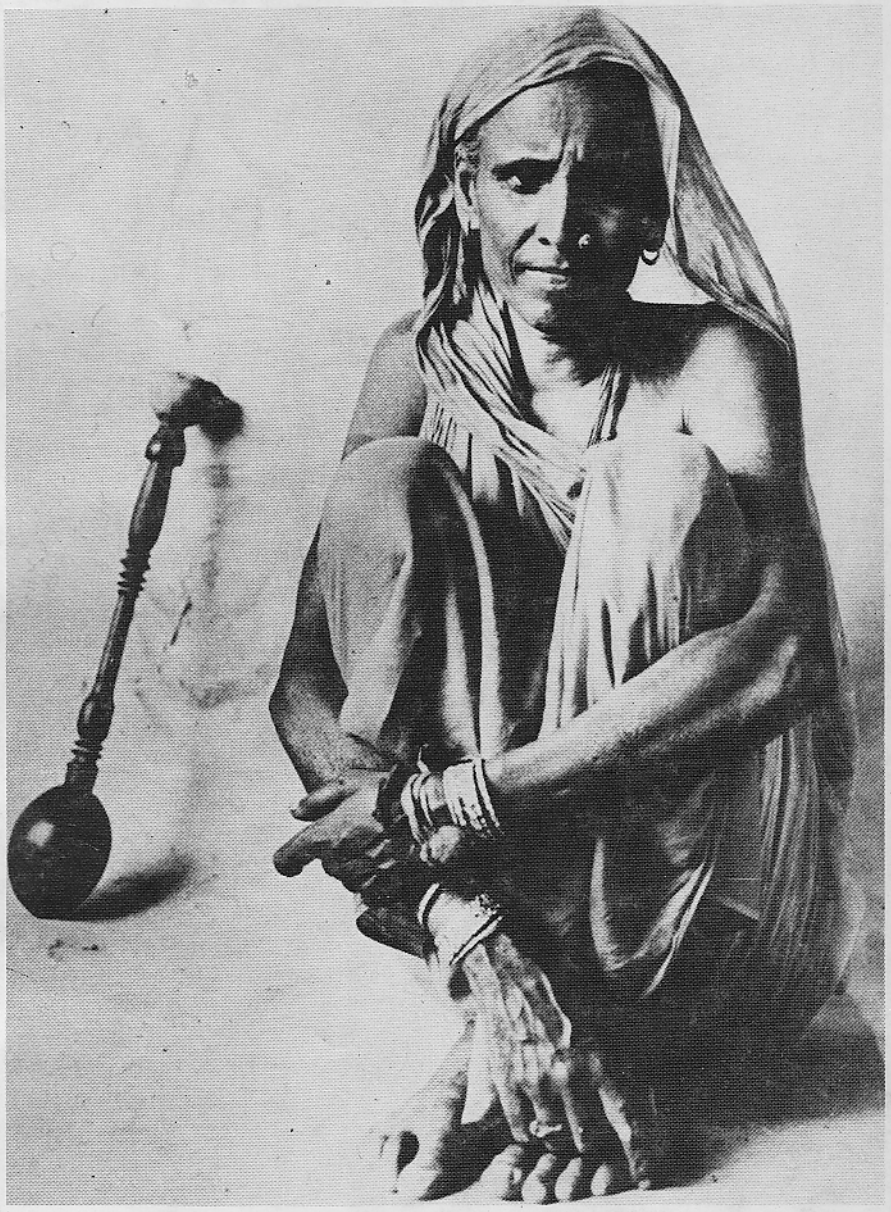
The Maithili Women of Sirsia

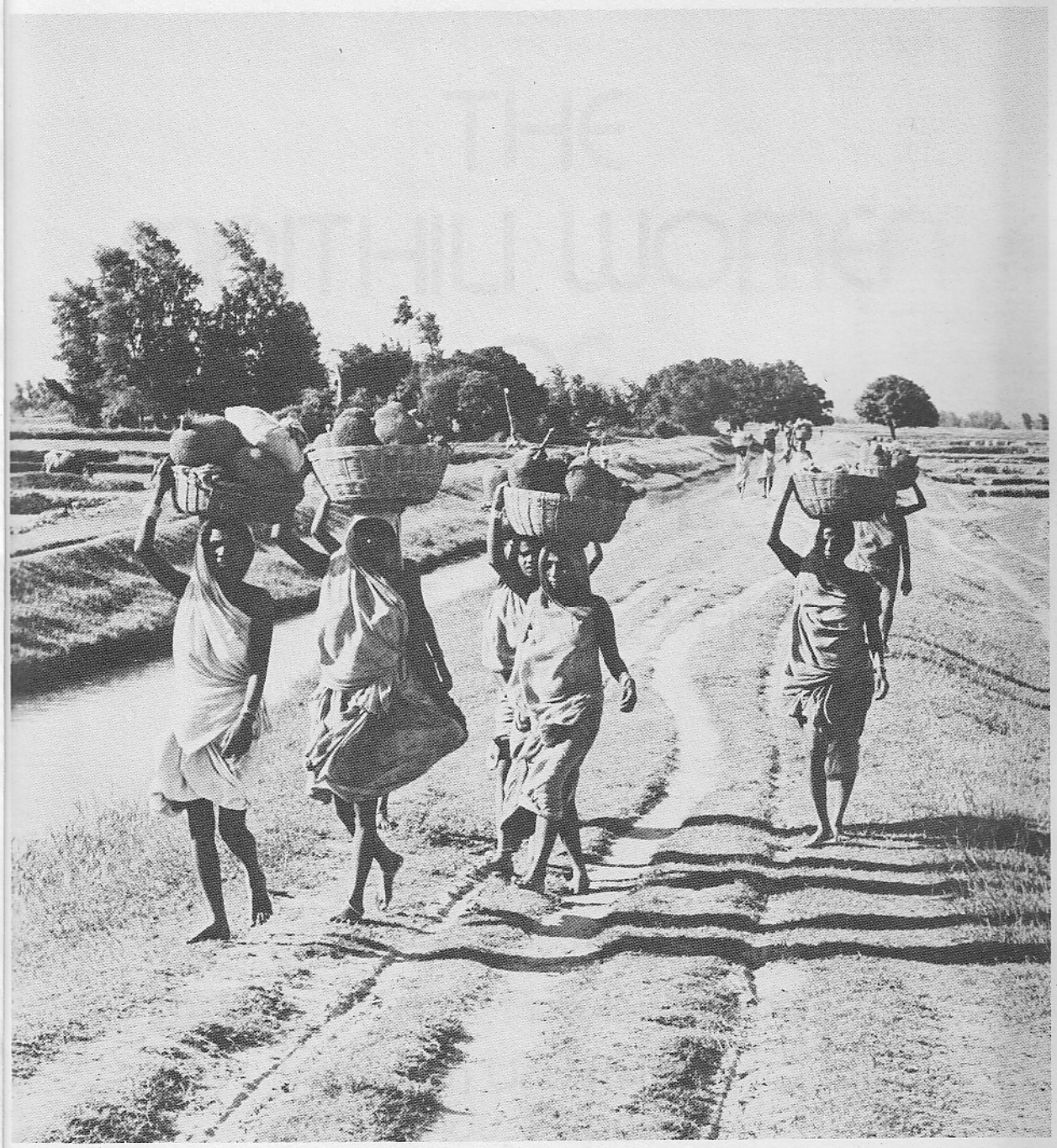
- meena acharya



THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN NEPAL

volume II part 1

THE MAITHILI WOMEN OF SIRSIA



The Status of Women in Nepal

Volume II: FIELD STUDIES

Part 1

THE MAITHILI WOMEN OF SIRSIA

MEENA ACHARYA

CEDA

Centre for Economic Development and Administration

Tribhuvan University
Kathmandu, Nepal

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THE RESEARCH FOR THIS MONOGRAPH
WAS FUNDED BY A GRANT FROM
THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FOREWORD

The CEDA Status of Women Project was a multidisciplinary Research endeavor carried out by Tribhuvan University's Centre for Economic Development and Administration (CEDA) under a grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The overall purpose of the project as stated in the project agreement between His Majesty's Government and USAID was

> " ... to collect and generate information on the status and roles of a representative range of Nepalese women in order to support planning to facilitate the increased integration of women into the national development process."

To achieve this broad purpose both secondary and primary research was carried out in consecutive phases. Phase I was devoted to collection and analysis of available secondary data on Nepalese women in a number of specific areas which helped the project team to clarify its research objectives for the second phase comprising the field work. It also resulted in the publication of the following monographs comprising the Volume I Background Report on the Status of Women in Nepal:

1. Statistical Profile of Nepalese Women: A Critical Review, Volume I, Part I (by Meena Acharya)

2. Tradition and Change in the Legal Status of Nepalese Women, Volume I, Part 2 (by Lynn Bennett with assistance from Shilu Singh)

3. Institutions Concerning Women in Nepal, Volume I, Part 3 (by Bina Pradhan)

4. Annotated Bibliography on Women in Nepal, Volume I, Part 4 (by Indira M. Shrestha)

5. Integration of Women in Development: The Case of Nepal, Volume I, Part 5 (by Pushkar Raj Reejal)

The present study is the outcome of the Project's Phase II which was intended " ... to develop methodologies and implement pilot socio-economic case studies of women in traditional rural communities." Altogether eight separate village studies on the Status of Women were carried out by the project researchers in the following communities:

Region/District	Community	Researcher
1. Eastern Terai (Dhanusha)	Maithili (Mixed Castes)	Meena Acharya
2. Central Middle Hills (Sindhu Palchowk)	Tamang	Indira M. Shrestha
3. Kathmandu Valley (Lalitpur)	Newar (Jyapu + Others)	Bina Pradhan
4. Central Middle Hills	Parbatiya (Brahman, Chhetri, and low caste Sarki)	Lynn Bennett
5. Western High Mountains (Mustang)	Baragaonle (Tibetan-Speaking People)	Sidney Schuler
6. Eastern Middle Hills (Sankhuwa Sabha)	Lohrung Rai	Charlotte Hardman
7. Far Western Inner-Terai (Dang Deokhuri)	Tharu	Drone Rajaure
8. Far Western Middle Hills (Rolpa)	Kham Magar	Augusta Molnar

Using both in-depth anthropological methods and quantitative survey techniques the researchers gathered comparative data on women's economic role and their status in the family and wider social group. Of particular importance in the project's effort to document the economic contribution of rural women was the observational time allocation study which each researcher conducted as part of his or her fieldwork.

The present monographs are the parts of the Volume II, Status of Women Field Studies Series which includes eight village studies written by the individual researchers. It also consists of a ninth monograph which analyses the aggregate data and summarizes the major findings of the village studies. The ninth monograph is an attempt to

distill the policy implications of the Phase I and Phase II findings and provide guidelines for a National Plan of Action to increase both the productivity and the status of Nepalese women.

It is our sincere hope that this pioneer research work on Status of Nepalese Women will contribute positively towards promoting equality of sexes in the Nepalese society.

All the members of the project team deserve thanks for their admirable research endeavor.

Dr. Govind Ram Agrawal
Executive Director

February, 1981

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project which is one of the first attempts to look at the present status of women in Nepal has been completed with the combined efforts of an inter disciplinary project team. Its success has to be attributed to a large number of people and it is not possible to identify their contribution in a compartmentalized fashion, as the project was quite broad in scope and also of a long duration encompassing about thirty-two months. CEDA would like to express its sincere appreciation to all those who have actively contributed to the successful completion of the project.

The project team had the privilege of working on specific issues with certain individuals and it is felt that their contributions be specially mentioned. The project team was constantly advised by a Board of Advisors consisting of Honorable Mrs. Kamal Rana as Chairperson, who is also the Chairperson of Women's Services Coordination Committee (WSCC). Her continuous interest and help in the project's success is highly appreciated. The other members of the Board, Honorable Dr. Ratna Shumsher Rana and Prof. Upendra Man Malla, Vice Chairman and Member of the National Planning Commission respectively, also provided valuable advice and guidance at different times to the project for which CEDA is greatly obliged.

The project team has worked very hard and it is basically their sincere dedication and commitment that have materialized in the final outputs. CEDA would like to express its special appreciation to Dr. Lynn Bennett who has contributed significantly both as a team member as well as in her capacity as Project Advisor. The other members of the team, Ms. Bina Pradhan, Ms. Meena Acharya, Ms. Indira Shrestha, Mr. Drone Prasad Rajaure, Dr. Augusta Molnar, and Ms. Sidney Schuler have also worked very hard from the beginning of the project to its end. Their individual monographs dealing with the different ethnic communities are the concrete evidence of their dedicated and committed efforts and admirable research endeavor. To all of them CEDA owes its deep gratitude and sincere obligation.

Apart from the team members, several other persons have also assisted the project with their expertise.
Mr. Narendra Shrestha's contribution as programmer, Mr. Shalik Ram Sharma's as statistician, and the contributions of

Dr. Chaitanya Misra, Ms. Padma Shrestha and Ms. Basundhara Dongal in the project are duly acknowledged. Mr. Govinda Sharma, Mr. Vishnu Nepal and Mr. Bishnu Bhakta Shrestha helped in the tabulation of the field data.

Several United States Agency for International Development (USAID) officials have helped in project completion. Mr. Samuel Butterfield, the former Director of USAID to Nepal deserves special appreciation. Mr. Thomas Rose took keen interest in the project and helped in the later part of the project. Dr. Laurie Mailloux's continuous interest and help has been a great source of encouragement in expediting the project work. Mr. John Babylon and Mr. William Nance also helped significantly at different times.

On behalf of the project team and myself, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to our present Executive Director, Dr. Govind Ram Agrawal, who has taken keen interest and has been a constant source of inspiration for the project, right from the time of his taking over the leadership of CEDA. His academic and intellectual input along with the kind of administrative support so much required for the successful completion of the project is deeply and sincerely appreciated. Mr. Sant Bahadur Gurung, Deputy Director of our Centre has always been a great help to us at different, and sometimes difficult, times. Dr. Khem B. Bista and Mr. Madhukar Shumsher Rana, our former Executive Directors helped us extensively during their tenure of office, and we owe a deep sense of gratitude to them. Dr. Puskar Raj Reejal also contributed to the project by taking over the Directorship of the project at the earlier period and Mr. Devendra Raj Upadhaya's contribution as consultant to the project is also appreciated.

The project team also received substantial help from Mr. Devendra Gurung, Ms. Pavitra Thapa, Mr. Iswor Narayan Manandhar and Mr. Manoj Shrestha in their different capacities. Mr. Dibya Giri deserves our special acknowledgement for his patience and hard work in typing and retyping the manuscripts. Mr. Prem Rai's contribution for the project is also duly acknowledged.

Apart from the contributions of the above mentioned persons, several other individuals and institutions have helped us. The CEDA administration and other professional colleagues at our Centre are duly acknowledged in a collective way for their help and assistance.

The project materialized due to the sincere desire on the part of His Majesty's Government for finding out the present status of Nepalese women and to suggest measures for improvements. This challenging task was entrusted to CEDA for which we owe a deep and sincere gratitude to His Majesty's Government. We hope and believe that the output will be of immense help in designing and implementing the future programmes aimed at the upliftment of the status of women in our country.

Last, but not the least, the United States Agency for International Development Mission to Nepal deserves special thanks and appreciation for funding this research.

Mr. Bhavani Dhungana
Project Director

February 1981

METHODOLOGICAL FOREWORD[1]

Research Objectives and Theoretical Perspectives

This monograph is part of the Volume II field studies series which represents the final outcome of a three year research endeavor on the Status of Women in Nepal. As its name indicates the general objective of the project was to analyse and evaluate the role and status of Nepalese women. In particular the project sought to focus on rural women and their relation to the development process. These specific objectives entailed first of all, recognition of the fact that Nepalese women are not a homogeneous group and secondly, a commitment to document as accurately as possible the actual contribution women make to the rural economy. The result was a research design involving two distinct phases. The first phase was to be an analysis based on existing data of the macro-level variables affecting the over-all socio-economic position of women in Nepal. This phase was completed with the publication of five monographs in Volume I.

The second phase was planned as a series of intensive field studies on the dynamics of the day to day life of village women and the diversity of ways in which women's roles and status have been defined by different ethnic groups within Nepal. Specifically, the objectives set for the second phase were to investigate those areas where the existing information on rural women was either inadequate or inaccurate.

Extended field studies were carried out to collect both qualitative and quantitative data on women in eight different communities in various parts of Nepal. The development of a unified methodological approach to be used in these eight studies was made simpler by the fact that despite our varied

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[1] For fuller discussion of the theoretical perspectives on which the Status of Women study is based and of the methodologies used in data collection see Chapter I of the Aggregate Analysis (Acharya and Bennett), The Rural Women of Nepal: An Aggregate Analysis and Summary of Eight Village Studies, Volume II, Part 9, C.E.D.A., Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Kathmandu. (1981).

backgrounds as economists, linguists and anthropologists all the project team members shared the basic theoretical assumption that the concept of "women's status" could not be treated as a unitary construct having a single explanation. (See, Aggregate Analysis).

It was one of our central hypotheses that, despite the title of our project, it is misleading to speak of the status of women -- even within a single group. We expected that if we looked carefully enough, our studies of the various communities in Nepal would all reveal a good deal of ambiguity in the relations between the sexes. Specifically, we expected that women's status vis-a-vis men (in a given community) would vary with women's many roles and the contexts within which these roles are enacted. Since status is a function of the power, authority and prestige attached to a given role by society and since everyone, male and female, must enact a number of different roles in the course of a lifetime (or indeed in a single day or even simultaneously at a given instant), we would expect the status of any one individual -- or any social category like male or female -- to be a complex configuration arising from these many roles and the various powers, limitations and the perceived values assigned to them.

From the point of view of development, it is our conviction that an effective integration of rural women into the development process must begin with a clear-eyed vision and an unbiased understanding of who these women are, what they do and what they want. We must know not only where they are vulnerable and in need of support, but also where they are strong so that this strength can be further encouraged.

Research Design and Methodology

To address these issues we needed an approach that would allow us to erbrace the complexity of the phenomena of sexual stratification which we expected to -- and did -- encounter during our extended fieldwork. We decided that for purposes of data collection and for the initial stages of analysis we would distinguish the following "dimensions" of women's status:

1. Economic
2. Familial
3. Political/Community

4. Educational
5. Legal
6. Ideological/Religious

In formulating these "dimensions" we were influenced by Giele's (1976) typology of six major life options or areas of control or access to opportunity as determinants of women's over-all status. We modified the categories to make our "dimensions" more appropriate to the context of village Nepal and more useful to our basic focus on development issues. Yet we knew from the beginning -- and it became even clearer during the course of fieldwork -- that all the dimensions overlapped in numerous ways and that the divisions we had made were ultimately arbitrary. Almost all of us have ended up reorganizing the dimensions in the course of analyzing and writing up the data from our respective villages. Perhaps the main value of the "six dimensions" was to encourage each of us to look into aspects of village reality and the problem of women's status that are not usually dealt with in detail by our particular discipline.

In order to capture the diversity of the Nepalese situation and the multiplicity of factors affecting women's status it was necessary to make several departures from convention in our approach to the collection of field data.

The first departure was in the weight given to the cultural variable in the choice of survey sites. It is our conviction that the gender systems which essentially define male and female and their roles and relationships to each other within a particular ethnic group are socially constructed. This is not to deny that biological and ecological factors influence women's status and the relationship between the sexes. But it does mean that we must look beyond such factors if we are to either to account for the marked cross cultural variation in human gender systems or to fully comprehend the dynamics of the female role in any particular culture.

This conviction led the research team to attempt to cover in depth as many cultural groupings as possible within the resource constraint of the project. As a result eight communities were covered in the second phase.

Despite our emphasis on the importance of cultural factors we did not want to underestimate the role of economic

variables in the determination of women's status. It has been one of our hypotheses that substantial improvement in the economic status of a household might well be accompanied by an actual deterioration of status of women vis-a-vis men in that household (Acharya 1979). Therefore, for analytical purposes, we have classified all our quantitative data according to the economic strata. By inter-strata comparison we hoped to ascertain the role of economic factors in determining the status of women versus men.

All the sample households have been classified into three economic strata: top, middle and bottom. Income rather than property has been taken as a basis for this economic stratification. We considered income to be a better indicator of the actual economic well-being of the household than land holding since land is only one of the sources of income. In fact, although the landed gentry retains much of its former prestige and influence as a vestige of traditional systems of social stratification, in many parts of Nepal the landed gentry appears to be losing its economic predominance. Members of the emerging trading or bourgeois class are in many cases economically better off than the landed gentry. Moreover, classification of households according to land holdings alone would not capture the economic differentiation between landless but relatively well off businessmen and professionals on the one hand, and marginal farmers and landless laborers on the other.

Another consideration in economic classification in the current analysis is that the sample households have been stratified according to village economic standards and not national or international standards. The economic stratum of each household was determined on the basis of household production and income data. Using the average 1977 per capita income for Nepal of Rs. 1320 or $ 110 given by the Asian Development Bank (Key Indicators of Developing Member Countries of ADB, Economic Office, Asian Development Bank, Vol. X, No. 1, April 1979, p. 157) as the mid-point we established the middle stratum as being all those households whose per capita income was within 25% (or Rs. 330) below or above the national average. Thus our cut off points were

Rs. 990 for the bottom stratum and Rs. 1650 for the top stratum.[1]

The second methodological departure in our research design was the decision to use a balanced two pronged approach incorporating both in-depth anthropological and quantitative survey methods. This was a natural outcome of our equal concern to understand the cultural and the economic variables affecting women's status.

Qualitative Data Gathering

The most important element in our approach to qualitative data gathering was simply living with the people we wanted to learn about. Each researcher became a resident of the community he or she was studying, living with a local family and practicing techniques of participant observation and the unstructured interview with key informants. The period of fieldwork ranged from six months to several years (in the case of the co-operating anthropologists who had already been engaged in their own dissertation research in their communities). All the team members were fluent in Nepali and five of them were also able to communicate easily in the local language as well. This they reported was especially important, not only because it enabled them to understand casual comments and conversation in the family

[1] Interestingly in 7 out of the eight villages this definition gave us the expected distribution between bottom, middle and top stratum households. In Kagbeni however, all but two of the households were found to be in the top strata. Although the people of Kagbeni do appear to be doing relatively well economically, it should also be remembered that the prices of basic food supplies and other commodities are very much higher in Kagbeni than in other areas studied so the increased income may not necessarily result in increased purchasing power or a higher standard of living. For the village monograph, the Kagbeni population was re-classified by the researcher into 3 economic strata applicable to the village. For aggregate analysis the original strata definition was retained.

where they lived, but also because in several villages[1] communication with women in particular would have been severely limited had the researcher not been able to speak the local language.

To guide the collection of descriptive, in-depth information a Field Manual was prepared containing sets of "leading questions" for each of the six dimensions. The Manual also contained "Key Informant Schedules" on certain topics such as child rearing practices,[2] legal awareness and kinship terminology where the number of people interviewed was not as important as having good rapport with the informant and being a sensitive listener. The Manual also included practical suggestions about how researchers might go about indirectly collecting certain types of sensitive information as well as how to informally cross check the quantitative survey data which they were also responsible for gathering.[3]

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[1]The Maithili speaking women in Sirsia, and the Tharu women in particular were unfamiliar with Nepali. Kham speaking Magar women, the Lohorung Rai, Newar and Tamang women and the Tibetian speaking women of Baragaon were fluent in Nepali but of course preferred communicating in their own language. Nepali was the mother tongue in only one of the 8 sites.

[2]The schedule used by the team was a revised version of one prepared by Mrs. Basundara Dungal of CNAS and generously shared with the Status of Women team.

[3]For further background on the type of qualitative data sought and approaches used see Field Manual: Guidelines for the Collection and Analysis of Data on the Status of Women in Rural Nepalese Communities, Centre for Economic Development and Administration (CEDA), Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal. 1979. (Bound Mimeo).

Quantitative Data Collection

Site Selection and Sample Size

The sites for the eight village studies were purposively selected according to ethnic group and geographic area (Mountain, Hill and Terai). The map (Figure i) shows the locations of the research sites and the communities included.

Within each village[1] a random sample of 35 households was selected making a total of 280 households in all. In three of the villages (Sirsia, Bulu and Bakundol) which were of mixed caste populations the sample was stratified by caste. Within this sample a sub-sample of 24 households in each village was randomly selected for the observational time allocation study.[2] Households were defined to include all members who ate from the same kitchen[3] and who had lived in the village for at least 6 months during the previous year.

Survey Instruments

The team developed a series of survey instruments to generate quantitative information on the following aspects of the sample population:

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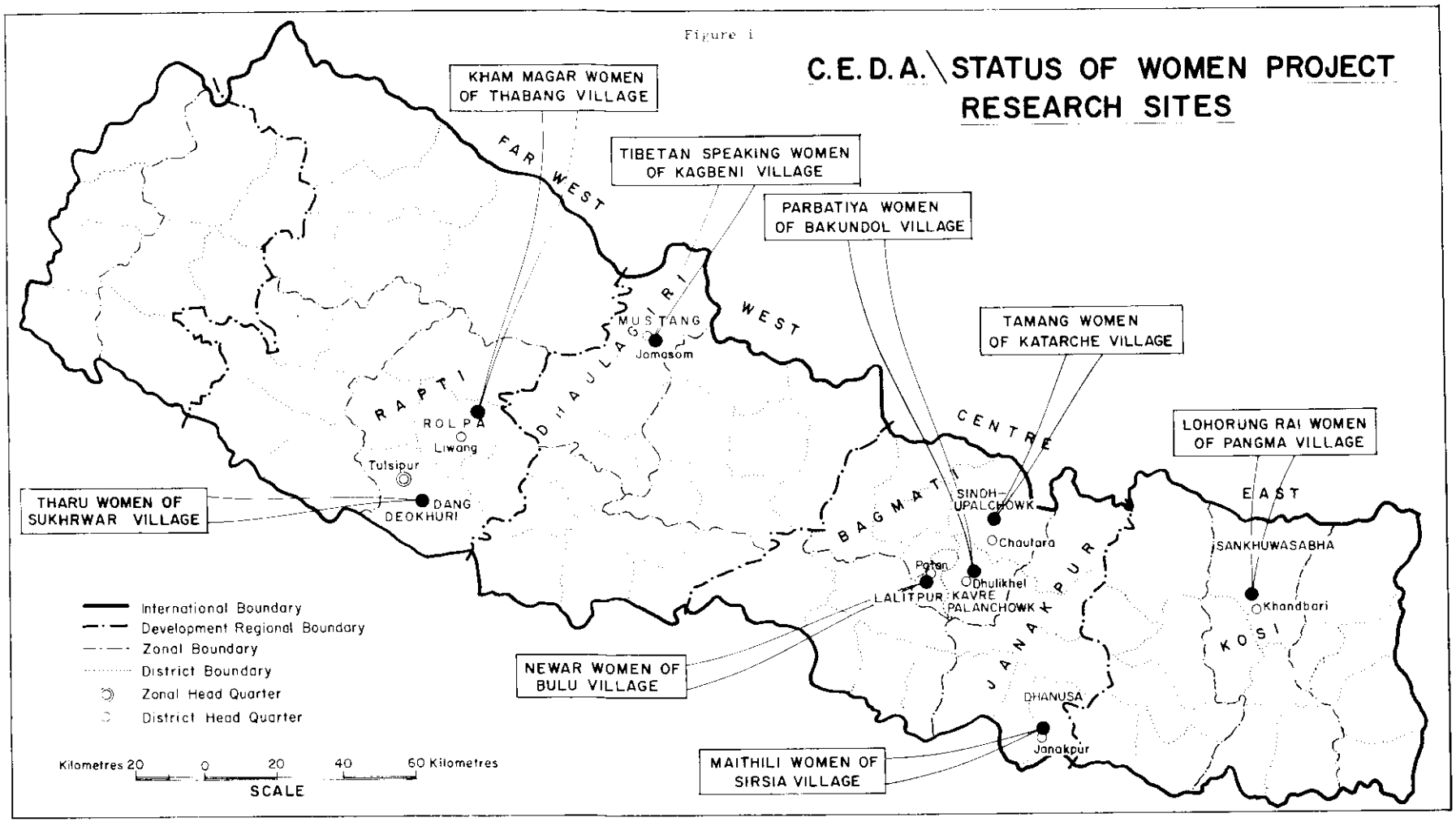
[1] By "village" we refer to a traditional residential unit locally known and named as such rather than to the larger administrative unit or panchayat which generally consists of several villages and is usually too large and unwieldy to study in depth.

[2] A smaller sample was selected for the Time Allocation Study because our methodology required that certain sub-groups of households be visited on alternate days within the period of one hour. We were concerned that we would not be able to visit more than six households within an hour so we limited the sample to 4 groups of six or 24 households. With the wisdom of hindsight we now realize that we could have visited more houses in an hour and included the entire 35 household population in the Time Allocation Study.

[3] In the case of communities like the Kham Magar where some family members spent extended periods in the families' high pasture dwelling, eating from the same kitchen meant sharing household food supplies.

Figure 1


C.E.D.A. \ STATUS OF WOMEN PROJECT
RESEARCH SITES
KHAM MAGAR WOMEN OF THABANG VILLAGE
TIBETAN SPEAKING WOMEN OF KAGBENI VILLAGE
PARBATIYA WOMEN OF BAKUNDOL VILLAGE
TAMANG WOMEN OF KATARCHE VILLAGE
LOHORUNG RAI WOMEN OF PANGMA VILLAGE
THARU WOMEN OF SUKHRWAR VILLAGE
NEWAR WOMEN OF BULU VILLAGE
MAITHILI WOMEN OF SIRSIA VILLAGE
FAR WEST
MUSTANG
Jomosom
DHAULAGIRI
WEST
RAPTI
ROLPA
Liwang
Tulsipur
DANG DEOKHURI
CENTRE
BAGMATI
SINDHUPALCHOWK
Chautara
Patan
Dhulikhel
LALITPUR
KAVRE PALANCHOWK
JANAKPUR
DHANUSA
Janakpur
EAST
SANKHUWASABHA
Khandbari
KOSI
International Boundary
Development Regional Boundary
Zonal Boundary
District Boundary
Zonal Head Quarter
District Head Quarter
Kilometres 20 0 20 40 60 Kilometres
SCALE

1. Demographic Variables: Besides the conventional demographic data on individuals such as sex, age, marital status, fertility history, education and literacy, this set of information includes data on marital history, type and forms of marriage, short-term mobility of household members as well as each individual's kinship position (relation to the household head) within the family. At the household level, information has been collected on the caste/clan and lineage identity of the households, composition of the households and family structure.

2. Time Use Data: Observational time use data was collected for all members of the sample households. (To be discussed below).

3. Income and Production: An attempt was made to capture the total household production with a detailed structured set of schedules matching the time-use categories. Five schedules were used each on different categories of income namely, agricultural production, industrial products and processed food, other production, (such as kitchen gardening, hunting and gathering) income from capital assets and wage/salary and income transfers.

4. Household Assets: The schedule on property holdings included questions on household property as well as personal property. It also included questions on rights of disposal of joint family property. The schedule was devised in detail to capture all likely items of household and personal assets including conventional items like land and animals, cash bank deposits as well as jewellery and valuable clothing, household utensils, furniture etc. There was also a schedule on women's independent income and their use of these earnings.

5. Credit: Access to and use of credit by men and women.

6. Employment: Employment opportunities and attitudes toward different kinds of work and employment outside the home differentiated by sex.

7. Exchanges at Marriage: Exchanges of cash, goods and labor between affinal families as part of the formalization of marriage.

8. Literacy and Education Levels: Educational attainment and attitudes to male and female education.

9. Social Images: Male/Female stereotypes and qualities appreciated in brides and grooms.

10. Women's Political Consciousness and Community Participation: Awareness of local, district and national political figures, voting records, panchayat meeting attendance, attitudes toward and involvement in extension and development activities.

11. Household Decision Making: This included seven different schedules covering decision making in the following areas: a) Household labor allocation, b) Agriculture, c) Cash and kind expenditure (food, gifts, travel, medicine etc.), d) Investment, e) Borrowing, f) Disposal of family food production, g) Disposal of other family resources.

It should be mentioned that data collection on personal property was problematic but instructive. In the process of interviewing we learned that the concept of "personal property" was ambiguous and irrelevant to the villagers. The data on exchanges in marriage were also found to be too complex for quantification in the way we had envisioned.

The project's questionnaires on decision making represent another innovation in data collection techniques. In these forms we avoided general questions such as "who makes decisions about buying clothing ?" Instead for each category of decision we asked what particular transactions or purchases had taken place in the past two weeks, month or year (depending on how important and frequent the type of transaction). After writing down the particular item decided (i.e. the sale of a hen, the taking of Rs. 500 loan or the purchase of a new cooking pot), we then asked questions about the stages of the decision making process. For each decision made we asked who had initiated it or suggested the idea, who had been consulted, who had finally executed the decision (and in the process decided the amount of money to spend for the purchase or to accept for the sale) and who if anyone had subsequently disagreed with the decision made. Since we are particularly interested in women's role in decision making and knew that in most communities men would be the culturally accepted "decision makers" in most spheres, we specifically administered this series to adult women -- trying whenever we could to talk to them when senior males were not present.

The fourth and most important departure from convention was our attempt to capture the full subsistence production of the household. The inadequacy of conventional statistics for the measurement of household production and subsequently, the contribution of women to household subsistence in developing countries, has been discussed by various authors (Boserup 1970, Lele 1975). Acharya (1979) discussed these issues in the specific context of Nepal in Volume I, Part 1 of the present Status of Women Project. For the field studies we tried to capture physical production within the household to the maximum extent. This is reflected in the detailed schedules on household production and food processing. Moreover we realize the importance of other activities within the household for the maintenance and reproduction of the household and have generated data on the time use patterns of all members within the household.

Collection of data on production of physical goods involved problems of valuation for aggregation. There are several alternative methods by which these goods can be valued. Most writers however, agree that for valuation of physical goods the use of market price or replacement cost is best. Since we had no intention of valuing the services produced within the household (i.e. services such as a mother's care for her own children for which we do not feel economic valuation is appropriate or feasible),we adopted a combination of first and third methods in valuation of the goods produced for household consumption. Traded goods were valued at the prevailing market price. Since much of the food processing involved home produced raw materials, the following procedure was adopted for the valuation of food processing done at home. The market cost of raw materials (e.g. paddy) and cash and kind cost involved in processing (milling charges if any) were deducted from the total market value of processed good (husked rice in this case) and the difference taken as the income generated by food processing

within the household.[1]

Non-traded goods like dried green vegetables were valued at the price of the cheapest vegetable in the off-season. Thus a conservative replacement cost approach was adopted for valuation of these goods.

The Time Allocation Study (TAS)

The Time Allocation Study (TAS) was in many ways the central component of the project's attempt to assess the actual economic contribution of rural women. Analysis of the available macro-level statistics, such as for example, labor force participation rates, in the first phase of the project (Acharya, 1979) revealed the inadequacy of conventional statistics for the assessment of women's real economic role in Nepalese villages. Therefore, in order to support long range economic planning, to stimulate the reformulation of government policy on women and to provide the kind of detailed, area specific information necessary for the incorporation of women into rural development programs, the team decided that micro-level data on women's work should be gathered to supplement the existing national level statistics.

We were particularly interested in the non-market, subsistence sector of the economy: the sector which is least amenable to conventional modes of economic measurement and where we hypothesized women's input to be the greatest.

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[1] It should be noted that the value added income from food processing activities such as liquor making, grinding, husking etc. was not included in the household income calculations used for determining economic strata. This is because the Asian Development Bank's per capita income figure used as a median for our stratification procedure was not based on such detailed accounting of home production income. The considerable amount of such income earned by these activities would have inflated the per capita income of the sample households relative to the national average.

This led us to focus on the household and to attempt to measure how its members — young and old, male and female — use their time in productive versus reproductive activities. In fact, we felt that the whole question of what is "productive" activity -- the whole definition of work itself -- needed to be reassessed on the basis of fresh observation of what village families do with their time to meet and if possible to surpass, their subsistence needs.

We adopted our methodology from an unpublished paper by Johnson (1974)[1] who had used the "spot check" technique of randomly timed household observations to gather time allocation data on the Machiguenga community in South America. This method may be described in the following stages:

1. Preparation of a detailed list of activities and their definitions is the first step in any attempt towards data collection on time allocation. A structured list of activities is a must for preserving uniformity in the definition of activities. Our list included 97 activities classified in 12 major categories.[2]

2. Selection of the sample households in the survey sites (which had already been selected as discussed above) was the next step. In villages with strict caste distinctions the households were classified according to the caste for sampling purposes and a random selection of households made within each group. Thus the caste distribution of the village households was also reflected in the sample distribution.

3. These 24 sample households were divided into four groups (A, B, C & D) of six households each. Each group consisted of six households because that was thought to be the maximum number of households which could be visited by the researchers

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[1]The findings of this study appeared in published form in 1975 as "Time Allocation in a Machiguenga Community" IN Ethnology 14:301-10.

[2]For complete list of all 97 sub-activities see Field Manual (CEDA 1979), Appendix VI or The Rural Women of Nepal: An Aggregate Analysis and Summary of Eight Village Studies, Vol. II, Part 9. (Acharya and Bennett, 1981).

within the specified hour. The researchers visited two groups of households each day at two different hours which were determined in advance by random selection. Each group of households was thus visited on alternative days for a period of six months in four villages and one year in another four villages.

We had wanted to cover the full agricultural cycle for all the village studies to obtain a complete record of the seasonal variation in women's and men's workloads. However, because of the limited time and funding available, the CEDA staff team members working in Sirsia, Sukrawar, Pulu and Katarche were only able to observe their sample households over a six month period. Fortunately we were able to time the field research to encompass most of the agricultural busy season and a portion of the winter slack season. The Kagbeni study was carried out over an eight month[1] period and the remaining three studies (in Thabang, Pangma and Bakundol) cover a full year.

The hours of daily visits for each group of households were selected randomly from within the universe of a 16 hour (4 a.m. to 8 p.m.)[2] day for 26 weeks. Thus each

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[1]This study was planned to cover a full year but had to be suspended when the research assistant, having been mistaken for one of the parties in a local faction, was murdered. His death was not related in any way to his role as a research assistant and theoretically someone else could have been trained to carry on the work. However, by the time the general shock and disruption caused by the murder had subsided in the community there had already been too long a gap in the data collection and the principal researcher decided to suspend the study.

[2]In Kagbeni the researcher was unable to visit families before six a.m. because of the large Tibetian mastifs which are let loose at night to protect households against thieves. Only after they are chained in the morning is it feasible to venture out and visit homes. Therefore the period of observation for this village was only 14 hours. Similarly the researcher in Sukhrawar village was able to begin his observation at 5 a.m. and covered only a 15 hour period. The reason we set our starting time so early is that we knew that in many communities women grind their flour at this time and also that during the summer months both men and women may begin work in the fields well before 6 a.m.

household was visited 78 times in six month studies and 156 times in one year studies. Total number of households covered in eight villages was 192. (For details on parameters of each field study see attached Figure ii).

4. The field workers were provided with Form 'A' (attached) and Code Sheets. Their job was to visit the households during the pre-determined hours (a chart of which was provided to them) and check the appropriate box on the Form 'A'.[1] Form 'A' has a precoded and predefined activity list on the vertical column and person code of the household members on the horizontal line. Field workers were asked to write the name of the household members in the horizontal line against appropriate person codes before visiting the households. (For more detailed discussion, see Aggregate Analysis).

The data collected by this method represented the frequency of observations of a given activity within the time horizon used. This was taken as the frequency of time distribution and the resulting time allocation data derived. There is an explicit assumption in this jump (which is supported by statistical probability) that if people devote in general more time to activity A than to activity B, people will be observed more times performing activity A than B. This data does not provide information on time intensity of operation A compared to operation B.

In other words, it was assumed if people spend more time cooking than washing their hands, we would encounter more people who were cooking at the moment of our spot check than people who were washing their hands. This assumption is valid provided the group of households being visited within the hour are more or less homogeneous in their major activity pattern.

---

[1]As with Johnson's study our aim was to record "what each member of the household was doing before they became aware of our presence .... When members were absent, but nearby we went to observe them -- otherwise we relied on informant testimony about the activities of absent members, verifying where possible". Researchers report that other family members generally gave an accurate account of what members were doing.

TABLE i

PARAMETERS OF RESEARCH DESIGN FOR THE CEDA/STATUS OF WOMEN TIME ALLOCATION STUDIES

	Code No.	115	121	123	124	226	228	237	239	All Villages
	Village	KAGBENI	PANGMA	THABANG	BAKUNDOL	BULU	KATARCHE	SUKRAWAR	SIRSIA	
	Ethnic Group	Baragaonle	Lohorung Rai	Kham Magar	Parbatiya	Newar	Tamang	Tharu	Maithili	
1.	Daily period from which observation points were randomly chosen	14 hrs.	16 hrs.	16 hrs.	16 hrs.	16 hrs.	16 hrs.	15 hrs.	16 hrs.	Varies
2.	Number of months observed	8 mo. (34 wks.)	12 mo. (52 wks.)	12 mo. (52 wks.)	12 mo. (52 wks.)	6 mo. (26 wks.)	6 mo. (26 wks.)	6 mo. (26 wks.)	6 mo. (26 wks.)	Varies
3.	Starting Dates	1 Jan. 78	26 Feb. 78	27 Feb. 78	26 Feb. 78	1 Aug. 78	4 Aug. 78	25 Jan. 79	31 Jul. 78	
4.	Number of Sample households	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	192
5.	Sample population for TAS study	110	123	133	146	115	119	307	168	1221
6.	Observation points per week per household	3	3	3*	3	3	3	3	3	3 random times per week
7.	Total observations per person in each village	(34x3) 102	(52x3) 156	(52x3) 156	(52x3) 156	(26x3) 78	(26x3) 78	(26x3) 78	(26x3) 78	Varies
8.	Approximate total number of observations per village	11220	19188	20748	22776	8970	9282	23946	13104	129234

* Dr. Molnar the Researcher working in Thabang actually made 6 visits a week to each household and collected twice the number of observations on each individual. This "double data" however, has not been included in the aggregate study. Through an analysis of this data at a future time the Researcher hopes to evaluate whether an increased number of observation points has any affect on the time allocation patterns that emerge.

Form A

Daily Activities

Village No. | Household No. | Month | Date | Hour

Activity Code and Description / Person Code and Name		01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	-
Code	Activity										
01010											
01020	Animal Husbandry										
	Agriculture										

Monograph Content and Format

Although in a certain sense the Field Manual and the quantitative survey instruments provided a broad analytical framework for the data collection effort, the extent of the analytical uniformity intended for the village studies should perhaps be clarified. This is especially necessary with regard to the qualitative aspect where a great deal of flexibility in terms of both data collection and interpretation was expected and in fact, encouraged. The Field Manual was intended to ensure that certain basic information was gathered on all six "dimensions" while allowing the individual researchers to concentrate their attention on those areas which particularly interested them or which emerged as central to understanding the status of women in the community where they worked. Thus each team member has organized his or her material in a different way to address those theoretical issues which he or she felt to be the most important from among those discussed in the Manual.

The quantitative data gathered through the questionnaires and schedules were of course uniform for all villages. The same surveys were administered at each research site and a set of standard tabulations were prepared for all villages. Nevertheless, the final decision as to which statistics or tables to incorporate in each monograph and how to interpret them was left to the individual author. Some have relied heavily on their quantitative data and in the course of their analysis developed new ways to present it in tabular or graph form. Others have preferred to concentrate on the presentation and analysis of their qualitative data gathered through participant observation. To facilitate comparison between the villages a standard set of tables on demographic and socio-economic aspects of each community have been included in the Appendices of the summary and aggregate analysis monograph.

Research Team

Status of Women Project

CEDA

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INTRODUCTION

The current study is one in the series of eight case studies envisaged under the Status of Women Project in Nepal. The major objectives of this particular case study have been to (1) assess and evaluate the role and status of women in Maithili society vis-a-vis men, (2) to analyze the status and role of women in this society in the context of development policies and programmes, and (3) to indicate the scope and direction for future work towards integrating Maithili women into the development process.

The first chapter introduces the reader to the village and culture. The three following chapters are addressed to the evaluation of the status and role of women in Maithili society. The second chapter describes the cultural and socio-religious aspects of women's role and status. The third chapter tries to measure the contribution of women to the household welfare and the fourth chapter deals with the dimension of power and authority of women in this society.

Most of the methodological aspects of this study were covered in the common introduction to this series. Within the general theoretical perspective of the project, however, there are certain specific points which need to be re-emphasised for this analysis. One such point which needs further discussion is the distinction between the two terms "role" and "status". This distinction is crucial to the analysis of women's position in Maithili society. A confusion between these terms might lead to conclusions quite diverse from real power relations within the society. This problem of confusion has been discussed in detail by Buvinic (1976), and Ridley (n.d.). As Ridley points out "status refers to the ranking of a social position in terms of power, prestige and esteem in comparison with another or other social positions. Thus status is a relative term. While role also refers to a social position, it is defined either normatively or behaviorally. Role is defined as an expected pattern of behavior or as an actual pattern of behavior associated with particular social position. In neither instance, however does the concept of role imply a ranking". Similar status does not necessarily imply similar roles. The status of a doctor and an engineer in Nepalese society is similar but their roles are quite different.

Status is a multi-dimensional concept and measurement of status involves complicated exercises in grading and judgement. Sociologists differ widely as to the scales of status measurement. (Duncan 1968, Giele 1977, Schlegel 1977). In this project the status has been conceived as having six dimensions, i.e., familial, economic, political, legal, educational and ideological. For this case study, however familial, educational and ideological/religious dimensions have been considered together. Furthermore the political/community and legal aspects of women's status have all been addressed in a single chapter, as all these categories are directly related to the issues of power and authority. Socio-cultural images and role expectations and the esteem, prestige and social authority attached to them go into the formation of socio-cultural status. In a Hindu society where religion is also a way of life, socio-cultural status is also inseparable from ideological and religious images. I tend to agree with Smock (1977) in grouping all these factors together. According to her, the aspects of culture most important in determining the "nature and scope of roles of men and women" are (1) images of women (which might be spiritual, sexual, intellectual and managerial or other), (2) the differences perceived between men and women, (3) the definitions of the kinds of relationships possible and desirable between men and women, (4) the degree of concern with female sexuality and purity, and (5) norms of division of labor.

Economic status, on the other hand, is a measurable concept and may be decomposed into several indicators such as ownership of wealth and property, opportunity for participation in occupations of higher status, level of income and control over income, etc.

Political status also is a composite indicator and may be measured in terms of power, authority and autonomy in different spheres of life. It is very important to make a distinction between power and authority in the analysis of social stratification. These categories may be best defined in Schlegel's (1977) terms: "power is ability to exert control (legitimate or illegitimate), authority is socially recognized and legitimated right to make decisions concerning others as well as on resource deployment". Autonomy means freedom from control by others. The availability of life options described by Giele (1977) and adapted by myself (1978) as indicators of

status in the first part of this study, seem inadequate to explain fully women's status. Many of these options may be classified under autonomy in the present definition.

A systematic status differentiation with a degree of rigidity in vertical mobility results in social stratification (Duncan 1968). In this definition, age and ability as factors of social differentiation are not differentiating factors in social stratification because the age path is open to all and ability and intelligence are distributed randomly. When there is an institutionalized hierarchical system of inequality regarding rewards, prestige and power attached to different social roles and overwhelmingly greater probability of either sex occupying systematically high prestige or low prestige roles, a systematic sexual inequality exists (Schlegel 1977).

The discussions in the second, third and fourth chapters, closely follow the logic of social stratification discussed above.

The concluding chapter is addressed to the second and third objectives as outlined above. Various questions of women's role and status have been examined from perspectives of development planning, and concrete policy recommendations are offered to the planners.


Figure : I. I
NEPAL
N
International Boundaries
Zonal Boundaries
District Boundaries
Regional Boundaries
FAR WESTERN REGION
MID WESTERN REGION
WESTERN REGION
CENTRAL REGION
EASTERN REGION
5th.
INDIA
CHINA
SIKKIM
Humla
Dolpa
Mugu
Jumla
Mustang
Manang
Rukum
Rolpa
Magdi
Kaski
Lamjung
Gorkha
Dhadin
Rasuwa
Nuwakot
Sindhupalchok
Kathmandu
Dolakha
Bhaktapur
Kavrepalanchok
Ramechap
Okhaldhunga
Khotang
Solokhumbu
Sankhuwasava
Taplejung
Terhathum
Panchthar
Ilam
Jhapa
Bhojpur
Dhankuta
Udayapur
Sunsari
Morang
Biratnagar
Saptari
Siraha
Dhanusha
Janakpur
Mahottari
Sarlahi
Rautahat
Gaur
Bara
Parsa
Makwanpur
Lalitpur
Sindhuli
Chitwan
Nawalparasi
Rupandehi
Kapilbastu
Palpa
Syanja
Tanahu
Gulmi
Pyuthan
Argha-Khanchi
Baglung
Parbat
Dang-deukhuri
Banke
Bardia
Surkhet
Salyan
Kailali
Kanchanpur
Dadeldhura
Doti
Achaam
Baitadi
Bajhang
Dorchula
Tibrikot
Bajura
Jajarkot
Dailekh
MILOMETERS
0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140 160
0 20 40 60 80 100
MILES
AFGANISTHAN
PAKISTHAN
CHINA
NEPAL
INDIA
SRI LANKA
80°
82°
84°
86°
88°
30°
28°

CHAPTER I

THE VILLAGE AND THE PEOPLE

Mithila was the land of many Hindu legends and Maithili culture is one of the ancient cultures of the Indo-Gangetic plains. Maithili culture, as practised in the villages, is similar to, but at the same time distinct from other Hindu cultures of these plains. At present, Maithili-speaking people are found inhabiting the Terai plains, between the districts of Rautahat and Morang in Nepal, and in about nine adjcining districts in Bihar and West Bengal (Mishra 1979, Aquique 1974).

