immutable through the centuries and, therefore, not the proper subject of historical investigation. I was first attracted to the subject by the apparent contradiction in

the tradition that offered a formal eulogy of motherhood, but, continued to relegate to the background the WOMAN as the mother and the experiential aspect of motherhood. I turned to the Mahābhārata, and used the Dharmaśāstras as supportive evidence in an attempt to find an answer to this duality in brahmanical attitude.

During the course of my research I found the staff of the Nehru Memorial Library (Teen Murti), The Archaeological Survey of India Library and the Jawaharlal Nehru University Library, to be extremely helpful and so they deserve a word of gratitude. My deep appreciation to the management and staff of Arpan Photostat for giving the final shape to my dissertation.

I intend to utilise this opportunity to acknowledge my debts to Professor Romila Thapar, whose class lectures and stimulating discussion sessions reinforced my interest in ancient Indian history, to Dr. Patricia Uberoi, who initiated me into the subject of Women's Studies, and to Dr. Uma Chakravarty, whom I have never met, but whose articles confirmed my suspicions of the phallocentrism of historical

discourse on ancient India. I also include special word of thanks for my parents, for all my friends, especially Reeti, and of course Subho, who tried his intellectual best to wean me back from the supposedly "feminist path".

And a very special word of gratitude for my supervisor Kunal Chakrabarti for his constant encouragement and faith in me, and for his inexhaustible patience which I have often severely tested.

However, I wish to emphasise that I am solely responsible for all the errors and omissions.

16th June, 1993

Ujjayini BasuRay
U.B.R.

CONTENTS

	PAGE NO.
I INTRODUCTION -- ON WOMEN, THE MOTHER AND THE <u>MAHĀBHĀRATA</u>	1-37
II THE BRAHMANICAL CONCEPTUALIZATION OF OF MOTHERHOOD -- ITS EXPRESSION IN THE <u>DHARMAŚĀSTRAS</u> AND <u>MAHĀBHĀRATA</u>	38-61
III KUNTĪ AND GĀNDHĀRĪ IN THE <u>MAHĀBHĀRATA</u> -- THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NORMATIVE MODEL.	62-78
IV THE TWO FACES OF WOMEN IN THE <u>MAHĀBHĀRATA</u> -- THE WIFE VIS-A-VIS THE MOTHER	79-95
V CONCLUSION	96-99
BIBLIOGRAPHY	100-109

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: ON WOMEN, THE MOTHER AND THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

1a.) In the Book of Genesis the Lord said to woman -

"I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception, in sorrow thy shall bring forth Children and thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee".

Biblical mythology, by identifying the woman as the original 'sinner', attempted to provide a kind of justification for her subordination to male authority and her exclusion from high status occupations and positions of power. But with the rise of "feminist consciousness",¹ Women themselves started becoming aware of the asymmetries of power opportunities and situations that have universally marked their fortunes. Imbued with such consciousness they began to confront the universality of women's subordination and oppression and realise, that, whatever the power and status accorded to women in a given culture, they, in com-

1. Used in the same sense as by Keohane and Gelphi in N. Keohane, M. Rosaldo and Gelphi (eds). Feminist Theory : A Critique of Ideology. Harvester Press, U.K, 1982, "Introduction", where they distinguish between three types of consciousness - feminist, female and feminine.

parison to men, have always been devalued as the "second sex."² Attention was focussed on the pervasive pattern of subordination that have prevented the development of woman kind. The oppression of women was seen, both as a material reality originating in material conditions and as a psychological phenomenon, a function of the way women and men perceive one another and themselves.³ Different causes were attributed to the exploitation of women. Some suggested biological reductionism and argued that sexual division of labour and inequality between sexes is determined to some degree by the biological differences between men and women.⁴ Others argued that gender roles are culturally determined

-
2. The term has been borrowed from Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex. Picador Publications, London 1988(reprint) where she reiterates that since patriarchal times women have been forced to occupy a secondary place in relation to men. She says, "...Thus humanity is male and man defines women not in herself but as relative to him... she is defined and differentiated with reference to man ... she is the Incidental, the Inessential as opposed to the Essential. He is the Subject, he is Absolute and she is the Other." pg.16.
 3. C.Kahn & G.Green (eds) Making a Difference; Feminist Literary Criticism. Routledge, London, N.York, 1985, pg.3-5.
 4. Simone de Beauvoir, implied biological determinism when she said "They are women in virtue of their anatomy & physiology ... hence their dependency is not the result of a historical event or a social change. It was not something that occurred" op.cit., pg. 18.

and the inequality between sexes stem from socially constructed power relationships.

Thus the Women's Liberation Movement came into existence in the late 1960's and early 1970's which began to protest against what was perceived as a millennia of cultural subordination of women and their sexuality to the needs and fantasies of men. Feminists sought to liberate women from the structures that contributed to their marginalization and so feminism came to assume the hues of a political discourse, whose aim was not only to reinterpret the world, but to change the world itself. Fighting for "change", feminists put forth strong arguments for a different past without which the concept of a different future could not be achieved. To discover and create a history both for women and for their intellectual and practical struggle became the prime task.⁵

[It was while formulating a history that would validate their struggle, feminists discovered what has been called the 'invisibility' of women in traditional historiography.⁶

5. A. Oakley and J. Mitchell (eds) What is Feminism? Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986 pg.1.

6. U. Chakravarty and K. Roy "Breaking out of Invisibility." in S. Jay Kleinberg (ed) "Retrieving Women's History" Berg/ Unesco/, Oxford/ Paris. 1988.pg.319.

Because of a general tendency to identify men with humanity, and the association of men with social roles of dominance and authority, previous histories have treated women as theoretically uninteresting. Their exclusion as actors in history probably stemmed from the traditional focus of history writing, which was till recently, concerned with those who wielded power.⁷ Thus, women did not figure in any analysis of wars that women did not fight or in any accounts of parliaments in which they did not sit or of empires they did not conquer.⁸ But sometimes, when women did exercise power, they were seen as deviants or manipulators or at best exceptions. Uma Chakravarty and Kumkum Roy point out the distortions that occur in such situations. For example, when women have wielded power, they have usually been deni-

7 This notion is quite similar to that of Foucault who felt that the invisibility of women in history was linked to the question of power. Because of continued subordination women were denied status as historical actors and the historical discourse that denied women visibility also perpetuated their subordination and their image of passive recipients of other's acts, cited in ibid., pg. 15.

8. S. Jay Kleinberg (ed) Retrieving Women's History, op.cit.,pg.3. A similar view is expressed by Gerda Lerner in her book "The Majority finds its Past : Placing Women in History", Oxford University Press, London, 1979, when she says as long as "the transmission and experience of power" is its prime focus as long as "war and politics are seen as more significant to history than childrearing, women will remain marginalised and invisible." pg. 160-67.

grated by their contemporary male world, as is evident from the treatment of Diddā (in Kalhaṇa's Rājataranṅiṅī), of Razia Sultan by the medieval chroniclers and subsequent historians, and in the depiction of Noorjahan as extremely manipulative and power hungry. In contrast, women who combined motherhood with governance are perceived to be less threatening and are often mythified, like Rani Lakṣmī Bāi and Chāndbibi.⁹ Moreover, even when the domain of history was broadened beyond the study of wars and parliaments, it still remained biased because of the phallogocentric world view of the historian. To cite a few examples, traditional social histories on labour tend to concentrate on the activities of male trade unions and traditional economic histories on agriculture neglect women's role in it. Thus, traditional history has predominantly remained a record of male experience, written by men, from a male perspective.

While seeking to explain the prolonged invisibility of women in history Marxist feminists focussed on the relationship between capitalism and the sexual division of labour and pointed out that the ideology of separate spheres, with

9. These examples are taken from U. Chakravarty and K. Roy's article 'In Search of our Past' Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 23, No.18, April 1988, pg. W7.

| the male being identified with production and public activity and the female with reproduction and domestic activity led to a devaluation of woman's activities that rendered her unsuitable as a historical subject, as an agent of change. Others, basing themselves on Jacques Lacan, felt that woman's historical invisibility stemmed from her symbolic association with lack and loss, | with the threat posed by femininity to unified male subjectivity, with the status of the female as the Other.¹⁰ Feminists, following Ortner, accounted for the pan cultural devaluation of women by referring to their symbolic association with "nature" and of men with "culture" or as Ortner puts it, "women are seen as being closer to nature than men"¹¹ because of their reproductive physiology and the social roles associated with it. Men's activities are deemed cultural for "he creates relatively lasting, eternal, transcendent objects while women creates only perishables,"¹² and therefore, his activities are felt to be the proper subject of historical discourse.

10. S. Jay Kleinberg (ed) op cit., pg. 15.

11. Sherry Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture" in M. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (eds) Woman, Culture and Society. Stanford University, Stanford, 1974. pg.73.

12. ibid., pg.75.

Cixous developed the binary oppositions between male and female even further as (1) Activity/ Passivity, (2) Sun/Moon, (3) Culture/Nature, (4) Day/Night, (5) Father/Mother, (6) Head/Emotions, (7) Logos/Pathos, (8) Intelligence/Sensitivity¹³ and attempted to make clear the extent to which the masculine subject has relegated women to the negative pole of his hierarchies, associating her with the category of 'not man', that prop up his claim to centrality. History also became a casualty of this phallogentrism.

1b. Thus, the rising criticism directed against traditional history led to the gradual realisation that the task of a historian also included an effort to recover the female experience, to revive the buried and neglected female past. This prompted the recognition of gender as an important category of historical analysis. In fact, Joan Kelly proposed that we regard the social relationship of sexes as a fundamental category of historical thought.¹⁴ However,

13. Toril Moi, Sexual Textual Politics, Methuen, London and New York, 1985. pg.104.

14. Joan Kelly : 'Women, History and Theory; the Essays of Joan Kelly : University of Chicago, Chicago, 1984. pg. XIX

Elizabeth Fox Genovese¹⁵ provides a word of caution while reiterating the importance of including women in history. She feels that to overcome the historiographical lacunae one cannot simply counterpose an alternative history based on female subjects, for such ghettoization would serve only to replicate the construction of female as the 'other' which already pervades official histories. Thus, the effort should be directed not towards a women's history, but, to situate women in history. Gender cannot be regarded as the fundamental category of historical analysis but as a category of historical analysis.

The importance of gender as a category of historical analysis cannot be denied. It opens up vistas for a new perspective on the past. It helps in the exploration, and conceptualization of a whole range of human activities that had previously been excluded. It encourages historians to rethink accepted conventions about periodization ¹⁶ and it

15. Elizabeth Fox Genovese : 'Placing Women's History in History' New Left Review, No.33, May/June 1982, pg. 1-15.

16. Joan Kelly, op.cit., pg.XX, 2,3. where she questions the notion that western civilization has moved from repressive to more liberating structure, by analysing women's status in the periods of so called progressive change like the Renaissance and French Revolution, when actually women tended to become subject to more restrictions.

helps to transform one's understanding of social change. It incorporates women's experience, perceptions and contributions to culture and civilization along with men.

1c. | In India, surprisingly, women have featured quite prominently in historical writing, particularly where the ancient period is concerned. Clarisse Bader¹⁷ was the first to do a full length study in 1867 and it was followed up and elaborated by A. S. Altekar¹⁸, Padmini Sengupta¹⁹, M.A. Indra²⁰, Shakuntala Rao Shastri²¹ among others. |

| The first part of Bader's book included a short section on the role of women in religion, drawn from Vedic and Dharmasāstraic sources, and then proceeded to describe women in ancient India as wives, daughters and widows. Her basic contention was that the position of women was high in

-
17. Clarisse Bader, Women in Ancient India : Moral and Literary Studies, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 1987 (Reprint).
 18. A.S. Altekar , The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization. Motilal Banarsidas, New Delhi. 1962 (3rd ed.).
 19. P. Sengupta , The Story of Women in India, Indian Book House. New Delhi. 1974.
 20. M.A. Indra, The Status of Women in Ancient India, Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, 1955 (2nd ed).
 21. S. R. Shastri , Women in the Vedic age. Bharatiya Bidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1952.

the Vedic age. The situation changed with Manu and the real fall in the status of women came with the rise of the Kṛṣṇa Cult. The second part based on the epics and classical Sanskrit literature, picked up prominent women characters and described their "greatness"²². Though the book is one of the first of its kind, it suffers from several shortcomings. It is bland and unanalytical, exhibiting a total dependence on the translation of ancient Indian sources and the acceptance of these sources in toto²³.

Bader's approach was unabashedly romantic²⁴ and with her began the tendency to glorify the ancient past as the golden

-
22. On Sītā she says, " where could there be found that sweet mixture of love and chastity passionate devotion, dignity, faithfulness to duty which make Sita the ideal model of womanly perception". Bader op.cit., pg.222. On Damayantī and Sāvitrī she says "Both rising above the fear of misfortune, above the fear of death in their devotion to those whose existence they had vowed to share".pg. 300.
23. To give a few examples she says "Everywhere bursts forth in the Vedic Hymn the sympathetic respect of the ārya for women". ibid.,pg.49 or when she says "The hymns to the God of gambling worthily describe the ascendancy of the wife". ibid.,pg.50.
24. Bader, op.cit., pg 69. To give one example, Bader tends to eulogise even satī seeing it as awe inspiring, an expression of women's ability to go "beyond the bounds of the required."

age of India's womanhood²⁵. This tendency reached its climax under Altekar and subsequently became the norm. Bader was deeply influenced by Max Muller, for whom ancient India had become a sort of utopia for romantic imagination and thus both of them contributed to the creation of an Aryan golden age where men were free, brave and fearless and women learned, free and cultured.

But it was Altekar who first conducted a serious and empirically well-grounded study on the status and position of women in ancient India. But he, too, relied on Vedic and Dharmaśāstraic sources with occasional references from secular literature. His intention was to study the position of women from prehistoric times to the present day as this was regarded as the vital indicator of the level of civilization achieved by the Hindu Society²⁶. He first discussed the various stages in the life of a woman such as childhood, marriage, widowhood etc., and followed it up with a discussion of the rights enjoyed by women.

25. For example, she says, "Even though the birth of a daughter was not exactly welcome she was lovingly treated and shielded by her mother's solitude and assured of the protection of the father and mother." Bader, ibid., pg.23.

26. Altekar, op.cit., pg. 1.

He explained that in all ancient patriarchal societies the birth of a daughter was unwelcome as she had no fighting value, while the son was a permanent economic asset²⁷. But, this was not so in the Vedic and Upanisadic ages as "cultured parents were often as anxious for daughters as they were for sons, as daughters could be initiated in to Vedic studies and were entitled to offer sacrifices²⁸. But later, when ancestor worship became popular, child marriage came into vogue, and levirate and widow remarriage were banned, passages on the undesirability of daughters crept into the epics and the Brāhmaṇas for "to become a daughter's parent became an endless source of misery and worry."²⁹ Thus, these passages were not the result of a hatred for her sex, but, the result of the "all engrossing anxiety to see that she was well placed in life."³⁰ He repeatedly emphasised the education imparted to girls in the Vedic period³¹ and the freedom enjoyed by women for they were allowed to attend

27. ibid., pg.3.

28. ibid., pg.4.

