CONTOURS OF WOMANHOOD– SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WOMANHOOD AMONG THE MARGINALIZED FISHERWOMEN IN KERALA

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Abstract

Womanhood depends on the capability and capacity of a person to do her roles. When we talk about the roles enacted by women in the society, it doesn't exclusively mean the roles assigned to them. It also includes their self-perception about which, what and how the roles of women are possessed in relation to time and space. Emancipation and empowerment processes greatly depend upon these real-life experiences. It is the accumulated effect of these identifications that are marked as visible changes in the status of women in society. This village study of fisherwomen community in Kerala used qualitative methodology specially focusing on the gender identity constructions of women in a marginalized community. Comparing social relations of women in three generations of fisherwomen community with the major social institutions, viz; education and marriage, the research tried to understand various forms of social organization and dynamics behind construction of gender identities and how it has evolved through time. Ten families with three generations of women living together were purposively selected. Semi structured interview guide was used. Study showed that the pattern of education received by women was entirely different from that of their male siblings. Marriage and the role of being a housewife gave power to women to voice their opinion in family matters only when they advanced to their Middle Ages.

Key words

Womanhood, Gender identities, social construction, Fisherwomen, Education, Marriage.

Introduction

Nature of women, their ambitions and aspirations, desires and wishes, birth and upbringing have been the subject of discussion, conversations and investigations throughout the history of mankind. Woman has been branded as a mysterious creature as well as a devoted mother and self - sacrificing wife during various

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periods of time through which the human civilization has evolved out from its primitive roots to an advanced scientific and technical culture (Mathur, S. S., 2001). Womanhood depends on the capability and capacity of a person to do her roles. When we talk about the roles enacted by women in the society, it doesn't exclusively mean the roles assigned to them. It also includes their self-perception about which, what and how the roles of women are possessed in relation to time and space. Similarly, status of women in the society greatly depends upon the roles and power relations attributed to women during particular periods of history. Butler (1990) has specified that 'Gender is more a matter of performance than a matter of ascription'.

Not only the roles of women are important, but also the roles in concurrence with the age of the women are equally important. Emancipation and empowerment have of course resulted in positive change in the status of women within her society and the societies at large. However, these processes greatly depend upon the real-life experiences of women. How women perceive these changes and opportunities and how they imbibe these provisions into their self and personhood and how they frame their actions in reciprocation to these changes are equally responsible. It is the accumulated effect of these identifications that are marked as visible changes in the status of women in society. These changes had always had a rooting in the socio-cultural milieus in which the she lives. As gender is a social construct, the socio economic and cultural environment decides the pathway for her self-emancipation process. This social context deeply influences people's perspectives and experiences. Along with the social class into which she is born, and along with the race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and other social categories, the events and inventions of an era also shape her perspectives (Elder 1994). Hence, relations of women to the power structures and social institutions, the interaction processes within the social system, all plays a crucial role in developing the mechanisms for development of womanhood.

Women and their roles within the family and society have made gender not just one of the many inequalities faced by women, but the most pervasive one too. Analysing gender differences, it could be seen that it includes social behaviours and the internal dispositions underlying them. Women are the most disadvantaged at every level and within every disadvantaged group. Gender is structured into the organization of social relations of production and reproduction of every known society (Kabeer and Natali 2013). It gives structure to power relations including those in the household and family. With regard to economic power too, unfortunately, women are not usually the ones who gain most from economic and natural resources. They are distanced from the highest economic rewards not only by gender but also by class, caste and race, all of which compound the effects of gender. Women's deprivation is further compounded by men's demands for greater share in the household resources for consumption (Kapadia, 1995; p.205). The works of World Bank and UNDP has corroborated that there is a positive

correlation between gender equality and education, employment, higher rates of economic growth, human development and well-being of the whole society.

