Chapter III
ECOLOGY, ECONOMY AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE: PRECOLONIAL CONFIGURATIONS AND COLONIAL CHANGE
From ancient times, geographic and ecological factors have played a key role in shaping the history and culture of the mountainous region. Thousands of years of land movements have altered elevations of mountains and fostered the instabilities of mountain zones, bestowing a unique history and a number of unique features upon the Himalayan valley. Each valley is a micro region housing many smaller, diverse communities. This chapter aims at capturing key aspects of historical change in the social ecology and the politico-economic and social life of the people in Garhwal region from pre-colonial to colonial times in order to understand the changing socio-historical context of Garhwali women and their location within that context. Adopting a broad political economy approach this chapter attempts a reconstruction of the pre-capitalist past of Garhwal peasant society, with a focus on examining the interrelationship between environment, population, social structure and culture. Following Afonja (1986) we attempt to understand social production, the relationship between women's role and relations in production, as well as their role and relations in reproduction.

Important though the larger socio-historical context and women's location is for this study, we are constrained by the paucity and limitations of secondary source material. Atkinson’s Gazetteer of the Garhwal Himalayas (1884) has been the primary and at times the only data source. Many historians and scholars have depended almost entirely on it. Others have pointed out its several shortcomings, for example, its spatial and temporal incoherence, unverified and unverifiable facts, based largely on hearsay and folklore. It is said to display an absence of a historical perspective and is imbued with the bias of an alien administration (Rawat, 1989). In recent times, few attempts have been made to give a more scientific account of this area based on primary sources like copper plate inscriptions, original manuscripts, archival sources etc. by historians. This has brought forth several controversies regarding the area and periodisation under study.

Information on Garhwal is especially scanty as compared to adjoining Kumaon. Historians are of the opinion that the “conditions obtained in Garhwal were more or less similar. As such the existence of somewhat same economic structure maybe suggested for the Garhwal chiefdom as well” (M.P.Joshi, 1990 p.96). Though historically and culturally Kumaon and Garhwal have stood as opposed categories and continue to do so
to some extent even today, yet their social structures share marked similarities and their inhabitants retain social and cultural ties (Sanwal, 1976; Guha, 1991). Hence, we have drawn upon documents pertaining to both Kumaon and Garhwal. Basically, it bears emphasis that this attempt to reconstruct the social history of this region thus has to be read with these limitations of the sources and problems of periodisation in mind. Much more historical research needs to be conducted in the region.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first describes the natural setting and geographical features of Garhwal. The second section attempts an analysis of pre-colonial Garhwal society in which we examine the ecological foundations, cultural adaptation and social organisation of the agriculture and animal husbandry-based subsistence economy. The third section examines structural and cultural dimensions of the relations of production, the evolution and nature of agrarian classes, caste and gender stratification and its linkages within. The fourth and final section examines the social impact on Garhwal peasant economy under the jolt of colonial-capitalist accumulation and the squeezing of people's resource which spelt the decline of subsistence economy and initiated processes of migration that have not been stemmed to this day.
Figure 3.1: Location of Map of Garhwal Himalaya

GARHWAŁ: GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION AND NATURAL FEATURES

The "Gar-Kum" Himalayas of erstwhile Uttar Pradesh and present day Uttaranchal comprises the central portion of the Himalayan mountainous expanse from Kashmir to Darjeeling. It consisted of two clearly discernible cultural regions, namely Garhwal and Kumaon, extending from 29° 5' N to 31° 25' North latitudes and from 77° 45' E to 81° E longitudes, with an area of approximately 46,500 sq. kms, bordered by Nepal in the east and Tibet in the north, while Himachal Pradesh formed its western and north-western boundaries and in its south lies the Ganga Yamuna plains of Uttar Pradesh.

About three-fourth of this 'Garh-Kum" region, covering the western half is Garhwal - 'the country of fortress' - called after the large stone structures found scattered through the region. From the varied accounts, it appears that the region known today as Garhwal was known earlier as Kedarkhand. Geographically the Garhwal region lies between latitude 29° 26' N to 31° 28' N and longitude 77° 49' E to 80°6' E, with a total area of 29,089 sq. kms. In the east, the region is separated by the high hills of Kumaon Himalaya (forming the district boundaries of Pithoragarh, Almora and Nainital). River Ton separates Garhwal and Himachal Pradesh in the west. The snow clad peaks of Higher Himalaya make the Indo-Tibetan boundary in the North, while in the South, this region starts from the foothill zone of the Himalaya (see Map 3.1) Being a part of the larger geopolitical unit - the Himalayas - they share geological history with it. Like many parts of the Himalaya, this region also supports much varied and complex physical characteristics, mainly due to abrupt attitudinal variations, diverse topography and climatic extremes (Kharkwal, 2001).

Topographically the Garhwal region is one of rocky precipitous mountains and rivers, with highly undulating and rugged terrain. It varies from low valleys and narrow strips to very high mountains and between these extremes of elevation are high valleys, narrow plains, foothills and low mountains. There exists a great contrast in elevation of valley bottoms and mountain peaks everywhere in the region. Hence the region represents all characteristic features of the Himalayas viz. high relief, steep escarpments with most precipitous ravines, peaks crowned with perpetual snows, glaciers, deeply scooped
valleys with swiftly flowing, roaring streamlets and glistening lakes etc. (Kharkwal, 2001).

The mountain system of Garhwal Himalayas has a north-west and easterly direction, rising abruptly from the Gangetic plan at scarcely 1000 feet above sea-level to perpetual snow passes into Tibet, at 16,000 to 18,000 feet and the peaks of Bandarpunch, Trishul, Nanda Devi and others reaching 20,000 to 25,000 feet (Berreman, 1963). Thus about 16.2 percent of the region is under perpetual snow. The only exemption to this rugged mountainous terrain is a very narrow sub-mountain strip of plain land, called “Bhabhar”\(^1\), marking the southern boundary of the region. Hence Garhwal region enjoys a wide range of altitude ranging from 325 m in the “Bhabhar” to a height of 7817 m forming the peak of Greater Himalayas or Himadri. The northern part of the region, most of which lies under snow covered zone, provides the sources of the most important river system of the region, namely Ganga, Yamuna and Ramganga. These rivers flow parallel to the mountain, but at some places, they turn into acute bends, resulting in formation of deep gorges. The whole hilly tract is bisected by a number of small streams and rivulets locally known as gad, gadhera or raula. These rise in the lower hills of Garhwal and join these rivers either in this region or in adjoining district of Bijnor. These along with lakes or tals of various shapes and sizes are important water features of the region. The major river systems have cut deep north-south valleys, which are separated from one another by formidable ridges. The region’s major river systems carry the glacial run-off to the plains and the river valleys provide the only access to the inner mountains. Occasionally, this topography has led to faunal and floral isolation of natural environments and is often responsible for segregation of agricultural systems (Kharkwal, 2001; Agarwal et al, 1995; English, 1985).

Administratively, the Garhwal region today embraces Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Rudraprayag, Tehri, Dehradun, Haridwar and Pauri Garhwal districts of Uttaranchal State\(^2\). The district of interest for this study is Pauri Garhwal district, often simply known as Garhwal.

\(^1\) Bhabhar is a submontane strip, south of the foot of the Siwalik Hills, which extends up to the southern boundary of Garhwal district. The whole trail is 132 km with minimum and maximum width of 0.5 km and 6.00 kms respectively. The southern belts of this zone are comparatively levelled and is more favorable for agricultural practices.

\(^2\) These seven districts together form the Garhwal region with its regional headquarters at Pauri in Pauri Garhwal district.
district, a populous region with its terrain of rugged hills, narrow river valleys and forested spurs rising to 3500 metres or more.

