

**FEMINIST ANTHROPOLOGY AND
FAMILY FORMATION :
A PRELIMINARY INQUIRY**

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled "Feminist Anthropology and Family Formation: A Preliminary Inquiry" submitted by Ms. SUNEET SINGH, is in partial fulfilment of six credits for the degree of Master of Philosophy of this University. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University, and is her own work.

I recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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INTRODUCTION

The discipline of demography carried a perspective that viewed population as a dependent variable; and socio-economic factors the determining independent variables. Demographers observed that the timing and extent of western fertility decline had not been related to advances in contraceptive technology. They had concluded therefore that fertility declined when the motivation to have children changed. Motivation changed in response to structural changes in social system (Rao, 1994).

The post-second world war baby-boom knocked out some of scientific credibility of the demographic transition theory. Demography, then, became a policy science, shedding its social science heritage; it became, in this period, more prescriptive. The earlier demographic perspective implied that motivation for curtailing family size could not exist in primarily peasant communities. But demographers now overturned nearly sixty years of research on the determinants of fertility by suggesting that fertility in agrarian societies could be lowered directly through the use of contraceptive technology.

India was one of the first nations in the world to initiate an official family planning programme. Commencing in the first Five-Year Plan in 1952, with a clinical approach and a budget of 65 lakhs the operational strategy of the family planning programme in the first two plan

periods was influenced by the traditional approach of the international planned parenthood movement. The clinical approach emphasised person-to-person instruction on contraceptive methods. The Third Five-Year Plan accorded very high priority to family planning with the adoption of the Extension Education approach in 1962. In 1965, the United Nations Advisory Mission suggested the launching of the 'Reinforced Programme', the major component of which was IUCD. Towards the end of the third five-year plan, it was increasingly being realised that IUCD strategy had not been successful. The programme strategy in the Fourth Plan period, in the early 1970s relied, therefore, largely on vasectomy in what was called the 'Camp approach. The Camp approach, however, proved difficult to sustain and in view of the abuses in the family planning programme in the period of emergency, vasectomy was abandoned. Attention now focused on female sterilization - which formed the cornerstone of the programme during the Sixth and Seventh Plan periods (Rao, 1994).

The Seventh Plan outlay for family planning programme was Rs.34.50 billion; the outlay for all health programmes combined for the Seventh Plan was Rs.33.93 billion. Over the years, the family welfare programme has taken the shape of a gigantic organisation with its ramifications reaching right upto every village of the country. Massive inputs have been made in the field of mass communication, and

education, training, monitoring and evaluation and research to provide support to the programme. The Government of India itself has now admitted that the efforts made thus far have not yielded the desired result. The Public Accounts Committee admitted in its 139th Report that despite massive financial inputs, the birth rate has remained stationary, around 33 per thousand, since 1977. The late Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, in his inaugural address to the XXI International Population Congress in September 1989 observed that there was "inadequate causal connection between our family planning programme and the impact of these on our birth rates" and that "the rate of increase in financial outlays in family planning is not matched by a commensurate decline in birth rates".

According to the eighth plan, the birth rate has remained stagnant at 33/34 per thousand. This has happened inspite of the fact that the Couple Protection Rate (CPR) has been going up significantly during the same period. The CPR has increased from 22.3 per cent in 1977 to nearly 35 per cent in 1985, and further to 44.1 per cent in 1991. The Plan acknowledges that further increases in CPR will require reduction in infant mortality rates, increase in female literacy and increase in job opportunities for women.

The problems faced by the Indian family planning programme are not solely technical, administrative or strategical. The neo-Malthusian understanding of the population issue lies at the heart of the programme's failure. Neo-Malthusianism fails to recognise that motivation to practice family planning is dependent on the socio-economic situation of parents, which in turn, alters the determinants of family size. It also fails to recognise that these determinants vary among different sections of the population.

There have been many studies by traditional anthropologists in the field of demography. However, these studies lacked a comprehensive holistic approach. Traditional functionalist anthropology fails to understand the socio-economic, political and other dimensions of human fertility and family formation and its dynamics. Further it could not relate social processes taking place in a society to a broader political and economic forces.

Science by definition and tradition, is supposed to be totally objective and free of biases. However, this is the ideal, not the reality. The activities and theorising of the scientific community do not proceed in a vacuum. They are subject to all the biases current in the established social system. These affect and sometimes warp their conclusions. The influence of prejudice tends to be

strongest in those branches of science that are closest to human life, its history and values. Among them are biology, sociology, anthropology, and the two younger sciences called sociobiology and primatology.

The first Chapter of this dissertation entitled "The Heritage of Anthropology" traces the evolution of the discipline, pioneering work of its founders and their important findings.

The work of this pioneering school was marked by following traits: it was, first of all, evolutionary in its approach to the problems of "pre-civilised" humanity. Secondly this school followed materialistic approach. Around the turn of nineteenth century the field of anthropology was dominated by anthropologists, hostile to the evolutionary method of the nineteenth-century founders of the discipline viz., the "diffusionist" and "functionalist" school. This school of thought abandoned a comprehensive evolutionary approach and substituted, in its place, empirical and descriptive field studies of contemporary primitive people. They set forth some universal theories:

First, that matriarchy never existed and the patriarchal family was eternal; and

Second, that women have always been the inferior sex as they are today.

Anthropologists were buttressed in their views by discourse in the discipline of primatology and sociobiology theories attempts to explain human behaviour and potentialities and reduce the analyses to biology. They try to justify the presence of sexist stereotypes in society. They remain dedicated to the task of explaining why women are naturally fitted, biologically destined, for the social roles they indeed fill and consequently, for social inferiority. and economic dependence.

The second chapter discusses the theories of family formation. It views family formation as a process taking place perpetually in a society. A family in order to sustain and to perpetuate itself has to endure the external forces acting on it. For some sections of people, fertility is the only aspect left fully at the disposal of their families, which could be altered to facilitate a better chance for enduring these forces. This is the basic argument on which theories relating family formation and fertility are founded.

Major theories of family formation are: labour theory, insurance and security theory. These two can be clubbed together as rationality theories. This is followed by Caldwell's Wealth Flows theory. All these theories are grouped together as conventional anthropological explanation. They are based on functionalist and structure

functionalist approach.

Studies related to labour theory and insurance and security theory came as a critique to those arguments, based on neo-classical macro-economics which tried to establish a positive correlation between fertility decline and economic growth in poor societies. The argument here is that with the reduction in fertility the per capita income and savings of the people would increase, leading to an increase in rate of investment and hence a faster economic growth.

All the three theories essentially are in agreement that the family formation process in pre-industrial society is economically rational. At a micro-level, economic benefits from children are powerful motives in influencing family formation strategy. But at macro-level, one cannot generalise and expect uniform causal relation between these motives for different classes of people. Evidence does not support the assumption that the poor produce more. Caldwell's criterion of the direction of net wealth flows is convincing at a micro-level; like the other two theories, but does not yield any generalisation at macro-level.

These theories fails to explain satisfactorily the family formation process in non-Western societies. The basic reason for failure of these theories is that they

locate a family within an economic class and presume same responses from all the families of this economic class, exposed to similar economic conditions. They do not attempt to study decision making process at the level of the family and fails to take into account and analyse the impact of broader macro-level forces outside the control of family and the community that act to shape the family formation process.

Feminist anthropology as a perspective overlaps to a great extent with historical materialism. Methodologically it strives for historicity, holism, inter-relatedness and specificity in analysing a problem. It cuts-across the traditional boundaries of social sciences in general and anthropology in particular.

Feminist anthropology views family formation as an integrated component of a social formation and function within a particular system. It maintains a complex and dialectical relation with other components like - Kinship, politics, economy, ideology religion etc. The forces influencing family formation process of a society emanates from regional, national and global levels.

Inter-relatedness of family formation process to other aspects of a social formation and to broader global forces suggest that causality is fixed, not unilinearly and to a single factor, but to a complex inter-related web of

causes. The configuration of this web of causes is specific to any social group. Often one particular attribute of these multiple causes may dominate in shaping this configuration.

Feminist anthropology in its methodology shares a great extent with historical materialism. However, in terms of its objectives and theories, it is quite distinct from the writings of Marx. One of the most important theoretical insights subsumed by the critical tradition of anthropology not dealt by Marx is the process of social reproduction. Feminist anthropology gives central importance to this aspect. A discussion on social reproduction will necessarily include discussion on the concept of reproduction of labour, allocation of labour potential in relation with means of production and the component of ideology which perpetuate this relation.

Feminist anthropology provides an insight into the link between biological reproduction and social reproduction. It is argued that biological reproduction is an important component by controlling which the perpetuation of existing social relation is enabled.

Feminist anthropology argues that the control over the women's reproduction power by men was established in the course of human history. The control of female sexuality by men was a historical necessity to establish and sustain

the patriarchal order. The hold on this rein has been effectively utilised to maintain social stratification in a society. Thus family formation is seen as a part of the perpetuation of social stratification, gender relations and social reproduction.

It has illustrated that subordination of women by men and related sexual division of labour was a historically shaped event. The extreme level of subordination of women found in many of today's more socio-economically advanced cultures are relatively recent phenomena.

The extent of female participation in production in India is determined by a nexus of class/caste hierarchy and norms of patriarchal ideology. In an hierarchical society based on patrilineal-patrilocal families, the location of family in the caste/class hierarchy would determine the levels and forms of women's productive work.

Feminist anthropology argues that women in poor rural households are burdened with a significant responsibility for family subsistence and are important, often the primary, and in many female-headed households, the sole economic providers. However, their ability to fulfill this responsibility is significantly constrained by the limited (and declining) resources and means at their command - a constraint that stem not merely from their class position but also from gender. These gender inequities in access to

resources take varying forms: intra-family differences in distribution of basic necessities; women's systematically disadvantaged position in labour market; their constrained access to crucial means of production - land and associated production technology; and the growing deterioration and privatisation of country's common property resources on which poor in general and women in particular, depend in substantial degree for sustenance. In other words, what feminist anthropology attempts to carry out, is to reinstate the position of women in discourse in anthropology.

CHAPTER 1

THE HERITAGE OF ANTHROPOLOGY

The discipline of anthropology traces its heritage to the work of Morgan, Taylor and other nineteenth century evolutionists who defined the new science as a study of prehistoric society and its origins. The two most important findings of their work were the following:

- 1) a primitive society was a collective egalitarian system having none of the inequities of modern society which is founded upon the patriarchal family, private property, and the State.
- 2) a pre-historic society was a matriarchal society in which women occupied positions of leadership in productive and social life and were held in high esteem.

The work of this pioneering school was marked by the following traits: it was, first of all, evolutionary in its approach to the problems of "pre-civilised" humanity. These anthropologists extended Darwinism into the social world. They proceeded on the premise that in its march from animality to civilization, humankind had passed through a sequence of distinct, materially conditioned stages viz: Savagery, Barbarism and Civilization. Morgan subdivided the first two epochs into a lower middle and upper stages, according to the progress made in the production of the means of subsistence¹. The evolution of the family proceeded concurrently, but Morgan however, does not offer conclusive criteria for delimitation of the periods². The evolutionists believed that it was both possible and necessary to distinguish the lower stages from the higher ones that grew out of them and to trace the interconnection between them.

Secondly, this school was, substantially, what may be characterised as materialistic. Its members laid great stress upon the activities of human beings in procuring the necessities of life as the foundation for all other social phenomena, institutions and culture. They correlate natural conditions, technology, and economy with the beliefs, practices, ideas and institutions of primitive people³.

Although these scholars applied the materialistic method to the extent of their ability, their materialism was in many instances crude, inconsistent, and incomplete. This was true even of Morgan, who, as Engels wrote, had rediscovered in his own way the materialistic interpretation of history which Engels and Marx has elaborated on forty years earlier⁴.

Despite their deficiencies, the aims and methods of classical nineteenth-century school were fundamentally sound. Their weaknesses have been picked up and exaggerated by their opponents today, not in order to correct them and then probe more deeply into the evolution of humanity, but to exploit them as a means of discrediting the positive achievements of classical anthropologists⁵.

Around the turn of the century, new tendencies began to assert themselves in the field of anthropology. These were marked with growing aversion to the main ideas and methods of the classical school. Two of the principal currents of thought in this sweeping reaction are the "diffusionist" and the "functionalist" or "descriptionist" schools. The diffusionists

focus their attention upon the beginning of civilization. Sir G. Elliot Smith, anatomist and leading figure of this school, asserts that "Egypt was the cradle, not only of agriculture, metallurgy, architecture, ship-building, weaving and clothing, alcoholic drinks and religious rituals, kinship and statecraft, but of civilisation in its widest sense". The fundamental institutions of civilization spread from that innovating centre, with minor accretions and modifications, throughout the world.

Whether or not Egypt was the sole source of all inventions as claimed by Smith, the diffusion of achievements from one people to another is an undeniable factor in history. However, the study of diffusion is no substitute for the analysis of evolution, which covers a far broader field in time and space than surveyed by the diffusionist school. Anthropology is, in fact primarily concerned not with civilised but with savage, or precivilised society. The diffusionists skip over the most decisive epoch of social evolution viz the period from the origin of human society to the threshold of civilization. They do not study the evolution of precivilized society or arrange these stages in any definite historical order⁶.

The functionalist school, represented by the Franz Boas school in the United States and the Radcliffe Brown school in England, abandoned a comprehensive evolutionary approach and substituted, in its place, empirical and descriptive field studies of contemporary primitive people surviving in various parts of globe.

Their primary aim is to demonstrate that a variety or diversity of cultures exist and have always existed. They deny that any institution or feature of society is inherently more primitive or advanced than any other; instead anti-evolutionists have set forth some "universal" theories of their own. They argue that matriarchy never existed and that the patriarchal family was eternally the norm. They further argue that women have always been the inferior sex, as they are today, because of their childbearing functions and other biological disabilities; and that male supremacy has always existed because of the latter's physical and mental abilities. Reed has questioned the functionalists assumption of the universal and unchanging system of patriarchy. She argues instead that patriarchy is historically a relatively new phenomenon. By denying evolutionary stages of human civilisation, a vast area of human life on earth is denied its rightful space. She emphasises that the pioneering scholars brought forth a wealth of materials. They assembled this data from literary sources as well as from actual observation and field studies on matrilineal structures still surviving in many regions of the globe.

In place of a historical approach involving a dynamic view of social development as a whole the functionalists have substituted a static and purely descriptive approach. This has perhaps retarded the growth of the discipline.

This has perhaps retarded the growth of the discipline. This retrogression arose directly out of the abandonment of the materialist outlook and aims of the classical school. The functionalists of the twentieth century are unwilling and unable to relate the social and cultural institutions of primitive peoples to the economic base upon which they are founded. They deny that productive forces and activities are decisive in shaping these cultural features. They proceed as though cultural institutions developed apart from, and even in opposition to, their technological and productive foundations.

By divorcing culture from its economic roots, some of these anthropologist came to some absurd conclusions. Elliot Smith, for instance, locates the key to human progress not in the advancement made in the means of life but in a particular mode of preserving corpses: "It is no exaggeration to claim that the ideas associated with the practice of the embalmer's art have been the most potent influence in building up both the material and spiritual elements of civilization".

According to Leslie A. White, the end product of this retrogressive movement is the fashionable psychological and psychiatric approach - the latest off-spring of the functional school.⁷ Margaret Mead, E. Saphir, Ruth Benedict and other students of Boas are the principal

material forces and factors which determine the structure and evolution of society, they put forward superficial and arbitrary observations on the unique psychological construct of primitive groups. In place of the historical interactions between the developing productive forces and cultural institutions which spring from them, they substitute the peculiarities of the individual personality.⁸

Margaret Mead locates the key to the differences among cultures not in their different productive and social forces, but in differences in weaning and toilet training of children. For instance Coming of Age in Samoa, and Growing up in New Guinea, are based on anthropological studies of personality. The approach is to apply psychoanalytical method in the study of culture. She argued that the culture of the area or of a nation is depicted in the formation of personality. Why and how these secondary cultural features arose and evolved are not explained.

The whole functionalist school, including its psychological branch, regards "culture" as something disembodied, dematerialised and reified. Culture thus becomes an abstraction, intangible and imperceptible from what was once a distinct category of real, observable, tangible phenomenon.

In the field of anthropology, as in other fields, a consistently evolutionist and materialist method of thought has revolutionary implications. Unwittingly the classical anthropologists had lent credence to, and, verified the approach of historical materialism. The science of anthropology did not originate with the historical materialists, but the creators of Marxism drew upon the materials provided by the nineteenth - century anthropologists to extend their own historical reach and substantiate the materialistic interpretation of history. They drew out, to their logical conclusion, the sharp contrast between capitalism, the highest form of class society, and preclass society. These conclusions are set forth by Engels, in his classic, The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State published in 1884.

The Marxists connected Morgan's findings with the conclusion that just as primitive collectivism had been destroyed by class society so, in turn, class society would be replaced by a new higher stage of civilisation viz socialism. The reactionary flight from materialism and evolutionism arose out of the effort to counter this challenge of the Marxists. In the process, the functionalists not only opposed the Marxists but rejected their own predecessors. Julian Steward for instance pointed out that the underlying reason for the

anti-materialism and anti-evolutionism of contemporary anthropologists is that the reactionary school has become predominant because it has accommodated itself to ruling - class prejudices and dogmas and assumed the obligation of stamping out the spread of revolutionary conclusions⁹.

Anthropologists were buttressed in their arguments by discourse in the discipline of primatology. The majority of twentieth - century anthropologists, hostile to the evolutionary method of classical anthropology, had replaced any comprehensive theoretical approach to their discipline with descriptive field studies. Many primatologists followed the same narrow empirical course, side-stepping theory and restricting themselves to particular studies of different species of primates. The primatologists, who avoid the evolutionary approach, can easily give the misleading impression that contemporary primates are equivalent to ancient primates. It would be unscientific to equate the behaviour of the few surviving primate species today with their own animal ancestors, much less with humans.

Primatologists, in the footsteps of mainstream anthropologists, have by and large not paid adequate attention to the implication of the findings to the reconstruction of earlier societies. In the animal world the primate male is portrayed as the sultan of the harem or

the patriarch of a family. Primatologist tend to extend to this view to the human world. Primatologist thus accept the proposition that all societies, past and present, have been dominated by men with women occupying submissive and subordinate status.