Gender across generations – visualizing the patterns of identity constructions

Gender is identified differently by women in different generations. This village study of fisherwomen community in Kerala specially focuses on how and why gender relations have changed over time, where these changes have headed and whether these changes have been constructive to the development and emancipation of women. Especially for the women in a marginalized community, what is the significance of social systems and social processes in moulding the images and identities of womanhood? Comparing the social relations of women in three generations from fisherwomen community, the research tries to understand the dynamics behind evolution of gender identities and the ideas of empowerment.

The term generation is developed as a social and historical concept comprising the structure not only of societies but also of history itself. According to Ortega Gasset's theory of Human Life, "Human life is a drama with character, plot, and scenery, i.e., the world is primarily a mass of social interpretations of reality: beliefs, ideas, customs, estimations etc. These have a life independent of our individual wills: like laws, they stand 'in force' and we cannot avoid meeting them and having to deal with them. Thus, a generation is a human variation; every generation manifests a certain vital attitude (Marias Tulian, 1968; p: 89). Each biological generation comes into contact anew with the existent cultural heritage. Each new generation interprets reality without the years of commitment to a previous ideology and thereby transforms that reality.

There is a continuous emergence of new generations and disappearance of older generations. This may not guarantee the transformation of social structures but it does serve as a vehicle for social change. Whether a given generation realizes its potentiality in effecting social change or creating a distinctive generation style depends upon the trigger action of specific events or acceleration in tempo of social and cultural transformation. Since a historical event will have differential effects on persons of different ages and since new generations may participate in the recreation of society and its institutions, the dialectic between a changing individual interacting within a changing society is inevitable. This interaction between the individual and society consists of an interaction between cause and effect, where each may serve as both cause and effect.

"The dialectical exercise is simple in the extreme, for it requires only that the analyst of society question everything that she sees and hears, examine phenomena fully from every angle, seek and evaluate the contradiction of any proposition, and consider every category from the view point of its non-contents as well as its positive attributes. It requires us to look also for paradoxes as much as complementarities, for opposition as much as accommodation. It portrays a universe of dissonance underlying apparent order and seeks deeper orders beyond dissonance. It urges the critical examination, in the light of ongoing social activity,

of those common-sense guidelines to behavior and common-sense interpretations of reality that lie at the core of our cultural systems". (Robert F. Murphy, 1971).

Methodology

The study was qualitative, confining to the fisherwomen community in *Puthiyathura* - a coastal village in Karumkulam Panchayath - situated in Thiruvananthapuram district in the southernmost state of Kerala. Basic information on socio economic characteristics of village households was collected. Research broadened from this basic knowledge to a more in-depth elaboration of core ideas on women empowerment and womanhood.

Gender perspective on identity creation and empowerment was the primary objective of the study. As mentioned earlier, the study concentrated on two major factors – education and marriage. Education is seen as the best observable factor in measuring empowerment of a population. It is widely accepted that if women are educated, they are automatically empowered. However, it is debated whether formal education helps to empower women in all sectors and whether it is devoid of inequalities with regard to accessibility, approachability and affordability. In this circumstance, the study on the marginalized fisherwomen becomes significant in bringing out their unique histories.

Marriage is another important institution that brings role sets into the life of women. Social identities of womanhood are effortlessly interwoven to family, procreation and care through marriage. Autonomy for women in decisions related to marriage, hence, depicts another major factor of empowerment. Keeping this in view, the second objective was to inquire into the nexus between marriage and empowerment of women in the marginalized fisherwomen community.

Ten families with three generations of women living together were purposively selected for the study. In the collection and analysis of data, these generations were named as older generation, middle generation and younger generation. Responses were recorded by conducting in depth interviews, informal group discussions and participant observation. Semi structured interview guide was used. Narratives were extensively depended upon to capture the experiences without losing its essence. The community used a unique language which was a mixture of two regional languages - Tamil and Malayalam. Yet, the language had its own dialects which neither resembled both of them. Two out of the three field investigators were from the fisherwomen community. As the researcher and investigators were able to maintain rapport with respondents, the process of enquiry and data collection succeeded in catching the ideas that were conveyed in this colloquial language. Since the respondents were women from three generations, the researcher could promote the respondents to share their actual experiences without hesitation.

