

CONDITIONING OF SUBALTERN: GENDER IN HARYANVI FOLKTALES

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ABSTRACT

Culture has traditionally been seen as of key significance in the construction and conditioning of gender identity. The oral tradition of folk narrative has been an important part of culture construction. In the folktales gender roles i.e the expected or preferred ways for people of each sex to behave are rigidly defined. The body is clearly a medium of culture. It is also more directly, a locus of social control'. To the extent that woman's body is the foundation on which gender equality is built, established and legitimized, understanding the female body in different contexts, settings and situations is important in folklore discussions.

KEYWORDS Culture, Gender Identity, Folktales, Body, Conditioning

Criticism ...is brought to bear on objects of experience whose objectivity is called into question; criticism supposes that there is a degree of inbuilt deformity which masquerades as reality. It seeks to remove this distortion and there by to make it possible the liberation of what has been distorted. Hence it entails a conception of emancipation¹

-Connerton

This present contemporary 'order of discourse' (a term adapted from Foucault) has a property which distinguishes it from earlier order of discourse or which at least has not been manifested in earlier of discourse to anything like the same degree. It deconstructs notions of gendered discourses in the manner wherein 'inbuilt deformity' in the Haryanvi folk narrative can be criticized leading to 'liberation' and 'emancipation' of the 'objects of experience'.

The recent analysis of gender and culture has drawn heavily on literary theory, with the deconstructionism of Derrida and also on the discourse analysis of Michel Foucault. This work often speaks of difference, both between women and men, but also between women. Indeed some of the emphasis on differences between women has problematized the very concept of woman as unitary category.

¹ Roger Fowles, Critical Linguistics (USA: OUP, 1976)

Gender identity is conveyed and structured by both verbal and non-verbal means in the folk narratives. Recent interest has focused on, among things, the manner in which gender classifications are influenced by the semantic structure of language.

In the old mythology Aditi or infinite space was regarded as the Eternal Mother and Prakriti was the Eternal Mother capable of evolving all created things out of herself but never so creating unless united with the eternal spirit principle embodied in the Eternal Male, Parusha. There appears to have been a tendency on the part of the Indo-Germanic race to look upon their deities as belong to both sexes at once, and hence the dualistic idea in Brahmanism of Ardhanarī or the androgynous Shiva.

To start with, let us have a reading of what religious folktales have to confer on women, as religions are powerful social institutions, that shape gender identities in society. In the Haryanvi religious folktales, woman is defined as an 'ambivalent' persona. Woman is located in myth and popular culture as both goddess and dangerous power (Shakti), as virtuous wife and dangerous evil, both pure and impure in her embodiment. Women were not only revered and worshipped but also controlled through a direct regulation of her sexuality. Women finds mention as following in religious terms-

Worshipping starts as the day starts, as they get up from bed they kiss the 'land' as a mark of respect for someone which has endow upon us everything – Goddess Earth - Dharti Mata - in Vedas personified as mother of all things – an idea common to all folktales. It's a regular rite common to all castes that a few days before a wedding the women go in procession to the village clay-pit and fetch from there the sacred earth (matmangare) which is used in making the marriage altar and the fireplace on which the wedding feast is cooked. There are various elements in the ritual which point to a very primitive origin. Then, one part of the proceedings is that of a Chamar, one of the non-Aryan castes, who leads the procession, beating his drum the whole time to scare demons. When the earth has been collected the drum is worshipped and smeared with red land. The Chamar, again, digs the earth with an affectation of secrecy, which, as we shall see, is indispensable in rites of this class. The mother of the bride or bridegroom veils herself with her sheet, and the digger passes the earth over his left shoulder to a virgin who stands behind him and receives it in a corner of her robe. In villages, earth is also used to purify the cooking vessels.

There is a curious tale of Gange Mai. *The nymph kalauria bore to Indus a son of notable beauty, by name Ganges, who in the ignorance of intoxication had connection with his mother. But when later on he learned the truth from his nurse, in the passion of his remorse he threw himself into the river Chliaros, which was called Ganges after him.*

Another legend again is found in Mahabharata. *The wise Santanu goes to hunt on the banks of Ganges and finds a lonely nymph, of whom he becomes enamoured. She puts him under the taboo that he is never to say anything to displease her. She bears him eight sons, of whom she throws seven into the river, and her husband dares not remonstrate with her. When she is about to throw away the last child he challenges her to tell him who she is*

and to have pity upon him. She then tells him she is Ganga personified and that the seven sons are the divine Vasavas, who by being thrown into the river are liberated from the cause of human life. The eighth remains among men as Dyaus, the sky, in the form of eunuch Bhishma.

