Women's Participation in Decentralized Government: Panchayat Raj Institutions in Rural Rajasthan, India

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Abstract:

Good governance is a concept that has been promoted by development agencies, particularly the World Bank since 1989. Good governance is not a simple concept; rather it is the amalgamation of a plethora of concepts theorized to bring about development. The scope and goals of good governance have evolved over time from a purely economic standpoint to a social one with the purposes of efficiency and empowerment in mind. The emphasis on democracy within the concept of good governance has led to the additional concept of decentralization. Decentralization encompasses several goals, one of them being increased participation in decision-making by marginalized groups, or a voice in their own development. The purpose of this study is to test decentralization theory in terms of the claims that it makes regarding participation. This study is examining the participation of women as citizens in decentralized governments in the villages of rural Rajasthan, India.

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Table of Contents:

Chapter 1:

Introduction:

Good governance is a concept that has been promoted by development agencies, particularly the World Bank since 1989. Good governance is not a simple concept; rather it is the amalgamation of a plethora of concepts theorized to bring about development. The scope and goals of good governance have evolved over time from a purely economic standpoint to a social one with the purposes of efficiency, empowerment and development in mind. The emphasis on democracy and civil society within the concept of good governance has led to the additional concept of decentralization. Decentralization encompasses several goals, one of them being increased participation in decision-making by marginalized groups, or a voice in their own development. The purpose of this study is to test decentralization theory in terms of the claims that it makes regarding participation. As this paper shall demonstrate through the literature, decentralized governments have been theorized as increasing both the interest and participation of marginalized groups in their local governments. As will be outlined, the concept of participation in development thinking has shifted from the project level to that of policy with a focus on the rights and agency of the citizen. Given that participation has shifted in its focus to the citizen, increasingly it has come to encompass political participation. As decentralized governments are closer to the people, by being located at the grassroots level, it is thought that access will be granted to those who have previously been excluded. Accordingly, decentralization is designed to allow people to have a greater say in their own development and be able to communicate their needs through their local governments.

As this paper will demonstrate, participation has become increasingly significant to development thinking and practice. Citizens are being highlighted in the democratic process as integral to the communication of needs and in decision making that directly impacts their lives. Ultimately the good governance and rights based approach have converged to focus on the idea of 'citizen participation'. Decentralization, with much of its focus on increased participation, has been an area that many gender and development proponents view as an entry point for women. However in many ways decentralization is an idealistic concept that gives rise to many issues regarding its effectiveness in increasing participation, particularly for women. Around the world, women participate less in political activity than men do. There are numerous explanations for their lower levels of political participation which this paper will examine in the context of unequal citizenship due to gendered roles that inhibit women in the political process. Women the world over face challenges to their participation in politics. However in developing countries where gender roles are often deeply entrenched in society, women face numerous barriers to their participation in political activity at any level of government. Decentralization it is claimed, has the ability to alleviate many of the barriers associated with political activity for women. However decentralization may not have the ability to challenge entrenched social norms and the lack of resources that women possess that inhibit their political participation.

The result of the shift in the way in which development understood and practiced with a focus on the 'citizen' has led to the concept of citizenship itself being questioned. Feminists in particular are questioning the concept regarding its origin and impact - specifically with regard to those who are included and those who are excluded. Women's

political participation is usually examined through their formal participation as elected officials rather than as citizens. As the concept of citizen participation is becoming synonymous with the development process, it is essential to consider whether women are participating in the political process as citizens. In the context of decentralization, it is important that women as citizens are participating – communicating their needs and desires in the development of their communities.

Decentralization theory in this case, is being tested in rural Rajasthan, India and seeks to ascertain whether or not women in the villages are participating in their local governments. The objective of this study is to understand how India's 1993 constitutional amendment to decentralize government to the local level (known as Panchayat Raj Institutions [PRIs]) has led to women's participation in these institutions in the villages of rural Rajasthan. To clarify, participation in this case is confined to the participation of women in their communities, as citizens, rather than those who have been elected into local bodies through the reservation of seats. Rajasthan is a particularly interesting case for study of the effect of decentralization given its reputation as a state known for its patriarchal culture and low levels of development for women. If Rajasthan can successfully incorporate women into the political process through decentralization, than it is probable that this can occur in any given locale. However, if women continue to be excluded, Rajasthan highlights many of the barriers that they face in participating in decentralized government systems.

Women and the Development Project:

In part, the goal of this study is to shine a light on development thinking and practice in terms of how women, or gender and development are considered in the larger development project. Generally, when women are being considered in the context of development, the rationale for their inclusion is part of the case made. This study has chosen not to do that for a variety of reasons. While this section will not go into depth regarding the evolution of women in development (for more see Rathgeber, 1990), it will give a very brief overview of women's place in development.

Women emerged as significant to the development project in the 1970's with Ester Boserup's "Women's Role in Economic Development". Boserup's work focused on the effects of modernization on women as producers. Primarily it highlighted women's contribution to the economy. The result was that women became significant to the field of development as they had something to contribute to the project. Since then, women have seemingly been the missing ingredient in the development project capable of improving anything and everything. What is at issue is that the inclusion of women in development must be justified – making women agents of the larger development project; a cure all for what ails societies:

> Focusing on women is often the best way to reduce birth rates and child mortality; improve health, nutrition and education; stem HIV/AIDS; build robust self-sustaining community organizations; and encourage grassroots democracy. (Coleman, 2004: 80)

Women have not been included in development for the improvement of the quality of their lives as human beings. Rather they have been seen as a means to an end. The result of women being considered a means to an end in development, is that the inclusion of gender in programming has resulted in arguably, its dilution. In the 1990's

'gender' became a buzzword for international institutions and led to the mandated inclusion of women, or gender, in programming (Cornwall et al., 2007:3).) CIDA for example mandates that gender equality "must be considered as an integral part of all CIDA policies, programs and projects" (1995:5). This sentiment is similar to that of the vast majority of development aid agencies. The concern however, by feminists, is that the mandated inclusion and mainstreaming of gender has diluted both the process and the outcomes; thus becoming ineffective. Cornwall et al. (2007:10) argue, "Where gender comes to be represented in the guise of approaches, tools, frameworks and mechanisms, these instruments become a substitute for deeper change in objectives and outcomes".

