

Status of Women in The Himalayas: A Case of Gaddis

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ABSTRACT This paper describes and analyses the life of Gaddi women of Bharmour in Chamba District, Himachal Pradesh, Western Himalaya. In traditional Gaddi Community, the women have an important role to play. Gender principles are central to hill organisation of traditional communities. Gender and the division of labour that depends on its recognition, are decisive elements giving societies stability and cohesiveness. In Bharmour, role of women is not only of importance in economic activities due to ecological and environmental factors, but her role in non-economic activities is equally important i.e., formation and continuity of family hearth and home on the domain of women. Women's role as wives, mothers, organisers and as basic foundation of other dimensions of social life is of utmost importance. These factors have given, Gaddi women social status and authority almost equal to men.

The United Nations has defined the status of women as the "conjunction of position a woman occupies as a worker, student, wife, mother...., of the power and prestige attached to these positions, and of the rights and duties she is expected to exercise" (U.N., 1975). "To what extent, do women, compared with men, have access to knowledge, to economic resources and to political power, and what degree of personal autonomy do these resources permit in the process of decision-making and choice at crucial points in the life cycle?" (Ibid).

The low status of women derives from a lack of control over material or social resources and from a lack of choice in the unfolding of one's destiny. A single measure cannot be used to assess the status of women; rather "a multi-dimensional cluster of variables" is required to indicate their status. Status is not a fixed, rigid concept, it changes over time. Women occupy different positions in the social structure as they pass through the life cycle, and the very basis upon which the community ascribes power, privilege and prestige also changes.

The status of women can be ascertained by the educational achievements of women, legal rights and status given to them, employment opportunities and demographic characteristics of women

in socio-cultural terms.

In India our attitude to women has been ambivalent—full of contradictions. Hinduism is not a monolithic religion and because it has evolved over the centuries integrating the beliefs and attitudes of diverse racial and cultural groups, there is no single Hindu view of women valid for all times. The family structure in the country is patriarchal, patrilocal and patrilineal. Consequently a boy is regarded as the perpetuator of the family line, and a girl 'a bird of passage'. Within the hierarchial groupings generated by the caste system, the family organisation further creates inequality between the sexes. With a secondary status, women play but a subdued role in social life. Several economic, political and social changes notwithstanding, women are still far behind men.

This paper describes and analyses the life of Gaddi women of Bharmour in District Chamba, Himachal Pradesh, Western Himalaya. What makes this study special is the contribution made by women in production and land resource use. If we see Gaddi women in regard to their educational achievements, legal and political rights, employment opportunities and demographic characteristics, Gaddi women do not have high status. Literacy rate among Gaddi females is as

low as 12.2 per cent and Gaddi males literacy rate of 34.30 (Bhasin, 1990) against India's female's literacy rate of 24.32. Girls are not sent to school as they are needed at home to look after the small children or do other odd jobs at home. The sex ratio among Gaddis of Bharmour is 870, which indicates the excess of males in the population. Among the Gaddis of Bharmour, high fertility is valued and the position of women is quite high. The comparatively high position of women in the Gaddi society is the result of her economic value to the family. The economic value that women have in the Gaddi way of life gives them an important and irreplaceable position. So the reason for the low ratio cannot be ascribed to the underearing of women. It could be a chance occurrence or the rigours of the terrain has taken its toll. The high female mortality rate can be linked to the socio-cultural factors rooted within the household. Daughters have no rights to land, only a few items at the time of wedding are given.

However, in traditional Gaddi community, the women have an important role to play. Gender principles are central to the organisation of traditional communities. Gender and the division of labour that depends on its recognition, are decisive elements giving mountain societies stability and cohesiveness (Illich, 1982; Abu-Lughod, 1985).

