

Men, Women, and Cultural Benchmarks: Gender Roles and Social Organization of The
Khasi and Kerala Cultures

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In 2012 Jyoti Singh Pandey, a 23-year-old physiotherapy intern living in Munirka, Delhi, was brutally raped and beaten on a private bus. The six men present, one being the driver of the bus, all participated in the assault. She died fifteen days later.¹ I found this story in approximately 30 seconds; I typed in the phrase “violence against women in India” and was instantly given 30,600,000 results to choose from. While stories of violence in any country are not uncommon, India experiences a particularly high rate of gender-based violence. But when studying the origins of this violence, it’s important to note that these stories don’t originate from every corner of the country; in fact, there are quite a few Indian cultures that are thought to be more egalitarian in nature.

Heide Goettner-Abendroth, a German philosopher and researcher, specializes in studying matriarchal societies across the globe. Her main claim lies in the idea that matriarchies are synonymous with egalitarian societies. Because women naturally lead with nurturing and harmonious characteristics in these cultures, everyone in the society is considered equal; violence projected from one gender onto another is unheard of.² The Khasi tribe of Northeast India and Kerala of South India are supposed matriarchies that, according to Goettner-Abendroth’s claim, should be more egalitarian in nature. Some scholars even argue these societies could hold the answer to achieving gender equality in such an overwhelmingly patriarchal country. However, these apparently matriarchal societies don’t appear to be egalitarian in the way Goettner-Abendroth suggests. The matrilineality and matrifocality present in Kerala, while providing women with certain economic and cultural rights within the home, restricts women’s freedom just as much as the Indian patriarchy. Furthermore, gender roles within the Khasi tribe appear to favor women over men and in turn limit men’s rights. While the word “matriarchy” contains tension among scholars on its own, these matrilineal, matrifocal, and

matrilocal models of organization don't lend themselves to egalitarian ideals and can create as much gender inequity as the Indian patriarchy. To prove this, I will present contradicting definitions of "matriarchy" to further the idea that the words "matriarchy" and "equality" are not necessarily synonymous. I will then describe how characteristics of masculinity and femininity in patriarchal India lead to violence against women, comparing and contrasting these gender roles to those present in the Khasi and Kerala cultures. The analysis of these cultures will consist of anthropological and historical data that depict how their matrilineal, matrifocal, and matrilocal systems fail to promote gender equality.

Conflicting Definitions of "Matriarchy"

Calling the Khasi tribe and Kerala society a "matriarchy" is a problem on its own. Unlike the word "patriarchy," which most dictionaries would define as a system of organization in which men hold a large majority of the political, economic, and social power, a matriarchy is more difficult to define. It could be defined as a parallel to patriarchy, simply replacing the word "men" with "women" in the above definition. But scholars don't agree on many pieces of this definition and have attempted to add and subtract features in order to apply it to different societies that aren't patriarchies, yet also aren't of the complete opposite extreme. Heide Goettner-Abendroth, in her book *Matriarchal Societies: Studies on Indigenous Cultures across the Globe* published in 2012, claims matriarchies are present when "mothers are at the center of society, as manifested by matrilineality and by mothers' power of economic distribution," essentially stating that inheritance passes through women and they hold most, if not all, economic power. But her definition isn't complete without the most essential part: "gender equality." If there is no presence of gender equality then, in her opinion, it can't be a matriarchy.³

On the other hand, Cynthia Eller, a Professor of Religion from Montclair University, claims that there is no real evidence of a matriarchy having ever existed anywhere in the world. She argues that matriarchies should be considered a myth, and those who describe them as “story tellers.” Eller believes that telling “stories” of matriarchies as if they are real is detrimental to the modern feminist movement because they “are not capable of telling us whether or how we might put an end to sexism.” If women use historical matriarchies as a “profoundly empowering” foundation for eventually achieving equality, they would be basing their hope for the future off of a fake past.⁴ Eller’s idea is not uncommon; many scholars have claimed that matriarchies are nothing but a myth. It’s these scholars who critique women like Goettner-Abendroth for using her feminist activism to cloud her research rather than create informed theses based on what the facts tell her; in fact, while she claims that the Khasi tribe is a matriarchy exhibiting gender equality, others argue the tribe is quite gender biased. But even Eller has collected criticism of her own. Other scholars claim she built a “straw man” argument in which she conveniently ignored evidence of well-researched societies like the Khasi where women do hold a significant amount of power.⁵

Finally, Peggy Reeves Sanday, a Professor of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania, attempts to broaden the definition of matriarchy rather than limit or eradicate it. She claims that a matriarchy has nothing to do with who is literally in charge, but rather how the sexes are defined in religion and in gender roles. Matriarchies can be defined by social relationships in which women hold more influence than men, but not necessarily political or economic power.⁶ This definition tends to focus more on the social aspect of a society and, although scholars don’t criticize it heavily, is also much too vague to decide whether a society is or is not a matriarchy.

It's clear from these definitions and their respective critiques that the definition of "matriarchy" is dependent on the eye of the beholder. Sanday's definition differs greatly from Goettner-Abendroth's, and Eller attempts to discredit both. Because of this controversy, this paper will refrain from naming either the Khasi or Kerala societies a "matriarchy." Rather, it will focus on their actual social organization in relation to gender roles and gender equity without attaching either society to potentially contested vocabulary.

Although both societies will not claim matriarchy as a defining word, other vocabulary related to matriarchies can help us analyze these cultures. The word "matrifocal" implies a society in which women are the head of the family and household. "Matrilocal" refers to a system in which, after marriage, the husband moves in to his wife's home with her family. "Matrilineal" describes a system of inheritance in which descent and kinship are traced through the female. Finally, "egalitarian" is the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities.

Violence and Masculinity

When exploring these societies, it's essential to understand the culture that surrounds them. There are many factors that have contributed to gender-based violence in India, but a driving force lies in the hegemonic masculine and feminine stereotypes engrained into both men and women at a young age. Hegemonic masculinity "demand[s] conformity to certain normative characteristics, for example toughness and violence." In this way, in order for a man to truly be a "man," he must prescribe to certain social norms to reach a "cultural benchmark against which all males implicitly measure their gender legitimacy."⁷ For example, if a man isn't able to exhibit toughness and violence in the same way as his peers, then he might not be accepted as a "man" because he doesn't have characteristics associated with that specific "benchmark."

In India, a historical benchmark lies in the image of the warrior, a cross-cultural symbol of strength and power, bearing weapons and fighting heroic battles for a greater cause. This heroic, warrior image is often engrained in young men who are particularly “drawn to the mythic ideal of the hero, or heroic band of brothers where there is triumph against the odds.” The warrior itself implies an attachment to wartime, where violence is necessary for survival.⁸ But what implications does this “benchmark” have in modern society where, for most young men in India, fighting in wars isn’t relevant anymore?

The warrior, despite its literal irrelevance to modern day society, seems to have a direct correlation to values associated with nationalism and masculinity today. At its core, nationalism implies an “us vs. them” mindset that parallels to how masculinity is constructed. The values of domination and competition that evolve from nationalism, engrained in the idea that the nation-state is superior and in competition with other nations, manifests into masculinity and allows men to associate their masculinity with superiority and power. Likewise, the warrior image implies “martial values” such as strength, prowess, and readiness to inflict pain.⁹ The warrior image coupled with nationalistic values seems to have translated into violence against women. But how does a supposedly heroic symbol lead to violence against women as opposed to other men, like in wartime? Hegemonic masculinity in India cannot be completely understood without associating its complement, femininity, with inferiority.