The arguments put forward to buttress this thesis of male supremacy are as follows;

1. Sexual dimorphism which implies that males are, on average, larger and heavier than females and are thus able to control them physically.
2. Primatologist are of view that male animals are protector of their 'families' or defenders of their 'societies' as humans are.
3. Another misconception is the notion that males are usually the leaders of primate troops and sound alarms, or give other signals at the sight of a predator and then conduct the group to safety.
4. Yet another crude male-biased thesis is of the "harem" theory of male dominance. This is based upon the fact that in primate troops, females outnumber males, often by two-to-one or more. From the male-biased point of view, this paucity of males gives each one a large number of females to "dominate". This troop is then portrayed as a group of "harems", each under the lordship of a patriarchal master.

The thesis that males are socially superior to females rests upon two biological traits: males are often larger and more muscular, and females bear the offspring. The females are then portrayed as helpless and dependent upon brawny and brainy males for sustenance and protection -- in the animal as well as the modern human world. Evidence, however, indicates that the females forage for themselves and their offspring and are thus not dependent on males for sustenance.

As Ralph Linton puts it, the male of Homo sapiens is "on average, larger and heavier than females and able to dominate them physically. Whether the feminist like it or not, the average man can thrash the average woman". Combined with this trait is the "continuous sexual activity" of the males, who are actively interested in all females and try to collect and hold as many of them as possible. Jealous of rival males, they "restrict the attention of their female partners to themselves". He concludes that dominated females are in no position to do anything about it: "the double standard is as old as the primate order".¹⁰

Washburn and Harburg argue that "individual animals must be able to make the decision to fight or flee". Female primates are however not dependent on males for protection. If not taking flight they will fight to protect



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their offspring. The females are extremely adept in concealing themselves and their offsprings; they do not depend upon males for protection. Only humans can organise guards and soldiers and other defense systems. Primate protection comes not only from their own species sounding the alarm, but even from alien species which also fear large carnivores.¹¹

Contrary to the crude male-biased harem theory primate males do not thrash females, do not possess "harems" and do not have control over the sexual activities of the females. Females have the advantage because they outnumber males in primate troops and are capable of cooperating.

In the wild, females control their own sexual activities and males adapt themselves to the oestrus periods of the females. During the extended periods when females are caring for their offspring they do not seek sexual congress, and males do not approach them. Phyllis C. Jay writes that when a female "is not in oestrus, the adult males show no sexual interest in her. She is the sole initiator of sexual activity".¹²

When sexually receptive, the female is even more vigorous than the male, and she mates with many males in the vicinity instead of restricting herself to a solitary male. Carpenter is of view that "the females in natural groupings of primates are usually the aggressors and

initiator of sexual responses". There are no reports of male, even the dominant male, restricting his female's sexual attention to himself. Males quietly wait for their turn at access to the female.¹³

Sexual pairing is incidental in the life of a female primate and usually short-lived. Washburn and De Vore note that a consort pair "may stay together for as little as an hour or as long as several days". They "usually move to the edge of the troop. It is at this time that fighting may take place, if the dominance order is not clearly established among the males". However, "normally there is no fight over females, and a male does not monopolise a female for long". They conclude that there is nothing resembling a family or harem among baboons. Much the same seems to be true of other species of monkeys. Sexual behaviour appears to contribute little to the cohesion of the troop¹⁴.

Sexuality contributes so little to the cohesion of the troop that the segregation of sexes is far more pronounced. Due to extended period of sex segregation, the female primate bears few offspring in her lifetime. Birute Galdikas-Brindanour writes that male and orangutans are rarely even seen together. A female bears an offspring only once every four or five years.¹⁵ Good all¹⁶ noted that there are relatively few births in chimpanzee

community; mothers have an offspring about once every three and a half to five years. In contrast to the more enduring relations between females and their young, the relations between adult males and females are ephemeral.

Shirley Strum observed that female baboons spend more than ninety per cent of their lives sexually non-receptive and it is not much less for males. This is very different from the human preoccupation with sex.¹⁷

Thus the "grouping pattern" is not based upon the sexual relations between males and females but upon the more durable bonds of females and offspring. The animal "group" is not a family dominated by the father: it is a maternal brood in which the male is usually not even present. The segregation of the sexes is far more pronounced than their fleeting unions for sexual intercourse which occur only in the mating season. Females represent the central core of the primate group.

Strum has questioned the male biased version of primate behaviour. She doubts whether a small percentage of males could be responsible so totally for primate social life. She argues further that unfortunately many popular writers have misapplied the findings. They have used animal behaviour as a justification for what the author would like to think about human behaviour. We can not use animal behaviour to justify human foibles and decide we

are destined to behave with violence or male dominance because, it is an irrepressible part of our "animal nature". These are misleading and dangerous assumptions for we should distinguish between "what is shared and what is different between primates and humans".¹⁸

The fact that men hold leading positions in society now does not mean that this has always been the case. In the primate world rudimentary forms of leadership are furnished by adult females and not by the males. The more extensive functions of females in providing for and protecting their infants, together with longer periods in which they exercise these functions, make the females the more intelligent, capable and resourceful sex.

In their effort to justify the present day male supremacy, primatologists have ignored the basic fact that unlike animals humans are products of two kind of evolution: organic and social. Simpson has emphasized that the new social evolution increasingly displaced the old biological evolution, to the point that today humans have lost virtually all their ancestral animal pattern of behaviour and instincts. These have been replaced by their own socially conditioned reactions.¹⁹

Equating humans with primates by overemphasizing certain similarities, while underplaying the vast differences, is unscientific. Thus the denial by academic

anthropologist that humans had passed a sequence of stages in social evolution was extended to primatology. There was an attempt to liquidate the qualitative distinction between humans and primates.²⁰

According to Engels, humans, equipped with hands, began to make and use tools in systematic labour activities. Production and reproduction of the necessities of life - which no other animal is capable of - became the prime condition for human survival and progress. As Oakley puts it, "Man is a social animal distinguished by culture; by ability to make tools and communicate ideas".²¹

The labour theory of social origins was ignored by those who were determined to blur the dividing line between humans and primates. They have overestimated the ability of primates to manipulate sticks and stones and have equated them with tool-makers. The same is true for the primate diet. They are almost entirely vegetarian and "animal food accounts for less than one per cent". In short primate diet and food habits are not equivalent to human hunters and meat eaters.

In Merchant's view there exists in any historical period an array of intellectual ideas. Of these, some spread, and some appear to die out. Kuhn argues that "direction and cumulation of social changes make some ideas more central in the array, while other move to the

nurturing mother, which was central to Renaissance imagery, became replaced as the Scientific Revolution mechanised and rationalised the world view. The view of nature as disorder provided a rationale for the need to control and master it. Merchant pointed out that in the mid-fifteenth century, a new representation emerged of body, society nature and cosmos as machines that are manipulatable and require control and domination. Ideas of order and predictability, of natural laws acting on inert atoms and bodies, superceded ancient philosophies of vitalism and animism, skepticism, change, and uncertainty.²³

It is important that in the patriarchal civilizations that have been our cultural context for the past several thousand years, a particular, consistent and profound bias shapes scientific theories in general and theories about women in particular. One unchanging feature of our history is that all the dominant cultures have been patriarchal, whether enlightened, reformed, feudal, capitalist or socialist. Science like all culture, reflects that consistent historical bias.²⁴

The field of sociobiology has provided important in-sights into the social behaviour of animals. E.O. Wilson introduced Sociobiology in 1975 as the ultimate discipline of human behaviour, the "new synthesis" that

will "reformulate the foundation of the social sciences".²⁵ Sociobiology considers all human behaviour, characteristics and social organization to be biologically, genetically and evolutionarily determined. Sociobiology popounds certain characteristics of female and male 'nature' to be universal. Based on this assumption, it explains why women are genetically, universally, predisposed to certain characteristics. Thus women are said to be "attached" to the home and nursery while men are to business. Similarly men are said to be naturally fickle and promiscuous while women are faithful and selective; men are aggressive and dominant while women are submissive and nurturant.

The significance of sociobiological theories lies not only in the seriousness of the political implications but in the fact that sociobiology uses shoddy and deceptive methodology. Some of these methodological problems include ethnocentrism, selective use of animal models, anthropomorphism of concepts and language (such as, for instance, machismo in insects, prostitution among apes and birds, homosexuality among worms and rape in flowers) and distortion and misrepresentation in the use of data. The basic premises are flawed: the universal behavioural characteristics and sexual differences of humans that they presume to explain as biological are not universal within or between cultures. The behaviour of animals can not be taken to indicate innate behaviour of humans, "uncontami-

nated" by culture.²⁶

Distinctions of human characteristics and temperaments, innate male and female natures, are social and cultural constructs. They are not natural. They are part of an ideology that attempts to make what are in fact social and political distinctions appear natural and biological. They are utilised therefore to justify differences in social roles and relations of dominance and subordination. Sociobiological theories support "status quo" and lend scientific basis to sexist and racist ideologies.

The basic premise of sociobiology is that human behaviour and certain aspects of social organization have evolved, like our bodies, through adaptation based on Darwinian natural selection. It suggests that behaviour also evolved in similar ways so that "adaptive" and "successful" behaviour become based in our genes and certain genetic configuration became selected because they result in behaviour that are adaptive for survival. Our "innate" predisposition to display these behaviours constitute our human nature.²⁷

The key concept of sociobiological theory is that behaviours are programmed to maximise the ability of the body's genes to reproduce themselves. An important area for sociobiological speculation is that of reproduction

itself. The second key postulate, then, is that the two sexes have a different strategy for maximizing their fitness through the reproduction of the largest possible number of offspring. And it is to this difference that sociobiologists are able to attribute what they consider to be differences in female and male natures, behaviours and social roles. They believe that women and men have different strategies and behaviours for assuring the reproduction and survival of their genes because they have an "unequal" biological investment in each offspring. This fact, according to sociobiologists, results in different reproductive strategies in the two sexes: women are selective and choosy - they go for quality whereas men go for quantity. Thus Wilson writes: "It pays males to be aggressive, hasty, fickle and indiscriminating. In theory it is more profitable for females to be coy, to hold back until they can identify males with the best genes. Human beings obey this biological principle faithfully."

Barash explains further: "The evolutionary mechanism should be clear. Genes that allow females to accept the sort of males who makes lesser contributions to their reproductive success will leave fewer copies of themselves than will genes that influence the females to be more selective. For males, a very different strategy applies. The maximum advantage goes to individuals with fewer inhibitions, a genetically influenced tendency to play fast

and loose".²⁸

The question of dominance hierarchies and the relationship between male's status within the group and his access to females was investigated by the primatologists, anthropologists and sociobiologist who were not motivated to justify the sexual status quo. Important observations clearly contradicted the stereotyped descriptions and the evolutionary formula that was derived from it (Lancaster, 1975;²⁹ Leavitt, 1975;³⁰). They have demonstrated that dominance hierarchies are neither universal nor always male.

Barash in his book, The Whisperings Within, makes extravagant use of human behavioural concepts and language in the descriptions of animal behaviour. He thus observes "rape in ducks, adultery in bluebirds, prostitution in hummingbirds and homosexual rape in parasitic worms". Noting rape as rampant in nature, he strongly suggests that rape is a natural phenomena in nature. The implication is that male rapists are simply unwitting tools of a blind genetic drive; rape itself an unconscious urge for reproduction success and hence, biologically speaking, both inevitable and advantageous.

The basic problem in the methodology has been the projection of the investigator's personal and cultural values and biases about human behaviour onto his

observation and interpretation of the behaviour of animals and other cultures. What is also involved in these anthropomorphic and ethnocentric descriptions is the use of language. The words are burdened with heavy implication. Language is used to mould reality to a particular "truth" and to impose a particular perception of the world as reality. Sociobiologists use language to mould the truth when they say that courted females are coy or insects have evolved "rampant machismo" (Wilson 1975.) or that aggression is a universal trait of males. When Barash and other Sociobiologists use the word rape to describe pollination, they appropriate the word in order to remove rape from its socio-political context of male violence against women. The harem theory assumed that the male was of central importance, defending the troop, making decisions, having his choice of sex partners; in return he was groomed, fed and sexed by his harem of dependent females. Language substituted for actual observations, but it served ideology "demonstrating" that human male dominance and polygamy are innate as they are rooted in our primate ancestors (Bleier 1984).³¹

Another problem in sociobiological writings is the omission of data that confounds the stereotype. Sociobiology takes no note for instance, of the South American male rhea bird that incubates and tends the 50 or 100 eggs that are laid by females in the nest he builds.

Or the shared parenting phenomenon of "double clutching": a situation in which the female shore birds produce two clutches of eggs in quick succession, one of which becomes the females responsibility while the other is the male's. The female jacuna bird has a territory where she keeps a "harem" of males. She fills with eggs the nest that each male builds in his own sub territory and leaves him to incubate and tend the brood. Many bonded sea bird pairs take turns sitting on the nest, while the partner goes out to the sea to bring back fish. Similarly the emperor penguin father remains nearly immobile during the two months he incubates his offsprings egg while the mother hunts for food. Bonner notes that monogamy is the main mating system among animals in which both sexes share in parental care.

Sociobiology attempts to validate the belief that genes determine behaviour and that social relations and cultures have evolved through the genetic transmission of behavioural traits and characteristics. Sociobiological theories explain in terms of biology the origins of gender differentiated roles and position held by women and by men in modern as well as past civilisations. In doing so, sociobiologists attempt to assign natural causes to phenomena of social origin.

Sociobiology functions as a political theory and program. Despite their liberal protestations, sociobiologists explain and justify the existence of womens' social and physical oppression by asserting the genetic origins, and hence, the inevitability of rape, the sexual double standards, the relegation of women to the private world of home and motherhood.

Furthermore sociobiology suffers from serious methodological problems. These include unsubstantiated assumptions, the inadequate data, the incorrect use of animal models and inappropriate conclusions.

The predominant theory related to human cultural evolution has been the Man-the-Hunter theory. The theory, in essence, describes the process whereby our increasingly upright bipedal (male) ancestors, used their free hands to fashion tools and weapons for hunting. This is said to have occurred 15 to 4 million years ago. Men banded together to hunt large animals and to share in the kill that they carried back for their females and young dependents. This primary sexual division led to an intensification of sexual division of labour and sexual differentiation in psychological and temperamental characteristic. This theory explains female dependence on males for survival and evolution. The origin of men as hunters is also linked with the origin and evolution of a

presumed "killer" instinct in males that accounts for war, torture, homicide, competitiveness, aggression, daring and creativity that accounts for male dominance over females in all aspects of personal, social, political and economic life.

Bleier comments: "The Man-The-Hunter" theory of human evolution does not take women into account in human evolution. It starts with a set of assumptions concerning the eternal nature of characteristics, temperaments and roles". I consider these to be serious philosophical, conceptual and the methodological problems that makes the theory scientifically weak.³²

Archaeological records indicate that the oldest stone artefacts date back to about 2 to 2.5 million years. These are small hand sized stones from which flakes were chipped leaving edges. These implements have been used for cutting and scraping³³ The earliest evidence of actual systematic hunting dates to a site 500,000 years old in Spain.³⁴ It was not until the Neanderthal period, 100,000 to 35,000 years ago that first composite tool appeared viz: hefted axes or spears that could be used to kill large animals for the kind and the scale of hunting that is postulated to be an important force in human cultural evolution.³⁵

The evidence from fossils suggests that upright, bipedal humans evolved without benefit of social hunting of

large animals from the time of Ramapithecus about 15 millions ago to the period between Homo-erectus of 500,000 evident years ago and Homo-sapiens neanderthalensis of about 100,000 years ago. This period constituted about 99 per cent of hominid evolutionary time. During the same period the brain size increased dramatically from the estimated 300 cc of Ramapithecus to the Neanderthal Homo sapiens brain, which is approximately the size of the average modern Homo sapiens' brain (1450 cc). The drastic enlargement of brain tapered off around 100,000 to 35,000 years ago during which occurred dramatic forward leap in cultural complexity. This included the elaboration of rituals, symbols, languages, art and the increasing sophistication of tool making in addition to large-scale co-operative hunting. Rather than being a cause of the uniquely human suspects of hominid evolution and human mind, cooperative hunting, appears to have been one of the cultural developments made possible by an advanced technology and brain close to the capacity of modern Homo sapiens.³⁶

Bleier (1984) suggests that large scale social hunting was one of the many ritualized forms in which gender differentiation began to develop. This was around the period between 100,000 to 35,000 years ago when human capacity for symbolisation, language and ritualisation appeared fully and when tool and weapon technology was

sufficiently advanced to make differential access to tools a social possibility.

There was a differential access by women and men to tools and weapons. Tabet (1982) argues that it is a common feature of contemporary pre-industrial cultures whether hunting-gathering, fishing, horticulture, and agriculture that women are under equipped with a technological gap existing between women and men. In foraging societies, even when the major contribution to the groups' subsistence is produced through womens' work, in gathering, hunting or fishing, womens' tools are rudimentary - sticks nets or baskets - while more advanced tool - harpoon, spear, axe knives bow and arrows and boats are made, used by, and, reserved for men. While both women and men can and use rudimentary tools, women, in general are prohibited the use of weapon and tools more complex that serve as instruments of production.³⁷

In horticulture and agriculture the work of soil preparation, seeding, weeding and harvesting is done by digging sticks and hoes, usually by women although it may be carried out by either women or men. Where, however, the plough is introduced, it becomes a male tool. Further, when tools can be activated by wind, water or animals, they are used by men. Women continue such operation as grounding and pounding by hand using tools like stones and

sticks and mortar and pestle. Tabet argues that the sexual division of labour is always a relationship of control and is the result and not the cause of differential use of tools.