Findings

Gender is a value free concept. Differences of value arise only when we take gender in relation to their functions in society. What is more important is our way of looking at the matter.

Table 1. General Socio- Economic and Demographic characteristics

Details	Older generation	Middle generation	Younger generation
AGE	56 - 95	36 - 55	18 - 35
Educational Qualification	Illiterate – 5 Primary class – 3 High school - 2	Illiterate – 1 Primary class -2 High school - 7	Higher secondary – 2 Degree – 6 B Sc Nursing – 1 Diploma course -1
Marital status	Married – 4 Widowed - 6	Married – 8 Widowed -2	Married – 2 Unmarried – 8
Occupation	Fish vending – 9 House wife -1	Fish vending -4 Self-employed -2 House wives -4	Professional -1 House wife – 1 Student - 8

Impact of Education

Changing status of women in different periods and in different civilizations has greatly been influenced by her upbringing. Education has always remained an influencing factor in designing those statuses and vice versa. As a provider of pleasure and producer of children, her education was completely neglected at many times, but whenever and wherever she was given high prestige in society; her education became the primary concern of the social order. Thus, education of woman has been completely linked to her sociological status and psychological makeup. Whether women's education was of the same pattern as the education of men? If not, then why and what type of education was available for them? What is the opinion of women in getting educated and in joining the world of work? What were their expectations? What will be the futuristic trends of women's education? How education has helped them, or otherwise, in developing gender identities? were some of the questions raised by this study as an attempt to discuss vital issues concerning women's education and identity constructions.

Getting formal education was a dream for the older generation. Their education centred on familiarizing traditional knowledge about sea, fishing, house

making, supporting the parents and later on their husband. They were confined to home following their traditional knowledge systems about nature, fishing and fish processing, indulging in sea related livelihoods. For older generation, formal schools were almost absent and transportation facilities were scarce. Not to mention about learning kits, textbooks, bags and note books. Those rare ones who got to enter schools, used sands, slates for writing was luxury for a few. Among the older generation, options for higher studies were so limited that S.S.L.C or tenth pass was the highest level of education was even thinkable for women in the higher strata of the community only.

> *"Books used by S.S.L.C students at that time is now*
> *studied by LKG / UKG students" – Josephine (82)*

Even though older generation women opined that their community does not restricted educating girls, it appeared otherwise from the fact that parents showed differential treatment between boys and girls in matter of schooling. Girls remained at home looking after their siblings, doing cooking, washing clothes and making home. Education was not at all discussed in the families. They couldn't find any skill or information pertaining to their nature, habitat or livelihood in their curriculum which could equip them to live well after getting formal education. However, some of the older generation women expressed their affinity for schooling, how they fantasized going to school along with the girls in the general community, possessing school bags, slates and chalks to write.

In India, after independence, there was a growing realization that women's education is primal to the healthy development of social and national life. Efforts were made to provide schools, incentives for the weaker sections and minorities. There were periodical schemes to educate people through adult literacy programs, especially women, who were school drop outs or illiterates. But these facilities were also minimally utilized by the marginalized fisher women. Only a very small number of women in the older generation learned to read and write through the *Saksharathratha Mission* or literacy mission.

Even after introduction of modern education system in India, researches have shown that attaining desired level of education was a mirage to the middle generation women. There was double vulnerability by being women and belonging to a marginalized community. Even though the middle generation women realized importance of education, they didn't receive supportive social environments. Family poverty was again another main reason for dropping out of school. Women helped the family economy by engaging in activities like traditional fish vending, preparing dry fish and allied jobs. Education altogether had different meaning in their lives. How well one is aligned themselves with the social habitat and ecology was the strongest question that gave meaning and definition for education.

Regarding accessibility issues, the middle generation women resorted to regretting on their social conditions when they were denied the opportunity to get

education. Of late, changes in the educational sector had its influence in re-shaping their approach towards almost all major social institutions like marriage, family and education. This was reflected in their attitude that education would empower women and help them to lead a healthy and happy life. However, statements like,

> *"Education and employment make women arrogant and disrespectful. Divorce rates are also increasing due to educated women thinking independently of their husband, family and children",* Johnamma (75) - represented deep rooted contradictions among generations.

