

**BODY AND SEXUALITY AMONG ADOLESCENT
TRIBAL GIRLS: A STUDY OF SANTHALS
IN JHARKHAND**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (ARTS)**

**BY
SRILEKHA CHAKRABORTY**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY
KOLKATA- 700032**

2023

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

BODY AND SEXUALITY AMONG ADOLESCENT TRIBAL GIRLS:
A STUDY OF SANTHALS IN JHARKHAND is submitted by me for the
award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur University
is based upon my work carried out under the Supervision of Dr. Piyali Sur.
And that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for
any degree or diploma anywhere/elsewhere.

Countersigned by the

Supervisor:

Candidate:

Date :

Date :

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Piyali Sur, Professor, Department of Sociology, Jadavpur University, who has not only been a true guide but a feminist ally as well through every step of my research. On my fieldwork days in Jharkhand, she was always there, a phone call or an email away as a silent observer. She showed me the right direction with her profound theoretical interpretations whenever I struggled to analyze my learning from the fieldwork and also on days when I questioned my personal life as a feminist ethnographer on the ground. I will always be deeply indebted to Dr. Bipul Kr. Bhadra to have introduced me to Dr. Piyali Sur one fine morning years ago and change the course of my life forever since then.

I express my deepest gratitude to Mr. Murari Mohan Choudhury, the Executive Director of NEEDS (Network for Enterprise Enhancement and Development Support), Jharkhand, for creating opportunities beyond possibilities for me at each and every point on the ground. I am grateful to have known the ground in length and breadth during my fieldwork under his guidance, and I feel humble enough to have gotten the opportunity to serve his organization and the people in the Santhal Paragana in Jharkhand with time. This endeavor would not have been possible without the field staff, namely Jeetendra, Sumati, Mukhi, Dular, Rohit, Hasnain, and Ajay, who made enough effort during the fieldwork. As the saying goes, 'Fieldwork ends when the researcher leaves the village or site, but ethnography continues' (Fetterman, 2010); I hope to continue serving this community and these people through my activism and research work for years to come.

I could not have undertaken this journey without my parents, Mr. Sankar Chakraborty & Mrs. Kalyani Chakraborty, for supporting me through thick and thin in my life choices and constantly pushing me to prioritize education over everything

throughout my life. And last but not least, I want to thank my partner Soumalya Biswas, who, for the last three years, nudged me every single day, even through difficult times to give this thesis the best possible shape ever.

This project is a labor of all your collective love and perseverance equally, as much as I can claim it is mine!

Srilekha Chakraborty

December, 2022

Kolkata

CONTENT

	Page No.
CERTIFICATE	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii-iii
CONTENT	iv-vi
1: INTRODUCTION	7-62
1.1: The Rationale of the Study	7-11
1.2: Situating the Field	11-15
1.3: The Context of Tribal Identity	15-18
1.4: Historical Interpretation of Body and Sexuality	19-26
1.5: Decoding Body, Gender, and Sexuality in this Study	26-34
1.6: The Analytical Understanding of Power and the Body in the Study	34-42
1.7: Sociology of Embodiment and the Lived Bodies	42-49
1.8: Theorizing Adolescent Bodies and Agency in Everyday Life	49-54
1.9: The Organization of the Dissertation	54-61
1.10: Conclusion	61-62
2: METHODOLOGY: ON LIVING THE ETHNOGRAPHY ON THE GROUND	63-114
2.1: Introduction	63-67
2.2: Setting the Gaze on the Ground	68-71
2.3: The Access and Entry to the Field	71-75
2.4: Being the 'Other' on the Field	75-83
2.5: Playing the Participant Observer	83-87
2.6: Performing the Impression Management	87-93

2.7: Gender on the Field	93-100
2.8: The Art of Data Collection	100-105
2.9: The Withdrawal from the Field and the Process of Writing	106-111
2.10: Conclusion	111-114
3: EXPERIENCING BODY AND SEXUALITY IN EVERYDAY	115-160
LIFE	
3.1: Introduction	115-119
3.2: The Making of the laborious bodies	119-126
3.3: The Discourse between the Land and the Body	126-131
3.4. Construction of Marriage and Motherhood through Bodies	131-144
3.5 The Discourse of Surveillance in the Gendered Bodies	144-151
3.6 Adolescents and the Onset of Sexed Bodies	151-158
3.7 Conclusion	158-160
4 : EMBODIED RITES OF PASSAGE AND RITUAL	161-210
PRACTICES	
4.1: Introduction	161-166
4.2: Internalizing Beauty Rituals and the Shaping of the Body Image	166-174
4.3: Body and the Ritual Performance of Dance	174-179
4.4: Lived Bodies & Denial of Spaces in Rituals	180-186
4.5: Menstruating Bodies and the Rite of Passage	186-197
4.6: On Marriage Rituals as the Rites of Passage	197-200
4.7: The Ailing Body as a Rite of Passage	200-209
4.8: Conclusion	209-210
5: FINDING THE AGENCY IN THE BODY	211-258
5.1: Introduction	211-217

5.2: Sexuality, Risk, and the Loitering Bodies	217-228
5.3: Tattoos and the Negotiations around the Inscribed Bodies	228-234
5.4: Bodies and the Dilemma on Reclaiming the Spaces	234-239
5.5: Negotiating Gender in Everyday Life	239-245
5.6: Docile Bodies and the Biopower	245-256
5.7: Conclusion	256-258
6: CONCLUSION	259-297
6.1: Introduction	259-261
6.2: The Chapters in a Brief	261-266
6.3: A Brief on the Theories Applied	266-271
6.4: Major Findings	271-284
6.5: Towards a New Narrative	284-291
6.6: Limitations of the Study	291-292
6.7: Future Scope of Research	293-294
6.8: Concluding Thoughts	294-297
END NOTES	298-328
BIBLIOGRAPHY	329-349
APPENDIX 1	350-360

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Rationale of the Study:

Gender, patriarchy, and women's bodies have been an integral part of anthropological, sociological, and feminist dialogues prioritizing the discourse of women in marginalized communities in South Asia. The intersections of race, tribal nation, and gender are also collectively linked to analyse the breadth of oppression for native women in several works of literature. However, Judith Butler comments in *Gender Trouble* (Butler, 1990) that it is not enough to inquire into how women might become more fully represented in language and politics only as we need to understand how 'women' as a category is produced and restrained by the very structures of power. In areas of hunger and poverty, discussions on gender, body, and sexuality are seldom prioritized. It is often assumed that in native communities, indigenous women should defend the tribal nationalism and liberation from the oppressors of land and instead ignore sexism and their experiences of bodies as part of their very survival as women in the communities (Ramirez, 2007, p. 23). In an attempt to document discourses around gender, body, and sexuality in everyday life, this study focuses on adolescent tribal girls from the Santhal Parganas¹ region of Jharkhand, prioritizing two districts named Deoghar and Pakur between 2015- 2018. One of my first memories from the interviews with the tribal girls was around January 2015, when I visited Kolgi² during the *Mage Parab*³. The women would climb up ladders, paint their houses cobalt blue, and neatly plaster their floors with cow dung. It was the welcoming festival of new crops after the harsh winters. There was an intoxicating smell in the air of freshly brewed *hadiya*⁴ and heaves of green sal *pattals* or *sal* leaves being neatly woven into

bowls by girls skipping school for ages. All I knew was that I was about to delve into an ethnographic examination of the politics of gender, bodies, and sexuality situated among young girls in the Santhal Parganas of Jharkhand for the next few years.

The early feminist anthropologists had pitched grand theories on the 'universality' of female subordination (Geertz, 1973). However, culture is not entirely systematic and integrated, but rather something co-created and lived through the bodies daily. The anthropological and sociological debates around the social construction of bodies, the performed rites of passage and rituals, and the agency in bodies in everyday tribal life are the focus areas of this study while discussing gender, body, and sexuality at its core. The reason for studying 'adolescent tribal girls' was to understand the social construction of gender in bodies and the events that marks their bodies as female and gendered, which has rarely been central to the discourse of theoretical trends studying women and bodies in India (Niranjana, 2001, p. 13). Feminist theories have studied women mainly concerning reproduction and motherhood. However, there has been very little literature on the post-reproductive life phase (Lamb, 2000). Similarly, there is very little literature on the adolescent body and sexuality from a South Asian indigenous context and adolescent bodies in general. There is a possible explanation for the difficulty of studying sexuality among children and adolescents because the perception that children are not sexual beings and introducing a topic of sexuality through intervention creates an adverse outcome among children (Van Reeuwijk, 2010, p. 06). The centrality of the studies around adolescent bodies and its literature from the Global North has been around anorexia and obesity (Fingerson, 2006). However, in the Santhal communities, the interactions with the adolescent girls happened around the importance of daily chores and labor in the field on how it is the most important tool for marriage. *"If you do not know all the work, but few like how to cut crops and*

wash utensils, you are okay to get married; the rest the in-laws will teach you in their house," the girls would say. A complex set of values was attached to the adolescent bodies in the tribal community, the one with the functionality of labor, marriage and motherhood, being the core component of the study. The new members of society get involved in a self-regulating process where they begin to monitor their own as well as the conduct of others through the process of 'doing gender' (West & Zimmerman, 1990). Therefore, I wanted to follow patterns of the practice theory (Bourdieu, 1977) and power (Foucault, 1972), which emphasized the social construct to understand adolescent girls in the communities. This chapter also emphasizes how adolescents embody the understanding of gender and sexuality, not simply performing the norms but as individual actors or persons living through their bodies. Another critical component that guides the length and breadth of this thesis is the context of 'space' which technically means open, empty, and lack of shape. However, sociologically, the context of space is not only rooted in the orientation of bodily practices but tends to control several dichotomies, as in 'mind and body,' 'public and private,' & 'male and female' (Niranjana, 2001). By focusing on the acts within which women define their lives that mark bodies as female, the primary task of this study was to have a conceptual elaboration of how gendered bodies are produced through the social construction of spaces, performance of rituals, and also through risk, resistance and negotiations in bodies.

The three objectives of this research are:

- To understand the various ways Santhali girls experience body and sexuality in their everyday lives.
- The ways these adolescent bodies live through rites of passage and ritual practices and internalize an understanding of body and sexuality.

- And to understand the agency in the body reflecting on the resistance, risk, and negotiations in their everyday lives.

The chapters in this study indicate that the body is not a mere object but a condition contextualized through relations to 'other' from the culture and spaces it occupies as 'being-to-the-world' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). The articulation of the embodied experiences of the body through language, perceiving beauty, living through rituals and rites of passage, deconstructing motherhood, and living through the sociocultural locations through inner dilemmas, beliefs, and internalization of selves (Thapan, 2009) were critical to the everyday life of the adolescent bodies in the Adivasi Santhal Parganas region and are documented through the chapters of this thesis. Furthermore, to investigate the vulnerability among adolescents in knowing about puberty, sexuality, and sexual behavior, the focus of the study was on understanding how adolescents experienced sexuality and sexual relationships in their everyday lives. Children are contextualized in their social worlds to understand how meanings are negotiated in social interactions. Therefore, how these adolescents interpreted and understood social experience and formed systems while growing up through social interaction shape both individual and social patterns of sexuality (Tolman et al., 1994). The narratives from the adolescents are the central informants of the study as the chapters in the study do not include adolescents as passive recipients of an adult culture and their bodies being simply assimilating it and producing it but also as active social agents in their own way and own experiences and actions in this social world (Van Reeuwijk, 2010, p. 07). Just as Puri (1999) in her book, my concern has been questioning the aspects of gender and sexuality in contemporary, post-colonial India, however, through the voices of adolescent girls from the Santhal Parganas. It was essential to consider the daily contexts of the adolescent's social lives and position

within the local understandings and norms of behavioral patterns around the body, gender, and sexuality. I argue in the thesis that the narratives of the adolescent tribal girls tell us much about internalized aspects of womanhood, gender, and sexuality and the cultural patterns around them. Hence, this study was not about how adolescent girls were expected to behave during a social situation as a norm but highlighted how girls felt performing those norms and how they accepted and negotiated their identities.

1.2. Situating the Field:

The slogan *Loha Nahi Anaaj Chaahiye!*⁵ has been a pertinent demand for the Santhal Parganas since the colonial era. The struggle of *Jal, Jungle, and Jameen* has taken up an essential part of these communities' survival in the country's marginalized pockets. According to the 2011 census⁶, Jharkhand has around 8.6% of Scheduled Tribes in India currently. Jharkhand, which means 'forest tract,' is an ancient name given to the forested upland, geographically called Chotanagpur plateau, and got separated from undivided Bihar in 2000⁷. The inception of the movement of the tribal for a separate state of Jharkhand was supposedly an extension of their heroic tradition of struggle against British imperialism and local feudalism since the era of Sidho-Kanho (Raj 1992).⁸ Sidho and Kanho, the leaders of the Santhal *Hul* or the Santhal rebellion back in the times (1855-56) against the East India Company and the Zamindari system, have been the symbol of the struggle against imperial oppression. Not only economic oppression or political control, but as Nitya Rao points out, Santhal *Hul* was an expression of 'ideological freedom' to legitimize a culture and an alternative way of life based on emotional attachment to their land (Rao, 2018). However, Rao also questions that while Sidho and Kanho became an embodiment of Adivasi victory, 'where have all the women in the struggle been?'. Several pieces of literature from the Santhal

Parganas have noticed the daily struggles of the people as residues, and most importantly, women amongst them have been forgotten since the *Hul* (Guha, 1983).

In countries like India, girls in low-income families are often supposed to get less food than boys and are less likely to be sent to school. As the standard historical and sociological research points out, by the time a child is six or seven years old, girls develop a fairly coherent sense of their sexual identity and the expectations attached to it (Geetha, 2007, p. 32). There are set codes of gendered behavior in the society constructed for boys and girls where boys must not cry, and boys can jump and roam freely; however, along with these set gendered patterns of gendered expectations, the added socio-economic atrocities in the tribal land problematizes the context of gender and body further deep. 62.6% of pregnant women in Jharkhand in the age group of 15-49 years are anemic compared to 50.3 percent in India, and this is a manifestation of poverty and hunger transmitted through generations.^{9 10} The heavy workload of tribal women, anemia, and limited access to body rights has profound effects on the health and pregnancy of women in these areas. The socio-demographic profile also reflects that Jharkhand has the highest dropout rates in India, where only thirty out of a hundred girls finish school. According to the Jharkhand Economic Survey conducted in 201516, the enrolment of girl students at primary and upper primary levels is 50%.¹¹ Young women's agencies and peer support groups have always been limited in Jharkhand. With 49% of girls getting married before their 18th birthday, the percentage is much higher than the national average of 47% among girls aged 15-19 and the average case has never gone below 50% in the last decade as the maternal healthcare-seeking awareness and behavior among adolescent tribal girls are very limited (Rani et al., 2007).

Moreover, Kishwar (1987) writes that tribal women play a crucial role in the production process and are not maintained by the men's labor as they get to cultivate a portion of the land in their lifetime as a part of the usufructuary right until death when the land again reverts to the men in the family. This act aimed to check the alienation of tribal lands by non-tribal as being transferred through marriage in the form of gifts or bride prices. Therefore, as soon as a daughter marries, she loses her limited usufructuary right over parental land. A married daughter thrown out by her husband also cannot claim shelter in her parental home as a 'right' but can stay with their brothers, facing much drudgery but is given a piece of land for her maintenance which is much smaller than the ones sons get. If an unmarried daughter is raped or has a sexual relationship with a non-tribal man, she loses her usufructuary right to the parental land. A widow's usufructuary right in her husband's land is similar to that of an unmarried daughter, where she does not inherit the land but has a right to be maintained through a small portion until death. Interestingly, daughters are denied rights in other forms of family property, too, as they do not have any right to even the cattle that may be given to their father or brothers as her bride price.

My initial interactions with the adolescent girls in Deoghar would lead to the discussion on how most adolescent girls in their village got married or eloped with their boyfriends. They would complain that the remaining few who were unmarried till then were left behind all alone, deprived of companions to accompany them to school. Eventually, they ended up leaving school or sports they were interested in to indulge in household work. Most anthropological studies on the ill health of tribal women have always been associated with their lack of awareness and illiteracy. They have a 'reductionist' tone to blame the tribes for their cultural practices as a failure to adopt mainstream development shifts (Mann, 1993). As Ramirez would point out while

mentioning the struggles of Native American women that it is the rule of the land as if there is always something more meaningful and significant going on with tribal nationalism or land rights that women should defend, where women and their own issues can wait (Ramirez, 2007, p. 23). Hence the zeal to document the understanding of the gendered body and sexuality of indigenous Santhali¹² adolescent girls putting their experiences of internalizing social construction, negotiations through rituals, and reclaiming agencies through their lived realities was a step closer to normalizing the discourse of studying adolescent bodies beyond a 'reductionist' approach in the Adivasi context.

The rationale behind having a set of adolescent Santhali 'voices' in the thesis does not simply mean the representation of the adolescent bodies in the texts. However, the socially constructed identity is presented through the bodies lived in this world because 'being heard and included' as voices was not the only focus of the study but was a starting point instead. The immediate context of being represented through lived realities and voices from the ground in this thesis represents an embodied historical self, gender, and body constructed by a matrix of social and political processes in a land contextualized through hunger and poverty. However, the logic behind choosing the Santhals for the research was varied. The accessibility into the said tribe was easier due to the support received from the local Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) named NEEDS¹³ and the legacy of their sustainable development work on the ground that I could enter an unknown land with some level of comfort. However, if we sociologically situate the politics of tribes versus the state, there is a historical crude reality behind why some tribes were more accessible than others. As James Scott (2009) points out, there is an 'ideal appropriation' of 'state space' historically built by the State, which leads to the foundation of 'tribe-making.' It was also interesting to identify in the field

that even when the funders wanted to fund development projects on the ground, they looked for a community where they could experience a visible change and impact within a short period of time. The history behind which tribal communities are easily accessible and are more civilized to embody a visible developmental change model is also a product of the 'civilizational discourse' in which those who are considered to 'be settled' are presumed to have raised their cultural and moral levels to be in par with the state demand. This civilization discourse has always stayed in power, and if we examine the centripetal meaning behind 'being civilized,' it boils down to becoming a state subject. It is, therefore, striking how often a tribal or ethnic identity is generated at the periphery almost entirely to make a political claim towards its resources, and it is often a state construct. Hence, the accessibility to the Santhal tribe and the positionality of even being able to have a part of the major conversation with girls and women in the community in broken Hindi language (though translations from the field staff were a necessary tool of conversation) were linked to the state construct of 'being civilized'. Since the colonial era, the Santhal tribe was one such tribe whose complex boundaries of ethnicity were altered to be more of a 'civilized' and 'state-subject' through representation in literature, language, education, and policies as being 'not-a-state subject' was considered as 'uncivilized' (Scott, 2009).

1.3. The Context of Tribal Identity:

Today, a tribe is universally understood as primitive, savage, or wild routinely as an idiom of defining backwardness against the so-called advanced non-tribal colonial measures of the development paradigm (Bara, 2009, p. 90). The colonial ethnography of the time portrayed tribes as beastly and having animal-like loose emotions and low intellect depicted as '*dasyus*,' '*daityas*,' '*rakshasas*,' which was similar to mid-19th

century western racial concept (Xaxa, 2005). His argument also points out that the abasement and the dictum that grades the tribes as savage have been measured through non-tribal and colonially evolved sources of a development paradigm that ignores the tribal viewpoint. The term 'tribe' to describe people who were different from those of the mainstream civilization is viewed as a colonial construction (Singh, 1997). A politics of language, religion, and identity runs in India, defining 'tribe' in literature and academics. The big question around tribes in post-colonial India has always been, 'Can they Survive in the Modern World?' Hence, the formation of the new states of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand posed theoretical and practical challenges to the idea around the 'savior syndrome' the so-called mainstreamist 'modern states' had and their superiority of thoughts on what makes a state modern (Krishna, 2000). In a world created by the indigenous themselves, they are constantly asked to prove if they could survive, whereas 'backwardness' and 'primitive' techniques are said to be intrinsic to tribes and are something that's called out as anti-mainstream (Ratnagar, 2003). Besides the context of survival, many sociological and economic studies on tribes are written on the politics around the question, 'What is a tribal identity?' (Pathy, 1995; 1999)¹⁴. The state and the dominant classes play an active role in the distinctness of the tribal consciousness and identity, forcing the marginalized to be convinced of their intrinsic inferiority¹⁵.

The term 'tribal' usually means a social unit, whereas 'Adivasi' is the collective term for the tribes of the Indian subcontinent who are recognized as indigenous inhabitants. The question of tribes in India is closely linked with administrative, religious, and identity politics at large. Hence, groups and communities have been increasing demand for their inclusion in the list of Scheduled Tribes of the Indian

Constitution. On the other hand, tribes have been fighting for their separate *Sarna* religious identity for ages (Kumar & Panda, 2018).¹⁶ The early ethnographers were unclear about India's distinction between caste and tribe. Xaxa points out that the 18th century writings showed synonymous use of the term 'caste and tribes of India' (Xaxa, 1999). T.K Oommen wrote that G.S Ghurye wanted to integrate the Scheduled Tribes into the Indian society and polity, assuming that the contact of tribes with Hindus would gradually enhance their respectability. Our constitution also posits Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in an analogous tone; however, in reality, the boundaries between castes and tribes in terms of marginalization have constantly been shifting, contradicting the 'absolute subalternity' in both cases. Nevertheless, the Dalit articulation of democracy has been around the question of representation, while the Adivasi articulation of democracy has been around the question of autonomy over state control (Banerjee, 2016).

Most early Indian Sociologists did not apprehend the tribal issues as different and distinct because what was prioritized in their writing was the process of assimilation of smaller groups of a different culture into the overarching homogenous culture then (Oommen, 2011). A strong ethnic sense of 'we' tribal and 'they' being the '*dikus*' or the 'outsiders' united the entire tribal population for a collective struggle resisting and revolting against the exploitation (Louis, 2003). Nevertheless, then there was a culture of silence or *Nirbakization* of the tribes that gradually shaped alongside the conversation of tribes or Adivasi initiated by the process of Sanskritization (Mahato, 2000). The argument has been that Adivasi people have rarely benefited from the various developmental and industrialization processes, as dispossession and forced migration have remained a chronic phenomenon. In fact, the cost of this development led them to extreme poverty, exploitation, oppression, and dehumanization culminating

in cultural silence that debilitates and destroys not only personality but also the cultural excellence and creative genius of the ethnic groups. In structural institutions like schools, the scheduled tribe children were particularly at a disadvantage as education was not imparted in their mother tongue (Rana & Das, 2004). In the health section, the data around malnourishment¹⁷ and the deaths from the Adivasi communities have been mostly ignored by the national media¹⁸ (Khera, 2008). The family-planning program was adopted in 1952 to stabilize the growth of the population over a reasonable period. However, reviews of the health status of tribal women showed that both the female fertility and infant mortality rates have been higher than the national average since then. Interestingly, rural women who use contraceptive methods depend solely on the public sector. Hence, the context of choice tends to become more of a development model where the woman has to 'fit in' here. It was not about exercising one's agency, where tribal women are caught up in this vicious cycle between poverty and improved living standards of health and water (Kumar & Joshi, 2008). There has technically been very little research done on married adolescent girls and their choices of sexuality in Jharkhand around their reproductive health and health-seeking behavior (Rani et al., 2007). I want to end this section by mentioning Spivak's (1988) ground-breaking article *Can the Subaltern Speak?* problematizing the context of subaltern voices and focusing on 'gendered subalternism,' she writes that subaltern women cannot speak not because a woman does not have a voice or will not act but because they are not given a position from where they can act or speak.¹⁹ She argues that the European intellectuals know the 'Other' from the colonial discourse and assume they speak the narrative of the society's 'Other.' However, in reality, the representation of the 'Other' from a colonial voice destroys the subjectivity of the subaltern.

1.4: Historical Interpretation of Body and Sexuality:

Through the evolution of the body in Philosophy, there has always been a Cartesian debate on 'Body versus Mind.' Body, since the time of Greek Philosophy, has been glorified as a 'Pleasure or Tomb' where their sculptors, painters, and potters celebrated the beauty of the naked human form in stone, paint, and clay, and the Greeks were even the first to develop the theories of beauty (Synnott, 1993). However, there was a dualism between the mind and the body. Greek philosophers like Socrates (466-399 BC) debated that the mind is better than the body and the soul as a helpless prisoner chained in the body compelled to view reality through prison bars. Plato (427-348 BC) similarly maintained this body-soul dualism by stating that soul is utterly superior to the body, and a philosopher's main occupation is to free and separate the soul from the body through their work. In *The Symposium* (1993), Plato suggested that there is always a scale of perfection ranging from the love of physical beauty to a love of beautiful souls and finally to the love of God, who is the absolute beauty. So Plato's analysis of the mortal physical body was on a lesser scale than the soul always, which had higher goals to achieve freedom from the body. However, Aristotle (384–322 BC) rejected Plato's dualism of body and soul. He defined the soul as a form in the living body; hence there cannot be one without the other. Synnott (1993) also portrays the transition with the birth of the Renaissance in Italy in the fourteenth century when the body was rediscovered through the art of Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, and Titian, who painted the body and its beauty and with that the ascetic idea of the body as an enemy came to an end strengthening the idea of the body being 'beautiful.' With Descartes (1668), the modern definition of the body as a machine came to the discourse when he compared the body to a clock that works without a mind and the parts of the body, the arms, the face and hands, as the whole machine is made of flesh and bones.

Friedrich Nietzsche rejected Christianity and the asceticism and negativism associated with the body; where in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (2005), he praised the body with the 'Self' and not in a hierarchy above the body.²⁰ On similar notes, *In Being and Nothingness* (1966), capsizing the Cartesian idealism Sartre insisted that the body is the self and that the self is the body 'I live my body...The body is what I immediately am...I am my body to the extent that I am' (Sartre, 1966, pp. 428–60) in contrast to Descartes's *Cogito ergo sum* ('I think, therefore I am') where he argues that mind is entirely truly distinct from the body and can exist without it (Descartes, 1974, pp. 105, 156). In Sociology, with the work of Spencer (1820-1903), the physical body provided the metaphorical foundation of the social body where social thinkers thought of society as a system that is comprised of interrelated parts mainly working harmoniously to organically present a social system evolving for the body to adapt and change in the desired environment. Moreover, since the rise of sociology, the human body has been central through several theories examining art, entertainment, prostitution, or activities directed toward the body's modification or healing (Waskul & Vannini, 2006). Since then, there have been several pieces of literature in sociology focusing on the dichotomies in operation- mind/body, public/private, male/female where always the former axis has been viewed as superior in relation to the latter. Bryan Turner (1991) identified four specific reasons for the failure of classical sociology to generate an understanding of the body. He argued that Durkheim, Weber, and Simmel were more generally concerned with the historical evolution of societies than individuals. For example, they were more concerned with topics like similarities between industrial capitalist societies and the contrasts with traditional societies, the rise of political democracy and citizenship, the power of religion and the gradual secularization of values and beliefs, and more (Shilling, 2003, pp.21-22).

In *Regulating Bodies*, Turner (1992) writes that being influenced by the same Cartesian thought on mind versus body, sociology, as an age-old philosophical tradition, accepted the mind/body dichotomy for years. However, with the launch of Turner and Featherstone's 1995 journal, *The Body and Society*, the context of the 'body' emerged in sociology as a distinct study area. The study of the body has become one of the principal fields of 'political and cultural activity' in modern social systems since then. Nonetheless, parts of classical sociology highlighted the body in their discourse, where Durkheim (1912) viewed the body as a source and location for the sacred phenomena that technically bind individuals together into a moral whole, and Karl Marx was concerned with the assimilation of the body in the capitalist system of production. The current writings on the body have thus taken up the classical legacy. They have marked several modern avenues, for example, habitus in Bourdieu, highlighting Durkheimian concerns on social and cognitive functions of 'collective representations' and Marxian concerns on social class (Shilling, 2003, pp. 08-09). Durkheim (1912) viewed sociology as involving the study of social facts; however, he was also concerned about how these facts become internalized in body positioning and interplay through shared everyday life. Weber was also concerned with the body through his 1930 publication *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, where central to the spirit of the modern economic life was the voluntary surrender of the body to strict routine and discipline²¹. However, unlike earlier Marxist analyses, Foucault's work centered on the body, not ideology. It is Foucault who reminds us that the body is not an inert ahistorical given but an object of physical and psychical inscription where bodies are constituted by what he terms power/knowledge relations, providing a retheorization of the body (Scott & Morgan, 1993, p. 52). Foucault had the most radical social constructionist approach. The Foucauldian approach to the body

considers the body as the 'vanishing biological entity' and becomes instead a socially constructed product that is highly malleable. Therefore, the body for Foucault is not simply a focus of discourse but tends to remain as a link between the daily practices on the one hand and the large-scale organizations on the other (Shilling, 2003, p. 65). Goffman, another influential social constructionist, has examined the body's position in social interaction through behavior in public and private places where the management of the body is always central to maintaining encounters through social roles and relations. Both Foucault's and Goffman's views on the body are about bodies being central to the embodied subject, and the significance of the body is determined by the 'social structures' existing beyond the reach of individuals. Foucault focuses on how the body is invested with powers that control individuals, and Goffman is more interested in how the body enables people to interfere. In contrast to the naturalistic views that portray people's actions as determined by biology; Goffman argues that individuals usually can control their bodily performances in social interaction. However, there are shared vocabularies of body idioms that are not in immediate control of the individuals (Goffman, 1963, p. 35).

The work of Pierre Bourdieu and Norbert Elias were the ones that overcame the dichotomy between biology/society, mind/body, and nature/culture split by providing a theory of the body as a form of physical capital and civilized bodies, respectively. Bourdieu's notion of the body links people's identities with social values based on appearances, size, and shape. In contrast, Elias (1991) showed how bodies, through appearances, became increasingly individualized and separated us from others. Both processes talk about investing more effort in monitoring and managing the body yet losing the satisfaction of bodily desires. The body for Bourdieu, as well as Elias, is both an 'unfinished' entity bearing a symbolic value and is integral to the maintenance of

social inequalities which are linked to the people's social location²² (Shilling, 2003, p. 13). Throughout the establishment and then the development of sociology, it mostly adopted a disembodied approach towards the subject matters with a high preference towards other facets of a human embodiment, like language and consciousness, than the body itself. When sociology started questioning the divide between nature and society, theorists envisioned the body as central to the human actor and the sociological diaspora (Shilling, 2003, p. 17). With that, the theorization of bodies came into the forefront where individual bodies linked to the possibilities of agency bring us closer to the fact of 'being bodies' along with the virtue of having bodies that provide us with life but also bring us close to the ultimate death (Featherstone & Turner, 1995; Berger & Luckmann, 1991). In Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction, the body has a 'symbolic value' where he shows a particular interest in the unfinishedness of the body developing in relation to various social forces integral to maintaining social inequalities. Bourdieu analyzes that the body has become commodified in modern society in several ways. This is not limited to the buying and selling of labor power but to the method by which the body has become a possessor of power and the garner of physical capital, which then gets to be converted into what Bourdieu calls cultural capital, economic capital, and social capital (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984; 1986) through 'social reproduction.'²³ As per Bourdieu, the emphasis on social reproduction also affects the degree to which people can exercise agency because, by the trajectories assigned to people through social location, habitus, and taste, it is difficult to 'break out' of the corporeal arrangement assigned to them. As per Bourdieu (1984, p. 466), 'habitus' operates at the level of the subconscious, which is beyond the reach of scrutiny or control by the will of people and occurs outside the control of each generation.

However, if we emphasize this interpretation of 'social reproduction,' it means that the body is solely the bearer of the external structures of cultural codes and that the phenomenological understanding of the lived body has little room (Turner, 1996). Nevertheless, Turner also argues that developing a sociological understanding of the body's physicality is optional since the 'natural body' is already injected with cultural understanding and social history (Turner, 1996, p. 34). Shilling, however, argued that Turner's oversimplified position undermines those physical capacities of the body responsible for creating creative action and social relations (Shilling, 2003, p. ix).

The systematic chronology of the study of bodies posts the First World War had the bodies made as a metaphor for fitness and health in the United States. There was a whole revolution to 'reclaim the bodies' and question the ability to control and associate a meaning to the bodies, which gave rise to the second wave feminism in the 1960s, having its root in fertility and abortion rights concerning women and their bodies. Using the body as a vehicle of political action and protest was the first time the oppression of women's bodies was brought into academia. For example, Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* (1971) on how women can break out of subordination in society by conquering the tyranny of reproductive biology.²⁴ Early feminists in the United States always viewed the identification of women with their bodies as the root cause of their oppression in a patriarchal culture prevailing in society. There was always a Nature/Culture debate prevalent where a woman is always identified with Nature primarily because of the bodily functions related to reproduction and child-bearing. Indian writers like Thapan (2009, pp. 35-36) quoted Leela Dube (1986), in her argument around women from North and Central India embodying the symbolism of the 'seed' and the 'earth' as an explanation of the biological reproduction process; however, the women stand alienated from productive resources and have no control over her own labor power.

Thapan, therefore, points out that a woman's body is undoubtedly the surface on which the culturally and socially sanctioned codes of a desirable woman are inscribed, depicting an in-depth understanding of femininity in the given society.

Similarly, 'Sexuality,' for Foucault, was not something that was given naturally, which the power tried to hold in check or a domain which knowledge tends to discover gradually; it is instead a historical construct (Foucault, 1978, p. 105). The 'social construction of sexuality,' as Weeks (2003) identifies, is also the multiple ways in which the complex history of our society shapes our emotions, desires, and relationships. The social construction of sexuality traces the changed sexual patterns over time. Many in the positions of the Roman Catholic Church still tend to define the norms of sex in the relationship of reproduction. In the *History of Sexuality: Volume 1*, Foucault (1978) points out that sex was a means of access employed as a formal discipline since the nineteenth century as a regulation. Hence, sexuality since then was sought out in the smallest details of individual existence and tracked down in behavior and had a strong analysis around it. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, a certain frankness around sexuality was still common, with a little need for secrecy. As Foucault writes, it was when the anatomies were shown, and bodies made an open display of themselves in a shameless discourse. However, soon with the 'Victorian Bourgeoisie,' sexuality was carefully confined and moved into the home where the legal and conjugal family took custody of it through a serious function of reproduction. For the subject of sex, 'silence' became the rule. However, we find that culture's grip on the woman's body is a constant intimate fact dominated by everyday life's practices and bodily habits (Bordo, 1993 a, 1993 b; Bartky, 1997). The modern question, therefore, is on how 'we reconceive the body as no longer a passive medium,' and to answer the question, we fall back to the classic statement of Simone de Beauvoir's

1953 book, *The Second Sex*, 'one is not born but becomes a woman' (Beauvoir, 2010). Moreover, the way Butler (1990) interprets it is that women itself is a term in process and is in the form of 'becoming' that cannot be said to originate or end. As Thapan (2009, p. 38) writes, it is therefore emphasized that gendered embodiment is not just determined but is produced in a given socio-cultural setting.

1.5: Decoding Body, Gender, and Sexuality in this Study:

The Adivasi-Dalit and Bahujans in India have continuously refused to be integrated into mainstream Hinduism for a long time. Describing gender and body, Nivedita Menon (2017) argues that there is a popular political, fair-complexioned, saffron flag bearing sacred image of an Indian woman always pitted against the dark-skinned Dalit Adivasi rural woman, accompanied by the black buffalo, not the sacred cow. Not fitting into a certain Brahminical identity claims for being the 'Bharatmata's unruly daughters,' the daughters who were instead the Adivasi or the first inhabitants of the Nation in reality are bodies seldom counted as India's daughters. Women have been in the peripheries of academic literature for ages; however, amidst the 'new identity' defined by urban, middle, and upper classes of society (Shilee & Shailee, 2002), the narratives of doubly marginalized voices of tribal women and concerns around their identities were further subdued. The personal narratives on the body, gender, and sexuality in this thesis, therefore, explore the views of the contemporary post-colonial Indian adolescents from the Santhal community whose grandmothers have equally fought for land rights and refused to be integrated into mainstream Hinduism.

When studying the body, gender, and sexuality among adolescents, it was understood that there is generally very little literature on childhood sexuality. Most of the available literature on embodied adolescent sexuality has focused on girls'

experiences, primarily because this literature rests on cultural assumptions that adolescent boys experience bodily sexual desire. In contrast, girls either do not have or do not always act on their sexual feelings (Tolman et al., 2014). In the literature on adolescent sexuality globally, a certain kind of discriminatory understanding is prevalent in bodies. For example, the school-going Black and Latina girls and negotiations of their hyper sexuality concerning the white girls and their assumptions of an absence of sexual feelings was a typical pattern of discourse around sexuality (French, 2012). In exploring the body and how teens feel about the body, many writers have examined girls' body images, weight concerns, sexuality, and self-esteem. However, what has been missing are the narratives on how girls might use their bodies in their social interactions, how the body might be a resource for power, and how bodies might respond to this power (Fingerson, 2006). In conditions of 'high modernity' as projected by Giddens, there is a growing tendency for the bodies to become increasingly central to the modern person's sense of self-identity as more people are increasingly concerned with the health, shape, and appearance of their own bodies. There is an unprecedented degree of control over bodies on the one hand and also living in an age that's thrown a radical doubt to our knowledge of what bodies are and how we can control them, there is an increasing uncertainty on body standards (Shilling, 2003).

This study experienced space and gender playing an essential part in the practices and discourses of femininity and sexuality governing the morality and control lived through the bodies. A strong spatial narrative governed people's lives in the village and was essential in constructing gendered bodies. The centrality of the term 'space' and the constant negotiations around it is situated through bodies in the Indian context, and it is through these spaces that the 'female' is constituted. As Niranjana

(2001) in her writing points out, the differentiation of '*olage-horage*' in the Kannada language deciding on certain bodily practices as proper and improper, the inner-outer distinction to the matter of everyday life similarly separated the social space into '*ghar*' and '*bahir*'- the home and the world (Chatterjee, 1993). The home should be unaffected by the profane activities of this material world. So one gets identified with social roles defined by gender to adhere to the social space of who dominates the *ghar* and who does the *bahir*. Women and the spaces they occupy are not about a field that their body realizes freely but an enclosure in which she feels positioned in a way where she is confined. Furthermore, the disciplinary practices around sex and gender are a way the feminine body is constructed which is practiced and subjected and has an inferior status inscribed in them (Young, 2005). Elizabeth Grosz writes that the body's spacio-temporal location and settings inform women's bodily practices within diverse contexts and settings as bodies are never simply human bodies or social bodies (Grosz, 1995). Grosz (1994), in *Volatile Bodies*, also noticed that Cartesian dualism establishes a problematic rift between the mind and the matter. She writes that reducing either the mind to the body or the body to the mind is to leave their interaction unexplained and impossible, as bodies are commonly considered a signifying medium and a vehicle of public and private expression.

Within the standard classical framework of sociology and also in women's studies, 'sex' has been identified as the pre-social biological body. In contrast, gender is supposed to be the cultural script linked to the socialization of the body producing women and men and other genders in a sociocultural context²⁵. However, the feminist understanding derives gender as the cultural overlay upon sex, suggesting that biology precedes outside the domain of culture and history (Puri, 1999). Nevertheless, Judith Butler (1990) notes in *Gender Trouble* that to argue that gender and sex are the products

of social construction solely runs the risk of conceptualizing the body as a passive instrument of culture. This study perceived bodies as the permeable boundary between the individual sense of self and the existing society (Tolman et al., 2014). In this study, it is believed that bodies do not merely function in a vacuum but are a 'body-subject' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). From participating in the basic bodily acts to presentation and performance in broader societal organizations on deciding upon marriages and decoding shame and morality, these are the 'lived bodies.' Drawing upon the feminist insights, it is seen that gender is an effect of disciplinary practices and regulating mechanisms of power which produces the context of sexualities and identities as Butler (1990) sees gender as 'performativity' through which identities are constructed by repeated acts which appear as normalized. Therefore, this dissertation aims to talk about the 'lived body'. In *Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl" and Other Essays*, Iris Young (2005) points out that the lived body is a constructed 'unified idea' of a physical body that is acting and experiencing in a specific sociocultural context; it is the body-in-situation. A person always faces a material fact of one's body related to the given environment. With a particular kind of skin and hair color, shape, and size, one's specific body lives in a specific context crowded by others, reciprocating a particular language, food habits, and culture. The idea of the lived body refuses the distinction between 'nature and culture,' which grounds a definitive distinction between sex and gender. Young writes that because the lived body is always encultured and has the ontological freedom to construct itself by the symbolism, a body learns to pronounce at a very early age through clothes one wears as a nation, one's occupational status and are encultured by habits often specific to locale or group. Therefore, the gendered subject is not biological, or are even a psychological phenomenon, but a social being which experiences their femininity with a complex interplay of

relationships constructed through class, caste, and other socio-economic factors. Gender is constructed, lived, and inscribed on the subject in everyday life socially and through her own perceptions, desires, and fantasies (Thapan, 1995). 'Doing Gender' (West & Zimmerman, 1987), even in this thesis, involves a complex set of socially guided interactional activities that casts a particular expression of the masculine and the feminine natures. When gender is viewed as an accomplishment, our attention shifts from the matters internal to the individual, and the focus turns out to be on the institutional discourse where performance becomes the ideal, and therefore it is individuals who 'do' gender. Men and women strategically ritualize and customize certain domestic labor practices to negotiate emotions associated with gender, communicate them through their lived bodies, and craft their gender identities. Ritualization involves strategies of differentiation among routine human activities like household work, motherhood, and more that evoke a certain bodily response between the embodied self and a socially structured environment (Johnson, 2008). Girls often shared during the focus group discussions, "*We are asked to work a lot in our house and the field. Our parents are preparing us for marriage! They say if I cannot work at my in-law's place, they will never keep me in their house but will send me back.*" There tends to remain an instrumental attitude toward bodies and the labor it produces in household work and reproduction, which constructs the identity of gender and sexuality. Gendered social practices, therefore, do not simply negate the body but transcend and transform it by changing the meaning and character of people's bodies reinforcing particular images of femininity and masculinity (Shilling, 2003, p. 94).

Gayle Rubin's 1984 essay, *Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality* (Rubin, 2002), is considered to be the challenging conflation between sexuality, gender, and the theories of women's oppression, insisting that as

sexuality cannot always be equated with gender, sexuality cannot be isolated from the effects of gender either. Sexuality in this study was about ways thoroughly young girls negotiated and reproduced aspects of heterosexuality. There were strategically selected appropriate languages, thoughts, and spaces to exercise one's views on exercising desires and sexuality by elaborating on pleasures in a place and mentioning the taboos in other places. As girls would often share about the others going to local fairs and getting lured by the boys, *"If a girl manages to control her sexual desire when she is sixteen, then consider her life gets better forever. However, she struggles for her entire life if she cannot control her desire and elopes or has sex."* What was more intriguing was how broad social themes and patterns intersected into more personal and individual aspects of the narratives decoding the patterns of sexual behavior and understanding gender and sexuality. Sexed bodies are produced at the intersections of gender and sexuality. Despite the sexed bodies being regulated and there being legit enforcement strategies, they are meant to appear normal. Cooley's (1902) theory on the 'looking-glass self' reflects the idea that one forms images of one's self from the imaginary perspectives of others. Similarly, like the 'looking-glass self,' Cooley's bodies can be equated to the theories of the 'looking-glass body,' where we build perspectives of our bodies based on the imagination of others. The narratives in this study also provide insights into how adolescent girls, from their very early lives, tend not just to internalize but also contend and undermine these normalizing the disciplinary effects of social control in their lives.

The working definition²⁶ of sexuality as per the World Health Organization (WHO) released in the year 2006 is: '...a central aspect of being human throughout life encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts,

fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, practices, roles, and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, legal, historical, religious, and spiritual factors.'

Such a broad approach to sexuality assumes that sexuality is constructed differently across different cultures over time. The cultural, political, and economic approaches are also linked to constructing sexual experiences in different settings beyond a bio-medical model. In addressing these definitions of sexuality and the narratives of the young girls through this study, one could start equating that several elements influence a person's decision to engage and refrain from sex, their understanding of sexuality, and their identities of bodies. From culturally normative ideas about good and bad behavior to exploring sexuality as an agency and the hopes, fear, and pregnancy associated with it, a vast network of reasons influences sexuality and the decision-making around it. Based on the information the adolescents provided, these stories spoke about collectives on the one hand and emphasized individual stories on the other hand to conceptualize the temporal orientation of the individual as external circumstances that directed the actors' attention (Van Reeuwijk, 2010, p. 09). However, this study believes that the norms, values, and culture constructs the manifestations of sexuality channels but does not create sexuality. Nevertheless, it is also interesting to find out that one's sexuality comes from within but is normalized by the discourse of sexuality prevalent in society (Goettsch, 1989).

This study's narratives validated that the legitimate and procreative couple laid the law where adolescent girls experienced their bodies as gendered bodies meant to procreate. Those unable to perform motherhood were asked to leave the in-law's house

anytime and threatened that "*even a cow would give milk if brought in the house, but you cannot bear a child, so who will be the heir of our property?*" The legitimate procreating couples were the model²⁷ with the single locus of sexuality acknowledged in the social space through a utilitarian and fertile one. The rest remains vague and indecent. If there was also room for illegitimate sexuality, those were the demarcated spaces for the 'Other Victorians' (Foucault, 1978, pp. 1-14). So the adolescent girls who chose to visit the village fair and spoke about 'sex' a topic being repressed and condemned, spoke about it as a deliberate transgression, were always the 'Other Victorians' spoken about in the community and girls often projecting a visible distance from them in conversations to portray a 'good girl image.' Research has claimed that there is little about actual sexual bodies and sex in sexuality research, and the theories narrate a sanitized version of the actual sex. Foucault's sexuality is a condition of our time and place and reflects the relationship between institutional power – knowledge and sexual bodies. Foucault's (1977; 1978) work thus has been of enormous value in thinking about how bodies and sexuality are socially constructed and hegemonic in nature, continuing to enable and constrain how bodies might be experienced and lived. As per Foucault, the eighteenth and the nineteenth century brought with them concern with governmentally-approved forms of sexuality with its base on legitimate reproduction, and with the advent of the twentieth century, the attention of government shifted from regulating individual bodies to regulating the population as a whole as a transition from traditional to modern societies. On the one hand, where the individuation²⁸ was a set practice to identify individuals through separated marks, numbers, signs, and control and surveillance of people, there was a significant increase in the discourse on sexuality which linked the sex of individual bodies to the management of the national population (Shilling, 2003, p. 68).

The identification of women with their physical bodies has been the root cause of their oppression in a patriarchal culture and society like India. Though the body is intensely 'personal' and rests in individuals, the manifestations of the bodies are shaped by gender, age, class, and ethnicity. This dissertation also portrays that women's identification with their bodies most often results from suppression of their emotional, mental, and psychological being covered in marriage, motherhood, and even occupying spaces. Kanchan Mathur (2008) writes that in the Indian context, the woman's body is a space where the culturally coded and socially sanctioned norms which are desirable for the woman are inscribed. The socialization of a girl child, as the article points out, is a complex process with the principal purpose of inculcating in girls the appropriate codes of conduct and training them to see their lives primarily in service to others linked to their role as a mother, wife or daughter where they carry with them the burden of 'honor' and 'shame.' The female body, therefore, becomes the edifice on which the codes of morality around sexuality and gender are built, legitimized, and subjected. Therefore, gendered practices and images of the body exert an influence through which we perceive, categorize and value women's and men's bodies, legitimizing and reproducing social inequalities (Shilling, 2003).

1.6: The Analytical Understanding of Power and the Body in the Study:

Grounded in historical analysis, Foucault's effective forms of contemporary power are designated in 'disciplinary power,' which is power experienced by surveillance rather than a force that makes people internalize self-policing or self-surveillance because it means as if they are constantly being watched (Foucault, 1977). For Foucault, modern power, as opposed to sovereign power, is non-authoritarian. However, it produces and normalizes bodies to serve prevailing relations of dominance and subordination without

any forms of coercion. Bodies, therefore, tend to be docile by the lived experiences where one does not function as per individual interpretation but by mass standards of 'gaze.' However, Foucault does not view bodies as naturally different entities whose biological constitution determines and permanently limits the capabilities of human subjects. However, this Foucauldian analysis though not spoken from a gendered perspective, was constructive for feminist scholars in understanding the positioning of women in contemporary society concerning their bodies (Bordo, 1993 a). Against the naturalistic view of gender and sexuality, feminists argue that it is 'society,' not nature creates gender and sexual differences. In particular, feminists argued that women's sexuality is socially shaped in ways that sustain men's social and political dominance (Seidman et al., 2006). As Bartky (1997, pp. 129-154) points out, the fundamental argument is that Foucault treats the bodily experiences of men and women as if they were 'one.' His analysis of the body did not differ for men and women as if they bore the same relationship to the characteristic institutions of modern life Bartky writes. She argues that women, like men, are subjected to many disciplinary practices, but Foucault has been blind to the disciplines that produce the embodiment of femininity in women. However, 'Where is the account of the disciplinary practices that engender the "docile bodies" of women, bodies more docile than the bodies of men?' Bartky argues that to overlook the forms of the subjection of the feminine body is to promote the silence and the powerlessness of those upon whom these disciplines have been strictly imposed since ages.

Challenging Foucault's analysis from a feminist perspective, it can be argued that the natural body is the basis on which individual identities and social inequalities are built. It can also be argued that power exercised through gendered identities is fractured and shifting. Foucault's epistemological view of the body means that 'bodies'

disappears as a material and biological phenomenon when imposed by the meaning of discourse (Shilling 2003, pp. 69-70). Shilling points out that Foucault's analysis sometimes seems disembodied with limited visibility as corporeal entities where the body is present in the topic of discussion but is absent from the focus of investigating like a 'vanishing body.' Arthur Frank (1991) recognizes that bodies do not emerge out of discourses and institutions but emerge out of bodies, where specifically, women's bodies provide people with the means of acting but also place constraints on specific actions. Hence, it is argued that discourses do not determine 'power' possessed in bodies as per Foucault's work but only refer to ideas of the body's abilities and constraints which are experienced by bodies as already present for their self-understanding (Shilling, 2003, pp. 82-83). Taking into consideration Foucault's context of power and biopolitics through a feminist lens, this study tries to understand the modern-day mechanisms governing people. From negotiating bodies through the context of *Jal, Jungle, and Jameen* to marriage, motherhood, sexuality, and everyday labor on the ground, this study highlights the narratives from the ground depicting power through lived realities in everyday life. For example, 'self-consciousness' is inherent in girls' newly acquired position as 'the object of the gaze' as a woman is 'to be looked at.' Hence, this leads to constant surveillance concerning appearances, gestures, and posture on the one hand and through performing motherhood and exercising sexuality on the other (Bordo, 1993 a). Foucault's (1977, pp. 26) analysis of power in *Discipline and Punish* 'presupposes that the power exercised on the body is conceived not as a property, but as a strategy . . . that one should take as its model a perpetual battle rather than a contract regulating a transaction or the conquest of a territory.'

Understanding how modern power operates requires us to cease the image that 'power' is the possession of individuals and groups but is a dynamic network of non-

centralized forces. Therefore, the context of 'subject and power' is socially constructed as per Foucault (1982) and is a model advantageous to the analysis of male dominance and female subordination reproducing itself 'voluntarily' through self-normalization of everyday habits around masculinity and femininity (Bordo, 1993 a). Bordo equates this analysis to dieting and bodybuilding seen as powerful panoptic technologies producing self-monitoring 'docile' bodies. While visible strength is no longer necessary to maintain social position, and bodies were not considered property, most women are still controlled by it in both the private and public arena. (Scott & Morgan, 1993). Bordo's theory on 'body management' through food and diet regulates a 'power' exercised in the form of ideal physical body size and shape centered on the politics of appearance and reproduction of femininity as Foucault's theory of modern power and surveillance (1993 a; 1993 b)²⁹.

Therefore, dominant forms of subjectivity and identity are not maintained through physical restraint or material coercion but through self-surveillance with a panoptic gaze (Foucault, 1977). Similarly, Bartky (1997) highlighted how women engage with the 'right' body shape and size and (also spaces in this thesis) the constant check on one's body, monitoring every move of it is like the inmate of the panopticon self, committed to relentless self-surveillance. Therefore, self-surveillance is a form of obedience to the 'power' patriarchy holds through our bodies. Beyond dieting and body building as components of 'body management,' the social construction of women in their bodies bears a visual image of the traits of a 'good girl' as Leela Dube (1988) argues that a girl should walk with soft steps and should be rebuked for jumping, running or rushing to a place. These movements are considered a part of masculine behavior, more unbecoming of a female. Dube also argues that uncontrolled female sexuality is a danger to the purity of the agnatic and caste groups. The power in bodies,

therefore, exercised in India is 'where the purity of the caste and its menfolk is a direct function of the purity of its womenfolk primarily of their sisters and daughters, whom they give in marriage and secondarily, on the women they take as wives.'³⁰

Therefore, power is exercised rather than possessed not just by the privilege acquired by the dominant class but interestingly also manifested and extended by the ones dominated. Foucault emphasizes that this subjection is simply not obtained by the instruments of violence but is 'subtle' and can be without involving violence in general where it is calculated and organized, making use neither of weapons nor of terror and yet remaining of strongly maintained physical order. (Foucault, 1977). The message offered to adolescent girls about themselves had little to do with being confident and comfortable with their sexuality. It is instead around ideas of restraining and passive sexuality packaged in the construction of being 'good' as a desired youthful feminine subjectivity induced in the bodies (Frost, 2001). The deviancy in girls getting into trouble is frequently linked with policing of girls reflecting that women are principally defined by their sexuality but denied power when they exercise their sexuality. Therefore, the bodies are an over-determined site of power for feminists and Foucault that performs as a surface inscribed with cultural and historical practices and are subjected to political and economic forces accordingly (King, 2004).

The attempts to regulate these female bodies are incorporated through bodily lessons learned through routine and habitual activities and the mundane emphasis on self-surveillance and self-monitoring with the 'direct grip' on the female body (Bordo, 1993 a). The human body, therefore, enters a machinery of power through the "discipline" which explores it, breaks it down, and rearranges it again, and a 'mechanics of power' is born. Thus disciplines produce subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile bodies' through a multiplicity of minor processes in society that repeats and supports

one another. However, Bordo also identifies that women are active agents engaging in the practices and are not oppressed or victims of the practice, but engage with power through a discourse of active self-discipline. Hence, the oppressed groups are not positioned outside of power as powerless (Foucault, 1977), and there is no top-down coercion. Through bodily practices, bodies become 'docile' bodies subjected to external regulation, self-surveillance, and improvement, creating 'knowledge' as power normalizing dominance and subordination. Power therefore regulates and is operated through the smallest element of the construction of space, time, movement, and gesture, embodied through 'micro-physics' (Blood, 2005; Foucault 1977, 1980). For example, 'Shame' was a subjective experience of being stigmatized in various popular ways associated with female selfhood (Goffman, 1971) and self-identity in women. Theorists have argued that shame is a distressed apprehension of the self that hails from being 'seen' (Bartky, 1990). So there is a paradoxical relationship between women and their bodies where women are seen as synonymous to their bodies by society and, simultaneously, experiencing their bodies at a distance, constantly under surveillance by their own gaze. Power is therefore exercised through different forms of social construction and imposed on our lives, and 'beauty' was one of them studied during this research. While decoding the beauty myth, Wolf writes (1991, p. 90),

'The beauty myth tells a story: The quality called "beauty" objectively and universally exists. Women must want to embody it, and men must want to possess women who embody it. This embodiment is an imperative for women and not for men, which is situation is necessary and natural because it is biological, sexual, and evolutionary: Strong men battle for beautiful women, and beautiful women are more reproductively successful. Women's beauty must correlate to their fertility, and since this system is based on sexual selection, it is inevitable and changeless.'

Wolf wrote that female sexuality is negatively defined and constructed, and 'beauty,' is a currency system like the gold standard measuring its value. Women are taught to be vulnerable and absorb the beauty myth's intervention in sexuality because society and the sexual education imparted to women are made to ensure the same. 'Beauty,' therefore, plays a significant role in sexuality, keeping women's eyes lowered to their bodies, only to check their reflections in the eyes of men. The beauty myth countered women's new freedoms by imposing social limits to women's lives directly linked to our faces and bodies. Power and knowledge are, therefore, directly related to one another as power produces knowledge, and in turn, knowledge produces a condemned body or a docile body accordingly (Foucault, 1980). Furthermore, discipline brings with it an ultimate form of ritualized surveillance in the form of 'examination' as a normalizing gaze that combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and judgment validating the qualification or failure of an individual into an ideal social order (Foucault, 1977).

One of the most significant innovations in the technique of power in the eighteenth century was the strategic emergence of 'population' as an economic and political problem where the government shifted its focus from 'individual people' to population. The population was suddenly considered 'wealth' where specific variables like birth and death rates, life expectancy, fertility, state of health, frequency of illness, and diet patterns became significantly important. Therefore, the body served as the basis of control through biological processes like birth and mortality, leading to several interventions and regulatory control based on the 'biopolitics' of the population. Foucault writes that the calculative management of life carefully replaced the old power of 'death,' symbolizing sovereign power through the constant administration of bodies

exercised by the institutions. In *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1; (1978, pp. 140-141), Foucault writes,

'The bio-power was, without question, an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes.'

For Foucault (1977, 1980), 'power comes from below' as there is no all-encompassing binary opposition between the rulers and the ruled at the matrix of power. Therefore, power emerges from various overlapping and intertwined relationships and needs to be better understood by looking at monarchies at the top of any chain in their command. People are policed in their behaviors and presentation to the extent that gets transferred from individual surveillance to 'bio-power' as identified by Foucault, which is linked to what the government and state find standard and acceptable in populations governed by them. With more control on women's bodies as contestation sites for nations through birth control, reproduction, and sexuality, 'biopower' becomes a practice for adolescents, as found in this study. Chapter 5 of this thesis discusses biopower/biopolitics and individual agency because what Foucault called the 'repressive hypothesis' does not mean that all regimes of sexual regulation are of equal force or effectiveness. As Foucault mentions, there will be someplace occupied by the 'Other Victorians', or the ones resisting the norms in every society. In *The Subject and Power* (1982), Foucault writes that to find out what our society means by sanity; we should first investigate what is happening in the field of insanity and search for the meaning of legality only when we have investigated the field of illegality in society. The struggles towards a technique or form of power associated with 'biopolitics' is not an anti-authority struggle limited to one country but are 'transversal'

and not confined to a particular political or economic control of the government. Foucault also writes that it is impossible to say that one thing is of the order of 'liberation' and the other is of 'oppression' as in every institution, however terrifying the system is, the possibilities of resistance and disobedience are always there.³¹

1.7: Sociology of Embodiment and the Lived Bodies:

There is a critique linked to the social constructionist theory of the ordered body that though radically challenges the idea that bodies constitute a natural base on which the society is founded, these theories overlook human experience and agency (Shilling, 2005). Because the body is not an object or simply a subject but rather a context through which one can relate to other objects. As Merleau-Ponty (1962) points out, one 'lives' the body as a phenomenon experienced by one as a phenomenological reflection on the body, which reveals that one is not a subject separated from the world or others as a mind somehow cut off from matter and space. Goffman writes that our life experience is inevitably mediated through our bodies and is dependent on managing our bodies through time and space as 'we have bodies and we act with our bodies' (Shilling, 2003, p. 20). So while human embodiment provides the potential for communication and shared experiences, our experiences of the embodiment provide a basis for theorizing social commonality and the construction of difference. The understanding of body and sexuality throughout this study is intertwined between two distinct processes, with the body being embodied in 'space and time' that reflects the corporeality living in the skin (Grosz, 1994) and, on the other hand, 'embodying the social and the sexual' through negotiations and acceptance (Crossley, 2006; Rubin, 2002). Hence, the embodiment is one of the core themes, through which the bodies are perceived in this study, (Grosz,

1994), where embodiment refers to the experiences of living in, perceiving, and experiencing the world from a particular location of the bodies emphasizing on space. Embodiment is 'a lived a matter of gender' (Hughes & Witz, 1997) and is crucial to the experience and perception of gender identity. At the point of overlap between the physical, the symbolic, and the sociological, the body is, therefore, one of the dynamic frontiers and also a threshold through which the lived experience of the world is incorporated and realized by the individual who is 'neither pure object nor pure subject' (McNay, 1999, p. 98). As subjects, the body image is therefore also influenced by the inner content of lived experience (Ferguson, 1997, p. 6), and adolescents in this thesis spoke with a complexity located in economic deprivation, caste, and other gender relations. Embodiment, therefore, is a robust discourse integral to this study and mentions how the social and historical rituals and mores enter the body and are entangled and performed as a part of the production of identities (Butler, 1994). Furthermore, these norms and discourses we internalize embody our bodily feelings and behaviors (Foucault, 1978; Bartky, 1997). Betty Friedan's (1974) theory of the 'problem with no name' in the 1950-60s American society in describing the widespread unhappiness of women living as housewife-mother was not simply a crisis of marriage and family ideology. However, the growing 'feminine mystique' can be equated to a gendered embodied self and body image socially constructed over time. Embodiment emphasizes that there is no "real" material body as such and the historical and cultural inscriptions in the body produce the body.

Several theorists argued that women are undoubtedly located in a physical and psychological space as much as she is in the cultural and social domain (Niranjana, 2001). Therefore, narrating their lives with stories that reflected their dilemmas on living through a gendered body also reflected resistance and conscious choices taken

at times living out of an embodied identity. Therefore, my work focuses on adolescent bodies and seeks to understand their lived experience from their location, listening to the constructions of their everyday world as an experienced and contested social reality. Undoubtedly, poverty and the crucial thoughts around land, labor, and rituals were embodied realities through which their bodies were constructed and lived. How the girls spoke happily during sessions on specific rituals and refrained from others had a strong recognition of their gendered subjects and reflected their 'habitus.' Bourdieu (1977; 1984) stated that the embodied actor is both shaped by and is an active reproducer of society. As per Bourdieu, there is a structural analysis of the ordered body associated with objectivism and a phenomenological understanding of the body associated with subjectivism. Moreover, 'habitus' is formed in the context of people's social location, reproducing existing social structures and being located within the body; it affects every aspect of the human embodiment (Shilling, 2003, p. 113). Meenakshi Thapan's major works around 'embodiment' have been an essential reference for this study. Thapan (2009, p. 06) also writes, 'Embodiment is not merely about being-in-the-body or behavior but about the experience, subjectivity, political consciousness, agency, and will.' Thapan compares Bourdieu's work on social power in everyday life with a feminist analysis of how both power and agency operate through mundane and everyday tasks such as embodied engagements with work of different kinds. If looked into from a woman's physical stance, the gestures she uses, the particular tone of her voice, and the silence and the absence of speech are critical markers of both the power and woman's agential response (Thapan, 2009). Similar to what Thapan depicted about her characters in her studies- with the 'good' daughter being the edifice of sexual morality and working hard for the survival of the family, whereas the 'radical' woman, consciously defines their lived experience through

departure from the social norms, I found several alike characters in the communities too. Thapan found a strong linkage between embodiment, gender, and identity and their connection to the socially and emotionally constructed human body. Individuals, therefore, clearly do not constitute singular, fixed, and isolated identities but are represented by multiple voices representing multiple subjectivities based on lived experiences as constitutive of the embodied self (Thapan, 2009, p. 03).