Teleki (1975) has developed a detailed critique of Man-the-Hunter theory. He writes that there is a false dichotomy made of the diets and subsistence behaviors of apes and humans. Primates and humans are omnivorous and only about 20 to 30 per cent of the diet of most gatherer-hunter people consist of meat, in the form of small games that are collected or trapped. And just as humans are not carnivorous but omnivorous, so are the primates are not carnivorous but omnivores. The primates are not herbivores but omnivores, since they eat meat also.³⁸

The oldest hominid teeth indicate that early hominids were also basically plant eaters or omnivores rather than carnivores. Australopithecus and her contemporary Homo habilis cousin had the larger worn, grinding molars of plant-eating animals and not the long, tearing canines of carnivores. Studies of modern gatherer-hunter nomadic groups have shown that the gathering of plant foods and small animals is done mainly by women. This is the most dependable food source and contributes 60-90 per cent of the total diet. Despite the importance of gathered food in

diet, meat is nonetheless generally more prized (Shostak, M.1981) and hunting may be viewed as more prestigious. In some places this may be because game is more scarce and precious or because hunting has been invested with symbolic and ritualistic significance. The record, then, shows that today the gathering of plant foods and small animals is the primary subsistence activity of the majority of nomadic gatherer-hunters and women participate predominantly.³⁹ Unless ecological circumstances were vastly different millions of year ago -- the palaeological records do not suggest this -- it appears likely that early hominids were also principally gatherers. This is likely to have held true even after the development of the hunting of large mammals with weapons about 100,000 years ago.

If, then, data from archaeology, primatology and anthropology, do not confirm the importance of hunting and weapon making as prime causal factors in the evolution of human intellect, inventiveness, language and art, the alternative could be the assumption that prehistoric women were foragers who, unlike men, carried their nursing babies with them for three to four years (like the contemporary ! Kung). Slocum, Tanner and Tanner and Zihlman have suggested alternative reconstructions of the course of cultural evolution.

Since one of the evolutionary consequences of upright bipedal posture and locomotion was the loss of grasping ability of the feet and since hominids were also losing their body fur, there came a time when babies could not cling to their mother's back or abdomens. At the same time hominid offspring were born more immature and remained dependent for a much longer time. For these reasons Slocum suggests that it would have been very important for mothers to invent baby slings to carry nursing babies on their backs, leaving their hands free for gathering. The excess food may have been collected for the purpose of sharing, processing or storing. On this basis Slocum, Tanner and Zihlman suggest that it was probably the requirements of gathering and collecting plants, fruits and small animals, rather than hunting large and dangerous animals that provided the impetus for this first type of material technology viz: carrying devices.

Furthermore, they suggest that the same requirements also provided the impetus for the use of tools. Sticks, bones, hand stones etc extended the reach for fruit and nuts in trees, helped to pry up roots and tubers and dig out burrowing animals. They also helped to pulverise and chop tough plants and crack - open nuts and seeds. Tanner and Zihlman consider one important consequence of their interpretation - that the amiable atmosphere of gathering plants and catching of small animals by women and men poses

no natural selection pressure for aggression and competitiveness. Such pressures are an integral part of Man-The-Hunter theories which pose a gender dichotomous biocultural evolution. Tanner and Zihlman's assumptions are supported by observations that most contemporary gatherers and hunters lead well-paced lives with leisure time, sociability, adequate food and the absence, with rare exception, of aggression and competitiveness. They suggest that those cognitive, inventive and social skills that are associated with the gathering mode are most responsible for early human survival and consequent evolutionary success. These include the mapping of food sources, ability to communicate this information to the other, the development of complex social relationship, planning and teaching and learning of subsistence techniques.

Tanner and Zihlman propose that prehistoric women selected more sociable males as those likely to participate in the care, feeding, and protecting their children. They argue that selection pressures were for cooperation and sociability rather than competition and aggression. Thus they suggest that sexual selection and human evolution were guided by sociable women rather than competitive and aggressive men.⁴⁰

Bleier (1984) remarks that Slocum's, Tanner's and Zihlman's arguments need not imply simply a counter theory to Man-The Hunter: namely that it was Women-as-Gatherers who did the inventing and who thus account for human cultural evolution. Rather one could say that for millions of years, hominids (female and male) evolved as gatherers. It is possible that early hominids forged for his/her own needs, eating as they roamed, since little else was possible before carriers and campsites became possible. It would have been during that long period from about 15 to 5 million to about 100,000 years ago that inventiveness and technology were evolving along with those characteristics and capabilities of mind and brain, which eventually made possible the development of social organisation of all subsistence and other activities.

One important aspect of Tanner's and Zihlman's viewpoint is that it does not begin with the assumption of woman's passivity and dependence as a basis for building of human evolution. Their view attaches great importance to womens' childbearing and rearing. Unlike other biosocial theories, however, they do not see reproduction as a force leading inevitably to helplessness and dependence. Rather, they view it as a social force leading to selection for innovativeness, sociability and cooperativeness, thus making women the more resourceful sex.

The models of Slocum, Tanner and Zihlman do carry the risk, however, of perpetuating a single cause or primary-event explanation about the universal and uniform course of the evolution of forms of social organisation and behavior. More specifically, they could serve to perpetuate assumptions that biological phenomena, like reproduction and by implication, motherhood, determine the course and forms of social relation and cultural evolution.

Other anthropologists have proposed other factors as keys to understanding human cultural evolution. Richard Lee⁴¹ posed the carrying device as the essential pre-requisite of human economy. He argues that development of food exchange and campsites were basic features of the hominid way of life. These two features made it possible for a person on a given day to forage in different areas, concentrate on a different food, engage in hunting with the attendant risks of catching nothing, or simply sit and develop new tools, secure in the expectation of being fed by others. But, Lee emphasised, neither food exchange nor home bases would be possible without the carrying devices to transport collected foods, raw material for the manufacture of tools and the tools themselves. Leakey⁴² and Lewin⁴³ and Gordon Hewes⁴⁴ have supported this theory. Mary Leakey⁴⁵ and Glynn Isaac⁴⁶ have uncovered evidence that hominids had developed a carrying device around two million years back.

The classical anthropology of nineteenth-century evolutionists made two important discoveries. First that primitive society was an egalitarian society and, second, that it was also a matriarchal society. These findings challenged the prevalent patriarchal society and soon gave rise to controversies.

Reed (1978) noted that two institutions are of primary importance: the institution of totemism and the other, the primitive kinship system. Early scholars devoted many years to study these subjects. But later their successors erased these institutions from the records. Totemism and kinship were thereupon dismissed as mere figments in the imaginations of earlier scholars.⁴⁷

Reed hypothesises that the primitive taboo-could not be directed against incest. Primitive people were ignorant of the most elementary biological facts of life, including conception and the inevitability of death. How, then, could they have understand the concept of incest?⁴⁸

Moreover, the taboo was a double taboo, applying to food as well as to sex. In fact, the clause applying to food was more elaborate and stringent prohibition. This raised the question as to the so stringency of the food taboo. Reed hypothesises that it might have been directed against cannibalism. In other words, the earliest hunters

had to learn what flesh they could eat. This dilemma could only be solved through social and cultural means and hence totemism and taboo developed. It was first and foremost a prohibition against cannibalism and it began as a protection of the totem kin.⁴⁹

Totem kin marked a dividing line between human flesh that could not be killed or eaten and animal flesh that could. Those who were born of the same horde of mother and who lived and worked together in the same community were the totem kins. Outsiders and strangers were non kin and therefore non-human; they were animals who could be killed and eaten. This is how totem kinship began on a small scale and furnished protection for the kin group.⁵⁰

Subsequently this protection against cannibalism became broader in scope. This was accomplished through the interchange system called "gift giving", by which different groups began exchanging food and other goods with one another. These acts converted them from strangers and enemies (or "animals" in the most primitive concept) into new kinds of kinsmen and friends. These linkages created a network of affiliated clans, which ultimately, became the higher cultural level. Cannibalism dwindled to an occasional ritual till it vanished altogether.

The other clause of the taboo was simply a sex taboo, having nothing whatever to do with incest. In order to

overcome animal sexuality and to convert fighting males into human brotherhood, all males in totem kin group were forbidden access to any female of that group. In this way tribal brotherhood was formed and totemism and taboo played an important role in suppressing animal sexuality.

The two clauses of the taboo have an intimate relationship. Food and sex represent the most basic needs in animal life and they are the twin driving forces behind the survival of the species. The double taboo of food and sex therefore represent the earliest social control which led to human organization. Those who have turned away from matriarchy, however, fail to understand totemism because it was female sex that instituted it: Contrary to current myth about their status, women have not always been the inferior sex; they were the mothers responsible for the survival of the species. Unlike the male who suffered from the biological handicap of incessant striving for dominance over other males, females could band together for protection of themselves and their offspring. This nurturing co-operative trait enabled them to make great advance from the maternal brood in the animal world to the maternal clan system in the human world. Through the institution of totemism and taboo, then females were able to correct the biological deficiencies of males, the two basic hungers were socialised and males were brought together as clan brothers. This cooperative association of

men-fratriarchy--has no counterpart in animal world. It represents the crowning achievement of the totemic system which was instituted by women.⁵¹

The other important institution to reconstruct our most ancient history is primitive kinship system. The kinship system in its mature form grew out of totem kinship system. The totem kinship system included certain animals along with humans, where as the mature system was restricted to human alone. Lewis Morgan called this system the "classificatory system" of kinship. This kinship is a system of social kinship embracing all the members of the community, where-as our family system is restricted to the genetic members of the same family.

Like its predecessor the totem kinship system, the classificatory system was also matrilineal; that is kinship and descent were traced through the maternal line. However, the male line of kinship and descent in matriarchal period was traced through "fraternal" line, i.e., the mother's brother. This represent the matrilineal kinship system, which was also fratrilineal (Reed, 1978).⁵²

This may come as a shock when we consider that under clan taboo, a clan brother can not marry a clan sister. He can not therefore, be biological father of his sister's son. However primitive people were ignorant of biological paternity and and a mother's brother was capable of

performing various function for their sister's children as the husband and father who later took their place.

The mother's brothers were guardians and tutors of their sister's son. The male line of descent and succession accordingly passed from maternal uncle to nephew. This line of decent prevailed throughout the entire epoch of matrilineal clan system, even after patrilineal kinship was recognised. However, it was possible to assimilated patrilineal kinship into mother-brother clan, without altering its basic structure; the same was not true of patrilineal descent. Changing the line of male descent from mother's brother to father shattered the fratriarchy-and that, in turn, brought down matriarchy. Both were replaced by patriarchy.⁵³

The matrifamily (or Morgan's pairing family) was the last stage in the evolution of matriclan system, because it recognised the father and patrilineal kinship. It was a divided family, torn between two functional fathers -- the mother's brother and her husband.. However the mother's brother held the fixed permanent traditional fathers - the mother's brother and her husband. However the mother's brother held the fixed permanent traditional ties to his sister's son,. while the father had an ephemeral relation with his wife's children. A son was a kin to his father as long as his mother's marriage lasted and these marriages

were easily and often broken. A child's relationship to his mother's brother was a blood relationship in the primitive sense of that term. This meant that in all critical situations the son stood on the side of his mother's brother and not that of his father. This system was a serious obstacle in the path of full development of unified one-father family.

There was a protracted and bloody struggle between the contending categories of men - the matrilineal and the patrilineal father. There was an extremely painful process by which the divided family was replaced by patriarchal one - father family. In the same process the family system of kinship replaced the former classificatory or social system of kinship.

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CHAPTER II
THEORIES OF FAMILY FORMATION

The family may be defined as the basic and smallest social grouping, the members of which are united by the bonds of kinship. Murdock¹ defines family as "a social group characterised by common residence, economic co-operation, and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually co-habiting adults".

The process of family formation consists of those acts related to an individual's marriage, begetting children out of this wedlock, nurture of the young and basic enculturation of the next generation into their social group thus enabling them to carry on social and economic activities for their survival and reproduction.

A family is a deliberately formed association. Its form, content and composition varies from time to time and place to place. The family as a social unit is universal. The members are bound together by institutionalised social and economic rights and obligations.

Family formation is a process taking place perpetually in a society. A family, in order to sustain and to perpetuate itself, has to endure the external forces acting on it. Some classes of people rely on their fertility to facilitate a better chance for enduring these forces. "The

theories of family formation and fertility is based on this basic argument.

These theories like the labour theory, the insurance and security theory and the wealth flow theory can be grouped together into conventional anthropological explanations on family formation and fertility change.² All these theories essentially argue that the fertility level of a family is not arbitrarily set. The decision by a couple to have a number of children is essentially a rational decision, a judgement of their social environment. The pitfall of these theories is precisely its "rationalism" -- that it assumes a universal rationality and expect similar responses from all the families of a class exposed to similar economic conditions. But rationality does not exist in the abstract; it is concrete, the product of a particular social, political, economic and historical context.

These theories were developed as a critique of neo-classical macro-economic theories which proposed a positive correlation between fertility decline and economic growth in poor societies. The proponents of these theories argued that a reduction in fertility alters a population's age structure so that the proportion of working-age to dependent populations increases. Increased income and savings per capita result. A rise in per capita income

should enable a rise in per capita saving leading to higher rate of investment. The higher rates of saving would result in higher capital per head so that output per head would rise and a faster economic growth ensue.³

The neo-classical macro-economic theories which attempt to establish positive correlation between fertility decline and economic growth are based on the assumption that the family is unit of only consumption and not production. This argument holds good for a fully developed capitalist society, where family ceases to be a unit of production, but not for rural agricultural communities in the developing world.

The major limitation of neo-classical macro-economic is that first it tends to overestimate the size of released consumption due to reduction in numbers in the age group of 0-15 years. Second, it is not clear that the saving rate is a function of the level of per-capita income. It is one thing to suggest that society with higher per capita income should be able to save more, but it is another to suggest that therefore, savings will rise when per capita income rises. It can be argued that released resources are absorbed in the form of rise in consumption. Third, a rise in per capita saving does not necessarily imply that every one will share equally in this. We have a classic case of illustration of this in India during the sixties: per

capita real income has increased by about 7-8 per cent between 1960-61 and 1867-68. At the same time the saving rate registered a fall instead of a rise. The stagnation of the saving rate suggest that the per capita real consumption must have increased. But the resultant increase in consumption was confined entirely to the rich.⁴ In other words, in calculating per capita income, savings, GDP consumption etc, the population of a nation is assumed to be homogeneous in nature. The neo-classical model posits a unilinear relation between savings and population growth which is fallacious.

Studies in some countries reduced population growth may have a negligible effect on saving and may even lead to lower aggregate saving rates. Studies of households saving in a number of developing countries have been inconclusive about the relationship between the number of children and savings. A comprehensive model that explains why the impact of children on household saving varies from country to country has not yet been fully developed and tested. An improved understanding of the relationship between demographic factors and saving in developing countries will depend upon availability of improved data and better models.⁵ The theories of family formation that we consider here bring anthropological insight into the discipline of demography.

Labour Theory

The notion that the production of children can be measured in terms of cost-benefit to the family was illustrated by Leibenstein in (1957).⁶ He argued that parents have a rough estimate of the costs and the benefits of children in deciding to have a child. Explanations of this nature can be grouped together under one heading viz. Labour theory. It fundamentally tries to link labour value of children with the fertility level. Powerful arguments in support of this theory comes from Mamdani(1972⁷,1976⁸) Nag et al(1978⁹), Cain (1977¹⁰,1978¹¹) Nadkarni(1976¹²).

Mamdani's study is a critique of the Khanna study. He selected Manupur, one of the seven 'test' villages of the Khanna study. His work was based on interviews of people who were working as field level workers, and the respondents of the Khanna study. In Manupur life has been radically altered by series of far reaching technological changes. There is an intimate relationship between technological change and the social structure of the village. In 1960 Intensive Agricultural Development Program (IADP) was launched in Ludhiana district. IADP acted as the single most important agency for bringing change in the social structure of Manupur. It provided a source of financing independent of Brahmin moneylenders. The cooperative society successfully undermined the

material basis of the Brahmin moneylender. The cultivator-owners, about sixty per cent of the population became the dominant caste.¹³ The improvement in agricultural technology and accompanying changes in social relation made the jajmani system redundant. Labour thus became a commodity in Manupur. Feudal relation of work gave way to capitalist relation of work. The traditional service caste people were gradually absorbed into agriculture, as there was no decline in the need for agricultural labour despite technological changes.¹⁴

He observed that in all sections of people except the brahmin caste and the large farmers, there existed a felt need to have a large family. As long as agricultural production is characterised by low technology there will always be a clear demarcation between those times of the year when labour is in great demand and those times when it is not; his income will depend upon the amount of work his family can contract during the busy season. A large family thus means a greater income during the busy season and higher saving for the low season.¹⁵

The inclusion of women in the agricultural labour force means that low caste families do not look upon the birth of a girl child with as much disfavour as used to be the case. Obviously the disfavour still persist to a degree, since the daughter will marry and emigrate

precisely when she has reached the age of greatest productivity.¹⁶

Increase in family labour would fetch the landless labourer more wages. For an owner cultivator, it would reduce the need for hired labour and might enable him to rent more land for cultivation. Under these conditions, then, to limit one's family size would mean "to willfully court economic disaster"¹⁷.

At a conceptual level he argues that in the case of rural landless labourers, small peasants and urban migrant labourers, children can contribute to family income either directly by doing paid work or indirectly by attending to unpaid domestic duties and thereby releasing the adults for more gainful employment.

The rationale for higher fertility thus lies in the economic value of children calculated on a long-term basis. The only means by which the individual production unit, the family, can increase the physical product at its disposal is by increasing the labour power at its disposal e.g. through high rates of reproduction. Moreover, given that there is always a need for additional income among the poor peasants and labourers, with each additional child the cost of having a child declines and benefit rises.¹⁸

Cain (1977) illustrated from his study of Bangladesh village that male children appear to become net producers by the age of twelve and compensate for their cumulative consumption by the age of fifteen. However, it is important to note that the studied village is an atypical village, rice cultivation is predominant. It is possible that this gives employment opportunities for every one.¹⁹

Mueller (1976) argued to the contrary that there is always a surplus labour force in peasant agriculture. For a major part of the year, children and women are out of market production. "The labour participation for children appeared to be relatively high while it was exceptionally low for women"²⁰. Mueller argues that children consume substantially more than they produce until they reach fifteen to nineteen years of age. She concludes that in peasant agriculture, children have a negative economic value. It should be noted that she has taken into account only the activities directly related to the market economy in measuring labour participation of children.

