The Maasai women

“The Maasai Women” is a documentary basically based on the socio-economic conditions of a specific group of people in Eastern Africa. The Maasai people are ordinary people who do not plant crops but instead rear animals and view them as riches and also give them names. They use every part of their animals for nutrition and practical needs and believe that there is a spiritual bond between them and the animals they raise. The women in addition to raising kids and managing the home also produce dairy products. The documentary also demonstrates patriarchal lifestyle of the Maasai people in which the men are the head of family and are responsible for most of the decisions taken in the family.

In the Maasai tribe, when the men reach the age of 16, they undergo circumcision and serve as warriors and the girls who are their companions also go through circumcision. The circumcision ceremony begins as a quiet family affair and is regarded as her farewell to childhood and father’s village. The ceremony is expected to transform the girl into a mature and thoughtful woman. Her head is shaved, she relinquishes her childhood name and gives her jewelries to a younger sister marking the shedding of her identity. Later at the climax of the ceremony, the mother will anoint the clothes of the women with butter and the father will put on women's jewels to honor his status as the father of the newly fertile woman.

(summary)

It seems that the girl is being married to a guy who is a friend of her father’s. They seem to be singing and dancing a lot. It seems that women blame their dependance on their inability to own animals, but they explain this away in a myth which lays the blame on women themselves.

The Maasai follow patriarchal system and the marriage is basically arranged by the elders of the community which involves the exchange of cattle between the groom and bride’s family as mentioned earlier, cattle are given great importance by the Maasai. The bride’s family receives a large number of cattle.

The socio-economic status of the Maasai woman is low in general as they have limited access to education and healthcare and are expected to fulfill the role of bearing children, raising cattle and carrying out other works.

Bearing a male heir is considered crucial for the Maasai women as they follow patrilineal system and bearing a male heir ensures the continuity of the family’s lineage. Woman who bears male children are highly valued and those who can’t are either divorced or mistreated by their husband.