For example, land and domestic work claimed to be a very critical embodied discourse in every session with adolescent girls during fieldwork while discussing gender and everyday life. In the *Origin of the Family, Private Property and State*, Engels (1884) critiqued the inequality in the family, which others had thought natural. He linked the transformation of women from equal, productive members of society to dependent wives. Moreover, women entering the workforce and social production without the ideological valuation of roles changing in the family institutionalized the double shifts women work (Evans, 1987, pp. 82-83). Labour became an essential aspect of women's life where growing demands in peasantry demanded women to be domesticated too, and housework became an important role that women's bodies tended to play in the Adivasi communities. Gayle Rubin asks the question in *The Traffic in Women: Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex*, 'What is a domesticated woman?' where she shows that women tend to produce unpaid labor; it is, therefore, to argue that this usefulness explains the genesis behind the oppression of women (Rubin, 1975). The labor in land and the labor in motherhood one produces through the body being one of the essential criteria to remain married was a deeply embodied understanding of gender and sexuality constructed from an early age among the adolescents interviewed. It was also interesting to understand the historical understanding of labor lived through women's bodies in this region. With the increase in the change to underground mining,

the dark underground spaces started becoming heavily 'gendered' and inaccessible to women. The laboring bodies here were subject to discourses of hegemonic masculinity, and women popularly started to be known as '*kamins*' or pit women, and their presence became problematic. Work and family lives were understandably intricately mixed in the mine pits, and the lower-caste, poor, and working-class women's bodies became the sites of government being ostracized from the industrial workforce with a fear to keep a note on the needs of women, especially who were pregnant and needed care (LahiriDutt, 2013).³² What followed was 'the feminization of poverty' (Fausto-Sterling, 1985), and women in the tribal region started occupying the roles of head loaders in mines and forest work to a job with a lesser value which men would not usually do (Basu et al., 1983).³³ On the other hand, when men left their wives to work on the land and migrate to cities still, they would never tend to give away the rights of the land to women (Kishwar, 1987)³⁴. Simone De Beauvoir, in 1949 would, say that this is the fundamental characteristic of women that she becomes the 'Other' in the heart of everything (Beauvoir, 2010). In *The Dialectics of Sex*, Firestone, while critiquing Engels and his division of labor, attempted to talk about the 'Sex Class,' which is deep and invisible. She argued, 'It would be a mistake to attempt to explain the oppression of women according to this strictly economic interpretation as it does not go deep enough to talk about the sexual division attached to it' (Firestone, 1971). Suppose gender and sexuality are an intrinsic part of the embodied self, and the self is tied to labor and performance in everyday life. In that case, labor becomes essential to comprehend how it affects the social construction of marriage, mobility, and identity, as women have been doubly colonized in marginalized societies. Labor, therefore had a much deeper understanding of the lives of adolescent bodies in this region, shaping their embodied identity around gender and sexuality than mere physical work because

of the historical and cultural discourse associated with labor and tribal women. A *Gogohor* (woman) in a Santhal community is, therefore, not just a mother, homemaker, or cultivator; she is all of these and is beyond the role-based identities living their lives through hard work and pain. However, she also possesses an immense sense of control as women's identities are negotiated at different levels within the household, the community, and even the state bureaucracy (Rao, 2008). Lived experience, therefore, is an amalgamated articulation by women on their subjectivity based on the experiences from there every day and a location of certain historical and social knowledge one upholds in the body.

The body as an object is inseparable from the body as a subject, and they are always emergent from one another. Embodiment is therefore that 'process' in the making by which the object-body is actively experienced and produced as the subject-body (Waskul & Van der Riet, 2002, pp. 487-513)³⁵. The phenomenological approaches to the body and embodiment revolve around strong descriptions of lived experiences that reveal meanings in the lives of individuals and groups. Therefore, the body is a province through which the 'meaning' of certain realities is regulated and lived, and meanings are not separate from the embodied experience or the world. Sometimes the phenomenological approach can be connected to the 'looking-glass' understanding of the body, where the body simultaneously sees and is seen (Waskul & Vannini, 2006). The phenomenological perspective views all human perception as embodied; the psychological element remains an essential component in the formation of gendered selves to the extent that the body must be 'psychically constituted in order for the subject to acquire a sense of its place in the world and in connection with others' (Grosz, 1994, p. xii). Elizabeth Grosz (1994, p. 22) suggests that we develop an understanding of what she calls 'embodied subjectivity' or 'psychical corporeality,'

which avoids dualism. The lived body in corporeal phenomenology is commonly considered a medium of private expression of ideas, thoughts, and beliefs and a public expression of codes translated into the external public world. Similarly, Erving Goffman's work has been particularly significant in emphasizing the situated place of the body, and its link with self and social identity through face-work, gestures, and other nuanced forms of behavior in the 'presentation of the self' as an appearance in the form of public display in everyday life (Goffman, 1956). However, Goffman's work also suggests that there is an extent to which individuals can express themselves through their bodies in their everyday life. Moreover, a social constraint is always exercised through 'shared vocabularies of the body idiom,' which implies that though bodies belong to individuals; their significance is always socially derived (Shilling, 2003). The embodiment also constitutes ways we form or 'perform' our bodies as part of the production of identities (Butler, 1994), as gender and gendered bodies are not predestined but constructed through the repeated stylization of highly regulated acts. For example, there is a detailed discussion in later chapters of this dissertation on how women learn to experience menstruation as a dirty and disgusting phenomenon which society reminds women to be mindful in concealing the menstrual process leaving no bloodstains visible (Young, 2005; Puri, 1999). Women are also made to bear the burden of menstruation and their 'polluted bodies' across several cultures, allowing more surveillance of bodies by people and cultures (Bobel, 2019).

The intersection of class and embodiment tends to remain a complex factor in constructing one's identity. The mentioned context of *hadiya* (local alcoholic drink with fermented rice) or the *gotna* (tattoos) in the finding chapters of this thesis depicts the relation between class and embodied gendered selves experienced by adolescent girls in the community. Beyond women's experiences of their embodied and gendered selves

in the context of their class position, the subjects can always ensure upward mobility, status, and privilege in society. Bodies, therefore, has both a physical location as much as they are socially constructed. Therefore, women articulate their construction of femininity from a political space and through emotions where they engage not only with the world but also with inner dilemmas, negotiations, resistance, and risk intertwined in their embodied selves (Thapan, 2009, p. 11).

1.8: Theorizing Adolescent Bodies and Agency in Everyday Life:

The term adolescence is of Latin origin, which means 'to grow into adulthood,' and clearly, there is never a single or linear event that denotes the end of childhood or the beginning of adolescence. It has been suggested that a set of transitions in adolescence gradually leads to individual behavior and development in adulthood (Thapan, 2009, p. 26). As per WHO, adolescence is a phase of life between childhood and adulthood from ages 10 to 19 as a unique stage of human development through physical, cognitive, and psychosocial growth. Thapan (2009, p. 26) also quotes Erikson (1968; 1979) on how their work focused on male adolescents in formulating their theories where the term 'adolescence' itself was a masculine construct based on masculine images of self, identity, relationship, and morality with neglect on young women.

Throughout this study, bodies in the chapters are considered constructed on the one hand, and the interplay between negotiations, manipulations, and resistance has been highlighted on the other. People and groups with a larger emphasis on adolescent bodies in this context are found throughout the research interacting in a social system, creating concepts over time. These concepts are performed and eventually habituated into a series of roles played by each other, therefore institutionalized with a meaning embedded into the socially constructed society (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). Quite

simply, the body, therefore, is potentially no longer subjected to the constraints and the limitations that once were characterized because the more we have tried to control and alter the body in current times, the greater has been the uncertainty about what constitutes the 'natural' body (Shilling, 2003, p. 09). Hence different kinds of constructionism form different accounts of agency and have different implications for understanding social relationships. Through the influence of 'tradition and modernity' in shaping adolescence in India, Verma and Saraswathi (2002, pp. 105-40) identifies that educationally disadvantaged young women, due to the absence of schooling in their early years, experience an 'adolescence' based on their lived experience where though the agential voice is present in both sets of young women from the advantaged and disadvantaged class, the articulation takes different forms. So eventually, young women's self-image is grounded in their embodiment where the body as an object and the body as a subject are simultaneously present. Domesticity and tasks ensure their adaptation to marriage and motherhood beyond social constructionism that one theoretical context that this thesis prioritized was the concept of 'human agency' in adolescents. This rounds back to the analysis as mentioned earlier that bodies are not situated in vacuums, and alone, constructionism does not allow a vocabulary for studying human performance or experience in the everyday world. However, as cultural representations of the body are historical, there is also an experience of embodiment that can only be understood when we grasp the body as a lived experience (Turner, 2008). The context of the structure, socialization, and agency are always interlinked; like the key concepts in Bourdieu's work in habitus, field, and capital. The agent is socialized in the 'field,' and as the agent accommodates their roles and relationships in the context of their position in the field, the internalized relationships and habitual expectations and relationships form the 'habitus' over time. Hence, the context of

structure and agency was found intertwined as a significant finding from this study with the exercising of manifested and latent agency on the one hand through negotiations and resistance to norms and with massive structural restraints, on the other hand, exercised every day. Therefore, the shape and disposition of the body tend to be products of a 'cultural habitus' within a specific location of a particular social class (Turner, 1992). The body is central to our ability to make a difference, intervene or exercise agency in the world. The bodily emotions and preferences are a fundamental source of 'social forms' responsible for creative actions and social relations (Shilling, 2003, p. ix).

Childhood socialization is an interesting collective process. It is not a linear process but a reproductive process, which means they do not internalize the external adult culture just through role play. There are aspects where children become a part of the adult culture and gradually contribute to the negotiations with adults and their production of a series of peer cultures with other children (Corsaro, 1992). As elaborated on in the third chapter, on any given day, children as old as three years old in the villages would be seen playing with broken tools made of bamboo used to husk the rice in mornings as an organized 'play technique' to master husking of rice when their parents were busy in the field. They would be seen putting mud and sand in those tools and husking them to re-shift how adults husk rice. As per Goffman (1956), this understanding of theorizing the body, therefore, plays an essential role in mediating the relationship between people's self-identity and their social identity. This, in turn, means that the social meanings which are attached to particular bodily forms and performances tend to become internalized and exert a powerful influence on an individual's sense of self and feelings of inner worth. Cahill (1986; 1989), similarly to Goffman, also highlighted how children, through play, learned to fashion their gender

identities and appearances through the management of their 'personal fronts' and through taking the role of the generalized other a child learns the rules of public conduct and acquires skills in applying those skills gradually in everyday interaction. The vast bulk of daily life consists of established routines in work, leisure, and family life, where individuals enter and leave encounters at every stage of focused and unfocused meetings. Goffman argues that individuals can usually control and monitor their bodily performances to facilitate social interaction (Shilling, 2003, p. 72). It was similar for adolescents on the ground to build a set of performances around their gendered identity. For example, adolescent girls in the communities would desperately negotiate to get a tattoo as an entry point into larger women's groups to be able to wear a sari and considered a grownup lady as a rite of passage from childhood as well as an agency in itself. Goffman's analysis of the 'shared vocabularies of body idiom' or the conventional forms of 'nonverbal language' is the most crucial component of public behavior. Tattoos similarly could be linked to this shared vocabulary or a form of non-verbal language inscribed in people's bodies which guides people's perceptions of bodily appearances and performances, providing a sense of social constraints under which body management occurs.³⁶ Shilling (2003, pp. 72–73) writes that Goffman's approach suggests that human bodies have a dual location where bodies are the property of the individuals yet are defined significantly by society. In Goffman's work, the body plays a vital role in mediating the relationship between people's self-identity and social identity through the most basic unit of interaction order, 'the encounters.' Goffman argues that the vast bulk of daily life consists of several established routines in work, leisure, and family life where individuals frequently initiate, enter, and leave encounters with others.

From a different perspective, girls who loiter in the local fair at night on their own choice are often termed as the 'loose girl' and a threat to the other girls in the community. There are detailed narratives on how some girls would agree to their loitering, and others would narrate how they are different and never allowed to loiter, taking up a higher moral standpoint. Cooley (1902) studied how sentiments and self-esteem are socially deprived through our imagination of others' judgment and is known as the 'looking glass self,' which was very much present in the adolescent narratives. Every interview with unmarried school-going adolescents during the interview was a time travel to a future scenario of them having a good life for their unborn children. Marriage and motherhood, therefore, represented definitive markers of gender identity. Though aspirations of marriage and children were always present among adolescents, for the ones who had married already, there was a sense of loss of freedom and their desire to loiter freely. So through the narratives presented in this thesis, there was an interrelation of agency and structure always available in the discourse on how adolescents understood and perceived bodies. Giddens (1979) identifies through his structuration theory that 'agency' reflects independent activities whereby individuals satisfy their desires and goals, while structure also refers to existing rules and resources. Structuration theory attempts to understand human social behavior beyond the structure-agency and the macro-micro perspectives competing with each other for its existence. The structuration theory emphasizes that the structure or agency theories cannot fully explain social action. Giddens writes that actors operate within the context of rules produced by social structures. Since the actors are responsible for functionally running the social structures, the structures have no inherent stability outside human action³⁷. The body is an active part of the social experience. However, the social experience and the social conception of the body are only sometimes supportive

because socially constructed messages differ significantly from how individual bodies experience the world and are agents of social change. Shilling (2005) argues that a body actively changing a set of sociocultural constructs is simultaneously also perpetuating the sociocultural construct, which is in the process of changing.

1.9: The Organization of the Dissertation:

1.9.a. Chapter 2: Methodology: Living the Ethnography on Ground

The second chapter of this thesis is a detailed documented analysis of the 'ethnography' used and lived through this research. The origin of the term 'Ethnography' lies in nineteenth-century Western anthropology, where ethnography was like a descriptive account of a community or culture outside the West and was complementary to 'ethnology' back then, referred to the historical and comparative analysis of non-western societies and cultures. Since the early twentieth century, ethnographic fieldwork became central to anthropology, and carrying out such work in a society different from one's own was considered a rite of passage required for entry to the 'tribe' of anthropologists (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). 'Ethnographies are portraits of diversity in an increasingly homogenous world' where individuals and groups understand, accommodate, and sometimes even resist a shared order (Van Maanen, 2011, p. xvii). The methodology chapter, therefore, focuses on the journey of being the participant observer and studying the most predictable, mundane everyday life patterns of human thoughts and behaviors experienced by adolescents in the Santhali communities. My journey as an ethnographer started on the ground in 2014 as a researcher and an NGO (Non-governmental Organization) worker in two districts of Jharkhand, which provided me with accessibility and entry into the field. The critical boundary on the ground always prevailed that the ethnographer must present and

narrate a world of observation to produce a clear image of the community as a 'part insider' being the participant in the social world that is the object of the investigation and also 'part outsider' performing a professional purpose in the field of research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Hence, being a Participant Observant was about subjecting one's body, personality, and social situations to physically and ecologically penetrate in a circle closer to their habitat while responding to their life (Goffman, 1989). From the entry to the field and cutting one's life to the bone on the ground (Goffman, 1989) to deciding on the research framework while addressing personal biases, this chapter depicts every step performed as an ethnographer in the community. There was a 'shadow side' of doing the ethnography, spoken at length in this chapter, where the boundaries of the personal and formal ethnography begin to get complicated when as a person, one fails to fit within the framework of a professional researcher (McLean & Leibing, 2007). Bryman (2001) argues that it is always crucial for ethnographers not to fool themselves about their primary status concerning those they study as they will always be the 'outsider.' Hence, from the struggles of situating the ethnographer in me being 'The Other' or the 'Outsider' to adopting the 'Stranger' (Schutz, 1944) in oneself with specific knowledge of the interpretive function of the new cultural pattern and recipes, this chapter holds the narratives of all. It is known that 'the ethnographer's self-portrait is mystified and ironized from the standpoint of others' (Clifford, 1983), and I experienced the same on the ground.

Through the Purposive Sampling method between 2015 and 2018, fifty adolescent girls between sixteen and nineteen were separately interviewed in about twenty villages in the Deoghar and Pakur districts of Jharkhand for a collective understanding of their body, gender, and sexuality. Along with the interviews, about twenty to twenty-five FGDs collectively with the women and the girls were organized

through field staff to understand a lot about festivals, rituals, tattoos, and marriage rites to identify the behavioral patterns and the familiar symbols of everyday life. In the field, therefore, the ethnographic work was never 'orderly' done as it was sometimes chaotic, presenting the intriguing and exciting character of the research; however, the 'ethnographer's trust' and 'ethics' tends to remain a consistent phenomenon on ground (Fetterman, 2010), addressed in details throughout this chapter. Cornering it back to the existential question of 'Can there be a feminist ethnography?' (Stacey, 1988), this chapter also highlights the predominant 'delusion of the alliance' more than the 'delusion of separateness' suffered by feminist ethnographers. From 'impression management' on the ground to negotiations on the field while penetrating a specific space protected by 'gatekeepers,' this chapter highlights every aspect of the field lived through ethnography.

As in terms of data collection, ethnography involves the researchers' participation in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching and asking questions through informal and formal interviews; a lot of people's actions and accounts were studied in an everyday context (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Fetterman (2010, p.10) writes, 'Fieldwork ends when the researcher leaves the village or site, but ethnography continues.' Hence, given the nature of the data and the analysis, the 'withdrawal' was equally dramatic as the 'entry,' and the act is portrayed thoroughly throughout this chapter. The arrangements of the field notes and the constant check in the process of being able to write the narration through the eyes of local people as they pursue their daily lives was a challenging act. The dilemma of an ethnographer being able to decipher the 'silence' and the 'laughter' in discussions with adolescents bringing out the native's point of view is represented through sections of this chapter. As Denzin (1997) rightly points out, writing the lived experiences on text as a 'lived textuality' is

about grounding the work on the study through the flesh and blood of the individuals studied, but in the process, the writer bleeds too. Every section of this chapter and this thesis after that is an amalgamation of the narratives from the adolescents and my interpretations of encountering certain life-changing concepts through 'autoethnography,' where I was both the research subject and the object (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003, p. 19).

1.9.b. Chapter 3: Experiencing Body and Sexuality in Everyday Life

The larger discourse of this dissertation being around gender, body, and sexuality, it was integral to dedicate a finding chapter to the quintessential sociological concepts that define a woman's body and identity in her everyday life living in an Adivasi community which is through 'land and the labor.' Several pieces of literature mention that the struggle for recognition for indigenous women begins with the land and then takes up multiple meanings embedded in the social structure (Rao, 2018). The understanding of marriage, fertility, motherhood, and sexuality among the Santhali adolescent girls has been studied thoroughly through this chapter, with 'land' being one of the central points in understanding the social practices around gender, mobility, body, and sexuality. The gendered identity of labor and the decisions around marriage and motherhood were pertinent markers related to land that adolescent girls internalized from a very young age in the communities and were represented through their voices in this chapter. The last section of the chapter addresses what sex and sexual relationships mean to adolescents and the desire, expectation, and notion of being 'the good girl' attached to it. This section also talks about the various places in the village adolescents met to explore their sexuality and also discusses the role of love and attraction in their lives. The surveillance among the villagers on the whereabouts of the

adolescents concerning the norms was also discussed in this chapter, highlighting how sexual behavior is influenced by the meanings and values adolescents learn attached to gender, sex, and sexuality. This chapter prioritized the narratives of adolescent girls and their 'bodies' lived through social construction and surveillance in their everyday lives.

The sense of being a woman is often internalized and alters between the perspective of the 'body as object and the body as subject' (Das, 1988, p. 193). This chapter analyses adolescent girls' understanding of their gendered identity, therefore not only perceived but also 'deeply inscribed' on their bodies through their lived experiences (McNay, 1999, p. 98). However, while considering the process of social construction at its core, this chapter assumes that women's bodies are not produced in a vacuum; rather, it is constantly exposed to an arena of social and cultural ideologies and practices that impacts their understanding of gender identity, sexuality and the construction of their bodies (Thapan, 2009, p. 02).

1.9.c. Chapter 4: Embodied Rites of Passage and Ritual Practices

The third chapter in this dissertation highlighted that the construction of bodies is not a 'given' status; instead, it is a dynamic social category with different meanings and cultural ideologies inscribed in it, shaping the understanding of gendered bodies and sexuality. In link to this impression from the previous chapter, the current chapter considered the linkages between embodiment and the construction of gender through the 'rituals' and 'rites of passage' the adolescent girls perform and live through in their everyday lives. This chapter incessantly interconnected beauty, body image, menstruation, and tattoos as parts of embodied symbolized ritual practices and rites of passage lived through adolescent bodies as an unfinished phenomenon in a constant

process of 'becoming' (Butler, 1990). Analyzing the unnoticed taken-for-granted performed organized 'rites' and 'ritual practices' among the Adivasi Santhali adolescent girls through dance, taboos, and religious practices is the foundation of this chapter. The 'rites of passage' in this chapter have been about ceremonies or experiences that mark significant transitional periods in a person's life, and the 'ritual activities' are about the set notion of roles and perspectives one tends to perform in the process of perceiving the embodied reality of the world through their bodies. Through the construction of 'space' as one of the essential contexts associated with the mundane rituals and the rites of passage, this chapter narrated how women and their bodies are refrained from occupying specific spaces in the Adivasi communities hence building a personal and emotional experience through bodies. The adolescent girls' temporal and spatial lived realities through rituals and rites of passage had a deeper embodied meaning central to their recognition of themselves as gendered subjects (Niranjana, 2001) and have been the focus of this chapter. The ethnographic narratives on internalizing the ritual of dance as a collective form of expression of bodies, the experiences around menstruation, and the detailed descriptions of the ailing bodies lived by the adolescents were the exciting developments in this research bringing in more voices from the ground.

1.9.d. Chapter 5: Finding the Agency in the Body

The action or inaction around any situated circumstances is frequently referred to as 'agency,' described as having a degree of choice available to the actor to act a certain way or have acted otherwise (Giddens, 1984). An agency exercised by an individual has a more or less transformative impact on the nature of the situated structure itself. It was interesting to study how certain norms and rituals interact with the adolescents'

personal choices in the Santhali community and leads to risk, negotiations, and resistance towards specific kinds of action or inactions. An emphasis on the interplay of society and self-influences and explains the behavior of individuals and their functionality in different social situations. With the last two finding chapters focusing on the foundations of how bodies are constructed through rituals, rites of passage, land, and labor, this chapter tends to examine the 'agency' associated with bodies. This chapter highlights how social norms and expectations inform adolescents, construct their bodies, and conflict with one another while framing individual identities, desires, and feelings within the societal structure, contextualizing 'agency' through bodies.

Agency in this chapter, therefore, is an 'embodied identity' lived through the bodies collectively as a source of resistance, risk, and negotiations to understand how different societal discourse is performed through bodies. My aim in studying adolescents as social agents in this chapter was not to explore if adolescents had agency but rather to understand how agency in whatever form present is executed and socially manifested through bodies shaping the social structures and norms in their everyday lives. This chapter, therefore, talks about the unwanted mothers in society, the girls who liked sports, and the rebellious girls who liked loitering and questioning the societal norms on mobility and accessibility through resistance, risk, and negotiations lived through their bodies. To identify how the structures are reproduced and transformed to create newer meanings, for example, on exploring sexuality and loitering while breaking the norms, required a continuous interaction between physical, psychological, and social processes experienced by the adolescents and are represented through the narratives in this chapter (Van Reeuwijk, 2010). There has been a particular emphasis provided to the detailed individual narratives in this chapter which, however, connects us to the larger discourse of the circumstances on the ground. The primary

discussion points in this chapter were the state-affiliated policies that act as 'biopower' or 'biopolitics' on the one hand and the plethora of negotiations, resistance, and risk young girls exercise through their bodies in society on the other hand.

1.10: Conclusion:

This chapter is an amalgamation of the socio-economic position of the land, situating women in the political struggle, and the literature review at length. From Featherstone and Turner's *The Body and Society* (1995) setting the agenda for a wide range of research around the sociology of the body to the classical Durkheim's functionalism and the Marxist interpretation of the body, several research theories have been used to situate the literature review for this study and are comprehended in this Introduction chapter. From early feminist debates of Firestone (1971), Rubin (1975; 2002), Grosz (1994; 1995), and Bordo (1993 a; 1993 b) to bodies being intimately connected to power through Foucault's (1972; 1977; 1978; 1979) social constructionist theories, Bourdieu's (1977; 1984) habitus and Butler's (1990; 1994) debate on gender this chapters took into consideration the broader discourse on the sociology of gender and body to validate the field narratives in the following chapters. One of this study's core theoretical constructs lies in bringing the South Asian histories of tribes, gender, embodiment, sexuality, and tribes to the forefront. Hence, theorists like Xaxa (1999; 2005), Pathy (1995; 1999), Thapan (2009), Niranjana (2001), Dube (1988), and Kishwar (1982; 1987) are also widely situated throughout this chapter and this dissertation study. The three objectives of this research are widely rationalized in this chapter depicting the context through the field and tribal history as to why gender, sexuality, and body among adolescent girls is a researchable topic in the tribal terrain. From the historical interpretation of body and sexuality to theorizing adolescent bodies

and agency in everyday life, this chapter carefully decoded the classical and contemporary theories on body, sexuality, and gender used in this study. This chapter ends with a brief description of the organization of the finding chapters written hereafter.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY: ON LIVING THE ETHNOGRAPHY ON THE GROUND

2.1: Introduction

As an ethnographer, to remain primarily invisible throughout the writing or to be embedded in the text is a classic dilemma one goes through. The methodology chapter, therefore, is one such part of the entire writing which is the window that lets the ethnographer be true to their experience and embrace their failures and successes. Van Maanen writes, 'Ethnographies are portraits of diversity in an increasingly homogenous world. Ethnographies display the intricate ways individuals and groups understand, accommodate, and resist a presumably shared order' (Van Maanen, 2011, p. xviii). No other method in sociology allows one the opportunity to write about silence and noise from the field experiences and theorize and analyze them the way ethnography does for any study. Ethnographic research begins with selecting a problem or topic of interest. One danger of ethnography is that it sometimes produces a stereotype of a group, subculture, or culture. The idea is that the ethnographer must present and narrate a world of observation to produce a clear image of the community. However, only typically a fraction of what an ethnographer learns and sees in the fieldwork can be presented in the most accurate terms with all the context, non-judgmental concepts, observations, interviews, and theories emerging during the fieldwork (Fetterman, 2010).

Franz Boas brought fieldwork into the lives of anthropologists, pushing the anthropologists from the university to the field by redefining humanity (Clifford, 1983, pp.118-46). This chapter considers the understanding of my field experiences as a

'Participant Observer' and discusses the boundaries of my entry and access to the ground in detail. There are narrations throughout this chapter where the experiences of the "Other"¹ in me, the interpretive methods of the culture, and the labels of gender on the ground constantly narrated accounts of my everyday life as an ethnographer. Therefore, the 'push' and the 'entry' in the field tend to be a crucial part of ethnography, where it is not only about entering the field but about a vast range of changes the ethnographer experiences in their own lives (Srinivas, 1976). The journey of entry into the tribal community, both as an ethnographer as well as an individual among the indigenous people and their culture, sets the tone of this chapter. There was a 'shadow side' of doing the ethnography, which has been spoken about in length in this chapter, where the boundaries of the personal and formal ethnography begin to get complicated when as a person, one fails to fit within the framework of professional (McLean & Leibing, 2007). Through disturbing field encounters challenging my own emotional, moral, and intellectual standpoints around the body, gender and sexuality, this chapter holds experiences challenging my understanding of the 'personal is political'² along with the detailed explanation of methodology on the ground. This chapter also has a detailed usage of personal pronouns and personal narratives written in the first person, like several classical ethnographies, for example, the way Srinivas (1976) wrote *The Remembered Village* from a personalized account.

From the time I completed my master's in sociology in 2011, I wanted to study rural India through the lens of a sociologist and a desire for activism in gender and women's rights. Hence there were several reasons why my research choice seemed ideal for this thesis. It seemed both proper and fitting that I investigated an area of my interest even if I was an 'outsider' to the field, as I was in a position to conduct a series of research with women and adolescents with my academic understanding and a wish to

learn from the Adivasi community. Nevertheless, I was threatened with the prospect of changing my life entirely as a participant observer, but in those days, my spirit of learning about women and their everyday lives in rural India to contextualize the theories I learned in my sociology classes was beyond explanation. My journey as an ethnographer started on the ground in 2014 as a researcher on a small livelihood project for women with an organization named NEEDS where I found myself in one of their community resource centers in the middle of a block in the Deoghar district of Jharkhand, about thirty kilometers away from the main town. There were days when I would resemble Malinowski's life when under confinement by the British during World I, where he found himself tenting alongside the natives of the Trobriand Islands for several years (Stocking, 1983). During night-time in the resource center, there was no light in the area other than the small tube light lit in the main hallway. The heat in the sultry month of March kept me awake all night, and the massive noise of the old rusty generator gave me company. It is said that sociologists at large focus their work on urban contexts that are close to home with no alien tongue to master. On the other hand, anthropologists looked for entry into the culture of interest in a semi-isolated social system (Fetterman, 2010). Therefore, the urge for my study was to find a collective realm between sociologists studying secular, economic, and political aspects of social life on one hand and anthropologists studying the sacred, emotional, and private life of the people studied through the process.

This chapter narrates the study's methodology and talks about my everyday life as an ethnographer that has remained central to the study and a witness to the experiences of my fieldwork done between 2015 to 2018 in the Pakur and Deoghar districts of Jharkhand. These were the two areas I visited the most for the project with NEEDS and had accessibility to the people there. In the field, I realized that the major

projects run by the NGO during that time were around livelihood, poverty alleviation, and mortality of pregnant women and children, whereas gender, sexuality, and puberty among adolescent girls were not a concept of knowledge discussed in widespread programs. Through the fieldwork, I realized that puberty was more than just a natural phenomenon in this land, with hunger, poverty, and labored bodies being political sites of everyday survival. The acute silence around the everyday lives of adolescents and my sociological interest in understanding gender, body, and culture in the Adivasi terrain drew me closer to studying adolescents in the area.

Ethnography involves the researcher's participation in people's lives living, following, and observing them as a field worker. It is required to live along with a group of people for more than a year to document and interpret their life patterns and beliefs in an alien land³ (Goffman, 1989; Van Maanen, 2011). Hence this chapter on the methodology of the study talks about the on-ground experiences as a researcher present on the ground, the art of listening and comprehending, the areas of struggle, and finally, the process of writing and cornering it back to the existential question of "Can there be a feminist ethnography?" (Stacey, 1988). Dipesh Chakrabarty points out that the historical data between 1850 and 1910 on Indian autobiographies were remarkably public when written by men and a lot about extended families when written by women. In contrast, Leila Ahmed, in her writing, suggests that women autobiographers turn towards their 'gardens' and talk about them as a means of foregrounding unexpressed pain (Visweswaran, 1997). Hence, participating in the debate on what counts as a woman's writing, the 'writing' of this ethnography was through my ethnographer's lens that highlighted what the adolescents considered as their evolved perceptions of everyday lives. Therefore, the sections in this chapter on methodology do justice to my understanding as an ethnographer who lived through a cultural lens to interpret several

forms of human behaviors around an unknown land. My presence as an interpreter is quite visible in this study, trying to make objective notes throughout these narratives. Finding a space for the subaltern voice always suggests a new location for voice by prioritizing personal narratives and 'autoethnographic' texts. And the beauty of ethnography allowed me to have my voice move in and out of the story with my identity attached to it rather than being alienated.

Every section of this thesis is an amalgamation of the narratives from the adolescents and depicts my interpretations and dilemmas on encountering certain life changing concepts through 'autoethnography', where I became both the research subject and the object (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003, p. 19). Urvashi Butalia wrote about her deep suspicion of any history written with a distance from the author and an absence of the 'I' as if the author were a mere vehicle but still trying to create an illusion of objectivity (Butalia, 1998). So technically, this chapter of methodology and, after that, every chapter in this thesis holds testimony and narratives of empowering anecdotes of young girls and myself because to portray culture requires the fieldworker to hear, see, and, most importantly, write of what was presumably witnessed and interpreted during the study keeping one's understanding in the center (Van Maanen 2011, p. 03). Unlike the masters of anthropology like Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard, my work makes no claims to being an example of an insightful realist work; however, it is still a representation of a realist style to its closest. Other than only prioritizing the object of fieldwork, this chapter and every chapter of this thesis contain my confessional⁴ accounts of ethnography in parts with an attempt to demystify the personal biases and character flaws that I lived through as a participant observer. These confessional accounts rarely portrayed me as a passive and unremarkable character, only presenting

what one sees as a spectator but also as someone who was actively present in the process and equally narrated the process of change practiced in the field.

2.2: Setting the Gaze on the Ground:

The role of the ethnographer is to be a 'part insider' being the participant in the social world that is the object of the investigation and also 'part outsider' performing a professional purpose in the field of research, and this was always a critical boundary to be managed (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). There was also a constant dilemma of managing the 'myth-making' associated with ethnographic labor that Malinowski engaged in his writings (Bryman, 2001). A constant argument runs through the ethnographer's mind on how one should set one's position on the ground, collect accurate data, and ask oneself the validity of the accounts collected as authentic and not a 'construction of myth.'

Van Maanen (2011, p. 02) noticed that fieldwork required some of the instincts of an exile, with the fieldworker typically arriving at the place of the study without much introduction about the place and people and being almost ready to be overwhelmed with episodes of embarrassment, affection, confusion, adventure, warmth, fear, insults and even surprise. Little things, therefore, would always demarcate my presence from the community during the initial days on the ground; for example, I would stay in the community but still go with the ASHA *didi* to access the bathroom in the high school and not use the open field. On days during festivals when the entire village would be intoxicated, and the smell of freshly brewed *hadiya* would take over the village, after every session or interview, I was often offered a bowl of *hadiya*. I had to politely reject the proposition every time by telling them that I was 'working' and would not be able to taste it. This thin line would still demarcate the hierarchy with the

boundaries of participant observation, and it constantly puts me in a position to situate my identity on the ground. For example, in winter, specifically in 2016, I was in Pakur and booked a lodge close to the community where I could get some hot water to take a bath because living in the field, I caught an immense cold and developed short breath during the month of December. The hotel room was pale blue with big discolored spots of dampness in the walls, which turned into a white patch in years. There was a dim, powered yellow bulb fixed at a corner of the room with a constant sound of a tripping drop of water from the bathroom tap, clearing it to be a scene from any Hindi crime thriller written in the heartland of Bihar. Raja, a young boy in his twenties, would be the attendant there and would come every morning and afternoon to take orders for food during the field stay. Every time I would order an extra vegetable dish beyond the staple *dal* and *roti* (lentils and bread), he would be astonished by my appetite and ability to afford the luxury of choice. Ordering one more dish with dinner was a luxury Raja had never experienced, being born in one of the most poverty stricken districts of Jharkhand. The silent interactions with Raja would always provide me with a reality check and prepare me better with a lens to document the deeper context behind the lived experiences on the ground.

On other occasions, there were moments in the course of ethnographic work that occupied a particular position during the fieldwork, which demarcated oneself between going native and feeling the absolute stranger. What is important to discuss here is the context of 'ethics' which pervades every stage of ethnographic work where the ethnographers need to make informed decisions that satisfy the demands of the science and the morality of the fieldwork (Fetterman, 2010, p. 140). So, when adolescent girls during sessions would share about their sexual relationships and their absolute unawareness of contraception, I would struggle to balance how much am I allowed to

share to garner the authenticity of the data collected. These were the 'shadow sides' (McLean & Leibing, 2007) of the ethnographer's life that makes the feeling at home or discovering friendship in the community with the informant questionable and problematic to decipher what is real and what remains staged. There is this constant negotiation of the identity, and for months the desire for totally amalgamating in the community and being able to function as one of 'them' remained strong. Bryman (2001) argues that it is always crucial for ethnographers to refrain from fooling themselves about their basic status concerning those they study as they will always be the 'outsider.' After months of struggling to be one of the community members and trying to document what is different, the realization dawned that I was a *diku*⁵ indeed; the outsider in the land and a fact that could never be altered. I realized that I was not one of them and were not the same, forming a homogenous category of women because I could leave the land anytime I wanted to, but they could not. So my task was to identify the mundane and compare knowledge differences with the larger discourse available around gender, sexuality, and body. I finally realized that my research should not only highlight the outsider's perspective in me but also examine the mundane because it was essential to prioritize what one 'sees' in the community. However, even if the thought emanated from me, it took time to accept being a '*diku*' as an integral part of my everyday life and identity.

If one follows the pages from *Manushi* a set of journals created back in the 1980s in India, and the stories from undivided Bihar and then one goes about thirty-five years later on the ground to analyze what young girls consider essential for them in current times while defining their bodies, the longitudinal analysis through time in this same region would not differ much when it comes to representation of stories and perceptions around gender, body, and sexuality experienced through land and labor and

that itself makes this study sociological enough to understand what it says about women and their bodies in a whole. When I spoke to young girls about their lives, mainly the labor, marriage, and future children were their priorities and were the embodied identity represented through their gender and performed through their bodies. There was no way one could write an ethnography around gender, body, and sexuality for these young girls without emphasizing the above-mentioned concepts overlooking the foundations of land and labor associated with gender and sexuality in the bodies of these tribal women (Kishwar, 1987; Agarwal, 1994; Gupta, 1983).

2.3: The Access and Entry to the Field:

As most ethnographic research entails involvement in the lives of others, gaining access to the field was a journey in itself. Moreover, fieldwork is known to be the heart of the ethnographic design that brings to life the anthropological concepts, data collection techniques, and analysis, basically framing it under the banner of 'doing ethnography' (Fetterman, 2010). In early 2014, I started working in the communities with NEEDS in Deoghar when they were working with livelihood and agriculture with women from the self-help groups. The access to the field was, therefore, mostly planned, and I always knew what to expect from the visit. I used to follow the field staff only to get a short time post their discussion on irrigation and crops to talk about gender and domestic violence with these women and girls. Gradually after the third meeting with the ASHA *didis*, I would share my research ideas on young girls, and they would usually nod their heads with acceptance of my presence and the research both. I tried to simplify the theoretical concepts around body and sexuality, and the role play between the 'overt' and the 'covert' researcher here took foundational steps (Denzin, 1997) because I was an overt researcher, present on the ground and lived everyday life with the people. In

the initial stage, when I shared the motives of my research, I would instead take the path of sanitized topics of menstruation, puberty, and early marriage to confirm my entry into the field and build a foundation before I could talk about sexuality. Therefore, by the time I started specifically asking questions on the body, sexuality, and gender with the adolescents, I almost had to spend a year and a half with them visiting the VHND⁶ and the SHGs⁷ and schools and home visits to repeatedly meet and engage with the adolescents through different projects held by the NGO and began to make some sense of what I could observe. Once I became involved in the daily lives of the people, my important objects of query changed dramatically. I was gradually drawn to asking more relatable questions on understanding the body, gender, and sexuality in adolescence. However, my entry point of a 'classical ethnography' to be followed started with a prolonged stay, and it went exploratory in nature from self-help groups to understanding sexuality with a considerable amount of time. Talking about sanitized topics usually puts me in the dilemma of validating the study's objectivity by performing the front and back-stage interactions (Goffman, 1956). My impression fostered by the performance contradicted my role as a researcher trying to understand beyond health to sections of gender, sexuality, and sexual relationships. However, the relationship between the ethnographer and the informants' changes throughout their fieldwork, shifting from being a stranger to being a friend and moving back to being a stranger eventually. Hence, getting assimilated into the field was not a linear process in itself. Even after days of meetings and interactions, there would come a time during an odd session when a young girl sitting beside me would suddenly put their hand out beside mine to match the skin color immediately. In that very moment, I would again be an 'Other.' Everything would be new to me, and I would take massive notes trying to theorize every little thing I observed. Hoping to make sense and through a slow trial

and error process, I gradually started making sense of the behavioral patterns of the adolescents in the community (Styles, 1979, p.138).

In the field, therefore, the ethnographic work is never 'orderly'- it involves serendipity, creativity, patience, and a struggle to find the pattern to data and comprehend what needs to be documented. However, these discussions in a later stage of the fieldwork confine an orderly structure of ethnography; in general, it is unplanned and sometimes chaotic, presenting the intriguing and exciting character of the research (Fetterman, 2010). It took a long time for me to understand the basic terms in Santhali and pick the tone of the words. Hence, during sessions as an ethnographer, I had to deal with my anxiety constantly while interpreting the 'silence' and the 'laughter' and justifying the reflexivity in the ethnography on how close the translations have been. There was a double dilemma technically on the 'access and the entry' to accept that an exhaustive account of any locale is never possible in the first place, and it took a long time for me to grasp the fact. Every morning I would enter the village with my *jhola* or cloth bag, and kids would start crying, imagining I was someone from the health department that had come to give them vaccine injections. There would always be a young girl in the house getting ready to pick up the kids (interestingly, I would never see these girls in schools throughout my stay in the village). The woman would heartily laugh at the situation and run behind the children to fetch them up again. I would wait by the side, watching the courtyard and hoping these women would return their children soon so I could start the session with them. I was the "stranger" (Schutz, 1944) the typical ethnographer "doing ethnography" (Fetterman, 2010). As the criticism of ethnography goes, I was trying to study the significant events in everyday life of those usually portrayed as victims and marginalized (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). Situating people in the process was tough as to constantly counter oneself to which village to

choose, what patterns to follow while collecting the stories, and finally, whose story to write.

This study considered purposive sampling as one of the core data collection methods by talking to fifty Santhali tribal girls between fifteen to nineteen years old in two blocks of Pakur and Deoghar named Litipara and Palajori, respectively. Adolescent girls who were married or unmarried, school-going or dropouts, having children or separated were part of the research and would be willing to interact with me and problematize the question under the study. Only two girls among the interviewees with whom detailed intervention happened were school-going and studying in hostels; the rest were primarily married or had returned from their in-laws' post-marriage and were looking for a new groom. A significant portion of the girls were school dropouts; however, they claimed they were enrolled in schools but never joined classes due to the heavy workload in their house. The rest of the girls were either married or once eloped, staying with their in-laws looking for their *bapla* or marriage to happen in the future. These girls were either having children or waiting to have one soon, typically scared of the consequences if they could not bear a child. Sumati, a married woman in her thirties in Deoghar, and Dular & Mukhi, two young girls in their twenties in Pakur, were the three field workers who helped me in the process of my data collection on the ground through a series of Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with adolescent girls and women and informal and semi-structured interviews too.⁸

Over time, Mukhi would start sharing about her boyfriend and her would-be husband quite casually when she understood the kind of data I was collecting. For Mukhi, it was the first time she would open up to an alien person and talk about her sexuality. There were zones of my discomfort in grasping every minute detail of her sex life that she would offer at times, considering I was the one who would be interested

in it in detail. On the other hand, Dular took up this job with NEEDS post a marriage proposition of her broke because her family demanded twenty-five thousand rupees' cash as a bride-price⁹ and the groom's family denied it. In Deoghar, on the other hand, Sumati's husband would always drop her at the fields and stay with her on the field, sleeping outside the village under the big mango trees while Sumati would be conducting sessions. Her husband was very dominating and often fought with me if Sumati had much work to do, which was given to her by me, and she could not spend time with him. However, these three personalities were my eyes and voice on the field in the initial days and my entry points to the community decoding the perfect set of translations for me on the ground. We will generally plan our weekly meeting sessions, and Sumati in Deoghar and Dular and Mukhi in Pakur will set out to the field, discuss with the ASHA¹⁰ workers and fix an FGD or an interview with the adolescent girls.

2.4: Being the 'Other' on the Field

There is always a dilemma spoken hugely about 'the problem of speaking for others in the field and the ethics and responsibility involved in performing personal narratives of people, especially whose identities and cultural practices are underrepresented. There is a fascinating dialogue around the 'Other' being divided between the two sets of people, the 'cynics' and the 'zealots' as per Madison's (1988, pp. 276-86) article, *Performance, Personal Narratives, and the Politics of Possibility*. The cynics believe that any attempt towards a performance of the other is unattainable and an act of crass appropriation and distortion. The zealots, however, believe that they can clone the mind, body, and soul of the 'Other' even better than the other. Hence, it becomes important to constantly examine the assumptions of being the 'Other' myself in the field to define my purpose as an ethnographer on the ground.

To diminish the line of difference, I used art and creative tools to start the conversation around gender and bodies with women and girls on the ground. Often during my initial days on the field, I used to sit in the office and design posters on domestic violence when offered a tiny slot to talk during the SHG meetings the following day. On one such afternoon like that, while designing communication tools, the livelihood program manager from the project would come up to my desk would comment with mockery that I do a very fancy job, sitting and making all these funnylooking colorful posters all day. His advice would be that I should not talk about these concepts of violence and gender rights on the ground and that I was putting all kinds of Western ideas in these women's heads. He continued that people in that land sow seeds, grow crops, drink merrily, and enjoy their lives, and there was no reason to talk about violence, gender, and sexual rights to these people. Malinowski spoke about a phenomenon named 'foreshadowed problems' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 21), investigating how people see themselves in a situation. My colleague's argument narrated that something more significant and broader out there structured and shaped around hunger and poverty for tribal women where the nuanced discussion on body rights can wait. It is not that, as a researcher, I never experienced a feeling of frustration towards these women who were not able to articulate or conceive the oppression, violence, and injustice which has been so evident in their lives and also in the lives of their mothers or elder sisters¹¹ (Ghosh, 2012). Most of the time, they acted as if the misery was destined for being born as a woman and born in a land of poverty. However, gradually I tended not to believe that women who have no theoretical knowledge of what body rights constitute or how feminism is defined have no idea of how it affects them in their everyday lives, and I continued the work on making the posters and forming the groups on the ground. As said by Arthur Schopenhauer, 'the task is not so

much to see what no one yet has seen but to think what nobody yet has thought about that which everyone sees . . . ' (McLean & Leibing, 2007, p. 20).

On the ground, when I talked to young girls in length to decode their everyday lives and understand how gender and body shape their identity, they would often surprisingly laugh at the innate need for me to document stories of girls as mundane as them. "*What is so special in our stories that you are documenting it?*" they would often ask me. With these small yet significant instances happening around, I questioned what Geertz in 1973 (Bryman, 2001, pp. 258-270) called the 'native's point of view' while building the epistemology in ethnography. Because selfhood is associated with each person studied through the research process and ethnography, where the 'otherness' is conceptualized to 'grasp a native point of view,' making it contradictory because we cannot be sure who the native is and who is actually being studied in the process.¹² I assumed that I was the one who was trying to make every observation objective- to observe and ask seemingly insignificant questions to them and write down everything I would see and hear to form a pattern.

The context of Sanskritization Vs. *Nirbakization* (Mahato, 2000, pp. 17-18) leads to a culture of silence in the marginalized population where they think their stories are not worthy. As an ethnographer in the field functioning from the privileged caste identity, it was a challenge to pursue neutrality in my research, keeping my professional and personal biases and positioning in mind. The culture of silence is sometimes latent to the extent that our representation of the subaltern says more about us than the subaltern, where we produce the subaltern by our own gaze and end up reinforcing subalternity (Spivak, 1988). In her most influential postcolonial theory, Spivak also points out that the 'act of empowerment' of the subalterns from a privileged gaze has a silencing effect because it is essential to analyze whether we are speaking 'for' the

subalterns in any way rather than empowering them to speak. The metaphorical reliance on the maligned sensory system named 'vision' in the feminist discourse can be brought to the point of analysis here. Donna Haraway's (1988, pp. 575-99) article *Situated Knowledge: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective* identifies how vision is good for avoiding binaries and signifies a leap out of the marked bodies into a conquering gaze from nowhere. This gaze mythically inscribes all the marked bodies to be seen, and the power remains in the unmarked category to only represent others while escaping representation themselves. Therefore, vision is a question of power but is also about how one exercises it on the ground. However, during my stay on the ground, I questioned the power and the embodied nature of my vision of the native's point of view (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003, p. 31).

Every group I met was particularly enlightening for me with the taboos I learned, the everyday labor practiced, and the ritual the celebrations of in the community as a joint discussion for FGDs. In every individual story, there were narratives of struggle with puberty, sections on sexual relationships, power, discrimination, and the everyday struggle of *Jal, Jungle, and Jameen*; however, still, the girls would ask if their stories were important. Edmund Leach pointed out that the word 'tribe,' like the word native, has a derogatory connotation. The expressions primitive tribe/ savage tribe were formerly used to denote people presumed low down in an imaginary hierarchy of social evolution as "the lower races" (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). Ethnography is about cultural differences ordinarily presumed to be stable over long periods, where the manners and customs of tribes are endlessly repeated year after year, lifetime after lifetime. Hence, it brings forward that for a long time, stories of a particular community were considered unimportant, especially those around young girls, their bodies, and their gender. John Beverley (2000), in his article *The Subaltern*

Speaks takes up the topic of 'testimonio' on the issue of how the subaltern speaks after Gayatri Spivak's (1988) famous article, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* where she rightly observes that if the subaltern spoke in a way that we would listen to they would not be a subaltern anymore. A *testimonio*, he writes, in a way overcomes this kind of objection where a first-person political text around social upheaval, colonization process, the struggles, and survival techniques are written in the form of a *testimonio* or a first personal account by the protagonist where the author is not a researcher but a person who testifies on behalf of the personal experiences (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003, pp. 55565). Therefore, one of the prime components of participant observer on the ground was to look beyond the situated knowledge and prioritize the *testimonios* encountered to alter and challenge the known perspectives.

Madhu Kishwar (1987) elaborated in *Manushi* on the 'subjectivity of the researched' that as men in many situations control women's subjectivity, it was, therefore, challenging to grasp the subjectivity in research. Having said that, it is essential to highlight that reducing the question of subjectivity merely to a researcher's personal biases and experiences is also not a rational enough method of interpreting the field. It is crucial that the image of the observer is also transformed from being a mere 'instrument' that neutrally records the subjects' viewpoint to the one who actively engages with the subjects in dialogue and is in an evolving relationship. As Veena Das pointed out that the problem of fieldwork and the text written based on it by Indian sociologists studying their society is based on the denial of the subjective involvement in their own society where the observed is treated as a distant other¹³ (Jairath & Thapan, 1984). In most cases, the relative position of the anthropologist is that of the temporarily sane, the momentarily well, the stably domiciled who interacts with the not sane, the ill, or the displaced, trying to capture their stigma, madness, and vulnerability to a mere

gaze of the 'Other' in oneself (McLean & Leibing, 2007, pp. 56-74). It was interesting to identify sociologists with an 'Insider' status (compared to an outsider) who also dealt with the dilemma of rejection and acceptance. So when Joseph Styles studied the 'Gay Baths' in 1974, they realized that identifying as gay and planning to study a gay institution raised a more profound question of comfort. They realized their gayness was an asset, with easy access to the baths and being naturally sympathetic towards gay people. However, not getting disturbed about being around gay sexual activity was not intriguing enough for a fresh perspective for the study; instead was a problem in several ways (Styles, 1979, pp. 135-152).

Among adolescents, the stake in talking about sexuality and body and revealing intimacy in the process had a sense of shame and a fragile sense of self-control. Therefore, while talking about the "Other" here, the paradox of the anthropological stance constantly questioned the standpoint as to who was the "Other" in the discussion- was it the interviewee or me? It was me on the ground who was driven by a curiosity about the mysterious and hidden aspect of social reality (hardly sharing the common assumptions of the group), questioning and exploring the painful and secretive element under fieldwork to bring out the unequal relationships and power differentials under which prior knowledge of any given phenomena was constructed (Lambek, 1997, pp. 31-53; Douglas, 1999). My intention of creating a specific kind of knowledge that prioritized body, gender, and sexuality among tribes and having a particular lens to assess this public discourse made me feel as if talking about gender and sexuality was a prioritized topic in the community. For example, Scheper-Hughes's book *Death without Weeping* (1993) received harsh critiques from Brazilian intellectuals considering that Scheper-Hughes has been so involved in what she calls 'militant anthropology' (Scheper-Hughes, 1995) that she was selective in her observations and

filtered them through ideologies associated with excluding the larger public discourse as a strategy. Similarly, Laura McClusky's observation about literature around domestic violence suggests that ethnographers avoid gender-based violence as a discussion topic in their writing because writing negatively about others' violence invites cultural imperialism and hypocrisy when similar types of violence exist in the ethnographers' homes and societies. Hence these were considered 'too ugly' topics to be written about (Howell, 2004, pp. 323-352).

Ethnographies have always been documents that pose questions at the margins between the two cultures in the discussion. It, therefore, decodes one culture while recording or deconstructing it for the other in the process (Van Maanen, 2011, p. 4). In this respect, it can be argued that everything seen as 'real' in the field as a stranger is also through a vision influenced by my culture and my need to comprehend a certain set of knowledge. Therefore, the formative role of the 'ethnographic encounter' stems from the fact that each player's gaze acts as a mirror for the other and becomes part of what makes them who they are. Van Maanen also quotes Lacan's approach to the 'mirror stage,' which refers to a developmental period when infants still experience the image in the mirror as a unified self-image at a time when they feel still fragmented.¹⁴ Schutz (1944) noted that the people on the ground would live inside the culture and tend to see it as simply a reflection of how the world is, but not conscious that their own vision is shaped distinctively by their culture.¹⁵

As a researcher in the new cultural pattern of the social group, I grappled with information in the best possible way. I have therefore performed every part of being the 'stranger' in Alfred Schutz's language, questioning what seems to be unquestionable to the group and had to have a deep explicit knowledge to be able to connect to the pattern that was needed to start the thread of discussion (Schutz, 1944). There was often this

inquisitive aura in the village whenever I asked questions about sex or sexuality, like *"do you use contraception?"* Girls would ask me what my purpose behind collecting these stories was and why people would be interested to know if they were having sex or not. The most crucial question was the sheer astonishment that I would get a degree and be paid to document someone's understanding of sexuality. I became the person, as Schutz would say, someone who questioned nearly everything that seems to be unquestionable and, at the same time, was a stranger interpreting the 'cultural pattern' of the group with the need to be accepted and assimilated through laws and customs.

As Schutz narrates that the 'stranger' in oneself would live through the conflict constantly and question their own cultural understanding in the process. Only after specific knowledge of the interpretive function of the new cultural pattern may the stranger start to adopt it as an 'objective recipe' and alienate from the one they have known forever. For example, the taboo around purity and pollution is associated with my own Savarna household on menstruation and the fact that my body was associated with pollution since my puberty every month on the days that I would bleed. The elaborate rituals, from the washing off of the bed linens to throwing the collected water in the house to fill it up with fresh one on the fifth day of my cycle when I would wash my hair and wear a clean dress and would be allowed to enter the kitchen or touch God. The approaching stranger in me transformed from an 'unconcerned onlooker' to a 'would-be member' of the unknown group concerned about the details around me on performing the "Other" myself and encountering the norms I was subjected to in my life. However, this picture reflected the cultural pattern for the group from working with women and youth, and my understanding of gender and sexuality through a 'looking-glass'¹⁶ effect would analyze patterns of prejudices, bias, and negotiations with my own culture on the ground. Fieldwork is, therefore, a process of building up images from

biases, preconceptions, and new information, trying and testing these images against own observations, and accepting and modifying these images based on what one observes and what one is told (Styles, 1979, p.149).

2.5: Playing the Participant Observer:

Powdermaker in *Stranger and Friend: The Way of an Anthropologist* (1966) talks about 'Participant Observation' as a phenomenon where there is participation in the lives of people under the study and also maintaining a professional relationship with them for observation and data. Participant observation, as Goffman (1989) would say, is about subjecting oneself, one's own body, and own social situation to a set of contingencies where the researcher can physically and ecologically penetrate the circle of the social and ethnic situation of the respondents and is close to the field in link with what is happening on the ground. Before starting the field visits for the study, as mentioned above, I was already working on the ground on small projects around reproductive and maternal health rights. I was already a resident for a year, trying to internalize people's fundamental beliefs, fears, hopes, and expectations. This process built a context before delving into studying the body, gender, and sexuality among adolescents. The simple, ritualistic behaviors of following the girls to the market or the village tube well for fetching water taught me how people used their time and space to determine what was precious, sacred, and mundane, or profane activities. The process of my understanding was unsystematic in the beginning and was somewhat uncontrolled, but the techniques got refined as more and more I understood the culture (Powdermaker, 1966). Gradually from an unsystematic beginning to a more refined technique of being able to grasp everyday life as a participant-observer was a journey indeed.

Goffman, in *On Fieldwork*, talks about 'cutting one's life to the bone' on the ground (Goffman, 1989), and constantly playing the role of the participant-observer was challenging and life-changing at the same time. It was about being present fully and, simultaneously, being critically aware of the conscious, systematic distancing. Being a 'Participant Observant' was about subjecting one's body, personality, and social situations to physically and ecologically penetrate in a circle closer to their habitat while responding to their life. Initially, there was a situation of artificially forcing myself to be turned into the setting as a witness and not an interviewer or a listener questioning my privilege and setting until I could adapt to it. My bathroom needs on the ground at times and the urge to take a leak in open fields during the fieldwork was one of the most dynamic adaptations I took up within the dilemma of embodying shame for myself as well as adopting a life of the girls when they would say "*we use the fields nearby to urinate.*" Between 2014 to 2018, several bathrooms under the *Swacch Bharat Abhiyan*¹⁷ popped up here and there in the villages. The bathrooms constructed under the campaign had massive flaws that one could not even properly sit in; bathrooms were either dysfunctional without water or necessary depth but with *Izzat Ghar*¹⁸ or the 'House of Dignity' written on the doors. Seeing small toilets built around the villages with visible signs of *Izzat Ghar* on the doors was an ironic setting during the time. During my entire field visit in Pakur and Deoghar, I used the open field many times when I needed to urinate during the fieldwork. Even when the bathrooms were built, no one on the ground ever opened the door for me for the bathrooms because they were not using themselves. There was no water supply in any of the bathrooms even after two years of construction, and in some places, the walls were chipped and falling apart due to the lack of usage. Therefore, all I envisioned during my stay in the village was

hundreds of bathrooms cropped up here and there haphazardly like freshly bloomed mushrooms post-rain.

Majorly the initial session with the girls would take place in the family setting when we laughed and talked about rituals, traditions and festivals, and dance. There would be an older woman husking the rice in a traditional mortar and pestle and a kid sleeping on the side of the courtyard. There would be no women or men in the house either, as few would be on the field, and the others would be off to Bengal to harvest rice or work at brick kilns. If it were an offseason from harvesting, men would be off to different states to work in bangle and biscuit factories. In the context of field adaptations, the ground scenarios were sometimes humorous. On days when I would talk about 'child marriage' as per planned protocols of the job roles with NEEDS asking young girls to stand up for their rights against early marriage, I would suddenly notice a lizard somewhere crawling up a wall beside me. I would scream out with utmost fear, and girls would laugh and say, "*You are scared of a lizard and asking us to fight against child marriage.*" We all would laugh together after that situation. My vulnerabilities would make me closer to the group whenever I showcased my fears and imperfection. As Goffman pointed out, the field is never a place to portray how smart I was among the group members (Goffman, 1989). So every time I pulled up being an object of laughter or curiosity in the group, I was a happy researcher gliding through the wind while returning on a scooter of a field worker, rejoicing the moment on grounds I had just earned. Irony and humor are tactics of ethnographers usually appreciated in writings when one utilizes those limitations on the ground with aesthetic elegance and depicts their narrations on being a participant observer (Clifford & Marcus, 1986).

On every occasion, I was going through a different affiliation issue, performing the actual tests of penetrating every group, and the process was not a one-dimensional

business. However, it had layers to it, providing the choice to apply my subjectivity to the situation and perform accordingly. As a participant observer, at times, I would reject the *hadiya* that they would offer me during the field visits, but then there were days too when I would sit with women during the field breaks while they would weed the paddy fields and share a *beedi* with them and talk life. However, Srinivas (1976) in *The Remembered Village*, mentioned that he deliberately excluded the Harijan ward during the household census as he wanted to approach the Harijans through the headman as a gesture of respect to him and also to make sure he received maximum cooperation from them. There was no one-dimensional approach to penetrating the field. However, there was a constant affiliation issue with reaching out to the lowest group with power. The point was never to be seen engaging with any groups high up on the radar of the social system, as Goffman (1989) would suggest that once seen with higher authorities, moving down a social system is more complex than moving up. So for me smoking a rolled *beedi* with women on the field and being a part of their afternoon breaks when both of us have done a chunk of our daily work (me, the researcher, and the women who toiled in the field) gave an assurance that I was there to stay. This ideological distinction between the public/private and the *ghar/bahir* led to the identification of social roles performed by men and women in Bengali society (Chatterjee, 1993).

However, governed by varying norms and expectations even in the tribal land, the strict segregation of private feminine spaces from the male public space was not demarcated in the most severe form. Starting the conversation with women gave me an added advantage to accessing their children, who were adolescents, and it kept me covered from men and their unnecessary attention towards me on the ground when visiting the villages. On days' drunk men from the village would come and start a conversation with me, demanding I should take sessions with them too. On other days,

they would sit back on sessions with adolescent girls on sexuality, and no other girl would dare to speak anything on that day rather than vaguely smiling when asked. There were times when I would also have to negotiate under some unavoidable circumstances having a visiting volunteer or a funding organization member. On those days, I would take a car from the organization's office in Pakur or Deoghar back to the village, and I would ask the driver to park it far from the village vicinity. I preferred to walk the rest of the course lest I make a different impression and mess up with the one I took years to build on. Therefore, Goffman's (1989) idea of cutting one's life to the bone and forgetting to be a sociologist on the ground, along with the regular performance of impression management in the group, was an interesting role the ethnographer had to perform. Bringing in one's subjectivity in the research every passing day while living a life of a participant-observer questioned one's understanding and ability to comprehend the existence on the ground and accordingly act upon it. The following section on impression management draws necessary attention to this interesting interplay.

2.6: Performing the Impression Management:

In the initial days of fieldwork in the village, there was a need to complement the villagers on their houses with blue walls and mud-stridden courtyards looking aesthetically beautiful as an entry point to a conversation. To that compliment, the villagers would always return with a quote that *"everything in the city is beautiful with elaborate resources in the house with electricity and well-maintained bathrooms and roads in the city."* There was a struggle in situating myself there, and it took me time to realize that though the entry into the field was dramatic enough, I could leave the field anytime I wanted; however, they would never be able to do the same. From a more significant aspect, this discusses the interviewer's presentation of self because building

rapport is not the only concern; however, it is essential to establish and maintain the interview situation itself (Ryan, 2006, pp. 151-68). Hence, my romanticizing the color of the walls on the ground was problematic to an extent. Because it shows the power owned as an outsider in the given situation where they would never be able to experience the better resources they desire; however, me being able to complement their rural minimalistic traditional life as a pilgrimage (which I could leave anytime and be back to the pleasures of the city). It seemed like I was pushing the hypothesis of the mainstream romanticized beauty of the Adivasi landscape too much in the conversations, which I rejected gradually, feeling that I was merely trying to arrive at the truth (Styles, 1979, p. 145). So discussions around aesthetics and complementing on houses initially raised questions about my ethics as a participant-observer. In order to study a primitive community that was not my own, I had no choice but to assume the role of the 'overt researcher' with the zeal to participate in every social activity over an extended period. The construction of a collective identity may be facilitated in spaces where the ethnographer can exploit relevant skills or knowledge they already possess. In my case, the knowledge around reproductive health and my activism on the ground through the organization NEEDS I possessed were the signs of developing a relationship. However, as a participant-observer, I also had to refrain from being an intervenor and systematically control the intervention to document what would have happened "naturally" (Bryman, 2001, p. 162). Because while ethnographers can leave the field whenever they want to, the scene they must customarily act like this is untrue. However, as a part of establishing a potential benefit to the organization at times while coming across narratives on sexuality around contraceptive practices of adolescents, I often struggled to perform the role of a passive subject by listening to the stories as a researcher or being the active collaborator advising them as a development professional

on the ground. Judith Stacey's 1988 article, *Can there be a Feminist Ethnography?* argues that feminist researchers predominantly suffer the 'delusion of the alliance' more than the 'delusion of separateness,' which may lead to a 'feminist ethnographer's dilemma' with the amount of knowledge and the plight around how much to share and that there cannot be anything called a 'fully feminist ethnography.'¹⁹ Ethnographers face a dilemma once they get close to sensitive information shared with them in their role of 'friend' rather than in the role of researcher, and this happens quite often as a participant observer when for days and months, one has gained and regained the trust in the community²⁰. The concern as a researcher remains that the experiences of the intimate knowledge will become public and coincide with broader debates about reserving the informants' privacy as it is simply 'too personal' to write about (Howell, 2004). Ethics pervades every stage of the ethnographic work on the ground, where ethnographers often find themselves at crossroads, expected to make intelligent and informed decisions that satisfy the demands of science and the morality of the data collection process (Fetterman, 2010, p. 140). The relations of power between a relationship on the ground betray the 'feminist innocence,' and Donna Haraway (1988) noted that this costs a lot on feminist visualization of the world by taking back the male gaze²¹. Others argue that feminist researchers are not the embodiment of a homogenous population competing for being an 'insider' but are agents grappling with a similar ambivalence of fieldwork struggling with the representation of different viewpoints all the time through a 'feminist insider dilemma' (Zavalla, 1993, pp. 138-159). For example, Kamala Visweswaran (1994) writes that if the context is 'betrayal,' the most unspoken betrayal is the assumption of 'universal sisterhood' between women and is a fiction of feminist ethnography. These feminist arguments acknowledge the power relations and impression of a feminist ethnographer and a subject on the ground.