Sirsia-Parbari, the focus of this study, is a village situated about eighteen kilometers from Janakpur*, the legendary city of the Hindu epic, the Ramayana. This village, however, seems to be a relatively new settlement dating back only to the middle of the last century, when reclamation of forest and waste land was encouraged by the Rana rulers on very lucrative terms (see Regmi 1976).

Sirsia village itself is only a part of the larger entity called the village panchayat**. According to the 1975 panchayat estimates, the panchayat had a population of 5,523, of whom 1,228 persons lived in Sirsia-Parbari (called Sirsia henceforth) the settlement covered by this study (Table 1.1). Sirsia is situated at a distance of about one hour's walk north of the Mahendra Highway. The village panchayat is served by the Hardinath Irrigation Project. A branch of the Agricultural Development Bank is situated in a nearby settlement. One health clinic, a sajha office (government marketing and credit cooperative) and a small village post office, all situated about a half hour's walk from the settlement, constitute the institutional network which serves the village panchayat (Table 1.2).

---

*Janakpur in Dhanusha District is about 247 km west of Biratnagar, the district headquarters of Morang District.

**A village panchayat is a rural administrative unit under the present Panchayat System.

FIGURE 1.2

MAP OF DHANUSHA DISTRICT

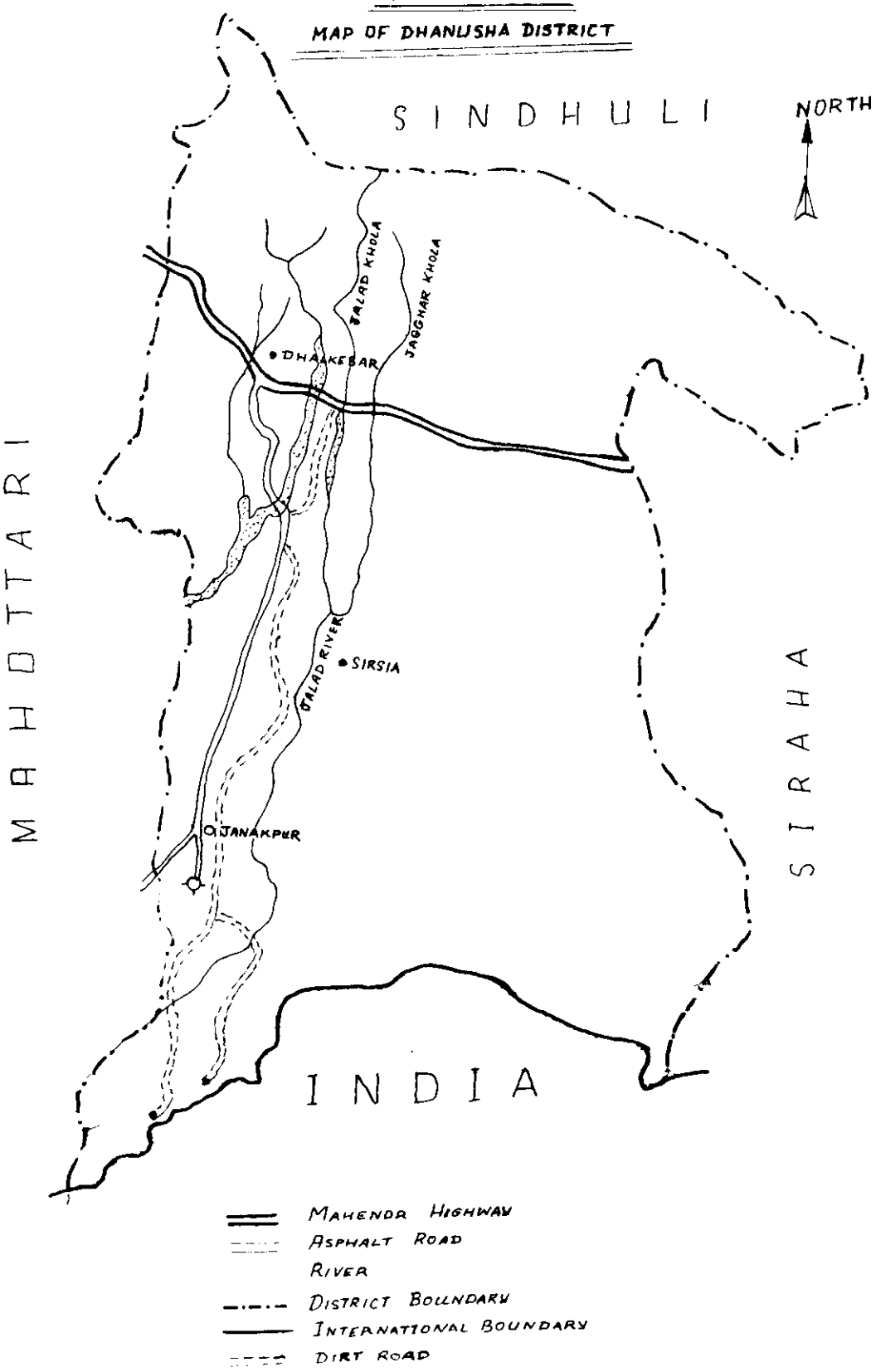


FIGURE 1.3

TARAPATTI - SIRSIA PANCHAYAT

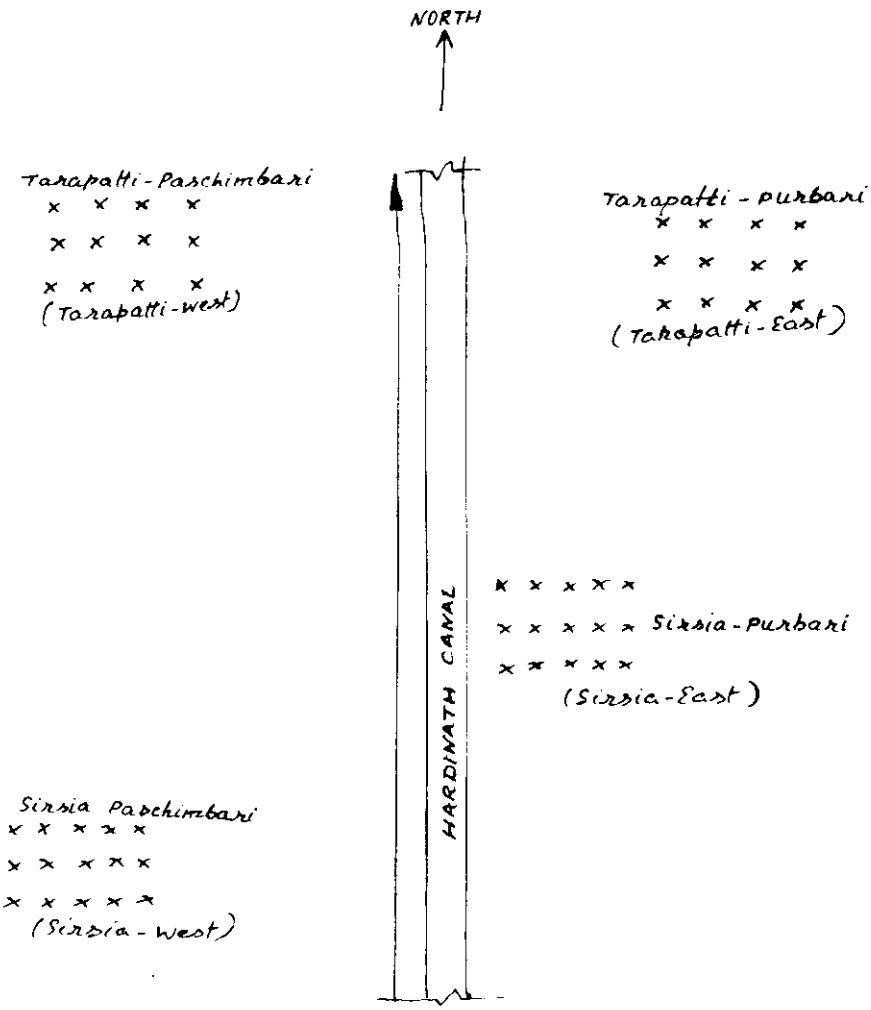


FIGURE 1.4

AN IMPRESSIONISTIC SKETCH OF THE SETTLEMENT

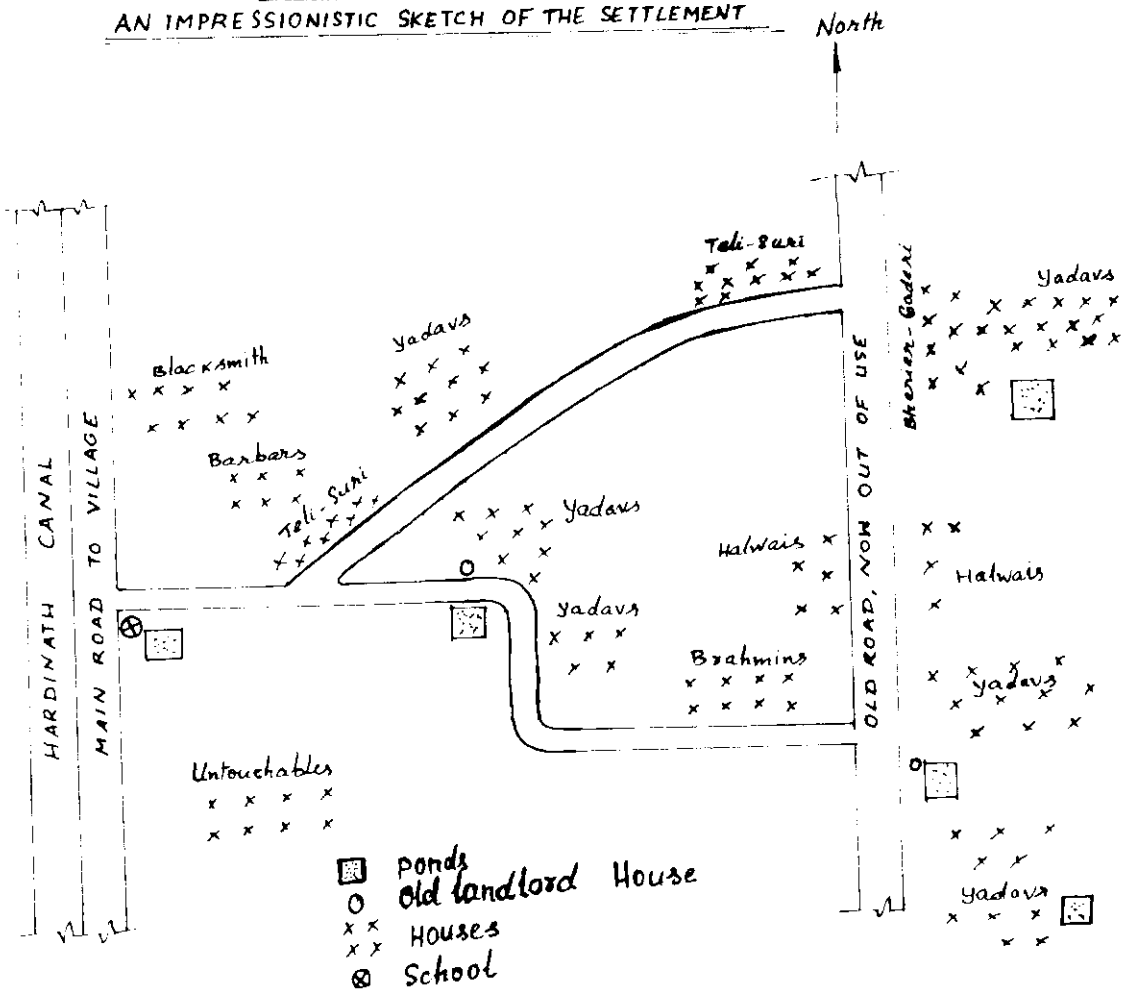


Table 1.1

COMPARATIVE STATISTICS

1. All Nepal population, 1971 (In numbers)	11,555,983
2. Of which, Maithili speaking, 1971 (In numbers)	1,327,242
3. Maithili speaking population to total population (In percent)	11.5
4. Maithili speaking population in Dhanukha district, 1971 (In numbers)	284,707
5. Dhanukha district's Maithili speaking population to total Maithili speaking population (In percent)	21.5
6. Population of Tarapatti-Sirsia panchayat, 1971 (In numbers)	42,255
7. Tarapatti-Sirsia panchayat population to Maithili speaking district population (In percent)	1.5
8. Population of the same panchayat in the survey year (In numbers)	5,523*
9. Population of the Sirsia-Parbari in the survey year (In numbers)	1,228
10. Sirsia-Parbari population to panchayat population (In percent)	22.2

Source: CBS, The Planning Commission. 1977

HMG Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. 1974

*Estimated on the basis of 1975 voter's list and a population growth rate of 2.5 percent.

There is a primary school in the settlement, and a middle school is situated at about five or six kilometers away (Table 1.2).

The village is a typical Terai settlement organized around a few wealthy households and inhabited mostly by middle ranking farmer castes, the Yadavs and Bheriers. Bhahmans and service castes both constitute a minority in the village. In addition to these castes, the village has other middle-ranking trading castes, of which the Teli-Suri and Haluwais are the largest. Sirsia-Parbari is divided into distinct caste neighborhoods and almost all the members of a given caste are located within their own caste area. Only recent outgrowths are exceptions to this rule. With the increasing density of population, however, the strict residential segregation between caste groups is beginning to break down.

Although the walls of the caste system are crumbling fast in the urban areas, the caste system still constitutes one of the basic organizing principles in the rural Terai. Sirsia is no exception to this. As elsewhere, Brahmans are at the top of the Hindu hierarchy, while the Chamars or untouchables are at the bottom. In between are the Yadavs and Bheriers (the farmer castes), the Haluwai and the Teli-Suri (the trading castes) and the service castes such as the Hajams (barbers) and Lohars (blacksmiths). The hierarchy among the subcastes within the main castes is always disputed and hard to arrange into a fixed order of rank.

Because of the importance of caste structure in the village life, it was considered necessary to include all castes in our analysis. Accordingly, for sampling purposes, the households in the village were classified according to caste and a proportional sample was drawn from each caste (Table 1.3).

Economically the village is organized around a few big landlords. The pressure on the land is tremendous--the man/land ratio in the sampled households being 3.8 persons per hectare. The average land holding for the sample households was 1.8 hectares per household.

Table 1.2

INSTITUTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR DEVELOPMENT

Institutions	Distance from the village panchayat
Primary school	Within the panchayat
Secondary school	About 5 kilometres, in the adjoining panchayat
Health post	Within the panchayat
Sajha	About 2 kilometres, in the adjoining panchayat
Agricultural Development Bank office	About 2 kilometres, in the adjoining panchayat
Post office	Within the panchayat
Hardinath Irrigation Project	Head work located at about 4 kilometres
Hardinath Research Farm	About 4 kilometres
Agricultural extension worker, i.e., JTA	Stationed in the panchayat

Table 1.3

CASTE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SIRSIA HOUSEHOLDS IN THE VILLAGE AND THE SAMPLE SIZE

Caste	Number of households in the village		Sample Households*			
			General Survey		Time Allocation	
	Number	Percentage to total households	Number	Percentage to total sample households	Number	Percentage to total sample households
1. Brahmans	6	3.93	2	5.71	1	4.16
2. Yadavs	95	46.34	14	40.00	10	41.67
3. Teli-Suri-Haluwai	43	20.98	7	20.00	5	20.83
4. Bherier-Gaderi	48	23.41	8	22.86	6	25.00
5. Hazams-Lohars	7	3.41	2	5.72	1	4 17
6. Chamars	6	2.93	2	5.71	1	4.17
Total households	205	100.00	35	100.00	24	100.00

*Proportion of sample households does not tally exactly with the caste proportion of households in the village due to rounding effect.

Eleven percent of the households have no land. Another 60 percent own less than 2 hectares of land. Only 3 percent of the households have more than eight hectares of land.

As mentioned in the introduction, the project team believes that economic factors exert strong influence on the role of women vis-a-vis men in the society. Accordingly households have been divided into three economic strata--top, middle and bottom--on the basis of per-capita income in the household. In the Sirsia sample the top economic stratum constitutes 25.7 percent of the households, the bottom economic stratum 60 percent and the middle economic stratum only 14.3 percent of the households, demonstrating the polarization in the village (Table 1.4).

Caste differentiation and economic stratification cut across each other. Both high caste Brahmans and low caste Chamars are found in the bottom economic stratum. The middle castes (who are divided into sub-castes according to whether or not their touch pollutes water) have both rich and poor in their ranks (Tables 1.5 and 1.6). The alliance system in Sirsia is influenced very much by economic factors. For example in the village panchayat meetings the poor of all castes, whether Bherier or Yadavs, formed the opposition and were on one side while the rich of all castes formed the ruling group. While the poorer men and women of Yadav and Bherier castes constantly consult one another on various matters concerning the village, they rarely talk to their caste brothers or sisters of the rich households.

Per household asset holdings of the sample households were 67,642 rupees. Asset holdings in the top economic stratum were worth 182,608 rupees per household while the average family size was 8.6 persons per household. The comparable figures for the middle income stratum were 54,592 rupees and 5.4 persons. The bottom economic stratum had, on the average, asset holdings worth 21,478 rupees and 6.2 persons per household. The structure of asset holdings does not differ significantly between the different economic strata. On the whole, land and buildings constitute about 90 percent of the assets. Households in the top economic stratum held 91.2 percent of their assets in the form of land and buildings and 4.0 percent in the form of jewelry. Households in the middle economic stratum had comparatively higher percentages of land and buildings and lower percentages of jewelry. Almost 90 percent of the household

Table 1.4

HOUSEHOLDS BY CASTE AND ECONOMIC STRATA

Caste \ Economic Strata	Top	Middle	Bottom	All Strata
High				
Brahman	-	-	2 (100.0) (9.5)	2 (100.0) (5.7)
Middle				
Yadav and Haluwai	4 (25.0) (44.4)	3 (18.8) (60.0)	9 (56.2) (42.9)	16 (100.0) (45.7)
Others	5 (33.3) (44.6)	2 (13.3) (40.0)	8 (53.4) (38.1)	15 (100.0) (42.9)
Low (Untouchables)				
Chamar	-	-	2 (100.0) (9.5)	2 (100.0) (5.7)
All castes	9 (25.7) (100.0)	5 (14.3) (100.0)	21 (60.0) (100.0)	35 (100.0) (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentages - first row percent and second column percent.

Table 1.5

POPULATION BY ECONOMIC STRATA AND CASTE

Caste \ Economic Strata	Top	Middle	Bottom	All Strata
High				
Brahman	-	-	12 (100.0) (9.2)	12 (100.0) (5.1)
Middle				
Yadav and Haluwai	47 (39.5) (60.3	15 (12.6) (55.6)	57 (47.9) (43.9)	119 (100.0) (50.7)
Others	31 (18.6) (39.7)	12 (44.4)	52 (81.4) (40.0)	95 (100.0) (40.4)
Low (Untouchables)				
Chamar	-	-	9 (100.0) (6.9)	9 (100.0) (3.8)
All Castes	78 (33.2) (100.0)	27 (11.5) (100.0)	130 (55.3) (100.0)	235 (100.0) (100.0)

(Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages-first row percent and second column percent).

Table 1.6

PER HOUSEHOLD ASSET HOLDINGS AND ASSET STRUCTURE

Particulars / Economic Strata	Asset holdings (in Rs.)	Percentage distribution as per different kinds of assets								
		Land & building	Animals*			Agricultural implements	Transport vehicles	Gold & silver	Other	Total
			Major	Minor	Total					
Top	182,608	91.2	3.7	-	3.7	0.1	0.5	3.8	0.7	100.0
Middle	54,592	95.1	2.1	0.1	2.2	0.2	0.9	0.7	0.9	100.0
Bottom	21,478	89.8	4.1	0.3	4.4	0.2	0.4	4.3	0.9	100.0
All Strata	67,642	91.4	3.6	0.1	3.7	0.1	0.5	3.5	0.8	100.0

* Major = cattle
Minor = other

assets in the bottom economic stratum were also in the form of land and buildings. Most of this consisted of dwelling houses. The percentage of jewelry in their assets was highest of all.

Characteristics of the Sample Population

The sample population was 235, of whom 50.6 percent were men and 49.4 percent women. The sex ratio in the sample population was 102.5 males to 100 females against the 1971 national sex ratio of 101.4 and the all Terai sex ratio of 106.7 (see Acharya 1979). About 39 percent of the population were below fifteen and about 5 percent above 60. Thus about 56 percent of the population fell in the working age group of 15 to 59 years. In the working age group of 15 to 59, the sex ratio per 100 female was 109.5 males. It is hard to draw demographic conclusions from the available statistics due to the small size of the sample. Economic factors, however, do seem to contribute towards increasing the proportion of females in the total population. In the top economic stratum there were only 77.3 men per 100 women, while in the middle and bottom economic strata there were 125 and 116.7 men per 100 women respectively (Table 1.7 to 1.9).

Table 1.7

SEX AND AGE GROUP

Age Group \ Sex	Male		Female		Total		Males per 100 females
	Number	Percentage of total	Number	Percentage of total	Number	Percentage of total	
0- 9	36	30.2	36	31.0	72	30.6	100.0
10-14	9	7.6	10	8.6	19	8.1	90.0
15-24	20	16.8	20	17.3	40	17.0	100.0
25-34	29	24.4	25	21.6	54	23.0	116.0
35-49	14	11.8	11	9.5	25	10.7	127.3
50-59	6	5.0	7	6.0	13	5.5	85.7
60 and above	5	4.2	7	6.0	12	5.1	71.4
Total	119	100	116	100	235	100	102.5

Table 1.8

POPULATION BY ECONOMIC STRATA AND AGE GROUP

Age Group \ Strata/Sex	Top			Middle			Bottom		
	Male	Female	Ratio	Male	Female	Ratio	Male	Female	Ratio
0-14	1	17	67.7	5	4	125.0	29	25	116.0
15-59	21	23	91.3	9	7	128.6	39	33	118.2
60 and above	2	4	50.0	1	1	No	2	2	100.0
Total	34	44	77.3	15	12	125.0	70	60	116.7

Table 1.9

POPULATION BY CASTE AND AGE GROUP

Age Group \ Caste	High (Brahmans)		Middle						Low (Chamars)	
			Yadavs & Haluwai		Others		Total			
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
0-14	3	3	18	23	20	20	38	43	4	-
15-59	3	3	38	36	26	21	64	57	2	3
60 and above	-	-	1	3	4	4	5	7	-	-
Total	6	6	57	62	50	45	107	107	6	3
Overall sex ratio	100.0		91.9		111.1		100.0		200.0	

Literacy and Educational Level

About 22 percent of the sample population could read and write although only 12.5 percent had had any schooling. No one had had higher education and only 6.9 percent had had secondary schooling. Moreover, only 5.7 percent of the women in the sample were literate as against 37.8 percent of the men. Only 2.9 percent of the women had been to primary school while none of them had had secondary schooling (Tables 1.10-1.11). The economic stratum to which they belonged was an important factor in female education. Relatively more women from higher economic strata were literate (Table 1.10-1.11). Caste, in contrast, appeared to have no influence on whether women were literate or not. All women in both high and low castes in the sample were illiterate (Table 1.12-1.13).

The Life Style

The Family Structure and Living Quarters

In Maithili society close relationships are maintained within the agnatic groups. Most people go through a cycle of living in extended-nuclear-extended households (Kapadia, 1947). A person is usually born in an extended family. A man may set up his own household before his parents die or he may continue to live in the extended household until it contains third and fourth generation members. However, most of the households split before this stage is reached. The statistics on family structure show that the scale is slightly tilted in favour of nuclear households, but the majority of people live in extended households (Tables 1.14-1.17). The incidence of extended families is much higher in the top and middle economic strata than in the bottom economic stratum. It is generally the land which keeps a family together. Brothers of poorer households tend to split earlier but their parents usually live with one of the brothers. Looking at caste, no extended family was reported in the sample of low caste households, while 50 percent of the Brahman households and 51.6 percent of the middle caste households were extended.

The majority of the population live in thatched one-storey houses. These houses are usually conglomerates of one room buildings build around a courtyard. The buildings are built on all four sides with small openings at the four corners. The front corner, however, has a larger door

Table 1.10

LITERACY PATTERN BY ECONOMIC STRATA AND SEX

(For population of 15 years and above)

Sex / Economic Strata	Male			Female			Both		
	Literate	Illiterate	Total	Literate	Illiterate	Total	Literate	Illiterate	Total
Top	16 (69.6)	7 (30.4)	23 (100.0)	3 (11.1)	24 (88.9)	27 (100.0)	19 (38.0)	31 (62.0)	50 (100.0)
Middle	4 (40.0)	6 (60.0)	10 (100.0)	-	8 (100.0)	8 (100.0)	4 (22.2)	14 (77.8)	18 (100.0)
Bottom	8 (19.5)	33 (80.5)	41 (100.0)	1 (2.9)	34 (97.1)	35 (100.0)	9 (11.8)	67 (88.2)	76 (100.0)
All Strata	28 (37.8)	46 (62.11)	74 (100.0)	4 (5.7)	66 (94.3)	70 (100.0)	32 (22.2)	112 (77.8)	144 (100.0)

(Figures within the parentheses indicate percentages).

Table 1.13

EDUCATIONAL PATTERN BY CASTE AND SEX

(For population of 15 years and above)

Sex/Schooling level / Caste	Male				Female		
	No Schooling	Primary	Secondary	Total	No Schooling	Primary	Total
High	-	1 (33.3)	2 (66.7)	3 (100.0)	3 (100.0)	-	3 (100.0)
Middle	56 (81.15)	5 (7.25)	8 (11.6)	69 (100.0)	62 (96.9)	2 (3.1)	64 (100.0)
Low	2 (100.0)	-	-	2 (100.0)	3 (100.0)	-	3 (100.0)
All castes	58 (78.4)	6 (8.10)	10 (13.5)	74 (100.0)	68 (97.15)	2 (2.85)	70 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses are row percentages.

Table 1.14

HOUSEHOLDS BY ECONOMIC STRATA AND FAMILY STRUCTURE

Economic Strata \ Family Structure	Nuclear	Extended	Total
Top	3 (33.3)	6 (66.7)	9 (100.0)
Middle	2 (40.0)	3 (60.0)	5 (100.0)
Bottom	13 (61.9)	8 (38.1)	21 (100.0)
All Strata	18 (51.4)	17 (48.6)	35 (100.0)

Figure within brackets are row percentages.

Table 1.15

POPULATION BY ECONOMIC STRATA AND FAMILY STRUCTURE

Economic Strata \ Family Structure	Nuclear	Extended	Total
Top	17 (21.8)	61 (78.2)	78 (100.0)
Middle	12 (44.4)	15 (55.6)	27 (100.0)
Bottom	62 (47.7)	68 (52.3)	130 (100.0)
All Strata	91 (38.7)	144 (61.3)	235 (100.0)

Figures within brackets are row percentages.

Table 1.16

HOUSEHOLDS BY CASTE AND FAMILY STRUCTURE

Caste \ Structure	Nuclear	Extended	Total
High	1 (50.0)	1 (50.0)	2 (100.0)
Middle	15 (48.4)	16 (51.6)	31 (100.0)
Low	2 (100.0)	-	2 (100.0)
All Castes	18 (51.4)	17 (48.6)	35 (100.0)

Figures in the parentheses indicate row percentages.

Table 1.17

POPULATION BY CASTE AND FAMILY STRUCTURE

Caste \ Family Structure	Nuclear	Extended	Total
High	4 (33.3)	8 (66.7)	12 (100.0)
Middle	78 (36.4)	136 (63.6)	214 (100.0)
Low	9 (100.0)	-	9 (100.0)
All Castes	91 (38.7)	144 (61.3)	235 (100.0)

Figures in the parentheses indicate row percentages.

and a verandah. Wealthy households have the whole courtyard to themselves, while in poorer households several brothers share a courtyard. The buildings usually have only one room and in joint or extended households each couple has one building to itself. These rooms rarely have windows but open towards the courtyard. There is a long verandah attached to each building and all household work is done on the verandah or in the courtyard. This is the women's domain and men enter it only at night, for meals or for some small errands. The buildings around the courtyard also have a second storey which is used for storing household utensils, jewelry, clothing and other valuables. The space on the second floor is very limited and it is not possible to stand up inside.

In wealthy households there is an outer building at some distance from the main household. Men spend most of their time in this building. Male visitors are received and lodged here and men of the house may also sleep in this building. In winter a fire is made in front of this building at which the male villagers assemble in the mornings and evenings. This is an important place where major decisions on matters pertaining to farm and village affairs are made. Males from poorer households who cannot afford their own firewood go to one of these several fireside assemblies, called ghura. These outer buildings also serve as store-houses for farm implements and machines, chemical fertilizers, grains and all kinds of goods used on the farm. Women seldom go to these buildings or to these fireplaces. They light their own fire within the household. Women from several poor households combine to make a common fire.

Wealthy households are built in front of a pond which usually belongs to the household. Besides the living quarters, barn houses and animal sheds, a men's quarter and granaries are also built around the pond.

Food and Clothing

The staple food of the people of Sirsia is rice, rice bread and sometimes, wheat bread. A variety of pulses and some vegetables form a permanent part of the diet. Sour milk (made after butter has been extracted) is another source of nutrition, and more fortunate families have milk and curd occasionally. The very poor, however, can rarely afford pulses and vegetables all year round. Only

during harvest seasons and planting times can they afford full meals. Usually a meal for poor villagers consists of a piece of flat bread (roti) with salt and pepper, or rice with either vegetables or pulses. Other than during busy agricultural seasons, poor people have only one meal with rice. Their other meal consists of sweet potatoes.

Most of the children in Sirsia go naked during the summer season up to the age of four or five, when they start wearing pants or underpants. At about seven years of age, girls are discouraged from going around naked and after they have reached the age of about twelve they are made to wear a top. Up to the age of five or six both boys and girls sleep with their parents. If the father is sleeping out in the men's quarters, children sleep with their mothers. After this age, the boys begin to spend more time with their father in the men's house; they tend to play and remain nearer the main house where the women work.

The women mostly wear white cotton cloth which they wrap around their body, pulling one corner over their back and towards the front so that it covers them from head to foot, leaving their hands free to work. After the birth of a child, women do not wear any blouse except on festive occasions or when going out of the village. When asked why they do not wear blouses, the poor women said they had no money to buy them while the women from wealthy families said they did not wear blouses because it was too hot. Men usually wear smaller pieces of material as a dhoti; wearing shirts is optional.

A daily bath is almost a ritual for both men and women as well as for children. Men and women walk into the village pond fully dressed to have their baths. Then they change into dry clothes. Younger children, especially boys, take their baths naked. Children from poorer families, who cannot afford more than one pair of shirts, have their bath in the shirts and let them dry on their bodies.

Rich and poor look very much the same; their dress is similar, although the rich may occasionally wear a pair of slippers while the poor go barefoot. The beds, food and even clothing are shared among the employees and the employers if they are from the same caste. The men's

house in the household where I stayed was a place for perpetual visitors, where anybody could come and sleep in the master's bed for the day. People drink from the same pot without any hesitation if they are of the same caste.

It is customary for a father to eat with all his children from the same plate. Meal times are not fixed and need not be at the same time for all family members. Anybody can eat at any time. Children join their elders as they eat if they are on good terms. There is a large metal plate on which all kinds of food is placed and around which any number of people can sit and eat. Daughters after 10-12 years of age usually discontinue this habit and start eating with their mothers. They may even eat on their own and be joined by the younger children.

Ideology and Culture

Maithili people have a rich cultural heritage and strong folk traditions. The legend of Rama and Sita, the model king and the ideal queen of Hindu culture, symbolising benevolence and self-sacrifice, pervades the folklore and lives of the people. Ramnavami, the birth date of Rama, and Bibah Panchami, the marriage anniversary of Rama and Sita, are the greatest festivals in the area.

Sita is the woman who had tremendous will-power when resisting the advances of the king of Sri Lanka, Ravana, but who succumbed silently to unjust and wrongful banishment by her husband Rama. In the end Sita had to prove her sexual purity by entreating the earth mother to swallow her up. For the Maithili people, as for almost all Hindus, Sita exemplifies the strongly-held cultural ideal of female behavior.

Srinivasan (1976) has described how, in Indian society, in an attempt to raise their social status, people from lower castes and lower economic strata try to emulate the behavior of the members of higher castes and higher economic strata. But in actual practice, economic needs usually force the lower caste to discard this goal and devise their own strategy for survival. The actual behavior of the people differs significantly from what they see as the ideal. This divergence between the actual and the idealised behavioral pattern is also very much in evidence in the roles of the women in the Hindu culture of Sirsia.

Another aspect of the Maithili value system is the association of low status with physical labour. This is, perhaps, a feature of most societies just emerging from a feudal economic system. In the Maithili view, people of high status should not engage in physical toil. This means that for both men and women there is social prestige in avoiding physical work,or, at least, in not working in the fields, a very low status job in feudal agricultural societies.

These two components of the Maithili value system combine to give prestige to women who do not work outside the household, and to accord higher status to those families who do not have to send their women to work outside.

The high value attached to sexual purity has also resulted in a strict pardah (keeping the face covered) for a woman in her affinal household. Pardah is also a sign of respect shown to male affines. A young bride in her affinal household is expected to observe strict pardah and not to show her face to the elder men of her household or to male villagers in general. She should not appear before any male stranger, nor should she raise her voice. No males, except her husband and men of his lineage genealogically junior to her, are supposed to hear her voice. When she has to communicate with men she must do so through children (see Luchinsky, 1962). On one occasion a man was shown the photo of his younger brother's wife, but he did not recognise her, He had never seen his younger sister-in-law, not once in the in the ten years of their coexistence in the same household. In Maithili culture a woman should especially never be seen by her husband's elder brother (jeth) who is also supposed never to hear her voice (Burghart, 1975).

Despite this seclusion, women in both wealthy and poor families have to work very hard, though the kind of work done by the poorer women is more visible to outsiders (see Chapter 3).

Marriage is considered essential for every Maithili woman. It is the only way that women can lay claim to inheritance and find security in their old age. Divorce and remarriage is against the cultural ideal, which stresses that women, like Sita, must maintain strict sexual purity and remain faithful to one husband all their lives.

Nevertheless, in actual practice, remarriage brings no stigma except to Brahmans. Remarriage is quite common. In the Sirsia sample there is one woman in the top economic stratum who has been married three times but who is living a perfectly normal life and is well integrated in the rest of the village society.

On the whole, ideologically the women are seen as weak and dependent on men, while men are supposed to be strong and able to cope with the world and support their families. Women are therefore always encouraged to be attached to men--father, husband, brother or son. The villagers say:

> "Get hold of a man when you are still young because through his sons you will inherit land and gain security."

Both men and women have a very negative view of women's personality and behaviour.

In the community opinion (as elicited through formal questionnaires) women possess more negative qualities and fewer positive qualities than do men (Table 1.18 and 1.19). Men on the whole allotted women negative qualities while they rated themselves very positively. Women on the whole gave positive ratings to both men and women but among women respondents men scored a higher overall positive image than did women. A high percentage of both men and women thought women more quarrelsome and stubborn than men. A higher percentage of men thought women more lazy while women expressed the opposite opinion. More people (both men and women) thought women kinder and more religious. Most respondents thought men more trustworthy and concerned about the family. Only with respect to obedience and cooperation did male and female opinions differ significantly. While only 19.3 percent of the men thought women more obedient against 22.6 percent for men, 48.6 percent of the women thought females more obedient than men. Only 20 percent of the female respondents thought men more obedient. While both men and women thought men more cooperative, the percentage of female respondents who considered women as more cooperative was much higher than that of male respondents.

Thus in the village society, a large number of men and women ascribed more negative qualities and fewer positive

Table 1.18

OPINIONS ABOUT SELF IMAGES

Questions \ Respondents	Male				Female				Both			
	Men	Women	Both	Total	Men	Women	Both	Total	Men	Women	Both	Total
1. Who is more trustworthy?	11 (36.7)	5 (16.7)	14 (46.6)	30 (100.0)	10 (30.3)	5 (15.2)	18 (54.5)	33 (100.0)	21 (33.3)	10 (15.9)	32 (50.8)	63 (100.0)
2. Who is more concerned about the family?	10 (32.2)	6 (19.4)	15 (48.4)	31 (100.0)	13 (40.6)	8 (25.0)	11 (34.4)	32 (100.0)	23 (36.5)	14 (22.2)	26 (41.3)	63 (100.0)
3. Who is more obedient towards superiors?	7 (22.6)	6 (19.3)	18 (58.1)	31 (100.0)	7 (20.0)	17 (48. 6)	11 (31.4)	35 (100.0)	14 (21.2)	23 (34.9)	29 (43.9)	66 (100.0)
4. Who is more kind?	2 (6.2)	20 (62.5)	10 (31.3)	32 (100.0)	5 (14.7)	21 (61.8)	8 (23.5)	34 (100.0)	7 (10.6)	41 (62.1)	18 (27.3)	66 (100.0)
5. Who is more cooperative?	11 (35.5)	2 (6.4)	18 (58.1)	31 (100.0)	21 (37.5)	7 (21.9)	13 (40.6)	32 (100.0)	23 (36.5)	9 (14.3)	31 (49.2)	63 (100.0)
6. Who is more concerned and involved in religion?	6 (18.7)	19 (59.4)	7 (21.9)	32 (100.0)	5 15.1)	20 (60.6)	8 (24.3)	33 (100.0)	11 (16.9)	39 (60.0)	15 (23.1)	65 (100.0)
I. Sub-total I (Positive-Image)	47 (25.1)	58 (31.0)	82 (43.9)	187 (100.0)	52 (26.1)	78 (39.2)	69 (34.7)	199 (100.0)	99 (25.7)	136 (35.2)	151 (39.2)	386 (100.0)
1. Who is more selfish?	4 (14.8)	7 (25.9)	16 (59.3)	27 (100.0)	14 (42.4)	10 (30.3)	9 (27.3)	33 (100.0)	18 (30.0)	17 (28.3)	25 (41.7)	60 (100.0)
2. Who is more lazy?	6 (20.7)	10 (34.5)	13 (44.8)	29 (100.0)	5 (16.1)	16 (51.6)	10 (32.3)	31 (100.0)	11 (18.3)	26 (43.3)	23 (38.4)	60 (100.0)
3. Who is more stubborn?	1 (3.4)	20 (69.0)	8 (27.6)	29 (100.0)	5 (17.2)	20 (69.0)	4 (13.8)	29 (100.0)	6 (10.3)	40 (69.0)	12 (20.7)	58 (100.0)
4. Who is more quarrelsome?	0	23 (71.9)	9 (28.1)	32 (100.0)	5 (16.7)	21 (70.0)	4 (13.3)	30 (100.0)	5 (8.1)	44 (71.0)	13 (20.9)	62 (100.0)
II. Sub-Total II (Negative Image)	11 (9.4)	60 (51.3)	46 (39.3)	117 (100.0)	29 (23.6)	67 (54.5)	27 (21.9)	123 (100.0)	40 (116.7)	127 (52.9)	73 (20.4)	240 (100.0)
Overall Image (I-II)	36	-2	36	70	23	11	42	76	59	9	78	146

Table 1.19

OPINIONS ON SELF IMAGES BY FAMILY STRUCTURE

Respondent/Image \ Type of Family	Nuclear				Extended				All			
	Men	Women	Both	Total	Men	Women	Both	Total	Men	Women	Both	Total
I. Male Respondent Overall (a-b)	22	-1	12	33	14	-1	24	37	36	-2	36	70
a. Positive	26 (30.2)	28 (32.6)	32 (37.2)	86 (100.0)	21 (20.8)	30 (29.7)	50 (49.5)	101 (100.0)	47 (25.1)	58 (31.0)	82 (43.9)	187 (100.0)
b. Negative	4 (7.6)	29 (54.7)	20 (37.7)	53 (100.0)	7 (10.9)	31 (48.5)	26 (40.6)	64 (100.0)	11 (9.4)	60 (51.3)	46 (39.3)	117 (100.0)
II. Female Respondent Overall (c-d)	20	-4	22	38	3	15	20	38	23	11	42	76
c. Positive	30 (29.7)	36 (35.6)	35 (34.7)	101 (100.0)	22 (22.5)	42 (42.9)	34 (34.6)	98 (100.0)	52 (26.1)	78 (39.2)	69 (34.7)	199 (100.0)
d. Negative	10 (15.9)	40 (63.5)	13 (20.6)	63 (100.0)	19 (31.7)	27 (45.0)	14 (23.3)	60 (100.0)	29 (23.6)	67 (54.5)	27 (21.9)	123 (100.0)
III. Total Respondent (I + II) Overall (e-f)	42	-5	34	71	17	14	44	75	59	9	78	146
e. Positive	56 (30.0)	64 (34.2)	67 (35.8)	187 (100.0)	43 (21.6)	72 (36.2)	84 (42.2)	199 (100.0)	99 (25.7)	136 (35.2)	151 (39.1)	386 (100.0)
f. Negative	14 (12.1)	69 (59.5)	33 (28.4)	116 (100.0)	26 (21.0)	58 (46.8)	40 (32.2)	124 (100.0)	40 (16.7)	127 (52.9)	73 (30.4)	240 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentage.

qualities to women compared with men.

In this culture, a woman must show unfailing devotion to her husband and extreme subservience. In ideal situations mothers are respected and loved. Both consanguinal (related by blood) and affinal (related by marriage) women should be loved and cared for. But reality diverges greatly from the ideal and, while there are some respected and powerful women, there are also ignored, powerless, destitute women in this society. In the present case study an attempt is made to analyse how and when women become powerful and what forces contribute towards strengthening the position of women.

CHAPTER II

SOCIAL SETTING AND CULTURAL MILIEU

A Woman's Life Cycle

An individual's place in society is determined by many complex factors. In societies where an individual's worth is judged not in terms of his or her individual qualities but on the basis of his social network and the social groups to which he belongs, an assessment of women's position becomes very complicated. Women do not visualise themselves as a class apart. By virtue of their birth and marriage they are placed in a social class and, depending upon that class, they are either privileged in relation to men and women of other classes or are not. Women have family identity and class identity which place them closer to men of the same family and class than to women of other families and other classes. In Maithili society, the situation is further complicated by the existence of rigid caste divisions. Caste also tends to separate women from each other and align them with the men of their own caste group.

The South Asian village functions as a socio-economic system composed of interacting realms (Mandelbaum, 1970) of which the most relevant for this study are the economic, the political, and the cultural-ideological-religious. The household itself is one of the most important sub-systems on which a society is based. Each sub-system functions only in interaction with others within the village and between villages. In this system people are the ultimate elements and interaction between these elements often takes place through sub-systems like caste groupings, clan alliance groups and family units. Here not all the elements have equal power and authority or equal obligations or duties. Wealth, caste, age, sex and kinship position in the family are the major differentiating factors by which each group's power and position should be assessed.

Such information as whether or not mothers are respected by their children or whether or not sisters are worshipped by their brothers is inadequate for assessing the relative status of women in the society. As members of a higher caste, a higher class or a particular kinship

network, and according to their place in the network, certain women do enjoy certain rights and privileges. However, this study contends that these privileges are illusory when women's position is viewed vis-a-vis that of men of a similar class, caste or kinship group.

Caste is one of the major factors which determine an individual's status in the society. Both men and women inherit caste by birth but after that sexual behavior and marriage play vital roles in determining women's caste status, while for men these factors are of little or no importance. In the Hindu social milieu, a woman derives her full caste identity only after marriage (Bennett, 1977).

For both men and women, marriage is almost compulsory and a very important ceremony in their lives. Marriage bonds are supposed to be irrevocable, and ideally both men and women are supposed to preserve conjugal purity. In the present sample 78.3 percent of the males and 93.8 percent of females were married (Table 2.1). The only currently unmarried individuals were older people whose spouses had died. Boys marry after about fifteen years of age while most girls are married by 15, hence the lower percentage of married men in the overall male population of ten years and above.

Table 2.1

POPULATION BY MARITAL STATUS AND SEX
(For population of 10 years and above)

Marital status \ Sex	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	In percent	Number	In percent	Number	In percent
Married at least once	65	78.3	75	93.8	140	85.9
Never married	18	21.7	5	6.2	23	14.1
Total	83	100.0	80	100.0	163	100.0

In a woman's life marriage is the most important event and the one which largely determines her position in life as an adult. It is not based on any individual or emotional factors, but is, above all, an alliance between two families. Maithili kinship groups are organized along patrilineal principles and their residence pattern is patrilocal. Name and property are inherited by sons who have corresponding ritual and economic responsibilities towards their agnatic groups. Women enter these groups as wives from outside by marriage and marriage bonds are an important factor in group alliances. Prospective wives and husbands play very little part in the establishment of these alliances; they are married while still very young.

In many cases, the prospective bridegrooms are far older than the prospective brides. While 96 percent of the women in the Sirsia sample were married before they were 16, only 70.3 percent of the males were married before sixteen (Table 2.2). No women were found to have married after 20 years of age, while 6.3 percent of the males reported that their first marriage occurred after they had reached this age. The largest number of males reported being married between 14 and 16 while the largest number of women reported being married between 10 and 13. Thus 96 percent of the village girls are married before they reach the legal marriageable age of sixteen. However, the trend is changing for both boys and girls. While all women above the age of 39 reported being married before they were 13 years of age, of those between 20 and 39, only 70.8 percent reported this. Comparable statistics for men are 47.4 percent and 19.6 percent respectively.(Table 2.3).

According to field data, both men and women in the top economic stratum marry earlier than men and women in the bottom economic stratum, and caste does not appear to be an important factor in this respect. The small number of observations, however, precludes any definite conclusion (Tables 2.4 and 2.5).

More than 94 percent of the women's marriages were by family arrangement, and 92 percent of men's marriages were arranged. Irrespective of their economic stratum or caste membership, girls are married earlier than boys and thus have even less voice in the choice of their prospective spouse than do males (Table 2.6). Own-choice marriages are discouraged and frowned upon. This attitude is reflected

Table 2.2

AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE BY SEX

(For population of 15 years and above)

Sex / Age at first marriage	Male			Female		
	Number	In percent	Cumulative percentage	Number	In percent	Cumulative percentage
1- 9	5	7.8	7.8	17	23.0	23.0
10-13	13	20.3	28.1	42	56.8	79.8
14-16	27	42.2	70.3	12	16.2	96.0
17-20	15	23.4	93.7	3	4.0	100.0
21 +	4	6.3	100.0	-	-	100.0
Total	64	100.0	100.0	74	100.0	100.0

Table 2.3

AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE BY SEX AND AGE GROUP
(For population of 15 years and above)

Sex/Age at first marriage \ Age group	10 to 19	20 to 39	40 & above	Total
Male				
1- 9	-	4 (9.8)	1 (5.3)	5 (7.8)
10-13	1 (25.0)	4 (9.8)	8 (42.1)	13 (20.3)
14-16	3 (75.0)	16 (39.0)	8 (42.1)	27 (42.2)
17-20	-	13 (31.6)	2 (10.5)	15 (23.4)
21 +	-	4 (9.8)		4 (6.3)
Total	4 (100.0)	41 (100.0)	19 (100.0)	64 (100.0)
Female				
1- 9	2 (15.4)	7 (17.1)	8 (40.9)	17 (23.0)
10-13	8 (61.5)	22 (53.7)	12 (60.0)	42 (56.8)
14-16	3 (23.1)	9 (21.9)	- -	12 (16.2)
17-20	-	3 (7.3)	-	3 (4.0)
21 +	-	-	-	-
Total	13 (100.0)	41 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	74 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate column percentages.