Arguably this can be considered true of decentralization and its focus on participation of marginalized groups, in this case women. As this paper shall outline, there are many barriers to women's inclusion in the political process at any level, local or otherwise. Thus shifting the idea of development to one of participation in government institutions/ the rights based approach, is ripe with pitfalls for women to participate. It suggests that women are being paid lip service due to their mandated inclusion in development policy and programming leaving the structures of power in tact, gender relations unchanged and women's voices in the development process muted.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature:

Background: The Evolution of Decentralization

'Good Governance' comprises several areas and is essentially about government reform. The concept of good governance has evolved as more actors enter the debate. For the World Bank good governance primarily relates to establishing markets free of government interference (Beeson, 485: 2001). The role of the state is to be reduced to establishing the legal and institutional environment where markets can operate with maximum efficiency. For the Bank there is a link between market liberalization, privatization, free trade and good governance (Paliwala, 2001: 2). It is through these measures, it is claimed, that markets can flourish and development can occur. As Weiss states "actions to foster good governance concentrate on two undesirable characteristics that had been prevalent earlier: the unrepresentative nature of governments and the inefficiency of non-market systems". For the World Bank good governance is primarily about reform in terms of management and administration (Leftwich, 1993: 2). However the term has been taken up by Western donor countries that have extended good governance to include a political dimension: the promotion of democracy.

The United Nations has also had a role to play in the promotion and conceptualization of good governance. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) has identified eight characteristics of good governance stating that it is "participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law" (UNESCAP). In many respects good governance has become a shopping list of desirable qualities that governance should possess as identified by Weiss:

Good Governance is more than multi-party elections, a judiciary and a parliament, which have been emphasized as the primary symbols of Western-style democracy. The list of other attributes...is formidable: universal protection of human rights; non-discrimatory laws; efficient, impartial and rapid judicial processes; transparent public agencies; accountability for decisions by public officials; devolution of resources and decision making to local levels from the capital; and meaningful participation by citizens in debating public policies and choices (Weiss, 2000: 801).

The goals of the good governance agenda are interconnected and one of the means of achieving them has been identified as decentralization.

What is Decentralization?

At a basic starting point, decentralization refers to political and administrative reforms that transfer varying degrees of function, responsibility, resources and political and fiscal autonomy to lower tiers of the state (ie: regional, district or municipal levels of government) (Rondinelli & Cheema, 1983: 18). Decentralization can also refer to the transfer of state functions and responsibilities to quasi-state or private institutions or the transfer of responsibilities of the state to actors at the local level such as NGOs and community groups, often in the form of partnerships (Rondinelli, 2002).

The method under which decentralization takes place differs, as do the classifications of decentralization. There are three identified areas of decentralization: political, fiscal and administrative (Rondinelli, 2002). Political decentralization emphasizes the redistribution of power to lower tier levels of government. Fiscal decentralization refers to the shift in responsibility for expenditures and allocations distributed between tiers of government. Administrative decentralization refers to the transfer of public functions to lower tier levels of governments, which can take several forms:

- De-concentration: transfers functions such as planning and decision making (in areas such as education and health) to units of central government throughout the country.

- Delegation: transfers the responsibilities for functions to organizations that are accountable to the central government such as housing authorities and public corporations.

- Devolution: transfers responsibilities to lower level tiers of government that have specific levels of autonomy from the central government. This tends to be the most common form of administrative decentralization.

- Divestment: transfers responsibility and functions of the central government from the public to the private sector. This transfer often takes the form of contracting out and can include NGOs, community groups or private business.

(Rondinelli, 2002; Rondinelli & Cheema, 1983: 18-24).

Decentralization is a particularly significant area of the good governance agenda. As good governance has become a part of donor policy, countries all over the world are pursuing the agenda. In many cases, all of the recommendations for good governance reforms are not strictly followed. However decentralization is one part of the overall governance agenda that is being pursued (Doornbos, 2004: 383). Estimates suggest that 80% of transitional countries (Eastern and Central Europe) are engaged in decentralization (Manor, 1999: viii).

The Rationale for Decentralization

One of the primary reasons for the promotion of decentralization is efficiency (Smith, 1985: 28). In decentralization theory, it is thought that the lower tiers of the state, particularly those at the community level are better equipped to administer services or engage in development efforts more effectively than the central state. The rational is that those working in the field are closer to the people and the problems that they encounter; thus they have a better knowledge of reality and have an enhanced ability to respond at the local level. In addition, decentralization is thought to cut through the red tape and highly structured procedures characteristic of developing countries where power, authority and resources are heavily concentrated at the central level (Rondinelli & Cheema, 1983: 14-15; Smith, 1985: 28).

The second primary rationale for decentralization is empowerment. Decentralization is thought to enhance both equity and democracy, which make it appealing to NGOs, social activists and donors. The empowerment rationale views democratic decentralization in the form of political devolution as a means to allow citizens an enhanced ability to participate in the decisions and resource allocations that directly affect their lives (MacLean, 2003).

Within the empowerment rationale for decentralization is the recognition that poverty is not just a matter of material condition, but is also a matter of power. This argument falls in line with John Friedmann's (1992) disempowerment model of poverty, which argues that poor people not only lack material items to meet their basic needs but also lack access to bases of social power. This disempowerment perpetuates their material poverty creating a vicious cycle. Decentralized decision- making and resource

allocation is thought to have the ability to offset the influence and control over development activities by entrenched local elites who are often uninterested or unsympathetic to national development goals and initiatives as well as the needs of poor groups in rural societies (Rondinelli & Cheema, 1983: 16).

In the theoretical literature on participation, democracy and most recently decentralization, the local level is perceived as the space where citizens can best become familiar with democratic practices, develop greater administrative capability and managerial and technical skills (Rondinelli & Cheema, 1983: 15; Pateman, 1970; Magnusson, 1996). As local levels of government are smaller and closer to the people, they are viewed as more easily accessible. In addition, in theory, at least, people will be more interested and active in politics at the local level as it deals with matters that directly affect their daily lives such as water management, waste disposal and community infrastructure. The close proximity of citizens to local governments is further thought to potentially reduce corruption and increase accountability (Smith, 1985: 26; Fisman & Gatti, 2002).