The other important thing was the 'impression management' on situating my identity as a participant-observer, being a part of every social activity yet not an intruder. Goffman identified that the mix of costumes would be reasonable to the natives who were not mimicry on the one hand and would also retain one's identity (Goffman, 1979). So for days, I tried to combine hundreds of things that were done but made no sense. Mores, laws, folkways, and fashions were the essential things to be considered to begin with impression management, but I took up the task with clothes. I fixed two sets of clothes for the field visits, one with a green and blue printed short kurta with a green pyjama and the other a yellow and dark blue printed *kurta* (a loose cotton cloth) with a pink pyjama. It is important to discuss my attire and the look at this point because it was essential to maintain consistency on that, and I kept wearing them for days for them to recognize me as a known person. In studying *the Glasgow Gang* and their insider culture, James Patrick sometimes observed that the researcher must dress in a way that is mainly in sync with the other cases around (Patrick, 1973).

During the entire fieldwork, I wore a pair of black-framed spectacles and became the '*kala chasma wali didi*' (the sister wearing the black-framed glasses). For months the ASHA didi and the young girls who randomly volunteered to gather the participants for the sessions or meets would pass from one door to the other asking everyone to assemble for the *kala chasma wali didi's* session. To avoid even the slightest chance of being forgotten, I never left wearing that black-framed glasses for five straight years. Even with the chipped handles and falling screws of the glasses, I remained glued to it as if it was an extended identity of the ethnographer in me on the ground. The symbolism of membership (Van Maanen, 2011) was important there and my innate wish to be as close to them as possible was very integral. There was an ethnographer's manipulation in everyday life, and the ethnographer's body was the most

contested site of impact. Ann Oakley (1981), in her article *Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms* rightly mentions that the interview methodology is a negotiated text with a site where power, class, and gender intersect and on one side where the positivistic research demands objectivity and detachment for the feminist-based interviewing. On the other hand, it also requires openness, emotional engagement, and the development of a potentially long-term trusting relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003).

I would enter the village with my yellow kurta and green oversized *pyjamas*, and a big *jhola* or cloth bag. I would work all morning only to get a group of women assembled for a session on contraception. As the session started, they would ask my social worker in Santhali about my marital status. The fact that I was unmarried would lead to some women leaving the session, denying to attend a session on contraception from me resembling an 'impure body.' While they would leave the session cursing me on the way, all would laugh at the sudden spurt of amusement created in that situation which would not happen on an everyday basis. The young married girls and adolescents would stay back in the sessions and try to start a conversation with me as I would bring in forbidden knowledge for them on sexuality and gender, which they would never be able to receive otherwise. The crowd is indeed an essential source of exercising patriarchal power, even in vulnerable and poverty-stricken areas²² and it was wrong to assume that I was the only one with the power on the ground in a given situation, and it was interesting to find that power disparity worked both ways. Hence, there is no set kind of privileged position of knowledge when scrutinizing a human group through a methodological framework of the insider myth and the outsider myth. The outsider myth entails that only outsiders can conduct valid research on a given group as they

possess objectivity and emotional distance. On the other hand, the insider myth asserts that only insiders can do valid research on a group they belong to (Styles, 1979, p. 148). However, what, as a participant observer, I experienced in the community was instead a shifting relationship of power and hierarchy even while one was researching a relatively powerless group (Ghosh, 2012). In fact, my impression management was a 'performance' in practice referring to all the activities occurring during a continuous dramaturgical expression (Goffman, 1956) of the 'front' and the 'backstage' with the context of performing and performing everything right all the time. I was under scrutiny on the ground all the time on my whereabouts, and people were curious about the topics I would discuss at the meet-ups with the girls, like a new forbidden territory that everybody wanted to be a part of. I learned to flow with the situations gradually rather than try to always fit them into the preconceived notions of what field research should look like and became much more conscious about the actual negotiations (Styles, 1979, p. 142). In one such village in the Palajori block of Deoghar, a girl elopes from her house with a local boy. The entire village assumed that post the sessions' on gender and sexuality and the formation of the girl's group, the girl got 'excited' enough to explore it and eloped with the guy. I was strictly asked never to revisit the village during my stay if I wanted to return to Kolkata alive. In an entirely different situation sitting in the room of the Block Level Education Officer handling the Kasturba Gandhi Schools²³ for adolescent girls, I was told to be cautious about the words I use during the session with the girls as they should not make them "*bichlit*" or excited. On one side, these incidents portrayed the controlled setup of body and sexuality young girls experienced in institutions and society. On the other hand, there was a discussion about me coming from the city, the '*diku*' who was on the ground to imbibe a spurt of prevented knowledge on the body and sexuality of young girls. Therefore, impression

management in the field was never a linear process. It was often hard to navigate as a feminist advocating for the body rights of young girls and being questioned on the same values repeatedly. The ethnographers' journey on the field is often lonely, but as Behar would say, 'Anthropology that does not break your heart just is not worth doing' (Behar, 1996, p. 17).

2.7: Gender on the Field:

This section addresses one of the significant issues I encountered on the ground - 'Gender.' The given setting on the ground had different angles of gaining access to a situation, and negotiating access belonging to a particular 'gender' as an ethnographer was one of the pertinent aspects that generated a pattern of knowledge about the field (Barbera-Stein, 1979). Gender becomes significant in the field depending upon the information collected, and it is also an essential aspect of the access to spaces we occupy as ethnographers. As there is an immense struggle to penetrate a certain space due to gender, there were also opportunities to capitalize on gender roles renegotiating some aspects of them for the fieldwork. The private settings would mark boundaries not to be easily penetrated and were indeed policed by 'gatekeepers' (Hoffman, 1980; Cassell, 1988). In formal organizations, the initial access negotiations are focused on official permission granted or withheld by key personnel or the 'gatekeepers.'²⁴ Technically, this also seems true even in places where the ethnographers are studying settings in which they have been participants for a long time (Atkinson, 1981).

In discussions with government officials, the asks around the data and information on women's health would end up with men ending every conversation with "*aap mahila hein naa, aap nahi samjhengi.*"²⁵ They often narrated several stereotypes and protocols, assuming I might not know enough about the spoken issue even though

I was a researcher on a said topic. There was utmost joy a *Pandey jee* from the local PHC (Public Health Center) in Pakur would describe a situation reminding me that I was a woman and hence I might not know about certain things. Knowing who has the power to open up or block off access or who considers themselves and are considered by others to have the authority to grant or refuse access is an essential aspect of sociological knowledge about the setting and gender influences it. Ann Oakley (1981, pp. 30-61) writes in *Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms* that in fieldwork, women are often characterized as sensitive and incapable of objectivity due to emotional detachment, constantly immersed in making sustainable personal relationships. They have an innate altruistic quality of being a mother and a housewife who is easily manipulated and exploited. In contrast, men are always thought superior through their capacity for rationality and possession of an instrumental orientation in their relationships with others (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003, p. 250). Conversations and negotiations with the gatekeepers during the field visits were marked by my gender and the spaces I occupied as a woman. Gatekeepers were, therefore, pioneers behind facilitative relationships taken up through the existing networks of territory and boundaries of what can be accessed. Seeking permission from such gatekeepers is often an unavoidable first step when gaining access to data (Berreman, 1962).

The chances of my acceptance in the community to talk about sexuality, intimacy, and daily lives were higher because women are perceived to be less threatening than men with stories associated with other women (Warren, 1988). As per Warren's experience in her ethnography, women seen as unthreatening may gain access to settings and information with a certain amount of ease where the common cultural stereotypes of females work in favor of them. However, Warren also provides the restrictions and the risks that can arise from being a woman researcher. Yes, being a

woman, I would get access to some information better, but that would not ensure a context of 'genderless neutrality' on the field (Westmarland, 2000). There was always a curiosity about my marital status every time I walked into a village to speak to a couple of women. After a half-hour session on the most crucial chronic maternal health disorders, I would ask them if they would have some questions post the session- the first question they would ask was about my husband or marriage plans if not married. I was angry at times and humiliated, detesting that of all the content discussed in the session, what stood up for them was inquiring about my marital status. It was shocking to them that I could even remain unmarried in my thirties. Then there would run a continued debate on the speculation about me either being a widow or an unproductive woman unable to bear a child for which my husband must have left me. The interviewer's presentation of self was therefore important, as a spectrum from one end of being single to be labelled as unproductive on not being able to produce children, to having some disease and hence not married, to be a widow, or husband decided to quit on me- the myriad choices would keep gazing the reason for me being single. It is known that 'the ethnographer's self-portrait is mystified and ironized from the standpoint of others' (Clifford, 1983), and I experienced the same on the ground. It was problematic for me to attend these dialogues every day; however, I would end up being humorous, finding a way to discuss my marriage as a single-point entry to the core group by reinstating patriarchy in its own way. I would often reply to these questions but would be unsure how much to share at a given time. Having said all of these, I was always consciously present as an ethnographer in the field and embraced every discussion pertinent to gender, however painful it was for me only to bring out complete sincerity and openness in the discussion. Feminist researchers, in most cases, use 'prescriptive ethics' responsibly, such as reciprocity, honesty, and accountability, to

treat participants of ethnography with respect and equality (Ghosh, 2012). At times departing from the conventional interviewing 'ethic' seemed sociological enough as an essential way of giving the subjective situation of women and their thoughts, questions, and views more visibility in the study than it usually had traditionally due to the context of ethics always coming in the way (Oakley, 1981). She also noticed that interviewing women, therefore, should become a strategy to document women's lives as their own realities that matter. Furthermore, she also notes that behind this change, there is also a dramatically changed role of the researcher that mattered in the process where from being a mere data-collecting instrument for the research, the researcher becomes an aware data-collecting instrument for promoting sociology for women (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003, p. 253). Hence, embracing their concerns and constant questions about my marriage and relationship was an entry point for me with honesty and vulnerability to understand a larger discourse around perceived identity on the embodied idea of body and sexuality through conversations that mattered in their lives. However, shared gender being the only point of connection was a concern arena as several ethnographers shared that gender was not enough criterion to create a rapport, especially where there are different class, geographic and socio-economic parameters involved (Reissman, 1987). It was interesting to understand that my presence was perceived as 'masculine' by many, associated with the fact that I could travel with autonomy, was working in an organization, was more educated than a lot of them, and even men, could wear clothes of better quality, speak English, and many more. On days when I would accompany the young girls to a nearby field in the afternoon, a few girls would share, "*you are like a man to us.*" However, with this association of empowerment, I was frowned upon for not embodying my characteristics as a woman. They constantly reminded me of what a shame any woman would bring to the community if she were not married. So my

association with the women and the adolescent girls was not only that of power that I possessed, but it was also an image that none of them would either associate with or risk embodying. Rainbird (1990) experienced something similar when she found out how being female affected her relations in the field as some activities were exclusive to one sex or the other so she could attend meetings freely around the countryside as men did, but not drink with men unless other women were present. However, the interactions became personalized as soon as I became involved with the women and adolescent girls in their banter toward me. They soon opened up about their own narratives around bodily and sexual relations. However, still belonging to a different social status or national group can make someone socially distanced beyond the part of connecting as a woman because it creates an ambiguous category while performing the gender roles. As an ethnographer, there was always a requirement to fit into a given context in relevant roles. For example, Srinivas wrote in *The Remembered Village* that the peasants kept urging him to behave like a Brahmin. The headman's daughter was also portrayed as being scandalized by his indifference to the rules of pollution and purity and kept reporting to her father (Srinivas, 1976).

Living through a gendered body as an ethnographer, I had several unlearning for myself, questioning my own position of power and privilege every time. A young girl named Sukhmani would repeatedly come to the sessions in Deoghar and talk to me every time I visited their village. She would inquisitively ask about my marital status and my boyfriend. She would feel pity and express sorrow every time she would listen that I was single. She was about seventeen and was married by the time we met. After repeated conversations about her family and life, she came to me one day after the session with a proposal. She would share that her husband's brother was working in a brick kiln in Durgapur, and she would like us to know each other and get married when

he came to the village later that year. It was not new that relevant others approached researchers in the field for sexual relationships and marriage during their fieldwork.²⁶ I denied the proposal, and my colleagues ended up laughing after the incident considering me in misery. However, the context left several questions in my mind. I analyzed in that one window period whether I manipulated my existence in the field over the fact that I was constantly trying to build this rapport that 'I am one of them,' and then I withdrew myself from considering the match where my class, choice, and privilege acted as a barrier when the adolescent girl brought the proposal. Gender was one of the poignant dimensions which gave me access to pieces of information, but also it made me distant at the same time performing my own life in reality, questioning what acceptance for me meant in the community. Post that conversation Sukhmani never came to any of the sessions again and never agreed to meet me. Therefore, the question of 'dwelling' has always been fundamental because the context of demarcating every time where I belonged was the barrier to differences of where to fit in (Visweswaran, 1994, p. 116).

Ethnographies are known to influence people's interests and lives individually and collectively for better or worse (Van Maanen, 2011, p. 05). I end this section with an interesting story about my hair color during the fieldwork, which brought me closer to the context of having influenced people's lives for better or for worse. It was 2016, and during *Durga Puja*²⁷ when I visited my home that year, out of a sudden adrenaline rush, I went to a hairdresser and got two red colored streaks in my hair as a symbol of indulging in the madness of celebration. I thought I could cover the streak under a bun every time I went to the field. Amidst the green bangles and the same colored clothes that I would repeat to the field, my hair color became that one secret I could still hide

inside a bun but would remain a part of me. Unfortunately, the girls would notice me so minutely that they figured out my little secret red streaks. In one of the villages in Deoghar named Kherwa, girls were so astonished by something like a red hair color that they, along with a few girls, started collecting money for days. Soon they researched for a decent parlor, made the team, and travelled by bus seventy kilometers to a district named Dumka only to get their hair colored. So one morning in November, when I entered Kherwa, about five adolescent girls who attended the session with golden streaks on their hair would smile at me with contentment in their eyes. I initially would try to avoid the fact that I saw a bunch of golden streaks peeping from their hair among a room full of adolescent girls in that Anganwadi center. However, they insisted on bringing up the discussion of hair color by too often flipping their hair in front of me and smiling in harmony. I finally gave in to the discussion and what followed was the exciting story of their journey to Dumka. They were upset that they wanted red color for their hair to match my hair color but failed and settled with golden brown identically. My fundamental research has been about the body, and understanding beauty in it was a significant part of the study. I returned that day from the field feeling wholesome. Somewhere in between me playing my part of impression management and pulling up loose kurtas and bangles in my hands for months, these girls were trying to imitate my techniques of beauty and adornment the same way I have been trying. There is a more profound question that feminist ethnography puts out to the world always on what the researcher is giving back to the community as they take from them their stories and represent the voices of the subalterns adding to the larger discourse of *Can the Subaltern Be Heard?* (Spivak, 1988; Maggio, 2007). The young girls risked their freedom to 'loiter' (Phadke et al., 2011), inspired by my hair color, and figured out their agency living through their gendered bodies. They travelled for the first time not

for work to a neighboring state but to experience sheer leisure exploring the newest form of fashion they got introduced to. Feminist researchers should reflect on a particular kind of social world, for example, to specify how gendered social life is organized, structured, and made meaningful in a given context. Producing knowledge by reinterpreting experiences, emotions, and meanings attached to behavior within different normative frameworks that are grounded in how women voice their experiences is something that makes feminist ethnography such an important tool to focus on matters otherwise neglected (Ghosh, 2012).

2.8: The Art of Data Collection:

The interviews and the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) added patterns to the larger purview around gender, body, and sexuality studied during this research. The FGDs set in the base of verbal interaction and language in the community with conversations around festivals, marriage, songs they sing, and taking leads from the discussions that sprang up in the group and also helped in identifying symbols of everyday life that described a given culture (Fetterman, 2010, pp. 27-28). The naturally occurring oral accounts were a massive source of direct information about the setting and the discursive practices of the people who produced them (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 99). The idea was to take the pieces of the discussions from the FGDs to set a tone of familiarity and create a pattern of behavioral understanding about issues in the community. The personal interviews with selected participants from the FGDs were situated later, where probes more intimate around sexual relationships, contraception, motherhood, and sexuality were conducted. The approach of FGD provided an excellent way to compare the answers of the individual in the group and then take it forward during personal interviews on their reason for a specific response on the same.

Asking general questions about work, everyday life, and rituals during festivities during FGDs was a valuable method of data collection about specific questions or hypotheses. Informal interviews are, therefore, the most common entry points in ethnographic work with casual conversations with an implicit agenda. The researchers use informal approaches to discover what people think, the categories of meaning in a culture, and how one person's perception differs from another (Fetterman, 2010, p. 70).

Between 2015 and 2018, fifty adolescent girls between sixteen and nineteen were separately interviewed in approximately twenty villages in the Deoghar and Pakur districts of Jharkhand for a collective understanding of their body, gender, and sexuality. I also visited the women on the ground and conducted about twenty to twenty-five FGDs collectively with the women and the girls. It took a repetition on the ground with constant group discussion and interviewing for triangulation around topics on gender, sexuality, and body because it took time for the adolescents to register the context and build narratives around it. I experienced certain symbolism during the interviewing process where men would react with jealousy that girls are about to get extraordinary schemes post the study, which men would not, and the rumor would pass on faster. My 'informants' during the field visits were the ASHA workers passing me stories of young girls and their sexual relationships.²⁸ With time the relationship between researchers and respondents based on ethics has come under new voluntary scrutiny by the community of social science researchers where the question of authority and legitimacy, locus of control, and agency are always inquired upon being empowering or disempowering to the respondent (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003). As an ethnographer, I tried to maintain the same decorum during my data collection process and have refrained from using the original names of the interviewees as well as the villages on ethical grounds.

'Silence' from the interviewee was also a valuable tool from the interviewer, which I discovered during the fieldwork. In most of the cases where the ASHA workers or the SHG women would share secret stories of the girls with me, the triangulation on the ground would add up to the 'ethnographer's dilemma' on what information to prioritize about testing one source of information against another to prove the hypothesis (Denzin, 1978). The negotiation for control between the ethnographer and key informant constitutes the art of the method, as a kind of 'ethnographic dance' (McLean & Leibing, 2007) mediated by social distance, rules of politeness, and ethics. There was a need to protect the confidentiality of the informants, and even after spending a considerable amount of time with a particular girl, if the rumor or gossip heard about a girl in question would not appear in her discussion, I would be in a dilemma if that part of the incident belonged to her documented story or not. Stacey (1988) points out that no matter how welcoming and enjoyable the field worker's presence appears to the 'natives,' the fieldworker's presence is an intrusion into the field. Also, the fact that the researcher is far 'freer' than the researched to leave the situation becomes crucial to respect privacy and live up to the ethics of feminist ethnography. Often, the lives, loves, and tragedies that informants share with a researcher are all forms of stories when analyzed and put forward in writing through the ethnographer, but in the end, their lives remain the same. The ethnographic method appears to place the researcher and her informants in a collaborative, reciprocal quest for understanding. However, the research product is ultimately that of the researcher offering a researcher's interpretations. Hence, an ethnographer cannot escape interpretation, evaluation, and judgment tasks, but attending to another's story in the interview context is not a simple task. It requires an altered conception of ways we use those life stories to pursue our sociological interests. Susan Chase, in her article *Taking Narrative Seriously*:

Consequences for Method and Theory in Interview Studies writes that taking narratives seriously means directing our attention to the process of an embodiment of what the narrators accomplish as they tell the story. The ethnographer's job is to identify general social phenomena through the story (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003, p. 275).

There always remains a concern about framing practical questions for the interviewee and listening to the silence during discussions. As Paul Farmer's famous note on silence in *Pathologies of Power Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor* (Farmer, 2003, p. 26) depict, sometimes one must 'scratch at this surface silence, to trigger that painful eloquence' while at other times, one should listen to the silence, note it, learn from it, and respect it and soon the ethnographer needs to start valuing silence. The girls I studied during the field visits and their insecurities about bodies on not sharing relevant chapters of their lives and remaining 'silent' did add depth to the study on envisioning 'gender' and patriarchal position through their lived realities and are documented the same way in the coming chapters. The informal interviews were where I would visit the homes and have casual, semi-structured conversations with a specific but implicit research agenda to fit in. Sumati was a great translator, and I would savor every word she would say to understand the cultural connotations. It was interesting to find out the categories of meaning in culture from the casual conversations and personal interviews to understand the shared values around gender and sexuality in the villages. When during an interview, a group of young girls would ask me, "*Is it important to be a mother?*" I would get torn between performing as an activist and an ethnographer on the ground in a dilemma either to empower them with an alternative analogy or to document their reality. Hence to be in the fieldwork and maintain a natural situation while attempting to learn about another person's life in a relatively systematic

fashion is complicated. Any interview, therefore, has a degree of manipulation (Fetterman, 2010).

Naturalism²⁹ favors non-directive interviewing, where the interviewee talks for length in his or her terms minimally directed by the researcher. However, in everyday life, sometimes the informal way of asking questions is interpreted as inappropriate when it covers topics like sexuality because concepts and ideas around specific topics were socially constructed. Choosing the interviewee and snowballing it over a long period was an arduous task, which Glaser and Strauss (1967) called 'theoretical sampling,' choosing and collating those stories in patterns most likely to develop and test emerging analytic ideas. The entry was tricky because, as a researcher, I had to penetrate barriers that people might protect themselves from or maybe not be sure about analyzing the topics around gender, body, and sexuality (Douglas, 1976). Building the 'ethnographer's trust' was essential to scope narratives about relationships, beauty, and deepest insecurities associated with the body. The foundation was built through verbal and nonverbal communication, and the field behavior was the most effective part, with a need to show up on time as promised every time (because everything from the reaping and sowing in the field to fetching the water and attending to the siblings at home was time-bound). Many a time, I would follow the girls to the nearby pond during the bath or their farm field on days and will indulge in a casual conversation on the way. Most of the time during these walks, I had no recording devices, papers, or pens. There are some common sites on the ground where the exchange of accounts among participants is likely to occur. These turn out to be rewarding locations for the ethnographer to visit (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 99). These locations in the fieldwork turn out to be places that help the ethnographer garner perceptions of the situated reality as ethnographers attempt to immerse themselves in the field, working with people rather

than devices and papers all the time (Fetterman, 2010). However, as per Fetterman, ethnographers, even overtly, would rarely tell all the people they are studying everything about the research because the study would evolve from where it began. For example, the much deeper concepts around body and sexuality were gradually covered with time on the ground but started with discussions around rituals and celebrations.

However, a frequent concern about my ethnographic study was to involve publicizing things said or done in private. This may be interpreted as breaching a matter of principle, but it is also sometimes feared that making the private-public may have undesirable long-term consequences. For example, it has been suggested in order to prioritize ethics in social science, that all social research 'entails the possibility of destroying the privacy and autonomy of the individual, of providing more ammunition to those already in power, of laying the groundwork for an invincibly oppressive state' (Barnes, 1979, p. 22). Interviewing, however, came with its own set of ethnographers' dilemmas, and I want to end this section with one such set of questions that remained with me throughout the interview process, and it is important to share it here. In 1992, when Cannon was doing in-depth research on women with breast cancer, she found many of them were uncomfortable answering the questions, or even if they agreed to answer, they felt depressed and eventually cancelled the meeting (Cannon, 1992). Similarly, like Cannon, I felt triggered by every interview with the girls. I questioned myself that with the repeated discussion about their labor and property rights, gender and sexuality, early marriage, and motherhood was I being ethical in challenging their everyday lives by leaving them with unresolved questions about their identity and body, which otherwise they would have never encountered.

2.9: The Withdrawal from the Field and the Process of Writing:

Every time I left the field after a day's work, I was burdened with so much information that my brain would not work for a few hours. To make the ethnography rich and analytically correct, the ample number of casual laughter between discussions that got lost in the translation of language troubled me, and the ways to analyze the silence in the discussion bothered me. In classical ethnography, despite the significance of narratives, qualitative researchers rarely focus on the talk, but narratives were necessary, as was talk (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003, p. 273). The withdrawal from the field, the ways to arrange and rearrange the data in my field notes again and again, which would make sense in writing, and getting back to the setup again the following day was daunting, monotonous, and mundane. So when I started fieldwork in Pakur, over time, I realized a strange symptom that I developed, and it was a story of discomfort that engulfed me more with every passing day during my stay in the field. Every morning when I got ready to visit the field and got closer to the community, there was an extreme denial to visit the girls. This feeling gradually became so overpowering that I started feeling a sense of 'nausea' and felt like vomiting every day at the prospect of carrying out the day-to-day activities. After dealing with this for quite some time, I sat down to reflect on what was upsetting me because one of the rules of ethnography was to identify and document every change the ethnographer undergoes on the field. On deeper self-realization along these lines, I realized that the conversation with the young girls and women was making me ill. My entire body felt repelled by the conversations I would have to conduct in the interviews, and I was in the sense of fear to receive a bunch of new information for the day, which my body and mind would be unable to process. My body would conspire to resist going any closer to the field and to even embracing these kinds of details in my own body was triggering in its own way. The

everyday life and the rituals and festivals offered powerful characters and narratives to me, which challenged some of the religious views on patterns of sexuality, menstrual stigmas, and pre-marital sex my Brahminical upbringing imbibed in me. Those days post the interviews on Saturday evenings, I would travel to the village fair to document as much as possible of those romantic interactions of adolescents, the intoxicated group of men and women, and their benevolent secret meetings. On other days I would listen to the elaborate stories of dating experiences, their travel to the nearest river bank, and on occasion, their secret night stays. And then, above all, the practice and belief around menstruation that was so different constantly countered my own set of beliefs.

The willingness of each author to describe moments of perceived failure or dissonance, intense identification, or uncomfortable feedback or silence from their subjects beyond the representation of the "successful" ethnography adds a more humane quotient to the writing, and I have tried to do the same through my writing. 'Shadows' are present in all fieldwork, and it is worth challenging the borders and the margins of the commonly perceivable myth of writing about only what works the most. Therefore, we aim to discuss the different levels and layers of fieldwork processes and social and cultural phenomena, which are overshadowed and sometimes completely out of sight in our research and texts (McLean & Leibing, 2007), like failures, silences, and rejections. So back from the field, when I elaborated on the notes and started writing the thesis, the process numbed me in the beginning with pressure emphasizing how well I do justice to the characters and their perspectives. Malinowski said the matter candidly enough, reflected in his diaries, mentioned his feelings of ownership over the Trobrianders, and wrote, 'It is I who will describe them or create them' (Stocking, 1983, p. 101).

Fetterman writes, 'Fieldwork ends when the researcher leaves the village or site, but ethnography continues' (Fetterman, 2010, p.10). So when I left the field physically, there was so much pressure to bring all the data into one place and the dilemma of interpreting the narratives in a way that would keep the essence intact. The fatigue and reminiscences of the field lingered with me even when I finally took an off from the field in 2019 and shifted to Ranchi, the capital of Jharkhand, where I concentrated on my writing. Though months into the fieldwork, I realized that no matter how intimate I was in the community, I could never be a part of their lives (Powdermaker, 1966); I never knew that disengaging from the field would also be an equally challenging task. The dualism of the researcher in me and the confessional field data dissolved the spaces in between, shaping it into a much stronger feminist ethnography than I envisioned when I started writing. Writing the lived experiences on text as a 'lived textuality' is about grounding the work on the study through the flesh-and-blood of the individuals studied, but in the process, the writer bleeds too (Denzin, 1997). Analyzing the field notes and transcribing the audio and video recordings are all time-consuming and demanding activities. There is, in fact, always the temptation to try and observe everything and keep taking notes on it and an immense fear of missing out on essential details or vital incidents post-withdrawal from the field (Hammersly & Atkinson, 2007). Writing all of these in a way with the transformation of the material from the field to the text is possible only through an acquired art of storytelling. Fetterman (2010, p. 113) writes that ethnographic writing is as tricky and as satisfying as the description of nature with simple notes on small events to significant landmarks to even highlighting the details of the temperature and the season in the given field, which requires an "eye" for the details and the ability to express the details in its proper context through writing.

The compliance with feminist values while writing turned out to be difficult because of the necessity for the ethnographer to place their interpretation of the data and to turn it into a believable world enough that the readers could accept hence once again bringing back the concern on 'Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?' (Stacey, 1988). However, it is essential to acknowledge that there was no completeness to the narratives depicted for portraying a cultural whole and the one for the complete self.³⁰ As fieldwork is a specific kind of localized dwelling where the field becomes a home away from home, it was also the same space as Leslie Marmon Silko (1977) writes on 'decolonizing the mind' and hence reading the standard works of literature on ethnography there was a constant dilemma about how a woman-centered ethnography should be written and how truly one should decolonize the mind.³¹

Writing ethnography was a catharsis in documenting a slice of life as a literal illusion for fieldwork done years ago. The 'literal illusion' suggests that the culture stands still through time even after the ethnography has ended. In the book *Tales of the Field on writing ethnography*, Van Maanen (2011) uses the folksy term "tales"³² referring to ethnographic writing, which draws attention to the importance of the inherent story-like character of the fieldwork accounts. 'Writing and representations' becomes the essential aspects in ethnography to constantly make the voice of the 'Other' not be silenced by their writing dominance. In ethnography, it is not expected that the researched becomes a muted object of the ethnographer's scrutiny, like the 'crisis of representation' that originated in American cultural anthropology in the 1980s (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). In writing the culture in ethnography since Malinowski's time, the "method" of participant observation expressed a delicate balance of subjectivity and objectivity. Interestingly, the ethnographer's personal experiences, especially participation and empathy, were recognized as core to the research process. However,

they were also restrained simultaneously by impersonal observation standards and 'objective' distance. The writing part after that disturbed the overall subjective/objective balance and the representation theory.³³

My study was not to fulfil the ethnographer's visualization and own 'stories'; however, it was not devoid of my interpretations and viewpoint while depicting the understanding of the adolescents. The language used by ethnographers in their writing is not always a transparent medium to see reality. It is instead a construction that draws on many of the rhetorical strategies used by researchers to represent reality in a way (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The dilemma that, as an ethnographer, I was reproducing the authority of the observer as a dominating form of surveillance and reportage through the research was also prevalent (Denzin, 1997). Evans-Pritchard pointed out that writing had its responsibility because what one was writing about the social world is of fundamental importance to our own and others' interpretations of it in a believable way to the reader (Bryman, 2001). The writing part was the most demanding in the ethnography, where I had to deal with not only 'unstructured data' but also analyze patterns to what Glaser and Strauss (1967) would talk about 'constant comparative method.' I included only a fraction of the data from what I interviewed in the process, not because the stories were not worth mentioning but to draw a specific pattern in the study and make it presentable as an ethnography. However, in the writing process, every chapter holds witness to several stories presenting mostly an individual as an entry point and adding to the larger discourse of the collective understanding of gender, sexuality, and body in the community. To produce an ethnography also requires decisions about what to tell and whom to tell because ethnographies are written with particular audiences in mind and reflect the presumptions carried by the authors regarding the expectations of the intended readers. Therefore, writing is a

communicative act between the author and the reader (unlike the traveller's tale or an investigative report, an ethnography), representing accounts and explanations by the members of the culture depicted their everyday lives (Van Maanen, 2011, p. 25). Ethnographic writing was not simply reducing the collected data to scripts. However, the number of lost messages in translations and the emotions were also significant when we presented the finished product to the audience for them to gaze into reality. I tried to use 'ethnographic allegories' through my writing, describing the cultural events and drawing particular attention to specific voices within the texts spoken about (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). For example, when Lalita (more details in Chapter 5 of the thesis) interprets her identity in the community where people call her 'masculine' because of her ability to work a lot, Lalita is beyond that construct and does not box herself in that gender dualism. Through a coherent ethnographic account putting out Lalita's interpretation of her body image construct, I constantly battled with portraying everyday human experiences, conflicts, and joys, which is technically a part of a woman's existence in the most interpretive way through the ethnographic allegories.

2.10: Conclusion:

As a naive individual trying to understand a culture in the community, ethnography promises apparent freedom from rigid methodological rules and a way always to capture the narratives through a grand theory. The claim of objectivity on the ground with the perspective on "us" and "them," along with interrelated narratives on body and sexuality among adolescent girls in their everyday life, was a critical reflection on my reality. It started with understanding culture and the peculiar practice of representing the reality of 'others' through the analysis of one's own experience in the world of others. Ethnography is, therefore, highly personal, yet it serves as a basis for a broad

understanding of other societies. I am aware that there can be many issues raised about my research on ethical grounds regarding me being an outsider in the community grappling between silence and a language I hardly mastered throughout my study. Nevertheless, my fieldwork included living with the community as a participant observer. The occasional wearing of the blue and green bangles and the same *kurta* and *pyjama* to the field every time so that they can relate to me were the few changes I adopted to bridge the gap in the ground. The process over the lengthy period was self-transforming as a fieldworker experiencing that strange and unfamiliar place, and people started to unfold in an increasingly familiar and confident way (Van Mannen, 2010). I learned to move around strangers holding readiness of episodes of embarrassment, for example, when I was scared of lizards and isolated when I was an unmarried woman on the ground where my gender roles were used as markers to term me incompetent for not bearing a child. Nevertheless, then there were episodes of warmth too when people would allow me to their homes, and there would be an adventure too when young girls would take me to the nearby pond and talk about their recent encounters of love and sex on the way.

Amidst all of these, I constantly encountered my own 'shadow side' of blurred borders between ethnography and life. The goal as an ethnographer was technical and discussed a possible approach of 'lifting out' the data in the shadow with a gaze on the mundane everyday life, which mostly craved a sense of normality on the ground for me. There were hours of electricity shortage in the town where I helplessly longed for a better condition to write and think and was engulfed with homesickness. At a more personal level, I recognized a personal and previously unknown affinity with the "positive withdrawal" I had described in my research. Gradually, I began to pay attention to it, leave room for it in my life, and find ways to inhabit that space more

richly. These examples show how fieldwork experiences can leave traces seen as "shadows" that haunt a researcher. So I started feeling nauseated for a long time on the ground and wanted to throw up as I neared the field, torn between my understanding of body and sexuality and the narratives I encountered daily. These links moved and shifted as we evolved intellectually on the ground, making our way through the knowledge and vision that are grounded in our own particular life histories (Bryman, 2001).

Fieldwork may appear romantic and adventurous, but on the inside, relationships are based on certain kinds of rapport formed only through time and perseverance. I always occupied these spaces with women sitting with them at the end of the day in fields, smoking a *beedi* and talking about lives, imagining how romantic experiences these are. And then, on other days, in between conversations with girls, there were always "silences" and "laughter"; those were undescribed in the most concrete ways, increasing my challenge as a researcher. Often as an ethnographer, I mentioned my personal biases, relationship insights, and character flaws in the community with the adolescents to get access to a more dedicated space, as the works of literature depicted that the field needed to be constructed in one's way and not something available out there. The implied storyline of an ethnographer in the field is that of a fieldworker and a culture finding each other midway through a long struggle but finally making a match with it. However, writing this ethnography was beyond finding a match with a different culture for me as deep down, in a personal way, it was an ongoing process of identifying and questioning my privilege and culture all the time. On a different note, spending a year or so in some alien community with people doing a great many unfamiliar things in unfamiliar ways does not lend itself to extracting every single interest, value, and belief. However, when I was back from the field to

Kolkata, I stood in front of a giant elevator in a high-rise building and forgot how it worked.

I want to end this chapter with an argument I kept questioning enough during the fieldwork (through a lens of a feminist ethnographer), being, what was the need for the 'shared identity' that women are forced to talk about and live with? Kamala Visweswaran (1994), in her book, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*, shared that there is no such thing as a shared identity and universal sisterhood as it is a part of the cultural truism we are meant to believe and live also. As fieldwork progressed, some issues acquired clarity, but other troubling questions arose, and the quest for creating a newer set of knowledge prevailed for a long. However, I also discovered through this study that the idea of an ethnography was not to develop a newer set of knowledge but to acknowledge the mundane, and this study wanted to bring out the same in the existing everyday life of adolescents and their idea of gender, body, and sexuality. I also discovered that the ethnographic process appears to be where researchers and their informants are in a collective quest for understanding but are modified and influenced by the informant. The research product is technically produced by the researcher's interpretation and purposes registered in a researcher's voice and lived through the researcher's judgment (Stacey, 1988). The ethnographer learns to think beyond the insider and outsider debate and accepts that understanding the field will have its own biases, and learning the fieldwork gets easier. Fieldwork is, therefore, a process of building up images from biases and learning new information against observations, accepting and modifying these images based on what one observes and has been told (Styles, 1979, p. 149).

CHAPTER 3

EXPERIENCING BODY AND SEXUALITY IN EVERYDAY LIFE

3.1: Introduction:

Me (during an interview): *"What do you do, Betiya?"*

Betiya Murmu (16 years old): *"Everything at home! I cook rice, apply mud in the courtyard, go to the field and take care of the children. There is no one else to do these chores at home. My sister-in-law was there with me, and she used to help me, but she got married and left for her in-laws. She tells me she also has to do the same daily with her in-laws. Since I was a child, I was told that we have to work intensely at our in-laws' place, and nothing else can change for us on that end."*

During the interview, Betiya was married, and she said she was sixteen years old but was unsure about her birth date or year because no one knew the correct date at home, and her Aadhaar card had misprinted her birthdate. While working in the field, I met her in Daldali village of Littipara block, Pakur, but she agreed to take some time to chat with me. Betiya's words above, where she carefully mentions her *eril kudi* (sister-in-law), depict a discourse that suggests a set of meanings, representations, images, and a set of collective stories of lived realities for several Adivasi adolescent girls described in this chapter hereafter. My fieldwork in villages would always revolve around the timings of the everyday work of sowing and reaping. Besides the field, on a small bench made out of bamboo, I would sit and look at the girls working during the sowing season. Stooped down in the field and bending like a flamingo, they often reminded me of P. Sainath's astonishing photo exhibition *Visible Work, Invisible*

Women – A lifetime bending (Sainath, 2014), projecting women and their bodies in labor in rural India. On days I would wait until late afternoon for the girls to return from the field, they would return wearing short faded blue pleated skirts from when they attended school years back¹, and they would greet me *Johar* with their hands cupped near their breasts as a welcoming gesture in Jharkhand. It was the sowing season during August, and on those days, they would not get time to pluck vegetables from the field. As Sumati, my field staff from Deoghar, would tell me; they would instead collect *googlies* (snails) from the fields and cook them in the evening. Sumati would share with sheer disgust that men would never help pluck the vegetables or cook the food, even when women and girls were overburdened with the daily work. I would watch these anemic girls² living on *googlies* for days during the sowing and harvesting season. While on their way home from the field, few would stay with me for the interviews, and others would walk past me to go home and cook the day's meal. It was a hard day for them, just like every other day. Watching them walk past me and slowly disappear into their houses was like visualizing the 'feeling of homecoming.' As Hebbar argues, marking the completion of every agricultural season is not only a realization of their labor but also an assertion of themselves in their bodies and a reassurance of their existence. It is a celebration of all that they nurtured and reproduced for the day, and it is in this sense that 'she' feels at home (Hebbar, 2005). It is interesting how Nitya Rao mentions that the struggle for recognition for indigenous women begins with the land and then takes up multiple meanings embedded in the social structure and that, ultimately, it was a question of the identities³ of women and of how one's self was valued and framed in the context of society (Rao, 2018, pp. 4-5). The larger discourse of my study though being around gender, body, and sexuality, it was not possible at all to have an appropriate discourse on these issues by leaving out the quintessential

concepts that define a woman's body and identity in her everyday life in an Adivasi community- which is the land and the labor. The contexts of marriage, fertility, and motherhood have been studied through the lens of body and embodiment in recent times and are presented in this chapter accordingly. However, the context of 'land' and its relation to the gendered body is an area of sociological interpretation included in this chapter, with land being one of the central points to understanding social practices around gender, body, and sexuality. The gendered identity of labor and the decisions around marriage and motherhood were pertinent markers related to land that adolescent girls internalized from a very young age in the communities and were explored in detail through this chapter.

Women's bodies are known to be culturally portrayed as passive and submissive. Many childhood and feminist researchers have been concerned about these passive and negative constructions of female bodies (Fingerson, 2006). However, even if women's bodies have been considered passive or regulated for a long time in literature, this chapter tries to understand how adolescent girls define their daily lives and their lived realities through the representation of their bodies. This chapter, therefore, is written through the stories and experiences of adolescent girls on their 'bodies,' internalizing the concept of land, labor, marriage, and sexuality as a process of social construction lived through their everyday lives. This chapter is written with an understanding that women's bodies are not produced in a vacuum; rather, it is constantly exposed to an arena of social and cultural ideologies and practices that impacts their identities and the construction of their bodies (Thapan, 2009, p. 02). Furthermore, sexual behavior is influenced by the meanings and values adolescents learn to attach to sex and sexuality through the complex array of social influences that

eventually affect the meaning and development of systems around gender roles and gender identities.

In *Social Construction of Reality*, Berger and Luckmann (1991) challenge the view that conventional knowledge is based upon objective, unbiased observation of the world and, somewhat opposing positivism, wrote that 'what exists is what we perceive to exist. The sense of being a woman is often internalized and alters between the perspective of the 'body as object and the body as subject' (Das, 1988, p. 193), and this chapter assumes that adolescent girls understanding of their gendered identity is, therefore not only perceived but also 'deeply inscribed' on the bodies through their lived in experiences⁴ (McNay, 1999, p. 98). Marcel Mauss (1973), in his classical essay on the 'techniques of the body,' mentions that there can be no such thing as natural behavior and that every kind of action carries the imprint of social learning. As girls experience adolescence across caste⁵, tribes, and class, their future appears to be more fixed, both in terms of their work roles and also their emotional lives where girls always assume that they have to get married, raise children and accept that women have to sometimes sacrifice their wants for the good of the society (Geetha, 2007, pp. 3-4). Keeping these arguments at the core, this chapter starts by deconstructing the context of social construction and the formation of regulated bodies as crucial among adolescents interviewed in the tribal landscape. The first half of the chapter tends to understand how 'bodies' are constructed in everyday lives through the narratives of the young adolescent girls around land and labor and try to portray how while growing up, one is trained to have a gendered regulated body as the ideal representation of femininities and ideal bodily function (Thapan, 2009). The next half of the chapter identifies the construction of marriage and the norms depicted in the making of the gendered bodies that girls narrated as intrinsic to their identity. The last section of the chapter highlights

the discourse of surveillance in the communities and discusses the understanding of sexuality as a discourse among adolescents. Every section of this chapter is based on the repetitive narratives of the young girls validating how the above-mentioned contexts have been fundamental in shaping their bodies as gendered identities. Moreover, in every part of this chapter, the discourse of land, labor, gender, sexuality, and body remains pertinent to girls' lives, and their social construction has been evident. Furthermore, the theoretical perspectives of power, knowledge, habitus, and symbolic interaction are embedded in every part of this chapter, portraying how young girls navigated and internalized gender, body, and sexuality in their everyday lives.

3.2: The Making of the Laborious Bodies:

When asked, "*What is the difference between a boy and a girl?*"

The girls during the session would answer- "*Jameen!*" (Land)

The historical understanding of land and property rights holds significant importance for women and girls of the Santhal Parganas. Nitya Rao (Rao, 2018), in her book *Good Women Do Not Inherit Land*, mentions that globally land has been the critical element in framing the identities of indigenous people. However, she also stated, 'In material terms, women are as engaged with land and agriculture as men; it is in the social-symbolic realm that their rights are not just secondary, but also denied' (Rao, 2018, p. 201). The Nature/Nurture debate viewed the identification of women with their bodies and the labor produced by bodies as the root cause of their oppression throughout history (Firestone, 1971). Women have been identified with nature primarily as their body is a vehicle for reproduction, and their entire life, their roles, their position, and their status in society, are defined by this primary bodily function (Thapan, 1995).

Gayle Rubin proposes other names for the sex/gender system in *The Traffic in Women*:

Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex, the most common alternatives being 'modes of production and 'patriarchy' where the economy is linked to production and the sexual system to reproduction (Rubin, 1975). Hence, labor and land are significant components that shape women's and girls' identities in society, and the understanding of gender, sexuality, and bodies are innately interlinked to its construction.

Jhadu Lagana and paani bharna (sweeping and fetching water) were the first two memories of household work for most of the adolescent girls interviewed in this study. *"We have to work, and there is no choice; what would we eat if we do not work?"* girls often narrated during interviews as women and girls primarily responsible for feeding the family (N.G Basu et al., 1983). Gradually discovering the hard labor and working in the fields, cooking at home, skipping school, and then leaving school to manage the younger siblings at home were the typical trajectories of the tribal girls in Pakur and Deoghar interviewed during the study. Adolescent girls, during the interviews, shared, *"I did not know my body was so powerful that I could work so much."* Getting to know what work and identity are for them and what laborious bodies were was a journey for the adolescent girls experiencing the power and endurance through their bodies. In a small village named Simaljoli in Deoghar, during an FGD with about ten girls, one girl from the session shared that *"I left school as early as in the third standard, as there was no one at the house to work, and I had to drop school."* After a sudden burst of laughter, a few other girls in the session shared that their families prioritized education. Still, others would sarcastically negate them by saying, *"sab ke ghar mein nahi hota"* (not in everyone's house), and they will again burst into laughter. Often, these discussions with girls showcased how time and again, in their homes, their natures and destinies were crucially interlinked for their future (Geetha,

2007, p. 02). In the narratives the adolescents presented, the differentiation between happiness and unhappiness was about the level of household labor one had to indulge in. Girls would share that every parent from a very early age would teach them to work; they would say, *"Our parents are preparing us for marriage. They say if I cannot work, my in-laws will never keep me in their house and send me back."* Berger and Luckmann (1991) captured the reality of everyday life as an 'ordered reality'; they said that language used in everyday life continuously provides necessary objectification and posits an order within which everyday life makes sense. Language⁶ as a part of a larger discourse that shapes social reality has also been a part of the discussion among social constructionists and structural theorists (Burr, 1995). In a personal interview with Xavier Dias in 2019, he shared that *"The Adivasi does not have quite a written history with their codified values and customs, but what they had best is the skill of communicating the values through stories passing it on from one generation to another"* (Dias, 2019). Therefore, the language used to define the worth of these young girls and their bodies to value marriage and labor started from a very early age in the families where the way they coached them was to work harder with every passing day. The daily life of an Adivasi adolescent girl during the season of sowing would usually start at 3:00 am. They would cook food, clean their siblings, set off for the field as early as possible, and come back at 4:00 pm after the strenuous day job to cook dinner and attend children. If girls did not want to work in the field, families would say, *"do not see you working hard enough in the morning, eh! - work hard, and only then will you get to eat."*

Social constructionist asserts that families, therefore, played a crucial role in constructing the idea of the body for these adolescent girls. Parents develop a set of shared assumptions assisting children in redirecting them toward the dominant social

context in the household and what is expected outside of their bodies that need to work hard to survive. It is important to point out that parents' influence is not detached from the socio-economic context in which the adolescents live (Van Reeuwijk, 2010, p. 82; Berger & Luckmann, 1991). On any given day, children as old as three years old in the villages would be seen playing with broken tools made of bamboo, used to husk the rice in the mornings as an organized play technique to master husking of rice when their parents were busy in the field. They would be seen putting mud and sand in those tools and husking them to makeshift the process of how adults husk rice. Studies of children's play activities⁷ as routine occasions for the expression of gender-appropriate behavior (Corsaro, 1992) can yield new insights into how our 'essential natures' are constructed (West & Zimmerman, 1987). These young girls were learning methods of husking rice in their playtime, which they will use in the field soon. These activities were social conditions under which the self-arises as an object (Mead, 1934) through the personalities they take through 'generalized others and the roles these children play. The responsibilities, depth, and number of tasks associated with children increases and get differentiated according to the increasing physical and mental development of the child with their age (Van Reeuwijk, 2010). The development of 'cultural capital,' even through leisure and play, is embodied within children through acquiring particular tastes and abilities (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu writes that the working class tends to develop an instrumental relation to their body as they have little time free from necessity; hence, the body is a means to an end for them. Working-class women, therefore, develop orientations to their bodies that are strongly marked by the need to earn money and services to run the household (Shilling, 2003, p. 114).

The language codified the value of work and labor as a passing history to the next generation can be expressed in how Foucault defined the 'docile bodies' (Foucault,

1977). Foucault argues that the human body enters the machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down, and rearranges it with discipline that produces subjected and practiced bodies. The knowledge hence produced is a 'mechanic of micro powers' through which one has a hold over other bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed, and the efficiency that one determines. Children participate in their unique cultures by appropriating information from the adult world framed by the larger society and contributing to more significant cultural production⁸ (Fingerson, 2006). Generally, women in the Adivasi community do not have rights on land or even rights to domestic animals. At no point in life can a woman claim a share in her husband's land as her own. Though tribal women have always been doubly colonized, daughters in the Adivasi communities are valued chiefly because of their labor and work. A woman's work burden might be crushing in a tribal family if there are no daughters to help them with their daily work hence constructing their gendered bodies through everyday work (De, 2018, p. 138).

Sushmita (15 years old): *"I was studying in Dumka and stayed in a hostel, but since my mother got sick, I had to come back and assist her in the household chores. My father goes out to work in the fields. My elder brothers are home, but I must do all the household work."*

When Sushmita left her hostel and returned home for days, she was angry with herself and refused to talk to anyone but gradually started adopting her new life and concentrating on the daily chores leaving behind her quest for education and liberty. She had other men in the house, but the fact that women engaged in household work in the form of 'doing gender' and men were not engaged in it are the early symbolizations

attached to the activities that are supposed to shape the gendered identity of each other (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Turshila (17 years old): *"All my friends, one by one, went to study in a hostel; I stayed back at home because I have my brother and mother. My father has died of some unknown illness so I stayed back and could not go to the hostel. My house runs by farming, and I do most of the work there. However, I wanted to study."*

Arti (18 years old): *"I have been working at home since I was ten. I started doing household chores because every morning, my brother and I used to go to school hungry without food, as my mother could not finish all the household chores and prepare food for us. So out of frustration and hunger, I started helping her and cooking food in the morning. My brother never helped; he woke up and asked for tea and food left for school."*

As we grow up, the ideas of masculinity and femininity associated with specific work also strengthen as we are consistently told what tends to be the 'norm.' People actively reject interest in things that are recognized as untypical of their sex which is specifically housework in this context, and adolescent girls in the communities too experienced the same. At the same time, they cultivated a 'deliberate passivity'⁹ by shaping their gendered bodies and accepting housework as a norm (Geetha, 2007). Ritualization is, therefore, the process through which individuals strategically design extraordinary symbolic meaning to their daily activities to accomplish select goals and objectives on 'doing gender' (Johnson, 2008). In the ritualistic household tasks in the community, men had more choices and say in it, and internalization of this discrimination made adolescent girls in the community construct their ideas on

gendered bodies from a very young age with the kind of labor it produced. Jane Humphries (1977), while describing women's oppression in families from a Marxist Feminist perspective, critically writes that household activity is fused to the capitalist mode of production through the reproduction cycle of labor-power, where value is neither created nor destroyed but merely recycled, and the family survives through domestic labor. Most of the adolescent period for girls interviewed during the study had gone by managing other siblings and working at home when parents were in the field.

Adolescent girls started experiencing their bodies and their value through labor, where their daily labor kept them out of school or aiming for a life they did not envision for them and through. A group of girls I interviewed in Deoghar shared, "*We have to keep doing this; is there a choice?*". The question these girls posted can be connected back to Friedan's (1974, p. 63) *Feminine Mystique*, where she mentioned that when they were growing up, many women and girls could not see themselves beyond the age of twenty one during the 1960s in The United States, "We had no image of our own future, of ourselves as women." It is interesting how unimaginably, beyond geographies and time, the politics of bodies match up in women's identity over choice even after years of asking, "Is this really what I want to be?"

On my regular visits to the field on sexual and reproductive health projects that I would take up with adolescent girls via NEEDS during my stay, girls would often say that they forgot what discussions they did last time with me on reproductive health contraception and body rights. "*Bhool gaye didi, itna kaam hein pura din*"¹⁰ would be a common phrase they would often use innocently to let go of their turn during the evening sessions. Of all the things that the struggle of existence in everyday life has taken from the community, 'memories' of remembering information not directly linked

to daily labor were one of them as it was considered less significant for survival. Performing the hard work in the fields, living through anemia and malnourished bodies, the fight for *Jal, Jungle, and Jameen*, and the household chores have taken avenues for women and girls in this region to think beyond labor, food, and survival. Because things that are critical in building one's identity and consciousness that shape perspectives had lesser priority in the community for girls as if it never fits into the rhythm of the requirements of their everyday life. The conceptualization of 'critical consciousness' or 'consciousness raising' has always been a central component of a Marxist theory on education and learning. Marxist feminist researchers and educators found that the theorization of consciousness was essential to understanding social relations and conditions. Therefore, the concept of who makes history and how is determined and advanced through the development of rational human consciousness (Carpenter & Mojab, 2017). Furthermore, it was also interesting to find out that the 'Unruly Daughters of BharatMata'¹¹ (Menon, 2017) and their everyday struggle for food and survival was so vast that they could never imagine a life beyond it.

3.3: The Discourse between the Land and the Body:

As mentioned earlier, Nitya Rao (2018, p. 201), in her book *Good Women Do Not Inherit Land*, mentioned that globally land had been the key element in framing the identities of indigenous people. However, she also stated, 'In material terms, women are as engaged with land and agriculture as men; it is in the social-symbolic realm that their rights are not just secondary, but also denied.' The land has always been given in the male's name, considering them as the 'head of the household,' while women have never received land in their own names (Kishwar, 1987). When men migrated out of their villages for work, and even if women had worked on that land for many years in

the man's absence, they still would not be able to claim the land. Therefore, women have always been doubly colonized and marginalized in the tribal areas, firstly bearing the patriarchal burden of being a woman. Secondly, a close look at rural society in India reveals the discriminatory law and practices they have been a part off.

Rani (18 years old): *"I have heard many times from the villagers that woman does all the labor, but it is important to have a son for the land."*

Soromoti (16 years old): *"This land is for my brother and brother's wife; how can I have this land? I will go to my in-laws; how will we cultivate the land here then? The land will stay here and will not come with me. When I leave for my in-laws' post marriage, that will be my land."*

Soromoti's father would often bring her to their field since she was five years old and proudly claim, *"these are ours!"* by showing her the vastness of the land. From there, Soromoti figured out that they had about 21 acres and 46 decimals of land, and when she gradually grew up, she learned that she would never be able to claim any part of the land because it was her brother's and her brother's wives. In the *Origin of Family, Private Property, and the State*, Engels suggests a direct link between private property, class formation, and the subordination of women (1884). For young girls like Soromoti, the association of land where she labors the whole day and the alienation towards it simultaneously creates a sense of gendered bodies and identities through social construction. The fact that land can be inherited only by sons and daughters has minimal usufructuary rights until marriage was known to every adolescent girl in the community. Above everything else, what was foundational to the existence of living in the gendered bodies and producing labor was for "marriage" and finally being able to

be connected to a land that girls might call their own until they die. The need for the land's male heir created domination by men and kept producing a culture of son preference (Kishwar 1982, 1987) in Santhal Pargana because it is through them that a woman secures their position and their rights to the land.¹²

Sumati (Field staff): *"Girls are always told that they will not get land during their marriage because Adivasi does not have jewellery or money to give as gifts, but all they had was land. So how will one carry the land with them to their in-laws?"*

Land formed a kind of complex identity of living through the gendered body of a woman. The context of land was indispensable to the community, but so was the context of women being defined by the labor to be produced for sowing the land, mending the courtyard, and even leaving the dream of education for taking care of the land but never being allowed to claim a part of the same land. However, it is interesting that even after years of the fight put by the feminist activists, Adivasi leaders in Jharkhand condemned any judgment around land rights for women claiming that they have no intention of interfering with customary law because initiating a discussion on individual rights for women would create further divisions in the Adivasi society (Rao, 2018). Their further claim of fear that women would be the road to the transfer of land by getting married to the *dikus* (the outsiders) made it very evident that the fight was over women's bodies and the politics of land associated with it. In the larger context, the study found that the politics of land also socially constructed the understanding of gender and sexuality and framed adolescent girls' identity in the community.

When I first met eighteen years old Meru Marandi in a small village in Pakur, she was staying with her brothers and their family at her maternal house. Meru was just sixteen when her husband (separated at the time of the story) pulled her out from the

hatiya or the local market and, in front of the entire village, forcefully dragged her to his house, where she was after that considered married. During the entire time of this ordeal, however, Meru resisted and kept crying.¹³ After months of staying together, when Meru could not imbibe the desire for sexual relations with her husband, her husband thought she slept with other men on regular course and hence was reluctant to perform sex with him. One day Meru's husband asked her to leave his house, and Meru returned to her maternal house as a price she paid to value the consent of her sexuality and desire. Since she returned to her house, her brother's wives have been calling her a *daayan*¹⁴ instead and creating a ruckus in the house every day, blaming their brother for being unable to marry¹⁵ her off for good.

Meru (18 years old): *"I have been working a lot in the house. I want to marry anyone I find who agrees to marry me. All I want is to leave this house soon."*

The land was so integral to women's identity and bodies that Meru was ready to choose any man to be with over choosing to stay at her maternal house, considering her failure to stay with her husband and losing her worth. Nitya Rao points out that 'Many Adivasi men see women's demand for land rights as disrupting the struggle to establish a collective identity and gain collective rights, in a context of overall marginality' because the struggle for land signified much more than a struggle for an economic resource, a more profound struggle over cultural, ideological, moral and political questions (Rao, 2018) and also bodies and sexuality which lived through it.

If a girl has attained puberty and no *mehmaani* or marriage proposal has arrived yet for her, it is not considered a good sign and is a form of hidden anxiety for the family. Though the girls in the Adivasi communities are not considered a burden as they keep performing an integral part in the production system, they will still say – "No

one has called me yet" when asked about marriage (Kishwar, 1987; 1989), and this spoke about a series of collective burden adolescents will live through post their puberty. A small village in Pakur named Hatighar that I studied during the research had one interesting characteristic the field staff told me about. No woman ever had an arranged marriage in this village, as no one got a *mehmaani* in their house. Girls either eloped or were asked to find someone to be in love with and marry them because women and girls from a very young age would sell *hadiya*¹⁶ in the local market and were not considered good enough for marriage. The tribal population in the village had minimal land associated with their name, and to curb poverty, girls and women either worked outside the village or sold *hadiya* daily.

Durshila Marandi (17 years old): *"I have to sell hadiya because we do not have land. Boys often tease me at the fair when I go to sell hadiya. It is common for men to lurk at girls like us when we are out, but it depends on whether the girl answers back or not. I believe that a mehmaani would have come for me by now if I was not selling hadiya. I cannot leave my family as I don't have anywhere to go. I must look for a man and leave this village with him after marriage. If I stay for my entire life in this house, I might get a part in the property- but if not, then the little we have our brother will get. My brother's wife may be coming after marriage and hailing abuses to my brother that I am some witch that I could not find a house of my own and hovering over her home."*

Heritage talks about gender and accountability, where members of society get into a descriptive account of the state of affairs to one another, and the members agree that their activities are subject to comment (Heritage, 1984, pp. 136-37). Also, women

are often constructed with this gendered idea that women invite trouble onto their bodies or are to be blamed when harassment occurs. Hence, it is assumed that women must demonstrate respectability all the time, as good women cannot talk about sexual harassment or fall prey to sexual harassment (Phadke et al., 2012). For adolescent girls like Durshila, who have not heard from a man yet on a marriage proposal, being associated with the land and labor that they belonged to was a critical understanding of the construction of gender and bodies for women demarcated between the public and the private spaces, they would occupy. Adolescent girls from this village, during sessions, would often talk about their scepticism on marriage since puberty and the alienation they started developing from their land, encountering the inner dilemma of the 'loss of face' (Goffman, 1956) that they would undergo concerning other girls of their age who were groomed to be married soon. Property rights¹⁷ among young girls in South Asia shape the understanding of their personality and identity (Agarwal, 1994) in various ways. Most times, the life decisions around the choice of marriage, separation, and sexuality revolve around it. The unwanted bodies mostly tend to lose dignity because gendered bodies like Meru and Durshila were a threat to the identity of femininity where an association with land in one way or the other constructed the perspective of their bodies and sexualities in their adolescence.

3.4. Construction of Marriage and Motherhood through Bodies:

Sukarmani (17 years old): *"If my in-laws allow me to study, then I might; if not, then I will not. When my sister married, her in-laws told her previously that they would allow her to study post-marriage, but after marriage, they did not allow her."*

During FGDs with girls, there would be some story of someone's elder sister who studied till standard fifth but then left school to get married. In his book *Everybody Loves a Good Drought*, Sainath only had three stories in the section where he spoke about education. When questioned about this, he answered, "There could have been a little bit more on education in this section had there been a little bit more education in the places I went to" (Sainath, 1996, p. 47). A young girl cannot escape the value in society that marriage brings to them (Dube, 1988); hence, the social construction of marriage is highly influenced by the understanding of norms, property rights, gender, and sexuality. Girls who have been studying in Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalaya (KGBV)¹⁸ or staying in hostels in the town when they returned home for holidays, were groomed by the family for marriage and the importance of children. Every interview with unmarried school-going adolescents was a time travel to their dream of studying to provide a good life for their unborn children and rarely about their ambition.

Marriage and motherhood, therefore, represented definitive markers of gender identity. However, the narratives around marriage and motherhood showcased that this seemingly ordinary aspect of their lives has its core in the normalizing and disciplinary strategies of women and their bodies (Puri, 1999, p. 02).

Meena (16 years old): *"I will work as a nurse or teacher after school. I will earn money and spend it on my kids. I will buy things for my own need too, but I will mostly buy clothes for my children and think I will enroll them in a good school and teach them properly"*.

In *The Reproduction of Mothering*, Chodorow addresses the question of 'why women mother?' by which she means why daughters grow up to be the primary, affective, intensively involved parents of their children. She answers that a woman's

psychological capabilities for parenting are built into her personality through her continuing intense relationship with her mother (Chodorow, 1978). Meena was unmarried, studying in one of the KGBV in Jharkhand, built to have young girls achieve a career. However, Meena thinks that whatever degree a woman achieves in education, it is essential to have children, and there is pressure on girls to produce an heir for the land. There was always the context of getting married and having children as an indispensable part of the discussion with girls while talking about oneself. Since the time of the rising middle class in India, traced back to the Civil Disobedience Movement, the need for an emerging nation needed a sound progeny, and the responsibility was on middle-class Brahmin women because marginalized bodies do not build nations. As a result, a particular class and caste of women started marrying late and focusing on their education. The Dalit-Bahujan-Adivasi never could break that construction of the nation (Hatekar et al., 2009) and could think beyond hunger, reproduction, labor, and survival. Hence, girls from these communities were expected to get married and trained to be the 'docile body' because there was no alternative for many in modern India. Most adolescent girls in the communities are aware that they will soon be married as they have hardly seen any other girls around who were allowed to prioritize education over early marriage.

Komoli (15 years old): *"I have been asked to work in the field since I was seven years old and learned to cook at home. My parents always told me to work or else I will be beaten up in my in-law's house, and they will not keep me. Sometimes I think sasural is like a jail; I am so scared to be there."*

For many young girls, their construction of 'knowledge' around concepts of marriage, puberty, and in-laws' place and the socialization around these concepts had a

lived history. Komoli is not alone; several girls, with the advent of puberty, develop extreme insecurity over this unknown place called '*sasural*' or the in-laws' place because of the encountered lived experiences of their married sisters and friends. Girls should learn to bear pain and deprivation and eat anything given to them; this is a part of the training for the reality they are likely to confront in the mother-in-law's house. The notions of tolerance and self-restraint are also rooted in a consciously-cultivated feminine role embedded in and legitimized by culture and cultural ideology since childhood (Dube, 1988). A body is docile when its subjected, transformed, manipulated, and shaped with a vision to improve and be more productive. As per Foucault, the chief function of disciplinary power remains to train the confused, useless multitudes of bodies and make individuals both objects and instruments of its exercise (Foucault, 1977).