The main connection between women and inferiority lies in the idea of “purity.” Starting from a young age, women are seen as “pure” and “innocent,” therefore implying that in order to maintain this innocence, a certain measure of protection is required.¹⁰ Once men are given the role to protect women, the warrior role, positions of inferiority and superiority follow. But this idea seems contradictory to previous statements; it makes little sense to be physically violent

towards someone one is meant to protect. In order for this concept to make sense, it's important to separate innocence of the woman and the woman herself. The man's job, in this form of "heroic" masculinity, is to protect the woman's *purity* until she is able to reproduce, not to protect *her*. In this sense she is more of a vessel to further the man's legacy in his children.¹¹

Once the purity surrounding femininity causes women to be seen this way, violence becomes a tool to limit her freedom and objectify her further. The power imbalance between femininity and masculinity, as propelled by nationalism, warrior symbols, and values of purity and innocence, serves as a large cause for violence against women in India.

Origins of Gender Roles

Unlike sex, gender isn't a universal truth. Although some argue that sex isn't binary either, gender is a more fluid concept. While sex is assigned at birth with little thought involved, gender roles are carefully constructed, influenced, and defined by culture over the course of one's life. Nancy Bonvillian, a professor of anthropology and linguistics at Bard University, described the construction of gender elegantly: "Females and males are born, but women and men are products of enculturation."¹²

When a baby is born, the first step is to assign a biological marker: boy or girl? Following this marker is where forming a gender role begins. With the name "boy" and "girl" comes with many associations, such as colors, baby names, and clothing. The baby's room, for example, typically exemplifies a specific color palette that relates to a girl or a boy—in America the colors pink and blue pertain to girls and boys respectively. While colors on their own don't cause inequalities between genders, they do cause an initial separation that slowly increases.¹³ It's the specific definitions of "masculinity" and "femininity" in an institution that eventually defines inequality.

When creating gender roles, childhood is an extremely important developmental stage. How parents treat their children effects how children view themselves. Because “parenting is gendered, with different expectations for mothers and for fathers,” children grow up understanding there is a difference between being a boy and being a girl. If mothers normally work in the home while fathers are paid as high-level bosses, children associate women with the home and men with leadership and power.¹⁴ These differences manifest in the toys children grow up with, such as dolls, which suggest motherly instincts, and action figures, which suggest strength and often violence.

The following studies will attempt to understand gender roles in the Kerala and Khasi societies by analyzing how gender is constructed within each system; gender roles provide an insight into how men and women view themselves and each other, which is a main indicator of where inequality originates within a society. When looking at the construction of gender in a general context, a separation between men and women as they grow up is visible through almost any culture. But how are these gender roles affected in a matrilineal, matrifocal, and matrilineal system? In order to analyze these two cultures from the lens of gender roles, I provide historical context of the Kerala and Khasi cultures coupled with specific characteristics of each gender found from anthropological studies, in addition to interviews I conducted with members of the Kerala society.

Kerala: Matrilineal to Patrilineal

Kerala, a state located on the Malabar Coast in southwest India, has been historically praised for its matrilineal and matrifocal system that has supposedly led to higher education rates and rights for women. In an article in *Hinduism Today*, Choodie Shivaram claims that in Kerala women were “educated, respected,” and were able to move “about without fear or censure,

participated occupationally wherever they wished, and were the major force leading Kerala to become India's first near-100% literate state."¹⁵ But, as the case study of Kerala will demonstrate, women's rights in the state are much more complicated than this; their matrilineality and matrifocality don't necessarily give women the equal rights Shivaram suggests they have, yet at the same time their system of organization serves its own important purpose.

Kerala itself is not matrifocal or matrilineal as a whole; the state contains multiple cultures. The Nairs are the most well known people who practice this type of organization. Their matrilineality and matrifocality influence how gender is viewed in the society. For one, because inheritance runs through women, they have economic ownership over all property.¹⁶ This gives women a certain amount of financial protection they aren't afforded in a patrilineal system, which carries its own implications that will be explained later.

Second, children belong to the mother and her family, and they inherit her last name over the father. In this way, daughters are more valued because they are the ones who continue the family legacy. Unlike gender roles in much of patrilineal India where women are meant to reproduce to continue the man's legacy, women reproduce to continue their own legacy; birthing a girl is valuable for more than just her potential reproductive future. In fact, in the beginning of the Nair's matrilineal system, women used their husbands for their biological functions like women were used in patrilineal India—"It was not unusual for a woman, once she had two or three daughters[...]to send her husband on his way."¹⁷ While it's unclear whether this statement implies informal or formal divorce, the act itself of a woman using a man solely for his reproductive abilities expresses not only a reversal of values present in patriarchal India, but also shows how daughters are essential for the system to continue and are therefore highly valued.

Third, the Nairs are organized in a matrilocal system where, after marriage, the husband moves into his wife's house.¹⁸ This is not only rare in matrilineal systems, but it is important to understand when considering domestic violence. Because the man moves into the woman's house, typically with much of her extended family, her family affords her a certain amount of protection and familiarity. Although there are certainly superior masculine and inferior feminine roles at play, it's possible that literal living conditions affect this as well. With this logic, violence against a woman would be more difficult for the man to carry out even if he wanted to.

Finally, the matrifocal system allows women to be center of the household. They care for children and make decisions for the family, which in early Nair society meant they also made much of the political decisions through their husbands.¹⁹ All of these characteristics of the matrilineal, matrilocal, and matrifocal system have afforded women a certain amount of importance and financial protection that gives them a leg up from the rest of patriarchal India when looking at gender equality.

However, unlike what Goettner-Abendroth would suggest at this point, this system doesn't lend itself completely to egalitarian values. There are two possible reasons why Kerala contains increasing gender inequity; first, the matrilineal and matrifocal system seems to limit women's freedom despite the protection the system provides; and second, as of the late 19th century, reforms dissolving the matrilineal system have pushed Kerala towards more patriarchal values that have led to increased violence.

For this paper, I conducted two interviews of women who grew up in Kerala under the Nair's matrilineal system, one of whom continues to live there, in order to properly understand how gender roles were defined starting from early childhood. As explained above, a large part of constructing gender revolves around the clothes, toys, coming of age rituals, and relationships

engrained in childhood. Geetha Varma is a 48-year-old woman currently residing in California, but who grew up in Kerala from 1967 to 1990. She says that the matrilineal and matrifocal system gave women “a lot more importance in the system than actual power.” She grew up in her mother’s home, and although her mother’s side was more important, “men still had more authority and decision making power.” The matrifocality didn’t seem to extend beyond raising children. However, the girls inherited land in order to be “financially protected.” She explained further that even though women couldn’t work due to the large role they played in maintaining the home, they were “protected” through the matrilineal system.²⁰ It’s here where suspicion about the true nature of Kerala’s matrilineal system arose, because the word “protection” seems to be a common theme when describing the role of women in India. Hegemonic masculinity and its feminine correlate depended on men protecting the purity of women and therefore limited their freedom. In Kerala the matrilineal system protected women financially by allowing them to own property, slightly compensating for the fact that they couldn’t earn salaries while also giving them an overwhelmingly large importance in the house. The matrifocal system might give women power in their home and give girls a certain value, but it also limited their freedom to pursue other professions. The matrilineal system seems to make up for this limitation by giving women financial protection through land ownership, but falls short of giving women true gender equality.