These worships, probably derived from one of the so – called non-Aryan races, were subsequently developed into that of the female energies of greater gods, a Brahmani of Brahma, Indrani of Indra, and so on; and thus the simple worship of mother has developed and degenerated into the abominations of the Tantras. These mother are usually regarded as eight in number – Asta Hati, Sometimes seven – Brahmi or Brahmani, Mahesvari, Kaunlari, Vaishnavi, Varahi, Indrani or Aindrani or Mahendri and Chamunda, Chandika. Sometimes nine - Brahmani, Vaishnavi, Randri, Varahi, Narasinhika, Kauman, Mahendri, Chamunda, Chandika. Sometimes sixteen – Gauri, Padma, Sachi, Medha, Savitri, Vijaya, Jaya, Devasena, Svadha, Svaha, Santi, Pushti, Dhriti, Tushti, Atmadevata, kuladevata.²

The Jumna/Yamuna – Yami or Yamuna was the daughter of Sun and Sister of Yama, the god of death. They were the first human pair and the progenitors of the race of men.

Yamuna was unmarried and hence some people will not drink from her because she was not purified by the marriage rite, and so the water is heavy and indigestible.

Anasuya, wife of Atri, was a daughter of the Rishi Daksha. She did penance for 10,000 years and so was enabled to create the river Mandakini and thus saved the land from famine.

Narmada was wooed by the river Son, who proved faithless to her, and was beguiled by the Johita, a rival lady Stream, who acted the part of the barber's wife at the wedding. The Narmada's emerged at her lover's perfidy, tore her away through the marble rocks at Jabalpur, now great rival of Mother Ganga.

The patrilineal part of Haryanvi society expects several virtues in a woman. The first among them is chastity. Before marriage a woman should not think of any man in sexual terms; after marriage, of no man other than her husband. The second virtue is devotion to her husband. The notion of Pati Parmeshwar—the husband as the supreme God—is widely referred to and women observe several fasts to ensure that they get the same husband life after life. Such fasts also include prayers for the long life of the husband, so that the wife does not have to undergo the sufferings of widowhood.

² Monier-Williams, Sanskrit Dictionary

The closely related idea is of Sati, that involves a woman in immolating herself on the pyre of her husband. Of course, there is a legal ban on the practice and cases of Sati are indeed rare in contemporary Haryana. What is important in this context is the powerful hold that the ideal has on the mind. Sati sites are often developed into shrines and fairs held there attract huge crowds. The word Sati means 'pure', a model wife. The woman throws herself alive into the pyre of her husband and thus embody purity and sense of self sacrifice for her husband. Metaphorically, this concept is depicted in *A Sadhu and Married Man*³. In the story, a pigeon sacrifices his life to quench the hunger of their beloved Raja. When he dies after jumping into the fire, the she pigeon also follows the act and becomes a sati.

Third, a wife is expected to mould herself in the pattern of the family into which she is married and merge her individual identity into that of her husband. She was after all, meant to be her husband's "shadow" and had to follow him through the course of life. In the hour of need, she must stand by him, adding her strength to his.

These, it should be added, were meant to be ideal values and it was recognized that not many could live up to them. Thus, several Jatis and communities—in fact, a substantial majority in the population—permit divorce and widow re-marriage. In the cult of poverty, adherence to such norms is not possible

Culture has traditionally been seen as of key significance in the construction of gender identity. The oral tradition of folk narrative has been an important part of culture construction. In the folktales gender roles i.e the expected or preferred ways for people of each sex to behave are rigidly defined. For instance, men have traditionally been expected to be strong, aggressive, even dominating. Women have been expected to be nurturing, sensitive, emotional, and relatively passive. Sigmund Freud theorized that *identification and imitation of same-sex parents leads to effective gender-identity formation*. In the latency period described by Freud (ages seven to twelve), *males and females tend to segregate themselves solidifies gender identification and roles-specific behaviour*.⁴ Schools and families continue to influence gender socialization throughout adolescence. During adolescence, peer influence becomes the strongest agent of gender socialization as teens form together in small social groups to facilitate their transition into adulthood and into the larger society. The socializing effects of the mass media also become powerful in teen years.

The anatomical difference were for a long time viewed as intimately related to differences in emotional and intellectual capacities, as well as differences in physical abilities. The task and roles assigned to men and women in Haryanvi cultural tradition are assumed to be correlated highly with anatomically based aptitudes.