Women in the village would sarcastically share that they might elope if the girls were not married off early. They often shared during interviews that "*it is impossible to control a girl after she attains her puberty.*" The social construction of the realities around the body, gender, and sexuality finds a girl the most vulnerable between the onset of puberty and marriage. Marriage was always a controlled phenomenon in caste societies¹⁹ based on purity and pollution (Chakravarti, 1995; Dube, 1988). Therefore, the idea of marriage was socially constructed as an instrument of control to be an institution where women were fully conscious that they would have to work all their lives as enslaved people in their husbands' houses and that they should not expect any security as a right. So when women enter a marriage, they are prepared to do the labor, produce children and keep less emotional expectations from their husbands (Kishwar, 1987). When asked what their husbands do for the married girls I interviewed, they always answered, "*kuch nahi!*" (Nothing at all!). Though land and farming is the

primary source of living, words like "Nothing at all!" while describing their husband's role in the family always narrated their expectations from their husbands, which were significantly less.

Savitri (18 years old): *"I was married once in the year 2012 when I was only thirteen-year-old, but I returned home after ten days. I was so young that I did not even get my menstruation during my marriage. I did not know any work, and my in-laws were furious about this. They were rude and wanted me to leave. When I returned to my house, my mother said I had to return to my in-laws because that was my house. However, I refused."*

Savitri was getting ready for her second marriage in a few days, and when asked during the interview, what would change for her this time from the last wedding, she answered, *"Nothing at all. I have to work the same way and also produce children."* The 'feminine mystique' permits, even encourage, women to ignore the question of their identity (Friedan, 1974). So young unmarried girls were a threat in the communities where they had to get married early because families in social interaction enter a situation where they take the responsibility of taking guard over 'their face.' It is their duty, and they were expected to go to any length to sustain it to avoid a scene where they 'lose face.' When families create disciplined bodies out of their adolescent girls, they receive support from the broader social unit. This wider social unit is expected to project a mutual structural feature of expected interaction that holds the 'face' for each other in the community (Goffman, 1956).

Of all the daily chores, *nipai-potai*, or the plastering of the floor, is the one the girls found the hardest, they learned it from their mothers and brothers' wives, and it was a technique the girls firmly had to know to survive, and get married. The art of

nipai-potai, or making the mud floor in the house's courtyard, tends to be one of the most critical deciding factors in projecting the girl's eligibility for marriage. The mixture used to coat the floor had mud and sand, which sometimes pierced the girls' hands while they learned the method. When the first layer of mud dried up, another layer was applied, and the girls repeated the process thrice until perfection. According to Bourdieu (1977), 'Practice' represents the dialectical relationship between object - social structure - and subject, the emotional experiences of the people responding to the social imperatives inside the immediate situation.

On my occasional field visits, I would stop by freshly colored houses, which would stand out amongst the others as a visual treat in the community. A vast flowerpot sculpted in the wall in vibrant red, yellow and green colors decorated by girls was a delightful sight to the eyes. To add more creativity to the art, girls would put edges of broken bangles in those flowers on the mud wall for that extra shine and placed small pieces of glasses on those red borders, which reflected lights and gave out a little glitter. Inside the house, women would make *pattals* or small bowls with *Sal* leaves, and the young girls would smile as I entered the house. The more perfectly a girl learns *nipai-potai* and painting the house, the higher her chances of marriage. When the *ghatakars* (match-makers) are out in the community to look for eligible bachelors, they notice these decors on the wall outside. Soon they understand that there must be some young girl who is unmarried in that house and seeking a groom. According to *The Elementary Structure of Kinship*, Lévi-Strauss (1969) points out that the bride is the object of exchange. The bride constitutes a sign and a value that opens a channel of exchange that serves the functional purpose of facilitating trade and performs the symbolic or ritualistic purpose of consolidating the internal bonds, the collective identity, of each clan differentiated through the act. The symbolism attached to the well-presented house

was, therefore, a manifestation of what Foucault terms as 'disciplinary power' girls tame to showcase the representation of eligible bodies constructed for marriage²⁰.

Buddhi (17 years old): *"If I do not produce a child, my in-laws would say it would have been fruitful for them even if they would have got a cow home and not me because at least the cow will give them milk and ask me what will I be giving to the family? Who will eat their land now?"*

Adolescent girls were expected to produce children in marriage, and bodies that could not produce a child were often compared to a 'cow.' The comparison with the cow eligible to produce milk symbolized flourishing and the threat for women to be thrown out of their houses if they could not bring flourishing to the house.

According to Verrier Elwin, 'Tribal woman has a wide freedom, which she seldom abuses. She can go to a bazar, even by herself. She can visit her friends. She can dance and sing, especially before marriage, as she pleases. She can laugh and joke with men without reproach. Her freedom becomes naturally somewhat restricted after marriage, but even then; she can be herself' (Jain, 1980, pp. 205-13). Several works of literature talk in length about tribal women and their liberal setup in their community. However, such gendered comparisons and the consequences if unable to produce children were internalized through tales aimed at girls from a very young age making childbirth a woman's responsibility even in the Adivasi communities praised for their women's liberal way of life. Young malnourished girls married by thirteen or fourteen years of age would have a different story associated with milk and reproduction. Being unable to produce milk for their children, these malnourished young girls were often considered *daayan* or witches. I met eighteen years old Somvari in the Kherwa village of Palajori block. She was married when she was thirteen and was called a *daayan* in

the community since she stopped producing milk after the birth of her third child. Other women and her mother-in-law told her that women have been producing children for ages but never did their breasts go dry. Somvari could not pass the 'examination' of proving her femininity and motherhood, the 'examination' that Foucault calls the 'highest mechanism of discipline' to claim the integral symbolism of motherhood through her reproductive body. Examination combines the ceremony of power, the deployment of force, and the establishment of truth (Foucault, 1972), and young girls in the communities were socially constructed to internalize their bodies as passive bodies through the examinations they performed in their daily lives. When a girl blossoms into adolescence, her breasts are looked at differently than before, where people, especially boys, notice their breasts or a lack of them and may establish a male gaze that positions her from the outside. Childbirth similarly evaluates the milk producing breast or lack of them with the same public gaze that positions them from outside, evaluating her according to standards that she had no part in establishing and that remain outside her control (Young, 1992).

Girls are valued and not considered a burden in Adivasi communities because of their labor and economic contribution to their families (De, 2018). However, the context of patriarchy still lived through the bodies from the core; for example, the context of the bride price which the woman brings to her natal home during the marriage is considered a lesser patriarchal than other caste Hindu families, and the custom of 'dowry.' The bride price payments, however, also go to their fathers, brothers, or male kin who inherit the family land.²¹ Though the ritual of the bride price is supposed to be an empowering concept because it reverses the concept of dowry, Kishwar (1989) wrote that the bride price is not an unmixed blessing for women. Bride price is usually the amount with which the woman's family either buys a cow or marries

off the younger son to compensate for the labor and productivity they received from their unmarried daughter (Schlegel & Eloul, 1988). However, Kishwar (1987, p.98) writes,

'Daughters do not have a share in the family's cattle or house. A married woman does not even have a right to the cattle that may be given to her father or brothers as her bride price.'

The bride, the gift, and the object of exchange serve the functional purpose of consolidating the internal bonds between the clan. However, the girl never receives any part of the bride price for herself. The bride²² functions as a relational term between groups of men (Lévi-Strauss, 1969). Girls from a very early age would be trained by mothers and other stakeholders too on grounds for marriage. The elders always put a mark of approval by deciding upon the bride price, and it is also paid partly in cash and partly in kind, like the paddy, goat, or pair of bullocks as per the terms (Deogaonkar & Deogaonkar, 2003). During sessions on reproductive health conducted with NGOs during the study, I noticed that ASHAs and older women would insist that girls as early as nine years old join the discussion because they would be married soon. Many anthropologists and sociologists have discussed the market as a significant social space among Adivasi women (Sinha, 2005; Mohanty, 1987; Kishwar, 1987). The adolescent girls shared that many *ghataks* roam around in the village market to find out if they get eligible bachelors to get married. And in any such market, when a girl wearing a sari and fresh flowers on her head in the presence of both the families would be given *chuda*, *muri* and *gud*²³ in her lap, she would lovingly accept it in a new thin *gamocha* or a piece of chequered cotton cloth, and her marriage gets fixed. And following that day, they become a body in progress to be trained, disciplined, and moulded into a productive 'docile' one in the community where women become stakeholders in

conducting the surveillance and pushing girls to hone more skills on sexuality and maternal health through sessions from the NGOs. My initial response to this disbelief was derived from the perception that sex is not for children, making it inappropriate for young girls as early as age nine or ten to discuss anything related to sex. However, this was interesting to find out that this was normalized in the community in a few houses as power was easily exerted over children by adults because of their age, strength, and position in society, which adds to the way their bodies are socially constructed with layers of misguided trust in the intentions or actions of other adults when it was time for adolescents to come to terms with their gender, bodies, and sexuality (Van Reeuwijk, 2010, p. 11).

Merleau-Ponty points out that the body is not an object but rather immanent and transcendent; it is the condition through which we possibly live, 'It is the body as I live it, as I experience' (Grosz, 1994). Hence marriage, childbirth, and lactation are experiences lived through the sexed bodies. Research on women and motherhood has found philosophies about gender and femininity to be habitually embodied in pregnancy. The pregnant bodies and the women through motherhood exercise a notion of their bodies growing into an embodied identity that defines them as women. Most times on the ground, when I asked mothers of malnourished children how long they have been feeding them breast milk, they would be clueless. They would say they never counted, as even before the child could grow big enough, she was already pregnant with another one, so she forgot the exact dates and months. Few women would also think through the exact birthdates of their children; they will try and remember the season, "*maybe it was winter or early spring,*" not remembering the exact dates, and try to remember the closest season their child was born. Entering into an acceptance of motherhood post-childbirth was a more critical shift as a rite of passage than responding

to childbirth's desires and bodily reactions as a process. The feminine may be understood as the unspoken, disembodied underside of the flesh with the attributes of both femininity and maternity (Grosz, 1994).

Melco Hansda (19 years old) was from Gohonda village in the Pakur district. I met Melco in the courtyard of her house one afternoon just after an FGD we did with girls in her courtyard. It was Saturday, and the girls were getting ready to go to the afternoon *hatiya* or local market on this day every week. Usually, no interviews were scheduled for the second half of Saturdays, so I stayed back only to talk to Melco. She wore an off-white cotton sari with green and pink floral printed borders, her hair roughly tucked behind, and when she smiled, there was a gap between her teeth. Melco did not have any tattoos on her body, and when asked, she smiled and said, "*My mother died very early, and no one paid any heed to get my tattoos done. When I came to my in-law's place, no one gave any heed.*" While loosely carrying her child in her arms, Melco shared that she was getting married as per rituals the following year, 2019. I sat on a *khatiya*, the colloquial beds made of ropes and bamboo, and I asked Melco to sit in the *khatiya*, but she didn't; Mukhi said that if her husband's elder brother is around, then she cannot sit in the *khatiya* or can open her hair. Individuals within a society attach similar meanings, and frequently a great deal of importance, to bodily appearances and physical actions such as facial expressions and gestures (Goffman, 1963, p. 35), and these for feminine bodies are a majority of times associated with a respectable woman and her sexuality. Melco, nineteen, then back in 2017, came to her in-laws' place from her home about eight years back when her mother died, and her father brought another woman to her home as her stepmother. Someone had to take Melco, and her present in-laws agreed to bring her with them and considered her married. Melco narrated, "*they needed someone to work for their house, so they got me,*

but I did not get married to their son then but stayed together." Melco was young enough even to have her periods then, but she started staying in their house and staying with her husband. Melco wanted to leave the house and go back several times because, during *dhaan-katni* (the time of the crop harvest), her in-laws would behave nicely for the relentless labor she would bring to the field. However, when her husband is out of the village, they use slang for her at misbehaved. She has thought many times about leaving, but she has two daughters already and a stepmother in her maternal home. Melco has been listening to one comment very often from her in-laws, "*keep quiet; you are not married to our house yet,*" during heated conversations. Melco, therefore, desired to get married through rituals because she would be able to wear vermilion then as a visible symbolic entitlement of married bodies in the community. Melco was bullied by the families, unable to decide because of her motherhood. Melco's story is not a standalone story but a symbolic representation of several young girls and their systematic passive body producing consistent performance as required to be 'on stage, producing consistent performances during encounters (Featherstone, 1982; Goffman, 1963). Melco's story also seems indispensable for her relatability to Bordo's question, 'Are Mothers Persons?' (Bordo, 1993 a).

Self-surveillance is a form of obedience to patriarchy (Bartky, 1997) cultivated as Butler stated that nobody is a gender from the start; gender is performed when we take up a role that is crucial to the gender that we are (Butler, 1990). I met Elina in November 2018 at Gando Pahari, Pakur; she was sixteen years old then and eloped²⁴ with her husband about two years ago, and she had a kid who was a year old during the interview. When she eloped with her husband from a *mela*, her parents were angry; Elina was very young and weak for labor both in the fields and in conceiving a child. Therefore, her parents wanted to take her back, but when they came to take her back,

she refused to return. Elina and her husband did not have a ceremonial marriage, yet they eloped from a local fair, but she was happy that she was a mother and had a child from her *babla*, and she did not care much because they could not throw her out of the house. Elina studied till standard sixth before she eloped; her in-laws initially agreed to let her go to school but later said, "*if girls study more, they will grow up and run with someone smart and educated,*" so they stopped her from going to school. During the interview, Elina and I sat beside an open field below a bamboo bush in a torn rag. She recalled that just after the marriage, her in-laws scolded her repeatedly because she was young and weak and always questioned her husband on his choice that could have married an older girl who could work and take up the labor in the house. In his work named 'Body and Social Theory,' Shilling (2003) pointed out that there is a need to develop and define appropriate bodily forms of most value in society, adding to the notions of what counts as legitimate bodies. As we are talking about rites of passage as an important transition in a person's life, stripping the individuals of their existing roles and preparing them for a new one, 'bodies' and taming the bodies perform an important role in the transition. There is a form of resistance and rebellion on acting all grown-up when schools and families insist on a prolonged childhood, and there are several ways for one to 'act older' (Frost, 2001, p. 123).

Elina started toiling in the field and at her house, where she labored hard for hours because she had to prove to everyone that her body could endure hard work. She also wanted to give birth early to prove that she could conceive and raise a child. There is a 'power over bodies' and 'power off bodies,' and Elina had that immense need to tame her body, emphasizing its place as the link between people's self-identity and social identity (Goffman, 1956). Nevertheless, the important question remained whether the 'risk' was imposed upon versus the chosen risk (Luhmann, 1993). Elina

married and took the risk as a choice, but had her embodied vision and construction of her gendered being framed early through a risk imposed where through motherhood and labor, she wanted to claim her space through the validation that 'gender is performatively produced' (Butler, 1990). Young, in her work, argues how pregnancy does not belong to the woman herself as either the woman is a container for the developing fetus or it becomes objectified by the woman herself as a condition of her body (Young, 2005, p. 46). Elina's body was overburdened by the performance she picked up, altering her feelings as a survival strategy to negotiate the situation by performing hard-core labor and birthing a child ahead of time that her body could bear. Orbach (1988) argues that throughout the years' mothers come to subjugate and misrecognize their own needs by putting first the needs of their children and husband. Here Elina and other girls like her negotiated their own legitimate space in their family, the corporeal setup being the most critical ground of performance and maintenance of appearances as a form of public display in everyday life (Goffman, 1956).

3.5 The Discourse of Surveillance in the Gendered Bodies

Veena Das has argued that the socialization process in Indian societies reflects how the bodies of men and women are socially viewed and are also assigned different values to the masculine and the feminine bodies after that (Das, 1988). Women and girls were integral to the tribal household and the field through their labor. However, women were debarred from ploughing the field as they were ritually prohibited from touching the plough. Thapan (2009) noticed that a young woman's experience of her gendered identity rests very much in her body through her body image and concerns her embodiment with others in her everyday life. The context on how gender is not only perceived and experienced but also 'deeply inscribed on our bodies' (McNay, 1999) and

thereby on our lived experiences through the discourse of surveillance in the community would be the significant context dealt through the narratives in this section.

Dopdi (17 years old): *"Two years back, I climbed the roof of my house to get blackberries from the tree on a summer afternoon. An older woman passing by saw me and said that the village would not have enough rain that year for girls like me. She walked away with a grumpy tone cursing me in a harsh tone. I got down the tree after some time, but that entire summer, I spent being terrified of the village not having rain because of me. I used to look at the sky, pray to my ancestors that it should rain that summer, and keep cursing myself. However, that year it rained the most, unlike other years!"*

The community's belief systems are expressions of nature's sacred realm that are set apart as forbidden. The myths²⁵ become the determined conduct of the individual in society as 'rules' for action separating the sacred from the profane (Durkheim, 1912). The culture of powers and dangers in a primitive universe knows a distinctive set of laws governing how these misfortunes and disasters fall upon society. The main links between persons and misfortunes are always supposed to be personal links (Douglas, 1966). Through a form of surveillance mechanism, young girls are made to believe traditionally from a very early age that touching the plough will bring an omen to the whole village, such as a drought or famine.²⁶ Even after years of activism and the fight against patriarchy in the modern world, this taboo has been predominant and still practiced today. Girls who dared to break the norms and touched the plough were fined heavily by the Panchayat for having their family feed the entire *Gram Sabha*, *murgabhaat* and *hadiya* (Chicken-rice and local alcohol). The other myth

that prevailed was that if women touched the plough, it impaired the strength and effectiveness of the plough. Young girls often argue during the session that the ban on women ploughing exists because ploughing is a very strenuous activity that women are constitutionally incapable of performing. Sociologists and activists have decoded the real purpose behind the taboo, which seems to be to strengthen male control over the land, even while women perform most of the labor on the land. The taboo ensures that women and girls can never conduct agricultural operations independently without cooperation from male members. As a result, young girls from a very young age started defining their bodies as gendered and associating with a particular passive understanding of their bodies being forbidden to be a part of one of the most important parts of agriculture. It is common for a woman with no male family member to find it challenging to hire male help for ploughing. Hence, the dependency on a cousin, brother, or sister's husband always tends to remain (Kishwar, 1987; De, 2018; Sinha, 2005) if the added daily labor charge is to be avoided. Kelkar and Nathan point out that there are no such prohibitions ever for men, and interestingly, all the prohibitions are regarding one final step to the hindrance on the primary production related to ploughing. This control makes women dependent on men, legitimizes male control of the production process (Kelkar & Nathan, 1991), and makes young girls aware of their gendered bodies. Like ploughing, thatching of the roof is also considered taboo for women. The taboo seems to be another way of ensuring that a woman cannot take care of her survival needs and build a house without the support of men in the community.

When asked how the girls felt about the taboo in the session, they would often answer, *"the norm does not permit us to touch the plough. At times, we feel like we should revoke this, but then we surrender and accept the defeat. We do not think we can ever topple this rule."* In most cases, there was an ambiguity among the girls around

the reason for the taboos, but they nevertheless followed it into practice through their 'habitus' as a way of life. The 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1977) that contributes to the development of the body is a socially constituted system of providing individuals a way to categorize their situations. The habitus is formed when people develop a 'world view' based on the context of people's social locations and positions (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 190). The way people treated their bodies revealed the deepest disposition of the habitus. The construction of self is a development that arises in social experience (Mead, 1934). In this case, precisely, it is the constant understanding of the power/knowledge (Foucault, 1980) that developed in the given individual as a result of relations to that process which socially constructed the views of what is acceptable in the community and this gradually becomes a part of the larger public imagination too.

Goffman contends that when human beings interact with others in their given environment, they assume that each possesses essential nature and represents natural signs expressed by them. Femininity and masculinity are regarded as prototypes of essential expressions that are conveyed in any social situation. Crafting this identity is, therefore, shared performance and 'gender display' then is a collaborative act whereby through interactions, people work together to craft their identities (Goffman, 1979, p. 75). *Gram Sabha* has always demarcated the differences in the performance of femininity and masculinity as the code of conduct and a way to maintain surveillance where girls and women were not allowed to participate in any decision-making process.

Aarti (17 years old): *"Kali Puja²⁷ is the time of a massive celebration in our village, even if it is an Adivasi village. Once, I asked my father to take me to the Gram Sabha, where men were deciding on the number of souvenirs to be collected from people for the Puja. My father stopped me by saying that women have no*

role in the meeting and that he will come back and inform us about the decision."

In the interviews, Aarti would say that she did not like this part of her being a 'girl,' on being unable to visit the *Gram Sabha*. The *Gram Sabha* is a forum people use to discuss local governance and development plans for the village. It was also where women were barred from attending, and men commenced the meetings because the decision-making capacity was on men. Berger talks about the social constructionism of the consciousness, which is always intentional, and the understanding of surveillance in this context is experienced as belonging to an external physical world that successfully has shaped the subjective reality of the individuals (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). Girls understanding of being an 'Other' and the marginalized in the given set is the phenomenon through which their identity of being feminine is constructed every day and lived through their body as 'one is not born a woman but becomes one' (Beauvoir 2010). The pattern of passive construction of bodies needed to be ensured every day by not allowing girls to be a part of the *Gram Sabha*. These spaces were areas of constant surveillance on gender as we know that power comes from below and the complex local interwoven relationships (Foucault, 1980) in our everyday lives. There was constant surveillance of adolescent girls and their mobility post-puberty in spaces outside the home, too, through a 'Panopticon gaze' (Foucault, 1977). Surveillance was silent, just like the *Gram Sabha*, which by controlling spaces, controlled the lives of the young girls and internalized in them the idea of living through a 'gendered' body from a very young age.

Aarti (17 years old): *"If a boy talks to a girl in the market, no one blames the boy, but for girls, everyone is alert, and this makes me*

think a lot about it. I wonder why girls are only asked so much about it and why not boys if society is for both."

Silamoti (18 years old): *"If the girls are going somewhere alone, villagers always ask them to get a friend to accompany them; villagers scold a girl much more than a boy."*

Hatiya or local markets were places the boys could visit easily, but girls post puberty were only allowed to go without their family until married. The entry to puberty in such cases was institutionalized through different boundaries set by the external to discipline²⁸ the bodies (Foucault, 1977). It was interesting to find out how girls experience themselves as self through the 'good girl' notion not directly but only indirectly through social experience, from the standpoints of other individual members of the same social group, or from the generalized standpoint of the social group as a whole to which they belonged (Mead, 1934). Girls would narrate that a 'good girl' in the community is one who works a lot in the community and does not go out with the boys or in the *mela*. Community members often check on the girls mastering 'essential femininity' through their accountable 'ladylike' behavior (West & Zimmerman, 1987). The Adivasi community had their elaborate *mela*, which most of the girls during the sessions agreed to have ever gone alone but always knew that those were the places where boys and girls met. In the communities I visited in Deoghar, where people of other castes and clans co-habited with the tribal, there was a demarcation between the girls who belonged to the tribal communities and the others who did not up repeatedly while discussing body and sexuality. During the sessions, the Hindu girls often talked about the village fairs and the permission the tribal girls get to spend nights there.

Supriya (17 years old)²⁹: *"During the village fair, we do not roam around with Bita Chele (Other Men). Our families do not let us go*

alone; they would stop us and say that we have grown up now and that there is no need to go with other men. But the Santhals can!"

Adolescent girls thoroughly compared their situation around class, caste, and tribe with their peers to develop an idea of morality associated with their culture and the spaces they occupied with their bodies. There was a pride in embracing that these girls were 'different' from the other Santhali girls in the community, sharing that they were not allowed to roam with the other men in the *mela* at night. In the *Archeology of Knowledge* (1988), Foucault certainly did not see the emergence and rise to prominence of particular discourses or pieces of knowledge as the result of intentional machinations by powerful groups. Instead, life's functional and social conditions provide a suitable culture for some representations rather than others. The effects of these representations may not be immediately apparent or intended, but it prevails. Gender is inscribed on the subject in everyday life both socially and through perceptions. These perceptions are based on knowledge as gender identities are constructed and lived (Thapan, 2009). Hence, the concept of 'good girl' among the girls in the community was lived through their understanding of their bodies and sexualities, considering young girls exploring their sexualities as not being the embodiment of sacred bodies. Furthermore, it was interesting to find out, as mentioned above, that majority of the tribal young girls during the sessions would admit to having never visited a *mela* and would function apparently from a space of a loss of face' because her identity was supported by judgments of the dominant group (Goffman, 1956). Therefore, adolescent girls produced a constant self-surveillance where they no longer needed to be monitored because they began to monitor themselves. This constructed self-censoring gaze is known as the 'disciplining of the bodies' (Foucault, 1977). In other words, these are the visible bodily implications

of developing the 'cultural capital' embodied within children through their acquisition of particular tastes and abilities (Bourdieu, 1986).

3.6 Adolescents and the Onset of Sexed Bodies:

'The two huts stood a little way apart from each other, in the center of the village. It was thus that the young people slept every night in their dormitories, away from their parents, with no taboos or restraints imposed upon them. Throughout Paraja's history, those two huts had stood at the center of the tribe. Here, the young men and women sang to each other across the open space that separated them' (Mohanty, 1987, p. 17).

There are numerous sexual liaisons between the inmates of the youth dormitories known as the *Gothul*, where girls often found their way to the bachelor's hall and slept there. The inmates of the dormitory formed a clan into which boys were admitted after passing through serious rituals. The *Gothul* played an essential part in their life by imbibing in them religious and social customs³⁰. Before entering the dormitory, the boys were often gifted with drums, axe, ploughs, and more from their fathers to symbolize a new skill they would learn from the *Gothul*. Courtship was very common in the dormitories, and the transition from a man out of the boys to making them hunters and teaching them social duties was the principal purpose of the *Gothul* (Sinha, 2005). There has not been much study on the *Gothul* system prevailing in the Adivasi communities. However, *Gothul* has been the institution where the adults from the communities trained the young adolescents, and youth social customs and sexuality were integral to it. What was important was a choice and a decision-making capacity that prevailed among youth in choosing their life partner and purpose. It was when sexual practices had little need for secrecy, and things were done without too much concealment. However, soon it was an era of the 'Victorian bourgeoisie' that dawned,

and sexuality got confined, and silence became the rule on the subject of sex (Foucault, 1978).

KGBV was one of the hostels for the tribal girls built with the hope of retaining more getting school dropouts. When I visited the school to talk to young girls, I was told not to talk about anything that may make them "*uttejit*" or excited. In a broader context, this meant that I should be a bar from talking about anything that might sexually excite them. During all my visits to the KGBV school, the warden did not leave me alone with the kids for a moment. The freedom of the language between children and adults or students and teachers around sexuality disappeared (Foucault, 1977), unlike in the times of the *Gothul* when the elders emphasized understanding sexuality as a social skill (Sinha, 2005). None of the girls would ever answer anything about puberty, menstruation, or body in front of the warden, and the warden would keep track of every other minute thing the girls would say. It was a form of discipline exercised through observation, a mechanism that made it possible to induce the effects of power as clearly visible (Foucault, 1977). It was, therefore, interesting to put sexuality in discourse and locate the forms of power on how it penetrates and controls the everyday lives of these adolescent girls in the Adivasi communities and how it socially constructs their knowledge of sexuality and sexual identity. Sexual identity refers to how people operate in socially defined places by experiencing themselves as sexual beings (Dube, 1988). As Butler pointed out, 'women itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot be said to originate or end' (Butler, 1990).

Space is fundamental in any form of communal life, and space is fundamental in any exercise of power (Foucault, 1994). Nevertheless, adolescents and youth in the Adivasi communities had opportunities in spaces like *mela* or local fairs to interact and court. There has been surveillance on the young girls visiting the local *mela*. This

section mentions narratives from *mela* and how the understanding of body and sexuality evolves around *mela*. *Mela* was usually organized around festivals. Madhu Kishwar writes, 'At festivals such as *Maghe Parab* which is celebrated soon after the winter harvest, many restraints are dropped. Unmarried women sing, dance, and drink with abandon. Men are expected openly to woo women and many marriage alliances are formed at this time' (Kishwar, 1987).

In every society, it is necessary to make room for illegitimate sexuality; there is always a space for the 'Other Victorians' (Foucault, 1977). Girls would share that couples, as well as single boys and girls, meet up in *mela*, and if a girl is alone in a *mela* along with her friends and not family, boys get a chance to tease them more, considering she might be here to mingle. Though peers were one of the primary sources of information about sex, there was no peer pressure or competition among peers to showcase their sex life among the girls in the community reflected through their narratives. Instead, to showcase how adolescent girls were often disinterested in romantic propositions in public was a norm during interviews. Moreover, there was pride in how girls showed sexual reticence in guarding their reputation and passive roles as recipients of courtships, while boys actively tried to convince girls to lure them (Van Reeuvwijk, 2010, p. 117).

Sonali (16 years old): *"Boys were showing me a Jatra³¹ ticket and were saying they would show me the theatre. My cousin's sister, who accompanied me, held the ticket, tore it, and threw it in the boy's face. They were angry with us for not accepting the proposal but later left the place and went away."*

Soromoti (17 years old): *"I once went to the mela with my friends. A few boys in the mela were behind me and said they liked me;*

many said I did not want to have a relationship. During mela, boys would come behind us, laugh, and hit us with small stones until we looked back and talked to them. They want to flirt, but few also want to marry."

Girls shared that to get attracted to the boys in the *mela*, their most important criteria would be if they looked *mojh* (handsome), with an excellent nose and stylish dresses, and of course, his behavior toward others and the kindness with which he approaches the girl is essential. Girls considered that how the boys approached them would matter a lot and help them think if he was eligible to spend time with before they decided if she would go with him to his house and consent to marriage. It was an exciting finding because the sole purpose of marriage in the Santhali community remained land, labor, and sustainability. There were narratives on the ground where girls, once married, would return to their maternal house if there were no land to cultivate or the man was a drunkard unable to take the girls' responsibility. Surprisingly, this was not considered a taboo in most cases, and the girls would often get married again. However, during interviews, adolescent girls shared their desire for a man with good behavior. They often shared, *"If also the boy is from a well-to-do family, he will not carry his land or property to the fair; what will remain with him is his behavior, and that will judge him."* At the village fair, boys will bring flowers to impress the girl, and the moment they see a girl not talking much with anyone, they will approach her and try to build a conversation. As for girls, some of the boys lured girls with earrings and snacks in the *mela*, but a few boys would also approach to marry the girls genuinely as they would be looking for a life partner in the fair. It was interesting how beyond gifts like money, earrings, and bangles, adolescents would share that what attracted the proposal most for the girls was the will the man showed for marriage. During FGDs,

girls often said, *"If we Adivasi like someone, we do not keep shifting our eyes from one man to another."* Hence girls would narrate that if a nicely-spoken man approaches any girl at the fair, she might agree to follow him to his house and consider getting married. However, girls refrained from proposing to a boy they liked because there would be gossip among friends if the boy did not want her back. Girls would exclaim, *"It is not in our culture! Moreover, what if they reject me? His friends would know and tease me"*. Every time a discussion around the proposal pointed out the social construction around the lead in the proposal making based on their gendered identity of bodies which kept practicing. Therefore, the power inequity in gender relations translates to an unequal power balance in heterosexual interactions. The male partners always made fundamental decisions regarding taking the lead on sexual actions (Van Reeuwijk, 2010, p. 55). It was interesting to find out that boys were to quote macho ideals in this situation with an aggressive masculine identity and were expected to express an unbridled choice of sexuality. At the same time, girls were expected to practice coyness (Geetha, 2002, p. 03). In a Tanzanian study on children's perception of sexual issues, girls mentioned similar instances of how older boys and men waited outside the school compound and offered them money for sex while they walked back home. However, boys also expressed that they struggled with peer pressure to have sex. Both the sexes in the study shared that they expressed equal curiosity about sex and had the wish to be sexually experienced. They even shared that children were often exposed to situations where they had to make sexual decisions before puberty. However, the children believed that they could not reach out to adults for 'guidance' because, as per the dominant norm, sex is a taboo topic for discussion between children and adults (Van Reeuwijk, 2010, p. 05).

Dube (1988) pointed out that a considerable amount of importance is attached to how a girl carries herself in everyday life and interacts with others. Therefore, how a girl is supposed to behave upon her expression of sexuality is associated with the belief that women should be responsible for protecting themselves, which is socially constructed (Phadke et al., 2002). Hence individuals not only 'do' gender but also 'use' gender to continue the distinction of gender identities (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Nevertheless, there will still be adolescent girls who would form a group to go the extra mile. During the sessions, girls would narrate how villagers would often ask other children in the village if couples were meeting or not. In the *mela*, other younger children in the community would wait and guard them on the couples' secret dates and instead barter their loyalty on hiding the affair by having the couple treat them with sweets to hide the love affair. However, girls during the interviews had a 'shared identity' about the *mela*, as mentioned above, as being a place they need to avoid to be 'good girls'. There was an imposed silence and complex understanding among families and individuals in the social system toward the forbidden act³². However, adolescent girls and boys met and interacted during the *mela*. Girls during the session shared that at times to avoid the surveillance of the community, when girls meet their boyfriends in *hatiya or mela*, they touch their feet to show others that they are elder brothers or respected relatives. Nevertheless, young girls learned about their bodies and sexuality in everyday lives amidst all of these. As girls often shared, *"If a girl manages to control her sexual desire when she is sixteen, then consider her entire life getting better forever since then. However, if she cannot control her sexuality at sixteen, she struggles for her entire life."*

Family and society's limitations on women and their bodies heighten the paradoxical links between female bodies and their understanding of sexualities. Often

in the narratives of women and girls, there is a reflection of parental and societal fears about women's sexuality. Also, it depends upon the girl's responsibility to control her sexuality. Therefore, the puberty narratives of women and girls are culturally coded in sexual terms. The social/sexual restrictions shape their ideas of what it means to be a 'respectable woman' (Puri, 1999, p. 68).

Women in the communities often joked, "*Sarna chawal has excited these girls, and all want to fly out with their increased body heat.*" *Sarna chawal* or *Saran rice* uses a lot of imported fertilizers, almost all paddy production in recent times uses imported fertilizers, and these women joke that these fertilizers have produced excessive heat in their bodies. The term 'body heat' is a pun used to indicate young girls and their sexual desire and a 'Panoptic gaze.' The sarcasm, irony, and gossip associated with young girls in the community and their bodies speak about how women's bodies are both lived and imagined and how bodies bear the mark of morality (Niranjana, 2001). Furthermore, with this comes the question of whether adolescent girls roaming around with their boyfriends in the *mela* ever knew about contraception. Firestone, in 'Dialectics of Sex,' wrote that women before the discovery of birth control pills were at the mercy of biology on menstruation and childbirth (Firestone, 1971). Though several girls I interviewed were in a sexual relationship or had been in a sexual relationship, contraception was not a part of their knowledge they had ever heard about. If a girl ever got pregnant, the local quacks would give them some medicines, or mothers would use local tricks for abortion, like feeding the girl raw papaya to drop the foetus but still would never reach out to an ASHA in the village.

Adolescents described several social influences, situational aspects, and reasoning while narrating their understanding of gender roles and sexual behaviors. Throughout childhood and adolescence, children are socialized and learn ways to

associate meaning with situations and actions, internalizing the norms. This socialization goes the same way as adolescents' understanding of the body, gender, and sexuality (Van Reeuwijk, 2010). The discourse on sexuality and the understanding of the idea of contraception where the various programs³³ associated with family planning for adolescents and women were not implemented sustainably across India because of the lack of external funding and government policies as any other programs run in a Third World Country (Rao, 2004). As a result, the hopes and fear for the future of getting pregnant were a lesser concern in the decision-making capacity of the adolescent girls in the communities, and contraception was never a part of the conversation while discussing sexuality.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter draws stories and experiences of Adivasi Santhali girls in their everyday life and connects them to the social construction of gender and sexuality in their adolescence. The personal becomes political when the historical analysis of the representation of labor in Santhal Parganas through daily chores and in the fields has its roots in discrimination and struggle where the man will not give up land ownership. However, labor on land and childbirth remains the most significant phenomenon women are supposed to perform. The adolescents and their understanding of gender, body, and sexuality revolved around parameters of land, labor, and surveillance through every day norms. Though women have been studied in the context of land and labor for ages, decoding gender and sexuality for adolescents in the tribal communities in the current setting was impossible without including land and labor in the discourse of understanding body and sexuality because that was foundational to survival.

'Doing gender' and using gender-rendered social arrangements around marriage, motherhood, sexuality, and adolescents sustained and reproduced those through their bodies while growing up. Social construction for young girls at early age included dropping out of school and taking up responsibilities at home, where the better they get in their daily chores, the earlier they were ready to be married. Conversely, married women could neither claim land nor own the bride price in the maternal house. This chapter reflected many such stories on young girls and their understanding of marriage and sexuality around the understanding of land regarding the choices they could make. This chapter reflected that gender is a powerful ideological construction and it produces and reproduces knowledge about social norms through 'micro powers' that establish discipline in a given setting where women were not able to participate in village forums and not able to claim lands or climb the roof of the house were the 'Panoptican gaze' imposed on girls which if they failed to perform appropriately would be accountable. This chapter also highlights the way society exercises its surveillance mechanism for adolescents exercising their mobility and sexuality in spaces outside their homes.

Various sections of the chapter mention the patriarchal setup planned around production and reproduction, where life revolved around marriage and children, and the alternatives would undergo 'surveillance' from the villagers. The emphasis on the anecdotes in between is the voices from the ground showcasing the ways one

internalizes the social construction of gender, body, and sexuality through 'habitus' as a structure that governs practice and the ways one perceives the culture and the environment around.

In his book *Development is Freedom*, Amartya Sen introduces the term 'unfreedom' as a concept that forces people to take up roles that can make a person

helpless prey in violating other kinds of freedom (Sen, 1999). During my research and trying to understand social construction in the communities for a long time, I kept on referring to Amartya Sen's concept of 'unfreedom' thinking has the young girls in the community ever got the opportunity to question the basic assumptions of the feminine expectations to challenge their positions in households, field, education or at in laws' places and hence through this thesis in other chapters the context of space, agency, and negotiation applied by the young girls to build an alternative understanding of the bodies have also been the center of the discourse.

CHAPTER 4

EMBODIED RITES OF PASSAGE AND RITUAL PRACTICES

4.1: Introduction:

I do not know what the most beautiful body part in a woman's body is. But I think it must be the vagina because a woman can never be a mother without that – Soromoti (17 years old).

Our bodies are the permeable boundaries between our sense of self, on the one hand, and the society in which we live is the other. The most banal acts of life, from how we dress to how we talk and perceive our bodies to decisions on marriage and sexuality, are embodied entities that decide on the body and are lived through the body¹ (Tolman et al., 2014). Shilling (2003) argues that 'The human body is subject to social power structures and relations and so is the embodiment' and individuals are represented through their bodies as much as the social and cultural circumstances where the body is developed. Merleau-Ponty (1962) described the lived body as a 'body subject,' which means that the body is never a passive receptor but experiences the world directly. The recent sociological discourse prioritizes more on what is about the body that allows it to be shaped by the society in a particular fashion and what part of the body shapes society. The need to combine the 'lived experiences' which contribute to social relations along with the body (Turner, 2008) and Foucault's concept of Power/Knowledge have been crusaders in shaping the sociological applications of the 'body' in academia. The understanding of the 'Body' has been a crucial site in Western Academia through the writings 'Hunger as ideology' and 'Anorexia Nervosa' (Bordo, 1985), followed by the dominating Western understanding of adolescent bodies in Sociology through gyms and brackets of obesity.

Regarding the context of Indian bodies, the governing factors are caste, class, and the concepts of purity and pollution in bodies. A single concept of the body in India has never been accepted. Bodies in particular which are denied representation have always been integral to the discourse of Indian bodies² (Michaels & Wulf, 2011). Given the context of the current study, it was interesting to understand how everyday rituals and the rites of passage contribute to forming a 'body image' in the Santhali societies. This chapter depicts the unnoticed taken-for-granted phenomenological expectancies and habitus (Schutz et al., 1967; Bourdieu, 1977) of the performed organized 'rites' and 'ritual practices' of everyday life that form the embodied understanding of bodies among the Adivasi Santhali girls studied throughout this study conducted in Jharkhand. Embodiment in this chapter refers to the experiences of 'living in' and thereby perceiving the world from a specific location of the inhabiting bodies (Tolman et al., 2014), whereas being embodied refers to an experiential awareness of the feelings and expressions within one's body through the corporeality we live in (Grosz, 1994). As per 'practices,' this chapter deals with constantly ritualized behaviors in a given setup to have the rhetoric of social, cultural, and political inscribed through a body. The 'rites of passage' in this chapter are about ceremonies or experiences that mark significant transitional periods in a person's life and the involved 'ritual activities' that strip individuals from a set notion of roles and perspectives and prepare them with a new set of roles to perform. For the first time, Arnold Van Gennep's, *The Rites of Passage* (1960) considered the rites of passage to be shared and passed through emotions around ritual practices. Metaphorically, he used the term 'passages' to denote the transportation from one social state to another with specific rituals of marriage, childbirth, and death. Ceremonies, as suggested by him, involve a sequence of phases- the rites of separation, transition, and incorporation associated with the performance of rituals, all intertwined

in a way that shapes the understanding of a body in society. Practices of rituals and rites of passage through the narratives in this chapter construct a gendered knowledge of the body among tribal adolescent girls in their everyday lives. This chapter, therefore, talks beyond the underlying pre-coded patterns of the rituals in the society in which the young girls were a mere part of a passive and submissive entity. This study prioritizes the thoughts and processes embedded in the rituals and rites of passage through which a body performs the rituals and embodies a deeper understanding of gender, body, sexuality, and femininity.

Bibhuti Bhushan's description of *Bhanmati*, with her slender body brimming with youthfulness, creates a perfect bountiful image of a tribal woman (De, 2018). However, it is still through a male gaze, like several other pieces of literature on Adivasi women, that talks about their torso and the beauty around their hair and breast. The most important part of the body, which the majority of the girls interviewed in this research shared, would be their 'nose,' which they were conscious about. Almost everyone would want to make it sharp and tall enough to look beautiful and for men to be attracted to them post-puberty. They often say, "*Men would agree to marry a girl swayed by her beauty if she has a beautiful nose.*" Women's bodies have often been conceptualized by focusing on the particular social and cultural messages directed at parts of the body like breasts, genitals, and other sexualized body parts. However, finding 'the nose' as one of the most attractive body parts in the body puts the entire context of popular notions around tribal bodies to question, through whose 'gaze' are these bodies being presented? Therefore, more voices from adolescent young girls talk about their bodies and 'body image' in everyday lives through the art of embodying tattoos, living through menstruation and birthing, deconstructing beauty, and living through the ailing bodies; in this chapter. At the core of this chapter, the understanding

of the 'body image' and 'embodiment' are narrated through the discourse of rituals and the rites of passage which the adolescent girls in the community performed in their everyday lives. And as the interactionist perspective on the body says that the body as an object cannot be separated from the body as a subject as they are emergent from one another, 'embodiment' refers quite precisely to the process by which the object-body is actively experienced, produced, sustained, and/or transformed as a subject-body (Waskul & van der Riet, 2002, p. 488)³ through the rituals and rites of passage to perceive their body.⁴

The sacred/profane dichotomy is fundamental to how religions work in society. For Durkheim, the 'sacred' is conveyed through social rituals as a powerful social force in the modern world, classified separately from the profane. The symbols of rituals are never simple but have the social and cultural power of the collective embedded in them, with the ritual's object being a society's belief system. In the *Elementary Form of Religious Life*, Durkheim (1912) illustrates how 'sacred' is constructed in the 'primitive' religion through what we eat, the spaces we demarcate for religion and the things we do with our bodies. This chapter highlights how the construction of the 'sacred' is associated with the construction of feminine-gendered bodies. This chapter also highlights 'space' as one of the essential contexts associated with the rituals and the rites of passage that tends to nurture the gendered identity through the lived bodies because 'spatiality' informs the bodily practices of women within diverse contexts and settings (Niranjana, 2001). Furthermore, choosing the rituals and rites of passage as events while discovering the body image and embodiment was crucial as Thapan (2009, p. xiv) would say that 'To understand women, their position and their struggle in Indian society, the perspective of the embodiment is imperative, as a woman is undoubtedly located in a physical and psychological space as much as she is in the cultural and social

domain.' This chapter tends to understand the temporal and spatial narratives that had a deeper meaning by talking about adolescent girls⁵ and their lived realities through the subjective experience of rituals and rites of passage as central to their recognition of themselves as gendered subjects and asserts that subjective experience is crucial to our understanding of the complex character of everyday life.

As anthropologist Mary Douglas (1970) has argued, the body is a powerful symbolic form, a surface on which a culture's central rules, hierarchies, and even metaphysical commitments are inscribed and reinforced.⁶ Without rituals, Douglas writes that there would be no sociality, collective power, no celebrations, and no sharing of life's central and most meaningful moments. Rituals are symbolic action that organizes and historically has been the basis of human language, kinship, and culture, forming the base of a 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986). Rituals are usually the collective expressions that though externally performed interestingly, are intertwined with personal, sexual, and intimate emotional experiences through bodies. Internalized through bodies gained through individuals' initial learning and being unconsciously influenced by the surroundings, rituals become an integral part of the habitus people live in (Bourdieu, 1977). Ritual behavior is 'repetitive' and consciously follows a mundane pattern of expressions and repetition. Rituals are intertwined with the context of the body in a natural way for the body to proclaim, enact, and dwell self-consciously in determinative realities of sacred and profane, particularly in the realm of 'femininity.' There is so much dependency on the seemingly willing acceptance of various norms and practices that a power 'from below' prevails and guides us, as Foucault (1977) puts it. In rituals, people voluntarily submit to their bodily existence and assume particular roles with highly patterned rules and roles that conform the self to all others who have embodied these typical roles in the past, as if everything were based on the ancestors.

Moreover, once you accept the ritual symbolism as truth, it is neither social nor cultural; however, it becomes one's identity like everyday practices habituated into walking, driving, and in this case, dancing and working as daily laborers (Mauss, 1973; Bourdieu, 1977). Hence the rites of passage and the rituals were two of the significant phenomena in understanding how gendered identities in bodies are both constructed and lived through bodies and how the meanings related to gender are instilled in the construction of femininity in Adivasi Santhali girls from early childhood.

As Bordo (1993 a) would argue, we exist through our bodies, and the 'materiality' of our existence is a certainty. Hence, what is examined in this chapter is the direct perception of adolescent girls themselves and the ways they experience their bodies living through rituals and rites of passage⁷ they encounter in their everyday lives. It partially explores some of the positions and ideas related to their bodies, which young women embody. As discussed in the previous chapters, the body is not a 'given' but a social category with different meanings imposed and developed by different population sectors. This chapter considers the linkages between embodiment, gender, and identity and how these point to the socially constructed human body determined by the rituals and rites of passage these adolescent girls performed in their everyday lives. This chapter incessantly interconnects beauty, body image, gender, and spaces through embodied ritual practices and rites of passage all together in a thread as an unfinished phenomenon in a constant process of 'becoming' while living within society (Butler, 1990).

4.2: Internalizing Beauty Rituals and the Shaping of the Body Image:

The rise of 'The Beauty Myth' (Wolf, 1991) was just one of the several emerging social fictions that described and controlled women in a feminine sphere in her embodied self,

motherhood, and painstaking tasks like lacemaking back in time. Hence, it is pertinent to understand beauty as an essential aspect of gender consciousness and identity shaping the 'body image.' The body image, as studied in this thesis, is not just about how another person sees one but in a way, how a person sees oneself too and would like others to see them in a given social scenario through the 'looking-glass self' as Cooley (1902) would mention as an enormous imagined embodied self in action⁸.

My daily interactions with the girls would happen in the community hall, where they would usually come to meet wearing an old blue or red skirt which was the school uniform from the time they were studying in the school and which has faded over the years since they dropped out from their school⁹.

Ritamoni (15 years old): *"When I was told to leave wearing a skirt post-puberty, I thought my shame in the body was in my knees. I loved my skirt and did not understand why I should not wear it. For days I grew up with shame associated with my knees and the bare part of the legs and thought that it is the most important part of my body that needs to be covered."*

Girls would embody 'stigma' around the body through a conscious body image developed by a given set of power that explores it, breaks it down, and again rearranges it with a set of disciplines that produce subjected, practiced, docile bodies (Foucault, 1977). So when Ritamoni and other girls like her were embracing puberty as a rite of passage, what tended to be the most stigmatized part of her body was the bare knees repeatedly asked by other women in the community to be covered. The visible part of their body, which to date was allowing them to work freely on the ground, getting rid of the mud by wearing a skirt above the knees, suddenly was a stigmatized entity altogether, and the girls would often look for ways to tackle this growing shame.

Puberty was a rite of passage for adolescent bodies like Ritamoni's and other girls like her discovering newer stigmatized entities in their bodies during adolescence.

On days when I sat beside the common tube well in the village writing my morning notes, I would notice the trend among adolescent girls taking an old torn *gamocha*, which is a thin chequered color piece of cloth over their t-shirt to cover their breasts and would roam around in the village with that. A few thirteen- or fourteen-year-old girls who have not developed breasts would also start taking a *gamocha* to fit in. The girls would be timid and share, "*I feel a lot ashamed nowadays. I have started thinking that I cannot walk just like that; I have to wear a gamocha over my breasts, or otherwise, I cannot go out.*" There is always a benchmark on what is morally acceptable and what is not in the larger social milieu. Furthermore, women's breasts have always been invested with social, cultural, and political meanings that shape women's understanding of their embodied selves (Millstead & Frith, 2003, pp. 455–465). Young writes that in our culture that focuses to the extreme on 'breasts,' 'women in their adolescent years often feel judged for themselves and others. Breasts become the daily tangible and visible signifiers of womanliness; they are in question in this society for a problematic judgment beyond escape (Young, 1992, p. 76). Breasts are the most visible sign of a woman's femininity and the signal of her sexuality. At times, girls may not feel ashamed of their bodies. They may be proud instead of becoming a woman and watching the maturing of her bosom with satisfaction as an entry towards womanhood, unknown how the bodily changes might change her identity. However, she participates in the process of 'becoming a woman' (Beauvoir, 2010).

In the villages of the Deoghar district, duplicated¹⁰ *Fair and Lovely* and *Vaseline* cream tubes were brought to them by the person who sells cosmetics, better known as *Manihari* in the local language. Olson points out while narrating the

marketing strategies of media that 'The advertisers do understand that beauty is a key component of female identity and market accordingly' (Olson, 2006, p. 54). In a rural context, the *Manihari* usually plays the role of the media, the man who turns out to be the single agency of fashion for these girls in very remote places. On hot afternoons when the girls silently parade back to their houses from laborious mundane work in the fields, the local *Manihari* would come up cycling in a bicycle with green and pink earrings and bangles. I would talk to one such person for hours and would realize that *Manihari* is a significant stakeholder for these girls who keeps them in link with what is fashionable in the market¹¹. The interactions with the *Manihari* in the villages were one of the fun sessions of my day, which I would savour as a participant observer. On an average day, the *Manihari* would bring fancy hair oil and shampoo, which few girls could afford and others could not.

Sonamoni (17 years old): *"I always wait for the Manihari to come to my village; it is sometimes painful when I do not have money to buy anything from him. I know I can only buy it if I have money."*

There is a space of negotiation of one's desire among adolescent girls linked to understanding beauty and deconstructing poverty and the ability to own a beauty product. The acceptance of the socio-economic situation portrays that the places where there is already a prevailing dearth of capital, owning beauty products seem to be a luxury. However, in the FGDs, we would talk in detail about hair oils and body oils for days, and girls would exclaim that they have heard from their grandmothers about "*kochre ka tel*" and "*sarsho ka tel*" (oil made of local seeds) with which they used to clean their body and hair. Moreover, the soil near the river was known to every girl as smooth and has been used to clean their hair for ages, and the soil can even be dried up to make bathing cakes that provide smoothness to the body. However, in recent times,

girls prefer shampoo and scented hair oil over the available resources "*even knowing that soil or kochre ka tel are better beauty products, we will never use it during bath if we have the option to choose the shampoo and colorful soaps*" they would say. Olson (2006, p. 53) wrote, 'Early adolescent girls were especially vulnerable to media images. They are constantly searching for information to guide them on how they should look and behave in this new world'. The most exciting conversations would happen when girls in the group would share that they still use the *kochre ka tel* and immediately feel ashamed to admit it, as others would immediately laugh at the disclosure. *Kochre ka tel* for girls in the community symbolized shame. It depicts a lifestyle choice based on a particular set of the socio-economic reality of people living in poverty, unable to prioritize modern-day beauty items.¹² The positioning of the girls would bring us back to Goffman's analysis of every person constantly responding to their standing in the eyes of others, implying the constant states of emotions- embarrassment, shame, humiliation, and more (Goffman, 1963; 1983). Over here, the embarrassment of the girls who accepted that they used homemade products and the consciousness it brought with them. There was a subtle power and hierarchy in owning the forms of resources and being able to talk about it in a group. However, I also realized that my presence as a participant observer added to their perception of what is modern and accepted as fashion and beauty based on my presentation on the ground. The demarcation between 'us and them' was social, cultural, and economical and was corporeally represented through space and time (Grosz, 1995). The mirror image is symbolic here, representing 'the threshold of the visible world, which not only presents the subject with an image of its own body but also represents the image of the environment (Grosz, 1994).

While writing about beauty, given the intersectional boundary between self and society, 'skin' has been a subject of theoretical interest to many researchers in many

domains (Crossley, 2001). One of the crucial aspects of embodying a perspective on body image remains embedded in the 'skin color' of one's body, which is about the performance of one's lived body through the skin. Bodies have socially constructed thought processes on skin color and experience one's body and others' as sites of differentiation through the skin's complexion. Our desire for a certain body is so powerful and reflected through the skin complexion that it sometimes threatens our boundaries and self-definition.

Bibhuti (16 years old): *"I will look for someone who looks like me if I have a more handsome and fair guy for me; then, after we fight, he would say that you are a dark person, and I do not want to be with you! He might always threaten to leave me and get a better girl who is fairer than me. So I need to marry someone who matches my body color; when there is a fight, I want to tell him that we look the same. I sometimes feel that if one could change looks, it would be so nice."*

Bhibhuti's narratives bring to our notice what Charles Cooley (1902) represented through his ideas of the 'looking-glass self,' where a person's self-consciousness involves monitoring the self from the point of view of others. In almost every tribal house I visited, I have seen a nearly finished wrinkled tube of *Fair and Lovely* fairness cream and a broken mirror. Though people in the indigenous communities of Santhal Pargana shared similar dark skin complexions, girls were concerned about their dark complexions. They had been applying *Fair and Lovely* because it looks attractive and lowers the chances of getting dejected during the marriage. The beauty product, therefore, becomes a tool to negotiate marriage, adding to a larger agenda of gendered bodies. Moreover, body complexion is not only inscribed

on our bodies, but we live every day through the flesh and skin in reality and negotiate our position. Location, therefore, becomes the most fundamental aspect of understanding the embodied reality of the body image. As Thapan (2009, p. 09) rightly points out,

'It is not out of place to emphasize a woman's use of the body, including her sexuality, as a weapon for survival, whether to combat the harsh conditions imposed by poverty, to attack the oppressor physically, or to strategically manipulate, coerce or extract the maximum to her advantage.'

However, the whole nature of women's relationship to their bodies is gender specific (Turner, 1991), and Bourdieu, too, identified gender distinction to be the key focus while analyzing 'reflexive embodiment.' As a fact of habitus, he argues that middle-class women make much more significant investments in their bodies than working-class women as a strategic response to a situation that's advantageous (Waskul & Vannini, 2006) for them.¹³ On days of harvesting around November, I visited girls in fields while they worked on fields and would follow them to the common well on afternoons, just because they would not have time otherwise to talk to me due to workload. Eighteen years old Basanti from the Ghormara village of the Palajori block of the Deoghar district sat with me one such afternoon beside a common well across an open field. In between a deep discussion on what beauty means to her, she would pause and point out to a black and white goat kid roaming around the field, relatively young to even walk properly. Basanti would randomly ask me, "*how does it look, didi?*" and later answer, "*The black goat looks very ugly, I know, but if this was a girl, even then, boys would also be following her and would want to have sex with her.*" Andrea Dworkin (1974) stated that 'standards of beauty' describe in precise terms the relationship that an individual will have with her own body and the uses to which she

can put her body to define the dimensions of her physical freedom, which is always related to the psychological development. In their mutual interactions, the flesh is considered an essential pre-communicative domain from which both subject and object develop an identity.¹⁴

Internalizing the context of beauty in bodies is a rite of passage for adolescent girls where they put a value on their changing bodies. The male gaze has treated women's beauty as an object for male creativity and imagination, which shaped, manipulated, and even transformed them. This gaze drove women to objectify by notions of their desire. Moreover, women in this situation are considered socially powerless, mostly lacking the means to express themselves and consent to be these objects, submitting themselves to the same beauty rules in whose making women have played almost no role (Geertz, 1973). Basanti and several other girls like her had their understanding of beauty governed around the fact that bodies, however it is, would attract men towards sex and ways women could contribute a considerable amount of labor both in the field and in their house. Interestingly, 'The Beauty Myth' tells a story where the quality called 'beauty' objectively and universally exists but through different definitions and expressions to it (Wolf, 1991). There was a constant struggle with Basanti's understanding of the body as subject versus object dualism. The beauty experience was therefore narrowed down to a physically sexed and labored body which constantly narrated the perspective of the social construction and the body image and the making of the passively regulated bodies performing the gendered roles. As Thapan (2005) would narrate, 'The woman's body is undoubtedly the place to begin for an indepth understanding of femininity as it is the surface inscribed the culturally coded and socially sanctioned contexts of the perfect or desirable woman.' The socially sanctioned context of a beautiful body in a rural tribal context was that of an abled

laborious body. These abled laborious bodies are meant to cater to the community's economic survival with the hard work in the field during seasonal cultivation and harvesting and the household chores, as explained in the last chapter on the social construction of bodies. Socialization, therefore, is the methodology to instill in girls the appropriate code of conduct, training her life primarily in service to others (Thapan, 1995, p.36).

4.3: Body and the Ritual Performance of Dance

The construction of the nation as *Mother India* and the building of chaste Indian women in dance saw how, in the early 20th century, the Bharatanatyam was idealized as a nationalist art created to cleanse, purify and regulate the art and women's bodies (Mitra, 2006). However, when Bharatanatyam passed the dictum of chaste dances, other forms of dance did not pass this privilege. Dance is an integral part of the Santhali rituals and celebrations. Therefore, it was essential to study the dynamics of tribal adolescent girls and their bodies in dance to tunes that were not considered 'idealized' as cleansed and pure but as a ritual celebration that taught these adolescent girls a great deal about their bodies and identities. During festivities and rituals, mainly known as *parab* in the Santhali language, the whole village becomes a commune where dancing is an integral part of the rituals and involves young girls, ladies, and even older women. Girls dressed in traditional striped *lungi* and *saree* draped around their waist get ready to dance, sometimes even prepared to play the drums if men were too drunk to play. On such occasions, young girls would welcome me to the village by planning a dance for me and even playing drums. These adolescent girls, therefore, were undoubtedly aware of their womanly characteristics, grounded in their embodiment (Thapan, 1995). However, at the same time, they assert their independence from the more feminine

aspects of their embodiment by beating a drum as hard as they can, putting the left foot to hold the ground firmly and the right leg a bit lifted on another rock holding the drum with full pride and beating the sticks with the other. The majority of the rituals in the community hovered around the earth and plantation. In August, girls would celebrate *Karma*; they would decorate a pot with seeds and worship until new saplings would grow out of the pots. Girls would then get their pots together and bring them together to the typical village ground and circle around it, and then they would start dancing. Girls would say, *"Dancing together feels so good, and we look at each other's pots and find out whose plant has grown more."* Norms, therefore, were not only consolidated but were performed through the rituals and habitus in various ways embodied through work and play, which are made and unmade in the experience of everyday life (Bourdieu, 1977).

On such occasions, the whole village gets drunk, and youth and adolescents meet with one another secretly though and celebrate nature. During sessions, when asked when a girl is said to be dancing perfectly,

Ritamoni (16 years old): *"Getting every step correct with a proper amount of bending the body with every beat a rhythm gets created and if one dances in that rhythm one is known to ace the perfect dance."*

Fulmoni (17 years old): *"From a very young age, we start following the ladies in the village, but no one is left out in the dance if they cannot perform it perfectly."*

The older women are the links between the girls from being amateurish to owning the dance with every rhythm. These older women who had mastered the skill of dancing had the power to control and influence others through surveillance during

the dance. As Durkheim (1912) writes, whatever is 'sacred' is expressed through a set of collective symbols in a way that people gather around, feeling a form of shared moral sentiment towards it. Skills innately contribute to one's power and privilege and hold one in a functional position in the status quo. It is interesting how the bodies enable people to intervene in it through dance, intending to come out as a trained body without a societal force (Goffman, 1963, 1983; Foucault, 1972). I often watched these intoxicated wrinkled-skin grandmothers sit back and constantly monitor these young girls on how they needed to open up, improve and dance. Dance did not play a role in the bride selection process, and the grandmothers never scolded the girls if they could not dance as per their instructions. They would rather joke with the girls, *"If you do not know dancing when you are married, in your in-laws' place, other women will pull you to dance during your marriage ceremony. You will turn into a joke, and everybody will laugh at you if you cannot dance then. It will also be shameful for our village. Your husband's brother will tease you and say, Oh! Brother, what wife have you got."*

The constant teasing of girls who cannot gain perfection in their future marriage had a blend of cultural dissemination in it; this is how a new girl was coached into the construction of the ritual and performed their femininity through the performance. During such a setting, an old drunk woman comes in front, holds the girl who was not bending correctly as per the rhythm, pulls her hand, and starts the step with her. Corsaro (2005, p. 359) states, 'Children's participation in cultural routines is essential to the interpretive approach. In adult-child interaction, children are often exposed to social knowledge they do not grasp fully. Because of the predictable participant structure of cultural routines, however, interaction normally continues in an orderly fashion, and ambiguous, often are left to be pursued over the course of children's interactive experiences. '

The interpretive approach, therefore, states that the regularized cultural routines are the rites of the passages creatively set by adults to induct the children through a structured process on the adaptability of the 'public body' available for presentation.

Paul Atkinson, in his article *Opera and the Embodiment of Performance* (Waskul & Vannini, 2006, pp. 95-108) examined how through the rehearsal process, the opera directors and the performers negotiated the creation of the roles through physical accomplishments associated with the gesture, orientation, gaze, and movement within a defined set of space on the stage because in the end what finally mattered was the public presentation of the ideal bodies. However, one of the most exciting parts of the dance in the community remained that no girl was rejected from the dance if she was unable to reach perfection. Hence, highlighting here that dance was not a medium that bred competition among gendered feminine bodies but was a rite of passage building the collective identity of the body. As Sherlock points out in the article *Dance and the Culture of the Body*, the cultural production of a professional dancer had a particular body type required to present the correct image on the stage, which means that the look of the dancer is paramount to anything else where the social class, the dance training, and the physical above intellectual requirements of the body was a mandate (Scott & Morgan, 1993, p. 37).

Ritamoni (17 years old): *"But there is no way one does not want to dance; the moment we listen to music; we feel like dancing. We feel so charged that we come out of our house and start dancing."*

Dance tends to be a rite of passage that every single girl in the community has to go through. Girls during the session would proudly flaunt that they never rehearse for any dance; they know it very well and have been doing it since childhood. So when they listen to the music, they directly start dancing with a euphoria. Almost everyone

voluntarily joined the band, and the girls shared that when the dance started, none of them could stay at home isolated. Instead, all gathered to celebrate a culture of joy. Dance is traditional in a way where the whole community participates and choreographs together. In a tribal community, there are no spectators, but persons of all ages are all performers joining the dance (Deogaonkar & Deogaonkar, 2003).