Table 2.4

AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE BY ECONOMIC STRATA AND SEX
(For population of 15 years and above)

Economic strata/Sex / Age at first marriage	Top		Middle		Bottom	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1- 9	3 (16.7)	9 (33.3)	-	1 (12.5)	2 (5.3)	7 (17.9)
10-13	4 (22.2)	13 (48.2)	2 (25.0)	6 (75.0)	7 (18.4)	23 (59.0)
14-16	7 (38.9)	4 (14.8)	3 (37.5)	1 (12.5)	17 (44.7)	7 (17.9)
17-20	2 (11.1)	1 (3.7)	3 (37.5)	- -	10 (5.3)	2 -
21 +	2 (11.1)	-	-	-	2 (5.3)	-
Total	18 (100.0)	27 (100.0)	8 (100.0)	8 (100.0)	38 (100.0)	39 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate column percentages.

Table 2.5

MARRIED AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE BY CASTE AND SEX

(For population of 15 years and above)

Caste/Sex / Age at first marriage	High		Middle		Low	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1- 9	-	-	4 (6.8)	16 (23.5)	1 (50.0)	1 (33.3)
10-13	-	1 (33.3)	13 (22.0)	39 (57.4)	-	2 (66.7)
14-16	-	2 (66.7)	26 (44.1)	10 (14.7)	1 (50.0)	-
17-20	3 (100.0)	-	12 (20.3)	3 (4.4)	-	-
21 +	-	-	4 (6.8)	-	-	-
Total	3 (100.0)	3 (100.0)	59 (100.0)	68 (100.0)	2 (100.0)	3 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate column percentages.

Table 2.6

FORM OF MARRIAGE BY SEX

(For all marriages)

Form of marriage \ Sex	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Own choice	6	7.9	5	6.0	10	6.3
Own choice without parent's consent	4	5.3	3	3.6	6	3.8
Own choice with parent's consent	2	2.6	2	2.4	4	2.5
Arranged	70	92.1	78	94.0	149	93.7
Arranged without own consent	68	89.5	76	91.6	144	90.6
Arranged with consent	2	2.6	2	2.4	5	3.1
Total	76	100.0	83	100.0	159	100.0

in the fact that a relatively large percent of own-choice marriages were reported to have taken place with minimal ceremony (Table 2.7). Only in the case of remarriage do women have a greater choice of husband. It is interesting to note that in the case of second marriage, a higher proportion of females were married by their own choice than were males (Table 2.8). This may be the result of the cultural idea that no man is supposed to remain single for long and the remarriage of single men is expeditiously arranged. In the case of women, if they are beyond their youth, they have to arrange a second marriage themselves.

The sample evidence shows that neither caste nor economic strata is of major importance in determining whether people get married by arrangement or by choice (Tables 2.9 and 2.10).

Discrimination between males and females in their relative options concerning life partners begins to show as age advances. If a man does not like his wife, he may decide to marry again without any loss of social prestige, caste standing, access to property, or rights of inheritance. But women's inheritance rights, social and ritual status, and their access to property all depend on her being attached to a specific male. The necessity for sexual purity, however, is somewhat more flexible in Maithili society than among the high caste Brahmans and Chetris of Nepal (Bennett, 1977). Unlike high caste Hindu families from the Middle Hills (Parbatiya Hindu), unmarried Maithili girls are allowed to cook the daily rice and ritual food. Moreover the norms governing divorce and widow remarriage are more relaxed in this society. Except among Brahmans, a widow does not lose her caste status on remarriage if the man is also of the same caste. If the girl is widowed or if for some reason she refuses to go to her affines or her affines refuse to accept her before she is transferred to her husband's household, the parents try to marry her off somewhere else. Such action carries no negative social stigma, and these girls are easily remarried. In some cases women do leave their husbands and go off with somebody else. But in doing so, they face loss of prestige and considerable economic risk compared to men in similar positions. On cohabiting with a person from a lower caste she looses her caste status as well. But the offspring from second or third marriages are not considered below the caste of their father.

Table 2.7

FORM OF MARRIAGE BY SEX AND TYPE OF CEREMONY

Form of marriage/Sex / Type of Ceremony	Own Choice		Arranged		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
No ritual	1 (100.0) (16.7)	-	-	1 (100.0) (1.3)	1 (100.0) (1.3)	1 (100.0) (1.2)
Minimum ritual	3 (37.5) (50.0)	2 (25.0) (50.0)	5 (62.5) (7.1)	6 (75.0) (7.6)	8 (100.0) (10.5)	8 (100.0) (9.6)
Maximum ritual	2 (3.0) (33.3)	2 (2.7) (50.0)	65 (97.0) (92.9)	72 (97.3) (91.1)	67 (100.0) (88.2)	74 (100.0) (89.2)
Total	6 (7.9) (100.0)	4 (4.8) (100.0)	70 (92.1) (100.0)	79 (95.2) (100.0)	76 (100.0) (100.0)	83 (100.0) (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentages to row total and column totals.

Table 2.8

FORM OF MARRIAGE BY SEX AND TIMES MARRIED

Form of marriage/Sex / Times married	Own Choice		Arranged		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Once	3	2	61	73	64	75
	(4.7)	(2.7)	(95.3)	(97.3)	(100.0)	(100.0)
Twice	3	2	9	5	12	7
	(25.0)	(28.6)	(75.0)	(71.4)	(100.0)	(100.0)
Thrice	-	1	-	-	-	1
		(100.0)				(100.0)
Total*	6	5	70	78	76	83
	(7.9)	(6.0)	(92.1)	(94.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)

Figures in parentheses are percentages.

*Total may be more than the number of married population in the sample as one may have married more than once.

Table 2.9

FORM OF MARRIAGE BY SEX AND ECONOMIC STRATA

(In person number)

Economic strata \ Form of marriage/ Sex	Own Choice		Arranged		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Top	3	1	20	30	23	31
	(13.0)	(3.2)	(87.0)	(96.8)	(100.0)	(100.0)
Middle	0	1	10	8	10	9
		(11.1)	(100.0)	(88.9)	(100.0)	(100.0)
Bottom	3	2	40	41	43	43
	(7.0)	(4.7)	(93.0)	(95.3)	(100.0)	(100.0)
Total*	6	4	70	79	76	83
	(7.9)	(4.8)	(92.1)	(95.2)	(100.0)	(100.0)

*See footnote to Table 2.8.

Table 2.10

FORM OF MARRIAGE BY SEX AND CASTE

Form of marriage/Sex / Caste	Own Choice		Arranged		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
High	-	-	3	3	3	3
			(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)
Middle	6	4	64	73	70	77
	(8.6)	(5.2)	(91.4)	(94.8)	(100.0)	(100.0)
Low	-	-	3	3	3	3
			(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)
Total*	6	4	70	79	76	83
	(7.9)	(4.8)	(92.1)	(95.2)	(100.0)	(100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentages to total.

*See footnote to Table 2.8.

Altogether 88 percent of the women were presently married, and 90.8 percent of the men were presently married. About six percent of the men and almost 11 percent of the women were widowed. Only 3.1 percent men and 1.3 percent of women were divorced. (Table 2.11).

Of the 69 married women of 15 years of age and above, three (4.3%) were in their second marriage and one had married a third time. Of the 64 married men of 15 years of age and above, 12 (18.7%) had married twice.(Table 2.12).

The small size of the sample precludes any definite conclusions on the relationship of economic factors to marriage patterns in this society. However, there are some women in all economic strata in their second marriage (Table 2.12). The one woman in the sample who has married a third time belongs to the top economic stratum. The incidence of female remarriage was highest in the top economic stratum. In the middle economic stratum there was no remarriage (Table 2.12). Neither Brahmans nor untouchables reported any female remarriage in the present sample. This may be only the result of the small sample size (Table 2.17). In this society, Brahmans prohibit the possibility of remarriage for women, whether it be after divorce or widowhood (Table 2.13).

The second and third marriages for women are established with minimal ceremony. While 14.7 percent of the remarried males said they were married with maximum ritual no remarried women had been married with maximum ritual (Table 2.14). The one third marriage case involved no ceremony.

Thus, although remarriages have lower ritual status, the data clearly indicates that the taboo against remarriage in Maithili society is not strictly observed.

Within the marital union there are tighter controls on women's sexuality than on men's. Husbands have exclusive control over the sexuality of their wives while women have no such rights over their husbands.

In a woman's life cycle, birth, marriage and motherhood are important landmarks and her life may be divided into three important stages: (i) childhood and adolescence, (ii) marriage and early womanhood, (iii) maturity and old age.

Table 2.11

PRESENT MARITAL STATUS BY AGE GROUP

(For population married at least once)

Marital status/Sex / Age Group	Male				Female			
	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Total	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Total
10-14	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	6
15-19	4	-	-	4	7	-	-	7
20-34	34	-	2	36	36	-	1	37
35-49	13	1	-	14	10	1	-	11
50 and above	8	3	-	11	7	7	-	14
All age group	59	4	2	65	66	8	1	75
	(90.8)	(6.1)	(3.1)	(100.0)	(88.0)	(10.7)	(1.3)	(100.0)

Table 2.12

PRESENT MARITAL STATUS BY ECONOMIC STRATA AND SEX
(For population of 15 years and above)

Economic strata/Sex / Present marital status	Top		Middle		Bottom		All Strata	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Married once	14 (73.7)	20 (77.0)	4 (50.0)	6 (75.0)	29 (76.3)	30 (85.7)	47 (72.3)	56 (81.1)
Married twice	4 (21.1)	1 (3.8)	2 (25.0)	-	6 (15.8)	2 (5.7)	12 (18.5)	3 (4.3)
Married thrice	-	1 (3.8)	-	-	-	-	-	1 (1.5)
Widowed	-	4 (15.4)	2 (25.0)	2 (25.0)	2 (5.3)	2 (5.7)	4 (6.1)	8 (11.6)
Divorced	1 (5.2)	-	-	-	1 (2.6)	1 (2.0)	2 (3.1)	1 (1.5)
Total	19 (100.0)	26 (100.0)	8 (100.0)	8 (100.0)	38 (100.0)	35 (100.0)	65 (100.0)	69* (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate column percentages

*Six married women were below fifteen. Therefore this table's total does not tally with that of Table 2.11.

Table 2.13

PRESENT MARITAL STATUS BY CASTE AND SEX

(For population of 15 years and above)

Caste/Sex / Present marital status	High		Middle		Low	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Married once	3	3	43	51	1	2
	(100.0)	(100.0)	(71.7)	(80.9)	(50.0)	(66.7)
Married twice	-	-	11	3	1	-
			(18.3)	(4.8)	(50.0)	
Married thrice	-	-	-	1	-	-
				(1.6)		
Widowed	-	-	4	7	-	1
			(6.7)	(11.1)		(33.3)
Divorced	-	-	2	1	-	-
			(3.3)	(1.6)		
Total	3	3	60	63	2	3
	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)

Table 2.14

NUMBER OF MARITAL UNIONS BY TYPE OF CEREMONY AND SEX

Type of ceremony/Sex / Number of Marital unions	No ritual		Minimum ritual		Maximum ritual		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
One	1 (1.6)	-	1 (1.6)	1 (1.3)	62 (96.8)	74 (98.7)	64 (100.0)	75 (100.0)
Two	-	-	7 (100.0)	7 (100.0)	5 (14.7)	-	12 (100.0)	7 (100.0)
Three	-	1 (100.0)	-	-	-	-	-	1 (100.0)
Total	1 (1.3)	1 (1.2)	8 (10.5)	8 (9.6)	67 (88.2)	74 (89.2)	76* (100.0)	83* (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

*Totals do not tally with Tables 2.11-2.13 because number of marriages can be more than number of reporting persons, since the same person may be married twice and thrice.

Childhood and Adolescence

Girls are prepared from early childhood to accept their transfer to another household by marriage. The whole socialization process inculcates in them the idea that they are only temporary guests in their natal households and that their ultimate destiny lies with the unknown household to which they will go after marriage.

From the moment a baby girl is born she is an object of scorn. This is reflected immediately in the after-birth ceremony. When a boy is born there is rejoicing and congratulations all round but if it is a girl nobody bothers to congratulate the mother or to celebrate. If the girl baby has been preceded by other female children, the father is jeered at and becomes the butt of jokes in the community while the mother must suffer the open disappointment and even the anger of her husband and her other affines. After too many daughters, a man may even decide to take another wife.

If a boy is born the midwife is given 5 kilos of paddy, one kilo of rice and two rupees. If a girl is born, the midwife gets 2.5 kilos of paddy, one kilo of rice and one rupee. There is a saying among the Maithili people that if a girl is born the earth sinks by one foot, while if a boy is born it rises up one foot to meet him. On the sixth day after birth, when the chat (naming ceremony) takes place, five times more rice and other things are prepared as offerings to the gods for boys than for girls. The unwanted girl is made to realize her fate from early childhood, indirectly by her parents' neglect, and directly through their words. For example, a second girl was born to a young couple. When the new mother was asked if she had cut the umbilical cord, as is the practice in the village, she said it had been done with an old piece of iron. When asked whether she was not afraid that the child might die of tetanus, she said it would be a relief if the baby died. In another case, the mother of a one year-old baby girl (who had three older sisters) often cursed her youngest daughter with the wish that she would die. The little girl was told this partially in play, but she had already realized that her mother's words expressed anger and she used to cry whenever she was cursed in this way by her mother. Her mother was very much afraid that her husband might decide to bring in another wife because she had not produced a son.

In contrast, when a mother of four sons gave birth to another, she was not unhappy even though the family had wanted a daughter this time. While a son is a necessity for "old age insurance" and for spiritual salvation after death, a family without a daughter is simply thought to be incomplete, and most villagers expressed the idea that a family should have at least one daughter.

A young Maithili girl begins her life in this atmosphere. By the time she is nine or ten, her family begin to search for a husband for her and by the time she is twelve or thirteen, she will normally have been married off. However, although she goes to visit her affines and spends some time in her husband's household, she continues to live in her natal household till puberty. Nevertheless, her behavior in her parents' home changes after marriage. She learns to hide her face, if somebody from her affinal group is present. Her movements are confined to the areas where she has no chance of meeting her affines. She hears her family and others talk about her affines and is able to talk to her peers about her husband's home; this helps to reconcile her to the idea of eventually moving to that household.

While a boy is growing into manhood he has no particular responsibilities except to help his father in farm work if he is from a poor family, and to study if he is from a rich one. Slowly he starts to learn the management tasks involved in running the family farm. A girl, on the other hand, is expected to help her mother in household tasks from early childhood. Up to the age of six or seven, boys and girls play together, but it is usually boys and girls of the same lineage. Inter-lineage play groups are frowned upon. One old mother interviewed regretted that times were changing and girls were being left free without work to do for too many years. She added that girls should not be left without work for too long, because they might wander off and become discredited by sexual contact with men. This informant felt that a boy could be neither too troublesome nor too clever because these qualities would help him deal with the world. A girl, however, should not be left to develop into a troublesome or clever woman because such behavior would discredit both the girl's natal and affinal lineages.

Thus, a girl's first awareness of the world around her begins with the realization that she is unwanted and is of little value to her parents or other natal household members. She learns to accept that preference is always shown to the male children in the family in food, clothing, education and other aspects of life. She also learns to treat her brothers as privileged family members. She takes out her frustration on her younger sisters or female cousins.

In the field study, a set of questions were asked of 35 men and 35 women about the desirable qualities in a prospective bride and bridegroom. Tables 2.15 and 2.16 indicate that the most desirable qualities in brides are beauty and respectable birth. The third and fourth most desirable qualities are hardworking capacity and girl's subservience. In the case of bridegrooms, the most important asset is wealth. A boy's birth status ranks second in the list of desirable qualities.

Education is given low priority. Only 12.6 percent of the respondents thought that bridegrooms should have any educational qualifications. A bride's educational qualifications figure still lower in the list of desirable qualities. People in the top economic stratum, however, show a proportionately greater preference for both educated brides and bridegrooms (Tables 2.17 and 2.18).

Opportunities for Literacy and Education

In Sirsia education for girls is looked upon as a useless luxury, since girls are not expected to need education in their daily life. The village of Sirsia-Purbari shares a primary school with another village of the same size. The school had a total of 112 pupils in the first three classes in the survey year. Of them only 10 were girls, all in the first grade.

On a sample day's visit to the school, 83 pupils were present, out of which only three were girls. Asked why so few girls were attending, the teacher said that although the girls were better students, their guardians usually wanted them to stay home and work and were not very keen on sending them regularly to the school. The case of an 8 year-old girl, Lila, may be taken as an illustration. Lila belongs to a wealthy family, but, although all her

Table 2.15

DESIRED QUALITIES IN AN IDEAL BRIDEGROOM

Qualities \ Respondents	Male	Female	Total
1. Should provide well for family, should be rich	23 (25.6)	28 (27.7)	51 (26.7)
2. Should be good looking	14 (15.6)	26 (25.7)	40 (20.9)
3. Should be educated	17 (18.9)	7 (6.9)	24 (12.6)
4. Should be from a reputable family	19 (21.1)	25 (24.8)	44 (23.0)
5. Should love his wife	1 (1.1)	5 (5.0)	6 (3.2)
6. Should have a good reputation in the village	1 (1.1)	-	1 (0.5)
7. Should be hard working	12 (13.3)	8 (7.9)	20 (10.5)
8. Should be respectful to her parents	2 (2.2)	-	2 (1.0)
9. Others	1 (1.1)	2 (2.0)	3 (1.6)
Total	90 (100.0)	101 (100.0)	191 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate column percentages.

Table 2.16

DESIRED QUALITIES IN AN IDEAL BRIDE

Qualities \ Respondents	Male	Female	Total
1. Should help the family by working outside	1 (1.1)	2 (2.0)	3 (1.6)
2. Should be pretty	27 (29.0)	30 (30.0)	57 (29.6)
3. Should be able to bear many children	-	2 (2.0)	2 (1.0)
4. Should be hard working	20 (21.5)	20 (20.0)	40 (20.7)
5. Should be from a reputable family	22 (23.7)	22 (22.0)	44 (22.8)
6. Should be respectful to in-laws	16 (17.2)	19 (19.0)	35 (18.1)
7. Should be respectful to her husband	1 (1.1)	1 (1.0)	2 (1.0)
8. Others	6 (6.4)	4 (4.0)	10 (5.2)
Total	93 (100.0)	100 (100.0)	193 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate column percentages.

Table 2.17

DESIRED QUALITIES IN AN IDEAL BRIDEGROOM BY ECONOMIC STRATA

Qualities \ Economic strata	Top	Middle	Bottom
1. Should provide well for family; should be rich	14 (25.9)	8 (27.6)	29 (26.9)
2. Should be good looking	10 (18.5)	7 (24.1)	23 (21.3)
3. Should be educated	12 (22.2)	2 (6.9)	10 (9.3)
4. Should be from a respectable family	10 (18.5)	5 (17.2)	29 (26.8)
5. Should love his wife	2 (3.7)	1 (3.5)	3 (2.8)
6. Should have a good reputation in the village	1 (1.8)	-	-
7. Should be hard working	3 (5.6)	6 (20.7)	11 (10.2)
8. Should be respectful to her parents	1 (1.9)	-	1 (0.9)
9. Others	1 (1.9)		2 (1.8)
Total	54 (100.0)	29 (100.0)	108 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate column percentages.

Table 2.18

DESIRED QUALITIES IN AN IDEAL BRIDE BY ECONOMIC STRATA

Qualities \ Economic strata	Top	Middle	Bottom
1. Should help the family by working outside	-	-	3 (2.7)
2. Should be pretty	16 (29.6)	10 (35.7)	31 (28.0)
3. Should be able to bear many children	-	-	2 (1.8)
4. Should be hard working	9 (16.7)	7 (25.0)	24 (21.6)
5. Should be from a reputable family	14 (25.9)	5 (17.9)	25 (22.5)
6. Should be respectful to in-laws	7 (13.0)	5 (17.9)	23 (20.7)
7. Should be respectful to her husband	-	-	2 (1.8)
8. Others (Educated)	8 (14.8)	1 (3.5)	1 (0.9)
Total	54 (100.0)	28 (100.0)	111 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate column percentages.

sisters and cousins go to school, she does not. Lila's father explained that she used to go but since her stepmother had given birth to a child, Lila's assistance in caring for the new mother and child was needed at home. Although other girls of this household were enrolled at school, they missed school most of the time. On the other hand, a girl and two boys from a nearby household of the same lineage were very regular in attending the school. There is another case of a nine-year-old girl, Rima. Both her parents are literate and from a family belonging to the middle-ranking Teli caste. Rima was going to school and studying well, but her mother fell sick with chest trouble and the girl had to leave school to stay at home and cook, do laundry and other household chores.

Several explicit questions on education were included in the field study. Only 1.6 percent of the people interviewed saw no need for the education of boys, while for girls the figure was 35.9 percent (Table 2.19). About 31 percent of the male respondents and 41 percent of the female respondents thought that there was no need to educate girls. Of the three economic strata, more respondents from the middle and bottom economic strata seemed indifferent to both male and female education (Table 2.20). All high and low caste respondents advocated education for boys while a 100 percent of the male respondents in the low castes thought it important to educate boys while no education was deemed useful for girls. The overwhelming majority of interviewees in the middle castes were for boys' education, while on the question of educating girls they were divided: 63 percent saying "yes' and 37 percent saying 'no' (Table 2.21).

Even those who expressed an awareness of the need for education for girls invariably wanted less education for girls than for boys (Table 2.22). Of the 15 male respondents in this category, only 4 (26.7 percent) wanted to educate girls as much as they could afford to. On the other hand 20 (71.4 percent) of the total 28 respondents answering the question expressed their desire to educate boys for as long as they could afford to do. The percentage of female respondents wanting to educate boys to the highest possible level was 62.5 percent, while for girls the figure was only 26.7 percent.

In analysing these kinds of attitudes towards education in general and female education in particular,

Table 2.19

ATTITUDE TOWARDS EDUCATION BY RESPONDENTS

Question - Is it important to go to school?

Answers \ Respondent	Male	Female	Total
For boys			
Yes	31	32	63
	(96.9)	(100.0)	(98.4)
No	1	-	1
	(3.1)		(1.6)
Total	32 (100.0)	32 (100.0)	64 (100.0)
For girls			
Yes	22	19	41
	(68.8)	(59.4)	(64.1)
No	10	13	23
	(31.2)	(40.6)	(35.9)
Total	32 (100.0)	32 (100.0)	64 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate column percentages.

Table 2.20

ATTITUDE TOWARDS EDUCATION BY ECONOMIC STRATA

Question - Is it important to go to school?

Answers \ Economic strata	Top	Middle	Bottom	All Strata
For boys				
Yes	18	9	36	63
	(100.0)	(100.0)	(97.3)	(98.4)
No	-	-	1	1
			(2.7)	(1.6)
Total	18 (100.0)	9 (100.0)	37 (100.0)	64 (100.0)
For girls				
Yes	15	5	21	41
	(83.3)	(55.6)	(56.8)	(64.1)
No.	3	4	16	23
	(16.7)	(44.4)	(43.2)	(35.9)
Total	18 (100.0)	9 (100.0)	37 (100.0)	64 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate column percentages.

Table 2.21

ATTITUDE TOWARDS EDUCATIONS BY CASTE

Question: Is it important to go to school?

Answers \ Caste	High	Middle	Low	Total
For boys				
Yes	3	57	3	63
	(100.0)	(98.3)	(100.0)	(98.4)
No	-	1	-	1
		(1.7)		(1.6)
Total	3 (100.0)	58 (100.0)	3 (100.0)	64 (100.0)
For girls				
Yes	3	36	2*	41
	(100.0)	(63.2)	(50.0)	(64.1)
No	-	21	2*	23
		(36.8)	(50.0)	(35.9)
Total	3 (100.0)	57 (100.0)	4 (100.0)	64 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate column percentages.

*Both respondents who said yes were females while both who said no were males.

Table 2.22

DESIRED LEVEL OF EDUCATION FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

Particulars / Years of schooling	Male responses		Female responses		Total responses	
	For boys	For girls	For boys	For girls	For boys	For girls
Less than 3 years	1 (3.6)	4 (26.7)	-	2 (13.3)	1 (1.9)	6 (20.0)
3- 7 years	-	-	-	3 (20.0)	-	3 (10.0)
8-10 years	5 (17.9)	6 (40.0)	7 (29.2)	6 (40.0)	12 (23.1)	12 (40.0)
More than 10 years	2 (7.1)	1 (6.6)	2 (8.3)	-	4 (7.7)	1 (3.3)
As much as can afford	20 (71.4)	4 (26.7)	15 (62.5)	4 (26.7)	35 (67.3)	8 (26.7)
Total	28 (100.0)	15 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	15 (100.0)	52 (100.0)	30 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate column percentages.

the cost of education, the irrelevance of the girl's educational qualifications for her natal household and the need for a girl's labour in the home appeared to be the most important factors hampering female education in Sirsia Village (Table 2.23). Male respondents cited the irrelevance of the daughter's education to her natal household and her later life as the most important reason for not sending girls to the school. By contrast female respondents saw the high cost of education as the greatest inhibiting factor.

For the top economic stratum, the need for a girl's labour in the household, the high cost of education and the irrelevance of her education to the natal household, all appear to contribute equally in keeping her out of school. In the middle economic stratum, the irrelevance of a girl's education to her natal household was the most important factor hampering her education. The high cost of education and the irrelevance of a girl's educational qualifications to her natal household were the most important factors in keeping girls from the bottom economic stratum out of school (Table 2.24).

Similar reasons were given for desiring less education for girls than for boys (Table 2.25).

Caste made no significant difference to the answers to these questions (Table 2.26). The factors that appear to hamper female education are further discussed below:

1. It is considered that literacy will be of no use to females in their adult life. A woman is not expected to deal with the outside world, so whatever she learns she will forget. Take the case of Raju, a girl about 14 years old, who went to the village school and completed her primary education; she can no longer read or write after leaving school three years ago. Asked why she was not sent for further education, her parents replied that there was no girls' school in the vicinity. Raju was already mature and could not go to the secondary school in another village where she would mix with all sorts of boys.

2. Education of girls is also hampered by the fact that educated girls have to be married off to more educated boys and this becomes an expensive arrangement. Well-

Table 2.23

REASONS FOR KEEPING GIRLS OUT OF SCHOOL BY RESPONDENTS

Reason \ Respondents	Male	Female	Total
1. They are needed for farm work	2 (8.0)	1 (3.8)	3 (5.9)
2. They are going to get married and leave the family	7 (28.0)	7 (26.9)	14 (27.5)
3. They are not likely to join service	1 (4.0)	1 (3.8)	2 (3 9)
4. They are needed at home for domestic work	5 (20.0)	4 (15.4)	9 (17.6)
5. It costs too much	6 (24.0)	10 (38.5)	16 (31.4)
6. Their husband will take care of them	3 (12.0)	3 (11.6)	6 (11.8)
7. Others	1 (4.0)	-	1 (1.9)
Total	25 (100.0)	26 (100.0)	51 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate column percentages.

Table 2.24

REASONS FOR KEEPING GIRLS OUT OF SCHOOL BY ECONOMIC STRATA

Reasons \ Economic Strata	Top	Middle	Bottom
1. They are needed for farm work	-	1 (8.3)	2 (6.3)
2. They are going to get married and leave the family	2 (23.6)	4 (33.3)	8 (25.0)
3. They are not likely to join service	-	1 (8.3)	1 (3.1)
4. They are needed at home for domestic work	2 (28.6)	2 (16.7)	5 (15.6)
5. It costs too much	2 (28.6)	2 (16.7)	12 (37.5)
6. Their husband will take care of them	1 (14.2)	2 (16.7)	3 (9.4)
7. Others	-	-	1 (3.1)
Total	7 (100.0)	12 (100.0)	32 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate column percentages.

Table 2.25

REASONS FOR RELATIVELY LOWER DESIRED EDUCATIONAL LEVEL FOR GIRLS BY RESPONDENTS

Reasons \ Respondents	Male	Female	Total
1. They will have to mix with boys at school	1 (9.1)	0	1 (3.7)
2. They are going be married off	4 (36.4)	6 (37.5)	10 (37.1)
3. They are not likely to join service	0	1 (6.3)	1 (3.7)
4. They are needed at home for domestic work	1 (9.1)	2 (12.5)	3 (11.1)
5. It costs too much to send them	2 (18.2)	4 (25.0)	6 (22.2)
6. Their husband will take care of them	3 (27.2)	1 (6.2)	4 (14.8)
7. Others	0	2 (12.5)	2 (7.4)
Total	11 (100.0)	16 (100.0)	27 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate column percentages.

Table 2.26

REASONS FOR KEEPING GIRLS OUT OF SCHOOL
BY CASTE

Reasons \ Caste	Middle	Low
1. They are needed for farm work	4 (10.2)	1 (8.3)
2. They are going to get married and leave the family	10 (25.6)	4 (33.3)
3. They are not likely to join service	2 (5.13)	-
4. They are needed at home for domestic work	7 (17.9)	-
5. It costs too much	11 (28.2)	5 (41.7)
6. Their husband will take care of them	4 (10.25)	2 (16.7)
7. Others	1 (2.65)	-
Total	39 (100.0)	12 (100.0)

to-do families want to marry off their consanguinal women to richer families. This practice of economic hypergamy is a financial drain on the girl's parents who must provide a tilak (gift of money) to the groom.

3. A girl's labour is needed in the household or on the farm (see the section on 'Time Allocation' in Chapter III).

4. Poverty makes education untenable. It is considered that girls should make money from farm work rather than waste their time in useless education. A poor father of an eleven-year-old girl was asked why he was not sending his daughter to school. He replied:

> What will she do with education? She has been given one or two goats. If she can bring them up well she can make some money and buy some silver jewelry for herself when she goes to her sasural (husband's household) after marriage.

Literacy for the sake of literacy seems useless to the people of Sirsia. Literacy and education are seen as steps to non-manual and non-farm work. The villagers reason that there is no benefit in having children learn to read and write if they have to continue performing manual work.

On the other hand, in wealthier families, educated boys have started to seek literate wives. This has propelled a few wealthy families to send their girls to school. At the same time there is a greater tendency to marry off girls at a young age to young uneducated boys because educated boys need larger tilaks. But these parents may send their married daughter to school at their own place of residence so that she may be worthy of her husband. Sometimes the bridegroom's parents insist on this. For example, Rekha is about 12 years old and has been married for two years. Her parents paid Rs.10,000 as tilak. Her husband is now finishing secondary school. She is still at her natal home, but her husband's family wants her educated, so she is given lessons at home and is sent to the local school although her attendance there is very irregular.

As a consequence of the low priority accorded to education in the village world-view, only 22.7 percent of the population aged 5 years and above are literate and only 15.2 percent has had any schooling (Table 2.27).

Only 9.9 percent of the females are literate, while male literacy (36.1 percent) is considerably higher. About 24 percent of the male population in the sample have had schooling compared to only 6.9 percent of the female population. A breakdown by age indicates that while 30.4 percent of the school-age boys were attending or had been to school, only 16.1 percent of the girls in that age group were doing so. Literacy and education percentages are uniformly higher for males for all age groups.

However, a changing attitude towards female education is discernable. Only 5.7 percent of the women above fifteen were reported literate and only 2.9 percent said they had been to school. Similar statistics were considerably higher for girls between 5 and 14 years of age. The sample shows the significance of economic factors in a family's decision about the education of girls (Table 2.28). Wealthy households more often educate their daughters, as these daughters are expected to marry educated boys. The small sample size precludes any firm judgement on the influence of caste on female education (Table 2.29), but education of Brahman girls, even from poor families, seemed to be more common.

The Marriage

Establishing a marriage in a Maithili community is an extended affair lasting 3 to 7 years. The younger the children are married, the more prolonged the interval between the first marriage ceremony and final transfer of the bride to her husband's household. The marriage procedure starts from the moment the parents start looking for a bride or groom, and is usually initiated by the bride's parents. The bride's parents seek a match with a family of good economic standing. The marriage customs differ between the poor and the rich and among different castes but the basic features of the marriage are:

1. Marriage before puberty; as early as possible, but generally around 10-13 years for the girls.

2. Patrilocal residence.

3. A prolonged interval between the first marriage ceremony (bibah), and the final transfer of the bride (gauna) to her husband's household.

Table 2.27

LITERACY AND EDUCATIONAL PATTERN BY AGE GROUP

Literacy / Educational Level / Age group	Population			Literacy Pattern						Educational Level					
				Male		Female		Both		Male		Female		Both	
	Male	Female	Total	Literate	Illiterate	Literate	Illiterate	Literate	Illiterate	Schooling	No Schooling	Schooling	No Schooling	Schooling	No Schooling
5-14	23	31	54	7	16	6	25	13	41	7	16	5	26	12	42
				(30.4)	(69.6)	(19.4)	(80.6)	(24.1)	(75.9)	(30.4)	(69.6)	(16.1)	(83.9)	(22.2)	(77.8)
15 and above	74	70	144	28	46	4	66	32	112	16	58	2	68	18	126
				(37.8)	(62.2)	(5.7)	(94.3)	(22.2)	(77.8)	(21.6)	(78.4)	(2.9)	(97.1)	(12.5)	(87.5)
5 +	97	101	198	35	62	10	91	45	153	23	74	7	94	30	168
				(36.1)	(63.9)	(9.9)	(90.1)	(22.7)	(77.3)	(23.7)	(76.3)	(6.9)	(93.1)	(15.2)	(84.8)

Table 2.28

EDUCATIONAL PATTERN BY ECONOMIC STRATA
(For children between 5 and 14 years)

Sex/Level of education / Economic Strata	Male			Female			Total		
	No schooling	Primary schooling	Total	No schooling	Primary schooling	Total	No schooling	Primary schooling	Total
Top	2 (66.7)	1 (33.3)	3 (100.0)	6 (66.7)	3 (33.3)	9 (100.0)	8 (66.7)	4 (33.3)	12 (100.0)
Middle	-	1 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	3 (100.0)	-	3 (100.0)	3 (75.0)	1 (25.0)	4 (100.0)
Bottom	14 (73.7)	5 (26.3)	19 (100.0)	17 (89.5)	2 (10.5)	19 (100.0)	31 (81.6)	7 (18.4)	38 (100.0)
All strata	16 (69.6)	7 (30.4)	23 (100.0)	26 (83.9)	5* (16.1)	31 (100.0)	42 (77.8)	12 (22.2)	54 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

*Of the literate girls in this age group only one from the middle economic stratum had been educated at home, thus making the number of literate females in this age group in Table 2.25.

Table 2.29

EDUCATIONAL PATTERN BY CASTE

(For children between 5 and 14 years)

Sex/Level of education / Caste	Male			Female		
	No schooling	Primary schooling	Total	No schooling	Primary schooling	Total
High	-	1	1	1	1	2
		(100.0)	(100.0)	(50.0)	(50.0)	(100.0)
Middle	15	5	20	25	4	29
	(75.0)	(25.0)	(100.0)	(86.2)	(13.8)	(100.0)
Low	1	1	2	-	-	-
	(50.0)	(50.0)	(100.0)			
All castes	16	7	23	26	5	31
	(69.6)	(30.4)	(100.0)	(83.9)	(16.1)	(100.0)

4. Severe purdah (seclusion)of the bride during the first few years after her transfer to her husband's household which relaxes slowly with the birth of successive children.

The practice of giving cash money (tilak) to the bridegroom is specific to the wealthy families of Maithili community. It may be considered a "price" for hypergamy, and the bride's parents are willing to pay a somewhat higher price to send their daughter to a family of better economic standing. Before a marriage is contracted there is a lot of haggling over the amount of tilak. The bridegroom's side wants to get as much as possible, while the bride's parents want to settle the tilak at the minimum necessary for getting their daughter married into the family of their choice. Many families sell their land to get their daughters married off. Tilak payments are becoming more and more onerous for the parents and are undermining the value of daughters in Maithili society. When a girl is born the first consideration is to get her married off well.

Educated boys cost more. Informants said that tilak for a young boy still in school is about 10,000 rupees; tilak for boys finishing school with a School Leaving Certificate is about 20,000 rupees; and for an engineer or a doctor the price is up to 100,000 rupees. However, this practice is prevalent only among the well-to-do, and the poor people neither demand tilak nor receive it. It is most mercenary in the case of rich Brahmans. There is a special annual mela (gathering) in Madhubani, a nearby town over the border in India, where all Brahmans go to find marriage partners for their children. In these melas, continuous bargaining goes on over the price of the bridegroom, the highest bidder being accepted by the groom's side. The bride's parents literally have to buy the husband for their daughters.

Asked why girls are married so early, members of wealthy households replied that the older their daughter grows, the older the husband must be, and the price of getting adult, educated husbands for daughters (especially if the daughter is educated) is very high. They felt that it is better to marry girls off early to promising boys from rich households, because this is less costly. When members of a poorer family were interviewed as to why girls have to be married off so early, they replied that

it was the custom and that eventually the daughters have to go anyway. As a reason for seeking early marriage for sons, many villagers mentioned the desire for grandchildren and the mother-in-law's need for a helping hand in the household.

Between Brahmans and other castes, the marriage customs differ slightly in ceremonial details (Table 2.30). The common features and main points of interest in these marriage procedures are: (i) tilak - the cash gift to the bridegroom, (ii) kanyadan - the gift of the virgin, (iii) the oath-taking before the fire and the placing of the red vermilion powder on the bride's forehead and hair parting, along with the giving of jute thread and gold as good omens for long life and luck, (iv) an exchange of gifts from both the bride's and the bridegroom's side as well as a paying of homage to the bride's parents and other older relatives by the bridegroom, and (v) marriage songs.

After the arrangement of the marriage between the two families, the formal ceremony of tilak-giving takes place. People from the bride's house--usually the father, brothers and father's brothers--go to the bridegroom's house where tilak is given. After the valuables and money are handed to the bridegroom amid ceremonial chants and joking songs by women, the bridegroom has to touch the feet of the elders of the bride's side who are present. This is called cheka. The ceremony is accompanied by the singing of the household women and music played by the village musicians, though in Brahman marriages no music is played. The tilak ceremony is a kind of engagement between the prospective bride and groom. In the case of Brahman marriages, the bridegroom's marriage party returns with this tilak party to the bride's house for further marriage ceremonies. In the case of other castes, gifts for the bride and bride's mother which include food, clothing, and jewelry, are sent by the bridegroom's side.

There is another ceremony which takes place only in non-Brahman marriages. After tilak the bride and groom are married to the mango branch, the meaning of which is not entirely clear. Informants said the mango branch is a symbol of immortality or long life. Both boy and girl are married to the mango branch prior to the real marriage.

The next step in the marriage ceremony is the gift of the virgin (kanyadan). In Brahman marriages the

Table 2.30

IMPORTANT FEATURES OF MARRIAGE CEREMONY

	For Brahmans	For others
1.	Payment of tilak. Payment of tilak and visit of the barat (the bridegrooms party) to the bride's house and consequent marriage is a single process, one event following the other.	Payment of tilak and visit of barat and marriage ceremony are separately timed ceremonies. Giving of tilak is called cheka.
2.		Marriage to the mango branch.
3.	Kanyadan - The bride is given away by her parents.	The bride is given away by her maternal uncle and aunt, or paternal grand/aunt or maternal aunt. Only in the absence of all these relatives, do the girl's parents give away the daughter.
4.	Oath taking in front of the fire. Takes place inside the house--the mandap--the sacred fire is lit in the house.	The mandap (sacred fire) is lit in the courtyard.
5.	Gauri puja--worship of the Goddess Gauri.	No prolonged Gauri puja.
6.	Gauna--eventual transfer of the bride to the husband's household. May take place after many years of marriage, or may be within the year of marriage depending upon the age of of the bride.	Gauna invariably takes a place after a long period because the girls are married young.
7.	No musicians accompany the barat.	Musicians accompany the barat.
8.	Marriage songs accompany all rituals procedures	Marriage songs accommany all ritual procedures.

kanyadan is performed by the girl's parents. In other marriages either the maternal uncle and aunt, or paternal grandaunt or maternal aunt give away the bride. Only in the absence of these relatives do the girl's parents undertake the kanyadan. The person making the gift of the virgin also gives a cow, gold and other things to the bridal pair. Generally, the person who makes this gift of the virgin cannot eat or use anything brought from the bridegroom's side. However, in Brahman families this rule seem to be impracticable since here the bridegroom's family must send food and gifts to the bride's family. The informant explained that the gift of gold and a cow after kanyadan is made to atone for committing the sin of using things brought from the bridegroom's side.

Gauri puja and the lighting of the sacred lights are specific features of Brahman marriage ceremonies. Gauri puja (worship ofthe goddess Gauri who is the spouse of Lord Shiva) symbolises devotion of the bride to her husband; the light which burns four nights and days throughout the ceremony symbolises her prayer for the long life of her husband. The marriage ceremony is completed in four days and the bride and the bridegroom share the same room on the fourth night. The bridegroom then returns alone to his house, although he is henceforth free to visit his wife at her house. It is the custom of all castes that the transfer of the new bride to the affinal household (gauna) takes place only after an interval, the length of which depends upon the age of the bride.

Table 2.31

EXCHANGES PER MARRIAGE BY ECONOMIC STRATA

Economic strata	Number of reported marriages	To Bride	To Groom	To Affines	(In rupees) Total
Top	2				
Bride's side		9,750	250	2,430	11,000
Tilak (cash)		-	250	1,000	1,250
Other		6,700		3,450	9,750
Groom's side		2,450	-	1,430	3,880
Bottom	5				
Bride's side		140	400	152	652
Groom's side		388	-	24	412

In the marriage ceremony, the bride has to be given lac bracelets, a yellow sari, vermillion powder, and hansuli, a necklace shaped like a sickle, from the bridegroom's side. Among the Maithili people the red vermillion powder and lac bracelets are the signs of a married women. A widow may not wear these items. At the death of her husband, vermillion is ceremonially washed from a woman's forehead and hair parting and the lac bracelets broken.

Except for tilak, the exchange of gifts during marriage is a two-way flow. But there is always more expenditure and gift giving from the bride's side. In the marriages reported in this sample, the average marriage expenses on the bride's side were about 58 percent more than those on the groom's side in the bottom economic stratum, and almost three times more in the marriages of the top economic stratum (Table 2.31). There was no tilak involved in the marriages of the bottom economic stratum. One marriage in the top economic stratum reported a cash gift of 2,500 rupees. In the bottom economic stratum, marriage gift exchanges involve food and clothing and some silver jewelry to the bride. In the top economic stratum, on the other hand, all kinds of gifts are given from the bride's side while the gifts from the groom's side consist of food, clothing and jewelry. A list of gifts given to the bridegroom and the bride by the bride's parents in one marriage in the top economic stratum is given in Table 2.32.

It is interesting to note that the groom's side bargains, not only over the gifts to the bridegroom and his parents, but also over the gifts given to the bride by her own parents. This is because women do not have total control over their own jewelry or even their clothing. In one recent marriage the bride was asked by her mother-in-law not to use any of the clothing given to her by her parents while in her natal home. She was told to wear these clothes only in her husband's house. Her parents also had to agree to let her finish her school education and bear the cost of her education before sending her to her affinal household. This was all part of the marriage agreement.

All marriage ceremonies are accompanied by women's marriage songs in both the bride's and the bridegroom's households. These are mostly joking songs and songs about how a bride should behave in her affinal household, what she should expect, the love she is going to receive from her husband etc. The songs are to tease the bridegroom in

Table 2.32

LIST OF GIFTS FROM BRIDE'S PARENTS IN A TOP ECONOMIC STRATUM MARRIAGE

To Groom	Value in rupees
1. Furniture	1,000
2. Watch	500
3. Bicycle	650
4. Transistor	950
5. Gold ring	750
6. Gold chain	1,000
7. Clothing	1,000
Total:	4,150

To Bride	
1. Clothing	2,500
2. Gold jewelry	3,900
3. Silver jewelry	3,500
4. Watch	500
Total:	9,400

the bride's household and the bridegroom's mother in the bridegroom's household.

The girl stays for a long time in her natal household after her marriage. She is prepared over a prolonged period for her eventual transfer to her affinal household. After puberty (16 to 18 years) she is finally transferred to the affinal household. Even this transfer process is prolonged by a whole year of going back and forth between her natal and affinal household. In the beginning the affinal women treat the new bride well, and she sits most of the time inside a room where a constant string of female visitors come to have a look at her and evaluate her physical features.

During this time, the bridegroom's household shows off the dowery and the bride while the villagers may either criticize or praise the bride and the quality and quantity of the gifts sent by the bride's people. The bride rarely

hears these criticisms.

Womanhood

Thus some time between the age of 13 and 18, a girl goes to live permanently in her husband's household. She has to adjust herself to the new set of relatives, their habits and behavior. This household is usually an extended family with the bride's father-in-law or husband's eldest brother as head of the family and her mother-in-law or the eldest sister-in-law managing the household. She is the youngest and newest entrant to the affinal group. She has no allies within the household. If there are internal factions, each group will try to get her on their side. She will have to behave cautiously and join forces with the group whose interests best coincide with hers. She might make many mistakes and suffer in the process, or she might eventually emerge as a powerful woman in her maturity. But a long time must elapse and a series of events must take place in the life cycle of the household--and of the woman herself--before she can begin to have an effective voice in the management of family affairs.

At the beginning, as the most junior woman in the household, she is gradually drawn into the household chores. Her first job is cooking, since it is the duty of the youngest affinal women to do the household cooking. She is not assigned tasks for which she would have to venture outside the house. With time her work load becomes quite heavy. It is interesting to note from the time-allocation study that sisters-in-law, daughters-in-law and granddaughters-in-law are the most heavily worked members in the family (Table 2.33). These categories of women worked an average of 11 hours per day compared to about 10 hours for female spouses and 8.5 hours for mothers and paternal aunts. By comparison, their male counterparts worked an average of about seven hours a day. It is also noteworthy that these categories of women spend the largest portion of their time on domestic work. Of the 3.55 hours they each devote on the average to productive work, 1.39 hours was spent on food processing, which is also performed mostly within the household. These women had the least amount of leisure, about three hours per woman per day. They also spent the least time on social activities--only 0.03 hour per day.

As the daughter-in-law and youngest sister-in-law in the family, the young bride is subjected to critical eyes

Table 2.33

TIME SPENT ON DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES BY RELATION TO THE HOUSEHOLD HEAD

(For population of 15 years and above)

Activity / Relation to household head	Productive*					Domestic	Child-care	Work burden	Education & personal maintenance	Social	Leisure	Total working hours
	Animal husbandry	Agriculture	Food processing & manufacturing	Other	Total							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9=6+7+8	10	11	12	13=9+10+11+12
1. Head of the household	0.46	3.28	0.44	2.03	6.21	0.43	0.13	6.77	2.00	0.11	7.12	16.00
2. Spouse	0.72	1.28	1.37	1.06	4.43	4.06	1.25	9.74	1.65	0.08	4.53	16.00
3. Mother/aunt	0.54	0.74	1.07	1.07	3.42	3.46	1.62	8.50	1.20	0.16	6.14	16.00
4. Married brother/son, nephew, etc.	0.98	3.42	0.42	1.82	6.64	0.42	0.03	7.09	1.95	0.13	6.83	16.00
5. Sister-in-law, daughter-in-law, grand-daughter-in-law	0.70	0.69	1.39	0.77	3.55	6.24	1.30	11.09	1.81	0.03	3.07	16.00

and her work is constantly watched to detect mistakes. In rich households, if she did not bring a good tilak and dowry, she may be treated very harshly right from the beginning. Her position in the affinal household is stronger if her natal household is in a position to support her. This depends upon whether or not she has loving parents.

In poor households the new bride is entrusted with any and all household activities about a month after her arrival in the house, but she is usually not taken to the fields to participate in agricultural work for two or three years. Once she has produced a child, she is expected to work in the fields like other women. In poorer households a wife is judged according to her ability to work rather than by what she has brought in the form of dowry or tilak. These assets are minimal in poor families.

At this stage in her life, a woman is expected to show extreme respect towards those of her husband's relatives who are senior to her either by age or by generation. Her freedom of behavior and speech is severely restricted. She goes out to the fields to go to the toilet only in the early morning or in the late evening, with some other females of the household. She is allowed a private room with her husband, but her husband will visit her there only at night. She is not supposed to be seen by any males of the house or of the village who are senior to her husband. She may, however, be seen by her husband's younger brothers or cousins or other related males who are a generation below her, e.g., sons of her husband's brothers. And she is allowed to have a joking relationships with her husband's younger brother and his younger cousins (father's brother's sons).

The new wife usually comes from a nearby village. About 84 percent of the married women in the Sirsia sample were from villages not more than six hours' walk away. No woman said that it took more than one day to travel to her natal home (maika) (Tables 2.34 and 2.35).

Women's visits to their natal homes are infrequent but they usually spend a few months there at a stretch. One informant said that it was difficult to visit her natal home frequently because when she came back to the husband's household after such visits, she had to bring substantial gifts of food and delicacies to her in-laws.