Government at the local level is also theorized to be more representative than at the central level (Rondinelli & Cheema, 1983: 15). Decentralization is often promoted in order for national minorities to gain representation thereby defending and forwarding their collective interests, which can lead to greater equity in the allocation of government resources and investments. As well, more inclusive representation is thought to have a stabilizing effect on the national political system (Smith, 1985: 27; Rondinelli & Cheema, 1983: 15).

It is likely that decentralization initiatives are implemented for both purposes of efficiency and empowerment. However one of the overarching themes in the rationale for decentralization is increased participation (particularly that of traditionally marginalized groups), which enhances the ability of people to express their needs and preferences. The result is hypothesized as improving local service delivery and enhancing development initiatives as they become more responsive, effective and inclusive to the people they are designed to serve. However, as many critics of decentralization point out, participation in a decentralized system can be problematic.

Issues of Participation in Decentralization

As outlined in the previous discussion, participation is key to the success of decentralization initiatives. Increased participation has the potential to lead to better representation, empowerment, and distribution of resources, thereby leading to reduced poverty (Blair, 2000: 26). Blair (2000) argues that participation and accountability are crucial to effective local level governments for poverty reduction. However in practice there are many barriers to achieving full and equal participation. This has been an ongoing issue in decentralization for over twenty years. As Rondinelli and Cheema (1983: 16) point out in their analysis of decentralization in the early 1980's:

> ...it has also become clear from experience with attempting to implement decentralization policies that not all of the alleged benefits materialize and that few developing countries have been highly successful in carrying out their decentralization programs. Simply creating decentralized structures for development decision making and announcing new procedures for participation in development planning and administration do not guarantee that they will be effective or that they will generate economic growth with greater social equity.

Bandhan & Mookherjee (1999) make the point that communities are not homogeneous and existing inequalities between both groups and individuals can mean that marginalized groups are disadvantaged in participation. One of the major risks identified in decentralization is that local elites will capture more power when it is shifted to the local level, reinforcing their local domination (Bandhan & Mookherjee, 1999; Ribot, 2002: 46). Often there are complex power dynamics at the local level that are not taken into account in decentralization theory and practical efforts and the initiative can do more harm than good (Guijit & Shah, 1998).

Gaventa and Valderrama (1999) highlight a number of issues regarding the capacity of citizens to effectively participate including:

- The level and history of participation and mobilization in civil society.

- The availability of appropriate skills (ie: literacy), knowledge and experience required for effective participation.

- Participation depends on the level of political will on the part of local and national authorities. A lack of political will can impede the ability of marginalized groups and individuals to participate.

- A lack of resources to implement decisions or a lack of control over the allocation of resources can undermine effective participation.

(Gaventa & Valderrama, 1999: 6-9)

Hence, gaining inclusive and effective participation is key to the success of the goals associated with decentralization. However there are many challenges associated with gaining participation. In many developing countries women are among the most

marginalized and disadvantaged groups in society making the potential barriers to participation a gender issue (Bryld, 2001: 154).

Participation in the context of Decentralization

Before examining the problems associated with gender and participation in decentralization, it is important to understand what is meant by participation in this context. Though participation is consistently referred to in both good governance and decentralization literature, it is rarely defined in context. The concept of participation has evolved over time and has been called upon to perform a variety of functions in relation to development thinking and practice. As will be established in the following section, the nature of participation in development has shifted to a rights based approach that includes the notions of both citizenship and political participation.

Examining participation in its more modern form, a trajectory can be established in terms of how the concept has been employed and why. In the 1970's, NGOs argued that development should generate increased self-sufficiency rather than depending on the top-down provisions of the state (Nelson & Wright, 2001: 3). This idea spread beyond the NGO arena in response to the perceived failure of the top-down, modernization project in the post-colonial era. The World Bank adopted this approach in the 1980's, particularly with its Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), which moved functions from the state to the private and NGO sector. At this time, participation was mainly a concern at the project level (often apart from the state), in attempts to insure that the voices of the intended beneficiaries were heard (Gaventa, 2002: 3; Cornwall, 2002: 50). Over the past twenty years the concept of participation has referred to participation in the

social arena, the community or in development projects (Gaventa & Valderrama, 1999). However as Gaventa and Valderrama (1999) point out, and as reflected by development initiatives, the concept of participation is increasingly applied to rights of citizenship and to democratic governance.

Through the late 1980s and 1990s participation began to take on a new meaning as rights based approaches began to take root in development thinking, alongside the good governance agenda. As the good governance agenda expanded, questions arose about how citizens engage and make demands on the state, thereby having a voice in the decisions that affect them (Gaventa, 2002: 2). At the same time those concerned with the fulfillment of human rights as a means of development were also considering how rights could be realized. Though the concept of rights is not new to the field of development, in recent years it has gained more currency in both thinking and action. This is apparent in the UNDP's 2000 Human Development Report, which states "Human development is essential for realizing human rights and human rights are essential for full human development" (UNDP, 2000:2). The UNDP runs parallel to the good governance agenda stating that the fulfillment of rights, or the ability of rights to have meaning "requires democracy that is inclusive" (UNDP, 2000:7). The rights based agenda complements the good governance agenda in its perspective that rights only become real when citizens are engaged in the decisions and processes that affect them (Gaventa, 2002:2). Inevitably the two agendas have come together and new methods for the realization of their goals are being sought which has led to a new vision of what is meant by participatory development

Due to these parallel shifts in development thinking, participatory development traditionally concerned with participation at the project level, has increasingly shifted its focus to political participation. With the promotion of the good governance and rights based agendas there is interest in deepening democracy thereby creating a new relationship between government and citizens (Rhodes, 1996: 652-3; Gaventa & Valderrama, 1999). What we are witnessing today is a convergence between participatory development, a rights based agenda and the good governance agenda that are being played out in initiatives such as decentralization. As a result, rights are being more closely linked to the state and the concept of citizenship as Gaventa (2002) describes:

> Shaped by parallel moves within both human rights and development thought, participation has been re-framed as a fundamental human and citizenship right and a prerequisite for making other rights claims. Representing a level of convergence, these shifts have opened spaces for the participation and good governance agendas to meet under concepts of 'citizenship participation', 'participatory governance' or 'participatory citizenship' (Gaventa, 2002:3).