³ Recorded in cassette

⁴ Sigmund Freud, History of Sexuality

Men and women undeniably have certain physical differences. It is a subject of debate whether these biological differences also cause behavioral differences and whether biology, therefore is one of the causes of sex roles and gender-related social stratification. Biological determinism hold that biology does effect these things, but sociologist argue against the idea. For instance in Haryanvi folktales from birth a female child is received in a different way than is a male child which show that the notion of women are inferior to men in stressed from the very moment a child is born later, supported by the behaviour patterns prescribed for girls and women. Hence gender discrimination and gender roles are to a large extent imposed by the society. Gender is constructed and expressed in many areas of social life.

The body is clearly a medium of culture. It is also more directly, a locus of social control' so that we are not what we want to be but are made through culture. This is what Foucault calls the 'decile body' which is regulated by the norms of cultural life.

Anthropologists and sociologists have commented on the marked nature of women's body by caste, religious belief, social norms and practices and on how women's embodiment and her sexuality serve as important boundary makers. The female sexuality is controlled by caste and class factors in folklore discourses. A women's body and sexuality are in any case under the controlling purview of men. It is assertion not only of patriarchal power but also of social control. Woman is allowed little or no space for an independent, self-perceived articulation, definition or expression of her sexuality. Her body becomes an instrument and a symbol for the community's expression of caste, class and communal honour. Chastity, virtue and above all, purity are extolled as great feminine virtues embodying the honour of the family, community and nation. In a sense, women's body is often no longer her body but has been taken over by the community, of both men and women, to establish and legitimize its image in society.

To the extent that woman's body is the foundation on which gender equality is built, established and legitimized, understanding the female body in different contexts, settings and situations is important in folklore discussions.

Only when we view the female body a communicative or lived body that we can begin to understand the implications of both the social construction of lived experience as well as women's own perceptions and articulations of their embodiment. The gender is inscribed on woman in everyday life both socially as well as through her life experiences, perceptions, desires, fantasies. It is in this sense that gender identity is truly both constructed and lived.

The internalization of representation of the female body by women in folktales appears to be fundamental to the formation of feminine identity here .At one level, women menstruate, give birth, nurse babies, menopause experiences which are unavailable to men. At another level, women and men are located in cultural setting that shape their experience of embodiment differently depending on class, ethnic, religious and caste factors. These

socio-spatial and other historical factors are therefore equally important in the experience of embodiment in these discourses.

Socialization practices in Haryanvi folklores reflect the care and concern that goes into the upbringing of girls so that they are infact trained to conduct themselves according to social norms, values and practices. Later women absorb social expectations and infact experience them as their own, so that power, in a sense does not operate coercively but from within.

The social learning process that imbibes people (notably young) into understanding the various aspects of their culture includes the process of gender socialization. Gender socialization encompasses the process of learning society's gender roles and their advantages and limitations.

In the folktales, there is a clear categorization of what it means to be made of female. This categorization process and the agents of socialization that transmit knowledge about gender roles influence how individuals define themselves and other in terms of gender and sex role.

Secondly, I would dwell on what precisely is the relationship between the economic roles of women and gender stratification.

Patriarchy, means to serve the interest of the male sex. The sex role division in Haryanvi folk narrative is such that men are for production and women for reproduction. The unpaid, unseen household work is considered lower than the work done by men outside the house. There are various folktales where women are shown engaged in household tasks as the only apt task for them. Women are sexually vulnerable, therefore conservative men put a lot of restrictions on them and many rituals and taboos are linked to the various biological events in life.

George Peter Murdoch sees biological differences between men and women as the basis for sexual division of labour in society.⁵ Men have more physical strength and therefore they take such roles which require physical strength. Women can bear children and therefore they are associated with activities that are related to the raising of family. This is primarily due to male dominance which result from the fact that man's life is more public and woman's life is more private due to child bearing and child rearing, men thus claim greater rights than women do distribute goods outside the domestic group. Men greater control over exchange of valued goods.

In the folktales women have been shown walking longer miles to collect firewood and water which increased women's work load. Similarly, since women are also shown to be the major water carriers. They cook with inefficient fuels like crop wastes, dung cakes etc. Anthropological studies indicate that woman were the major producers of food, clothing, crafts and many different tools .