Table 2.34

DISTANCE TO NATAL HOME BY ECONOMIC STRATA

Economic strata / Distance	Top		Middle		Bottom		All Strata	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Same village					2	5.6	2	2.9
0-6 hours	23	92.00	8	100.00	27	75.0	58	84.1
6 hours-1 day	2	8.00	-	-	7	19.4	9	13.0
Total	25	100.0	8	100.0	36	100.0	69	100.0

Table 2.35

DISTANCE TO NATAL HOME BY CASTE

Caste / Distance	High		Middle		Low		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	percent
Same village	-	-	2	3.2	-	-	2	2.9
0-6 hours	2	66.7	54	85.7	2	66.7	58	84.1
6 hours-1 day	1	33.3	7	11.1	1	33.3	9	13.0
Total	3	100.0	63	100.0	3	100.0	69	100.0

Her maika had to give her and all her visiting children new clothing, too.

In contrast to the Parbatia insistence that women give birth in their husband's household, Maithili women are usually expected to have their babies in their natal households. While lactating, therefore, they may spend many months in their natal households, if they have living parents or brothers who care for them. According to the sample statistics, women in the 15-44 age group spend more time in their natal households than older women who have relatively little chance to do so (Table 2.36). In the current sample comparatively less women from the middle economic stratum had time to visit their natal households than those of the top or bottom strata (Table 2.37). Similarly more of the high caste women visited their natal households (Table 2.38).

Except for these visits to their natal household, women at this stage of life have very little mobility. Actually, overall mobility appears very low for both men and women. About 69 percent of the males and 86 percent of the females had made no trips outside the village within the year of their survey. About 19 percent of the males and 12 percent of the females had made 1 to 3 trips, while only one woman and 10 men (about 12 percent) reported making more than three trips (Table 2.39). The mobility of women in the middle economic stratum in this sample was less than the mobility of women in the top or bottom economic strata (Table 2.40).

Table 2.36

TIME SPENT IN NATAL HOME BY AGE GROUP

(In number)

Age group \ Days	None	1-14	15-30	31-90	91+	Total
15-24	9	2	3	2	1	17
	(52.9)	(11.8)	(17.6)	(11.8)	(5.9)	(100.0)
25-44	18	5	4	2	5	34
	(52.9)	(14.7)	(11.8)	(5.9)	(14.7)	(100.0)
45 +	10	4	1	-	-	15
	(66.7)	(26.7)	(6.6)			(100.0)
Total	37	11	8	4	6	66
	(56.1)	(16.7)	(12.1)	(6.0)	(9.1)	(100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

Table 2.37

TIME SPENT IN NATAL HOME BY ECONOMIC STRATA

(In number)

Economic strata \ Days	None	1-14	15-30	31-90	91+	Total
Top	14	2	2	2	4	24
	(58.4)	(8.3)	(8.3)	(8.3)	(16.7)	(100.0)
Middle	5	-	2	1	-	8
	(62.5)		(25.0)	(12.5)		(100.0)
Bottom	18	9	4	1	2	34
	(52.9)	(26.5)	(11.8)	(2.9)	(5.9)	(100.0)
Total	37	11	8	4	6	66
	(56.1)	(16.7)	(12.1)	(6.0)	(9.1)	(100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

Table 2.38

TIME SPENT IN NATAL HOME BY CASTE

(In number)

Caste \ Days	None	1-14	15-30	31-90	91+	Total
High	3	-	-	-	-	3
	(100.0)					(100.0)
Middle	33	10	7	4	6	60
	(55.0)	(16.7)	(11.6)	(6.7)	(10.0)	(100.0)
Low	1	1	1	-	-	3
	(33.3)	(33.3)	(33.4)			(100.0)
Total	37	11	8	4	6	66
	(56.1)	(16.7)	(12.1)	(6.0)	(9.1)	(100.0)

Table 2.39

MOBILITY PATTERN BY AGE GROUP AND SEX

(In number)

Age group/ Sex / Trips	10 - 14		15 - 24		25 - 39		40 +		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
No trip	9	9	18	19	20	22	10	19	57	69
	(100.0)	(90.0)	(90.0)	(95.0)	(57.1)	(75.9)	(52.6)	(90.5)	(68.7)	(86.2)
1-3	-	1	2	1	7	6	7	2	16	10
		(10.0)	(10.0)	(5.0)	(20.0)	(20.7)	(36.8)	(9.5)	(19.3)	(12.5)
4-10	-	-	-	-	3	-	1	-	4	-
					(8.6)		(5.3)		(4.8)	
10 +	-	-	-	-	5	1	1	-	6	1
					(14.3)	(3.4)	(5.3)		(7.2)	(1.3)
Total	9 (100.0)	10 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	35 (100.0)	29 (100.0)	19 (100.0)	21 (100.0)	83 (100.0)	80 (100.0)

Figures in the parentheses indicate column percentages.

Table 2.40

MOBILITY PATTERN BY ECONOMIC STRATA AND SEX

(In number)

Economic strata/ Sex / Trips	Top		Middle		Bottom		All strata	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
No trip	14 (58.3)	23 (82.1)	7 (63.6)	8 (100.0)	36 (75.0)	38 (86.4)	57 (68.7)	69 (86.2)
1-3	4 (16.7)	5 (17.9)	3 (27.3)	-	9 (18.7)	5 (11.4)	16 (19.3)	10 (12.5)
4-10	2 (8.3)	-	-	-	2 (4.2)	-	4 (4.8)	-
10 +	4 (16.7)	-	1 (9.1)	-	1 (2.1)	1 (2.2)	6 (7.2)	1 (1.3)
Total	24 (100.0)	28 (100.0)	11 (100.0)	8 (100.0)	48 (100.0)	44 (100.0)	83 (100.0)	80 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate column percentages.

Conception, Birth and Fertility

Within two to three years, a woman is expected to begin having children. If she does not produce any children within five years after moving in with her husband, people begin to worry and suggest various prayers, rituals and visits to village curers. If she is able to produce at least daughters, her husband and her in-laws are willing to wait quite a long time for a male child from her. But if she is unable to produce a son towards the end of her child bearing age (40-45) then the man has the legitimate option to marry again. In fact relatives will advise him to do so. If he is himself an only son, there may be great pressure on him to marry again.

At the time of this survey, 8.5 percent of the males and 13.3 percent of the females were living in polygnous marriages; that is, 13.3 percent of the women had co-wives, while 8.5 percent of the men had more than one wife. (Table 2.41). The incidence of polygnous marriages appears to be greater in the top economic stratum. Castewise, only men of the middle castes seem to have no more than one living wife (Table 2.42).

No stigma is attached to polygyny. A man is considered to have a natural right to plural wives. When asked why they had polygamous marriages, men gave many different reasons, such as dislike of the first wife, or the first wife's inability to bear a son.

The wife must resign herself to a co-wife if she is unable to provide male progeny. One of the women in the sample who has so far borne only daughters said that she will go on having children until she gives birth to a son. Should she fail to do so, she will ask her husband to marry again.

The Sirsia sample showed that 8.5 percent of the men had more than one wife living with them. It is also interesting to note that 16.7 percent of the married men in the top economic stratum and a similar percentage in the middle stratum had two wives, in contrast to 2.8 percent of the men in the bottom economic stratum.

Table 2.41

TYPE OF PRESENT MARRIAGE BY ECONOMIC STRATA AND SEX

(For population of 15 years and above)

Type of present marriage / Economic strata/Sex	Top		Middle		Bottom		All Strata	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Monogamous	15 (83.3)	16 (72.7)	5 (83.3)	6 (100.0)	34 (97.1)	30 (93.8)	54 (91.5)	52 (86.7)
Polygynous	3 (16.7)	6 (27.3)	1 (16.7)	-	1 (2.9)	2 (6.2)	5 (8.5)	8 (13.3)
Total	18 (100.0)	22 (100.0)	6 (100.0)	6 (100.0)	35 (100.0)	32 (100.0)	59 (100.0)	60 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate column percentages.

Table 2.42

TYPE OF PRESENT MARRIAGE BY CASTE AND SEX

(For population of 15 years and above)

Caste/Sex / Type of present marriage	High		Middle		Low			
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Monogamous	3 (100.0)	3 (100.0)	49 (90.7)	47 (93.1)	2 (100.0)	2 (100.0)	54 (91.5)	52 (86.7)
Polygamous	-	-	5 (9.3)	8 (6.9)	-	-	5 (8.5)	8 (13.3)
Total	3 (100.0)	3 (100.0)	54 (100.0)	55 (100.0)	2 (100.0)	2 (100.0)	59 (100.0)	60 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate column percentages.

Thus it is crucial to a woman's well-being that she produce sons. Without sons she loses her hold over her husband and her security in the household. Her rights are limited to mere subsistence which she must earn by constant toil. It is not surprising that the focus of a young woman's attention during her productive years is on producing sons, since her power in the household and security in old age depend on them. It is also not surprising that women are devoted to their sons. Love will, of course, be shown to both sons and daughters, but a woman's self-interest lies in bearing as many sons as possible.

As a consequence, fertility is high in this society. The number of conceptions and children born alive is uniformly high for women in all economic strata and castes.

The high social value attached to children and high fertility is in direct conflict with the national goal of population control and reduction in fertility. The average number of conceptions per woman, among women who have completed 50 years of age, was 5.93 and on the average each woman had 5.64 live births (Table 2.43). The number of ever-born children per woman is slightly lower than the national average of 3.3 per ever-married woman aged 15 to 49 (Nepal Fertility Survey, 1976). The mean number of children now alive per adult woman is also slightly lower than the national average of 2.4. The number of sons now alive is 15 percent more than the number of daughters now alive. The difference among the women of different economic strata regarding conception and birth as well as the number of living sons is statistically insignificant (Table 2.44). Nor does family structure show any significant relation to these variables (Table 2.45).

Fertility in general and the begetting of sons in particular is highly desired and prized in Maithili society. A woman's worth is judged in terms of how many sons she can produce and no amount of propoganda can divert her from pursuing her individual interests as best she can.

Maturity and Old Age

A woman gains full membership and security in her husbnnd's household after she gives birth to a son. But

Table 2.43

AVERAGE NUMBER OF CONCEPTIONS AND BIRTHS PER ADULT FEMALE BY AGE GROUP

Particulars / Age group	Number of respon-dents	Concep-tions	Births	Children now alive		
				Male	Female	Total
15-19	7	1.00	0.29	0.15	0.14	0.29
		(0.00)	(0.49)	(0.38)	(0.38)	(0.49)
20-24	12	1.83	1.25	0.75	0.25	1.00
		(1.12)	(1.22)	(0.62)	(0.45)	(0.95)
25-29	16	3.06	2.63	1.19	1.06	2.25
		(1.48)	(1.59)	(1.17)	(0.77)	(1.29)
30-49	20	4.45	4.05	1.25	1.55	2.80
		(2.01)	(2.01)	(1.33)	(1.40)	(1.64)
50 +	14	5.93	5.64	2.07	1.43	3.50
		(1.98)	(2.21)	(1.39)	(1.28)	(1.70)
Village	69	3.62	3.17	1.21	1.04	2.25
Average		(2.28)	(2.44)	(1.24)	(1.16)	(1.71)

Figures in parentheses indicate standard deviations.

Table 2.44

AVERAGE NUMBER OF CONCEPTIONS AND BIRTHS PER ADULT FEMALE BY ECONOMIC STRATA

Particulars / Economic strata	Number of respon-dents	Concep-tions	Births	Male	Female	Total
Top	26	3.85	3.42	0.85	1.30	2.15
		(2.54)	(2.80)	(1.01)	(1.29)	(1.69)
Middle	8	3.88	3.50	1.63	0.87	2.50
		(2.23)	(2.33)	(1.06)	(1.13)	(1.51)
Bottom	35	3.40	2.91	1.37	0.89	2.26
		(2.13)	(2.20)	(1.40)	(1.05)	(1.80)
Village	69	3.62	3.17	1.21	1.04	2.25
		(2.28)	(2.44)	(1.24)	(1.16)	(1.71)

Figures in parentheses indicate standard deviations.

Table 2.45

AVERAGE NUMBER OF CONCEPTIONS AND BIRTHS PER ADULT FEMALE BY FAMILY STRUCTURE

Particulars / Family structure	Number of respondents	Conceptions	Births	Children now alive		
				Male	Female	Total
Nuclear	22	3.77	3.59	1.45	1.05	2.50
		(2.25)	(2.24)	(1.22)	(1.00)	(1.44)
Extended	47	3.55	2.98	1.09	1.04	2.13
		(2.32)	(2.52)	(1.25)	(1.23)	(1.83)
Village	69	3.62	3.17	1.21	1.04	2.25
Average		(2.28)	(2.44)	(1.24)	(1.16)	(1.71)

Figures in parentheses indicate standard deviations.

a long time elapses between the birth of a son and a woman gaining a hold over household affairs. Meanwhile her husband must gain control over the farm affairs or an effective voice in the management of the farm. In this interim period a woman's source of power is her husband. She reaches the height of her power when her husband is the head of the family and her children are growing up.

After the death of her husband a woman's power depends upon whether or not her sons listen to her, whereas a wife exerts power only when she can influence her husband. The following case illustrates this. Pano is the mother of three sons. She is a widow and lives in a household of eighteen members consisting of her sons and their families. She used to be in charge of the management of the household, then, about two years ago, her husband died. She had three daughters-in-law and a host of grand children to command. But there was constant bickering in the household, and the eldest daughter-in-law was at odds with the old woman. She used to avoid work and blame Pano for household mismanagement and for granting special favours to her own daughter who was visiting her natal home after child birth. Finally the dispute was settled by dislodging the old woman from her position as household manager. This decision was made by her sons. In this dispute the younger daughters-in-law supported their sister-in-law rather than Pano. The old woman was forced into a position where she had nothing to do, and she was furious. When she was told she could "just live and please herself," she replied that she was a person, not a ghost. Now she spends all day collecting grass for the animals and caring for them and nobody pays attention to her wishes and needs.

On the other hand, the story of Lalo is quite different. Though her son was reported as the head of the household in our interview, Lalo is defacto head of the household and manages the farm as well. At present Lalo is about 53 years old. Her husband died leaving her a young son about ten years old and a large farm. She invited her husband's sister's husband to assist her on the farm and she managed the household and farm expertly. She raised the son and got him married. At present her son, who is about 30 years old, has three children. Lalo is a contented grandmother and a powerful force in the family.

The case of Mano is similar. She was respected and praised by other villagers when her husband, now 125 years old, had to flee the village and fight a court case in Kathmandu; she was left on her own and managed the big household of about twenty persons (including her own son and grandsons and her brother-in-law's son and grandsons) very well. She is now about 90 and living with her husband and eldest daughter, while all her grandsons and her brother-in-law's grandsons live in separate households.

Although a minority of families are joint-extended households, the living quarters of brothers, the father and sons, are clustered around the same courtyard or attached to each other. The social relationship among the members of the family are more or less the same whether they eat in one kitchen or in separate kitchens. Almost all the families have at least one parent with them and have younger brothers living with them. At certain times, the household contains various people of different kinship relations to each other (Table 2.46). There is a complex set of relationships among household members. Each kinship link carries a set of mutual obligations, rights and expectations.

A father is responsible for bringing up his children and disciplining them, especially his sons. It is a father's duty to find a worthy husband for his daughter and to marry her at the right time. A caring father of good economic standing will try to marry his daughters into a good family by giving a large tilak and other presents to the groom's family at the wedding. In return, the daughters should protect the family's name by observing proper sexual and social behavior before and after marriage. Before marriage daughters are expected to take care of the small babies in the household and help the mother with household chores. In poor families, in addition to helping her mother in domestic work, a daughter has to give a helping hand with work in the fields.

A mother is responsible for feeding the family, managing the household well in her later years, and looking after the married daughters and their children when they are visiting. Mothers are expected to pass over their land to the sons but they may give their jewelry and clothing to their daughters. Disciplining a daughter is one of the mother's most important duties. The daughters-in-law and younger sisters-in-law have to show great respect to their

Table 2.46

POPULATION BY RELATION TO HOUSEHOLD HEAD

Relation to household head \ Age group	Below 15	15-50	50 +	Total	
				Number	Percentage to total
Men	45	63	11	119	50.6
11. Head of the household	-	24	11	35	14.9
2. Brother unmarried	2	1	-	3	1.3
3. Brother married	-	7	-	7	3.0
4. Son/nephew unmarried	27	6	-	33	14.0
5. Son/nephew married	-	18	-	18	7.7
6. Son-in-law	-	1	-	1	0.4
7. Grand son unmarried	16	1	-	17	7.2
8. Grand son married	-	2	-	2	0.8
9. Other non-relatives women	-	3	-	3	1.3
Women	46	56	14	116	49.4
A. Consanguinal	(44)	(5)	(7)	(56)	(23.9)
10. Mother/paternal aunt		1	7	8	3.4
11. Daughter/niece unmarried	27	-	-	27	11.5
12. Daughter/niece married	1	2	-	3	1.3
13. Sister married	3	-	-	3	1.3
14. Grand daughter/niece unmarried	12	1	-	13	5.5
15. Grand daughter/niece married	1	1	-	2	0.8
B. Affinal	(1)	(51)	(7)	(59)	(25.1)
16. Wife	-	25	7	32	13.6
17. Sister-in-law	-	8	-	8	3 4
18. Daughter-in-law	1	17	-	18	7.7
19. Grand-daughter-in-law	-	1	-	1	0.4
20. Other female relatives	(1)	-	-	(1)	(0.4)
Total population	91	119	25	235	100.0

mothers-in-law and older sisters-in-law. Mothers-in-law, on the other hand are expected to treat their daughters-in-law considerately, for example, by giving them ornaments and cosmetics. The older sisters-in-law are not supposed to fight with their younger sisters-in-law, while the younger ones are expected to do most of the housework. The responsibility of cooking always falls to the youngest affinal woman in the family.

Elder brothers are expected to take the place of the father in his absence. They are expected to care for the younger brothers and sisters while these younger children are expected to respect and listen to the elder brothers. Answering back to an elder, father or brother, is considered bad behaviour. While the older brother, in the absence of his father, is responsible for bringing up younger brothers and sisters, sisters have no obligations to each other. Their obligation towards their brothers is both ritual and based on affection.

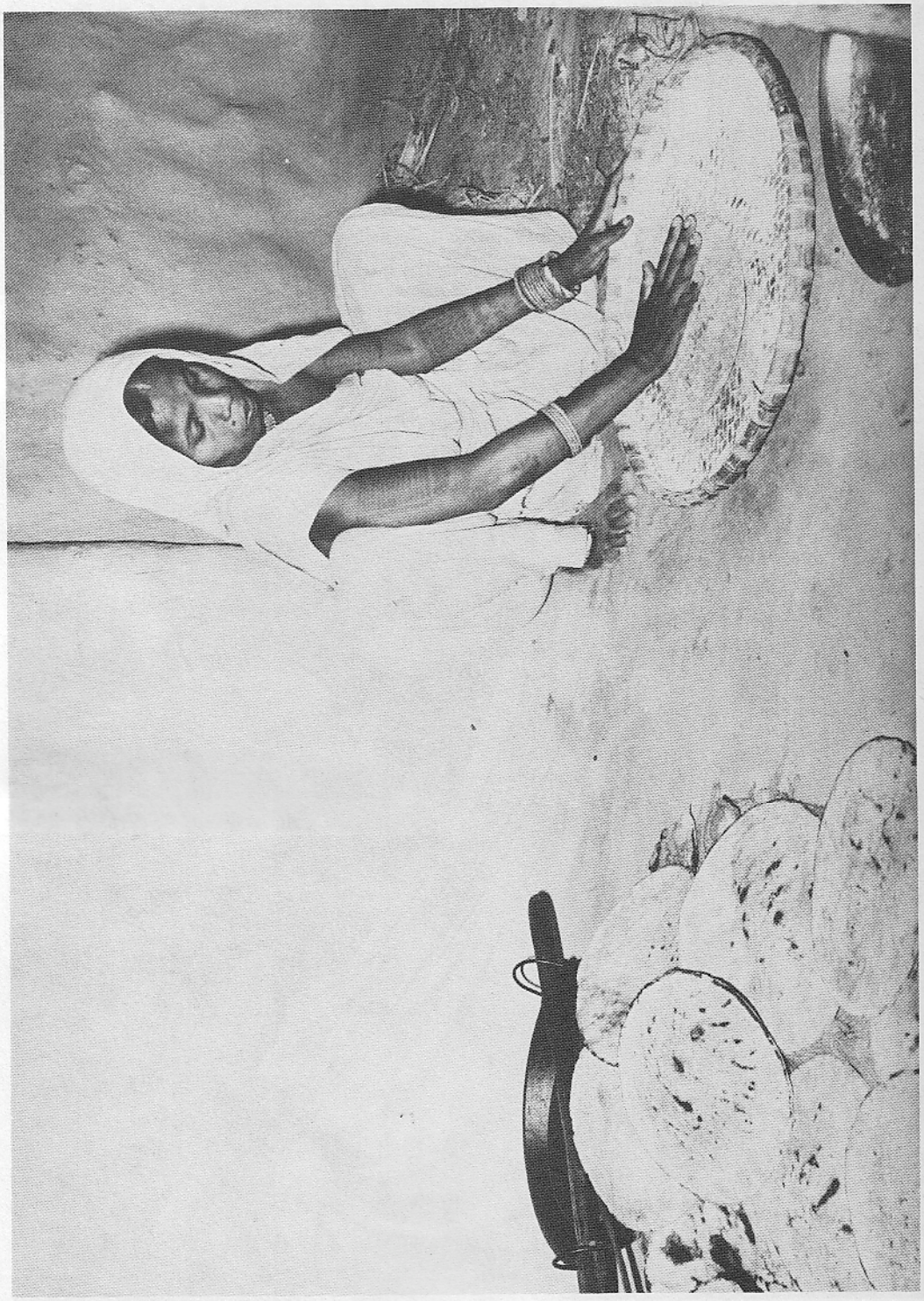
In this system a father, as the head of the household, has top command and his youngest son is at the bottom of the male hierarchy. Sons are expected to respect their father and elder brothers. But all women of the household are lower in the hierarchy vis-a-vis their male counterparts and carry the obligation of obedience and subjugation to them.

Given the interplay of diverse factors, it is hard to say why and when some women gain power while other are powerless. As discussed in the introduction the authority, in contrast to power, is derived from a social system and has to be backed by society. Women never have any authority. But power may be exercised even without authority and this is what women strive for--access to power. Some are successful in this endeavour and others are not, depending first of all upon whether or not they can produce sons.

A woman's sole access to resources and power within the household is through her husband or sons. This fact is vital in the evaluation of a woman's position in the household. In Sirsia's well-to-do families, some women are very powerful while others are treated almost as servants. But the status of a powerful woman is a derived status (derived through husbands and sons) and, as individuals, women have little value in this social system. Men, on

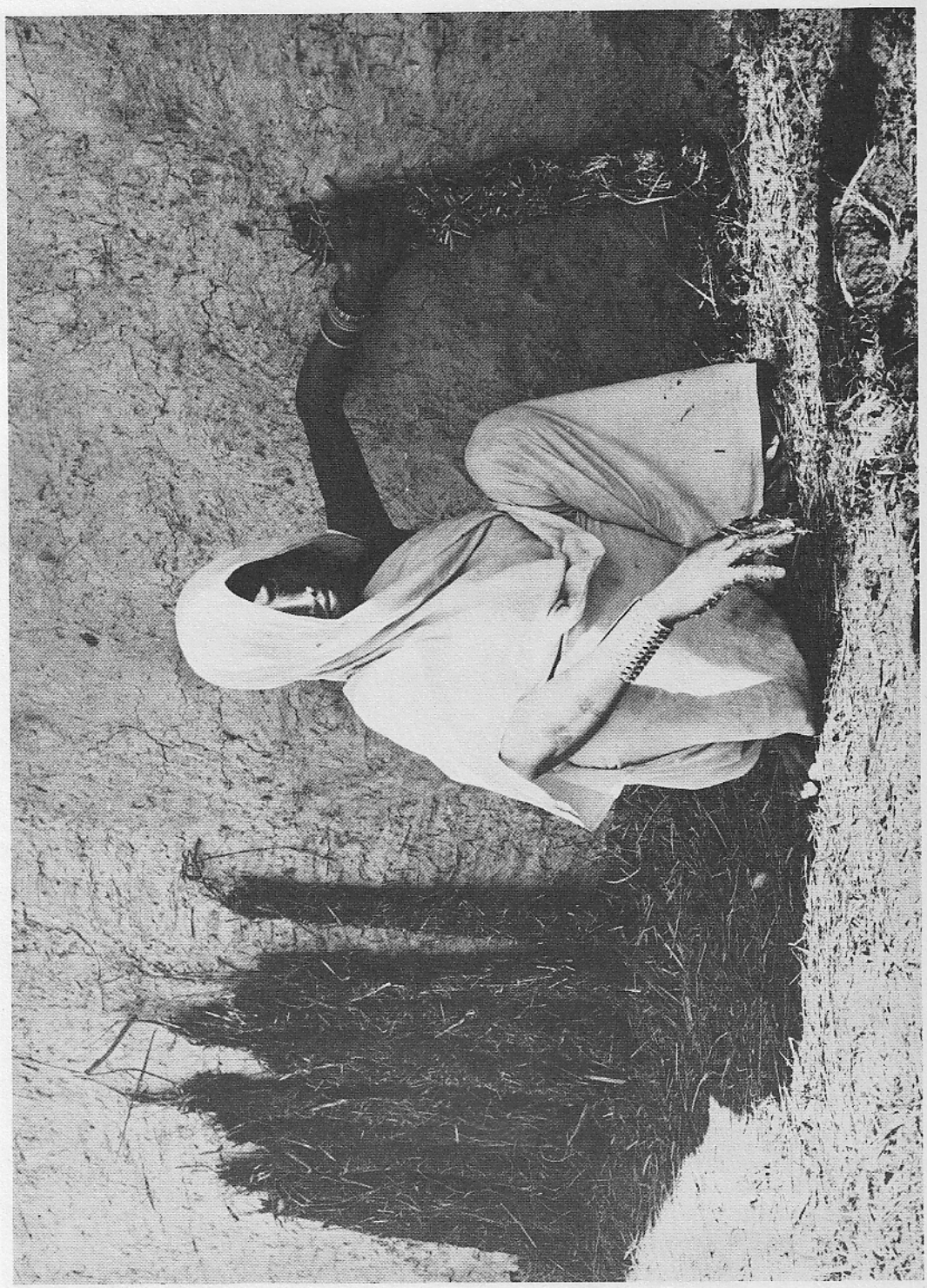
the other hand, though they have little authority when they are young, in middle age move more or less automatically to a position of considerable prestige and power as eventual heads of families. This basic inequality between the sexes pervades all social behavior and is reflected in attitudes towards fertility, female health and nutrition, female education and marriage.

No more power in the household.



Daughter-in-law making rotis (flat bread).

Happy to have a son.

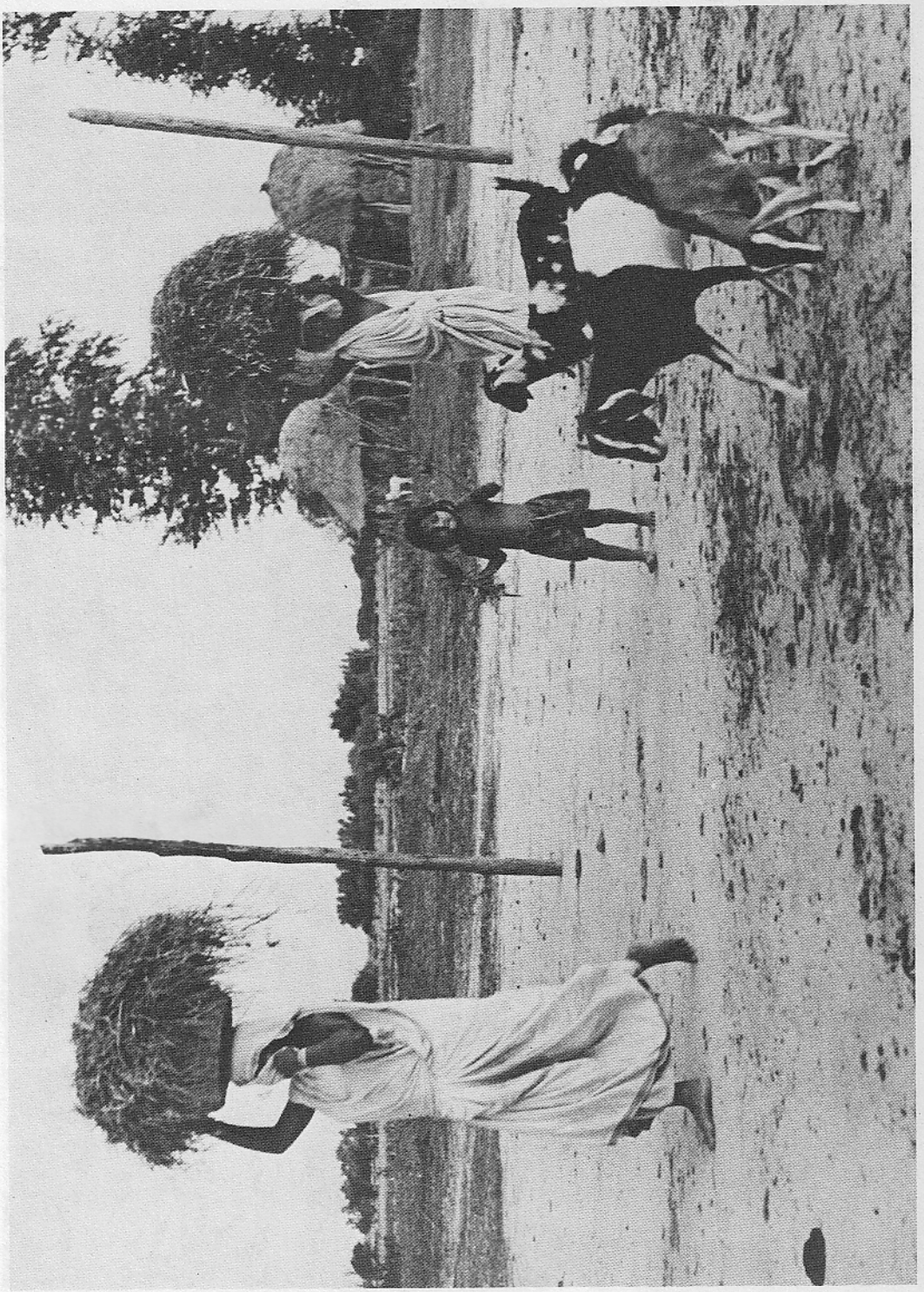


Daughter-in-law making 'dung sticks' for fuel.

Ready for marriage.

Little girl taking care of her younger brother.

Girl washing pots at the pond.



Little girl bringing the animals home.

CHAPTER III

THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM

The economy of Sirsia village may be analyzed in the following framework:

(1) The economic setting - linkages and channels of interaction

(2) The household economy - production and work patterns.

The village as an economic entity is part of the larger economic systems of the district and nation. On the other hand, the village unit contains many and varied systems within itself, most important and elemental of which are the households.

The economic relations of the village with the outside world manifest themselves through both monetised or non-monetised exchange of products and labour. Participation in this process of exchange brings people into contact with the outer world and exposes them to an external environment.

The village of Sirsia has a relatively small marketable agricultural surplus. Within the survey year, only 11.8 percent of the total household production was marketed while only 65 percent of the households reported bulk selling. However, all households had to sell something to meet their needs for other products. The villagers participate in a series of local markets called hat. These hat markets take place in and around the village on different days of the week. Throughout the week there is always a hat somewhere nearby, and once a week the hat is organized within the village panchayat itself. The largest hat is the weekly market in Mahendra Nagar, 8 kilometres from Sirsia where bulk selling of agricultural products and of animals takes place. Transactions involving small sales take place in the local village hat markets, where the participation of women as buyers and sellers is as important as that of men. But women usually sell village products, such as vegetables, cooked food, pulses and dried spices, while almost all the industrial products coming from the cities are sold by men. Bulk grain sellers and buyers are also men. The village links with the broader world are always established through men, whether the link is political or

economic. But women participate actively in establishing economic links within and between neighbouring villages (Table 3.1).

Another economic link between the village and the outside world is participation in the labour market. The villagers' participation in the exchange of labour is very limited. The villagers of Sirsia-Purbari enter the labour market mostly as buyers of labour. They hire people from the surrounding villages as well as the labour of seasonal migrants from India. Women participate in the labour market as sellers of labour power usually only within their own village, though occasionally they work for landlords in neighbouring villages. The time spent by all villagers, both men and women, outside the village is marginal. During the six months period of our observation, only 2 labour days were reported for employment outside the village, and these were for men. All the days that women spent outside the village were accounted for by visits to natal households or to grand-parents' household (Table 3.2).

As already mentioned in the introductory chapter, the majority of the villagers are extremely poor. Only one household had more than 16 hectares of land and this was a large household of 18 members. The remaining 34 households all had less than seven hectares of land.

According to the definitions adopted for this study, 25.7 percent of the households are in the top economic stratum while 60 percent constitute the bottom (Table 3.4). Only 14.3 percent of the households fall in the middle economic stratum.. There are three old landlord families, one or two new landlords, and one or two new upcoming families who have recently made money from business and trading. These newer petty bourgeois families are investing their trading profits back into the land. The limited availability of land together with a great demand for it have resulted in rocketing land prices. At the same time, the population pressure in the middle income group often forces them to pledge or sell their small pieces of land, and in this way they are being rapidly eased out of land ownership. The middle economic stratum is dwindling fast. Of the total sample population of 235 persons, only 11.5 percent are in the middle economic stratum. The top economic stratum constitutes 33.2 percent of the total population, and over 55 percent of the total sample population are in the bottom economic stratum.

Table 3.1

MALE/FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN HAT BAZAARS

(local markets)

Sellers / Kind of stalls	Number			Percentage to row total	
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Fish and meat	17	1	18	94.4	5.6
Vegetables	31	37	68	45.6	54.4
Liquor	2	1	3	66.7	33.3
Rice and pulses	11	16	27	40.7	59.3
Salt, oil and spices	3	2	5	60.0	40.0
Textile	20		20	100.0	-
Sanitary goods, cosmetics, stationary, etc.	23	12	35	65.7	34.3
Cooked food	4	5	9	44.4	55.6
Pottery	2	4	6	33.3	66.7
Tea and cigarettes	10	-	10	100.0	-
Shoe maker	2	-	2	100.0	-
Total	125	78	203	61.6	38.4

Table 3.2

PERCAPITA DAYS SPENT OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE* BY AGE GROUP

(In number of days)

Purpose \ Age group/ Sex	10 - 14		15 +	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
For employment	-	-	2	-
For other purposes	-	5	6	12
Total days outside	-	5	8	12

*In six months period covered by the survey.

Table 3.3

PERCAPITA DAYS SPENT OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE* BY ECONOMIC STRATA
(For population of 15 years and above)

Purpose / Economic strata	For employment		For other purposes	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Top	1	-	11	11
Middle	-	-	-	8
Bottom	3	-	6	13
All strata	2	-	6	12

*In sixth months period covered by the survey.

Table 3.4

DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE HOUSEHOLDS AND POPULATION BY ECONOMIC STRATA

Particulars / Economic strata	Households		Population	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Top	9	25.7	78	33.2
Middle	5	14.3	27	11.5
Bottom	21	60.0	130	55.3
All strata	35	100.0	235	100.0

There is a clear distinction in terms of social prestige between the traditional landlord families and the new rich. One landlord family in particular stands at the top of the village hierarchy. This family has an effective voice in village administration, even though none of the family members live permanently in the village. In spite of the government's land reform, which began in 1963, there are still cultivator families who have been tilling the land since before 1941 and who have not yet claimed tenancy rights. In one interview, one such farmer, Ram, said that his landlord threatened him with eviction should he claim tenancy rights. According to Ram the landlord had promised to let him cultivate his usual piece of land if he did not claim tenancy. The landlord had also threatened to take away two-thirds of the land which Ram was cultivating if Ram dared to declare his tenancy rights. So Ram did not claim tenancy. He now realizes that he made a mistake. The extreme economic polarisation in the village is also reflected in the statistics on economic stratification (Table 3.4).

The economic system of the village is completely dependent on land ownership. Since there is no industry nearby to provide employment, the villagers depend entirely on agriculture for their living. People from Sirsia did not go to work on the roads even when construction was going on only 5 or 6 kilometres away from the village. There is only one family in the village which has any member involved in the organized service sector. Except for the richest landlord, only one person in the village has finished middle school and he was searching for a job, temporarily teaching in the village school. (The teacher in the primary school in the village is an outsider).

The traditional kamaiya system is a kind of feudal labour relationship between the service castes and the agricultural families. According to Luschinsky, a similar system, called zazmani exists in areas around Delhi (Luschinsky 1962). Sirsia-Purbari has a few blacksmith (Lohar) families, a few barbers (Hazam) and some scavenger/sweepers (Chamars). The rest of the locally provided services are given by outsiders. Barter is the norm and grain is the medium of all exchange. Within the kamaiya system, each barber, blacksmith and scavenger/sweeper family has a fixed number of client households. The service households receive different amounts of fixed

annual payments from their client families.

Barbers (Hazams)

Each household annually pays the barber about 18 kilos of paddy per every service-receiving member of the main generation of the household. For example, if there is a client household consisting of one elderly father, three grown sons and some grandsons, the barber will receive only about 52 kilos of paddy annually, as the old father and the grandsons have to be served free. The client's guests also have to be served free. Apart from this, the barbers are entitled to some specific payments on religious occasions, such as marriage, bratabandha (ritual conferring of full caste status to males) and other functions. The village has about 10 barber households. One barber interviewed said that he served about 50 households. He complained that keen competition among barbers prevented effective action towards any increase in the annual payments. A barber usually has his own house and land and is free to leave the village if he so desires. The villagers can employ other barbers if they wish. Traditionally neither of these actions were allowed. Any service caste household wanting to leave the village had to arrange for its replacement, and the clients could be prevented from employing barbers from outside the village. In recent years, this mutual unwritten tradition has been breaking down.

In this intercaste system, barbers' wives are bound by custom to provide certain services to the client households. Their most important activity is to give manicures to the women of the client household, but they do not receive any specific payment for their services.

Blacksmiths (Lohars)

Blacksmiths are paid about 37 kilos of paddy annually per pair of oxen in the client's household. Those clients who have 4 oxen or two ploughs pay twice that, i.e., 74 kilos. On the other hand, one day's work under free hire brings in 2 kilos of paddy (or 8 rupees). The blacksmiths in Sirsia all live on their own land. They have the traditional right to prevent other blacksmiths from working in the village but the competition from Indian blacksmiths is keen and the landholders are increasingly seeking the cheaper services of these competing Indian

blacksmiths. The blacksmiths may leave the village if they so desire without having to ensure alternative blacksmith services for clients. The village is served by two blacksmith families living in this village and two from outside the village. The local blacksmiths complain that, due to keen competition, they are paid at a lower rate than are agricultural labourers.

Agricultural Labourers

The agricultural labour system is somewhat complex.

Fixed period hiring: The landed households hire a number of agricultural workers (jan) on a permanent, annual, or semi-annual basis. In return these labourers are given 0.2-0.4 hectares of land which they share crop (50:50). In return for this, they have to work for their landlord in the busy seasons for payment of regular wages, sometimes paid in cash but usually in kind. These labourers cannot work for other employers as long as their own landlords need them. They can borrow animals and other labourers from the landlord to work their piece of share-cropped land, but the animal and human labour days have to be paid back by free labour for the landlord for an equivalent number of days.

Labour exchange: Small farmers generally participate in labour exchange arrangements, which is called madattyia kaj in Sirsia and parma in other parts of Nepal. There are no permanent labour exchange groups, but exchange of labour in the parma system is arranged on an ad hoc basis by the small farmers themselves. Women participate in these arrangements only when other women are involved. Usually it is a family to family exchange. No differentiation in value is made between the labour days of a man or a woman in these exchanges, and one man day may be exchanged for one woman day. Most of the time labour exchange involves animals. Poor families may own only one ox, and so two poor families will combine to constitute a plough team for working on each other's land. This is called bhajauta.

The social organization of production is partly feudal and partly market-oriented. The organization of production extends beyond the kinship group or lineage, but labour exchange groups tend to be kin or friendship-based. Kinship, however, is still the most important

basis for co-operation in social occasions, such as marriage and death. Women of the whole lineage work together pounding rice, preparing beaten rice, cleaning vegetables and cooking delicacies. Men of the lineage work together in organizing marriages, funerals and other ceremonies. The lineage group identity is still very strong and it manifests itself most clearly in conflicts involving people of different lineage.

Wage labour: A third kind of labour system is that of wage labour. Labourers may be hired individually for a day's work and paid on the basis of time worked. Wage labour may also be procured on a contract basis whereby an entire household will come and work collectively at a task such as harvesting and will be paid as a group on the basis of the amount of work done.

During the plantation period the labourers are usually hired individually and paid a daily wage. The regular daily wage rate is 4 kilos of grains without meals and 2.5 kilos with three meals. In addition, children of non-working age are allowed to eat the mid-day meal with their parents in the field. It is interesting to note that males and females in Sirsia receive the same wage for the same type of work.

Harvesting labour is usually hired on a contractual basis. The whole family works together and whatever is harvested is shared between the landlord and the labourer. The labourer's family earns a collective income for which all family members, including women, work. The rice harvesting season is also the time for preparing land for wheat and potatoes. So one man in the family ploughs either the family's or the landlord's land in the morning, for which he gets a regular wage, while the rest of the family go harvesting. After a meal and a brief siesta during the heat of the day, he joins his family in harvesting and in the afternoon they all start transporting the harvested loads to the landlord's yard. Everybody carries a load at the end of the day, but men start to transport the loads earlier. Usually one labourer harvests not less than eight loads a day.

In the contract labour system where ties are between households, not individuals, and where a man is considered the head of the household, the women's economic role is invisible and in the background. Though a woman works very

hard in harvesting, the income from harvesting is considered her husband's income, not her own, nor even as joint income.

The wage is 1/16 of whatever is harvested. It is paid in the form of sheaves of paddy, wheat or millet right from the field. No food is provided for the labourers during harvesting. However, after the crop has been harvested, the labourers' children may collect the left-overs and gather additional grain to keep themselves. Traditionally, besides the proper wage for the day, the labourers are given one antia (armful of paddy) each day. This antia is half of a bundle of sheaves which is prepared specially for this purpose by each labouring family. There is one landlord family which does not pay its antia and the labourers are very bitter about it. The traditional informal system of letting the children go with their parents to the fields and of additional payment in the form of antia is breaking down and the landlords are refusing to give these benefits to the labourers. The labourers are helpless to do anything about this as it was an informal arrangement, and landlords now have access to a virtually unlimited labour supply from India. The labourers are trying to increase the formal wage rate in compensation for the loss of these traditional benefits. This has created a tense situation in the village. The labourers went on strike in an attempt to increase the formal wage rate, and to improve the conditions of labour. The demands of the strikers were: (a) A daily wage of 4 kilos of paddy, using standard measures*, without meals. (b) One twelfth of the amount of harvested grain instead of the traditional one sixteenth. (c) Payment of a full day's wage (instead of the ½ day's wage currently given) for working from 3 a.m. to 8.a.m. during the harvesting period, since it involves night work. (d) Proper blankets for the nights when they have to sleep in the landlord's yard in preparation for the next day's work.

The district administration intervened to resolve the situation. Only the first demand was conceded and the labourers went back to work after their leader was arrested. The undercurrent of dissatisfaction, however,

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*From last year landlords were supposed to give 4 kilos, but the labourers complained that the measures used were considerably less than 4 kilos.

is still present in the village. As mentioned earlier, there is not a single factory nearby and no industrial work in the village. There is one small rice mill which employs two people who are paid the low wage of 100 rupees per month without food which they accept because they are from an untouchable caste, are very poor and have no alternative channels of employment.

Income Generation and Economic Activities

Household income is generated with and without market intervention. Almost 81 percent of the household income of 8,695 rupees was generated and used within the household sector, while only 19.3 percent passed through the market, either in the form of product sale or wage income (Table 3.5). Of the wage or salary income 19.3 percent was contributed by women. This kind of contribution was nil in the top and middle economic strata but constituted 19.7 percent for the households in the bottom economic stratum (Table 3.6). On the other hand the contribution of women to the income generated within the household is significant for all economic strata.

Most household production is used to meet subsistence needs (Table 3.5). A hundred percent of the household income was generated in the farm and household sector in the top economic stratum. Per household income of the top stratum was 18,952 rupees. Of this, only 13.3 percent was marketed. In the middle economic stratum, of the total per household income of 7,823 rupees, more than 98 percent was accounted for by the household sector; and of the household output, only 14.1 percent was marketed. The bottom economic stratum showed the lowest dependence on domestic production, as wage income constituted 26.2 percent of the total income, and they marketed only 5.3 percent of their household production. Thus in poor households 31.5 percent of the income generated involved market intermediation. In totality, of the average household income of 8,695 rupees, 91.7 percent was generated in the household and farm sector.

Sectorwise, after agriculture, food processing accounted for the largest share of the total household income in the top and middle economic strata (Table 3.7). In Sirsia, processes connected with the conversion of paddy into rice was the single major item which accounted for income from food processing in the sweet vendors'

Table 3.5

DISTRIBUTION OF PER HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY ECONOMIC STRATA

(In rupees)

Composition of Income / Economic strata	Subsistence production	Market Income			Total Income
		Production sales	Wage, salary & other income	Total	
1	2	3	4	5 = 3 + 4	6 = 2 + 5
Top	16,440	2,512	-	2 512	18,952
	(86.7)	(13.3)	-	(13.3)	(100.0)
Middle	6,604	1,086	133	1,219	7,823
	(84.4)	(13.9)	(1.7)	(15.6)	(100.0)
Bottom	3,088	238	1,180	1,418	4,506
	(68.5)	(5.3)	(26.2)	(31.5)	(100.0)
All strata	7,024	944	727	1,671	8,695
Average	(80.8)	(10.9)	(8.4)	(19.2)	(100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentages to total income.

Table 3.6

DISTRIBUTION OF PER HOUSEHOLD SALARY AND WAGE INCOME BY SEX AND ECONOMIC STRATA

(Amount in rupees)

Economic strata \ Sex	Amount			Percentage to row total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Top	-	-	-	-	-	-
Middle	133	-	133	100.0		100.0
Bottom	947	233	1180	80.3	19.7	100.0
All strata	587	140	727	80.7	19.3	100.0

Table 3.7

COMPOSITION OF PER HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY ECONOMIC STRATA

(Income in rupees)

Sectors / Economic strata	Production					Wage, salary & other income	Total income
	Farm production	Kitchen gardening	Animal husbandry	Hunting and gathering	Manufacturing & food processing		
Top	13,479	62	1,294	130	3,987	-	18,952
	(71.1)	(0.3)	(6.8)	(0.7)	(21.1)		(100.0)
Middle	5,481	249	118	108	1,734	133	7,823
	(70.1)	(3.2)	(1.4)	(1.4)	(22.2)	(1.7)	(100.0)
Bottom	2,139	13	247	2	926	1,180	4,507
	(47.5)	(0.3)	(5.5)	(0.0)	(20.5)	(26.2)	(100.0)
All strata	5,532	59	498	50	1,829	727	8,695
	(63.6)	(0.7)	(5.7)	(0.6)	(21.0)	(8.4)	(100.0)

Figures in the parentheses indicate row percentages.

households. Another food processing operation performed in the household was cooking and roasting food for sale.

Thus, in the village the household is a unit of production as well as of consumption and reproduction. As a unit of production the household performs the following tasks:

1. Land cultivation and all the processes involved in farming and kitchen gardening.

2. Tending and keeping of animals.

3. Food processing and manufacturing.

4. Fuel collection and management.

5. Supply of water for the household.

Since the household functions as a unit of production and consumption, the income generated within the household is a joint product of the family. The production of one single product involves different processes in which both men and women are involved. In order to identify the contribution of women, therefore, to the household income, it is important to look at the product as a result of a series of processes and analyze the labour contribution of each individual in these processes.

Time Allocation of the Household Members

The household as a unit of production requires certain time inputs from all its members. In Sirsia, the household members together put in 48.32 hours of work per day in an average family of seven--consisting of 2 males, 2 females, and one male and one female children between 10 to 14, and one female child of 6-9 age group. This is a work burden* of 6.95 hours on each adult male member, 9.98 hours on each adult female member, 4.81 hours on boys between the ages of 10 and 14, and 7.6 hours on girls of the same age group. Male children between 5 and 9 years of age have to spend 1.24 hours working each day while

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*"Work burden" is defined as the time devoted to all kinds of work: productive, domestic and childcare.

girls in the same age group put in 2.05 hours (Table 3.8). Thus the total work burden is uniformally higher for females than for males in all the age groups.

