CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCING PATRIARCHY AND GENDER HISTORY

In today’s world, there has been a lot of study on gender and gender roles in the society. One of the reasons for this can be attributed to feminists who studied women vis-à-vis men in the society. As the studies progressed it was found that most of the societies in the world are dominated by men. The histories of different countries and culture are all about the history of men and what they had achieved. These histories were written by men and they wrote that which they assumed to be important. Some of the works which are mostly used in studying history, to name a few, are the works by Edward Gibbon\(^1\), C.J.H. Hayes\(^2\), Henry Beveridge\(^3\), Arnold J. Toynbee\(^4\). In these works it can be seen that women’s participation in history was totally neglected and they were rather pushed to the background. Women’s participation in the evolution of society and the fact that they were partners in the process of civilization were completely ignored. The authors of the traditional histories shared the positivist image of the masculine, a set of superior dominating characteristics even though they were living in different countries. Judith Zinsser observed that “a brief survey of some of the “great historians” from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries shows the ways in which the realities of women’s past disappeared in the denigrating, stereotypical portraits painted of individuals, and in the rhetorical uses made of women in the abstract.”\(^5\) However, when women like

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\(^1\) Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, (Hartfordshire, 1998)
\(^2\) C.J.H. Hayes, *Modern Europe to 1870*, (Delhi, 3rd Indian reprint, 1998)
\(^3\) Henry Beveridge, *A Comprehensive History of India*, (New Delhi, 6th reprint, 1974)
Mary Wollstonecraft, Sheila Rowbotham and others began to look for the women in history they came to know more about their history and how they were hidden in the writings of history and how they were subordinated. They also realised that they were subordinated primarily due to the influence of patriarchal ideas in the recording and writing of history.

The word patriarchy which is frequently used by feminists and writers literally means the rule of the father or the ‘patriarch’ in a family where the eldest male is the head of the family and controls his wife, children, other members of the family and slaves. According to Gerda Lerner, the period of the establishment of patriarchy was not one event but a process which developed over a period of nearly 2500 years from approximately 3100 to 600 BC. As time passed the word patriarchy came to be generally used to refer to male domination in the family, society, polity etc whereby men are the decision makers in all aspects of life. It is a system of social structures and practices in which men selfishly dominate and exploit women to their own satisfaction. It can also be said to be an ideology in which men are seen as superior to women, that women are and should be controlled by men and that they are part of men’s properties.

Patriarchy can be seen in almost all the societies in the world. But is should be noted that its nature is different in different societies, in different classes in the same society and also in different periods of history. For instance, the practice of purdah, (the veil used by Hindu and Muslim women to cover their faces), which is

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7 Kamla Bhasin, *What is Patriarchy*, (New Delhi, 1994) p.3  
one of the forms for subordinating women can be different for women of different region. It can also vary for Muslim and Hindu women. This custom can also differ according to the changes in time. An example for this can be inferred from the days of the Taliban in Afghanistan when all women were forced to cover themselves from head to toe even covering their faces, forbidden to work and leave the house without a male escort. But after the fall of the Taliban, women have been allowed to return to work and the government no longer forces women to cover themselves. However women still faced a lot of problems and discrimination. Another example for the difference of subordination of women through the changing times can be also seen in the case of widow remarriage. Traditionally in Indian society, widows were not allowed to remarry. However as time passed the Widow Remarriage Act (Act XV of 1856) was passed in which widows could remarry without any fear, although the societal acceptance of this was a different matter. So though the function of patriarchy may vary, yet the concept remains the same. In all patriarchal societies, economic, political, religious, social and cultural institutions are by and large controlled by men.

The family, which is the basic unit of society, can be said to be the most patriarchal. A man is assumed to be the head of the family and it is he who controls women’s labour or production and mobility. Decisions about reproduction are also generally under the control of the male members. This has been noted by Kathleen A. Lahey when she wrote, “Most women procreate and nurture under conditions of such unrelenting male control that it is fair to say that all of women’s reproductive

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10 www.afghan-web.com/woman
11 Shailly Sahai, Social Legislation and Status of Hindu Women, (Jaipur, 1996) p.21
arrangements are subject to some form of patriarchal domination."^{12} The mother is also made to internalise the belief that she should be under the authority of the husband. Hence it is from this unit that the first lesson of patriarchy is taught and where a hierarchical system is created. The family not merely mirrors the order in the state and educates its children to follow what is being taught, it also creates and constantly reinforces that order.^{13} When the children follow this order, the next generation is socialized into those patriarchal ideas through the family.

In the religious sphere it can also be seen that all established religions in the world are patriarchal as they regard male authority as supreme. In Brahmanical and Vedic teachings women were described as property. The Bhagavad-Gita places women, vaisyas and shudras in the same category and describes them all as being of sinful birth, and punishment for killing either a woman or a shudra is the same.^{14} The Atharva Veda has said that women should be kept away as sinfulness, deceit and ignorance are inherent in them.^{15} In Islam also, women had no recognised place. They were treated like properties bought by a price. Women also cannot be a kazi. “Women are like jewels are admired and sought after, but should be protected and guarded lest they be stolen. They are property, valuable property, but really not persons, and must not take upon themselves the prerogative of persons who are after all exclusively male.”^{16} The Quran also said that “men are superior to women on account of the qualities in which God has given them pre-eminence and also because

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^{12} Kathleen A.Lahey, “Celebration and Struggle: Feminism and Law” in Angela Mies & Geraldine Finn (ed), Feminism, From Pressure to Politics (Jaipur, 2002) p.104
^{13} Gerda Lerner, op. cit. p.217
^{14} Neera Desai & Maithreyi Krishnaraj, Women and Society in India, (Delhi, 1987), p.34
^{15} Bibekananda Das & L.N.Dash, The Feminine Gender, (New Delhi, 1995) p, 61
^{16} ibid, p.64
they furnish dowry for women." Patriarchal idea is also seen in Christianity. The Old Testament of the Bible placed women in a secondary position. In today’s church also a lot of discrimination is seen against women. In the church women play an important role but very often they are given a secondary position. Though some churches have allowed women to become a minister / pastor, yet majority of the churches including the churches in Mizoram still have not permitted women to be ordained ministers and elders. Hence women cannot occupy the position of decision makers. So it can be said that all major religions have been interpreted and controlled by men. Women are hardly seen in the forefront. It is always the men who have defined morality, ethics, behaviour and even law. So in all religions the world over women are subordinated and pushed to the background.