Like the older generation women, middle generation women in the study also desired to provide educational opportunity for their daughters in expectation to fulfill their own unfinished desires. Socio-economic independence was the main hope shared by many.

> *"Today education is very important. I wished to go to college, but I had studied only 8th standard. That is why I have determined to give more education to my daughter. I will help her until she reaches her highest qualification" – Susheela (42)*

When it came to the younger generation women, education became the essential ingredient for empowerment. Through education, they anticipated bright future, secured jobs and independent lives. Unlike the other two generations, younger generation reported to have exposure to more opportunities. Still there was deficiency in support systems. They depended more on information and communication technology. A virtual world of exposure to modernity was provided by social media that transcended socio-cultural – geographical barriers and increased their freedom of speech and expression of opinion.

> *"One should not be stopped from getting education even after marriage."- Rajani (21).*

> *"Our Kerala is proud to have attained 100% literacy rate and providing better basic education facilities as well. Now SSLC has become the minimum educational qualification of majority. "- Jasmine, (29)*

> *"Education is modernized. "-Mary Merlin, (18)*

> *"We get hi-tech education in schools and colleges. "- Hema, (19)*

Migration out of the village for higher education was also frequent among younger generation women. They had the choice to select educational facilities as per their convenience. However, unemployment, family poverty, cultural adjustments etc still remained as a problem for those in the lowest economic strata. Panchayath, Church Authorities and Vizhinjam Port Development Authority provided better schooling facilities for the community. Despite these developments,

proportion of women pursuing higher education was low compared to men within the community. Majority of the respondents in the younger generation too complained that they are not successful in reaching their goals for the fullest extent because they are girls and they have to compromise and struggle between personal choices and family choices. Their main struggle was to convince the family, neighbourhood, community members and the church authorities about their ambitions which was unlikely a matter of concern for men. New job trends influenced their occupational preferences. Instead of traditional fish vending jobs, they were more interested in Government sector jobs. Women in the younger generation considered education as an instrument to achieve personal freedom, financial independency and equality. Ultimately, they hope to establish a deserving position within the society as a whole.

Impact of Marriage

According to psycho analytic approach models, marriage is seen as a response to our human need to be attached to another person to overcome a sense of isolation (Bowlby, 1986). A special feature of such relationships is recognized as projective identification, or psychological division of labor, where partners look to each other to provide the emotional qualities they feel they lack or choose not to exercise. Many of these qualities are linked to maintaining a desired sense of gender identity (Farrel and Rosenberg, 1981). Because individuals come to a relationship with many idiosyncratic needs and fantasies, each couple evolves patterns of relating that have special meanings to them, even though the patterns might be contrary to those expected or displayed by others.

Despite their desires for formal schooling, most of them were compelled to get married. Average age of girls at marriage was 12 – 16. Girls were a heavy responsibility in marriage market due to dowry demands. Women in the older generation did neither have any concept about their marriage nor any imagination regarding their husbands to be. Marriage was a matter of decision taken by parents and elder siblings. The pressing factor behind marriage was family poverty and number of unmarried girls remaining in the family who were of marriageable age. Dowry was a social problem at that time too. When all such factors were present, pressure from parents amplified and girls were compelled to get married at awfully young ages as early as 12 or 13.

> *"Whoever the parents show, that one will be our better halves."-*
> *Jusamary (87) and Franseena (83) (older generation).*

> *"My husband asked my mother- why didn't you educate Mariyapillai? For which my mother replied – if I have educated her, did you get her to marry you? Won't she be going to the school? Son, we don't have the money to educate her and find a better alliance. Still five girls are below her in the family"-*
> *Mariyapillai (89) (older generation).*

Each local community has its own history. They differ from each other in many respects such as the natural environment, ecosystem and resources, which cannot be washed away by a process of globalization. There are specific distribution of power, wealth and income. People react differently to changes that affect them based on their perceptions. The specificity of such local situations, the different opportunities and constraints of people's livelihoods, the culture of each separate society and community within which people try to survive and give meaning to their lives should be studied if one wants to understand the meaning of development and empowerment as perceived by the people concerned.