29. Altekar, op.cit., pg.5.

30. ibid., pg.6

31. ibid., pg. 9-12. He gives the names of several educated women like Apalā, Gārgī, Diddā, Prabhābatī Gupta.

dramatic and public performances.³² ↑

| Discussing marriage and divorce, he reiterated the importance of marriage for women³³ which till the 5th century B.C. was conducted after the attainment of puberty, and argued that divorce was permitted under certain circumstances.³⁴ He felt that in the Vedic and Epic periods the wife was treated with utmost courtesy and her position was one of "honorable subordination"³⁵ and fortunately for him in ancient times Hindu wives always lived up to the ideal of Sītā³⁶ and Sāvitrī. On the question of widowhood he suggested that widow remarriage and niyoga³⁷ existed in the Vedic age, while satī did not, gaining a firm footing only around 1000 A.D. Thus, he concluded, that till 300 B.C. the

32. ibid., pg. 15.

33. ibid., pg. 29, "Marriage determines the fate of a woman to a much more greater extent than it does the destinies of man." or in pg.33 "there are more pitfalls in the path of an unmarried woman than those in the way of an unmarried man."

34. ibid., pg. 83.

35. Altekar op.cit., pg. 93.

36. ibid., pg. 105.

37. Altekar appears uncomfortable with the concept of niyoga, condemning it as a "relic of barbarism." pg. 149.

position of the widow was quite satisfactory, her only disadvantage being her inability to inherit property.

Altekar said little on the question of women's participation in public life, devoting himself instead to the institution of purdāh, which according to him did not exist prior to 100 B.C. and became established in the Hindu society only with the advent of muslim rule³⁸. He emphasised women's high religious status in the vedic age because of her ability to participate in sacrifices.³⁹ He remained patently uncomfortable while dealing with the issue of the property rights of women. Beyond giving an elaborate description of strīdhana,⁴⁰ he cursorily dealt with the proprietary rights of women and concluded by noting the gradual improvement in such rights for women, particularly among the widow.⁴¹

Thus, Altekar concluded that in ancient India women were held in high esteem. He cited such examples as the

38. Altekar, op.cit., pg. 166, 175. He does not offer any explanation for the gradual development of this institution.

39. ibid., pp. 197-99.

40. Altekar, op.cit., pg. 231. He says, "This history of Strīdhana is undoubtedly a proud & glorious chapter in the story of Hindu civilization."

41. ibid., pg. 277.

prohibition on killing of women, her exemption from ferry tax, etc., and explained the derogatory references to women as exceptions. This began to decline around 300 A.D. when certain "evil practices" like sati, child marriage, abolition of widow remarriage etc, crept in, though he does not explain why such customs did creep in. Altekar's views became the accepted model whenever the question of women in ancient India came up for discussion in subsequent writings. Historians stuck to his basic precepts, with minor alterations, for a long time.

R.C Dutt argued that there was a complete lack of unhealthy restrictions on women⁴², child marriage was not prevalent⁴³, and widow remarriage was popular⁴⁴ and concluded that Hindu women held an honourable place in society since the beginning. However, he elaborated on an idea that was only implicit in Altekar when he categorically attributed the subsequent deterioration in the status of Hindu

42. R.C. Dutt, The Early Hindu Civilization, Punthi Pustak, Calcutta, 1963 (4th ed.), pg. 60

43. ibid., pg. 61.

44. ibid., pg. 65.

women, to muslim invasion.⁴⁵ Prof. Indra, on the other hand, acknowledged the limitation of the sources and attempted to show what he called the 'good' and 'bad' sides of the picture though he agreed that in the Vedic age women were not "morally low creatures", and enjoyed equal religious rights.⁴⁶ Even in the epic age she remained the centre of domestic life, the pivot of the entire social system, with the deterioration occurring in the Dharmasāstraic period. Thus, he too agreed (with Altekar) on the highest virtues of Āryan womanhood, which lifted society to a high state of culture.⁴⁷ S.R. Sastri concentrated only on the position of women in the Vedic age. Though she distinguished between the Ṛg Vedic age and the Atharva Vedic age,⁴⁸ she more or less reiterated the views of Altekar on the high position of women in the earlier period, though she admitted that some deterioration may have taken place in the later Vedic period.

45. ibid., pg.150-51. He says: "Absolute seclusion and restraint are not Hindu customs ... were unknown in India till Mohammedan times".

46. M.A. Indra, op cit., pg.2-3.

47. ibid., pg. 21.

48. S.R. Sastri, op.cit., pg. 57-58.

This notion, of a glorious epoch for India's womenhood became so established, that even those writing in the late sixties, like Padmini Sengupta, continued to reinforce this notion by stating: "The golden age for women lasted from 400 B.C. to 600 A.D."⁴⁹ Thus, there emerged in the historiography on women a particular point of view, subsequently called the 'Altekarian paradigm."⁵⁰ Though historians differed regarding the onset of the deterioration and the reasons for it, they stuck to the basic premise that women had enjoyed a golden past.

However, there are certain drawbacks of this paradigm which make it unacceptable now. Most of the historians deal with the category WOMEN as a single entity and, therefore, presuppose women to be a homogenous socio-cultural group. Though Altekar vaguely refers to lower and upper classes of society,⁵¹ the fact remains, that, these historians have been unable to take into account the differences that must have existed between women of different castes, classes and regions.

49. P. Sengupta, op.cit., pg. 57-58.

50. Uma Chakravarty, "Beyond the Altekarian Paradigm." Social Scientist, 1988.

51. Altekar, op.cit., pg. 42.

There is also a tendency of arbitrary usage of fixed dates as watersheds where the history of women is concerned. Altekar says child marriage began in 300 B.C.,⁵² post puberty marriages ended in 5th century B.C.⁵³ and purdāh was unknown till 100 B.C.⁵⁴ Such fixed dates lead to a theory of sudden and dramatic changes in the position of women, without taking into account the longstanding socio-economic factors responsible for them.

The Altekarian reconstruction of ancient Indian womanhood is entirely dependent on Brahmanical sources and a total acceptance of them. This raises an important question - whether the sources used can be accepted as true depictions of existing social realities, i.e., what was the relationship between the normative and the historical? In answer, it can be said that these sources are often "fanatically prejudiced against women"⁵⁵ and since they confine themselves to the upper castes they provide a partial view

52. ibid., pg. 16.

53. ibid., pg. 48.

54. ibid., pg. 91.

55. U.Chakravarty & K.Roy, "Breaking out of Invisibility" in S.J.Kleinberg(ed), op.cit., pg. 319 ff.

from above.⁵⁶ Moreover, these texts usually reflect theoretical formulations, what should exist, and not what actually existed. The gap between textual theory and actual practice is often highlighted by anthropological research.⁵⁷ Thus, to accept a prescriptive literature written or compiled by a brāhmaṇa male elite as totally expressive of the actual experience of women is untenable.⁵⁸

It has also been pointed out that this historiography exists almost entirely within the context of Hinduism.⁵⁹

This resulted in a preoccupation with legal and religious questions, such as, were widows allowed to marry? did child marriage exist? etc., and an obsession with the right of women to perform sacrifices, as if, these were the only indicators of the status of women in society. The social position of women was analysed only in terms of her inclu-

56. U.Chakravarty, "Beyond the Altekarian paradigm." op.cit., pg. 44-51.

57. Gombrich, 1971, quoted in Julia Leslie's The Perfect Wife, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989.

58. M. Mies, in Indian Women and Patriarchy, Concept Publishers, New Delhi, 1980, says that brahmanical sources belong to the "Great Tradition" and, therefore, more attention should be given to oral traditions while reconstituting a history of women. pg. 37-40.

59. While Dutt & Altekar openly state that they are concerned with Hindu women, it is implicit in the works of others.

sion or exclusion in public assemblies and her right to education. Thus, the perspective that emerged was confined to viewing of women only in the context of the family⁶⁰, as a daughter, wife or a widow. She was defined almost entirely in relative terms, that centred around her relationship with men. Even if women's reproductive faculties lead to a simple identification of women with family, such studies still did not shed light on the powers they derived from membership to the family, the power relations within families, etc., and instead remained a description of the various stages in a woman's life. But these stages were also incompletely described, for none of the historians undertook an analysis of the position of the mother beyond commenting on the exalted status she is supposed to have occupied.⁶¹ So motherhood was regarded as a constant and, therefore, not worthy of discussion.

The Altekarian kind of historiography also displays an inherently communal bias, for there is a tendency to attribute all evils that crept into the Hindu society and led to a deterioration in the status of women, to the advent

60. U.Chakravarty, 'Beyond the Altekarian Paradigm', op.cit., pg. 44.

61. Altekar, op.cit., pg. 101.

of the muslims in India. R.C. Dutt is quite vehement on this issue.⁶² Such an implicit assumption is also to be found in Altekar when he says that purdāh came to be established with Muslim rule, partly as a protection for women folk from the covetous eyes of an unscrupulous soldiery and partly as a result of the imitation of the manners of the conquerors,⁶³ or when he says, that, satī came to be established by 1000 A.D.⁶⁴ It was repeatedly stressed that the position of women had undergone no serious deterioration in south India which remained relatively free from Muslim influence.⁶⁵ All this was part of an attempt to absolve the Hindu Civilization of the responsibility of deterioration in the position of women by making an external factor account for it.

This historiography does not address the questions of economic rights of women and the role of women in the economy. This issue does not figure at all in the books of S. R. Shastri, P. Sengupta and R. C. Dutt and even Altekar confined himself to giving an elaborate description of Strīdha-

62. R.C Dutt, op.cit, pg. 150.

63. Altekar, op cit, pg. 175.

64. ibid., pg. 128.

65. R.Mukherjee in Tara Ali Baig(ed), "Women of India". Government of India, N.Delhi, 1958, pg. 9

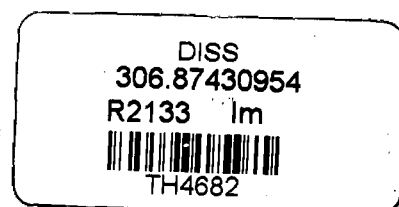
Diss

TH-4682

21

Y, 22212(R65-6893,8).44A

N3



na, and a cursory description of the proprietary rights of women. In fact he advocated the denial of patrimony to unmarried daughters,⁶⁶ and justified the non-ownership of landed property by women in ancient India.⁶⁷ Altekar discusses the economic role of women only when he establishes a link between the emergence of the śūdras as a servile class and the decline in the position of women, but, remains entirely insensitive to the role of women as producers, and as a factor in production.

Also, the existing historiography seems to hold women themselves responsible for the changes that occurred in their status. For example, it is said that women were excluded from Vedic studies because "it suited them to be busy with household chores",⁶⁸ or that pre-puberty marriages were introduced due to women's entry into the Buddhist Sanghas⁶⁹ or that women's exclusion from sacrifices was due to the

66. Altekar, op.cit., pg. 246.

67. ibid. , pg. 339.

68. P. Sengupta, op.cit., pg. 68.

69. Altekar, op.cit., pg. 55-56.

'favourite non Āryan wife'.⁷⁰ Thus, these histories have internalised and, therefore, reflect an inherently patriarchal bias and a strong belief in biological determinism.⁷¹

Uma Chakravarty explains the particular bias of Altekar (which continued in the later works) as symptomatic of a period, when the past was dramatically reconstituted by bringing into sharp focus the need of the people for a different self image than the one they held of themselves.⁷²

The need for a new self image arose to counterpose the one with which the British tried to emphasise their superior morality and which highlighted the contemporary low status of women among the subject population⁷³. Thus, the emphasis on the high position of women in ancient India arose in the

70. ibid., pg. 345. Altekar explains that increasing marriages between Āryan males and non Āryan women and the elevation of the non Āryan wife to the position of the favourite led to the participation of the non Āryan wives in sacrifices, which could not be condoned. So, it was decided to exclude women altogether.

71. ibid., pg. 3,28.

72. U.Chakravarty, "Whatever Happened to the Vedic Dasi?" in K.Sangari and S. Vaid(eds) Recasting women.. Essays in Colonial History, Kalifor Women, New Delhi, 1989, pg. 27-86.

73. For example, Mill said: "Among rude people women are generally degraded, among civilised people they are exalted." quoted in S. Tharu and K. Lalita (eds) Women Writing in India. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1993, pg. 46.

context of colonialism and nationalism and contemporary evil practices emphasised by the British were portrayed as temporary aberrations which could be easily eliminated. This is openly stated by R.C.Dutt: "No nation held their women in higher honour than the Hindus, but, the Hindus have been misjudged and wronged⁷⁴" and is implicit the constant comparisons undertaken by Altekar⁷⁵ and Indra⁷⁶, between the position of women in western civilization and in ancient Hindu civilization, to the advantage of the latter. Thus, the parameters for the historical exploration of women became rather limited. Two kinds of historiographical trends emerged. The first was a kind of "compensatory"⁷⁷ history in which historians concerned themselves with portraying exceptional women such as those of Padmini Sengupta and Bader, but achievement continued to be defined according to the standards of the male public world. The second was a kind of women's history written with a political purpose which served to reinforce the concept of women as the

74. R. C. Dutt op.cit, pg. 150.

75. Altekar, op.cit, pg. 333.

76. Indra, op.cit, pg. 25.

77. Gerda Lerner quoted in C. Kahn and G. Green (eds) Making a Difference; Feminist Literary Criticism, Routledge, London and N. York, 1985. pg. 13.

"other" implying as it did that women could not be situated in history, but that a separate historical discourse had to be created for them.

1D. Modern scholarship on women in ancient India, despite recognising the inadequacies of the paradigms employed in the past, have been unable to bring about a radical departure. Some, continued to feel that women in the Vedic age enjoyed a high status "though things might not have been as good as they are sometimes made out to be"⁷⁸ and that there had existed a time when the position of women was better from which there occurred a gradual subordination.⁷⁹ Others remained preoccupied with family relationships, the status of women, the status of widows, rituals and samskāras⁸⁰ and repeated Altekarian explanations.⁸¹ This modern preoccupation with status, analysed in the categories of 'good' or,

78. Bimla Luthra, in B.R. Nanda (ed) Indian Women from Purdah to Modernity, Radiant Publishers, N. Delhi 1990 (reprint) pg.2.

79. This assumption is implicit in Gulati when she says that deterioration in women's status occurred due to Brahmanical austerities, foreign invasions, role of the caste system, joint family and feudalism. S. Gulati, Women and Society, Chanakya Publication, New Delhi, 1985, pg. 3.

80. ibid.

81. ibid., pp. 22, 23.

'bad' betrays an obsession with the question of equality/inequality of sexes, which in itself is a fallacious concept, being a product of patriarchal ideology. But some attempts to explore new horizons can be found. | S. Bhattacharji analyses the eulogy on motherhood in ancient India which she feels might have been an "ideational and emotional compensation for reality" and traces its socio-economic roots, by showing how women came to be regarded as the human counterpart of land in a patriarchally organised agricultural society⁸². In another article on prostitution⁸³ she traces its socio-economic roots, the vilification of prostitutes in literature, the economic and social status of prostitutes and the development of the concept of women as chattels and commodities. Ranjana Kumari⁸⁴ focusses on the concept of femaleness under Hinduism and sees the total insistence of brahmanical scriptures on wifely chastity, fidelity and devotion, as a male attempt to retain control over female sexuality. However, within such scholarship there has emerged a tendency which views women as "passive

82. S. Bhattacharji, "Motherhood in Ancient India". Economic and Political Weekly, Oct. 1990, pg. 50-57.

83. S. Bhattacharji, 'Prostitution in Ancient India', Social Scientist No. 165, Feb. 1987.

84. Ranjana Kumari, Female Sexuality in Hinduism. Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, N. Delhi, 1988.

victims" of oppression whereas Altekarian historiography saw women as "passive recipients" of respect and veneration. Thus, modern scholarship has been unable to establish new paradigms for studying women in history.]