Hence it is through the social and cultural practices, apart from the mundane strategies of the socialization process of labor, that girls start shaping up their ideas on bodies through the 'shared vocabularies of body idiom' (Goffman, 1963, p. 35) in the communities. I would often notice that when a girl, however, would dance with all enthusiasm, the older women in the village felt nostalgic, and they praised the girls and said that it reminded them of old times when they used to dance at a young age and was in the brim of their beauty. For these old women, the skill of transforming the 'knowledge of dance' from one generation to another is also a moment of rites of passage of securely passing a cultural code to the next generation with a hope of togetherness and communion to be celebrated and performed in coming years. The structuring of the encounters, as Goffman would say, is essential, and at every stage of these focused or unfocused meetings, the movements and appearances of the body send messages of intent between people (Shilling, 2008). Therefore, synchronized human behavior in ritual becomes essential because it gives life a unique pattern since practice, participation, experience in, and exposure to ritual are significant factors in this process. It is worthwhile looking at the physical aspects of a ritual as they are inscribed in and through the patterns of the movements in the body and not a history written through texts. Just like a younger grandson following what the acting priests are doing in the temple from an early age¹⁵ (Michaels & Wulf, 2011), dance has been the same in the communities. Both are internalized through the learning process, attendance, repetition,

and practice through experienced adults. However, the ritualistic symbolism of brahminical identity and the rigidity around the structure with priests is not what the dance and the bodily engagement with older women in the community looked like, as the relationship pattern with the trainer and the trainee was way less strict in the given context.

Girls at the time would sing and tease men– *"You left your village and have come here; Oh, tell me! What pleasure you have here."* When girls are dancing, boys would secretly come to meet their girlfriends. During festivals, boys will bring sweets for the girls; that is the foremost thing they will bring to lure the girls into talking to them. However, a context of aesthetics and purity has always been simultaneously built with dance. Taking the historical dimension here, The Odissi dance is the manifestation of the energy of God where the central element that determines the body's movements in the dance is the 'love and surrender' in which the dancer devotes himself to the divine (Michaels & Wulf, 2011, p. 199). The tribal dance, on the other hand, with the music and the drumming forms, the costuming, and the intoxication are the exclusive possession of these lowest castes (Michaels & Wulf, 2011, p. 127). By considering the body in movement, we can see better how it inhabits space (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, pp. 100-102) and what signifies the aesthetic forms of dance in that hierarchy of art and what bodies are rejected from the status quo. Because the Adivasi dance was not a competitive and structured space of either Bharatanatyam or Ballerina, where the discipline of ballet produces and maintains a particular type of body that demonstrates cultural preferences and strong class relationships that are influenced by social access and class background¹⁶.

4.4: Lived Bodies & Denial of Spaces in Rituals:

The formation of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1986) is related to Bourdieu's former theory on an understanding of '*habitus*' (1977) as institutionalized into the methodology framework of society's functional rubric. Cultural capital is gained through an individual's learning from the surroundings. On the other hand, *habitus* is related to the knowledge of how people view and understand the world based on the specific culture one lives in. Hence, cultural capital and *habitus* help us understand the contemporary world and its practices. However, Bourdieu also notices that on the core of this foundation of society, if one examines myths and rituals, we would notice that it is based on the 'structural analysis of the society, the 'infrastructure' which constitutes a code through which the underlying meaning of the myths is validated in the society. These codes then convert into *habitus* as the second main factor which contributes to the development of the body, which is not only a 'socially constituted system of cognitive and motivating structures' but also offers individuals to associate with similar predetermined performances and ways to act in given situations (Bourdieu, 1984, p.190).

Spaces and locations occupied by young girls in the community during rituals describe the *habitus* and gendered knowledge one holds about one's body. Girls in the communities I interacted with were never allowed to go to *Jeharthaan*, where their ancestors were worshipped. *Jeherthaan* would always be on the edge of the village, empty open space with *Sal* trees, *Sal* which they worshiped as God. Post marriages, when the newly married couple visits the *Jeherthaan* as a welcoming gesture, the new bride will not be allowed to enter the *Jeherthaan*. However, she will only show her presence as a new community member outside the wall, whereas the groom can enter the boundary wall. *Jeherthaan* is a sacred place associated with the ancestors. There

was a subtle demarcation of power and knowledge mutually conditioned in living through the female bodies, who were denied entry or connection to almost everything associated with the ancestors' legacy. Through this phenomenology of social reproduction, bodies were a bearer of the symbolic value of patriarchy existing in the myths around the places women and girls could occupy (Shilling, 2003).

However, the denial of spaces gets more interesting when we scrutinize how 'food' becomes an essential component of rituals and festivities rooted in patriarchy. In the first volume of *The Raw and the Cooked*, Lévi-Strauss (1970, pp. 64- 65) marked myths that depicted culinary procedures as mediatory activities between heaven and earth, life and death, and nature and society. Moreover, as Knight (1991) points out, rituals embodied in myth have been the antithesis to that thought behind several spaces female bodies are allowed to occupy or the places one was denied entry. During the *Bandhna parab* in 2017, when the entire village was decked up and intoxicated for the big festival of harvest and worshipping animals, I met eighteen years old Sarita for the first time. The *Santhals* worship the *Sarna* religion that comprises the *Sal* trees, the mountain, nature, and most importantly, the ancestors. *Bongas* or ancestors are an integral part of life, keeping the continuum between the past and present alive and protecting and neutralizing any harm to the community. Satisfying the *Bongas* in every ritual is the most crucial part of any festival in the Santhali community, and there were several forms of sacrifice attached to it.¹⁷ So in the corner of a room in the house selected as sacred for the sacrifice, men from the house would sacrifice a chicken, smear the floor with drops of blood¹⁸ and offer the ancestors rice and chicken. However, women are not allowed to enter the room during the offering or eat the sacrificed meat after the offerings are done. The spaces occupied in the process of the rituals are gendered, and girls were often trained from a very early age on the denial of

this space which they could never occupy. Adolescent girls will grow up with this knowledge that throughout their lives, be it her maternal house or her husband's house, they will never be offered anything from that sacrifice, and it will always be the men who could eat those. After discussing with several women and men in the community, I realized that to hold the connection with the ancestors is supposedly a manly phenomenon, and the sacrificial meat was an embodied object to validate that women were not allowed to occupy all spaces and positions with ease.

Diverse contexts and settings can inform different bodily practices of women¹⁹ within a given space; Sarita shared that she does not understand the reason for this ritual and feels so excluded that she has stopped entering the room where the sacrifice is made, even on ordinary days when there is no festival. "*I do not enter that room anymore,*" she would say. In more than one way, the household is located at the center of the women's lives and is a significant part of their daily activities. As discussed in the chapter previously that the sacred/profane dichotomy is a fundamental approach to how religions work in society (Durkheim, 1912); it is therefore proven through the narratives of adolescent girls like Sarita that the construction of what is 'sacred' is associated with the construction of feminine gendered bodies with controlled mobility. Although the distinction between the sacred and profane is absolute and universal, it is noticed that the dichotomies are represented in infinite ways starting with the feeling of respect and fascination, changing into a dependency on a belief system expressed through the language of a myth that becomes symbolic in one's everyday life.

Woman and the way they inhabit space becomes a key to the preserving parameters of gender identity, and be it physically or morally, women themselves often become the central actors in the process of cultural reproduction where femininity, sexuality, and the body are the product of and the medium through which physical,

moral and cultural spaces are marked (Niranjana, 2001). For adolescent girls like Sarita, their negotiation with space is how they internalize gender inhabited and performed in a way that is not only inscribed by the proximity of her body (in occupying space and rejecting the entry to the room) but also is about building her embodiment around the material condition of the habitus in her everyday life creating her boundaries. As Thapan (2005, p.09) writes, 'We are empowered through our bodies and the practical, material conditions of our everyday lives serve as markers of our embodiment as much as they do for the ground on which resistance, change, and transformation are articulated and become possible.'

Sarita's story validates that 'power' does not control the subject through systems of coercive force; instead, it supervises and observes, and gradually measures the body's behavior and interactions to produce knowledge for oneself and others (Foucault, 1977; 1980). The space surrounding one determines the limits and restrictions of the body and within the subject's body that is lived through spatiality, interpersonal relations, and cultural representations (Grosz, 1994, p. 80). We only grasp the idea of external space through certain relations to our body or corporeal schema and react accordingly (Crossley, 2001). The conditioning towards a feminine body living through the rituals in everyday lives produced an idea of the politics of spaces for these adolescent girls. However, I realized that Sarita was not alone in this path of not being allowed to occupy a given space in the room during the ritual, as every single girl I interacted with through the study had been through the same and had ways their bodies interpreted the context.

Anjana (17 years old): *"I can clean and set everything, flowers, fruits, and incense sticks for the ritual. After the offering, the place where the sacrifice happens is cleaned by my mother; and we can*

only enter the room after that. The sacrificed food is not allowed to us at all. However, I love eating a lot. This one time, they made khichdi with meat; I wanted to eat when everyone ate. I thought I would eat a part of it but was not allowed; the moment I touched it to taste a bit, my mother said just put that thing down in a stern voice. I even took the khichri in my hands and wanted to eat as my mouth was watering. I never had got the opportunity, but I would have eaten it if I got a chance."

The body is essential in mediating the relationship between people's self-identity and social identity. The social meanings attached to particular bodily forms and performances lived through the bodies tend to become internalized and exert a powerful influence on an individual's sense of self and feelings of inner worth (Shilling, 2003). Embodiment, therefore, is not merely about 'being-in-the-body' or behavior but about the experience and the socialized subjectivity where the habitus takes the way an agent is involved in the structured domain of practice (Crossley, 2001). The denial of sacrificial meat to adolescent girls clearly understood the spaces gendered feminine bodies occupied post-puberty until their marriage. Anjana's desire to eat the food, if no one had seen it, represents the fact that 'gender is performatively produced' and real only to the extent it is performed when we take up a role that's crucial to the gender that we are (Butler, 1990). Butler also writes in *Gender Trouble* that for something to be performative, it has to produce a repetitive series of facts that collectively consolidate the person's image. Hence, the sacrificial portion of meat denied to the young girls is a rite of passage and a step towards the making of the 'docile body' that is performing the roles of the ideal feminine gender (Foucault, 1980), which is publically showcased and repeated over and over.

Over time I realized that rituals played a fundamental role in the social construction of gender lived through bodies connecting food with property rights and mobility. Similar rituals in the communities discriminated against women on the spaces they would occupy and the food they could consume. Just like the offering to the *Bongas* there was the *Gada parab*, where men would collect rice and tiny chicken from every household and collectively meet at a riverbank to cook. Women were strictly prohibited from participating in or consuming any food from that cooking.

Interestingly, no such ritual practices were done solely by women or girls in the community. Girls would say, "*Since early childhood, we are not allowed to participate in the ritual, and that has been the norm. If there is an excess quantity of food that would remain even after all men and boys have been fed well, still they will not bring anything back; they will eat everything there and finish it.*"

Rituals like this make it understandable that women and girls do not grasp space directly but through bodily situations (Niranjana, 2001). It also brings us to the pertinent questions of mobility and gender and the construction of femininity. One of the common structures of Durkheim's construction of rituals in religion does mention a select group of people, mainly excluding women and children, going to a special secretive place to perform a defined set of actions related to a sacred object (Durkheim, 1912). However, when we analyze the context through dimensions of a feminist understanding, these secretive arrangements highlight a patriarchal gendered attribute attached to the women and girls and their lived bodies. The politics of food and who gets the portion of maximum nutrition in the household is a larger debate that women have been fighting for a long time. Bordo pointed out that 'the rule for the construction of femininity requires that women learn to feed others, not the self, and to construe any desires for self-nurturance and self-feeding as greedy and excessive' (Bordo, 1993 a).

Moreover, it is interesting to find that the spirits of several rituals in the Santhali communities are also designed in a way that tames and socializes women's bodies in a pattern of sacrifice and an ability to exercise power over food and nutrition as core components of gender. As Durkheim (1912) mentioned, the practice of religion represents society's 'collective consciousness' through the rituals imparting a deep seated sentiment making the moral ideas compelling to follow, with 67% of adult women in rural Jharkhand suffering from anemia (NFHS 2015-16) and the history being consistent with that²⁰, it makes us question which bodies suffer the burden of rituals that include shares of nutrition in it and what values women, and their bodies hold in any given society.

4.5: Menstruating Bodies and the Rite of Passage:

"There is a leech inside my vagina!"

Those days I was collecting stories on experiences of the first period from adolescent girls to understand how female bodies and womanhood are normalized and regulated through menarche and menstruation. It was a hot Saturday afternoon in May 2016, and beneath a huge Banyan tree at the edge of the Ghormara village in Deoghar, it was an FGD that I was conducting with ten adolescent girls. Seventeen years old Fulmoni Hansda stood up during the session and volunteered to share experiences of her first period. She said, *"I went to take a bath in the river, came back, and saw something red and sticky in my skirt. I checked and saw that I was bleeding from my vagina. I thought a leech had gone inside my body through the vagina and would soon suck all the blood, and I would die. I did not tell anyone about this incident at home, and for the next five days, I almost stood beside a wall in the corner of a room and*

barely moved. I was scared of falling asleep, assuming that as soon as I sleep, I may die in sleep and never wake up."

Just when Fulmoni shared her story, there was a burst of laughter that roared in the session. When everyone was silent again and shared their own stories, I realized Fulmoni was not alone; a lot of adolescent girls from the community undergo the similar experience of their menarche through risk and fear of life where they too believed that they are going to die because either a leech or some terrible disease had taken over their body²¹. Jyoti Puri argues that it is a common phenomenon that women tend to assume the responsibility for the burden of menstruation where they think they have somehow brought this affliction of the event upon themselves where they did something wrong or in some way hurt themselves, and it is their problem since then (Puri, 1999, p. 50).

Menstruation is a biological phenomenon and a rite of passage for adolescent girls, but the lived experiences of women and girls are located in different spatiotemporal setups. Jyoti Puri writes that in much of the literature available in contemporary India, the female body is viewed through categories of tradition, modernization, and patriarchy. She also writes that the feminist literature on menarche and menstruation is a striking example of how rituals, taboos, and changing cultural beliefs at the onset of industrialization and modernization have perceived menarche and menstruation. However, she writes that these contemporary analyses do not reveal how the sexed or female bodies have been produced, shaped, and regulated women's bodily experiences (Puri, 1999, p. 44). Hence, this chapter's section narrates an understanding of menstruation from a mundane perspective of everyday life and the bodily experiences it shapes for the Adivasi adolescent girls studied through this ethnography.

Menstruation is called *hormo-baha* in the Santhali language. Though with the advent of Sanskritization, many young girls call it *mahina* and *mahavari* in Hindi, the word *hormo-baha* is still prevalent among girls. *Hormo* means body, and *Baha* means flower, so technically menstruation means the blossom of the body. *Baha parab* is also the spring festival among the Santhals, where the whole community cheers up, sings, and celebrates the new bloom of the season. However, girls had little knowledge of menstruation beyond the beautiful Santhali name for menstruation. Adolescent girls experience menstruation and 'first blood' with fear where the narratives young girls carry with them, the moments of disbelief, getting used to one's blood, and what needs to be done and undone to embrace the new way of life becomes an embodied reality that one carries with them the entire life (Dammery, 2016). Adolescent girls in the communities experienced their first periods from a lack of education and ignorance about puberty and their body's changes. Menstruation is a natural bodily function, but puberty was an ambiguous phase in the lives of the adolescent girls interviewed over time. It was an uninformed phenomenon for girls. Without an understanding of the body and space to talk about it, girls in this region experienced menstruation as a social stigma that should never be spoken about. This section of the chapter does not discuss the science and the medical theory related to menstruation. Instead, this section is to understand the mundane of menstruation and discover how young girls in the tribal community embodied the myth of blood and their bodies through stigma, taboo, knowledge, and relationship with their mothers.

My discussions around gender, sexuality, and body started with a more sanitized context of menstruation. I call it sanitized over here because, by 2015-16, menstrual activism was having its moment in India. Several NGOs took up the work on menstrual awareness, and schools wanted more and more sessions on it. By 2018, a

movie named *Padman*²² got released, and by 2019 a movie named *'Period. End of Sentence'* got an Oscar on the global platform. However, the association of period blood in different cultures and India was still linked with pollution and bodies associated with dirt, risk, and fear.²³ Therefore, it was necessary to document one of the most important rites of passage for these young girls and their adolescent bodies through their lens in the community- 'menstruation.'

Chris Bobel applies the Foucauldian notion of discourse to rightly point out what has been spoken about in the discourse on menstruation and what has been silenced. She identified that a majority of the problem of menstruation is reduced to a complex set of issues around material problem and solution that starts and ends with menstrual products and managing periods; however, the social and structural understanding is beyond that (Bobel, 2019)²⁴. Menstruation is always spoken in the purview of taboo, hygiene, and 'managed bodies' where the understanding of sexuality and embracing the bodily changes around menstruation remains a silenced topic. The adolescent girls during FGDs would share,

"When we get periods, in a few days, the body starts glowing, and then everyone says that the person is looking pretty. The villagers claim that by seeing the glow on someone's face, they would understand that the girl is menstruating and that it is time to bring a match for her."

Others shared, *"After the first time we get our periods, the body blooms, and boys are attracted to the young girls. So post our periods, we are asked not to meet boys or loiter freely because what if something happens?"*

Most of the time, it was beyond blood, and other bodily attributes which caused concern, fear, and threats as menstruation often brings an ambiguity around it (Douglas, 1966). From our earliest awareness of menstruation until it stops, it is common to ask women to be mindful and conceal the menstrual process by leaving no bloodstains visible anywhere, as menstruation is dirty and disgusting and should be hidden (Puri, 1999, p. 107). The ambiguity of menstruation and the bodily changes in puberty, therefore, tends to raise curiosity and a way young girls could gauge the surveillance in society on their sexuality and link to the advent of love and sexual relationships.

So when the adolescents described menstruation, they focused on how it is linked to the role of reproduction and the body in public purview post menstruation on getting ready to be married and conceive. In the Southern part of India, the entire process of the first menstruation is ritualized with a public gathering. Girls are blessed during the occasion with the readiness for marriage and childbearing to convey at once the cultural status of the girl and how her life will be spaced out in the future. However, Seemanthini Niranjana (2001) writes that though the first menstruation is an auspicious event, the menstruating girl herself is seen as 'polluting.' Hence, celebrating the bodies as sexual and reproductive has an underlying patriarchal connotation, marking the value of the female bodies (Fingerson, 2006). It is an oxymoron on how menstruation is a single phenomenon where girls are asked to take pride in becoming women with the sexual and reproductive power she hones post their periods in one hand and also, on the other hand, they must take care in hiding the same evidence of their bleeding from their family, friends and even strangers on the street (Young, 2005).

When it comes to myths and taboos, the Santhali girls interviewed during the study shared only a few of them that prevailed in the community. The taboos that I grew up with while staying in a privileged and upper caste *Savarna* household on not

touching the drinking water or the vessels, not entering the kitchen or praying to God, not eating at the dining table, and having the entire bed sheets and curtains in the house washed and cleaned every month as a ritual ceremony of cleansing were not anything closer that girls had to practice in the community.²⁵ Though there was a discussion in the community that girls should not loiter around freely post periods (which had a lot to do with controlling one's sexuality), the labor produced by these bodies was still not discounted during menstruation and the pubertal girl and her body needed to be tamed to produce labor. Santhali girls in Pakur and Deoghar shared that they had no restrictions on working in the fields, fetching water for household chores, cooking food, and cleaning during their menstruation. They would often say, "*Who will work didi, if we do not? So we are allowed to do everything.*" Several cultures across the globe have restricted menstruating bodies from performing mundane household work and occupying spaces they are otherwise allowed. The *Hormo Baha* among the Santhals was not associated with the myths because the daily labor that girls and women brought into the fields and households was the primary source of survival. It is interesting to analyze that the basis of discarding the myth was not knowledge around menstruation or awareness of body rights, as those were still passive bodies formed to perform the gendered feminine requirement of producing mundane labor. During the harvest season, a girl from the community would get rupees two hundred to rupees two hundred fifty for a day's labor in the field. I realized that these are laborious bodies, and not working for a day during menstruation can take away a day's meal for the family with no pay. The concept of sacred and profane are not only patriarchal but also have their deep roots in privilege. There is always a struggle to define and develop the appropriate bodily forms. Such forms are the most valued in society at a given time. The corporeal

setup, therefore, adds definitions to what is counted as a legitimate body and is very much based on the 'physical capital' that performs (Shilling, 2008).

In one of the schools I visited in Pakur during a meeting with government officials and children from schools, the debate was about having a 'waste bin' for menstrual products. Adolescent girls shared that they skipped school during periods because there was no way they could change their pads in school, and it was problematic for them to spend around eight hours a day without changing pads with travel time included. The government officials, during the meeting, asked the young girls to change their sanitary pads in any dark unused rooms in the school and keep the sanitary pads with them because sanitary pads thrown in the dustbins would be unhygienic for the official cleaning person to clean them. Schools, workplaces, and public institutions often assume a standard body with standard needs as a body that does not menstruate. The message that the adolescent girls received in the schools to cover up their menstruation or change in dark rooms, or not have a person to clean up menstrual waste added to a rite of passage on how young girls experienced periods in public from a very early age. Because other wastes though normalized, menstrual waste came with stigma and the idea of 'dirt' attached to it. The message that a menstruating woman is perfectly 'normal' entails a body that hides all signs of her menstruation. To be normal therefore is to be in a 'menstrual closet' as Young (2005, p. 106-111) points out, where the default body is the one that does not bleed from the vagina. Therefore, the idea of 'dirt' is a cultural construct used to maintain a particular worldview of social organizations (Douglas, 1966). So the context of menstruation in the Santhali community is not the one that can surpass the context of the cultural construct of menstruation, as no bodily experience gets exempted from the strategies of power. The

most elaborate discourse and pollution theories exist in places with ambiguities and contradictions in most social systems (Puri, 1999).

Girls post their menstruation, were asked very firmly to abide by one myth in their community: not to pluck vegetables from the garden or enter the garden in the backyard of the house during their periods. Fearing that the plants and vegetables would decay and flowers would wither away if the girls touched the plants during their periods, they were asked not to touch them. However, adolescent girls in the community were inquisitive about these claims and often tried to test them secretly.

Arti (18 years old): "One time while menstruating, I entered the garden as there was no one in the house. I wanted to pluck some brinjals from the garden. I waited for several weeks after that secretly and did not say anything. I wanted to watch if the plant rotted or not. To my surprise, nothing happened!"

The menstrual lore that girls would continue from one generation to another would be that anything budding or growing is not to be killed or plucked during menstruation, or else it will die. Nevertheless, several other girls during the session would giggle at the story suggesting an incident from their life where they challenged the lore and touched the vegetables in the garden. Finding it rebellious enough to discover that none of the vegetables or plants withered after they touched them. It is interesting to notice that similar menstrual beliefs are reflected through traditions of many cultures from Italy to Uganda, which include not touching grapes or sauce or tomatoes and where girls were also told not to climb trees because it was believed that they would rot or wither away (Knight, 1991). These similarities across cultures spoke about one unanimous aspect of the menstruating body as 'polluted bodies' during menstruation, and the surveillance people and culture embody of the menstruating

bodies as tainted bodies (Bobel, 2019). With the impure and tainted bodies, there was always a connection of 'bad blood' that these bodies would produce, and girls would often share, "*we produce heat every month, and the bad blood comes out of our body.*"

The association between the myth of the 'bad blood' getting released from the body every month so that new blood gets formulated was a part of a strong narrative among girls when they spoke about their periods. Not only girls but the ASHAs I interacted with would sometimes mention the *bad blood* in the body that needs to get released to keep women calm. Living with a particular body that produces bad blood every month talks loudly about how girls imagine their bodies to be. It was interesting when girls often said that nothing terrible in men's bodies needs to be released so they do not menstruate. There is always a prominent thought of being a 'lesser body' and self-surveillance in keeping the self-censoring gaze alive in oneself (Foucault, 1977). The menstrual blood of girls, even from the Adivasi communities, was associated with pollution in some way or another. The emphasis, therefore, remains on the menstrual blood and the perceived dirtiness around it of the bodies being considered secondary and polluted. There are several attempts to regulate female bodies through everyday bodily practices and experiences, which Susan Bordo mentioned as 'the direct grip' of culture on the body, and menstruation is one such experience (1993 a). The 'direct grip' suggests that the bodily lessons we learn through routine affect our relationship with our bodies politically. In contrast, it also calls for the strategies of self-surveillance and self-monitoring required to make docile bodies (Puri, 1999, p. 46).

Hence it is proved that when we talk about dignity in menstruation, we talk about how well we manage menstruation by not talking about it, which brings us to the point of investigation around the 'channel of communication' for adolescent girls in the Santhali communities in this part of the chapter. The dialogue and knowledge shared

on menstruation between the mother and the daughter was not common in the communities I interacted with throughout the study. There were many such instances where during sessions on menstruation conducted with the mother and the daughter, a mother would get to know for the first time, maybe even two years' post, the menarche about the periods of their daughters. In most cases, they would share that it was the first time they even got to talk about menstruation in a closed room. In that room where the girls shared their experiences of menstruation in front of their mothers, it was as if a social contract had been breached in revealing their menstrual status because it was something that needed to be kept hidden. The girls would say they felt shy to share their menarche with their mothers as they always heard from others never to share their periods with anyone and hide it. Girls always reached out to their friends and their brother's wife first, not their mothers' post their menstruation. Menstruation was a lonely discovery among girls until a sister or sister-in-law or brother's wife would come up and lend some information. In the Adivasi communities, the *Gothuls* or the dormitories (Mohanty, 1987) and the system around embracing puberty and sexuality was a part where friends were supposed to stay together and learn about sexuality and society. Parents were not the sole members from whom they learned wisdom; instead, it was learned in a common methodology through a rite of passage where parents did not have much ownership of puberty or the sexuality of young girls and boys. In several cultures in South Asia, specifically South India in India and Srilankan culture, one's mother notices the menarche first. They then keep the daughter inside a room until they call the washing woman, who seems to be a facilitator for the rites of passage, comes and showers the girl and takes off her clothes and even any precious belongings like jewellery. Then after seven days of staying in the room, like a blossomed flower, she is produced amongst the relatives and neighbours for a ceremony (Dammery, 2016).

So the distance between mothers and daughters in a ritualistic pattern around menstruation is found in several other cultures. However, in the current scenario, the absence of dialogue between a mother and daughter was not solely patriarchal but was linked to knowledge. As in most cases, mothers did not indulge in conversation during periods because they managed it in isolation during puberty without much knowledge about menstruation. The reason for silence between a mother and her daughter, therefore, is related to the context of knowledge and experience of their own. In current times, girls have learned to manage and control the flow of menstrual blood so that it remains within the realm of the private and individual body more than observing hygiene, cleanliness, or understanding changes in their bodies. Menstruation is new and has a significant impact on girls and their lives, but for women, it has already become a part of their routine (Fingerson, 2006), and it was assumed that young girls would learn to hide it and manage it, too on their own. The social construction of the feminine gendered bodies revolved so much around teaching the perfect form of labor and aspiring for a marriage that other rites of passage take a back seat.

Sonamoni (16 years old): *"We do not discuss it. Maybe my mother knows about my periods as I am already so grown up, but she does not tell me anything, and we have never spoken about it. On days I tell her I do not want to pray, she agrees without asking why."*

The embodied self of Sonamoni and other girls like Sonamoni has learned to isolate her mother from the conversation. At the most basic level, girls expressed feelings of both concealment²⁶ and shame, where much of the work that girls perform to manage menstruation is done to hide the evidence from others that they are menstruating. The girls continued to follow, lived through the cultural prescription, and kept menstruation concealed because the 'standard body' is a male body, and men do

not menstruate (Fingerson, 2006). Though menstruation still tends to be known by that beautiful word *hormo-baha*, the context of shame, silence, and dirt remains attached to it among adolescent girls in the community. Moreover, the knowledge that bodies that manage their period are 'good bodies' and any menstruators failing to do so has a troubled body at risk remains prevalent (Bobel, 2019). Puri (1999) pointed out that nowhere are the contradictions of the private and controlled nature of the female body more evident than the onset of menstruation in the life of a young girl.

4.6: On Marriage Rituals as the Rites of Passage:

Mother: Do not roam around decked up like this;

People will look at you and will blame you,

That you are always going out whenever you want.

People will look at you and will blame you,

Oh, daughter! Who will marry you if you listen to no one?

Daughter: Do not worry. Look around and search for the one mother with a golden house, and that person will marry me.²⁷

The hymns sung during marriage set the scene for the other girls in the community, teasing them about their loitering and the prospect of marriage and being ready to be married off soon. Other than teasing, the songs were about the bride praising her on how great her life will become after marriage with happy moments, and sometimes it also spoke about the hard work she had to do in her in-law's place. To understand women and their narratives in Indian society, the embodiment perspective is undoubtedly essential as a woman is located in a physical and psychological space as much as in the cultural and social domain (Thapan, 2009). The above-mentioned song shares a moment on the uncertainty of marriage because of the girl's unruly

mobility and the fact that her corporeal setup should be focused on marriage and nothing else since she has grown up. This song is also about how a better future and a wealthy family are waiting somewhere who will marry the girl off for a prosperous life. This small encounter brings in the practicality of the mother-daughter relationship through a song where the woman asks her daughter not to leave the house and ensure control of the 'docile body' in the making (Foucault, 1977) worthy of a regulated life. The social reproduction of society involves the social reproduction of appropriate bodies, and the underlying 'emotion work' is a rite of passage in itself (Shilling, 2003). The section of the chapter narrates the lived experiences of young girls and the rituals and sociocultural discourse associated with the rites of passage in birthing and marriage.

On the day of the marriage, the groom's family will arrive and put a vermillion mark or *tilak* on the bride's forehead. The groom's family will bring a big basket which girls call *khacha* (a basket), and a *sari* for the bride. The matchmaker will get three young men, preferably younger brothers of the groom, and enter the room where the bride and her family will be sitting. The bride will wear the *sari* and sit in the *khacha* or the basket, the matchmaker gets a piece of a *dhoti* for this ritual, and then the young men will take the bride outside in that big basket. The basket ritual tends to be a significant rite of passage as bodies are always understood within a spatial and temporal context and corporeality (Grosz, 1994). This ritual, however, is only for the first marriages of the girls; if it is the second marriage of the girl or the girl has eloped with someone and was not socially married or had children before the social marriage, she would not be allowed to sit on the basket. It is okay for a woman to leave her in-laws if there is not enough land to provide for her or her husband has an affair with someone or remains drunk always. However, the second time during her marriage, there will not

be any basket ritual anymore; the in-laws will just put *tilak* and take her. Ironically if a man marries for the second time or even more, there will still be the *basket* ritual. In a traditional marriage, the bride's body serves as a ritual gift helping to unite two families; thus, the virginal purity of the woman's body plays an important role. Though it is not a spoken phenomenon, the ritual with the basket is a visible mark of a symbolized identity of controlled sexuality and chastity.

Sonamoni (16 years old): *"I do not understand why only girls have to provide the test of purity by sitting in the basket. Boys do not have to prove anything as no such rituals show their marital status during the marriage."*

Hoponmoni (18 years old): *"When tribal men marry from other castes, they are mostly accepted, but when a girl does the same, everyone considers her dead, and her families organize a Bhoj considering her dead."*

During our casual discussions, adolescent girls questioned the base of the ritual because what is under surveillance here is the woman's body and the context of 'purity.' After all, the superiority of men over women and high caste over low caste are found embedded in folk ideas through innate and acquired knowledge on understanding gendered bodies (Still, 2014, p. 30). Hence, along with the basket rituals, the fact that girls were marrying in 'castes' other than tribes also had several rituals linked to the context of purification. *Bhoj*, or a public display of a feast signifying the daughter's death, is organized, portraying the fact that it is a gendered responsibility of women and girls to secure the family's good name and that the daughter has brought shame to the community. However, if a man marries a woman from a different caste or tribe, no such rites are organized, and men and boys can easily surpass it through their claims in

the patriarchy. This ritual portrays patriarchy to its core, signifying that, like the upper caste control and surveillance over the bodies in the reproductive age, there was different yet similar contextualization in the tribal communities to control and surveillance being etched through the woman's body portraying rules of reproduction and marriage. The context of the sacred-profane dichotomy has always remained a disputed area of discussion because the notion of sacred as a transcendent reality is the closest to the participant's own experience. Bodies in every community, therefore, have always been generators of meaning when they are engaged in encounters that constantly display information about the embodied body and the message it signifies (Shilling, 2003).

4.7: The Ailing Body as the Rite of Passage

Bodies in literature from Bordo's (1993a; 1990) 'Woman Who Doesn't Eat,' 'Reading the Slender Body and Other' to Orbach (1988) and Chernin's (1983) analyses of the 'distort bodies' and 'tyranny of slenderness'²⁸ respectively, represented a popular kind of feminist literature restricted by the media, diet, and fitness industries. It was interesting to understand the lived realities of the subaltern bodies and the coping mechanisms for illness and disability in everyday life, which did not fit much into this spectrum of study. Girls would meet the *jhola-chaap* doctors or the quacks, who often would get them medicines and know the community's deepest secrets. The ASHAs would share how the quacks dealt with every detailed knowledge on unwanted pregnancy, abortions, and issues on delayed menstruation. During an FGD, girls would talk about a quack they met recently for health-related concerns. Immediately they would burst into laughter; there was a sense of shame in their expressions every time they accepted they met a quack. However, they would also share, " *there is no*

accessibility for an alternative most of the time when we look for doctors or ASHA/ANM didis helping us with reproductive health." The countless quacks with pretentious degrees would do the work as ordinary people will not have many choices, and availabilities of doctors nearby as to go outside the villages and look for doctors far in the main town gets troublesome. Hence, their choices of doctors depend on the availability and accessibility of the doctors (Sainath, 1996).

This section of the chapter includes three different narratives of three different adolescent girls I interacted with in Pakur and Deoghar dealing with their bodies in sickness and bodies in disability. All these three stories reflect the embodied collective reality of the other girls in similar settings exercising in a similar setup.

Serina (15 years old): "Yes, last year (2017) August, there was a blood clot in my brain, and I got sick because of that. I did not know much about what had happened. Later I heard from others that my mother came to my room one fine morning and started calling me to wake up, but I did not respond. She then called everyone, and they took me to the doctor."

Serina was a stout little girl from a village named Daldali in Deoghar. She had a squinted left eye and loads of *tabeez* (amulets) in her arms. After days of being unconscious, when Serina woke up a few months ago, she saw all of these amulets in her hand with roots and small sacks wrapped together and wanted to throw them, but she had to keep them at her family's request. The body's psychical interiors are intertwined with the social inscription of bodily processes established outside. The mind accords with the changing social meanings attributed to the body through structured historical, social, and cultural particularity embedded in social encounters (Grosz, 1994). Hence, starting with the amulets, Serina also felt that since her illness,

her family members have more control over her body and mobility as they constantly ask her whereabouts. Moreover, the neighbours have told her many times that a witch has possessed her because she loiters around to places at her own will. All these experiences have made Serina hate her body more every day. Above all, since she got sick, discussions have been happening in her house to get her married soon. However, Serina thinks that no one might want to marry her currently because of the unknown medical issue in her brain. There was a moment of silence in the discussion before Serina shared that she wanted to marry a person who is in service, not one who works in the field. She would say, *"I have to work less, not on the fields anymore, and will have a good quality of life. I might even be staying in an office quarter."* Young girls from the tribal land did not want their lands anymore, and they wanted to join the service or marry others who were joining the service (Dias, 2019) in the hope of a better life where there would be less labor in the field that they have to undertake daily. Clandria Still, while explaining Dalit woman's choices, writes, 'It is all too easy to dismiss Dalit women's preferences as a blind embrace of values that degrade them. It could be that poor Dalit women are logically assessing the limited alternatives available to them. For a Dalit woman, life as a housewife is more favorable to the physical strain and exploitation associated with agricultural wage labor' (Still, 2014).

Serina's wish to marry a person in service is her aspiration for a good life, moving a step up the social scale, and her logical assessment of her ailing body with a limited capacity to labor with the embodied illness. For Serina, her life with a man having a service and not agricultural land is a way to discard the physical strain women and their bodies associate with the land throughout history. Serina, in her story, also shared that the one good thing that happened to post her illness was how amidst all this pain, she was but refrained from the hard work she once put in on the ground. She

would share with a witty smile, *"I cannot stand under the sun anymore, and everyone asks me to rest and not work. I can demand anything from my brother's wives, and they get it done without questioning anything."* For her, this unknown illness was an opportunity or a rite of passage to manipulate the gendered symbolism of labor associated with socially constructed bodies. Serina was able to re-establish a form of coherent re-embodied identity despite the crisis they encountered during the illness giving new meanings to her life from the ones already present (Corbin & Strauss, 1988). Turner writes that diseases are not simply invasions of an environment by any alien entity, and often a person appropriates their illness as their individuality. 'We express our agency in terms of our interpretation and adoption of disease and illness in the sense that the migraine attack becomes my migraine and the gouty leg becomes my special mode of walking' (Turner, 2008, p. 200). Serina's story, therefore, emphasizes the importance of human agency and consciousness even through disease and ailment.

There was a fear of rejection and self-consciousness about internalizing social stigmas on bodies that were not appropriate to the social standards, the obese, the fat, and the unattractive (Bess, 1997). Every person on a sick role or with a disability had a temporary part of functioning to minimize the effects of illness on the productive capacity of the individuals in the societies (Parsons, 1991). A distance exists between the cultural images and the physical realities that impairment and disability carry. The mechanisms of the organic body do not entirely determine these experiences however are shaped by cultural meanings associated with health and illness in a corporeal situation. Chronic illness and disability, therefore, present circumstances where people become conscious of their bodies and reflect upon them in ways that may or may not be on their terms. Nevertheless, studying people's experiences with chronic illness and disability helps us understand the fragility of our bodies and appearances and how these

are reflected through our lived experiences. The physical milieu and the neighborhoods are vital, as the location is always more than the physical place and reflects a 'spatialization' of social relations (Niranjana, 2001). Nineteen years old Durshila Baski and her story of living through disability had her share of embodied lenses that governed her. When I first met Durshila in Pakur, she was doing *nipai-potai* (layering the floor with mud) in a vast courtyard of her house, wearing a pale yellow sari. The huge courtyard had everything from fishnets to shells and a green field opening in the front with mustard grown in it. The courtyard smelled of dried fish, and loads of *sal* leaves were drying in a side. In another corner, there was a heap of unfinished *pattal* or bowls made of leaves to sell for feasts held during marriages. It was a November morning with a clear sky when we did the meeting; Durshila was alone in the house. I asked her why she was wearing a sari at home as other unmarried girls wear a skirt, and she replied slowly that she loved to wear a *sari*. Durshila left her studies to post the fifth standard and did not go to school, a majority of girls from her community got married gradually, and she also dropped out, unwilling to go to school because of the pressure of working in her home with seven siblings. When we discussed marriage, she shared that she was never married but in a faint voice. *"No one has come yet; I do not think anyone will take me home anymore. I am getting old. I feel bad that mehmaani, for other girls in the village, comes so early, but nothing has come yet for me. So now I depend on my brother and still stay at his house."*

Arthur Frank (1995) argued that the dialogues ill people engage in with others have the potential to 'create empathetic bonds between themselves and their listeners, and there are integral accounts of pain and human realities hidden beneath it.' Durshila speculates that staying at her brother's house will bring in a huge quarrel later, and she wants to marry any man who brings a match for her as she said she just wanted to get

married. Durshila was tired of the relentless chores in her house, as she depended on her brother and his wife and was responsible for the enormous labor in the house. Durshila had to take care of the entire house, cook, clean, fetch water, and dry the fish; she did the *nipai-potai* and placed cow dung on the wall to dry for later. Moreover, when all these were done, she finally lent her hand in making the *pattals* sold in the local market.

I regularly visited Durshila's village and met the ASHA for various health schemes for adolescents and women. One day on our way to an Anganwadi center, she told me that some boy was studying in Pakur and he came to the village during some festival. During the festive dance, somehow, Durshila started screaming that the boy touched her inappropriately and pulled her sari. Her family then held the guy and created a ruckus, and later the next day, his family was summoned, and Durshila was married off and sent with them. The ASHA *didi* shared that Durshila could not use her right hand for any work since her childhood and was a girl with a disability that her inlaws had no idea during the marriage. When Durshila reached their house, the family figured out the disability and started torturing her, they gave her no food, and no one would talk to her, and when she finally had to return to her maternal home with her life back. It has already been five years since Durshila returned, and since then, she pulled a rumor about her in the village. Several people from her village said she must have tricked the guy and falsely accused him of molesting her during the dance, as her family wanted her to get married somehow and planned it together. Durshila has been living with this accusation for years with the hope that she would be married again, as one can only reflect and form images of oneself from the imaginary perspectives of others²⁹. Therefore, Durshila wore a sari at home, but it was interesting that even after several meetings, Durshila never shared her life experiences with me. What stood out for me

then was the location where her body was situated, along with the neighborhood and the surveillance she must have been taking up for a long time. Durshila's marriage was the rite of passage which was both a performance and a protest (Brodwin, 1992; Shilling, 2008) through her body with disability. The fear of the chaotic future, as what is ugly about the body is hers alone, prevented her from fully inhabiting her body (Wolf, 1991), and marriage was the only rite of passage to legitimize her femininity and identity. Her monotonous, strenuous work at home, also, legitimizes her disabled body, maintaining the unflawed and subjective experience of inferiority.

The dramaturgical body is embedded in a social practice of performing the tradition of the 'front' and the 'backstage,' where the human body has to be constantly and systematically produced, sustained, and presented in everyday life. The body is, therefore, a dynamic entity realized and actualized through various socially designed regulated activities. Hence, people do not merely 'have' a body but actively 'do' a body that is crafted, negotiated, manipulated, and ritualized (Goffman, 1956; Turner, 2008; Waskul & Vannini, 2006). Grosz's concept of 'volatile bodies' defines subjectivity as constantly shifting between the inner psychic worlds and the exterior forces of power, and she also stresses that there is a capacity of bodies to 'act and react' as centers of desire and agency (Grosz, 1994). When nineteen years old Bharti Hansda in Ghormara village of Deoghar was one of the volunteers for a health initiative run by NEEDS, we would often sit back post work and talk about our lives. When I showed keen interest in learning more about her Bharti would smile and say, *"Oh didi! Of all the people in the world, you are interested to know about my life. I feel so shy talking about myself. I have never spoken about anything. I always keep listening; being a woman, I think I always have to listen."*

Bharti was married in 2010, and it has been six years since then, but she has been unable to have any biological children even if they tried a lot. It is a rumor in the community that she is sick or maybe possessed by some witch.³⁰ Nevertheless, Bharti is under much pressure to produce a child, or else her husband is on the verge of marrying another woman. As per Bharti, her husband loves her a lot but is bound by the family pressure to get an heir for the land. Thus, her husband proposed that even if he got a new woman for the house, Bharti could still stay with them. However, in an angry tone during the interview, Bharti shared, *"Rather than planning all these, he should do something wisely. He never took me to the doctor and blamed it for my problem. How will I believe that if he has never taken me to the doctor?"*

Every time she demanded to see a doctor, her in-laws and the villagers told her that everyone bears a child normally and no one in the community ever needed to go to a doctor. They later termed her a woman with an acute illness incapable of performing motherhood. Bharti was tired of listening to the same thing and experiencing her body as an alien. Her body mediated a relationship between self-identity and social identity shared through embarrassment and stigma (Shilling, 2003). All the added stress of delivering a child has made Bharti lose a lot of body weight and made her very thin over the years. Few people have started saying that some witch has possessed her; others speculated that during her marriage, someone must have pushed a *baan* (a tool in witchcraft) to make her life miserable.

Bharti's burdened passive body symbolized powerlessness, and she aspired to attain freedom only when she could produce a child. At times she was scared about seeing the doctor and getting herself diagnosed because Bharti struggled with the reality of her femininity. Bharti assumed that her body was not as 'docile' and nurturing as it is supposed to be living up to the feminine expectations (Bartky, 1997). Bharti

wants to leave her husband and her in-laws' place but has always been unable to do that, imagining her fate outside her house. She assumed nothing would change in her life because she would be denied property rights or land in her maternal house. Even if she marries another man and cannot produce a child there, the cycle of bearing the ailing body from one door to the other will continue. However, unsure about the reason behind her body's ability to produce a child, given that her husband never took her to the doctor, she felt caught up in the myth of an induced dilemma. Women and their bodies always pay one of the greatest symbolic and material prices to figure out and negotiate their existence in it and constantly position the context of femininity in their own way (Firestone, 1971). Bharti's innate wish for motherhood as a rite of passage, her anxiety about losing control of her own body that has been unsupportive with childbirth, the unsure future of her husband marrying someone else and the surveillance on her body being called unwell altogether reiterate the context of childbirth as an embedded identity that every girl in the community bore with them as a reflection of an ideal healthy body, and there is in no context an alternative. Embracing the ailing body and performing every little part towards maintaining it with acts one would have otherwise never done to the body is a rite of passage in getting to know the ailing body. Bharti's embodiment of performing the phenomenon of birthing a child was so powerful that she went to every natural healer across religions and was even ready to convert to Christianity in search of the true identity of her body. Living through the body was considered unproductive, and owning up to every proposed act from the Godmen and quacks, whoever assured her that she would be able to deliver a baby by performing some rituals, was a rite of passage in itself on how she perceived the body. Many healers in the past shared with her that she needed to hold a sacrificial ritual with goats and chicken, and only then would she be able to get pregnant. However, Bharti's

father-in-law was a drunkard person spending all his money on himself and was not ready to make the sacrifice or spend any money on Bharti. Bharti's anger and hatred towards her body were also linked to these external factors, for example, her father-in-law, as she believed she would be able to deliver a baby if the sacrificial ritual was performed. However, she felt helpless at the same time to decide on behalf of her own body because, in the patriarchal land, the decision-making capacity lay with her father-in-law.

Therefore, the intersection of space and location in identity construction is a complex network for ailing bodies. The construction of ailing bodies emerges not only from women and girls' experience of their embodied and gendered selves but also considers the 'personal as political' ability of the subjects to keep creating 'femininity' as a ritual or a way of being that bestows status and respectability.

4.8: Conclusion:

From menstruation to marriage, beauty, and the birthing of children, this chapter dealt with the repetitive rituals and the different rites of passage the bodies lived through in the social milieu, which shaped and reshaped bodies as identities and mediums of expression. Given that the various individuals in the spacio-temporal setup experienced their bodies through different rites of passage, summarizing the embodiment into a determined meaning was a complex interpretation. No homogenized image was presented throughout the chapter; however, certain specific measures of discipline and culture were highlighted that were considered the cause of embodied gender identities as per the finding. From Sarita's narrative on politics over bodies occupying spaces in celebrations around food and ancestral connect to Bharti's coming in terms of her body

being unable to give birth to a child contextualized how socio-temporal locations shaped the identity of the adolescent bodies studied through this research.

Rituals were not only consolidated over generations but were performed, inhabited, and experienced in various ways, which young girls started believing as their boundaries of bodies. In this understanding of the simultaneous constancy of habitus, the view is that the habitus is embodied and reflective through understanding and articulation (Shilling, 2008) and 'doing gender' with performances made and unmade in the experience of everyday life. Gender, therefore, is not only inscribed on our bodies but also breathes out its existence through our everyday lives, becoming the very identity through which we situate our lives in space and location. Location is, therefore, critical to our understanding of embodiment and to understand how women use their bodies to survive societal demands.

Most of the time, we respond unconsciously to the social world's probabilities where behaviors are conditioned through fields, and our body reacts accordingly as history is codified into practice which bodies perform (Bourdieu, 1984). However, bodies are not built through rituals and rites of passage in socially constructed vacuums; bodies negotiate and manipulate in their everyday lives too. Therefore, it is crucial to study the body as an agency in its own 'lived-in' reality. Hence, the next chapter tries to collate the objective facts around bodies as agencies among the adolescents in the Santhal Parganas of Jharkhand, the bodies as agencies that negotiate and adjust to the 'biopower' of state, family, and societal norms accordingly.

CHAPTER 5

FINDING THE AGENCY IN THE BODY

5.1: Introduction

In 1991, on the festival of Holi, a rowdy group of TISCO employees molested a team of Adivasi women laborers on the construction site of the Companies Sports Stadium. These Ho women had joined hands and told these drunken workers that as their *Baa Parab* (festival of spring) was not yet performed in their village, they cannot join them in the Holi celebrations as it was a sacrilege otherwise. The TISCO workers forced themselves on the women by applying color on their breast and genitals and molested them' (Dias, 2012).

After the *Baa Parab* incident, there was a long legal battle between the Adivasi, the TISCO, and the State Administration. There were about fifteen people accused in the case, but even after two decades, the case is yet to get justice. As per Xavier Dias, someone who has followed the battle of the people of Noamundi¹ against the TISCO has experienced how the people who fought are today the unsung heroes of Jharkhand, and their wives and children are to date suffering. The abovementioned story portrays a question of agency and negotiating bodies associated with women with the economic empowerment that private and public organizations and institutions have brought for people in the Santal Pargana region in Jharkhand. In areas of poverty and hunger, women are deprived of definitions of rape, and domestic violence² and the need to study the manipulation, resistance, and negotiations associated with bodies has not been new but has been a long-drawn struggle. With the construction of the bodies and the everyday rituals discussed in length in the last two chapters, the acceptance, manipulation, resistance, and risks that form the bodies are the prime focus of this

chapter. This chapter considers the narratives of the young girls living under the existence of 'biopower' in the Santhali communities of Jharkhand but also negotiating with the agency in their ways lived through their bodies. Young girls grow up in socially constructed bodies, but bodies tend to defy the structure on several occasions as they do not grow in a vacuum. Resistance and risk also shape gendered identities and subjectivities, as we will identify the same in this chapter, because social norms and expectations not only inform the adolescents and constructs their bodies but also conflicts with one another in creating newer meanings to norms and situations, channelizing 'agency' through bodies. With the last two finding chapters focusing on the foundations of how bodies are constructed through rituals, rites of passage, land, and labor, this chapter tends to examine the agency associated with bodies. The primary discussion points in this chapter are the state affiliated policies that act as 'biopower' or 'biopolitics' on the one hand and the plethora of negotiations, resistance, and risk young girls exercise through their bodies in society on the other hand.

The imperative to be 'feminine' in all possibilities serves the interest of domination. However, as Bartky (1997) points out, there is little evidence that women of color or working-class women are generally less committed to the embodiment of ideal femininity than the more privileged ones. This chapter also explores how women in everyday activities seek power through resisting and accommodating the mainstream norms and the role the body plays in sustaining and challenging women's territory in a society where more is expected than a mere appropriation of labor. However, it is difficult to see on several theoretical levels how people can break out of the corporeal trajectories assigned to them, which are mostly governed by location, field, and *habitus* because *habitus* operates at a subconscious level or beyond the control of the will (Bourdieu, 1984). The emphasis on social reproduction in Bourdieu's work affects the

degree to which people can exercise agency as it portrays the body as primarily a bearer of external structures or cultural codes. However, in *Regulating Bodies: Essays in Medical Sociology* (1992), Turner notes that Bourdieu's work has little room for the phenomenological understanding of the 'lived body.' The agent, as per Bourdieu, is socialized in a 'field' through the different allocated roles and relationships in the context of their position in the field. These internalized relationships and habitual expectations, therefore, form *habitus* over time. However, Turner also identifies that the cultural representation of the body is historical; however, there lies an experience of embodiment that can only be understood by grasping the body as a lived experience. Constructionism does not allow us to analyze the phenomenology of the everyday world. The way the body provides a vocabulary for studying the human experience and agency in the body is sometimes beyond constructionism (Turner, 1992).

Agency in this chapter is an 'embodied identity' lived through the bodies collectively as a source of resistance, risk, and negotiations to understand how societal discourse is performed through bodies. The previous chapters have noted the values associated with motherhood and the importance of reproductive bodies, but there are lived realities beyond it. As Germaine Greer in *The Female Eunuch* mentions, 'Women must learn how to question the most basic assumptions about feminine normality in order to reopen the possibilities for development that have been successively locked off by conditioning....' (Greer, 1970, p. 4)

Structure operates in a controlled process at different levels of society. Shilling (2003) argues that the body is central to our ability to 'make a difference to intervene or to exercise 'agency' in the world, and our bodily emotions and actions are a fundamental source of 'social forms.' In contrast, proponents of the 'agency theory' consider that individuals as agency possess the ability to exercise their own free will

and make their own choices. However, instead of describing bodies and the capacity of human action being constrained by robust, stable societal structures like religion and political institutions on the one hand and as a function of individual expression of will, which is the agency, there is the 'structuration theory' developed by Giddens (1984). Giddens developed the concept of 'structuration,' where he argues that just as an individual's autonomy and agency are influenced by structure, structures are also maintained and adapted through the exercise of agency. Giddens critically analyzes that social action cannot be fully explained by the structure or agency theories alone. The social structures, therefore, are viewed as the products of individual action that are either sustained, discarded, or shaped by individual will rather than the one that is forced upon.

Therefore, resistance, risk, and sustainability can be alternatively described as rebellious, irrational, and deviant concerning young people (Rigakos & Law, 2009). For example, where femininity and female morality are once represented through socio-physical and cultural spaces (Niranjana, 2001, p. 89), some girls start taking pleasure outside cultural spaces and challenge the boundary between the public and the private. However, they bring with them the labels of respectable and non-respectable bodies associated with the context of privacy that women and girls are expected to perform (Phadke et al., 2011, p. 179). This chapter, therefore, talks about the unwanted mothers in society, the girls who liked sports, and the rebellious girls who liked loitering and questioning the societal norms through resistance, risk, and negotiations lived through their bodies. Because the body is a gendered social phenomenon in ways it is discussed, interpreted, and lived in the embodied social setup, and as Bordo (1993 a) describes, the body is a 'politically inscribed identity' too. The sense of being a woman is internalized through the double perspectives of being 'body as the object and

the body as the subject' (Das, 1988). The body is, therefore, always more than a tangible, physical and corporeal object wrapped in a skeleton with muscles and organs (Moore, 1998). Furthermore, the body as an object is inseparable from the body as a subject; instead, they are emergent from one another (Waskul & van der Riet, 2002, pp. 487-513). In the essay 'Role Play,' V. Geetha has a section on 'Do Roles Fit?' in her book foundational book *Patriarchy*, where being a female requires that she is patient, understanding, and compassionate, suppressing the contrary emotions. As an irritable mother is enormously guilty for not being gentle and patient; the timid man, as Geetha writes, on the other hand, cultivates a sense of inferiority for not being enough man (Geetha, 2002, p. 36). This chapter is an entry into understanding how socially constructed adolescent bodies lived through poverty, taboos, and norms intersect with personal feelings and takes up risk and resistance, resulting in a certain kind of action and inaction. This 'choice' is often referred to as an agency, and as per Giddens (1984), 'agency' is described as having a degree of free choice in the sense that they could also have acted otherwise. For example, an agent or actor's choices are circumscribed by social structures that restrict human thinking and action by limiting or influencing opportunities for choice. Sometimes, agents' structured choices have transformative effects on the structure itself (Van Reeuwijk, 2010, p. 08). Therefore, for structures to be reproduced and transformed and new meanings to be created requires continuous interaction between the adolescents' physical, social, and psychological processes.

Agency is when embodied individuals act upon their circumstances and do not simply accept norms that society offers as bodies themselves can be used in an agentic manner as they shape any forms of social interactions (Fingerson, 2006)³. Mahmood (2005) would say that if socialization and tradition casually contribute to one's desire to be enslaved, one is not acting autonomously at all but instead acting heteronomous

in viewing oneself and others simultaneously. 'Agency,' according to Mahmood's characterization of liberal agency, is understood as the capacity to realize one's interests against the weight of custom, tradition, transcendental will, or other obstacles. She also notices how norms are defined and assigned through coercive public policies, which go beyond public policies and liberties and rights. Power and resistance are, therefore, coextensive, as resistance will follow when power is exercised (Foucault, 1982). The normative labels marks bodies as female or feminine, but the processes of the societies are not that simple of women upholding hegemonic moral codes only; hence the question of women's agency comes in negotiating the terrains of bodily subjects through power and resistance (Niranjana, 2001). This chapter tends to highlight how beyond a 'reactionary' model of resistance, young girls negotiate their agency through their lived bodies through very mundane transformative practices (Thapan, 1995). Through power, mobility, sexuality, and more, this chapter mentions a few narratives on how risk, resistance, and negotiations coexisted in the spacio-temporal setting that girls inhabited. Decision-making is complex and involves a multitude of elements that influences the process. There is an individual psychological process in decision-making around risk, resistance, and acceptance, which is both dynamic and emotional, reported by social and situational influence. Agency, therefore, implies choices but also implies conflicting interests as there is always a context of 'morality' representing the 'good girl' associated with it, as we noticed in the previous chapters where a lack of self-control during adolescence is donned upon as a sin.

There is a theoretical model of 'individual temporal orientation' used in the conceptualization of 'agency' in this chapter. This model analyzes behavior, examining how goals and expectations, whether socially or personally, are informed by individual decision-making (Van Reeuwijk, 2010). The theoretical model of 'individual temporal

orientations' is based on the assumption that people usually do not make completely random choices; instead, they are guided by internalized socialization. Social norms and expectations such as gender roles are therefore internalized and become an important personal goal which is culturally informed and later conflicts when individuals exercise agency. Through this chapter, I aim to show how social norms and expectations inform and negotiate and how adolescents manage this conflict. Therefore, the sections in this chapter prioritize various individual stories navigating their agency through risk, resistance, and acceptance of the norms because the intention was not to generalize the patterns of agency in a given context. The temporal orientation of an actor in every section of this chapter is therefore portrayed as dynamic, simultaneously incorporating the presence of several state and society-specific demands that continuously refocuses through the changing contexts. Every story in this chapter highlights, on the one hand, how individual adolescent girls negotiate their lived-in realities through the same cultural norms and roles, at times performing as regulated bodies. On the other hand, this chapter also highlights redefined alternatives of the norms intertwined with each other. There is an emphasis on detailed individual stories in this chapter which, however, connects to a larger discourse of adolescent girls and their understanding of body and sexuality.

5.2: Sexuality, Risk, and the Loitering Bodies:

'Spaces' are not neutral grounds, nor are they equally designed for everybody; hence, space is not just given but is 'constructed' as an active participant in making a particular social order. In this social order, the context of loitering becomes significant because loitering blurs the boundaries of the social order (Phadke et al., 2011). This chapter section is about the embodied narratives of young girls who loitered unapologetically,

challenging the concept that being present in public without a purpose is deemed 'unfeminine.'⁴ In Why Loiter, Asef Bayat's description of 'Fun' is quoted where he describes it as an array of non-routine and joyful conduct involving playful art, music, sex, sports, speaking, laughing, and more. It is an act where individuals break free temporarily from the disciplined constraints of daily life, normative obligations, and organized power. So here, pleasure or fun is seen as threatening because it fundamentally questions the idea that women's presence in public space is only acceptable when they have a purpose and as if it violates the boundaries of public and private (Phadke et al., 2011, p. 113). Young girls in the community often said that post menstruation, they were asked not to meet boys because what if they indulge in some '*badmaashi*' (the collective term for being 'naughty')?

The terminology of 'being naughty' and the 'narrative of safety' around women's bodies is not about the accidents or injury in the body but is always about the popular public imagination of girls gaining more sexual agency through mobility (Phadke, 2011, p. 5). Hence many of the young girls from marginalized communities given a chance prefer to get married because that must be the only agency and the hope for a better life compared to the options of working as menial laborers and with compromised social freedom (Rao, 2009). While this seems to impose and promote larger disempowerment in general, discipline does bring power to these women (Bartky, 1997, p. 145). Adolescents often mentioned social influences about culturally normative ideas about good and bad behavior associated with sex. However, still, there was curiosity and an urge to manipulate settings and channel an agency through loitering in whatever way possible, in this case, the easiest being traveling to access open fields for toilets in the morning. Girls would form a group every morning to go to the end of the village ground for the day's toilet, where, for a few, that was the only

time for loitering and even meeting their boyfriends. During the sessions, girls would narrate how villagers would often ask them if other girls and boys were meeting as couples or not in secret places to get news. On the way to the toilet in the open fields, other younger children or siblings in the community would wait and guard them. Younger children would play these roles on secret dates for the couples and instead barter their loyalty on hiding the love affair with sweet treats.

The previous chapters highlighted that understanding gender, body, and sexuality has been influenced by the meanings and values attached to social norms. There is a complex set of, for example, the accessibility of mobile phones in the communities came with conditions where young girls usually never had complete access to mobile phones; they were always on the receiving ends of their brothers or parents. While conducting sessions on sex and sexuality in the community with NEEDS during my research, I would have to reach out to ASHA *didis* and use their mobile phones to share informative videos or online resources. So to reach out to girls, one had to undergo a layer of surveillance already that one had to cross. Chandmoni from Kherwa was seventeen years old during the interview. The year was 2017, and she was already in a relationship with her boyfriend since 2016, whom she accidentally got introduced over a "missed call" on the phone one day when she could grab the phone for a few moments when her mother was away for work. Since then, every day Chandmoni's mother went for a bath, she used to talk to the guy who was the embodiment of sexual pleasure.

Chandmoni (17 years old): *"Never before I received a call from a boy who would say my voice intoxicated him within a few minutes of talking and propose to me after that."*

Chandmoni went to meet her lover in local fairs fearlessly, and, to avoid the surveillance of local people, she even touched his feet, pretending to be some elder brother treated with respect⁵. In order to prevent being caught and punished, the courtships took place in secrecy as an agency and with hidden messages where dialogues were often short and direct and gestures that would prevent attracting attention and getting caught (Van Reeuwijk, 2010). Chandmoni would describe the guy as fair, from the same tribe, and doing some service, hoping that if they get married, she will shift to the quarter with him soon. Her risk-taking behavior here was to grab the phone daily to talk to her boyfriend secretly. Where girls are not allowed equal digital access, adolescents have been deconstructing the public-private boundaries that continue to shape femininities in socially constructed bodies through multiple forms of resistance and negotiations.

Therefore, it is noted that the question of risk and public space was an intersection of romanticism in the lives of the Adivasi girls negotiating and resisting norms. The year was December 2018 when I met sixteen years old Sunita Soren in Gando Pahari, Pakur, working in someone's field as a daily laborer in the middle of a jungle. I had to walk over a mile through the jungle surrounded by tall Sal trees to reach there, and somewhere near an opening of fresh river water, she was chopping the yellow paddy strands. When the day's work was done, and it was a lunch break for them, we sat down near the field above a small heap of stones from which we could see the flowing water and the field. When I shared that I was talking to girls trying to understand their lives, she asked,

Sunita (16 years old): *"Why are young girls not allowed to roam alone? Is it because they would roam with men? When I go to a mela, and someone pulls me by my hand, I talk to them. However,*

when they tell me they want to take me with them, I deny it. If boys give me something as a gift, I take it up, and I do time pass with them too, and sometimes I stay in the mela at night with friends."

Sunita has been working as a daily laborer in fields for years; she does not work in her field because that is unpaid labor; instead, she earns rupees one hundred and twenty per day if she works on other's property. With the money Sunita earned, she got the freedom to buy things of her own choice and loiter around the night at the village fair without answering her parents⁶ and caring about others talking about her. In several other cultures, too, money and disobedience in children symbolized a certain level of development and, in turn, made them feel entitled to make their own decisions (Van

Reeuwijk, 2010, p. 85). For other women in the community, she was termed as the 'loose girl' and a threat to the community for other girls. Sunita was flamboyantly exploring her sexuality, defying the boundaries defined by families and communities and not merely playing the roles assigned to her. Agency in bodies provides room to explore sexual behavior that sometimes does not conform to the norms; hence, newer meanings are created and structures change.