Pauri Garhwal District lies between the High Himalayas on the north and the Terai\(^3\) bordering the Gangetic plain in the South. The altitude varies from 500 m to 3500 m and with the exception of a narrow strip 5 - 8 kms wide along the southern edge called Bhabhar, there is very little naturally flat land. The western boundary is formed by the Alakananda river, which below its confluence with Bhagirathi river at Deoprayag becomes the Ganga. The whole district, comprising numerous steep-sided valleys with narrow, often stony floors, is drained by tributaries of this system. The catchment of Nayyar river, a tributary of the Alakananda is confined to the Pauri district. It has its origin in Dudatoli range, the highest point of 3098 m in the District. The Pauri Garhwal district comprises an area of 5440 sq. kms between latitude 29°45' to 30°15' N and longitude 78° 24' to 79° 23' E. About two-third area of the district falls under forestland. Thick forests are seen in southern Siwalik ranges and a few pockets at higher elevation of Deedatoli, Damdeval and Adwani ranges (Whittaker, 1984; Lal et al, 1987).

Topographically, Pauri Garhwal District embodies parts of Lesser Himalaya\(^4\) in its northern and central part and sub-Himalayas\(^5\) as foothills in the southern part and Bhabhar and Terai in its southern most parts. Since the Garhwal Himalayas lies above 30° North latitude, it is therefore within the temperate zone, not far from the tropics. The High Himalayas to the north and the Gangetic plain to the south influence the climate and vegetation. The sub-Himalayan parts get maximum monsoon rains as these form the major barrier, while Lesser Himalayan range receive comparatively less rainfall and the valley part gets still less rainfall. The western disturbances and summer monsoon currents contribute towards the changing seasons in this region. Maximum rainfall occurs from June to September, while sporadic snowfall occurs in the higher reaches in the month of

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\(^3\) Terai is the name given to the flat belt of the region bordering the southern edge of the Himalayas from the Ganges gorge at Hardwar to the Northeast corner of Bihar State.

\(^4\) Lesser Himalayas are central part of the Himalayas lying between the Greater Himalaya (or Himadri) and Siwaliks (or sub-Himalayas) ranging from 1500 to 2700 m of ridges and 500 to 1200 m of valleys.

\(^5\) Sub-Himalayas or Outer-Himalayas are the Siwalik hills, which are the long chain of narrow and low hills (750 - 1200 m) running almost parallel to the main Himalayas.
December - January. Average annual rainfall in Pauri Garhwal is 1440 mm\(^6\) (Whittaker, 1984; Lal et al., 1987; Kharkwal, 2001).

Geographers conventionally identify three parallel environmental zones running on an east-west axis through the regions: the Lesser Himalayas, the sub-Himalayas or Siwalik Hills and the Bhabhar and Terai. Each zone is distinguished by specific variables of elevation, vegetation, soil composition, slope contours, precipitation and patterns of socio-economic adaptation of its inhabitants (Hagan, 1961, cf. English, 1985). The altitude and rainfall profoundly influence vegetation. The flora and fauna is varied and described in detail by Atkinson (Atkinson, 1884). Thus Pauri Garhwal exhibits a variety of climatic and vegetational zones from sub-tropical in the lowest parts of the lowest valley to warm temperate near the crests. Additionally due to elevation and other topographical features, there is diversification in climatic conditions to the extent that micro-climatic conditions usually differ from valley to valley and locality to locality, according to the direction of ridges, degree of slope, intensity of forest cover and nearness to the glaciers (Saklani, 1998). These in turn have a bearing on spatial interaction and process of development of the region, leading to a large degree of variation in the region's socio-economic development and related agricultural and other developmental activities.

ECOLOGICAL BASIS OF HILL SUBSISTENCE ECONOMY AND ITS DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

The Ecological Basis Of The Subsistence Economy

Against the background of climatic and topographic feature of Garhwal, we now move on to discussing the unique economy and specific mountain production strategy of the Garhwal region which evolved over a period of time. Most historians have placed the date of arrival of Aryans in this region to about 2000 B.C. Depending upon the meagre

\(^6\) Rainfall in the region is monsoonal in character and averages 1450 mm per annum, but there is high annual variability 955- 2300 mm, as well as marked seasonality. Over 75 percent of precipitation occurs between mid-June and mid-September (Lal et al., 1987, p.535 - based on data from Pauri for the period 1901 - 82 ; Whittaker, 1984, p.110).
sources of evidence, it is difficult to establish the periods more specifically. Hence we use this as the cut-off point.

The earliest non-Aryan peoples (prior to 2000 B.C.), whose lives are shrouded in pre-history, are said to have lived by simple hunting, fishing and gathering activity. In course of time, they gradually reached a new stage of primitive agriculture, popularly known as shift or jhum cultivation, which is called katil or khil in the hill region. Early agricultural operations included clearing of jungles on the hill-slope, burning of the patches and growing paddy and other crops. Patches were used for a few seasons and then abandoned. Later diversified varieties of grains, lentils, etc. were raised using maximum number of plots of land for cultivation and animals like cows, buffaloes, horses, goats, sheep and fowls were domesticated from the point of view of having food source. Transhumance was practised, which involved a seasonal cyclical movement of men and animals during the year so as to make the best possible use of seasonally available pastures and water. Forests were exploited for seasonal forest produce such as honey, tubers, fruits etc. Non-agricultural production in early Garhwal was largely restricted to the production of metal equipment and articles made from copper, iron, wood, leaves, leather and pottery. Artisans tapped the mountains for the mineral resources. Stone masonry, carpentry and oil pressing were the other occupations (Saklani, 1998, p.123-149)

The earliest archaeological sources shows that settled plough agriculture evolved in the region between 1500 to 1000 B.C. when the Khasa people established their numerical and political dominance. They adapted themselves to and further developed the multifaceted exploitation of a vertical eco-system (Berreman, 1963; Joshi, 1990; Saklani, 1998). The rainfed agricultural operations of the region were and are till today constrained by the fragile agro-ecological conditions. Yet Garhwali cultivators have managed to be self sufficient in food, by building a symbiotic relationship between themselves and their ecological niche. Cultivation, raising livestock and foraging were the chief subsistence activities.

Land, livestock, agricultural tools and implements have been the main means of production. Cultivation was primarily done with wooden ploughs tipped with iron blades.
Animal husbandry remained an integral part of the agricultural system due to the criticality for soil fertility. Given the poor soil conditions, hill agriculture is absolutely dependent on organic, animal dung manure for replenishing its fertility. The symbiotic relationship between ecology and economy is further underscored by the centrality of forests to the subsistence economy. Besides being sources of food, fuel, material for shelter, medicinal plants, fodder, and for the crafting of agricultural implements, both agriculture and animal husbandry are heavily forest biomass dependent. Forests augment nutritive value of soil through foliage. Fodder grass and leaves are critical for the maintenance of livestock, which in turn provided the sole source of manure to the fields. Hence, forests are essential to stability of soil systems and hydrological balance of the eco-system (Shiva, 1991; Mehta, 1994). Very importantly, soil conservation and protection of water resources are also related to forests. Long realising the criticality of forests for sustainability of their economy and lives, the Garhwali people have a history of traditional consciousness about the renewability of the natural assets. Customary practices regulated grazing. Care was taken to allow time for regeneration of village pastures by tactfully combining grazing with grass cutting, lopping and collection of straw from cultivated fields and practising vertical seasonal migrations. These practices evolved over time, perhaps due to sustainable use of pastures (Dangwal, 1997).

Self-sufficient subsistence however did not and could not spell economic isolation. Essential foods like salt and cloth, were procured from outside and there was intra-region barter trade. Moreover, these ancient communities also had an established internal and external trade system. Different communities traded in different goods like gold dust, silver, medicinal herbs, gems, perfumes, sweet smelling herbs, spice, beautiful animals, birds, wool, skins of various animals, iron tools, asbestos, grey pottery, copper ware and so on. (Thaper, 1984; Nautiyal, et. al., 1977; Pliny, 1892, all cited in Saklani, 1998). The trade was based on barter-system, as currency was not in circulation at that time (Chaudhory, 1955). Barter system, which formed an integral part of their internal trade and commerce, lasted for centuries, and some remnants of it can even be found in the villages today.
Thus there exist a strong link between forest, agriculture and animal husbandry and the economic life of the people. The economic structure and social organisation are built around the primary relationship with both its topographic features and natural resources in the Himalayas. Clearly, for the Garhwal economy, ecological conditions have been of utmost significance because of the tight interweaving that exists in productive activity with the renewability of the surrounding natural assets (Dangwal, 1997).

