

Status of Women in Transhumant Societies

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ABSTRACT The present study revolves around the women of three pastoral transhumant societies, Gaddis of Bharmour of Himachal Pradesh, Bhutias of Lachen and Lahung of Sikkim, and Changpa of Changthang of Ladakh. Women are backbone of the economics' structure, as the production system is much dependent on them. The role and status of women vary according to the traditions of cultural group. Transhumant pastoral societies depend for sustenance on livestock herding and use of pasturelands. Due to certain specificities like accessibility, fragility, marginality, diversity or heterogeneity; life in general is tougher for women among transhumant pastoralists. The pastoral production activities implicate the services of both sexes, but women's involvement varies in different culture-ecological conditions. Women play a central role in the pastoralist way of life, providing labour for the various tasks with regard to the livestock, the land and the household. The pastoral societies have been largely seen to be male dominated in which men have economic, social, political and cultural powers special to men. Patriarchy denotes a culture of power relationship that promotes man's supremacy. Among Gaddis, the household consists of one elementary family of a man, his wife and their children, with the occasional addition of unmarried, widowed, or divorced relatives who would be otherwise alone in their house or wife and children of married son family. Conventionally fraternal polyandry, primogenitor and monasticism were part of a traditional culture among the Changpas and Bhutias to overcome economic and demographic problems. Regional isolation helped to retain the traditional socio-economic system until the winds of change swept in. In pastoral societies, both men and women share the economic activities but they do not share the burden equally or in the same ways. Pastoral women suffer two kinds of desecrations: those that all pastoralists share regardless of gender, and those that are specific to women. The women in study areas contribute more labour for smooth running of the household than men do. The Gaddi and Bhutia women have been playing a very important role in their economy. In these traditional pastoral communities, the women have an important role to play. Gender principles are central to the organisation of traditional communities. Emphasis on gender, a relational concept provides opportunities for looking at full range of social and cultural institutions, which reproduce gender hierarchies and gender-based inequalities. The cultural interpretation of gender is central to the identity and status of women that entails web of relationships

INTRODUCTION

Transhumance is the seasonal movement of people with their livestock, to higher pastures in summer and to pastures in lower valleys in winter. The term derives from Latin-*trans* 'across' and *humus* 'ground'. Transhumance is practiced in those parts of worlds where there are mountains, highlands that are too cold to be inhabited and utilised in for grazing in winter. The distinctive physical environment of the mountains restricts economic processes. These basic features can be seen to have contributed to a series of altitudinal zones or *niches* that can be exploited in different ways. This vertical stratification of resources implies mobility among them if man has to utilise environment fully. Transhumance is a form of pastoral, economic and social organisation in which livestock moves twice yearly between highland summer pastures and lowland winter pastures. It is a seasonal movement from one ecological zone to another. The interaction of altitude, climate and soil fertility sets upper limits on agriculture and pastoralism and within the range of agriculture, upper limits

on types of crops (Troll 1968, 1972; Uhlig 1976; Dollfus 1981). The economic forces of transhumant mobility are inseparable from social and ideological forces. Transhumant technologies can now be understood as much more than an ecological and economic strategy. Transhumance with or without agriculture becomes profitable where high pastures are available. In the terms of ecological adaptations, the two most significant factors for transhumance are the availability of pastures and the severity of winter. Transhumants that migrate from summer pastures to winter pastures with their flocks have some sort of living arrangements at both the places, and use tents and shelters while ascending or descending. Apart from getting their basic needs fulfilled from their stocks, they also barter or trade their animals and animal products to meet with other necessities of life. Where people have regular summer and winter pastures, to supplement their resources they start growing grains or vegetables at or near winter or summer pasture. Transhumance of this type is practiced in mountainous regions of many parts of the world. These studies point to the lack of transparency in defining

and classifying nomadism and pastoralism. Several authors have carried out studies on these transhumant groups (Newell 1967; Khatana 1976a, 1976b; Nitzberg 1987; Goldstein and Masserschmidt 1980; Kango and Dhar 1981; Rao and Casimir 1982; Bhasin 1988, 1989, 1996). All forms of transhumance may be regarded as different forms of adaptation, the parameters of which are determined by ecology and level of technological development. This makes transhumance a special adaptation, both from economic and cultural point of view. It is special because it manages the conditions dictated by environment. Women are the ones who are in the best position to understand the value of nature and land (Tauli-Carpuz 1993).

STATUS OF WOMEN

The term 'status' includes not only personal and proprietary rights but duties, liabilities and disabilities as well. The position of women in India as a whole is characterised by sharp gender disparities, although women's status varies considerably by region. For all time there are socio-cultural factors, which validate for the status of women in particular society. Gender roles are socially constructed. Status of women is generally measured using three indicators: education, employment status and intra-household decision-making power. Mason (1984) points out the status of women has three distinct and not necessarily overlapping features -prestige, power and autonomy that need to be measured separately. Caldwell and Caldwell (1983) have defined the autonomy as the ability to make decisions about education, employment and health care. Women's ability to communicate with and convince their spouses or other members of the family indicates their decision-making autonomy. Women with great decision-making power are supposed to have a higher status in the household. Studies have shown that marriage payments and residence pattern also affect the status of women. Where marriage is exogamous and residence is neolocal, a new bride is completely cut-off from all female networks. She is thus vis-à-vis her in-laws in a position similar to that of household servant.

In India, women are discriminated due to several historical, religious and other reasons. There are various hypotheses about why women have relatively high or low status. The common pre-

mise is that women status is high when they contribute substantially to primary subsistence activities. Women position is low in the societies where food getting is entirely men's job like hunting, herding or intensive agriculture. In the historical times when warfare was essential, men were more esteemed than women. Likewise, in the centralised political systems men had high status. Men in most societies contribute more to primary subsistence activities, as women have infant and child care responsibilities. However, women contribute substantially to primary subsistence activities that depend heavily on gathering and horticulture and in which men are away on labour or pastoral duties while subsistence work has to be done. When primary and secondary subsistence activities are counted, women work more than men.

Women occupy different positions in the social structure as they pass through the lifecycle, and the very basis upon which the community ascribes power, privilege and prestige also changes.

Women in transhumant societies in Himalayas are no different. Transhumant societies depend for sustenance on livestock herding and use of pasturelands, due to certain specificities like accessibility, fragility, marginality, diversity or heterogeneity; as described by Jodha (1992), life in general is tougher for women among transhumants. Women are the backbone of the economic structure, as the production system is much dependent on them. The role and status of women vary according to the traditions of the cultural group. The pastoral production activities implicate the services of both sexes, but women's involvement varies in different culture-ecological conditions. The livestock production system can be broadly divided into five categories increasing responsibilities, based on gender and age: (a) are not involved in livestock production; (b) women are accountable for processing of animal products; (c) women are liable for managing small stock and other animals kept at home besides processing of animal products; (d) women are responsible for managing and herding large livestock, other animals and processing of livestock produce; and (e) along with other responsibilities of livestock, women also indulge in trading.

Women play a central role in the transhumant way of life, providing labour for the various tasks with regard to the livestock, the land and the

household. In some societies, there is no involvement of women in livestock production. Women lack ownership rights, control over resources and may or may not have control over the disposal of animals and animal products. In other societies, women are responsible only for processing products. In many societies, women are responsible for managing and processing small stock and other animals kept at the homestead.

In spite of substantial participation and contribution to transhumant economy, the role of women in livestock production has not been paid enough attention. This is in part because transhumant societies are male-dominated like most other subsistence systems, but also of the attitude of women themselves, who are socialised to underestimate their economic worth. The role of women in transhumant societies is generally described as subsidiary, their adversity, their subjugation and their lack of power as opposed to men's domination, ownership, power and associated patriarchal relation. Patriarchy denotes a culture of power relationship that promotes man's supremacy and women subjugation. It encompasses institutional endorsement of man's ascendancy within the family and other social structures. Patriarchy, like gender is produced, materialised, and transformed through culture and social relations. The Indian family organisation makes discrimination between the sexes. With a secondary status, women play but a submissive role in social life. On virtually all frontiers of human societal pursuits-economic, educational, scientific, legal, official, political and religious sphere Indian women suffer profoundly. Despite several economic, political and social changes, women are still far behind. In most transhumant societies, gender roles are strongly marked, and patterns seem to be similar across the world.