⁵ George Peter Murdoch, Social Structure (New York: Macmillan Company, 1949)

In present times also, greater female dependency on men has resulted from the process of urbanization. From the shift from household to factory and industry from the introduction of cash crops. women have lost their traditional rights to land and men, though continuing to rely on women's traditional assistance, men claim the entire income from the cash production of export crops for themselves.

. In many parts of the state, originally egalitarian gender relationships have been replaced by more hierarchical ones, and women have consequently been marginalized removed from the positions of economic and political decision making .

If women got any attention in the folk tale it was as mothers and housekeepers. It is argued that women, because of their reproductive roles, are universally viewed as being closer to nature while men are linked with culture. She defines culture in terms of human consciousness including the products of the same like, technology which is used to control and harness nature. That which is cultural and subject to human manipulation is assigned more worth than that which is natural hence women and women's roles are degraded or devalued, whether explicitly or implicitly. .There are numerous folktales where the devotion of the mother is exhibited .In *Bhagat Puranmal*⁶ story, the mother regains her vision when she sees her son after a long separation.

Mother, being the epitome of love, has always unadulterated another woman's love for her children, In the history of '*Puranmal Bhagat*' when Puranmal returns after twelve years, her mother regains her lost eyesight, everywhere happiness surrounds and also the fields turn green and fertile.

In Tilkutni Chauth, Sankat Chauth stories a women keeps fasts for happy life of their children. In Tilkutni Chauth, a mother keeps fasts and pray for longevity of her children. She gives her son some rice that protects her son from many dangers. when the son is going out, she gives 'Jo-Til' to her son. He is able to cross large rivers by sheer strength of Jo-Til. It protects him against wild animals like lion, snake, so much so that he comes out of fire alive. In Sankat Chauth, the old mother says to her son, '*I will keep sankath chauth fasts, so that I can keep you away from all problems.*' Also, children are protected from small pox infection by keeping Sheetal Ashtami fasts, in the story '*Shetala-Ashtami*⁷ In *Hoi Astmi*⁸ story also, mother keeps fasts to pray for longer life of her children.

⁶ Recorded in cassette

⁷ ibid

⁸ ibid

In a family, husband and wife fulfil the foremost role, their mutual relations have an impact on the entire family. Traditionally, the husband earns or male counterpart makes fulfilling the arrangements for basic amenities in the family and the wife looks after household. In Rigveda, wife is symbolised as home. According to Vashistha,

*Wife is the soul of her husband .In Puranas, there is an explicit description of husband and wife. Husband ought to fulfil all the wishes of her wife, treating her with dignity and self-respect. Wife on her part, expresses her heartfelt gratitude towards him and in whom husband can confide in.*⁹ Bhagvat Gita expounds the duties of a wife as:

One who serves her husband lives according to his wishes and remain committed to him. The women who serves her husband, like Lakshmi serves her Lord, will attain heaven after death. She will live with her husband only, in heaven in peace as Vishnu and Lakshmi. So, no tapasya for a wife is greater than devotion to her husband.

Similar strain can be seen in Haryanvi folktales. Mostly religious stories are replete with love relations of husband wife like *Karva Chauth, Gangaur*¹⁰etc. Usually wife prays for long life for her husband , her 'suhaag' In one of the religious folktales *The Story Of Lord Shiva*, Parvati keeps fast secretly and astonishes Shiv and Narad by her latent shakti.¹¹

In *Dhruv Bhagat*' story, Uttanpad's wife Suniti persuades her husband to remarry to continue their pedigree. She requests, '*Lord ! you get married Our family name will be sustained.*'

In the story, *Pipal Tree*, Brahmin and his wife go twelve km everyday to worship a peepal tree. Both share each other's sorrows.

In '*Sparrow and Goldsmith* story, the he sparrow takes revenge for his wife's insult. It shows the immense respect that the husband has for his wife In the story *Mother Cow*,¹² women neutralizes the curse on her husband who is living cursed life in the body of a donkey .In 'Gugapeer' story, Kanchan, keeps fast for continuous twelve years for her husband. At last, her husband comes and takes her along with him in a respectable manner.