For older generation women, marriages were simple ceremonies conducted at home or in the church. After the ceremonies, there used to have a feast at the bride's home. Couples used to remain at the bride's home for the first week of their marriage and then only returned to the husband's home. This practice may be seen as limited to the fishermen community in this particular village. Among those in the nearby village, the brides usually went to their husband's home directly after marriage.

Women called their husband "Kettiyal" meaning 'the person who married me or tied the knot'. Gold ornaments were very rare. Gold was considered as luxury that could be used by elite class and caste. So, most of the women used to get a tiny gold locket called the 'minnu' or 'thaali'- made of gold. Many of the families which could not afford to have gold used alternate metals like silver or the locket made out of bull horns or sea shells. The groom ties this on to the bride's neck during the marriage ceremony.

Remarriage was a question out of choice and a matter out of debate among women in older generation. Important concerns for the majority who opposed remarriage were as follows:

- Church will not approve the second marriage. They will not give religious ceremonies or honour like 'koodhaasha'(sacrament).
- Step father may be hostile towards the children from earlier marriage. The second husband may harass or hate their children. This may lead to unrests in the family.
- Bitter experiences of the first marriage may happen again and the women could not bear it again. Hence it was better to refrain from re-marriage.

Most of the reasons were similar to that of women in every generation from time to time. This attitude of older generation women led them to continue as widows for longer periods - the highest being forty-seven years of widowhood among the cases studied. Considering marriage as a collective necessity that vested primary importance to family and community was the prominent aspect of marriage for women in such communities. It is important to know how women evaluate their marriage patterns and concepts over time. Further, whether women have achieved any tangible independency with regard to decisions of marriage and experienced

any empowerment remains to be understood. Women need to be understood not only as victims of change, but also as agents in the process.

Analysing the middle generation, it could be seen that marriage still remained as a decision taken by parents to complete their obligation. 'Earlier the better' was the thought that ruled them. Church gave an agreement called betrothal. Women used to concur to their parent's decision. Family duty and family status was priorities than individual choice.

> *"They asked me the consent. Even after I said I do not like the marriage, they conducted my marriage. They wanted it, they did it"- Sheeba (47)*

> *"It is the family decision. They select the groom. How could we refuse? I can't."-Jaseetha (50)*

Women in the middle generation had concepts/imagination about their marriage and their future husbands. They wished for husbands who don't have any kind of bad habits, who showed responsibility towards family and is a believer in God. But many women got partners who were totally against their concepts. "Partner should be a person who doesn't have any kind of bad habits. But I got a person who have all kinds of bad habits like drinking, chewing beetle leaves, use of Pan Parag etc. I wished for a person who has good character." - Sushila (45).

In such cases, family life became more of adjustments than of happiness. Marital tensions persisted for those women, decreasing their feeling of wellbeing. Here we can observe that family, procreation and care were the priorities given by women. They didn't expect their husband or family to be supporting them for education, employment or job opportunities outside their community or habitat. Preferential age of marriage for middle generation women increased to 16 - 22 years. Dowry burden on bride's family increased as demands of the generation of grooms became high. Instead of shared livelihood resources in a traditional family system like fishing boats, nets, etc., independent livelihood resources became more preferred one for the middle generation. Grooms depended on dowry as a major source of capital to build their livelihood resources in the course of modernization. Women also favored dowry as an option for building a prosperous trouble-free family life.