Likewise, while the matrilineal system restricted women from leaving the house due to economic ties, women were also limited to the home due to cultural values engrained in them as young girls. “Girls couldn’t leave the house much,” Mrs. Varma claimed, “and there weren’t too many social events.” Growing up, there was one main coming of age ritual for girls when they hit puberty. The ceremony lasted a few days and, as Mrs. Varma recollects, it was probably

originally intended to let people know that the girl was ready for marriage. “My grandmother got married at 15,” she stated. The coming of age ceremony for boys was much different, not focused on their reproductive future but rather on religious instruction. They had what was known as a thread ceremony, usually done between the ages of 10 and 15, which served as a spiritual transaction that allowed the young boy to eventually become a priest if he chose that particular path. While only boys of the Brahmin class could become priests, this ceremony wasn’t exclusive to them and served as a metaphorical passage into spiritual knowledge. Girls, on the other hand, were not afforded the same choice to pursue priesthood.²¹ The polarity between these rituals depicts an inequality between gender roles growing up that eventually stunts gender equality in the society; girls, despite their importance to the system, were still culturally favored for their reproductive abilities while boys were given leadership roles in religion and governing. Because girls were rarely let out of their homes, it became a symbol of a woman’s place. Bhadramani Thampal, a 70-year-old woman currently residing in Kerala, stated that her mother was “only a house worker” and her father visited “once a month” to provide for the family.²² While Kerala’s social organization lends itself to protect women financially and from abuse, their gender roles are far from allowing women to “[participate] occupationally wherever they wish” as *Hinduism Today* initially claimed.²³

Furthermore, Kerala has experienced domestic violence due to a heightened presence of Christian values and nationalism initiated from British imperialism in the late 19th century. But this falls more on the fault of the surrounding patriarchy than the matrilineal system. With the help of Christian missionaries and a nationalist movement, the matrilineal system was increasingly critiqued for the inferior roles it gave to men over women’s sexuality. The small, nuclear family began to win out as reformers worried that the large, joint family in the wife’s

name would prevent a man from following his “ ‘natural’ instincts towards his wife and children.”²⁴ These “natural” instincts, as evident in hegemonic masculinity in the rest of India, is most likely referring to a “natural” dominance and strength a man has over his family—though this dominance isn’t as “natural” as reformers claim, as seen by the complicated and careful construction of the masculine gender role described previously. This social reform had economic implications as the matrilineal system began to die out, giving men economic as well as social dominance over his family. In 1921 the Cochin Christian Succession Law was passed that legally restricted daughters from inheriting property.²⁵ These reforms have a few important implications about the roles of men and women. First, remember that femininity in Kerala didn’t differ much from the rest of India; women were still considered to be in need of constant protection and were therefore restricted to the home. The matrilineal and matrilocal system was used to protect women in this manner, allowing them to live with their extended family and inherit land. When the matrilineal system dissolved and nuclear families became more common, men seemed to adopt the role previously held by the system: protecting women and keeping them in their homes.

The first of these reasons serves as a comment on the matrilineal system, and the second on the patriarchy; neither system has been able to successfully address gender inequity in India. But it’s important to remember that the matrilineal, matrifocal, and matrilocal system isn’t without a purpose. Within a patriarchal country, the system is able to protect women of Kerala and keep them financially stable. Although they still have a long way to go before being able to truthfully own the word egalitarian, the Nairs’ system of social organization has served a practical purpose that shouldn’t be belittled or go unnoticed. As long as the system serves its purpose for the people of the society, there is no need for criticism just because the culture is

slightly different than our own. The place for criticism lies in claiming the culture is egalitarian; while Kerala's matrilineal, matrifocal, and matrilineal system seems to help women in certain ways, their gender roles claim women are in need of protection and set limitations on their freedom, which doesn't stray far from the rest of patriarchal India.

Khasi: Conflicting Depictions of Gender Roles

As with Kerala, scholars studying the Khasi tribe of Northeast India don't agree on the implications of their matrilineal system. Goettner-Abendroth created her own case study on the Khasi tribe under her claim that matriarchal societies were egalitarian; however, the following section will address the problematic nature of this claim. The controversy lies in the power imbalance between men and women; some scholars claim the Khasi's matrifocal system gives men an inferior status compared to women, while others claim that the harmonious nature of women's rule has led to increased gender equity. Understanding these claims is essential to understanding nature of gender roles in the Khasi tribe.

Goettner-Abendroth depicts Khasi women using masculine adjectives, which suggests they don't follow the feminine gender roles present in patriarchal India. She writes how "they are still described as being as strong and muscular as the men." Unlike Kerala where women are still seen as in need of protection, Khasi women were physically strong, almost like warriors.²⁶ With this warrior image, it's possible that women assumed the masculine image present in patrilineal India.

According to Goettner-Abendroth, Khasi women are "head of the clan" and lead without any army or police system, which also brings up questions about Khasi women's gender role as compared to patrilineal India.²⁷ As discussed with Kerala, one major role of femininity in India lies in the idea of protection. Goettner-Abendroth described the Khasi women having authority

much like a mother over her child.²⁸ Because a mother's main role is to protect her child, this idea seems to contain its own underlying theme of protection. Khasi women in Goettner-Abendroth's eyes seem to be a toned down version of men in patrilineal India; they are apparently able to have authority without exhibiting physical violence. With this in mind it would be reasonable to draw a conclusion that the Khasi tribe are almost egalitarian in nature, and the organization of women leading through peace and harmony would give both men and women rights. But controversies around the Khasi question the sustainability and truth of this claim.

Many scholars have described men's role in the Khasi culture as inferior, as if they "hold roles that seem to mirror those of women in patriarchal societies." Husbands are thought to have "no social roles deemed important," which is severely different than Goettner-Abendroth's claim that women rule like a mother over a child.²⁹ But if women assume a less extreme role of masculinity in India, men could assume the role of femininity and have limitations set on their freedom. This is especially evident in the recent "men's rights" movement that has swept Meghalaya, the state in which the Khasi tribe resides.

The Meghalaya Succession to Self Acquired Property Act was passed in 1984 that gave both genders equal inheritance rights. The law was passed by an all male legislation in the state of Meghalaya because women have no political power. While this might lead an outsider to assume that this male dominance over politics would represent a patriarchy, in the Khasi tribe men assumed political power under the guidance of women, once again alluding to the idea that women were equivalent to mothers "ruling" over their children. In this case, men lobbied for their rights and, unlike Kerala, which took away all inheritance rights from women, this law gave equal rights to all genders.³⁰ But this move for equality was not due to matrilineality but rather in

spite of it—change was prompted by inequalities set forth by the matrilineal system. Keith Pariat, leader of the movement, claims that “Khasi men have become so accustomed to a life of no responsibility that they have no drive left and feel ‘useless’[...]they have been emasculated, stripped of all power, authority, status and function, save procreation.” Pariat is claiming that men’s main role in this society is procreation, and he implies that they deserve power and authority.³¹ It’s unclear whether he believes men should have all power and authority, but those two traits are ones evident in characteristics of hegemonic masculinity present in the rest of patriarchal India. These protests ultimately ask two conflicting questions about the nature of women’s rule in the Khasi tribe; one, is the matrilineal and matrifocal system creating gender roles that are suppressing men; or two, is the men’s rights legislation influenced by patriarchal India, which contains its own gender bias, rather than actual inequality?