The Bharmour *Tehsil* lies approximately between the North latitude 32°-11' and 32°-41' and the East longitude 76°-22' and 76°-53'. The lowest altitude is about 1340 metres and the highest about 5900 metres above sea level. Bharmour *Tehsil* is remarkably mountainous; level and flat pieces of land are an exception. Cultivation ranges, approximately between 1400 metres and 3700 metres. The slopes are too steep for average agriculture. Because of the steepness of the slopes, in the rainy seasons, the good soil cover is lost and soil conservation becomes a real hazard. The terrain itself is rocky with frequent outcrops of huge boulders, slate and rock faces. The soil is more or less clayey or clay loam to loam with gravel, its depth varying inversely with

the slope. Depending upon the altitude the climate varies a good deal. Taken as a whole, the climate is temperate with well marked seasons. The winter lasts from December to February (both inclusive) and is characterised by snowfall which is heavy and descends lower in the inner valleys. The streams and rivers are mainly snow-fed. Perennial springs are also common. Agricultural lands are mostly rainfed, as the gorges are deep and no economic water channels have been dug.

Ecological conditions in the area have resulted in a mixed-agro-pastoral economy. Although agriculture provides the bulk of the staple food, Gaddis give importance to sheep and goat rearing. From this source they obtain additional food in the form of meat and milk and wool for clothing. Due to heavy snowfall for about three to four months during winter, the Gaddis generally migrate to lower hills and plains along with their flocks of sheep and goats. During this period the main source of livelihood is sale of wool and employment of their children and women as domestic servants. A small percentage of population is left behind to look after the cattle and fields and spinning and weaving of woollens. The migration is necessitated because the pastures and grazing lands are covered with snow, and it is difficult to maintain the large number of sheep and goats, and secondly, for the selling of raw wool which is available in large quantities without market facilities. Other secondary traditional pursuits in the area are collecting minor forest produce, various kinds of household industries such as spinning and weaving, tailoring and bee-keeping, and specialised occupations such as carpentry, iron-smithery, medicine, religious and para-religious activities. More recently the increase in mercantile and government activity has created new sources of income in transport, road building, construction, wholesaling and retailing. Horticulture, while not yet significant, may become a major source of income in the coming years.

Although agriculture is the mainstay of the Gaddis, yet the food produced is not enough for

the whole year. The climate (temperature and precipitation), short working season, absence of irrigation in the area, fragmentation of the land resulting in small fields preventing the mechanisation of agricultural practices, absence of surplus labour in the area has affected the agricultural production in Bharmour. The short working season and absence of irrigation ~~is~~ rice (most productive per land unit) as a food crop. Agriculture technology is extremely simple and time consuming. The Gaddis have a pre-wheel culture in which human back lifts and moves every thing. The only non-human power so far utilised is that of animals in ploughing and thrashing, and of water-mills (*Gharats*) for grinding.

These features serve to restrict the agricultural production. Upper ranges of these mountains are noteworthy for their, lush meadows and other good summer grazing and are thus rich in the natural resources which Gaddis are able to exploit. However, these pastures are only seasonal, Gaddis cannot rely on them for year round sustenance. Consequently pattern of transhumance is developed to utilise the productive mountain area in its productive season, while relying on the other areas the rest of the year. Thus, the Gaddis of Bharmour are able to support a human and animal population of sufficient size by means of agriculture and herding. For herding they utilise summer pastures surrounding mountain and winter pastures of the lower mountain of in and around Kangra.

It cannot however be said, that environment alone drives them out of Bharmour during winter, but the economic reality is also responsible for the same. There are families in Bharmour who do not have enough land or do not rear enough sheep and goats to fulfill their economic needs throughout the year. They have to look for odd jobs in lower hills, where they migrate. They work on daily wages as road labourers, wood cutters etc., and their women and children work as domestic help, thus earning their livelihood for winter months. Apart from this, wool and woollen products needs some way of disposal which is not possible if they are stagnant locally. As all

the local people have sheep and goats (even if they have few) they cannot sell or exchange wool and woollen products, except by way of their own consumption. Inadequate transportation plays a significant role in arresting the developmental activities. Thus the ecologic and economic factors necessitate transhumance among Gaddis. They have a mixed economy because of ecological imperatives.