> *"Strhreedhanam (dowry) is willingly given by our parents to their daughter."- Jessy (51)*

> *"Giving Sthrreedhanam (dowry) is a good thing because my husband is a worker in a fishing boat. He doesn't have a fixed source of income. If he had received sufficient dowry, it would have helped him to withstand adverse situations". Johnamma (54).*

Reduced contacts with outside world prevented women in the middle generation from identifying the kind of marginalization faced by them. Even though they knew that their role in the society was limited to household works, majority of women in the middle generation could neither break this chain nor were willing to do so. This physical barrier to education and developed areas experienced by the older and middle generation women was not a factor of isolation / marginalization for younger generation, as they were more connected with the rest of the world through the modern communication facilities.

Marriages became expensive and extravagant occasions for the younger generation. Invitation letters, Videos, Camera, and Radio etc. were widely used. Marriage courses conducted by the church authorities became mandatory. Inter caste – inter religious love marriages became more frequent.

> *"Today marriages are considered as an occasion to show the luxury of the family. Values of marriages are less considered. Marriages show luxury and celebration."* -
> *Ludiya (21)*

> *"My parent's told me to open my mind if I have an affair;"*-
> *Freedamol (19)*

Opinion of parents still remained as the final word regarding decisions on marriage for younger generation as well. Willingness was asked on marrying a particular person and the opinions were taken into consideration. Even in the case of love marriages, securing consent of parents was preferred. It was a progressive change that the younger generation received the opportunity within the family to raise their voices, express their consent or dissent regarding the selection of mates. One of the main reasons for younger generation women to securing this consent was the possibility for acquiring family property as dowry.

> *"Sometimes we feel that girls are agreeing for their wedding to*
>
> *get the dowry from the family"* – *Annie (19).*

Dowry, which is considered as social evil, received acceptance on account that it helped women to secure their legitimate share from family. With the existing patriarchal property rights in the community, dowry became the major factor for dividing family property between male and female children. At the same time, compulsion from in-laws, domestic violence, battering etc. were considered as atrocities.

Surprisingly, irrespective of her educational attainments, age of the girl still remained as the priority factor for fixing marriageable age. Age at marriage for the third generation ranged from 17-25, even though they themselves preferred late twenties. Younger generation women believed that it will help them to solve family problems on their own. Unmarried respondents opined that woman should marry at

the age of 24-26 only. By that time, they could get quality education and secure a good job. Self-sufficient self-reliant, empowered life was their main ambition.

Concepts of younger generation about partners also showed remarkable difference. They preferred peaceful, understanding and educated partners for their marital life. They also required their husbands should allow them to go for a job and if possible, support them to go to colleges for continuing higher education. Hence, it was observed that marriage became secondary choice to the younger generation. Long term relationships in marriage, family consistency, synchronization in marital relationships etc. came to be considered as equal responsibility of their partners too.

> *"For some people remarriage is a license. They keep on remarrying again and again. They will not stick on to a relationship"* – Marymarline (24)

Younger generation women were more anxious about the strained marital relationships due to the availability of the option for divorce. Declining quality of marital relationships was the most vulnerable situation for women in the younger generation. While alcoholic husbands were the concerns of older and middle generation women, lack of trust, extra marital relationships and cheating between couples due to use of mobile phones and social media were the main troubles faced by younger generation. Love marriages also ended up in problems. Unlike earlier generations, the younger generation was bold enough to speak for themselves. Even after generations of social change, exposure to education and modern ways of life, women were reluctant to consider a life outside family, marriage and morality.

Analysis

Learning about gender identity constructions among the women in marginalized fisher folk community was brilliantly interesting. Household chores and home management was the major roles identified by the older generation. Economy of women was not at all identified separately, even though finance of the family run through their hands. Money flow through the hands of the women, but was not possessed by them. Hence, older generation women acquired little assets in their name. The economy was only that of the family. They also had a strong preference for continuing the traditional work of fish vending. Responsibility and morality of the women was attached to their traditional work which was intrinsically bonded by their relationship with nature and habitat. Even though it was a tiresome work in modern times, many of the older generation women continued to work as fish vendors. Lack of skill in other job areas restricted their chances to go outside the community for work and vice versa. Their unique colloquial language, dressing pattern and differentiating life style were equally significant factors that created self-imposed marginalization.