These questions can’t be definitively answered. While statistics show that gender disparity through an economic lens in Meghalaya is fairly equal, the validity of the men’s rights movement could make sense under the gender roles presented above in which women assume the protective role over men and men are used primarily used for reproductive purposes. Furthermore, the property act of 1984 suggests that males hold all political power because they were able to pass it with an all male legislation. This begs the question: if they’ve had political power all along and have been suppressed, why wait to challenge the system until 1984? As evident in both Pariat’s claims against women and Goettner-Abendroth’s depiction of them, it’s quite possible that the cultural power women had over men suppressed their ability to protest for their rights until recently.

But it’s also quite possible, pertaining to the second question, that the legislation was influenced heavily by patriarchal India. The surrounding cultures give men physical and cultural

authority, which is what the Khasi men claim they want. This connection shouldn't go unnoticed, but it seems equally probable that the local Khasi system oppresses men. Goettner-Abendroth suggests the Khasi tribe is egalitarian, yet the way she depicts them in relation to claims brought out during the men's rights movement suggests an inequality could exist that is almost a reversal of the inequality present in patriarchal India.

Conclusion

Both Kerala and Khasi seem to share a common thread: patriarchal ideals are seeping into the matrilineal system. While the reasoning for the ideals differ, it's clear the matrilineal system isn't surviving in India. But the matrilineal system isn't a victim to the patriarchy; it isn't in need of saving by feminists looking for an answer to gender inequity. The Kerala and Khasi models of organization shouldn't be preserved for the purpose of increasing gender equality, as they don't lend themselves to egalitarian ideals. In Kerala, the matrilineal system protected women yet also didn't lead to complete equality. Therefore, when the system dissolved, women's rights fell even further. In Khasi, the matrilineal system appeared to lead to increased gender equity yet recently, with the introduction of a men's rights movement and changed legislation, reflects the possibility of men being suppressed by women. Kerala presents a system that attempts to better life for women without changing their gender roles or offering them increased freedom, which means that when the system evolves, women lose more and more rights. The Khasi seems to slightly reverse gender roles and continue to suppress in other ways. They don't appear to offer a solution to achieving gender equality that can be used in other cultures.

However, it should also be remembered that I am not a part of the Khasi or Kerala societies; in fact, I am not even an Indian citizen. As an American basing my feminist beliefs off of American values, there is bias as to how I view gender equality. Kerala's matrilineal and

matrilocal systems do serve a purpose in their society: protecting women financially and physically. My judgments of this society remain engrained in the Western view that, in order for women to have equal rights, they must be able to choose their own path and not be tied to their home. In Kerala, until patriarchal systems disrupted the matrilineality and matrilocality, women were financially and physically safe. In an overwhelmingly patriarchal country, the existence of this matrilineal system served an important purpose and, compared to the rest of the country, did give women “equality” in the sense that they had just as much power over their home and children as their husbands.

Therefore, through the lens of an anthropologist, my bias shouldn’t lead to a critique of the culture merely because it doesn’t match up with Western feminist views of gender equality. But, through the lens of an advocate of gender equality, critique is necessary to grow closer to an egalitarian society. Cynthia Eller claimed that telling stories of “matriarchies” as if they were real is detrimental to the feminist movement because feminists would be basing their hopes for the future off of a fake past. As seen by these case studies, looking to Kerala and Khasi as a solution is equally as detrimental. The matrilineal, matrifocal, and matrilocality systems give women a certain amount of power in some ways; however, they fail to change the foundation of gender roles in order to give *both* men and women equality. As long as one gender is seen as inferior to another, equality will never be attainable.

Notes

¹ Nidhi Bansal, "India's Daughter, the World's Daughter: Stopping Violence against Women," *Huffington Post* (Los Angeles, CA), March 19, 2015, accessed March 30, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/plan-international-canada/http/www.huffingtonpost.ca/plan-international-canada/indias-daughter-violence-against-women_b_6901560.html.

² Heide Goettner-Abendroth, *Matriarchal Societies: Studies on Indigenous Cultures across the Globe* (2012; repr., New York, US: Peter Lang Publishing, 2013).

³ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴ Cynthia Eller, "Chapter 1," in *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory: Why an Invented Past Won't Give Women a Future* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000), 1-4.

⁵ "Knocking down Straw Dolls: A Critique of Cynthia Eller's the Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory: Why an Invented past Won't Give Women a Future," *Suppressed Histories*, last modified 2000, accessed March 31, 2015, <http://www.suppressedhistories.net/articles/eller.html>.

⁶ Peggy Reeves Sanday, "Matriarchy as a Sociocultural Form" (paper presented at The 16th Congress of the Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association, Melaka, MY, July 1, 1998).

⁷ Pam Nilan et al., "Masculinities and Violence in India and Indonesia," *Journal of Health and Development* 4, nos. 1-4 (2008): 212.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 213.

⁹ Sikata Banerjee, *Make Me a Man!: Masculinity, Hinduism, and Nationalism in India* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012).

¹⁰ Leela Dube, "On the Construction of Gender: Hindu Girls in Patrilineal India," *Economic and Political Weekly* 23, no. 18 (April 30, 1988): 13.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Nancy Bonvillian, *Women and Men: Cultural Constructs of Gender*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997), 1.

¹³ Judith Lorber, "Night to His Day: The Social Construction of Gender," in *Paradoxes of Gender* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 55.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Choodie Shivaram, "Where Women Wore the Crown," *Hinduism Today*, accessed March 2, 2015, <http://www.hinduismtoday.com/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=3569>.

¹⁶ Asha Narang Spaak, "A Strange Society," *India International Centre Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (July 1978): 173.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Geetha Varma, interview by the author, Los Altos, CA, March 25, 2015.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Bhadramani Thampal, interview by the author, Los Altos, CA, March 27, 2015.

²³ Shivaram, "Where Women Wore the Crown."

²⁴ Praveena Kodoth and Mridul Eapen, "Looking beyond Gender Parity: Gender Inequalities of Some Dimensions of Well-Being in Kerala," *Economic and Political Weekly* 40, no. 30 (July 23, 2005): 3278.

²⁵ Ibid, 3279.

²⁶ Goettner-Abendroth, *Matriarchal Societies: Studies on Indigenous*, 46.

²⁷ Ibid, 48.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Uri Gneezy, Kenneth L. Leonard, and John A. List, *Gender Differences in Competition* (Cambridge, MA, 2006), 5.

³⁰ Tiplut Nongbri, "Gender and the Khasi Family Structure: Some Implications of the Meghalaya Succession to Self-Acquired Property Act, 1984," *Sociological Bulletin* 37, no. 1 (March 1988): 73.

³¹ Amrit Dhillon, "Tribe Faces Push for Men's Rights," *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney, AU), April 2, 2013, accessed March 23, 2015, <http://www.smh.com.au/world/tribe-faces-push-for-mens-rights-20130401-2h2yp.html>.

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Bamberger, Joan. "The Myth of Matriarchy: Why Men Rule in Primitive Society." In *Woman, Culture, and Society*, by Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, Louise Lamphere, and Joan Bamberger, 263-80. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974.