⁹ Pt Shri Ram Sharma,Rigveda(Bareilly:Sanskrit Sansthan)

¹⁰ Recorded in cassette

¹¹ ibid

¹² ibid

One even comes across certain stories where a husband doubts the integrity of his wife. For example, *In Thursday Fast*, A brahmin castigates his wife. A son is born in his absence which the Brahmin disowns. He abuses his wife and son and plans to throw the new born in the well. But Lord Hanuman appears in dreams and tells him that the new born boy Mangala is his own. After that live happily ever after.¹³

In *Raja Sohail Singh* Story, wife of Jaswant Singh Rajput Nirmala, inspite of being dedicated to her husband is accused of adultery. This all happens because of minister Sadik khan's plans. according to which Jaswant Singh will be hanged if his wife's adultery is proved But his wife proves her innocence and saves her husband ¹⁴

So, it can be seen that, in these folktales, wives consider their husbands, literally a God, and spent their entire life serving them only.

Depiction of woman as a sister is another facet of her representation in folktales. In the story, *Bhaiya Dooj*¹⁵, the sister protects her brother from dangers that might have taken away his life –snake, tree, Toran. There is so much respect for the relation of sister that when the girl addresses Nag as 'my brother' even snake makes her its sister and gifts her ornaments.

The daughter in the family has been shown to bear the brunt of prejudices. She is there only to be disposed of . She has to pray for her safety herself in some of the folktales An old lady marry off his daughter to a dog, in *'The Story of Wednesday'* just because she gives grains to the poor people and hence could save only little for her mother. The Mother has to pay the price for her misconduct. But the daughter, on the path of dharma, right conduct, saves her mother from the hellish life by giving her prasada.¹⁶ In *'The Story of the Lucky Girl'*, a Raja marries off her daughter to a woodcutter as he believes she is unlucky for him. But his daughter proves to be lucky for the groom's family.¹⁷

In Haryanvi folk narratives, the relation of brother and sister is depicted as very pious. Sister is always ready to sacrifice anything for the welfare of her brother and brother vows to protect her sister throughout his life. In the culture of Haryana, each brother treats the sister of the other boy as his own sister and protects her with the same vow as he protects his own real sister.

¹³ibid

¹⁴ ibid

¹⁵ ibid

¹⁶ ibid

¹⁷ ibid

The manifestations of these feelings can be seen in celebration of festivals like Raksha - Bandhan, Bhaiya - Dhooj etal. These festivals signify love, harmony, commitment, trust in this relation. In the story '*Bhaiya Dhooj*' a sister saves her brother from snake, tree and a fierce wild animal.¹⁸In '*The Story of Thrusday*', Thrusday asks a brother to leave his sister but the brother refuses. He says, '*If I leave you, only my stomach will suffer, but if I leave my sister, entire village will leave me.*'¹⁹.In '*Nag Panchmi*' Story, a 'nag' or snake regards a girl as her sister when being addressed as, 'Brother!' by the girl. Nag also gives her jeweleries. When the nag is about to bite her, she says '*Namaste Brother!*' Nag, then replies, '*If you would not have called me by that name, I would have bitten you!*'²⁰

Even in animals, the pure relations of brother and sister could be seen. In '*Bular-Bulari story*', both brother and sister help each other. Daughter-in-law gifts lots of presents to her sister-in-law.²¹

But In the story *the Magic Shoes*²² sister disregards her brother when he could not bring expensive gifts owing to his poor economic condition.

In the story, '*Hoi-Asthami*', a daughter-in-law, while digging soil accidently kills seven children of Mother Hoi. Mother Hoi curses her that she would remain barren throughout her life. But daughter-in-law takes the curse upon herself and remains barren throughout her life. What a magnanimous description of the relationship between a daughter-in-law and sister-in-law.²³

In a joint family system, mother-in-law generally dominates over other family members. Virginia Woolf's says, '*General ideas are General's ideas*'. So, though she treats her daughter-in-law affectionately but at times tends to get harsh.

She keeps fiddling with the freedom of her daughter-in-law and keeps control on her movements resulting in strained relationships between the two. The contemporary scenario in Haryana in not different from elsewhere, where a sea of difference exist between educated daughter-in-laws' and uneducated mother-in-laws'.

In '*Amla-Naomi*' story ,An old woman continued to distribute amla to Brahmins even after her son's wedding. The new bride did not like it and instead asked mother-in-law to give only a little amla to Brahmins and that

¹⁸ Recorded in cassette

¹⁹ ibid

²⁰ ibid

²¹ ibid

²² ibid

²³ ibid

too, unripe. Old woman finally leaves the house.²⁴ In *'The Story of SurrajNarayan'* the mother-in-law blames the new bride that the new born baby is not his son's and is illegitimate.²⁵