In spite of the difficulties and problems created by the location, climate and physical features, the Gaddis by their ingenuity and hard work have formed a well balanced society whose activities are organised on the basis of gender. The Gaddi women are concerned with crop growing and Gaddi men with herding of their sheep and goats.

In pre-industrial or traditional societies which lack market system, the business of everyday living is usually carried on gendered division of labour (Illich, 1982). Bharmour is such a society with little specialisation of labour, resulting in barter or little exchange within the village.

In Bharmour, the division of labour is mainly between herding and agriculture. In all other tasks concerned with life in the village, such as crafts and work on boundary walls, house-building, *Gharats* (water-mills), there is a division between men's work and women's work. The men are shepherds and women grow crops for food. But the boundaries are not so clearly marked, as there is overlapping and deviations from the rule. There are also cases where the rule is inflexible and times when change is possible.

Women's Work: Major portion of the agriculture is done by women who do weeding, hoeing, harvesting and thrashing except ploughing (which is done by men) in the fields adjacent to houses or far off fields. The other activities of women include looking after the house, children and cattle. Women weed in the fields, which helps in the thinning of the maize or wheat crop which are sown broadcast and collect these as fodder for the animals that do not go up to high pastures. Womens' work start after breakfast, they work in the field until mid-day. They carry home loads

of fodder on their backs or on head. After a short break of mid-day, they are back in fields until four to five P.M. Then they spend time in the village, at the *Panihar* (water source) collecting water and start preparing for the evening meal. Sometimes they go back to the fields to collect more fodder. Almost all food processing is women's work. Girls are trained by their mothers from an early age to weed, prepare food, pounding of kernels of wild apricots for extraction of oil, washing clothes and looking after the siblings. It is the women who with assistance of children are largely responsible for the cattle or for collecting fodder for stall fed animals and fuel for the family hearth. This permit them considerable time away from the village. At home or on hill sides, they are free to talk to whom so ever they please, male or female, high caste or low. As a consequence, communication among women and between men and women is as high as it is among men. In other parts of India, female communication network tends to be overwhelmingly confined to caste and kin, thus reinforcing differentiation among caste lines. It does not conform with de Schlippe's statement, about traditional societies in Africa of women working close to the homestead (1956:40). Gaddi women are relatively emancipated, they appear before men, modestly, with covered heads.

The generalised "principle of mutual" avoidance applies in Gaddi society to the extent where it does not hamper the economic activities. In Gaddi society, women work very hard, in some cases even more than the men. However these women are not backward. They have power in their own sphere, no man tells them what to do. They are responsible for their own share of work and share the benefits of their own work as long as the unit of production and consumption remains the home. Their own perception and that of their men, is that women share major portion of socio-economic activities and consequently they are respected, well thought of and think well of themselves. This respect is same for women of all castes and classes. The concept of patriarchy which prevails in subsistence

societies conveys respect rather than envy between the genders (Illich, 1982: 92). Women in subsistence economic households have far more power and independence than modern suburban housewives. However, Gaddi women live their lives as dependents throughout their life-cycle; as daughters, sisters, wives; or as mothers of sons. They seldom have a voice in the political sphere. They are not ignored at household level, but are not given due credit and importance at political level. They are like invisible hands shaping and maintaining the structure of society.

Men's Work: Although men are primarily concerned with sheep and goat rearing and herding, they are also involved in the agricultural activities in the village to some extent. Men plough and prepare the fields for *Rabi* and *Kharif* crops (the two main cropping seasons) using a bull and simple plough; they build terraces on the hill slopes. They do this, after arriving from lower hills of Kangra and before going upto high pastures (*Dhars*) in the summer or sometimes they come down to work from '*Tarkal*' for a while, leaving their flocks with a kinsmen. Sometimes they may send the flocks up with a '*Puhal*' and remain in the village to work.