The division of work between productive and domestic, however, is different for males and females. Adult males spend 92.2 percent of their daily work time in productive work, while women spend only 38.8 percent of their daily work time in this type of work. But given that women work more hours than men, women put in as much as 60.4 percent of the total male time spent on productive work. On the other hand men's contribution to domestic work and child care activities is only marginal while women spend 6.11 hours per day on these activities. This is 61.2 percent of their total work time. Men have about seven hours of leisure per day while women have only four hours of free time.

Looking at the work burden according to economic strata, men in the middle and top economic strata work less than men in the bottom economic stratum, but the total work burden per woman remains almost the same for all economic strata, about 10 hours per day. This is a glaring fact which questions the general assumption that women's lot improves with the upward mobility of the household. As shown by Table 3.9 only the nature of work changes for women when the poor are compared with the middle and top income strata.

Children of 10 to 14 years, both male and female, have to work hard. While boys put in about 5 hours of work per day, girls of the same age group have almost a full work day, that is, they work for an average of 7.6 hours per day. Boys spend 77.3 percent of their work time on productive work, while similar work takes only 64.5 percent of a girl's work time. It is interesting to note, however, that girls in this age group spend 31.7 percent more time on productive work than boys in the same age groups. Girls have to spend another 2.70 hours on domestic and child care activities, while boys spend only 1.09 hours per day on domestic and child care activities. Nevertheless, this is more time than the adult males spend on these activities. It is also noteworthy that girls in this age group put in more productive work that adult females; their total work burden is more than that of adult men but less than that of adult women (Table 3.8).

Table 3.8

DAILY TIME ALLOCATION AS PER GROUP OF ACTIVITIES BY AGE GROUP AND SEX

(In hours)

Activities \ Age group/ Sex	5 - 9		10 - 14		15 +	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1. Work Burden (a + b + c)	1.24	2.05	4.81	7.60	6.95	9.98
a. Productive	(1.10)	(1.15)	(3.72)	(4.90)	(6.41)	(3.87)
b. Domestic	(0.10)	(0.42)	(0.47)	(2.31)	(0.46)	(4.86)
c. Childcare	(0.04)	(0.48)	(0.62)	(0.39)	(0.08)	(1.25)
2. Education	1.38	0.35	2.08	0.66	0.04	-
3. Personal maintenance	1.54	2.02	1.75	2.15	1.89	1.76
4. Social	0.03	0.17	0.06	0.22	0.11	0.10
5. Leisure	11.81	11.41	7.30	5.37	7.01	4.16
Total working hours	16.00	16.00	16.00	16.00	16.00	16.00

Among children of the 5 to 9 age group, girls work 66 percent more than boys of the same age group. Their work input, both in production and in domestic spheres, is greater than that of boys of the same age group. Boys of 5 to 9 years of age spend on the average 1.38 hours on education, whereas girls spend only 0.35 hours. Similarly, in the 10 to 14 years age group, the time given to education by boys is far greater than that given by girls. At present adult females spend no time on educational activities--not only because of their heavy work burden, but because at present there are no opportunities for adult education in the village.

Contrary to the usual assumption, adult women spend less time on personal care than adult men (Table 3.8). On the other hand, girls in both the 10 to 14 and 5 to 9 age groups spend more time on personal care than boys of the same age groups.

Both men and women appear to have very little time for social activities and they devote only about six minutes per day to these activities. Girls in the 10-14 age group spend more time on social activities than adults. In the case of boys this time is almost 52 minutes per day. A girl's average time for social activities is 13 minutes (0.22 hours) per day. Even girls of the 5-9 age group spend more time on social activities, such as ritual, inter-village visiting, voluntary labour, than do adult men and women.

It is clear that women have to work longer than men for the overall welfare of the family. They contribute less time to 'productive' work and more to domestic work. But a household's welfare depends on the total work performed by all members of the household, and welfare maximisation involves proper allocation of total available time to the various necessary tasks. In principle we agree with the proponents of the new household economics that time is and should be treated as a scarce resource for peasant households, and that any welfare maximisation function developed for the household should treat time as a scarce input (Becker 1965, Evenson 1976 Quizon and Evenson 1978). It follows that all work performed for the maximisation of total household welfare is therefore 'productive' work and the conventional classification of women's domestic work as unproductive should be completely abandoned. How to value the time and

work done at home is a different question.

It is therefore important to look at all productive and domestic activities in order to assess the actual contribution of women to household welfare.

It is interesting to note that time devoted to productive work by women in both the bottom and top economic strata is higher than that of women in the middle economic stratum (Table 3.9). This is a result of heavy food-processing activities in the top economic stratum. In these household, there is much more food processing than in the households of the middle or bottom economic strata. Women in the bottom economic stratum, however, go out to work while women in the middle economic stratum are unlikely to do so. In view of the relative land poverty of the middle stratum households, as compared to the top stratum households, women in these households have less productive work (i.e., food processing) which can be performed at home. On the other hand, women in the middle economic stratum spent much more time (7.31 hours) on domestic and childcare activities than did women of the top (6.49 hours) or bottom economic strata (5.57 hours).

Economic stratum made no difference to the time spent on education by women since no women are involved in education. Women of the top and middle economic strata spent more time on social activities than did women of the bottom economic stratum. In contrast, women in the top economic stratum spent much more time on personal care than did women of both the middle and bottom economic strata. Consequently they had the least leisure time. Women in the bottom economic stratum had the highest leisure time, with a minimum time spent on personal care and social activities.

It is difficult to draw conclusions about children's work burden in different economic strata because of the small size of the sample. On the whole, it appears that children from the poor households, both boys and girls, have to work harder than their counterparts in the middle or top economic strata (Table 3.10). Female children of 10 to 14 years of age from the bottom economic stratum had to work as long as 8.56 hours a day, whereas in the top economic stratum they worked only 1.44 hours per day. However, male children of the same age group in the

Table 3.9

DAILY TIME ALLOCATION AS PER GROUP OF ACTIVITIES BY ECONOMIC STRATA AND SEX

(For population of 15 years and above)

Economic strata/Sex / Activities	Top		Middle		Bottom	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1. Work Burden (a+b+c)	6.64	9.86	5.77	10.25	7.46	9.97
a. Productive	(5.86)	(3.36)	(5.20)	(2.94)	(7.04)	(4.39)
b. Domestic	(0.66)	(4.99)	(0.45)	(5.84)	(0.37)	(4.53)
c. Childcare	(0.12)	(1.51)	(0.12)	(1.47)	(0.05)	(1.05)
2. Education	0.02	-	0.16	-	0.01	-
3. Personal maintenance	1.98	2.09	1.92	1.63	1.84	1.61
4. Social	0.14	0.19	0.16	0.10	0.08	0.05
5. Leisure	7.22	3.86	7.99	4.02	6.61	4.37
Total waking hours	16.00	16.00	16.00	16.00	16.00	16.00

Table 3.10

DAILY TIME ALLOCATION AS PER GROUP OF ACTIVITIES BY ECONOMIC STRATA AND SEX

(For age group 10-14)

(In hours)

Activities \ Economic strata	Top		Middle		Bottom	
	Male*	Female	Male	Female*	Male	Female
1. Work Burden (A + b)	-	1.44	6.97	-	4.45	8.56
a. Productive	-	(0.21)	(6.35)	-	(3.28)	(5.63)
b. Domestic and childcare	-	(1.23)	(0.62)	-	(1.17)	(2.93)
2. Education	-	4.93	-	-	2.42	-
3. Personal maintenance, social and leisure	-	9.63	9.03	-	9.13	7.44
Total waking hours	-	16.00	16.00		16.00	16.00

*No people in this category in the sample.

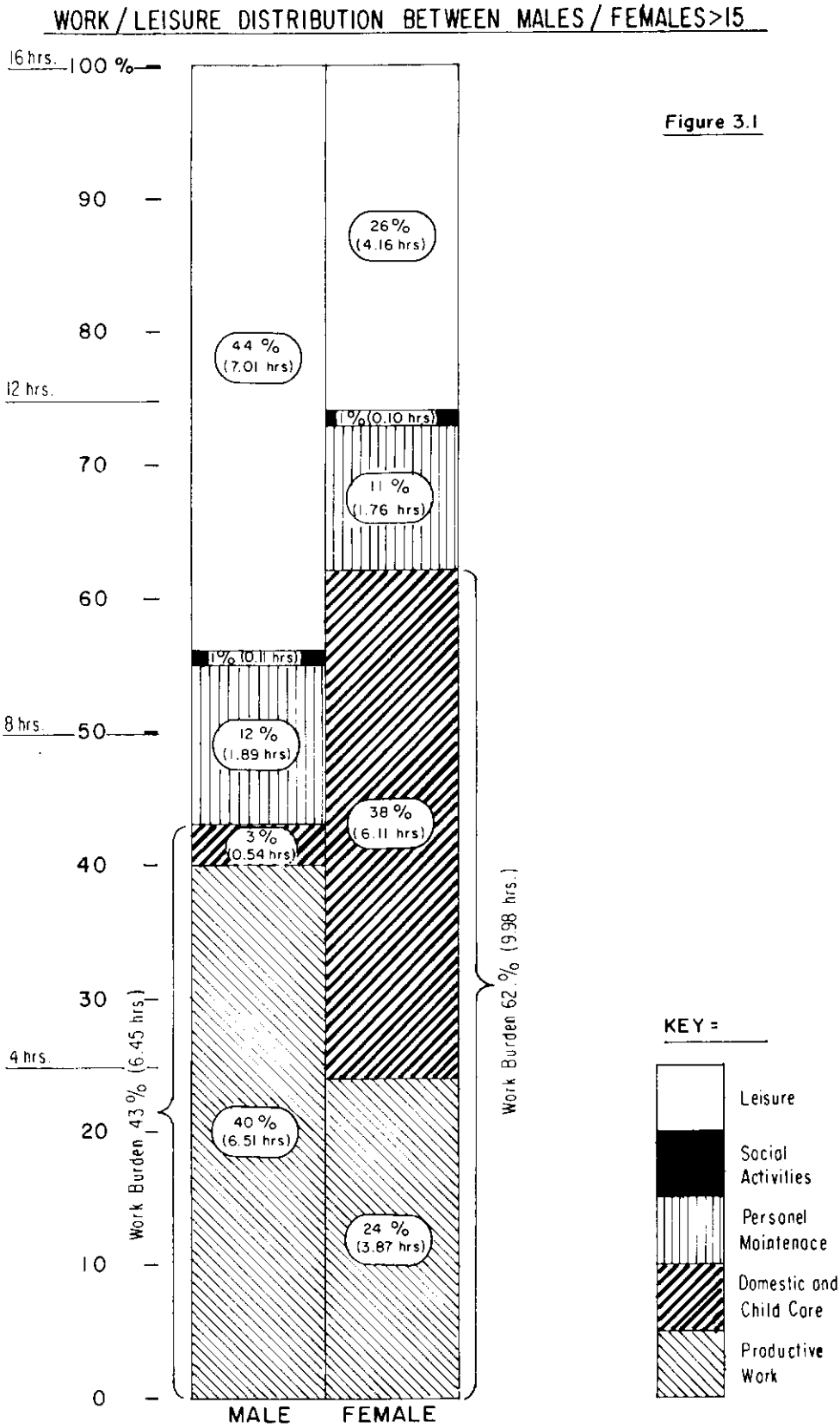

WORK / LEISURE DISTRIBUTION BETWEEN MALES / FEMALES >15
16 hrs.
100 %
90
80
12 hrs.
70
60
8 hrs.
50
40
30
4 hrs.
20
10
0
44 % (7.01 hrs)
26 % (4.16 hrs)
1 % (0.10 hrs)
11 % (1.76 hrs)
1 % (0.11 hrs)
12 % (1.89 hrs)
38 % (6.11 hrs)
3 % (0.54 hrs)
40 % (6.51 hrs)
24 % (3.87 hrs)
Work Burden 43 % (6.45 hrs.)
Work Burden 62 % (9.98 hrs.)
MALE
FEMALE
KEY =
Leisure
Social Activities
Personel Maintenace
Domestic and Child Care
Productive Work

Figure 3.1

WORK/LEISURE DISTRIBUTION BETWEEN MALES & FEMALES 10-14 YRS.

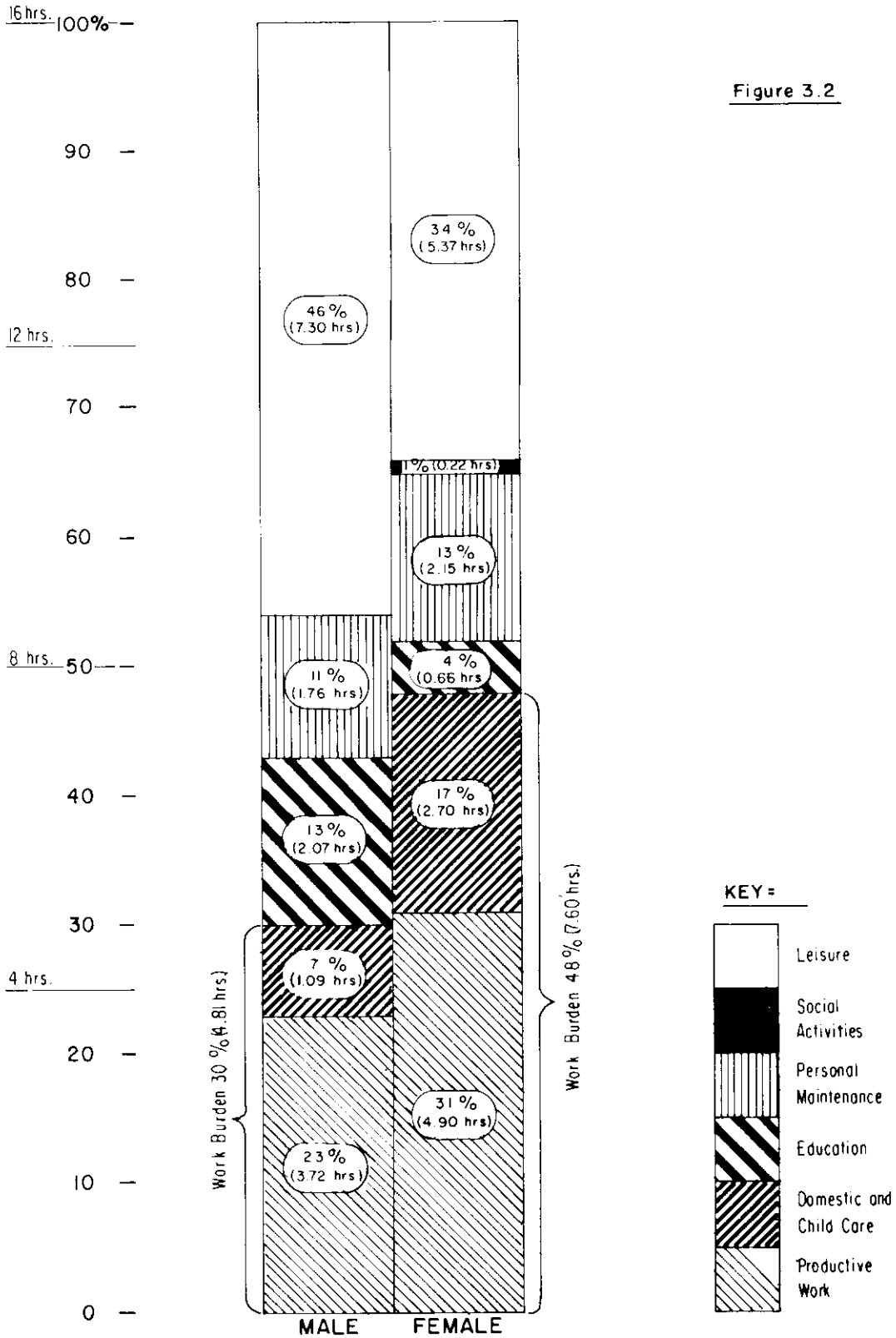


Figure 3.2

WORK/LEISURE DISTRIBUTION BETWEEN MALES & FEMALES 5-9 YRS.

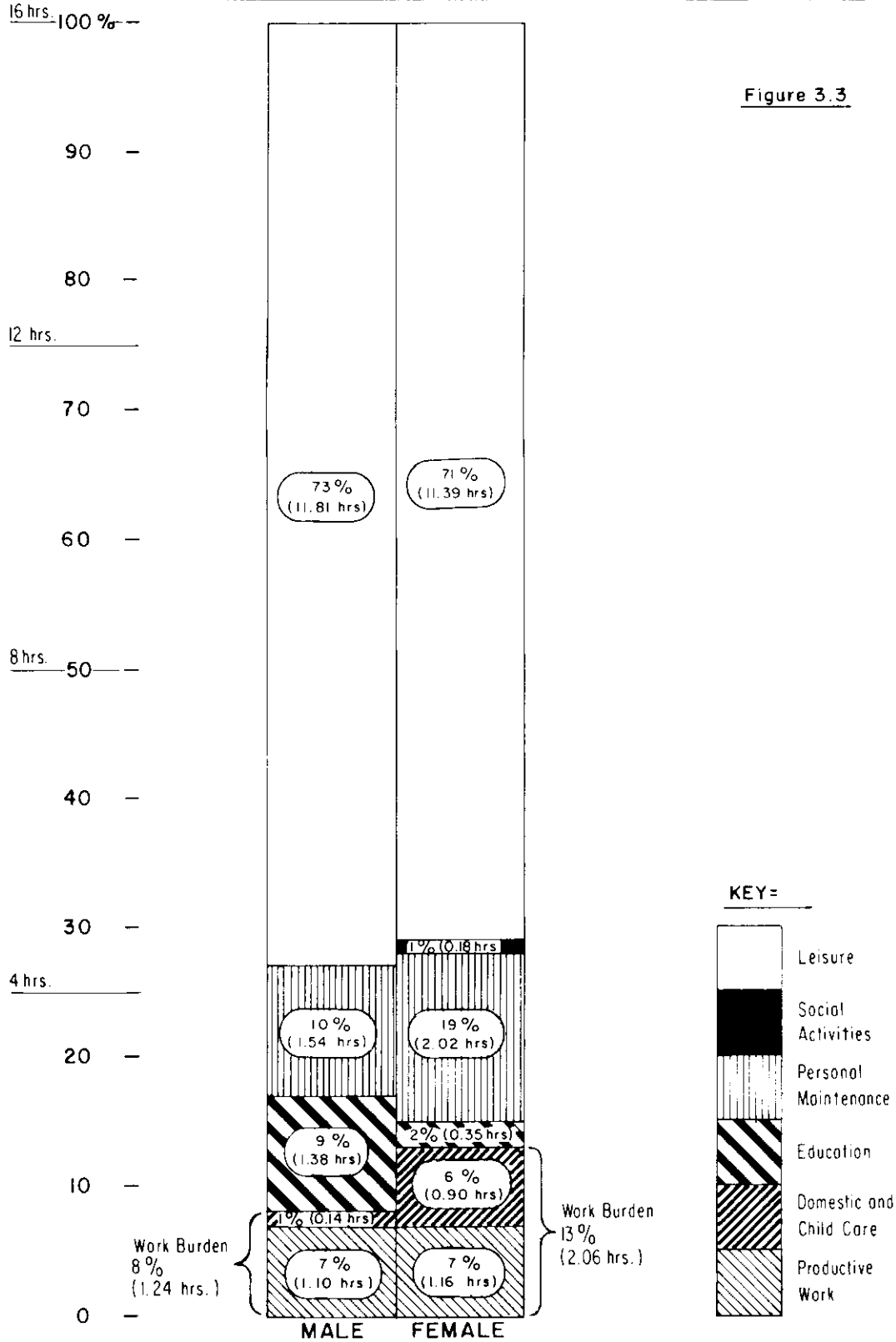


Figure 3.3

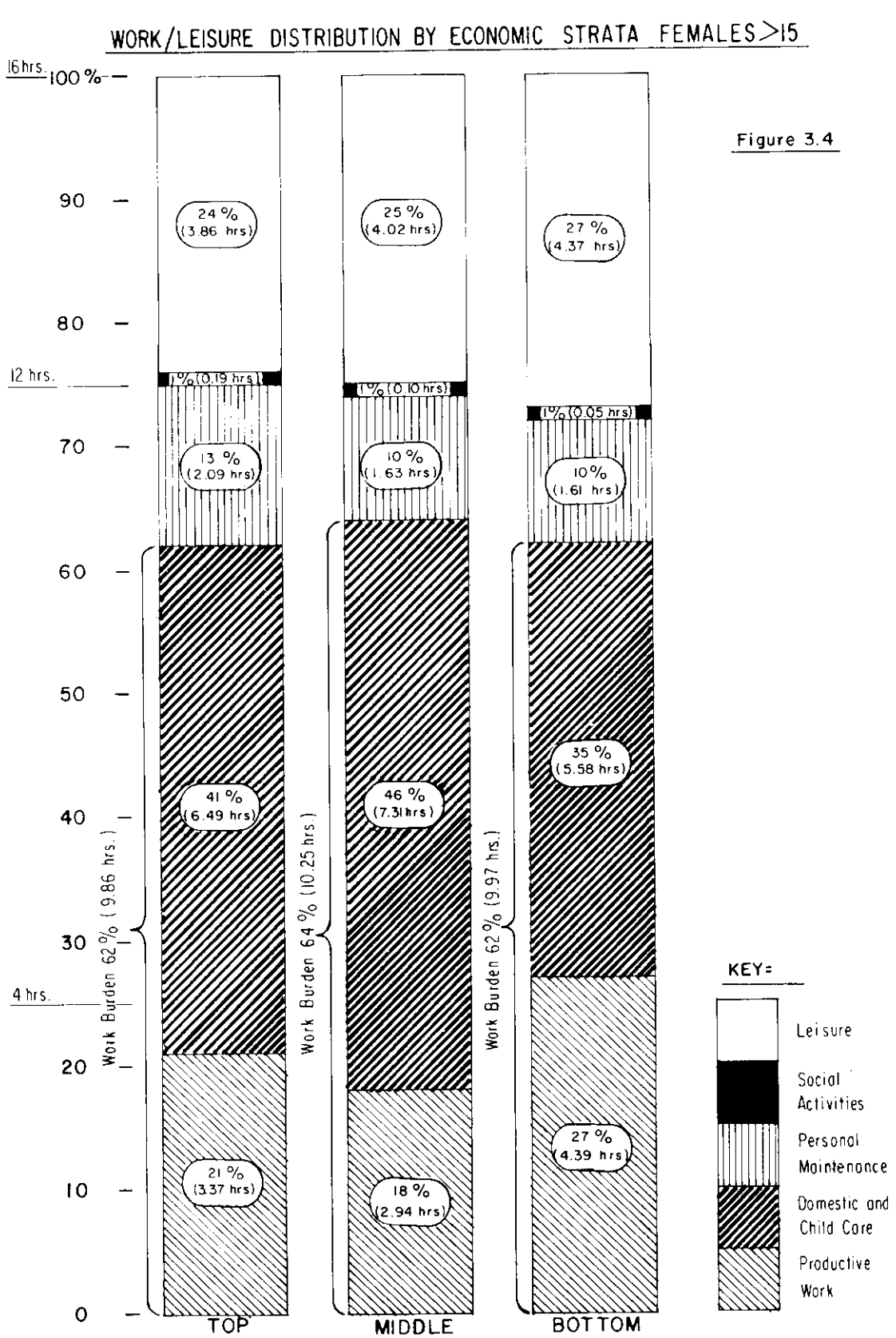

WORK/LEISURE DISTRIBUTION BY ECONOMIC STRATA FEMALES >15
16 hrs.
100 %
90
80
12 hrs.
70
60
50
40
30
4 hrs.
20
10
0
24 % (3.86 hrs)
1% (0.19 hrs)
13 % (2.09 hrs)
41 % (6.49 hrs)
21 % (3.37 hrs)
25 % (4.02 hrs)
1% (0.10 hrs)
10 % (1.63 hrs)
46 % (7.31 hrs)
18 % (2.94 hrs)
27 % (4.37 hrs)
1% (0.05 hrs)
10 % (1.61 hrs)
35 % (5.58 hrs)
27 % (4.39 hrs)
Work Burden 62 % (9.86 hrs.)
Work Burden 64 % (10.25 hrs.)
Work Burden 62 % (9.97 hrs.)
TOP
MIDDLE
BOTTOM
KEY=
Leisure
Social Activities
Personal Maintenance
Domestic and Child Care
Productive Work

Figure 3.4

WORK/LEISURE DISTRIBUTION BY ECONOMIC STRATA MALES >15

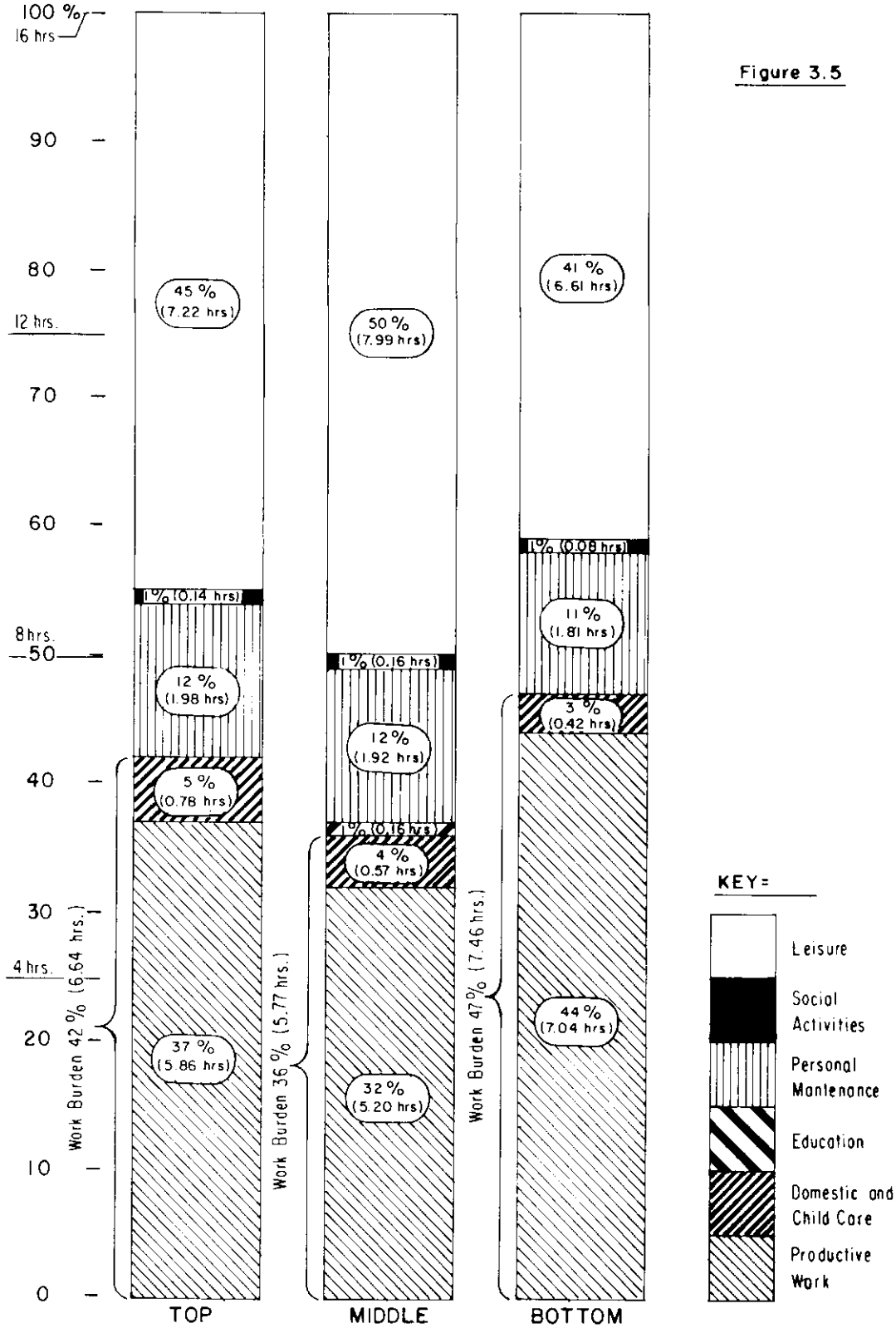


Figure 3.5

middle economic stratum worked for longer periods than their counterparts in the bottom economic stratum. The work burden for girls of 5 to 9 years of age was highest for the bottom economic stratum, considerably less for girls of the middle economic stratum and even less for those of the top economic stratum (Table 3.11). But irrespective of the wealth of the households, girls had to work for more time than boys in comparable age groups.

Caste does not seem to have much influence on women's work burdens either. Women of both high and low castes have to work similar hours. The distribution of the work burden between different kinds of work, however, does differ by caste. Women of high caste devote more of their time to domestic and childcare activities than do women in the low castes. About 58 percent of the waking time of the high caste women, 37 percent of the time of the women from the middle castes and 33 percent of that of the low caste women was spent on these activities. The time spent on productive work is proportionately higher for low caste women. Low caste women spend less time on personal care and so have more leisure time (Table 3.12).

Family structure, however, does make a difference to the total work burden of women. Both men and women have to work more hours in nuclear families than in extended ones. Women do less productive work in extended households, but they devote as much time to domestic work as do women in nuclear families. Women in nuclear families have less leisure than women in extended families (Table 3.13).

This study also confirms the conclusions of many other authors on the economic cost and benefit of children to the peasant households. Children start contributing towards the maintenance and reproduction of the household from an early age and are therefore a high-return investment for the households (Nag, White and Peet 1977, Cain 1979).

I. Productive Work

Going into the details of work allocation in Sirsia households, we find that women are involved in all production, but women and men participate in different stages of the production process.

Table 3.11

DAILY TIME ALLOCATION AS PER GROUP OF ACTIVITIES BY ECONOMIC STRATA AND SEX

For age group (5-9)

Economic strata/Sex / Activities	Top		Middle		Bottom	
	Male	Female	Male*	Female	Male	Female
1. Work Burden (a + b)	0.37	1.41	-	1.67	1.48	2.56
a. Productive work	(0.22)	(0.26)		(0.37)	(1.35)	(1.94)
b. Domestic and childcare	(0.15)	(1.15)	-	(1.30)	(0.13)	(0.62)
2. Education	5.33	0.94	-	-	0.33	0.16
3. Personal maintenance, and social and leisure	10.30	13.65	-	14.33	14.19	13.28
Total waking hours	16.00	16.00	-	16.00	16.00	16.00

*No people in this category in the sample.

Table 3.12

DAILY TIME ALLOCATION AS PER GROUP OF ACTIVITIES BY CASTE AND SEX

(For population of 15 years and above)

Caste/Sex / Activities	High		Middle		Low	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1. Work Burden (a+b+c)	4.5	10.8	7.0	9.9	7.9	10.2
a. Productive	(3.5)	(1.5)	(6.5)	(3.9)	(7.9)	(4.8)
b. Domestic	(0.6)	(7.9)	(0.4)	(4.8)	-	(4.6)
c. Childcare	(0.4)	(1.4)	(0.1)	(1.2)	-	(0.8)
2. Education	-	-	-	-	-	-
3. Personal maintenance	3.3	1.5	1.9	1.8	1.5	0.9
4. Social	0.6	-	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3
5. Leisure	7.6	3.7	7.0	4.2	6.4	4.6
Total waking hours	16.00	16.00	16.00	16.00	16.00	16.00

Table 3.13

DAILY TIME ALLOCATION BY FAMILY STRUCTURE AND SEX

(For population of 15 years and above)

(In hours)

Activities \ Family Structure/Sex	Nuclear		Extended	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1. Work burden	7.29	10.73	6.78	9.73
a. Productive work	(6.81)	(4.63)	(6.22)	(3.61)
b. Domestic work*	(0.48)	(6.10)	(0.56)	(6.12)
2. Education	-	-	0.06	-
3. Personal maintenance	1.71	1.27	1.98	1.92
4. Social activity	0.16	0.06	0.08	0.11
5. Leisure	6.84	3.94	7.10	4.24
Total waking hours	16.00	16.00	16.00	16.00

*Includes childcare.

Animal Husbandry

In Maithili society, ideally women are not supposed to work outside the four walls of the house. Hence to have to work in the fields or participate in herding lowers their prestige and the prestige of their household. In reality, however, in the majority of the households women, especially girls in the 10 to 14 age group, devote the largest part of their work day to animal husbandry. They spend almost 3 hours daily on this activity, which is more time than adult males or females spend on it. Boys in this age group also put in more than 2 hours of work on it each day. Animal husbandry is the major productive work for both boys and girls in this age group (Table 3.14).

In almost all households, women usually supply fodder and clean the sheds of the larger animals, while smaller animals, such as goats and sheep, are entirely the responsibility of women and children.

Analyzing the work pattern by economic strata, one finds that the large animals, such as oxen and buffaloes, are generally tended by permanently hired labourers. In their absence it is done by other men of the household. But small animals, such as she-goats and he-goats, are tended and kept by women. On the other hand, fodder is collected by the women of the household irrespective of economic strata. This work is usually assigned to the old women in the household (Table 3.15).

Agriculture

Agriculture is here defined as work in the fields, such as ploughing and levelling, planting, weeding and irrigating. Harvesting and post harvest transportation of crops, threshing and the first storing also come under agriculture. Since all these operations involve moving out of the courtyard, the female time input to a household's own farm is uniformly lower than that of males, except in the case of female children in the 5 to 9 age group. Women in the bottom economic stratum, however, spend 1.23 hours daily on agricultural work compared to only about 0.88 hour spent by women of the middle economic stratum and about 0.58 hour spent by women in the top economic stratum. Women in Maithili society do not plough, but they participate fully in the planting, harvesting and weeding of all crops. Local fertilizer

Table 3.14

DAILY TIME ALLOCATIONS AS PER DIFFERENT PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES BY AGE GROUP AND SEX

(In hours)

Activities \ Age group/Sex	5 - 9		10-14		15 +	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1. Animal husbandry	0.57	0.79	2.08	2.97	1.11	0.68
2. Agriculture	0.12	0.16	1.05	0.83	3.20	0.98
3. Hunting and gathering	0.08	0.04	0.06	0.30	0.19	0.28
4. Manufacturing	-	-	-	-	0.22	0.18
5. Food processing	-	0.01	0.09	0.41	0.13	1.13
6. Outside income earning activities (In village)	0.30	0.15	0.35	0.33	1.39	0.52
7. Construction	0.03	-	0.09	0.06	0.17	0.10
Total time on productive activities	1.10	1.15	3.72	4.90	6.41	3.87

Table 3.15

DAILY TIME ALLOCATION AS PER DIFFERENT PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES BY ECONOMIC STRATA AND SEX

(For population of 15 years and above)

Economic strata/sex / Activities	Top		Middle		Bottom	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1. Animal husbandry	1.36	0.54	0.30	0.49	1.28	0.82
2. Agriculture	3.29	0.58	3.47	0.88	3.06	1.23
3. Hunting and gathering	0.15	0.29	0.13	0.16	0.23	0.30
4. Manufacturing	0.04	0.19	0.11	0.10	0.33	0.20
5. Food processing	0.19	1.00	0.09	0.91	0.12	1.26
6. Outside income earning activities (In village)	0.76	0.71	1.05	0.20	1.77	0.08
7. Construction	0.07	0.05	0.05	0.20	0.25	0.50
Total time on productive activities	5.86	3.36	5.20	2.94	7.04	4.39

application and seed selection, constitute other major female activities in agriculture.

Responses to questions asked about seed selection and fertilizer application indicated that in 70 percent of cases women did seed selection, while in 6.1 percent of the cases both sexes performed the task. Female participation in this activity was highest in the bottom economic stratum (Table 3.16). When the data is considered by crop it is evident a larger percentage of women were involved in the seed selection for foodgrains than in seed selection for kitchen gardening (Table 3.17).

In about 36 percent of the cases, fertilizer application was reported as women's work and in 6.4 percent of the cases both males and females were equally involved. A larger proportion of females in the bottom economic stratum were involved in fertilizer application (Table 3.18), and women in the middle income group again showed the lowest participation. When the type of fertilizer is considered, however, females were less involved in the application of chemical fertilizer as compared to traditional organic fertilizer. Ninety percent of the application of traditional fertilizer was done by women, while they applied only 16 percent of the chemical fertilizer. When households used both traditional and chemical fertilizer women did 50 percent of the work (Table 3.19).

Hunting and Gathering

Females spend a lot more time on hunting and gathering than males in all but 5 and 9 age groups and in all economic strata. This is basically because they do the fuel collection which comes under the category of "hunting and gathering". Only rarely is firewood available for fuel, so all women have to work on shaping cowdung to make dung paddies suitable for burning. Poor women, with no animals in the house, have to collect dung from village paths and pasture land. They also collect small sticks. The usual practice in the village is to put straw or whatever small pieces of wood are available, for example, pulse bushes, jute sticks, straw, into the cowdung. This is then made into a 2-3 foot long bundle about 12 inches in diameter and dried in the sun. These bundles are called goraha. Another similar product of smaller size is called gorahanni, and the cowdung straw

Table 3.16

SEED SELECTION

Economic strata \ Sex	Male	Female	Both (50/50)	Total
Top	16	21	10	47
	(34.0)	(44.7)	(21.3)	(100.0)
Middle	8	23	-	31
	(25.8)	(74.2)		(100.0)
Bottom	15	71	-	86
	(17.4)	(82.6)		(100.0)
All strata	39	115	10	164
	(23.8)	(70.1)	(6.1)	(100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

Table 3.17

SEED SELECTION

Crops \ Sex	Male	Female	Both (50/50)	Total
Food grains	33	104	10	147
	(22.5)	(70.7)	(6.8)	(100.0)
Kitchen garden	6	11	-	17
	(35.3)	(64.7)		(100.0)
All crops	39	115	10	164
	(23.8)	(70.1)	(6.1)	(100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

Table 3.18

FERTILIZER APPLICATION

(In number)

Economic strata \ Sex	Male	Female	Both	Total
Top	15	10	2	27
	(55.6)	(37.0)	(7.4)	(100.0)
Middle	13	2	-	15
	(86.7)	(13.3)		(100.0)
Bottom	26	22	4	52
	(50.0)	(42.3)	(7.7)	(100.0)
All strata	54	34	6	94
	(57.4)	(36.2)	(6.4)	(100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

Table 3.19

FERTILIZER APPLICATION

(In number)

Kind of fertilizer \ Applicator	Male	Female	Both (50/50)	Total
Organic (Traditional)	1 (10.0)	9 (90.0)	-	10 (100.0)
Chemical	42 (84.0)	8 (16.0)		50 (100.0)
Organic-chemical (Mixture)	11 (32.4)	17 (50.0)	6 (17.6)	34 (100.0)
Total	54 (57.4)	34 (36.2)	6 (6.4)	94 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

chips are called chipri. These are the main kinds of fuel used in the village. The preparation of fuel for a wealthy household containing about 18 family members and ten animals takes a woman about two hours a day.

Manufacturing and Food Processing

Manufacturing occupies very little of the villagers' time in Sirsia. Only goods of little value, such as rope, baskets, mats, are manufactured at home and all of these are used in the household. These activities are performed mainly by men.

Food processing is another area in which women make a large contribution. Almost all food processing is done by women. This part of the production process can hardly be ignored in a largely self-sufficient agricultural household. Women spend 1.13 hours daily on this work while men spend only about 0.13 hour.

Women in all economic strata are heavily involved in food processing. Some processed food is used for payment of labourers. In big farm households a considerable number of labourers are hired and paid in kind and they have to be given three meals a day. Another portion of the processed food is sold in the market, and another is consumed within the household and used for production in the form of seeds. Women do not participate directly in the cultivation process in wealthier households, but once the harvest is in, the women of the household form the core of the labour force for further processing of the crop. Paddy for household consumption and for feeding the labour force is husked, cleaned and parboiled at home by women. Similarly, all the pulses and beans are threshed, cleaned and ground by women. Food processing for the household cannot be separated from food processing for the payment of wages and for feeding the farm labourers.

After harvesting, huge amounts of paddy are parboiled in huge cauldrons on large mud stoves. This paddy is then dried in the sun for a day before it is sent for milling. After milling it is husked and cleaned and stored in small stores (kothi) made of bamboo chips plastered with a mixture of mud and cowdung. These kothis have an opening near the bottom and at the top. The bottom opening is closed with straw and plastered with the mud-cowdung mixture. The grain is poured into the kothi

DISTRIBUTION OF PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES BETWEEN MALES & FEMALES>15

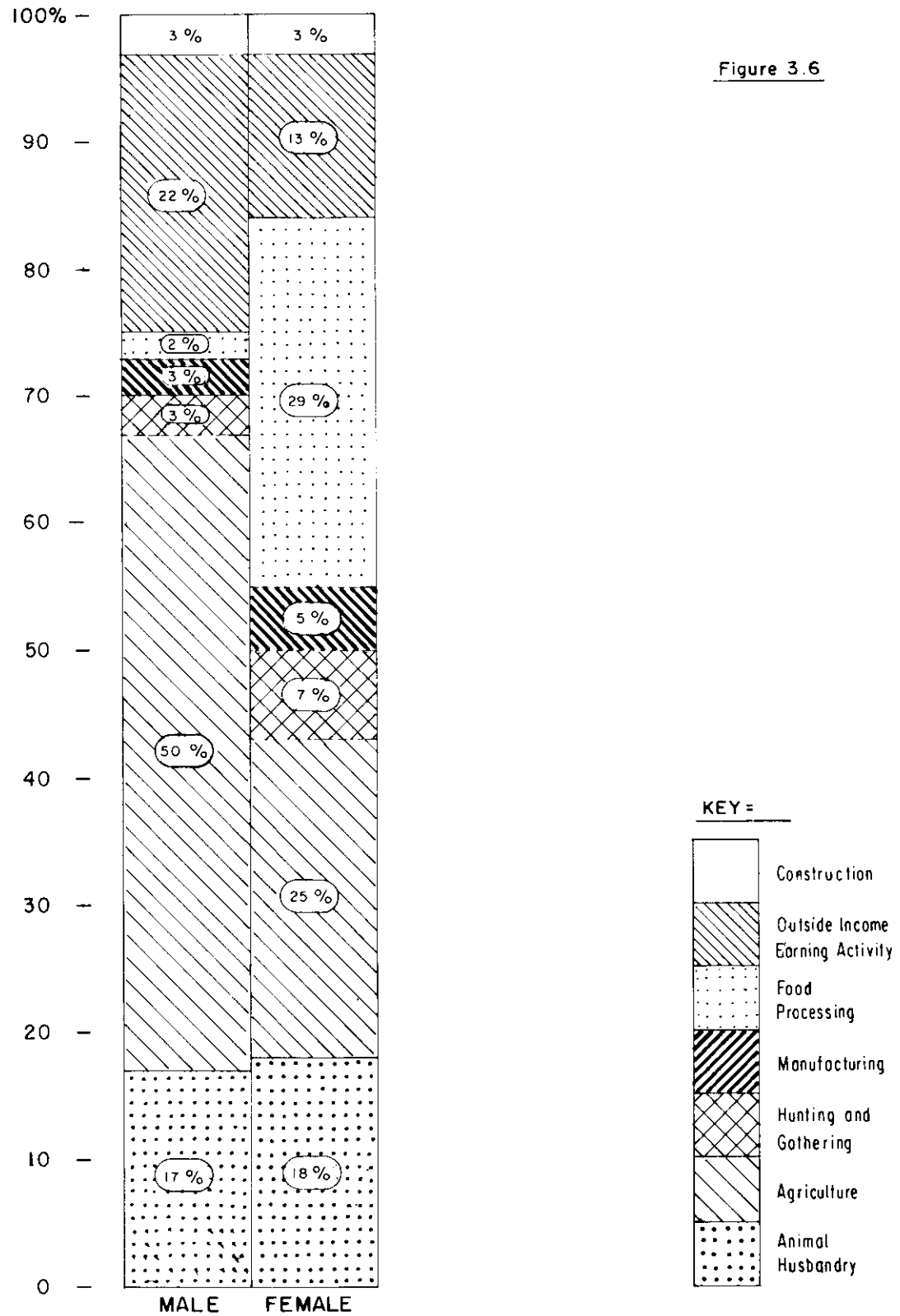


Figure 3.6

DISTRIBUTION OF PRODUCTION ACTIVITIES BY ECONOMIC STRATA FEMALES>15

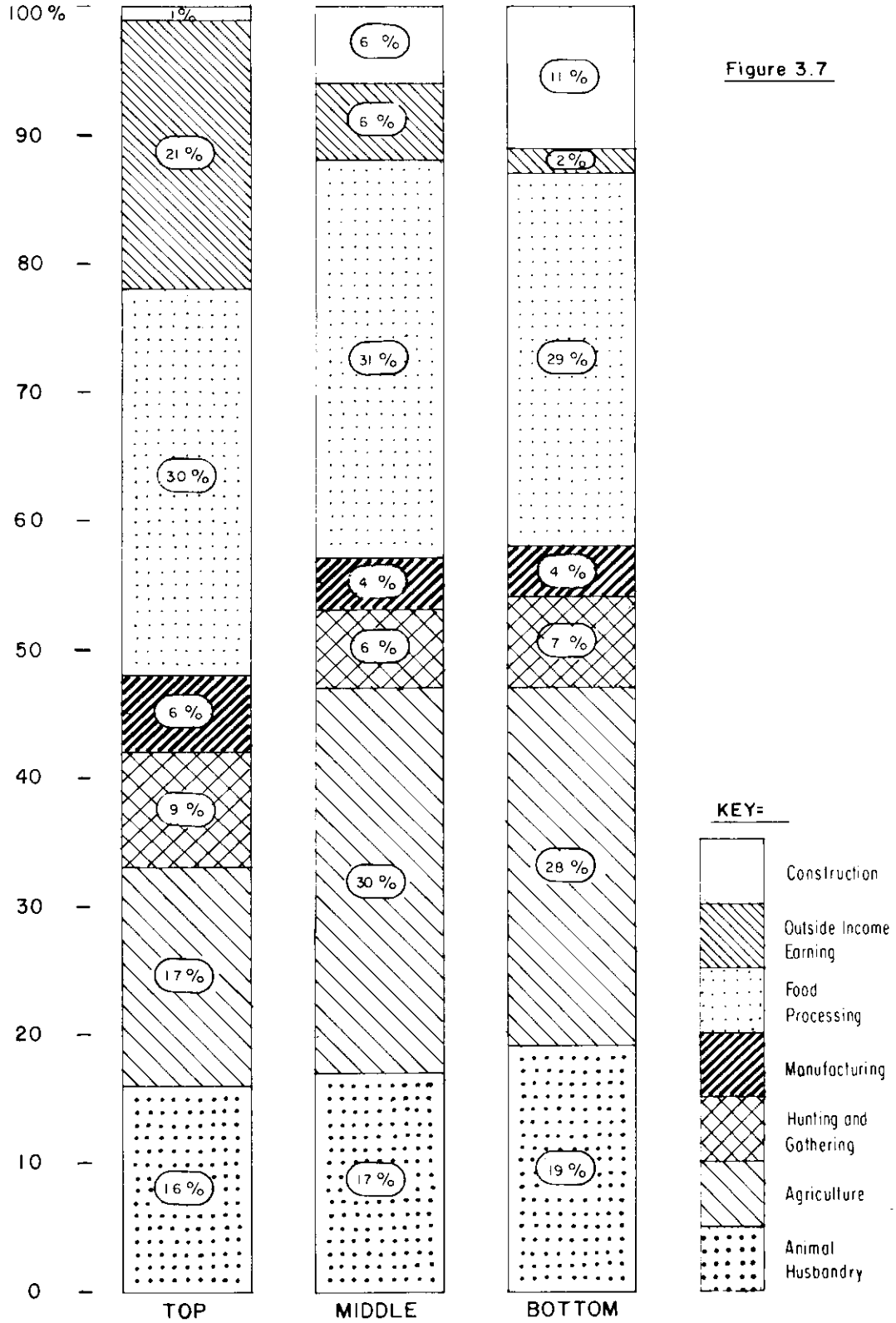


Figure 3.7

cooperative and teaching--which are year round full time jobs. For reasons of prestige women in the higher socio-economic strata do not work outside the household, yet the time allocation statistics show that women in the bottom economic stratum spend less time on outside income earning activities than women in the higher income strata. Outside income earning activity in our definition, besides other activities such as working for wages and salary, also includes trading and keeping tea and other food stalls. In the sample there are two sweet-vender households, one each in the top and middle economic strata. These families cook and roast different kinds of food and sell them in the nearby weekly hat markets. While cooking and roasting of this food is a female job both men and women participate in the actual marketing and hence the higher participation of women from wealtheir households in outside income earning activities.

II. Domestic and Child care Activities

In both rich and poor households domestic activities fall within the women's domain. These include the maintenance of the household, processing and preservation of grains for household use, cooking, cleaning, and the care of the children and the old. While men spend very little time on domestic activities (2.9 percent of their total time, or 0.46 hours per day) women spend as much as 30.4 percent of their time doing domestic chores. They spend 4.86 hours daily dooking, cleaning and performing other household tasks.

