

# **LIVING TRADITIONS: WOMENS NARRATIVES OF THE COMMONS AS PROCESS.**



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## Embedded View of the Commons



**Women have been at the centre of subsistence and commons based communities, managing the symbiosis between their communities and the commons, nurturing, caring, both nature and community - Practicing the tasks reproduction, of survival based on subsistence and sharing of resources.**



Their work in the household or on the fields, in the forest, grazing of cattle or foraging for fuel, food, water or grasses is neither considered as “work” in the current paradigm nor is it remunerated or accorded dignity even minimally by way of ensuring security or entitlements for women

The care and nurturing roles that women perform became the means of their confinement while men took it upon themselves to be the ‘provider’





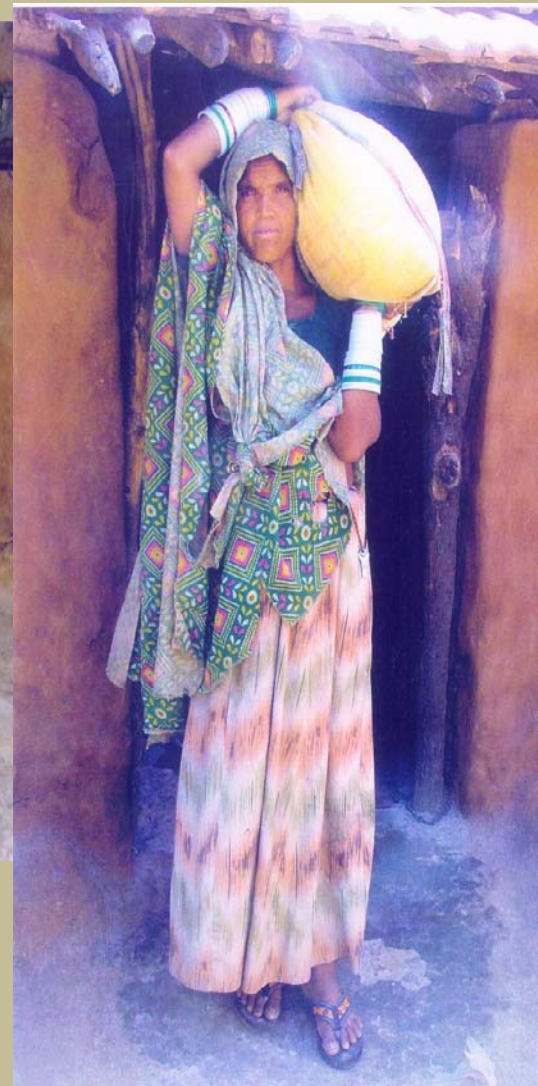
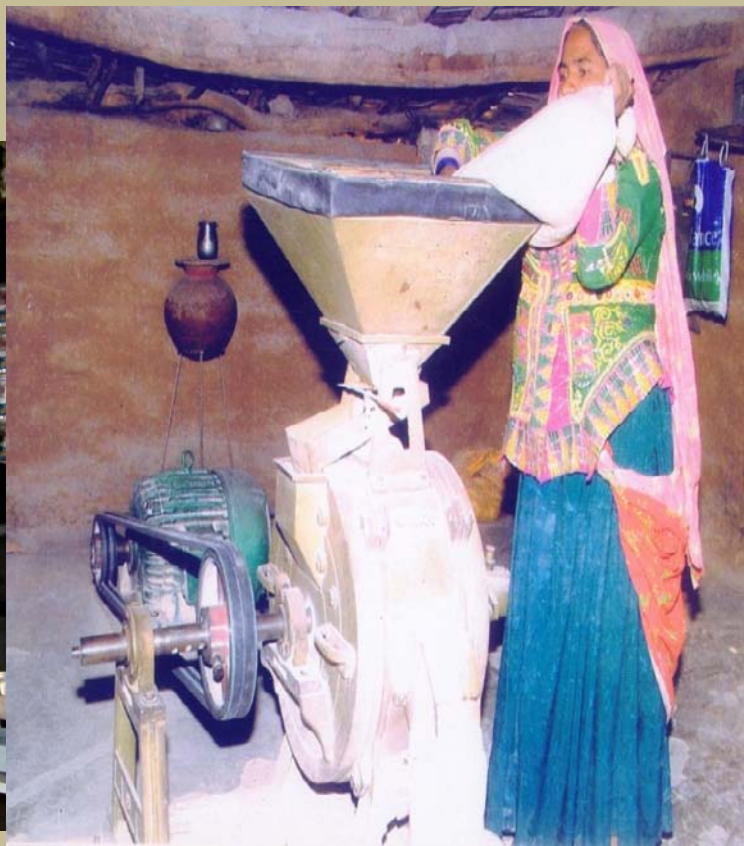
# Work labour and production

Foraging/collection, seeding and growing, nurturing and preserving etc are integral to the economic functions of these societies, as are the activities undertaken to cook and process, clean and store, nurture and care for those in the community as well as others, as well as for nature and all its elements and other species and elements in the natural environment.