The Distinctive Features Of Hill Agro-Ecology

Hill agriculture is an elaborately organised and extremely difficult and laborious enterprise. It represents a unique adaptation to the challenges posed by the mountain terrain and environment. It has several distinctive features that are critical to understanding the labour process:

**Terracing**

The mountainous terrain limits the scope of reclaiming land for cultivation purposes. Such conditions require that the land be terraced i.e. cut into hand-made field. The terraces rising in stair-like successions from the lower level towards the top, constitute a distinctive feature of hill farming. Terracing is indispensable to plough agriculture, which requires level fields and an effective means of checking soil erosion. It also enhances productivity by conserving heat and moisture. Cultivation on steep slopes would be impossible without it.

**Verticality**

The construction of terraces depends upon the slope of the ridge on which they are built. The steeper the slope of the ridge, the smaller the size of the terrace, making large-sized fields almost impossible. But due to the topography of the region, the villagers are forced to use both the gentle and steep slopes and hence cultivation is carried on in scattered blocks, divided by intervening ridges and ravines. Hence one comes across enormous number of little fields, of variety of sizes, shapes and gradient, ranging from 500 to 6000 in number across villages (Pant, 1959) and cultivating is concurrently carried out on several tracts of land. This is called verticality. Scattered fields across varying heights
permit multi-layered cropping, maximising the use of solar energy and nutrients and at the same time, taking the advantage of differences in elevation, soil, rainfall and so forth. Verticality was also essential from the point of view of efficient resource-labour use and it worked as a strategy to hedge against pests and fickle climatic conditions.

**Organic manuring of soil**

Upland mountain soils are for most part shallow and skeletal with low water-retention capacity. Heavy rains wash off the top of the soil and impoverish it. It is therefore essential to replenish soil fertility. Constant and abundant manuring through organic manure occupies a most important place in agriculture of the hills. The people of this area have practised different forms of manuring to ensure good yields.

**Water resources and gul irrigation**

Cultivation is largely rain-fed and therefore subject to the vicissitudes of the climate. Periodic crop failure resulting from uneven distribution of rainfall within the growing season was an unavoidable feature of the agricultural economy. Irrigation is obviously desirable in such regions, which are marked by seasonality and annual variability of rainfall. However, the possibilities have been limited. Water for irrigation is thus only to be derived from small springs (locally called gadera) arising in the area. The water is harnessed by building guls or diversion channels and ditches contoured round hillsides. Only the smaller streams can be tapped, the larger ones are too turbulent to be easily harnessed. Thus over most of Garhwal, the possibilities for intensifying production through irrigation are limited by high variability in water supply and difficulty in harnessing water resources.

**Crop rotation systems**

With irrigated land (taloan) being limited in the hills and the available upland mountain soils needing constant replenishment, people have to resort to crop-land rotation to maintain agricultural productivity on the unirrigated terraced land (uproan or ukhar). Village lands are divided into two sars (parts or fields), with one remaining fallow each rabi season. This allows for soil recuperation and also possesses the advantage of
allowing livestock to graze on stubble without damaging crops growing in the other sar. Only three crops are grown per unit of arable land every two years. Pulses are often inter-cropped with cereals, which provide a balanced composition for the soil and keeps down weeding.

Apart from the knowledge and practice pertaining to agricultural production, practices regarding felling of forests and grazing were sensitive to natural sustenance. That regeneration of forests and pastures was a central concern was evident in tactful practices of grass cutting, lopping, collecting and the practice of seasonal migration. These practices evolved over time, towards preservation of natural vegetation cover, prevention of soil erosion and maintenance of water absorptive and retentive capacity of soil.

**Land Use And Labour Process In The Subsistence Economy**

The widespread dispersion of family plots, or the original land allocations among the families can be interpreted as a response to the historical needs of maximising expected agricultural production in the presence of limited trading opportunities and constraints on labour availability. The distribution of agricultural plots at different altitudes allows a more or less equitable allocation of productive land among the members of the community as well as the sharing out of area specific risks such as landslides and gully erosion (Das, 2000). Traditionally the finer cereals like rice were planted in the more fertile plots at lower altitude and coarser grams like cholai and mandua were cultivated in the land around the village and higher up. Moreover, this distribution allows the maximisation of labour input through altitude contingent time calendars. The peak labour requirements for fields at different altitudes occur at different points in time, allowing household labour to be utilised in a dispersed manner throughout the year instead of a concentrated peak followed by a slack period. The production pattern therefore met the need to optimise labour available in the family.

As against the male and female farming systems identified by Boserup (1975) the Garhwal subsistence system maybe described as a family farming system with a large and significant role for women. Traditionally family, whether nuclear or extended as the case may be, is the fundamental labouring unit or the unit of production. Historically, the
difficulty, volume and intensity of subsistence activity and complete dependence on agricultural production demanded considerable flexibility and co-ordination among all household members, young and old, male and female. Hard physical work in extremely difficult conditions of the hilly terrain is the order of the day - the requirement of human labour in terms of quantum and time is enormous. Population being sparse and scattered, hired labour is difficult to get. The contribution of all family members above 8 years of age is thus required for intensive agricultural and all other work.

Apart from family labour there also exists a tradition of co-operative/collective group labour which cuts across lines of kinship within the community for more labour intensive activities. On the appointed day all those who are free to do so assemble at the place of work. For instance whenever there is a great deal of carrying to be done over considerable distances, co-operative labour may be employed, as when wood, slate, or sheet iron is to be brought for house construction. After co-operative work is completed the "host" serves some refreshment, but no formal obligation to repay is incurred. However an ideology of reciprocity surrounds these work patterns. Women too constitute informal co-operative groups for assistance with cultivation work especially. Moreover given the difficulties of production in the region, inter-village service exchanges between high and low caste also provide important source of labour assistance, though a specific patron client element enters this asymmetrical arrangement. Women of low caste families also provide labour assistance to high caste families.

**Gender Division Of Labour And Women's Roles In Production And Reproduction**

The understanding in this section is based primarily on the work of British administrators like Traill (1828), Atkinson (1884), Pauw (1896) and Walton (1910) and also supported by Pant's study of 1935. Supported by cultural ideology, there exists a gender dichotomy of work in that certain activities in the domestic and agricultural realms are designated strictly as "male" or "female". Men are heads of families and make decisions in economic matters. Their tasks are to plough, dig and drive. Men do all the ploughing and other cultivation of fields that is done with animals. Even touching the plough is taboo for women. The plough is associated with men and virility. Men also sow the fields.
Their other tasks are the building of terrace walls and embanking and the excavation of irrigation ditches. Running the water mills, extraction of oil, marketing, and stack-building are among their tasks. It is men's responsibility to construct and repair the houses, make and maintain household equipment, and market / trade the produce. Men deal with the outside world, public agencies, the polity, administration and state.

Women are symbolically linked with fertility and hence their involvement with a range of cultivation / tending / rearing tasks. Women of all cultivating families play a major role in agriculture. Except ploughing, women virtually do everything, including help with male tasks. Preparing manure and manuring the fields, transplanting, weeding, hoeing, harvesting, cutting of grass for fodder, etc. is performed entirely by women with little help from the men to a little from children. Many jobs are common to both sexes: e.g. carrying home the field produce, threshing, etc. except during the sowing and harvesting seasons.

The reality is that the male cultivator literally "needs a wife" to perform the drudgery of the field all through the year. In the artisan and priestly castes, men do the specialised work and women perform nearly the same task, as do women in exclusively agricultural families. In the tailoring and basket making castes, women occasionally help their menfolk do some of the stitching or weaving.