Several scholars have argued against these views. They believe that traditional and pre-colonial pastoral communities were comparatively egalitarian. Women were actively involved in pastoral activities and had great influence on decision-making processes on domestic as well as pastoral livelihood practices. It was because of the external pressure of male-dominated colonial powers, development works, and introduction of cash economies. The development interventions were always men oriented, which led to bifurcation of men and women sphere of activities. The women's duties restricted around

their homestead, thus marginalising their role and authority (Hodgson 1999; Kipury 1991; Joekes and Pointing 1991).

LITERATURE ON TRANSHUMANT WOMEN

There exists limited research about transhumant women and their role in livestock production. Earlier anthropological studies that dealt with pastoral gender relations applied a synchronic model, analyzing them in terms of either the pastoral mode of production or pastoralist ideology. Harold Schneider contended that among East African pastoralists, men's control of livestock gave them control of women, who were 'usually thoroughly subordinated to men and thus unable to establish independent identity as a production force' (1979: 82). Spencer alleged that both male and female Matapato Maasai believe in 'the undisputed right of men to own women as "possessions"'. Marriage, in his view, was therefore 'the transfer of a woman as a possession from her father who reared her to her husband who rules her' (1979: 198). Galaty (1988) maintained that in their ideology Maasai men were the 'real' pastoralists, while Maasai women were negatively equated with lower status hunters, providing an ideological explanation for their lower status.

The literature on women in pastoral societies is relatively limited when compared to the vast body of research on women in agriculture. The early studies of pastoralism largely ignore women's economic activities and social status, even though there have been some improvements in more recent literature, especially by anthropologists (Horowitz 1992). Martin and Voorhies (1975: 352) give reasons to explain why research on women in herding societies is so rare. "This is perhaps because of the bias that economic, political and social dominance of males which is common to interest of anthropologists". Categorically, women in pastoral societies have a critical role in the socio-economic and cultural activities, and the management and conservation of natural resources and environmental amenities of the household and communities. The pastoral societies have been largely seen to be male dominated in which men have economic, social, political and cultural powers special to men. In 1987, Dahl published a collection of essays with theoretical insights on issues related to women

and significant roles played by pastoral women in various pastoral societies. By detailing different axes of social differentiation, division of labour and ideological elements, most authors clarify economic roles and relative status of women in pastoral societies. Contrary to earlier anthropological treatments of pastoral women as socially and productively subordinate to men, these articles point out both direct and indirect ways that women contribute to subsistence production (Ensminger 1987; Fratkin and Smith 1995; Hodgson 2000; Little 1987; Talle 1987; Turner 1999). Such studies have highlighted the role of women in these societies in a variety of domains ranging from livestock production (Dahl 1987) to religious system (Straight 1997) to kinship (Bianco 2000) to food allocation (Holtzman 2002). In Somalia and in the north-eastern province of Kenya, women play a crucial role in solving conflicts (Elmi et al. 2000). In some pastoral societies, women are making effort to upgrade their technological and environmental knowledge that is crucial to their way of life (Smith and Webley 2000). Among Bedouin of Egypt, women try to update their database as livelihood practices keep changing (Briggs et al. 2003). Among matrilineal Tuareg pastoral groups of Sahara, women control urban markets indirectly from their rural tents through activities of men (Rasmussen 2002).

Pastoral societies in the Middle East show a poor understanding of the economic and political roles played by women. Fazel (1977) using comparative data examines strategies whereby women exercise power and influence decision-making at all levels in an apparently male-dominated society. Among Boyr Ahmad of southwest Iran, the position of pastoral women in relations of production, distribution and property disposition is regarded as the basis of their political power. In the Middle East and North Africa, where Islam is a determining factor, though women work more than men, are dominated by men. Adan (1988) discussed women's work in herding sheep and goats, and in milking and processing milk from small stock and large (camels and cattle) among Somalian pastoralists. Women work more than 11 hours a day in the dry season and 12-13 hours in a wet season: most of this time is spent watering stock in dry season and milking and making butter in wet season. Women work cooperatively to make the constituent parts of their movable houses and cook together on

ceremonial occasions. Both traditional law (*Her*) and Islamic law (*Shari'a*) regulate Somalian nomadic life. However, Muslim women of South Africa have greater autonomy and less gender bias.

Holtzman (2002) pointed out that researchers often failed to analyse the role and status of women, domestic/ public dichotomies among these allegedly prominently male dominated societies. This analytical framework assumes the universal subordination of women to men, attributes its cause to the asymmetrical binary opposition between the sexes that is women engage in domestic work concerning their own family and household such as cooking, collecting firewood, bringing water and child bearing in the private domain. While men care about their herds, herding and are engaged in trading (Ortner 1974; Rosaldo and Lampere 1974; Rosaldo 1974). It was clarified in later studies that private/public spatial distinction was not equivalent to a domestic/political distinction of power, nor was it clearly gendered or hierarchical (Collier and Rosaldo 1981). Such an explanation assumes that such distinctive spheres are universally present and unchanging through history. This Universalist argument has been criticised by many authors (Yanagisako 1979; Camaroff 1987). In the present study, an attempt has been made to study the status and role of women in three transhumant societies inhabiting different regions of Himalayas.

TRANSHUMANTS OF THE HIMALAYAS

A number of transhumant groups in Himalayas are practicing subsistence agriculture along with raising large herds of animals. Sheep and goat pastoralism is a constant feature of traditional mountain societies. *Gaddis*, *Gujjars*, *Bakarwals*, *Kinnauras*, *Kaulis* and *Kanets* of the north Indian Himalayas, *Bhotias* of Garhwal Himalayas, *Bhotias* and *Sherpas* of Khumbu valley of Nepal, *Kirats* of eastern Nepal, *Monpa* yak breeders of Arunachal Pradesh, *Bhutias* of Lachen and Lachung, Sikkim and *Changpas* of Changthang, Ladakh are some of the known pastoral communities of Himalayas. The pastoral communities of Himalayas make use of resources like high mountain pastures by three different ways by characteristic mobility patterns, socio-economic organisation and property rights. There are nomads like Changpa of Changthang in Ladakh,

whose economy is predominantly based on animal husbandry; there are agro-pastoralist groups like Gaddis of Bharmour, Himachal Pradesh; and Bhutias of Lachen and Lachung in Sikkim, who practice marginal agriculture and raise herds of sheep and goats and yaks (Bhasin 1988, 1989, 1996). The interaction of altitude, climate and soil fertility set upper limits on agriculture and pastoralism and within the range of agriculture, upper limits on types of crops (Troll 1968, 1972; Uhlig 1976; Dollfus 1981). Several authors have carried out studies on these pastoralist groups (Uhlig 1961; Singh 1963; Newell 1967; Khatana 1976a, 1976b; Nitzberg 1987; Goldstein and Messerschmidt 1980; Kango and Dhar 1981; Rao and Casimir 1982; Bhasin 1988, 1989, 1996; Farooquee and Rao 1999-2000). Though pastoral women studies have not been a major part of these, however information on the role of Himalayan women have been provided by Bhasin (1989, 1990, 1996, 2007), Biswas (1990), Farooquee and Rawat (2001), Ghatak (2006), Guha (1989), Katoch (2003), Pokhriyal (1985), Rana (1996), Rawat and Kothari (1994), Rao (1998), Rawat and Singh (1993), Samal (1993), Singh and Rawat (1992). Rao (1998) using the concepts of personal autonomy and agency among women and men, as they are reflected in daily decision-making within a frame of socio-religious perception and structures of power and authority studied the lives of Bakkarwal pastoralists.

PRESENT STUDY

The present study deals with status of women in three transhumant societies in Himalayas. Using comparative data, this paper explores how transhumant women of three groups exploit their power and influence decision-making in an apparently male dominated societies. The position of women in relation to production, distribution, maintenance of household and socialisation of children is regarded here as basis of their power. The transhumant societies are structured in terms of two social worlds- the private sphere of the house (the women's sphere) and the public sphere (the men's sphere). The social status of transhumant women is complex and is not possible to explain with a single paradigm. A single woman plays multiple roles associated with a particular relation to each individual.