Sunita (16 years old): "I feel angry and like hitting whoever calls me a loose girl. It hurts my mind also, but I do not listen to anyone as their opinion does not own me. I will roam around, and I do not care what they think."

Therefore, the space that bodies occupy is not a field in which bodies realize freely but instead an enclosure in which she feels positioned and confined. The loose woman, as many feminists quoted in their writings, however, violates these norms as her looseness is manifest not only in her morals but also through her speech and the free and easy way she moves (Young, 2005; Bartky, 1993). Sunita's expression of anger

is similar to what Giddens (1984) points out in his structuration theory which moves beyond the dualism of structure and agency and argues for the 'duality of structure' where the social structure tends to be both the medium and the outcome of social action of the individual itself. As Nitya Rao (2018, p. 113) writes,

'Resistance in its everyday forms is an important tool for bargaining and exercising power, taking either more public, overt forms or remaining covert and local. This is particularly visible in the case of women manoeuvring between a discourse of rights and the reality of everyday subordination. Their decision is not just defined by the social context of the times, but also varies with the position of the individual or group within that society, making for 'everyone's forms of resistance.'

Therefore, the agency is not only about the manifestation of a rebel but also about staying in the same system and, through a latent action of the individual, is about changing the system's social structure. The term 'reflexivity' suggests an agent's ability to alter their place in the social structure consciously. It is also possible that a body that is actively changing the sociocultural constructs is simultaneously perpetuating the sociocultural constructs in the process of changing (Shilling, 2005). Our choices are dictated by social rewards and punishments attached to them. Where the cost of non-abiding by the norms is equivalent to having material deprivation, denial of social approval, or humiliation, we tend to refrain from breaking the norm (Geetha, 2002, p. 8). The message offered to girls is very little about being confident and comfortable with their sexuality; instead, it is about having passive sexuality garbed in the construction of being 'good' as the desired femininity induced in the bodies (Frost, 2001). Women in the community would often joke that young girls in present times have had the new refined packet of rice known as the *Sarna Chawal* found in shops and have developed an inevitable trend to roam around aimlessly. Parents and other

adults being the same products of the community, try to control and restrain children's sexuality by avoiding discussing sex with children as a taboo topic. The sarcasm, irony, and gossip associated with young girls in the community and their bodies speak about how women's bodies are both lived and imagined and how bodies bear the mark of morality (Niranjana, 2001) and a social and cultural pattern of sexual behavior in a given community. Fingerson (2006) points out in her study of adolescence that 'women's bodies are often culturally portrayed as passive and devalued. She also notices that childhood researchers are considered the passive construction of female bodies only and refuse to research girls and women actively defining lives by wielding power and agency in everyday life. The body is a gendered social phenomenon in ways its discussed, interpreted, and lived in the embodied social setup. However, as Bordo (1993 a) describes, the body is a 'politically inscribed identity,' too. Thapan writes that socialization is not the only normalizing strategy that functions effectively in society, as women are continuously exposed to a spectrum of impacting social and cultural ideologies and practices through negotiations, strategy, and contestations (Thapan, 2009). The sense of being a woman is internalized through the two perspectives of 'body as the object and the body as the subject' (Das, 1988). The body, therefore always more than a tangible, physical, and corporeal object wrapped in a skeleton with muscles and organs (Moore, 1998), and the body as an object is inseparable from the body as a subject; instead, they are emergent from one another (Waskul & van der Riet, 2002).

If we bring back the discourse to beauty again, feminists also argue that the ideal of beauty has to be viewed as a construction, a myth imposed on women. Moreover, female beauty is granted two markets, the 'licit' and the 'illicit' where the licit beauty is tame, regular, and passive; the one is meant for domestic conjugal use and linked to marriage and motherhood, the other is, in fact, a public beauty that

indicates sexual availability. This dangerous female power bears the marks of the forbidden. (Geetha,

2002, p. 115). Sunita prioritized her sexual autonomy and shared that while she had a boyfriend who had been gifting her the beautiful earrings that she adored, anytime a *mehmaan* or a better suitor came for her, she was ready to break up with this person and indulge for a better life. Therefore, the current context of sexual activities could sometimes be considered a form of resistance to fight the attached norms to sexuality imposed upon adolescent girls. Therefore, emotions and social contexts play a significant role in an actor's 'temporal orientation' in exercising their agency. Within the context of physical interaction between partners, the meanings associated with sex are reconstructed and reframed as a medium of agency exercised through bodily autonomy. Therefore, this decision-making model demonstrates how adolescents construct a system of sexual meanings and makes dynamic perceptions of benefits and risks (Van Reeuwijk, 2010, pp. 205-210).

Geetha (2002) writes thus, 'norms' are not coercive rules but our behaviors and action, which actualizes norms by embodying them and fulfilling the social roles, and those who could resist being overpowered by norms often had to pursue their personal choices on their own. Sunita and other adolescent girls like her knew they would not be able to roam around then and could never live a life of their choice as they noticed none of the other married girls ever lived the life of their choice from her community. Therefore, it can be analyzed that the 'act of sex is not simply a lived and experienced reality outside of power.'⁷ If sexuality is a discursive-technological complex, then sex is not simply a material reality of sexuality (Grosz, 1994) because girls and their aspiration to fulfilling their sexual desire somewhere came with the construction of the controlled married bodies they experienced around them and wanted an alternative.

The identification of women with the unruly body and the deep misogynistic fear of sexuality being rampant and destructive aims to produce a version of female subjectivity that is still powerful in present times, the one that is tamed (Frost, 2001).

Talamai Soren from Kukurduba, Pakur, was a rare finding and one of the critical interviews in the course of the thesis. I met Talamai when I was looking to talk to a married young girl who had returned to her maternal home post-marriage. After three weeks of my search in the community, I finally met Talamai returning from her field when a local ASHA caught hold of her for an interview with me. Talamai was seventeen and was already married to a man she never loved because he was dark and not handsome enough for her. So soon after her marriage, she returned to her village and never returned. The strength and confidence she described in her desire for a handsome man and why she did not like her husband was powerful. It was a December afternoon when I spoke to Talamai. She shared that earlier that year, she was married when a *mehmaani* came for her. She got married and left with the man, but she realized they had a tiny house once she was there. Then the real struggle started when Talamai didn't feel any attraction towards him as he was 'dark complexioned' and a drunkard. Her family chose the groom so she could return, but when she did, her mother was furious and had always created a miserable environment for her and asked her to leave, and Talamai has been struggling with it. Talamai's husband came to take her back to her house, but she denied it and said she did not want to return there any more. Talamai was a seventeen-year-old girl who had never been to school as she was ill as a child. Talamai had a sister whom she loved a lot, but two years back, she decided to wake up one day and leave the village alone.

Talamai would recall that she had some mental issues, and there were twice or thrice she left home, and her father always got her back before she finally left one fine

morning. Since then, Talamai has been living with a pain in her heart that they could not do anything for her sister, that they did not have money for her health checkup, and neither could they go to the police station because there was no way they could find her out anymore. Since Talamai returned, she started working in the field vehemently and listening to her mother's daily abuses. If for a day she refused to go for *dhaan katni* (chop the paddy), her mother would be furious and rude to her and ask her to leave or to contribute to her family. However, whenever she is asked to return to her husband, she denies it and gets more firm with her decision. The fact that Talamai could decide on her sexuality and choice to reject her husband when she did not like him was unacceptable to many of the villagers and her family too. Resistance in relation to women's lives has always been projected against exercising power. There is always an attempt to define women's agency as transformative in its capacity related only to the politics of change. As a result, only a certain kind of resistance and action are considered agential. There is a deep unease about certain kind of women's acts that does not blend into the existing structure of patriarchal dominance⁸ (Niranjana, 2001).

Talamai is aiming for a second marriage soon and wants to leave her village soon, either with someone from *hatiya* or *mela*. However, Talamai has more agency and choice in her hand this time, and she thinks that with her separation came her freedom to choose whom she wants to marry. As Foucault (1978, p. 158-59) would argue,

'By creating the imaginary element- sex what was important to discuss was the 'desire for sex'- the desire to have it and have access to it, discover it, and feel liberated to frame it in truth. The desirability of sex makes us think we are affirming the rights of our sex against all power, and that's also governed by all notions of sexuality, law, and power we are embedded with.'

Talamai's sexual agency was beyond the grip of power and against the deployment of sexuality by states and societies on norms of suppressed sex and desire. Talamai's claim of bodies and pleasures was resistance to the possibility of confirmation (Cohen & Taylor, 1992). So every time her parents scolded her, she wanted to leave her house and was waiting for the next man who would come into her life, "*the first man who would approach me, if I like him I will go with him,*" she would say, and that's how Talamai's quest looking for her next groom started in *mela* and the local *hatiya*.

When we talk about risk-taking, it is always associated with irrationality or ignorance, and not much is spoken about the voluntary-risk taking perspective. Talamai's emotional intensity associated with her looking out for a new husband and being ready to marry whoever approaches her first makes it clear that Talamai had associated voluntary risk-taking through the boundaries of her body. Negotiating how far one can push oneself, her story is about mastering the fear and risk of the burden of forced marriage, the loss of a sister, and the desire to escape the village to live her life with a sense of personal agency (Tulloch & Lupton, 2003). Tulloch & Lupton also writes that it is believed that the highly controlled body is an embodiment of the 'civilized body image.' Hence, this discourse rejects the alternative of the alternative actor that embraces the danger. However, both the narratives of Sunita and Talamai highlight the integral role played by boundaries in framing the ideas of purity and danger in bodies and the concept of risk, which is dangerous but also certainly challenges the borders between the known and the unknown, resulting in a feeling of accomplishment and agency (Douglas, 1966). As in the history of literature, wherever women and their bodies and desire are documented, the narratives of contested female

bodies with a sexual agency are demarcated and removed into the margins other than the ones that count as a passive repository of the tradition (Puri, 1999, p. 44).

5.3: Tattoos and the Negotiations around the Inscribed Bodies:

Western civilization is offended by the act of voluntarily etching a permanent inscription of a visual message on its skin. Lingis (Grosz, 1994) claims that the processes by which the primitive body is marked or scarred in the West were assumed to be painful and barbaric. Bordo writes that in a given culture, not one part of a woman's body is left untouched or unaltered and that every part of the modification and the alteration is an ongoing and repetitive process (Bordo, 1993 a). In this light, it was interesting to study a form of cultural symbolism that young girls carried in their bodies- 'the tattoos' and understand what meanings the tattoos hold inscribed on the surface of their bodies. The body, being the bearer of symbolic value, tattoo, is one of the important symbolic identities within the Santhali community studied in this section to understand the art, pain, and lived realities behind the inscription in the bodies and the larger discourse of gender associated with it.⁹ The etching on the body's surface is a permanence alarm of the exhibition of subjectivity on the body's surface (Grosz, 1994). Tattoos are an 'ism' in the tribal communities or an ideology practiced distinctively as a rite of passage. The tattoos are called '*khuda*' or '*gotna*' among the Santhals and are referred to the same throughout this section. A common proverb that young girls often heard from older women was, "*Gotna karo nahi toh Jam raja nahi legah!*"¹⁰ In the first approach towards death and the body in *The Sacred Canopy*, Peter Berger (1990) argues that humans are species whose conditions of embodiment force them to act and invest towards the meanings of survival. He also writes that 'death' constitutes a crucial threat to people and needs to be dealt with by society through the

provision of shared meaning systems (Shilling, 2003). Therefore, it was interesting that tattoos signify hidden or inferred messages that carefully represent the body's significance through space and time. As tattoos represent belonging and identity in the ever-changing world, the concept of tattoos in the Santhali communities I interacted with was more for a connection to a life after death. Girls would share that they have heard, "*Tattoos are a medium to get united to the ancestors after death where the spirits would identify members from their community in a different world.*" It is a belief that when people are dead, they do not take anything else with them but only take the symbols inscribed in their bodies which they then can sell and eat. The tattoos usually symbolize flowers, rice, fish, paddy, and other edible and indigenous products with a sellable value. These folklores symbolize flourishing for the dead woman who dreamt of traveling to another world with all these products rich enough to be sold and eaten if no ancestors acknowledged them as a member of their tribe. Older women in the community would share bits of folklore with me that until their children or family members give them '*Bhoj*,' they can sell these and eat when they are dead.¹¹ Considering the history of poverty in the Santhal Parganas region, it was assumed that the family members would not be able to give away the formal *Bhoj* soon after the death. Hence, the tattoos on the body embodied the wait between the period of getting the *Bhoj* and getting accepted in their community post-death. However, men only had a copper coin heated up and carved in their hand as an emblem, and in some cases, with a change in desired designs, they also had their names written in it. Girls felt that the chances for men to get a *Bhoj* post-death were much higher than women due to their connection with their ancestors (See Chapter 4 of this thesis). However, the inscribed surface of the tattooed bodies was the carrier of the universal truth of life after death and the hope for girls and their bodies to be still associated with the same tribe post-

death. *They will often share mythical stories in the sessions, "when we die, a big snake will come and sit over our chest; it will try to pull us down. There will be so many people there, and how will our ancestors get to know us? They will only recognize us by our tattoos."* There was a strong sense of fear of losing the community, and tattooing, therefore, was the method of uniting with the community and resonating with the culture through the body as the 'symbolic capital' (Bourdieu, 1986) prescribed presently when alive and also post-death.¹² However, underlying this discussion beyond life and death, 'tattoo' held a much deeper internalization of gender, poverty, and power, shaping the rites of passage among adolescent girls.

Bibhuti (17): *"My mother said she could not afford khuda, and we do not have money for it in our home. So one day, I took some corn from the sack and went to take the khuda when they came calling for girls to get their tattoos done."*

Soromoti (17 years old): *"I took gotna when I was five. My mother, sister, and grandmother also had fresh tattoos done that day as their other tattoos faded. They inspired me, and I wanted to take the khuda on my body too."*

Most girls in the community inscribed tattoos on their bodies very young. In a few cases, they would plead with their mothers to pay for the tattoos, and when not given, they conspire ways to arrange some money to get the tattoos done. Everyone shared about the immense pain they received in the process of getting the tattoo done and shared stories of how they would hit the ladies and wanted to run away, hoping they had heard their mother and never would have asked for a tattoo.

Bibhuti (17 years old): *"When the needle starts moving in your body, you feel ticklish, but soon it starts hurting a lot and gets red and swollen. I shouted and kicked the lady who was doing the tattoos. They caught me, held me to the ground, and completed the design."*

Often bodies are scarred in the name of rituals, and the cut leads to pain, but as Durkheim would suggest, pain is integral to solidarity building. Pain rituals symbolize getting rid of the 'profane' to get closer to the 'sacred' by overcoming the limitations of flesh (Crossley, 2006, p. 23). Totemic symbols, as per Crossley, represents the clan and the collectives, where the individuals identify with their collective as a reflexive embodiment. Altering the body, therefore, becomes something of profound social significance; hence even through pain, no young girl would miss out on the chance of adorning the rite of this passage to get closer to the circle of the women around them. For Soromoti, it was a celebratory moment when her mother, grandmother, and she all got inked together. That evening, when her grandmother applied turmeric and oil to cure the swollen bruises on her hand and chest, her grandmother was content that she would unite with her ancestors someday after death. Soromoti was also content because, for the first time, her grandmother, mother, and herself finished an act together that brought her a step closer to a gendered self of being a woman and having an entry to the inner circle of the house with other women. Societies presuppose certain stability in how people represent themselves in a given social space (Turner, 2008; Shilling, 2003, p. 80). The element of self-construction is, therefore, always present in both perceptions and practices. Bodies being the bearers of symbolism, knowledge being power, and the risk of being left out from the collective was the most crucial emotion that engulfed the tattooed bodies.

A particular cult of women known as the *gotnewali*, apparently from the minority Muslim community in the tribal areas here, tends to travel near and far in areas asking every young household girl to get a tattoo on their body. During a field visit, I spoke with ten to twelve *Gotnewalis* in Kolgi village in March 2015 and roamed around the village with them that day. *Gotnewalis* tend to hold a mysterious image in the villages as no one knows when a tattoo maker's group will visit their village. Money was an important criterion, more the money one can offer, the more beautiful the tattoo. Post the tattoo gets done, they disappear from the villages but leave back the first potion of medicine, a paste made of raw turmeric and oil, and will do some *jhaar-phook* (exorcism) before leaving. They will blow some air and chant a few words to relieve the pain and give the girls some relief. The *Gotnewali* would say that the pattern of the designs has changed over the years. Previously young girls did not have any pen or paper to jot down the design and were not educated, so the designs were simple with mainly objects from nature. However, with time young girls started bringing designs made on paper; they put effort into finding the latest styles and want these women to add their thoughts to the traditional designs. Girls also wanted to write their names through writing names was never a tribal pattern, as the older women in the *gotnewali* troop recalled.

Basanti (19 years old): *"I got the gotna when I was twelve. I was young but was not involved in the adult group discussions. The day I did my gotna I wore a sari and came out. My aunt and elder sisters called and asked me to sit with them. I felt I was taken into the inner circle of the woman's group. It felt different."*

Basanti desperately wanted to be a part of the woman's group and enjoyed having the tattoos as that one entry point into the group. Her mentioning the point of

wearing a *sari* was a mention on a celebratory mark that day on getting not only closer to the clan but to her femininity on being welcomed inside the woman's group in her household finally. The modification of an individual's body is usually an event for the whole community or a select group as it bears witness to the marking of the individual and confers meaning upon it (Crossley, 2006, p. 23).

However, there were several occasions on which girls would react to the permanence of tattoos while growing up. Hence, Basanti soon hated her tattoo when she grew up. Basanti grew up to be a daily laborer working on other's land. Every morning during the migration season, when the *thikedaars* or contractors would come to the village, they would pick her up first, identifying her as laborious with her tattoos. Basanti would sternly comment, "*we are the indigenous, the Adivasi, the women who could work hard, and our tattoos are a way to identify us.*" That Basanti did not want to associate herself with a laborious body with the understanding of a deeply rooted inferior status inscribed to her body. As Bourdieu would say, bodies bear the imprint of the social class through the individual's social location and the formation of their habitus (Bourdieu, 1984); a working-class woman articulates her construction of femininity and body from within her economic and political space. It is therefore grounded in her everyday life experiences at work, in the family, community, and in poverty, where the class is significant. Bourdieu's (1977) body project emphasizes gender differences through body modification and maintenance. The working classes tend to develop an instrumental relation to their body, the body is a means to an end, and the inscribed body works as an embodied identity of labor they carried with them (Shilling, 1991; 1992). While Basanti refused to identify with her laborious body, she was not alone, as other girls during the session would often consider their skin color dark enough and need no dark-inked tattoos to make it worse. Some young girls would

say they did it when they were young and did not want it when they grew up as their body parts look further darker. Bartky (1988) mentioned the normalized discourse of the body in society by arguing, 'A woman's skin must be soft, supple, hairless, and smooth; ideally, it should betray no sign of wear, experience, age, or deep thought.'

The tattoo's permanence bothered the college-going young girls too. They shared that when they started college, girls wore full-sleeve *salwar kameez*¹³, covering their tattoos as a negotiation strategy with their bodies being marked from a particular community. Sometimes non-compliance takes the shape of a 'refusal' to take on the identity that a given system wishes to construct for an individual and dis-identification. Hence, many adolescents and youth negotiate and manipulate certain dominant discourses of race, class, and caste through their agency (Rigakos & Law, 2009, pp. 79103). On a similar note, it was interesting how my field staff would never let me have a tattoo made on my body from the *Gotnewalis*. Mukhi would get furious with the idea and always protest out loud, *"it will pain a lot which you will not be able to bear, and you will not look good. I will never let you get these on your body."* Sometimes the stubbornness in Mukhi's body language and the way she would fight my idea of getting a *gotna* done reminded me of the idea that the primitive body is distinguished from the civilized body by degrees of barbarism, pain, and cruelty they can undergo (Grosz, 1994). I was the 'Other' to Mukhi, and my body was not the one that could have endured the pain or the ugliness that it would portray.

5.4: Bodies and the Dilemma on Reclaiming the Spaces:

In every possible way, we see that risk and resistance question the patriarchal construct of the female body but, in the process, also deskills them at times. Women sometimes admire the aesthetics associated with femininity because bodies that are 'feminine' and

socially constructed are crucial to a woman's sense of herself (Bartky, 1997, p. 146). In the context of setting the boundary on what makes a body more feminine and where it finds its agency, this section is built on narratives of young girls reclaiming the spaces through their bodies that social norms deny them from occupying.

Lalita Murmu was an 18-year-old girl from the Palajori block of Deoghar who has always been known as masculine in the community. During interactions with other girls and women in the village. They would often giggle and term her *baba hor*, which means to be masculine as a father. Lalita was the eldest sister in the family and was a laborious girl with broad shoulders and a well-built body. She did all the daily chores, went to work in the field, and stepped inside the room where the *Bongas* were worshipped with the sacrificial blood¹⁴. During one interview with her, Lalita would ask him to leave the scene sternly when a drunk man came to bully us once. She often asked me why women's bodies were considered weak and would comment, *"I do not think women and their bodies are weak. I have prepared myself by following the farming work of other women. It is a tough job."* She took pride in learning the entire work of *kheti* (farming) all by herself. Lalita's grandparents were old and often called her a 'son,' but she never liked how they called her. Lalita was so laborious that other families from the community would ask her to visit their households when they cleaned and mended the house. She would often help them do the most physical labor. However, she would always reclaim her space in every interview by repeating, *"I do not feel good. I do not think I work like a man. I think I work like a woman."* As mentioned above, the difference between the female body and the feminine is about the movement and the spaces women occupy through their gendered-appropriate bodies. The need to be 'feminine' arises from the disciplinary methodology established by society. Butler's (1990) *Gender Trouble* argues that if one is not born but becomes a

woman, then all learn to be men and women. Hence there is no reason why feminine qualities should only be marked in female bodies and masculine qualities in bodies marked male.¹⁵ In our everyday life, we are consistently told what typical feminine behavior is, and those who do not behave like the one were admonished (Geetha, 2002, p. 03).

Sociologists argue that men and women strategically 'ritualize' selected domestic labor practices to negotiate the emotions associated with gender¹⁶ (Bell, 1992; Johnson, 2008, pp. 229-251). The dichotomy of Lalita's experiences of her body was fundamental to understanding how Lalita did not want to accept the way she was called masculine in the community. The feminine with the generally textured culture, values, and practices as an alternative was a disgrace. However, the lack of public sanction did not change her views toward her body. Instead, her story reflects how the 'cultural' and the 'natural' contextually put around can be misleading as a woman's perception of themselves were rooted in matrices and spaces (Niranjana, 2001, pp. 68-69). That the way girls throw a ball is that girls do not bring their whole body into an act of motion and move the way boys do. Interestingly, the visual expression and reflections on 'feminine comportment' and body movement in any physical activities on how one twists or leans reveal a difference in how boys and girls use their bodies in a given work. These behaviors were, however, learned since adolescence among the girls. Iris Young (2005) quotes Erwin Straus (1966) in her revolutionary chapter *Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body, Comportment, Mobility and Spatiality* on his observations on the remarkable differences in the manner of throwing of the two sexes. He mentions that while throwing a ball, boys tend to twist more, lean forward, and move their bodies backward using the mobility of the entire body, where at the same time, girls only tend to move their arms, whereas their entire body remains mostly

immobile and even the arms are not extended the way it should be¹⁷. In a given society, Young identifies a 'feminine existence' where she identifies 'femininity' not as a mysterious quality or essence that women possess by being biologically born as a female. Like Beauvoir, Young (2005) also contextualizes femininity as a set of structures and conditions delimiting the contexts of being a woman and living the realities in a society where women tend not to put their whole bodies into engagement in any physical task with the same ease and naturalness as men are expected to put. As Young (2005, p. 33) writes, 'Women often do not perceive themselves as capable of lifting and carrying heavy things, pushing and shoving with significant force, pulling, squeezing, grasping, or twisting with force.'

As per Butler, 'Doing Gender' implies an act of conformity on the part of the performer, performing what is expected from them, but 'Undoing gender calls for an active voice' (Butler, 2004). The adolescent girls in the community, however, in their way, negotiated gender and body rights in their everyday lives and reclaimed the spaces that were denied to them. I met seventeen years old Maryam Marandi on a December afternoon in 2018 when she was performing a *nukkad natak*, a street play with three other girls, on an awareness program organized by NEEDS on child marriage & domestic violence. A small ground was cleared in one of the sites in the Littipara block, and green and white canopies were marked there; it was a *nukkad mela*. Nearby the villagers were sitting to listen to the song and dance performed by the *nukkad natak* team, matched with some Bollywood tune with changed lyrics being that of social awakening for people to stop child marriage in the community. I could not figure out from the enthusiasm of the people that were the people sitting there to listen to the social message or enjoy a song and dance show. I would see two drunkards dancing to the tunes the other social workers wanted to pacify but were uncontrollable and finally

driven out of the show. I would sit there waiting for Maryam to finish the show and interview her. This next section of the chapter is about Maryam and how she had been reclaiming her gendered body in a public space. It has been three months since Maryam joined the *nukkad natak* gangs. The group owner who stayed close to Maryam's house offered her the job once, and since then, whenever there is a contract of *nukkad nataks* with NGOs spreading awareness against child marriage, promoting healthy maternal health, and other social issues. Maryam performs with them. Maryam's father was an alcoholic, and Maryam would remember days when he would beat her and her siblings very hard. When she wanted to work, Maryam's father would initially not let her work.

However, when he went to Goa for a job as a menial laborer, she persuaded her mother to allow her to work because everyone at home was struggling with hunger. So when her mother agreed, Maryam's journey with the *nukkad natak* and theater team began. V. Geetha (2002, p. 8) pointed out that in times of great social upheaval, the so-called norms and expectations associated with characteristics of a particular society are often challenged and altered. However, she also pointed out that as soon as the order is restored back in society, the older norms tend to reassert their position and conform to their traditional way of functioning.

Maryam (17 years old): *"Girls around our village are not allowed to work outside, so other women in the village, my neighbours, would say, Oh! This girl is going out to work; she is dancing and not good."*

There was a sense of disgust attached to the word *naach* or dance, in the community linked to girls and their bodies. However, Maryam shared that she has to dance in *nukkad nataks* even if she violated the cultural code of being feminine through the act to have financial independence, deal with her alcoholic father and feed her

family. We often treat the body as a comparative and normative looking glass that is technically separated from the self and the situation (Waskul & Vannini, 2006). Adolescent girls in the community seeking agency through their bodies often questioned the ideal definition of the 'good girl image' being loved and adored for their 'feminine existence.' During the interview, Maryam constantly narrated how the villagers looked down upon her and how she wanted to stop dancing soon. She also narrated how she has been a Christian since birth but has never diligently attended the Sunday prayer since she started work in the dance troops. She feels she has been violating a code of 'femininity' and has been a seeker of solace in believing in religion since then. The self-surveillance that Maryam imposed on herself was obedience to patriarchy and the disciplinary power embedded in the production of perfect femininity. The self-surveillance brought her to the borderlines of accepting the disciplinary power contrary to the agency she experienced with her financial freedom, where she was, for the first time, able to challenge her alcoholic father, pay for food, and sustain her family. As Foucault also pointed out, power relations always lead to new forms of resistance. Moreover, as it is true that we might experience the 'illusion of power' while being just a 'docile body,' there is also a sense of power that the 'docility' provides us (Bordo, 1993 a, p. 192). In every part of modern society, the older forms of patriarchy will gradually erode into the newer forms of domination and reinforcement of patriarchy, and sexuality and morality of bodies will always lead that path of reinforcement of patriarchy.

5.5: Negotiating Gender in Everyday Life:

It can be said that 'risk is gendered' because not only are men allowed to experience more freedom to engage with risk, but engaging with risk also is linked to implications

for reputation, honor, and woman's virtue as more prized over their desires and agencies (Phadke et al., 2011, pp. 58-59). Sport and employment have always been a man's territory, and their validation of occupying the space with their overtly masculine presence was a norm. The constant display of superiority in any act reminded another gender of a space that was not theirs. Girls, during the interviews, would often share about one of the most interesting masculine gender norms of men being the superiority they claimed in a given space during sports. During local MLA¹⁸ elections in the district, local MLAs often organized football matches in huge fields to seek votes. Where men were entitled to this leisure for women, no events were organized, and neither participated in those spaces created for men. The girls gradually assumed that there was seldom a need to invest in women in any politics-related discourse as it was men who would always manage the women in their house regarding any politics-related matter. They would vote for whomever the man in the house wanted to be voted for, as women were primarily apolitical. However, young girls in sports and employment identified space discrimination in the community and often fought for the alternative. During my field visits, I noticed young girls in groups planning to play sports, mainly archery, football, or *kabbadi*. Girls would start playing, getting motivated by their teachers in school with the hope that if someone played well, they might get a government job if selected for the State team, and the thrill of getting a job would pull a few young girls together to play.

Menaka (19 years old): *"So after winning an Independence Day game when Chief Minister Hemant Soren presented us with cash, we bought our first jerseys."*

These girls would collect funds to buy jerseys and hide them in a friend's house. Every morning at four o'clock before the day's chores started, girls would reach that

one friend's house wearing *salwar kameez* and skirts and change into their respective jerseys to play till five-thirty a.m. in the morning only to return home before the day's chores start. Many parents supported their daughters' agency in pursuing games in the hope of a better job in the future.

Manisha (18 years old): *"I do not think it is a man's game as no one has ever told this to me. However, I have noticed while playing that boys always judge which girl plays better and who does not. They would always comment on us in the field and keep teaching us tactics to play well as if we had asked for their comments. I have never seen any girl coaching a guy even if they play badly, as the boys may find it offensive."*

Manisha started playing football in 2012 when she was twelve years old; she took time to master the game but realized that boys who were the worst players even had the right to coach a girl but often found it offensive to be coached by girls even if they played well. She realized a gendered connotation attached to women and sports. Showcasing that men in sports are better than women in contemporary patriarchal culture is the foundation of the panoptical male connoisseur. This panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women where women perpetually stand before his gaze and under his judgment and gradually live their body as seen by another, by an anonymous patriarchal 'Other' always (Foucault, 1977). (Bartky, 1997, p. 140). During her repeated interviews, Manisha often added instances in which she had to fight to hold her and other team members' space in the field. At times boys would ask them to leave the field and play somewhere else, to which Manisha would answer, *"The field belongs to the government; if you have a right to play, so do we."* Manisha shared that she never felt that this game had changed her feelings of being less feminine

and playing any masculine game. However, there was only one thing that Manisha and the other girls on the team found the most humiliating; it was about negotiating with the boys to let them play early before them because they were expected to reach home before dusk.

Manisha (18 years old): *"During any competition, boys always had this ego that they would be the first to play. However, we had to reach home by six in the evening and always had to request them to give us the early slot."*

And then, when the boys would mock them asking them to leave, saying, *"go home then if you cannot stay back,"* Menaka remembered she once answered, *"I have informed at home and come to play."* The sexualization of femininity is the medium through which the physical and cultural spaces are marked through morality (Niranjana, 2001). Women and the restricted mobility of spaces they inhabit become key to preserving their immediate group's physical and moral code. However, when these boundaries are blurred, women are often asked to conform to the norms, and hence the urge of the boys to state that these girls belong to private and not in public was a 'power mechanism' men-owned under patriarchy.

However, adolescent girls like Manisha and Menaka received a lot of backlash from the community as the villagers often questioned their intention of manipulating other girls to play with them as they eventually needed to be married off and concentrate on the daily chores. The team that girls like Manisha and Menaka dared to form had slowly fallen apart by 2017 during the interview as there were hardly any girls left in the community to practice the game after their marriage. Manisha aspired to leave Palajori, Deoghar, and shift to Dumka, a nearby district soon to continue her football training, while all Menaka had was her fields to work. While describing the

city of Bombay, Phadke and other authors (Phadke et al., 2011) beautifully narrated the importance of public spaces. She writes how spaces represented what the city might mean for its citizens to belong there as a space which they can claim with their bodies, walking and strolling, and partaking of the thrills of risk-taking in the city. It was important to mention this dichotomy of urban and rural dialogue here to showcase that in both cases, women were fighting the most basic form of negotiating their agency through resistance and risk in their available public places. It also shows what a given social setting means regarding the possibilities it creates for young girls to exercise their agency. All the girls with whom Manisha prepared the football team gradually left the village post-marriage one by one, sharing much about what the community reciprocates to women's agency. Figuring out agencies through bodies and negotiating spaces in everyday lives were, therefore, not a linear course of existence, and resistance was not always 'reactionary' as Foucault would suggest (Foucault, 1977). However, young girls negotiate their agency through their lived bodies as a very mundane transformative practice that coexists in the same society.

In spaces created by Community Organizations, groups of girls would get an alternative space to create their agency. Girls trained as facilitators under the Gender and Sexual Reproductive Health Rights would get a small stipend for the month and be associated with several other girls during sessions on gender, menstruation, contraception, and sexuality. The facilitators would act as a trust mechanism in the community. The Self-Help Group and Adolescent Friendly Clubs created by the local NGOs would also provide these young girls avenues for employment. Nineteen years old Hiramoti from Palajori Deoghar was appointed a part-time facilitator by a local NGO as a menstrual health peer leader. Her role was to talk to the adolescents on the ground and educate them about menstruation.

Hiramoti (19 years old): *"On one such session, I found two young girls sharing with me that their periods had stopped. I went to ASHA to get the pregnancy kit, proud that I was a trained facilitator and could keep the kit."*

A majority of young girls in the community dreaded speaking to the ASHA *didi* about their sexual health because most of the ASHA *didi* were from their village. Having Hiramoti as a peer social worker was a great benefit for young girls as they started trusting her with all their health-related information. However, there was a different side to this empowerment; Hiramoti started becoming an eyesore to men in the community, and being a school dropout when she was expected to work on the ground, she started working with an NGO and started earning money for that too. On days when I would visit Hiramoti's house and park the office car at a distance, men would yell at her while passing the parked car, *"have you become some big kind of politician or some kind of Prime Minister that people are coming to meet you?"* These comments linked to Hiramoti's economic independence of planning her life, leaving the boundaries of her house, and carving her agency from her hardships as contrary to the image of Adivasi women who were the head loaders¹⁹ and historically, economically subjugated men with lower payments were justified as being undisciplined and unskilled. Spaces have always been based on the principle of exclusion on class, religion, sexual preference, and more (Niranjana, 2001). Women are barred from public spaces because of the control of sexuality and mobility, which is very much about the consenting relationships women might have with 'undesirable men' (Phadke et al., 2011). However, Hiramoti and other adolescent girls like her would attempt to frame their agency with all the support they could gather. Because with the

skilled work and the mentoring from the NGOs, they had a cause and had earned the freedom to 'loiter.'

5.6: Docile Bodies and the Biopower:

Young people occupy a specific location concerning power and identity when they start experiencing temporary inequality in ways that negate their existence in the presence and induce potential capacity for resistance in them (Raby, 2005). In this part of the chapter, we talk about the lived realities of adolescents intertwined with understanding the mechanism of society based upon Foucault's theory of 'biopower'²⁰ (Foucault, 1978) and stories that would add up to the more significant debate of negotiations and risks adolescents continue to carry in their lived realities. Disciplinary power worked mainly through the institutions, while biopower worked through the state. However, the state created these institutions, such as prisons, labor camps, and more. Biopolitics, therefore, is a technology of power aimed at organizing, governing, and regulating the phenomena peculiar to life in the context of the general population to produce the biological in a specific form (Foucault, 1978). The body was the last 'bastion' to fall before the modern intrusive government, where the state has always exercised the right to take away life, inflict pain, brand the body, and more (Synnott, 1993). The power of death that's accounted with the sovereign has expanded its forces because 'wars are no longer waged in the name of the sovereign who must be defended but rather the entire population is mobilized for wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity' (Foucault, 1978). What is at stake is the biological existence of the population because Foucault argues that genocide has become the dream of modern states because power is situated and exercised through the population's life, species, and race. Gradually, the power over life centers on the body as a machine, disciplining and optimizing its capabilities

to perform in a structured pattern. The supervision of life was conducted through an entire series of interventions and regulatory controls known as the 'biopower' and the 'biopolitics' of the population. The first section of power, as Foucault identifies, is the 'disciplinary power'²¹ with the body as its focus of subjugation, but the second form of power is focused on the 'species body' through biopower²² that serves as the basis of the biological process with the control of mortality, the level of health, life expectancies, and birth with their supervision induced through the entire series of interventions through regulatory controls (Foucault, 1978, p. 139). However, the body's disciplines and the population's regulation simultaneously became the most important tool through which power over life was deployed. The discipline and surveillance associated with policies on education and birth control and subjugation of the bodies among the young girls in the Santhal Pargana are the essential contexts I speak about in this section of the chapter. Biopower through biopolitics gradually became an indispensable part of the social system in the marginalized communities of the Adivasi terrain, with the insertion of the bodies as a political object into the machinery of production and reproduction for the sustainability of the diverse institutions. In the *History of Sexuality*²³ (1978), Foucault investigates how sexuality has been used in different discursive systems and produced a particular power effect instead. Foucault links sexuality with biopolitics as a style of government and a controlling technique regulating the population through 'biopower.' Biopolitics as a regulatory mechanism of society soon becomes the domain in which the decisions concerning regulatory mechanisms and processes of life of common people take place. Foucault notices that the irony of the deployment of biopower is in having us believe that our 'liberation' is always in balance. However, it takes a more profound intervention to count on the lived realities of people to understand the aftermath of biopower.

It was a cold December morning in 2017, and as soon as it turned three o'clock in the afternoon, it got paler and chilly in Pakur. I sat at the PHC²⁴ in the Littipara block since morning, waiting for the Medical Officer in Charge (MOIC) for an interview on maternal health in the district. As soon as I reached the PHC, I saw small groups of people with two to three members scattered near the open field of the PHC sitting there and the health professionals sharing that the MOIC was very busy for the day. As I went to speak to a few ASHA workers in a different part of the building, I saw a person with heavy force clearing out the storeroom of the PHC and sweeping it very fast with a broom. Rolls of dust stormed over the PHC, and I saw a rickshaw puller in his van bringing twenty to twenty-five pieces of extremely thin, foamed hospital bedding with a glossy maroon cover to the room and setting it there. One after another, two men brought an unconscious woman post-operation into that room on a stretcher and kept her there. With every woman, at least two of her children followed her to the room, totally perplexed about what had happened to their mother but still struggling to be relevant enough and trying to remain close to them. In the next couple of hours, the process repeated faster than I could keep track; the stretcher brought more unconscious women lying in bed and their kids following behind them. Gradually the room started beaming with the noises of the children and a few ladies accompanying the operated women. The MOIC came to me a few hours later, smiled, and said it was impossible to talk today as he got a notice from the Health Department to get the 'ligations' or sterilization done, and he was bound by a target that needed to be completed. He constantly looked at his hands with gloves and gestured that he was exhausted and that I could speak to the ANMs²⁵ inside the Operation Theater. Therefore, I entered the operation theater to talk to the ANMs; it was a room again with one bed, two chairs, and a dim yellow bulb. A small stove was in a corner where the knives, injection

syringes, and towels were getting sterilized, and the ANMs were sitting in the same operation bed and catching a breath after the day's hard work. It was a long and tiring day for them; all they needed was to relax. The ward boy brought *samosas*, and while they were eating and about to start the interview, someone said, "*let us make tea*" ANM put the saucepan down with boiling injection syringes and put the saucepan with tea on the same stove. I started my interview with anticipation, with the ANM *didis* taking the first bite of their *samosas* sitting in the operation bed where a few hours back, a series of sterilization trail took place. ANM *didis* were tired that day with their workload, with which they had to convince women over a night and bring all of them for sterilization to fulfill the target.

That day when I was leaving the center post the interviews, I saw a family- a man with a gray color shirt and light brown pants sitting with his hand folded between his knees on the ground, holding a green plastic bag with some thin papers in it. His mother, an older woman, sat beside him along with his two-year-old son fidgeting around. They sat there staring at the PHC while the woman was getting the ligation inside. The wait there seemed to be structured and staged. For poverty and hunger were so deep-rooted in the terrains of Jharkhand that one entire family seemed to wait for the woman outside to get the operation done, to get the money to run the household for maybe a month or less. V. Geetha (2002, p. 06) noticed in her book that child-care and housekeeping amongst the poor are also essential and the norm of wifhood and motherhood. However, it is clear that they are never paranoid about good housekeeping and mothering, but their primary concern always remains about food and the family's survival. Amidst all of these, the fact that over a night, a crowd of women from nearby villages gathered to fulfill the target criteria of a scheme spoke of the harsh reality of

women's agency; these schemes bring to the grassroots through the inherent biopower state exercises on people.

In 1952, India was one of the first countries in the developing world to create a state-sponsored family planning program. The National Family Planning Program²⁶ primarily aimed to have lower fertility rates and slow population growth to deal with economic development. A symbol of an 'Inverted Red Triangle' changed the history of health services in India, but it was far from universal. The Family Planning Program demarcated the nation under poverty, population, and economy brackets. 'In other words, birth control is not posited as a woman's right as a citizen but as a means to either national development or the reduction of extraordinarily high maternal mortality rates,' as Rao (2004) would point out.

In the early 1970s, Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, implemented the much-criticized forced sterilization program but failed. Rao (2004) also noted that it was interesting to notice that post the emergency, the entire focus of the family planning program shifted to 'women' as sterilizing men proved to be politically expensive. It is intriguing to notice how women bore the burden of 'birth control' over the last forty years. Research depicts that the messaging gradually on the ground has shifted from men to women on birth control. Many women during the study shared that they take up the burden of the ligation because *"men will get weaker, post sterilization, and as they work harder, they need to retain the strength in their bodies."* It was interesting to observe how faster this narrative spread with every passing day and how biopower technically worked. In Indian families, women are expected to silently bear the burden of contributing to the family's welfare. Patriarchy intersecting with gender roles was what this program turned into overtime, exploiting the defenseless and weak more than being centered on women's rights (Rao, 2004). Biopower gradually functions as a norm

changing the narratives because its internalized through the body and not exercised as acts of threat; rather is dispersed through society as a phenomenon that prevails and changes the societal context over time. The Family planning program gradually became a national effort under the garb of 'health for the underprivileged.' Soon the maternal health policies and the *Panchayati Raj* system offering delivery of health care too strategized the control of women's bodies with controlled data around sex, birthing, and women's bodies. People unable to afford the private initiatives were the people with meager agencies and could not protest against these state-operated systems because it became an exercised norm through habitus. Years have changed, and so did the ways of State-regulated exercises on maternal health through biopower. Girls as young as sixteen would give birth to children in Pakur and Deoghar, and under the Janani Suraksha Yojana²⁷ (JSY) would receive fourteen hundred rupees post-delivery and the required injections and medicines during childbirth and her postnatal care. The government publishes a yellow card for every pregnant woman to keep track of every pregnancy under JSY. As under eighteen years of marriage and pregnancy for girls is illegal in India²⁸, the issued government yellow cards rarely have 'under eighteen years' written in them to avoid legal complications. The field workers confirmed that every young girl under eighteen who would go to make a yellow card would also have '18 years old' written in it. The accessibility to contraceptives is expected to provide informed choices and rights for women. However, when it reaches the ground catering to the last miles, the agency associated with contraceptive rights becomes vague.

Elina (16 years old): *"I am sixteen years old, but my pregnancy card writes eighteen there. I told them I was sixteen, but they wrote eighteen and said it was okay!"*

The field staff would often frown at me during these situations and validate the ongoing manipulations through her body language. The ability to transform the data related to birth and women's health is one of the crucial aspects of biopower exercised by the government in marginalized communities, which questions the maternal rights associated with birthing women in reality. Foucault writes that in modern times,

'Power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate dominion of death, but with living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied at the level of life itself: it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body' (Foucault, 1978, pp. 142-43).

More than the threat of death, the power that has access to the biological life of civilizations and their bodies runs the risk of manipulating the concerns of the materiality of human embodiment. State-operated data is, therefore, the new capital that can control maternal bodies as early as in their adolescent years there. The data about women's bodies are manipulated here and compels us to question women's agency and body rights and also talks about the senses, knowledgeability, and capability to exercise informed choices, act and relate to the power we can exercise through our lived bodies. Biopower profoundly exercises its supremacy, and in contrast to sovereign power that functions around taking life or letting live, this is more about fostering life where power will no longer be associated with the domain of death. The new rule of the land was the mastery of exercising power over life instead of taking charge of a life that gave power access to the body and its being. Adolescent girls in these situations, like Elina, often find themselves within this institution and practices as an 'alienating self'²⁹ where the control over the knowledge of pregnancy and birth devalues the relation she has to the fetus as the pregnant body often takes away the

autonomy from her (Young, 2005, p. 47). Pregnancy has a clear physical and psychological beginning and end; however, the protagonists of pregnancy stories are less determined by biology and have their stories framed by social organizations, where the medical establishments claim ownership over the pregnant woman and the unborn. Women's experiences of childbearing are shaped by medicine in a highly politicized manner. The process of medicalization limits personal choice and agency and encourages a dependency on the health care system, alienating women from their experiences of the body (Young, 2005; Lupton, 2013). Biopower is the way 'biopolitics' is put to work in a society with what Foucault describes as a profound transformation of the mechanics of power (Foucault, 1978, p. 136) which seems to be positive but hides other capacities of power that are in play within the set-up of the government from the 19th century. It is, therefore, interesting to find out through the example of adolescent girls how, during their teenage pregnancies, biopower does not replace its repressive and deductive function of power but works together to incite them, control, monitor, and organize the forces while making them grow but under control and ordering them rather annihilate them (Foucault, 1978, p. 136).

Regarding the question of Adivasi societies being liberal and less patriarchal, the motive of this thesis has always been to deconstruct the patriarchy in the Adivasi communities. As Foucault wrote in the *History of Sexuality* (1978), at the heart of the economic and political problems of the population, there was always 'sex.' Hence, it was essential for the state to know what was happening with the citizen's sex hence designating sex as a public issue between the state and the individual. For Foucault, bio-power, a power that takes hold of human life and communities at the grassroots, monitored legitimate sexuality through the *Gram Sabha*. Lokkhimoni Marandi was eighteen years old and unmarried during her interview in Pakur, but she had a baby

daughter by then- Lokkhi was the unwanted mother of the village. Lokkhi was in standard eighth when she became pregnant and had little knowledge of what needed to be done then and where to seek support to deal with an unwanted pregnancy. Lokkhimoni said that when one gets her periods, they become, but she was pregnant with little knowledge of what needed to be done.

Lokkhi (18 years old): *"When you get your periods, you become beautiful, and your body gets a full shape. So when I got fat, I thought I was blooming rather than thinking that I was pregnant."*

And while she was pregnant and struggling to figure out a solution with no accessibility to health care, the villagers did a *Gram Sabha*. In the Sabha, the men claimed that the entire village got contaminated or '*ashuddh*' as a Sanskrit term for being profane and spoiled. They demanded that Lokkhi declare the name of the father whose child she was born in front of everyone. Women were not allowed to attend any form of *Gram Sabha* as there prevailed a gendered demarcation of the spaces women could occupy with their bodies in the community. However, for the first time, Lokkhi attended her own *Sabha* that decided the fate of her and her family since then. Lokkhi, was asked who was the father of the child she was about to give birth to, and out of sheer nervousness that day, she said she could not utter the *man's name*. *"I was in love and did not understand; now I understand what a big mistake I have made by not taking the name and taking all the blame myself,"* Lokkhi would share out of anger. Though the man was in the crowd along with his family, everyone blamed Lokkhi for the trouble she brought to herself and the village. In a superficial but strong way, many times, women are forced to believe that women invite trouble or, in some way or the other, can control the situation if they want to (Phadke et al., 2011, p. 38). Lokkhimoni's trial did not stop there, as her family was asked to pay the entire village for rice, money,

meat, and alcohol for being guilty. Interestingly everyone knew the man with whom Lokkhi had a relationship, but they were not charged a penny. When a group of men sat there and scrutinized the validity of Lokkhi's pregnancy to purify the village landscape, Lokkhi could not fight the system. Modern disciplinary power is peculiar, where the female body enters into the machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down, and rearranges it. As older forms of domination get eroded, newer forms of domination arise and spread, and the shape keeps changing (Bartky, 1997, p. 149).

Lokkhi negotiated to a point she could, but patriarchy was also integral in modern indigenous societies in the context of biopower. When the child was born, Lokkhi named her daughter Raihila Tudu, giving her the surname of her sister's husband, as getting a father's name was important, she shared. Men in the village mockingly called Lokkhi *hili* or brother's wife usually referred to as married women. Under the male scrutiny of the sovereign status, Lokkhi averted her eyes, and her female gaze was trained to abandon its claim to the state. She was the 'loose' woman upon whom the question of purity was posed (Bartky, 1997, p. 135). It is assumed that Lokkhi must have agreed to a specific fragment of risk; as a part of her 'voluntary risk.' She chose to have a sexual relationship with the man but then what followed was the 'risk imposed' by the system, which she discovered when she was pregnant and questioned by the *Gram Sabha*, making her decode how risks are constructed as social facts (Lupton, 2013).

As Foucault would suggest, the notion of sex made it possible to group people in an artificial unity and social conduct where 'sex' became the signifier and a universal signified. There was still a concept of human sexuality in society, which had nothing to do with the sciences but could invert the representation of the relationships of power to sexuality and also enables one to conceive power on sex as law and taboo. It is that

dominant imaginary boundary that individuals pass to have access to general meanings associated with bodies and identities. The rituals associated with it on the ground are the rituals that suppress it. The irony that Lokkhi and her parents had to go through was immense. It was unfair that Lokkhi's parents had to pay for the purification alone, but it proves that biopower controls the population spread and is gendered too. Biopower was able to access the body because it functioned through norms rather than laws and was internalized by the subjects rather than exercised from the above through threats of violence and dispersed throughout society rather than located in a single individual or government body (Cohen & Taylor, 1992, p. 43).

While with segments of society, the state validates procreation by providing incentives to parenthood, few were prevented from procreation by the disciplinary power increasingly charged upon producing a suitably embodied femininity. Unwed mothers were unfit to procreate or raise a child, which led to the ritualization of symbolizing the village getting contaminated, where the girl's family spent a large amount of money to 'purify' the village. As Foucault notes, 'sexuality' exists at the point where the body and the population meet. The control of sex is essential to keep the discussion on biopower running as it is not only controlling the body, but it is about exercising the right to who has to bear the context of dignity and maintenance of the 'purity' in question. Lokkhi's story witnesses how civilizations are so powerful and intent to have infinite patience to inquire about the actual status of sex and discourses of individuals validating Foucault's (1977) claim that 'power operates from down.' On the question of being less patriarchal, the institutions and regulations operating in every society, including the indigenous, do function around developing an instrument that regulates 'sex' with the best interest of biopower exercised by the state. The disciplinary power increasingly charged with producing a suitably embodied femininity is dispersed

and anonymous but is real (Bartky, 1997, p. 149). To be a 'bad girl' might assure access to the public, just like in the case of Lokkhimoni exploring her sexuality but also simultaneously means that this provides the limited capacity to bargain or negotiate for other rights (Phadke et al., 2011). When we talk about spaces, we tend to understand that people hold power and dominant positions in the current institutional system. It is interesting to understand that though no one may control the rules of the game in modern society, still, not all players on the field are equal (Bordo, 1993 a). Spaces acquire meanings not by themselves but by oppositional relations to the identities associated with the spaces, too; hence, the embodiment is gendered and situational (Niranjana, 2001).

In the narratives of Lokkhimoni and Elina, there is a notion of risk being a 'value-laden social construct.' The surveillance that 'the vigilant eye' conducts through public and private institutions by gathering information about the population talks about institutional knowledge management, shaping one's identity, and negotiating through their bodies (Rigakos & Law, 2009, pp. 79-103). Because what adolescent girls identify as risk, resistance, and agency around biopower is a form of the political right they exercise in their everyday life.

5.7: Conclusion:

Power and agency are the two dichotomies that run in the spectrum of this thesis. In every chapter, the priority is to understand how women lived through their bodies in their everyday lives. This chapter studied the negotiation, resistance, and acceptance of the cultural and socio-political diaspora that adolescent girls are born in. Above all, this chapter prioritized more individual stories from the ground that could be blended into a larger discourse. My aim in studying adolescents as social agents were not to explore

whether they had agency but to understand how different adolescent girls exerted and manifested their agency and how these manifestations constantly shaped and reshaped their social structures.

Resistance and risk can shape up in every possible way through the shifting selves represented by manifest or latent forms hailed through conflicting discourses (Butler, 1993, p. 192). People may act in unpredictable ways and can affect change for themselves and others by questioning the discourse. This chapter narrated resistance, risk, and negotiation one could identify through the narratives of young Adivasi girls from Pakur and Deoghar in the Santhal Pargana region. The experiences that each of the characters brought here about their bodies being sites of agency, resistance, and risk in their own way was setting up a strong identity for them expressed through their lived bodies as an alternative. This chapter provides insight into the fact that the spaces one occupies in the tribal communities are not neutral too. The girls who loitered unapologetically had to go through the private and public contexts, the good and the bad, and were labeled as the 'loose woman.' There are boundaries which, when crossed, the 'narratives of safety' in the community emerged in people's popular imagination as interlinked to sexuality and morality and are patriarchal and controlling. From love relationships through mobile phones to reclaiming spaces on the ground through sports, adolescent girls have been negotiating and resisting patriarchy through the narratives in this chapter. Girls were embracing their bodies, negotiating with mobility, and questioning the social construct. In their way, they were trying to shape an identity for themselves and empower themselves through employment and choice of desire. One of the essential findings through most of these narratives is that these girls did not break out of their systems to perform resistance. Instead, they were in their homes, dedicated to the labor and responsibilities they were expected to perform. However, the risk and

negotiations they undertook in their everyday lives were intertwined because the household was as crucial as the public for them. Talking of tribal women and their resistance has majorly been through *Jal, Jungle, Jameen*, and the breakthrough these bodies brought with them on the systems functioning under the state. The narratives of young girls in their everyday lives make this chapter a phenomenal episode because it also portrayed that in terms of occupying spaces in society, the institutional surveillance and the biopower associated with it had fundamental roles in the lives of these girls shaping their agency.

While on one side, adolescent girls like Lokkhimoni living their lives as unwanted mothers in the community and negotiating their spaces portrays a vision of how other girls in the society must be living in, girls like Manisha in this chapter fight for their rights to play football on the common ground replying to the boys, "*the ground is for everyone.*" Furthermore, when Sunita negotiates for her rights to 'loiter' fundamentally comes from the point of girls knowing that their freedom is subject to her knowing the 'limits.' Some restrictions are never applied the same way to men and women; the way it functions sometimes is like one force set against the other (Phadke et al., 2011, p. 8). Gaining mastery over one's body is a consequence of 'body power'

(Foucault, 1980), where reflexive embodiment acts as a self-policing technique derived from internalizing an external panoptic gaze as if the body is imprisoned by a socially and politically constructed gaze (Foucault, 1977). Therefore, power tends to remain peculiar in modern society; as women resist patriarchy and violence while prioritizing agency and sexual desire, newer control versions constantly evolve. However, in every society, there is always room for the 'Other Victorians' (Foucault, 1978).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1. Introduction:

It is the amalgamation of the stories from the adolescent girls on the ground, which is not of the dominant culture but of the excluded, that this dissertation got its existence into the literature of the Sociology of Body. As much as the themes in this study considered the social construction of the bodies, it also considers emotions, risk, and negotiations guided through rituals establishing a lived gendered identity. The length and breadth of this dissertation echo an understanding that bodies do not perform 'culture' in a vacuum, and neither are identities created in isolation. Common threads of fear and joy, pleasure and danger weave across the narratives in this study. On the one hand, where we experience young girls voicing out the internalized gendered oppressions around mobility and controlled sexuality, there were specific relational dynamics and fear of being rejected for not performing labor and motherhood in marriage. Again, where feminists, for ages, have been rejecting the idea 'that women should not be solely represented through their motherhood and biology' (Firestone, 1971; Rubin, 2002), every narrative with adolescent girls in the community ended with their future envisioned in marriage and children. Therefore, it brings us to the double dilemma on the fact that is it really that 'the subalterns cannot speak' (Spivak, 1988) and also why girls deserve to be educated about their sexual desires challenging the notion of gender and desires being dangerous (Tolman et al., 2014). However, Clandria Still (2014), while explaining Dalit woman's choices, writes, 'It is all too easy to dismiss Dalit women's preferences as a blind embrace of values that degrade them. It could be that poor Dalit women are logically assessing their limited alternatives. For a Dalit

woman, life as a housewife is more favorable to the physical strain and exploitation associated with agricultural wage labor' (See chapter 4). Also, one has to deconstruct the concept of 'silence' vividly among the Adivasi before commenting on it. De (2018) points out that there has been cultural silencing with the eradication of *Ghotuls* with the advent of missionaries and NGOs. Secondly, the *Nirbakization* vs Sanskritization (Mahato, 2000, pp. 17-18) ignored the voices of the women through manipulations around health initiatives being controlled by State elites (See chapter 5) and forced mainstreaming. The third is the 'silence' of the words as if the 'subalterns cannot speak' when asked about specific questions relevant to their lives. However, it is crucial to understand how often the most vulnerable groups are even ready to share their plights with 'outsiders.' For example, in December 1980, when Madhu Kishwar went to Singhbhum as a member of the women's inquiry committee to conduct an inquiry into alleged atrocities against tribal women by the Bihar military police then, which killed fourteen tribal, it was challenging to get the victims to attest to having been 'raped' even though they were brutally raped and several tribal men testified to it (Kishwar, 1982). Women did not admit to being raped or share any anecdotes or use the word rape for fear to have lost their land rights. On the ground in recent times, when the girls were interviewed during this study, they would often surprisingly laugh at the innate need for me to document stories of girls as mundane as them. "What is so special in our stories that you are documenting it?" they would ask me. The context of *Nirbakization* leads to a culture of silence in the marginalized population where they think their stories are not worthy. The writing of this thesis takes into consideration the culture of silence, which is sometimes latent to the extent that our representation of the subaltern says more about us than the subaltern themselves, where we produce the subaltern by our own gaze and end up reinforcing 'subalternity' (Spivak, 1988). Hence, if one follows

the pages from *Manushi* (a set of journals created back in the 1980s in India) and studies the status of women in undivided Bihar and then thirty-five years later tries to analyze the context of women and girls on the ground defining their everyday lives, this study becomes sociological enough in documenting this longitudinal analysis over time through the representation of stories and perceptions around gender, body, and sexuality in the same region.

6.2: The Chapters in a Brief:

This dissertation study was conducted through purposive sampling by talking to fifty Santhali tribal girls between fifteen to nineteen years old in two blocks of Pakur and Deoghar named Litipara and Palajori, respectively. The role of the ethnographer as portrayed in the second chapter, *Methodology: On Living the Ethnography on the Ground*, was to be a 'part insider' being the participant in the social world that is the object of the investigation and also 'part outsider' performing a professional purpose in the field of research, and this was always a critical boundary to be managed (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Experiences of cutting one's life to the bone (Goffman, 1989), surviving in different seasons, detailed descriptions of festivals and *melas*, and encounters with the villagers through *hadiyas* are shared throughout the methodology chapter. There was also a constant dilemma of managing the 'mythmaking' associated with ethnographic labor from the ground that Malinowski engaged in his writings (Bryman, 2001) as questioning the validity of the accounts collected as authentic and not a 'construction of myth.' A constant argument runs in the ethnographer's mind about how to position oneself on the ground and collect accurate data, which has been documented in large in this chapter. What was important to discuss in this chapter was also the context of 'ethics' which pervades every stage of

ethnographic work where the ethnographers need to make informed decisions that satisfy the demands of the science and the morality of the fieldwork (Fetterman, 2010, p. 140). There were the 'shadow sides' (McLean & Leibing, 2007) of the ethnographer's life; therefore, when the relationship between the ethnographer and the informants changed throughout their fieldwork, shifting from being a stranger to being a friend and moving back to being a stranger eventually and the context of ethics constantly was revisited throughout the chapter.

Hence, this chapter on the methodology talks about the on-ground experiences as a researcher "doing ethnography" (Fetterman, 2010) as a "stranger" (Schutz, 1944), the art of listening and comprehending data, the areas of struggle in the ground, comprehending gender and the impression management, and finally, the process of writing and cornering it back to the existential question of "Can there be a feminist ethnography?" (Stacey, 1988). The entry and the exit into the field were dramatic enough, and it is worth challenging the borders and the margins of the commonly perceivable myth of writing about only what works the most (McLean & Leibing, 2007). This chapter described moments of perceived failure or dissonance, intense identification, or uncomfortable feedback or silence from their subjects beyond the representation of the "successful" ethnography and added a more humane quotient to the writing.

The third chapter, *Experiencing Body and Sexuality in Everyday Life*, is written through the stories and experiences of adolescent girls on their 'bodies,' internalizing the concept of land, labor, marriage, and sexuality as a process of social construction lived through their everyday lives. This chapter tries to understand the construction of adolescent bodies through the constantly exposed arena of social and cultural ideologies and practices that impacts their identities (Thapan, 2009, p. 02). The

narratives in this chapter assume that adolescent girls' understanding of their gendered identity is not only perceived but also 'deeply inscribed' on their bodies through their lived-in experiences as a dynamic frontier balancing between the physical, the symbolic, and the sociological (McNay, 1999, p. 98). Keeping these arguments at the core, this chapter starts by deconstructing the context of social construction and the formation of regulated bodies realizing that bodies are 'neither pure object nor pure subject' (McNay, 1999, p. 98). The first half of the chapter explains how 'bodies' are constructed in everyday lives through the narratives of the young adolescent girls around their domestic work and the work on the field. It tries to portray how while growing up, one is trained to have a gendered regulated body as the ideal representation of femininities (Thapan, 2009). It discusses the understanding of internalized sexuality among adolescents fostered by the cultural cues that devalue them if they do not meet the prescribed standards (Bartky, 1993). The next half of the chapter identifies the construction of marriage and motherhood as the norms depicted in the making of the gendered bodies being intrinsic to the identity of adolescent girls. The last section of the chapter highlights the discourse of surveillance in the communities.

This third chapter decodes the concept of 'habitus,' 'power/knowledge,' and 'construction of self,' one at a time that contributes to the development of the body as a socially constituted system and the views of what is acceptable in the community, which gradually becomes a part of the larger public imagination too (Bourdieu, 1984; Foucault, 1980; Mead, 1934). The role of the family in the socialization of adolescent girls into everyday labor in the land and the home as entry points to sustainable marriage was a complex process dealt with in detail throughout the chapter. Throughout childhood and adolescence, children are socialized and learn ways to associate meaning with situations and actions, internalizing the acceptable norms around land rights,

marriage, and the context of sexuality in the communities. How adolescent girls not only perform 'doing gender' as per the acceptable norms in society through their socially constructed bodies, but this chapter also includes adolescent narratives on how they feel performing them through their bodies.

Shilling (2003) argues that 'the human body is subject to social power structures and relations, and so is the embodiment' represented through the bodies. As embodiment relates to the ways our social and historical environments enter into our bodies in a normative fashion through norms and discourses (Tolman et al., 2014), the fourth chapter, *Embodied Rites of Passage and Ritual Practices*, focuses on how rituals and rites of passage tend to become those discourses through which one embodies the norms and live through their bodies. The 'rites of passage' in this chapter are about ceremonies or experiences that mark significant transitional periods in a person's life and the involved 'ritual activities' that strip individuals from a set notion of roles and perspectives and prepare them with a new set of roles to perform. This study prioritizes the thoughts and processes embedded in the rituals and rites of passage, not where young girls were a mere part of a passive and submissive entity performing the rituals. The studies of femininity and its symbolization have been studied through the stages of her life cycle through socialization in sociological literature; however, these need to ask particularly how women and girls pattern these ideas in and through their lived bodies (Niranjana, 2001). Hence, how the adolescent girls in the community embody a certain deeper understanding of gender, body, sexuality, and femininity through these ritual practices and rites of passage was the core finding in this chapter.