Men also control the economic institutions. In Asian countries where majority of the people live in rural areas, land is an important significant form of property. Land determines a person’s economic well being, social status, and political power. Men are the ones who own most of the land and hence they tend to have more power than women and very often women had to be subservient to them. So, women had to be dependent on the male members of the family and had to be under their authority. Even if they happen to have some land, they hardly have any control over it. Ownership of land does not necessarily mean control over of the land. Some women might have access to the land, but they hardly have any rights over it. In matrilineal societies also, it is found that even though women may inherit

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19 Bina Agarwal, *A Field of One’s Own* (New Delhi, reprinted, 1998) p.xv
20 *ibid.* p,12
the land, they could not dispose of it or take action on it as they wished. They had to have the consent of the brothers or uncles in the family. This becomes evident from the existing studies on the matrilineal societies like the Khasis and the Garos. Among the Khasis, women have no power or authority over the inherited property without the consent of the male members like the brothers or uncles.\(^1\) Among the Garos also, although the property is registered in the wife’s name, the husband has the power to override her decision and wishes and women are under the control of their husbands.\(^2\) Women who work in the field had to toil for long hours and when they return to the house, they again had to do the many household chores without having any rest. In today’s world many women are employed in offices. However in these cases it is seen that despite having a career outside the home they still have to look after the family. Hence they had to work outside to supplement the family’s income and also had to bear the responsibility of being a mother. In spite of working hard for the family, the household works are not considered to be productive work as it is seen as personal work rather than an economic activity. If they did not happen to work outside, the chores which kept them busy all day long were not considered to be labour and therefore such women are often referred to as non-working women. It should be remembered that women maintain the other members of the family and makes it possible for them to reproduce the means of life through labour.\(^3\) However women’s role as producers, rearers of children and housework as mentioned is not considered to be an economic contribution. Women also have no control over their

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\(^1\) Cerilla Khonglah, "Khasi Women and the Indigenous Question" in Walter Fernandes & Sanjay Barbora (ed), Changing Women’s Status in India: Focus on the NorthEast (Guwahati, 2002) p 169

\(^2\) Caroline R. Marak, "Matriliney and Education among the Garos" in Walter Fernandes & Sanjay Barbora (ed), ibid. p 161

\(^3\) Sheila Rowbotham, op cit., p xxix
own production. They often had to submit whatever they earn to their husbands or to the male head in the family.\textsuperscript{24} Even if both the husband and wife are earning, the wife's earnings are mainly used for family maintenance while men kept back their income for spending on food and drinks.\textsuperscript{25} So it can be said that women have little access to resources and also have little control on the distribution of the products of their labour. They also have no control on reproduction. The numbers of children were often determined by the husband.

In political system also, it is seen that women rarely come to the forefront. The reason for women's exclusion in the polity was mainly because women were considered to have no reasoning power and that they were inferior. Aristotle reasoned that as males were superior and female inferior so men rule over women.\textsuperscript{26} Moreover very often women were economically dependent on men and had no resources of their own. Since they did not have an earning to fall back on they were regarded to be of no significance and would not be able to contribute to the society. Moreover, it was believed that politics belongs to the public sphere where intrusion of women is not welcomed.\textsuperscript{27} Hence, the structures and institutions of the state have been made by men and embody their interest rather than those of women. It took a long time even in the west for women to get suffrage. Even in the United States of America, when it was debated whether the American Indians should be able to cast their vote, the issue of women was not debated at all. There was no need felt even to mention or justify that while women were counted among the whole number of free

\textsuperscript{24} Dr. Santosh, \textit{Cultural Pattern and Economic Participation in Women} (New Delhi, 1996) p.86  
\textsuperscript{25} Bina Agarwal, \textit{op. cit.}, p.28-30  
\textsuperscript{26} Gerda Lerner, \textit{The Creation of Feminist Consciousness} (New York, 1993) p.6  
\textsuperscript{27} Kiran Saxena (ed) \textit{Women and Politics}, (New Delhi, 2000) p.21,22
persons in each state for purposes of representation, they had no right to vote and to be elected to public office.\textsuperscript{28} It was only in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century that women the world over received the right to vote. This shows that women were not regarded to be citizens and their status was lower than that of the men. As women were regarded to be inferior and devoid of reasoning power, they were excluded from the important decision making bodies. This idea is reflected even in the constitution making bodies of India and USA. In India, the members of the drafting committee of the constitution were A.K.Ayyar, N.G.Ayyar, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, Dr.K.M.Munshi, M.Saadulla, B.L.Mitter, D.P.Khaitan and N.M.Rao\textsuperscript{29} who are all men. This has to be seen in the context of the fact that women participated in large numbers in the Indian National Movement, and there were educated and qualified women too. It also needs to be asked that even though there were women members in the Constituent Assembly, did their voice make a very big difference in the field of gender concerns? The Constitution of USA was also drafted by representatives of twelve states\textsuperscript{30} who were referred as the founding fathers which showed that they were all men. Thus the state constitutions, laws and other ordinances of the countries are all drafted and decided by the male members of the society without considering the opinions of the women. The exclusion of women as decision makers and denying them the right to vote indicates that the state consider women as unfit members of the polity. There

\textsuperscript{28} Gerda Lerner, *The .... of Feminist Consciousness*, op. cit., p.8