Nag and his colleagues (1978)²¹ have pointed out that Mueller has failed to acknowledge the fact that in almost all peasant societies there exist a multiplicity of occupations, apart from agriculture. While agricultural labour brings in the greatest economic return, the major portion of time of most people is spent in non-agricultural

activities, in which economic return is low. Thus there is only underproductivity but not unemployment or under-employment. Even in peasant villages of high population density, households with a large number of children ensure for themselves a lengthy period of economic success.

The labour theory, apart from explaining the persistence of high fertility among the poor, also tries to explain the decline of fertility. It argues that with the advent of modernization and mechanization of farming activities the need for a large labour force will not exist any more. This would reduce the desire for children and hence the fertility would decline (Mamdani 1972 , Nag 1978). Nag has argued that the economic value of children is higher in peasant societies than in industrial societies: it is also higher in farming households than in non-farming households.

To sum up, proponents of this theory would argue that "over population" does not lead to poverty. On the contrary that poverty induces the rational need to augment labour power, the only resource commanded by the poor. In other words, that poverty leads to higher fertility.

Insurance and Security Theory

The main argument of this theory is that for the poor children act as a source of security and as an insurance in

the old age. The number of births a couple may have is not an arbitrary affair. It is not determined by fecundity level in the absence of birth control facilities. The number of children a couple will have is a variable which is influenced by the strong motivation on the part of couples in having or not having children. This is rooted in the desire to ensure a minimum number of surviving children in the face of heavy mortality risks in the socio-economic circumstances which make couple view children as possible sources of labour and security in old age.

Gould (1976) pointed out that in many communities, in order to ensure living heirs, to look after them in old age, parents "stock pile" children. If there are many children, parents can depend on one or the other; or children can divide among themselves the responsibility of taking care of their parents.²²

Rao (1976) advanced insurance and security theory through a hypothetical model. At very high mortality rates, the required number of births might exceed the fecundity limit of a woman, so that, in certain ranges of mortality, a fall in mortality rate might not be immediately followed by a reduction in births. As survival rates improve, birth rates might remain flat and growth rates rise up to a point; after that, birth rates fall

more than proportionately and growth rates decline.²³

The initial unresponsiveness of birth rates to improvements in mortality is due to the fact that a very low level of survival the minimum number of children required to ensure the survival of at least one child with some confidence may be so large that it might exceed either the fecund capacity of the mother or the economic capacity of the family to support so many children.²⁴

In considering how the class position affects behaviour in relation to fertility, Rao has identified two costs and three motivations as to why people want children. He divided a community into four classes namely, workers, peasants and petit bourgeoisie, capitalist farmers, industrialists, big traders. etc; and the professional classes. He takes into consideration the cost of bringing up children as follows:

- a) The direct cost of feeding
- b) The indirect cost of fore-going employment opportunities by women.

The strength of motives for having children vary from class to class. The major motives are the following:

- a) Children make a home happy.
- b) Children are a source of future income.
- c) Children are an insurance against old age.

Rao arrives at a curvilinear relation between economic status and family size. The insurance motive is strongest among workers: they greatly depend on children. Since the income earned is very small, they seek safety in numbers. This motive becomes weaker as the property status increase. In peasant families the insurance motive is likely to be much stronger than in capitalist groups. This motive might also be strong among professional groups.²⁵

Children as a source of income is much stronger in class II (peasant and petit bourgeoisie). This motive is likely to be weaker among workers and weakest among capitalist and professional group. On balance, the net motivation for having children may be strongest in class II and weakest in class III and the desire for having children may be stronger in class I than class III or class IV.²⁶

These economic theories ignore the differential nature of the peasantry. The attitude toward having children and fertility varies enormously among different sections of the peasantry with same agricultural technology. Macfarlane (1978) points out that Japan and China in early twentieth century had contrasting fertility pattern, although both were wet-rice cultivating countries²⁷

Even if we restrict ourselves to poorer classes and grant that there is a desirable number of children calculable from the theory, not all families succeed in

attaining this size; only a small fraction would. The rational strategy, whether adopted through conscious economic calculation or unconsciously, is defeated in most cases. If we take the insurance motive, couples produce a lot of children so as to ensure atleast one survivor (preferably a son) who would, in the absence of social security, take care of parents when they grow old. This motive, does not apply to all rural classes with the same degree of importance and among poorer classes, parents rarely survive - given their low level of life expectance.²⁸ Once again we can see why theory can have a macro-level validity, but still be very incomplete in relation to families. Unless theory describes also the social adjustment mechanisms, which attend upon such chance variation in family size and describes further how the underlying processes vary between different social classes, it is not analytically and empirically sustainable.

According to Monica Das Gupta (1978), with the steady increase of population there is a change in traditional economic organization. To cope with increasing population pressure, traditional economic relations are altered in such a way that the landless and small peasants are made to bear the brunt of the problem. The rich farmers put into use more of their own family labour. Under such conditions large families do not improve the economic status of the

poor. She points out that under "different conditions much of the same kind of 'development' can have quite contrary effect on the number of desired children"²⁹. The effect of development may also vary over a period of time.

Nag (1982) studied Manupur twelve years after Mamdani. He observed that the economic value of children has reduced. This is due to a "reduction in remunerative work by children; a reduction in child's work time due to change in the nature of agricultural and household activities as well as due to higher enrollment of both boys and girls in the school".³⁰

The association between poverty and high fertility is paradoxical. Do poor produce more children per couple than do the rich? The belief that the poor breed faster - through what Malthus called improvidence - is wide spread although lacking in factual basis. It is taken as almost axiomatic that all family planning effort to control fertility should be directed towards the poor. Whether the axioms are true or not is apparently of no concern to planners.³¹

The historical evidence indicates that well-to-do classes had, in fact, a higher level of fertility than the poor classes. Historical data show that in European as well as other countries, family size and wealth (as measured by landholding) were directly associated. Wealthy

families generally had a larger number of children than labouring classes.³²

There are other reasons as well. The manner in which property, especially land, is held and devolve from generation to the other influence family structure in agrarian populations. Such structures in agrarian societies have considerable effect on fertility. This can be illustrated through European 'pattern of marriage' described by Hajnal(1965). This pattern characterised by high rates of celibacy and late marriages among both males and females and with high order of fertility within marriage. This pattern tend to keep overall fertility low in terms of the number of children per woman. The high rate of celibacy in Europe was due to ultimogeniture or primogeniture mode of property devolution.

Goody (1976) has shown that under high mortality regimes a certain significant proportion (about 23 per cent) of couples remain without a heir to pass on property. This would happen even under conditions of uncontrolled fertility and the absence of 'rational' strategies for attaining desired family size.³³

In the absence of controlled fertility, biological and other factors tend to depress the level of fertility among the poor. "Historical data shows that the age at menarche tend to fall as standard of living rise; cross

sectional data demonstrate that menarche is delayed among the undernourished poor"²¹ The age at menopause is positively associated with good nutrition and general well-being. The higher rate of mortality among poor reduce the average reproductive period per woman through a high proportion of deaths before menopause. Another factor which could account for lower fertility among poor is the possibility of higher rates of pregnancy wastage. On the whole, the biological balance favours the rich in reproductive capacity.

Krishnaji(1980) conclude, from the data on fertility and family size differentials that a low average size of family among agricultural laboruers and peasants arises mainly from high rates of mortality and lower fertility and a high average size of family among big land owners from low rate of mortality and tendency for joint families to remain undivided as it confers economic advantages.³⁴

Purely economic theories are thus, in a sense, limited. The most important component of economic theory of high fertility is the one based the 'economic value' of children; others such as the 'pension motive' or son preference can ultimately be converted into economic value of children. These theories are based on 'peasant rationality', but this supra rationality is not applicable uniformly to all peasant classes. A child may be asset

in one class but a burden in another.

Purely economic theories are either simplistic or require revision. The fertility variations are modified to a limited extent by socially - imposed controls. To understand these controls it is necessary to take into account class differences among the peasantry.

It is not possible to make a generalised unilinear relation between economic status and fertility. Studies which provide empirical support to relate economic status and fertility (showing either positive or negative correlation) are micro-level studies. We can not arrive at a generalization based on micro-level studies. They can, at best, demonstrate the variations. The major drawback of these studies is that they group together different group of people under one category 'the poor'. Even peasantry is not a homogenous category. The peasantry comprises discrete classes with differential access to resources and technology and thus labour requirements. It is possible therefore that there will be differential motive for having less or more children according to the relation of production.

Wealth Flows Theory

The theory of wealth flows was proposed by John C. Caldwell. He utilised the concept of "wealth flows" to

explain both high fertility and the onset of sustained fertility decline "wealth flows" are defined as all the money, goods, services and guarantees that one person provides to another". The term "wealth" is used to emphasize the fact that the transactions are not all monetary. Wealth flows analysis is fundamental to an understanding of the nature of family relationship at all times and in all places. It analyses the economics of family production and argues that fertility decline is the result of change in a family's internal economic structure. Wealth flows analysis can be employed to throw light on mortality³⁵, migration, and on other non-demographic phenomena.

The development of wealth flows theory lay in a nagging problem that "large families did not seem to be worse off either in their contemporary condition or in their past experience of relative socio-economic mobility". The field experience in rural areas revealed that large families are equated with strength, power and success while small families are regarded as more likely to meet with disaster.³⁶

Caldwell identified three fertility regimes: one where there is no economic gain to individuals from restricting fertility; second, where transition is taking place, and the third where there is economic gain from restricting

fertility. In these situations, behaviour is not only rational but economically rational. The maximum and minimum family sizes in these societies are determined by personal, social and physiological reasons, not economic ones alone³⁷

Caldwell analyses the direction and magnitude of wealth flow in "primitive" 'traditional' and transitional societies. By primitive society he means a society of food gatherers, nomadic pastoralist, or agriculturalists living in largely self - sufficient communities, feeling little or no impact from a nation state or a world religion. The traditional societies are pre-dominantly agrarian with the apparatus of government and often the structure of an organised religion providing guarantee of safety or assistance to the individual and the community. Transitional societies are those where rapid changes in the way of life towards modern economy, usually in recent times, has been catalysed by outside contacts. It is maintained that, at least in the contemporary world, the support for unlimited fertility finally crumbles in transitional societies.

"The fundamental issue in demographic transition" for Caldwell is the direction and magnitude of inter-generation wealth flows, - whether from children to parents or from parents to children.

High fertility, he argues, has probably been advantageous to most families over most of human history. In primitive and in almost all traditional societies, net wealth flows from children to parents. Here the only economically rational response that holds good in an indefinitely large number of children. Here children are considered investment in the real sense and high fertility may be the only sound investment. When children are no longer an economic advantage, fertility will fall and that fall will not occur until the sum of their economic and emotional returns is negative.

There are two kinds of societies from a demographic point of view : One where unlimited fertility is an economic advantage and other where fertility is of no economic advantage. The onset of fertility decline - is a reversal of intergenerational wealth flow. This is a change of economic relationship within the family which arises from change in emotional balance, thus rendering high fertility disadvantageous. Very subtle shifts in emotional relationships, within the family, usually reflecting changes in society's attitude towards male-female and parent child relationship can dramatically alter the direction of the wealth flow.

The primitive and traditional societies follow the familial mode of production. In fact the family mode of

production is also found among urban artisans and merchants who could in no way be regarded as subsistence producers. The strength of familial morality means that family members could be trusted to a much greater extent than an outsider.

This system does not collapse with the appearance of capitalism and indeed the labour market is used for very long periods to supplement and even strengthen familial production. This is done by allowing younger members to earn wages while the family system continues as long as all or most of the wages are put into common family budget largely under the control of patriarch. Ultimately the labour market undermines the whole system and makes high fertility uneconomic. The link between economic decision making and reproductive decision making becomes identical with biological parentage, and the family tends to nucleate. In consequence emotional changes with important demographic and economic implications occur. The larger family of familial production deliberately kept weak the emotional links between spouses and even young children and their biological parents. This kind of morality ensured the economic functioning of the larger unit.

The smaller nuclear families appeared as familial production declined. These families ensured strong emotional bonding which worked towards greater egalitarianism in family consumption. Thus for a man,

children and wives became more expensive. Emotional egalitarianism within nuclear family made it even less likely that there would be substantial wealth flow to older generation, and made higher fertility thereby less rewarding.

The high fertility in the West during the mid-nineteenth century was based on a 'two-tiered productive' system which developed in these countries. This system differentiated between "productive" work in the market place and "non-productive" household activities. It substantially downgraded household activities. The morality that supported this downgrading was in complete contrast of the original morality of total familial production.

The morality of this two-tiered system allowed differential consumption which is important in explaining continued high fertility. Husbands were given better food because they "earned the wages". They wore better clothes because "their work demanded it". The Children, even of middle class, lived in austerity. This was considered to be essential part of upbringing.

The high fertility situation in the West was fragile. There were direct costs and greater indirect ones; children demanded more and got more. The consumption gap between generations narrowed and high fertility became definitely

disadvantageous. Compulsory mass schooling was enforced through education law and regulation of labour conditions for protection of children. Eventually the disequilibrium mechanism arrived - compulsory mass schooling.

Once fertility began to fall, it ultimately reached a very low level with-in a short span of time. This was not only due to change in inter-generational wealth flow but due to number of other related factors like greater familiarization with contraception, the increasing legitimacy of its practice and improvement in its technology.

The situation in the third world has been different and this difference is explained by the movement towards a global economy and global society. Imported Western concepts of family have come with missionaries, administrators, educational systems and mass media. The rights of children and of wives has been emphasised. Mass education systems have appeared at a much earlier stage of economic development. This means that wealth flow tended to reverse much closer to the time when families production was breaking down. The imported concepts of the role of children may have hastened the breakdown. Caldwell has also emphasised on the role played by national family planning organizations in reducing fertility.

Wealth flows theory is economically deterministic in two ways. The first is that it explains fertility as declining as soon as net economic lifetime advantages from children are no longer anticipated. The second is that the analysis predicted that traditional familial production will always be characterised by economic advantage to high fertility and that non-familial production (whether capitalist or socialist) will ultimately be characterised by low fertility. It distinguishes two fundamental modes of production: familial and non-familial. Familial production is characterised by intergenerational exploitative economic relation which favour the old generation, and by a morality that both justifies and facilitates this. Ultimately in non-familial production this morality will be replaced by another one of a more "individualistic type". However, moralities wither only slowly.

Caldwell proposed "wealth Flows" theory in order to restate demographic transition theory. He pointed out major lacuna in demographic transition theory, which had to be filled in order to improve the applicability of the theory.

Caldwell's analysis however, is based entirely on individual families, as if they exist without any relation to each other. Further, it ignores completely differences

in power and access to resources both within a family and between families. Caldwell clearly subscribes to 'methodological individualism' (Bharadwaj, 1980) of neo-classical economics. Here all the families in a society are assumed to be uniform in nature and society is considered as an array of slots into which these uniform 'units' are distributed all over uniformly. Uniformity of 'units' and homogeneity with which they are distributed gives no place for any kind of stratification in the society. The concepts like class and class conflict are completely left unexamined.

A family is a social entity. It can not exist in isolation, without interacting with one another. In the course of its existence, it inevitably enters into a definite relations with another leading to unequal exchanges and distribution of wealth and power.

Another crucial point in Caldwell's analysis (1982) is that he selects a few aspects of modernization like education (schooling), mass media, modern health services etc. and not many other which are perhaps more important.

All the aspect of modernization he has listed are aspects which are directly moulded by economic development. These aspects are only visible indicators of economic development or underdevelopment. In other words, he tends to argue that economic development directly affects

Feminist anthropology emphasises that social and economic change is a continuous process. It links micro-process with the macro-processes. It views family formation to be linked with wider regional, national and international processes -- social, economic, political - within which they are embedded. Feminist anthropology, neither tries to advance a universal law of population nor does it attempt to perceive demographic process taking place in different societies, homogeneously. Instead it acknowledges the fact that demographic structure of a society is shaped by broader macro-level, common economic forces as well as by parochial micro-level, economic and socio-cultural factors. This suggest that demographic processes do not respond mechanically to economic factors, on the contrary, feminist anthropology throw light on the enormous complexity of issues that shape demographic process historically.

Feminist anthropology draws it basic tenets from historical materialism. It strives for historical specificity, holism multicausality and inter-relatedness of different levels of forces. This enables explanation given by Feminist anthropology as comprehensive at the same time specific. It do not see population as an abstract entity, but as a heterogeneous mixture of classes each experiencing a different effect on its mortality, fertility and migration, which is shaped by indigenous and extraneous forces.

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CHAPTER III
CONTRIBUTION OF FEMINIST ANTHROPOLOGY

Contemporary feminist anthropology emerged out of anthropology of women during the seventies. The feminist critique in social anthropology grew out of a specific concern with the neglect of women in the discipline. Social anthropology treated women ambiguously. Women were not ignored in traditional anthropology. Women have always been present in ethnographic accounts, primarily because of the traditional anthropological concern with kinship and marriage. The main problem was not, therefore, one of empirical study, but rather one of representation. Rohrlich Leavitt et al., (1975) have illustrated this problem. The authors analysed the different interpretations given by male and female ethnographers to the position and nature of Australian Aboriginal women. Male ethnographers spoke of women as profane, economically unimportant and excluded from rituals. Female researchers, on the other hand, described the women's central role in subsistence, the importance of women's rituals and the respectful way in which they were treated by men.¹ Women were present in both sets of ethnographies, but in very different ways.

The new 'anthropology of women' thus began, in the early 1970s, by confronting the problem of how women were represented in anthropological writings. The initial problem was identified as one of male bias, which was seen as having three 'tiers'. The first layer consists of bias

imported by anthropologists, who bring to the research various assumptions and expectations about the relationship between women and men, and about the significance of those relationships for an understanding of the wider society. The second bias is one inherent in the society being studied. Women are considered as subordinate to men in many societies, and this view of gender relations is likely to be the one communicated to the enquiring anthropologist. The third bias is provided by the bias inherent in Western culture. The argument here is that when researchers perceive the asymmetrical relations between women and men in other cultures, they assume such asymmetries to be analogous to their own cultural experience of the unequal and hierarchical nature of gender relations in Western society.² Feminist anthropologists have argued that even where more egalitarian relations between women and men exist, researchers are very often unable to understand this potential equality because they insist on interpreting difference and asymmetry as inequality and hierarchy (Rogers, 1975;³ Leacock, 1978).⁴ Feminist anthropologists saw their initial task as one of deconstructing this three-tiered structure of male bias. One way of doing this was to focus on women, by studying and describing what women really do, as opposed to what men (ethnographers and informants) say they do, and by recording and analysing the statements, perceptions and attitudes of women themselves.