Joint Work: In most households the husband and wife can efficiently do all the work, although it is not easy during the period when there are young children who must be constantly watched by the mother until an elder child is able to do it for her. A child of ten is considered capable of taking sheep and goats, to graze for the day or to watch younger children. Children between five and ten fetch supplies from the shop, run errands and help their mothers watch the animals. Infants are tied into a shawl and carried on the mother's back, while she grazes the animals, weeds the crops, cuts grass for fodder and collects fire-wood. It is also the job of adult women and teenage boys to cleanse the animal pens of manure and take it to the fields. At home they prepare food, get water, milk the cattle, wash clothes, clean and spin wool and do the various

other household chores. The work done by women is constant, diverse and often arduous. The work of men tends to be seasonal. In the men's light working season, many of them take up weaving clothes and blankets.

There is practically no task, other than minding small children, which does not require co-operation of both sexes. In the fields duties of the male include sowing seed, ploughing, preparing soil, digging, building retaining walls and reaping. Women help the men by beating soil after ploughing with a T-shaped implement, manuring, reaping and winnowing. When work, such as sowing cereals, must be completed in a critical span of time, men and women work together in the fields. The men is helped by his wife, mother, grown-up daughters, or any other female relative who shares his roof. Both men and women gather manure and take it to the fields. Women carry the manure on their backs, in baskets and children help too. Men and women harvest and thrash cereals. The crop is gathered and laid in bundles on the ground. Then it is taken to the house courtyard for thrashing and winnowing by women.

In the making of clothes, men do the twisting of three threads on a spinner, weaving, making *Doras* etc., while teasing and spinning the wool into thread is done by women. The wool is spun on *Unsaan* by men or on *Charkhas* by women. The weaving is done on pitlooms mostly by men, few women might also know this art. They prepare *Pattos* and blankets locally called *Gardus*. The *Patti* is used for preparing *Chola* or the coat as the case maybe, and the *Gardus* serve as cover cloth. Embroidery, repairing clothing and dying of clothes are female tasks. Carrying the grain to *Gharat* (the water mill), cutting and storing the firewood, collection of wild fruits and walnuts etc., making *Sur* (local beer) except mixing ingredients are the jobs of men. Women do pounding of cereals, making oil from wild apricot, stirring and making *Ghee* (clarified butter), mixing ingredients for *Sur*, keeping house clean and periodical plastering with cow-dung.

In Bharmour there is no recognizable separ-

ateness of tools and this relates primarily to not so well defined division of labour. Both sexes can use all the agricultural implements except the plough which can only be used by a male. All tools and artefacts are made by men. Bharmour is poorly developed in craft work. Only utilitarian goods for home and fields are produced.

Male members of the family have to help outside in communal tasks such as building water channels for *Gharats*, retaining field walls, carrying of the main beam for a new house, storing grass for the winter and feeding the cattle (For details see Bhasin, 1988).

In the ritual sphere men dominate. Both sexes participate in ceremonies, but men shoulder the major responsibilities. Musical instruments are mainly played by men. Women do take parts in dancing but their movements are different from those of men. Devotional songs are mostly sung by men. Marriage songs are sung by both the sexes.

Men and women differ in the way they speak and what they talk about (Illich, 1982 : 137). Women talk about the home, children and emotions; while men talk about work, innovations ideas and politics. Women in Bharmour are separated by language. They speak the local 'Bharmourie' language. Hindi is mostly spoken and understood by men. Now-a-days children who go to school can also understand and speak Hindi. But the number of school going children is not very high especially among girls. Education is generally conceived by Gaddis as a means of upward social mobility for men. The women's mobility on social ladder is through marriage to a person who is likely to be socially mobile. It does not effect women social position whether she is educated or uneducated. Thus, mostly boys are sent to schools. This discrimination against women is not because of her intelligence or ability to learn, it is only that it is not going to help her in the traditional life style. The problem of conversing with women is that all questions have to be asked by men and getting the answers by men. Men translate, take things for granted, and mould their answers to suit the occasion.