Cooking is the major domestic activity for all women in Sirsia. Adult women spend almost 55 percent of their total domestic work time cooking (Table 3.20). At planting and harvest times women from wealthy households cook throughout the day sitting in front of a huge hot earthern oven. At these times they must prepare food not only for the family members but for all the labourers working on the family land. The morning meal consists of thick flat rice flour breads (roti), the mid-day meal consists of cooked rice, pulses and vegetables, and the afternoon meal is the same as the morning meal. The flat breads, which weigh about 500 grams each, are cooked on hugh pans on cowdung and wood fires. In larger households, one or two women are constantly cooking in the busy agricultural seasons. Girls of the 10-14 age group spend about 0.88 hours per

Table 3.20

DAILY TIME ALLOCATION AS PER DIFFERENT DOMESTIC ACTIVITIES BY AGE GROUP AND SEX

(In hours)

Activities \ Age group/Sex	5 - 9		10 - 14		15 +	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
A. Domestic	0.10	0.42	0.47	2.31	0.46	4.86
1. Cooking	-	0.06	0.12	0.88	0.09	2.67
2. Cleaning pot and pans	-	0.14	-	0.52	0.01	0.37
3. Cleaning house	0.02	0.06	0.14	0.44	0.02	0.82
4. Laundry	0.02	0.03	-	0.06	0.01	0.04
5. Fetching water	-	0.06	0.09	0.30	0.01	0.51
6. Shopping	0.02	0.01	0.12	-	0.27	0.14
7. Other	0.04	0.06	-	0.11	0.05	0.31
B. Childcare	0.04	0.48	0.62	0.39	0.08	1.25
Total domestic and childcare	0.14	0.90	1.09	2.70	0.54	6.11

day cooking while adult women spend 2.67 hours cooking.

Second place in the daily domestic work of women of all economic strata is taken by house cleaning (Table 3.21). This involves sweeping and then plastering the floor with a mud-cowdung mixture. Girls of the 10-14 age group spend more time cleaning pots and pans than cleaning the house. Laundry takes very little time for anyone as most people wash their own clothes themselves while bathing.

Water collection is another major task of women. They spend half-an-hour each day collecting and fetching water.

In Dhanukha district, where the study area is located, there are ponds every half mile or so. Ponds abound in villages. It is the custom to make a pond if a family becomes rich or the family has any kind of success, and religious people in particular make ponds if they can afford to do so. So a rich household has to make a pond because this is a "status symbol". Ponds are useful as a source of irrigation in the dry seasons; people bathe in these ponds, do their laundry and wash pots and pans in them. They are used for everything except as a source of drinking water. Apart from status, for a rich household it is imperative to have a pond in front of the house because its women cannot go far away to bathe or clean pots and pans. The ponds are very dirty and a source of illness and epidemics because only in the annual flooding during the rainly season does the filth on top of the water get washed away.

For drinking water, there is a well in each locality usually provided by the rich households, or sometimes by the community collectively. People use the well water only for drinking, so there is no pot-washing or bathing around the well. Nowadays, most wells have 2-3 foot cemented walls surrounding them with a wide cement platform around the base. The old wells which had brick walls above the ground and brick platforms, are collapsing and there is perpetual mud around them. These wells are never cleaned and no chemicals are added to the drinking water. In the dry seasons the well water is relatively clean but in the rainy season the water is thick with mud as the brick interior of the well is penetrated by the rain water from around the well.

Table 3.21

DAILY TIME ALLOCATION AS PER DIFFERENT DOMESTIC ACTIVITIES BY ECONOMIC STRATA AND SEX

(For population of 15 years and above)

(In hours)

Activities \ Economic strata/Sex	Top		Middle		Bottom	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
A. Domestic	0.66	4.99	0.45	5.84	0.37	4.53
1. Cooking	0.17	2.58	0.14	3.20	0.04	2.56
2. Cleaning pots and pans	0.04	0.48	-	0.43	-	0.30
3. Cleaning house	0.04	0.92	0.02	1.01	0.01	0.72
4. Laundry	-	0.07	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.04
5. Fetching water	0.02	0.53	0.02	0.62	-	0.47
6. Shopping	0.33	0.14	0.16	0.13	0.28	0.14
7. Other	0.06	0.27	0.09	0.42	0.03	0.30
B. Childcare	0.12	1.51	0.12	1.47	0.05	1.05
Total domestic and childcare	0.78	6.50	0.57	7.31	0.42	5.58

Drawing drinking water and carrying it home is women's work except in households where there are servants. Even male servants despise this task. The water is drawn in small five-to-seven litre buckets, and then poured in big earthern water jars, which the women carry on their heads. This they have been doing from their childhood and they do it qiite easily. The wells are not very far from the house and fetching water is not a problem in this village.

Men and women in all economic strata do the shopping; the men spending relatively more time on it than the women in all economic strata. The time spent by women on shopping is almost equal for all the economic strata.

Childcare takes 1.25 hours of women's time per day. Girls of 5-9 years spend half-an-hour per day caring for their younger siblings while girls in the10-14 age group spend less time on this activity. On the other hand males of the 10-14 age group spend more time on childcare than males in other age groups. Boys aged 10 to 14 in the bottom economic stratum spend more daily time on childcare and domestic activities than boys of the same age in the middle economic strata (Table 3.10). This might be the result of the fact that the women in the bottom economic stratum have to go out to work and children of both sexes have to do domestic chores and food processing in the household.

Household Production and Family Welfare

Although men put in more productive work in the conventional sense of the term, women's contributions to the economic well-being of the family are in no ways less than those of the men. Women contribute both directly and indirectly towards increasing family income and promoting family welfare. For analytical purposes it is reasonable to allocate the household income to the different sexes and children in the family in proportion to the time spent by them on productive activities. As reported by Cloud (1977) a similar methodology was adopted for calculating women's contribution in production in different sectors of the economy in a UN Economic Commission Report on Africa.

The 24 sample households produced goods worth 196,801 rupees and per household production was 8,200 rupees (Table 3.22). In agriculture, animal husbandry and other

Table 3.22

MALE/FEMALE CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS HOUSEHOLD INCOME*

(In percent)

Activity \ Sex/Age group	Male 15+	Female 15+	Male Child 10-14	Female Child 10-14	Total
1. Animal husbandry	53.84 (3680)	27.84 (1903)	7.27 (497)	11.05 (755)	100.00 (6835)
2. Agriculture	76.70 (108363)	19.94 (28172)	1.83 (2585)	1.53 (2162)	100.00 (141282)
2.1 Agriculture, exclusive of kitchen gardening	77.15 (107850)	19.52 (27288)	1.82 (2544)	1.51 (2111)	100.00 (139793)
2.2 Kitchen gardening	55.00 (819)	40.00 (596)	2.50 (37)	2.50 (37)	100.00 (1489)
3. Hunting and gathering (excludes fuel collection)	42.25 (599)	51.64 (732)	0.94 (13)	5.16 (73)	100.00 (1417)
4. Manufacturing	59.09 (59)	40.91 (41)	-	-	100.00 (100)
4.1 Rope/Basketry	57.83 (52)	42.17 (38)	-	-	100.00 (90)
5. Food processing	44.97 (21211)	52.50 (24800)	0.51 (241)	1.94 (915)	100.00 (47167)
5.1 Husking/Drying	11.73 (4656)	84.92 (33711)	0.28 (111)	3.07 (1219)	100.00 (39697)
5.2 Roasting/Grinding	2.33 (6)	90.70 (221)	2.32 (6)	4.65 (11)	100.00 (244)
5.3 Cooked food & others	66.76 (4317)	31.74 (2052)	0.41 (27)	1.09 (70)	100.00 (6466)
I. Sub-total for Household production (1+2+3+4+5)	68.04 (133912)	28.28 (55648)	1.70 (3336)	1.98 (3905)	100.00 (196801)
II. Wage and Salary	74.64 (11891)	25.36 (4040)	-	-	100.00 (15931)
III. Total household income (I + II)	68.54 (145803)	28.06 (59688)	1.57 (3336)	1.83 (3905)	100.00 (212732)

Figures in parentheses indicate contribution in value terms (Rs.).

*Based on the 24 sample households included in the Time Allocation Study.

productive fields in which the product cannot be ascribed directly to any particular member of the household, household production may be divided according to the proportion of time spent by each sex and age group on that particular product. On this basis it may be tentatively concluded that women contributed 28.3 percent to the total joint gross production of the household. Together with wage income they contributed 28.06 percent to the total household income. Male children contributed 1.7 percent of this output while female children contributed 2 percent.

Sectorwise women's work input in food processing is highest at 52.5 percent of the total food processing activities. The second sphere where they contributed the most is in hunting and gathering. Their relative contribution in comparison to men is lowest in agriculture, but even in this sphere they contribute about 20 percent to the total agricultural work.

Both male and female children's contribution is highest in animal husbandry. Thus all members of the household contribute to the household income but their relative contribution varies between the different sectors.

The results of this study are in line with other time allocation studies done for similar peasant households in different parts of the world. Studies on women's time allocation (Halim and Husain 1979, Cain 1977, Quizon and Evenson 1978, McSweeney 1979) have shown that women in most parts of Asia and Africa are involved heavily in the agricultural work and are the main food processors in peasant households. The Bangladesh study by Halim and Hussain concludes that: "It is interesting to note that both housewife and other female members of the family spend more time in productive works than the farm operator and other males".

According to the studies quoted by Quizon and Evenson women in both Java and the Philippines worked longer hours than men. Philippino women worked about 10 hours a day while Japanese and Bangladesh women work even longer. The current case study shows that Maithili women also work about 10 hours a day (Table 3.23).

Table 3.23

CROSS COUNTRY COMPARISONS OF HOURS WORKED

(Productive + Domestic Work)

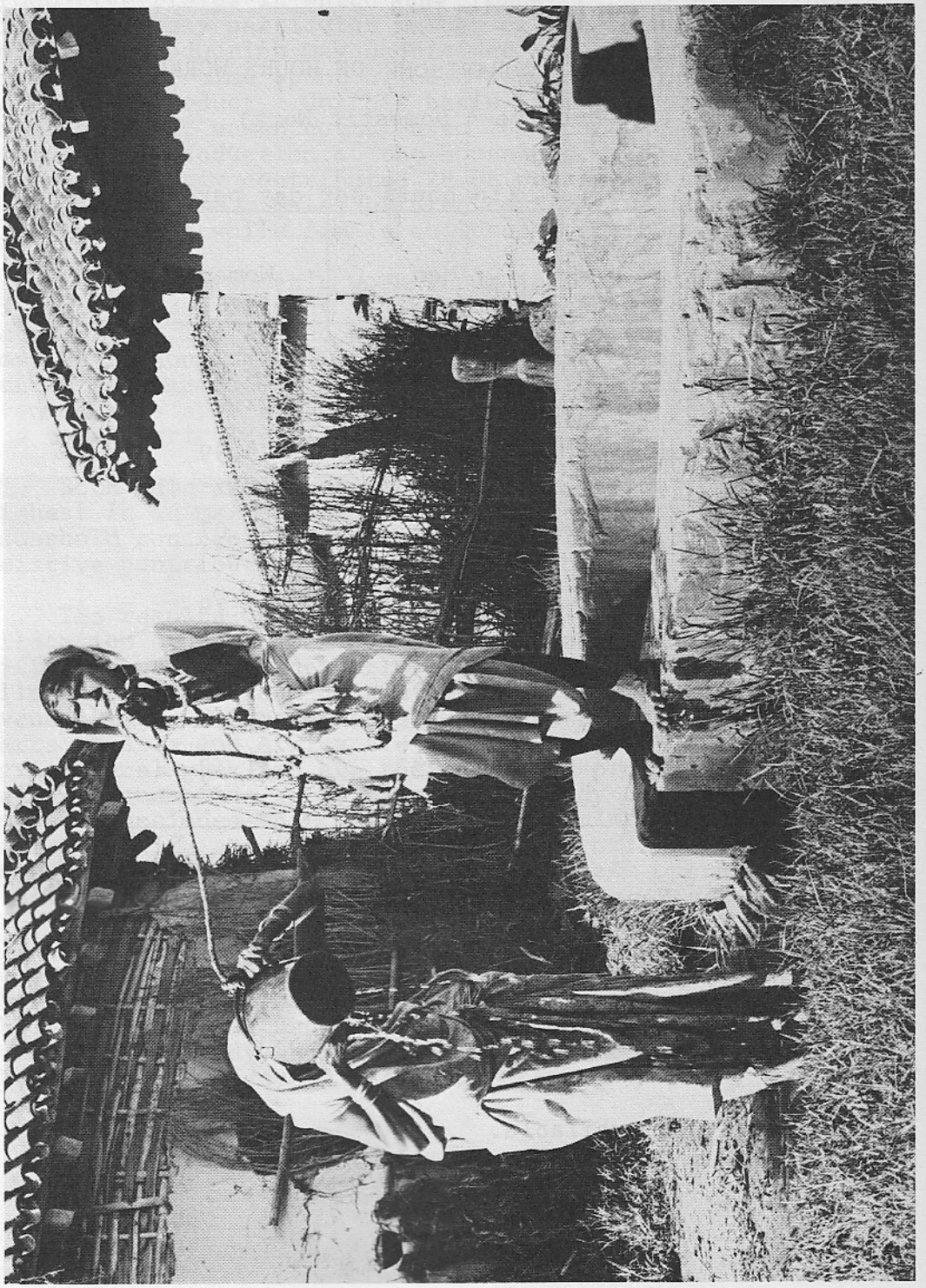
(In hours per day per person)

Sex / Place/ Country	Men	Women
Sirsia/Nepal (1976/77)	6.95	9.98
Laguna/Philippines (1975)	8.15	9.99
USA (1975)	na	6.07
Israel (1975)	na	7.79
Bangladesh (1974)	10.16	10.90
Java/Indonesia* (1972/73)	8.84	11.25

Source: For Nepal - Present Field Survey.
For other countries - Quizon and Evenson, 1978, Table 10.

*Only for employed population.

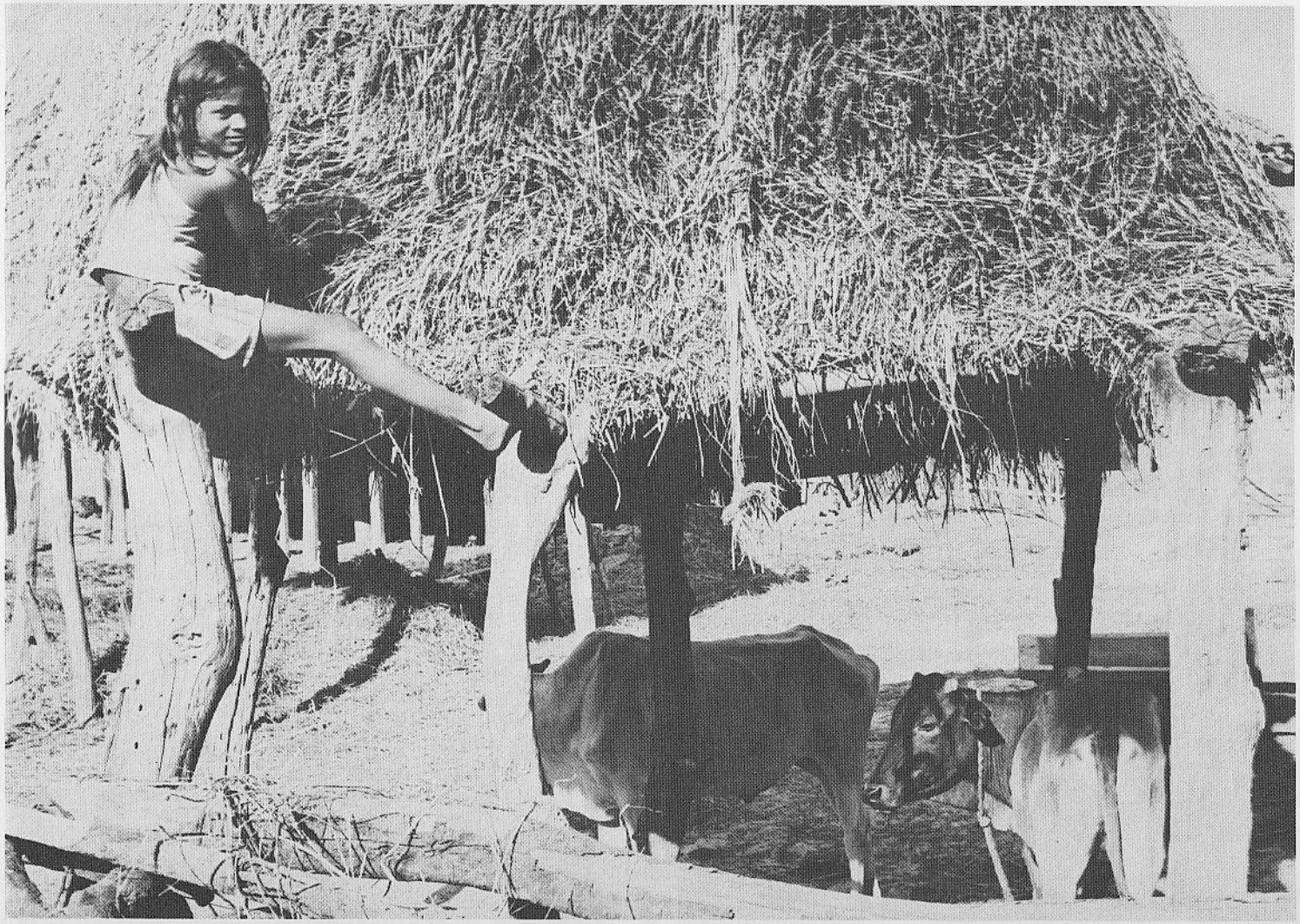
na = not available.



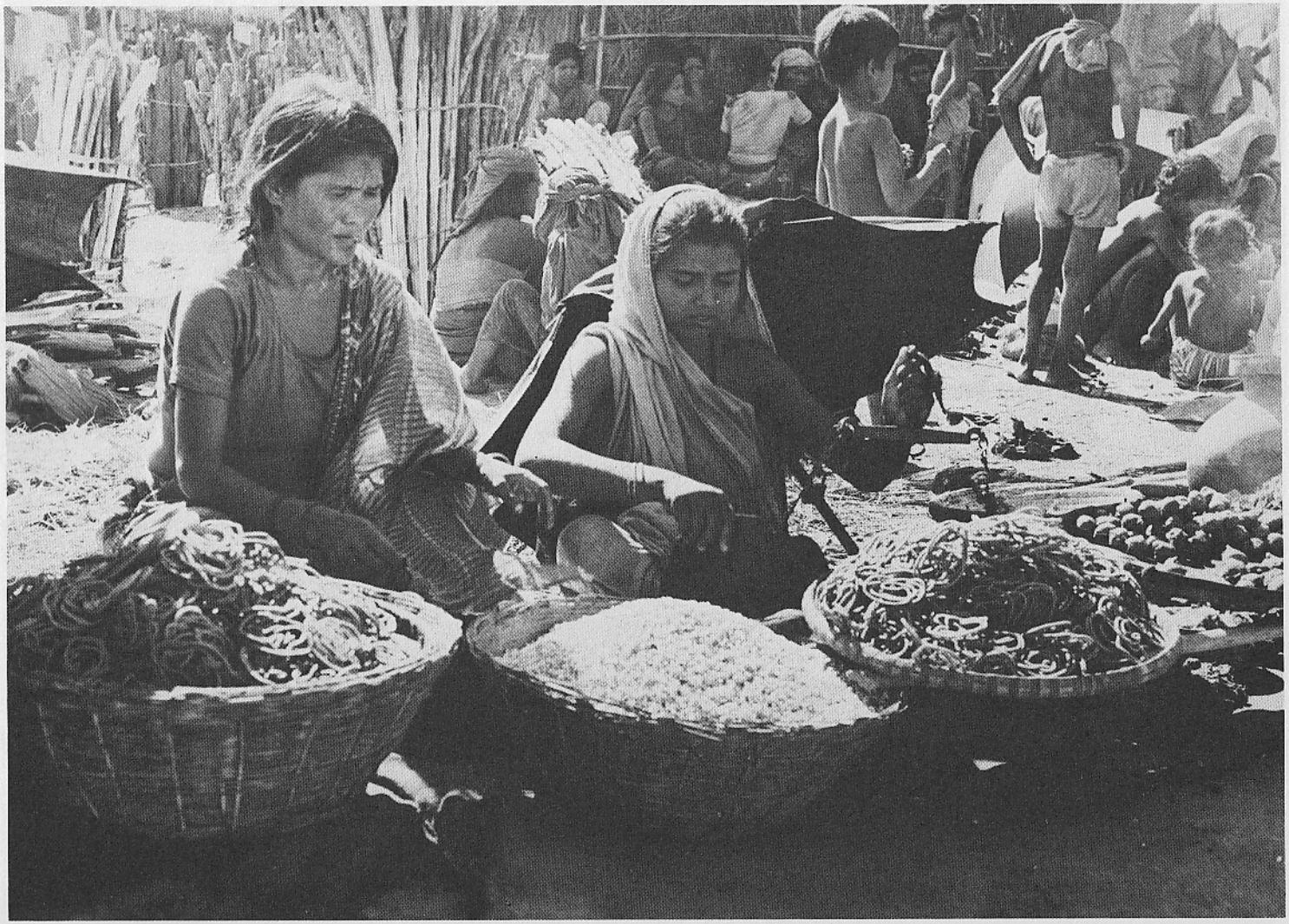
Young women drawing water at the well.

Woman oiling her baby.

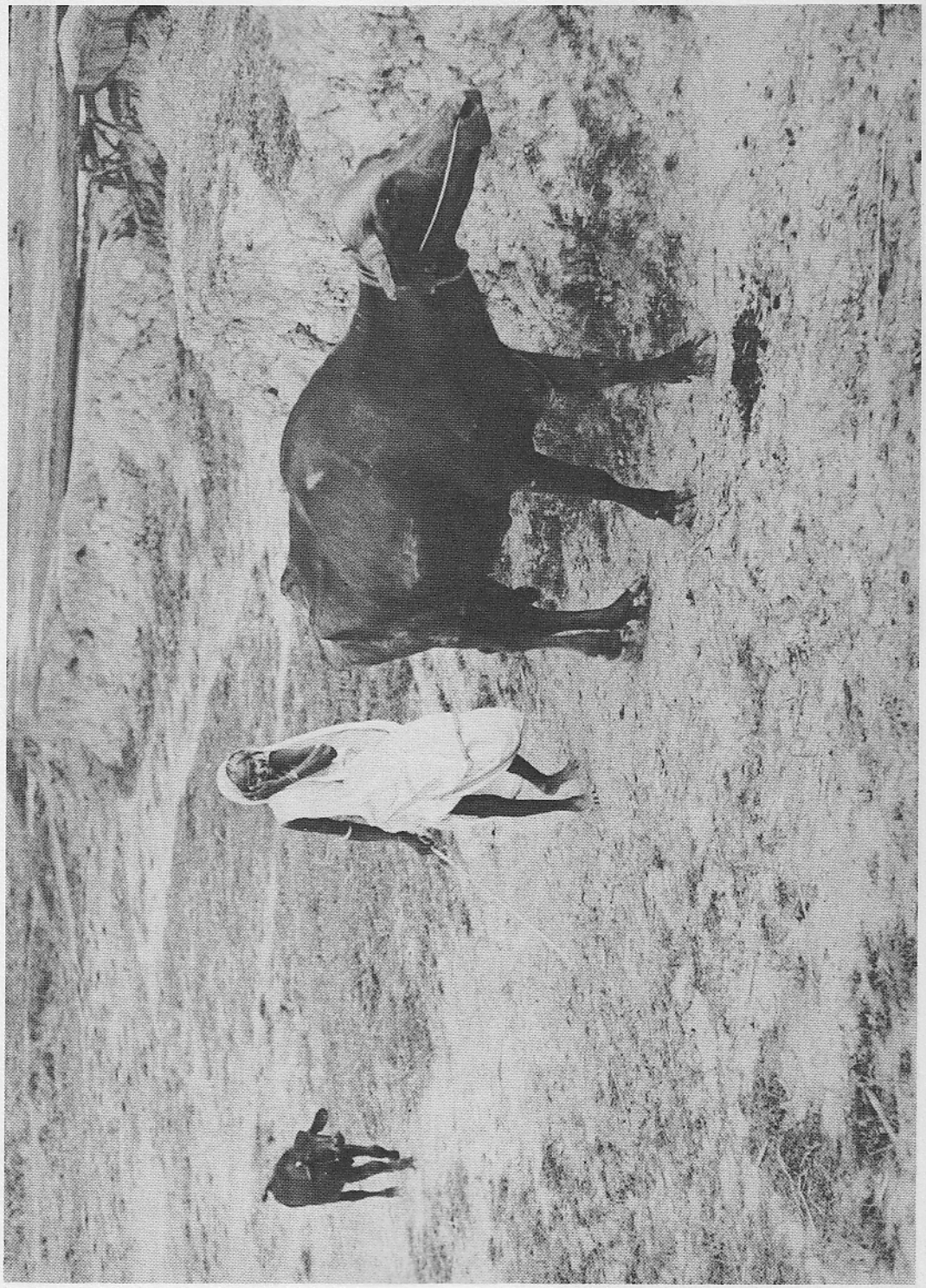
Two women shopping in the market (hat).



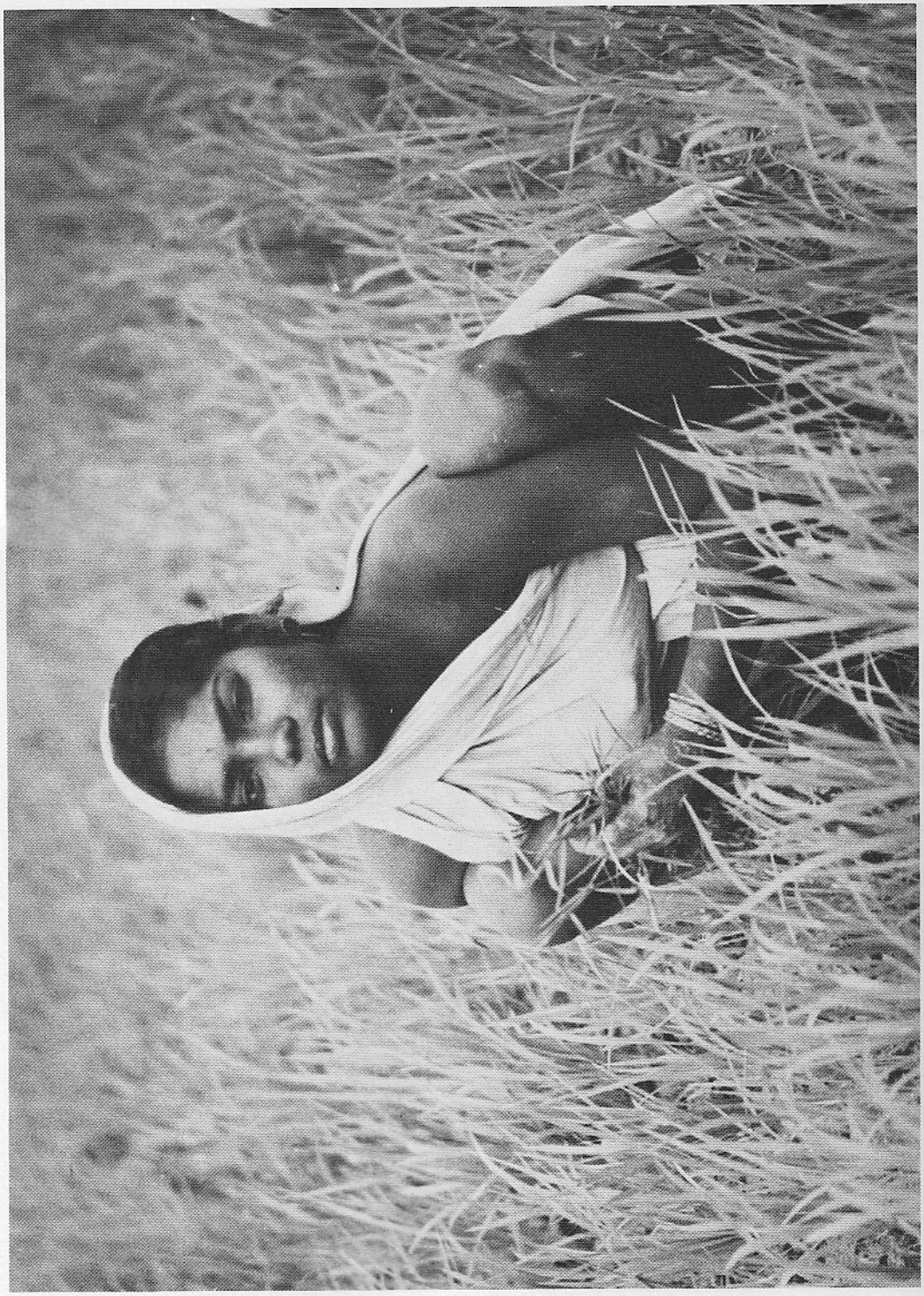
Young girl getting straw to feed the animals.



Women selling sweets at bi-weekly market (hat).



Woman bringing cattle home after grazing.



Woman weeding.

CHAPTER IV

LEGAL FRAMEWORK, AUTHORITY AND POWER STRUCTURE

The preceding two chapters have shown the different stages of life of Maithili women and the contexts of the various kinship and socio-economic relations. This chapter relates women's role in different spheres of social life to the power and authority structure of the society.

It would be pertinent to repeat once again that authority is derived externally on the basis of a society's legal and political framework while individual power may be gained on the strength of individual character and circumstances. Nepal's legal code is contradictory regarding the position of women. While women are granted equal rights in matters of voting and getting elected to positions of power in the public domain, in matters of basic rights of citizenship they are grossly discriminated against. For example, while a child of paternal Nepalese descent is confered automatic Nepalese citizenship, a child of a Nepalese mother and an alien father will have great difficulty in getting this citizenship. Women have only limited rights of inheritance and ownership of property (Bennett 1979), and they are still included in the category of minor in many matters Their rights in family affairs are extremely limited and fathers and paternal blood relatives have ultimate rights of custody over children of the lineage concerned.

This tendency to patrilineal dominance, though general throughout Nepal, is particularly strong in Maithili society. Legally, Maithili women have political rights equal to those of men in certain matters, but in practice, they can make very little use of these rights, since political rights, if not backed by an economic base and recognized within the social framework, are rarely meaningful. The actual exercise of political and legal rights is limited because of the lack of a firm economic base, the lack of education, and because of differences between local social custom (customary law) and national law.

I. Economic Relations within the Family and Access to Resources

a) Land Inheritance

Land is the basic asset for production and the economic basis of the overall power structure. Maintaining a level of subsistence and meeting requirements of agricultural production on that land requires a heavy labour input. It is usually believed locally that women are not land owners because cultivation of land requires male labour, and they are considered helpless without men.

In this Maithili village, as elsewhere in Hindu Nepal, the inheritance system is patrilineal and the males of a patriline inherit all property, both landed and moveable. Though in theory Nepal's legal system is operative throughout the country, in practice the traditional inheritance rights of the women in this village are far more limited than the legal code would have them. On the break up of a joint household, all of the ancestral property passes over to the direct descendents in the patriline. The parents, if living, keep only a small piece of land as jibika - kind of maintenance allowance equivalent to the jiune bhag described by Bennett (1979). If the parents cannot work the land themselves, the sons, grandsons or the brother's sons work the land for the older people and give them paddy and other products after the harvest. At the time of partition it is usually decided how much each inheriting member of the patriline should contribute towards the maintenance of the older dependent people. The older dependents could include the parents, grand-parents, uncles and aunts and step-mothers, if the step-mothers have no direct male descendants.

Despite the official Nepalese law, in Sirsia a woman is not entitled to any share in the property; widows and unmarried daughters can claim only maintenance. Even when there are no direct male descendants the property goes automatically to the nearest male descendant rather than to a daughter (married or unmarried) unless a will is specifically made in her favour or the property is transferred to her during the father's life time. Generally a couple without sons will take the latter course and distribute some of their property among their daughters, giving the rest to the male patrilineal relative who also inherits the duty to perform the death

ceremonies and memorial services after the death. Even when the property goes to the daughter's side it is usually the daughter's son who is given legal rights over the property. It is not, on the other hand, unusual for a man to inherit some property from his maternal grand-parents. When there are no sons, the couple expect the son-in-law or the daughter's son to help with the farming, and upon the death of the sonless couple, these males, not the daughters, will inherit the land.

Women's power over the distribution of property is limited and can be exercised only through the husband. A woman who has inherited paternal property has to face many encroachments and difficulties from other members of her paternal lineage. For example, this is the case with Tetri, a Sirsia woman of about thirty-five years of age. Tetri had no brothers, and, after the death of her parents, she inherited the house of her father and the compound attached to it. Tetri is married and lives in her husband's house and wants, therefore, to sell this property inherited from her father. She is thwarted in this by her father's brother who says that he will not allow her to sell the property to anyone outside the family. He wants to acquire this property for himself but the price he is offering is ridiculously low. Although the Pradhan Panch (the chairman of the village panchayat) promised to help her sell her property to whomever she liked and took money from her, he did not actually help her carry out the transactions. Other villagers expressed doubt about Tetri's ability to sell the property to anyone other than her uncle.

The case of Sonabati is another illustration of the limitations on the property rights of women. Sonabati is a ninety year old woman who recently forced a partition in which she and her husband took their shares of the patrilineal property and set up a separate household from their three grandsons. The jibika amounted to 5 bighas of land. Sonabati's middle-aged daughter, Suraj, was not happy in her husband's household because he had brought in a co-wife. Sonabati, therefore, invited her daughter and youngest grandson to live with her. She wants to give part of her land to her daughter, Suraj, but her son's sons are vehemently opposed to this idea because they feel that the jibika, as patrilineal property, should revert to them on their grand-parents' death (their father, Sonabati's son, is already dead). Her husband is avoiding the issue and

tells her that as long as his son's sons do not agree, he cannot legally give the land to his daughter. It was not possible to find out whether he was lying to his wife or whether he himself did not know that he could legally will his part of the property to his daughter.

Cases like this are innumerable in the village and illustrate the apathy shown towards women's rights to property. In Maithili custom, daughters, married or unmarried, and regardless of their age, have no rights to their parents' property. If married, they are entitled to maintenance rights in their husband's household; if not married, they have to stay with their fathers or brothers and work for their living. In other words, a woman's right to land ownership is derived through her husband and through her male descendents. In this society, where all the relations of production are based on land, the limitation on a woman's right to land ownership puts her on a very unequal footing with men.

b) Ornaments

Women have, however, found ways to circumvent the situation. They use different strategies to gain direct or indirect control over landed property, and they concentrate on acquiring moveable property, basically in the form of ornaments. Even though they are not in full control of their own ornaments, jewelry and other ornaments are informally considered their own property. Usually men will sell this jewelry only in a family emergency.

Women, therefore, try to acquire as much jewelry as possible. In the present sample of 70 adult women, 49 (70.0 percent) had some jewelry (Table 4.1). In this group of 49, ornaments owned by each woman amounted to the value of 1,696 rupees on the average. In the top economic stratum per woman ownership was 2,280 rupees, in the middle stratum 2,000 rupees and in the bottom stratum 931 rupees. Even in the bottom economic stratum a large percentage of women had some jewelry. Per capita ownership of jewelry was understandably highest in the top economic stratum and lowest in the bottom stratum. Women in the top economic stratum possessed two and a half times the per capita jewelry owned by the women of the bottom stratum.

Table 4.1

OWNERSHIP OF ORNAMENTS AND JEWELRY

Particulars / Economic strata	Total number of adult women	Women who have ornaments and jewelry		Average amount (In rupees)
		Number	Percent	
Top	27	27	100.0	2,280
Middle	8	1	12.5	2,000
Bottom	35	21	60.0	931
All strata	70	49	70.0	1,696

Women acquire these ornaments in various ways, for example from:

Panjaura

During harvesting, daughters and sisters of wealthy households may go to the fields to collect armfuls of grain sheaves and make an income for themselves by selling this grain. They may buy ornaments from this income.

Goat Raising

Little girls may be given new-born baby goats by their parents, grandparents or other relatives, and as girls and women, may raise their goats and keep the income from them. They make money by selling these animals when they come of age.

Gifts from Natal Household

When girls get married they are given some of their mother's ornaments and some other jewelry as bride wealth. (See Chapter III for details on marriage gifts).

Gifts from Husband and Husband's Family

At marriage the bride receives certain ornaments from her husband's family. These ornaments include silver, hansuli (a kind of necklace), bracelets and arm ornaments Marriage gifts might also include gold earrings and a nose ornament (bulaki).

Women then formally have some property in the form of ornaments acquired in different ways. However, women have very limited actual ownership rights, even over these ornaments. On divorce, ornaments given to a woman by her husband or affines have to be returned, and in the ordinary course of events a woman has later to give some of her ornaments to her daughters and daughter-in-law on their marriage.

The isolation of a woman without sons in her husband's household makes her very vulnerable to physical brute force from her husband and her husband's family. Although people do not exactly advocate or approve of wife-beating, it carries no strong social stigma and women are supposed to bear it stoically. In the villager's view, a man has

absolute rights over his wife and he is entitled to do whatever he likes with her, short of killing her. A woman's command over her own personal property is thus conditional on her physical strength or her ability to transfer her property to safe custody in a case of dispute.

c) Wages

For women in the bottom economic stratum income from wages is very important. However, half of those women who earned wages did not see their earnings as independent income under their own control (Table 4.2). In the sample 10 women reported earning wage income for the household income statistics, while only 5 reported having an independent income. Of those who had an independent income 87.5 percent spent it on the household and only one woman (12.5 percent) put it away as personal savings.

II Political Participation

The basic inequality in production relations also limits a woman's effective political power, since politics is the science of exercising power - whether at the household, village, district or national level. Political power is used here in a broad sense to include also participation in household decision making.

Household Decision Making

At the household level, a woman in Maithili society has no socially sanctioned authority to make decisions on her own. But in spite of this she may in fact wield considerable power and play an important role in household decision making.

Of the 1,339 decisions on different aspects of household affairs recorded in the Sirsia sample 327 (24.4 percent) were made by women. One hundred and ninty-three (14.2 percent) of the decisions were made by males and females jointly (Table 4.3). Even though only 24.4 percent of the decisions were made by women, 52.1 percent of the decisions were initiated by women and in another 16.2 percent of the cases, women were consulted. In 21.4 percent of the cases, both males and females were consulted. Only 12.2 percent of the decisions were made without any consultation.

Table 4.2

SOURCES OF PERSONAL INCOME AND ITS USE

	Number of persons	Sources of Income		Use	
		Land	Wage	Household expenditure	Other use
A. Total Responses	35 (100.0)	-	-	-	
1. Those who have no personal income	27 (77.1)				
2. Those who have	8 (22.8)	3 (37.5)	5 (62.5)	7 (87.5)	1 (12.5)
B. Women (15 and above) in the sample	70 (100.0)				
3. Women who work for wages	10 (14.3)				
4. Women who do not	60 (85.7)				

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

For a more detailed study of decision making, household affairs were divided into nine spheres. Women's decision-making roles in the different spheres differ significantly. Almost 86 percent of the daily cooking decisions were made by women (Table 4.4). Their role in spending decisions was significantly less prominent. Even in the case of food items and small household necessities, women made only 43.6 percent of the decisions involved. They played only a minimal role in deciding how much money to spend on clothing or household durables or on education or health. Nevertheless on overall count, women's contribution to daily household expenditure decisions (including cooking) was 31.7 precent, while men decided only 50.2 percent of the cases. In 13.3 percent of the cases there was a joint decision, while in 4.8 percent the action taken was traditional and informants felt that no specific decision was made. Out of the total daily household expenditure decisions, however, 40 percent were matters pertaining to cooking and spending on food and small household necessities.

But even in those cases where the decisions were made by men, women might have initiated the decision. In almost 90 percent of the cases either male or female or both were consulted (Table 4.4). Thus, even though women have no sanctioned authority on any matter, they appear to play a very important role in the household's daily decision making.

Women's role in household investment, borrowings and other resource allocation decisions was low. They made the decisions on such matters in 30.2 percent of the cases (Table 4.5), and in 26 percent of the cases these decisions were made jointly. About 34 percent of the decisions were initiated by women and 14 percent were initiated jointly. Only 17.2 percent of the cases were decided without any consultation. Almost 90 percent of the decisions were reported as having involved no disagreement.

Women played a much less significant role in decisions on investment in land and animals. Only 8.7 percent of these decisions were made solely by women. However, joint decisions constituted a significant part (37 percent) of the total decisions. Almost 58.7 percent of the decisions were made in consultation with women or with

Table 4.3

DECISION MAKING ROLES—SUMMARY

(In number)

Decision stages / Subjects of decision	Decision					Initiation					Consultation					Disagreement				
	Male	Female	Both	Tradi-tional	Total	Male	Female	Both	Tradi-tional	Total	Male	Female	Both	None	Total	Male	Female	Both	None	Total
1. Expenditure on small food item and household necessities	75 (39.3)	98 (51.3)	13 (6.8)	5 (2.6)	191 (100.0)	29 (18.6)	127 (81.4)	-	-	156 (100.0)	112 (71.8)	16 (10.2)	11 (7.1)	17 (10.9)	156 (100.0)	10 (6.4)	-	-	146 (93.6)	156 (100.0)
2. Clothing and durables	82 (60.3)	26 (19.1)	23 (16.9)	5 (3.7)	136 (100.0)	51 (37.5)	67 (49.3)	15 (11.0)	3 (2.2)	136 (100.0)	75 (55.2)	23 (16.9)	26 (19.1)	12 (8.8)	136 (100.0)	-	-	2 (1.5)	134 (98.5)	136 (100.0)
3. Education and health	38 (62.3)	8 (13.1)	8 (13.1)	7 (11.5)	61 (100.0)	21 (34.4)	25 (41.0)	10 (16.4)	5 (8.2)	61 (100.0)	22 (36.1)	6 (9.8)	24 (39.3)	9 (14.8)	61 (100.0)	3 (4.9)	2 (3.3)	-	56 (91.8)	61 (100.0)
4. Gifts, social functions and travel	44 (50.0)	19 (21.6)	19 (21.6)	6 (6.8)	88 (100.0)	32 (36.4)	40 (45.5)	10 (11.3)	6 (6.8)	88 (100.0)	33 (37.5)	21 (23.9)	26 (29.5)	8 (9.1)	88 (100.0)	2 (2.3)	8 (9.1)	-	78 (88.6)	88 (100.0)
5. Capital transactions	20 (37.7)	5 (9.5)	20 (37.7)	8 (15.1)	53 (100.0)	33 (62.3)	10 (18.9)	9 (17.0)	1 (1.8)	53 (100.0)	19 (35.8)	13 (24.5)	15 (28.3)	6 (11.4)	53 (100.0)	1 (1.8)	3 (5.7)	-	49 (92.5)	53 (100.0)
6. Borrowings	15 (60.0)	1 (4.0)	8 (32.0)	1 (4.0)	25 (100.0)	15 (60.0)	6 (24.0)	4 (16.0)	-	25 (100.0)	7 (28.0)	7 (28.0)	7 (28.0)	4 (16.0)	25 (100.0)	1 (4.0)	-	-	24 (96.0)	25 (100.0)
7. Disposal of household resources	49 (36.6)	58 (43.3)	27 (20.1)	-	134 (100.0)	35 (41.2)	40 (47.0)	10 (11.8)	-	85 (100.0)	35 (41.2)	12 (14.1)	20 (23.5)	18 (21.2)	85 (100.0)	4 (4.7)	-	-	81 (95.3)	85 (100.0)
8. Labour allocation	53 (94.6)	2 (3.6)	1 (1.8)	-	56 (100.0)															
9. Agriculture	360 (60.5)	110 (18.5)	74 (12.4)	51 (8.6)	595 (100.0)															
Total	736 (55.0)	327 (24.4)	193 (14.4)	83 (6.2)	1339 (100.0)	216 (35.8)	315 (52.1)	58 (9.6)	15 (2.5)	604 (100.0)	303 (50.2)	98 (16.2)	129 (21.4)	74 (12.2)	604 (100.0)	21 (3.5)	13 (2.2)	2 (0.3)	568 (94.0)	604 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

Table 4.4

DECISION MAKING ROLES BY SEX

(Household Expenditure Decisions)

(In number)

Initiation				Consultation					Disagreement				
Female	Both	Tradi-tional	Total	Male	Female	Both	None	Total	Male	Female	Both	None	Total
127	-	-	156	112	16	11	17	156	10	-	-	146	156
(81.4)	-	-	(100.0)	(71.7)	(10.3)	(7.1)	(10.9)	(100.0)	(6.4)	-	-	(93.6)	(100.0)
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
127	-	-	156	112	16	11	17	156	10	-	-	146	156
(81.4)	-	-	(100.0)	(71.7)	(10.3)	(7.1)	(10.9)	(100.0)	(6.4)	-	-	(93.6)	(100.0)
67	15	3	136	75	23	26	12	136	-	-	2	134	136
(49.3)	(11.0)	(2.2)	(100.0)	(55.2)	(16.9)	(19.1)	(8.8)	(100.0)	-	-	(1.5)	(98.5)	(100.0)
60	14	3	119	64	22	21	12	119	-	-	2	117	119
(50.4)	(11.8)	(2.5)	(100.0)	(53.8)	(18.5)	(17.6)	(10.1)	(100.0)	-	-	(1.7)	(98.3)	(100.0)
7	1	-	17	11	1	5	-	17	-	-	-	17	17
(41.2)	(5.9)	-	(100.0)	(64.7)	(5.9)	(29.4)	-	(100.0)	-	-	-	(100.0)	(100.0)
25	10	5	61	22	6	24	9	61	3	2	-	56	61
(41.0)	(16.4)	(8.2)	(100.0)	(36.1)	(9.8)	(39.3)	(14.8)	(100.0)	(4.9)	(3.3)	-	(91.8)	(100.0)
24	9	5	58	21	6	22	9	58	3	2	-	53	58
(41.4)	(15.5)	(8.6)	(100.0)	(36.2)	(10.4)	(37.9)	(15.5)	(100.0)	(5.2)	(3.5)	-	(91.3)	(100.0)
1	1	-	3	1	-	2	-	3	-	-	-	3	3
(33.3)	(33.3)	-	(100.0)	(33.3)	-	(66.7)	-	(100.0)	-	-	-	(100.0)	(100.0)
40	10	6	88	33	21	26	8	88	2	8	-	78	88
(45.4)	(11.4)	(6.8)	(100.0)	(37.5)	(23.9)	(29.5)	(9.1)	(100.0)	(2.3)	(9.1)	-	(88.6)	(100.0)
11	-	4	23	4	15	3	1	23	1	4	-	18	23
(47.8)	-	(17.4)	(100.0)	(17.4)	(65.2)	(13.1)	(4.3)	(100.0)	(4.3)	(17.4)	-	(78.3)	(100.0)
24	10	2	56	26	3	23	4	56	-	2	-	54	56
(42.9)	(17.9)	(3.5)	(100.0)	(46.4)	(5.4)	(41.1)	(7.1)	(100.0)	-	(3.6)	-	(96.4)	(100.0)
5	-	-	9	3	3	-	3	9	1	2	-	6	9
(55.6)	-	-	(100.0)	(33.3)	(33.3)	-	(33.3)	(100.0)	(11.1)	(22.2)	-	(66.7)	(100.0)
259	35	14	441	242	66	87	46	441	15	10	2	414	441
(58.7)	(7.9)	(3.2)	(100.0)	(54.9)	(15.0)	(19.7)	(10.4)	(100.0)	(3.4)	(2.2)	(0.5)	(93.9)	(100.0)

Table

DECISION MAKING

(Household Expendi

Categories of decision \ Decision stages	Decision					Initiation				
	Male	Female	Both	Tradi-tional	Total	Male	Female	Both	Tradi-tional	T
I. Food and small household necessities	75 (39.3)	98 (51.3)	13 (6.8)	5 (2.6)	191 (100.0)	29 (18.6)	127 (81.4)	- -	- -	(1
a. To cook particular food	2 (5.7)	30 (85.7)	3 (8.6)	- -	35 (100.0)	- -	- -	- -	- -	
b. How much to spend on food and small household necessities?	73 (46.8)	68 (43.6)	10 (6.4)	5 (3.2)	156 (100.0)	29 (18.6)	127 (81.4)	- -	- -	(1
II. Clothing and durables (a + b). How much money to spend on?	82 (60.3)	26 (19.1)	23 (16.9)	5 (3.7)	136 (100.0)	51 (37.5)	67 (49.3)	15 (11.0)	3 (2.2)	(1
a. Clothing	70 (58.8)	23 (19.3)	22 (18.5)	4 (3.4)	119 (100.0)	42 (35.3)	60 (50.4)	14 (11.8)	3 (2.5)	(1
b. Household durables	12 (70.6)	3 (17.6)	1 (5.9)	1 (5.9)	17 (100.0)	9 (52.9)	7 (41.2)	1 (5.9)	- -	(
III. On education and health	38 (62.3)	8 (13.1)	8 (13.1)	7 (11.5)	61 (100.0)	21 (34.4)	25 (41.0)	10 (16.4)	5 (8.2)	(
a. On medical treatment	38 (65.5)	7 (12.1)	6 (10.3)	7 (12.1)	58 (100.0)	20 (34.5)	24 (41.4)	9 (15.5)	5 (8.6)	(
b. On education	- -	1 (33.3)	2 (66.7)	- -	3 (100.0)	1 (33.3)	1 (33.3)	1 (33.3)	- -	(
IV. Gifts and expenditure on social functions & travel	44 (50.0)	19 (21.6)	19 (21.6)	6 (6.8)	88 (100.0)	32 (36.4)	40 (45.4)	10 (11.4)	6 (6.8)	(1
a. Gifts/loans	7 (30.4)	8 (34.8)	5 (21.8)	3 (13.0)	23 (100.0)	8 (34.8)	11 (47.8)	- -	4 (17.4)	(1
b. Social/religious	32 (57.1)	8 (14.3)	14 (25.0)	2 (3.6)	56 (100.0)	20 (35.7)	24 (42.9)	10 (17.9)	2 (3.5)	(
c. Travel	5 (55.6)	3 (33.3)	- -	1 (11.1)	9 (100.0)	4 (44.4)	5 (55.6)	- -	- -	(1
Total	239 (50.2)	151 (31.7)	63 (13.3)	23 (4.8)	476 (100.0)	133 (30.2)	259 (58.7)	35 (7.9)	14 (3.2)	(1

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

Table 4.3

Table 4.5

DECISION MAKING ROLES BY SEX

(Investment, Borrowing, and Other Resource Allocation Decisions)

(In number)

Categories of decision \ Decision stages	Decision					Initiation					Consultation					Disagreement				
	Male	Female	Both	Traditional	Total	Male	Female	Both	Traditional	Total	Male	Female	Both	None	Total	Male	Female	Both	None	Total
I Major investment decisions (a + b)	20 (37.7)	5 (9.5)	20 (37.7)	8 (15.1)	53 (100.0)	33 (62.3)	10 (18.9)	9 (17.0)	1 (1.8)	53 (100.0)	19 (35.9)	13 (24.5)	15 (28.3)	6 (11.3)	53 (100.0)	1 (1.9)	3 (5.7)		49 (92.4)	53 (100.0)
a. Buy or sale land and major animals	20 (43.5)	4 (8.7)	17 (37.0)	5 (10.8)	46 (100.0)	32 (69.6)	5 (10.8)	9 (19.6)	-	46 (100.0)	14 (30.4)	12 (26.1)	15 (32.6)	5 (10.9)	46 (100.0)	1 (2.2)	3 (6.5)	-	42 (91.3)	46 (100.0)
b. Other	-	1 (14.2)	3 (42.9)	3 (42.9)	7 (100.0)	1 (14.3)	5 (71.4)	-	1 (14.3)	7 (100.0)	5 (71.4)	1 (14.3)	-	1 (14.3)	7 (100.0)	-	-	-	7 (100.0)	7 (100.0)
II Borrowing	15 (60.0)	1 (4.0)	8 (32.0)	1 (4.0)	25 (100.0)	15 (60.0)	6 (24.0)	4 (16.0)	-	25 (100.0)	7 (28.0)	7 (28.0)	7 (28.0)	4 (16.0)	25 (100.0)	1 (4.0)	-	-	24 (96.0)	25 (100.0)
III Disposal of household resources (c + d + e)	49 (36.6)	58 (43.3)	27 (20.1)	-	134 (100.0)	35 (41.2)	40 (47.0)	10 (11.8)	-	85 (100.0)	35 (41.2)	12 (14.1)	20 (23.5)	18 (21.2)	85 (100.0)	6 (7.1)	1 (1.2)	5 (5.8)	73 (85.9)	85 (100.0)
c. Food grains	40 (36.0)	53 (47.8)	18 (16.2)	-	111 (100.0)	29 (46.8)	30 (48.4)	3 (4.8)	-	62 (100.0)	31 (50.0)	10 (16.1)	10 (16.1)	11 (17.8)	62 (100.0)	4 (6.5)	-	-	58 (93.5)	62 (100.0)
d. Vegetable	7 (46.6)	4 (26.7)	4 (26.7)	-	15 (100.0)	3 (20.0)	9 (60.0)	3 (20.0)	-	15 (100.0)	3 (20.0)	2 (13.3)	4 (26.7)	6 (40.0)	15 (100.0)	-	-	-	15 (100.0)	15 (100.0)
e. Small animals	2 (25.0)	1 (12.5)	5 (62.5)	-	8 (100.0)	3 (37.5)	1 (12.5)	4 (50.0)	-	8 (100.0)	1 (12.5)	-	6 (75.0)	1 (12.5)	8 (100.0)	2 (2.5)	1 (12.5)	5 (62.5)	-	8 (100.0)
Total (I+II+III)	84 (39.6)	64 (30.2)	55 (25.9)	9 (4.3)	212 (100.0)	83 (51.0)	56 (34.3)	23 (14.1)	1 (0.6)	163 (100.0)	61 (37.4)	32 (19.6)	42 (25.8)	28 (17.2)	163 (100.0)	8 (4.9)	4 (2.5)	5 (3.1)	146 (89.5)	163 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

both male and female household members. This underscores the fact that even in major investment decisions, women play a very important role.