Besides agricultural work, all women bear the responsibility of domestic / household / reproductive work and animal husbandry. They cook and care for children. While men are responsible for herding and grazing animals, women collect most of the fodder for animals and, with the children, tend to animals most of the time. They prepare the manure, take care of it, dry it, store it, and are primarily responsible for seeing that the fields are fertilised with it. They carry headloads of water for the family and the animals. Women winnow the grain after it is threshed and prepare it for storage. Cooking, cleaning, washing are female tasks. Between and during harvests women are fully employed in production and reproduction, accounting for the bulk of work in the former and total work in the latter. Within the women of the household, there are norms for sharing the tasks by age and seniority.
Women's centrality in the subsistence economy in Garhwal seems clearly linked to labour scarcity and hardship of mountain agriculture. As noted by Pant "in this inequitable division of labour, the majority of the tedious and fatiguing jobs have been assigned to women. For her there is no slack season; the whole year is spent in hard toil" (Pant, 1935). In seasonal and non-seasonal work, in slack as well as intense agricultural seasons, women's work cycle continues. Hence, in terms of sheer working hours, theirs is a higher and heavier participation in the hill economy.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE, THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF SUBSISTENCE PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION: PRE-COLONIAL GARHwal

To understand gender relations within production in the context of the caste and class system, we have organised this section into four parts. Put together they emphasise how gender penetrates and influences production and is determined by property relations and ties down women into a subsidiary position in all social economic sphere. We are aware that our understanding has been constrained by paucity of historical and sociological research. Nevertheless, the available material has helped in bringing out the linkages between social processes and present a broad picture that needs further substantiation.

Land, Class And Caste In Evolutionary Process

Around 2000 B.C. ancient settlements of Kols, Kiratas, Doms in the region were displaced by the superior socio-political force of Khasas, Khasiya or Khasi perhaps of Aryan stock (Saklani, 1998, p39). The Khasas established a number of petty chieftanships all over the region, which came to be known after them as Khas-des or Khasmandala. The majority of the population of Garhwal-Kumaon is largely believed to be of Khasa origin. Khasa society was a territorially based socio-political system said to have worked like a kin dominated "tribal democracies". However, this was restricted to the Khasa who controlled the production and held superior proprietary rights, with the Doms occupying subservient positions as serfs. This was a politically decentralised system in which supernaturalism played an important role in the maintenance of the social order (Joshi, 1990, p.388)
It is believed that land was not property but was the territory for the Khasa communities and there existed a system of collective ownership of land. There was usually a sense of private ownership as regards their livestock, but as far as the land was concerned, there was community ownership. Each of the khaai clans inhabited a valley between two mountain ridges and claimed joint ownership of the land within the clan territory. Tradition suggests that two categories of land were recognised. First, agricultural land, which, along with the site inhabited by a lineage, constituted a village. This land was divided amongst the households of each lineage with ultimate ownership vested in the lineage and expressed in the restrictions imposed on the transfer of land to a non-lineage member without the consent of the lineage peers. This land was referred to as that (ancestral) and the right of property in such land derived from its original reclamation and occupation. Secondly, forest covered land was owned by the entire clan. It was used as grazing ground, hunting ground and for collection of fuel and other forest produced. A new site for laying out terraces and building residential structures could be cleared with the consent of the clan head and elders. When the population outgrew the land base in one area, people migrated to another occupied area where they had first user-rights. The second type of land was forest-covered land that belonged to the entire clan. This included communal grazing area, hunting grounds and forest for collecting fuel, fodder and other forest produce (Sanwal, 1976).

From the beginning of the 4th century A.D., the Garhwal region was subject to a range of ruling dynasties - indigenous, local Himalayan or distant from the plains, which exerted varying degrees of political or economic control. The Kunindas, followed by the Yandheyas, the Nagas and later the powerful Katyuris. Territorially based loosely united hill dwellers were forced into sub-tenancy by the Katyuris laying the base for a "feudalistic society". However, people continued to live in economically self-sufficient villages and semi-autonomous settlements with least interference of the State. The administrative machinery of the ruling chiefs consisted of very few people. “Aristocracy” and “Dominant” persons were the key figures in Katyuri administration, called the Saynas / Budhas / Padhanas - the elder men of the communities. However, people are said to have enjoyed autonomy with regard to administration of justice, land use and so on (Traill, 1828 cf. Pokriyal 1993; Saklani, 1987 cf. Joshi, 1990; Sanwal, 1976).
The Processes Of Differentiation Of The Peasantry

The emergence of the Parmara kings in the fourteenth century A.D. as the ruling classes marked the rise of the ruling class and demise of clan-based power. The control over productive means shifted from clan chiefs to a class of appointed officials in whom the ruling kings vested power. In this process, the relations of production were transformed from direct patriclass to chiefly family control, giving rise to a more differentiated or stratified social structure based on the rise of the classes. A proper four-ranked feudal class system evolved around land resources and control. Just below the king were the "feudal magnates" comprising the representatives of "best old families" called thokdars or sayanas (Walton, 1910). They were the revenue collectors of the king. The state successively imposed on landholders numerous taxes and customary dues (dastur and phitai) summed up under the term chatitis rakam aur battis kalam (meaning thirty six items of royal revenue and thirty two ministerial dues) republishing heavy dues levied over the actual cultivating communities. The land revenue was collected as the share of the produce. The next stratum were the proprietors or land grantees called thatwan who worked as an intermediary between peasant cultivators and the feudatory (Trail, 1828; Walton, 1991). The vast majority were the peasant-cultivators called khaikar or occupancy tenants at will, or those who eat produce of the land or "Khana" on conditions of paying the land tax "kar", who were forced into formal status of occupancy tenants, but who enjoyed hereditary, permanent but non-transferable rights in the soil.

Besides khaikar cultivators there were temporary tenants called kaini and sirtan who had a right to land. Some kind of bonded labour known as haliya or chorya was also prevalent in some areas (Pauw, 1896; Walton, 1911). However, land in the interior seldom changed proprietors and the greater part of the occupants derived their legitimacy from long established tradition (Pauw, 1896). Clans and their village level control of land and traditional practices governing it were not destroyed.

Access to forests and forest products continued to be universal without hindrance. The only forest related tax payable to the state was that on grazing of domestic animals,
which also included contributions (in kind) of various animal products, and handcrafted items such as baskets, wooden utensils and mats (Negi et al, 1997, p.160).

The Emergence of Hinduism and Caste Status Hierarchy

The late Katyuri period had witnessed the immigration of people professing Shastric Hinduism. Brahmins and Kshatriyas from the Gangetic plains were encouraged to emigrate to be installed in key administrative positions by the Katyuri rulers. They were given gifts of land and powerful positions. Due to continuous cultural contacts with the brahminical Hinduism and greater Hindu tradition, the native Khasa/Khasi communities gradually assumed social formations akin to the Brahmanical Hindu order. Consequently the territorial identities steadily assumed caste identities and the indigenous community entered firmly into a variant of the traditional caste or *jati* fold around 11 A.D.

A new two-tier system of Bith - Dom (high caste groups - low caste group) corresponded in the broadest sense to the distinction between ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’. The line of distinction between Bith and Dom represented the barrier of untouchability. Immigrant influx led to sanskritisation, and also introduced labels of *baman* (Brahmin) and *jimidar* (Rajput) in the Garhwali society. The category Bith was in turn differentiated internally into (i) Thuljat or asal and (ii) Khasi, which corresponded to the distinction between “immigrant” and “indigenous”. Superior status was accredited to immigrants (Thuljat or asal) based on their military and material powers and they as a whole ranked higher than the Khasis, while the indigenous or Khasa groups were considered too heterodox and outside mainstream Hindu tradition and thus relegated to a lower position by the new comers. This immigrant-indigenous dichotomy was well defined for both Rajput and Brahmins. Hence the Brahmin caste in Garhwal was subdivided into Thuljat (or asal-Baman) and khas-Baman, while the Rajputs were divided into Thuljat (or asal-Rajput) and khas-Rajput (locally called khas-jimidar and simply “khasiyas”). These distinctions can be pictorially represented as follows:
In terms of their linkage to the class structure described in the previous section, the Brahmins and Rajputs were mostly the *hissedars* and *khaikars*, whereas *sirtans* and others were mostly from the Doms (Sanwal, 1976). Rajputs formed the numerically dominant group of the peasantry. The Doms hardly had any land of their own and minimal of *khaikar* and *hissedari* rights. They worked virtually as slaves of the Brahmin and Rajputs doing menial work and other occupations/services (Walton, 1911). A status hierarchy in terms of relative ritual purity evolved between and within the caste groups.

The *Asal baman* in Garhwal were differentiated into endogamous Sarolas and Gangaris, with the Sarolas ranking highest among the Garhwal Brahmins by virtue of service to the royal household. Sarola superiority was established by a royal decree (Raturi, 1928). Food commensality assumed great importance in determining the ritual status (Raturi, 1928; Aradhana, 1988).