**The symbolic processes that accompany these activities, flowing from the cycle of performance of such activities in the rhythm of nature are integral to their lives in the celebration of this abundance as well as in the celebration and reiteration of their presence among them—the symbiotic embedded-ness**

# Patriarchal Essentialism

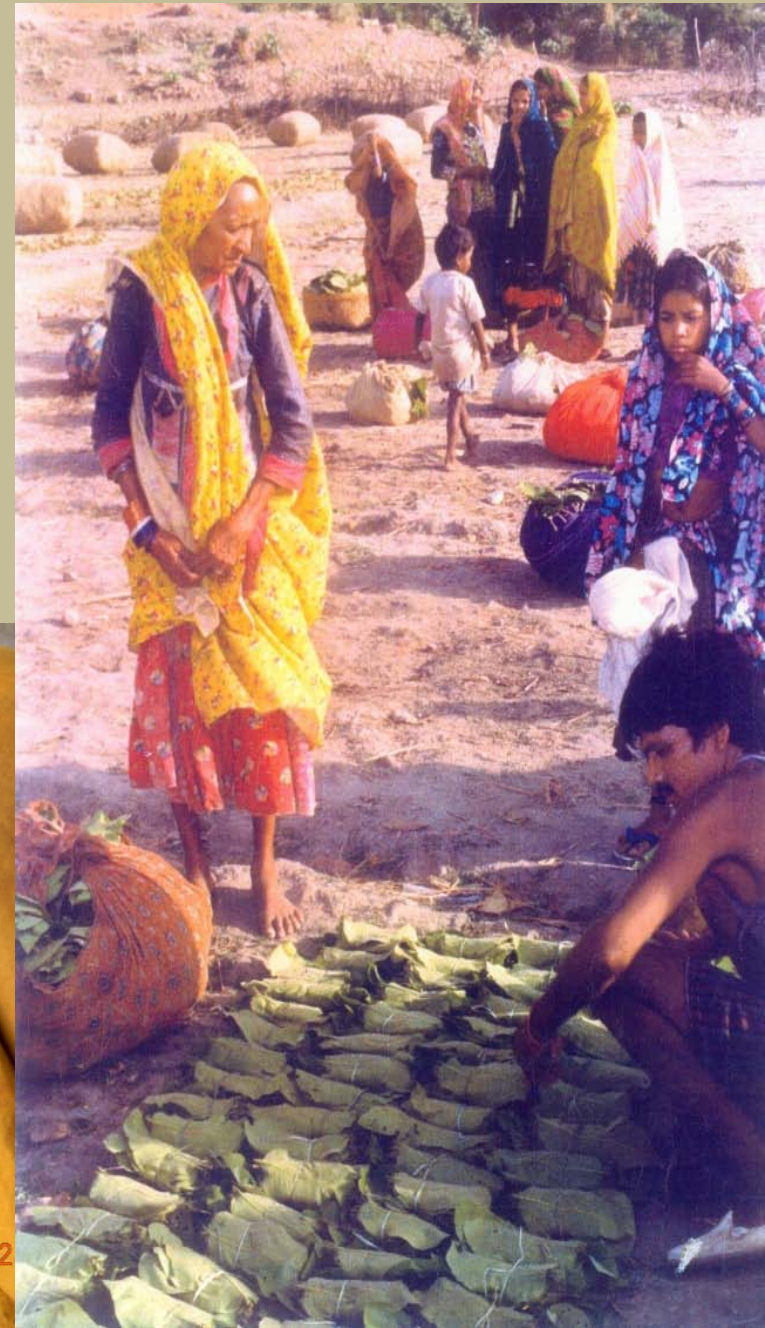


**Recent arguments that women's entry into new realms of work may lead to less care and nurturance are located in a gender biased framework; such work could as well be shared and would then enable men and women to contribute more holistically towards building nourishing societies.**



## Knowledge and wisdom from the commons

Although women remain the holders of knowledge related to food , herbs and healing practices; aware, capable and informed by the oral legacy of skills and knowledge, this work is relegated to the realm of invisibility and lack of recognition.





In the current paradigm thrust towards a capitalistic, patriarchal and hierarchical socio economic structure of society which is marked by the oppressive control over labour and the domination of nature and of women's work and labour. Their work in the household or on the fields, in the forest, grazing of cattle or foraging for fuel, food, water or grasses is not considered as "work", nor is it remunerated or accorded dignity even minimally by ensuring security or entitlements for women.