Among Gaddis the concept of women's space is where only women may sit, work or enter freely at any time is relatively informal and flexible and depends on the separation of activities that results from the sexual division of labour. It is a characteristic feature of traditional societies to set apart, or see a distinction in physical space which is used by men and women (Schlippe, 1956; Edelberg and Jones, 1979; Lachurie, 1979; Illich, 1982).

In Bharmour, there are no such private or intimate spaces for women, though men have public space to hold meetings, settle disputes, discuss political and farming issues, or just sit. There is at least one such space in each of the settlements, either under a tree or in the open space. Women do not have a similar, formal sitting space. The *Gharat* is another space which interchangeably becomes men's or women's. There are several *Gharats* in each settlement. If women are at the *Gharat*, it tends to be only women and children, but there are no fixed rules. When women occupy public spaces, such as '*Panihar*', water spring, field etc., men usually do not join them. The women interact with each other, not with their men as couples. The men only join them in the privacy of home and '*Khaliyan*' (courtyard). Interaction between individual men and women varies according to kinship relation and relative age, which ranges from relaxed informality to extreme avoidance, marked by women covering their head and men averting their glances. Men who are not kin, especially elders do not come closer to an area where a group of women is sitting. By these standards the Gaddis also maintain the integrity of the gender divide.

The courtyards are mainly women's space (except during threshing when men and women work together in the courtyard). All food processing is done here. Washing of clothes, spinning of wool, embroidery, giving bath to children etc. is all done here. The kitchen is a women's domain.

The grazing grounds in and around the village, near '*Panihars*' are areas where old women, young girls and small boys sit with babies, to

mind cattle and young sheep and goats that are too young to go upto high pastures.

During the year there is a definite change of economic activities, and where and by whom they are done. Apart from agricultural activities, there are pastoral activities to be followed.

Both summer and winter pastures contain the elements of space and time when compared to village economy. That is to say, the pastures are spatially removed from the village. They are at a different altitude and far-removed from the village. Being seasonally used, they bring in the concept of time. They provide gender differences in the concept of time. They provide gender differences in the utilization of resources and tools such as sheep and goats as opposed to field crops, male instead of female labour. For clipping fleece from sheep, locally prepared scissors, '*Kar*' and for spinning *Unsaan* are used.

The beliefs and ideas held by the villagers have a vital influence on the lives of the men and women and children. For one thing, it reinforces the gender division for work, place, tools and language. According to religious beliefs, women are considered impure, that is why they are not allowed to use plough and visit high altitude passes as these places are considered to be inhabited by supernatural beings.

The role of Gaddi women in childbirth and funerals is an important part of village life. Here women are carriers of traditional information in absence of written records. The women appear to have their own place in society.

The economic cycle and division of labour in the area has given an important role to the women. This economic role has undoubtedly affected the social position of women, who have social freedom which is quite remarkable in its scope. There is a cultural similarity among the several castes in Bharmour, as the women from the different castes have the same economic role to play, necessitated by the demands of environment to grow food for their own consumption. The economic value and worth of women therefore as (a) independent and necessary unit of economic activity without which the given economic

system will not survive, (b) complementary to the men as work force, in organized functioning of the whole economic system consisting of agriculture and herding.

Role of women is not only of importance in economic activities, but her role in non-economic activities is equally important. Formation and continuity of family, health and home are the domain of women. Women's role as wives, mothers, organizers and as the basic foundation of other dimensions of social life is of utmost importance. Although Gaddis are patrilineal and patrilocal, yet due to the various factors listed, the family assumes a mother-centredness with the children and some important decisions falling to the sphere of women's intervention. Men are out for pastoral activities, so the socialisation of children automatically becomes mother's business, in the early years of their lives at least.