As participation is increasingly being applied to active democratic citizenship and thus political participation, Gaventa and Valderrama (1999) find that the development literature has paid little attention to notions of political participation. Decentralized governments naturally embody this element of participation leading Gaventa and Valderrama to go back to the classic study of political participation by Nie & Verba (1972). Nie & Verba define political participation as "those legal activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and/or the actions they take".

Ultimately the spheres of participation, of politics, social life and community are

being linked to one another creating an expansion of the concept of participation to one

of 'citizenship'. Citizenship in this case links individual rights with social and civic

responsibilities (Gaventa & Valderrama, 1999). Citizen participation within the good

governance frame involves direct ways in which citizen's influence and exercise control

over their governments rather than the traditional forms of indirect participation. As

Gaventa & Valderrama observe and is reflected in table 1, the definition of participation

has shifted in its application from being concerned with beneficiaries to a concern with

"broad forms of engagement by citizens in policy formulation and decision making in

key areas that affect their lives" (Gaventa & Valderrama, 1999: 6)

Table 1: Shift in Participation:

FROM:	TO:
Beneficiary	Citizen
Project	Policy
Consultation	Decision-Making
Appraisal	Implementation
Micro	Macro

Source: Gaventa & Valderrama, 1999: 7

In the context of decentralization, women as marginalized and often a

traditionally excluded group are viewed as one in which participation can be enhanced.

While decentralization may provide an opportunity for women in terms of their

participation, it is problematic given that women around the world have lower levels of

political participation than men. Because participation has increasingly become political

in nature, the next section of this discussion will examine women's political participation.

There is no doubt that in development initiatives participation is becoming increasingly political in nature. For women, this is both promising and problematic due to their low levels of political participation in comparison to men (Chhibber, 2002: 409). Most studies focus on women's political participation as elected representatives. However there is also evidence that in general, women as citizens participate in politics less than men do (Schlozman et al., 1997: 1050-51). Many proponents of gender and development view the promotion of participation in the good governance/decentralization agenda as an opportunity for inserting concerns to enhance public accountability to women as well as to promote and demand their inclusion (Goetz, 1995: 55). Many activists and policy makers view local level governance as a strategic site for advancing gender interests. If the concept of good governance is about the participation of all people in the decision-making process, there is an obvious entry point for the integration of women that has the potential to lead to a transformation of gender-relations and a greater voice for women.

The significance of development policy was not lost on the participants at the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) held in Beijing in 1995. One of the recommendations for action in the conferences is a section on Women in Power and Decision Making. The platform points to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that everyone has the right to take part in the government of his/her country and states:

> The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of both

transparent and accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life. Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning (UN: Beijing Platform Section G, article 181).

The UNDP has echoed this sentiment in their publication *Women's Political Participation and Good Governance: 21st Century Challenges.* The report advocates for the presence of women in decision-making positions stating "until gender parity is reached in governance, women cannot reach full equality with men in any sphere" (Banergee & Oquist, 2000: 3). Further, the report recognizes that governments dominated by only one gender are less likely to serve the needs of society as whole – inclusive and responsive to the needs of both sexes.

While major changes in women's status have occurred in many countries around the world, women's political participation has remained low, in some cases much lower than their male counterparts (Chhibber, 2002: 409, Conway, 2001: 231). There are certainly differences from country to country; however overall, it is well known that women's engagement in political activity is lower than that of men. In some cases women are actively engaged in public activity as citizens to influence the political process, but are not accordingly represented in office (Conway, 2001: 231). In the United States for example, women's suffrage and equal citizenship rights were granted in 1920. However, in spite of this women's voter turnout did not equal that of men until the 1980's. Women's participation in political activity (such as signing petitions, attending demonstrations and contacting public officials) paralleled that of men by the 1990's, however they continue to be much less likely to hold office at every level of government.

The World Values Survey (2000-2001) reflects that in most countries throughout the world, women are less interested in politics than men. Thirty-nine percent of women compared with fifty-two percent of men had an interest in politics according to the survey. The exceptions are Argentina, the Philippines and Tanzania where women and men share the same level of political interest. The World Values Survey also found that men are more likely to participate in public activity (signing petitions, attending demonstrations) than women. Thirty percent of men compared with twenty four percent of women engaged in political activity. However, once again there were exceptions with Canada, Sweden, the United States, Argentina, South Korea, Israel, Tanzania, Vietnam and Egypt displaying low levels of difference in the political activity of men and women.

In general, women participate less in politics as both citizens and/or in elected official positions. There are numerous explanations as to why women participate less than men in politics. Given the context of this discussion of decentralization and citizen participation, citizenship provides a useful frame in which to explore these explanations.

Barriers to Women's Political Participation: The Gendered Citizen

As citizenship is becoming more significant to development thinking and practice, questions have been raised about the meaning and nature of the concept – particularly regarding those who are included and those who are excluded (Gaventa, 2000: 2). The concept of citizenship is essentially the relationship or direct link between an individual and the state. Both the state and the individual have mutual responsibilities toward one another: the state to provide for its citizens and citizens to defend the sovereignty of the state (Laczo, 2003: 76). Citizenship legitimizes the right of individuals to access public

19

resources and allows for their participation in public life. In other words citizenship

entitles people to the goods that the state provides and to have a say in their provision. In

liberal versions of democracy, citizens are expected to participate in political activity, at

least to the extent of voting in elections, and also have options to participate further by

such exercises as attending public government meetings, contacting public officials and

running for office (Conway, 2001: 231). Political participation of the citizenry can also

take different forms of activism such as signing petitions and/or attending protests.

While the concept of citizenship is often thought to be universal, it is argued,

particularly by feminists, that this is not the case (Pateman, 1989). The universal notion

of citizenship implies that all people are the same, having the same needs and interests

and starting from the same position of power and resources (Meer & Sever, 2004: 16).