However, correcting male bias in reporting and building up new data on women could only be a first step, because the real problem about incorporating women into anthropology lies not at the level of empirical research but at the theoretical and analytical level. Feminist anthropology is, therefore, faced with much larger task of reworking and redefining anthropology theory.

Ardener was the first to recognise the significance of 'male bias'. He proposed a theory of 'muted groups' in which he argued that the dominant groups in society generate and control the dominant modes of expression. Muted groups are silenced by the structures of dominance. If they wish to express themselves they are forced to do so through the dominant modes of expression, the dominant ideologies.⁵ According to Ardener, 'mutedness' is the product of the relations of dominance which exist between dominant and sub-dominant groups in society. His theory does not imply that the 'mute' should actually be silent, nor does it necessarily imply that they are neglected at the level of empirical research. Women may speak a great deal, their activities and responsibilities may be minutely observed by the ethnographer, as Ardener points out, but they may remain muted because their model of reality, their view of world, cannot be realised or expressed using the terms of the dominant male model. The dominant male structures of society inhibit the free expression of

alternative models, and sub-dominant groups are forced to structure their understanding of the world through the model of the dominant group. The free expression of the 'female perspective' is blocked at the level of ordinary, direct language. Women can not use the male - dominated structures of language to say what they want to say, to give an account of their view of the world. Their utterances are oblique, muffled, muted. Ardener, therefore, suggests that women and men have different 'world-views' or models of society.

Ardener argues that the kinds of models provided by male informants are the sort of models which are familiar and intelligible to anthropological researchers. This is because researchers are either men, or women trained in a male-oriented discipline. Anthropology itself orders the world in a male idiom. The fact that linguistic concepts and categories in Western culture equate 'man' with society as a whole as in 'mankind', has led anthropologists to imagine that the male view is also 'society's' view. Ardener's conclusion is that male bias exist not just because the majority of ethnographers and informants are male, but because anthropologists - women and men - have been using male models drawn from their own culture to explain male models present in other cultures. As a result, a series of homologies is established between the ethnographer's models and those of people (men) who are

being studied. Women's models are suppressed. The analytical and conceptual tools to hand actually prevent the anthropologist from hearing and understanding the views of women. Ardener identifies the problem as residing not just in the practice of anthropological fieldwork, but in the conceptual framework which underlies that practice. Theory always informs the way in which we collect, interpret and present data. Feminist anthropology is not, therefore, about adding women into the discipline. It is instead about confronting the conceptual and analytical inadequacies of disciplinary theory.

The 'anthropology of women' was the precursor feminist anthropology. It was very successful in bringing women 'back into view' in the discipline but in so doing it was more remedial than radical. Feminist anthropology is more than the study of women. It is the study of gender, of the inter-relations between women and men, and of the role of gender in structuring human societies, their histories, ideologies, economic systems and political structures.

The most outstanding contribution feminist anthropology has made to the discipline has been the development of theories relating to gender identity and the cultural construction of gender. Feminist anthropology emphasises the study of gender as a principle of human social life. The major difficulty in equating feminism,

with the 'woman's point of view' is that this assumes that there is a unitary woman's perspective or point of view, which can be seen to be held by an identifiable sociological category 'woman'. However, feminist anthropology strongly challenges this idea. They have demonstrated that there can be no universal or unitary sociological category 'woman', and therefore, that there can be no analytical meaning in any universal conditions, attitudes or views ascribed to this 'woman'. For example, in the 'universal subordination of women' and the 'oppression of women'. The term patriarchy is similarly deconstructed. This does not mean that women are not oppressed by patriarchal structures, but it does mean that the nature and consequences of those structures have to be specified in each instance and not assumed.⁶

Feminist anthropology has demonstrated that gender relations are central to any sustained analyses of class and historical relations. 'Woman' is a cultural, historical variable and gender itself is a social construction, which always requires specification within any given context. They have developed sustained theoretical position which specifies the interconnections between gender and historical differences. These are being demonstrated in analysing the penetration of capitalism, the impact of colonial domination and the changing nature of family/household structure.

Feminist anthropology as a perspective overlaps, to a great extent, with historical materialism. Methodologically it strives for historicity, holism, inter-relatedness and specificity in analysing a problem. It cuts across the traditional boundaries of social sciences in general and anthropology in particular.

It is extremely difficult to analyse the family formation process. In no other area of our existence are ideology, feeling, fantasy, wishes and reality so complexly intermingled. A series of social relations crystallise into apparently concrete social structures. There exist no universal law of family formation. The process of family formation are seen as embedded with-in the structures and process of economic, social and political institutions (Elshtain, 1982)⁷.

Family formation strategy is an integral component of a social formation and function within a particular system. It maintains a complex and dialectical relation with other components like kinship, politics, economy, ideology, religion etc. The forces shaping family formation strategies of a society emanates from regional, national and global levels.

The inter-relatedness of family formation process to other aspects of a social formation and to broader global

forces suggest that, causality is fixed, not unilinearly and to a single factor, but to a complex inter-related web of causes. The configuration of this web of causes is specific to any social group. Often one particular attribute of these multiple causes for — instance religion, politics or kinship — dominates in shaping this configuration. However, economy determines which particular institution would function as the dominant one (Godelier, 1984);⁸ Meillassou, 1979).⁹

A major limitation faced by feminist anthropology in adopting the writings in traditional political economy is the inadequate treatment of the concept of 'reproduction'. Marx, when he speaks of reproduction, restricts it merely to the process of successive repetition of the production cycle e.g. the process of extended reproduction (Harris and Young 1981;¹⁰ Mies, 1980;¹¹ Benntholett-Thompson, 1982;¹² Dietrich, 1992.¹³)

The concept of gender relation, patriarchy, nature of household and women's work, social reproduction, women and state, capitalist penetration and the changing nature of women's lives, ecology are of central importance while dealing with family formation.

"Social reproduction is the overall reproduction of a particular social formation." It subsumes subsistence reproduction. However, social reproduction is a much wider

process and of a different level of abstraction. It also includes the components of "allocation" of individuals to particular class positions standing in particular relation to the means of production" and the component of reproduction of adequately socialised labour" which involves the component of ideology¹⁴.

The process of family formation is seen as a component of the process of reproduction of labour, which in turn is subsumed by social reproduction. It is argued that the process of family formation gets tuned with the process of labour allocation to different groups. In other words, the forces that operate to perpetuate a social formation also shapes the course of family formation. It allocates labour in to different strata on the basis of class, caste, rank or gender. The ideologies are defined by the dominant strata. The perpetuation of social formation is ensured through socio-cultural and political institutions like marriage, kinship, law, education, religion, technology, language etc.

We consider here two important aspects of this process. First how the domain of biological reproduction is regulated and put into use for the perpetuation of a social formation. This would involve a discussion on how patriarchal order was installed by gaining control over female sexuality. Second, how the process of subsistence

production got subordinated to extended production. This would enhance our understanding of how family formation process gets shaped by broader socio-economic and political process.

Feminist anthropology argues that the control of women by men is the most crucial process in perpetuating the social relations of production and hence the social formation. This holds true for any society whatever be the kind of stratification (Harris and Young, 1981;¹⁵ Meillassoux, 1972;¹⁶). Control of women's sexuality by men has a very immediate relation with the reproduction of labour in a society. Sex is not a biological but a social event. The attitude towards sexuality is shaped by caste/class factors and are highly culture-specific and gender specific. This means that sex is highly institutionalised and functionalised¹⁷. Control of women's reproductive power was a necessity at a historical juncture of human evolution. It became "necessary for the further development of society".¹⁸ Engels argued that women's subordination began with the development of private property, when according to him "the world historical defeat of the female sex took place.

Meillassoux analysed "social reproduction" in terms of "labour" and this in turn he identifies with control over human reproduction. He further argues that control over

women's reproductive power is the same as control over differential allocation of labour and opines that control over women by certain categories of men is a necessary condition for the reproduction of social formation.

Engels argued that modern civilization was based on restricting women to the sphere of the home in order to produce heir to inherit property. This, he said, was the beginning of the sexual double standard in marriage. According to him with the development of the state, the monogamous family changed into the patriarchal family in which the wife's household labour became a "private service, the wife became a head servant, excluded from all participation in social production"¹⁹.

In the earlier period, when the concept of fatherhood was not understood, human relation and grouping revolved around women and motherhood. It is probable that the earliest social bond was the mother and child. Evolutionist view of matriarchy preceding patriarchy lends support to this view point. Feminist anthropology, although it does not accept the unilinear evolutionary scheme propounded by Morgan, accepts the precedence of matriarchy over patriarchy. Evidence in favour of this argument can be drawn from ethnographic data, archaeological findings and artefacts, prehistorical cave paintings, mythology, folk tradition etc.

Malinowsky in his book "Sex and Repression in Savage Society", writing about the matrilineal people of Trobriand island, says that among them " the husband is not regarded as the father of the child, physiologically he has nothing to do with the child birth, children, in native beliefs, are inserted into mother's womb as tiny spirits, generally by the agency of the spirit of a deceased kinswoman of mother". Fatherhood, for Trobriand islanders, is a purely social relation.

Nongbri writes: that Khasi justify their matrilineal descent system on the ground that the mother who nurtures the child during its incubation should have rights over her child. This idea is rooted in the Khasi view of human reproduction. The Khasi says that the father provides stature and form, while the mother contributes flesh and blood to the child. The mother carries and nourishes the child in her womb and it is from the mother's blood that the unborn child receives the life-giving force. The Khasi stress the role of mother in reproduction.²⁰

Graves (1955) notes from the earlier Greek myths that it was the Great Goddess who was regarded as immortal, omnipotent and was considered most important. Religious thought was centered around the Goddess, representing motherhood. During this period fatherhood was unknown and motherhood was a mystery. The tribal queen chose an annual

lover - a king - to be sacrificed and his blood spilled in the field to enrich the fertility of soil and flock. Men were assigned trivial jobs like hunting, fishing, gathering, herding and safeguarding the territory from intruders. These activities were supervised by women and subject to rules laid by the matriarch.²¹

In the case of ancient Greece, as interpreted from myths, the 'King' who was chosen by the queen as a lover and for subsequent sacrifice, gradually lengthened his period of 'reign' to the whole summer and to whole one year. He later decided to give only an annual mock death, during which a "surrogate boy-king" was sacrificed and his blood spilled to enrich field and flock. From then onwards the position of queen gradually got weakened and the king established himself permanently. This coincided with settled agriculture and acknowledging the relevance of coition to child bearing. The status of men gradually increased and that of women came down. This change of dominance from females to males is brought out in the myths by greater reference to male Gods than Goddess. Male Gods who were earlier depicted as mere demi Gods, powerless and inferior when compared to female Goddesses, were now given prominence and were depicted as immortal and more powerful and superior.

We can draw lot of parallels from this situation to that of matrilineal Nayars of South India during pre-British period. Gough (1959) stated that the Nayars traditionally had no marriage in the strict sense of the term but only a "relationship" of perpetual affinity between linked lineages. The notion of fatherhood was lacking. The young Nayar girl, before her puberty, was married to a ritual husband. The husband did not enjoy any right from the girl and was also excluded from any legal rights in respect to women's children. ²² The women received as visiting husbands a number of men of her sub-caste from outside her lineage. In addition she might be visited by any Nayar of the higher sub-caste and a Nambudiri Brahman. All these relations were called sambandham. The woman without any impediments from ritual husband, bears children. The child uses a term of address meaning "lord" or "leader" towards all its mother's lovers but use of this term does not carry with it any connotation of paternity, either legal or biological²³. Nayars acknowledge 'social paternity'. It is attributed to a man who comes forward to bear the expenditure incurred during the pregnancy and child birth. The Nayar women stayed with her children in the taravad.

Nayar men were traditionally trained as professional soldiers and for part of each year they tended to be absent from the village in wars against neighbouring

kingdom or for military exercises at the capital (Leach, 1955; Gough 1959). However, the Nayar kinship slowly modified in nineteenth century and more rapidly in twentieth century. The powers vested in the hands of female members were taken over by their consanguinal male kinsmen.

In the Indian context earlier writing do not lend any evidence in support of matriarchy preceding patriarchy. This is because written evidences are available only from Aryan period. During this period patriarchal order began to set in. Vedic and post-vedic brahminical scriptures serves only as patriarchal ideology and do not throw any light on an earlier matriarchal order.

Chakravarti (1993) notes that pre-historic paintings from Bhimbetka (5000 BC) and material evidence from Harappa indicate the importance, if not the superior position, enjoyed by women. There are some indications that in pre-historic cultures women's contribution in production and in reproduction was regarded as valuable²⁴.

Women are prominently included in paintings of group hunting. Roy argued that their presence in the hunt might indicate both symbolic and real participation in ensuring the success of the hunt. Evidence from cave paintings from central India suggest that in the hunting gathering stage there was no rigid sexual division of labour. This point can also be substantiated with example from modern

anthropological data on contemporary hunting-gathering societies and in societies that practice shifting cultivation (Goody, 1976)²⁵.

Among the contemporary hunters - gatherers, although there is a perceptible sexual division of labour, there is nonetheless a high level of equality between the sexes. Shostok argues that the sexual division of labour that exists is not rigidly defined and that a division between domestic and public life is largely meaningless. !Kung do not have any kind of preference for either a male or a female child²⁶.

!Kung women play a role of great importance in the family and in the economy. They bring in equal or even greater amount of food material than men. Women are not regulated by men. Women are responsible for a major part of household activities. They decide about child birth, child care, getting their children married etc. The inheritance of "core membership" in a band and ownership of water holes are decided by both women and men equally²⁷.

Female reproductive power in such a hunting-gathering society is regarded as valuable because the very survival of a community is dependent upon it.

Prehistoric paintings at Katholia, Bhimbetka and Kharwai treat female sexuality as one aspect of female

existence. (Roy, 1987).²⁸

Evidence from the Harappan civilization has not been analysed from a gender perspective, but there is some indication of emergence of social stratification. However, the existence of numerous mother goddess icons and the bronze statue of the dancing girl could be interpreted as the continued importance of women's special relationship with reproduction, and may also be seen as an acceptance of their sexuality (Chakravarti 1993)²⁹.

From the Vedic period onwards, the subordination of women assumed a severe form. This was accomplished by use of three devices namely, religion, law and state power. Both reproductive and productive powers of women were controlled by men and put into use for continuation of the social order. This period is related to the Aryan invasions. As Aryans succeeded in establishing their control over certain areas, the conquerors enslaved the women of the subjugated people. Thus women were the first large group to be enslaved in Indian history. The possession of women slaves was clearly a major element in the primitive accumulation of wealth. Chakravarti cites evidence from Rigveda to show that women of both Aryan and indigenous populations were controlled by Aryan men. The Aryan women were marginalised in terms of their original role in the sacrifice. Their roles in the productive system

were also changing, as they were increasingly confined within the household. The increasing dependence on agriculture shifted the scene of food production outside the households to the fields. The labour of subjugated people was extracted to work the land and this enabled Aryan women's labour to be restricted to the household. Thus their participation in production was reduced and they were associated only with reproduction. This led to deterioration of the status of women.

Subsequent brahmanical and Buddhist scriptures describe women as wicked, unfaithful, innately promiscuous etc. According to one of the texts, women are the edge of a razor, poison, snakes and fire all rolled into one (Leslie, 1989)³⁰. Manu ascribed to women the habit of lying, sitting around and an indiscriminate love of ornaments, anger, meanness, treachery and bad conduct. The Satapatha Brahmana, describes woman as a Sudra, a dog and a crow. It holds the view that women's innate nature was lascivious. Buddhist literature states that women are a sex composed of wickedness and guile; that they are unstable as sand and as cruel as a snake.

According to Manu, the ancient law-giver of Hinduism, "women's essential nature will drive women into seeking satisfaction anywhere, anytime and with any one". It was recognised that men were dependent upon women to perpetuate

the social and the moral order. This led them to confront the problem of women's sexuality. Thus it was felt necessary to guard women in order to maintain the purity of family lineage or caste and control over private property.

Women's general subordination was essential at this stage because it was only then that the mechanism of control upon women's sexuality could actually be achieved. The mechanism of control operated through three devices and at three levels. The first was ideology - through stridharma or pativrata-dharma - to ensure social control of women and ensure chastity. The ideological control over women through the idealisation of chastity and wifely fidelity as the highest duty of women, reinforced through customs and rituals and through construction of notions of womanhood. These idealise wifely fidelity as in case of Sita, Savitri, Anasuya, Arundhati etc.

The second device and level of control over women was vested in the hands of husband and male kinsmen and was backed by potential right to use coercion and physical chastisement of women who violate the norms established for them. The third mechanism of control was envisaged in the ancient Indian patriarchal structure - the King. The King was vested with the authority to punish errant wives who flouted the ideological norms for women and also subverted the control of male kinsmen. The patriarchal state of

early India viewed adultery as one of the major 'crimes' in society.³¹

Religious ideology, however, is not the only mechanism, to control female sexuality and their production capacity. In an industrial society the ideology of patriarchy is maintained through institutions like law, education, medicine etc. Walby (1986) suggests that certain forms of sexuality are crucial for patriarchal relations; in particular, that the institutionalisation of heterosexuality is necessary for patriarchy since without it, the patriarchal mode of production could not exist. The existence of widespread institutionalised homosexuality and lesbianism would preclude the domestic relationship between men and women from being at the centre of the patriarchal mode of production³². Jackson (1978) argues that adolescent females bear forms of sexuality which are perceived as appropriate to their gender roles, rather than this sexuality being a self-evident biological instinct. Thus forms of sexuality are determined by the nature of gender relations³³.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, "Science was becoming the metaphor within which the existing social and sexual division of labour was justified and reinforced". In late eighteenth century woman's right movement was accompanied by a flourishing of discredited science of

craniology dedicated to the task of primatology of explaining why women are naturally fitted, biologically destined for the social roles they indeed fill and consequently for social inferiority and economic dependence. In recent decades several important areas of biology has produced explanations and theories of sex difference in behaviours and characteristics. These theories have a reactionary political message.