1E. In the context of the necessity of new approaches, an area that remains largely unexplored is the realm of ideology. In fact, Joan Kelly was one of the first to argue that, if indeed, women were to be restored to their rightful place in history, historians have to take into account the prevailing ideology on women.⁸⁵ Feminists have also argued that in order to unearth the structures of subordination of women an analysis of the ideology on women would prove useful. This is because all societies promote identities and roles taken to be appropriate to genders which are depicted as natural emanations of sexual differences. The ideology on women subsumes these identities and roles and in fact, is responsible for their expression and justification. Thus, it perhaps, unconsciously and unknowingly perpetuates the continued subordination of women and is the source of op-

85. Joan Kelly, Women History and Theory; the Essays of Joan Kelly, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1984. She says, the regulation of female sexuality, women's political and economic role and the role of women in shaping the outlook of society should also be looked into, pg. XIX.

pression and exploitation. Though ideology is often defined as a set or system of symbols, beliefs and assumptions which pertain in some ways to social action and political practice⁸⁶ such a simplistic definition ignores the ways in which ideology about women serve to sustain relations of sexual domination by representing it as legitimate and natural. This ideology serves to perpetuate the repressive structures of sexual dominance, by positing that order as natural and not cultural.⁸⁷ An analysis of this ideology will help expose the structures of subordination of women and reveal the extent to which women, and men, have been conditioned by it. Keeping this in mind, we wish to examine the ideology on motherhood in ancient India, as depicted in the Mahābhārata, and see in what ways 'mother' has been projected as the social ideal, the origins and necessity of this construct and its links with patriarchy.

86. Seliger, Gouldner and Hirst express this view according to John B. Thompson, Studies in the Theories of Ideology, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1984, pg. 73-148.

87. Ideology here is used in the sense of what Mannheim calls the particular conception of ideology, quoted in Peter Burke, History of Social Theory, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992. pg. 95, 96.

1F. | It can be argued that women have almost universally, been defined in terms of a largely maternal and domestic role. "Elaboration of her reproductive functions shape her social role and psychology; they colour her cultural definition".⁸⁸ Thus, the themes of motherhood and sexual reproduction are central to the male conception of women. Not only feminists, but also psychoanalysts, testify to the importance of this original relationship, of the mother infant dyad, for the development of subsequent social relations and describe it as a central factor in personality formation.⁸⁹ In India, too, mother has been a key cultural construct of the Hindu kinship system and has been so from the ancient times. In fact, historical and religious tradition have had a tendency to equate 'women' with mother and view the birth of a male child as an essential step in the parents' salvation. An even superficial reading of the Dharmaśāstras, particularly Manu, makes us aware of the cultural value and importance bestowed on women as mother. This pro-natalism of Hinduism also found expression in the worship of the sacred fertile cows, the liṅgam, the yoni and in the proliferation

88. M. Rosaldo and L. Lampere (eds), op.cit., pg. 7-8.

89. S. Kakar, The Inner World. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1979. PP. 52, 54.

of fertility cults. "Hindu society was of course not unique in revering motherhood as a moral, religious and even artistic ideal but the absolute and all encompassing social importance of motherhood, the ubiquitous variety of motherhood myths and the function of offspring in ritual and religious life (as well as economic) gave motherhood in Indian culture a particular incontrovertible legitimacy."⁹⁰ The ideological dominance and cultural reverence of motherhood has continued even today, as is evident from ethnographic studies,⁹¹ and from folktales which reaffirm the status of the mother.

Surprisingly, however, inspite of motherhood being considered the crucial factor in shaping the feminine identity in India, very rarely do accounts of mother child relationships feature in classical mythology which has instead tended to concentrate on the husband/wife relationship. The only two exceptions are, perhaps, the Karna-Kuntī relationship and the Kṛṣṇa Yaśodā relationship. But, in the first, the interaction occurs when the child has become an

90. S. Kakar, *ibid.*, pg. 78.

91. Paul Hershman, 'Virgin and Mother' in I.M Lewis (ed) Symbols and Sentiments, Academic Press, London, 1977. pg. 270. ff.

adult, more importantly a male adult, who occupies, by virtue of his maleness, a higher position in society vis a vis his mother. Thus, the traditional roles of dependent child and a dominant mother are reversed and the child interacts from an equal if not superior position. [As for the Kṛṣṇa-Yaśodā relationship, it too cannot be regarded as the normative model, for, the divinity of the child, Kṛṣṇa, is undeniable. Even classical Indian iconography rarely represents the mother child dyad which is at variance with the expressed ideology on motherhood. Usually goddesses are depicted as either alone or with their spouses, i.e., - Hara Gaurī, Śiva Pārvatī, Viṣṇu Lakṣmī. (Pārvatī with Gaṇeśa a common motif in calendar art, does not find any place in classical iconography). Rarely are they found in association with children with the possible exception of Manasā⁹² who is shown holding a child on her lap. In fact among all the terracotta seals and reliefs found, only one terracotta seal from Harappā and an early Gupta terracotta relief emphasise

92. B. C. Bhattacharya, The Brahmanic Iconography, Cosmo Publications, N.Delhi, 1978, pg. 39.

the reproductive aspects of femininity.⁹³ Keeping in mind this lacunae the recovery of the perception of motherhood in the past, and its implications for women, become all the more important.

While dealing with this problem I have restricted myself to the realm of literature for literature is itself a "discursive practice"⁹⁴ whose conventions encode social conventions and are ideologically complicit. Literature not only transmits ideologies and perceptions, it virtually creates it, being a "mediating, moulding force in society,"⁹⁵ that structure our sense of the world. Literature remains a rich domain for gender studies, for, literature and mythology, by casting women in sexually defined roles, reiterate the sense of women as the 'other' and thus

93. J.M. Banerjea, The Development of Hindu Iconography, University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1941, pg. 104. says that the seal from Harappā shows a nude female figure, with her legs wide apart and a plant issuing from her womb, while the terracotta relief discovered by Marshall from Bhīṭā shows the female figure in the same position, but with a lotus issuing from her neck.

94. T. Eagleton, Literary Theory ; An Introduction University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1985, pg. 205.

95. T. Hawkes, Structuralism and Semiotics, University of California, Berkeley, 1977, pg. 56.

M

become "the collective consciousness of patriarchy."⁹⁶ So a re-reading of literature makes possible the recovery of the ideology on women. |

The choice of the Mahābhārata needs little explanation. The Mahābhārata written over many centuries and incorporating materials of different kinds-mythic, legendary, didactic, folk and of course brahmanical - was perhaps a genuine heroic poem in its original form, but, was subsequently enlarged into an Indian, if not a Hindu cultural encyclopaedia. | In fact, the Mahābhārata can be said to embody the abundance of India as a nation.⁹⁷ It remains an inexhaustible mine for the investigation of religion, mythology, legends, philosophy, law, custom and social and political institutions. But more important than the historical core of the Mahābhārata, its exquisite narration or its didactic messages, is the influence the text has exerted and continues to exert over the minds of the people through the centuries. Sukthankar testifies to the universality and immor-

96. Kate Millet quoted in M. Humme (ed), Feminist Criticism Women as Contemporary Critics, Harvester Press, Sussex 1986, pg. 33.

97. R. Katz, Arjuna in the Mahābhārta, Motilal Banarsidas, New Delhi, 1990 (Indian ed.), pg.3.

tality of the book,⁹⁸ and says "whether we realise it or not, we in India still stand under the spell of the Mahābhārata."⁹⁹ Thus, the role of the Mahābhārata in moulding the social norms in India cannot be denied. Although this is not an overtly religious text it has virtually been designated as a scripture, because of the veneration it inspires, the values it sustains and the authority it commands.¹⁰⁰

It is necessary to establish the historical precedents of the Mahābhārata by dwelling briefly on the date of the text and on its origin and subsequent redactions. Though it is generally acknowledged that epic literature cannot be precisely dated¹⁰¹ containing as it does information that ranges over several centuries, E.W.Hopkins has developed an elaborate schema for dating, what is considered to be the various layers of the epic.¹⁰² He opines that while the

98. V. A. Sukthankar, On the Meaning of the Mahābhārata. Asiatic Society of Bombay, Bombay, 1957, pg. 58.

99. ibid., pg. 32.

100. W. A. Graham, Beyond the Written Word. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, pg. 3. He includes the Illiad and Odyssey as well as the Kojiki and Nihongi of Japan within the category of scriptural texts.

101. Romila Thapar, in S. P. Gupta & K. S. Ramachandran (eds) Mahābhārata Myth and Reality: Differing Views. Agam Prakasan, N.Delhi, 1976. pg. 172-174.

102. E. W. Hopkins, The Great Epic of India: Its Character and Origins, Punthi Pustak, Calcutta, 1969.

complete Mahābhārata as it is known today, cannot be later than the 4-5th centuries A.D., the original kernel of the epic, the Bhārata Kuru lays were in existence before 400 B.C. By 400-200 B.C. there was a Mahābhārata tale with Pāṇḍu heroes and legends and with Kṛṣṇa as the demigod. These two strands were combined together by brahmanical dialects. The epic was remade with Kṛṣṇa as a complete God and didactic materials were incorporated between 200 B.C.-200 A.D. Between 200-400 A.D. the last books were added along with the introduction of the first book. Macdonnel¹⁰³ is of the opinion that the original form of the epic came into existence by the 5th century B.C. In the next stage the epic was enlarged to include 20,000 ślokas and there was a favourable representation of the victorious Pāṇḍavas along with the introduction of two other gods, Śiva and Viṣṇu. This occurred between 300 B.C. and the 1st Century A.D. and the Mahābhārata in its present form emerged around 350 A.D. However, Sukthankar's opinion, that the Mahābhārata in its present form belongs to the period 400 B.C. -400 A.D., will be accepted as the most authoritative.

103. A. A. Macdonnel, A History of Sanskrit Literature Motilal Banarsidas, New Delhi, 1965, pg. 239-242.

Scholars on the Mahābhārata generally agree that, originally it was a primitive heroic poem, which was a part of the oral tradition and into it was incorporated an amorphous mass of didactic material, religious episodes, legends, tales, etc, with the purpose of developing the epic into a vehicle of popular edification and instruction. This redaction probably occurred around the 3rd-4th centuries A.D. when the Mahābhārata was taken away from the bards, who were the custodians of oral tradition, and formally committed to writing.¹⁰⁴ Though Hopkins believes that the work of redaction was under taken by the Yajurvedin priests¹⁰⁵ it seems more plausible that the redaction of the epic was the work of the Bhārgavas, for it is they who came into prominence in the epic. Their importance is frequently reiterated and they are represented as the people. The inclusion of didactic material especially on dharma and nīti, the two areas that they specialised in, betray the

104. Walter Ong, quoted in Peter Burke's, History of Social Theory, op.cit., pg. 100.

105. E.W Hopkins, op.cit., pg. 368.

Bhārgava influence over the epic.¹⁰⁶

However, what we wish to clarify is, that, inspite of bring aware of the controversy regarding the date and redaction of the Mahābhārata, what will be attempted here is a study of the ideology of motherhood that the entire text in its present form conveys. The intention is not to write a descriptive history of the status of women in the epic period. Such attempts already exist.¹⁰⁷ Instead, the ideological construction of motherhood in the Mahābhārata will be analysed treating the entire corpus of literature that goes under that name as one unitary and normative text. In doing so perhaps we will be able to arrive at some tentative conclusions regarding the historical necessity of this construct, its functions and its incorporation in the Mahābhārata.

106. V. S. Sukthankar, 'Epic studies VI, the Bhṛgu and the Bhārata.' Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Vol 18, Part I, 1936-37. pg. 65-75. This view is repeated by Goldman in Gods, Priests and Warriors; The Bhṛgu in the Mahābhārata, Columbia University, New York, 1977.

107. Examples of such work are P. C. Dharma's "The Status of Women during the Epic Period" Journal of Indian History vol 27, 1949 pg. 69-90, E. W. Hopkins' The Social Position of the Ruling Caste in Ancient India, Calcutta, University, Calcutta, 1969 and S. Jayal's The Status of Women in the Epics, Motilal Banarsidas, New Delhi, 1966. However, all of them function within very limited parameters and are unable to overcome what has been called the Altekarian Paradigm.

CHAPTER II

THE BRAHMANICAL CONCEPTUALIZATION OF MOTHERHOOD; ITS EXPRESSION IN THE DHARMAŚĀSTRAS AND MAHĀBHĀRATA

The recovery of ideology, on women in ancient India remains a problematical issue, because the sources are rather limited, and they are, for the most part brahmanical. Keeping in mind this limitation, we will nevertheless analyse that genre of literature known as the Dharmaśāstras to arrive at conclusions regarding the brahmanical conceptualization of motherhood, and will try and see, to what extent such an image of the mother is also represented in the Mahābhārata. The Dharmaśāstras have been chosen because they elucidate on the concept of "dharma" which was a mode of life and code of conduct meant to regulate human activities. The Dharmaśāstras deal with a variety of subjects, of which, two of the most important are strīdharmā (special duties of women) and strīpūṃsadharmā (duties of the husband and wife). It is from these two sections that we can grasp the brahmanical image of the women in general, and the mother in particular. Among the Dharmaśāstras, the Mānava Dharmaśāstra or the Manusmṛti is generally regarded as the

most authoritative and all encompassing. Probably completed sometime around the first to the third centuries A.D., and thus contemporary to the Mahābhārata, it is a pivotal text of the dominant form of Hinduism. "More compendiously than any other text, it provides a direct line to the most influential construction of the Hindu religion and Indian society as a whole¹". Manu has always been taken seriously, if not in practice, at least in theory. "In the realm of the ideal, Manu is the cornerstone of the priestly vision of what human life should be, a vision to which Hindus have always paid lip service and to which in many ways they genuinely aspire."². The authors/redactors of the Mahābhārata, too seem to have been influenced by Manu. It has been estimated by Hopkins that almost a third of the Mānava Dharmaśāstra is to be found in the Mahābhārata particularly in the Śānti and Anuśāsana Parvans.³ Hopkins makes clear that "the author or the authors of the first, twelveth and thirteenth Parvans of the Mahābhārata knew a Mānava Dharmaśāstra which was closely connected, but, not identical with

-
1. W. Doniger and B. Smith (translated), The Laws of Manu, Penguin, India, 1991, pg. xvii. Hereafter Manu.
 2. ibid., pg. Lix.
 3. Manu is quoted as an authority even in the Ādi Parvan.

the existing text."⁴ It is difficult to ascertain which was the source and which was the borrower, though, it seems probable, that the epic was composed under the influence of the Dharmaśāstras and not vice versa.