\textsuperscript{29} V.D.Kulshreshtha's *Landmarks in Indian Legal and Constitutional History*, Revised by B.M.Gandhi (Lucknow, 2005) p.349

are some women who are seen in the political field. It was said by feminists that women who took part in Marxist-Leninist organizations were often the wives or lovers of male leaders and their opinions tend to be indistinguishable from those of their mentors. In India too we see that Indira Gandhi was an important Prime Minister. There are also other prominent leaders in many Asian countries like Benazir Bhutto, Sirimavo Bandarnaike, Khaleda Zia and Corazon Aquino. But when studied closely it can be seen that these women are visible due to their association with some male political personalities. If the life of Indira Gandhi is carefully studied, one see that she was carefully groomed by her father Jawaharlal Nehru. This is revealed in the many letters sent by Nehru to her daughter Indira. In the life of Benazir Bhutto it is a known fact that after she completed her studies in Oxford, she wanted to join Foreign Service. But her father Z.A.Bhutto insisted that she contest the elections and at the time since she was not very experienced she assisted her father as an advisor and later became the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Indian women politicians also perceive their participation in politics as being supportive of the activity of their male family members, husbands, brothers and fathers. They were active in politics but the structure and pattern of gender relationship was not disrupted. They were involved in politics with the consent of their male family members. Vijaylakshmi Pandit, one of the pioneer Indian women politicians also

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32 N.B.Ghodke, *Indira Gandhi* (Jaipur, 1987); Don Moraes, *Mrs Gandhi* (New Delhi, 1980)
33 Sonia Gandhi (ed), *Freedom's Daughter, Letters between Indira Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru* (Delhi, 1992)
34 [www.storyofpakistan.com/person](http://www.storyofpakistan.com/person)
35 Vijay Agnew, *Elite Women in Indian Politics*, (Delhi, 1979) p.138
acknowledged that she was able to participate in politics because her husband agreed and encouraged her to do so. So it can be said that women’s involvement in politics showed the spirit of cooperation and not of competition with men. Moreover it can be asked whether they had really challenged patriarchal system. This can be questioned as they had the conventional attitude and were not mobilized on the basis of personal gain or from a desire to emancipate women or to demand an equal share of political status and prestige. There are some women in politics like Margaret Thatcher and Golda Meir who did not have significant relations with other prominent men but it should be noted here that they also functioned within the structure and principles which were laid down by men which was an accepted framework. If they had questioned or tried to undermine patriarchy it can be wondered whether they would have been welcomed by other members of their party. Thus it becomes clear that women hardly have any place in the political institutions and hence “in no country do women have political status, access, or influence equal to men’s.”

Thus it can be said that in a patriarchal society men have to a certain degree, a sense of freedom. But on women, a ‘cultural lobotomy’ is performed in which men undermine women in their physical and intellectual capacities under the most exploitative conditions. Hence there are divisions, distinctions and oppositions in the society. Patriarchal knowledge systems are also seen to emphasise specialization, to

36 ibid., p.139
37 Barbara Nelson & Najma Chowdhury(ed), Women and Politics Worldwide (Delhi, 1997) p.3
38 Ruby Rohrlich-Leavitt, Women Cross Culturally – Change and Challenge, (Chicago, 1975) p.286
be narrowly compartmentalized and fragmented and unable to see the wholeness of phenomena.  

As patriarchy is seen in almost all societies in the world, many writers have debated over its origin or why women were subordinated. There were some anthropologists and historians who were known as the maternalists who assumed that the family had originally been matriarchal in nature. They postulated their theory from the evidence of mother-goddess figures in many ancient religions and said that this proved the existence of female power in the past. To prove that matriarchy had existed they cite the status of Iroquois women who they claimed had powerful public role in controlling food distribution and in the Council of Elders. However, other anthropologists when studying about these people found out that the Iroquois women never held the office of the leaders of the tribes and never became chiefs. According to Lerner, the maternalists who talked of matriarchy where women subordinate men could not cite anthropological, ethnological or historical evidence. They based their assumptions on myth and religion. Moreover when further studies were carried out, it was found that most of the societies which were said to be matriarchal were instead matrilocal and matrilineal where women did not have political power and all authorities were not vested in them. There were many societies where a sort of egalitarian system was found and this was usually seen among hunting / gathering tribes which are characterized by economic interdependency. This can still be seen among the Kalahari Bushmen where men

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39 Alison Jagger, op.cit., p.367
40 Gerda Lerner, The ....of Patriarchy, op.cit., p.28 ff
41 ibid., p.30
42 ibid, p.31
hunt and women are the gatherers and among the Eskimos the raw materials to be used for hunting were processed by women\textsuperscript{43}. This economic interdependency does not mean that women and men are equal and as Margaret Mead has shown that men and women are not taken as equal in any culture of the world.\textsuperscript{44} In some societies power is shared between the women and men and in some groups women greatly influence the power of men. However a matriarchal society where women held power over men and made all the important decisions in all aspects of life is not to be found.

It has also been said that women were subordinated by men ‘by reason of his greater strength, his stronger sex drive, his insistence upon exogamous marriage, or some similar reasons relating to his greater sexuality or aggressiveness.’\textsuperscript{45} However, this has to be examined closely. Men appear to be stronger physically as they were conditioned right from childhood to be strong and were taught by the father and other male elders so as to make them appear strong and brave. Researchers have found that “fathers sex-type children more than mothers. They treat sons and daughters more differently and enforce gender role expectations more vigorously than mothers do.”\textsuperscript{46} The question of aggressiveness also cannot be ascertained as the level of aggressiveness is not clear. Hence the traits which are placed on men seem to be socially determined rather than biologically determined. Therefore the male character traits cannot be used for subordinating women. So it needs to be

\textsuperscript{43} Bibekananda Das & L.N.Dash, \textit{The Feminine Gender}, (New Delhi, 1995) p.45
\textsuperscript{44} Margaret Mead, \textit{Male and Female}, (London, 1950) p.8
\textsuperscript{45} Ruby Rohrlich-Leavitt, \textit{op.cit.}, p.286
\textsuperscript{46} Nancy Chodorow, “Gender, Relation and Difference in Psychoanalytic Perspective” in \textit{The Polity Readers in Gender Studies} (Delhi, 2002) p.45
questioned whether male subordination of women has been physically conditioned or socially conditioned.