All societies offer its children the presence

of two genders and related roles, according to kinship, sexuality, work, marriage and age. In the present study, an effort has been to describe the status of women in three different ecological regions, with different socio-economic conditions and cultural backgrounds. The conceptual framework to analyse women's status comprise the seven roles women play in life and work: parental, conjugal, domestic, kin, occupational, community and as an individual. In order to appraise the social status of women in these diverse ecological areas, the findings have been divided into subsequent categories: - (a) a girl /daughter/ a unmarried woman, (b) a married woman, (c) a widow, (d) divorcee, and (e) a barren woman. Bounded by moral sanctions and legal rights, women are compelled to obey their male relatives. Their work strategies are routed by cultural values, resources and choices available in the social system. In transhumant societies, analysis take into account women's role as members of production and household unit; in the kinship system as members of family and lineage; in marriage as members of inheritance structure and labour input and their position in decision-making. In transhumant societies, differential access to productive resources and property relations; division of labour by age and sex; decision making within the household and cultural cognitive categories all make difference to status of women. The sex roles in the transhumant organisation, produced by a specific set of cultural values and preferences as well as ecological, economic and technological factors work for the easy functioning of society.

Out of the three, two groups, Gaddis of Bharmour, Himachal Pradesh and Bhutias of Lachen-Lachung, North Sikkim are agro-pastoralist transhumant and the third group, Changpas of Changthang is of nomads. The transhumance system are similar in Bharmour and North Sikkim in that they are of vertical type where livestock move to high alpine region in summer and come back to lower mountain and valleys in winter. The Bhutias of Lachung and Lachung present an interesting contrast as far as movement for agricultural activity. The movements though vertical in both the cases are in the opposite direction. They are controlled by the presence of arable land at different elevations. The transhumants under study keep mixed flocks viz., sheep, goats, yaks, horses and dogs for wool, meat, rituals, transport and protection. Changpas of Cha-

ngthang raise herds of yak and flocks of sheep and *pashmina* goats. Gaddis at 2100 metres and Bhutias at 3000 metres follow *Alpwirtschaft* type of strategy, associated with the movement of peoples and animals in vertical space, communal control of pastures, combined with individual control of plots and haying fields and social institutions that schedule the complex movement in space and time. The Changpas inhabit the cold desert of Changthang, Ladakh at 3,500 to 4,500 metres. Their complete reliance on natural pastures creates difficulties for year round sustenance. Therefore, their pattern of migrations differs from Gaddis of Bharmour and Bhutias of Lachen and Lachung who have permanent houses at middle altitude. Gaddis spend their summers in their permanent homes in Bharmour tehsil and cultivate their lands. Due to heavy snowfall for about three to four months during winter, the Gaddis migrate to the lower hills and plains along with their sheep and goats. During this period, the main source of livelihood is the sale of wool and the employment of their children and the women as domestic help in the houses of landlords where they go and stay. 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; secondly, for the selling of raw wool which is available in large quantities in the absence of market facilities. Like Gaddis, Bhutias also migrate with their flocks to high altitude in summer and to lower altitude in winter (Bhasin 1988, 1989, 1996). Unlike Gaddis and Bhutias, Changpas have no reason to migrate to far off places, as the surrounding areas have the same short growing season. The tent-dwelling Changpas traverse with their livestock across the Changthang and the migrations between summer and winter pastures involve all the family members. An average family owns over two hundreds goats and sheep, several yaks and few horses. Changpas and Bhutias have communal pastureland with strong community regulation of land usage. Changpas and Bhutias follow the traditional system of grazing where in headman-the *goba* and *phi-phun* respectively decide areas for animal grazing. A unique feature of the traditional pastoral system is the complex administrative system of pasture allocation and reallocation by *goba* and *phi-phun* among Changpas and Bhutias respectively. Gaddis have property rights in Alpine pastures and customary rights or contracts

with residents in low hills for grazing. Male members of the family inherit these rights. In winter migrations, their families also accompany them. The Gaddis have property rights in Alpine pastures and customary rights or contracts with residents of lower hills. While men go with animals, women and children work as labourers and house help. The proprietor farmers provide shelter and grazing on their fields after harvest or on meadows. In return, the farmers get manure for their fields. The Changpa women of Changthang and Bhutia women of Lachen and Lachung in North Sikkim profess Buddhism while Gaddi women of Bharmour in Chamba district profess Hinduism. Changpas and Bhutias have communal pastureland with strong community regulation of land usage.

The prominent features of the three transhumant communities under study are given in Table 1.

For the transhumant cycle followed by the three communities see Table 2.

Women's Role in Economic Sphere

Pastoral women in India contribute positively to the local economy and participate along with men in subsistence activities. In reality, women do more work than men do. All households have a recognised head, the husband in the family, who represents the household in all public and official dealings. A woman is looked upon as the head of a household in the absence of an adult male. In these societies, women provide labour for the various tasks related to livestock but have no say in the process of decision-making, particularly over the disposal of animals and animal products. Economic activities are grouped into the following categories: *domestic, agro-pastoral, collecting, trading and other miscellaneous activities*. Men are shepherds and cultivators; women grow crops, cook and raise infants. The sexual division of labour is rather complete, though certain phases of agricultural labour fall to men, women shepherds exist under rare circumstances. Because of the tendency towards extensive social and economic equality in Buddhist society, there is no sharply defined division between the kind of work to be done by men and women in Bhutia society. However, among Changpas, there is however, a marked gender distinction in the pastoral production system, with the women involved mostly in milking and dairy

Table 1: The transhumance cycle followed by the three communities

Season	Months		Duration	Pastures
	From	To		
<i>Spring</i>				
Gaddis	Early April	End of June	90 days	Around Bharmour 1000-2500 metres
Bhutias (Lachenpa)	February 15	May 10	53 days	Lachen 2770 metres
Changpas	March-April	May-June	50-60 days	Changthang 3500-4500 metres
<i>Summer</i>				
Gaddis	July	September	90 days	Alpine pastures 2000-3500 metres
Bhutias (Lachenpa)	June	Middle of July	45 days	Yakthang, Samdong, Kalep 3600 metres
Changpas	July	September	80-90 days	Changthang 3500-4500 metres
<i>Autumn</i>				
Gaddis	October	December	90 days	Bharmour to Kangra hills 600-2300 metres
Bhutias (Lachenpa)	October	November	60 days	Thangu 3965 metres
Changpas	October	November	60 days	Changthang 3500-4500 metres
<i>Winter</i>				
Gaddis	December	End of March	120 days	Kangra hills
Bhutias (Lachenpa)	November	April	155 days	Lachen and Lower areas of Latong, Denga Geuma
Changpas	November	April	160 days	Changthang

processing, while males are responsible for shearing cashmere wool, herding and selling of animals. Both sexes participate in ceremonies, but men share the major responsibilities.

Domestic Activities: Married women in the study area carry out all types of work at home as well as outside that are a demand of mixed agro-pastoral economy. Among Gaddis and Bhutias, almost all women work in fields and take cattle to graze. The other activities of women include looking after the house and children, food preparation, food processing, collecting firewood and water, spinning and weaving, repairing clothes etc. The work done by women is constant, diverse and often arduous. Bhutia women, apart from growing food crops and fruits, accompany their husbands on pastoral duties as well. In the absence of men, the whole burden falls on the women. Among Changpas, the women and the old people staying back in the *rebo* are busy in the food processing, spinning wool and weaving clothes apart from other household work. Women and girls generally do the work within the household.

Women in these three groups do the milking and processing of milk but do not have the right to sell it. Changpa and Bhutias women also help

in dismantling and rebuilding their houses with the men when they move from one pasture to another with their herds. The pastoral gender division of labour only barely assigns to women major herding responsibilities over large stock. Women in the study groups take animals for grazing who do not accompany the main group for some reason or are left behind for agriculture. These women are different from Twareg women in Algeria, Niger, and Mali, who may own camels and who may engage in herding activities of small and large ruminants away from their domestic plain (Worley 1991). On the other hand, there are many reports of women herding sheep and goats, whose shorter grazing range does not call for women's prolonged separation from their homesteads.