In the liberal concept of citizenship, it is held that citizens are equal and thus the

particulars of gender, race, age and sexuality should not be part of the identity of a citizen

(Staeheli, 2004: 348-49). The concept of the citizen is to be gender neutral. Many

feminist scholars argue that this is an impossible fallacy. As Patricia Longo (2001: 269)

states:

> Ungendered citizens do not exist. Rather, one must take account of the very real
> differences in productive and reproductive labour and access to civil and political
> rights and how these differences influence the ways in which men and women
> access, struggle for and claim benefits from the state as citizens.

Equality, or the assumption that we are all the same, loses its meaning for those

who are marginalized, such as women, who have different needs and are not necessarily

starting from the same point in terms of power and resources. Thus it is argued that

citizenship is as much about exclusion as inclusion. In both the past and present, women

around the world have not enjoyed the same rights as men in terms of citizenship in both the developed and developing world (Kabeer, 2002). Until the recent past, women in the developed world were assumed to be dependants of their husbands and thus were not granted rights such as property ownership or sole custody of their children (Kabeer, 2002, Tamang, 2002: 310, Pateman, 1988). In many societies the assumption that women are the dependants of men persists. In India, while the constitution declares all citizens to be equal in the liberal tradition inherited from the British at independence, religious rights were included in the constitution to placate different groups in society. The result is a contradiction in the constitution which declares all citizens equal but includes both Muslim and Hindu personal laws that discriminate against women inhibiting them from equal rights in issues such as marriage, divorce, child custody, inheritance and property ownership (Harman & Kaufman, 2004: 42, Kabeer, 2002: 11).

Exclusion, or inequality in citizenship, it is argued, makes a difference in women's participation in politics and/or the public realm. The argument that most scholars have used to explain women's lower levels of political participation is the public/private split that is considered integral to the exclusionary nature of citizenship and the realization of rights for women. Ultimately, citizenship is situated in the public realm of the economy and the state while the private realm, the traditional space of women, of domestic, familial, and sexual relations is excluded from political theory (Tamang, 2002: 310-11). It is argued that women's exclusion from citizenship due to the public/private split has been integral to the concept's theory and practice (Lister, 2001: 2). The ability of men to actively participate in the public realm, it is argued, was enabled by women upholding the private realm. The result is that women have/had little

or no access to the public realm. Further, as the concept of citizenship was designed and carried out by men, they have naturally been the dominant group, thus their concerns have the ability to appear as the dominant concerns in society (Meer & Sever, 2004: 16).

Lister (2001: 2) argues that the deeply entrenched public/private dichotomy and the male/female qualities associated with it, is at the "heart of the gendered citizen relationship". On the public side is the male citizen who embodies the necessary characteristics or qualities of rationality, impartiality, independence and political agency. On the private side is where women are relegated, assumed incapable of developing the necessary male qualities for public life (Lister, 2001: 2). The result of this deeply entrenched public/private dichotomy is that women's admission to citizenship has been on male terms and theorization about citizenship continues to discount the relevance of what occurs in the private sphere. This is significant as it means that theorization about citizenship ignores the manner in which for example the gendered division of labour in the private sphere shapes the access of both men and women to the public sphere and to the political, economic and social rights of citizenship that derive from such access (Lister, 2001: 2).

As Kabeer (1996: 63) argues "Familial norms and values are constantly drawn upon in constructing the terms under which women and men enter and participate in public life and the market place". The public/private split has institutionalized women's exclusion from the public sphere (Baden, 2000: 30). Women are generally confined to typically female tasks that are associated with their domestic roles. Often women are subjected to sexual harassment and/or violence, which both symbolically and literally constrain women's identities as public actors. The notions of the public/private split are

remarkably persistent and are one of the central difficulties that women face not only entering politics, but achieving credibility and impact within this sphere (Karam, 2001: 23). The participation of women in public spaces can be perceived as a challenge to the historical dominance of men and bring about a reaction of backlash (Nussbaum, 2003: 10; Sen & Grown, 1987: 27).

The physical and historical dominance of men in the public sphere can also mean that their needs and habits have shaped it (Baden, 2000: 30). Everyday work patterns have become conditioned to the needs of men resulting in a gendered structuring of time and space. Women have very different needs and often consideration ought to be given to issues such as childcare and women's workloads. The ability of women to participate in the public sphere is often constrained by these needs. The history regarding women and their involvement in community organizations is therefore significant to decentralization. If women have no history of participation, it is less likely that decentralization will alleviate this issue. As Baden (2000) points out, gender perspectives in the governance literature tend to focus on the need for more women in political life and the strategies for achieving this goal. However there is often little thought into what to do once women have achieved presence in politics. There is also little consideration given to the need for transformation of institutions of power. Governance has tended to focus on "getting institutions right for development" rather than "getting institutions right for women in development" (Baden, 2000: 30). Outside the family where the gendering of roles is explicit and often assumed to be natural, there is a tendency to assume that institutions are neutral in respect to gender.

In terms of political activity, the gendered nature of citizenship is logically argued to make a difference in levels of participation. Political participation is naturally a public act for both men and women. However in most parts of the world it is an area that is typically dominated by men (Chhibber, 2002: 415). The role of women in most parts of the world continues to be home-centered which often leads to their exclusion from public activities and political participation (Chhibber, 2002: 409). Chhibber (2002) argues that in both Western and non-Western countries that the home-centered role that women continue to have had in the past have an impact on their level of political participation (also see Conway, 2001). He argues that in the Western world, for most of the twentieth century a women's place was in the home and thus these norms continue to have an impact on women's political participation. In much of the non-Western world, a woman's place continues to be in the home. As a result the norms, values, attitudes and beliefs that are associated with this role continue to inhibit women's political participation in both Western and non-Western countries (Chhibber, 2002: 409). In addition, though the private sphere is the domain of women, it is a sphere of male dominance. Chhibber argues that for women to participate in public life it is essential that they are able to exercise autonomy both inside and outside of the household. As long as women are confined to the household it will not be possible for them to participate in political life because they cannot be in the public sphere or do not have access to it (Chhibber, 2002: 415).