While some feminists have accepted that women's subordination was because of men's greater physical strength, F. Engels in his work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* had postulated that women's subordination is historically related to the development of private property and emergence of a class society. Before private property and wealth were accumulated, there existed the mother right. The division of labour was also clearly drawn. "The men went to war, hunted, fished, provided the raw materials for food and the tools necessary for these pursuits. The women cared for the house, and prepared food and clothing; they cooked, weaved and sewed. Each was master in his or her own field of activity; the men in the forest, the women in the house." In case of separation also, men could take the objects or the tools which were used by them for hunting or working and the cattle while women could retain household goods. Inheritance and lineage were drawn from the mother's side. But as wealth increased through domestication and owning of slaves and private property became more prominent, surplus was produced in areas controlled by men. Men then wanted their wealth to be under their name and to be inherited by their sons. So monogamy for women and the bondage of women to men was insisted upon and thus the mother right was overthrown and this was described by Engels as the *world-historic defeat of the female sex.* Patriarchy then became to be enforced and women became dependents on men which enabled

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47 F. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State,* (Moscow, reprint, 1977)
48 *ibid.* p.155
49 *ibid.* p.55
50 *ibid.* p.57
men to subordinate them. Thus, Engels's view was that subordination of women took place when private property emerged. However this has been critiqued by more recent studies which talk of the existence of patriarchy in pre-private property societies. Women may not have been systematically subjugated however women were not entirely equal to men as mentioned earlier. The studies also mentioned that there were assumptions in Engels theory like the desire for men to leave property to his heirs; an original and natural division of labour between the sexes. The theory that men created the first wealth was also challenged as they pointed out that women were the first cultivators who both provided subsistence and produced the first surplus.\textsuperscript{51} Engels was also criticized on his theory of sexual division of the family. It was stated that "the naturalistic account of the division of labour i.e. men doing social production and women doing the household work is contradicted by ethnographic and socio-logical data showing that women regularly contribute to subsistence activity and thereby to social production."\textsuperscript{52} But these critiques of Engels have not shown very clearly why and how male supremacy had been asserted.

However, through all the anthropological and historical debates on patriarchy one common feature that has emerged is that patriarchal domination is more a socio-historical construct than a biological construct. Thus it is not to be wondered that patriarchy was also present in the tribal societies of the North East. Prior to the British administration, many of the tribes in North East India including the Mizo engaged themselves in Inter-tribal and inter-village wars. Hence to protect

\textsuperscript{51} Valerie Bryson, \textit{Feminist Political Theory} (New York, 1992) pp.73-75
\textsuperscript{52} Meena A.Kelkar, \textit{Subordination of Woman} (New Delhi, 1995) p.17
themselves from invasion they used to raid other villages or ambush their enemies. After killing their enemies they used to cut the head and take it to their village to show that they have really killed the enemy. This practice is often referred to as head hunting. The head of the slain enemy was taken not only to prove their word but also as a symbol of their bravery. It was also believed that the slain enemy would serve the slayer in the next world provided the slayer organised a ritual or ceremony called ral aih. In many of the tribes in Southeast Asia who practiced head hunting, the slayer was considered to be a brave warrior and enabled them to boldly ask a woman to marry them. So, head hunting was also used for attracting girls. The warriors who used to take home the heads were all men and since they were regarded to be protecting the village including women and children, they gained the respect of the elders and other people in the village. By achieving prominence they also had a strong influence in the affairs of the society and they were given leadership roles. Women also had to obey their authority since men were the ones to protect them from being killed or from being taken as a slave. Hence in the tribal societies of North East India, head hunting is seen as one of the factors that contribute to subordination of women and their exclusion in leadership roles. As mentioned, since women looked up to the men for their survival, women therefore had to bow down under the authority of the men folk. So almost all the tribes of the Northeast except the Khasis, Garos and Rabhas are patriarchal society where man is the head

54 Dr. Susan Russell, “Headhunting in Southeast Asia” in www.seasite.niu.edu/crossroads/russell/headhunting
55 Ibid, B.Lalthangliana, op. cit., p.330
of the family and also possess all the leadership roles in the society. It would therefore be important to analyse whether the migration process which took place among people as in the case of the Mizo, can also be attributed to the enforcement of patriarchy and this will be studied in the later chapters.

Migration of people had occurred from prehistoric times and has continued till now. Migration is ordinarily referred to as a relatively permanent movement of persons over a significant distance. Migration is also known as the movement of people from one permanent residence to another permanent or temporary residence for substantial period of time. There are various causes for people to migrate such as natural disaster, calamities, scarcity of food and invasion. It is also said that wider economic, political and cultural conditions are potent causes of migration. The most common theory of migration which is being pointed out is the ‘push and pull’ theory advocated by Bogue. For the push factor the various causes enumerated are invasion, scarcity of food and being made outcaste by other members of the society. On the other hand, the pull factors could be availability of food, better ecological environment and attraction of labour or jobs. The availability of unused land and freedom from interference are important variables for people to migrate. When people migrate to other region, they try to find a place which is similar to the place they left. If that is not possible, they had to adapt to their new surroundings. In these circumstances, their culture and their socio-economic system would undergo a

58 R.B.Mandal (ed), Frontiers in Migration Analysis (New Delhi, 1981) p.1
59 Ram Nath Singh, Impact of Out Migration on Socio-Economic Conditions, (Delhi, 1990) p.10
change. Hence they may have to grow different kind of crops and the houses which they built may have to be different also. They could also be influenced by the people who had migrated earlier. It is most probable that they would learn new values and also try to adjust their living conditions according to the environment. So it can be said that migration helps in the diffusion of ideas and information. This brings about social and economic change, and can be regarded as a human adjustment to economic, environmental and social problems. Moreover when people migrate, they may have to fight other people who were already in the region. Hence men who are physically stronger and have traditionally been the warriors were usually looked up to for support and protection. There are various theories and works propounded by anthropologists, sociologists and geographers regarding migration. However the theories and their works did not include how migration process affected gender relations. In earlier times migration was based on assumptions and was done on a trial and error basis. It can be noted that when people shift from place to place which can cover long distances, their food habits, dress and their way of life could undergo a change. As time passed the people also make invent new things and so technology would advance. Moreover if the society is passing through a change in social, economic and technological conditions, gender relations would also be effected. So in a transitory society patriarchy could be reinforced or it may also happen that patriarchy could be weakened. Hence the level of patriarchy would be different according to the periods of time and as a result the level of women’s subordination could also vary.