Agro-pastoral Activities: In the traditional societies, which lack market system, the business of everyday living is usually carried on gender division of labour (Illich 1982). In the communities under study, the main subsistence activities are herding and agriculture and women folk are considered as the most important economic asset. Among Gaddis and Bhutias, the men are shepherds and women grow crops for food. Among Gaddis, in all other tasks concerned with life

Table 2: The prominent features of the three transhumant communities

Prominent feature	Population		
	Gaddis	Bhutias	Changpas
<i>Economy</i>	Agro pastoral	Agro-pastoral	Pastoral nomads
<i>Domesticated Livestock</i>	Sheep, goats and dogs	Yaks, Sheep, Ponies and dogs	Yaks, sheep, goats, horses and dogs.
<i>Transhumance</i>	Intervalley, Alpine pastures in summer and lower valleys in winter.	In summer to high altitudes in North Sikkim to lower altitudes in winter.	Summer and winter pastures in Changthang Plateau.
<i>Type of Transhumance</i>	Only men migrate to alpine pastures, women take care of crops. In winter, whole families migrate to lower hills, where men look after the flocks and women and children work in the homes of local landlords.	In summer whole families migrate to Thangu and Chopta valley and grow potato, radish and leafy vegetables. The herd owners move further north in search of fresh pastures. After the harvest of crops and onset of winters, they return back to their permanent residence. Some of them go further down to comparatively warm areas where they own cardamom plantations.	Changpas are pastoral nomads. Changpas move with their families, livestock, household goods and yak tents year round. These movements are regular and cyclic between the areas of summer pastures and winter pastures. The Changpas have communal pastureland with strong community regulation of land usage. The Changpas follow the traditional system of grazing wherein headman—the <i>goba</i> (headman) decides areas for animal grazing.
<i>Sources of Income</i>	Sale of wool, woollen products, animals and surplus grains	Trading of raw wool, blankets, rugs, <i>churpi</i> and other dairy products, potato and cardamom. New source of income by tourism.	Selling of butter, cheese, <i>pashmina</i> goat wool, sheep wool, lambskins, hides, occasional livestock, salt and small amounts of borax and sulphur.
<i>Social Structure</i>	Patrilineal, patriarchal, patrilineal. Patrilineal, caste groups, <i>gotras</i> , nuclear to parents. Monogamy and polygyny	Patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilineal, society is divided into 12 joint families, inheritance after the death of the <i>rus</i> (clan). Nuclear and polyandrous families, inheritance after the marriage of elder son during the life time of parents	Patriarchal, patrilineal, patrilineal, society is divided into named <i>phas-pun</i> . Nuclear, polyandrous families. They divide their property after the birth of the son's first child. Parents with their unmarried daughters move to a smaller house.
<i>Religion</i>	Gaddis profess Hinduism and worship Hindu gods and goddess. Despite the fact that the Gaddis are devout Hindus and they strongly lean towards Shaivism, the tradition of demon-worship and nature worship still persists. Most probably the religious beliefs and rituals were originally in essence demonolatry, ancestor worship and nature worship. With the passage of time, these religious beliefs were refined and retouched to form a part of the vast religious entity-Hinduism. This transformation was achieved by the absorption of local beliefs and rituals, rather than by their eradication. Patriarchal, patrilineal, patrilineal, society	Bhutias are Buddhists. They also believe in a vast array of gods and spirits who must be propitiated at appropriate time for the general welfare of society. The Bhutias of Lachen and Lachung place great emphasis on coercive rites of exorcising and destroying demons. The execution of religion is in the hands of trained specialists <i>Pau</i> , <i>Nejohum</i> and Lamas. <i>Pau</i> is a male and <i>Nejohum</i> is female. <i>Nejohum</i> wears a <i>Lhasyr</i> (white shawl). Bhutias permit its Lamas to marry one find both married and celibate lamas in village.	Although the Changpas of Changthang are Buddhists, yet their real worship is that of local spirits. People and animals live between the gods and the spirits, in a world, which is also inhabited by demons. Among the Changpas, there are three levels at which gods enter the community life — through household worship, <i>pha-spun</i> worship and <i>inter-pha-spun</i> worship. The Changpas worldview is that relation between animals and humans is based on link or association, rather than a clear boundary between them. Animals are an essential component of seasonal and life-cycle rituals, like the ceremonies associated with birth and marriage. Among the Changpas, animals are a vital link between man and the gods. For the reason that sheep and goats are of subsistence importance, they are icon of worship.

in the village, such as crafts, house building, watermills and work on boundary walls, there is division between men's work and women's work.

Among Gaddis and Bhutias, women perform major agricultural activities like hoeing, manuring, planting, weeding, irrigation, harvesting,

thrashing and preservation of seeds except ploughing (which are done by men) in the fields adjacent to houses or far off fields. Even when men are working in the fields, women help men by beating the soil after ploughing, manuring, reaping and winnowing. Apart from performing two-thirds of the duties for crop cultivation, women are largely responsible for the fodder and water for animals kept at home, while men herd the other animals. Bhutia women also look after *lee* (apple) gardens. Like women in Bangladesh who manage small ruminants, although men herd both cattle and small ruminants jointly (Feldman et al. 1986), Gaddi and Bhutias women also take care of sheep and goats that are left behind. Women and girls of Tihama region of Yemen are responsible exclusively for feeding, watering, milking and providing shelter for sheep, goats, cows and chickens kept at the homestead. Camel husbandry is a man's job (Hamada 1986).

Among Changpas, the involvement of women of all age groups in the different spheres of pastoral life is largely equal to that of males. In addition to the processing of milk, pastoral women also process the wool, fibres and hides. Pastoral women in all the three groups spin and weave woollen clothes, blankets, carpets, saddle bags and containers etc. All Changpa women work on loom for most of the time. The weaving of cloth is a measure of women's worth and a woman who does not weave, or who does not cook well, is not considered a good bride. Men claim to be spiritually cleaner than women are. Both Changpa men and women weave, though their looms are different. Men and women weave specific articles. Thus, while women must weave continuously, the men weave occasionally. The fabrics woven by women are as essential as those woven by men. There is a thread of prejudice against women running through discourse of spinning and weaving. Women weave textiles for use as clothes, blankets, containers for food and valuable possession, saddle bags for holding personal belongings, covering for floors, tent walls, and saddles. Men weave blankets, saddle-bags and tents.

The Changpa women weave in summer months, from May/June to October/November. Women weave on a back strap loom (*Sked-thags*), and men use a fixed handle (*Sikpa*) loom (*sa-thags*). Before the closure of border, as long as wool was coming from Tibet, the Bhutia women were practicing spinning and weaving as a house-

hold industry. However, now Bhutia women are mostly employed in making carpets, blankets, scrolls, Sikkimese caps leather and woollen shoes in a Sikkim Institute of Cottage Industry for carpet and blanket weaving.

In the making of clothes, Gaddi men do the twisting of three threads on a spinner, weaving and making *Doras* etc., while teasing and spinning the wool into thread is done by women. Embroidery, repairing and dyeing of clothes are female tasks.

Collecting Activities: Pastoralists mostly depend on natural resources, particularly for fuel, fodder and water. Women look after collection of all the three. In Changthang and north Sikkim, women collect yak dung to be used as fuel, while Gaddi women collect cow dung for using as manure in the fields. 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.

Bhutia women collect yak dung which they use as fuel and manure. Storing of hay is an essential part of pastoral economy. In Lachen and Lachung, herds are fed on hay from December to April. Immediately after the harvest of potatoes and vegetables, women cut grasses and weeds, tie these in bundles and store on the rooftop. They have to pluck fruits in time. They also collect roots, vegetables, fuel and fodder for daily use from the forest. Changpa women also have to collect animal dung, as there are no forests in this cold desert. At campsites, the animals are tethered in *les*. It takes months for one group to return to the same spot. After settling, women collect animal's dung, and use it as fuel especially when it is scarce during the long winters.

Trading Activities: In areas where milk production generates a surplus above household and herd consumption requirements, women may benefit by taking it to local markets and to small town processing centres. Barbara Michael (1990) reporting on production and marketing of milk and dairy products in the Sudan, states that Baggara women participate in all stages of this economic activity, and that their incomes constitute two-thirds of total annual household budget. They manage the money, which they earn and usually use it for the purchase of new stock or animal feed. Women's marketing links to various private and state cheese factories are facili-

tated by government pick-up posts and by a chain of middle women who sell the milk to retail sellers. Pastoral women serving consumer's needs in small encampments may also engage in milk transaction in urban areas, where primarily older local women traders who act as intermediaries between producers and consumers dominate markets. The desegregated nature of the milk market, the relative durability of soured milk, and the low initial capital investment facilitate the participation of distant pastoralist women in milk marketing, which allows them a degree of cash autonomy (Horowitz and Jowkar 1992).

The literature is exceptionally unforthcoming on the roles of women in the marketing of wool, hides and skins, yet these are often highly significant outputs of pastoral and agro-pastoral production systems.

In West Africa, herded sheep do not produce wool. The herders tan and use locally the hides of sheep, goats, and cattle. In East Africa, where herding households tend to slaughter their own livestock, there is a greater household involvement in hide and skin marketing which is an important source of income for women.