This complements research by Burns et al. (1997) who argue that what happens at home, or the relations between men and women in the private sphere has an impact on women's political participation. The authors find that tangible assets such as time,

education and money have less impact on women's political activity than less tangible assets such as the respect of the husband for the wife and the shared belief of equality that positively impact women's political participation (Burns et al, 1997: 384). In non-Western countries in particular, the ability to leave the home is often dependant on the consent of male family members. Thus women's autonomy and ability are often a product of the views that women and men share regarding these issues.

It is also argued by political scientists that the orientation which men and women have towards political activity is a result of socialization or the experiences that men and women have as both children and adults in their roles in both the workplace and the home. Women's role as the primary provider of childcare is highlighted as shaping their orientation to politics – whether or not they will be interested, feel that they belong in this role, be effective in it as well as the resources that they bring to the political process (Scholzman et al., 1994: 965, Chhibber, 2002: 410, Verba et al., 1997).

The public/private split naturally leads to the resources, power and knowledge that women are able to access in order to be active in politics and exercise their rights. A lack of time due to women's predominant role in the private sphere is often sited as a factor that inhibits women from political participation. As it is argued that women's roles in the household have allowed men the ability to be public actors, it is often contended that women all over the world continue to take on much of the domestic responsibilities, often in addition to income earning activities (Meer & Sever, 2004: 19, Pateman, 1989, Conway, 2001). The result is that women have less time to devote to political activity. Further it is argued that due to women's role in the private sphere, they often have little opportunity to gain the education and skills necessary for political involvement

(Scholzman et al.,1994). This is reflected in women's literacy and education rates which tend to be much lower than their male counterparts particularly in developing countries (GTZ, 2001: 1). Women's exclusion from education and the public sphere can also result in a lack of skills. Thus women often have little say in society and little opportunity to participate in political activities. Women also often lack access to information relating to the public sphere. In decentralized systems, women are often ill informed about the process, the mandate of local governing bodies and their rights and duties in relation to local level governing bodies (GTZ, 2001: 1). A lack of knowledge of the public sphere obviously constrains women's ability to participate.

Political participation is naturally linked to power, which is inevitably linked to resources. Bryld (2001) argues that shifts in power cannot be facilitated simply through changes in the structure of the state. Rather power is socially constructed through norms, linguistics and habits that are reproduced on a daily basis. In the context of development, Bryld (2001: 153) argues:

> …power is also very dependent upon resources and can be increased as actors expand their pool of resources. Being able to use formal power that has been provided depends on how much resources an actor can utilize. More specifically this takes, time, energy and at times, informal power such as status, networks, or the 'right' gender to be able to participate and to utilize formal power.

Thus when women have fewer resources than men, it is likely that it will inhibit their rights as citizens and their ability to participate in politics in both centralized and decentralized governments. In extremely patriarchal societies, resources that are essential to women's survival are often mediated by men on whom they are dependant on for their well-being and security (Kabeer, 2002). This naturally curtails both the voice and action of women. Often compliance with male dominated societies and households is based on

26

"anticipated reaction". In other words women adapt their behavior to avert a hostile reaction from the men whom they are dependant upon to provide resources for their survival (Kabeer, 2002). If women are dependant on men for the resources they need to survive, then they are not free to make decisions regarding their role in public life. If it is perceived that political activity will produce a negative reaction from the males whom they are dependant, it is unlikely that they will participate and this makes formal rights effective. When social relations are unequal, women may not be able to access rights to which they are legally entitled thus affecting the resources that they accumulate and are available to them (Meer & Sever, 2004: 19). Formal or legal rights cannot translate into actual rights if people are unable to make them real in practice

Perhaps one of the most important factors that affects women as citizens and thus, their political participation, is culture. The experience of citizenship is often linked to identity, shaped by culture which often supercedes formal rights and socializes individuals into their roles (Kabeer, 2002; McEwan, 2005). As Mouffe (1992, 1995, 1996) has argued, an individual's sense of identity and sense of citizenship mutually shape each other. Gendered cultural identities are often an important element in citizenship and participation in public life. As Kabeer (2002) also argues, men and women are often defined by their roles, relationships and ideologies of belonging which reproduces behavior in the public domain. In India, Sinha (2003) claims that culture is the most significant and pervasive factor that keeps Indian women from realizing their formal rights as citizens. She argues that while it is possible to address some inequalities through institutional reform, cultural ideas of women being inferior to men do not simply play themselves out in particular institutions rather "they prevail throughout every aspect

of life, in a fluid, uncontrollable form" (Sinha, 2003: 22). Social norms often supercede the provisions of the law and it has been found almost universally that in most cases, social norms prevail, affecting not only people but also civil servants, police and the judiciary. This can leave women with nowhere to turn for the protection of their rights and inhibit their political activity.

The pervasive factor of patriarchal culture naturally has an effect on women's political participation. It is important to keep in mind that men and women internalize their roles in society. The day- to- day habits of women and the regular reinforcement of their traditional role has an affect on the sense of what women can accomplish (Nussbaum, 2003: 11). Women's status is often derived through their traditional gender roles. Though participation in decentralized governments is intended to be empowering, understandings of women's roles and identities often contradict the long-term goals of women's empowerment. In many societies women perceive benefits from what Kandiyoti identifies as "patriarchal bargains" that are in excess of any advantages that women perceive can be achieved by challenging the existing order (Sharp et al., 2003: 282). Women who adopt this strategy are therefore reluctant to engage in activities that may challenge their gendered bargain. If the status of women is attached to their domestic role or their ability to seclude themselves from public life, participation in public life may not be a desirable option. It may not be an option that women perceive as empowering. If it is not considered socially acceptable for women to participate in the political realm, it is less likely that they will do so, or they will face discrimination for stepping outside of their culturally prescribed role.

Culture is a pervasive factor that can serve as an explanation for women's low levels of political participation in both the Western and non-Western world. While patriarchy is often overt in countries such as India, it is also argued to continue to operate in countries such as the United States where though there have been many changes, continues to place women into specific gendered roles thereby affecting their political participation (Conway, 2001: 231).

