

married sister. Her insight comes painfully on her "death day." Implicit is the suggestion that she has to be attuned to the wisdom she has left behind in her old homeland and must recover it through a painful struggle.

The concluding story in this collection, "Dusty Distance," is by Suniti Namjoshi, yet another diasporic writer. The desire of the Blue Donkey to be a writer is held in scorn by the male poet whose aggressiveness and magnificent confidence frighten her away. Next she encounters a Beautiful Lady who loves poetry but cannot understand "Blue Donkese" and although the Blue Donkey protests vehemently that she writes in English the Lady insists that their two worlds are very different—"What have a Lady and a donkey in common?" and the donkey turns away ruefully into the "dusty distance."

This fable serves as a comment on *The Inner Courtyard*. These voices—all Indian, all women, speaking in multitudinous tongues, articulating manifold experiences, might not belong to the Highway road of the "Poet" or the "immaculate woods" of the "Beautiful Lady". Yet—whether, they speak English or "Blue Donkese", these writers will not "sadly retrace" their steps into the "dusty distance." Instead, they will speak insistently *from* that distance, whether or not they are heeded.

¹The Naxalite Movement was a peasant uprising in 1972 at Naxalbari in Bengal. It was supported by communist revolutionaries, and was followed by similar uprisings elsewhere.

²*Chauti Ka Jaura* is the dress worn on the fourth day of wedding celebrations. It was believed that during the preparation of the trousseau, if even one piece of the elaborate dress was cut inexactly, something would go wrong with the marriage.

GENDER AND TRIBE: WOMEN, LAND AND FORESTS IN JHARKHAND

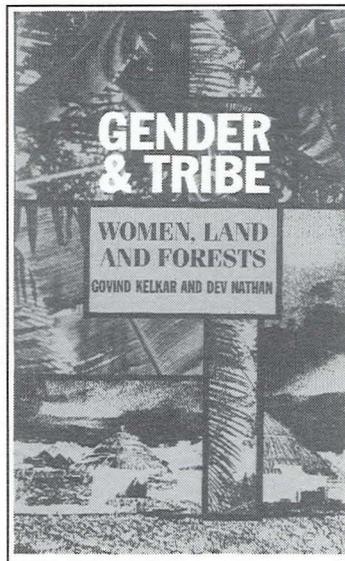
Govind Kelkar & Dev Nathan. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1991.

by *Sujata Ramachandran*

This interesting study documents the gen-

der role transformations that occur in a tribal society, and the formation of patriarchy in the present context: the continuing loss of control over land and forests on the part of the Jharkhand *adivasis* (tribals). It further looks at their resistance to this change in the form of a political movement for a Jharkhand state. The authors contrast the greater political and management participation of women in foraging tribes (as the Birhor) with the lesser position of women in the mainly agriculturalist tribes (as Santhal, Ho, Munda and Oraon). Kelkar and Nathan argue that the introduction of settled agriculture within the tribal situation had led to the propertylessness of women, and ensured patrilocality and the political marginalization of tribal women.

They claim that the origins of male



dominance are connected with the struggle to control women's labour and the products of women's labour, not necessarily the labour of reproduction, but women's labour as a whole. Thus, the subordination of women precedes the formation of class society, in the conventional sense. The seeds of gender inequality have been present in *adivasi* society, although not in a developed form of full control over all aspects of a woman's existence as found in caste/class society. It is, however, in the interaction of Jharkhandi society with state formations of the plains—initially with the Mughal Raj and much more so with British colonialism—that this society has evolved in the direction of patriarchy. In this context, the evolution of patrilineal

rights and the rise of various taboos against women's participation in some key types of labour such as ploughing are discussed. The study also considers the growing phenomenon of witch hunting as an attempt to establish the authority of men. Gender inequality has gradually extended to general social life and the authors cite the example of the following joke to reflect prevalent attitudes. "Why do women use both hands to wash their face and men only one?" The answer is, "Because women have two lords, singabonga and their husbands."

As yet, women in these tribes have not been completely devalued. The alienation of women's labour within the family is still partial, owing to the continuation of forms of communal property in land, the importance of gathering, and women's control over consumption and income. However, further development along the same patriarchal lines, the introduction of capitalism, and the rapid destruction of natural resources in the Jharkhand region would destroy the existing rights of the *adivasi* women and result in a situation no different from that which comes about in "mainstream" society. The authors conclude that if the ecological balance of the region is to be maintained and the patriarchal intent checked, then economic and other activities have to be organized on the basis of the community, and land rights given to individual women, as well as men, through allocation of means of production.

WESTERN WOMEN AND IMPERIALISM: COMPLICITY AND RESISTANCE

Edited by Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992

by *Davina Bhandar*

Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance, edited by Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel, is a diverse collection of essays detailing the