Gaddi women are very strong and courageous in the handling of environmental imperatives as can be demonstrated in the trekking and work pattern under the severe limitations of the harsh environment. Several studies dealing with pastoral societies indicate that the position of women in such societies is not very high because the actual care of the livestock and handling of economic affairs is entirely a male domain. However, in the Gaddi society women occupy an economically significant place which is reflected in the generally high position and importance that they have. The comparatively high position of women in Gaddi society is the result of her economic value to her family. During the summer migrations when the men are away with their flocks, women stay back and tend the fields and are sole incharge of the children's socialisation and during winter migration when the men are away they work as domestic servants once they have reached their destination (lower hills) thus earning more money for the family. In addition to this, during the winter migration, while they do not directly look after the sheep and goats, they otherwise look after their husbands and cook for them. The socio-cultural system as found in Bhamour is a reflection of the way in which the

Gaddis have, by tradition adopted to a mountainous, rugged environment. Rajputs and Brahmans (who form a Gaddi caste) came from the plains and adjusted themselves to different ecological conditions from the plains. Their religious beliefs, practices and caste system, though modified by a harsh environment throw a great deal of light on the fundamental nature of the institutions. But the position of women in Gaddi society is different from the other Indian women. Although Gaddis are Hindus, patrilineal and patrilocal, yet the economic value that women have in Gaddi way of life gives them an important and irreplaceable position. This cultural acceptance of the fact of their raised status gives them a voice in household affairs that is almost equal to that of their husbands.

The socio-economic equality of sexes can be seen in the attitudes and practices concerning marriage, divorce and household harmony. The ideal is the arranged marriage between an unrelated pre-pubertal boy and girl, both coming from different vallages. She should remain married to the boy for life, though she may marry his brother if the husband should die prematurely, more so when there are children from the first marriage. Dowry system, in its true traditional sense, is not prevalent among Gaddis. At the time of marriage certain essential items are given to the girl as gifts by her parents. These may consist of a few pieces of silver jewellery, the utensils for daily use and some agricultural implements. There is no custom which might be termed reversed dowry system entailing some payment by the parents of the bridegroom to the parents of the bride. However, different kind of 'bride price' is prevalent among Gaddis. In some cases, especially in those where there is a doubt that the girl may not be treated well by her husband and his parents, some ornaments are demanded as a kind of security from the parents of the bridegroom, and these are retained until the parents of the girl are satisfied that the girl is being treated well and has settled down. When such time comes the ornaments are returned. When there is marriage by exchange, in which brother and

sister in the family may marry a sister and brother belonging to another family, no bride price is paid. In the case of widow remarriage, some compensation is paid by her new husband to her husband's family in accordance with the possibility of her bearing children again, as well as her age. There is another system, which permits a woman to take on a new husband if he pays the former husband the amount incurred by him on his marriage. The consent of former husband is considered essential. As a general rule, the bride-price has to be paid before the marriage takes place. Because of demographic reasons it is harder for a man to find a wife than for a woman to find a husband. Moreover, the man has to bear the cost of the marriage much more heavily than the woman. Also a girl's father has little responsibility for making a monetary outlay for his daughter by compulsion although he often does give a substantial gift to his daughter at the time of the marriage. If a father wants to avoid that too, he can permit his daughter to elope. Similarly *Ghar-Jawantari*, a typical form of marriage where the boy has to work as a domestic servant in the house of his would be father-in-law, is practiced among the Gaddis of Bharmour. In Gaddi society, the custom of paying bride-price in case of widow marriage or second marriage is related to her economic importance. Women are not viewed as life partners in the usual accepted sense, but also as economically indispensable co-partners in the subsistence economy of the Gaddis.

A woman always has it in her power to leave her husband if she is angry, dissatisfied or unhappy. She has great freedom of movement as children, if any, remain with the husband. Her labour is sufficiently in demand so that she can move not only back to her natal family but also to a sister's husband's house or a more distant kinsmen's house. She can stay there till such times as she returns to her husband or finds a new one. There is no great need for her to return to the natal village although this is the usual practice.