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62 ibid., p.55
Supporters of patriarchy, like the traditionalists, however often argued that patriarchy is a given constant as they regard it to be biologically determined. Gerda Lerner commented, 'traditionalists, whether working within a religious or a scientific framework, have regarded women’s subordination as universal, God-given, or natural, hence immutable.'\(^63\) They put forward the belief that since men are stronger physically, they become hunters and providers and also defend their women against enemies while women being weaker physically stay at home and look after the family. These biological differences assigned them different social roles and tasks. So they propounded that women should be subordinated to men as they were created to have different roles and position. They also argued that because women produce children, their main purpose in life is to become mothers, and so their primary role is to be child-bearers and child-rearers.\(^64\) In reality, it can be noted that child bearing is sex attributed and cannot be changed. However child rearing is socially constructed. The various duties and functions to be done by men and women are culturally or socially constructed. This division of labour is more a matter of culture and is clearly seen from anthropological and historical studies. Activities which are generally accepted as masculine in male centred societies are also performed by women in some other societies. Margaret Mead wrote that among the Arapesh tribe in New Guinea both the sexes have feminine trait and among the Mundugumor both the sexes have masculine characters.\(^65\) It was also noted that among the tribes of Nambikwatra tribe and Encounter Bay in South Australia, it was the father who took care of the children while women do the housework but prefer hunting and war

\(^{63}\) Gerda Lerner, *The ... of Patriarchy*, op.cit., p.16  
\(^{64}\) *ibid.* p.17  
\(^{65}\) Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*, (New York, 1935)
expeditions. From such researches it has been possible to establish that the roles played by male and female is not because of biology but due to social conditioning.

The cause of women's subordination has also been studied by the anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss. He points out that just as there is an exchange of other objects, there was also an exchange of women. Women are thought of more as commodities than as human beings and were so exchanged and this led to the subordination of women. The idea put forward by this theory that exchange of women took place was that as the people thought endogamy as a taboo, and so they followed exogamy. The exchange of women was established between two groups of men while women were just objects in the process of exchange. The establishment of these extra-familial ties produces social relations which enabled people to extend the field of their activities and even their authorities beyond their own families. It also guaranteed "peaceful co-existence by creating extended family structures among strangers". Gerda Lerner had postulated as to why women were exchanged and not the men. According to her assumptions the people knew that if they captured women they could reproduce and population would be added to their group which would mean more labour force. She also added that if men were captured, they could not be trusted as they would always wait for a chance to get revenge or go back to their tribe. But if women were taken and given off in marriages and have children, they would be loyal to the tribe. So women were taken as captives to reproduce children.

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69 Gerda Lerner, The ....of Patriarchy, op.cit., p.48-49
and hence viewed women as a reproductive object. Moreover exchange of women could also mean not only women taken as captives, but also of bride stealing, rape or negotiated marriages. In this process Levi-Strauss said that women are reified, become dehumanized and are thought of more as things than as human. According to him, this exchange of women marks the beginning of women's subordination. This exchange reinforces a sexual division of labour which institutes male dominance. However one can wonder why it was only the women who were captured or given in exchange and not the men. It can be assumed that this may be because women were weaker and so could not desist the things imposed on them. It should also be noted that in foraging groups women play a major role in procuring food and other requirements for the family but men occupy a higher position and that the groups were patriarchal. If this was so it can be said that it was because of their subordination that women were exchanged.

The radical feminists on the other hand believed that women are a class by themselves, a class whose membership is defined by sex. As such they are subordinated in all societies because of biological differences, hierarchical division of labour and sex roles. The radical feminists insisted that male power is not only confined to the public worlds of political and paid employment, but that it extends into private life as in the family and in sexuality. The radicals also stressed that as men owned and controlled women's reproductive capacities, women have become dependent on men. Radical feminism also view patriarchy as an autonomous, social,

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70 ibid., p.47  
71 Meena A. Kelkar, op. cit., p.13  
73 Alison Jagger, op.cit., p.102  
74 Valerie Bryson, op. cit., p.181
historical and political force. The radical feminists have shown the 'male bias' in the society and how the various disciplines of study have reinforced patriarchy. Susan Brownmiller, for instance, argues that women's subordination is due to men's ability to rape them. Radical feminists like Brownmiller explained that men use their ability to rape, to intimidate and control women and this led to male dominance over women. The Radical Feminists have tended to generalise women of different societies and at different points of time into one homogenous unit. But it should be noted that though women were subordinated, the methods and level of subordination of women of different societies and at different time can vary. As noted by anthropologists, there are some societies in which women share power with their men. So the level of subordination might not be the same and their experiences could differ. Radical Feminists nevertheless have brought valuable insights to feminist theorizing. It identified the ways and means in which male values constructed women to be subordinated and enabled women to find out how to free themselves from it. Alison Jagger has rightly said, 'Radical Feminism has begun to create a "counter-reality" to show us the world not just as it appears to women who are confused by patriarchal ideology but as it appears to those who have a consciousness of their own oppression, who are aware that they inhabit a patriarchy. It has drawn on the experience of feminist women to show us, often, through poetry and literature, that prevailing world views are male-biased and descriptively inadequate.' The Radical Feminists tries to erode the barrier which separates the