Similarly, women play a very important role in decisions over the disposal of household resources. About 47 percent of the disposal questions were raised by them. Over 37 percent of the decisions were made in consultation with women or with both men and women household members, so that in most cases women were either consulted or they had initiated the decision, and in 43.3 percent of the cases they were the final decision makers.

Only in the sphere of labour allocation do women play a minor role (Table 4.6). In agricultural decisions involving questions about the choice of crops, fertilizer and seeds, women decided 18.5 percent of the cases by themselves, and 12.5 percent of the cases were decided by both men and women in the family. Although men take the major role in agricultural decision making women also play a significant part.

Women in the bottom economic stratum had a much greater voice in household decision making (Tables 4.7-4.9). In the Sirsia sample, women from the bottom economic stratum made 30 percent of decisions compared with their counterparts in the top and middle economic strata (17.5 and 19.4 percent of the cases respectively). The percentage of joint decisions, however, was a bit higher in the middle economic stratum.

The percentage of decisions made without consultation was less than 13 percent for households of all economic strata. In all strata joint decisions entailed little disagreement. The total percentage of females who either initiated decisions or were consulted during the decision making process was 74.1 percent in the top economic stratum, 34.8 percent in the middle stratum and 72.8 percent in the bottom stratum. This, together with their role in final decision making, indicates that women in the top and bottom economic strata are a powerful force in household decision making. Women in the middle stratum have a lesser role.

However, women of different economic strata differ significantly regarding their sphere of influence. Women's

Table 4.6

DECISION MAKING ROLES BY SEX

(Labour and Agricultural Decisions)

Particulars / Subjects of decision	Number					Percentage to row total				
	Male	Female	Both	Traditional	Total	Male	Female	Both	Traditional	Total
I. Labour allocation (a+b+c+d)	53	2	1	-	56	94.6	3.6	1.8	-	100.0
a) Arrange parma	17	-	-	-	17	100.0	-	-	-	100.0
b) Arrange wage	24	1	1	-	26	92.3	3.85	3.85		100.0
c) Control others	6	-	-	-	6	100.0	-	-	-	100.0
d) Control self	6	1	-	-	7	85.7	14.3	-	-	100.0
II. Agriculture (A + B + C)	360	110	74	51	595	60.5	18.5	12.4	8.6	100.0
A. Grains (e+f+g)	(310)	(88)	(62)	(48)	(508)	(61.0)	(17.3)	(12.2)	(9.5)	(100.0)
e) Planting	38	10	32	48	128	29.7	7.8	25.0	37.5	100.0
f) Seed	84	40	22	-	146	57.5	27.4	15.1	-	100.0
g) Fertilizer	188	38	8	-	234	80.4	16.2	3.4	-	100.0
B. Kitchen garden (h+i+j)	(47)	(20)	(12)	-	(79)	(59.5)	(25.3)	(15.2)	-	(100.0)
h) Planting	7	7	8	-	22	31.8	31.8	36.4	-	100.0
i) Seed	10	6	4	-	20	50.0	30.0	20.0	-	100.0
j) Fertilizer	30	7	-	-	37	81.1	18.9	-	-	100.0
C. Improved methods	(3)	(2)	-	(3)	(8)	(37.5)	(25.0)	(37.5)	-	(100.0)
Total (I + II)	413	112	75	51	651	63.5	17.2	11.5	7.8	100.0

DECISION MAKING ROLES -TOP ECONOMIC STRATUM

(In number)

Decision stages / Categories of decisions	Decision					Initiation					Consultation					Disagreement			
	Male	Female	Both	Tradi-tional	Total	Male	Female	Both	Tradi-tional	Total	Male	Female	Both	None	Total	Male	Female	None	Total
1. Expenditure on small food items	20 (40.8)	24 (49.0)	5 (10.2)	-	49 (100.0)	5 (12.5)	35 (87.5)	-	-	40 (100.0)	27 (67.5)	3 (7.5)	2 (5.0)	8 (20.0)	40 (100.0)	5 (12.5)	-	35 (87.5)	40 (100.0)
2. Clothing and durables	29 (67.5)	5 (11.6)	8 (18.6)	1 (2.3)	43 (100.0)	16 (37.2)	24 (55.8)	3 (7.0)	-	43 (100.0)	26 (60.5)	4 (9.2)	10 (23.3)	3 (7.0)	43 (100.0)	-	-	43 (100.0)	43 (100.0)
3. Education and health	16 (72.7)	2 (9.1)	3 (13.6)	1 (4.6)	22 (100.0)	7 (31.8)	9 (40.9)	6 (27.3)	-	22 (100.0)	8 (36.4)	5 (22.7)	6 (27.3)	3 (13.6)	22 (100.0)			22 (100.0)	22 (100.0)
4. Gifts and expenditure on religious and social functions	16 (47.1)	6 (17.6)	7 (20.6)	5 (14.7)	34 (100.0)	6 (17.7)	22 (64.7)	1 (2.9)	5 (14.7)	34 (100.0)	17 (50.0)	13 (38.2)	1 (2.9)	3 (8.9)	34 (100.0)	1 (2.9)	6 (17.7)	27 (79.4)	34 (100.0)
5. Capital transactions	13 (43.4)	4 (13.3)	10 (33.3)	3 (10.0)	30 (100.0)	19 (63.3)	6 (20.0)	5 (16.7)	-	30 (100.0)	12 (40.0)	9 (30.0)	9 (30.0)	-	30 (100.0)	1 (3.3)	2 (6.7)	27 (90.0)	30 (100.0)
6. Borrowing	4 (66.6)	1 (16.7)	1 (16.7)	-	6 (100.0)	4 (66.7)	2 (33.3)	-	-	6 (100.0)	2 (33.3)	3 (50.0)	1 (16.7)	-	6 (100.0)	1 (16.7)	-	5 (83.3)	6 (100.0)
7. Disposal of household resources	18 (62.1)	5 (17.2)	6 (20.7)	-	29 (100.0)	15 (75.0)	5 (25.0)	-	-	20 (100.0)	8 (40.0)	4 (20.0)	4 (20.0)	4 (20.0)	20 (100.0)	3 (15.0)		17 (85.0)	20 (100.0)
8. Labour allocation	9 (100.0)	-	-	-	9 (100.0)														
9. Agriculture	122 (64.2)	25 (13.2)	29 (15.3)	14 (7.3)	190 (100.0)														
Total	247 (60.0)	72 (17.5)	69 (16.7)	244 (5.8)	412 (100.0)	72 (36.9)	103 (52.8)	15 (7.7)	5 (2.6)	195 (100.0)	100 (51.3)	41 (21.0)	33 (16.9)	21 (10.8)	195 (100.0)	11 (5.6)	8 (4.1)	176 (90.3)	195 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

Table 4.8

DECISION MAKING ROLES - MIDDLE ECONOMIC STRATUM

(In number)

Decision stages / Categories of decision	Decision					Initiation					Consultation					Disagreement	
	Male	Female	Both	Tradi-tional	Total	Male	Female	Both	Tradi-tional	Total	Male	Female	Both	None	Total	None	Total
1. Expenditure on small food items and household necessities	13 (46.4)	9 (32.1)	1 (3.6)	5 (17.9)	28 (100.0)	23 (100.0)	-	-	-	23 (100.0)	15 (65.2)	3 (13.1)	-	5 (21.7)	23 (100.0)	23 (100.0)	23 (100.0)
2. Clothing and durables	17 (65.4)	3 (11.5)	2 (7.7)	4 (15.4)	26 (100.0)	11 (42.3)	11 (42.3)	4 (15.4)	-	26 (100.0)	17 (65.4)	-	5 (19.2)	4 (15.4)	26 (100.0)	26 (100.0)	26 (100.0)
3. Education and health	6 (60.0)	-	-	4 (40.0)	10 (100.0)	3 (30.0)	6 (60.0)	1 (10.0)	-	10 (100.0)	1 (10.0)	-	9 (90.0)	-	10 (100.0)	10 (100.0)	10 (100.0)
4. Gifts religious social function	5 (55.6)	3 (33.3)	1 (11.1)	-	9 (100.0)	4 (44.4)	4 (55.6)	5	-	9 (100.0)	2 (22.2)	-	7 (77.8)	-	9 (100.0)	9 (100.0)	9 (100.0)
5. Capital transaction	1 (14.2)	-	3 (42.9)	3 (42.9)	7 (100.0)	6 (85.8)	-	-	1 (14.2)	7 (100.0)	2 (28.6)	2 (28.6)	1 (14.2)	2 (28.6)	7 (100.0)	7 (100.0)	7 (100.0)
6. Borrowing	2 (50.0)	-	2 (50.0)	-	4 (100.0)	4 (100.0)	-	-	-	4 (100.0)	2 (50.0)	-	1 (25.0)	1 (25.0)	4 (100.0)	4 (100.0)	4 (100.0)
7. Disposal of household resources	5 (26.3)	7 (36.8)	7 (36.9)	-	19 (100.0)	7 (53.8)	3 (23.1)	3 (23.1)	-	13 (100.0)	6 (46.2)	3 (23.1)	4 (30.7)	-	13 (100.0)	13 (100.0)	13 (100.0)
8. Labour allocation	9 (90.0)	-	1 (10.0)	-	10 (100.0)												
9. Agriculture	49 (47.6)	20 (19.4)	21 (20.4)	13 (12.6)	103 (100.0)												
Total	107 (49.6)	42 (19.4)	38 (17.6)	29 (13.4)	216 (100.0)	54 (58.7)	24 (26.1)	13 (14.1)	1 (1.1)	92 (100.0)	45 (48.9)	8 (8.7)	27 (29.4)	12 (13.0)	92 (100.0)	92 (100.0)	92 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

Table 4.9

DECISION MAKING ROLES - BOTTOM ECONOMIC STRATUM

(In number)

Initiation					Consultation					Disagreement				
Male	Female	Both	Tradi-tional	Total	Male	Female	Both	None	Total	Male	Female	Both	None	Total
1 1.1)	92 (98.9)	- -	- -	93 (100.0)	70 (75.3)	10 (10.7)	9 (9.7)	4 (4.3)	93 (100.0)	5 (5.4)	- -	- -	88 (94.6)	93 (100.0)
24 35.8)	32 (47.8)	8 (11.9)	3 (4.5)	67 (100.0)	32 (47.8)	19 (28.4)	11 (16.4)	5 (7.4)	67 (100.0)	- -	- -	2 (3.0)	65 (97.0)	67 (100.0)
11 37.9)	10 (34.5)	3 (10.3)	5 (17.3)	29 (100.0)	13 (44 8)	1 (3.5)	9 (31.0)	6 (20.7)	29 (100.0)	3 (10.3)	2 (6.9)	-	24 (82.8)	29 (100.0)
26 57.8)	14 (31.1)	4 (8.9)	1 (2.2)	45 (100.0)	14 (31.1)	8 (17.8)	18 (40.0)	5 (11.1)	45 (100.0)	1 (2.2)	2 (4.5)	-	42 (93.3)	45 (100.0)
8 50.0)	4 (25.0)	4 (25.0)	- -	16 (100.0)	5 (31.3)	2 (12.4)	5 (31.3)	4 (25.0)	16 (100.0)	- -	1 (6.2)	- -	15 (93.8)	16 (100.0)
7 46.6)	4 (26.7)	4 (26.7)	- -	15 (100.0)	3 (20.0)	4 (26.7)	5 (33.3)	3 (20.0)	15 (100.0)	- -	- -	- -	15 (100.0)	15 (100.0)
52 (100.0)	32 (61.5)	7 (13.5)	- -	52 (100.0)	21 (40.4)	5 (9.6)	12 (23.1)	14 (26.9)	52 (100.0)	1 (1.9)	- -	- -	51 (98.1)	52 (100.0)
189 (59.7)	188 (59.3)	30 (9.5)	9 (2.8)	317 (100.0)	158 (49.8)	49 (15.5)	69 (21.8)	41 (12.9)	317 (100.0)	10 (3.2)	5 (1.6)	2 (0.6)	300 (94.6)	317 (100.0)

Table 4.9

DECISION MAKING ROLES - BOTH

Decision stages / Categories of decision	Decision					Initiation				
	Male	Female	Both	Tradi-tional	Total	Male	Female	Both	Tradi-tional	T
1. Expenditure on Small food items and household necessities	42 (36.8)	65 (57.0)	7 (6.2)	- -	144 (100.0)	1 (1.1)	92 (98.9)	- -	- -	(1
2. Clothing and durables	36 (53.7)	18 (26.9)	13 (19.4)	- -	67 (100.0)	24 (35.8)	32 (47.8)	8 (11.9)	3 (4.5)	(1
3. Education and health	16 (55.2)	6 (20.7)	5 (17.2)	2 (6.9)	29 (100.0)	11 (37.9)	10 (34.5)	3 (10.3)	5 (17.3)	(1
4. Gifts and expend-iture on social functions and travel	23 (51.1)	10 (22.2)	11 (24.5)	1 (2.2)	45 (100.0)	26 (57.8)	14 (31.1)	4 (8.9)	1 (2.2)	(1
5. Capital transactions	6 (37.5)	1 (6.3)	7 (43.8)	2 (12.4)	16 (100.0)	8 (50.0)	4 (25.0)	4 (25.0)	- -	(1
6. Borrowing	9 (60.0)	-	5 (33.3)	1 (6.7)	15 (100.0)	7 (46.6)	4 (26.7)	4 (26.7)	- -	(1
7. Disposal of household resources	26 (30.2)	46 (53.5)	14 (16.3)	- -	86 (100.0)	13 (25.0)	32 (61.5)	7 (13.5)	- -	(1
8. Labour allocation	35 (94.6)	2 (5.4)	- -	- -	37 (100.0)					
9. Agriculture	189 (62.6)	65 (21.5)	24 (7.9)	24 (8.0)	302 (100.0)					
Total	382 (53.7)	213 (30.0)	86 (12.1)	30 (4.2)	711 (100.0)	90 (28.4)	188 (59.3)	30 (9.5)	9 (2.8)	31 (100

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages

role in decision making was highest regarding food and small household expenditure for households of the top and bottom economic strata. Women in the middle income group had the largest voice in the distribution of household resources. Women's contribution to food and small household expenditure decisions is highest for women of the bottom economic stratum (57.0 percent) and lowest for women of the middle economic stratum (32 percent). Women in the top economic stratum made 49 percent of the decisions in this sphere. For women in the bottom economic stratum, their next greatest sphere of influence was the distribution of household resources. For women of the middle economic stratum, food and small household expenditure decisions occupied second place in their sphere of influence. For women in the top economic stratum on the other hand, both decision about gifts and expenditures on religious occasions and distribution of household resources constituted their second most important sphere of influence. Women in the bottom economic stratum made 21.5 percent of the agricultural decisions. Women's input in agricultural decision making declines to 19.4 percent for the middle income households and to only 13 percent for wealthy households. Women of the top and bottom economic strata played minor roles in decisions on capital transactions and borrowing while women in the middle economic stratum had almost no influence in this sphere. Women in the top and bottom economic strata also played a greater role in decisions on education and health.

On questions of who keeps the household cash and who goes to the bazaar, about 26 percent of the households entrusted their money to women's safe keeping. In almost 23 percent of the cases, women did the shopping themselves (Table 4.10). Women in the middle economic stratum displayed minimum participation. The percentage of women keeping the household money was highest in the top economic stratum, whereas the percentage of women going to the bazaar was highest in the bottom economic stratum, followed by women of the middle economic stratum.

In addition to the above statistics indicating the important role played by women in the household economic decision making, the following case may be taken as an example of women's roles in household politics.

In a household of 19 members, in which three brothers lived with their children and their widowed

Table 4.10

HOUSEHOLD'S MONEY KEEPING AND MARKETING BY ECONOMIC STRATA AND SEX

(In number)

Questions/Answers / Economic strata	Who keeps household money?				Who goes to bazaar?			
	Male	Female	Both	Total	Male	Female	Both	Total
Top	6	3	-	9	6	1	2	9
	(66.7)	(33.3)		(100.0)	(66.7)	(11.1)	(22.2)	(100.0)
Middle	5	-	-	5	4	1	-	5
	(100.0)			(100.0)	(80.0)	(20.0)		(100.0)
Bottom	15	6	-	21	14	6	1	21
	(71.4)	(28.6)		(100.0)	(66.7)	(28.6)	(4.7)	(100.0)
All strata	26	9		35	24	8	3	35
	(74.3)	(25.7)		(100.0)	(68.6)	(22.8)	(8.6)	(100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

mother, the middle brother, Yogi, hit his wife, Sita, because she refused to give him water while he was eating and asked him to get it himself. Sita was grumbling from the previous evening because her husband had neglected to bring medicine for their one-year-old baby, who had stomach problems. She was cooking and when she was asked to serve him water, she refused. He hit her with the water jug, after which she refused to cook any more and went inside the house and slept. Sita's older sister-in-law, Radha, also refused to cook, in sympathy for Sita. The youngest of the sisters-in-law was away visiting her parents, so there was now no woman to do the cooking. The men had to cook for themselves or go hungry, so they asked the servant to cook for them. When the food was ready, all the men had their meal and went away to the farm. The women were supposed to go hungry but in fact, when the men were gone, they cooked themselves a good meal. Yogi brought the medicine for the baby and afterwards he had to entreat his wife to start doing the housework again. He did this at night when nobody was looking. The women of the other household in the clan and Sita's older sister-in-law, Radha, were of the opinion that Sita should not have refused to serve water to Yogi since he was eating, and since he was well-known for his sharp bouts of anger. But Radha also expressed her disapproval of her brother-in-law's action by joining Sita in refusing to cook for the men after Yogi had beaten Sita. The case of Pano, cited earlier in Chapter II, while expressing the helplessness of the older woman, also depicts methods used by younger women to influence household politics.

These cases also indicate that women may cooperate with each other when a common interest is involved, although they are divided in general within the household because of the divergence between the household's collective interest and each woman's personal interests together with those of her children.

Thus, although women have no legal, economic or social authority in household decision making, they have considerable real power to influence household activities.

Community Affairs and Politics

In the public domain of politics women's involvement is much less evident. For the present analysis, the

"public domain" may be divided into district and panchayat level politics and caste politics.

A number of simple questions covering aspects of village, district and national politics were put to village women in the sample (Table 4.11). Only 24.4 percent of the responses to the political awareness evaluation questions were correct. Over seventy-five percent of the questions were answered incorrectly, indicating lack of knowledge about political processes and lack of participation in political processes.

Women, however, seemed to be more aware about village politics. About 64.4 percent of the questions on village politics were answered correctly while not a single correct response was recorded on district or national politics (Table 4.11). Only one woman was aware of the women's organization and the women's training institute. Women from the higher economic stratum showed slightly more awareness of village politics than did women of the bottom economic stratum. This, however, might just be a reporting resistence on the part of the poor women because of the political turmoil in the village. Women in the middle economic stratum had the lowest political awareness (Table 4.12). Analysis by caste shows that Brahman women are least aware of political matters (Table 4.13).

Most women in the village knew whether other village women had participated in politics (Table 4.14); only 13.8 percent did not know. Poor women and Brahman women were least aware of women's affairs (Table 4.15).

Statistics on voting participation indicate that only 14.3 percent of the women voted regularly, although almost 83 percent of the women had voted at least once. The women who voted regularly were either from the top or bottom economic stratum. Women in the middle economic stratum appear to have the lowest participation (Table 4.16). Brahman women reported no participation in voting in the local panchayat, while one of the two low caste women interviewed had voted once (Table 4.17). Only 20 percent of the women interviewed expressed willingness to serve as a representative in the local village panchayat (Table 4.18). Of those who expressed this willingness, 80 percent were from the bottom economic stratum (Table 4.18).

Table 4.11

WOMEN'S POLITICAL AWARENESS

Questions \ Answers	Number			Percentage to row total	
	Knows	Does not know	Total	Knows	Does not know
A. Village Politics (a + b + c)	65	36	101	64.4	35.6
a. Which panchayat does your village belong to?	17	17	34	50.0	50.0
b. Who is your Pradhan Panch?	29	6	35	82.9	17.1
c. What number of ward do you live in?	19	13	32	59.4	40.6
B. District and National Politics (4 questions)*	-	110	110	-	100.0
C. Heard of NWO** and WSCC*** (2 questions)	2	62	64	3.1	96.9
Total (A + B + C)	67	208	275	24.4	75.6

*The questions asked were:

a) Name of the Chief District Officer (CDO).
b) Name of the Chairman of the District Panchayat.
c) Name of the Chairman of the Back to Village Campaign. Committee in the Distrct .
d) Name of the Prime-Minister.

**Nepal Women's Organization.

***Women's Services Coordination Committee.

Table 4.12

WOMEN'S AWARENESS OF VILLAGE POLITICS* BY ECONOMIC STRATA

(In number)

Economic strata \ Responses	Knows	Does not know	Total responses	No responses
Top	19	8	27	-
	(70.4)	(29.6)	(100.0)	
Middle	8	7	15	-
	(53.3)	(46.7)	(100.0)	
Bottom	38	21	59	4
	(64.4)	(35.6)	(100.0)	
All strata	65	36	101	4
	(64.4)	(35.6)	(100.0)	

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

*No positive answers were recorded under questions on district and national politics, while two positive answers recorded for awareness on existence of NWO were in the bottom economic stratum.

Table 4.13

WOMEN'S AWARENESS OF VILLAGE POLITICS BY CASTE

(In number)

Caste \ Responses	Knows	Does not know	Total responses	No responses
High	3	3	6	1
	(50.0)	(50.0)	(100.0)	
Middle	56	33	89	3
	(62.9)	(37.1)	(100.0)	
Low	6	-	6	
	(100.0)		(100.0)	
All castes	65	36	101	4
	(64.4)	(35.6)	(100.0)	

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

Table 4.14

WOMEN'S AWARENESS OF OTHER VILLAGE WOMEN IN POLITICS BY ECONOMIC STRATA*

(In number)

Economic strata \ Responses	Knows	Does not know	Total responses	No responses
Top	24	1	25	2
	(96.0)	(4.0)	(100.0)	
Middle	13	1	14	1
	(92.9)	(7.1)	(100.0)	
Bottom	44	11	55	8
	(80.0)	(20.0)	(100.0)	
All strata	81	13	94	11
	(86.2)	(13.8)	(100.0)	

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

*The questions asked were:

(a) Are there any women represented in your panchayat at pessent?

(b) How did she become a member of the panchayat?

(c) What is the name of the panchayat member?

(d) Which village does she belong to?

(e) Has there ever been a woman member of your panchayat?

(f) Has there ever been a local woman from this village in the district panchayat or any other important political post?

Table 4.15

WOMEN'S AWARENESS OF OTHER VILLAGE WOMEN IN POLITICS BY CASTE

(In number)

Caste \ Responses	Knows	Does not know	Total responses	No responses
High	3	3	6	5
	(50.0)	(50.0)	(100.0)	
Middle	73	9	82	4
	(89.0)	(11.0)	(100.0)	
Low	5	1	6	2
	(83.3)	(16.7)	(100.0)	
All castes	81	13	94	11
	(86.2)	(13.8)	(100.0)	

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

Table 4.16

WOMEN'S VOTING PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL PANCHAYAT BY ECONOMIC STRATA

(In number)

Question: Have you ever voted in a village election?

Economic strata \ Responses	Regular	Once or twice	Never	Total
Top	2	7	-	9
	(22.2)	(77.8)		(100.0)
Middle	-	5	-	5
		(100.0)		(100.0)
Bottom	3	12	6	21
	(14.3)	(57.1)	(28.6)	(100.0)
All strata	5	24	6	35
	(14.3)	(68.6)	(17.1)	(100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

Table 4.17

WOMEN'S VOTING PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL PANCHAYAT BY CASTE

(In number)

Question: Have you ever voted in a village election?

Caste \ Responses	Regular	Once or twice	Never	Total
High	-	-	2	2
			(100.0)	(100.0)
Middle	5	23	3	31
	(16.1)	(74.2)	(9.7)	(100.0)
Low	-	1	1	2
		(50.0)	(50.0)	(100.0)
All castes	5	24	6	35
	(14.3)	(68.6)	(17.1)	(100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

Table 4.18

WOMEN'S WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN LOCAL PANCHAYAT BY ECONOMIC STRATA

(In number)

Question: If nominated would you like to participate in the village panchayat?

Responses / Economic strata	Yes	No	Do not know	Total
Top	1	4	1	6
	(16.7)	(66.6)	(16.7)	(100.0)
Middle	-	4	-	4
		(100.0)		(100.0)
Bottom	4	9	2	15
	(26.7)	(60.0)	(13.3)	(100.0)
All strata	5	17	3	25
	(20.0)	(68.0)	(12.0)	(100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

To all the women, and especially those in the lower economic strata and lower caste communities, however, the whole idea of having a position of authority in the local village government seemed both amusing and highly unlikely. Many of them laughed at the idea of such a complete reversal of their traditional roles of subservience vis-a-vis the male village leaders.

It is likely that a survey of voting in the recent referendum (May 1980), would find that almost all the women had voted. Sirsia is one of the most highly politicised villages in recent years. Although responses to the political participation questions do not indicate a very active participation by women in village politics, the political events of the survey year and the attitudes and reactions of the village women to those events illustrate their active role in the fierce political struggle in the village being fought over wage rates and working conditions. The village went through an intense political upheavel in 1979 and the district administration had to intervene to solve the political disputes. The outcome of such intervention was the loss of one life and subsequent greater repression by the landlords of the labourers. Every woman of the bottom economic stratum was conscious of this struggle and participated actively in the violent demonstration against police beatings and the arrest of their leader. It was very difficult persuading women to talk about these events and their role in them. Often questions were countered by hostile questions concerning the politics and policies of the government toward the poor. The women were acutely aware of the inequality of land distribution and expressed this on various occasions. Women of the top economic stratum had a less intense and immediate involvement in these struggles, but they were quite aware of what was going on in the village. They too, however, were reluctant to talk about it to me.

Women in the village appeared to be very much involved in an overall political struggle for economic gains for themselves and their families. The wage-raises demanded by the agricultural workers included both male and female wage rates, since there is no sex discrimination in the village regarding wage rates for similar agricultural operations. But there is tension between the rich and the poor in the village, and I was caught in between, with neither group trusting me. The women at the two extremes

of the economic spectrum do not realize the similarity of their position and the solidarity of their interests.

Women who participate in political life are ridiculed by the village elite who establish the social norm. One small conversation on this subject is illuminating. One young man, aged about 35, was asked whether any village woman could participate in the panchayat proceedings if nominated by the government. He laughed and mentioned a young woman named Phulo, and said only she would participate. Phulo has the reputation of loose behaviour and is looked down on. Many women were questioned as to why they did not participate in regular panchayat proceedings and they replied that in their society women simply do not participate in this kind of event. The attitude they expressed towards formal participation in panchayat bodies reflects the social norm, while real participation by women in the struggle for higher wages was necessitated by economic compulsion. Men needed the women's backing in their struggle for higher wage rates, and so women were actively involved. But the social norm does not allow Maithili women to participate directly in panchayat politics.

Traditional caste politics, however, allows for female leadership of the caste groupings in some special cases. Each caste group has its own assemblies which give judgement on affairs relating to caste and rituals. These assemblies, called praganna sava, have 15 to 20 villages under their jurisdiction. The leader of the caste is called the maizon. Each village has a dewan, who represents the villagers of the particular caste in the praganna sava. Members of caste assemblies, maizon and dewan, must all be invited for important life ceremonies such as bratabandha (conferring full caste status on a male), marriage and death.

These dewans, maizons and assemblies are powerful institutions in the village, presiding over matters of food habits, sex relations, marriage, the caste status of individuals and all other matters pertaining to caste. They may outcast individuals, a procedure called bhatkatne. A member so ex-communicated faces complete social isolation. For example, Matuk and his mother - from a Gareri household (middle caste) were excommunicated from their caste. Matuk's was the only wealthy Gareri household

in Sirsia-Purbari. Yet nobody of his caste accepted food from his household, nobody wanted to work in his fields, and nobody accepted water from the well his household used. There was a complete breakdown of relations between this family and the rest of the caste community. According to an informant, this punishment was meted out to Matuk, because he had had illicit relations with his own mother's sister. But Matuk's mother expressed the opinion that, since her household was richer than the rest of the Gareri households in the village, the poor were ostracizing her household members for not sharing their wealth with them.

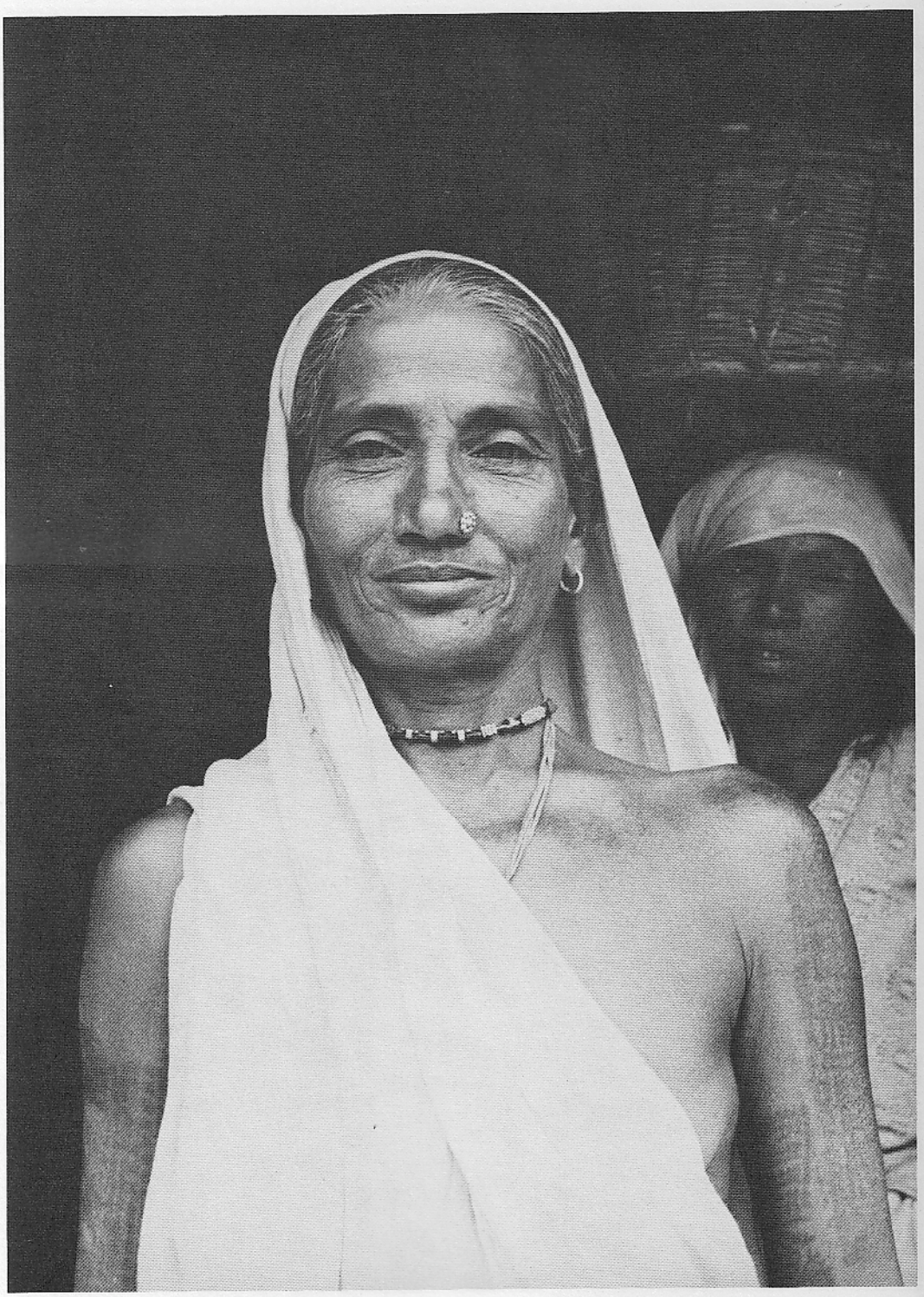
In Sirsia, there were four such praganna sava or caste assemblies - one each for the Yadav, Sudi, Teli and Bherier, all of them middle castes. On the death of a maizon, his son is expected to take over the caste leadership and to inherit the title of maizon. The post of dewan is also heriditary. But in cases where the successor is under age, his mother or the late maizon's widow assumes the title and becomes the leader of the caste community-until the inheritor comes of age. Thus a woman may play an important formal role in caste affairs, but she can do it only as a custodian of a junior male.

In this way, women's participation in public affairs is of an informal nature and mostly in support of men in their struggle for power.

Women working beside men - weeding paddy fields.

Women selling pots at the market.

Old enough not to worry about purdah.



At the prime of her power.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

From the foregoing analysis, one finds that Maithili society is an inegaliterian and sexually stratified society where women in general have lower status than men. The contrast between social role and status is very well illustrated in this case.

Maithili women play very important roles in the life cycle of a family and through it in that of the society. They are major actors in the subsistence sector. Women and female children contribute 28 percent of the total household income and about 54 percent of the time required for maintaining an average household of one adult male, one adult female, one male and female child of up to 14 years of age and one male and female child each from the 5-14 age group. If time is considered a scarce economic resource in the welfare function, women play a much more important role in the welfare of the household than men do.

The preceding analysis indicates that women in all economic strata put in the maximum amount of labour for the maintenance of the household. Men's time input in the household operations varies significantly with the wealth of the household. There is an inverse relationship between work-time and economic strata for men. However, there is no great difference in hours worked by women in different economic strata. Only the inside-outside dichotomy is much stronger for women of the rich households than for women of poor households. Women in poor households contribute to the household economy more directly i.e., by earning wages or by working in the family field, while the economic contribution of women in richer households is confined to food processing, animal care and fuel supply. Moreover, domestic and child care activities are almost exclusively the women's domain in all households.

Women participate in most of the activities carried out on the farm or at the household levels. There are very few male-only or female-only activities, except for domestic work and child care, which take up a considerable amount of women's time (Table 5.1). These activities carry low social status, have no place in an economic valuation system, if done for one's own household, and are paid at a lower rate than farm work if done for others.

Table 5.1

PERCEIVED DIVISION OF LABOUR

Only Men	Only Women
1. Milking and butchering	1. Feeding minor animals
2. Ploughing	2. Fodder collection
3. Applying chemical fertilizer	3. Making art baskets
4. Irrigating	4. Sewing
5. Threshing by employing animals (dauni)	5. Roasting, grinding
6. Smithery	6. Preparing dairy products
7. Liquor making	7. Food preservation
8. Jute processing	8. Cleaning pots and pans
9. Construction other than house repair	9. Cleaning and plastering house, yard and barn
10. Hunting and fishing	10. Making dung-cakes
	11. Fetching water
	12. Tending, feeding and bathing very young babies.

Women manage the day-to-day operations of the household and play major roles in the day-to-day decisions on these matters. Like everywhere else, women are responsible for rearing and caring for the children, i.e. reproduction of the family members. Motherhood carries a social premium and the veneration of motherhood is expressed through the worship of mother-goddesses. Mothers are an important part of rituals and an important cohesive force in the patriline. Wives are important as being those who will bear the next generation. Villagers compare women to the earth and consider them the nurturers of the life-giving seed without whose cooperation the seed would not germinate. Throughout Maithili culture there is a strong emphasis on the continuation of the progeny.

Thus, women play a very important role in the household economy as well as in the reproduction of the social system.

The question is what is the status of women who carry out these roles compared to that of men in comparable kinship and age categories.

Neither at the national level (Acharya 1979) nor at the household level is women's contribution to household economy socially recognized. As exemplified by this case study subsistence production constitutes a large part of the household income. This fact is ignored at all levels and women are counted socially and statistically as dependent upon the household head.

Legally women may own property and women are entitled to a share in the property of the affinal household. But in practice, women have no control over their own share in the affinal household and very little control even over their own personal property. A man, even distantly related, is considered to be full guardian of a woman and the disposal of her property is conditional on his agreement. Despite the fact that women work ten hours a day for maintenance and reproduction of the household they are considered economically dependent because they get no direct income. Women are the major partners in the reproduction of household members, but they have only very limited legal or socially recognized right over their children. If they decide to leave the affinal household, they have to leave their children and cut off all ties with them.

Production for subsistence is the major activity in Maithili rural areas and women participate in this production, working in fact longer hours than men. But they have very little control over the household income. Even though women's basic needs of food and shelter are met within the resource limitations of the household there is a systematic discrimination against women in the reward system of the subsistence household. Women's economic status, irrespective of the economic stratum they belong to, seems to be only slightly better than that of the slaves of ancient times who had only the right of maintenance.

Women's socio-cultural and religious status in the Hindu and Maithili system of beliefs and behavior are rather conflicting. Women are considered to be weak, irresponsible and incapable of protecting themselves against sexual assault. Sexual purity and devotion to men (father, son or husband) are the necessary conditions for gaining respect or esteem in the social structure. Women in the Hindu system may gain respect and esteem only by controlling their own emotions and aspirations. Men's social position is not contingent on control of their emotions and aspirations. This is a basic discrimination against women in the socio-cultural and religious belief system. Men gain success by fulfilling their personalities while women may gain success only by supressing their own personalities. This crucial fact is not clearly noted in analyses of cultural images of Hindu women.

Women have no independent existence and a woman's social position is entirely defined by her father's, husband's, or son's status. The social status of women in societies with hierarchical male-female relationships as described by Smock (1977) may be applied in toto to describe the Maithili women's position!

> "Security and social approval come through satisfying these men (father, brother, husband, son) and particularly through providing male heirs for the husband's family. An independent woman has no legal or social place within society. The completely derived nature of woman's status means that the woman who aspires to an independent role above and beyond her familial functions risks her social placement and well being."

As mentioned in the introduction, political status has three dimensions: power, authority and autonomy. In a hierarchically authoritative society such as the Maithili village power authority and autonomy are to a large extent limited socially for everybody--both men and women. The question examined in this case study is not whether the power, authority and autonomy exercised by different socio-economic groups is limited extraneously by outside force or internally by economic and caste forces. The question here is, given the limited power, authority and autonomy for each individual in this society, for whom is it more restrictive? For men or for women?

In the preceding sections, an attempt was made to depict the Maithili socio-economic system in its totality and to assess the position of men and women from-different angles, economic, social, cultural, religious and political by examining women at different stages of life and in different relationships to men in the household. Although women do have some power and exercise major influence over the household decision making, they have always less authority than men in similar age groups and positions in the kinship hierarchy. Women have no income or property under their direct control, but they do exercise some influence over the disposal and use of the property. Exercise of power by women in considered "manipulative" and socially illegitimate. This is very crucial in the analysis of the status of women. Schlegel's (1979) distinct perception of this fact, different from many other anthropologists (Rogers 1975, Jacobson 1977) set women's studies in the right direction. Women do exercise power but it is illegitimate power and is not backed by authority.

Likewise, Maithili women would be very low on a scale of autonomy. All young Maithili people, both men and women, have very little autonomy in their behavior patterns i.e. speech, eating habits, choice of marriage patterns, forms of association, choice of professions, etc. But, women's behavior is much more controlled than that of men. Spatial mobility for men is unrestricted while for young post-pubescent females there is very little scope for mobility. Women have virtually no choice of profession except as housewives and agricultural workers for their domestic unit. Freedom of association is restricted for both men and women by caste and economic status. But for women, it is made much harder by the purdah system and the

control that patrilineal males have over their mobility. Restrictions on mobility, association and choice of life partners are much stricter for women from higher castes as well as for those of better economic standing.

Thus on a status scale, composed of economic, socio-cultural cum religious and political indicators, Maithili women in general would be far below men. Fathers would always be higher than mothers, sons higher than daughters, brothers higher than sisters, husbands higher than wives and fathers-in-law higher than mothers-in-law, etc.

The foregoing analyses should establish the fact that in Maithili society there is a systematic sexual discrimination against women, which is against Nepal's declared objectives of sexual equality. It should be kept in mind that equality does not mean uniformity. Diversity is the rule of the universe. Doctors are different from engineers but on a social scale they would be about equal. Males and females are different biologically and may have greater or lesser pull towards certain functions. This division of labour should not lead to the sexual stratification of society whereby all male roles are accorded higher status than comparable female roles.

After establishing that women play very important roles in Maithili society but have secondary social status as compared to men, the next question to ask would be what implications this fact has for development planners.

Since the mid-seventies, Nepal's development plans, in conformity with changing perceptions of development problems in the world, have shifted their strategy of first growth and then equity to equity and growth together. The draft Sixth Five-Year Plan outlines its objectives under the following points: (1) gradual elimination of poverty, through a sustained effort towards generation of maximum employment and income for those below poverty line; (2) fulfillment of basic needs of the people: (3) restructuring of the socio-economic system with a view to elimination of conditions of exploitation in the society; and (4) preservation and better use of natural resources.

The first objective of the Plan is a question of making best use of local resources, basically that of human resources. The point that women constitute one half

of the available human resources and therefore cannot be ignored in a responsible development plan was made in the first part of this study and elsewhere (Acharya 1978, 1979). A further contention in this study is that the division of labour and time allocation of different family members in the Maithili household proves that women are equally important in providing subsistence to the household and each household has its own 'survival strategy' which affects the time allocation of all its members (Beker 1965, Evenson 1976). An effective intervention in the subsistence sector requires a thorough understanding of this "survival strategy".

The second and third points of the Sixth Plan objectives are related more directly to the questions of equity. Many components of basic needs, like providing basic health care facilities for maternity and child care, family planning, introducing better food habits and improving nutrition, are directly in the woman's domain (Palmer 1977). These plans and programmes will have little chance of success if women are ignored in their formulation.

Moreover, as sexual stratification is one of the most inequitable features of the Maithili socio-economic structure and the creation of an equitable socio-economic structure Nepal's planned objective, there is an immediate need for a policy towards elimination of the conditions of sexual inequality. Women constitute almost half of the Nepalese population and a society is not equitable if half of its citizens are treated as second class citizens.

There is a vicious circle of low social status, low economic and income status, low opportunities and low social status. In other words, women are economically far below men because they are socially confined, and they are socially confined because they have very few economic options. They have no control over income because they have no control over the means of production, and they have no control over the means of production because they have no income. To achieve the objective of equity between the sexes, it is necessary to intervene in these circles.

After the acceptance of the two facts that women have low status in Maithili society and that improvement

in their status should be a part of the development plans and programmes in this area, the third and the most difficult question to be answered is, how to go about integrating Maithili women into the development process and thereby raise their socio-economic status.

The preceding chapters show that women's secondary position in the society is a result of numerous factors and hence an attack on this problem should also be multi-dimensional. Conscious intervention is needed for (1) achieving equity within the households and (2) creating equal opportunities for women externally at the macro and micro levels. The issues of the women's status question at the National or "macro" level were discussed in the first part of our study (Acharya 1979, Bennett 1979, Pradhan 1979, Acharya and Pradhan 1979) and will be dealt with in the ninth volume of this series. Micro aspects of intervention policy and programmes for Maithili women will be taken up in this section.

Progress in improving the socio-economic status of the Maithili women will be slow and arduous. Changes in cultural and behaviour patterns may not be amenable to immediate intervention. The most feasible and concrete intervention would be to try to improve the income, health and educational status of the Maithili women.