Atkinson (1886) noted that nearly nine-tenth of the entire population recorded as Rajput was of local origin (khasiyas) and the remainder professed to be descendants from clans whose origin was traced to some districts in the plains (*asal* Rajputs). In return for their service the *asal* Rajputs were assigned villages and military titles were conferred on them. Names like Negi, Bisht, Rawat originally had occupational references only (Walton, 1910). But it is believed that slowly even the deemed low status Khasiya Rajputs started to affix such surnames that it became hard to distinguish Thuljat Rajput from the Khasiya class—a process called as de-khasiasation by few scholars (Joshi, 1990). Under the process of de-khasiasation, the word Khasa Rajput soon lost all ground and all
Rajputs increasingly styled themselves as Thakurs, Rajputs or simply Jimidars. In fact the word *Khasiya* has today become a contemptuous term.

The lowest caste group of Doms are conjectured to be the subjugated predecessors of the Khasis. They have been referred to as slaves in the early period and were accorded inferior social status under caste (Atkinson, 1884 and 1886). Walton describes Doms as a "depressed race", who seldom cultivate and who practically never own land (Walton, 1911). As the lowest and untouchable caste group of the Himalayan area, they worked as virtual slaves of the Brahmins and Rajput. The Doms comprise all segments that do menial work or are engaged in a range of services. The artisan classes referred to as Shilpkar are included among the Doms. There is no caste category of Shudra in this region. In hardened occupational sub-castes which are themselves ranked in a hierarchy within the broad untouchable caste category of Doms are the *Agari* (blacksmith), *Lohar* (ironsmith), *Tamta* (coppersmith), *Tirwa* (sword and knife sharpener), *Barkai* (carpenter), *Orh* (mason), *Raj* (mason) *Auji* (tailor and drummer), *Badi* (dancer), etc. Thus these sub-castes have an essentially functional orientation and are generally based on hereditary occupations (Atkinson, 1886; Bahadur, 1916; Raturi, 1928).

In terms of ritual and social status the Doms are social unequals in the moral economy of Garhwal. They suffered a number of disabilities, even though they were not as severe or oppressive as those in the plains. They were subject to such taxes not demanded from the non-Shilpakaras, for example, *amgadi, jhaguli*, a certain amount in cash on the birth of the first male child and on the occasion of the marriage of the first daughter, etc. Also their landed property was comparatively smaller as a sizeable number of them were tenant cultivators and many were landless. Most were engaged exclusively in commodity and service production. Records also show that the privilege granted to the Shilpakaras to collect dues from the people was occasionally termed as *bhika* (alms received as begging). This mode of address was contemptuous especially when similar rights enjoyed by non-Shilpakaras were termed differently, such as *nita, tika*, etc. (cited in Joshi, 1994). Furthermore, status distinctions were maintained through commensuality restrictions, maintenance of separate water sources, separate system of religious observances and rituals. Where the relationship between the high and low differed, was
in their greater informal interaction emerging perhaps out of the co-operation that was
necessitated by the hard mountain life at the village level. Interdependent economic
activities of the castes were governed by *jajmani* - the traditional system of labour and
grain exchange with rights of inherited patronage. Known as the *khaikiya-gusai* system in
local terms it involved a system of economic exchange, landholding and labour relations
that followed caste lines including a system of hereditary service relationships between
families.

**Gender And The Relations Of Production And Reproduction**

While the emergence of caste, subsequent power balance shifts and beginnings of peasant
differentiation in the region is marked, we have little evidence to show women’s status in
caste-class terms. We have scanty data to show whether women in peasant (landed),
tenants and landless category were really differentiated in terms of productive activities
and if gender relations of production varied over them. Thus in order to draw an
understanding of women’s position in relations of production we use writings of Pant
(1935); Walton (1910); Atkinson (1884); Traill (1828) as our main sources and analyse
these evidences through Sack's framework (Sacks, 1979).

**Gender And Relations Of Production**

The class-caste differentiated subsistence-production Garhwali peasant economy has
clearly been male dominated. Men as heads of clans lineage components and households
were the propertied and landholders in an economy organised around
patrilineal/patrilocal kinship. Men held customary land rights and direct access to land
and were the clients of the ruling classes. Men were related to the means of production
(with respect to agricultural land and livestock) as sons and brothers of a family (lineage).
Livestock, stored grain and the agricultural fields constituted the principal property of the
family. The eldest male was the property owner and chief decision-maker.

In such a system women's relation to productive means and to the public world in general
were through the husband or male head of the household. Sisters or daughters could not
inherit land and houses, wives inherited from husbands. Thus the labour performed by
women described in the previous section was in the relationship of wife/sister/mother and was patriarchally controlled. Husband, father, mother and often the brother had a right upon their labour. Men also worked as brothers/husbands/fathers but they were producers and owners and the women were producers but not owners.

As owners of property and heads of patrilocal, patrineal households, fathers had authority over the labour and marriage choices of unmarried children. A household usually consisted of a residential group of agnates and their families. Though not very clear, there is some evidence that till the late nineteenth century, this may have included the male head, his wife, his unmarried sons and daughters as well as the families of all married sons. But this group sharply decreased in size in the subsequent years, with sons establishing their separate household with their own family. It was said that all the man's property was his father's as long as the latter lived. The father made all decisions in the family; he was also responsible to take care of the needs of all the family members. Marrying his daughters and providing bridewealth for each of his sons was his responsibility. On his death, the eldest son took on the role of head.

Responsibility for productive labour in agriculture rested primarily on wives, though sisters and grown up daughters also assisted and participated in work at home and in the fields generally under the supervision of their mother. Task groups of wives primarily cultivated, collected fodder, water and firewood and cooked. Young unmarried girls were also assigned some tasks, but it was "the wife" on whom the primary responsibility rested. Wives, sisters and daughters all worked under the authority and management of the elder female, usually the head's wife/wives. With respect to household management, the oldest female held clear responsibility. Food was prepared for all family members by all wives (and their grown-up daughters) under their elder's management. Women (particularly the mother-in-law) decided what and how much to cook.

Both males and elder females of the family commanded the labour of the wives/daughters-in-law, and were entitled to their services. Even though women laboured to create the means of production, they did not own them and their claims to the produce were at best shared. The wives, as mothers of grown up sons, did have a place of their
own and a blood tie to the family's means of production, but the wives did not "own" any property or any means of production directly. Their claim on the family's property was as mother through their sons. Though their influence as wives and mothers was significant, women seldom acted as decision-makers. Clearly, kinship, marriage and family were the key structures that enforced the "wifely" relations of production.

Polygamy, Bride Price And Woman's Status

Polygamy as a popular marriage form and brideprice as a marriage custom further underscored a woman's subordinate position in family and society. Polygamous marriages were common and the numbers of wives were largely restricted to two. No significant caste differences exist in this practice. Writing on the custom, Atkinson's (1884) hypothesis was that the custom probably arose from the great difficulty there was in cultivating large amounts of lands. Wives were procured to help in the fieldwork and looked upon as beasts of burden. Pant agrees and sees polygamy as an offshoot of the unnatural division of labour. A cultivator who possesses a large holding will usually be the husband of more than one wife. He marries more wives in order to work more land. Two wives are thought to be the first essential in the necessary equipment of a hill cultivator and the hillman's wealth and prosperity may be measured by the number of wives (Pant, 1935). In Berreman's study (1963), the reasons given for polygamy were four: (1) to produce children when the first wife was barren, (2) to help with work, (3) for 'pleasure' (4) inheritance of additional wife from a brother. Wives were perceived to be a valuable asset.

Like polygamy, the practice of bride price seems to have a clear economic basis viz. utility for subsistence work. Dam Vivah or Tako-ka-yyah is the name given to the traditionally dominant bride price system of marriage. As noted by Walton, wives are always bought, (except among the few of the very highest caste), at a price which varies between two hundred rupees and one thousand (Walton, 1910). Due to her crucial role in production, the birth of a girl in Garhwal families is not considered a curse.