The socio-economical relevance of pastoral women and their contribution in livestock production in the study area is only supportive. In all the three communities, milk production does not generate a surplus above household and herd consumption requirements, women do not benefit by taking it to local markets and to small town processing centres. Both Changpas and Bhutias are far from trading towns and cities and women do not participate in all stages of economic production. The Gaddi women do migrate to places around Kangra town, but are busy working as househelp or labourers and men look after trading. Changpa men indulge in salt and *pashmina* trade and women keep out of it. These women do contribute to household economy but are not part of the pastoral production. Bhutias and Changpa women apart from performing their household duties, take on small business, run shops or work as porters as and when need arises.

Among Bhutias and Changpas, the involvement of women of all age groups in the different spheres of pastoral life is largely equal to that of the males. They actively take part in milking along with males besides processing the milk into storing form – butter, *churpi* etc., that are to be changed for grains in the subsequent time. This

situation is in contrast to Nuers, as observed by Evans Pritchard (1940: 22) that, “milking is performed daily by women, girls and uninitiated boys. Men are forbidden to milk cows——”. Stenning (1959) observed that among pastoral Fulani of Nigeria, Fulani women are responsible for marketing of milk and milk products as well. Among Changpa nomads, though women are involved in all spheres of pastoral life and their involvement in their subsistence economic activities is much bigger, they are not given the portfolio of trade. These pastoral women have woven an indelible and colourful pattern of culture and lifestyle in these rugged and economically marginalised regions. These women enjoy higher social status because there is no clear-cut division of labour or specific land rights. In the traditional set up, there were no institutionalised ways of earning cash by pastoral women of study area. Absence of infrastructure and preservation technology has so far prevented most women's direct access to urban consumers. Since the men are usually grazing the herds during the day, it is women who interact with traders and intermediaries who come there to purchase animals and animal products. However, presently by the integrated Rural Development Programme and Allied Programme, the women are helped in self-earning through poultry farming, piggery etc. It is true that these interventions have created more work for these already burdened women but have enhanced their economic value.

Women's Role in Social Sphere

Role of pastoral women in the study area is not only of importance in the economic activities, but her role in non-economic activities is equally important. Formation and continuity of family hearth and home is the domain of the women. Women's role as wives, mothers, and organisers and as basic foundation of other dimensions of social life is of extreme importance. In the pastoral societies, as men are out for pastoral duties, the socialisation of children automatically becomes mother's business, in the early years of life at least. The family assumes mother centeredness with the children and some important decisions falling into the sphere of women's intervention. In all the three societies, the role of women in childbirth, funerals and fairs and festivals is an important part of village life. Here women are carriers of traditional information in absence of written records.

Women's Role in Political Sphere

This inclination of pastoral societies in being androcentric is also reflected in women's absence from formal political institutions. Elder men work out decisions regarding herd mobility, conflict resolution, and diplomatic relations with neighbouring groups and the state. Both among Bhutias and Changpas, women can enjoy high social status and exercise a considerable measure of autonomy and decision-making power, a result of their participation in daily productive and reproductive activities. Women exercise, in fact, considerable informal political influence in their communities and households with regards to men's economic activities, marriage of their offspring, inheritance, transhumance routes, and the like (Horowitz and Jowkar 1992). The role of women's empowerment for a just society was highlighted in the Beijing Conference (1995). In all the three societies under study, women power does not extend to societal or political spheres. The economic power of the women in the household is not translated into corresponding community authority. Women supremacy is restricted within the family domain and does not extend to social or political spheres. It is interesting to note that although by convention every village Panchayat has a female member, the woman never bothers to attend the meeting or to take any active interest in the proceedings of Panchayat. Sikkim has a tradition of collective decision making by communities through the institution of *Dzumsha*. However, traditional institutions do not witness a significant role for women and *Dzumsha* is constituted of males only. In the absence of a male member, a female can represent her family unit. If a male head is absent from *Dzumsha* meeting, he is fined, however if represented by female head, she is liable to pay half the amount for her absence. Like Bhutias' *phipun*, *goba* holds Changpa encampments together and unites into unit. In this democratic form of government, the village council (*chogdus*) selects *goba* (Headman). The village council consists of all the male heads of the separate households. Women are generally bypassed and marginalised either they lack the requisite skills, or because women's heavy and unending domestic responsibilities makes attending meetings and participating in decision making difficult. Even the economic power of the women in the household is not trans-

lated into a corresponding community authority. Women perform waged and non-waged, productive and unproductive labour. The workload that is associated with these activities most unlikely does not give women any time to indulge in community affairs.

Women's Role in Religious Sphere

All the three societies under study show male dominance in ritual sphere. Two prominent religions – Buddhism and Hinduism, are professed by the pastoral groups under study operate with tenets that are restrictive of women's participation in their rituals. Their conventional religion is different from their professed religion. Gender is a significant slip-up in Buddhist societies, as in Hindu or Islamic ones. Buddhist monastic practices reinstate the social hierarchies that the Buddha had disparaged. Nuns and their nunneries are completely ignored. Nuns remain subject to the authority and scrutiny of monks throughout a religious life that is theoretically devoted to rise above gender and other social hierarchies. In Buddhist communities, monasticism is as structured around a gender division of labour and the dualities of sex as are the lay communities. Nuns are distinguished from female renunciates who live at home and do not perform any public rituals. Buddhist women can never become monks or be ordained due to the ideology of purity and pollution. Among Changpas and Bhutias, the lay and monastic realms are not alternating, as the monks play a central role in politico-economic processes. In Ladakh, Buddhist monasteries are wealthy, as monasteries are the biggest landing agencies and act as treasury. The lay patronage which sustains Buddhist monasticism is the Buddhist idea of earning merit. There is synchronised and incessant exchange between the laity and monastery, and the politico-economic and religious functionaries of the area. However, Buddhist nuns face many hardships first in establishing and afterwards in maintaining these nunneries. To become a nun, women reject her femininity and maternity and dedicate her to spiritual life in the nunnery. When a girl joins nunnery to learn rituals and Buddhist sermons, even then she is not free of her economic responsibilities towards her family and village. She performs her agricultural duties on the family farms and monastic estates. Families allow their daughters to join nunneries in order to earn

merit and at the same time make sure the assurance of their productive services. Buddhist nuns play an important arbitrating role between the monastery and the laity by performing ritual services and serving monks and society, thereby earning merit for their families and communities while continuing to perform labour in the fields. Both nuns and monks take vows to abstain from worldly pursuit, but nuns end up working as domestic help. The Buddhist way of life and making merit can neither assure a livelihood for nun nor provide funds for their periodic rituals, while assuring the same for the monks and their *gompas*. Despite the fact that nuns earn wide-ranging merit for the entire community, it does not assure them patronage as they do not perform practical *tantric*, instrumental and propitiatory rituals like monks.

The religious organisation of Buddhist society of Ladakh gives an idea about the gender inequality that denies status and independence to Buddhist nuns and perpetually subordinate and marginalise them. The situation of Bhutia and Changpa nuns is like that of Sherpa nuns. Ortner (1996) found that the moment of their creation as institutions the monastery supposedly represented the culmination of public concerns, and the nunnery the embodiment of domestic ones.

Changpas and Bhutias place great emphasis on coercive rights of exorcising and destroying demons. Both the communities have trained male and female specialists for exorcising demons. Changpas have *lha-ma* (female) and *lha-pa* (male) and Bhutias have *pau* (male) and *nejohum* (female) who play part in exorcising rights. Changpa and Bhutias nunneries are geographically separated from the *gompas* (monastery) and nuns do not perform rituals and funeral rights for the people. They are present only during festivals and certain ceremonies as spectators or at the time of earning merit for oneself. Bhutias even make difference between male and female funeral pyres. In the case of female and male funeral pyres, eight and seven tiers of firewood are laid respectively for consuming the body into flames. Bhutias explain this discrimination in a way that women are one degree below men in the society. To compensate this lower status of women, her pyre is raised higher (Bhasin 1991).

Among Gaddis as well men control ritual realm. Women participate in dancing and sing-

ing. In the rituals of Gaddi *Chela*, Gaddi women merely participate as spectators. There are no female counterparts of Gaddi *Chela*. Women are never appointed as priests, and are skillfully manipulated against themselves. Both sexes participate in ceremonies, but men shoulder major responsibilities. Men mainly play musical instruments. Women do take part in dancing but their movements are different from men. As the religious sphere is most dominating among pastoralists, it constitutes a major field for male domination. The women are deprived of public authority. Religion legitimises gender hierarchy. The subordination of women in religious activities and their denial of access to positions of religious leadership has been a powerful tool in most world religions in supporting the patriarchal order and the exclusion of women, from the public form (Ortner 1974; Sered 1994; Franzmen 2000). The religious sphere is a major field for male dominance, and a strategy to deprive women of public authority (Scott 1988; Jones 1993). There are a few innovations in religious sphere, and hence these changes must exist within a traditional, ritual and textual structure. Religious institutions are resistant to gender equality. In structure, an explicitly male religious framework contains the pastoral societies.