Banerjee, Sikata. *Make Me a Man!: Masculinity, Hinduism, and Nationalism in India*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012.

In her book, Banerjee argues that the definition of masculinity in India, such as having martial qualities—physical strength, prowess, a willingness to obey and give orders, a readiness to inflict pain—and an "us vs. them" mindset, has a direct correlation with nationalism and is therefore essential for a modern nation in India. In my other source on this bibliography, "Masculinities and Violence in India and Indonesia", it explained how hegemonic masculinity in India has led to more violence, especially against women (explained below). That source shows how values formed in patriarchies, such as the violent characteristics associated with masculinity, create a larger gap between genders; male qualities become superior to female qualities and therefore males become superior to females. Banerjee's book argues a similar thesis, that the "us vs. them" mindset around masculinity in India has led to a restriction on women's freedom and has widened the gap in equality between genders. This supports my thesis by addressing a reason for gender inequality in India, a patriarchy, stemming from cultural constructs of masculinity. But it also argues that these characteristics were essential in building a modern nation and therefore presents a new perspective on the possible correlation between masculinity, modernity, and progression; perhaps a matriarchy can't sustain itself in the modern world because its organization relies too heavily on harmony and conservatism over the violent or coercive power needed to protect borders and bring order to a diverse nation-state. This could be used as a counter argument about the benefits of a patriarchy over a matriarchy in the bigger picture.

Sikata Banerjee has written numerous publications about Indian nationalism, masculinity, and women's representation in India. She works at the department of women's studies at the University of Victoria as an associate professor. She also has a PhD in political science. Along with the author's knowledge of the subject as seen from her studies, the book consists of extensive notes and a bibliography. The book doesn't contain many helpful reviews by scholars or even the common reader, which could mean it isn't very well known or perhaps that this source isn't completely reliable. But Banerjee's background in women's studies, her current job, and her other works lead me to believe that this book presents a good source for my paper.

Bansal, Nidhi. "India's Daughter, the World's Daughter: Stopping Violence against Women." *Huffington Post* (Los Angeles, CA), March 19, 2015. Accessed March 30, 2015. http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/plan-international-canada/http/www.huffingtonpost.ca/plan-international-canada/indias-daughter-violence-against-women_b_6901560.html.

Beacon Press. "Knocking down Straw Dolls: A Critique of Cynthia Eller's the Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory: Why an Invented past Won't Give Women a Future." Suppressed

Histories. Last modified 2000. Accessed March 31, 2015.
<http://www.suppressedhistories.net/articles/eller.html>.

Bonvillain, Nancy. *Women and Men: Cultural Constructs of Gender*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997.

In Bonvillain's book (secondary source), she presents a study of gender relationships over many different cultures and through various ideological lenses. Most of the book discusses the impacts of different economies and ideologies on gender roles, which could be useful when analyzing certain matriarchies. But more relevantly, I want to specifically use the first chapter of this source as a basis for my analysis of the different matriarchies. In the first chapter, Bonvillain describes the different categories of describing cultures from the lens of gender roles and relations. She does this to show the reader how she plans to analyze the cultures presented later in her book. But rather than use her actual analysis of various cultures (most of which are not active matriarchies anymore), I plan to use these categories and their descriptions when analyzing how tribes like the Khasi or Owan, even Kerala, are organized and how they function. I chose her categories of analysis because they are fairly basic, meaning they could pertain to any society I decide to study. They range from gender constructs, social organization of households, rites of passage, male dominance and hierarchy, and changes in economy. This relates to research question and thesis in that it provides lenses of how to look at matriarchies and separate them into economic, political, and social sections to properly judge how much gender equity they have.

Nancy Bonvillain works at Bard College as a professor of anthropology and linguistics. She has written numerous books on various cultures, specifically Native American, as well as books about language and communication in general. She has a PhD from Columbia University in anthropology. The book consists of a variety of citations and references, and contains reviews in the back by multiple other scholars in similar fields. There is little bias considering Bonvillain is an expert in her field and presents everything with solid evidence and citations. Chacko, Elizabeth. "Marriage, Development, and the Status of Women in Kerala, India." *Gender and Development* 11, no. 2 (July 2003): 52-59.

This source describes gender inequality in Kerala, India by critiquing the institution of marriage in India (such as traditions of dowry and arranged marriages). Kerala was originally a matriarchy but began shifting away from that title shortly after British Imperialism started in the late 1700's. Although it still has some aspects similar to its old traditions, men hold much more power than women in social, political, and economic contexts. When this shift into patriarchal values started is widely debated, some even claim it still contains remnants of primarily matriarchal values. Because of this fact, this source could be used for or against my thesis. If the violence and discrimination against women started after Kerala's matriarchy started to dissipate, and this discrimination had a direct correlation to its transition into a patriarchy, it would help prove my thesis by showing how patriarchies lead to a more unequal society between genders. But if this inequality began while Kerala was still a matriarchy, then it could serve as a counter argument by showing how not all matriarchies are egalitarian in nature. I would just need to find more sources to back up one side or the other, but I think Kerala would be another interesting case study, maybe more than the Owan people just because both Kerala and the Khasi are from India.

Elizabeth Chacko has a PhD in geography and a graduate degree in Public Health from UCLA. Her focus is not on gender studies but rather on immigration and its effects on different communities, so her knowledge in this topic might not be *as* trustworthy as authors from my other sources who have spent their whole lives studying gender relations. But being a published author and scholar in fields other than gender, she provides an interesting perspective into this topic. The gender and development journal is a feminist publication that publishes articles about gender, policy, government, and equality. Because this journal is academic, selects its submissions through scholarly editors, and specializes in my topic, this source is credible.

Connell, R. W. *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics*. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987.

This secondary source will provide background into gender psychology and will be a good basis when trying to understand these societies on a more universal scale; despite being in different locations and living in different times, men and women in the context of psychology can share similar traits and dynamics. This book not only gives background into theories of gender through ideological frameworks, but it discusses femininity, masculinity, and gender relations within a society. This would help my thesis by not only providing insight into the psychology behind masculinity and femininity, but it would be a good comparison to actual matriarchies (or almost matriarchies, as professor Wills claimed there are very few examples of actual matriarchies) to see how the gender relations described here correlate to how the societies I want to study were actually organized.

R. W. Connell is a sociologist and professor at the University of Sydney. She is mostly known for her works on gender hierarchies and her social theory of gender relations. She has also researched theories around masculinity, specifically the idea of hegemonic masculinity that was discussed in my other source. Her background alone in gender studies, along with her status as a college professor and researcher, makes this source credible. But looking specifically at the book, it has references throughout, good reviews, and the evidence to back up her ideas refers to specific other physiologists, historians, and anthropologists. All of her work is extensively cited. The source itself is fairly old, which brings up some questions about the validity. As any discipline, psychology is changing as more research is conducted. But at the same time, because psychology is a study of the human mind in an emotional and behavioral aspect, many psychological concepts have remained constant. Because of this, this source would only be valid with a more recent source to back it up.

Delaney, Carol, and Deborah Kaspin. *An Experimental Introduction to Anthropology*. 2nd ed. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2011.