7 However, dowry is present even in dam marriages. Gifting of a rope, a sickle and other light agricultural implements used by women, bedding, cooking utensils, clothes and cattle - constitute the traditional dowry. Along with this, a woman also has the customary privilege of receiving gifts on festivals from her family of orientation.
But there is an opposing view on bride price, which asserts that it is the inferiority of the woman that is reflected in the practice. Pant is of the opinion that the "wives are literally bought as chattel, and the hillman can buy as many as he likes. They not only work for him, but also yield him children. The daughters he sells on profitable terms, while the sons help him like their mothers" (Pant, 1935).

Joshi too expressed similar sentiment when he wrote "a woman is a chattel, who is purchased for one of the sons by the father of the family. The nature of the transaction is more the acquisition of a valuable article for the family than a contractual relationship between a man and a woman" (Joshi, 1929). It is this view, which is borne out by cultural notions and practices, that surround bride price.

A woman with a well-built physique, capable of hardwork, proficient in household and agricultural work and having good fecundity is prized all over rural Garhwal. An infertile wife may either be divorced and/or another wife may be taken for begetting children. In the rough mountainous terrain, it has been observed that the girls of this area are preferred in the lower reaches, as they are considered tough and capable of putting in more labour. Even in that area, girls are generally brought from the interior of villages, where goes the belief that the father owns the daughter in the way the king owns the land.

It may therefore be surmised that the notion of ownership of daughter by father, of wife by husband and a woman’s economic role in production, go a long way to sustain the customary notion of bride price. In this respect it is significant that a young, good looking and well-built female divorcee may fetch a bride price higher than that paid for her earlier marriage. A perpetually weak wife is often divorced. A girl having a physical defect and not capable of putting in hard agricultural work does not fetch a good bride price.

Along with dam vivah, dan vivah (offering of daughter followed by dakshina or donation), has also been prevalent and may have evolved in the context of caste and Brahmanical values. When a daughter is given in dan and is accepted, dakshina is

---

8 In the ideological spirit of dan Vivah, dan (offering of daughter) is followed by dakshina (donation), i.e., consideration for accepting dan.
offered in the form of dowry, which has tended to increase in terms of money and conspicuous goods of luxury under the impact of monetary economy and modern consumerism. Dan marriage is prestigious and it has been practised by high castes having a greater share in land income. In the context of Garhwal, Raturi (1911) points out that the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas of Garhwal generally practise dan Vivah though traditionally they did practice dam vivah. This may have had implications for women's status. Fanger (1987) is of the opinion that the usage of the bride price form of marriage was indicative of the enormous importance of women in the traditional economy whereas the emergence of dowry suggests her decreased role in the expanding cash economy of employment migration. The issue requires further exploration.

The Cultural Ideology Of Women's Subordination

At the cultural ideological level and social practice, women of Garhwal are generally subordinate to men. In theory she is of course man's other self or power incarnate (Shakti). On occasions of religious celebration, such as marriages and pilgrimages, she occupies a foremost place. Polygamy is discouraged by the hillman's songs and proverbs. Every hilltop is honoured with a temple dedicated to a goddess: for example, Dunagiri, Shiahidevi, or Bananidevi. "Without a woman," the proverb says, "everything is in darkness". Again: "He who has not a wife has nobody in the world". A person however rich, resourceful, disciplined and well settled, if unmarried, is advised to go for ghara-barah - i.e. a wife.

Yet, in the typically dualist Hindu cultural ideology of gender, the Garhwali woman is simultaneously held in low esteem. In Pant's ethnographic account, a woman has been likened to a worn-out shoe, which can easily be replaced by another. She is the first member of the household to get up in the morning and last to go to bed at night. Inside the house she must take her meals when all the men have finished. In respect of clothing and ornaments she receives niggardly treatment. She cannot dispose of the household goods as she wishes or when she requires. She cannot sell or distribute grain in large

9 With the impact of modern forces of change and sources of income other than agriculture, dan vivah has been attaining greater social expanse. With preference for bridegrooms settled in urban-based white-collar jobs, the swing for dan marriages and negotiated dowry has been on the increase.
quantities. The men are the custodians of hard cash, and all monetary dealings are their exclusive concern. During the harvest her husband coaxes her into toiling her hardest; but at other times she is treated as livestock. The husband chastises his wife, and the men often talk boastfully of the necessity of maintaining discipline in the house. On account of her incessant labour and constant exposure to the weather, she becomes hard-featured even by middle age. Occasionally she goes to some fair in the neighbourhood. Her wealth consists of a few silver ornaments, of which the main are bracelets, bangles, nose- and ear-rings, and a necklace (hammal) of British-Indian silver coins (Pant, 1935). British accounts have been equally vocal about women's conditions as beasts of burden and their ill-treatment. Traill (1828) has documented large numbers of suicides among women of the region, which owe their prevalence to the drudgery of their life.

To sum up, despite woman's central role in the economy, the Garhwal woman is socio-culturally subordinate to the man. This status is the combined outcome of the caste class structures and marked pervasiveness of Hindu patriarchal culture and the gender division of labour.

BRITISH IMPACT: BREAKDOWN OF AGRO-ECOLOGICAL SUBSISTENCE AND THE BEGINNINGS OF OUT-MIGRATION

Prior to British control, Garhwalis suffered the brief but highly oppressive Gurkha regime (1804 to 1815). Armed resistance by people to their over-exploitation met with brutal suppression. An increase in trafficking of human slaves resulted in an exodus to escape oppression. The East India Company expelled the Gurkhas from Garhwal and Kumaon in 1815 paving the way for British.

The British regime imposed a series of policies and interventions that brought about fundamental changes in the lives of the people and began a process of their steady integration in the larger colonial economy and polity. As elsewhere, colonial rule signified the economic and commercial exploitation of natural resources and of labouring people. In Garhwal, the prime targets were forests and land. The British policy with respect to land and forest along with the ongoing increase in population, led to the depletion of natural resources and initiated processes that led to an insatiable commercial
interest in the forests and their rapid denudation. Colonial land policy further aggravated the situation. It promoted a more extensive cultivation of land by making it a source of revenue and instituting private property in land. The cumulative impact was the breakdown of the pre-colonial subsistence economy that had thrived on the close link between forests, agriculture and animal husbandry.

**Forests: Control, Exploitation, Denudation**

Control of forests was brought about by a series of Imperial Forest Acts. The requirements of commercial capitalism forced the state to invoke and assert the dominant "proprietary" claims on forest resources in its favour and usurp the traditional prescriptive rights of the rural communities (Saklani, 1987, cf. Negi et al, 1997). State control of forests, which began slowly with the establishment of British rule, intensified by the middle of nineteenth century.

From mid-nineteenth century to 1911, the region saw the progressive control of forests and wasteland by the colonial state, expanding its rights for commercial use and restricting people's rights for survival use. Commercial value of the rich Himalayan forests rose suddenly from 1853 when the British began constructing railway network to connect main harbours and major cities with the fertile hinterland. The building of the railway network was indeed a major negative landmark in the history of Indian forestry. Additionally the experimental tapping of chir or pine for resin (pinus longfolia) was certified as commercially feasible by 1910. Success in chemically treating pines to make it timber grade for use, made the chir commercially doubly important. The scattering of the chir throughout the hills and across unmeasured land outside the reserved forests thus provided the rationale for further restriction and control.

With the establishment of the Forest Department in 1864, a series of acts were passed which limited the rights of the people and expanded state control. Forests came to be "reserved". The year 1893 marked a significant change in the colonial forest policy when all unmeasured land outside the reserved forests was constituted as the District Protected Forests (DPF). Snow-clad peaks, hard rocks, inaccessible cliffs, riverbeds, unmeasured land, lakes and intervening spaces between measured fields became protected forests.
Rules were also formulated to regulate these forests, with restriction on cutting and lopping of reserved species and clearing land by felling trees. While DPF only empowered the Government to regulate the use of resources without settling the question of ownership, reserved forests definitely settled the question of right over forestland and produce between the individuals and the Government. Forests, which were reserved, were clearly under the control of the Forest Department. Successive new Forest Settlements (under Nelson, 1911-1917) made more excessive encroachments, further suppressing the rights of the local people. More often than not, the forest boundaries ran through people’s measured land. Forest within the assi sal boundary (civil forests) also got reserved. Assi sal, the traditional village boundary, had also been given legal status by the State.