Changpas follow a ritually defined living arrangement in their *rebos*. The household occupying a *rebo* is a commensal and property-owning group. The space in the left side of the tent is for females and right for males. This is further accentuated by the placement of articles and work performed. The men of the household always pray while sitting on the right side. They store prayer books, incense and other ceremonial articles on the right side. They keep saddles, saddle covers, stirrups and bridles, as well as saddlebags and blankets woven by men on right side of the tent. On the left side of the tent women keep their kitchenware. Women cook and do all household work on the left side of the tent. They construct shelves on the left side of the tent for keeping clothes of family members, saddlebags and blankets woven by women. The women of the house, including those who visit, inhabit the left side of the tent. The husband and wife sleep on the left side. Deliveries also take place on the left side. Children sleep on the right side (Bhasin 1992). Though both men and women occupy different portions of the domestic sphere, but outside their *rebos*, they walk together or assemble at common public places.

In these areas (as in all other areas), women have their own perceptions of gender equality that cannot be easily quantified by standard indicators

Women's Perceptions on Contribution in Work Home: About fifty percent women in the study area replied in affirmative. Husbands should and do help in cooking and bringing water. There is practically no task, other than minding small children, which does not require cooperation of both sexes. 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, they may help in the work at home.

Prohibitions during Pregnancy and Menstruation: There are no restrictions during pregnancy between Bodh and Bhutias women, while among Gaddis women there is restriction on keeping fast. After the childbirth, among Bodhs and Bhutias, the mother observes a period of pollution, when she is confined to the house for a certain period, usually lasting 30 days. Even outsiders cannot eat food or drink water from the house where childbirth has taken place, as a house is defiled by the childbirth (*bangthip*). It is a socially imposed *zem-ches*. They also cannot appear before the shrines of family and village gods. Among Gaddis there are no such restrictions, as sometimes deliveries take place during migrations. They do not worship, cook food and bring water. All the women justified the restrictions considering them impure.

Ownership of Jewellery after Marriage: More or less all the women considered it as their right to own jewellery.

Permission of Remarriage of a Divorced Woman: All women agreed on the point that like men, women should also have the prospect to remarry.

Women's Talk: Tribal women talk about their homes, children and emotions; while men talk about work, innovations, ideas and politics. Pastoral women in the study area are separated by language. They speak local language; Hindi is mostly understood and spoken by men. The women's mobility on social ladder is through marriage to a person who is likely to be socially mobile. They think it does not affect a woman's social position whether she is educated or uneducated. Thus, mostly boys are sent to school. This discrimination against girls is not because of her lack of intelligence or ability to learn, it is

only that it is not going to help her in the traditional lifestyle. The problem of conversing with women is that all questions have to be asked through men and getting the answers by men. Men translate, take things for granted, and mould their answers to suit their occasion.

Concept of Women's Space: Among pastoral groups in the study area, 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 result from the sexual division of labour. It is a characteristics feature of traditional societies to set apart, or see a distinction in physical space, which is used by men and women (de Schlippe 1956; Edelberg and Jones 1979; Ladurie 1979; Illich 1982). In the study area, there are no such private or intimate spaces for women, though men have public space to hold meetings, settle disputes, and discuss political and farming issues. Women do not have a similar, formal sitting space. The water mill is another space, which interchangeably becomes men's or women's. However, as there are several water mills in each settlement, if women are at one, it tends to be only women and children, but there are no fixed rules. When women occupy public spaces like water source, water spring, field etc., men usually do not join them. The women interact with each other, not with their men as couples. Among Gaddis, the 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 close to an area where a group of women is sitting. By these standards, pastoralists 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, providing bath to children etc. is all carried out here. The kitchen is a woman's domain.

The grazing grounds in and around the village, near water source are areas where old women, young girls and small boys sit with babies, to mind cattle and sheep and goat. In the transhumant societies of Gaddis and Bhutias, both summer and winter pasture contains the elements

of time and space when compared to village economy. That is to say, the pastures are spatially removed and are at different altitudes. Being seasonally used, they bring the concept of time. They provide gender differences in the utilisation of resources and tool such as animals as opposed to field crops, male instead of female labour. The pastoral women in the study area have been denied roles associated with masculinity as a result of ideology of the family and kinship, which identifies paternal roles with authoritative roles. Few women who have succeeded in acquiring some positions in communal life have found that their competence or their executive methods are frequently challenged or ridiculed.

Equal Rights to Men and Women: Pastoral women in the study area recognise the fact that they have been discriminated against in education, income, consumption, status and access to power; they have a worse health record than men; they suffer from social, cultural and legal discrimination and often from violence. They are discriminated on grounds of equity (which refers to equality of opportunities and choices) and efficiency. There is need for quantitative measurement, for a complete set of cultural and rights indicators to assess women's rights.

Labour Work: Earlier when a woman was working on her farm or collecting minor forest produce from the forest for her family, she felt belonged to it. However, with the change in scenario, when she has to do the labour work, she has to collect forest produce for the other agencies, her economic role becomes different. They feel as they are working as unskilled labourers, it does not help in improving their position. Providing skilled training to women may help in elevating their status. Pastoral women insist on a need based plan for providing work on year round basis, in line with the multiple occupational pattern of their work.

Violence against Women: Few women are free from threat and violence at the hands of their husbands. Violence often becomes a tool to socialise family members according to prescribed norms of behaviour with an overall perspective of male dominance and control. Kelkar (1991) situates violence against women 'in the socio-economic and political context of power relations' and it should include 'exploitation, discrimination, upholding of unequal economic and social structures, the creation of an atmosphere of terror, threat or reprisal and forms of religio-

cultural and political violence (Kelkar 1991). However, the violence in the form of female foeticide and infanticide suffered by women of other castes and communities it seems is not present among pastoralists.

Voting Rights Pastoral women take pleasure in their voting rights and about 85 per cent of women in the study area used their right. Paradoxically, most of them follow the advice of their husbands or some of them are under pressure to accept the wishes of their husbands.

Reproductive Rights: Women in the study areas have no personal opinion on the women's movement in the other parts of the world on the reproductive health issue as a part of women's reproductive rights. They are not comfortable with the idea of women regulating their own fertility. Though they do manage to have abortion with crude methods but men tackle major issues of planning the family. However, the women's reproductive health problems are originated in gender inequalities, control of power and resources.

Utilisation of Health Services: Utilisation of health and maternal health services is influenced by the characteristics of the health delivery system such as the availability, quality and the cost of the services. However, it does not necessarily means that if medical services are operational in an area all women are expected to avail the facility. It may be true that, even under the same conditions of availability, the response is different. Other factors such as social structure and status of women are equally important. In the study area, women could not take the decision on their own about going to health centres. It was not only peer pressure but lack of education which was the deciding factor.

Women role in pastoral societies have been discussed by many scholars mainly focusing on role of women in pastoral societies and related development programmes (Abu-Bodie 1979; Adan 1988; Al-Hassany 1983; Beaman 1983; Dahl 1987; Fazel 1977; Hewitt 1989; Horowitz and Jowkar 1992; Kipuri 1989, 1991; Oxby 1987). It has been observed that many development projects among African pastoral groups have not responded well, because planners and administrators did not take roles played by women into account (Hodgson 2000; Kettle 1992). As Himalayan pastoral groups are facing the same dilemma, the studies from other parts of parts may help to understand the importance of women role for social interventions. In real-

ity, gender roles in livestock production are not always rigidly defined or followed. Women are called to perform male roles and sometimes even men perform female duties.