Lastly it is significant to keep in mind that women are not a homogenous group in any given locality (Sen & Grown, 1987: 76). There are sharp divisions among women in terms of status and class and thus different groups of women face different challenges in terms of participation. For example in rural Northern India the status of women and the honor of the family is often attached to the ability to seclude women. Higher caste families have the ability to seclude their female family members thereby saving their women the shame of working in the fields, as they do not require their economic input. Lower caste women on the other hand, are far more mobile as their labour is required in the family fields for economic gain (Mandelbaum, 1988: 102). Thus women from different socio-economic backgrounds face different challenges in terms of participation in the public realm.

In decentralization theory, local government is thought to be a significant area of apprenticeship for women that has the potential to increase their participation. The many barriers that women face in participating in political activity such as the need to travel and spend time away from the home, have a large disposable income, education, political experience and social connections are thought to be at a lower social level locally (UNRISD, 2005: 196). It is also thought that governments at the local level will be more

appealing to women as they focus directly on basic community services. Though there is great hope attached to new understandings of participation and new methods for achieving good governance, and therefore development, it can be argued that the barriers that women face will not be alleviated by the process. Women in many parts of the world, including India, face severe disadvantages in entering the political realm at any level, local or otherwise.

Western Development Thinking , Citizenship and Participation

Before going further with this study, it is significant to note that the majority of development thinking is Western in nature and is often disputed in terms of how appropriate it is in other cultural contexts. The idea of participation, particularly with its focus on citizenship in a democratic political context is undeniably Western in origin. As is the idea of feminism and women in the development project. It must be acknowledged that there are indeed arguments that point to the very Western notion of such forms of women in 'development' and 'participation'.

Western & Southern Feminism

To begin, Southern feminists have been critical of the manner in which Northern or Western feminists have theorized the 'third world women' and a universal, shared idea of sisterhood and the struggle for equality. Mohanty (1991) for example is extremely critical of such ideas in her paper titled "Under Western Eyes" she presents her view of the colonizing effects of Western feminist scholarship and its exported worldview to countries in the South. Her work challenges the assumption of a universal feminism that

presents women as a "coherent group with identical interests and desires regardless of class, ethnic or racial location, or contradictions, implies a notion of gender and sexual difference or even patriarchy can be applied universally or cross-culturally (1991:55). Mohanty suggests that the homogeneous presentation of the oppression of women as a group is assumed and therefore produces the image of the average, inferior, third world woman in contrast to the capable, modern, Western women (1991: 56-57).

Mohanty is not the only voice making such claims regarding Western views of women in the South. Given the difference in realities that women live in different parts of the world, many Southern feminists argue that rather than being concerned with issues of equality, such as in Western feminism, women of the South are often more concerned with issues that affect both men and women such as the satisfaction of basic material needs (Saunders, 2002:6). Further, women in the South experience oppressive situations in terms of race, class and ethnicity that are as, or more, significant than gender. Okin (1999: 14) acknowledges the cultural limitations of Western feminism in a Southern context arguing that outsiders are passing judgment on a issues inside a cultural and religious framework that they cannot possible understand. Thus the idea of placing priority on women's political participation in local governments can be viewed as inappropriate to the context in which it is being carried out as a development initiative and even as a product of Western feminist/development thinking.

The Concept of Citizenship:

Just how culturally appropriate development thinking is can be questioned with regard to issues of Western and Southern feminisms and can also be questioned in terms

31

of cultural interpretations and experiences with Western concepts such as 'Citizenship' that have become synonymous with participation in the development process. Kabeer (2002) outlines a trajectory in the manner in which citizenship was established during colonial rule in former colonial countries.

Learning from previous experiences or experiences of other colonizers, the British were looking for a method of managing the local inhabitants of India as a foreign power. Ultimately they based their strategy on "the principal of association, indirect rule through local intermediaries, rather than assimilation, the extension of citizenship rights to the colonized people that became the basis of colonial policy" (Kabeer, 2002: 10). Kabeer points out that prior to colonialism, different regions of the world, including India, had been characterized by considerable heterogeneity in economies, political arrangements and cultures with authority dispersed within the community legitimized by custom, clan, caste, kinship etc. The colonial experience sought to reinvent this fluid order, by codifying it, reinterpreting it so that it no longer resembled its original diversity that could accommodate difference in local conditions (Kabeer, 2002: 11). The result was that separate communities were set up each governed by its own customs and traditions. Sharp divisions were drawn along religious and caste lines and communities became more rigid as they were absorbed into the state apparatus on the basis of difference. These differences were politicized and created an environment in which for example the lowest castes, the untouchables, could create a space based on ideological principles. This space unified them nationally due to the creation of a social category that had previously not existed. Ultimately, it was the British colonial strategy of 'divide and rule' and it is not without impact on the notion of citizenship.

Kabeer (2002) argues that as a result of the British colonial strategy is that imagined boundaries of communities became real over time and the colonized population gained and their independence as organized religious, ethnic and tribal communities rather than as individual citizens:

> They inherited the modern state apparatus which has been founded on colonial rule and dedicated to the promotion of colonial interests and the adopted the principal of universal franchise long before they experienced the social and economic changes which had given rise to these political institutions in the West. The rights of citizenship were not therefore the product of popular pressure or mass struggle, but bestowed by elite groups who had led the struggle for independence and modeled their constitutions on those of the "mother" colonial countries. (Kabeer, 2002: 14)

History unfolded in a different manner in post-colonial countries then it had in the West and although there was hope that the Western experiences of modernization/industrialization would take place in a relatively rapid timeframe, it did not. Neither did the ideas of the rights and freedoms of the individual. Instead, the imagined communities created during colonial rule have remained and continue to take precedence over the individual in India and many other post-colonial countries throughout the world. Rights in this case, in the Western model are based on the individual whereas rights elsewhere are based on the group that one identifies with (Kabeer, 2002: 15).

An excellent example of this is the 1985 Shah Bano case in India. This is the case of a seventy-three year old Muslim woman who after being divorced by her husband was granted a small maintenance allowance under the provision of the Criminal Procedure Code. Her husband argued against the award claiming that under the Muslim personal laws he was not required to pay his wife any maintenance. The court ruled that criminal

laws overrode personal laws and that they were applicable to all Indian citizens regardless of creed.