This secondary source provides an introduction to anthropology, defining key terms that will be used in my paper such as culture, subculture, boundless culture, culture in relation to power, and how to go about properly "investigating" a society. This is all primarily in the first chapter (Mr. Spross directed me to the first chapter and a chapter in the middle about the family in culture). The first chapter is particularly interesting in that it describes ways in which personal experience affects how you look at different types of society or your own society. If I decide to go forward with interviewing people who live/lived in Kerala, I will have to take this into account and

should understand first how to investigate a society properly before figuring out what questions to ask. The other chapter I hope to use in my paper is "Relatives and Relations", a chapter that will come in handy when analyzing what about the Kerala or Khasi culture makes it particularly egalitarian (or not). Understanding relationships will be especially important when looking at gender relations, gender roles, and definitions of femininity and masculinity; what does it really mean for a society to be matrilineal or matrilineal in relation to the rest of the family, childhood, or values? The chapter discusses everything from marriage, divorce, family, friends, to kinship with different pedigree charts and the significance of manners.

This book is fairly new, meaning it provides a very up-to-date view on the field of anthropology. Carol Delaney, the primary author, is an anthropologist with degrees in psychology and anthropology from Boston University and the University of Chicago, respectively. She has taught at Brown University and has worked at the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard. She has written numerous books on gender and feminism in relation to anthropology. Deborah Kaspian, the other author, is a professor of anthropology at Rhode Island College and has written anthropology books and journal articles as well. The book contains an extensive bibliography at the end of each chapter as well as reviews from other scholars in the field. Overall, based on these facts, I think this source is very reliable

Dhillon, Amrit. "Tribe Faces Push for Men's Rights." *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney, AU), April 2, 2013. Accessed March 23, 2015. <http://www.smh.com.au/world/tribe-faces-push-for-mens-rights-20130401-2h2yp.html>.

This secondary source, although not a scholarly source, is a recent article describing how Khasi men have begun pushing for their rights after being apparently suppressed by the women of their tribe. The source explains ways in which the Khasi men have been suppressed, for example having no authority over their own children or rights to their land. I think this is a very interesting source because it is describing a movement that sounds very similar to women's movements around India, only reversed. It makes me question what the women are like in the Khasi tribe that is making the men react in such a way. But many of the things they claim are unfair, such as the child having the mother's last name and the father having to live in the mother's house, is almost reversed in the rest of India yet seems perfectly normal and few people protest those specific aspects. In relation to my paper, this source serves as evidence of ways in which the Khasi tribe isn't as egalitarian as other scholars have claimed. But in contrast, this source could also show how patriarchal India is influencing matrilineal societies in ways that aren't necessary; perhaps the men aren't being as suppressed as they think, but in comparison to the rest of India it seems as if they are.

The Sydney Morning Herald isn't as distinguished as my other sources, but it isn't the only newspaper describing this phenomenon happening in the Khasi tribe. BBC, The Hindu, and The Guardian have published very similar articles, which leads me to believe the story itself isn't entirely falsified or misleading. But because the Sydney Morning Herald covers stories from celebrity gossip to politics, and the author is a journalist who primarily works for the newspaper, it isn't a source to necessarily take at face value. I think this source is a good gateway into the idea of Khasi men's rights and can be synthesized with the other articles containing similar points, but it shouldn't stand on its own as fact.

Dube, Leela. "On the Construction of Gender: Hindu Girls in Patrilineal India." *Economic and Political Weekly* 23, no. 18 (April 30, 1988): 11-19.

Eller, Cynthia. "Chapter 1." In *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory: Why an Invented Past Won't Give Women a Future*, 1-4. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000.

This secondary source is very similar to another source I found, "The Myth of Matriarchy: Why Men Rule in Primitive Society," but after meeting with Mr. Spross he informed me that that source might not be very reliable due to the word choice in the title. Because it was written in the 70's and used the word "primitive", which in that time was often a racist sentiment, the results of this source could very well be subtly racist and not completely objective. Even though this source could still be valid despite the word choice, I think it would be best to use Eller's book as well to ensure accuracy on this subject. This new source was written much more recently and presents interesting evidence that debunks the idea of a matriarchy ever existing. The author claims that stating an egalitarian type matriarchy ever existed is actually detrimental to the feminist movement today. She argues that matriarchies are a created past and we shouldn't strive to create a false past when we can be more innovative for the future. Although the author's methods and evidence have been in question, her argument isn't completely unheard of; I have been reading many other sources claiming matriarchies aren't real. I think this could provide an interesting pull and push in my paper, possibly a contrast between those living in a society and those observing from the outside. Most of my family living in Kerala claims it is a matriarchy, but if a matriarchy isn't a reality anywhere then to what extent is their viewpoint valid? In relation to my thesis, because there are so many different definitions of the word matriarchy and this source presents an interesting argument that there is no such thing as one in the first place, I might consider not using the word matriarchy but perhaps matrifocal, matrilocal, or matrilineal (Mr. Spross and I have discussed this but haven't come to a conclusion yet).

The validity of this source is questionable even though the author is a distinguished scholar. Eller is a professor of women's and religious studies at Montclair University. She has written multiple books about both women and anthropological studies with a focus on religions and gender relations. But this particular book has been in the spotlight of numerous anthropological critiques. In her article she critiques scholars who, in reality, actually refuted the existence of matriarchies just as she does. There's also criticism that she avoided counter-evidence and skewed evidence towards her thesis through a biased lens. Because of this, I plan on using this source carefully and doing more research into this "myth" she's discussing, possibly using it as a counter argument for my paper. But, as I see the logic in many of her points, I might use it as a reason to stop using the word matriarchy and move towards words with a more clear existence and definition.

"Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender." In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford, CA: Metaphysics Research Lab, 2008. Accessed January 22, 2015.

Gneezy, Uri, Kenneth L. Leonard, and John A. List. *Gender Differences in Competition*. Cambridge, MA. 2006.

This secondary source is a report about a study of the Masaai tribe in Tanzania, which is patrilineal, and the Khasi tribe of India, which is matrilineal. The source gives background on the gender roles of the Khasi tribe which I found particularly interesting; they claim that men are so inferior to women that they almost have no social role, similar to the type of inequality that exists in the rest of patriarchal India (though with less physical violence). This is an interesting contrast to what my other sources have claimed, that women of the Khasi tribe rule with an almost motherly quality and everything is equal. Upon looking into this I've found some other sources, though less academic (such as newspaper articles), that have claimed similar ideas and have discussed men's rights activists in the Meghalaya area attempting to pass legislation. More of this will be explained in my other source (from the Sydney Morning Herald). This source also describes an experiment the researchers conducted, where they tested how competitive the genders of the two tribes were. They found that the women of the Khasi tribe were much more willing to compete than the men, but more men in the Masaai tribe wanted to compete than women of the Khasi tribe. I think their findings here, while interesting, aren't completely relevant to my paper unless I decided to go more into the relevance of competition in patriarchies vs. matrilineal societies. But that might be a whole other paper in itself. I want to use their depiction of the Khasi men and women in my paper as tension about the true nature of Khasi women.

Uri Gneezy is a professor of Economics and Strategy at UC San Diego and is an Endowed Chair in Behavioral Economics. He has written numerous journal publications mainly about economics in relation to social behaviors in various types of societies. Out of the tens of articles he has written, a few cover economics in relation to gender. Kenneth Leonard is an associate professor at the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources in the University of Maryland, with a Ph.D. from Berkeley, and John List is a professor of Economics at the University of Chicago. These three researches, due to their position in these respected universities, are a reliable source for this paper.