Income and Employment Status

Alternative employment opportunities in the village are extremely limited. Among 37 persons who worked outside the household economy, one was in the middle income group and the rest in the low income group. Out of 37 persons who worked for wages 24 were men and 13 were women. Agriculture supplied the bulk of the employment. 67.3 percent of the total wage labour days worked by the people of Sirsia were in agriculture. Domestic service accounted for 15.5 percent of the wage labour days and other services such as smithing, midwifery, etc., supplied 2.9 percent of the employment (Table 5.2). Only two men were working in the organized sector, one in the local cooperative (Sajha) and one in the school. An overwhelming majority of women (93.9 percent) worked in agriculture and only one each worked in domestic service and other service sectors. The lone woman serving in other service sectors was a traditional midwife from the lowest caste in the village. Agriculture provided on the average 214

Table 5.2

WAGE/SALARY EMPLOYMENT BY SECTORS

Particulars / Sectors	Number of Persons Employed			Days of Employment		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Agriculture	16	11	27	3,420	1,605	5,025
				(67.3)	(93.9)	(73.9)
Domestic Service	3	1	4	790	45	835
				(15.5)	(2.6)	(12.3)
Other Service	3	1	4	145	60	205
				(2.9)	(3.5)	(3.0)
Govt. Service	2	-	2	730	-	730
				(14.3)		(10.8)
Total	24	13	37	5,085	1,710	6,795
				(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)

Figures in parentheses are column percentages.

days of employment to the 16 men working for wage employment in this sector and only 134 days of employment to women. Domestic service, which may also be counted as agricultural work, provided 263 days of employment per person to men and 45 days of employment to women.

A total of 88 persons responded to the question as to why they were not working outside the home for wages. (Table 5.3). Of the respondents 42 were males and 46 females. About 52 percent of the men and 41 percent of the women said they had too much work at home and had no time for outside work. Another 6.5 percent of the women indicated childcare responsibilities as a major cause for not working for wages. Combining these two sets of answers nearly 48 percent of the women said they were too busy to take up outside employment. About 24 percent of the women said social custom hampered them from taking outside employment while another 13 percent said there was no need to take outside employment. The combined percentage of males giving the above causes (i.e. too busy, etc.) for not working for wage employment was about 26 percent. In the same group may be added the 4.8 percent respondents who said they were not working because no suitable employment was available. These were mostly people who were not willing to work as labourers. Thus, about 26 percent of the men and 37 percent of the women would take no outside employment even if employment opportunities were provided to them. But a larger segment of the female population, namely 47.8 percent, were willing to take outside employment provided they had enough time. Asked what employment they would like to take, males preferred factory labour while females preferred agricultural labour, cottage industries and domestic service. About 26 percent of the male responses and 29 percent of the female responses indicated that any kind of employment would be taken up if available.

To start with, female employment programs should be targeted at these people. It is true that this will result in the women of the richer households being left out of these programs. But in history, every kind of change has come with one or other class pioneering it. Change in richer households would follow the change in poor households, if the jobs became sufficiently lucrative. No woman should be excluded from these programs, but if women from rich households do not join in at the beginning this should not be seen as an indication of failure of the programme.

Table 5.3

REASONS FOR NOT WORKING

Causes \ Sex	Male	Female	Total
1. Too old, poor health, etc.	4 (9.5)	7 (15.2)	11
2. Too much work at home	22 (52.4)	19 (41.3)	41
3. Children responsibilities	-	3 (6.5)	3
4. Study	3 (7.1)	-	3
5. Social Custom	5 (11.9)	11 (23.9)	16
6. No suitable employment	2 (4.8)	-	2
7. No need	6 (14.3)	6 (13.1)	12
Total responses	42 (100.0)	46 (100.0)	88 (100.0)

Improvement in income status implies providing income generating opportunities for women, over which they have control. It is not sufficient to improve the income status of households (although giving women the opportunity to have their own income will necessarily achieve that objective). Several studies have shown that women's increased control over income, and with it increased control over the allocation of household resources, leads to improved health and nutrition not only for women, but also for their children as well. (See, for example, ICRW 1980).

Improvement in farming methods and increase in agricultural productivity alone will not be effective in improving women's status in Maithili society. This is because land is the primary means of production in agriculture and only men have control over it. No matter how hard women work, the control over the yield from agriculture will go to men. Sirsia is a good illustration of this general contention. In Sirsia almost all the land is now irrigated so that the farm households are better off than those of the neighbouring villages. Yet there seems to have been no change in the status of Sirsia women. The increased intensity of land use has only increased their work burden, though their nutrition may have improved slightly.

Ruth Dickson (1978) argues that for any improvement of women's status, women have to be drawn out of the household and into market activity. The crucial factor here is not whether it is a market activity or not, but who owns the primary means of production and has control over the income generated from it. Control over income seems to be the primary factor in determining women's status. So women have to be drawn into new types of activities where they have control of the primary means of production and the resulting income.

Increase in agricultural productivity is necessary in order to release women for other activities. Plans and programmes directed towards the problems of the household sector and subsistence farming regarding farm techniques, food storage and nutrition, fuel use and storage, sanitation, health and education must be targeted to both men and women and in some cases more to women than men, in order to make these programmes more effective. It is necessary to improve the technology of food processing,

animal care and other household chores to release women for more productive work and for participation in programm programmes diffusing information, such as adult education, agricultural extension, health programmes, etc.

From the time allocation statistics it is clear that women work long hours and that the major part of their working time is devoted to food processing, domestic chores and childcare activities. The burden of domestic and childcare activities seems to be more or less uniform throughout the year for women, while food processing and agricultural activities as well as animal husbandry have their peak and slack periods (Figures 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4). At the peak of the agricultural season, women's work burden is heavier than is indicated in the sixth month average.

This data suggests that women in the poor households can devote more time to direct income earning activities (e.g. harvesting labour) only if the food processing, animal care and other household chores take less of their time. Nevertheless, these kinds of interventions are necessary but not sufficient conditions for improving women's status in Maithili society. The question of what would be a sufficient condition for raising women's status has generated much controversy, (Quinn 1977, Tiffiny 1977) but to me improving their economic status seems to be the only area where immediate results may be obtained.

Proposals for Income Generating Activities

Coming to the concrete level, organizational and technological improvement in food processing seems to be crucial both for making women's labour more productive as well as for providing income earning opportunities for women in Sirsia. It is also important to enable women and children to be released for education and other consciousness raising activities. As described in Chapter III, women in all households spend long hours processing and preparing food both for family members and field labourers during the busy plantation seasons. On the other hand no food is provided to labourers at harvest time, since this work is mostly contractual, so women in the labouring class households have to spend valuable time during the harvest period preparing food for the family members and thus forgo the opportunity of earning more income.

Figure 5.1

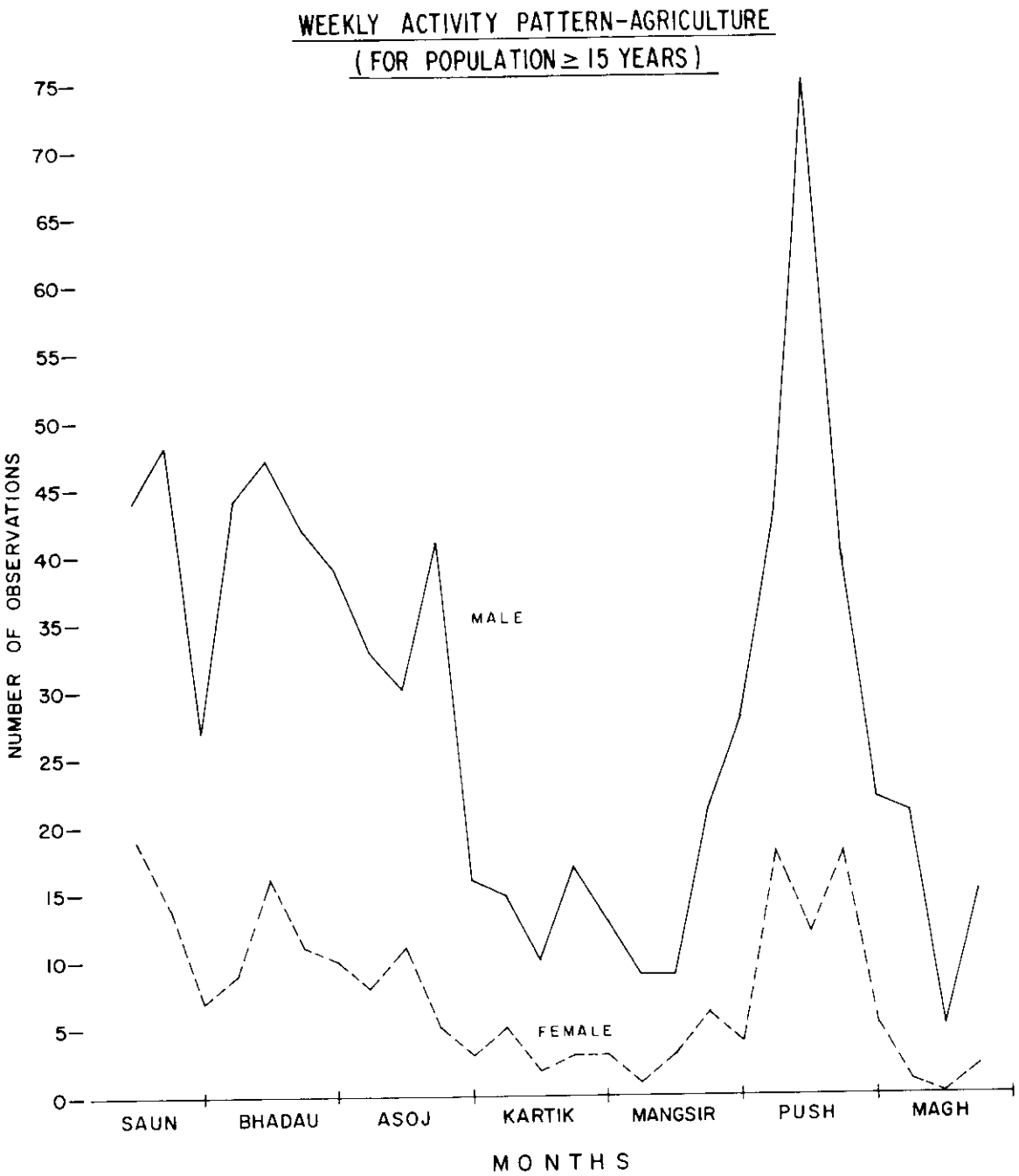

WEEKLY ACTIVITY PATTERN-AGRICULTURE
(FOR POPULATION ≥ 15 YEARS)
NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS
75
70
65
60
55
50
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
MALE
FEMALE
SAUN
BHADAU
ASOJ
KARTIK
MANGSIR
PUSH
MAGH
MONTHS

Figure 5.2

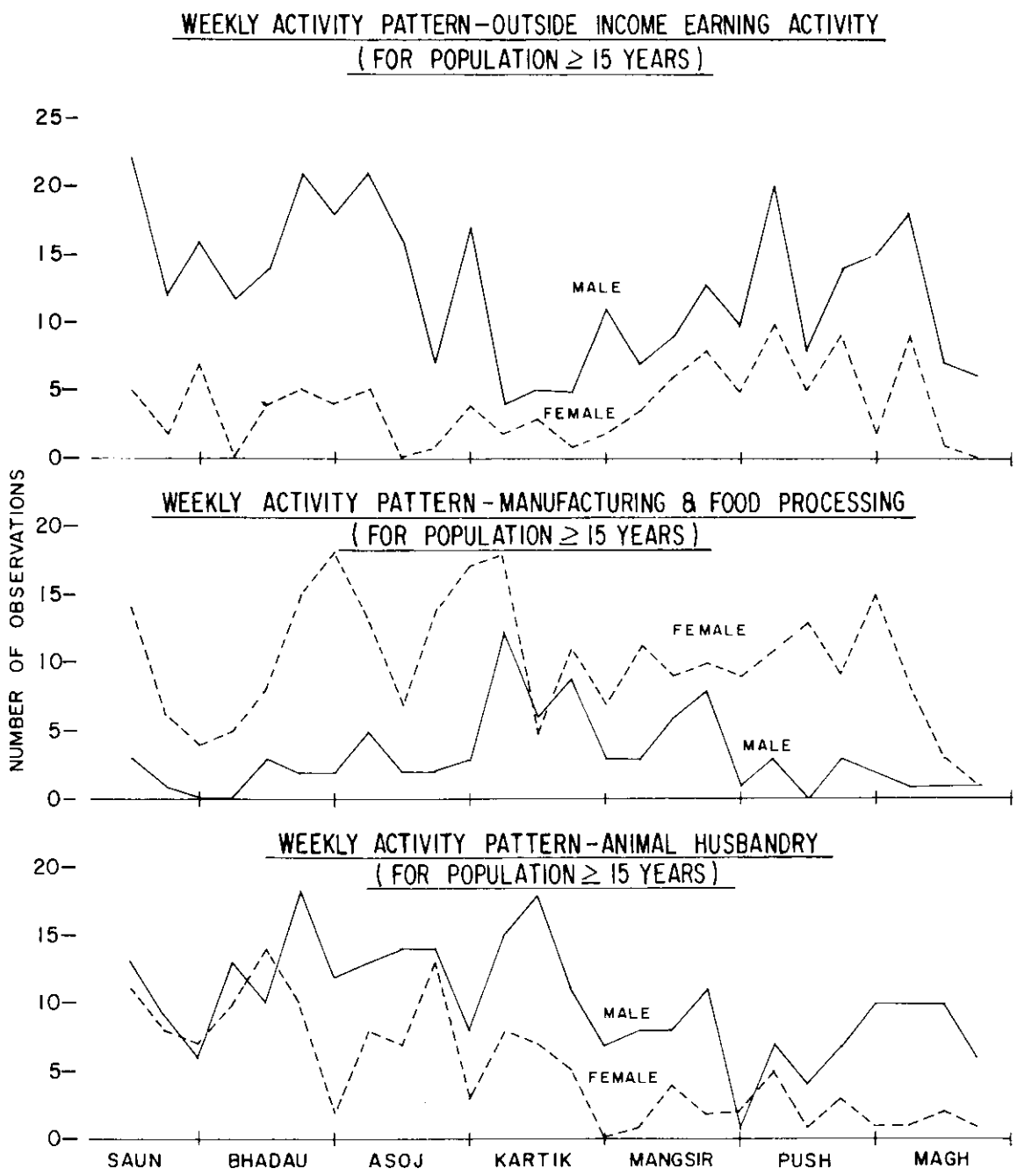

WEEKLY ACTIVITY PATTERN-OUTSIDE INCOME EARNING ACTIVITY
(FOR POPULATION ≥ 15 YEARS)
25
20
15
10
5
0
MALE
FEMALE
WEEKLY ACTIVITY PATTERN-MANUFACTURING & FOOD PROCESSING
(FOR POPULATION ≥ 15 YEARS)
20
15
10
5
0
FEMALE
MALE
NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS
WEEKLY ACTIVITY PATTERN-ANIMAL HUSBANDRY
(FOR POPULATION ≥ 15 YEARS)
20
15
10
5
0
MALE
FEMALE
SAUN
BHADAU
ASOJ
KARTIK
MANGSIR
PUSH
MAGH
MONTHS

Figure 5.3

WEEKLY ACTIVITY PATTERN-DOMESTIC
(FOR POPULATION ≥ 15 YEARS)

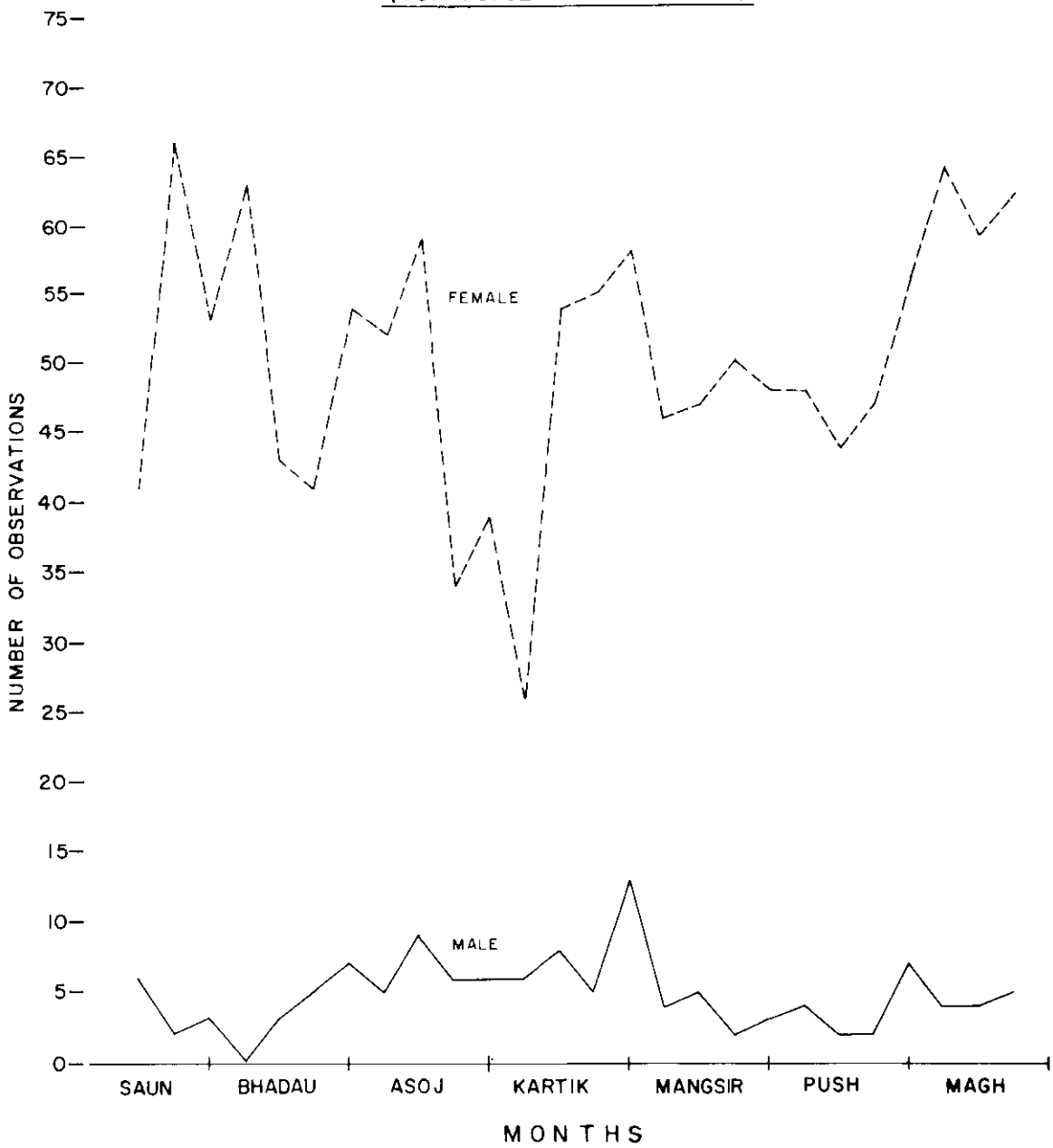
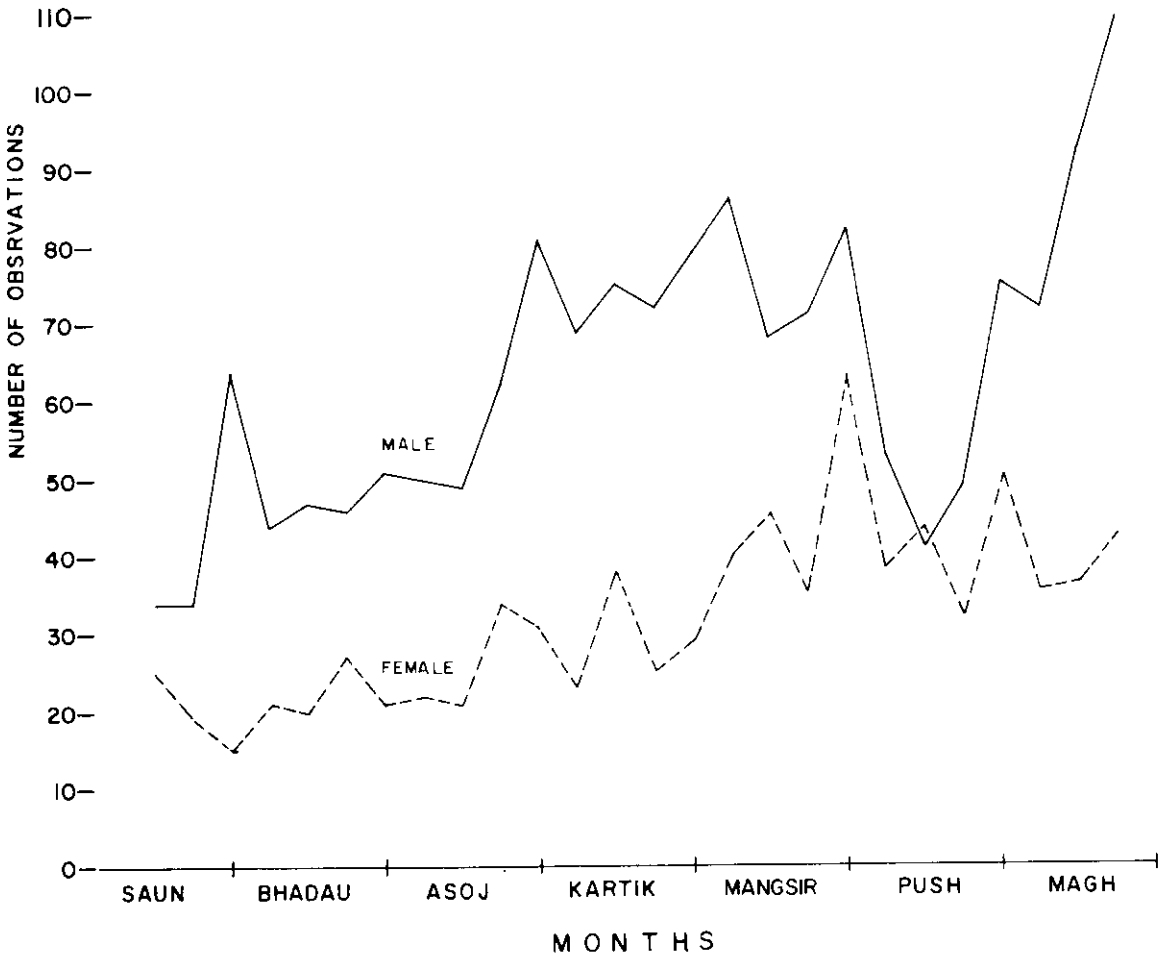


Figure 5.4

WEEKLY ACTIVITY PATTERN-LEISURE
(FOR POPULATION ≥ 15 YEARS)



Roti

A solution to this problem might be the organization of a simple village food processing industry, where women from non-polluting castes could be employed to produce flat bread (roti), and eventually other foods as well. This would also give women direct access to income earning activities. In Nigeria commercial food production has been found quite effective as a means of income generation for women, raising the efficiency of food preparation and freeing women for other activities (Simmons 1975). For Sirsia the feasibility of this project would need to be studied carefully. Although it might be only a busy season industry it is worth looking into.

Parboiling

Paddy parboiling, husking and cleaning are other major busy season time-consuming activities for women. The village home method of parboiling rice is different from the mill method. The villagers prefer home processed rice for a number of reasons. Rice parboiled at home has no offensive smell while the mill parboiled rice has. Besides this, commercially parboiled rice is considered too expensive since the cost of home parboiling is negligible because of the low opportunity cost of female labour. The third factor is probably habit and tradition. This whole process should be studied in the socio-economic context of the village and a feasibility study prepared for the establishment of a women's cooperative for paddy parboiling and cleaning at the village level on a small scale.

Cheap Clothing

Another possible industry for the village women is the production of simple and cheap ready made clothes. At present this type of clothing is supplied mostly by Indian producers. Most of the villages have no tailors and people buy thin ready made clothes. The competition from Indian products in this industry, however, might be quite keen. A deeper study and some pilot projects should be undertaken in this area.

Art Basketry and Maithili Paintings

Art basketry and Maithili paintings are some other areas which might be worth consideration. These are traditional skills of the Maithili woman, but they need further training in modernizing these traditional arts and resources for commercial exploitation. Commercialization of Maithili paintings in India has been quite successful.

These ventures will be successful only if they allow women to generate more income than the income foregone by externalizing certain of the food processing and other activities which women now perform "free" for the family. The productivity of one hour of work in these industries or the value of the goods produced must be greater than the value of what could be produced in the same amount of time at home. Technology will be crucial in increasing the productivity of women's labour sufficiently.

Organization

To organize this kind of work a central workshop would seem better than the home from several points of view. As pointed out by Dickson (1979) the central workshop has various advantages, such as providing for control over income by the workers (women), the possibility of social contact among women and a ready forum for other kinds of training.

These industries should employ only women to start with, because only this type of sex-segregated organization would be acceptable to the villagers. It might look rather conservative to many social scientists who have been dealing with problems of desexualising industrial employment in the advanced countries, but in Sirsia at this moment no more is achievable. The question of acceptability of rural development programmes and status and purdah consciousness of rural women has been discussed in detail for Bangladesh by Abdullah and Zeidenstein (1979). The situation in Sirsia is akin to the Bangladesh village situation, and it is essential to provide women with acceptable alternative channels of employment which are immediately acceptable to them.

Vegetable Gardening

Another possibility is that of vegetable gardening. Few vegetables are grown in this area. From one observation of village markets, vegetables seem to be one of the most traded goods and women actively participate in this trade. A major part of the vegetables demanded in the nearby city of Janakpur and surrounding areas is supplied by Indian traders. An organized campaign for vegetable gardening with distribution of appropriate inputs coupled with appropriate extension services and marketing arrangements might be a good enterprise for the village women. A proper feasibility and market study would be required before more concrete proposals could be made in this direction.

The dietary value of vegetables is well established, so only the economics of vegetable gardening in this particular area needs more intensive study.

Education and Training

Extensive literature exists on the importance of female education in development planning and it is one area where decision makers and planners need no more convincing. On the implementation level, however, the problem of female education seems to be as intractable as ever, especially in Maithili speaking areas. It has its own vicious circle; women have very little opportunity for education compared to men, because the social structure is too restrictive for females and the social structure is too restrictive because people are not well educated. Among the main factors responsible for relatively low interest in female education in Sirsia are the household's need for the labour of young girls for work at home and the irrelevance of the current curriculum to the girl's adult role.

Language seems to be another major problem. All educational materials are in Nepali and, since most of the children speak only Maithili, special teaching skill is needed to get children interested in what they are learning. The teacher in the village did not even know Nepali. Since women rarely get to use the language they are taught in the schools, the retention rate of literacy is extremely low for females. Therefore, to spend time and resources on female literacy, for literacy is what the

primary school accomplishes, seems to be quite futile to the villagers. This factor is a hindrance in the spread of education in general, both for males and females. Villagers look upon education as a stepping stone to higher careers, but since women have no scope for developing a career other than that of a housewife, educating girls seems practically useless to them. Primary education as of today is neither helpful in improving a woman's earning capacity nor her work efficiency.

Considering also the absentee rates of even those girls who were registered in the school, seven hour daytime all year round school schedules might be another area which needs to be looked at. From the analysis of time use data, it is evident that both boys and girls start working between the ages of 5 and 9. The average work period was 1.24 hours per day for boys and 2.06 hours for girls of between 5 and 9. Both girls and boys in the 10-14 age group have heavy work responsibilities. Boys work 4.8 hours per day on the average and girls work 7.60 hours. These figures, however, combine slack and busy seasons as well as all economic strata averages and are thus considerably lower than the busy season working hours for children of the middle and low economic strata households. Considering the work schedule of children, the school hours and schooling months might have to be rescheduled to fit the agricultural cycles.

All these factors, the irrelevance of educational materials to adult life, the lack of retention because of the language problem, and the families' need of children to perform domestic and farm work, tend to hamper female education more than male education.

According to the village social structure, men are expected to interact with the outside world. As such, some capacity to handle figures and interact with the official world, where Nepali is the lingua-franca, is perceived as a need for men. Ideal behavior for adult women, on the other hand, is almost total seclusion, and so women are not perceived as needing a means of communication with the outside world--if anything, such a skill might cast suspicion on their character.

Education should, therefore, be made functional-- not only for men but also for women. Educational materials

should contain more relevant material on household tasks and concerns. Separation of male and female education may be necessary for at least a decade. Rather than devising different materials for adult and child literacy, it might be preferable to devise different materials for male and female education and try to combine adult and child education. In their observed play patterns children always copy the adults and it does not seem advisable to assume that adults and children have separate worlds in these societies. This point is relevant for all agricultural societies, where children start working and behaving as adults at an early age. (Mead 1949). The separation of adulthood and childhood seems to be closer to western behavior patterns and perceptions than to the reality of Nepalese villages. Since the present author is no expert on education, however, these are only ideas which need to be debated and tested.

Village Sanitation and Health

This study had no specific questions on health and sanitation. Since more thorough studies are under way which cover this area, only a few points of personal observation are noted here. The first question that hits one when entering the village is the use of the village pond. Looking at the multi-purpose use of these ponds, they would seem to be the major source of the various illnesses in the village. But no proper attention seems to have been paid to the use of these ponds. People have no awareness of the dangers of using polluted water and raising the villagers' consciousness should be one of the major thrusts of the integrated rural health policy. These programmes should be aimed at both men and women. The villagers' understanding of the Nepali language in this part of the country is very limited, and women do not understand Nepali at all. Health education should, therefore, be in a colloquial form of the local language with visual equipment. There should be movie shows in the village with separate seating arrangements for men and women. The timing of these shows should be so arranged as to fit into the leisure time of both men and women, not only of men. Early evenings are free only for men and most of the shows are organized in the early evenings.

These materials on health, family planning and sanitation could contain visual pictures from the local

areas, e.g., the ponds and the village life of a local village similar to Sirsia, but with a cleaner and more sanitary environment. Comparisons and examples are effective only when there is a possibility of attainment. Examples of situations which are too dissimilar fail to impress people because they are too remote to aspire for.

Contact points in the village should be established through both male and female village leaders, not only for health education, but for agricultural extension and income generation, indeed for any local level development intervention. Age and wealth seemed an important factor in determining village leadership for women. The question on female leadership in the village was answered by 23 women--of them more than 74 percent identified one of the oldest women from one of the landlord families as the woman to whom they would turn in difficulties. Asked why they would seek the help of that woman in particular, they said it was because that old woman had more experience in the raising of children, more experience in female affairs and was from a wealthy family. Established channels of leadership should be used for development propaganda. Leading men and women in the village should be approached with tact. It is worth putting a lot of effort into involving these people rather than sending outside workers to the village. Only these local people can be effective points in the diffusion of information in the village. The structure of the relation between national and local politics demonstrates this point very well. For national leaders, village leaders are the main contact point and the only means through which they, as outsiders, can penitrate the villagers' mind.

Another link in the health information diffusion process could be the traditional village midwives. These midwives are not literate, but they have access to almost all households in the village and are an important part of the village information diffusion system. In devising this sort of program, the defects and difficulties of earlier attempts should, of course, be taken into account.

Analysis of the preceding chapters reveals that wealth, caste, sex and age are important factors in establishing social hierarchy in the village. People listen to the leaders if these leaders are representative of their own economic standing or their own caste, and

only if they are fairly mature. All these factors should be taken into account in selecting trainees for all village development programmes. Since young people often rank low in social hierarchy young village level workers are not very effective in the information diffusion work which they are supposed to do.

Most of the people, specially women, however, are illiterate, and training these people requires an unconventional approach in several ways, like minimum educational requirements for the trainees, medium of training, and site of training. The minimal educational qualifications demanded for recruitment of village level workers in all sectors are at present somewhat high by village standards. The real village leadership, or people from the 30 and 40 age group, are effectively excluded from participating in these training programmes, because they are not literate. Sites of training programmes, which are mostly located in distant places, require the farmer to go away from his farm for an extended period. Poor people can hardly afford to attend these programmes because without their daily wage their family members have to go hungry. The site factor presents even greater hindrance to women's participation in these programmes, because mature women can rarely afford to leave the household for more than a couple of hours. Moreover, socially it is not acceptable to her family that a woman go to a training programme outside the village.

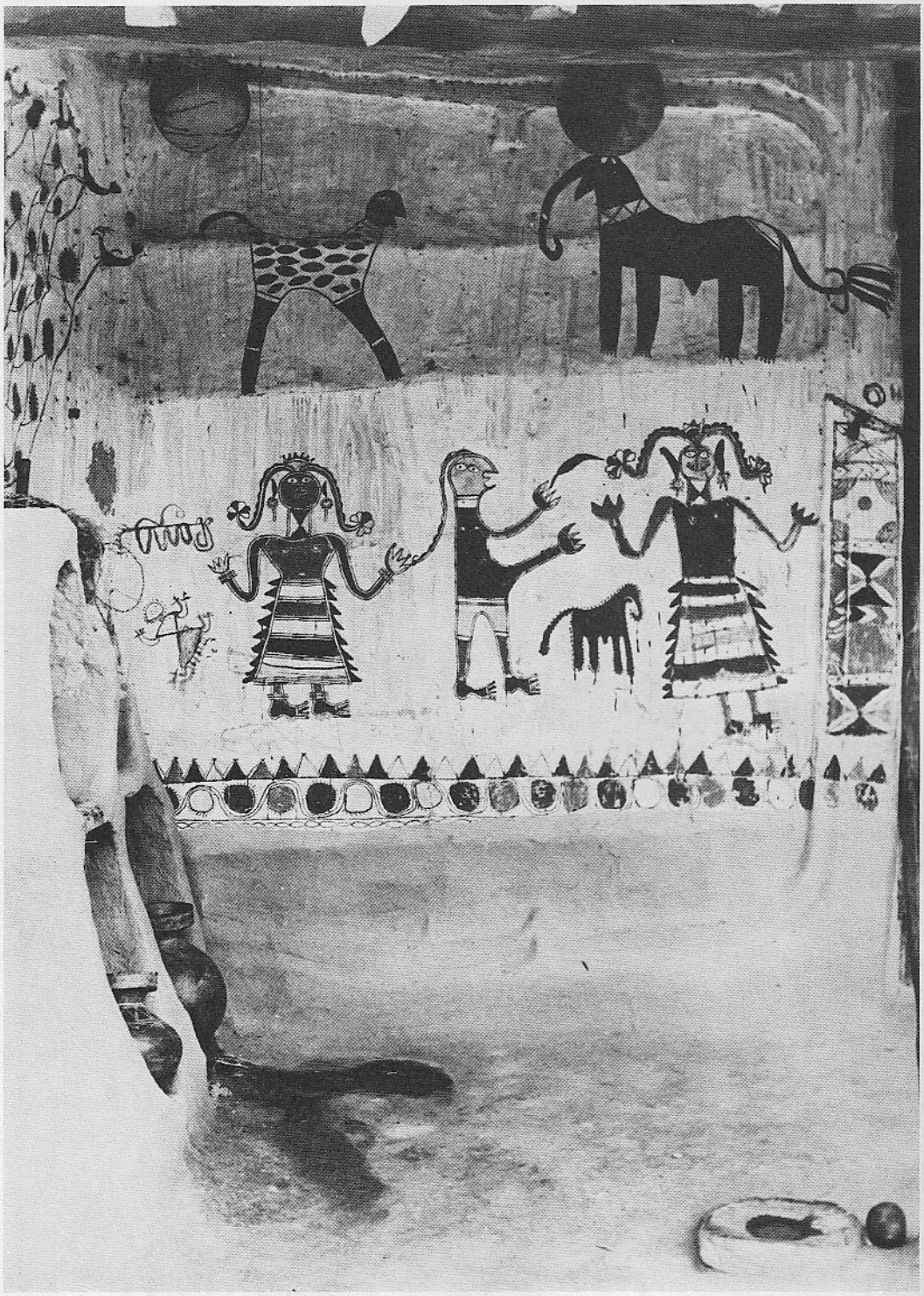
Women's training programmes that are devised only for those who can be taken out of the village because they have no strong family obligations (e.g. widows, unmarried girls, etc.) should be avoided. Women who are free to go out of the village for training purposes are usually on the fringe of the social structure and therefore have very little influence in village life. Only those women who are well integrated in the social structure can be good agents of change. For this, it is important to deal with already established traditional village leaders--women in the 30-40, or older, age group.

Since these people are mostly illiterate and unable to understand the national language, the training materials should be visual and in local colloquial language. For large language groups like Maithili, development of such materials is worth the cost.

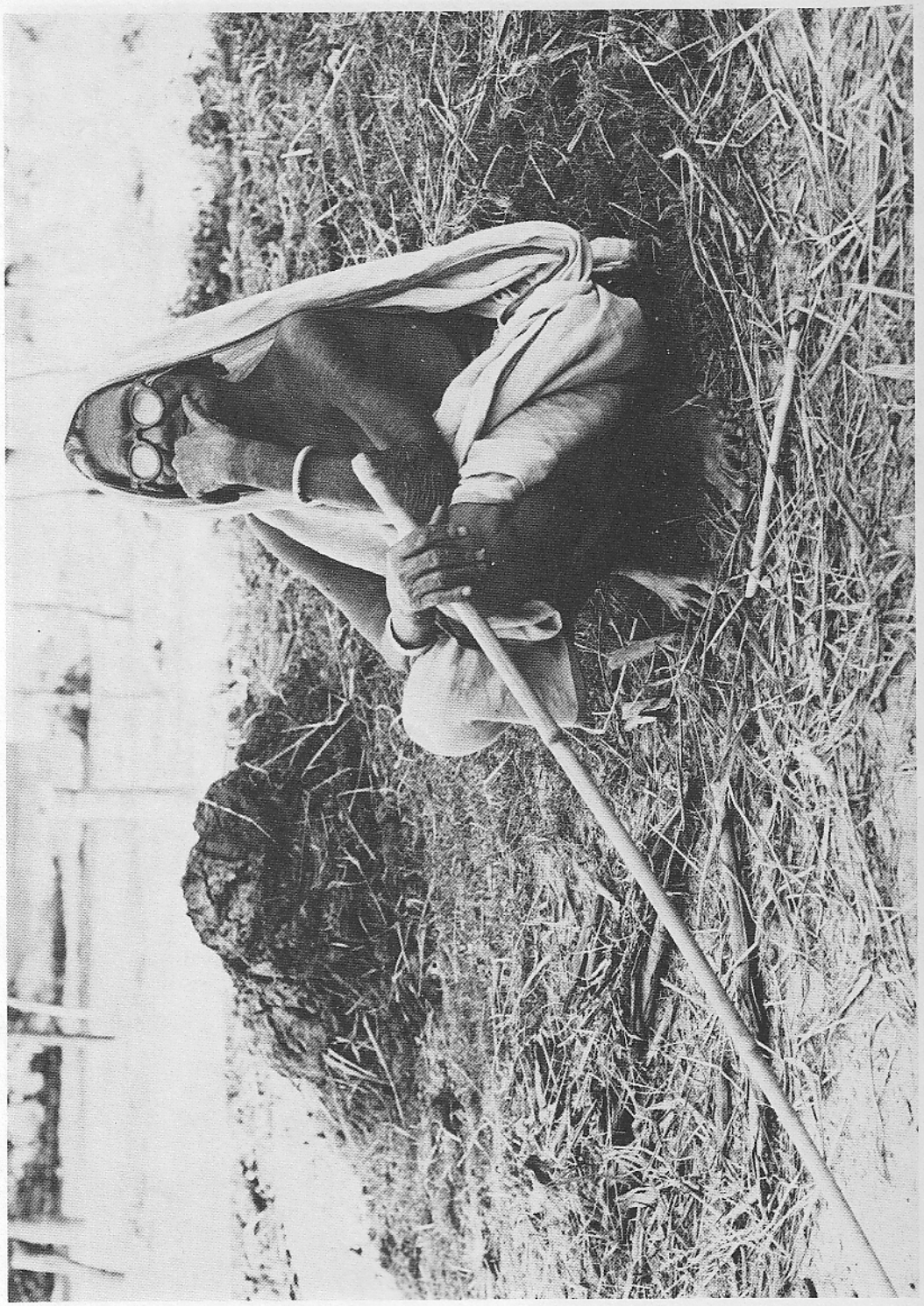
In the answers of the eight women about types of development work needed in the village, a road was mentioned four times, and an improvement of the drinking water supply system was mentioned three times. Schools and hospitals each appeared once. Some respondents also talked about the need for assistance to the poor, development of grazing land for animals, the elimination of superstitious practices and arrangement of credit facilities. As an improvement of the water supply system is identified even by village women as a desired development activity, it should face no great difficulty in acceptance, given proper planning and a carefully thought out information diffusion system.

Maithili women, in this part of Nepal, are hard working and have low status. Since they have low status and little interaction with the outside decision-making world, there is considerable likelihood of their receding to an even lower status as the role of the household as a production and political entity declines. The demand for ever increasing amounts of dowry in North Indian and Nepal Terai cities may be taken as an indicator of the declining status of women in this area. Development plans and programmes formulated for this area need to take into account the specific position of women in this area and devise specific programmes for their integration in the development process, in conformity with the cherished objective of growth with equity in Nepal.

Husking paddy in the courtyard of a house.



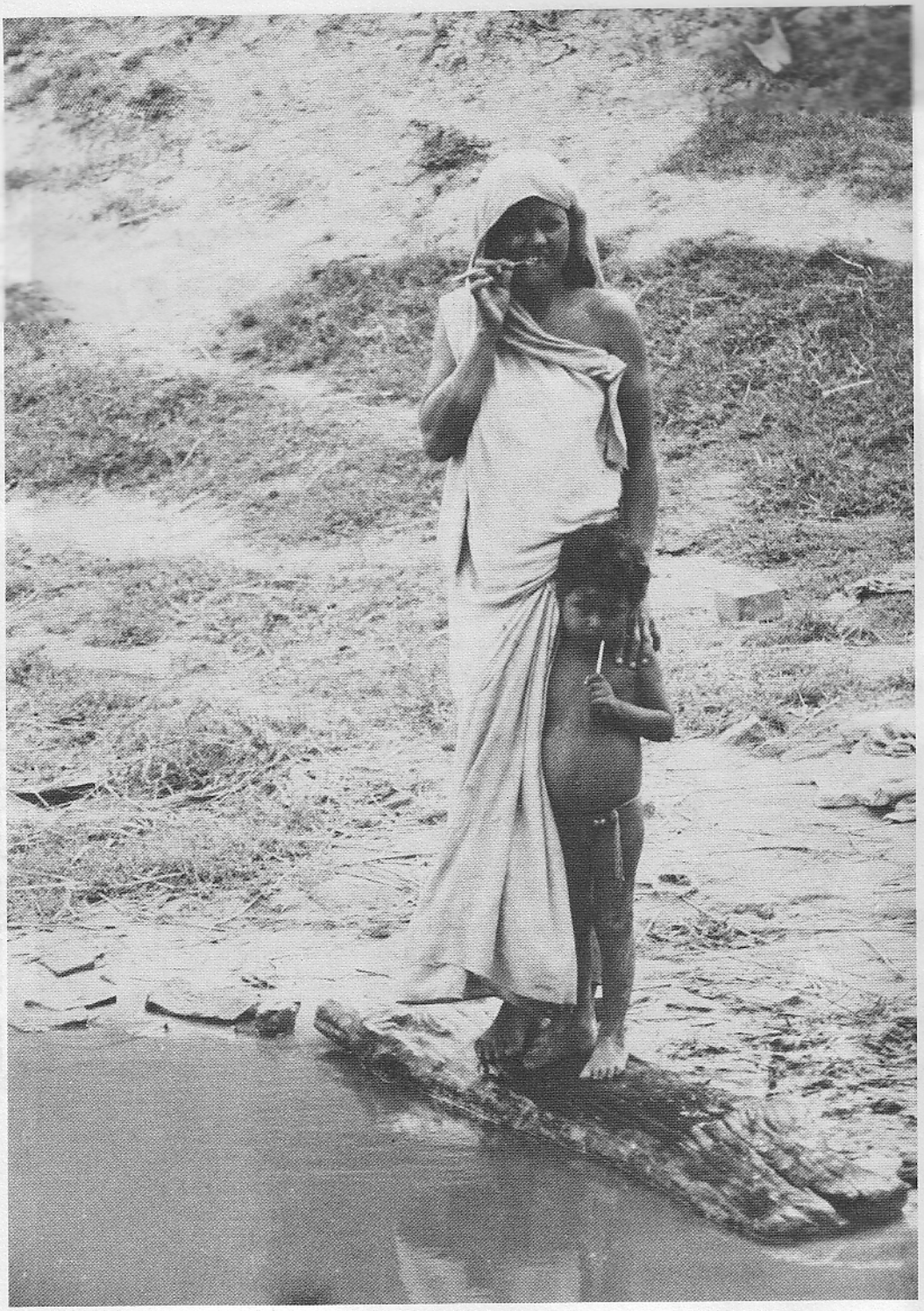
House wall painting and the mud rack used for storing water.



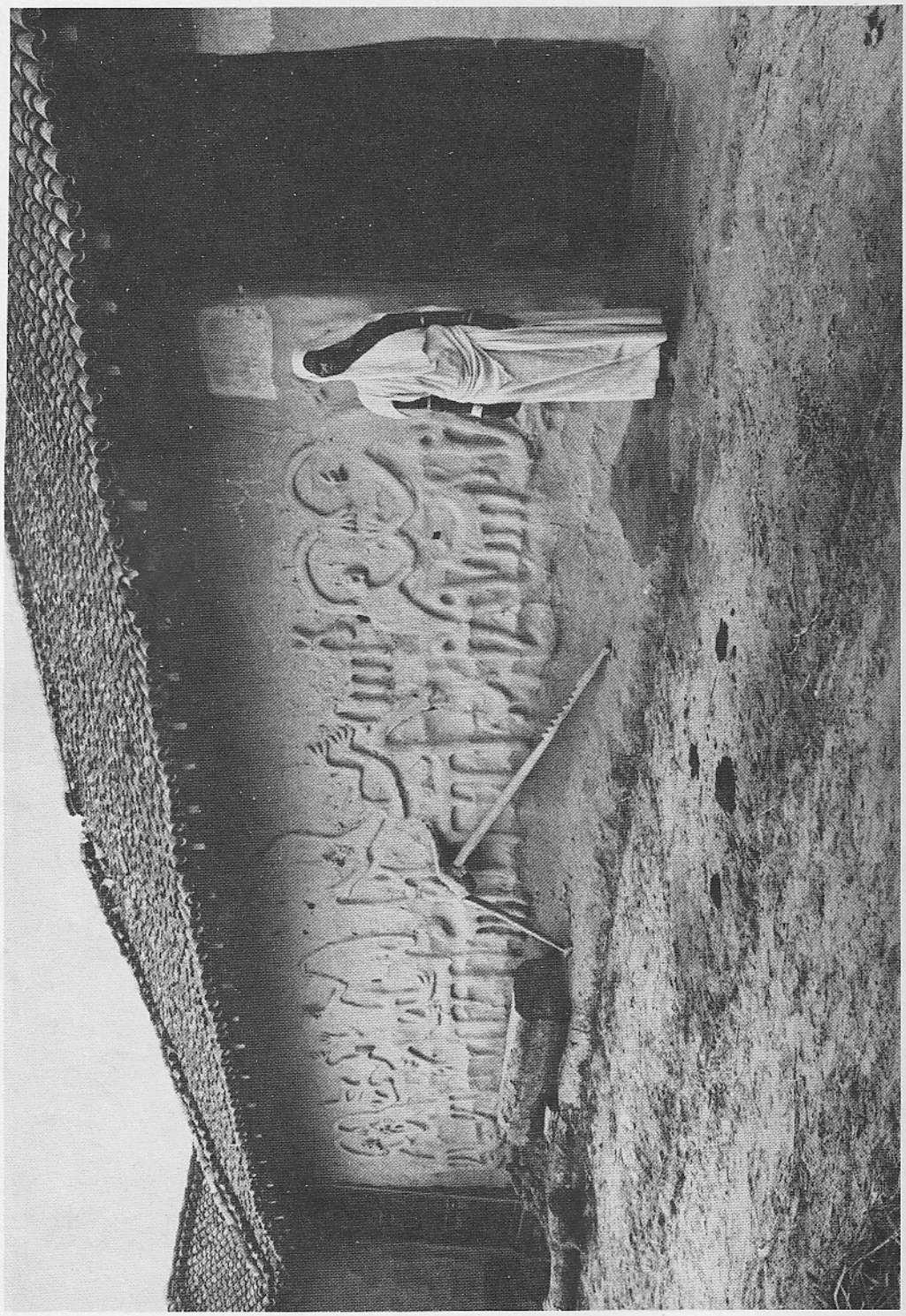
Old woman who has had an operation for cataract.

A complex of houses belonging to a landlord family.

Typical Maithili house.



Mother and son cleaning their teeth at the village pond.



Woman standing beside her house, the outer wall of which she herself embossed.

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Centre for Economic Development
and Administration

Tribhuvan University
Kathmandu, Nepal