Irrespective of which influenced the other a great similarity is to be found between the Mahābhārata and the Dharmaśāstras regarding the categories of womanhood dealt with by both of them. It is women as mothers who are eulogised and revered. The pronounced tenor of pronatalism found in Hinduism, has often been commented upon.⁵ Gautama who was of the opinion that the ācārya was the highest among the gurus⁶ was rather an exception for Manu says: "A teacher, father and mother should not be treated with contempt."⁷ The teacher is more important than ten instructors, and a father more than a hundred teachers, but the mother is more important than a thousand fathers."⁸ Yājñavalkya also

-
4. E.W. Hopkins, The Great Epic of India, its Character and Origins, Punthi Pushtak, Calcutta, 1969, pg. 21.
 5. T. Foster Carroll, Women, Religion and Development in the Third World, Praeger, New York, 1983, pg. 57.
 6. Gautama Dharmasūtra, II.56 cited in P.V. Kane The History of the Dharmaśāstras Vol. II, Part II, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, 1941, pg. 580.
 7. Manu, II.225.
 8. ibid., II.145.

places the mother higher than the ācārya.⁹ | In the Mahābhā-
rata, Bhīṣma proclaims that the worship of the mother,
father and preceptor was most important¹⁰ for "they are the
three worlds, they are the three modes of life, they are the
three sacred fires".¹¹ However, echoing Manu it is also
said, "the mother again is superior to ten fathers, or
perhaps, the whole world in importance. There is no one who
deserves such reverence as the mother"¹² because, "some
regard the mother as superior, some the father. But the
mother who brings forth and rears up offspring, does what is
more difficult."¹³ | Āpastamba emphasises the duty of the son
towards his mother, even if she is an outcast, as she per-
forms many troublesome duties for him¹⁴ while Baudhāyana
recommends that she should be maintained but not spoken
to.¹⁵ In the story of Śaṅkha Likhita it is said that a son

9. Yājñavalkya Smṛti I.35, cited in P.V. Kane, op.cit.,
pg.323.

10. Mahābhārata, XII.109.3.

11. ibid., XII.109.6/7.

12. ibid., XII.109.16.

13. ibid., III.197.15.

14. Āpastamba Grhasūtra, X.28.9.

15. Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra, II.2.48, cited in P.V. Kane,
op.cit., pg.580.

should not take sides in a parental quarrel, but, if he does, he should take his mother's side, since, she has carried, delivered and nourished him.¹⁶ The son's debt to his mother could never be redeemed except through the elaborate and expensive Śrautamuni sacrifice. Manu also directed that a pregnant woman, on account of her condition, was not to pay the ferry tax.¹⁷ The mother's curse was dreaded, for it was felt, that nothing could neutralise it. Vāsuki tells Sauti, "remedies certainly exist for all curses but no remedy can avail those cursed by their mother."¹⁸ Elsewhere, the Pāṇḍavas echo the same statement.¹⁹ There are strict injunctions against matricide in several ancient Indian texts. When Ajātaśatru wanted to kill his mother, he was advised against such an act by his ministers.²⁰ | The only recorded case of matricide is by Paraśurāma, who killed his mother Renukā,²¹ but one of the first boons that he

16. cited in P.V. Kane, op.cit., pg. 580-581. ,

17. Manu, VIII. 407.

18. Mahābhārata, I.33.4.

19. ibid., I.37.4.

20. Amitayurdhyana Sūtra cited in S. Bhattacharji, Motherhood in Ancient India," Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.25, No.41, October, 1990.

21. Mahābhārata, III.116.14.

sought from his father, was the restoration of her life. Mothers were the subject of eulogy, for, it was felt that only by becoming a mother a woman fulfilled the dharmā for which she was born. Manu categorically states that women were created to bear children and men to carry on the line.²² That motherhood was regarded as a duty and virtue is evident from what Pāṇḍu tells Kuntī, "... it is to beget children that the best of men, are born in the world"²³ or from what Śarmiṣṭhā tells Yayāti, "becoming a mother by thee let me practise the highest virtue in this world."²⁴ Thus, the woman as the mother became the focus of much veneration and respect. |

However, an analysis of the epic and the Dharmaśāstras reveal certain inherent and surprising contradictions. While motherhood was the subject of much glorification, neither did this extend to the woman as mother, nor was her role as an important social producer recognised. / Thus, there was a constant conflict between the positive values of motherhood and fertility and the impurity and pollution

22. Manu; IX. 96.

23. Mahābhārata, I. III.16.

24. ibid., I.77.21.

which was seen as surrounding childbirth and female sexuality. {

[The biological attributes of the female body were used to justify and legitimise male control and domination, as women during childbirth and menstruation were regarded as impure, even though both these functions are inextricably associated with becoming a mother. The Mānava Dharmaśāstra says that a man should not have sexual intercourse with a woman who is menstruating, even if he is out of the mind with desire,²⁵ nor carry on a conversation with her.²⁶ A priest, desirous of brilliant energy should not look at a woman giving birth²⁷, nor should one eat the leftovers of a woman who has just given birth.²⁸ However, the pollution arising from childbirth was applicable only to the mother, as the father became free from pollution after a mere wash.²⁹ Thus, the woman was regarded as inherently impure, her impurity stemming from the physiological processes of

25. Manu, IV. 40.

26. ibid., IV. 57.

27. ibid., IV. 44.

28. ibid., IV. 212, V.85.

29. Manu, V.62.

the female body, specifically those concerned with sexual intercourse, menstruation, birth and lactation. In contrast, the man was deemed to be intrinsically pure. So, the women's ritual status was lower than that of the man. There was an attempt to impose a sense of guilt on women, by linking their social function as reproducers to copulation, menstruation, etc. which were deemed polluting.³⁰ This was an effective means of ideological control over women, relying on the awesome functions of reproduction.

Thus, though apparently the mother was the object of reverence, there were several attempts to denigrate the role of women in childbirth and to deprive them of what little status they did gain by giving birth. At times, in the Mahābhārata, this assumed the form of a total negation of the woman's role in childbirth. For example Vaiśampāyana says that as a reward for penances, he obtained from Śakra a hundred sons, all without the intervention of women³¹.

30. (Emphasis added) This is why it was felt that sexual union was to be resorted to only for procreation and never for pleasure. Men are recommended to approach their wives only during the "Womanly season" and never "lustfully". Mahābhārata, I.58.6. The Manusmṛti also says, that, a man should have sex with his wife only during her fertile season and always find satisfaction with his own wife. III.45.

31. Mahābhārata, XIII. 18. 6.

Elsewhere, it was suggested that fathers, by ascetic penances and by worship of gods could obtain children³² rendering women unnecessary. From Vyāsa's vital seed was born his son called Śuka.³³ Once again, woman had no role to play. Several of the important characters in the Mahābhārata are said to have unnatural births - Agastya, who was born of the vital seed of Maitrāvaruṇa,³⁴ Droṇa who was born in a jar,³⁵ Draupadī and Dr̥ṣṭadumnya who were born of a sacrificial fire.³⁶ These legends and stories attempted to underplay what was perceived to be the incipient power derived by woman, from her procreative capacities.

Another attempt to devalue women's role in childbirth was the concept of Bījakṣetrayana, which found expression in many of the Dharmaśāstras and the epic. A woman was traditionally regarded as the field (Kṣetra), and the man as the seed, (Bīja) and all creatures with bodies were said to be born of the union of the seed and field.³⁷ The Nārada Smṛti

32. ibid., III.197.16.

33. ibid., XII.311.6-8.

34. ibid., XII.329.38(1).

35. ibid., I.54.3-5

36. ibid., I.155.37,41.

37. Manu, IX.33.

too, says "... a woman is the field and the man the possessor of the seed."³⁸ Of the two, in conformity with the general deprecation of women's childbearing activities, greater importance was attached to the male seed than to the female field. Manu Smṛti is categorical on this. "Of the seed and the womb, the seed is said to be more important, for the offspring of all living beings are marked by the mark of the seed,"³⁹ or "... since sages have been born in (female) animals by the power of the seed and were honoured and valued, therefore, the seed is valued"⁴⁰. | In the Mahābhārata, the importance of the seed is attested to by several legends which talk of conception and child birth occurring out of the sheer power of the male vital fluid⁴¹.

(While according primacy to the bīja over the kṣetra, the former is also called kṣetrajaṅṅa or knower of the field,

38. Nārada Smṛti cited in L.Dube, et. al., (eds) Visibility and Power, Essays on Women in Society and Development, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986. pg. 24.

39. Manu, IX.35.

40. ibid., X. 71-72.

41. For example, a mare drinking the water containing the seminal fluid of Vibhāṅḍaka, son of Kāśyapa, became pregnant. Mahābhārata, III.110.14-16. Ādrikā in the form of a fish, gave birth to human twins after she swallowed Vasu's seed. ibid., I. 57.48/49. The importance of the male seed is also highlighted during the narration of the story of the birth of Skanda. ibid., III.214.15/16.

while the kṣetra itself is the physical body.. An essentially unequal relationship is reflected and emphasised through the use of these symbols and the symbolism is utilised to underplay women's contribution to reproduction. This concept of the seed and the field "provides the rationalization for a system, in which, woman stands alienated from productive resources, has no control over her own labour power and is denied rights over her own offspring"⁴².

Arising from the importance attached to the bīja are several related aspects that seek to devalue the feminine face behind motherhood. It was often felt that natural birth was less important than initiation into the Vedas,⁴³ with the former being regarded as one's "mere coming into existence."⁴⁴ This point is repeatedly stated in the Mahābhārata.⁴⁵ The analogy of the seed and earth was also used to justify the begetting of sons on one's own wife by somebody else, as the fruit of the field belonged to the owner

42. L.Dube, "Seed and Earth: The Symbolism of Biological Reproduction and Sexual Relations of Production", in L. Dube et.al., (eds) op.cit., pg. 44.

43. Manu, II.146, II.231, II.233.

44. Manu, II.147.

45. Mahābhārata, XII. 109. 8, 17.

of the field.⁴⁶

In addition to the concept of bījakṣetrayana, another means of negating women's importance in childbirth was the designation of conception as the husband's rebirth. This idea first found expression in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, where the wife is called jāyā, because the husband is reborn in her as her son.⁴⁷ Manu explains that the wife was called jāyā as the husband was reborn (jāyate) in her.⁴⁸ The Mahābhārata also reiterates this idea in several passages.⁴⁹ The son is called "one's own self"⁵⁰ while the mother is referred to as a "sheath of flesh... The son sprung from the father is the father itself,"⁵¹ or "It has been said by learned persons that one is himself born as one's son... a wife is the sacred field in which the husband is born himself."⁵² Thus, what emerges is that the woman as the mother is not the actual object of reverence but, it is the son,

46. Manu, IX. 49, IX. 51, IX, 52.

47. Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, cited in P.V. Kane op.cit., pg. 428-429.

48. Manu, IX.8, IX.22.

49. Mahābhārata, III.13.62., I.68.36.

50. ibid., I.68.47.

51. ibid., I.69.29.

52. ibid., I.68.51.

who is the husband reborn. | Thus, the eulogy of motherhood for the production of male children was actually an inversion of the eulogy of man and the woman was regarded as a mere receptacle/ vehicle for the birth of the all important male child. | When the sister of Vāsuki conceived, it was the embryo which is described as resembling a flame of fire and possessed of great energy.⁵³ When Subhadrā delivered her child, it is Abhimanyu who was the subject of eloquent description.⁵⁴ Vyāsa, in a conversation with Dhṛtarāṣṭra, acknowledges, that a son "is the best of things" and that "there is nothing so good as a son.... the son surpasses in worth other valuable possessions."⁵⁵ Brahmanical tradition placed a very high premium on sons as the male child saved (trātāye) his father from the hell called put. Therefore, the son was called putra.⁵⁶ Moreover, the birth of a male child was regarded as absolutely necessary for the proper performance of many rituals, especially those carried out after the death of the parents. Manusmṛti elaborates on how sons born of different forms of marriages, free generations

53. ibid., I. 43. 12.

54. ibid., I. 212. 14.

55. ibid., III. 10. 4-5.

56. Manu, IX. 138; Mahābhārata, I. 68. 38.

of ancestors from guilt.⁵⁷ A number of mythic and didactic passages in the Mahābhārata emphasise that, begetting a son is one of man's highest duties and the only way he can discharge the debts he owes to his ancestors. Consider the stories of Mandapāla,⁵⁸ Agastya⁵⁹ and Jaraṭkāru,⁶⁰ or Pāṇḍu's request to Kuntī to resort to niyoga, because without progeny he would be unable to fulfill his debts to his ancestors.⁶¹ In fact, marriage was primarily for the birth of the male child, for, a newly wedded couple prayed "come let us join together that we may generate a male son for the sake of increase of wealth".⁶² The Āpastamba Grhasūtra states that, one of the primary purposes of marriage was the birth of sons who saved a man from hell.⁶³ Probably, this is why, of all the four āśramas, gārhastya is considered to

57. Manu, III.37-41.

58. Mahābhārata, I.220.11-13.

59. ibid., III.94.12-14.

60. ibid., I.13.20-22.

61. ibid., I.111.25-26.

62. S.Bhattacharji, "Motherhood in Ancient India", op.cit. pg. WS.50.

63. cited in P.V. Kane, op.cit., pg. 428.

be the most important by Gautama and Baudhāyana.⁶⁴

With the child becoming the dominant one in the mother child dyad, a mother's position and identity became dependent on the child, especially if the child was a male one. For women, the birth of a son became both a certification and redemption, for the birth of a son and not the fact of child bearing led to an unambiguous reversal in her status. That mothers themselves realised that their identity was established by their sons is evident from their lamentations when they did not have male children or were separated from them. Kuntī says, "O Mādhava, neither widowhood, nor the loss of fortune, nor hostility pains me as does separation from my sons."⁶⁵ Bhadrā Kākṣivatī, in a story related by Kuntī to Pāṇḍu, says that a widow, bereft of sons, is indeed wretched and "lives no more".⁶⁶ Jāmbavatī, beholding the birth of several sons to Rukmiṇī, pleaded with Kṛṣṇa for one also, who should be equal in power to that of Rukmi-

64. BaudhāyanaDharmasūtra, II.6.20, says since it is only the asrama of the house holder that begets offspring, necessary for achieving immortality, it is the most important. cited in ibid., pg. 425.

65. Mahābhārata, V.88.68.

66. ibid., I. 112.19

nī's.⁶⁷ The importance of Uttarā stems from the fact that she bore Parīkṣit, who eventually perpetuated the Pāṇḍava lineage. The son's importance in the mother's identity formation, and his role as her virtual saviour is evident from the story of Paulomā and Cyavana.⁶⁸ The apsarā Ādrikā was supposed to have been freed from her curse the moment she gave birth to two children.⁶⁹ Therefore, motherhood in a woman often incited the jealousy of others. When Devyānī became a mother, Śarmiṣṭhā was heartbroken and said, "Devyānī has become a mother, my youth is doomed to pass away in vain."⁷⁰ And when Devyānī got to know Śarmiṣṭhā had given birth to three sons, in contrast to her own two, she was enraged and complained to her father "Three sons have been begotten upon her by this king Yayāti, but, O father, being luckless I have only two."⁷¹

The samskāras or the brahmanical rites of passage prevalent in ancient India and elaborately described in the Dharmaśāstras, were, as expected, meant primarily for the

67. ibid., XIII. 14. 13-15.

68. ibid., I. 6. 2, 3, 12.

69. ibid., I. 57. 52.

70. ibid., I. 77. 8.

71. ibid., I. 78. 28.

male child. The Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad features a description of the rite called Garbhādhāna performed for conceiving a child (preferably a male one, of course).⁷² The Āśvālāyana Grhasūtra refers to a separate rite called Pūmsavana expressly for securing male children.⁷³ Manu describes a ritual that a wife had to perform if she wanted a male child.⁷⁴ Caturthīkarma was ritualised cohabitation with the wife, after her menstruation, for a son. The Anābhalovana and Viṣṇubali were to prevent the destruction of the foetus. In the samskāra called Soṣyantīkarma, first described in the Rg Veda,⁷⁵ prayers were to be offered, so that "the male child having been sleeping ten months inside his mother, comes out a living being, unharmed from his mother....". Several other samskāras were prescribed for the son - Medhājanana (to instil intelligence in the infant), Niṣkramaṇa (when the father held the son and brought him out of the house), Varṣavardhana (which sought along life for the infant), etc. Thus, most of the samskāras were performed

72. Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, VI. 4.21, cited in P.V. Kane, op. cit., pg.101.