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76 Alison M.Jagger, op.cit., p.12  
77 Susan Brownmiller, Against our Will:Men, Women and Rape (New York, 1976)  
78 Alison M.Jagger, op.cit., p.381
public and private sphere which was earlier demarcated by patriarchy. The Radicals emphasised that there is no distinction between the public and private realm and that both the realms are interconnected. They therefore started the slogan 'the personal is political'.\textsuperscript{79} So every area of life is also the sphere of sexual politics Thus Radical Feminism provides the conceptual foundation for bringing sexuality, childbearing and childrearing into the domain of politics.\textsuperscript{80}

Marxist Feminists on the other hand see women's subordination as originating with the introduction of private property. As Marx was primarily concerned with class antagonism, he concentrated on the exploitation of the workers who sold their labour to the owners of capital and how they got their part back in the form of wages.\textsuperscript{81} This could therefore include women who are working outside but did not include their work in the household. Though Marxists were correct in seeing women's relation to production but the crucial ways in which women's subordination is maintained within the family is ignored. According to Rowbotham, Marx takes for 'granted the necessity of women's labour in maintaining and reproducing wage earners, but he does not examine this in any detail or discuss its implications for women's consciousness.'\textsuperscript{82} As a result questions of sex, gender and procreation are not examined by them whereas when the sexual division of labour is examined, it is mainly in connection with economic production.

A very orthodox Marxist theory therefore may not adequately capture the very subtle workings of patriarchy in a society. It was in this context that Socialist

\textsuperscript{79} \textit{ibid.}, p.101
\textsuperscript{80} \textit{ibid.}, p.106
\textsuperscript{81} Sheila Rowbotham, \textit{op.cit.}, p.vviv
\textsuperscript{82} \textit{ibid.}
Feminism was born in the 1970s. It is the development of a political theory and practice that synthesize the best insights of radical feminism and of the Marxist tradition. Socialist feminism tries to evolve a better theory and makes an attempt to evade the problems that have confronted the earlier feminist theories. Socialism feminism also believed that women's inferior status is rooted in private property and class divided society. They also believed that sexual activity, childbearing, and childrearing are social practices that show power relations and are therefore appropriate subjects for political analysis. Moreover, they do not view 'humans as abstract genderless individuals, with women essentially indistinguishable from men. It views women as constituted essentially by the social relations they inhabit. The social relations of society define the particular activity a woman engages in at a given moment.'

The three main trends of feminist thoughts discussed above, i.e. Radical Feminists, Marxist Feminist and Socialist Feminist all tried to understand how women are subordinated and to find a way to end that subordination. Each feminist theory believed that women are subordinated but they perceive that subordination in a different way and the means for ending the subordination is also prescribed differently. Marxists see the existence and origins of patriarchy as bound up with class society and that patriarchy emerged after private property had developed. On the other hand, Radical Feminists see patriarchy as either autonomous or itself the cause of other forms of oppression. They also theorized that patriarchy did not evolve after capitalism but that it occurred in pre-capitalist society. Marxism

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83 Alison M. Jagger, *op. cit.*, p.123
84 *ibid.* p.130
believed that male dominance is an "ideology by which capital divides and rules; it must be overcome by a "cultural revolution" based on a socialist transformation of the "economy".". For radical feminism, male dominance is grounded in men's universal control over women's bodies, meaning their sexual and procreative capacities; it must be overcome by women's achieving sexual and procreative self-determination. The political theory of socialist feminism tries to incorporate the essence of both the above views by conceiving of contemporary male dominance as part of the economic foundation of society. The economics of domination was being understood to include childbearing and sexual activities as well. In the socialist feminist view, therefore, the abolition of male dominance requires a transformation of the economic foundation of society as a whole.  

Though different theories may be presented for the origin of the subordination of women, it can be safely said that various aspects of patriarchy are the main reasons for the women's subordination. It is patriarchal thought that allots a different status, position and function for men and women. Such thought prescribes that men and women are biologically different, their physique and appearances are different and so their body functioning would be different. Therefore the roles they were supposed to play is also different. Men are supposed to be the breadwinner and often go out of the house to earn a living. On the other hand women are supposed to stay in the house and look after the household. Even if they happen to have employment somewhere else, looking after the household is still their responsibility. They are also the ones who have to look after the children, in short the care-givers.

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85 ibid. p.147
86 ibid.
Men are also taught to be aggressive and domineering while women are told to act submissive and gentle. Girls are scolded if they happen to roam around while boys are hardly admonished for it. The roles and implications of such roles based on differences of sex is due to gender which is culturally constructed due to the influence of patriarchy. The word gender seems to have first appeared among American feminists who wanted to insist on the social quality of distinctions based on sex. Gender is also used as a way of referring to the social organization of the relationship between the two sexes. Gerda Lerner explained gender as the ‘cultural definition of behaviour defined as appropriate to the sexes in a given society at a given time.’ So it can be said that sex is biologically given while gender is culturally created. So sex is unchangeable whereas gender can and does undergo changes over time and is accordance to various social norms.

Thus, gender relations and gendered roles which has influenced the society for a long time had its effect on the writings of history too. Gerda Lerner has written that there is a difference between the unrecorded past and History which is the recorded and interpreted past. Women were always present in the unrecorded past, have participated in all events and have shared the world with men. They were instrumental in creating society. So, in the unrecorded past the contributions and works of women and men were preserved in folklore, art and ritual. However a glaring feature of the recorded History and in its interpretation is the marginalisation and complete wiping out of the women. Moreover the language which was used in

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87 Joan Scott, Gender and the Politics of History (New York, 1988) p.29
88 Gerda Lerner, The ...of Patriarchy, op.cit., p.238
89 ibid
the recorded history was also masculine as if history was a masculine phenomenon.\textsuperscript{90}