The violation of traditional patterns triggered a social movement, in the course of which people burnt state forests in protest. The outcome was the setting up of a "Forest Grievances Committee". It found most of the grievances of the peasants valid. Following the recommendations of the Committee, the restriction on use of resources in Reserve I (within assi sal boundary) forest was almost completely removed. The villagers had almost unlimited right to use the resources including free grazing, lopping and felling of timber for domestic purposes. Reserve II (outside assi sal) forests however continued to be with the Forest Department and subject to unrestrained felling. During World War II, felling and sawing were pushed into the remotest areas. As villagers struggled to retain and restore their rights, the colonial state did its utmost to take away or restrict these rights.

**British Land Policy, New Agrarian Structure And The Expansion Of Agriculture**

British consolidation of interests in agriculture through land settlements saw the conferment of proprietorship rights and its private ownership. Rights over agricultural land, which was traditionally owned by the native king, were now granted to individual peasants setting aside existent community rights of the people. This laid the base for the development of a new agrarian class structure. The policy of encouraging agriculture in the settlements, with a view to increasing revenue resulted in a scramble for cultivable
area. Population pressure, private interest and British interests enhanced the possibilities and incidence of agricultural extension. Cultivation increased by one-third and cultivable land increased by 50 percent during a four-decade span.

Starting in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, land surveys, known as khasra, recorded land area, proprietary rights, tenant classifications, crops and area of cropped land at the time of settlement (Imperial Gazetteer of India, 1908). Land was divided into following categories: Talon Shera – permanently irrigated land; Panchar Shera – irregularly irrigated land; Uproan – dry terraced land, first class (awal) and second class (doyan); and Ijran – inferior terraced land, cultivated intermittently (Negi et al, 1997; Stowell, 1907). Vast tracts of forestland were granted for agriculture. In the context of the new policy, cultivation was encouraged on wastelands that were adjoining the cultivated terraces known as nayabad land (Tucher, 1983, cf Negi et al, 1997).

Under the new land settlement, two basic classes of hissedars or proprietors and of occupancy tenants (khaikar and sirtans) were developed. Under the hissedari system, the British provided rights to all thatwans and khaikars of the prior rulers and some occupancy tenants who filled certain specific conditions became hissedars or proprietors. The khaikars differed from the hissedars only in that they could not transfer land and had to pay a fixed sum of cess (malikhana) to the proprietors. The attempt of the khaikars in British times was to gain status as hissedars. All persons holding land who were neither proprietors nor khaikar were known as Sirtan. Sirtans were tenants settled in nayabad land (newly cultivated land) obtained by village headman and Thokdars. Khaikhars who had put nayabad land into cultivation were assigned hissedari rights. These nayabad lands was not taxed until the new settlement took place. When commercial exploitation of forest wealth began in mid 19th century, the state put a stop to nayabad practice and encouraged forest conservation. The traditional village level administration was incorporated within the broader legal administrative arrangement of the state. Peasant

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10 Under this kind of British Agrarian policy, proprietors were induced to claim a right of ownership in all land not assessed, where the possession was largely in the hands of tenants with occupancy rights. Tenants were equally resolute in contesting the claim or evading it by declaring the waste plots necessary for pasturage. The same pressure was at work in pushing cultivation into the wastelands adjoining rival villages.
society was recognised and the state penetrated through a chain of administrative layers of power (Negi et al., 1997; Pathak et al., 1995).

Proprietors and occupancy tenants constituted about 80 percent of the cultivators. Data provided by Pauw (1896) showed that by the end of nineteenth century in Garhwal, almost 63.13 percent of landholders were made of hissedars, whereas the khaikhars and sirtans were 23.15 percent and 13.69 percent respectively. Thus the proportion of increase of around 12 percent reflected upward mobility of the khaikhar (See Table 3.1 below)

Table 3.1: Details Of Land Tenures In Garhwal (Areas In Acres)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenures</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prior to 1896</td>
<td>1896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hissedar</td>
<td>25569</td>
<td>33959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[50.83]</td>
<td>[63.13]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaikar</td>
<td>14676</td>
<td>12468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[29.18]</td>
<td>[23.18]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sirtan</td>
<td>10055</td>
<td>7364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[19.99]</td>
<td>[13.69]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50298</td>
<td>53791</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 2.49 acres = 1 hectare; Figures in brackets show the percentage of total.

Sirtans, peekast and kaini or khurni consisted of the lowest strata of hill land tenancy. Sirtans (or tenants at will, bearing no right of occupancy) and khurni or kaini (occupancy tenants temporarily established by grantee) were grouped by Pauw under sirtans comprising 13.95 percent of the total peasantry. These groups aimed at khaikar status and hissedari rights (Pauw, 1896). The class of non-resident tenants or peekast mostly constituted of sirtans living outside the village or in other villages with no permanent rights in the land. They made arrangements with the proprietors usually for one crop (Pauw, 1886). Servant labour or bonded labour called haliya or sanji was miniscule in hill agrarian system (Baden-Powell, 1892; Stowell, 1907; Pauw, 1896; Pokhriyal, 1993). There was no such thing as landless unskilled labour. However, by the end of the
nineteenth century, it was estimated that nine out of ten hillmen were *hissedars*, cultivating land with full ownership rights (Stowell, 1907, cf Negi et al, 1997)

**The Rupturing Of The Ecology-Economy Link**

The subsistence economy of pre-colonial times had given way to plentiful production during first phase of the British rule. Certainly in the first twenty to thirty years of British rule, "the land waxed fat". With production oriented towards subsistence needs, which were comfortably met, there remained a surplus of grain for export to Tibet and southwards to the plains. There was a modest export of foodstuff, including "grain of all kinds" (Trail, 1828) which were traded down the Alakananda valley during the dry season, which followed the *kharif* harvest (Girdlestone, 1867, p.61). Qualitative assessments of many British officials suggest that hill peasants were able to comfortably and autonomously meet their subsistence requirements, and in certain areas had surplus of grain for market. Usually having six months' stock of grain in hand, and with their diet supplemented by fish, fruit, vegetable, and animal flesh, the hill cultivators were described by Henry Ramsay, commissioner from 1856 to 1884, as 'probably better off than any peasantry in India' (Guha, 1991, p.143-48). The hill people also earned through sale of ghee, manufacture of woollen goods and load carriage by ponies of mountain goods (see for e.g. the Imperial Gazetteer of Hunter, 1885; Goudge, 1903; Walton, 1910).

However, colonial commercial interests along with increase of agricultural cultivation led to the denudation and depletion of the grazing, water and forest resources and exerted a massive environmental impact. The first victims of commercialisation of forests, were the forests themselves and the wildlife. The process gained increased momentum with each new land settlement and forest act. The teak forests of Tarai-Bhabhar and the pine forest of higher Himalayas were the first victims. Before 1815, the pine tree was targeted and by 1850 it was the teak forests of Tarai (Guha, 1989; Pathak, 1987c). Additionally mountaineering and trekking expeditions placed considerable pressure upon a few higher Himalayan valleys. In different travels and *shikaar* expeditions, thousands of birds and animals were killed. Trade in animal skin, bird feathers and musk also increased rapidly.
Mountaineer, 1860). Growth in agriculture resulted in further clearing up of the forests near the villages.

There was a significant difference between clear felling for cultivation by local people and clear felling for commercial use. Clear felling for cultivation in the indigenous system was followed by equally good regeneration, whereas this was not so in the areas clear felled for commercial purposes. The magnitude of the environmental impact of the latter was large, covering continuous vast tracts, sometimes in over a thousand hectares. Local peoples in contrast made small or compact and dispersed clearings. These continued to remain surrounded by forests and were fed by small streams with attendant beneficial effects on the soil derived from silt and compost. Secondly, even though clear felling for cultivation involved burning of refuse, this was a controlled and one-time affair, which enriched the soil, rather than impoverishing it. Regular cultivation over a period of time also had soil binding effects. Since the rotation of crops was based upon traditional knowledge of soil enriching versus soil depleting crops, the overall effect of agriculture was not to render the soils impoverished (as happened under British rule due to repeated fires, destruction of soil cover and long exposure to the sun).