73. Āśvālāyana Grhasūtra, I.13.1, cited in ibid., pg.201.

74. Manu, III. 262/263.

75. RgVeda, V.78.79, cited in P.V. Kane, op cit., pg.227.

for the child and not the mother. The Manusmṛti expressly states, that, Garbhādhāna, Pūmsavana, Sīmontonnayana Jātakarma and Cūḍākarma were performed to eradicate the guilt of the seed and the guilt of the womb, and were only for the child.⁷⁶ However, Viśvarūpa's commentary on Yājñavalkya asserts that all the sāṃskāras except Sīmontonnayana, had to be performed again and again, as they were for the male child, while Sīmontonnayana being a Sāṃskāra for women, had to be performed only once. This absence of prayers for the long life and health of the mother, at a time when the parturition mortality rate must have been very high, was indeed, in conformity with the general attitude towards women. Though in the Mahābhārata sāṃskāras are rarely referred to in detail, the above attitude is implicit in the blessings and wishes contained in several passages. Kuntī tells Draupadī, "Bear live children, bear man children."⁷⁷ (emphasis added) Quite a few resort to austere penances for sons,⁷⁸ others ask for sons when a boon is granted to

76. Manu, II.27

77. Mahābhārata, I. 191. 7.

78. Sagara, ibid.; III.104.12. ; Pulomā and Kalakā. ibid., III.170.6. ; Vinatā, ibid., I.27.24-26. Sṛnjaya, ibid., XII. 31.15.

them.⁷⁹ The Vana Parvan devotes a long section to evil spirits that are said to destroy the foetus,⁸⁰ but contains nothing on the measures to ensure the health of the mother. The total indifference to the mother's well being was in consonance with the general world view of patriarchy, in which WOMEN occupied the lowest possible position.

Though it was said that the mother was to be revered and adored, such reverence and adoration did not result in any substantial rights for the mother. Thus, the eulogy of motherhood seems to have been an emotional appeal, a compensation for the actual reality.⁸¹ Since the main dharma for women was dharanī dharma, it followed that if they failed in that by being unable to procreate sons they could be abandoned with impunity. Kauṭilya says that wives are to be abandoned if they fail to procreate sons within a prescribed period.⁸² If a wife lacked in either progeny or dharma, her husband could marry again, according to Āpastamba.⁸³ Ma-

79. ibid., III.115.21/22.

80. ibid., III.219.25-39.

81. S.Bhattachar ji, 'Motherhood in Ancient India', op. cit., pg. SW 50.

82. cited in P.V. Kane, op. cit., pg. 552.

83. cited in ibid., pg. 555.

nusmṛti recommended that a barren wife be superceded in the eighth year, one whose children have died in the tenth, and one who bears only daughters, in the eleventh year.⁸⁴ Surprisingly, it is the woman who is regularly blamed for failing to give birth. Male infertility was known as the custom of niyoga indicates, but no stigma was attached to the sterile male, such as Pāṇḍu, (the device of a curse was used to rationalise his sterility)⁸⁵ It was always the woman who was held responsible for failure to procreate. Moreover, it is evident from the Dharmaśāstras, that the mother after giving birth, had only a negligible role to play in her child's upbringing. This is revealed by the age of upanayana, which was eight years for the brāhmaṇas, eleven years for the kṣatryas and twelve for the vaiśyas.⁸⁶ Manu further lowered the age of upanayana for all the three castes.⁸⁷ The fixation of the time of upanayana, which initiated the male child into adult male society, and its further lowering by Manu, constituted an emotional rejection of the mother and the woman's world, and was aimed at depriving the mother of

84. Manu, IV. 81.

85. Mahābhārata, I. 109.28/29.

86. According to Āśvālāyana Gṛhasūtra cited in P.K. Kane, op. cit, pg. 275.

87. Manu, II. 36-37.

any right over the child. The mother receded into the background soon after the child was born. Thus, there was an attempt to restrict motherhood to just childbearing and not child rearing. None of the important mothers in the Mahābhārata play any role in their children's upbringing. All the decisions regarding the education, etc., of the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas were taken by Bhīṣma.⁸⁸ The children of Draupadī and Subhadrā were entrusted to the care of their maternal male relatives, when the Pāṇḍavas were in exile.⁸⁹ Śakuntalā decided to leave her son with Duṣyanta, when he is only six years old.⁹⁰ Janṭu was sacrificed inspite of his mother's protest.⁹¹ So, one cannot agree with Iravati Karve that, widows as guardians of minor sons enjoyed both wealth and power.⁹² The only example of a mother actually concerned with her son's upbringing and education is Gaṅgā.⁹³ Neither did women as mothers enjoy any special proprietary rights.

88. Mahābhārata, I.121.1.

89. ibid., III.24.44,46.

90. ibid., I.68.5.

91. ibid., III.128.2,III.128.4/5.

92. I. Karve, Kinship Organisation in India. Asia Publishing, Bombay, 1968, (3rd ed.) pg. 364.

93. Mahābhārata,. I. 94.31-36.

The only concession granted by Manu and Nārada was that widowed mothers of male children were allowed usufructory rights over the property (of their dead husbands) but, were not allowed to inherit it. A mother could partake of the inheritance only when her son died without children.⁹⁴ Otherwise the only property she could call her own was the strīdhana.⁹⁵ The deprivation of property rights even from women as the mother served to perpetuate the dependence of women on men.

In the final analysis, the custom of niyoga, prevalent in ancient India indicates that women did not have control over their own bodies, i.e, their reproductive functions could be commanded at will, and motherhood could be imposed on them even if they were unwilling. Ambikā and Ambālikā are prominent examples on whose unwilling persons motherhood was imposed in the interests of the lineage.⁹⁶ It is Pāṇḍu's desire for offspring that makes him request Kuntī to resort

94. Manu, IX, 217.

95. ibid., IX. 196.

96. Their unwillingness is evident from their reaction to Vyāsa. Ambikā shut her eyes and Ambālikā became pale with fear. Mahābhārata, I.100.4,15.

to niyoga,⁹⁷ but, initially Kuntī was extremely unwilling,⁹⁸ Manu contradicts himself on the question of niyoga, condemning it at times⁹⁹ and permitting it at other times, for the continuation of the lineage.¹⁰⁰ The Vaśiṣṭha Dharmasūtra says that the father or brother of the widow or the widow's husband, shall assemble the gurus, who taught and sacrificed for the deceased husband, and shall appoint her to raise an issue for her deceased husband (emphasis added). So, even when niyoga was allowed, it was always for the husband's benefit and for the continuation of his lineage, never for the mother. Her wishes were rarely taken into account and her body was not her own, since for all practical purposes women were born for procreation.

The above discussion reveals that contrary to the impression created by the Dharmasāstras and the epic, childbirth was denigrated as polluting and women being associated with it were regarded as intrinsically impure. There was an attempt to negate women's role in reproduction by assigning greater importance to the seed (bīja). It is

97. Mahābhārata, I. 111.30.

98. ibid., I. 112.5.

99. Manu, IX.64-65, IX.68.

100. ibid., IX. 59.

also evident that the son was actually the object of worship and all the blessings and rituals were meant for him. Mothers did not enjoy any rights over their progeny, over property, and even their own body. When this is juxtaposed with the eulogy of the mother, it becomes evident that it was not the actual mother but the concept of motherhood that was deified and, therefore, reduced to an abstraction. Since society preferred to view woman primarily as mother she lost her identity as a woman. Motherhood was reduced to an "object". This is what A. Rich calls the institutionalization of motherhood by the patriarchal social system, for its own purposes, through the celebration of the mythic condition of mothering.¹⁰¹ The experiential aspect of motherhood, from which women were deemed to derive power, was relegated to the background. This was all part of the attempt by patriarchy to fight off the incipient power derived by women from her reproductive capabilities. |

101. A. Rich, cited in M. Humme (ed), Feminist Criticism: Women as Contemporary Critics, Harvester Press, Sussex, 1986.

CHAPTER III

KUNTĪ AND GĀNDHĀRĪ IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA - THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NORMATIVE MODEL

It has been shown in the previous chapter that the stereotypical eulogy of the mother and motherhood, found in the Dharmaśāstras cannot be uncritically accepted. Nevertheless, we find that a similar glorification of motherhood was also included in the Mahābhārata, perhaps not in the same didactic terms, although some passages in the Śānti and Anuśāsana Parvans do echo a few of the popular dharmasāstric injunctions on the mother. Instead the Mahābhārata employed a more sophisticated device. The brahmanical redactors tried to confer certain dharmasāstric attributes to a few women characters in the Mahābhārata and developed these into ideals or normative models. This is particularly evident in the case of Kuntī. There was a conscious and fairly discernible attempt to develop Kuntī into an ideal and, therefore, the supreme mother. That which conformed to the dharmasāstric model of a mother was emphasised, and to an extent celebrated, and which did not was relegated to the

background. Gāndhārī, too, was presented primarily as a mother. But in her case the reworking is less visible because the influence she exerts over the various incidents of the epic is negligible compared to Kuntī. Nevertheless, both were developed as ideal mothers and convoluted justifications were provided for any behaviour or incident that did not fit into the required mould.

The craving for motherhood was deemed to be perfectly natural and in fact women were supposed to look forward to pregnancy and childbirth. Therefore, Kuntī's premarital liason and the resultant child is explained as arising from an intense desire to become a mother. After the brāhmaṇa granted her the boon to have children at her will through the gods, Kuntī had her menstrual periods. She was ashamed of having her flow while still a spinster.¹ This conforms to the Dharmaśāstras which recommended pre-puberty marriage, so that the fertile season of women did not go waste.² Generally, premarital liasons were not condoned. Many of the Dharmaśāstras, particularly the Manusmṛti, carry strict injunctions about the virginity of the bride at the time of the

1. Mahābhārata, III. 289.4.

2. Please refer to chapter two where this aspect has been elucidated upon.

marriage.³ Kuntī herself seems to have been aware of the importance of virginity for she repeatedly requested the Sun God to leave and begged: "My father and mother and other elders (only) have the power to give this body away, I shall not in this world infringe the law; to guard her body is a woman's glory."⁴ Finally, when Sūrya threatened to curse her she relented on condition that she would retain her virginity.⁵ Kuntī gave birth to her son Karṇa in total secrecy, and had to finally abandon him.⁶ "Though she knew that an unmarried girl is forbidden to bear a child she wept piteously."⁷ This entire chain of events is meant to indicate how Kuntī conformed to the brahmanical norms on womanhood, for she conceived as her fertile seasons were going waste; she ensured that she got back her virginity so that no blemish was attached to her purity; she abandoned her child but wept piteously for a mother was expected to exhibit such exces-

3. Manu, VIII. 364, VIII. 368, III.5, VIII.205.

4. Mahābhārata, III. 289.20.

5. ibid., III. 291. 10.

6. ibid., III. 292. 1-8.

7. ibid., III.292.9.

sive emotion at separation from her son.⁸

Satyavatī, who became pregnant before her marriage to Śāntanu, was in some sense an exception, for her child (the learned Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyan Vyāsa) is represented as an adult from his very birth. He did not require his mother's care. Vyāsa forsook his mother (promising to return if needed)⁹ and so absolved Satyavatī of any responsibility. Thus, she maintained her virginity even though a mother.

Several incidents in the epic involving Kuntī and Gāndhārī, make it clear that a woman's identity, authority and status stemmed from and was dependent on motherhood. Both Kuntī and Gāndhārī appear eager to become mothers. Gāndhārī took care of the sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana when he came to her palace exhausted with hunger and fatigue. In return, when the sage granted her a boon she sought a hundred sons equal to her lord in strength and accomplishment.¹⁰ Possibly the question of primogeniture was at the back of her mind, for if she gave birth to a son before Kuntī, that son would

8. But she apparently received news about him. "Pṛthā found out about his (Karna's) wearing a divine armour through a spy." *ibid.*, III. 293.14.

9. *ibid.*, I.57. 70/71.

10. *ibid.*, I.107. 7/8.

be the king, and her status as the royal mother would be immeasurably enhanced, compared to the status that she enjoyed as wife of the surrogate king Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Kuntī too was eager to have children, though when Pāṇḍu requested her to take recourse to niyoga, she appeared somewhat reluctant and said: "You yourself must come to me for children for not even in my thoughts shall I go to any man but you."¹¹ But she soon relented and revealed her secret,¹² through which she was able to procreate three children. Niyoga though at times permitted by Manu was generally condemned and, therefore, her initial reluctance was in line with prescribed norms. Eventually, however, she did not have to submit to the conventional niyoga and the conception of the Pāṇḍavas took place through divine intervention, which placed it above human criticism. Kuntī conformed again and fulfilled her dharma by becoming a mother. (This also ensured that Pāṇḍu's sterility was overlooked.) The desire to become a mother first was so strong that Gāndhārī aborted her foetus in anger, when she failed to give birth for two years and heard that Kuntī had already given birth to Yudhiṣṭhira.¹³

11. ibid., I. 112. 5.

12. ibid., I. 113. 32-38.

13. ibid., I. 107. 10/11, 15.

Gāndhārī openly admitted her disappointment at being unable to deliver first. The craving for sons was universal; for Mādrī approached Pāṇḍu to seek Kuntī's help to beget a child for her.¹⁴ She said that it was unfair that she should be childless and Kuntī alone should have offsprings.¹⁵ Pāṇḍu requested Kuntī¹⁶ who agreed reluctantly. Mādrī got two sons by calling upon the Aśvin twins. When asked again by Pāṇḍu, Kuntī categorically refused, "I fear that she will best (score over) me.... that is the way of women.... Therefore, you shall no more charge me that must be my favour from you."¹⁷ The fear that if Mādrī had more sons than Kuntī she would occupy a higher position in Pāṇḍu's household made Kuntī refuse, and this refusal was accepted as perfectly normal, for it was accepted that each woman would try and protect her position as best as she could. Nothing protected the interests of Kuntī more than restricting the number of sons of her co-wife.

14. ibid., I. 115. 2-6.

15. ibid., I. 115. 4.

16. ibid., I. 115 . 14. Pāṇḍu says: "You blameless woman must carry Mādrī cross as with a ship."

17. ibid., I. 115. 23/24.

From the Mahābhārata it appears that neither Kuntī nor Gāndhārī had any role to play in the upbringing of their sons.¹⁸ Once Kuntī came to Hastināpura, the entire responsibility of her children was taken over by Bhīṣma. Bhīṣma¹⁹ and Dhṛtarāṣṭra decided on the education to be imparted to the boys and the teacher to be appointed for them. Gāndhārī totally remained in the background and the only function that Kuntī performed was to comfort her sons, like a helpless mother expresses her anxiety about her son's welfare.²⁰ This was probably because of the sharp distinction that existed between the domestic and the public spheres. Women as mothers belonged to the former, while the activities of young male children was deemed to belong to the latter. Therefore, mothers in general had no role to play in the public activities of their male children. Possibly the only exception was Gaṅgā.²¹ She actively supervised Bhīṣma's education and it was only after he had completed his education that he was sent back²² to Śāntanu. She remained con-

18. ibid., I.119.14/15. In fact there is no mention of Kuntī.