There were of course some women who were seen in the records, but they are there due to their connection with males and were qualified by male standards. The main reason for women to be obliterated in history is because almost all historians have been male and were influenced by patriarchal thoughts. They have recorded and interpreted only what they have assumed to be important. The importance which they therefore gave was only to the lives and activities of men. Hence the "subject matter of history is always men in the midst of other men – men in collectives and groups".\textsuperscript{91} The contributions of women were not important for them and hence women were rarely given a space in the recordings. It may be argued that there were some men too whose lives and activities were not recognized but here also it can be said that this was because of class and not sex. In a society the dominant groups were also given significance and thereby the minorities were not given importance. Moreover since the early writers were mostly the educated ones from the upper classes so the lives of the people of the lower classes were hardly recognized. However, the lives of these hidden men was because of class whereas women's contribution was obliterated because of gender,\textsuperscript{92} and this was altogether a different concept. So it can be said that men were not hidden because of sex while women were hidden because of their sex. Thus texts on religion, law, politics, education etc carried different pronouncement for men depending on caste, class, age and religious

\textsuperscript{90} Judith P. Zinsser, op. cit., p.22ff
\textsuperscript{91} David Hackett Fischer, Historians' Fallacies: Towards a Logic of Historical Thought (New York, 1970), p.217
\textsuperscript{92} Sheila Rowbotham, op. cit., p.xxxi
sect. In contrast, women’s differences were overshadowed by their biological characteristics and the subordinate roles they were destined to play.\textsuperscript{93}

Even though women were not given a fair share in the recorded history, historians have called this ‘History and claimed Universality’ for it.\textsuperscript{94} So, all theories about human beings, our society and culture and behaviour have been man-made. Observations and interpretations in each discipline reflect perspective which means that their narratives and interpretations are not as true for women as they are for men. They do not correspond with women’s understandings. What women have done and topics that were intertwined with women’s lives – household and agricultural technology; religious ceremonies; family relationships and their reproduction were ignored and overlooked. The earlier historians were not concerned with how activities like migration, change of places and economy might have affected women’s lives and how they adapted to the changes. It is now understood how technological, economic and political changes which affected men had quite a different impact on women. For instance when capitalism emerged men had to work outside as wage earners of the capitalist owners. On the other hand women began to be more confined to the household. Technological inventions might make things easier for the men who work outside the house but it could make the women more subservient to male domination. This could be because women often lacked access to education of science and technology and rural women especially were bypassed by industrial modernisation.\textsuperscript{95} This resulted in substitution of male workers for female workers and women were assigned the manual work. The impact that changes in the

\textsuperscript{93} Geraldine Forbes, \textit{Women in Modern India} (New Delhi, 1998) p.1
\textsuperscript{94} Gerda Lerner, \textit{The ... of Patriarchy, op.cit.}, p.4
\textsuperscript{95} S.C. Jain, \textit{Women and Technology} (Jaipur, 1985) pp.2-4
society had on women was ignored by the historians. Family’s religious ceremonies also affected women as they were the ones who had to overlook all the preparations to be made for offerings and sacrifices and for feeding other people. There were some writers who have put a separate chapter ‘on’ women or ‘of’ women and they regard it as a justice done to women. Hence, studies of family, religion, society and village structure have traditionally been carried out without any regard for gender and gender relations. There has been no critical consideration of what this has meant for women’s lives, and what sacrifices women had to make to maintain these relations. History for a very long time has been largely studied without inquiry into how life conditions have differentially changed for persons according to gender. As a result, there are very few sources to know about women in the past and also to know the whole history of humankind. Hence some feminist and other writers began to work on women studies. In the west, there have been three general approaches to women’s studies, they are additive history, genderized history and contributory history. Additive history is history written after a re-examination of the sources to discover the contributions and role of women. Genderized history draws on a feminist perspective to rethink historiography and make gender difference a key to the analysis of social relations. Contributory history privileges women agency while recognizing how patriarchy impedes women’s action. In the present study, additive history approach would be used, as Mizoram is an area where sources on gender are scarce and one has to rely on the existing sources and hence a re-interpretation of the existing sources is needed to study gender history.

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96 R.Indira & Deepak Kumar Behera (ed) Gender and Society In India, Vol I. (New Delhi, 1999)
97 Geraldine Forbes, op.cit., p.2
Gender studies became more popular as it is important and fruitful to identify gender systems as it helps us to know the place or the position of the sexes in a society. It also demonstrates the essentiality of gender analysis to the field, rather than keeping it away from the mainstream in a women’s history category. It would also enable us to have a holistic approach to history. But it is important to realize that the different cultures or societies cannot be generalized as gender relations can be different in different societies. It can also vary in different phases of time. However the values and the principles of patriarchy are the same all over the world.

Thus, patriarchy which seems to be the norm in almost all societies greatly affected and influenced the psychology of both men and women for a very long time. However, women slowly began to realize how it affects their lives and so wanted to break free from its clutches. Feminist consciousness began to develop as they were aware that as a woman they have suffered wrongs and were subordinated. They also realised that their subordination was not natural but was socially determined. In the early phase, this development took the form of isolated thoughts by individual women. Later on other women also became conscious and formed organizations. They started several movements and this gained prominence in the 1960’s. Female authors began to write about how women were marginalized. Alice Clark in her *The Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* wrote about the nature of women’s productive activity and about the effect of capitalism on the economic position of women. Mary Wollstonecraft in *Vindication of the Rights of Women* wrote how women should try to decide their own fate and not to depend on men. She

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98 Margaret Mead, *op. cit.*, p.16  
100 Mary Wollstonecraft, *op. cit.*, (London, 1992)
also demanded a share in enforcing their rights. Mary Beard in her book *Women as a Force in History* \(^{101}\) studied the lives of women from ancient times to Second World War to show that women were members of a subordinated sex throughout history. She also tried to show that women always participated in historic events and they were a force in history. Other female writers were among the pioneer writers since they have also realized that due to the influence of patriarchy, they have always been hidden in history. So, they began the work of writing on women and opened up the “other half of history which would be inclusive, not exclusive, universal, not particular”. \(^{102}\) The importance of gender studies or the studying of a society from gender perspective came to be realised as this would produce a totally different view on any subject.