Therefore, more voices from adolescent young girls talk about their embodied identities and 'body image' in everyday lives through the art of tattoos, living through menstruation and birthing, deconstructing beauty, and living through the ailing bodies;

through the narratives in this chapter. This chapter incessantly interconnects beauty, body image, gender, and spaces through embodied ritual practices and rites of passage all together in a thread as an unfinished phenomenon in a constant process of 'becoming' while living within society (Butler, 1990) because the body is assumed not as a 'given' but a social category in this dissertation. This chapter highlights how the construction of the 'sacred' is associated with the construction of feminine-gendered bodies. Adolescent girls and their narratives on denial of spaces that they can occupy in ritual practices were one of the fundamental discussions in this chapter. 'Space' was, therefore, one of the essential contexts which nurtured the gendered identity through the lived bodies because 'spatiality' informs the bodily practices of women within diverse contexts and settings (Niranjana, 2001).

Mathur (2008) writes, 'The identification of women with their physical bodies is the root cause of their oppression in a patriarchal culture and society like India. Women are often denied the right to emotional, psychological, and physical spaces. The fact that the female body is constantly under pressure to conform and mould into prescribed social and cultural roles brings into question the spaces that need to be protected and rights that need to be claimed so that women's bodily integrity is respected.' Hence, with the construction of the bodies and the everyday rituals discussed in length in the other finding chapters, the fifth chapter, *Finding the Agency in the Body*, highlights the acceptance, manipulation, resistance, and risks that form the adolescent bodies. This chapter considers the narratives of the adolescent girls living under the existence of 'surveillance' and 'biopower' and negotiating in their quest for their desire and existence with the agency lived through their bodies. Agency in this chapter is an 'embodied identity' lived through the bodies collectively as a source of resistance, risk, and negotiations to understand how societal discourse is performed

through bodies. The context of society's 'panopticon gaze' and the 'biopower' as social norms and expectations not only informed the adolescents and constructed their bodies but also there were conflicts with one another in creating newer meanings to norms and situations channelizing 'agency' through bodies. This chapter explores how women in everyday activities seek power by accommodating and resisting mainstream norms through bodily actions. It is not about manifested resistance to breaking the system always but about living in the system and trying to showcase an alternative within it. The theoretical model of 'individual temporal orientation' used in the conceptualization of 'agency' in this chapter tries to prioritize individual narratives, examining how the goals and expectations of adolescents, whether socially or personally, are informed by individual decision-making. Agency implies choices but also implies conflicting interests, as there is always a context of 'morality' representing the ideal feminine image associated with it.

As the previous chapters narrated that structure operates in a controlled process at different levels of society, this chapter considered individuals as agencies possessing the ability to exercise their own free will and make their own choices around their mobility and sexuality. However, this chapter also states in detail the ways mechanism of society controls the understanding of gender, sexuality, and lived-in bodies among the adolescents who occupy a specific location concerning power and identity when they start experiencing temporary inequality in ways that negate their existence and thereby negotiate, accepts resists them to build an alternative in their own way.

6.3: A Brief on the Theories Applied:

The Cartesian debate over mind versus body rather than disembodied minds unaffected by their senses and habits gradually became central to the sociological imagination. In

Regulating Bodies, Turner (1992) writes that being influenced by the same Cartesian thought on mind versus body sociology as an age-old philosophical tradition accepted the mind/body dichotomy for years. However, with a new journal launched in 1995, *The Body and Society*, the context of 'body' emerged in sociology as a distinct study area. From being a subject of philosophy to having an intellectual significance in sociology, this thesis considers the historical evolution of the body in sociology. From parts of classical sociology highlighting the body in their discourse, where Durkheim (1912) viewed the body as some sacred phenomena that technically binds individuals together into a moral whole to Karl Marx, concerned with the assimilation of the body through everyday labor, this dissertation applies a spectrum of the theories to discuss the contexts on body and sexuality. The sacred/profane dichotomy is a fundamental approach to how religions work in society, and so do people's lives. For Durkheim, the 'sacred' is conveyed through social rituals as a powerful social force in the modern world, classified separately from the profane. Therefore, the chapter on rituals and rites of passage emphasized the construction of the 'sacred' and how it was associated with the construction of feminine-gendered bodies in this study. Bodies throughout this study were viewed as a source and recipient of a collective symbolism that possessed the capacity to incorporate individuals into the moral life of the group through dance and tattoos as symbolism lived through the bodies.

The feminist perspective emphasized a critical interrogation of the biological sex/cultural gender divide that there was nothing natural about women's corporeality that justified their public subordination (Oakley, 1972). This perspective has been highlighted throughout this thesis, considering women's bodies not functioning under a vacuum and analyzing the contexts where women were seen as more biological, corporeal, and natural than men (Grosz, 1994). Arguments by Bartky (1993, 1997),

Bordo (1993 a), Thapan (2009), and Young (2005) have been used thoroughly in this dissertation, validating how the body had been used as a means of discrimination against women based on motherhood, marriage, and domestic work. This dissertation emphasizes the modern-day concerns that increased the prominence of the bodies was the changing mode of governmentality, highlighting human physicality as an object of various forms of social control highlighted by Foucault (1977, 1978). Foucault's work thus has been of enormous value for this study in thinking about how bodies and sexuality are socially constructed and hegemonic, continuing to enable and constrain how bodies might be experienced and lived.

Foucault's effective forms of 'disciplinary power,' which is power experienced by surveillance rather than a force that makes people internalize self-policing or self-surveillance as if they are constantly watched (Foucault, 1977), has been used while describing adolescent girls and their understanding of rites of passage, social construction, mobility and more. From the increase in discourses on 'sexuality' since the eighteenth century to the management of national populations through 'biopower,' Foucault's theories have been instrumental in analyzing the finding data. With more control on women's bodies as contestation sites for nations through birth control, reproduction, and sexuality, biopower becomes a practice for adolescents, as found in this study. The relationship between social class, gender, and labor as a Marxist-Feminist discourse viewed the body as a source of economic relations has also been crucial in the chapters of this thesis while discussing the social construction of adolescent bodies. As Shilling (2005) points out that Marxist-Feminists have demonstrated that reproductive bodywork and domestic work include catering for one's own and other people's basic bodily needs for sustenance and physical care as well as child-bearing and caring, food preparation, and providing emotional support for other

members in the family. The reproductive bodywork and the domestic work and labor are closely related in this study, and adolescent girls on the ground performed every part of the above-mentioned reproductive and domestic work and internalized their gendered identity and femininity lived through their bodies. Therefore, from the social constructionist analyses of the ordered body to the phenomenologically oriented approaches towards the lived body and the structuration theories on the agency in bodies, there has been a chronology in the way theories have been presented in this thesis to conceptualize the significance of the body.

In the context of phenomenology and the experiencing body, Merleau-Ponty (1962) rejected the idea that bodies were seen exclusively as objects or exclusively as subjects. Instead, bodies were identified as the vehicle of 'being in' the world, similar to what has been repeatedly identified in the thesis with Judith Butler's (1990) theory of the 'heterosexual matrix' that embodied individuals through imperative cultural demands that bodies present themselves based on a stable sex/gender system. In every section of this thesis, the concept of Butler's (1990) *Gender Trouble*, which argues that gender emerges through a determined stylized acting of a set of repeated acts, has been highlighted.

As a socially constituted system formed in the context of people's social locations, habitus inculcates in them a set of tastes and a worldview (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984; 1986). Like Bourdieu's theory, this study also points out that *habitus* is based on structural and agentic factors, which are interdependent and mutually reinforcing of situations in which people live their everyday lives. The interaction between the body and society, as seen through the narratives in this study, involves a mutual determination through acceptance of norms while exercising agency which facilitates the reproduction of the status quo. In a practical sense and through physical capital,

lifestyle choices, foods consumed, and career aspirations are all significantly influenced by *habitus* (Shilling, 2005). However, it is difficult to see on several theoretical levels how people can break out of the corporeal trajectories assigned to them, as this current study also emphasized the phenomenological understanding of the 'lived body.' As Turner (1992) identifies, the cultural representation of the body is historical; however, there lies an experience of embodiment that can only be understood by grasping the body as a lived experience. Embodiment, therefore, had a pronounced influence in this study as the narratives on the ground it was written emphasized that gendered embodiment is not just determined but produced in a given socio-cultural setting (Thapan, 2009, p. 38). Similarly, this study experienced space and gender playing an essential part in the practices and discourses of femininity and sexuality governing the morality and control lived through the bodies. A robust spatial narrative, as identified by Seemanthini Niranjana (2001), governed people's lives in the village and played an essential role in constructing gendered bodies.

As Giddens points out in the structuration theory and as identified in this study, the relation to agency and the ability after that to intervene in daily life is dependent on the bodily conditions which surround the spacing, timing, and significance of the interpersonal encounters lived by the individuals (Giddens, 1984). For Bourdieu and Elias (1983, 1991), the body is an 'unfinished' entity bearing a symbolic value and is integral to maintaining social inequalities linked to people's social location. Goffman (1956), another influential social constructionist, has examined the body's position in social interaction through behavior in public and private places where the management of the body is always central to maintaining encounters through social roles and relations. Both Foucault's and Goffman's views on the body are about bodies being central to the embodied subject and have been crucial in understanding gender, body,

sexuality, and also ethnography in this research. In similar lines to Goffman (1956), Elias also demonstrates that individuals must become skilled in 'impression management,' and Cooley (1902) had the path-breaking theory on the 'looking-glass self' on how one internalizes oneself through the 'gaze' of others. All of these classical theories, along with the contemporary feminist and radical social-constructionist theories, have been emphasized during this study in order to make this study more sociological. Despite studying the Adivasi community, it looked beyond the anthropological standpoint of the cultural and symbolic system to speak on the notions of a woman's body and lived experiences while performing the culture. The social constructionist theories of governmentality and society, the structuration theories of the body, and the phenomenologically informed writings on the lived body and embodiment have consolidated the insights from the existing approaches and helped develop a current view of the body throughout this study.

6.4: Major Findings:

6.4.a: Formation of the Subjugated Bodies:

One of the core findings of this dissertation identified that the embodied action and experience are no longer under the control of the individual subject but have been controlled and appropriated by structures of governmentality and the goal-oriented activities associated with contemporary work and leisure designed by the constraints of social class (Shilling, 2005). Household work was the initial entry into the labor force as an inception to socialization where girls would often narrate, "*We have to work, and there is no choice; what would we eat if we do not work?*" Gradually discovering the hard labor and working in the fields, cooking at home, skipping school, and then finally leaving school to manage the younger siblings at home became a part of *habitus*,

the typical trajectories the tribal girls would internalize in their everyday lives. As some would share, *"I did not know my body was so powerful that I could work so much."* Hence, through daily work, the adolescent girls experienced the power, endurance, and identities in their bodies when they discovered that parents from a very early age would teach them to work to prepare them for marriage. Anecdotes like *"I left school as early as in the third standard, as there was no one at the house to work, and I had to drop school"* showcased how time and again, in their homes, their natures and destinies were crucially interlinked to their future (Geetha, 2002, p. 02). When they would *share that "our parents are preparing us for marriage through work or our in-laws will never keep us in their house,"* it captured the reality of everyday life as an 'ordered reality.' Social constructionist asserts that families played a crucial role in constructing the idea of the subjected bodies for these adolescent girls. As mentioned in the third chapter, parents develop a set of shared assumptions assisting children in redirecting them toward the dominant social context in the household and what is expected outside of their bodies that need to work hard to survive. It is essential to point out that parents' influence is separate from the socio-economic context in which the adolescents live (Van Reeuwijk, 2010, p. 82; Berger & Luckmann, 1991).

Bourdieu (1984; 1986) writes that the working class tends to develop an instrumental relation to their body as they have little time free from necessity. Hence, the development of 'cultural capital,' even through leisure and play, is embodied within children through acquiring particular tastes and abilities expressed through their bodies; the body is, therefore, a means to an end for them. And though women engaged in household work in the form of 'doing gender' and men were not engaged in it were the early symbolizations attached to the activities (West & Zimmerman, 1987) the fact that land can be inherited only by sons and daughters has minimal usufructuary rights until

marriage was known to every adolescent girl in the community. The fear of working hard and searching for sustainability in 'marriage' through hard labor in the field and at home so that they are not thrown out of their in-laws' place was a pertinent phenomenon adolescent girls internalized in their lives. For example, married underage girls would work harder than their body could undertake in their in-laws' house to prove to everyone that their body was capable of enduring hard work linking the bodies between people's self-identity and social identity (Goffman, 1956).

6.4.b: Critical Bodies and Sexuality:

It was interesting to find out how girls experience themselves as self through the 'good girl' notion not directly but only indirectly through social experience, from the standpoints of other individual members of the same social group, or from the generalized standpoint of the social group as a whole to which they belonged (Mead, 1934). Girls would narrate that the definition of a 'good girl' in the community is one who works a lot in her house and the field and does not go out with the boys or in the *mela*. Community members often check on the girls mastering 'essential femininity' through their accountable 'ladylike' behavior (West & Zimmerman, 1987). For example, the Adivasi community had their elaborate *mela*, which most of the girls during the sessions agreed to have never gone alone but always knew that those were the places where boys and girls met secretly. As if adolescent girls thoroughly compared their situations with other girls from the community to develop an idea of morality associated with their culture and the spaces they occupied with their bodies. Space is fundamental in any form of communal life, and space is fundamental in any exercise of power (Foucault, 1994).

In every society, it is necessary to make room for illegitimate sexuality; there is always a space for the 'Other Victorians' (Foucault, 1977). Nevertheless, adolescents and youth in the Adivasi communities had opportunities in spaces like *mela* or local fairs to interact and court. There was usually pride in how girls showed sexual reticence in guarding their reputation and passive roles as recipients of courtships, while boys actively tried to convince girls to lure them (Van Reeuvwijk, 2010, p. 117). However, girls refrained from proposing to boys they liked because of the shame it would bring if the boy did not want her back, as there would be gossip among friends. The sarcasm, irony, and gossip associated with young girls in the community and their bodies speak about how women's bodies are both lived and imagined and how bodies bear the mark of morality (Niranjana, 2001). Where femininity and female morality are once represented through socio-physical and cultural spaces (Niranjana, 2001, p. 89), some girls take pleasure outside cultural spaces and challenge the boundary between the public and the private. There are narratives in Chapter 5 where adolescent girls flamboyantly explore their sexuality by 'loitering' as a choice and defying the boundaries defined by the communities refusing to play the roles assigned to them. 'Agency' in bodies provides room to explore sexual behavior that sometimes does not conform to the norms, and hence newer meanings get created.

Therefore, this dissertation portrays how resistance, risk, and sustainability can be alternatively described as rebellious, irrational, and deviant concerning young people (Rigakos & Law, 2009). For other women in the community, these girls were often termed as 'loose girls' and a threat to the community for other girls. The loose woman, as many feminists quoted in their writings, however, violates these norms as her 'looseness' manifests not only in her morals but also through her speech and the free and easy way she moves (Young, 2005; Bartky, 1997). The identification of women

with the unruly body and the deep misogynistic fear of sexuality being rampant and destructive aims to produce a version of female subjectivity that is still powerful in present times, the one that is tamed (Frost, 2001). However, girls who had some sort of economic independence often expressed anger at surveillance around their loitering and freedom and resisted this silent control over their bodies. Thapan writes that socialization is not the only normalizing strategy that functions effectively in society, as women are continuously exposed to a spectrum of impacting social and cultural ideologies and practices through negotiations, strategy, and contestations (Thapan, 2009).

6.4.c: Inequality, Oppression, and the Body:

Adolescent girls who took up work other than chopping paddy on fields were often subjected to disgust. For example, in Chapter 5, we come across the story of Maryam, who shared that she has to dance with the local *nukkad natak team* even if she violated the cultural code of being feminine through the act to have financial independence, deal with her alcoholic father and feed her family. Women in the community would often joke that young girls in present times have had the new refined packet of rice known as the *Sarna Chawal* found in shops and have developed an inevitable trend to roam around aimlessly. We often treat the body as a comparative and normative looking glass that is technically separated from the self and the situation (Waskul & Vannini, 2006), and it is the same in the course of the finding in this dissertation on motherhood. Again, women struggling with their ailing bodies and marriages or motherhood had rumors of being possessed by witches. Such bodies mediated a relationship between self-identity and social identity shared through embarrassment and stigma (Shilling, 2003). These burdened passive bodies often symbolized powerlessness and aspired to attain freedom

only when one produced a child or got married. Adolescent girls assumed their bodies were not as 'docile' and nurturing as they should be living up to feminine expectations (Bartky, 1997). If one is unable to produce children, their anxiety about losing control of their own body, the unsure future of her husband marrying someone else, and the surveillance on her body being called unwell altogether reiterate the context of childbirth as an embedded identity that every girl in the community bore with them as a reflection of an ideal healthy body, and there is in no context an alternative. As chapter 3 notes anecdotes from girls sharing, "*If I do not produce a child, my in-laws would say it would have been fruitful for them even if they would have got a cow home and not me because at least the cow will give them milk and ask me what will I be giving to the family? Who will eat their land now?*" Adolescent girls were expected to produce children through marriage, and bodies that could not produce a child were often compared to a 'cow' and were a part of the gendered identity adolescent girls internalized from a young age.

6.4.d: Understanding the Menstruating Bodies:

Menstruation meant the blossom of the body, with *hormo* meaning body and *baha* meaning flower. As mentioned in chapter 4, 'menstruation' is called *hormo-baha* in the Santhali language, and though many young girls call it *mahina* and *mahavari* in Hindi, the word *hormo-baha* is still prevalent in the community. However, it was also observed during the chapter that girls had little knowledge or agency on menstruation beyond the beautiful Santhali name for menstruation. Adolescent girls experience menstruation and 'first periods' with fear where the narratives young girls carry with them, the moments of disbelief, getting used to one's blood, and what needs to be done and undone to embrace the new way of life becomes an embodied reality that one

carries with them the entire life (Dammery, 2016). When the adolescents described menstruation during the interview, they focused on how it is linked to the role of reproduction and the body in public purview post menstruation on getting ready to be married and conceive. For example, girls shared, *"when we get periods, in a few days, the body starts glowing, and everyone says that the person looks pretty. The villagers claim that by seeing the glow on someone's face, they would understand that the girl is menstruating and that it is time to bring a match for her."*

Menstruation was still associated with 'ganda khoon' or bad blood among the girls. The concept of living in a body that produces bad blood every month talks loudly about how girls imagine their bodies to be. There is always a prominent thought of being a 'lesser body' and self-surveillance in keeping the self-censoring gaze alive in oneself (Foucault, 1977). The emphasis, therefore, remains on the menstrual blood and the perceived dirtiness around it of the bodies being considered secondary and polluted. However, regarding myths and taboos, the Santhali girls interviewed during the study shared only a few that prevailed in the community. Santhali girls in Pakur and Deoghar shared that they had no restrictions on working in the fields, fetching water for household chores, cooking food, and cleaning during their menstruation which was the usual restriction faced by adolescent girls in parts of India. It is interesting to analyze that the basis of discarding the myth was not knowledge around menstruation or awareness of body rights, as those were still passive bodies formed to perform the gendered feminine requirement of producing mundane labor as a form of survival. During the harvest season, a girl from the community would get rupees two hundred to rupees two hundred fifty for a day's labor in the field. Not working for a day during menstruation can take away a day's meal for the family with no pay.

Adolescent girls in the communities would have little agency to talk about menstruation. The few NGOs and their projects, the inconsistent meetings by ASHA workers, and the discussions with friends were the sources of understanding menstruation (Chakraborty, 2019). However, there has been a 'silence' between mothers and daughters around the conversation on menstruation. In most cases, during any particular session, the mothers and the daughters would even talk about menstruation in a closed room for the first time, while it must have been two years by then that the girls had their menarche. The absence of dialogue between a mother and daughter was not solely patriarchal but was linked to knowledge as, in most cases, mothers did not indulge in conversation because they managed it in isolation during puberty without much knowledge about menstruation themselves. Girls would learn in their puberty that bodies that manage their period are 'good bodies' and any menstruators failing to do so has a troubled body at risk (Bobel, 2019).

6.4.e: Biopower and Surveillance in Bodies:

The finding chapters focused that the understanding of being an 'Other' and the marginalized in the given set is the phenomenon through which the identity of being feminine is constructed every day and lived through the adolescent bodies as 'one is not born a woman but becomes one' (Beauvoir, 2010). There was a visible pattern of passive construction of bodies which needed to be ensured every day by not allowing girls and women to be a part of the *Gram Sabha* for any political discussions or discussions around development.

Women were not allowed to attend any form of *Gram Sabha* as there prevailed a gendered demarcation of the spaces women could occupy with their bodies in the community. These spaces were areas of constant surveillance on gender as we know

that power comes from below and the complex local interwoven relationships in our everyday lives. There was constant surveillance of adolescent girls and their mobility post-puberty in spaces outside the home, too, through a 'Panopticon gaze' (Foucault, 1977). Surveillance was silent, just like the *Gram Sabha*, which by controlling spaces, controlled the lives of the young girls and internalized in them the idea of living through a 'gendered' body from a very young age. The lived realities around 'biopower' and the control it had on maternal health and the social positions of women and girls in the community have been evident in Chapters 3 and 5. Disciplinary power worked mainly through the institutions, while biopower worked through the state and gradually optimized its capabilities to perform in a structured pattern. The ability to control the data related to birth, contraceptive methods, and women's health are one of the crucial aspects of biopower exercised by the government in marginalized communities and identified through this study, which questions women's rights in reality. For example, the story of an adolescent girl and her pregnancy before marriage was termed unfit for the community, which led to the ritualization of symbolizing the village getting contaminated. Chapter 5 has detailed narration where the girl's family spent a large amount of money to 'purify' the village and feed every man in the village with alcohol, chicken, and rice. The new rule of the land was the mastery of exercising power over life instead of taking charge of a life that gave power access to the body. Adolescent girls in these situations often find themselves within this institution and practice as an 'alienating self' where the control over the knowledge of anything related to sexuality, marriage, and motherhood takes away their autonomy from them (Young, 2005, p. 47). The control of sex is essential to keep the discussion on biopower running as it is not only controlling the body, but it is about exercising the right to who has to bear the context of dignity and maintenance of the 'purity' in question for girls and it is prevalent

in the Adivasi communities too. More than the threat of death, the power that has access to the biological life of civilizations and their bodies and control of the data on maternity and contraceptives runs the risk of manipulating adolescent lives and their identities.

6.4.f: The Politics of Space and the Bodies:

The relationship between eating and sociability has not been eradicated in the contemporary era, as gender inequalities continue to be evident in these activities. Women traditionally have less access to food than men but more responsibility when preparing it for consumption (Shilling, 2005, p. 205). Chapter 4 highlights 'space' as one of the essential contexts associated with the rituals and the rites of passage that tends to nurture the gendered identity through the lived bodies because 'spatiality' informs the bodily practices of women within diverse contexts and settings (Niranjana, 2001). On one side, 'dance' is a traditional way where the whole community participates and choreographs together through the 'shared vocabularies of body idiom' (Goffman, 1963, p. 35); girls had certain restrictions on the other hand, around spaces they could occupy in the community or during festivals. For example, girls in the communities I interacted with were never allowed to go to *Jeharthaan*, where their ancestors were worshipped. Post marriages, when the newly married couple visits the *Jeherthaan* as a welcoming gesture, the new bride is not allowed to enter the *Jeherthaan*. However, she will take the blessings from outside the wall, whereas the groom can enter the boundary walls. In a different context, satisfying the *Bongas* or ancestors in every ritual is the most crucial part of any festival in the Santhali community, and several forms of sacrifice were attached to it. Chapter 4 narrates in detail how a corner of a room in the house is selected as sacred for the sacrifice, and men would sacrifice a chicken

remembering the ancestors where women were never allowed to enter the room during the offering, nor were they allowed to eat the sacrificed meat after the offerings were done. From a very early age in their maternal house, adolescent girls internalize that to hold the connection with their ancestors is supposedly a manly phenomenon, and the sacrificial meat was an embodied object to validate that women were not allowed to occupy all spaces and positions with ease. Rituals played a fundamental role in the social construction of gender lived through bodies connecting food with property rights and mobility. It was interesting to identify the rituals that restricted women from nutrition as a gendered component that led to discrimination. For example, Chapter 4 also mentions that just like the offering to the *Bongas* there was the *Gada parab*, where men would collect rice and tiny chicken from every household and collectively meet at a riverbank to cook, where women again would not be allowed to participate or even consume excess food. Interestingly, no such ritual practices were done solely by women or girls in the community, where men were not allowed to participate or consume food. Hence, rituals like this which discriminate against women participating or even control their bodies through food consumption, make it understandable that women and girls do not grasp space directly but through bodily situations (Niranjana, 2001). As Bartky (1997) writes that it is through the diminished dieting method and their relation to food that women are encouraged to take up as little space as possible.

6.4.g: Individuality and the Body:

Chapter 5 highlights 'tattoos' both as a rite of passage and an agency lived through bodies. Most girls in the community inscribed tattoos on their bodies at a very young, where in a few cases, they would plead with their mothers to pay for the tattoos. In places where their mothers would not give them money, they would conspire ways

to arrange some money or a handful of grains or rice to get the tattoos done from the *gotnewali*. Everyone shared their immense pain in getting the tattoo done and stories of how they would hit the ladies and wanted to run away, hoping they had heard their mother and never would have asked for a tattoo. Often bodies are scarred in the name of rituals, and the cut leads to pain, but as Durkheim would suggest, pain is integral to solidarity building. Pain rituals symbolize getting rid of the 'profane' to get closer to the 'sacred' by overcoming the limitations of flesh (Crossley, 2006, p. 23). No young girl would miss out on the chance of adorning the rite of this passage to get closer to the inner circle of the women around them as an agency where the individuals identify with their collective. Therefore, altering the body has a profound social significance as a celebratory moment when mothers, grandmothers, and adolescent girls sit together to apply turmeric and oil on the swollen bruises on their hands and chest and listen to stories about getting united with their ancestors someday after death. However, girls who once desperately wanted to be a part of the woman's group and enjoyed having tattoos as that one entry point into the group when they were very young would react to the permanence of tattoos while growing up. Some young girls would say they did it when they were young and did not want it when they grew up as their body parts look further darker. Bartky mentioned the normalized discourse of the body in society by arguing, 'A woman's skin must be soft, supple, hairless, and smooth; ideally, it should betray no sign of wear, experience, age, or deep thought' (Bartky, 1997). For example, the contractors would pick the girls and women every morning during the migration season, identifying them as laborious by tattooing them on their bodies. Girls would not want to be associated with a laborious body with the understanding of a deeply rooted inferior status inscribed to their bodies. In an entirely another context, tattoo permanence bothered college-going girls too. They shared that when they started

college, girls wore full-sleeve *salwar kameez*, covering their tattoos as a negotiation strategy with their bodies getting marked from a particular community. The modification of an individual's body is usually an event for the whole community or a select group to identify it on several occasions differently as it confers several meanings imposed through it (Crossley, 2006, p. 23).

6.4.h: The Outsider Myth in Ethnography:

Chapter 2 depicts the vivid concern that remains as a researcher where one struggles if the intimate knowledge of the informants will become public and coincide with broader debates about one's privacy as it is simply 'too personal' to write about it (Howell, 2004). Judith Stacey's 1988 article, *Can there be a Feminist Ethnography?* argues that feminist researchers predominantly suffer the delusion of alliance more than the delusion of separateness. This delusion, in turn, may lead to a 'feminist ethnographer's dilemma' once they get close to sensitive information shared with them in their role of 'friend' rather than in the role of researcher, and this happens quite often as a participant observer when for days and months, one has gained and regained the trust in the community. But as an outsider in the field, one can question the need for the 'shared identity' that women are forced to talk about and live with. Kamala Visweswaran (1994), in her book, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*, shared that there is no such thing as a shared identity and universal sisterhood as it is a part of the cultural truism we are meant to believe and live also.

It is noted in the methodology chapter that the chances of acceptance in the community to talk about sexuality, intimacy, and daily lives were higher because, being a women ethnographer, one is perceived to be less threatening than men (Warren, 1988). However, nothing would ensure a context of 'genderless neutrality' on the field

(Westmarland, 2000), as highlighted in the methodology chapter. In a different context, ethnography involves cutting one's life to the bone (Goffman, 1989), and for months there was a desire for totally amalgamating in the community and being able to function as one of 'them' remained strong. However, an ethnographer must refrain from fooling oneself into being an insider during the research (Bryman, 2001). Chapter 2, has a detailed narrative on how after months of struggle to be one of the community members and trying to document what is different; the realization dawned that I would always be a *diku* or an 'outsider' and my research should highlight the outsider's perspective in me and also examine the mundane because it was essential to prioritize what one 'sees' in the community. It was interesting to find that both an 'insider's myth' and an 'outsider's myth' prevailed in ethnography. The outsider myth entails that only outsiders can conduct valid research on a given group as they possess objectivity and emotional distance. On the other hand, the insider myth asserts that only insiders can do valid research on a group they belong to (Styles, 1979, p. 148). However, on the ground, as a participant observer, a shifting relationship of power and hierarchy prevailed even while one was researching a relatively powerless group (Ghosh, 2012).

6.5: Towards a New Narrative:

Women have always been a part of the anthropological discourse; however, the most important question remains on how women have been studied and also who studied them. Hence, the problem has seldom been about the absence of women in literature but is about the representation of women within any disciplinary frame, as there has been a male bias and male-centered view of the world within the discipline (Visweswaran, 1997). Beyond anthropological and sociological discipline, the reality on the ground equally focuses on a male view exercised and lived through the lens of

patriarchy. For example, bringing forth an extremely current topic from South Maharashtra and West Maharashtra, there has been an increase in cases of hysterectomy in the last few years among women sugarcane workers in Beed district removing their uterus. First reported in the year 2018¹ and continued until 2019, the stories of women removing their uterus for work became a controversial topic of discussion. Menstruation has been a long taboo in the country, as discussed in the findings chapter in this thesis, and menstruation is associated with bodies that are believed to be impure and excluded from social events. However, in a district named 'Beed' in Maharashtra, thousands of economically vulnerable family migrates every year migrated to work for six months as cane cutters in sugarcane fields where the contractors use every opportunity to exploit them. First of all, they would not hire women considering cane cutting hard work for women, and as women may also miss a day or two of their fieldwork during their periods². If during cane-cutting tenure, women miss a day's work, they have to pay the penalty, and hence a vast majority of women from the marginalized community with no agency were forced to make long-term health choices that impact their lives. The means of production obtained with a few and the biopower exercised by the capitalist mode of production turned several villages in Maharashtra into 'villages of womb-less women.'³ Therefore, the stigma of something as natural as menstruation compelled women as young as in their twenties to have hysterectomies so that they no longer miss their work days for periods. It is appalling to bear the sacrifices marginalized bodies make facing the capitalist mode of production.

On similar lines, very interestingly, Felix Padel, in his book *Sacrificing People: Invasions of a Tribal Landscape* (2009), brings forth the debates about human sacrifice and its historical and anthropological insights into the way colonial projects have

shaped how we see the world. The colonial ethnography has portrayed tribes as beastly and having animal-like loose emotions and low intellect, depicted as '*dasyus*,' '*daityas*,' '*rakshasas*,' which was similar to mid-19th century western racial concept (Xaxa, 2005). However, Padel's book builds the idea that ritual practices undertaken by the tribes are not rudimentary events but are framed by historical processes. Thus the dread that we feel at the idea of taking a human life through sacrifices as a part of the ritual is similar to the horrifying human sacrifices the government since the British times has been conducting. Padel (2009, pp. 305-307) writes that 'development' is a concept that holds enormous power in modern society and has an evolutionist idea associated with it. Padel also writes that 'development' is an idea considered rarely arising from the tribal society; however, it is something they always need to be guided into. Development, therefore, always becomes a euphemism for exploitation or for change imposed over marginalized people experienced with even worse kind of human sacrifice, which is harder to realize as it is widespread and normalized by what Foucault says as control of state on civilization or the 'biopower' as widely mentioned in this dissertation. Padel (2009, p. 316) writes,

'When tribal people are displaced by dams, mines and factories, they are invariably promised a better life, even though their standard of living invariably drops drastically in every dimension. Sometimes though, when tribal people are displaced by industry, their loss of homes, land, and community are described more frankly in terms of the *sacrifice* these people are making- the 'price of progress.'

Lastly, in the foreword of *Sacrificing People*, Hugh Brody (2009, pp. xiii-xxv) argues that the loss of land and the forced resettlement that tribal communities undergo in our country being deprived of the forest resources is indeed a sacrifice of both livelihood and lives. The after-effects of what all in the name of development brings

for the marginalized are diseases caused by poverty, deaths, and the physical and mental health crisis, a sacrifice that none of us in the civilized world question.

Therefore, it is proved that an analysis of existing literature on tribes in India reveals a set pattern of understanding the tribal history. In colonial India, the history of tribes has always been written and portrayed from the perspective of tribal resistance to development and identity politics. The post-colonial discourse, on the other hand, primarily focused their topics of discussion around land rights, property rights for women, and education of tribes when it came to an understanding of the tribal population. The post-colonial history also developed their understanding through the development parameters based on economic standpoints and empowerment. The overemphasis on the land rights of tribal women was justified by scholars who argued that if a woman is deprived of her land and has no authority over it, then it makes no sense to fight over other issues. As Bara argues, 'Even after independence, several tribals, with a strong sense of sons of the soil, have continued to assert for their rights. This struggle tempts scholars to project tribes as avowed subaltern fighters for property rights, but nonchalant on their cultural identity' (Bara, 2009, p. 90). The sociological and anthropological studies, literature, and economics gradually tried to research the culture, customs, and development paradigm among tribes. However, for a long, the perspective of Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), Body Rights, and Gender have always taken a back seat while academically researching tribal societies as they are always considered free and liberal. In a few tribal societies in India, there is liberty for a woman to choose their husband; there are institutions like *Gothul*⁴ where there were no rigid rules on sexuality, and in communities, divorce and remarriage were not based on stigma. It is interesting to analyze how the basic fundamental rights for women, that is, to choose their partner and explore one's sexuality, tend to be seen as

liberal for a tribal society because tribes are always compared with the customs of caste. In his book, Sinha (2005, p. xvi) argues, 'Writing women back into history also leads us to re-examine the institutions and the events that have been traditional objects of historical enquiry.' Hence to contextualize a tribal body and its lived realities, it is important to highlight what kinds of narration in the lives of tribal women are considered sacred and accepted and what parts are still considered taboo when we speak about sexuality.

Shifting from a sociological perspective to literature Mahasweta Devi's legendary *Draupadi*⁵ written more than forty years back in Bengali narrates a fiction of Dopdi⁶ Mejhena a 27-year-old tribal woman from West Bengal who tends to remain a symbol of revolution and a spirit of vigor to date. In the story, Dopdi gets raped several times by the police officials in one of the anonymous camps in Purulia the night they arrest her for being involved with some rebellious groups. Fighting through her own blood and gag and gazing through her ripped nipples and breasts the following day, as Devi (1993) writes and as translated by Spivak in her English version of the story, Dopdi heads towards the Burra Sahib's⁷ tent naked. In front of the already dumbstruck troop then (by this act of Dopdi) and the Burra Sahib, Dopdi refuses to put on clothes saying, 'You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again?' and '.... there is not a man here that I should be ashamed of.' The story ends with Dopdi pushing the officer with her dark, wounded breasts, and the officer, as the story narrates, 'is afraid to stand before an unarmed target, terribly afraid' (Spivak, 1993, p. 196) for the first time in his life. The story *Draupadi* is nauseating when we read it, and every line of the story celebrates the sexuality of a tribal woman from a wholly different perspective which is rigid and a symbol of strength. It talks about a powerful image of a tribal woman, a raped body of flesh addressing the structure with something that should be

covered up in silence, a 'woman's docile body.' However, Draupadi is a story about a marginalized woman standing up against the system narrated from the point of resistance which questions the basis of power and stories on the exploitation of tribes and connecting it to resistance against the system has been accepted tools of revolution. Nevertheless, we live in interesting times, and hence if we walk beyond the romanticized idea of tribal resistance, we see that narrations of everyday realities of women seldom make revolutionary tales. For example, two of the very recently written fiction stories set in the terrains of Jharkhand written by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar receive defamation.

The Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey: A Novel written in 2014 revolves around a few Santhali women in Jharkhand and their lived experiences with their family, casual sexual relationships, freedom of choice, consent⁸. Sexuality, desire, and choice are integral parts of this fiction, so the author gets shamed for bringing humiliation to tribal society. With another book from the tribal topography, *The Adivasi Will Not Dance: Stories*, Shekhar in the year 2015, gets into a much-debated controversy, particularly for the exact three paged short story *November Is the Month of Migrations* (Hansda, 2015, pp. 39-42). When the book received the Sahitya Academi Yuva Puraskar Award, it got banned in Jharkhand, creating an impression that it humiliated the tribal culture by being too sexual and portraying tribal women wrongly. The story is about a twentyone-year-old Santhali girl named Talamai who, along with other members of her village, makes a journey to a nearby state during the high time of migration. The story's setting is a corner of a railway station where Talamai, in return for a bread roll and a fifty-rupee note, is lured into having sex with a Railway Protection Officer. Now the entire story revolves around the thought process in Talamai's head during the ten minutes that the Protection Officer and Talamai get into the sexual act.

In the period between Talamai reciprocating the Protection Officer's call and the time she is done with the sexual intercourse, there have been layers of violence embedded inside, reflected in poverty and negotiations with hunger which questions her consent. In the story, during the sexual act, there is a line for the officer, 'Once, he says, 'Saali, you Santhal women are made for this only. You are good!' The line mentioned speaks a lot about violence and never does it once, making the story sexual. When Talamai quietly shows no expression during the entire sexual act, it speaks a lot about silently rooted violence and never does it once, making the story more sexual. However, Hansda received defamation for writing sexual content in his story⁹.

Now it is interesting to analyze why *Draupadi*, where the Police Officers raped Dopdi in the camp, is a celebrated piece of the story, whereas in contrast, Talamai is a shame because she has consent in this sexual act (however, with layers of socioeconomic parameters to be considered). It can be argued that Talamai's expression of sexuality was not of a rebel, unlike Dopdi; her body was not an epitome of rage or resistance in front of the system; instead, she was a much more submissive body. Moreover, in the story where the officer calls her for some work, in the story it is mentioned that 'Talamai knows what work he is talking about,' which reflects that she must have performed the role of the submissive body and had indulged into similar sexual act even before or has known about the same from others. Shekhar's stories compel us to question the hierarchy associated with particular expressions of legitimate bodies while discussing sexuality among tribes. Towards a new narrative on comprehending the context of sexuality among tribes in recent times, it is important to question that if sexuality is a non-patriarchal term in tribal societies and expresses freedom, then why is there a concept of purity and pollution associated with gender and sexuality among women from tribal communities on what is glorified and what needs

to be silenced in literature and academics. Comparing a Dopdi with a Talamai, it is essential to comprehend that if Dopdi, being subjected to the biopower, could never portray a rebellious act, then would *'Draupadi'* still be a celebrated piece of text even today, or would it be shamed too.

6.6: Limitations of the Study:

The access and entry into the field for this study were through livelihood projects and other development programs run by NGOs on the ground. The more relatable questions on understanding the body, gender, and sexuality among adolescents were technically introduced much later on the ground because grasping such intimate topics took a lot of time and precision. Ethnography was, therefore, a long, monotonous, and tiring exercise because by the time one reaches the core of the research question, a considerable amount of time has passed in the research timeline. It often required meeting an adolescent girl thrice to gauge a complete perspective of her understanding of gender, body, and sexuality. However, by the time the last interview date arrived, the girl would have left to work in Bengal during harvesting season or in brick kilns there, and the interview will remain incomplete forever. On other occasions, in two villages I visited during the fieldwork and interacted with the girls, one girl from each village eloped with their partner. Their parents and the villagers accused it on the sessions and interactions they started with me; that she eloped after knowing much about sexuality and mobility. I was then barred from entering the village by my colleagues from the local NGO concerning my safety. Hence, all the rapport built with the girls and women in the villages dissolved, and the progress made with the interviews and the time and labor behind the research work all ended, leaving me clueless at times having to start investing time and effort in new villages again.

Secondly, on a different note, as an ethnographer on the ground, I, took a long time to understand the basic terms in Santhali and pick the tone of the words. During FGD sessions and discussions with adolescent girls, there was a constant anxiety that interplayed at the back of the mind as a researcher while interpreting the language of 'silence' and the 'laughter.' There was a fear of being unable to document the expressions, laughter, and silence, which was beyond inference; hence, the locale representation is only partially presented through this study. Justifying the reflexivity in the ethnography on how close the translations have been and the issue of missing out on the nuances of the discussions in translations by the field workers was, therefore, a reality.

Lastly, Stacey (1988) points out that no matter how welcoming and enjoyable the field worker's presence appears to the 'natives,' the fieldworker's presence is an intrusion into the field. Also, the fact that the researcher is far 'freer' than the researched to leave the situation becomes crucial to respect privacy and live up to the ethics of feminist ethnography. Often, the lives, loves, and tragedies that informants share with a researcher are all forms of stories when analyzed and put forward in writing through the ethnographer, but in the end, their lives remain the same. The reciprocal quest of 'Feminist Ethnography' on giving back to the community from where one takes the data is fundamental. As an activist closely connected to the field during and after the study through development projects, an intense dilemma prevailed that there still will be a time when one has to leave the ground for other causes in life and will that still do justice to the immense amount of knowledge acquired to conduct this dissertation from the adolescent girls living in this land.

6.7: Future Scope of Research:

From the spaces adolescent bodies occupy while exploring intimacy on one side to the performance of marriage and motherhood as definitive markers of gender identity on the other (Puri, 1999), the focal point of this dissertation was to understand the views on body and identities formed that normalizes and regulates women's narratives and structures of hegemonic codes of gender and sexuality. However, Butler's work (1990) has proved extraordinarily influential in reimagining the sex/gender/body distinction by challenging the heterosexual subjects interlinked to women. Moreover, Butler portrays the 'heterosexual matrix' as damaging women's expressive capacities (Shilling, 2005, p. 51). Hence, it would be interesting to study beyond the 'heterosexual matrix' among adolescent girls in the tribal communities and research a broader spectrum of understanding gender and sexuality beyond binaries through bodies.

Secondly, it should be noted that though this dissertation dealt with intimacy in a sexual relationship with others, loitering and experiencing desires in a relationship with others, the context of 'autoeroticism' or the act of sexually stimulating oneself has been missing. Having said that, it would be interesting to deepen the study around forms of desire and exploration of sexual intimacy with the adolescents' post-puberty.

As a third point I would like to add that poverty and economic exploitation are so deeply ingrained in the tribal communities researched during the study that adolescent girls who travelled to Bengal and nearby other states during harvesting season, construction work, or working in brick kilns never complained about exploitation by the *thikedaars*. Jharkhand being one of the states with the highest rate of migration and trafficking (Verma, 2014), the girls never spoke about any form of sexual violence they had ever experienced during their work. It is therefore worth researching if there are deep-rooted economic insecurities embedded in adolescents on

losing out work for them and the entire village if any violence from the *thikedaars* is out in public.

Lastly, an angle missing from this study is 'witch craft' because it was primarily women who suffered the consequences of being called a witch or 'daayan.' Women are seen as well-versed in performing black magic and are eventually boycotted by seizing their rights, such as property rights (Sharma, 2018). As this research focused on gender, body, and sexuality among adolescents and not women, the consequences of witchcraft in their lives were majorly missing. Jharkhand, being one of the states with the highest cases of witch hunting¹⁰ as a combination of superstitious beliefs and patriarchal norms, it would be vital research to document the lived realities of the children and the adolescent girls who have experienced witch hunting upon any of their close family members and how they have internalized the trauma, shame and the aftermaths of the incident living in the communities.

6.8: Concluding Thoughts:

One of the tasks of women's history being rewritten was to question accepted schemes of periodization and how they affected women. To consider the standpoint of women as an essential point to discover the position of women in the historical development of a specific time is to argue that development often had quite different or even opposite effects on women as it hardly affected or took into consideration 'women' in its center. Nevertheless, one always returns to the revolutionary feminist article *Did Women have Renaissance?* by John Kelly-Gadol (1977) to argue that the development during Renaissance affected women so adversely that there was hardly any renaissance for women at all. For example, the quality of historical experiences women had during the Renaissance around the regulation of female sexuality as compared with male sexuality

were very different. Women's economic, cultural and political roles; access to property, and the education or training necessary for work as well as their participation in art, literature, and philosophy were very different from men as their contribution was hardly noticed or there were significantly fewer opportunities for women to excel. Hence, it is assumed that in the context of situating women and their relation to the state construct, women did not historically have a Renaissance. Nitya Rao (2018), while mentioning the Santhal *Hul* or the Santhal rebellion (See Chapter 1) under the leadership of Sidho and Kanho back in the times against the East India Company and the Zamindari system also questions that while Sidho and Kanho became an embodiment of Adivasi victory, 'where have all the women in the struggle been?'. Several pieces of literature from the Santhal Parganas have noticed the daily struggles of the people as residues, and most importantly, women amongst them have been forgotten since the *Hul* (Guha, 1983).

Performing the hard work in the fields, living through anemia and malnourished bodies, the fight for *Jal, Jungle, and Jameen*, and the household chores have taken avenues for women and girls in this region to think beyond labor, food, and survival. However, the land has always been given in the male's name, considering them as the 'head of the household,' while women have never received land in their own names (Kishwar, 1987). When men migrated out of their villages for work, and even if women had worked on that land for many years in the man's absence, they still would not be able to claim the land. The context of land was indispensable to the community, but so was the context of women being defined by the labor in the land and even leaving education for the same labor but never being allowed to claim a part of the same land.

It is interesting that even after years of the fight put by the feminist activists, Adivasi leaders in Jharkhand condemned any judgment around land rights for women claiming that they have no intention of interfering with customary law because

initiating a discussion on individual rights for women would create further divisions in the Adivasi society (Rao, 2018). Hence, it is essential to acknowledge that women in this land still fight for the fundamental rights of survival and identity and have missing voices from the ground narratives. Bhukya (2008) in his article validates the point that the postcolonial theoretical analysis has been creating unidimensional knowledge when it came to Adivasi, building the anthropological part of knowledge creation that deals with caste and tribe and the identity of the nation but seldom about women's body rights. When we speak about sexuality among tribes in academics and activism, there is a romanticized idea of tribal sexuality where there is 'free will' to choose their partners, easy separation, and acceptance of sexual relations before marriage. Over time in India, we are stuck with our imaginary definition of a glorious idea of sexuality among tribes with no standpoints of patriarchy. However, the measuring dictum of how patriarchal the tribal society is, has always been calculated in comparison to the caste-based societies in India and not exclusively within tribal society. Systems like the abolition of dowry and less control over sexuality prevail in tribal societies' terms for a better situation regarding the power and identity of a woman. Other than the general patriarchal claim of denying woman land in order to retain their patrilineal roots instead, my experiences of working in tribal regions of Jharkhand helped me note that Santhal women are also not allowed to plough in their fields neither allowed to climb rooftops to build the roof of their house. This myth validates that 'In material terms, women are as engaged with land and agriculture as men; it is in the social-symbolic realm that their rights are not just secondary, but also denied' (Rao, 2008. p. 200). Though these acts are highly embedded in patriarchy, and the socio-economic power in the society women live in, these systems are shadowed by the liberalism we idealize while celebrating tribal culture. Hence, prioritizing narratives from the ground on

gender, body, and sexuality as a prime part of understanding lived experiences of women and girls and interpreting tribal history from a feminist lens should be a core discourse of academia in the study of the Sociology of Body highlighting the South Asian perspective.

END NOTES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

¹ Santhal Pargana derives its name from two words: 'Santhal,' a significant tribe of India, and Pargana, a unit of administration used primarily by medieval rulers. Santhal Pargana is one of Jharkhand's divisions and comprises Godda, Deoghar, Dumka, Jamtara, Sahibganj, and Pakur.

² A small village in the Palajori Block of the Deoghar district of Jharkhand.

³ *Mage Parab* is a principal festival celebrated among the Ho and the Munda people of eastern India. However, it was interesting to learn that the Santals celebrated it too and decorated their entire village, followed by dance and feasts.

⁴ *Hadiya* or *handia* is a local rice beer originating in the Indian subcontinent. Hadiya is made with fermented rice and local tablets made with herbs over a week. It was an essential liquor prepared during any festival or marriage celebration.

⁵ We want grains, not iron!

⁶ <https://censusindia.gov.in/census.website/>

⁷ Several tribes, such as Santhals, Mundas, Oraons, Hos, Gonds, Kharias, Bhuiyans, Bhumij, and others, inhabit the Chotanagpur plateau.

⁸ From the earlier tribal revolts marked by their rejection of the 'saheb' and 'diku' to preserve, strengthen and assert their distinct ethnic culture, the Jharkhand movement, in the course of its long existence, has slowly but steadily been transformed into a revolution of resistance in itself.

⁹ <https://jharkhandlive.org/blog/2018/07/02/0009/>

¹⁰ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24984990>

11 <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/news/story/literacy-rate-jharkhand-309523-2016-02-19>

12 The Santhal tribe follows the Sarna religion and worships the sal/teak (Sarna) tree, considered the abode of the goddess Sarna. However, in due course of time, Santhals practiced Christianity too. A vast majority of tribals reside in rural areas. Tribals largely depend on forest resources for food, shelter, and medicine. The goddess is believed to protect the community from natural calamities and disasters (Government of Jharkhand website, www.jharkhand.nic.in).

13 NEEDS or Network for Enterprise Enhancement and Development Support has been working since 1998 in the poverty-stricken pockets of Jharkhand and Bihar to secure a sustainable livelihood, well-being of households, and food security for growth, gender justice, and human rights.

For more information, log on to: www.needsngo.in

14 Jagannath Pathy (1995) wrote, 'An ethnic group, then, is a historical identity whose members in large part conceive of themselves as being alike by certain common stable features located in language, culture, stereotypes, territory, ancestry-real or fictitious, specific nomenclature and endogamy and are so regarded by the members of other ethnic groups.' According to Pathy, the subjective tribal consciousness is not a static concept in itself.

15 In in the interest of the 'nation-state'; the tribal are deprived of much of their land, livelihood, and language, and a notion that their way of life should be raised to a so-called advanced cultural life (Pathy, 1999). Moreover, over time, the word 'Jharkhandi' is known as 'the land of the destitutes' comprising all the deprived sections of Indian society and those systematically silenced.

Nevertheless, it was interesting to find out what made them 'destitute' as even when policies were centrally designed for equality, the infrastructure often failed them (Kalathil, 1983).

16 Today, the divide has reached a point where Christian and Sarna tribal (non-Christian indigenous tribal) are openly hostile. The Sarna community believes that the church is conspiring against the Sarna tribal, their religion, and their culture and aims to annihilate the indigenous tribal community itself (Ekka, 2011).

17 <https://www.firstpost.com/india/jharkhand-health-crisis-in-jamshedpur-52-infants-die-from-malnutrition-in-30-days-3985675.html>

18 Khera pointed out in her article *Starvation Deaths and 'Primitive Tribal Groups'* (2008-09) that the deaths of 35 Birhors – a primitive tribal group in Jharkhand in October and November 2008 have been ignored by the national media. Official apathy contributes to the vulnerability of such impoverished tribal communities more because they are never seen or heard and are set onto a more fragile existence.

19 Gayatri Spivak (1988) points out through her revolutionary argumentative article *Can the Subaltern Speak?* that European elite academic and philosophical discourses are so powerful that they filter out the subaltern even when they speak. Spivak pointed out that the subaltern voices are always represented by fitting them into dominant voices and systems. As we always function within the theories of the dominant system, we cannot retrieve any 'pure' subaltern voices.

20 Nietzsche quotes, 'Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, stands a mighty commander, an unknown sage—he is called Self. He lives in your body;

he is your body.'

21 According to Weber, the Calvinist view of life produced in people a deep insecurity that manifested in itself to lead a wholly disciplined and dedicated life on earth. This primarily directed Puritans into business, in which endless hours could be dedicated to the people in return for the accumulation of money.

22 Shilling points out that though there were similarities between Bourdieu and Elias regarding their understanding of bodies, it should have been better to count on the over-emphasized similarity between their work as Bourdieu was concerned with the body being the bearer of value in contemporary society. Elias (1983; 1991) was more concerned with identifying the historical process of developing civilized bodies.

23 An act of labor is required to turn bodies into social entities that influence how people develop physical attributes of the body and learn to present their bodies through style, walking, and dress. Furthermore, different social classes produce distinct bodily forms, and there are substantial inequalities associated with the bodily forms (Bourdieu 1984, 1986).

24 Firestone argued that Human reproductive biology is seen as the fundamental basis for the family, characterized by children's dependence on a mother who is, in turn, dependent on a man.

25 Jyoti Puri (1999) identifies that in the classical framework, if "sex" is male and female, then "gender" is femininity and masculinity, and the categories woman and man fuse dominant perceptions of femaleness with femininity and maleness with masculinity.

26 https://www.who.int/health-topics/sexual-health#tab=tab_2

- ²⁷ Legitimate couples had a right to discretion; what came under strong scrutiny of the society was the sexuality of children, sexuality of mad men and women, criminals, and the sensuality of those who did not like the opposite sex, and more (Foucault, 1978).
- ²⁸ The 'hysterical woman' who was limited and defined by her sexuality, the 'masturbating child' who was prone to engage in immoral behavior and posing a danger to future races, and the 'perverse adult' whose sexual instincts deviated from legitimate norms were a threat to the society and made the dominance of the legitimate heterosexual couple as the functional norm classifying other people and other forms of sexuality as deviant in their way (Foucault, 1978).
- ²⁹ Bordo (1993 a; 1993 b) narrates that 'hunger as an ideology' has frequently been culturally represented through the metaphor of female appetite. She notes that back in the late Victorian era, for the first time in the West, those who could afford to eat well began systematically to deny themselves food in pursuit of an aesthetic ideal and a desire for a 'Slender Body'.
- ³⁰ Further, the development of a social hierarchy and power in bodies based on notions of relative purity has had a doubly unfortunate effect on the lives of Hindu women. On the one hand, they are impure and a source of pollution because of menstruation and childbirth and are assigned lower social worth. On the other hand, they are also considered pure beings, reflecting the honor and status of their menfolk.
- ³¹ In *The Subject and Power* (1982), Foucault analyses that nothing that is functionally ever absolutely liberating as liberty is a practice. The institutions can have modified constraints to loosen or break their functional methodology; however, none can ensure that people will have liberty automatically.

- ³² In public discourse and representation; mine pits are naturalized as masculine domains –the most obvious place of work for men under their physiological or biological traits. Lahiri-Dutt's (2013) article explores how hegemonic masculinity is constructed, propagated, and accepted as natural.
- ³³ A majority of the head loaders historically have been women. They need firewood to cook and some food to give the children, and relatively more employment is available to men as day laborers. If a man is unemployed, he may go with the women to the forest to cut wood. However, men rarely went on their own or in groups to cut wood, while women often went to the forest because women were responsible for feeding the family. Moreover, women day laborers were paid less than men for doing the same work.
- ³⁴ She found the roots deeply embedded in patriarchal biases, which assumed that once the males in the family have land, the female members' needs are simultaneously taken care of (Kishwar, 1987).
- ³⁵ Waskul & van der Riet (2002, p. 488) explain that 'a person does not 'inhabit' a static object body but is subjectively embodied in a fluid, emergent, and negotiated process of being. In this process, body, self, and social interaction are interrelated to such an extent that distinctions between them are not only permeable and shifting but also actively manipulated and configured.'
- ³⁶ While the body is not produced by social forces, as in Foucault's work, the meanings attributed to it, as we have also noted earlier, are determined by 'shared vocabularies of body idiom' which are not under the immediate control of individuals (Goffman, 1963, p. 35). Goffman refers to 'dress, bearing, movements and position, sound level, physical gestures such as waving or saluting, facial decorations, and broad emotional expressions' (Goffman, 1963,

p. 33).

- ³⁷ Structuralisms are, therefore the conditions governing the duality of the structure and system required for the reproduction of social systems (Giddens, 1984). According to Giddens, structure is when the rules and resources are organized as properties of social systems. At the same time, systems are reproduced relations between actors organized as social practices.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY: ON LIVING THE ETHNOGRAPHY ON THE GROUND

- ¹ As Georg Simmel once wrote, the 'eye' has a uniquely sociological function because the interaction of individuals is based upon mutual glances. He shared that the glance in the same act that reveals the others (being observed) also discloses the one who is observing (Simmel, 1921), which is an insight associated with Cooley's "looking-glass self" (1902) as it explains one can only form images of one's self from the imaginary perspective of others (Waskul & Vannini, 2006).
- ² *The Personal is Political* is a political argument used as a rallying slogan during the second wave of feminism from the late 1960s and beyond, which challenged the rudimentary temporal family values in society back then, connecting the personal experiences of women to the larger social and political structures.
- ³ Fieldwork usually means living with and living like those who are studied. In its broadest, most conventional sense, fieldwork demands the full-time involvement of a researcher over a lengthy period (typically unspecified). It consists mostly of ongoing interaction with the human targets of study on their home ground (Van Maanen, 2011, p. 02).

- ⁴ As per Van Maanen (2011), confessional ethnography does not replace the realist account of the narratives; instead, much of the confessional work is done to convince the audience of the otherwise human qualities of the field worker with the self-portrait presented in the narratives of the chapter. In most confessional writing, there is a tentative 'surrender' used by the fieldworker as a resolution to the fieldwork's daily problems with the fieldworker's life being intertwined with the fieldwork.
- ⁵ *Diku* is a derogatory Santali word for outsiders and foreigners who would intrude on the land with a hostile agenda to ruin the sanity of the land and its people by usurping land and the culture.
- ⁶ Village Health and Nutrition Day (VHND) was identified as a pan-India program under National Rural Health Mission to provide primary care services (health, nutrition, and sanitation) at the village level. These meets usually take place once a month in the Anganwadi center.
- ⁷ Self Help Groups (SHGs) are informal groups made of homogenous groups of 10-20 individuals who come together for savings and create livelihood opportunities internally, helping each other in times of need. In 1991-92 NABARD started promoting self-help groups on a large scale, and it was one of the life-changing movements in women's lives toward financial independence and inclusion.
- ⁸ The section on The Art of Data Collection in this chapter holds a descriptive analysis of the interview methods.
- ⁹ A detailed description of bride-price in tribal communities is available in the finding chapters of this thesis.

- 10 ASHA or Accredited Social Health Activists in the community are women who create awareness of health and its social determinants and mobilize the community on services available by the government.
- 11 Nandini Ghosh, in her 2012 article, *Doing Feminist Ethnography: Exploring the Lives of Disabled Women* shared her experiences in doing ethnography with women with disabilities and discovered that most of her respondents had internalized the oppression and accepted their 'fate' and were more at peace than her about their position in the community and their lives.
- 12 Geertz, while studying Balinese cockfighting in 1973, wrote that the epistemology of ethnography is further connected between the 'observer' and the 'observed.' A different set of symbolic forms guides each one of them, where images and behavior play an observer as well as an observed in the eye of the 'other.'
- 13 The EPW article back in 1984 written by Jairath and Thapan named *Nature and Significance of Subjectivity in Fieldwork* talks about how Veena Das interprets subjectivity on the ground. Veena Das mentions that the western model of interpreting the self and the other applied for studying primitive societies considers them distant. She writes that Indian sociologists have carried on the same understanding while they try and study their own society.
- 14 It is, therefore, as another person, that a child first experiences himself as a whole in the mirror stage, through a form that he embodies and in which he alienates at the same time because it is through the mirror that one experiences their self-image.
- 15 However, both positivism and naturalism failed to consider that social researchers are very much a part of the social world they stay in. Foucault and

Derrida both rejected the concept of realism and truth, stressing that history and social science have been under surveillance.

¹⁶ American sociologist Charles Horton Cooley created the term Looking-glass Self in 1902 in his work *Human Nature and the Social World*. The looking-glass self-phenomenon is described as our reflection of how we think we appear to others based on their judgments. The Looking-glass self-theory influenced several symbolic interactionist theories, which described the creation of the self as the outcome of interactions with others and beginning to develop an identity of our own and with others.

¹⁷ *Swachh Bharat* or *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan* or Clean India Mission was a National Level Campaign started by the Central Government of India in 2014 to prioritize cleanliness and clean the roads, waterbodies, and infrastructure as well as segregate household wastes and accelerate the efforts to universal sanitation coverage.

¹⁸ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/call-swachh-bharat-toilets-izzat-ghar-centre-to-states/articleshow/61123473.cms?from=mdr>

¹⁹ In the provocative article 'Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?' Judith Stacey (1993) questions the 'ethical principles' that a feminist could suffer a dilemma upon learning informants' confidences that were never intended for publication but needs to be published for the sake of the research.

²⁰ Clifford and Marcus (1986) in *Writing Cultures* have scrutinized ways that "power relations," "hierarchy," and "inequity" between researchers and their subjects are inherent in ethnographic research.

²¹ Any given standpoint begins from the previously silenced person in the

dominant discourses of the situated human disciplines. This process produces aversions to relativism and objectivism on available knowledge. Hence, Donna Haraway calls for feminist visualizations of the world.

²² For example, Shashank Sinha (2015) writes that the peaceful world of the harmless tribal in mind was shattered for good when villages small and large in Chotanagpur killed their women as a matter of witch hunting.

²³ The Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, or KGBV, is a residential girls' secondary school run by the Government of India since 2004 for the weaker section of India. It provides educational facilities for girls belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and Minority communities. The KGBV was integrated into the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan program post-2010 to provide educational facilities for girls to combat the gender disparity in educationally backward blocks.

²⁴ By 'gatekeepers,' Atkinson meant actors with control over the key resources and available avenues of opportunity. This role is carried out by different personnel in different organizational settings and exercises more control when a youngster's status is in question because it is their absolute pride to showcase status and power there (Atkinson, 1981).

²⁵ You are a woman, so you will not understand much about the situation!

²⁶ Joseph Style, in their 1979 article *Outsider/Insider: Researching Gay Baths* writes about their experience of how several customers in the bath approached them for sexual relationships during their study on gay baths. On one such occasion in 1974, instead of drawing away from rejecting a handsome-looking man's advances, they had a sexual relationship with them.

- ²⁷ *Durga Puja* is an annual Hindu festival celebrated in parts of India. It pays homage to the Hindu goddess Durga as a divine feminine because of her victory over evil. This festival is observed in the Indian calendar, corresponding to September-October every year.
- ²⁸ The finding Chapter 4 has detailed narratives on Durshila. Durshila, an adolescent girl with a disability of a nonfunctional left hand, and how she trapped a young man to marry her was a story the ASHA *didi* (elder sister in Hindi language) would share with me. Durshila would never mention anything about it during the interview other than her loneliness of being left at his brother's house for life because she was not married.
- ²⁹ As a philosophical understanding, naturalism treats common sense knowledge as a social reality. On the other hand, the positivist point of view treats stories, and people's accounts are subjective, with little relevance in explaining their behavior (Berger & Luckmann, 1991).
- ³⁰ Even Malinowski's diary represented an odd triangulation between the novel, his diary, and ethnography and was termed a 'self-help book.'
- ³¹ Women's ethnographies, until the mid-seventies, were written through third-person accounts and was left out as 'popularized accounts' or 'confessional field literature' (Clifford & Marcus, 1986).
- ³² However, by the term "tales," Van Maanen also clarifies to the readers that it does not imply that ethnography is mere fiction or that the whole world must be deliberately put between quotation marks.
- ³³ While analyzing, it was essential to consider that this subjective and objective duality as an ethnographer had a dominant effect of having an observer's

standpoint to see them without being seen and the caste class privilege I brought to the field.

CHAPTER 3: EXPERIENCING BODY AND SEXUALITY IN EVERYDAY LIFE

¹ As per the 2011 Census, Jharkhand's literacy rate for males is 76.84 percent, whereas, for females, it is 55.42 percent. The state's literacy rate is 66.41 percent, with a massive dropout of girls from high schools. For more information: <https://www.census2011.co.in/>

² The NFHS-5 data shows that among the states with a higher percentage of women with anemia, Jharkhand was one of them, with 65.2 percent of women and girls being anemic.