19. ibid., I.121.1.

20. ibid., I.119.

21. ibid., I. 93.43.

22. ibid., I. 94.31-36.

cerned for his well being throughout and infact actively intervened to prevent a conflict between Bhīṣma and Paraśurāma,²³ which was instigated by Ambā. But Gaṅgā's behaviour is explained by her divinity. She was not subject to human norms and, therefore, not expected to provide the role model.

The distinction between the public and the domestic domains appears to have been strictly maintained. Women, even as mothers, did not belong to the public sphere. That is why women did not enjoy any political power commensurate with their position. Political activities remained the prerogative of the male public world and women outside of its purview. This was regarded as the natural order of things. Before the Rājasūya Yajña Yudhiṣṭhira held a council to decide whether to go ahead with it. While he consulted his brothers, priests, and councillors,²⁴ Kuntī, the senior-most member of the household was left out. Infact, Kuntī was mentioned just once in the context of the Rājasūya Yajña, when Kṛṣṇa at the conclusion of the sacrifice came to pay

23. ibid., V. 179.23.

24. ibid., II. 12. 10.

his respects to her.²⁵ The references to Gāndhārī are even more infrequent.

In reality, the mothers had no role to play in the decision making process, even though the decision may have concerned them. When the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī were to leave for twelve years of exile after Yudhiṣṭhira had lost at the dice game,²⁶ it was Vidura who decided that Kuntī was to stay at his house, for she had become old and delicate.²⁷ Kuntī's wishes were not taken into account. She was only allowed to comfort Draupadī²⁸ and bemoan her unhappy fate.²⁹ Here again, Kuntī comes out as the typical mother: brave, stoical and passive. After the Pāṇḍavas returned from their exile and the preparations for the war began, neither Kuntī nor Gāndhārī played any part in the deliberations. It was only through emissaries like Kṛṣṇa and Sanjaya that the discussions were conducted. Gāndhārī's advice was sought just once by Dhṛtarāṣṭra,³⁰ and once she was asked to be

25. ibid., II. 42. 50.

26. ibid., II. 69. 1-4.

27. ibid., II. 69. 5.

28. ibid., II. 70. 7.

29. ibid., II. 70. 15.

30. ibid., V. 127. 2.

present when Sanjaya³¹ recounted certain details about the Pāṇḍava war preparations. Beyond rebuking Duryodhana³² and making dire prophecies about the future, Gāndhārī contributed nothing to the deliberations before the war. So complete was the exclusion of women from any kind of decision-making that when Kuntī did participate in any particular event such as at Vāraṇāvata,³³ she was made to do that at her eldest son's request. At Ekacakrā, when she took an independent decision of sending Bhima to combat the rākṣasa Baka,³⁴ she was rebuked by Yudhiṣṭhira.³⁵ Mothers were expected to be totally dependent on their sons, especially if they were adults.

However, certain contradictions are visible in some portions of the epic, for at times Kuntī acted with decisive firmness. Her strength of character is visible in the incidents relating to Karṇa's birth, her abandonment of Karṇa,³⁶

31. ibid., V. 65.6.

32. ibid., V. 67. 9/10., V. 127. 19-53.

33. ibid., I. 136.5.

34. ibid., I. 149. 1-5.

35. ibid., I. 150. 5-15.

36. ibid., III. 292. 1-8.

her refusal to acknowledge Karṇa in the arena³⁷ even when he was humiliated due to his parentage. In fact in all these incidents, and in the conversation she had with Karṇa³⁸ prior to the outbreak of the war, Kuntī comes out as a rather unfeeling³⁹ and, therefore, an atypical mother. Thus, these incidents are not emphasized, for they fall outside of the image the brahmanical redactors of the Mahābhārata were trying to create for Kuntī. Later, after the end of the war, Kuntī was openly criticised for her behaviour with Karṇa by Yudhiṣṭhira,⁴⁰ though she attempted to justify herself.⁴¹ But the condemnation by Yudhiṣṭhira reveals that Kuntī's 'non motherly' behaviour was expected to be criticised. Before the war, Kuntī sent several messages to Yudhiṣṭhira and the other Pāṇḍavas⁴² through Kṛṣṇa, exhorting them to stand up for their rights and to fight for justice. These speeches were extremely powerful and undoubtedly contributed

37. ibid., I.126.27, 29.

38. Ibid., V. 142, V. 143, V. 144.

39. ibid., V.142.25 She seems to be concerned only about her legitimate sons for she expects Karṇa to obey her once she receives him back as her son.

40. ibid., XII. 1.18., XII. 6.9.

41. ibid., XII. 6.3-8.

42. ibid., V 88. 74, V.88.72, V.130.7, V.130. 19-32, V. 135. 1-8.

to the war. However, later Kuntī tendered a virtual apology for her action. She said that she sent those messages not for herself but for the benefit of her sons, so that the race of Pāṇḍu, represented by her sons, would not be lost. "It was not for my own sake that I urged Vāsudeva with the stirring words of Vidulā. It was for your sake that I called upon you to follow that advice."⁴³ Thus, there was an attempt to transform Kuntī and Gāndhārī into ideal mothers. Sometimes impossible virtues like softness, gentleness, obsessive devotion to sons, silent sufferance, readiness to sacrifice, etc., were attributed to them. This was a part of an attempt by the patriarchal brahmanical ideologues to confine women to a narrow, and often remarkably constricting, sphere of behaviour. However, contradictions remained as the Mahābhārata was not crafted as a totality.

However, mothers, by fulfilling their dharma acquired a certain authority. They were venerated and their wishes respected. In fact, the veneration that Kuntī was supposed to have enjoyed was used to explain the polyandrous marriage of Draupadi, with which the brāhmaṇas were plainly uncomfortable. "And the two Pārthas went in the potter's shop,

43. ibid., XV.24.18.

and the powerful men found Pṛthā home. And the Lords of men in the highest spirits spoke to Kuntī of Draupadī, 'Look what we have found'.... and she merely said 'now you share that together.'⁴⁴ It was made out since Kuntī had uttered these words, it would be impossible to go against them because as a mother she could not be disobeyed. Gāndhārī, too, is represented as unexpectedly prophetic, her powers arising from her position as the dutiful wife and the ideal mother. After the war, Gāndhārī loudly lamented the death of her sons,⁴⁵ particularly Duryodhana even though she believed that he was clearly in the wrong. This was considered perfectly natural and necessary for her image as the ideal mother and, therefore, several chapters were devoted to these lamentations. Moreover, Gāndhārī held Kṛṣṇa responsible for the war and cursed him with the extinction of his entire race.⁴⁶ Even Kṛṣṇa, the avatāra, could not escape the curse, for a mother's words were sacred. Both these incidents are utilised to illustrate the little power that women derived from motherhood.

44. ibid., I. 182. 1-3.

45. ibid., XI.17. 1-3., XI.18.19/20.

46. ibid., XI.25.41/42.

Thus there was a conscious and deliberate effort by the brahmanical redactors of the Mahābhārata to rework the characters of Kuntī and Gāndhārī into ideal and normative mothers. Both were made to conform to the brahmanical conceptualization of the mother and, therefore, both Kuntī and Gāndhārī in the Mahābhārata have exemplary functions. Both are eulogised in the Mahābhārata as the mothers. Yudhiṣṭhira said of Kuntī: "The woman who from our childhood fostered us,.... wanted to fasts and austerities, always prone to auspicious rites, devout in her homage to deities and in her obedience to her gurus, a loving mother to her sons.... who for our sakes suffered hardships constantly, though she deserved none. Ask her her health...."⁴⁷ In this speech we get the brahmanical image of the mother and it is clearly stated that Kuntī conformed to it. In fact, in the representation of Kuntī and Gāndhārī one can discern all the eleven major stereotypes of femininity, as recounted by Mary Ellman,⁴⁸ to be found in literature. In the Mahābhārata, each female character is a vehicle for one particular image of the woman. For example, Kuntī and Gāndhārī are represent-

47. ibid., V. 81. 39.ff.

48. Mary Ellman, Thinking About Women, cited in Toril Moi's Sexual Textual Politics, Methuen, London and New York, 1985, Pg. 34.

ed primarily as mothers. There is little reference to Gāndhārī's marital life. Kuntī's interaction with Pāṇḍu is rather limited, except the conversation they had regarding the feasibility of niyoga.⁴⁹ In contrast, Draupadī is represented primarily as wife. Her interaction with her children is negligible. They were sent over to her natal family once the Pāṇḍavas left for exile.⁵⁰ Even when her sons were killed by Aśvatthāmā her grief was rather muted,⁵¹ especially when compared to the lamentations of Gāndhārī. Draupadī, unlike Kuntī, was always defined as devoted to her lords and never as devoted to the sons.⁵²

This compartmentalization of roles as a mother or a wife in one particular character was probably intended to make the normative model more effective, for it helped to bring the image into sharper relief.

In juxtaposition with the ideal mothers such as Kuntī and Gāndhārī, there were several others in the Mahābhārata

49. Mahābhārata, I. 111.30, I. 112.5, I. 112. 10-30, I. 113.5.

50. ibid., III.24.44, III.24.46.

51. ibid., X. 11.5/6, 10-15.

52. ibid. IV.1.fn., 5.

who did not conform to the brahmanical model. These mothers also have an exemplary role, for sometimes they bring out the virtues of the ideal mother by their deviant conduct. For example, Menakā who abandoned her child,⁵³ was severely condemned for her action. In other cases elaborate explanations were provided to justify the unmother-like behaviour. Gaṅgā abandoning her children is explained as resulting from the curse on the Vasuṣ.⁵⁴ Kadru, in a fit of pique, cursed her sons. This was rationalised by Brahmā as he pointed out that the snakes had drastically increased in number.⁵⁵ Menakā was not expected to follow convention, as she was an apsarā. Thus explanations were provided whenever women did not conform to the brahmanical image of the mother. However, we find that non-brahmanical mothers were not expected to conform to the ideal, for no justifications are provided for their behaviour. Patrilineality and patrilocality were not for Hidimbā,⁵⁶ as she was a rākṣasa and outside the pale of brahmanical society. She brought up her child on her own, unlike Kuntī and Gāndhārī. Rādhā, Karṇa's foster mother,

53. ibid., I. 8.6/7.

54. ibid., I.91.12-14, I.91.17, I.91.20/21.

55. ibid., I.18.8-10.

56. ibid., I.144.36.

also played a significant role in the adoption and upbringing of Karṇa. However, her role is entirely glossed over, except when Karṇa talks about her, just once.⁵⁷ It was felt that both these mothers were not worth elucidating, for they could not be held up as examples. Instead Kuntī and Gāndhārī as royal Kṣatrya mothers were better expected to illustrate the values of brahmanical society. Thus it is the characters of Kuntī and Gāndhārī which were reworked and transformed into normative models of the ideal mother.

57. ibid., v. 139..5-7.

CHAPTER IV

THE TWO FACES OF WOMAN IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA - THE WIFE VIS A VIS THE MOTHER.

In patriarchal societies women are defined entirely in relational terms, i.e., as a daughter, a wife or a mother. This is manifested in brahmanism's eulogy of motherhood and the construction of the mother as an important category, which resulted in a conscious attempt to evolve a normative model of motherhood, portrayed by Kuntī and Gāndhārī in the Mahābhārata. But the other equally, if not more important category was the wife. I now propose to investigate the interrelationship between the two categories, "wife" and "mother" as reflected in the Mahābhārata, in order to assess the status of the mother in the overall perspective on women.

In different cultural systems, different female relational roles tend to dominate the image of "female" and this controls the significance of all the other relational roles. The dominance of a particular type, within the larger category of women is highly consequential for the ways in which all women are reviewed in a particular culture. For example, since wives are

normally sexual partners while mothers are not, an emphasis on women as wives will tend to give ideological prominence to the sexual aspects of women in general. In such a culture, where an emphasis on female sexuality dominate its notion of femininity, women are generally viewed and treated with less respect, than in a culture in which women are constructed largely in kin terms.¹

Historians are somewhat divided in their opinion regarding the relative status of the wife vis a vis the mother in ancient India. While Meyer opined that women as childbearer received maximum privilege², he contradicted himself elsewhere, when he said that it was only as wife that women had any real right "to the joys of love, a right to life and its gifts".³ Contemporary ethnographic studies, seem to indicate that a women as a wife has almost no status at all and it is only by becoming the mother of sons can she hope to gain a position of power and authority.⁴ Other reiterate the dramatic improvement in the social status of

-
1. S. Ortner and H. Whitehead(eds), Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Sexuality, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986(Reprint), pg.23.
 2. J.J.Meyer, Sexual Life in Ancient India, The Standard Literature Company, Calcutta, 1956, pg.359.
 3. ibid., pg. 340.
 4. P.Hershman, "Virgin and Mother" in I.M.Lewis(ed), Symbols and Sentiments, Academic Press, London, 1977, pg. 270ff.

the Indian wife, once she becomes pregnant, which is regarded as a kind of deliverance from insecurity, doubt and the shame of infertility.⁵ In ancient Indian texts, both religious or secular, the wife occupies more space than the mother. Many of the Dharmaśāstras include several passages on strīpuṁsadharmā.⁶ It is women as wives, rather than as mothers, who form the substantial part of Manu's discourse on women, though of course, Manu also echoes the conventional eulogy of motherhood. He says "The wife is the visible form of what holds together the begetting of children, the caring of them, ... and the ordinary business of every day. Children, fulfillment of duties, obedience, and the ultimate sexual pleasure depend on the wife, so does heaven for oneself and one's ancestors."⁷ The wife's (jāyā) importance as a receptacle for the rebirth of her husband, has already been stated.⁸ The Mānava Dharmaśāstra also devotes several passages to the conduct of the virtuous wife,⁹ to measures necessary for

5. S.Kakar, The Inner World: A Psychoanalytic Study of Childhood and Society in India, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1991, (4th, ed), pg. 76,78.

6. For example that of Gautama, Baudhāyana, Āpastamba and Vasiṣṭha.

7. Manu., IX. 27-28.

8. ibid., IX. 8.

9. ibid., V. 154-156, V.164-165, IX. 22, IX.30.

keeping them in good spirits,¹⁰ for, "if the wife is not radiant... the whole family is not radiant."¹¹ Thus, it appears that such texts tended to focus on the man-woman relationship primarily in terms of the husband and wife. The Mahābhārata also contains similar references. Infact, women as wives, feature more regularly than women as mothers. Kuntī, the paradigmatic mother in the Mahābhārata, having been widowed early and separated from her sons, praised Draupadī to Kṛṣṇa, and called her a "true women" because she had chosen the life of her husbands over that of her sons.¹² The respect to be accorded to the wife is repeatedly reiterated. Śakuntalā tells Duṣyanta, "I am your wife and, therefore, deserve to be treated respectfully ."¹³ Elsewhere, commenting on the qualities of a virtuous wife, she says that the wife's importance lies in the fact that she is the man's half, the first of his friends, the root of religion, profit and desire, the root of his salvation.¹⁴ Therefore, the wife was one's most valuable possession.¹⁵ The designation of the wife as a

10. ibid., III. 55-59.

11. ibid., III. 61-62.

12. Mahābhārata, V.88.40-45.

13. ibid., I. 68. 24/25.

14. ibid., I. 68.40/41.