To get a total view of history, gender historians collected sources which seem to be important for their work. They have searched for “data which may have been collected but was ignored, and for new and more powerful research techniques to utilize the fragmentary data that are available”. \(^{103}\) They have used a lot of oral tradition like folktales, folksongs and proverbs or sayings. These oral traditions are quite important as they often reflect about the social conditions of the time. Women were also interviewed to know their experiences of the past. Gender historians also used symbols and metaphors as Gerda Lerner has done. The social norms, the rules and laws were also used for knowing gender relations. They have also used secondary sources and official papers. Moreover these gender historians have made

\(^{101}\) Mary Beard, *Women as Force in History* (New York, 1962)
\(^{102}\) Judith P.Zinsser, *op.cit.*, p,27
\(^{103}\) J.Krishnamurthy (ed), *Women in Colonial India*, (New Delhi, 1989) p,viii
use of diaries, journals and letters kept by women. These are then all interpreted or re-interpreted from the perspective of the woman.

Gender historians try to see history from a female perspective through the various sources used by them. The way in which a particular incident affected men and women could be different. The sources which they have used could be written by a male writer but in this case they try to relate what it could mean for a woman. Thus the way in which the sources are used is quite different from the normal historian’s view. Mary Beard studied medieval history through the history of law, literary evidence, education and organisation of the guilds. Sheila Rowbotham in her work *Hidden from History* studied about the various political movements and how periods of change have affected women. She studied the developments from a feminist perspective which before was studied from a men’s point of view. She knew that she had to see from a different light as things could be quite different for the one who experienced it than to just observe it. In the *Creation of Patriarchy* Gerda Lerner tried to trace, ‘by means of historical evidence, the development of the leading ideas, symbols, and metaphors by which patriarchal gender relations were incorporated into Western civilization.’\(^1\) As she studied she also tried to re-interpret the meanings from a women’s perspective. Some of the sources which she used were the works of men, but she reinterpreted them so as to know the actual gender relations. These gender historians had used different approaches to study gender and see women’s role in history. Mary Beard had used the approach of contributary gender study while Sheila Rowbotham had used genderized approach

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\(^1\) Gerda Lerner, *op.cit.*, p.10
and Gerda Lerner used additive approach. All these approaches may be different but they reflect women's contribution to the society, the role they played for the development of history and gender relations.

From the discussion above on the various trends of feminism and their impact on gender history, it is possible to conclude that Socialist feminist thought appears to be the best conceptual framework that one can adopt to have an adequate understanding of the subordination of women and women’s relation to men and nature. As mentioned earlier, Marxists primarily recognized differences of class and stressed similarities between women and men of the same class. On the other hand, Radical feminism recognized only differences of age and sex and viewed that the experiences of all women were the same. However Socialist feminism sees that an “individual’s life experience is shaped by her sex and gender...class, race and nationality.”\footnote{Alison M.Jagger, \textit{op.cit.}, p.134} Socialist feminist also view human nature as defined in part by biological characteristics which are subject to change through its conscious and cooperative productive activity. So, the difference between women and men are not pre-social givens, but are socially constructed and is therefore liable to change. By using Socialist feminist thought it would be possible therefore to have an adequate understanding of the real position of women and gender relations from the standpoint of women. The use of the Additive approach to gender history within the socialist feminist thought would thus provide a model within which gender relation in societies could be analysed. It is therefore proposed to use this framework of analysis to understand gender relations and patriarchy in the history of the Mizo.
Thus the study would be a re-evaluation of the various sources from a women’s perspective and would try to find out the exact contributions and role of women in the society.

Our discussion above also shows that history writing is still done very much under the domination of patriarchal values. There is insufficient study of gender for many of the societies. The Mizo society is no exception to this. Mizoram, which is situated in the North East India is inhabited by the Mizo. They are said to have migrated from China to Burma and to present Mizoram. The society is strictly patriarchal. One example to show the male attitude towards women can be known from the sayings like ‘Women and crabs have no religion’, ‘Women and old fence can be easily replaced’, ‘Women’s word is no word just as a crab meat is not a meat’.106 Women did the maximum work at home and in their jhum. They worked in the jhum along with their husband and all the domestic works were entirely their responsibility. Though women worked a lot for themselves and their families, they could not inherit the family’s property except on a very limited account. It is this patriarchal system of society that the present study is to be worked on. There are some works on the history of the Mizo by B.Lalthangliana107, Liangkaia108, K.Zawla109 and Dr. Vumson110. British administrators A.G.McCall,111 J.Shakespeare,112 Alexander Mackenzie113 and A.S.Reid114 who all have worked in

107 B.Lalthangliana, Mizo Chanchin (Aizawl, 2001)
108 Liangkaia, Mizo Chanchin (Aizawl, 1976)
109 K.Zawla, Mizo Pipute leh An Thlahte Chanchin (Aizawl, 1976)
110 Dr. Vumson, Zo History (Aizawl, 1986).
111 A.G.McCall, Lushai Chrysalis (Aizawl, reprint, 1977)
113 Alexander Mackenzie, The North-East Frontier of India (Delhi, reprint, 1979)
Mizoram have also written about the Mizo. Their works are quite useful to know about the history of the Mizo. However the method used by them is still based on traditional history. They have not given importance to women or to study the gender relations among the Mizo. Some of them have written something about women but that is not sufficient to know exactly how the different phases in migration or the developments which have taken place in Mizoram have effected the gender relations. This study is therefore necessary to see the gender relations among the people as previous studies have always been done by men and according to their perspective. As they migrated from place to place, the change of places, economy, geographical situations and other outside forces such as British administration, education and Christianity would have affected women but how it affected them is not studied as yet. In this framework, the various situations which have affected gender relations would be examined. Moreover, there are still Lai and other tribes of Mizo in Burma (Myanmar) who have not migrated to Mizoram. It is believed that the Mizo had migrated to the present state of Mizoram from Burma (Myanmar) but to assess the changes that took place in the society due to migration, it would be essential to know the socio-economic condition of the people prior to their migration.