This period saw a major transformation in the pattern of women's labour as they got more involved in wage labour. During this period, due to changing circumstances, it was necessary to reinforce and rationalise the subordination of women. The task of defining the position of women increasingly fell to the proponents of new science and to doctors and biologists in particular.

This reinforcement was achieved basically by reinforcing the traditional sexual morality by "glorification of motherhood" and by spreading a belief in "female sexual anaesthesia" (Doyal, 1979)³⁴. The notion of sexual anaesthesia of female was spread not by avoiding discussion on sex but by bringing it into the idiom of 'knowledge' and science. Sex as a part of knowledge pervaded all disciplines of science from jurisprudence to medicine, from a psychiatric council to a public discussion. Being a part of 'knowledge', it also became a

tool for social control (Greer, 1984³⁵; Doyal, 1979³⁶). Jurisprudence and medical psychiatry collaborated to define and decide what is 'normal' and deviant.

Foucault (1980) has challenged the traditional notion of sex as an instinctual drive, intrinsically liberating for the individual. His "History of Sexuality" not only questions the validity of Freudian and Marxist approaches to sexual liberation from Reich to Marcuse, but goes so far as to ask whether those arguments have not been formulated from within the same discursive and strategic limitations as the power they would like to attack. The repressive hypothesis - the argument that the past two-to-three hundred years have been characterised by sexual repression and negation - has held up well. Foucault suggests that the coincidence of the emergence of capitalism with the supposed advent of age of repression, has given the belief in repression 'a solemn historical and political guarantee'. He points out that the conception of sex as essentially repressive within capitalism is gratifying because of the opportunities it affords us to 'speak out against the powers that be, to utter truths and promise bliss, to link together enlightenment, liberation and manifold pleasures; to pronounce a discourse that combines the fervour of knowledge, the determination to change the laws, and the longing of the garden of earthly delights³⁷.

In fact, Western culture, far from having repressed sexuality, has actually produced it and multiplied it. It has spread it out as a particularly privileged means of gaining access to the individual and the social bodies, as a way of 'policing' society through procedures, normalisation rather than prohibition. Repression becomes one effect among many of this larger phenomenon. According to Foucault, the bourgeois class, regarded as the class that introduced repression in order to enhance the productivity of its working class, actively applied its techniques first to itself in the process of distinguishing itself from aristocracy and the working classes. It made its sexuality, and the health of its 'bodies', a fundamental source of its own identity and its own discipline.³⁸

Foucault insists that our identity and our sexuality are intimately linked. The relationship between body and discourse or power is not a negative one; power renders the body active and productive. Sexuality and identity can only be understood, then, in terms of the complicated and often paradoxical ways in which pleasures, knowledge and power are produced and disciplined in language, and institutionalised across multiple social fields. For Foucault, representation and discourses are themselves acts of power, acts of division and exclusion, which give themselves as knowledge. The body does not afford

knowledge that is then merely transmitted by an essentially neutral language and allowed or disallowed by a centralised form of prohibition. Discourse makes the body an object of knowledge and invests it with power.

Foucault argues that the history of sexuality since the seventeenth century, rather than being one of the repressions of sexuality in its various forms and expressions has been a history of discourse on sex that express and generate relationships of power. It has in general served as a mechanism of dissemination and incitement to sexuality. The discourse on sex is but a microcosm of women's discourses with the rest of her world - perpetually validating not herself but her ascribed position within the patriarchal social structure.

Foucault has argued that hystorisation of the female body, a body now saturated with sex and inherently pathological, represented the production of knowledge and pleasures for the purpose of discipline and control of families and populations. Sex is potentially the most effective and abusive way to control women psychologically, physically or through degradation and humiliation and to maiantain women's subjugation. Theories from Sude through Ellis and Freud have explained the "naturalness" of sexual sadism, without discussing the reality that it has always been male sadism against women (Barry, 1979) ³⁹. A

dominant and pervasive form of that discourse today is aggressive pornography.

It is widely acknowledged that illness has become a cultural metaphor for a vast array of human problems. The medical model is used from birth to death in the social construction of reality. Historically, as a larger number of critical events and human problems have come under the 'clinical gaze' our experience of them has been transformed. For women in particular, this process has had far-reaching consequences. Women have been the main targets in the expansion of medicine. There are multiple ways in which women's health in the contemporary period is being jeopardized by a male controlled, technology dominated medical-care system. Both physicians and women have contributed to the redefining of women's experience into medical categories. More precisely physicians seek to medicalise experience because of their specific beliefs and economic interest. These ideological and material motives are related to the development of the profession and the specific market conditions it faces in any given period. Women collaborate in the medicalisation process because of their own needs and motives, which, in turn, grew out of the class-specific nature of their subordination.

Medicalisation is a critical concept because it emphasises the fact that medicine is a social enterprise,

not merely a scientific one. A biological basis is neither necessary nor sufficient for an experience to be defined in terms of illness. Rather illness is constructed through human action -- that is, illness is not inherent in any behaviour or condition, but conferred by others (Reissman, 1982)⁴⁰. There are at least three ways in which scientific ideology plays a role in the medicalisation process. First and most obviously, the production of scientific knowledge is a historically determined social activity. Certain problems are selected for study, others are not. Social agenda are embedded in these choices. For example, sexist beliefs about the biological roots of gender roles formed the basis for endocrinology research in the 1920's. Second complex, dynamic and organic processes are reduced to narrow cause-and-effect relationships. Third, the science legitimates the power of physicians over definitions of illness and forms of treatment. Medical norms do not describe what is, but rather what should be. Thus, physicians create and reinforce social norms when they define behaviours or conditions as pathological.

Medicalisation also throw light on the power of physicians to define illness and monopolise the provision of treatment and this is an outcome of a political process. It highlights the way in which medicine's construction of reality are related to the structure of power at any given historical period. Women are more likely than man to have

problematic experiences defined and treated medically. Their economic and social powerlessness legitimates 'protection' by medical authorities. Physicians act on behalf of the larger society, thus further reinforcing existing power relation. Historically the medicalisation of certain problems was rooted in specific class interests. Physicians and women from the dominant class joined together - albeit out of very different motives - to redefine certain human events into medical categories (Reissman, 1982)⁴¹.

Today, pregnancy, birth and abortion are considered medical events. Medicalisation of childbirth occurred in the second decade of twentieth century. In 1910 about 50 per cent of all reported births in United States were attended by midwives. The medical profession and the people generally believed that the midwife was an adequate birth attendant. Nature was thought to control the process of birth. The teaching of obstetrics in medical schools was minimal, and direct experience with birth by medical students was rare.

Beginning around 1910 a central arena for struggle over professional dominance was childbirth. This event was handled predominantly by female midwives who, assisted by a network of female relatives and friends, provided emotional support and practical assistance to the pregnant woman.

Over a period 'social child birth' was replaced. The site of care shifted from the home to the hospital. The personnel who gave care changed from female midwives to male physicians; the techniques changed from non-interventionist approaches to approaches relying on technology and drugs. As a consequence, the meaning of childbirth for women was transformed from a human experience to a medical-technical problem. Obstetricians argued that normal pregnancy and parturition were an exception rather than the rule. Because they believed that birth was a pathological process.

Women participated in medicalisation of childbirth for a complex set of reasons. First, women wanted freedom from the pain, exhaustion and lingering incapacity of childbirth (Davies, 1978)⁴². For working-class women, the problems of maternity were intensified by harsh working and housing conditions. Second, because of declining fertility in upper and middle-classes, the meaning of birth was particularly significant to them. Because childbirth was a less frequent event, concern about foetal death and maternal mortality was greater. Thus, well-to-do women wanted to be attended by doctors not only because they were from higher social status compared to midwives but also because they possessed the instruments and surgical techniques that might be beneficial in cases of prolonged labour, toxæmia, foetal distress and other abnormal

conditions. Physicians used these fears to gain control over the entire market, including routine births.

The demise of midwifery and the resultant medicalisation of childbirth were consequences of force within the women's community as well as from outside it. Furthermore, it was a class specific process. Obstetricians also wanted control and in addition, it was in the interest of physicians to capture the childbirth market, because this event provided a gateway to a family and hence the entire healing market. Child birth served to distance women from their bodies and redefine birth as an event requiring hospitalisation and a physician's attendance.

From the perspective of women, the medicalisation of premenstrual syndrome (PMS) is filled with contradictions. On the positive side, physician's recognition of women's experience with menstruation is important for it legitimates an important aspect of women's lives. Women in certain economic groups are seeking out physicians regarding problems with menstruation and are actively participating in the construction of the new medical syndrome of PMS. For a small group of women who have pre-menstrual problems that severely interfere with functioning, relief is possible with medical treatment⁴³.

On the negative side, the medicalisation of menstruation has disturbing implications for women's lives. It reinforces the idea that women are controlled by biology in general and their reproductive systems in particular. This has been used to legitimise the exclusion of women from positions of power because of their supposed emotional instability and irrationality due to raging hormonal imbalances. Furthermore, labelling hormonal changes as a syndrome implies a pathological condition -- something to be controlled -- rather than suggesting that mood shifts and bodily changes are a normal part of life. Most important, the medicalisation of PMS deflects attention from social etiology. Rather than looking at the circumstances of women's lives that may make them irritable, depressed or angry, their strong feelings may be dismissed. The contradiction lies in the fact that the label of PMS allows women to be angry and say what is on their minds at a certain time each month, while at the same time it invalidates the content of their protest.

Like menstruation, women's physical appearance has come under medical scrutiny. Obesity is now a medical condition. Although weight is not exclusively a women's issue, it is an excellent example of medicalisation of women's experience for a number of reasons. It highlights the relationship between the social norm for femininity and medical social control. By medicalising weight, medical

science participates in programming aesthetics for women's bodies. This has far-reaching consequences for self-esteem, as women are evaluated on the basis of personal appearance more than men⁴⁴. Weight is also a good example of medicalisation because it illustrates, in a most graphic form, how power relations are maintained through medical social control. Women internalise their oppression by desiring to be thin and turning to doctors for help.

In addition to cultural ideals and medical definitions, several other factors shape belief about weight. Several industries profit from cultural preoccupation with women's size. The pharmaceutical companies market anorectic drugs. The food industry market low-calorie foods and the fashion industry simultaneously creates and reflects images of cultural ideal - the thin women. By treating weight as a medical problem, medicine diverts attention away from the social causes of poor nutrition and an obsession with thinness. By individualising the problem of weight, crucial questions are never asked.

Historically, and currently, there has been a point when the interests of women from the middle and upper classes are served by therapeutic professions, whose political and economic interests are in turn served by transforming these women's complaints into illness. Other

communities also influence medicalisation. Large profits accompany each redefinition of human experience into medical terms, since more drugs, tests, procedures and equipments are needed.

Women's lives have undergone a more total transformation as a result of medical scrutiny. Medicalisation has resulted in the construction of medical meanings of the normal functions in women. By contrast, routine experiences that are uniquely male remain largely constructed by medical science. For example, male contraceptive technology lags far behind what is available for women. Baldness in man has not yet been defined as a medical condition needing treatment.

Women's structural subordination to men has made them particularly vulnerable to the expansion of the clinical domain. In general, male physicians treat female patients. Social relations in doctors office replicate patriarchal relation in the larger culture. In these ways dominant social interests and patriarchal institutions are reinforced. The message that women are expected to be dependent on male physicians to manage their lives is reinforced by the pharmaceutical industry, in drug advertisements and by the media in general.

There is plenty of evidence to show that subordination of women by men and related sexual division of labour was a

historically shaped event. The extreme level of subordination of women by men found in many of today's more socio-economically advanced cultures, are relatively recent aberration in our long human history.

Harris and Young observed that "subordination of women is not a creation of capitalism", it intensifies and transforms existing forms of gender subordination⁴⁵. Capitalism to expand itself, tries to maintain not only the subordination of women and the concomitant division of labour, but also the kind of stratification that has been existing. It gets unrestricted supply of cheap labour by ensuring this. By retaining women within the household capitalism keeps itself away from the burden of producing and maintaining labour. Further, whatever wage labour it extracts from women is done at a cheaper rate than it does from men.

All modes of production prior to capitalism was subsistence production. In this social production and reproduction coincided with each other. Subsistence production includes "works related to pregnancy, childbirth, nursing and education, the work required in the production and transformation of food, clothing, housing etc⁴⁶". It also includes the subsistence production of peasants of the third world. Subsistence production involves production of use value - direct appropriation of

work for consumption. Here subsistence production subsumes reproduction of labour force. Under capitalistic mode of production these get transformed and redefined and increasingly separated. The domain of subsistence reproduction involving use-value production is, however, made as the integral part of the capitalist mode. Subsistence production takes place outside commodity production, but the use-value produced is appropriated by the capital. Use-value is transformed into exchange-value by means of prices. This way the labour power produced and reproduced within the domain of subsistence production is introduced into the domain of extended reproduction (Benholdt-Thomsen, 1982;⁴⁷ Mies 1980⁴⁸).

Material reproduction of labour force involves reproduction of labour on both day to day basis and generational basis. Reproduction of labour is the most vital and inevitable condition for the reproduction of capital. Both reproduction of labour, and reproduction of capital maintain a dialectical relation with each other. However, of all the commodities, labour force is the only commodity which cannot be produced capitalistically "on the basis of wage labour and extraction of surplus value⁴⁹." This explains why the process of reproduction of labour force is externalised from the sphere of extended reproduction into subsistence reproduction. Thus "capital itself requires the existence of non-capitalist forms of

production in order to ensure its own reproduction on an expanded scale⁵⁰".

Wably defines patriarchy as a system of inter-related social structures through which men exploit women. The key sets of patriarchal relations are to be found in domestic work, paid work, the state and male violence and sexuality. Wably argues that social relations in domestic work should be characterised as a patriarchal mode of production and that this is particularly significant in the determination of gender relations. However, when patriarchy is in articulation with the capitalistic rather than other modes of production, then patriarchal relations in paid work are of central importance to the maintenance of the system.⁵¹ The concept of patriarchal mode of production is essential to explain the exploitation of women by men independently of the exploitation of proletarians by capitalists.

"In the patriarchal mode of production, the producing class is composed of housewives or domestic labourers, while the non-producing and exploiting class is composed of husbands. The part of means of production which can be identified as the instrument of labour consists of women's bodies especially in the sense of her reproductive capacity, the house and its contents. It is the relationship between these elements which comprises the patriarchal mode of production⁵²". Thus the work of

appropriation of nature in which domestic labourer is engaged is that of production of labour power. This is generational production of children as well as the day to day production of labour power of her husband. The expropriation, which is taking place is the expropriation of the surplus labour of the domestic labourer by the husband.

The domestic labourer does not have possession of the husband who enters the labour process whose labour power she replenishes. She thus has no possession of this part of the means of production and as a consequence does not own this part of product of her labour. She is separated from the product of her labour and has no control over it, while the husband always has possession of his labour power, which wife has produced. She is separated from it at every level: physically: in the ability to use it,; legally, ideologically etc. The husband sells his labour power to an employer and receives a wage. He gives a portion of this wage to the wife for the maintenance of family and retains some for himself. The portion allocated to the wife's use on herself is typically less than the part of the wage allocated by the use of husband on himself. In addition, housewives work longer hours than the men. Thus she performs more labour and receives less return. Hence a wife's surplus labour is expropriated,⁵³.

When patriarchal mode articulates with the capitalist mode, the primary mechanism which ensures that women will serve their husbands is their exclusion from paid work on the same terms as men. Patriarchal relations within wage work are crucial in preventing women from entering work as freely as men and are reinforced by patriarchal state policies. Patriarchal relations in paid work are necessary if not sufficient to the retention of women as unpaid labourers in the household. The control of women's access to paid work is maintained primarily by patriarchal relation in the work place and in the state, as well as by those in the household. The form of this control has varied with time and place to a significant extent⁵⁴.

The extent of female participation in production in India is determined by a nexus of class/caste hierarchy and norms of patriarchal ideology. In an hierarchical society, based on patrilineal-patrilocal families, the localisation of a family in the caste class hierarchy would determine the level and forms of women's productive work⁵⁵.

Agarwal noted that while the dependence on wage work has been increased for both men and women, the increase has been greater for women. Census data reveal that in 1961, 25.6 per cent of rural female workers and 16.2 per cent of rural male workers were agricultural labourers; by 1981 the figures for women and men had increased to 49.6 per cent

and 23.3 per cent respectively. There had occurred a doubling of rural women's dependence on agriculture wage work as their main source of earnings in two decades. Similarly according to the Rural Labour Enquiries (RLEs) of 1964-65 and 1974-75, while the proportion of all agricultural labour households to all rural households increased from 21.7 per cent to 25.3 per cent and along with this the number of both male and female agricultural labourers also increased, the percentage increase was greater for women (57.5 per cent) than men (43.6 per cent)⁵⁶.

Chatterjee found a positive correlation between the ranks of regions (the RLEs divided India into 5 geo-regions) in terms of growth in numbers of female agricultural labour over the two survey years, and their ranks in terms of changes in the incidence of poverty over the same period. The highest increase in numbers has been in the eastern region (Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal) where the absolute incidence of rural poverty is the most as well⁵⁷.

RLEs indicate that employment creation with the green revolution technology has been inadequate to absorb growing number of agricultural wage workers. Gender wise, it shows that in both survey years, the average number of days of annual employment were lower and the average number of days

not worked during the year due to want of work were higher for women than men in all the states. Over a ten year period, the average number of days of employment decreased for both women and men at the all India level and in most states. While the days of involuntary unemployment increased for both sexes in almost all the states, the increase being more for women. Female annual earnings are consistently lower than male in both years, being less than half in 5 out of 14 states and close to half in most of the others in 1974-75. Also, over the same period, while real earnings have declined for both sexes in most states, in six states, the decline had been more for women. These include high agricultural growth states such as Punjab and Gujarat, as well as the states of eastern India with poor agricultural performance. In general, the absolute differentials are higher in the north-west than elsewhere, and highest in Punjab. On the whole, therefore, female agricultural labour in virtually all the states has suffered a decline in absolute real earnings. The overall high gender differentials in employment and earnings, has additional negative implication in terms of female life survival chances.