Divorce by mutual consent is permitted but there is no special form of divorce as such. A div-

orce may, however, remarry. Whenever a man in this region acts on a assumption that this authority will be accepted simply because he is a male and fails to take into account the wishes or feelings of his wife, sister or daughter, he often gets himself into trouble. There is no way for a man to force women's compliance with his wishes. Her economic ability and consequent social position has resulted in special institutional privileges that are bestowed on the women.

In case of the birth of a child after the husband's death irrespective of the time gap, the child if it be born in the husband's house, *Chaukhandu* (Born within the four walls), has full inheritance rights. Woman is responsible for the continuity of patrilineage. As replacement of woman is not easy in Gaddi society because of demographic reasons, rights of sexuality are ignored, but the right on the womb is there. In case the child is born after the husband's death and away from the husband's house, the child gets a share of property from the woman's father or brother, and in the case of remarriage the child is entitled to inheritance rights from her new-husband. In the later case the extent of the property settlement is divided before the woman agrees to remarry.

It is socially expected and considered as desirable that subsequent to the death of her husband a woman should marry her brother-in-law, but in actual practice the woman has the final say and she may refuse to enter such a man.

Like all men, Gaddi men also want their women to be virtuous yet female promiscuity in Gaddi society is a well known and accepted fact. There are no cases of women being punished or sent away on charges of promiscuity and immorality. This tolerance is obviously related to her economic importance.

However, there are a few conditions under which marital status is ambiguous. A promiscuous woman who stays with a series of men, and if she bears a child (*Hallor* or bastard) the genitor may not be willing to accept it as legitimately his.

There is also a question when a woman leaves

one man for another without obtaining a divorce. The first man may object and demand a substantial compensation that the second cannot pay. Under such circumstances the caste council is likely to support the claim of the first man but public sentiments usually is that nothing can be done to force the girl to return to him.

The men generally attribute the break up of joint families to the fighting among the women. Tensions among brothers and the resentment of father's authority are probably the same here as elsewhere, in India, but the pressure from women for partition is much greater. A woman is not willing to obey her parents-in-law, and sister-in-law tend to view each other as potential rivals for their husband's affection. The man desires to maintain good relations with his wife. He knows that if he or other members of the household do not treat her well she will leave. Eventually the property will be divided anyway, and then it is hard working, responsible and attentive wife which is of greater value than the co-operation of brothers.

Yet, the economic power of women in the household is not translated into corresponding community authority. They are not ignored at household level but are not given due credit and importance at official level. This economic superiority has resulted in more power for women, however, the power is restricted within the family domain and does not extend to social or political sphere. It is interesting to note that although by convention every village Panchayat has a female member, the lady never bothers to attend the meeting or to take any active interest in the proceeding of Panchayat.

It may be concluded as it is observed that ecology and environmental factors existing in Bharmour have given to Gaddi women a special economic power, an elevated social status and authority almost equal to men. However, there are certain domains in which men continue to dominate, as is culturally required. Moreover, community authority still is in the hands of men. There is a kind of duality observable here. Men dominate in public and community affairs, and

continue to play the role of the head of the family and bread winner, women enjoy greater say in family life, great deal of social freedom and several of their actions are condoned/tolerated. This confirm with Ornel and Rosaldo's thesis in one way that in spite of the Public/domestic dichotomy the ecologic/economic division interfere further modifications in women's position. Hence one may say that the Public/domestic dichotomy is not the only criterion for determining woman's status in society.

This is a patriarchal society in which men dominate in public sector. However in their own world women have a freedom, and a right to self expression. They can only be understood on their own terms, With the onset of development programmes economic changes are taking place but Gaddi women remain traditional in their dress, language, tools and resources because they grow food crops rather than cash crops. Modernization is bringing changes which affect men and women differently. Modernization brought by outside agencies is set in a male-biased ideology; women are seen as inherently "incapable"; the new techniques are aimed at men by men. "Male values are also reflected in the view that development is solely dependent on technological and economic advances. Such values exploit both the environment and vulnerable groups such as women (Hewitt, 1989 : 350).

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