Goettner-Abendroth, Heide. *Matriarchal Societies: Studies on Indigenous Cultures across the Globe*. 2012. Reprint, New York, US: Peter Lang Publishing, 2013.

This secondary source argues that matriarchal patterns within a society were more egalitarian in nature. It traces indigenous cultures in Asia, Africa, and America. In this book I would focus primarily on chapter two, a study of the Khasi tribe of Northeast India, mostly because the Khasi have an interesting archive of primary sources on their culture and are said to continue to practice this type of social organization today (though there is controversy over this). After looking at how gender roles were defined in this tribe, possibly compared to gender definitions the Owan people (as said in my other source) or outside influences in India, I can understand how definitions of masculinity and femininity have made this culture more egalitarian than patriarchies.

When looking at the author, citations, and reviews, this source is very reliable. The author is a German philosopher and researcher specializing in matriarchal studies. She has published many other books in German and English about matriarchies and women's studies. The book consists of extensive endnotes for each chapter along with editorial reviews from authors specializing in women's studies such as Genevieve Vaughan and reviews from a selection of college professors working in similar fields. Because the author is a highly esteemed scholar, recently guiding two World Congresses on matriarchal studies, and because

there is an extensive amount of research and citations, there is probably very little if any personal bias in this book.

Kodoth, Praveena, and Mridul Eapen. "Looking beyond Gender Parity: Gender Inequalities of Some Dimensions of Well-Being in Kerala." *Economic and Political Weekly* 40, no. 30 (July 23, 2005): 3278-86.

This secondary source continues to discuss the gender inequity that currently exists in Kerala. The article was published in 2005, which means it contains enough current information to describe gender in Kerala after the matriarchy dissolved (or became closer to governing like a patriarchy). The source describes a social reform, fit with worker unions and Christian missionaries, that began in late 19th century Kerala. This is the first mention of a time period I have found that could be when the matriarchy began to dissolve, which would help focus the time span of my research. The source also describes gender and family in Kerala after this transition and how, despite Kerala seeming to have better education and employment for women, the society actually contains high rates of domestic violence, child marriages, and unemployment. This would support my thesis by showing how, once matriarchal values started to dissipate, equality between genders lessened. But if, after looking more into the structure of Kerala's society (as many still claim it is a matriarchy), I see it resembles more of a patriarchy than a patriarchy, then this could be a good counter argument.

The Economic and Political Weekly journal is a social science journal from Mumbai, India. The authors are usually well known scholars and the journal contains research spanning from economics and politics to history and anthropology. The journal is known for being primary left, though I don't think that slight bias effects this particular source because it revolves more around gender-differing statistics than political opinion. This specific article consists of extensive footnotes, and the authors have written many articles on their specific fields. Praveena Kodoth has written over 19 major articles for the Economic and Political Weekly journal, all of which have been about women and many have been specific to Kerala. Kodoth also lives in Kerala as an associate professor at the Centre for Development studies, an institution dedicated to research in economics specifically. Professor Mridul Eapen has the same position at the Centre for Development studies as Kodoth and has written many articles about women's rights in India and Kerala specifically. Because these authors are writing for a well-known academic journal, are scholars with extensive knowledge on gender studies, and know Kerala especially well because they live and research there, this source is very credible.

Lorber, Judith. "Night to His Day: The Social Construction of Gender." In *Paradoxes of Gender*, 99-106. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994.

This secondary source provides more insight into the gender studies field, specifically how childhood and social organization effects gender stereotypes. This source, although fairly old, goes into depth on exactly what a child does when finding out their gender role, from rejecting certain traits to learning from their parents and leaders. I think when looking at places like Kerala and Khasi, especially if I end up interviewing people from Kerala, it will be important to understand where gender roles originate. My other sources around this topic talk more about gender theories rather than the step-by-step process a person goes through when determining

their gender in relation to how their society is organized. Since from my research I have found that gender roles have a direct correlation to violence, it will definitely be important to my thesis to understand where these stereotypes originate. If social organization and leadership can change these stereotypes, then they could also lessen violence and increase gender equality.

Judith Lorber is a professor of sociology and women's studies at CUNY Graduate Center and Brooklyn College. She has written over 8 books about gender studies and co-edited 3 more. She's also won awards from the American Sociological Association and traveled giving conferences on gender around the world. Along with being a distinguished scholar, her book consists of a bibliography and positive reviews from other authors and scholars. Because of the author's especially notable career in this specific field, this source is highly reliable.

Mishra, S. K. "Analysis of Gender Disparity in Meghalaya by Various Types of Composite Indices." Munich Personal PePEc Archive. Last modified June 18, 2007. Accessed January 29, 2015. <http://mpira.ub.uni-muenchen.de/3612/>.

This secondary source consists of charts and graphs depicting different types of gender relations in Meghalaya, where the Khasi tribe lives. A lot of this source contains advanced math and statistics that, unless I had a math teacher explain them in depth, I won't be able to use. Likewise, even if they were explained further, they describe the complicated economics of Meghalaya that I might be able to find written much simpler and equally effective in a different source. But at the end there is a series of fairly simple graphs showing deprivation in Meghalaya between men and women. In the Khasi graphs (West and East), the differences between the genders are very minimal. The source goes on to explain how matriarchal societies have greater gender equality than patriarchies, using the graphs as evidence. I would use this source to directly prove my thesis that matriarchies present a better system of social organization for achieving gender equality.

S.K. Mishra is a professor of economics at North-Eastern Hill University in Shillong, India. Although being a professor of economics doesn't completely correlate to gender studies, much of his analysis in this paper, because he was studying gender in relation to deprivation, depended on economics. He has published numerous articles in journals ranging from science, math, geography, agriculture, and humanities. His mathematical approach to this issue provides a new perspective for my paper other than the psychological angle. The paper itself was published in the Munich Personal RePEc Archive, which is a repository for economic research papers. Although the contributions must be approved by an editor and must be academic, anyone can submit an article, which makes this source slightly less reliable than the rest. But there are profiles on the extensive list of editors, all of whom work as academic scholars or professors in universities, and Mishra is a professional in his field who has written numerous published articles.

Nilan, Pam, Alex Broom, Argyo Demartoto, Assa Doron, K. R. Nayar, and John Germov. "Masculinities and Violence in India and Indonesia." *Journal of Health and Development* 4, nos. 1-4 (2008): 209-28.

In this secondary source, six authors examine the causes and affects for violence in India and Indonesia, two countries affected greatly by violence against women. I would focus on their

argument for India, though. One of these causes relate to characteristics attached to masculinity. Like Banerjee's book, "Make Me a Man!", masculinity in India often correlates with toughness and violence. But this article goes deeper into the reasons for gender inequality from these masculine characteristics. The article makes a distinction between masculinity and hegemonic masculinity. The latter describes a type of masculinity in which every male in the country must subscribe to the same type of masculinity and measure each other's success based on how much they conform to these characteristics. This conformity begins when children are raised and affects the relationship between men and women as well as men's tendency to be violent. A distinction between these two types of masculinity will be important in analyzing matriarchies to see whether hegemonic gender roles exist in females as well as males, or if hegemonic masculinity isn't as clearly defined in matriarchies. This relates to my thesis by presenting a more complex argument to the reasons why patriarchies that subscribe to hegemonic masculinity can't achieve as much gender equality as matriarchies.