15. ibid., I. 68.44.

man's best friend is borne out by other passages also.¹⁶ Bhīṣma, during the narration of the story of the pigeon and the fowler emphasised the position of the wife vis a vis the mother. "A householder's home even when filled with sons, grandsons and daughters-in-law and servants is regarded as empty if destitute of the housewife... A house without the wife is as desolate as the wilderness."¹⁷ At the end of the episode the male pigeon is made to say "One's spouse is one's associate in all one's acts of virtue, profit and pleasure... It is said that the wife is the richest possession of her lord... there is no friend like the wife.. no refuge better than the wife... and no better ally in the world than the wife."¹⁸ Throughout the story the importance of the wife over the the mother is reiterated for the female pigeon announces that widows even if they are the mothers of many children are miserable, for a women bereft of her husband becomes helpless and an object of pity.¹⁹ This was because, it was only the husband who could make unlimited gifts to her and never the

16. The brāhmaṇa's daughter in Ekac akrā calls the wife a man's best friend, ibid., I.147.11. ; so does Nala who also says that that a man could forsake himself but never his own wife, ibid., III.58.29.

17. ibid., XII.142.4/5.

18. ibid., XII.142.10.

19. ibid., XII.144.2.

father, brother or son."²⁰

It was recognised, that the husband, too, had the duty of protecting his wife and looking after her comfort. When Jamadagni's wife Renukā returned late from her errand exhausted by the heat, Jamadagni resolved to punish the sun god, Sūrya.²¹ In the story of the brāhmaṇa and his guest in the Aśvamedhikā Parvan, the former is made to say that it was a husband's duty to protect his wife and "that man who fails to protect his wife earns great infamy here, and goes to hell here after."²² It was expected that the husband should respect his wife's wishes. Sages often sent their disciples on difficult errands to fulfill the commands of their wives. Veda asked his disciple to obtain the earrings belonging to king Pauṣya's queen, for his wife, in lieu of his dakṣinā.²³ Ruru vowed to kill every snake he came across, because a snake had bitten his wife who was as dear to him as life itself.²⁴ The wife enjoyed special powers and had particular duties within a household. Draupadī, asked by Satyabhāmā on the secret of her success with her husbands, delivered a long speech on the

20. ibid., XII. 144.6.

21. ibid., XIII. 97.15, XIII. 97.17.

22. ibid., XIV. 93.22.

23. ibid., I.3. 97, I.3.99.

24. ibid., I. 10.1/2.

duties she undertook while at Indraprastha to make herself indispensable to them.²⁵ The speech reveals that all the crucial work in the royal household, from supervising the welfare of guests and relatives, to overseeing the entire functioning of the royal establishment was the duty of the wife. One of her most important duties appears to have been personal attendance on Kuntī and submission to the latter's wishes in matters of food and attire.²⁶ The mother, excluded from this function after her son's marriage, tended to recede into the background. Since the wife was a man's best friend, her advice was also to be heeded. Yudhiṣṭhira was devastated at the large scale destruction caused during the war. Though Bhīma,²⁷ Arjuna,²⁸ Nakula²⁹ and Sahadeva³⁰ tried to reason with him, it was Draupadī's words,³¹ that convinced him, of the righteousness of his action. Here, it was the wife who came forward to remind the king of his duties, and not the mother, who was also present. In the Mahāprasthānikā

25. ibid., III. 222. 39-56.

26. ibid., III. 222. 38.

27. ibid., XII. 10. 1-28.

28. ibid., XII. 11. 1-28.

29. ibid., XII. 12. 3-36.

30. ibid., XII. 13. 1-13.

31. ibid., XII. 14. 6-39.

Parvan, when the Pāṇḍavas decided to renounce the world, they were accompanied on their final journey by Draupadī, their wife.³² Thus, it was the wife who was deemed to be the constant companion of the husband. The Mahābhārata contains several stories in which the duties, code of conduct, etc, of a virtuous wife (pativratā) are outlined and celebrated. It was said that a wife, by following the mode of life of a pativratā gained certain powers. The hunter cursed by Damayantī, the chaste and ever devoted wife of Nala, fell down dead.³³ There is an entire section in the Vana Parvan called the Pativratā Mahātmya where the legend of Sāvitrī and Satyavāna is recounted. In it, Sāvitrī by the powers of her pativrātya won back her husband from Yama, the god of death, himself.³⁴ Thus, an ideal of wifely behavior was constructed, and only if the wife conformed to the virtues of chastity and obedience, i.e., to the ideal, that she gained access to this power unlike the mother who earned status automatically with childbirth. Nevertheless, the importance of marriage and the status of the wife is reiterated repeatedly, For example in the story of Kunī Gārga's daughter,³⁵ she is said to have

32. ibid., XVII. 1.18.

33. ibid., III. 61.37.

34. ibid., III. 281. 53-55.

35. ibid., IX.51.

passed her life by performing severe penances, and in the end was informed by Nārada, that, she could not attain heaven as she had never been married and had not acquired the status of a wife. Therefore, she married the sage Sṛṅgāvata for one night and the following morning, departed for heaven.³⁶

Thus, the authors/redactors of the Mahābhārata devoted long passages to women as wife, her duties, powers and position. In contrast the overt eulogy of motherhood appears rather subdued. This would seem to indicate, that, it was the category 'wife' by which the majority of the women were defined. Thus, it seems that the benign role of the mother was perceived as a given constant, while the sexuality of the wife, threatening and prone to indiscretion, required much greater control and therefore demanded greater attention.

However, in the Mahābhārata the mother has been accorded subtle superiority over the wife. Some of the most important decisions are taken by mother. During the Pāṇḍava's stay in Ekakakrā, it was Kuntī who unilaterally took the decision of sending Bhīma to confront the demon,³⁷ though, she was rebuked by Yudhiṣ-

36. ibid., IX. 51. 17-18.

37. ibid., I. 149. 2/3.

thira, later.³⁸ And when the Pāṇḍavas left Ekacakrā, it was Kuntī's decision, that, they should proceed towards the city of Drupada.³⁹ Then again at Vāraṇāvata, Kuntī was an active participant in the plan to set fire to the house, to preempt Purocana.⁴⁰ Three of the most important events in the Mahābhārata had Kuntī participating in them as a mother. These were the birth of Karṇa,⁴¹ her message to Yudhiṣṭhira and the other Pāṇḍavas before the war, suggesting that they should fight for their rights,⁴² and her subsequent dialogue with Karṇa⁴³ before the war, where she revealed his parentage⁴⁴ and extracted the promise, that, he would not kill any of the Pāṇḍavas, except Arjuna.⁴⁵ Satyavatī's role in the birth of Pāṇḍu and Dhṛtarāṣṭra is undeniable. It is she who first asked Bhīṣma⁴⁶ and then summoned Vyāsa, for

38. ibid., I. 150.5-10.

39. ibid., I. 156.1-6.

40. ibid., I. 136.5.

41. Mahābhārata, I.104.1-8.

42. To Yudhiṣṭhira - ibid., V. 130.1, V. 130.7, V. 130.19-32. To Bhīma ibid., V. 135.8, To Arjuna, ibid., V. 135.1-5, V.88.74.

43. ibid., V. 142 - V. 144.

44. ibid., V.143.13, V.143.6, V.142.25.

45. ibid., V. 144. 23/24.

46. ibid., I. 97. 9-16.

niyoga.⁴⁷ The importance of the mother over the wife is evident from the fact that the five brothers married Draupadī only in order to act in consonance with a routine statement from Kuntī. Draupadī's wishes were not taken into account. Socially, too, it appears that the mother was accorded precedence over the wife. This is made clear in several passages. In the potter's house, after Arjuna won Draupadī in the svayamvara "...the excellent Kurus laid their heads, by the side of their heads did Kuntī lie, and Kṛṣṇā lay athwart at their feet."⁴⁸ And most importantly, in the Sabhā Parvan, Yudhiṣṭhira had staked and lost his kingdom, his brothers and Draupadī,⁴⁹ (emphasis added) because he had proprietary rights over them (including his wife) but not over his mother. Although the wife and the mother were dependent on their husbands and sons respectively, the former was regarded as a possession but the latter was not. Evidently the mother occupied a more privileged position.

Thus, it appears, that though the passages on the wife and her duties are greater in number, it was the mother who as a person wielded a more subtle influence on her sons than the wife. This raises an important question; if indeed it was women as

47. ibid., I. 99.30-35.

48. ibid., I.184.9

49. ibid., II. 58.31, II. 58.37, II. 59.1.

mother who was eulogised and who in actual terms exerted greater influence, why are the Dharmaśāstras and the Mahābhārata, preoccupied with the wife rather than the mother?.

|| In these texts, motherhood was regarded as the summum bonum of a woman's existence, the *raison d'etre* behind her birth. It was felt that dhāranī dharma (childbearing) and pālana poṣana dharma (nurturance) was the only dharma for women. All the Dharmaśāstras reiterate that women were created to bear children.⁵⁰ Marriage was regarded as the only Vedic transformative ritual for women,⁵¹ the first step for the fulfillment of the duty for which she was born. So the importance of marriage is emphasised and fathers are asked to marry off their daughters as soon as they reach puberty, for when such a girl remained unmarried her "fertile seasons" were be wasted. A father who failed to marry off his daughter incurred the sin of the murder of an embryo.⁵² Nārada asked Sāvitrī's father to give her away in marriage as she was past the age of puberty.⁵³ Kuntī was ashamed to have her

50. Manu, IX. 96; Nārada Smṛti and Kauṭilya cited in P.V.Kane, op.cit., pg. 561 and 552.

51. Manu, II.67.

52. Yājñavalkya Smṛti, I. 64.

53. Mahābhārata, III. 278.4.

periods while still unmarried.⁵⁴ Even as a wife, a women did not fulfill her dharma till she gave birth, for women were married only for offspring.⁵⁵ The wife was merely the vessel for drawing the seed, while the son was the seed itself.⁵⁶ A wife was only a potential mother, she had to redeem herself in the eyes of the patriarchal society by actually giving birth to a child. Only then was she accorded the respect due to a women who had fulfilled her dharma.

Another reason for the attention devoted to the wife, (most of which are regulatory or admonishing in nature) in contrast to the veneration of the mother, is perhaps due to the brahmanical fear of female sexuality. The women as the mother was asexual while the women as the wife was seen as the embodiment of threatening sexuality. Fertility was regarded as a positive virtue but sexuality was not. Male sexuality was perceived as a socially positive force, as stored up semen could be channelised to form spiritual power, but female sexuality was seen as dark, polluting and ultimately destructive.

54. ibid., II. 289.4.

55. This is what Lopāmudrā told Agastya, ibid., III.95.2. Droṇa married Kṛpī as he was moved by a desire for offspring, ibid., I.121.11. Kuntī welcomed Draupadī and told her that she would rejoice again when Draupadī became the mother of a son, ibid., I.191.12.

56. ibid., XII.137.25.

The male fear of female sexuality stemmed from the view that a woman was capable of having sexual intercourse, far in excess of a man. The passion of woman was supposed to be eight fold than that of man.⁵⁷ Manusmṛti also exhibits a fear of women as wanton seducers of men,⁵⁸ and warns that even a learned man could be led astray by his sister, daughter or mother. Karna hints at the excessive sexual desires of women, when he says that women always like to have many husbands⁵⁹ with reference to Draupadī. This fear of women's sexual passion stemmed from a belief that in a man's semen reposed his energy, vigour and youth, the wastage of which was regarded as weakening and defiling. Since women, particularly as the wife, were regarded as the cause of this dissipation of energy, they were castigated for entrapping men and undermining their strength. So, Manu recommends that a student should sleep alone and never shed his semen,⁶⁰ and that a man should have intercourse with his wife

57. Brhat Parāśara cited in P.V.Kane, op.cit., pg. 570ff.

58. "It is the very nature of women to corrupt men here on earth." Manu, II. 213. "A wanton woman can lead even a learned man astray", Manu II. 214.

59. Mahābhārata, I.194.8.

60. Manu, II. 180.

only during her fertile season.⁶¹ Among the four great evils that deprive a man of his prosperity, women are counted first and the foremost.⁶² Bhīṣma tells the Pāṇḍavas that women are fond of pleasure and power.⁶³ The Anuśāsana Parvan reiterates that women derive greater pleasure from sexual union, than do men.⁶⁴ It was also felt that women, particularly the wife, could easily enter into adulterous unions because of her intense sexual appetite. "Good looks do not matter to them (women) nor do they care about youth. A man!, they say, and enjoy sex with him."⁶⁵ Manu cautions that wives even when zealously guarded often run after men like whores.⁶⁶ Nala, informed of Damayantī's impending second marriage, comments that the very nature of women is inconsistent,⁶⁷ while elsewhere it is said that women by habit deceived their husbands, for, they were given to impropriety of conduct and were marked by evil manners. So it was felt necessary

61. ibid., III. 45. Manu also says that disengagement from sexual union yields great fruit. ibid., V. 56.

62. Mahābhārata, III.14.8.

63. Mahābhārata, XII.34.33.

64. ibid., XIII. 12. 47.

65. Manu, IX. 14.

66. ibid., IX. 15.

67. Mahābhārata, III.96.6.

to guard the wife⁶⁸ to enjoin her to follow a particular code of conduct, to seclude her and to restrict her movements, so that the wealth bequeathed by a patriline benefited its actual biological descendants⁶⁹ and not persons of unknown paternity. In contrast, once a woman proved her worth by providing children, particularly male children who were accepted by the patriline as true biological descendants, the many restrictions on her were relaxed and she was duly honoured.⁷⁰ Thus, women through motherhood were desexualised. She ceased to be a threat having fulfilled her function, thus, deserving of the veneration that was given to her.

In conclusion, it may be stated that irrespective of the relative importance of the mother or the wife both continued to be defined in male terms, and both were dependent on men. A mother became a "good woman" only when she produced male children, a definition that perpetuated the cultural devaluation of women as "mere" biological reproducers. Similarly, a wife was a

68. Manu, IX.6.

69. Manu says that a man, by guarding his wife, guards his own descendants, practices, family and himself. IX.7.

70. Mandapāla tells Lapitā that men should never trust women even if they are wives for "it is only when they become mothers that they do not much mind serving their husbands." Mahābhārata, I. 224.31.

"good woman" only when she was chaste, dutiful and obedient to her husband.⁷¹ The mother's position depended on the son, and the wife's position on the husband. Neither could come out of these limitations.

71. It was said that the husband is the highest diety of the wife, (Mahābhārata, XIV. 93.24) her only refuge, (ibid., III.222.35.) and that it was the duty of wives to serve their husbands with reverence and willing obedience, (ibid., XIII. 134. 11-22). Such examples can be multiplied.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

We have seen that a particular image of the mother as desexualised, benevolent, gentle and ever ready to sacrifice for her sons, was created and incorporated into the Mahābhārata, and an attempt was made to develop in the characters of Kuntī and Gāndhārī the ideal normative mother even though they did not always fit into the mould. The influence that Kuntī wielded in shaping several incidents in the epic was explained away as arising from the powers of a true and devoted mother. However, the eulogy of the mother, which was basically an eulogy of the institution of motherhood, did not bring about any resultant, practical improvement in woman's position. Every attempt was made to check the power that women were perceived to derive from their reproductive functions. But between the wife and the mother, it was the latter who received brahmanical approval because she fell in line with normative prescriptions, by fulfilling her duty.

A few words are in order to explain the necessity of constructing this particular image of the woman and the mother and its incorporation into the Mahābhārata and the Dharmaśāstras in the early centuries of the Christian era.