In general, women are much more disadvantaged in their access to employment and earning, for a number of reasons.

- 1) Lesser job mobility due to their primary and often sole responsibility for child care, the ideology of

female seclusion and vulnerability to sexual abuse.

- 2) More limited access to information on job opportunities due to lower literacy levels and lesser access and interaction with the market place.
- 3) Confinement to casual work in agriculture, only men being hired as permanent labourers.
- 4) Lower payments often even for the same task, made possible by the ideological assumption that women's earnings are supplementary to the family or that women are less productive.
- 5) The form in which payment is made. A Karnataka study of rural labour found that 70 per cent of male labour contracts and only 20 per cent female labour contracts involved meal provision⁵⁸.
- 6) Exclusion from productivity-increasing machinery, the induction of which typically displaces women, who are rarely trained in its use and thus remain confined to manual tasks.

Female-Headed Households (FHHs) are worst affected by the gender biases in employment and wages and in general are found to have much less access to and control over land, greater dependency on wage labour for employment, a higher incidence of involuntary employment, and a low level of education and literacy than those headed by men ⁵⁹.

Apart from unequal opportunities for employment and earnings, there are several additional gender specific dimensions which affect women's work situation. The nature of agricultural work exposes them to particular health hazards: rice transplanting done primarily by women in the south, increases their susceptibility to ailments such as intestinal infections, arthritis, rheumatic joints, leech bites etc⁶⁰. An association between working in rice fields and gynaecological infections has been noted in rural Asia (UNDP, 1980). The virtual absence of leisure in any real sense in women's lives because of their almost sole responsibility for child care has additional health implications. The task specific seasonal and casual nature of their work leaves women for longer periods without employment and income and therefore, at greater risk of undernourishment. Added to this is the widespread sexual exploitation, by landlords, employers and creditors to whom the household is indebted⁶¹.

Female labour participation is also linked with intra-household discrimination against female children in access to food and health care and cross-regional variations therein, which impinge on female survival itself.

Miller found that the survival chance of female children are higher where female labour participation (FLP)

is also higher and relate this to -- the anticipated contribution of the female child to the household income as an adult and to lower associated female marriage cost. Again from a cross regional mapping of census and ethnographic evidence, Miller notes that regions of high FLP and low gender disparities in labour participation, are also those with low gender disparities in child survival and - low female marriage costs (due to low dowry incidence). Further, regions where female marriage costs are low, are also those where gender disparities in child survival are low ⁶².

In general, the northern states are characterised by lower FLP rates and higher gender disparities in participation, a higher incidence of dowry, greater intra-household discrimination against female children and lower female survival chances than southern states. Bardhan postulated that the economic value of women varies with the ecological zone and that where her value is high, the female offspring is seen as less burdensome⁶³.

There are marked differences in women's agricultural work according to agro-ecological zones. Female labour participation rates (FLPR) are consistently lower in traditional wheat growing belt of north-west (especially in Punjab and Haryana) in relation to the rice growing eastern and southern states. However, Agarwal⁶⁴ argued that there

also exists considerable variation between different rice regions, especially between the eastern and southern states. Agarwal noted that the FLPR in eastern state particularly Orissa, are lower than the southern states and closer to the wheat-growing north. Sen notes that the incidence of female agricultural labourers higher in irrigated paddy areas but not in paddy areas per se; other than in irrigated paddy areas. The incidence appears to be higher "in districts with low agricultural growth rates, low proportions of rice and wheat in gross cropped area (GCA), and high inequality in land ownership". Sen has documented a very high proportion of women agricultural labourers in the dry low productivity coarse grain growing districts of Maharashtra⁶⁵.

FLP itself varies across regions and explanations based primarily on agro-ecological zones and associated demand for female labour are found to be only partially valid. Among other things, cross-regional cultural norms relating to female seclusion and control over female sexuality, attitudes to manual work along caste lines, cultivation techniques, all impinge on this.

Among the poor, since FLP is typically higher and dowry incidence lower than among the well-to-do households, we would expect anti-female bias to be lower. But if under-employment among poor women is high, so that their

realised contribution to the household income is low. And if any increase in employment is not sustained long enough for it to have an impact on parental attitudes towards girl children, and the work is not socially or physically visible. If the cultural factors in the region make for strong son preference and high dowry among all classes, then despite more women entering the labour force, there could be a stronger bias against girls among the poor.

The 'visibility' of women's work is especially important as it does not appear to be enough that women and girls do productive task, but also that the work they do is socially recognised as valuable. Agriculture work which is physically more visible than home based work and work which fetches cash, is economically more visible than the 'free' collection of fuelwood, fodder or water. For instance, higher gender discrimination was found among landless, the boys of poor households were more involved in 'earning' activities than girls in collecting cowdung, paddy after harvest etc although the total time spent in both activities did not differ much between the sexes⁶⁶. The association shifts from bride-price to dowry with women's withdrawal from fieldwork. Following economic improvement in peasant households, there is a decline in socially-valued 'visible' work in favour of work that is socially undervalued and invisible⁶⁷.

While we would expect a lesser tendency towards discrimination against females among the poor, this tendency, would be modified and reversed in a situation where there is a high and sustained unemployment among women, where productive work done is not visible, especially, economically or where gender differentials in earnings are high. This tendency would also vary in degree inter-regionally since region-specific cultural norms (which directly, impinge on the economic) and prevailing ideology, would strengthen son preference and female neglect among all classes within that region irrespective of their F.L.P. In particular, in the north-west marriages among strangers (extended exchange policy) at considerable distances from girls natal home reduce the possibility of parents getting any help from married daughters. This is reinforced by social taboos against their accepting any such help; emphasis on hypergamous marriages is again associated with high dowries. In the south, preferred close-kin marriages (immediate exchange policy), marriage within or close to girls natal village and prevailing social norms have traditionally promoted greater interaction, and on a more equal basis, between the groom's and bride's families. It has also tended to reduce the importance of dowry in marriage alliances⁶⁸.

However, cross-regional, cross-class variation in factors affecting female well-being and survival are

narrowing down in recent years. In particular, both the incidence and amount of dowry have shown significant escalation across all regions and class/caste groups, including poor low-caste households, which earlier practised bride price. This could be result of partly of unequal gender effects of changing employment and earning opportunities in the rural areas with technological change and partly of factors such as homogenisation of cultural values and practices brought about by modern media, rising consumerism etc. In many villages of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh, the shift from bride price to dowry is near total and dowry amounts have increased manifold (Sharma, 1980)⁶⁹. Similar trends are noted in southern states of Karnataka (Epstein 1973)⁷⁰, Kerala (Gulati, 1984)⁷¹ and Tamil Nadu (Venkataramani, 1986)⁷². This is likely to strengthen anti-female bias within families across the country, but particularly in the northwest where gender differentials in earnings among the poor are not only highest, but also increasing.

Does the burden of rural poverty fall equally on women and men? In much of 'poverty' literature, it is assumed that all members of poor household are poor, and further, that they are all equally poor.

The data reveals systematically lower survival chances of women and female children as well as survival in a poor

state of health. Female life expectancy has been below male since the 1920s, with differentials increasing consistently between 1921 and 1970 with some closing of the gap since then. The sex ratio has been declining since the turn of the century, with the ratio being adverse across all states except Kerala, although more so in the north-west than the south. Mortality rates, again are higher for females than males except in the southern states where they approach parity (Agarwal 1989⁷³; Mies 1980⁷⁴).

Existing evidence is again fairly consistently on gender differentials in morbidity and unambiguous on the greater neglect of females in health care and the treatment of illness. Most rural health surveys record a much higher incidence of illness among women and girls than men and boys. When ill, more females than males receive no treatment or, if treated; less is spent on their medical care⁷⁵. Fewer female than male children receive aid in the first 24 hours of their terminal illness. Female ailments are typically ignored and medical help sought only when the disease is chronic or serious.⁷⁶ Hospital admission data reveals the same bias (Kynch & Sen, 1983⁷⁷). Women in poor households often hide their sickness in order not to disrupt housework or wage labour, to save on medical expenses or out of shyness (Khan et al, 1983)⁷⁸. During epidemics of plague and influenza too mortality has been found to be higher for females than males (Kynch, 1987)⁷⁹.

Malnutrition is higher among girls than boys during crisis as found for the 1987 West Bengal flood (Sen, 1988⁸⁰).

Further, despite disadvantaged earning conditions, women in poor households often contribute substantially to family income and at times more than their husbands. For instance in a sample village each in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, Mencher (1987)⁸¹; found that although the wife's earnings from agricultural wage work were typically about half or two-thirds of the husbands, her contribution to household maintenance was greater than his in 6 of the 20 sample villages equal or close to equal in 3 others, and substantial in the rest. This was also found in two West Bengal villages analysed by Mencher and Saradmoni, 1982⁸².

In all cases the proportion contributed by the wife from her income was greater than that by the husband from his. Typically she contributed over 90 per cent of her earnings, while the husband rarely gave over 60-75 per cent of his, and sometimes even less. The minimum contributed by all household males was less than by all females in 13 of the 20 villages, although the maximum contributed by all males was typically more.

Earning an income does not guarantee control over it; and employers have found to sometimes pay wages directly to the man when the husband and wife are working together (Chakarvarty and Tiwari, 1977)⁸³. But clearly the chances

of such control are greater than where women have no independent earnings.

Apart from their contributions in terms of earnings, they contribute substantially in form of complex range of unpaid tasks -- fetching, gathering, foraging, cooking, processing, conserving and building up of kin networks and inter-house hold relationship in the village. These often prove critical for family survival during periods of food shortages associated with seasonal troughs and even drought (Agarwal, 1988)⁸⁴.

Apart from inequalities in access to income-earning opportunities and intra-household gender inequalities in access to basic necessities, there are also significant gender differences in access to agriculture land - the basic means of production in agrarian economy.

Customarily, access to land has been largely confined to male household members. Ethnographic information based on village studies give an idea of women's customary land access. Cross - regionally among 145 communities where the household had some access (as owners or tenants) the overwhelming normative pattern (in 131 of these) communities is clearly patrilineal. It is only in the small pockets of north east (principally the states of Meghalaya and Assam) and the southwest (mainly Kerala) that matrilineal and bilateral inheritance patterns prevail

among certain communities. Under traditional Hindu law according to both the main legal systems - Mitakshara and Dayabhaga - women did not inherit immovable property such as land (although they could be gifted it), and at best enjoyed a life interest in ancestral property under special circumstances - as widows or daughters in son-less families. Islamic law did recognise women's rights to inherit ancestral property, including immovables, but not equal to men's. In relation to agricultural land, in most states, the religious law was superseded by regionally - prevailing customary law under which women were typically excluded. Usufructory rights were somewhat more common, but mainly confined to tribal communities, especially in eastern and northeastern India ⁸⁵.

Agarwal argues that even in communities which traditionally recognised women's inheritance rights in recognition was not unconditional but was usually linked to women remaining in parental home or village and the husband joining or visiting her there. This served as a means of ensuring that the land remained within the control of the extended family. Over time, even these limited rights, whether usufructory, as in most tribal (matrilineal or other) communities, or of inheritance, as among non-tribal matrilineal communities such as Nairs of Kerala, have been systematically eroded. The decline in matriliney, especially since the turn of the century, is a

result of a complex mix of factors. In particular, state policy in both the colonial and post-colonial periods had played a primary role in strengthening other changes. This is especially so in the tribal northeast, where among communities such as the matrilineal Garos, as long as land was communally owned and shifting cultivation practised, women had direct use rights to land and were the primary cultivators. But a shift to settled agriculture, technological modernisation and land privatisation have been associated with marginalisation of female labour, the registration of private plots in male names, and the systematic deprivation of Garo women of their traditional land rights.⁸⁶

Modern legislation, especially since independence, has given women of most communities in India the right to individually own, use and dispose of land and other immovable property, although the nature of these rights varies according to the personal laws governing different religious communities and even regions. But a common feature of all the laws is that these rights are still not on an equal basis with men's. Even more critical are the factors which restrict women's ability to exercise their limited legal claims, and to control and independently farm the land where they do get access.

First, where patrilocality, village exogamy and long distance marriages are norm, as they are in much of northern India, these, on the one hand, serve as barriers to women's ability to exercise direct control over the land they may inherit or be gifted in their natal villages and on the other hand, make the brother a vital link with the natal home. Especially after her father's death, a woman's access to her natal home can depend crucially on her relationship with her brother, who is thus seen as providing a social, economic and even physical security, in case of marital discord, ill-treatment and marriage break up, apart from playing a ritual role in her children's weddings among Hindu families of all castes. Most women thus give up their claims in favour of their brothers who maintain the latter's goodwill, although in actual practice, the material support provided by the brothers may not be significant.

Second, where women as sisters and daughters in traditionally patrilineal groups do not voluntarily give up their rights in favour of their brothers and instead file claims, male kin have resorted to various methods of circumventing modern laws. Fathers leave wills disinheriting daughters or wills have been forged by relatives after the person's death (Parry, 1979); or the brothers have appealed to revenue authorities that their sister is wealthy and does not need the land, or that she

is an absentee landlord as she is living with her husband in another village (Mayor, 1960)⁸⁷.

Third, official policies and programmes reflect and reinforce traditional attitudes. Prevailing bias tend to affect both court judgements and the formulation and impementation of government policies, including land reforms. For instance in Bodhgaya (Bihar) landless women, after an extended struggle for land controlled illegally by a Math (a local religious body), were granted rights by the government in two villages. But when they sought to formally register the land in their names, the district officer initially refused, on the grounds that the title could only be given to men since they were the heads of households (Manimala, 1983)⁸⁸. This systematic bias in implementation of state policy is found even in the context of matrilineal tribal communities. Among the Garos of the northeast, for instance, women have traditionally inherited property, but under land privatisation encouraged by state, the title deeds granted to individual households are typically in the male name.⁸⁹

Given their limited access to private property resources, the right to communal resources (especially for the gathering of essential items of daily use) have always provided rural women and children in general, but those of tribal landless or marginal peasant households in

particular, a source of subsistence;

Village commons and the country's forests have traditionally provided and continue to provide (although decreasing so) a wide variety of essential items - food, fuel, fodder, fibre, small timber, manure, bamboo, medicinal herbal oil, material for household buildings and handicrafts, resin, gum, honey, spices, etc - for personal use and sale. Many of these products have also been critical for tiding poor families over periods of seasonal or acute food shortages⁸⁹.

Jodha (1986)⁹⁰ analysed data from 12 semi-arid districts in 7 states of India and found that while all rural households use common property resources (CPRs) in some degree, for the poor, CPRs account for as much as 20 per cent or more of total income in 7 of the 12 districts, and 9-18 per cent in the remaining, but contribute only 1-4 per cent of the income of the non-poor. The dependence of poor is especially high for fuel and fodder across the regions studied. Ryan et al's (1983)⁹¹ detailed dietary survey in some of the same villages further shows that CPRs account for 8-9 per cent of food intake of poor households and 4 per cent of the better-off.

Apart from village commons, forests have always been a significant source of livelihood - providing basis of swidden cultivation, hunting and the gathering of minor

forest produce (MFP). Even today nearly 5 million persons (half of them in northeast and rest in central and eastern India) are involved in shifting cultivation⁹². In addition, MFP accounts for fairly significant proportions of total tribal income. On the whole an estimated 30 million or more people in the country depend wholly or substantially on MFP for a livelihood.

However, the availability of this means of sustenance is being seriously eroded by two parallel trends. One is a growing deterioration in the productivity of available communal resources. The second is the growing privatisation of these resources and their concentration in the hands of a few.

Within poor households, women and female children bear the main burden of this deterioration and decreasing access. As the main gatherers of fuel, fodder and water, their working day has lengthened. In Bihar where 7-8 years ago enough firewood could be gathered for self consumption and sale within 1-2 Kms, now a trek of 8-10 Kms per day is required. In some villages of Gujarat, with the complete denudation of the surrounding forest land, even a daily search of 4-5 hours yeild little apart from shrubs, weeds and roots of trees. These do not provide continuous heat and increase cooking time (Nagbrahman and Sambrani, 1983).⁹³ Shortages also induce shift to less nutritious

foods which need less fuel to cook or can be eaten raw or force people to eat partially cooked food (which could be toxic) or left overs (which tend to rot in tropical climate) or miss some meals altogether. While these adverse nutritional effects impinge on the whole household, women bear an additional burden because of the gender biases in intra-family food distribution, and little likelihood of their being able to afford extra calories for the additional energy expended in fuel collection (CSE, 1985-86)⁹⁴.

Similar implications for women's time and energy arise with the decline in common grazing land and acute fodder shortage in the country. As other source of livelihood get eroded, selling firewood is becoming increasingly common especially in eastern and central India, even as availability decreases. Most 'headloaders' are women who earn a meagre Rs. 5.50 or so a day for 20 Kg of wood (Bhaduri and Surin, 1980)⁹⁵.

Additionally, the decline in water tables with deforestation and tubewell installation has compounded the problem of drinking water. Today 39 per cent of villages and 49 per cent of the population is still without safe drinking water within 1.6 Km; and in many areas the number of problem village is increasing. In Maharashtra a 51 per cent increase in the number of wells and mechanised

pumpsets between 1960 and 1980 is estimated to have increased the problem villages from 1700 in 1980 to 2300 in 1983 (Jayal in CSE, 1985). Where dalit women have access to only one well, its drying up means an endless wait for their vessels to be filled up by upper caste women. A similar problem arises when a drinking water well goes saline near irrigation works. The burden of family ill-health associated with an increase in water-borne diseases with canal irrigation, or with pollution of rivers and ponds with fertiliser and pesticide run-offs, again fall specifically on women who are also themselves most exposed to such diseases. The agricultural tasks they perform leaves them similarly vulnerable — in China D.D.T and BHC residues have been found in mother's milk, women agricultural labourers being particularly susceptible (Wagner, 1987)⁹⁶. Soil erosion likewise has compounded problems of crop production for women specially in areas of high male outmigration.