All Indian pastoralists are facing common problem of shrinking of their pastoral resource base. The establishment of national parks and sanctuaries, in combination with the expansion of agriculture into marginal areas has undermined the traditional livelihood of all of them. Displacement and settlement of pastoralists is a common response to shrinking of pastures and environmental degradation. There is a chain of adverse conditions, which are forcing pastoralists to abandon their nomadic lives, their traditions and total loss of their identity and culture. No matter the cause, sedenterisation of transhumant groups has adverse effects on women's role and status. The pastoral families feel labour shortage as number of household members is reduced; women lose access to mutual aid networks, their social economic activities are diversified and their position and status as a whole are diminished. Moreover, degradation of the pasturelands contributes to the deterioration of both animals and fodder supply, a combination that considerably increases the burden of work on women. Any deterioration in the quality of grazing results into a reduction in milk supply, which is so critical to household provisioning and to household income. Reductions in milk availability force changes in the pastoral diet and in the amount of time women spend on food processing. As cereals become more prominent in the diet, women must spend more time in transforming the unhusked grain into meal and in obtaining more fuel wood for cooking, which increases land degradation and impoverishment.

An immediate consequence of the shift out of dairying is its adverse effect on women's normal authority over the management of household milk supplies. With the degradation of pastureland, they have to spend more time caring for young, sick and feeble livestock, which are kept at the homestead.

Wood shortage is another aspect of resource reduction, which has particular repercussions for women. Women are responsible for collecting firewood and often for house building. These have become increasingly time-consuming and tiring tasks as they have to walk for longer distances to find and gather sufficient firewood and construction material. Deterioration of the range-

land, which necessitates frequent moves to find new pasture, results in additional work for pastoral women. House moving are the women's responsibility, and more frequent moves means that this activity becomes much more time consuming (Dahl 1979: 64). Another matter of concern for pastoral women is the privatisation of common lands. Land privatisation, either by outsiders or by wealthy insiders, results in land shortage, which has an adverse impact on women. As a result, women's traditional access to private and common land is curtailed.

Among pastoral groups, at some point in their growth, individual households face labour shortages or surpluses. It is natural in communities which are not affluent, and where labour can hardly be purchased, that there should be some arrangement for co-operation, when man is in want. All the three groups have mutual aid groups and obligatory assistance. These relationships are reciprocal. In the recent years, there have been major changes in the socio-economic structure of pastoral systems, which have reduced the variability of households and broken the exchange systems. This has called for major re-orientation of labour allocation strategies towards employment, education for the young, and wage employment etc., resulting in increase in women's workloads in various ways.

The evidence thus indicates that environmental degradation contributes significantly to women's workloads while reducing their capacity to meet their household provisioning obligations. It suggests that the extra time many women have to spend in subsistence activities such as gathering wood, water, and fodder reduces the amount of time available for other economic activities. For poor women, or those with limited access to resources, the impact is likely to be even greater. In the course of their daily work, pastoral women develop an intimate knowledge of natural resource management, which they put in practice for the benefit of community and environment. As keeper of traditional knowledge, women pastoralists make an important contribution towards the sustainable management of land and natural resources the world over. Planners and administrators can make use of their knowledge and capabilities.

In the study area, both Changpas and Bhutias are feeling the crunch of resources due to closure of border after the Indo-China war. Changpas were using rich pastures near Tibet in win-

ter. As a result of border conflict, these people were forced to alter their migrations, find alternative pastures or reduce the number of animals. Numbers of Changpa families have settled near Leh and are facing the difficulties of changing their profession and way of life. Likewise, for Bhutias of Lachen and Lachung, animal husbandry was not sufficient to sustain the population, so they indulged in marginal trading activities with Tibetans across the border. Consequently, the Bhutias of Lachen and Lachung were trading with Tibetans across the border. The barter of timber, wood, dyestuffs and dairy products of North Sikkim for Tibetan salt and wool formed the basis of this trade. The Bhutias of Lachen and Lachung pursued it as an occupation intimately interwoven with their pastoral activities. Thus, as long as trade was unhampered by political restrictions, it enabled them to remain economically independent. However, with the closing of the Tibetan border in 1962, life changed for these people. It deprived them of their livelihood and had an adverse effect on their traditional crafts. Military encampments, supply basis, and defense posts were set up. Bhutias shifted from a pastoral and trading economy to a more settled agriculture and small scale horticulture and wage-earning economy. Now with the opening of the area, tour operators are plying in Lachen and Lachung and Bhutias have started boarding and lodging in services. Many of them have bought vehicles and have started transporting tourists. Though Gaddis have not been affected by Indo-China war, but they are stressed by the stringent forest laws and breaking of traditional pasturing relationships. Gaddis identify land tenure or lack of clarity in grazing rights as one of the major problems. These traditional laws were documented over a century ago at the time of land settlement, but much has changed since then.

There have been many development interventions focusing on livestock in these mountain areas in the last two-three decades. These development interventions in other parts of the world have faced numerous challenges and in many instances met with complete failure (Morton and Meadows 2000; Pratt et al. 1997). Researchers working in arid and semi-arid areas of Africa have attributed these failures to their migratory way of life as contrary to the goals of range management (Ellis et al. 1993; Ellis and Swift 1988; Fratkin 1997; Fratkin and Smith

1994; Momewood and Rogers 1987; McCabe 2004; Scoones 1996). Many scholars contradicted this view and corrected this misconception (Benke and Scoones 1992; Ellis and Swift 1988; Gunderson and Holling 2002; Hogg 1985; Kelly 1993; Morris 1988), new challenges continue to face pastoralist development. One such challenge comes from a failure to take into account changing divisions of labour in the design and implementation of development interventions. Wangui (2008) examined the development of gendered aspects of livelihood strategies and various development interventions. Central to this is an empirical analysis of gendered division of labour in the context of rapidly changing pastoralists livelihood. These livelihood changes led to shift in gendered roles in livestock production. Quantification of women's roles is relevant because the role of women is consistently downplayed by pastoralists.

DISCUSSION

In all the three transhumant communities under study, men handle large livestock and women look after the small animals or animals that are left behind. A sexual division of labour is common in pastoral societies, but the role of women's labour stands in sharp contrast to that of women in foraging societies. Men's duties outside the confine of the household involve less time, energy and labour. These activities include grazing, vaccination, deworming, and purchase of fodder and medicines and taking animals to dispensary mainly occur in public domain. All these activities entail movement, access to new technology and information and interaction with market. Patterns of gender division of labour are common and location specific. However, it is common in three communities that women look after the animals kept at home. In spite of having this sexual division of labour, women take care of animal's health, reproduction, their feeding and cleaning of sheds or pens. The activities performed by women look small and appear to involve low skill are important for the survival of livestock. This makes livestock production and management a household activity with flexible division of labour between the sexes. The intra-household division often depends on household labour availability, the number and type of livestock and economic position of the household. In fact, many household decisions are taken by

both men and women, although they may not be formally recognised as such for socio-cultural reasons. In all the three societies, children gender roles are separated early in life. The girls are trained to perform roles traditionally performed by women and the boys learn the skills of men. There is change in the traditional division of labour due to the development in the respective areas. More and more people are opting for non-traditional employments. These jobs are related to income generation.

In transhumant groups, women have limited rights to dispose of the products of pastoral production, which tend to be controlled by men. Though women labour is important to societal reproduction, the status of women is lower in pastoral groups. In all the three groups' traditional rules and regulations form the foundation of women's position which is reflected in the traditional practices of society. The tools of production are owned by men, as are the forces of production—animals and pasture rights. Limited right of girls' access to education, lack of access to control resources and the associated rights and benefits of their roles in community affairs, decision-making, labour division etc., does not enhance women's status. In all the three societies under study, women power does not extend to societal or political spheres. The economic power of the women in the household is not translated into corresponding community authority. Men's work in public sphere has usually enjoyed higher status than women's domestic work. Women supremacy is restricted within the family domain and does not extend to social or political spheres. The main obstacle to having equality in status of women and men is the women's lesser ability to perform work other than domestic work. Pastoralists explain the differences in their behaviour on physiological and psychological differences. 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 proceedings of Panchayat. Sikkim has a tradition of collective decision making by communities through the institution of *Dzumsha*. However, traditional institutions do not witness a significant role for women and *Dzumsha* is constituted of males only. In the absence of a male member, a female can represent her family unit. If a male head is absent from *Dzumsha* meeting, he is fined, how-

ever if represented by female head, she is liable to pay half the amount for her absence. This shows that women have a secondary importance in public affairs and community decision-making. Women are generally bypassed and marginalised either because they lack the requisite skills, or because women's heavy and unending domestic responsibilities makes attending meetings and participating in decision making difficult.

As a result of cultural and religious norms, women are deprived of property ownership rights and given lower status in the three communities. They are denied of participation in traditional leadership control of key assets and inheritances of common properties, etc. However, the pastoral women in the study area have been given special privileges in marriage, divorce or remarriage.