This was a period of great social flux. Several contemporary works refer to the period as the Kali age, and present a picture of the disintegration of the brahmanical social order caused by the foreign invasions, and the growing popularity of the heterodox religions. The epics, the Dharmaśāstras and the Purāṇas are the result of the brahmanical effort to reorganise themselves in the face of this challenge. Two of the main pillars of brahmanism have been land and family which are the major focus of the Mahābhārata. Both were deemed to be equally important to the ancestor venerating, agricultural society. And for both, the submission of women to patriarchal social order was considered to be vital, especially since under Buddhism, at least theoretically, the position of women was felt to have improved. The brahmanical order disapproved of the women's right to enter the Saṅghas and the right to own, manage and probably inherit property. Both these rights were considered as threatening, as the first had dangerous implications for the family while the second reduced the importance of the patriline. Therefore, to secure the submission of women, both for land and for the family, a particular image of womanhood was constructed by the brāhmaṇa compilers and redactors of the Dharmaśāstras and the epics. This included

an emphasis on virginity at the time of marriage, the condemnation of adultery and niyoga and castigation of widow remarriage, etc., to ensure that property, primarily in the form of land, passed onto the true biological descendants of the patriline and not any other. This assertion regarding the primacy of the family was and is an attempt to perpetuate the phallocentric order. Thus, the epics produced the two images of womanhood - the chaste, obedient, dutiful wife and the benign, ever sacrificing, dharma fulfilling mother, to secure women to the services of brahmanism.

Women in the Mahābhārata have exemplary functions, for the Mahābhārata conveys a picture of the way women are supposed to behave, a normative model for emulation. The śūdras and the women were not permitted to listen to the recitation of the Vedas. Nor were the Dharmaśāstras accessible to them. But, they were not debarred from listening to the itihāsa (for example - Mahābhārata) or the Purānas. In fact the Bhagavata Purāna explains that as the Vedas could not be learnt by women and the śūdras, the sage Vyāsa composed the story of Bhārata, out of compassion for them. Since the dharmasastraic injunctions on strīdharma had to be disseminated among the women, in order to be effective, an unique device was resorted to. The brahmanical class took over

certain popular legends from the bards which already existed as oral tradition and completely reformulated them and put them down in writing, for it is always easier to rearrange a written text than a memorized one. This brahmanical takeover of the Bhārata oral tradition from the custodianship of the Sūtas and Māgadhas and the transformation of the Mahābhārata into a vehicle of popular instruction was an event of historical significance. It developed into the most influential text of the post Vedic brahmanism and carried the message to millions of impressionable listeners for whom spoken words carried great authority. Thus, the image of the woman constructed by the Mahābhārata was quickly internalised by the women themselves.

Through ideological control and manipulation the brāhmanas sought to perpetuate, validate, and justify the order they were trying to establish. The Mahābhārata was adopted as one of the means for perpetuating their hegemony which itself became a hegemonic text, and the ideology on women, particularly the mother, became one of the bulwarks of patriarchal brahmanism. This image of woman, and the strict exhortations against any deviation, encouraged a sense of fatalism and passivity and induced women to consent to their own oppression and subordination.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. PRIMARY SOURCES

1. Basū, R. - Kṛṣṇa Dwaipāyan Vyās Kṛta Mahābhārata; S.C. Sarkar and Sons, Calcutta, 1986 (Reprint).
2. Dave, J.H. - Manusmṛti, Vols. 1-5; Bharatiya Bidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1972.
3. Doniger, W. and Smith, B. (translated) - The Laws of Manu; Penguin, India, New Delhi, 1991.
4. Dutt, M.N. (trans) - The Mahābhārata; Parimal Sanskrit Series, Delhi, 1988 (Reprint).
5. Majumdar, S. (presented) - Kāśidasi Mahābhārata; Dev Sahitya Kutir, Calcutta, 1992 (reprint)
6. Roy, P. C. (trans) - The Mahābhārata of Kṛṣṇa Dwaipāyana Vyāsa; Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1974 (3rd ed).
7. Singha, K.(ed) - Mahābhārata, Vols I and II; Tuli Kalam, Calcutta, 1987.
8. Sukthankar, V.S., et. al., (ed) - Mahābhārata, (critical edition) Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, 1933.
9. van Buitenen, J. A. B. (trans) - The Mahābhārata, Books 1-5; University of Chicago, Chicago, 1978.

II. SECONDARY SOURCE

A. BOOKS

1. Altekar, A.S. - The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization : From Prehistoric Times to the Present Day; Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1962 (3rd ed).
2. Aries, P. - Centuries of Childhood, A Social History of Family Life; Vintage Books, New York, 1962.
3. Bader, C. - Women in Ancient India : Moral and Literary Studies; Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, 1964 (reprint).
4. Banerjee, J .M. - The Development of Hindu Iconography; University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1941.
5. Belsey, C. - Critical Practice; Methuen, London and New York, 1980.
6. Bhattacharya, B. C. - The Brahmanic Iconography; Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1978.
7. Biardeau, M. - Hinduism - The Anthropology of a Civilization; Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989.
8. Bocock, R. and Thompson, K. (eds) - Religion and Ideology; Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1985.
9. Boggs, C. - Gramsci's Marxism; Pluto Press, London, 1980 (3rd ed).
10. Boudreau, F.A. et. al., (eds) - Sex Roles and Social Patterns; Praeger, New York, 1986.
11. Bowles, G. and Klein, R. D. (eds) - Theories of Women's Studies; Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1983.

12. Brunt, R. and Rowan, C. (eds) - Feminism, Culture and Politics; Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1982.
13. Burke, P. - History of Social Theory; Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992.
14. Caplan, P. (ed) - The Cultural Construction of Sexuality; Tavistock, London, 1987.
15. Chanana, K. (ed) - Education, Socialization and Women - Explorations in Gender Identity; Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1988.
16. Chandra, M. - Geographical and Economic Studies in the Mahabharata; U.P. Historical Society, Lucknow, 1945.
17. Chatterjee, C. K. - Studies in the Rites and Rituals of Hindu Marriage in Ancient India; Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Calcutta, 1978.
18. Culler, J. - On Deconstruction - Theory and Criticism After Structuralism; Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1983.
19. ----- - Framing the Sign-Criticism and its Institutions; Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1988.
20. Dube L., et.al., (eds) - Visibility and Power-Essays on Women in Society and Development; Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986.
21. Dutt, R. C. - The Early Hindy Civilization, Punthi Pustak, Calcutta, 1963 (4th ed).
22. Eagleton, M. (ed) - Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader; Basil Blackwell, London, 1987, (Reprint).
23. Eagleton, T. - Literary Theory : An Introduction University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1983.

24. Embree, A.T. - Imagining India : Essays on Indian History; Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989.
25. Forgacs, D. et.al., (eds) - Antonio Gramsci : Selections from Cultural Writings; Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1985.
26. Foster Carroll, T. - Women, Religion and Development in the Third World; Praeger, New York, 1983.
27. Gatwood, L. - Devi and the Spouse Goddess : Women, Sexuality and Marriage in India; Manohar, New Delhi, 1985.
28. Goldman, R. - Gods, Priests and Warriors - The Bhrgus in the Mahābhārata; Columbia University Press, New York, 1977.
29. Gopinath Rao, T. A. - Elements of Hindu Iconography, Vol I, Part II; The Law Printing House, Madras, 1914.
30. Graham, W.A. - Beyond the Written Word-Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion; Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987.
31. Greene, G. and Kahn, C. (eds) - Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism; Routledge London, 1985.
32. Hawkes, T. - Structuralism and Semiotics; Methuen, London, 1977.
33. Hazra, R.C. - Studies in the Puranic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs; Motilal Banarsidass New Delhi, 1975 (2nd ed).
34. Hobsbawm, E. and Ranger, T. (eds) - The Invention of Tradition; Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988.
35. Hopkins, E.W. - Epic Mythology; Indological Book House, Varanasi and Delhi, 1968.

36. ----- - The Great Epic of India : its Character and Origins; Punthi Pushtak, Calcutta, 1969.
37. ----- - The Social Position of the Ruling Caste in Ancient India; University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1969.
38. Horner, I.B. - Women under Primitive Buddhism; Philopress, Amsterdam, 1975 (reprint).
39. Indra, M.A. - The Status of Women in Ancient India; Motilal Banarsidass, Benares, 1955 (2nd ed).
40. Jayal, S. - Status of Women in the Epics; Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1966.
41. Kakar, S. - Indian Childhood : Cultural Ideals and Social Reality; Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1974.
42. ----- - The Inner World : A Psychoanalytic Study of Childhood and Society in India; Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1979.
43. Kane, P. V. - The History of the Dharmasāstras Vols I, II, IV, V; Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, 1941.
44. Kaplan, E. Ann (ed) - Postmodernism and its Discontents : Theories and Practice; Verso, London, 1988.
45. Karve, I. - Kinship Organisation in India; Asia Publishing, Bombay, 1968 (3rd ed).
46. ----- - Yugānta : The End of an Epoch; Disha Books, Hyderabad, 1991 (3rd ed).
47. Kelly, J. - Women, History and Theory : The Essays of Joan Kelly; Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1980.

48. Keohane, N. O., et.al., (eds) - Feminist Theory : A Critique of Ideology; Harvester Press, United Kingdom, 1982.
49. Kleinberg, S. Jay, (ed) - Retrieving Women's History : Changing Perceptions of the Role of Women in Politics and Society; Berg/UNESCO, Oxford/Paris, 1988.
50. Krishna Raj, M., (ed) - Women's Studies in India: Some Perspectives; Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1986.
51. Kumari, R. - Female Sexuality in Hinduism; Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, New Delhi, 1986.
52. Larrain, J. - Marxism and Ideology; Macmillan, London, 1983.
53. ----- - The Concept of Ideology; Hutchinson, London, 1986 (Reprint).
54. Leslie, J. - The Perfect Wife; Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989.
55. Lodge, D. (ed). - Twentieth Century Literary Criticism; Longmans, London and New York, 1989 (13th ed).
56. MacCormack, C. and Strathern, M. (eds) - Nature, Culture and Gender; Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987 (Reprint).
57. Matilal, B. - Moral Dilemmas in the Mahabharata; Indian Institute of Advanced Study, (Simla) and Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi, 1989.
58. Meyer, J.J. - Sexual Life in Ancient India; The Standard Literature Co., Calcutta, 1952.
59. Mies, M. - Indian Women and Patriarchy; Concept Publications, New Delhi, 1980.

60. Mitchell, J. and Oakley, A., (eds) - What is Feminism? ; Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986.
61. Moi, T. - Sexual Textual Politics; Methuen, London and New York, 1985.
62. Nandy, A. - Tradition, Tyranny and Utopia-Essays in the Politics of Awareness; Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1992 (Reprint).
63. Ortner, S. and Whitehead, H.(eds) - Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality; Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981.
64. Ostor, A. et.al.(eds) - Concepts of Person : Kinship, Caste and Marriage in India; Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1992.
65. Papanek, H. and Minault, G., (eds) - Separate Worlds; Chanakya Publicantions, New Delhi 1982.
66. Rice, E. P. - The Mahābhārata : Analysis and Index; Oxford University Press, London, 1934.
67. Richman, P. - Many Rāmāyanas : The Diversity of Narrative Tradition in South Asia; Oxford University Press; Delhi, 1992 (Indian ed.).
68. Rosaldo, M. and Lampere, L.,(eds) - Women, Culture and Society; Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1974.
69. Sangari, K. and Vaid, S.,(eds) - Recasting Women : Essays in Colonial History; Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1989.
70. Sengupta, P. - Story of Women of India; India Book House, New Delhi, 1974.
71. ----- - Women in India; Information Service of India, New Delhi, n.d.

72. Sengupta, S. - Women in Indian Folklore; Indian Publications, Calcutta, 1969.
73. Sharma, R.S. - Perspectives on Social and Economic History of Early India; Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1983.
74. Shastri, S.R. - Women in the Vedic Age; Bharatiya Bidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1952.
75. Siddhanta, N.K. - The Heroic Age of India; Asian Publication Service, India, 1977.
76. Sukthankar, V. S. - On the Meaning of the Mahābhārata; Asiatic Society of Bombay, Bombay, 1957.
77. Tharu, S. and Lalita, K., (eds) - Women Writing in India; Vol. I, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1991.
78. Thompson, J. B. - Studies in the Theory of Ideology; Polity Press, Cambridge, 1984.
79. Vaidya, C.V. - The Mahābhārata : A Criticism; Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1983. (Reprint).
80. Winternitz, M. - History of Indian Literature; Vols. I and II, Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, 1983.

II B ARTICLES

1. Bhattacharji, S. - "Motherhood in Ancient India". Economic and Political Weekly Vol. 25, No. 41, October, 1990.
2. ----- - "Prostitution in Ancient India" Social Scientist, Vol. 15, No.2, February, 1987.
3. Chakravarty, U. - "The Development of the Sītā Myth; A case study of women in Myth and Literature". Samya Sakti, Vol. I, No. 1, 1983.

4. ----- - The Rise of Buddhism as Experienced by Women". Manushi, Vol. 8, 1984,
5. ----- - "Beyond the Altekarian Paradigm" Social Scientist Vol. 16, 1988.
6. Chakravarty, U. and Roy, K. - "In search of our past - A Review of the Limitations and Possibilities of the Historiography of Women in early India". Economic and Political Weekly Vol. 23, no. 18, April, 1988.
7. Colebrooke, H. T. - "On the Duties of a Faithful Hindu Widow". in Colebrooke's Essays on the Religion and Philosophy of the Hindus; Indological Book House, Varanasi and Delhi, 1972 (Reprint).
8. Dharma, P.C. - "The Status of women in the Epic Period" Journal of Indian History, Vol. 27, no. 79-81, 1949.
9. Dube, L. - "On the Construction of Gender - Hindu Girls in Patrilineal India". Economic and Political Weekly Vol. 23, No. 18, April, 1988.
10. Duby, G. - "The Diffusion of Cultural Patterns in Feudal Society". Past and Present, No. 39-41, April, 1968.
11. Fox Genovese, E. - "Placing Women's History in History" New Left Review", No. 133, May, 1982.
12. Ganesh, K. - "Mother, who is not a Mother-In search of the great Indian Goddess". Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 25, No. 41, October, 1990.
13. Hansen, K. - "The Virāṅgana in North Indian History-Myth and Popular Culture". Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.23, No. 18, April, 1988.

14. Hershman , P. - "Virgin and Mother" in I.M. Lewis (ed),
Symbols and Sentiments; Academic Press,
London, 1977.
15. Jackson Lears, T. L. - "The Concept of Cultural
Hegemony". American Historical Review,
Vol. 90, No.3, 1985.
16. Kalpana Rao, V. and Vindhya Sudhkar, U. - "Women's
Dimension in Psychological Research".
Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 23,
No. 18, April, 1988.
17. Krishnan, P.- "In the Idiom of Loss : Ideology of
Motherhood in Television Serials".
Economic and Political Weekly Vol. 25,
41, October, 1990.
18. Shrimali, K.M. - "Religion, Ideology and Society.
Proceedings of the Indian History
Congress, Dharwad, 1988.
19. Sukthankar, V. S. - "Epic Studies VI - The Bhrgus and
the Bhārata, a Text Historical Study."
Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental
Research Institute, Vol. 18, Part I
1936-37.
20. Thapar, R. - "Tradition Versus Misconception." Ma-
nushi, No. 42-43, September - December,
1987.

2214