

# *Imperialist Ideas about Women*

In all societies worldwide, people's cultures cannot be deeply understood and fully studied without a careful scrutiny of gender relations.

The examination of gender necessitates going over different questions as private lives, personal identities, and power organization at the level of the family

As a result of cultural contacts between the different societies, gender related ideas were developed. Awareness and more openness replaced old traditions

In the post classical period, the Japanese imitation of the Chinese culture resulted in the creation of a more inferior stereotypes about women.

In their journeys to Africa, Muslim travelers were concerned about the considerable freedom given to women. Even after their conversion to Islam, they never adopted gender standards of the Middle East.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many local gender traditions in Africa and Asia were challenged by the establishment of European laws. European ‘gender equality’ was represented by the wives of European officials, planters, and missionaries. The influence was immense.

European colonizers, missionaries, and volunteer agencies led a campaign to 'civilize' Africans throughout spreading selected values and principles to the indigenous people of certain areas

The status and role played by women were of considerable importance at the level of the European colonies.

Accepted by some societies and rejected by others, there existed areas where European values were blended with local ones creating tensions for women there.

It's very important to note that European values concerning gender namely women were very intricate. Europeans were concerned with power and profit but never reform

Victorian values for women were widely accepted because they emphasized domesticity and a more important public role for men.

These values were compatible to the belief that women should be identified as part of a husband-headed household

In fact, Europeans did not push for massive change in the local gender relations. They were concerned with power and profit far more than with social reform

India and Africa were the two key places whereby European influences strongly affected the history of gender issues

# India

During the 1860s the British colonial rule considered Indian woman to be subject to 'civilization' along with men

The European missions to civilize Indian women were manifested in the attempts to convert them to Christianity

Indian women were taught domestic skills, nursing , and the importance of sharing activities between couples.

The remarriage law of 1853 was designed to solve the problem of divorce and widowhood among Muslim and Hindu Indian families. In both types of families women were not allowed to divorce and widows were not allowed to remarry.

# India

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> C, Indian feminists also strongly opposed arranged marriages of young girls to older men.

Visiting Britain and were greatly upset by the gender segregation there, some educated Indian women turned home and taught their fellow certain masculine skills such as carpentry and masonry.

They stressed 'Indian-ness' in dressing and behavior and insisted on breaking down the caste system.

# Sub-Saharan Africa

After the end of the ‘the scramble for Africa’, sub-Saharan women gained much attention from the colonial governments.

Unlike Indians, Africans were seen as barbarians who had no links to the “civilized” world.

According to the Victorian values, African women’s work with men on agriculture was inappropriate.

In some colonies, a series of laws were passed to prohibit African women from owning land. More, different measures were taken to ensure the dominance of men in the family



# Sub-Saharan Africa

Europeans stressed that the place of women was home, where she should busy herself raising children and tending to household duties, whereas it should be up to the man to go out and earn money.

Many African women built an interesting syncretic pattern to the changes they saw around them. They stressed the importance of education for women and birth control

Farther, some argued that women had to take over leadership of the family because men had become selfish and unreliable