Transhumants speak little of statuses and roles when talking about their social life. What they do talk of are the skills for managing the environment for making a living. They also talk of marriage, married life, children, and their socialisation within a community of relationships. The women's world in transhumant societies has three major manifestations: the home, children and private communication patterns between women of the camps. Transhumant societies tend to be male dominated, although variations in female status do occur. Characteristically, males control the ownership, distribution and tending of animals, while women look after home, children, dairying and subsistence agriculture. Rights of access to resources are highly limited and through inheritance. On the surface, all the three groups are patriarchal. Central and cultural institution such as marriage is regulated by men. Men take major decisions about the mobility, migration, sale of animals and animal products. They represent the household in village council and inherit property and grazing rights. On the other hand, men are highly dependent on women for domestic well-being (Holtzman 2002). Women feed men and provide men with children through their sexuality, which they control to a certain extent. Usually women are responsible for ensuring that food is available for the household and for themselves. To make sure that there is continual supply of food throughout the year; preservation of food items in time of surplus is the major strategy of women. They command a large degree of control over food items. This

gives them power in their own rights. There are number of ways in which women oppose wrongdoings, or undermine their husband authority. Women frequently engage in extramarital affairs, giving births to children not sired by their husbands. As was seen among Gaddis, where economic ability of woman and her consequent social position has resulted in special institutional privileges that are bestowed on the woman. To mention only a few: (a) in case of the birth of a child after the husband's death irrespective of the time gap, child, if it is born in the husband's house (*chaukhandu*= born within the four walls), has full inheritance rights; (b) in case the child is born away from the husband's house, the child gets a share of property from woman's father or brother. In case of remarriage, the child is entitled to inheritance rights from her new husband. The extent of the property settlement is decided before woman agrees to remarry; (c) it is socially expected and considered as desirable that subsequent to the death of her husband, a women should marry her brother-in-law, but in actual practice the woman has a final say and she may refuse to enter such a marriage; (d) 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 has been no case of women being punished or sent away on charges of promiscuity and immorality. This tolerance of promiscuity is obviously related to the economic importance of women.

The beliefs and ideas held by locals have a vital influence on the lives of the men, women and children. For one thing, it reinforces the gender division of work, place, tools and language. The present position and condition of the pastoral women is not an accidental affair. According to religious beliefs, women are considered impure, that is why they are not allowed to use plough and interact with supernatural beings directly. The economic cycle and division of labour in the transhumant areas has given an important role to the women. This economic role has undoubtedly affected the social position of women, who have social freedom that is quite remarkable in its scope.

Role of women is not only of importance in economic activities, but her role in non-economic activities is equally important. Women's role as wives, mothers, organisers and as the basic foundation of other dimensions of social life is of utmost importance. The transhumant women in

these areas occupy an economically significant place that is reflected in the generally high position and the importance that they have. The socio-economic equality of sexes can be observed in the attitudes and practices concerning marriage, divorce and household harmony. Girls have a say in their selection of marriage partner. There are different type of marriages that suit the occasions. Divorce is permitted and can be initiated by aggrieved party on grounds of incompatibility of nature with socio-judicial approval among three groups. A divorce is compensated by way of returning marriage expenses. Children are normally the liability of the father in divorce cases. Among Gaddis, in the event a divorcee woman wants to take them she can do so, if the divorcee husband also desires the same. *Khewat* (divorcee remarriage) can however take place. Widow remarriage is also permitted among Gaddis, preferably with elder or younger brother (fraternal widow inheritance). However, ultimate choice rests with the lady.

The transhumant women work very hard, in some cases even more than the men do. However, these women are not backward. They have power in their own sphere, no men tell 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. The concept of patriarchy, which prevails in subsistence societies, conveys respect rather than envy between the genders (Illich 1982). Despite the fact that transhumant women live their lives as dependents throughout their lifecycle: as daughters, sisters, and wives; or as mothers of sons, they have far more power and independence than modern sub-urban homemakers do. 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's house or finds a new one. Her economic ability and consequent social position has resulted in special institutional privileges that are bestowed on the women. In spite of having freedom, they seldom have a voice in the political sphere. They are not ignored at household level, but are not given due credit and importance in political and

religious subjects. They are like invisible hands shaping and maintaining the structure of society. Authority and power in these societies is structured by gender and age. As men grow older, their political power as members of village council increases. Women as they grow older, do not achieve any political power, though they do gain power and respect in the household. Based on her study of a Greek village, Friedl (1967:97) argues that in this society women in the "private sector" are able to influence important political and economic decisions "behind the façade of the public male dominance.....". In her opinion, it is the private domain of the family and not the public which can reveal the "relative attribution of power to males and females in most societies. While both Aswad (1967) and Chinas (1973) seem to emphasize the "informal roles" of women in influencing and affecting political decisions, Mohsin (1967: 154) in her analysis of position of women among the Moslem Awlad Ali views " participation in the public affairs of society (as) only one index of the political position of an individual....." the other being the legal rights accorded to women whereby they are able to influence political decision- making.

Women play an important role in their household economy. Transhumant women operate effectively in most economic and social institutions, participating in both local and migrant labour activities. Women's autonomy in terms of decision- making is highly constrained among transhumants. They have little access to, and exercise limited control over resources; and few are free from threat and violence at the hands of their husbands. If they work outside and earn wages, it does not alter the scene. Working for wages is not necessarily an indicator of autonomy. The wage earning pastoral women cannot make the decision to work on their own, nor do they have control over their earnings. The marriage pattern and family ties ensure that women are not cut off from family support.

Full range of social and cultural institutions, which reproduce gender hierarchies and gender-based inequalities include legal equality and excess to education and health. In the transhumant areas under study, the economic cycle and division of labour in the area has given an important role to the women. Environmental resource management illustrates that sustainability, especially in fragile ecosystems of Changthang and Sikkim, is better achieved by know-

ledge, skills and techniques of local people, which include mostly women. This does not necessarily mean that women are generally more environment-friendly; it is just that division of labour has given an important role to the women. Women's participation in the economic activity is important for their personal advancement and their status in the society. Work participation is influenced by a combination of number of social, economic, cultural and demographic factors. There is cultural similarity among the different groups in the study area, as the women from different groups have the same economic roles 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 economy without which the given economic system will not survive, (b) complementary to the men as work force, in organised functioning of the whole economic system. The economic power of the women in the household is not translated into a corresponding community authority. The male head, who is custodian of property, manages the family finance. Selections of the bridegroom for the daughter or sister, acquisition or disposal of property are all domains of the male members or eldest male. In spite of a substantial contribution in the subsistence economy, a women's right is not recognised in the transmission of landed property and this makes her dependent upon men.

With the onset of development programmes, economic changes are taking place but transhumant women remain traditional in their dress, language, tools and resources, because they grow food crops rather than cash crops. Significant changes have taken place in the two decades separating the United Nations Conferences on women in Mexico City (1975) and the meeting in Beijing (1995). Modernisation is bringing changes, which affect men and women differently. Modernisation 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: 351). The thought that women were being treated shabbily, led to the evolving of women centered programmes for

development were evolved which tended to overlook the importance of man-woman relations. Inadequate planning and implementation as well as culture resistance gave rise to more gender disparities. The association between cultures, economic organisations and different patterns of women's labour force participation ought to be implicit. Though efforts have been made in almost all countries to improve the status of women but it is still an unequal world. In addition to its general implication in social and economic development, education plays a key role in improving the status of women. The existing barriers to girls' enrolment ratios are related to the limited autonomy of women, and "deep rooted cultural beliefs and social habits that sustain gender inequality have a prolonged inertia" (United Nations 1995a). The education of women is the most important factor in determining maternal health, family and community health even after controlling for the availability factor. Education of a woman has a significant positive relationship to health status, as educated women are most likely to realise the benefits of using maternal health services. In addition, education may enhance female autonomy, increasing women's ability to make decisions regarding her own health and children's health.

The indigenous institutional systems should be considered as key partners in all intervention attempts such as development, social change, environmental protection, socio-political issues, etc. If the knowledge system is capitalised on, the indigenous institutions provide means of avoiding harmful traditional practices that are affecting girls and women and reducing or avoiding social discrimination of the minorities. The indigenous institutions should be empowered to enable and rebuild the capacity of the local communities to assume greater responsibilities in the management of natural resources and decisions regarding basic services.

NOTES

*Changpas occupy higher pastures (a marginal difference in altitude) during early summer. Changpas make seven to eight moves in a year from summer to winter pastures.

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