The British were motivated by need to ensure a continuing supply of timber for imperial needs. Under the 'scientific forestry' management of the British, all commercially insignificant trees (especially the broad-leaved species providing fodder, fuel, food and fertility to soil) were removed and the commercially valuable pine or chir trees took their place. The conversion of oak forest into chir pine forest, was a change in species which had a disastrous effect on ecology, which was the permanent economy of the local people. With the disappearance of these forests, water resources started drying up and soil erosion was accelerated. The prevalence of chir led to soil acidity. The villagers resisted this and their plea was: "we need broad-leaved food, fodder and fuel species to feed ourselves and our cows". But their protest was brutally suppressed (Guha, 1991).

The ill effects of extended cultivation began to surface by the early twentieth century itself. As a state response to the crisis it had created, several regulations on unhindered expansion of cultivation and preservation of common property resources came to be
imposed. Also, the protection of forests started gaining ground. Thus, the government gradually started imposing restrictions on unrestricted breaking of land. Despite this, the pressure from the peasants to extend and expand agriculture could simply not be contained by the state. It was politically and physically infeasible (Pathak et al., 1995). As a result, the common land within the assi sal boundary continued to be brought under the plough.

Colonial forest policy also had a destructive impact on the pastoral economy of the region based on a careful system of eco-management through transhumance wherein village grounds were meant to be rested by rotation. In the pre-colonial period, there were customary practices to regulate grazing in the village pastures. Care was taken to allow time for regeneration of pastures by tactfully combining grazing with grass cutting, lopping and collection of straw from cultivated fields and practising vertical seasonal migrations. These practices evolved over time, perhaps due to sustainable use of pastures. Colonial forestry brought these linkages under strain. The state began to control and regulate grazing on the pretext of its being harmful to forests (Dangwal, 1997). Various restrictions were placed on grazing: large areas were closed for grazing; only limited cattle were allowed in the reserved forests; cattle movements were regulated; and there were restrictions on lopping of trees which was essential for fodder collection. These restrictions resulted in reduced pastures and exclusion of large number of cattle from the reserved forests.

While large forest areas were reserved for commercial exploitation, increasing cattle population was made dependant for grazing on shrinking pastures - a process that contributed to ecological degradation. If the area that met grazing requirements had been scattered widely, the possibility of overuse would have been decreased. The entire process of redefining and recording of grazing rights was a painful experience for the hill people, which got only partially reflected in their petitions, complaints, resistance and protests (Dangwal, 1997).

The establishment of the Forest Department and implementation of conservation practices changed the traditional relationship between the state and rural people. Forests
were no more to be treated as community property. The traditional activities of the
villages such as grazing, lopping and cutting of trees for agricultural and domestic use
became penal offences. Fines, imprisonment and other forms of harassment like Begar
(maintenance of the traditional system of forced labour) haunted people (Negi et al, 1997).

Quite rapidly after this time, the social and ecological systems of the region came under
pressure. First, agriculture was expanding and land was getting fragmented due to
inheritance law and degraded; second, cattle population was growing; and third, the land
and forest resource on which agriculture was premised was getting depleted. All these
developments were mutually reinforcing and created an unprecedented pressure on the
ecology of the region (Pathak et al, 1995). The encroachment on traditional rights and the
rupturing of environmental stability of the already fragile ecosystem had a deleterious
impact on the sources of livelihood of peasantry.

From Subsistence To External Dependence: The Turn To Out-Migration

The inevitable and most devastating consequence of the breakdown of the ecology­
economy link was the rapid decline of the people’s subsistence. From a position of
relative comfort and at times of prosperity, Garhwali people reached a stage when they
could not produce enough to feed themselves. Colonialism set hill agriculture on a
downward spiral. In any case hill agriculture with its small fragmented landholdings and
peculiarities of topography had inherent limits to intensification. Systematic crop failures
are documented, during the latter half of the British era when a growing population
placed greater demands on thinning natural resources. The State Famine Relief had to be
instituted when crops failed in 1890 and 1892.

Population increased steadily and by around five times between 1841 and 1941, except in
1918 when an influenza epidemic killed large numbers. With the severing of the age-old
ties to land, forest and nature and of the largely harmonious ecology-people relationship,
the ecology-economy link lay ruptured. The subsistence economy that had earlier been
able to absorb in-migrants over centuries and even the initial attack of exploitative British
policies could no more absorb the growth of population as land and forests, hitherto
trusted and revered mainstays of economic life, were subject to impoverishment and
could not deliver results in these new harsh conditions. Natural calamities in the shape of floods and earthquakes had also increased people's miseries. Plague and cholera epidemics also occurred recurrently adding to their difficulties (see Table A 3.1 in Appendix).

Under these conditions people's lives were reduced to a struggle for survival. The transport and communications links established by the colonists provided escape through the opportunities for out-migration. Colonialism thus laid the basis for and heralded the coming of the money-order economy.

The railways had spawned some small-scale industrial and tertiary activity in Kotdwara to cater to the annual influx of pilgrims which was estimated at 30,000-50,000 (Raper, 1810; Traill, 1828). A demand was generated for restaurants, teashops, porters etc. Those villages situated near the Alakananda river benefited from this through the sale of grain, dairy products and labour. However immigration from outside into Garhwal was the dominant trend. Businesses were mostly owned by plainsmen and much of the profit from the pilgrim trade flowed down to the plains, to be invested in more lucrative areas there.

Garhwali migration initially took place within and later outside of Garhwal. The earliest migrants were largely from the lower castes and classes responding to the British demand for unskilled labour, public work and for coolies. Further, economic decline hastened the processes of out-migration. By the middle of the nineteenth century employment opportunities opened up in the British administrative bureaucracy, including the establishments of the survey, forest excise, archeology and other departments. The establishment of schools, hospitals and the press followed (Pathak, 1991, p.262). Pressures mounted on agriculture and on the need to diversify. Both were acutely felt and provided the impetus for younger folk to migrate to further destinations in search of jobs.

The British Army constituted the most important source of occupational recruitment. The Garhwalis already had a tradition of martial service - from the armies of the Garhwali kings to those of the Gurkha regime. The formation of the Garhwal Regiment by British
Government in 1890 with its headquarters at Landsdowne became a source of organised rural-urban migration.

At the lower end of the new emergent occupational hierarchy, seasonal labourers were employed in forests in southern parts of the district and in temporary labour in the hills stations and the army. The second low-grade occupational type was of domestic service in English households, which sought refuge from the blistering heat of the plains in the cool hill stations of Mussoorie and Nainital. Many seasonal workers were taken on as full-time servants in these houses. Some accompanied their new employers back to the plains (Whittaker, 1984). By 1900, Garhwalis were widely distributed over northern India.

Commensurate with patriarchal ideology, migration was completely a male affair. Women remained locked inside the crippled subsistence sector. Jobs were stratified by caste, the best and highest paid reserved for the upper castes. Employment in government agencies was open to the literate and those who had middle/high school education. Government jobs were considered more ‘prestigious’ compared to private sector jobs or self-employment (Panda, 2001). The introduction of a system of tax payment in cash rather than in kind by the British and the growing penetration of markets, increased the pressure for cash earnings and intensified the search for jobs outside of agriculture even by the not-so-well educated (Panda, 2001).

British interest in the Himalayan region was primarily four fold: expansion of colonial rule; greater mobilisation of raw materials and their export; acquisition of capital and manpower which became an important input in the army; and expansion of colonial market into the region. It also brought significant external influences. Incorporation into the British Empire, though accelerated its interaction with other parts of the country, failed to improve the socio-cultural and economic aspects of life in the region. The transfer of economic surplus through different channels adversely affected the development potentials, ultimately contributing to its underdevelopment.

Most crucially for the peasantry, land and forest degradation and exploitation weakened the resource base of peasant production and threatened the survival of households. This
decimation of the subsistence agro economy 'forced' many to abandon agriculture for migration. We have not ascertained the impact of migration on women. British accounts have contained a commentary on women as they lived and existed in pre-colonial Garhwali society. They have however, stopped short of establishing any connection between the colonial disruption of household-based economy and women's deteriorating role. As we have highlighted in the introductory chapter, there is a dearth of studies on women and it is this gap, which this research seeks to fulfill.