³ Struggles over land are not just about material change or redistribution of a resource but also about shifts in power relations between different groups and about asserting one's identity. Adopting an undifferentiated approach to land as just a physical category can divert attention from women's struggles to be valued and recognized as equals in society (Rao, 2018).

⁴ Thapan (2009) quotes in *Living the Body* as Lois McNay puts it: 'At the point of overlap between the physical, the symbolic and the sociological, the body is a dynamic, mutable frontier. The body is the threshold through which the subject has lived experience of the world is incorporated and realized and, as such, is neither pure object nor pure subject' (McNay, 1999, p. 98).

⁵ See Leela Dube (1988); where while examining the construction of gender among Hindu girls; she questions, 'what does it mean to be a girl?' trying to

question how women acquire the cultural ideas and values that shape their images of themselves.

⁶ See Burr (1995) in *An Introduction to Social Constructionism*, where he mentions that 'the way people think, the very categories and concepts that provide a framework of meaning for them, are provided by the language they use. Language, therefore, is a necessary pre-condition for thought as we know it.'

⁷ Games that involve dolls and kitchen work for girls effectively channeled the naturalness of the household work girls are supposed to undertake without necessarily generating a sense of discrimination (Dube, 1988).

⁸ William Corsaro's (1992) 'Orb Web Model,' based on his theory of interpretive reproduction, conceptualizes how children participate in their own unique cultures by appropriating information from the adult world. Being constrained by the larger society and at the same time actively contributing to cultural production, they move along a spiraling path that starts with its center with the family and its origin and constantly moves on to adolescence and later to their adulthood.

⁹ V. Geetha (2007) also writes that neither do boys appear eager to learn cooking or interest themselves in housework or to attend to children as masculinities and femininities are experienced as natural for us and not seen through the configuration of power and authority hailed upon through social construction.

¹⁰ I forgot what we discussed; there is so much work that I have to do in a day.

¹¹ The Adivasi-Dalit-Bahujan women have continually refused to be integrated into mainstream Hinduism and the image built by them. The 'unruly' Indian women are reclaiming the nation from the RSS-constructed vision of the mother

India, who is fair-complexioned, sacred, poised, and classy ready to bear a thousand sons (Menon, 2017).

¹² Kishwar (1987, p. 100) also points out an exciting dimension when she writes, 'It should be emphasized that a mother's right through her son is only a usufructuary right, during his lifetime, but is considered more secure because a son is expected to outlive his father.'

¹³ Girls during the session shared that if a man brings a woman to his house and declares her to be his wife, it is considered a *bapla* or marriage. The marriage with a feast for everyone happens later when they have enough money to feed the relatives, and if that does not happen, they will always be considered a married couple.

¹⁴ See Sinha in *Culture of Violence or Violence of Cultures? Adivasis and Witch-hunting in Chotanagpur* (2015), where he mentions that belief in *bongas* (spirits, godlings) and *daayans* (witches) formed an integral part of the religious and cosmological world of the Adivasis. The constructions of women being witches were intrinsically connected to the patriarchal structuring of Adivasi societies. Deeply ingrained in popular folklore, they played an essential role in ordering social and economic relations and significantly informed their perceptions of health, medicine, and disease.

¹⁵ As soon as a daughter marries, she loses her limited usufructuary right over parental land, even if the marriage is nominal (Kishwar 1982, 1987).

¹⁶ *Hadiya* is the local alcohol made out of fermented rice, and in modern times few chemical tablets are also used in it, which are readily available in the local markets.

- ¹⁷ Bina Agarwal argues that women of most South Asian communities have considerable legal rights to inherit landed property over the years of struggle. However, she also questions to what degree they can exercise their rights in practice and what factors constrain them from doing so entirely because customs still dominate practices, and in the end, women end up not gaining full ownership over the land in reality (Agarwal, 1994).
- ¹⁸ The Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, or KGBV, is a residential girls' higher secondary school introduced by the Government of India in August 2004. It was later integrated into the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan program* since 2010 to provide educational facilities for girls from Scheduled Castes, Schedule Tribes, and Other Backward Castes to curb the poverty line in the educationally backward blocks.
- ¹⁹ Uma Chakravarti, in *Gender, Caste and Labour: Ideological and material Structure of Widowhood* (1995), writes that enforced widowhood was the rule among the high caste where the woman faced social and sexual death when their husband died. However, enforced cohabitation is the rule for widows of several lower classes and castes, where they are forced to remarry and reproduce children. The reproductive practices of the laboring class are equated with a group of multiplying cattle in Chakravarti's article.
- ²⁰ Traditionally, power was what was seen, what was shown, and what was manifested, but disciplinary power, on the other hand, is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time, it imposes the power on those to whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility (Foucault, 1977). Therefore, the eligible bride was entitled to display their commitment to their house by displaying visible labor introducing their individuality and perfection.

21 Kishwar also wrote that Ho women like caste Hindu women are used as vehicles for transferring wealth from men of one family to those of another (Kishwar, 1987, 1989). Even if a woman is thrown out of her husband's house, she cannot claim the bride price from her father or brother.

22 According to *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, the object of exchange that both consolidates and differentiates kinship relations is 'women,' given as gifts from one patrilineal clan to another through the institution of marriage (Lévi-Strauss, 1949).

23 beaten rice, puffed rice, and jaggery

24 Somewhere, Elina and Melco depict the same set of desires one had in the context of the social marriage and its visual representation by applying vermilion as symbolism to acceptance in society. Though eloping with the man in question and being brought to his house is considered a marriage in the Santhali culture, Elina too wanted to have a *bapla*, a social marriage soon where she would be able to wear vermilion in her head. The desire to wear vermilion shares the context of a deep-rooted hierarchy with the more acceptable forms of women's bodies, even in the Adivasi communities, which in history did not have marriages where they had to apply vermilion to the forehead like the ones in the Hindu marriage rituals.

25 Myth is a popular belief or tradition that has grown around several scenarios. The rituals associated with myth embody the ideals and institutions of a society or segment that performs, practices, and believes in it.

26 In *Purity and Danger* 1966, Mary Douglas writes about a similar myth about women. She mentions that among the Nyakyusa tribes, a pregnant woman is thought to reduce the quantity of grain she approaches because the fetus in her

is voracious and snatches it.

27 Kali is a Hindu Goddess who is considered to be the manifestation of *Shakti* or power and the ultimate mother of all human beings.

28 In his discourse on *Means of Correct Training*, Foucault points out that the exercise of discipline assumes a mechanism that makes it visible to be seen on whom the effects of power are applied (1977).

29 Supriya belonged to a Hindu Schedule Caste family in Deoghar. They had a unique profession where their fathers and brothers roamed around in different states, telling stories of the dead with a local art form of *Path Chitra* or painting.

30 No formal education system was found among the Mundas and the Oraons. It is the youth dormitory system among the Mundas, and the Oraons stood for a training ground for the youth, but the whole affair was informal to the core (Bara, 2009).

31 *Jatra* is a famous musical folk theatre that originated in the states of Bengal and Orissa. *Jatra* performances resemble the art forms of *Nautanki* in Uttar Pradesh and the *Tamasha* in Maharashtra.

32 Sometimes a woman might go with a man she has met for the first time at a market or festival. If she finds, on reaching his house, that he is poor to provide her with any food, is a drunkard, or already has a wife, she may leave immediately, as Kishwar wrote. However, if she leaves a few hours after going to his house at his invitation, she may be considered married and lose her usufructuary right in her parental land (Kishwar, 1987).

33 During the time of the study; there was only one comprehensive program run across states for adolescents in India by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, India, named *Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram* (National

Adolescent Health Program), which was launched in 2014 for adolescents in the age group of 10-19 to provide them nutritional and reproductive health support. This program also ran in a few selected districts and was barely functional in remote villages. By the end of the fieldwork, there was the *Tejaswini* program spearheaded by the Jharkhand government in 2017- 2018 in 17 districts to promote the socio-economic empowerment of teenage girls and young women. However, it was too early to gauge the program's success during the study. For more information, the website details are:

<https://www.india.gov.in/ministry-health-and-family-welfare-6>

CHAPTER 4: EMBODIED RITES OF PASSAGE AND RITUAL PRACTICES

- ¹ As Tolman et al. write that almost everything about sex is also about the body and how we perceive sexuality is an intrinsic part of our embodied self (Tolman et al., 2014).
- ² Not only class and caste but various independent sources of languages, regions, religions, and beliefs make it impossible to reduce India to one uniform worldview. In most Indian religions, the body is considered a porous structure and concerns the individual and the social group. The body becomes a social body, and the social body is embedded in the context of purity and impurity, where to obtain purity, it is necessary, above all, to avoid forbidden body contact (Michaels & Wulf, 2011).
- ³ Waskul and van der Riet (2002) explain that 'a person does not 'inhabit' a static object body but is subjectively embodied in a fluid and a negotiated process of being. In this process, the body, self, and social interaction are interrelated to such an extent that distinctions between them are not only permeable and

shifting but also actively manipulated and configured.'

4 As Synott (1993) would also say that despite the hyper-intellectualism of the Western cultural tradition, which has historically privileged mind over body, as they said, 'mind is for man, and body is for women' the body was unquestionably there, needing and demanding attention and we are all 'embodied.'

5 While an enormous body of research explores childhood regarding gender, little study is done around childhood and body. Laura Fingerson (2006) wrote that children's bodies are constantly shifting and changing through growth and puberty and hence are an immense site of power negotiations; hence, children's experience social life and are embodied.

6 Mary Douglas also wrote in *Natural Symbols* (1970) that 'rituals' are external ceremonies in non-western cultures where activities such as singing, and dancing, and rain-making are meaningful life courses. Douglas questions the alienability of rituals in society through her writings.

7 It was more important to fall back on the rituals and the rites of passage because Adivasi does not have a written codified history. However, they transfer their wisdom into stories and tales to the next generation in the best possible way (Xavier Dias, 2019).

8 Cooley's (1902) concept of the looking-glass self is an imagined tool for looking at relationships between the body, self, and identity through the eyes and judgment of others.

9 <https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/india-news-what-it-takes-to-re-enroll-school-dropouts-in-vulnerable-communities-lessons-from-jharkhand/335109>

10 In almost every tribal house I have visited, I have seen an almost finished wrinkled wrapper of fair and lovely and a broken mirror amidst all the poverty, hunger, and anemia. However, people in the indigenous communities of Santhal Parganas shared similar physical body traits of a dark skin complexion. There are more details on this context below in this section.

11 A *Manihari* is trusted with its choices of the latest collection of cosmetics, creams, and nail paints. His wisdom to travel from Dumka to Durgapur and bring the latest fashionable cosmetics was a source of pleasure for the girls; with limited options of shapes, sizes, and cosmetics colors in his bags hung in the cycle handles.

12 I have shared a similar analogy while describing menstruation and linking menstrual products and accessibility later in this chapter with the context of poverty and socio-economic status.

13 Middle-class women tend to work in occupations where appearance matters and can affect career advancement; therefore, they have more incentive to work on their appearance. Working class women, by contrast, once they have secured a man in the marriage markets, have less incentive to work upon their appearance' (Waskul & Vannini, 2006).

14 In *Woman-Hating* (1974), Dworkin analyzed that the mortality, posture, gait, and spontaneity or the uses to which a woman can put her body to use, describes in precise terms the relationship one will have with her own body related to the 'standards of beauty' as it defines the dimensions of her freedom systematically.

15 See Michaels & Wulf (2011) where they mention that rituals that create a group's boundary need some 'soft qualification' from the young men to show from a very early age some interest in and around the temple as rituals constitute

a significant field of socialization where young men had to be attracted to the temple priest's profession (pp. 199-212).

¹⁶ Bourdieu (1984) writes on the inaccessibility of the working class occupational group to penetrate the circle of theatre dance, revealing that social backgrounds such as class and gender have an overall socializing effect on the cultural production rather than the biological one of natural talent.

¹⁷ One of the chief functions of the Adivasi festivals was to win over the *bongas* and neutralize their harmful intentions. Deeply ingrained in popular folklore, they played an essential role in ordering social and economic relations and significantly informed their perceptions of health, medicine, and disease. Fear of *bongas* not only underlined the celebration of all festivals, religious observances, ceremonies, and rituals but also played an essential part in their economic life – agricultural operations, hunting, and food-gathering (Sinha, 2005).

¹⁸ The offering of blood has been a part of many rituals in Hindu festivals. At this social level of performance, through the blood, cutting off the animals, the sacrifice and the red vermillion, the turmeric, the smoke, a masculine body- the heir of the house is also born simultaneously in the Hindu religion and so does the legacy of the ancestors continues even through sacrifice of blood in another context (Michaels & Wulf, 2011).

¹⁹ In a similar context, in the ritual of driving away the evil spirit, hundreds of womenfolk submit their 'body' and 'self' voluntarily to the act, and the shaman walks upon their bodies to identify the evil-spirited women. After identifying the evil-spirited woman, the shaman beats and slaps the woman's body with his legs and hands, and a bunch of her hair is pulled and nailed to a tree and then

cut off. The people believe that the evil spirit is driven away through the hair. (Michaels & Wulf 2011).

²⁰ As per the NFHS-5 data, the percentage of women between 15 and 49 years suffering from anemia in India is a growing graph, with the number being 65.7 percent in 2020-21, slightly higher than the 2015-16 data with 65.3 percent back then.

²¹ Fear and shock are common phenomena studied by theorists writing about menstruation. Jyoti Puri, in the analysis of menstrual blood among middle-class women, noted how middle-class women, in their description of menarche, had a sense of shock and anxiety at first sight of menstrual blood, followed by embarrassment and embarrassment shame (Puri, 1999).

²² Inspired by the true story of Arunachalam Muruganantham, a social entrepreneur who created a machine for making affordable sanitary towels after learning how his wife uses unhygienic products during her periods, the Bollywood movie, *Padman* was made.

²³ Menstruation as a rite of passage has several myths associated with *Chaupadi* in Nepal to South India, with its festivities embedded in patriarchy and bodily control of the society (Dammery, 2016). In other cultures, menstruating bodies have been associated with stigma and a woman's curse. In several African traditions, the rituals during the whole time a girl is menstruating include her not touching the earth or the sun rays falling on her, and if a man sees her face accidentally, it is thought that ill luck will befall him.

²⁴ Recent studies on menstruation have been around the fact to understand if menstruation has been empowering enough for young girls or ways one should make it empowering. The other set of studies has been around the availability

of safe and affordable menstrual products on how women manage menstruation (Bobel, 2019).

²⁵ Anthropology identifies menstrual restrictions and taboos ranging from ritual seclusion to the everyday restrictions of daily public activities such as cooking, cleaning, and playing to having more personal taboos associated with oneself, like bathing and washing one's hair (Puri, 1999, p. 56).

²⁶ Laura Fingerson in *Girls in Power* (2006) mentions that concealing menstruation is about the masculinist-based notion of the body, which gives a cultural message behind it, saying that hiding and managing is a masculine trait and also teaches women to treat menstruation as ordinary.

²⁷ I heard this song in Jamuna village, where Basanti (18 years old) and Sumati the field staff sang this for me, remembering a marriage song. The song is about a worrying discussion between the mother and the daughter. The mother worries about who will marry her daughter as she has been roaming around randomly, and soon she will be cursed by local people. As a counter answer, the fun and lively daughter told her not to be worried but to look around, as there would be a man who would own a house made of gold, and that person would come to marry her.

²⁸ Susie Orbach (1988) and Kim Chernin (1983) suggest that internalized social pressure finds expression in their eating habits and thereafter distorts women's bodies. They both suggested stubborn inequalities through their writings that remain in the society and are lived through eating experiences of bodies on how preoccupied we can be through eating, not eating and avoiding fat which in turn restricts their physical growth and expression.

²⁹ Cooley's (1902) concept of the looking-glass self is a tool for looking at

relationships between the body, self, and identity. This self-analytical tool has magnified meanings for different people with limited or compromised bodies because they can no longer take their bodies for granted. They see images of their body themselves and imagine how other people might respond to them, and looking glass self becomes an imagined embodied self in action. In this process, the body becomes a looking glass reflecting images of a present self and revealing images of a future (Waskul & Vannini, 2006).

³⁰ Instances like barrenness, the outbreak of diseases, epidemics, crop failures, and deaths provided the social occasioning and pretext for carrying out witch hunts and gave the act social legitimacy (Sinha, 2015).

CHAPTER 5: FINDING THE AGENCY IN THE BODY

¹ TISCO (Tata Iron & Steel Co.) presently known as TATA STEEL's captive iron ore mine lies in Noamundi Jharkhand (India). It is one of their first mines operational since 1907 and supplies ore to its furnace in Jamshedpur. This is the homeland of the Adivasi people of India, from whom resources were expropriated to convert the House of Tata's from an opium trader to a full-fledged monopoly capitalist, one of the first in British India. Noamundi, prior to the arrival of mining, was a 100% 'Ho' Adivasi territory where TATA then mechanized it into a large township including processing plants (Dias 2012, written by Dias along with the surviving accused before they surrendered to court).

² In December 1980, when Madhu Kiswar went to Singhbhum as a member of the women's inquiry committee to conduct an inquiry into alleged atrocities against tribal women by the Bihar military police, which killed 14 tribal it was

challenging to get the victims to attest to having been raped even though they were brutally raped and several tribal men testified to it (Manushi, 1982).

³ R. W. Connell in the book *Masculinities* (1995) contends that bodies themselves can be used in an agentic manner as they shape the course of social interactions. His term “body-reflexive practices” theorizes the body as both an object and an agent in social processes. As such, the body is a location for the negotiation of power (Fingerson, 2006).

⁴ The unapologetic presence of women in public disrupts societal expectations. The female body, the embodiment of honor, should be located in a private space because it is considered unmanageable and a potential threat to the power structure if in public (Phadke et al., 2011).

⁵ See Chapter 3, *Experiencing Body and Sexuality in Everyday Life*, for the section on 'Adolescents and the Onset of Sexed Bodies'

⁶ See Van Reeuwijk in the 2010 book *Because of Temptations*, where he mentions how children who handle their responsibilities eventually earn more respect and freedom from their parents or caretakers regarding decision-making. Responsible behavior and the ability to earn income are seen to be signs of maturity.

⁷ Sexuality, for Foucault, is nothing other than the effect of power, and power can always gain a hold on bodies, pleasures, and energies through the construction and deployment of sexuality. Sex is, therefore, not outside the exercise of power but a coherent integration of quite disparate elements, sensations, attitudes, and practices, that a range of knowledge like anatomy, biology, and psychology take as their respective objects of investigation or the construction of sexuality (Grosz, 1994).

8 Drawing on the insight of olage-homage or public and private within a community provides a picture of the field of power and tension within the family, rendering clear assigned spaces to each member where there are strong moral reminders of what place the wife, daughter, and daughter-in-law should occupy in the given space and also the socio-spatial activities one should perform (Niranjana, 2001).

9 Lingis claimed that the processes by which the primitive body is marked or scarred were termed painful and barbaric in the West. Like the tattooing of the Western body, there is something facile and superficial about the permanent etching on the body's surface (Grosz, 1994, pp. 138-159).

10 "Get your tattoos done, or the God of Death will not take you with them when you die."

11 '*Bhoj*' is a feast the community organizes for the deceased person and feeds the entire village and relatives to offer peace to the parting soul.

12 Alongside the other 'capitals' of the economic, cultural, and social, 'symbolic capital' as per Bourdieu (1986) is not a different form of capital but is legitimated and recognized as an intersection of the other forms of capital.

13 An outfit comprising of a pair of trousers (*salwar*) and a tunic (*kameez*) usually paired with a scarf (*dupatta*) which is typically worn by South Asian women and girls.

14 The fourth chapter of this thesis, named EMBODIED RITES OF PASSAGE AND RITUAL PRACTICES, mentions worshipping the *Bongas* and the denial of women and girls in the room during the time the sacrificial meat was dedicated to the ancestors.

- 15 Butler also writes in *Gender Trouble* that gender as a way of thinking and as a concept pre-exists the body and produces the category of the biological sex and gender also emerges through a discursively determined stylized activity.
- 16 Gender ritualization describes how men and women customize how they 'do' gender by strategically ritualizing or elevating the meaning of select gender practices to communicate an emotional message of gender symbolically, crafting a gender identity for themselves (Johnson, 2008).
- 17 Iris Young, in her book *On Female Body Experience*, analyses that the fundamental difference that Erwin W. Straus in *The Upright Posture, Phenomenological Psychology* (1966, p. 137–65) observed the way both boys and girls react to movements is that girls do not bring their whole bodies into motion the way boys did. He also writes that throwing is not the only movement in which men and woman use their bodies differently. However, it is a feminine behavior linked to failing to fully use the body's spatial potential.
- 18 Member of Legislative Assembly of political parties contesting elections
- 19 A 1983 article in *Manushi* named *Women Headloaders in Tribal Bihar* pointed out that historically, most head loaders in undivided Bihar have always been women. The reason was that more employment and work as daily laborers were available to men than women and that women were primarily responsible for feeding their children and family. If a man is unemployed, he can accompany the woman to the forest to cut wood, but men hardly ever take responsibility for fetching the wood from the forest. This article was a condensed report by N.G. Basu, T. Bhaduri, V. Surin, and Victoria Soreng from a survey conducted by Xavier Institute of Social Science, Ranchi.

20 Foucault introduces the notion of 'biopower' and 'biopolitics' in the last chapter of *History of Sexuality* Vol 1, where both these concepts were analyzed as an emerging biology-based racism that constituted an integral part of the normalizing power.

21 See M. Foucault; *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the prison* (1975).

22 Foucault discovered that biopower was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism which made possible the control of the bodies into a machinery of production and an explosion of numerous techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of population led to the beginning of the era of 'biopower.' Biopower then, together with disciplinary power, formed a concrete arrangement that created a great power source for nineteenth-century capitalism. (Foucault, 1978, p. 140).

23 The translated version of the *History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, R. Hurley was published in 1990; New York: Vintage.

24 PHC is Primary Health Centre under National Health Mission established to cover health services and products. For every 30,000 rural populations, there is a PHC set up to manage primary health.

25 ANM or Auxiliary Nurse Midwives are a village-level female government health worker who is the first contact person between the community and the health services.

26 <https://nhm.gov.in/index1.php?lang=1&level=2&sublinkid=821&lid=222>

27 Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) is a safe motherhood intervention under the National Health Mission launched in 2005. It was implemented to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality by promoting institutional delivery among poor pregnant women. JSY is a centrally sponsored scheme that integrates cash

assistance with delivery and post-delivery care. The scheme has identified Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) as an effective link between government and pregnant women. For more information, log on to:

<https://nhm.gov.in/index1.php?lang=1&level=3&lid=309&sublinkid=841>

28 <https://wcd.nic.in/policies/child-marriage-restraint-act1929>

29 As per Young (2005, p. 55), Alienation here means the objectification of one subject of another subject's body and their action such that they recognize the objectification as having its base in their own experience.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

1 <https://www.bbc.com/marathi/india-42465317>

2 <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2019/7/24/indian-female-farmers-going-womb-less-to-boost-productivity>

3 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-48836690.amp>

4 *Gothul* is a shared space in the tribal villages where young boys and girls meet after puberty, and through singing and dancing, they select partners for themselves. Under strict supervision from the senior youth, *Gothul* becomes a ground to explore sexuality for the tribal youths. Chapter 3 of the thesis has a detailed description of *Gothul*.

5 Draupadi is one of the protagonist characters from the Indian mythological tale Mahabharata. In the story by Mahasweta Devi, Draupadi or Dopdi is an Adivasi girl who is the story's protagonist.

6 See Critical Inquiry (1981), Vol 8, (2). pp. 381-402 as Spivak writes, 'It is either that as a tribal she cannot pronounce her own Sanskrit name (Draupadi), or the tribalized form, Dopdi, is the proper name of the ancient Draupadi.'

- ⁷ The boss or any official of a high post
- ⁸ See Hansda, S. Shekhar, (2014). *The Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey: A Novel*, *Rupa Publication India*
- ⁹ See “Some Adivasis want to burn a ‘pornographic’ book. Here’s why we Adivasi intellectuals oppose this” (2017) by *Scroll. in.*
<https://scroll.in/article/845596/some-adivasis-want-to-burn-a-writers-pornographic-book-heres-why-we-santal-scholars-oppose-this>
- ¹⁰ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/The-%E2%80%98witches%E2%80%99-of-Jharkhand/article16933528.ece>

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Atkinson, P. (1981). 'Transition from school to working life', *Sociological Research Unit*. Cardiff: University College.
- Agarwal, Bina. (1994). *A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*. Cambridge University Press.
- Banerjee, P. (2016). Writing the Adivasi: Some Historiographical Notes. *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 53(1), 1–23.
- Bara, J. (2009). Alien Construct and Tribal Contestation in Colonial Chhotanagpur: The Medium of Christianity. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 44(52), 90–96.
- Barbera-Stein, L. (1979). 'Access Negotiations: Comments on the Sociology of the Sociologist's Knowledge', *paper presented at the Seventy-Fourth Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association*, Boston, MA.
- Barnes, J.A. (1979). *Who Should Know What? Social Science, Privacy and Ethics*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Bartky S. L. (1997). "Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power" in K. Conboy, N. Medina & S. Stanbury (eds.), *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*, 129-154, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bartky S. L. (1993). *Gender and Domination*. London: Routledge.
- Basu, N.G., Bhaduri, T., Surin, V. & Soreng, V. (1983). Women Headloaders in Tribal Bihar, *Manushi*. 17. The reports were based on a survey conducted by Xavier Institute of Social Science, Ranchi.
- Beauvoir, S. de. (2010) [1949]. *The Second Sex*. London, England: Vintage Classics.

- Behar, R. (1996). *The Vulnerable Observer: Ethnography That Breaks your Heart*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Bell, C. M. (1992). *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Berger, P. (1990). *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Berger, P. and Luckmann, T. (1991) [1966]. *'The Social Construction of Reality' A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, London: Penguin Books.
- Berreman, G. (1962). Behind Many Masks: Ethnography and Impression Management in a Himalayan Village, *Monograph, 4, Society for Applied Anthropology*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Bess, B. E. (1997). Human Sexuality and Obesity. *International Journal of Mental Health*, 26, 61–67.
- Bhukya, B. (2008). The Mapping of the Adivasi Social: Colonial Anthropology and Adivasis. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43(39), 103–109.
- Blood, S. K. (2005). *Body Work: The Social Construction of Women's Body Image*. Routledge.
- Bobel, C. (2019). *The Managed Body: Developing Girls & Menstrual Health in the Global South*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bordo, S. (1985). 'Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture'. *Philosophical Forum*, 17, (2), 73–103.
- (1990) 'Reading the Slender Body', in Jacobus, M.; Keller, E.F.; & S. Shuttleworth, S. (eds), *Body/Politics: Women and the Discourses of Science*. New York and London: Routledge.

- (1993 a) *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- (1993b). Feminism, Foucault and the Politics of the Body, in C. Ramazanoglu (ed.), *Up Against Foucault: Explorations of Some Tensions Between Foucault and Feminism*. Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Translated by R. Nice, Cambridge University Press.
- (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.
- (1986). The Forms of Capital. in Richardson. J. (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. 241–258. New York: Greenwood.
- (1990). *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Brodwin, P. (1992). 'Symptoms and social performances: The case of Diane Reden', in M-J. Del Vecchio Good, P. Brodwin, B.J. Good and A. Kleinman (eds), *Pain as Human Experience. An Anthropological Perspective*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bryman, A. (2001). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burr, V. (1995). *An Introduction to Social Constructionism*. New York: Routledge.
- Butalia, U. (1998). *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*. New Delhi, India: Penguin Books India.
- Butler J. (1993). *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. Routledge.
- (1990). *'Gender Trouble' Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- (2004). *Undoing Gender*. Routledge.

- Cahill, S. E. (1986). "Childhood Socialization as a Recruitment Process: Some Lessons from the Study of Gender Development." in Adler, P. & Adler, P. (eds), *Sociological Studies of Child Development, Volume I*. Greenwich: CT JAI Press, 163–186.
- Cahill, S. E. (1989). "Fashioning Males and Females: Appearance Management and the Social Reproduction of Gender." *Symbolic Interaction*, 12(28), 1–298.
- Cannon, S. (1992). 'Reflections on Fieldwork in Stressful Situations', in R.G. Burgess (ed.). *Studies in Qualitative Methodology, 3, Learning about Fieldwork*, Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Carpenter, S. & Mojab, S. (2017). *Revolutionary Learning: Marxism, Feminism and Knowledge*. London: Pluto Press.
- Cassell, J. (1988). 'The Relationship of Observer to Observed When Studying Up', in R.G. Burgess (ed.), *Studies in Qualitative Methodology, I, Conducting Qualitative Research*, Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Chakraborty, S. (2019). Talking about Gender and Sexual Reproductive Health Rights of Adolescents and Youth in Jharkhand. *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, 25(3), 468-481.
- Chakravarti, U. (1993). Conceptualising Brahmanical Patriarchy in Early India: Gender, Caste, Class and State. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28(14), 579–585.
- Chakravarti, U. (1995). Gender, Caste and Labour: Ideological and Material Structure of Widowhood. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 30(36), 2248–2256.
- Chatterjee, P. (1993). *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, 4. Princeton University Press.
- Chernin, K. (1983). *Womansize: The Tyranny of Slenderness*. London. The Women's Press.

- Chodorow, N. (1978). *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Clifford, J. (1983). On Ethnographic Authority. *Representations*, 2, 118–146.
- Clifford, J. & Marcus, G.E. (1986). *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography: A School of American Research Advanced Seminar*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cohen, S. & Taylor, L. (1992) [1976]. *Escape Attempts: The Theory and Practice of Resistance to Everyday Life*. London: Routledge.
- Connell, R. W. (1995). *Masculinities*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Cooley, C.H. (1902). *Human Nature and the Social Order*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Corbin, J. & Strauss, A. (1988). *Unending Care and Work*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Corsaro, W. A. (1992). Interpretive Reproduction in Children's Peer Cultures. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 55(2), 160–177.
- Corsaro, W. A. (2005). *The Sociology of Childhood*. London: Pine Forge Press.
- Crossley, N. (2001). *The Social Body: Habit, Identity and Desire*. SAGE Publications.
- Crossley, N. (2006). *Reflexive Embodiment in the Contemporary Society*. New York: Open University Press.
- Dammery, S. (2016). *First Blood: A Cultural Study of Menarche*. Monash University Publishing.
- Das, V. (1988). Femininity and Orientation to the Body, in K. Chanana (ed.), *Socialisation, Education and Women: Explorations in Gender Identity*, New Delhi: Orient Longman Ltd, 193–207.
- De, D. (2018). *A History of Adivasi Women in Post-Independence Eastern India: The Margins of the Marginals*. SAGE.

- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2003). *The Landscape of Qualitative Research Theories and Issues*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N.K. (1997). *Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21st Century*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Deogaonkar, S.G. & Deogaonkar, S.S. (2003). *Tribal Dance and Songs*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.
- Descartes, R. (1968). *Discourse on Method and Meditations*. Translated by F. E. Sutcliffe. New York: Penguin Books.
- Descartes, R. (1974). *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*. Translated by E. Haldene and G. Ross. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Devi, M. (1993) [1978]. "*Dopdi*", *Best Stories of Mahasweta Devi*, Translated from Bengali by G.S. Spivak. New Delhi: National Book Trust.
- Dias, X. (2012). Twenty-year Battle of the People of Noamundi against Tata Steel still continues. *Twocircles.net*.
http://twocircles.net/2012nov25/twentyyear_battle_people_noamundi_against_tata_steel_still_continues.html
- Dias, X (2019): Personal interview note taken on 27.12.2019, 4:00 pm. Ranchi, Jharkhand.
- Douglas, J.D. (1976). *Investigative Social Research*. Beverly Hills. CA: Sage.
- Douglas, M. (1966). *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Douglas, M. (1970). *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology (3rd ed.)*. Routledge.
- Douglas, M. (1999). *Implicit Meanings: Selected Essays in Anthropology*. London: Routledge.
- Dube, L. (1988). Socialisation of Hindu Girls in Patrilineal India, in K. Chanana (ed.), *Socialisation, Education and Women: Explorations in Gender Identity*, New Delhi: Orient Longman Ltd, 166–192.

- Dube, Leela. (1986). 'Seed and Earth: The Symbolism of Biological Reproduction and Sexual Relations of Production', in Dube, L, Leacock, E & Ardener, S. (eds), *Visibility and Power: Essays on Women in Society and Development*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 22–53.
- Durkheim, E. (1912). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. in Jones, R.A. (ed.), *Emile Durkheim: An Introduction to Four Major Works*. 1986, Sage Publications, Inc., Beverly Hills, 115–155.
- Dworkin A. (1974). *Woman Hating*. Penguin.
- Elias, N. (1983). *Court Society*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Elias, N. (1991). *The Symbol Theory*. London: Sage.
- Engels, F. (1884). *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Marxists.org.
- Erwin W. Straus. (1966). "*The Upright Posture*", *Phenomenological Psychology*. New York: Basic Books.
- Evans, M. (1987), 'Engels: Materialism and Morality', Sayers, J., Evans, M. & N. Redclift (eds.), *Engels Revisited: New Feminist Essays*. London: Tavistock Press.
- Farmer, P. (2003). *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Fausto-Sterling, A. (1985). *Myths of Gender: Biological Theories about Women and Men*. Basic Books, A Member of the Perseus Books Group.
- Featherstone, M. (1982). The Body in Consumer Culture. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 1 (1), 8–33.
- Featherstone, M. & Turner, B.S. (1995). *Body and Society: An Introduction, 1*. London: Sage.

- Ferguson, A. (1997). 'Me and My Shadows: On the Accumulation of Body-Images in Western Society Part Two—The Corporeal Forms of Modernity.' *Body and Society*, 3(4), 1–31.
- Fetterman, D.M. (2010). *Ethnography: Step-by Step Guide. 3rd Edition*. LA: Sage.
- Fingerson, L. (2006). *GIRLS IN POWER Gender, Body, and Menstruation in Adolescence*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Firestone, S. (1971). *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*. A Bantam Book.
- Foucault, M. (1972) [1969]. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. Translated from the French by A. M. Sheridan Smith. Pantheon Books, New York.
- (1977). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- (1978). *The History of Sexuality 1st ed*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, C. Gordon (ed.), 1972–79.
- (1982). The Subject and Power. *Critical Inquiry*, 8(4), 777–795.
- (1994) [1966]. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. Vintage Books.
- Frank, A. (1991). 'For a Sociology of the Body: An Analytical Review', in M. Featherstone, M. Hepworth and B. Turner (eds.), *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory*. London: Sage.
- Frank, A. (1995). *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness and Ethics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

- French, B. H. (2012). More than Jezebels and Freaks: Exploring how Black Girls Navigate Sexual Coercion and Sexual Scripts. *Journal of African American Studies*, 17, 35–50.
- Friedan, B. (1974) [1963]. *Feminine Mystique*. New York: Dell Publishing Co. Inc.
- Frost, L. (2001). *Young Women and the Body: A Feminist Sociology*. London: Palgrave.
- Gadol, J.K. (1977). Did Women Have a Renaissance? In R. Bridenthai & C. Koonz (eds.), *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*. Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Geetha, V. (2002). *Gender*. Calcutta: Stree.
- Geetha, V. (2007). *Patriarchy*. Kolkata: Stree.
- Gennep A. Van. (1960). *The Rites of Passage*. University of Chicago Press.
- Ghosh, N. (2012). Doing Feminist Ethnography: Exploring the Lives of Disabled Women. *Indian Anthropologist*, 42(1), 11–26.
- Giddens, A. (1979). *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis*. University of California Press.
- Giddens, A. (1984). *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Glaser, B. G & Strauss, A.L (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing.
- Goettsch, S. L. (1989). Clarifying Basic Concepts: Conceptualizing Sexuality. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 26(2), 249–255.
- Goffman, E. (1956). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Social Sciences Research Centre, University of Edinburgh.

- (1963). *Behaviour in Public Places. Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings*. New York: The Free Press.
- (1979) [1976]. *Gender Advertisements*. New York: Harper & Row.
- (1983). 'The interaction Order'. *American Sociological Review*, 48, 1 -17.
- (1989). "On Fieldwork". Translated by L. H. Lofland. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 18(2), 123–132.
- Greer G. (1970). *The Female Eunuch*. MacGibbon & Kee.
- Grosz, E. (1994). *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Indiana University Press.
- Grosz, E. (1995). *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on Politics of Bodies*. New York: Routledge.
- Guha, R. (1983). *Subaltern Studies II: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Oxford University Press, Delhi.
- Gupta, R. (1983). Between Mines and Fields Tribal Women in Bihar. *Manushi*, 16, 20–23.
- Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (2007) [1983]. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Hansda, S.S. (2014). *The Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey*. New Delhi: Aleph Book Company.
- Hansda, S.S. (2015). *The Adivasis Will Not Dance: Stories*. New Delhi: Speaking Tiger Publishing Pvt. Ltd. pp. 39-42.
- Haraway, D. (1988). "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies*, 14, 575–99.

- Hatekar, N., Kumar, A., & Mathur, R. (2009). The Making of the Middle Class in Western India: Age at Marriage for Brahmin Women (1900-50). *Economic and Political Weekly*, 44(21), 40–49.
- Heritage, J. (1984). *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.
- Hoffman, J.E. (1980). 'Problems of Access in the Study of Social Elites and Boards of Directors', in W.B. Shaffir, R.A. Stebbins and A. Turowetz (eds). *Fieldwork Experience: Qualitative Approaches to Social Research*. New York: St Martin's Press.
- Howell, J. (2004). Turning Out Good Ethnography, or Talking out of Turn?: Gender, Violence, and Confidentiality in Southeastern Mexico. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 33(3), 323–352.
- Hughes, A. & Witz, A. (1997). 'Feminism and the Matter of Bodies: From de Beauvoir to Butler'. *Body and Society*, 3(1), 47–60.
- Humphries, J. (1977). Class Struggle and the Persistence of the Working-Class Family. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 1(3), 241–258.
- Jain, D., Singh, N. & Chand, M. (1980). *Women's Quest for Power: Five Indian Case Studies*. Vikas.
- Jairath, V.K, & Thapan, M. (1988). Nature and Significance of Subjectivity in Fieldwork. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 23(9), 408–409.
- Johnson, J. A. (2008). GENDER RITUALIZATION: THE CUSTOMIZATION OF "DOING" GENDER. *International Review of Modern Sociology*, 34(2), 229–251.
- Kalathil, M. (1983). Everyday Discriminations against Tribals. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 18(47), 1959–1960.

- Kelkar, G. & Nathan, D. (1991). *Gender and Tribe: Women, Land and Forests in Jharkhand*. New Delhi: Kali for Women.
- Khera, R. (2008). Starvation Deaths and "Primitive Tribal Groups." *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43(52), 11–14.
- King, A. (2004). The Prisoner of Gender: Foucault and the Disciplining of the Female Body. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 5(2), 29–39.
- Kishwar, M. (1982). Challenging the Denial of Land Rights to Women. *Manushi*, 13, 2–6.
- (1987). Toiling without Rights: Ho Women of Singhbhum. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22(3), 95–101.
- (1989). Dowry and Inheritance Rights. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 24(11), 587–588.
- Knight, C. (1991). *Blood Relations: Menstruation and the Origins of Culture*. London: Yale University Press.
- Krishna, D. (2000). The New Tribal States: Can They Survive in the Modern World? *Economic and Political Weekly*, 35(46), 3997–3998.
- Kumar, A. & Panda, P.K. (2018). Ethnicity, Religion, and Identity Politics among Tribes in Jharkhand. *Economic & Political Weekly*, LIII(39), 23–25.
- Kumar, A., & Joshi, K. M. (2008). Family-Planning Methods among the Tribal Population in South Gujarat: A Case Study of Access and Usage. *Development in Practice*, 18(2), 258–266.
- Lahiri-Dutt, K. (2013). Bodies in/out of Place: Hegemonic Masculinity and Kamins' Motherhood in Indian Coal Mines. *South Asian History and Culture*, 4(2), 213–229.

- Lamb S. (2000). *White Saris and Sweet Mangoes: Aging Gender and Body in North India*. University of California Press, London.
- Lambek, M. (1997). Pinching the Crocodile's Tongue: Affinity and the Anxieties of Influence in Fieldwork. *Anthropology and Humanism*, 22(1), 31–53.
- Lévi-Strauss C. (1969). *The Elementary Structures of Kinship (les structures élémentaires de la parenté)*. Translated from the French by H. J Bell, et al. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1970). *The Raw and the Cooked: Introduction to a Science of Mythology I*. London: Cape.
- Luhmann N. (1993). *Risk: A Sociological Theory*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Lupton, D. (2013) [1999]. *Risk*. Routledge.
- Madison, D. S. (1998). "Performances, Personal Narratives, and the Politics of Possibility." in Sheron J. D. (ed.), *The Future of Performance Studies: Visions and Revisions*. Annandale, Va.: National Communication Association. 276–86.
- Maggio, J. (2007). "Can the Subaltern Be Heard?": Political Theory, Translation, Representation, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. *Alternatives*, 32(4), 419–443.
- Mahato, P. P. (2000). *Sanskritization Vs Nirbakization: A Study of Cultural Resistance of the People of Junglemahal*. Calcutta: Sujan Publications.
- Mahmood, S. (2005). *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Mann, K. (1993). Tribal Women Development and Integration. *Indian Anthropologist*, 23(2), 17–31.
- Mathur, K. (2008). Body as Space, Body as Site: Bodily Integrity and Women's Empowerment in India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43(17), 54–63.
- Mauss, M. (1973). Techniques of the Body. *Economy and Society*, 2, 70–88.

- McLean, A. & Leibing, A. (2007). *The Shadow Side of Fieldwork: Exploring the Blurred Borders between Ethnography and Life*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- McNay, L. (1999). Gender, Habitus and the Field. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 16(1), 95–117.
- Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, Self and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Menon, N. (2017). Bharat Mata and Her Unruly Daughters. *The Wire*, India.
<https://thewire.in/gender/bharat-mata-unruly-daughters>
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Michaels, W. & Wulf, C. (2011). *Images of the Body in India*. India: Routledge.
- Millsted, R., & Frith, H. (2003). Being Large-Breasted: Women Negotiating Embodiment. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 26(5), 455–465.
- Mitra, R. (2006). Living a Body Myth, Performing a Body Reality: Reclaiming the Corporeality and Sexuality of the Indian Female Dancer. *Feminist Review*, 84, 67–83.
- Mohanty, G. (1987) [1945]. *Paraja*. Translated from Oriya by B.K. Das, B.K. Oxford India Press.
- Moore, T. (1998). *The Soul of Sex: Cultivating Life as an Act of Love*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Nietzsche F. W. & Parkes G. (2005) [1883]. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and Nobody*. Oxford University Press.
- Niranjana, S. (2001). *Gender and Space: Femininity, Sexualization and the Female Body*. India: SAGE Publications.
- Oakley, A. (1972). *Sex, Gender and Society*. London: Temple Smith.

- Oakley, A. (1981). Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms. In H. Roberts (ed.), *Doing Feminist Research*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Olson, G. (2006). *Teenage Girls: Exploring Issues Adolescent Girls Face and Strategies to Help Them*. CA: Zondervan
- Oommen, T. K. (2011). Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and the Nation: Situating G. S. Ghurye. *Sociological Bulletin*, 60(2), 228–244.
- Orbach, S. (1988). *Fat is a Feminist Issue*. London: Arrow Books.
- Padel F. (2009). *Sacrificing People: Invasions of a Tribal Landscape*. Orient BlackSwan.
- Parsons, T. (1991) [1951]. *The Social System*. London: Routledge.
- Pathy, J. (1995). The Consequences of the New Economic Policies on the Peoples of India: A Sociological Appraisal. *Sociological Bulletin*, 44(1), 11–32.
- Pathy, J. (1999). Tribe, Region and Nation in the Context of the Indian State. *Sociological Bulletin*, 48(1/2), 97–111.
- Patrick, J. (1973). *A Glasgow Gang Observed*, London: Eyre Methuen.
- Phadke, S., Khan S. & Ranade S. (2011). *Why Loiter?: Women and Risk on Mumbai Streets*. Penguin Books.
- Plato P. (1993). *The Dialogues of Plato, vol. ii: The Symposium*. Translated by R.E Allen. Yale University Press.
- Powdermaker, H. (1966). *Stranger and Friend: The Way of an Anthropologist*, W.W. Norton & Co.
- Prakash, L. (2003). Scheduled Castes and Tribes: The Reservation Debate. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 38(25), 2475–2478.
- Puri, J. (1999). *Woman, Body, Desire in Post-colonial India: Narratives of Gender and Sexuality*. New York: Routledge.

- Raby, R. (2005). What is Resistance? *Journal of Youth Studies*, 8(2), 151-171.
- Rainbird, H. (1990). 'Expectations and Revelations: Examining Conflict in the Andes', in R.G. Burgess (ed.), *Studies in Qualitative Methodology, 2, Reflections on Field Experience*, Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Raj, A. L. (1992). Ideology and Hegemony in Jharkhand Movement. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 27(5), 200–203.
- Ramirez, R. (2007). Race, Tribal Nation, and Gender: A Native Feminist Approach to Belonging. *Meridians*, 7(2), 22–40.
- Rana, K, & Das, S. (2004). Primary Education in Jharkhand. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 39(11), 1171–1178.
- Rani, S., Ghosh, S., & Sharan, M. (2007). Maternal Healthcare Seeking among Tribal Adolescent Girls in Jharkhand. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42(48), 56–61.
- Rao, M. (2004). *From Population Control to Reproductive Health: Malthusian Arithmetic*. Sage Publication.
- Rao, N. (2018). *'Good Women do not Inherit Land' Politics of Land and Gender in India*. Routledge.
- Ratnagar, S. (2003). Our Tribal Past. *Social Scientist*, 31(1/2), 17–36.
- Riessman, C. K. (1987). When Gender is Not Enough: Women Interviewing Women. *Gender and Society*, 1(2), 172–207.
- Rigakos, G. S., & Law, A. (2009). Risk, Realism and the Politics of Resistance. *Critical Sociology*. 35(1), 79–103.
- Ritambhara, H. (2005). Homecoming: Ho Women, Work, and Land Rights in Jharkhand. *Sociological Bulletin*, 54(1), 18–39.

- Rubin, G. S. (1975). The Traffic in Women Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex, in Rayna Reiter (ed.), *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, New York: Monthly View Press, 157–210.
- Rubin, G. S. (2002) [1984]. Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality. In *Culture, Society and Sexuality a Reader*, Routledge, 143-178.
- Ryan, P. (2006). 'Researching Irish Gay Male Lives: Reflections on Disclosure and Intellectual Autobiography in the Production of Personal Narratives', *Qualitative Research*, 6(2), 151–68.
- Sainath P. (1996). *Everybody Loves a Good Drought: Stories from India's Poorest Districts*. Penguin Books.
- Sainath, P. (2014). Visible Work Invisible Women: Women and Work in Rural India. September issue. *Pari.in*. <https://ruralindiaonline.org/en/>
- Sartre J.P. (1966). *Being and Nothingness; an Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. Washington Square Press.
- Scheper-Hughes, N. (1993). *Death without Weeping*. University of California Press.
- Scheper-Hughes, N. (1995). The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology. *Current Anthropology*, 36(3), 409–440.
- Schlegel, A., & Eloul, R. (1988). Marriage Transactions: Labor, Property, Status. *American Anthropologist*, 90(2), 291–309.
- Schutz, A. (1944). The Stranger: An Essay in Social Psychology. *American Journal of Sociology*, 49(6), 499–507.
- Schutz, A., Walsh, G. & Lehnert, F. (1967). *The Phenomenology of the Social World*. Northwestern University Press.
- Scott, J.C. (2009). *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. Yale University Press

- Scott, S. & Morgan, D. (1993). *Body Matters: Essays on the Sociology of the Body*. Falmer Press.
- Seidman, S., Fischer N. & Meeks C. (2006). *Handbook of the New Sexuality Studies*. Routledge.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. New York: Alfred Knopf.
- Sharma, J. (2018). Witch Hunting in India, *SUPREMO AMICUS*,3.
- Shilee, S. & Shailee, S. (2002). Indigenous Identity of Tribals in Jharkhand. *Indian Anthropologist*, 32(1/2), 75–86.
- Shilling, C. (1991). 'Educating the Body: Physical Capital and the Production of Social Inequalities'. *Sociology*, 25(4), 653-72.
- (1992) 'Schooling and the Production of Physical Capital'. *Discourse*, 13(1), 1-19.
- (2003) [1993]. *The Body and Social Theory*. Sage Publications.
- (2005). *The Body in Culture, Technology and Society*. Nottingham Trent University.
- (2008). *Changing Bodies: Habit, Crisis and Creativity*. Sage.
- Silko, L. M. (1977). *Ceremony*. New York: Viking Press.
- Simmel, Georg. (1921) [1908]. 'Sociology of the Senses: Visual Interaction', in R. Park and E. Burgess (eds.), *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Singh, K. S. (1997). The Emerging Tribal Scenario. *India International Centre Quarterly*, 24(1), 85–91.
- Sinha, S.S. (2005). *Restless Mothers and Turbulent Daughters: Situating Tribes in Gender Studies*. Calcutta: Stree Publication.
- Sinha, S.S. (2015). Culture of Violence or Violence of Cultures? Adivasis and Witch-hunting in Chotanagpur, *Anglistica AION*, 19(1), 105–120.

- Spivak G. C. (1988). Can the Subaltern Speak? in C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 271–313.
- Srinivas, M. N. (1976). *The Remembered Village*. University of California Press.
- Stacey, J. (1988). "Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?" *Women's Studies International Forum*, 11(1), 21–27.
- Still, C. (2014). *Dalit Women: Honour and Patriarchy in South India*. Social Science Press.
- Stocking, G.W. (1983). "The Ethnographer's Magic: Fieldwork in British Anthropology from Tylor to Malinowski." *Observers Observed: Essays on Ethnographic Fieldwork*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 70–120.
- Styles, J. (1979). Outsider/Insider: Researching Gay Baths. *Urban Life*, 8(2), 135-152.
- Synnott, A. (1993) *The Body Social: Symbolism, Self and Society*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Thapan, M. (1995). Gender, Body and Everyday Life. *Social Scientist*, 23, (7/9), 32–58.
- Thapan, M. (2009). *Living the Body Embodiment, Womanhood and Identity in Contemporary India*. India: Sage Publications.
- Tolman, D. (1994). Doing Desire: Adolescent girls' Struggles for/with sexuality. *Gender and Society*, 8(3), 324–342.
- Tolman, D.L, Bowman, C.P. & Fahs, B. (2014). Sexuality and Embodiment, in D. L. Tolman and L. M. Diamond (eds.), *APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology: Vol. 1. Person-Based Approaches*. American Psychological Association. 759–804.
- Tulloch, J. and Lupton, D. (2003). *Risk and Everyday Life*. London: Sage.

- Turner, B.S. (1991). 'Recent developments in the theory of the body', in M. Featherstone, M. Hepworth and B. S. Turner (eds.), *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory*. London: Sage.
- 1992). *Regulating Bodies: Essays in Medical Sociology*. London, Routledge.
- (1996) *The Body and Society: Exploration in Social Theory*, 2. London: Sage.
- (2008) [1984]. *The Body and Society*. Nottingham Trent University.
- Van Maanen, J. (2011) [1988]. *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography*. University of Chicago Press.
- Van Reeuwijk, M. (2010). *Because of Temptations: Children, Sex and HIV/AIDS in Tanzania*. Diemen: AMB Publishing.
- Verma, D. N. (2014). HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN SANTAL PARGANAS DIVISION OF JHARKHAND. *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 75, 1241–1246.
- Verma, S., & Saraswathi, T. S. (2002). Adolescence in India: Street Urchins or Silicon Valley Millionaires? in B. B. Brown, R. W. Larson & T. S. Saraswathi (eds.), *The World's Youth: Adolescence in Eight Regions of the Globe*. Cambridge University Press.
- Virginus Xaxa. (1999). Tribes as Indigenous People of India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34(51), 3589–3595.
- Virginus Xaxa. (2005). Politics of Language, Religion and Identity: Tribes in India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40(13), 1363–1370.
- Visweswaran, K. (1994). *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Visweswaran, K. (1997). Histories of Feminist Ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 26 (1997), 591–621.
- Warren, C.A.B. (1988). *Gender Issues in Field Research*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

- Waskul D. D. & van der Riet, P. (2002). "The Abject Embodiment of Cancer Patients: Dignity, Selfhood, and the Grotesque Body." *Symbolic Interaction*, 25(4), 487–513.
- Waskul D. D. & Vannini P. (2006). *Body/ Embodiment: Symbolic Interaction and the Sociology of the Body*. USA: Ashgate Publishing Company.
- Weeks, J. (2003) [1986]. *Sexuality*. Routledge.
- West, C. & Zimmerman, D.H. (1987). Doing Gender. *Gender and Society*, 1(2), 125–151.
- Westmarland, L. (2000). 'Taking the Flak: Operational Policing, Fear and Violence', in G. Lee-Treweek & S. Linkogle (eds.), *Danger in the Field: Risk and Ethics in Social Research*, London: Routledge.
- Wolf, N. (1991). *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Young, I. M. (2005). *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing like a Girl" and Other Essays*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Young, I.M. (1992). Breasted Experience, The Look and The Feeling, in R. Weitz (ed.), *The Politics of Women's Bodies, Sexuality Appearance and Behaviour*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zavella, P. (1993). Feminist Insider Dilemmas: Constructing Ethnic Identity with "Chicana" Informants. *Frontiers-a Journal of Women Studies*, 13, 138–159.

APPENDIX 1

FGD GUIDE AND INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Besides being a Participant Observer myself, the data collection tool mainly comprised a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide and an Interview Schedule. The FGD was an excellent way to consider the collective testimony and vision over daily life, rituals, ceremonies, and festivals. The idea was to have a conceptual understanding of the same on the ground among adolescents and as an entry point to much more profound concepts on personal understanding of gender, body, and sexuality. To understand a longitudinal shift in notions of gender, body, and sexuality over time, there were also brief FGDs conducted with women from the communities to grasp their views on the topics. More than one FGD was conducted with a group to understand the community's discourse better. On ethical grounds, one may ask for reasons for the names of the interviewees collected. The reason for it was that one interview with an adolescent had multiple follow-ups for months until I built the required rapport with the interviewee and got her perspectives.

1. **FGD Guide:**

A. **Adolescent girls:**

Daily Labour

- In a sequential manner, can you share the work you usually engage in from morning to night? What work do you like to do the most, and what do you absolutely detest performing?
- Since when did you start accompanying others to the field or helping with domestic chores? What was the first domestic work you learned?

- Who are the other members working with you in the house or the field? Can you elaborate on their work? What is the role of men from your family in the work you do in the home and field?
- What changes do you have in your daily schedule during the sowing and reaping season?
- Is there any particular work girls cannot perform in the field or the house? Can you elaborate on this?
- How are the days of menstruation different from other days at work?

Puberty

- What are the bodily changes you all have experienced post-puberty?
- What was the story behind your 'first period'? Can you share your experience?
- How have life experiences changed post-puberty? Has there been any change in society's views or imposed restrictions on your life post-puberty?
- Are there any restrictions imposed on girls in the community post-menstruation?
- Have you ever heard about specific actions in the community or family that bring shame and stigma to girls? When did you first hear about that? Have you ever tried not to abide by that rules?
- Who keeps an account of that what you do in your home and what you do outside? Are people from your community also involved in such surveillance? How do you feel about it?
- What do you do in your leisure time in the village? Where do you meet your friends? And what are the typical topics of gossip with friends?

- Between education and marriage, what are the major priorities for you and your family post-puberty?

Romantic Relationship

- Where do boys and girls usually meet to be friends with each other?
- What does a *mela* look like in the community? How do boys and girls interact or behave there?
- Are there exchanges of gifts in *mela* or *hatiya*? What is the prime purpose of exchanging gifts?
- What qualities does a boy usually look for in a girl while proposing or meeting in fairs and markets?
- What qualities in the boy impress the girl in fairs and markets?
- How are proposals in general in the community? What is the role of the boy and girl during any romantic proposal?
- Can a couple share about their relationship with their families?
- Are girls allowed to loiter with their boyfriends if the family approves of their relationship?
- What happens if the family doesn't agree to a romantic relationship?

Celebrations and Festivals

- What are the significant work roles men and women are involved in during festivals and rituals?
- Are girls barred from attending any particular rituals or celebrations in the community?

- Can you elaborate on the dance during festivals and how girls are taught the process of dance?
- Can you share some familiar songs girls and women sing during festivals or celebrations?
- How do girls deck up during the festivals, and what beauty products do you use?
- Do boys and girls meet up during festivals and rituals? Are there any restrictions on meeting friends, or can girls loiter during celebrations?
- Are there moral codes for girls around drinking *hadiya* or other food prepared during festivals?
- Can you elaborate more on the process and the experience of *gotna* or getting tattoos on your bodies?

Marriage and Reproduction

- Can you share some of the common songs sung during marriage ceremonies?
- What does the *mehmaani* or the groom's family usually look in the girl in a marriage proposal?
- What do a girl and her family look like in the groom?
- How does life change for adolescent girls in the community after marriage?
- Where are all the marriages fixed? What is the procedure by which marriages are fixed?
- In what situations do girls usually return to their maternal house post-marriage?

- If a girl returns from her in-laws' house post-marriage, are there any changes she experiences in her life from the family and the community?
- Can girls marry on their own? On what grounds is that accepted or unaccepted in the community?
- Are marriage and relationships common for girls outside the Santhal community? What are the consequences of such marriages?
- Can girls choose not to give birth to children post-marriage? What happens if a girl cannot produce children in their marriage?

B. Women:

Adolescence:

- Can you share any memorable moments/incidents from your childhood with your parents or friends? How was your life as a young girl in your adolescence?
- How did you spend your leisure time with your friends and family in adolescence?
- What was the expected behaviour of being a good girl when you were in your adolescence? Have there been any changes or differences in those expectations for the girls in the community in current times?
- What kind of work/daily chores do men and women/girls usually perform in the community/family? Are there any visual discriminations in those performed tasks on the field or households between boys and girls?
- What were your roles during rituals/festivals in your adolescence? Can you elaborate on any discrimination you faced in adolescence for being a girl?

- Were there any specific spaces (on regular days or during festivals) that girls your age were not allowed to occupy in the community or house? What has remained the same or has changed over time?
- What criteria did you choose to select a man for marriage when you were young?
- What do you think about girls having a boyfriend or a partner in today's times? What are the places where they meet and interact in the community?

Agency:

- How did girls bring shame or stigma to the family during adolescence? Have the codes of conduct remained the same over time for girls in the community?
- Can you elaborate on any action you ever tried to challenge that you were asked not to perform while being an adolescent girl in your community? How was the feeling, and what were the consequences, if any post that action?
- Do girls challenge any actions or moral codes in the present times in the community? Can you elaborate on what those are?
- Are women/girls' bodies considered impure or incompetent than men in any way in the community?
- Has there been any change in the timeline on the marriageable age for adolescent girls? Has there been any shift in the choices adolescent girls can make in their marriage in today's times?
- How does the life of a girl change after marriage? How are these changes in today's time different from when you married?

- Can women/girls decide on motherhood and contraceptive choices in the community? If you can elaborate on that.
- When did you receive any knowledge on contraception or menstruation? Do adolescent girls in the community has any space to acquire knowledge on contraception or menstruation in today's time?
- What kinds of decisions can women make in the household? With whom does the major decision make capacities lie in the home? Do you ever think there can be any alternative to the decision-making system?
- Are there different rules or moral codes set for women/girls and men in the community around: consuming food, loitering, rituals in marriage, and exploring romantic/sexual relationships?
- Can you share your thoughts about women and their land rights in the community? When did you first realize that you do not have any control over your land?

2. **Interview Schedule for Girls:**

Name-

Age-

Village and District-

Date & Time-

Norms and social conducts:

- Is there any difference in how you and your brother/husband are treated in your family?

- How does your community or family define an ‘ideal girl’ or ‘good girl’? How do you feel about the definition, and where do you consider yourself in that scale of judgment? What happens if someone or you cannot match that expectation?
- Are there different community surveillance mechanisms for boys and girls in terms of loitering or attending any spaces?
- How are the household chores/responsibilities and the fieldwork different for boys and girls? Since when did you learn the difference?
- Are there any differences in ritual performances between boys and girls during festivities and celebrations?
- What are the taboos associated with adolescent girls and their sexuality and menstruation?
- What actions lead to stigmatizing a girl or their family in the community? What are the areas in the community where if she is seen, she is stigmatized?

Romantic/Sexual Relationships:

- Where do boys and girls meet on typical days in the community? How are *parabs* and days of celebrations different from regular days when they meet up?
- Are sexual relationships common between boys and girls before marriage in the community? What are the significant expectations associated with sexual relationships among adolescents?
- Are adolescent girls allowed to have their consent on sexual relationships or usage of contraception during sexual relationships?

- Can you describe any of the romantic proposals you had in your life? Where did that happen, and how?
- Have you ever faced any rejections in romantic relationships that have had a significant change in your life?
- If you have to meet your friends in *mela* or meet your boyfriend, what excuse would you usually make at home?
- From whom did you learn about sexual relationships for the first time? Did you have anyone to share your anxieties, questions, or dilemmas about sex with anyone when you experienced it?
- Are there other forms of pleasure or intimate dreams you have experienced post-puberty/ marriage /or being in a relationship?
- Do you share your pleasures or desires with your partner?

Marriage:

- How are girls trained for marriage in the community?
- Can you elaborate on your experience of marrying/returning to your maternal home post-marriage? How has your life changed post-marriage?
- Why are girls married off early in the village? Did you have a choice in the marriage?
- Is virginity an essential criterion of discussion in marriage for girls?
- Can girls express their consent in sexual relationships or give birth to children in marriage?
- What happens if a girl is unwilling or unable to conceive a child in marriage?

- Under what circumstances does a girl leave her in-laws place? What is the reaction of the community or the family when a girl returns to her maternal house? How does her life remain in her maternal home post her return?

Body Image:

- How do you define a girl being called ‘beautiful’ in your community?
- How do young girls deck up during festivals or when meeting their boyfriends in *mela*? Where do you get to know about the latest beauty products?
- Do you share with your friends the beauty products, or is it absolutely a secret thing for a girl?
- How does menstruation make you feel about your body? To whom are you closest in sharing your menstrual problems, feelings, or issues?
- How does being involved in a sexual relationship make you feel about your body? Have you ever shared your experiences with anyone?
- What is your story of getting a tattoo? What does the design of your tattoo symbolize?
- How do you feel about getting tattoos inscribed on your body?
- Is there anything you do not like about yourself or your body that you want to change?

Agency:

- How important are education and paid labor for adolescent girls in the community?
- What have been the biggest dreams in your life?

- With whom does the major decision making capacities lie in the home? What kinds of decisions can women/ girls make in the household?
- What are the primary source of information around- sexuality, intimacy, menstruation, and contraception among young girls in the community?
- Have you heard stories from your grandmothers/mothers as to how was the social system before? Have there been any changes on loitering or attending *Gram Sabha* or any other context in current times since then?
- Are girls allowed to roam at their will during leisure, during festivals, in *mela*, with partners?
- Have you ever done a doctor's check-up for anemia, menstrual or reproductive health, or other health-related issues? Do you know about the nearby accessible government units for these check-ups?
- Have you felt a sense of fear or shame ever in doing anything? How did you think about doing that?
- Have you ever resisted doing anything that you were asked to do by your family or community? How did you feel about doing that?
- Have you negotiated anything in your house/community or taken a risk for something you were asked not to do? How did you feel about doing that?

Body and sexuality among adolescent tribal girls: A Study of Santhals in Jharkhand

ORIGINALITY REPORT

0%

SIMILARITY INDEX

PRIMARY SOURCES

EXCLUDE QUOTES ON

EXCLUDE SOURCES < 100 WORDS

EXCLUDE BIBLIOGRAPHY ON

EXCLUDE MATCHES < 100 WORDS