The massive displacement of people due to large irrigation works has specific class and gender implications. Rehabilitation usually takes care (even if in limited way) of the interest of the larger land owning groups, in terms of allotments of landless. This has particular adverse effect implications for women who can not re-create easily the network of kin support they have built up in the villages around and which they can draw

upon during a crisis; nor can they easily access alternative community of fuel fodder etc. (Agarwal, 1989).⁹⁷

Feminist anthropology has addressed the issue of invisibility of women in productive and reproductive work, family formation decision making etc. Feminist anthropology has made women visible in these spheres. However, it demonstrates that there is no universal category 'women' and therefore there can be no analytical meaning in any universal category. Woman is a culturally and historically variable.

Feminist anthropology has demonstrated that the gender relations are central to any sustained analysis of class and historical relations. 'Women' is culturally historically variable and gender itself is a social construction, which always requires specification within any given context.

Feminist anthropology argues that the extent of female participation in production in India is determined by the nexus of class/caste hierarchy, norms of patriarchal ideology and existing sexually division of labour and status of women in an society hierarchical society based on patrilineal - patrilocal families, the location of family in the caste/class hierarchy would determine the level and forms of women's productive work.

the level of fertility rather than by these aspects alone.

All the rationality theories agree that reproductive behaviour among peasant communities and workers is rational and moulded by their economic motives and not due to superstition or fatalism as is frequently adduced. However it appear to unrealistic to imagine that all families take into consideration the pros and cons of an additional child before giving birth to one. This view of 'rational' man owes largely to the contestable vision of neo-classical economic of man and society. Questioning this assumption is not to question the idea or rationality or maximization. But, it is only to suggest that they are not homogenous and universal.

The ideal of homogeneity is extended by these theories even to their units of study. For example; Caldwell, dealing with the concept of familial mode of production, assumes all families to be uniform in nature; and what holds good for one community is assumed to hold good for other also. These lacuna in these theories can be traced to their rootings in a neo-classical micro-economics of individual consumption and household production.

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Feminist anthropology does not derive its theoretical base from any single theoretical formulation. There is, therefore, no specific abstract definition of feminist anthropology application to all women at all times. The definition thus can and does change because feminist anthropology is based on historically and culturally concrete realities and levels of consciousness, perception etc.

Feminist critique in social anthropology grew out of specific concern with the neglect of women in the discipline. Women were not ignored in traditional anthropology. Women have always been present in ethnographic accounts, primarily because of the traditional anthropological concern with kinship, family and marriage. However, anthropology treated women ambiguously. The main problem was not, therefore, one of empirical study, but rather one of representation. There are different interpretations given by male and female ethnographers to the nature and position of women in a community. The male ethnographers spoke of women as profane, economically unimportant and excluded from rituals. The female ethnographers, on the other hand, described the women's central role in subsistence, the importance of women in rituals and the respectful way in which they were treated by men. Women are present in both sets of ethnographies, but in very different ways.

The anthropology was the precursor to feminist anthropology; it was very successful in bringing women 'back to into view' in the discipline. The initial problem

was identified as one of male bias, which was seen as having three 'tiers'.

Feminist anthropologists saw their initial task as one of reconstructing this three tiered structure of male bias. One way of doing this was to focus on women, by studying and describing what women really do, as opposed to what men (ethnographers and informants) say they do, and by recording and analysing the statements, perceptions and attitudes of women themselves. However, correcting male bias in reporting and building up new data on women could only be a first step, because the real problem about incorporating women into anthropology lies not at the level of empirical research but at the theoretical and analytical level. Feminist anthropology is, therefore, faced with much larger task of reworking and redefining anthropological theory.

Feminist anthropology has demonstrated that the gender relations are central to any sustained analysis of class and historical relations. 'Woman' is a culturally, historically variable and gender itself is a social construction, which always requires specification within any given context. They have developed sustained theoretical position which specify the interconnections between gender and historical differences. These are being demonstrated in analysing the implication of patriarchy on women, penetration of capitalism, the impact of colonial domination and the changing nature of family/household structure.

Feminist anthropology strives to understand the historical process of origin of patriarchy and focus primarily on regulation and reproduction and material base of patriarchy in the different class caste formations of the society. The patriarchal practices has regional, class and caste variation and diverse histories. It is necessary to have specific studies in order to build an adequate theoretical basis.

The state is assuming increasingly complex, multifarious and often pernicious functions. It already has a wide-ranging role in terms of formulating and implementing developmental and related policies. The specific gender implications of these emerging trends, and overall development strategies followed by the State, are complex and varied contingent in particular on the assumptions underlying state policies and programmes about the household and its character (e.g whether seen as a unit of convergent or conflicting gender interests), and about appropriate role of men and women in society pre-existing customary norms; and the part played by the community (religious, ethnic, caste, clan etc) to which the household belongs, which is often a significant mediatory factor between the state and the household. Indeed the State, the community and the household could be seen as interacting structures embodying pulls and pressures which may, at specific junctures, converge or move in contradictory directions in the taller case providing spaces for the building up of countervailing resistances. What is apparent, however, is that they are structures dominated by

patriarchal interests and typically the contradictions, as they have played themselves out, have tended to work to the detriment of women.

The ideology of gender-especially the assumption that women are (or should be) primarily housewives and mothers and secondarily workers - in fact, permeates most policies of the modern State. It thus affects women material situation in distinct ways in justifying a discriminatory wage structure, a double burden of work and an unequal access to technology information, credit training and productive resources. Indeed ideology plays a crucial role in the social construction of gender and in the process of women's subordination. The family, the community, the media, the educational, legal, cultural and religious institutions, all variously reflect, reinforce, shape and create prevailing ideological norms - norms which may well conflict with and contradict one another, and usually vary in their specification and endorsement across classes and regions. The striking content of this ideology is its preoccupation with particularly two aspects - the domestication of women and control over female sexuality.

The discipline of anthropology traces its heritage to the work of Morgan, Tylor and other Nineteenth century evolutionists. The two important findings of their work were the following:-

- a primitive society was a collective egalitarian system;
- it was a matriarchal society in which women occupied position of leadership in productive and

social life and were held in high esteem.

The work of this pioneering school followed an evolutionary and materialistic approach. They proceeded on the premise that in its march from criminality to civilisation, human kind has passed through a sequence of distinct materially conditioned stage, viz: Savagery, Barbarism, Civilisation. Its members laid great stress upon the activities of human beings in procuring the necessities of life as the foundation for explaining all other social phenomenon, institutions and culture. They correlate natural conditions, technology and economics with the beliefs and practices, ideas and institutions of primitive people.

Around the turn of the century new tendencies began to assert themselves in the field of anthropology. These were marked with growing aversion to the main ideas and methods of the classical school. Two of the principal currents of thought are the "diffusionist" and the "functionalist". Their primary aim is to demonstrate that a variety of culture exists and have always existed. They deny that any institution or feature of society is inherently more primitive or advanced than any other. Instead anti-evolutionists have set forth some universal theories of their own. They argue that matriarchy never existed and that the patriarchal family is eternal. They further argue that women have always been the inferior sex, as they are today, because of their childbearing functions and other biological disabilities. They argued that male supremacy has always existed because of the latter's superior

physical and mental abilities.

Anthropologists were buttressed in their views by discourse in the discipline of primatology and socio-biology.

E.O. Wilson introduced sociobiology in 1975 as the ultimate discipline of human behaviour the "new synthesis": that will 'reformulate' the foundation of social sciences. Sociobiology considers all human behaviours, characteristics and social relationships and forms of social organisation to be biologically, genetically and evolutionarily determined. Sociology announces certain characteristics of female and male "nature" to be universal. It argues that women are genetically predisposed to be "attached" to home and nursery and men to business and profession; that men are hasty, fickle and promiscuous and women are faithful and selective; while men are aggressive and dominant and women are nurturant and coy.

Primatologists try to equate women humans with primates by overemphasising certain similarities, while underplaying the vast differences. The significance of sociobiological theories lies not only in the seriousness of the political implications, but in the fact that sociobiology uses shoddy and deceptive methodology. The central problem is an ethnocentrism that generates unexamined assumptions, biased questions, the selective use of animal models, anthromorphism of concepts and language and distortion and misinterpretations in the use of data.

The basic premises are flawed: the universal behaviour characteristics and sexual differences of humans that they presume to explain as biological are not universal within or between cultures. The behaviours of animals cannot be taken to indicate innate behaviours of humans, 'uncontaminated' by culture.

The question of dominance, hierarchies and relationship between and individual male's status within the group and his access to females had began to be investigated by the primatologist, anthropologists and sociobiologists who are not motivated to justify the sexual status-quo. Important observation clearly contradict the stereotyped descriptions and the evolutionary formula that was derived from it. They have demonstrated that dominance hierarchies are neither universal nor always male.

The predominant theory related to human cultural evolution has been Man-the-Hunter theory. The theory, in essence describes the process whereby our increasingly upright bipedal (male) ancestors, used their free hands to fashion tools and weapons for hunting. Men banded together to hunt large animals and to share in the kill that they carried back for their females and young dependents. This primary sexual division led to an intensification of sexual division of labour and sexual differentiation in psychological and temperamental characteristics. This theory explains female dependence on male for survival and evolution. The origin of men as hunters is also linked with the origin and evolution of a presumed "Killer" instinct in males that account for war, torture, homicide,

competitiveness, aggression, daring and creativity. These account for male dominance over females in all aspects of personal, social, political and economic life.

Feminist anthropologists have demonstrated with help of data from archaeology, primatology and anthropology, that hunting and weapon making are not prime causal factors in the evolution of human intellect, inventiveness, language and art. They speculate alternative theory of human evolution namely Women - as gatherers who did the inventing and who thus account for human cultural evolution. One important aspect of this theory is that it does not begin with the assumption of women's passivity. It attaches great importance to women's childbearing and rearing. They do not see reproduction as a force leading to inevitability to helplessness and dependence. Rather, they view it as a social force leading to selection for innovativeness, sociability and cooperativeness, thus making women the more resourceful sex. However, this model carries the risk of single cause or primary event explanation of evolution.

Reed argues that once the academic anthropologist abandoned the evolutionary method and discarded the finding of matriarchy, they did not only cut off major portion of our history but also any possibility of understanding the peculiar institutions and customs of matriarchal society. Two of these are of primary importance; one is the institution of totemism. the other is primitive kinship. Anti evolutionist unable to decipher these institutions, erased these from the records. Totemism and kinship were

dismissed as mere figments in the imagination of earlier anthropologists. Thus after declaring matriarchy a non-subject, they went on to negate these key institutions.

The theories of family formation in conventional anthropology bring anthropological insight into the discipline of demography major theories of family formation are: labour theory, insurance and security theory. These two together can be clubbed as rationality theories. This is followed by Caldwell's Wealth Flows theory. All these theories are grouped together as conventional anthropological explanations. They are based on functionalist and structural functionalist approaches. These theories fail to explain satisfactorily, the family formation process in non-Western societies.

All the three theories essentially are in that the agreement family formation process in pre-industrial society are economically rational. At a micro-level economic benefits from children are powerful motives in influencing family formation strategy. But at macro-level one cannot generalise and expect uniform causal relation between these motives for different classes of people. Evidence does not support the assertion poor reproduce more.

Caldwells criterion of the direction of net wealth flows is convincing at a micro-level, like the other two theories, but does not yield any generalisation at macro-level. The basic reason for failure of these

theories is their rootings in neo-classical economics (e.g. method of methodological individualism). By doing so, they fail to take into account the broader macro-level forces outside the control of the family and the community that act to shape the family formation process.

Feminist anthropology as a perspective overlaps to a great extent with historical materialism. Methodologically it strives for historicity, holism, inter-relatedness and specificity in analysing a problem. It cuts-across the traditional boundaries of social sciences in general and anthropology in particular. It views family formation as an integrated component of a social formation and function within a particular system. It maintains a complex and dialectical relation with other components like kinship, politics, economy, ideology, religion etc. The forces shaping family formation of a society emanates from regional national and global levels.

Inter-relatedness of family formation processes to other aspects of a social formation and to broader global forces suggest that, causality is fixed, not unilinearly and to a single factor, but to a complex interrelated web of causes. The configuration of this web of causes is specific to any social group. Often one particular attribute of these multiple causes may dominate in shaping this configuration.

The feminist anthropology in its methodology shares a great extent with historical materialism. However, in terms of its objectives and theory, it is quite distinct

from the writings of Marx. One of the most important theoretical insights subsumed by the critical tradition of anthropology and not dealt by Marx is the process of "social" reproduction. Feminist anthropology gives central importance to this aspect. A discussion on social reproduction will necessarily include discussion on the concept of reproduction of labour, allocation of labour potential in relation with means of production and the component of ideology which perpetuate relation. It inevitably forces us to discuss how the role of biological reproduction and its control is important in perpetuating the process of social reproduction and existing social inequalities.

Feminist anthropology provides an insight into the link between biological reproduction and social reproduction. It is argued that biological reproduction is an important component by controlling which the perpetuation of existing social relations is enabled.

It attempts to show how with the advent of capitalist economy, the process of extended reproduction has got separated from subsistence reproduction and has subordinated the latter. The process of biological reproduction is also being subordinated by extended reproduction in the same way as subsistence production by capitalism.

Feminist anthropology explicitly demonstrates that the control over the women's reproduction power by men was established in the course of human history. It is argued

that control of female sexuality, by men was a historical necessity to establish and sustain the patriarchal order. The hold on this rein has been effectively utilised to maintain social stratification in a society. Thus family formation is seen as a part of perpetuation of the social stratification, gender relations and social reproduction.

Engels and other Marxists explained women's subordination only in economic terms. They argued that once private property was abolished and women joined the labour force, patriarchy would disappear. Whereas feminist anthropology argues that patriarchy preceded private property.

Chakravarti (1993) has analysed the structural framework of Indian patriarchy and argues that caste and gender hierarchies were the organising principles of Brahminical social order although they did not exist in the form in which we see them today. They evolved slowly over a considerable period of time. She argues that the establishment of private property and need to have caste purity required the subordination of women and strict control over their mobility and sexuality. The mechanism of control operated through three different devices and at three different levels.

Chakravarti recognises the existence of differences and contradictions in values, governing women in different classes, castes and regions, but she argues that "on the whole, post-caste-class Brahmanised society sanitised and circumscribed female power as mother and relocated it to reside in power born out of wifely fidelity and chastity.

Wifhood, not motherhood has been the dominant strand of mythology intended to mould feminine identity in India and it was through such models that the sexuality of women was contained within legitimate boundaries.

Feminist anthropology has demonstrated that in present day societies, sex is the potentially most effective and abusive way to control women psychologically, physically or through degradation and humiliation and to maintain women's subjugation. A dominant and pervasive form of that discourse today is aggressive pornography.

Medicalisation of women also throws light on the powers of physicians to define illness and monopolise the provision of treatment. This is an outcome of political processes. It highlights the way in which medicine's construction of reality are related to the structure of power at any given historical period. Women are more likely than men to have problematic experiences defined and treated medically. Their economic and social powerlessness legitimates their protection by medical authorities, and physicians act on behalf of the larger society, thus further reinforcing existing power relation. Historically the medicalisation of certain problems was rooted in specific class interests. Physicians and women from dominant class joined together - albeit out of very different motives - to redefine certain human events into medical categories.

It is demonstrated that women's lives have undergone a more total transformation as a result of medical scrutiny.

Medicalisation has resulted in the construction of medical meanings of normal functions in women. Women's structural subordination to men has made them particularly vulnerable to the expansion of the clinical domain. In general, male physicians treat female patients. Social relations in doctor's office replicate the patriarchal relation in the larger culture, and this all proceeds under the guise of science.

Feminist anthropology has illustrated that subordination of women by men and related sexual division of labour was a historically shaped event. The extreme level of subordination of women by men found in many of today's more socio-economically advanced cultures are relatively recent phenomena in our long history.

The extent of female participation in production in India is determined by a nexus of class/caste hierarchy and, norms of patriarchal ideology. In an hierarchical society based on patrilineal-patrilocal families, the location of family in the caste/class hierarchy would determine the level and forms of women's productive work.

Feminist anthropology argue that women in poor rural households are burdened with a significant responsibility for family subsistence and are important, often the primary, and in many female-headed households the role economic providers. However, their ability to fulfill this responsibility is significantly constrained by the limited (and declining) resources and means at their command - a constraint that stem not merely from their class position

but also from gender. These gender inequities in access to resources take varying forms: intra family differences in distribution of basic necessities; women's systematically disadvantaged position in labour market; their constrained access to crucial means of production - land, as and associated production technology; and the growing deterioration and privatisation of the countries, common property resources on which poor in general and women in particular, depend in substantial degree for sustenance.

It also traces women's past and existing rights to land in law and in customary practice, across communities and regions; examines changes in these rights among communities traditionally practising matrilineal inheritance and identify the factors, impinging on women's ability to claim control, and self manage land today, and variations therein cross-community and cross-regionally.

Feminist anthropology has addressed to the issue of invisibility of women in productive and reproductive work etc. It has demonstrated that there is no universal category 'women' and therefore there can be no analytical meaning in any universal category. Women is a culturally and historically variable. Feminist anthropology has demonstrated that gender relations are central to any sustained analysis of class and historical relations.

Feminist anthropology emphasises that social and economic change is a continuous process. It links micro-process with macro process. It views family formation to be linked with wider regional national and

international process - Social economic, political within which they are embeded. Micro-level decisions of individual social units are seen to be both a condition of, and be conditioned by, macro-level changes in production.

Feminist anthropology, neither tries to advance a universal law of population nor does it attempt to perceive demographic process taking place in different societies, homogeneously. Instead it acknowledges the fact that demographic structure of a society is shaped by broader macro-level common economic forces as well as by parochial micro-level economic and socio-cultural factors. This suggest that family formation process do not respond mechanically to economic factors, on the contrary, feminist anthropology throw light on enormous complexity of issues that shape demographic processes historically .

Levin (1987) argues that "things did not simply happen; forces - social economic, demographic, political and cultural - provided a momentum which caught up individuals. Caught up in the flow, individuals choices of action were limited and define by the context in which they acted, the context in which they thought, the context in which they made their choices. It is in this sense that individuals faced a determinate set of choices, not of their own choosing. It is in this sense history impinges itself on individual decision making. And because history presented itself to individuals as a set of determinate forces". Therefore social, economic and political forces, shapes the family formations, which gave shape and meaning to personal life.

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