There are folktales that show acrimonious behavior of daughter-in-law towards mother-in-law also. In *'The Stoy of Lord Ganesha'* mother-in-law used to have her meals after Vinayak's puja. The daughter-in-law said, *'You old woman! First you eat and also let other eat. Today, I will not give you roti, let me see how you do vinayak puja without bhog'*. Another area of their conflict is the hold of treasury. If this issue is solved then probably their relationship will have greater stability. The sort of suggestion is given in *'The Story of the Pipal Tree'*. In this story a brahmin couple have their son married to a very dutiful girl, who can prepare all thirty six traditional items of food. But the neighborhood incite her to grab the household keys. She, then, starts treating her in-laws badly, giving them half-cooked dal. Next day, when she asks them for keys, while they were about to go out for peepal puja, she says, *'Give me the house keys!'* Old woman answered, *'Why such a fuss over keys. You take the keys.'* The bride was really embarrassed.²⁶

relations between the two sisters in Haryanvi folktales do not reflect a very sound relationship generally. In *'The Story of the Poornima Fast'* Parwa and Poona were two sisters. Parwa's children die as a curse of her being irreligious. Out of extreme jealousy, Parwa sends sweets and toys for her sister's kids. They are poisoned sweets and the toys are enclosing a snake in them. But Poonam's children are prevented from this, because she has been religious in her life.²⁷

There is existence of world of symbols in the folktales that assign meaning and value to the categories of male and female. In folk narratives Children come across women as spoken of as a wife, a mother or asister who donot have an individual identity of their own and seldom as advisors. But in *The story of tailless buffalo*, the jat gets back his money and tailless buffalo from the thugs when he follows his woman's advice.²⁸

In the folktales, firstly there is the prescription for certain kinds of feed for certain occasion. Secondly, the food is to be ready within a specific time. Thirdly, the control is exerted by the preferences of the consumer which dictate the exact variant of the dinner to be served.

On the other hand, these days working couples in and urban society (since spouses need each other help more) have learned to share and cooperate in many ways. Men whose work shifts are different from those of their

²⁴ Recorded in cassette

²⁵ ibid

²⁶ ibid

²⁷ Recorded in cassette

²⁸ ibid

wives often cared for children while their wives worked. Husbands also helped their wives with the household chores but the subtle discrimination between the two sexes continues.

There is nearly consensus among the scholars engaged in cross-cultural research on gender and folk narratives that central to the structure of women's role in decision making is the structuring of production and reproduction .

Motherhood is the central facet of female existence because it is the most authentically biological experience that differentiates a woman from man. A woman's role in the reproduction of human beings far outweighs that of a man. It is invariably a woman who mothers. Motherhood and mothering are usually perceived as naturally related. This bringing forth of new life and its sustenance, so essential to human survival, paradoxically become instruments of subordination. Maternal responsibility is used as an alibi to exclude a woman from power, authority, decision and a participatory role in public life. Further, motherhood and mothering are not controlled by her.

Deprived of minimum safety nets such as nourishment, safe birthing, adequate anti-natal care, child care facilities, motherhood renders working Haryanvi women, specially in poor rural areas, extremely vulnerable. State sponsored incentives to motherhood both as ideology and material help are also questioned a patriarchal, denying women the ability to render motherhood as materially empowering.

In the folk narratives the process of human reproduction has been conceived of in terms of male seed germinating in the female field. This can be seen in texts used during rituals of marriage and other crises of life many of which are of vedic origin and the great epic of Mahabharata.

The conception of the process of human reproductions seems to have formed part of both the folklore tradition and people's consciousness through the ages. Leela Dube argues that *though medical science as expressed in Ayurveda recognized a woman's contribution to heredity, it was propagated in popular culture that the child carried the man's blood, as semen was believed to a product of his blood.*²⁹

The underlying implications of the metaphor of conceptions as the seed sown in the soil are used for biological symbolization of descent, to understand the nature of relations between the sexes and their relative rights and positions. Two things emerge from this. First, an essentially unequal relationship is reflected in an emphasized through the use of these symbols; and second, the symbolism is utilizing the culture to underplay the significance of women's contribution to biological reproduction. While tying her down to the supreme duty of motherhood, this symbolism is instrumental in denying her the natural right over her own children. Also in creating and

²⁹ Leela Dube, 'Caste and Women' in Visibility and Power,,MNSrinivas eds. (Delhi:OUP,1986)

sustaining an ideology in which strategic resources of both types-material as well as human remain in the hands of men.³⁰

Therefore we see that women as a subaltern entity hardly gets space to speak in her various role assigned to her by society.

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³⁰ Recorded in cassette