State officials and 'development workers' opine "*communities do not seem to have foresight in saving and hoarding as a buffer against future risks.*"

Yet women have nurtured and sustained natural resource endowments for centuries





# *Commons and the State*



*In the legacy of colonial rule the pre-eminence of state control of resources through the principle of 'eminent domain', and the priority accorded to individual rights over community rights results in a complex scenario of entitlements that negate the customary rights of communities to the commons.*

**The 'harnessing' of people's work as "labour" and appropriation of the natural heritage as sites for industry and urbanization can hardly compensate for loss of a paradigm and a way of life**





With the *increasing pressure on land and other resources* due to the demands of development and population, and an increasing focus on individual rights and legal decrees the rights, community rights have been threatened. New regimes alien to customary practices have made inroads.



While this may be problematic to customary practices, it does open avenues to negotiate gender equality



# State apathy and community dependency

Rations and food doles

Regions where people had a free flow of resources and determined the use and relationship with such resources are now rendered displaced and dependant, relying on govt even for the delivery of 'services' of water and food and work on terms determined by the market and state or compelled to migrate in low paid jobs



migration and displacement

Lack of Work and lack of will to work  
in situations of dependency



## Supreme Court judgment to protect encroachments of Water Bodies, Grazing lands



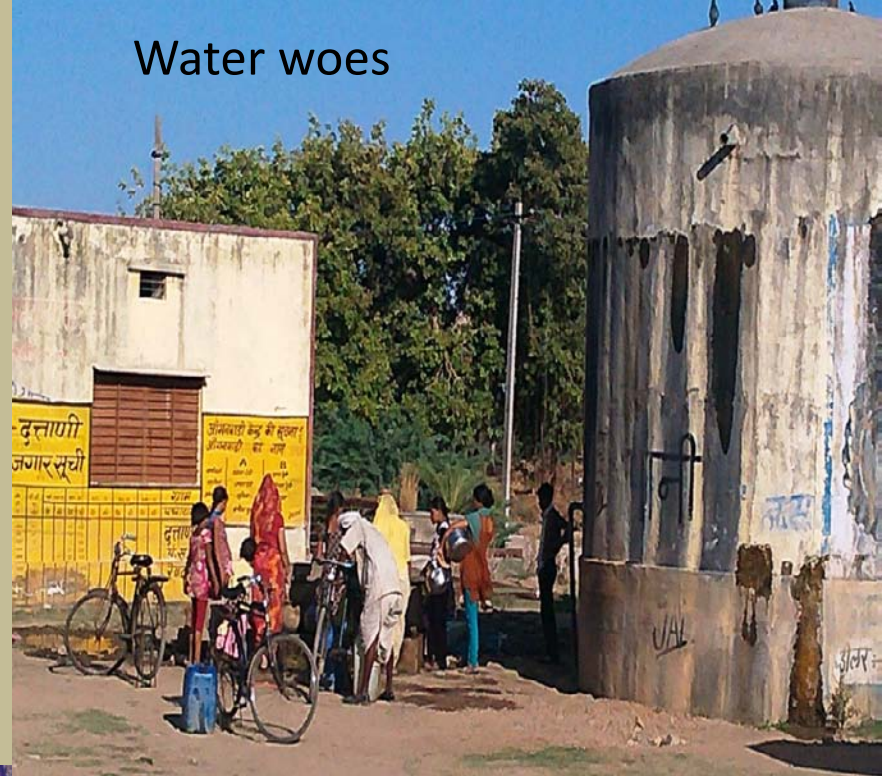
The recent ruling by the Supreme Court to protect Water Bodies and Grazing lands from encroachments has led to a spurt of activity from the state to identify demarcate and restore these natural commons. While the enactment seeks to secure these commons to ensure

their access to commoners and traditional users, interpretations of this ruling are also becoming evident with grazing lands being demarcated and fenced by the state agencies. In such a delimiting exercise the commons are viewed as a finite space, and their demarcation will free lands to cater to agendas of “development”.



***Water sector policies** promote privatization based on the 'user pays principle', removing water from the status of a commons that people could access and claim to have common rights over- rendering it a commodity for communities who managed and maintained those water resources in their vicinity.*

Water woes



Market solutions

Piped solutions



# Claim Agitate Negotiate

The conceptual basis of recent tribals and forest related enactments is embedded in the principles of commons, yet they for a foothold in the new dispensations on the law. The government focuses exclusively on individual claims in Forest Rights Act; the forest department declares the bonafide of the claimant on the basis of ever having been declared an encroacher- an irony of the process!

**It is women's experiences that bring forth the nuance, their articulations that inform the protests and the women themselves at the forefront in agitation.**





*“Yeh Jangal- Zameen hamare hai- nahin kisi ke baap ke”*

*“This land and water and forest  
is our legacy- not the state’s  
nor any landlords personal  
property”*



Women meet the  
local police chief

**As they seek to redress  
their issues before an  
increasingly resistant  
state, women are easy  
targets to the masculine  
aggressive power of the  
crony capitalist  
developers of industry,  
urbanization etc. working  
in allegiance with State.**







**No more Narmada-s,  
no more Niyamgiri-s,  
No more POSCO-s**