The Journal of Health and Development publishes articles connected to health and development through political, social, and economic lenses. The editor of the journal, professor K.R. Nayar, is a social scientist and professor who teaches classes on social sciences, public and environmental health, and research methods. As for the authors, Pam Nilan has a PhD from the University of Newcastle and is a professor of sociology in the School of Humanities and Social Science (along with an interest in Asian studies). Alex Broom is an associate professor of sociology and has a PhD from La Trobe University, Argyo Demartoto is a professor at a university in Indonesia (all his public information is in another language), K.R. Nayar has already been identified above as the editor of the journal, Assa Doron has a PhD in social anthropology, and John Germov is a professor at the University of Newcastle. The fact that the editor of the journal is also one of the writers of this article could be concerning when looking at the trustworthiness of this source, but his academic background of all the authors combined makes this source overall very credible.

Nongbri, Tiplut. "Gender and the Khasi Family Structure: Some Implications of the Meghalaya Succession to Self-Acquired Property Act, 1984." *Sociological Bulletin* 37, no. 1 (March 1988): 71-82.

This secondary source analyses the implications of the Self-Acquired Property act of 1984 that was put in place for the Khasi and Jaintia tribes of Meghalaya specifically. This act attempts to dispel the inheritance bias towards women (the matrilineal society) that the area feels is unfair to men. The law was created and passed by a legislative group of all men and creates some questions about how this pertains to Khasi gender relationships. The author brings up some very interesting points when explaining the property act, one of them being that for the rest of patriarchal India, a similar act was passed, only to dispel the opposite bias (men getting property over women). But she claims that this didn't do much because there was still such a large social bias towards men and men still had most political, economic, and social power. In relation to the Khasi, she has a similar argument, claiming that their gender relations are much more important and can actually be seen as separate of their "kinship principles" (such as matrilineal vs. patrilineal). This argument is an interesting distinction and possible counter argument in my paper, as unlike other sources describing the Khasi women as strong and powerful, she claims that their matrilineal inheritance is where the power stops for women, and they are actually seen

as weak and domestic people. This not only makes me question my other sources, but also question the real relationship between matrilineal and the role of women; does it give women any more power over men?

Tiplut Nongbri has a Ph.D. in sociology and is a professor at the Centre for the Study of Social Systems (School of Social Sciences) in Delhi, India. She has won a British Council Fellowship in Gender and Development and has written numerous books and journals, many of which have been about indigenous tribes and cultures of Northeast India (where the Khasi live). The Sociological Bulletin journal specializes in knowledge about Indian society, structure, and cultural dynamics. All the writers are highly respected scholars, all of whom live in India. Because of the journal and author's respected academic status, as well as their personal knowledge of the country, I would say this source is reliable.

Sanday, Peggy Reeves. "Matriarchy as a Sociocultural Form." Paper presented at The 16th Congress of the Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association, Melaka, MY, July 1, 1998.

This secondary source provides an anthropological perspective on matriarchal societies as a whole, not just Kerala or the Khasis specifically. In her paper, the author presents a new way to define matriarchy in a more fluid way that doesn't restrict a matriarchy to a society that is purely run by women. I picked this source specifically because, as Dr. Wills had explained, there are very few examples of actual matriarchies. This article claims that the way to discern matriarchies and patriarchies depends on mainly cultural aspects, such as how sexes are represented in religion, or how the sexes are defined in their gender roles and whether one of these roles is superior to the other (masculinity vs. femininity). I hope to use this author's definition of matriarchies in my paper so that I don't cut out certain matrilineal societies, such as Kerala, out of the definition merely because they aren't completely run by women as a patriarchy is completely run by men. This source will support my paper by providing a more concrete definition of matriarchies that will be a basis for the rest of the paper. But I hope to use other definitions along with this one, as I don't want to limit myself to one author's perspective of what a matriarchy is (such as Dr. Wills' definition).

The Congress of the Indo-Pacific Prehistory association, where this paper was presented, contains 600 members across the world and conducts research of eastern Asian countries and the Pacific region. Peggy Reeves Sanday has written numerous books in the fields of anthropology and gender studies, including "Female Power and Male Dominance" that I might also use for my paper if I can get it at a library. Her books have been reviewed by the New York Times and Washington Post, and she has also written numerous articles in various well-known journals, such as *The Journal of Graduate Research in Anthropology*. Because of her specific interest in my topic and the academic level of the congress she presented her paper at, this source is reliable.

Shivaram, Choodie. "Where Women Wore the Crown." *Hinduism Today*. Accessed March 2, 2015. <http://www.hinduismtoday.com/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=3569>.

In this secondary source, unlike my other sources about Kerala, the author attempts to defend Kerala and explain how, in the dissolving matriarchy, values of compassion and harmony are still at the core. The article is written more colloquially than many of my other sources from

more academic journals, but it consists of an interesting interview with professor Sashi Velupillai, a man who grew up in a matriarchal home. This interview, along with the author's thoughts on Kerala, would provide an interesting perspective on what it's actually like to live there, especially as a man. This article supports my thesis by showing how matriarchal societies create values of harmony and compassion that lead to more gender equity; the author explains how Kerala women are much more literate and respected than in most other states.

This secondary source is a little different than my other sources as it is written in colloquial language and doesn't come from an academic journal, but rather a Hindu magazine. This could very well lessen the validity of this source, but I found the author's argument to be particularly interesting. *Hinduism Today* is a magazine published by the Himalayan Academy and focuses mainly on promoting an understanding of everything to do with Hindu culture. The magazine is well known in India, which enhances its credibility a little bit. Choodie Shivaram is a correspondent for *Hinduism Today* and travels around India writing stories for the magazine. Because she works primarily for the magazine and not independently as a scholar and researcher, her credibility could also be questionable. Because of these facts, I wouldn't use this source as a basis for my argument but merely a supplement that I will hopefully be able to backup by more reputable sources.

Spaak, Asha Narang. "A Strange Society." *India International Centre Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (July 1978): 174-78.

Although this secondary source is a little bit older, it presents a good discussion about the social organization of Kerala that, like with the Khasi, I could analyze through anthropological and psychological lenses to see if they offer a better system for achieving gender equity. The article mostly focuses on the Nairs, a primary caste in Kerala who pride themselves in giving women either precedence or equality in most political, social, and economic situations. As a whole this source is mostly informational over analytical; it doesn't give much of an opinion on whether this system has led to better or worse gender equity. Because of this, I will probably use this source as background information when analyzing Kerala myself. So far, this source doesn't support or negate my thesis because it's purely information with no opinion, which makes it a less helpful source than the others about Kerala. But because I have so many articles with pros and cons about Kerala's gender equality, I feel it's important to have a fact-based article as a basis for my own argument.

The *India International Centre Quarterly* Journal consists of articles about cultures and values around the world. The authors range from being activists, writers, scholars, and politicians, all of whom are highly regarded. Asha Narang Spaak. The article itself contains footnotes and a bibliography. Because of the high scholarly level of the journal, this source is credible.

Thampal, Bhadramani. Interview by the author. Los Altos, CA. March 27, 2015.

Varma, Geetha. Interview by the author. Los Altos, CA. March 25, 2015.