According to "Resource theory" (Blood and Wolfe 1960, Heer 1963, Safilios – Rothschild 1970), power is generally associated with resources. Given

the gender-based stratification in most societies, these resources are unequally distributed between women and men, the latter having the greater share. Of relevance here is that the resources women control (ex: domestic competence, socialization of skills and other attributes) which are essential for an efficient management of marital and family life are not perceived as valuable as economic assets. When a society attaches significance to resources, which are material and not human in nature, the power of women is undermined (Ramu G.N.,2003). Women are socialized into being self –effacing and responsible. They have to take on the unselfish tasks of reproduction and nurturance. But the alienation of women from resources and their curtailed access to consumption at the household level leads to their poor health and wellbeing impacting the future health and wellbeing of the children.

At a time when women in the general population had access to the fruits of new social policies and political discourses after independence, these outcomes were not evenly distributed to those in the periphery. Women in marginalized communities were side-lined mainly because of the non-sympathetic and non-sensitive attitude of socio- political developments towards the issues of women. Hence, it was not easy for these women to carry themselves along with the developmental processes of the general public. Their special language and slang, ethnic dressing pattern etc differentiated them easily from other mainstream peer groups in schools. Geographical location of schools in nearby urban centres further increased the problem of accessibility beyond bridging. They were uprooted from a value system followed by their own community and were forced to embrace a foreign one. Sea and the people depending on ocean were invisible in the curriculum as well as it was absent in the thoughts of policy makers. As students, they faced identity clashes and adjustment problems. School drop outs were high in earlier periods due to the resulted cultural contradictions and inferiority complexes.

Responsibility to behold family cohesion and values were still vested on women. Mutual compromise by conversations mentioned as a solution for solving family problems put extra burden on the roles of women and warned them to be careful to avoid quarrels with husband and family. Adjustment and compromise in order to run family matters were also considered womanly. Marriage and the role of being a housewife gave power to women to voice their opinion in family matters only when they advanced to their Middle Ages. Regarding education of their daughters or the marriage of their offspring, we can see this freedom for expression of opinion was possible when moving to the middle generation. What education provided women in the younger generation was provided to the middle generation by age. Thus, the middle generation women demanded their young girls should be educated, given the opportunity to have a job and be economically self-reliant.

Marriage also involves social roles. This perspective leads to examination of each partner's role definition and role performance and how role expectations

and role performances change over the life time and over historical time. Marital status is an index of one's own place in the broader social system of legal, institutional and informal access to resources. Marriages and satisfaction in marital relationships are influenced by the expectations and opportunities that characterize the years together.   Many of the women emphasized role performance and instrumental aspects of the relationships such as showing substantial responsibilities in work, parenting, family care, and community interaction as the main factors that are responsible for marital stability and satisfaction. In case of women with assertive and alcoholic husbands, women tend to become more lenient and dependent. They accommodated or adjusted to the situation for the only sake of preserving peace within the family.

Maintaining a gendered division of labour seemed to be valued particularly by middle generation and older generation. However, younger generation can be observed as   empowered because they were against sex – typed tasks that might serve to reaffirm gender identity. Strong affective commitment shown by the husbands to the women of their life was reported as the main reason behind strong marital bonds by the older generation. In majority of the unsatisfactory marital relationships, alcohol abuse was the major problem, but most of the marriages there was no clear-cut problem to show. These were more attributed to failed expectations and overall dissatisfaction with the relationship. Such unsatisfactory marriages were held together by ambivalent mixtures of positive and negative feelings, and some turned into mere utilitarian arrangements.

Conclusion

Qualitative studies on interactions of social institutions like education and marriage on social construction of identities of diverse ethnic and cultural heritage groups are needed for uncovering the hidden truths about the realities that we observe. Especially, regarding gender identity constructions, their own experiences and the meaning they attribute to their experiences may support in describing different patterns of relationships and identities created by women. It will also provide insights into the lives of women in marginalized communities, how they are side-lined mainly because of the non-sympathetic and non- sensitive attitude of socio-political developments towards the issues of women.

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