The ruling created massive controversy in the Indian Muslim community with the majority viewing it as a blow to their cultural and religious rights. Bano dropped her claim, identifying with the rights of her community before her own rights as an individual or as a woman. In addition, the Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi was forced by the controversy to bring a bill before the house that would reverse the judgment of the court so that peace in the country among religious groups could be maintained (Sinha, 2002: 23).

The significance of different interpretations of citizenship, particularly regarding identity is that not all people in all cultures view it in the same manner in which it was originally constructed in the West. The experience of citizenship has not been universal across cultures but citizenship has played itself out differently across cultures and historical backdrops. Thus forwarding ones individual rights through political participation as a citizen for some, may not be a concept that is understood as it is in the Western sense.

Chapter 3: Background:

Rajasthan, India & Decentralization

Rajasthan is an arid, desert state in Northwestern India created at Independence in 1947 through the merger of several princely states (Billig, 1991: 343). The state is one of India's largest in terms of land area and has the lowest population density of all Indian states. The history of Rajasthan's and all of India's decentralization initiative, dates back

years before independence as a vision held by Gandhi of the villages being the heart and soul of India. Officially known as Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRI's), Gandhi's vision found its way into the Indian constitution in its creation. The constitution stated that efforts would be made to enable villages to function as units of self-government (World Bank, 2000: 4). In 1993 this goal was realized as Panchayats were institutionalized through the 73rd amendment to the Indian constitution making local government a reality across rural India. It was believed that centralized planning had not been effective in alleviating poverty, unemployment and inequality. Recognizing women's constrained position in society, included in the amendment was the reservation of 33% of all Panchayat seats for women on a rotational basis.

PRIs consist of three tiers: the Panchayat Samitis at the block level, the Zilla Parishads at the district level and the Gram Panchayats at the village level to which all members are elected. As this study is designed to focus on the participation of women it will focus on the Gram Panchayats, which are closest to the people in the villages. Gram Panchayats consist of a Sarpanch, who is the leader of the Gram Panchayat, and several ward members who are directly elected from each village or hamlet (small village) which the Gram Panchayat represents. Gram Panchayats are based on population and often represent several villages and hamlets.

While the central government selected numerous functions to be put under the control of PRIs, each state is responsible for the devolution of functions. In Rajasthan, PRI's have not been entirely empowered to perform all the functions mandated at the central level. As of 2006, when this study was carried out, sixteen programs have been devolved to the local level. These include elementary education, programs of literacy

and universalization of elementary education. However it is important to acknowledge at this time that PRI's in Rajasthan are not currently charged with the power of making decisions regarding the programs and priorities in their villages. Rather, they are administrators of development projects and programs that are mandated at the state and central level. It is these programs for which they are responsible and for which funding is devolved (GOI, 2006: 248; Sharma, et al. 2004: 2-3). Mandatory funding was constituted at the central level with the creation of PRIs. However, no percentage of state taxes was fixed for transfer. Only 2.44% of net state revenues is being transferred at this time, mainly for programs and projects created at the state and central level. Though the state of Rajasthan claims that 65% of its spending is ear marked for rural development, the majority of these funds are not being channeled through PRIs. In addition, the state has made clear that it is attempting to create more effective development planning at the district level and has set up committees through the Panchayats to do so, no funds have been placed at their disposal and their recommendations have remained on paper (Sharma, et al. 2004: 3). Thus it is reasonable at this time to conclude that the PRIs in Rajasthan are not free to create their own development priorities and fund them accordingly. Ultimately, their priorities must fit in with those that are mandated at higher levels of government. In addition, at this time, PRIs in Rajasthan have no means of raising their own funds as permission has not yet been granted at the state level (GOI, 2006: 249).

In addition to the structure and functions, a significant, mandatory feature of the PRIs is the Gram and Ward Sabhas. These are public meetings that citizens can attend to make their preferences and demands known to the elected council. The council also

presents the projects and programs that will be taking place in the villages they represent. One of the main purposes of the Sabhas is for transparency and accountability. The public has the opportunity to view the budget and hold the council accountable for decisions that have been made. Meetings are held four times a year on fixed dates. While citizens have the option of approaching their ward member, the Gram Sabhas in particular are thought of as the most significant vehicle for participating in PRIs. A public declaration to influence the priorities of PRI members, particularly as a group, is the most effective means of influence rather than making individual demands to individual member (GOI, 2006: 248-49).

PRIs and the Status of Women in India

In spite of reservations for women as elected officials, the transition to include women has not been easy. PRIs have existed unofficially for thousands of years and have traditionally been the domain of high-caste men (Mayaram, 2002: 395). Views regarding women are entrenched in the fabric or rural Indian society. Women in much of India live under the poorest conditions, in all most disadvantaged groups in Indian society, and the feature is most noticeable in rural areas. Women are often regarded as lower in terms of status in society than the lowest caste groups (Bryld, 2001: 154, Kabeer, 2002). Thus in spite of the system of reservations for women in PRIs, there tend to be challenges to their participation. Further, the focus of PRIs has been the inclusion of women as elected representatives and not on the participation of women as general citizens. In addition, both PRIs and the inclusion of women's political participation have been top-down affairs mandated at the central level of government (it is worthwhile to note that political

seats for women have not been reserved at the national level) (Lingam, 1998: 175). State level governments have often not been co-operative with the goals set at the national level and are far less gender sensitized. It is against this backdrop that women have been incorporated into India's decentralization program.

Like women in many parts of the world, women in India are no exception to the gendered nature of political participation. In terms of formal participation, as elected representatives, women in India are drastically underrepresented. At the national level, women's presence in the *Lok Sabha,* the lower house of parliament, in 2002 was 8.8%, placing the country 82nd of the 180 countries on which data is collected the presence of women in the lower house of parliament (Chihibber, 2002: 412). The state legislative bodies are no exception to a lack of women's presence (see Table 3). Even, in Kerala where women are more educated and are generally more active in the labour force than in other parts of the country, women's presence in the state legislative body remains low at only 9%. At the local level, in the Panchayats, the level of women's participation has been controlled by the reservation of one third of all seats for women on a rotational basis.

As citizens, women also display lower rates of voter turnout in both Lok Sabha elections and those in the state legislative bodies than men (see Table 2 & Table 3). However, it does appear that the gap is between men and women is closing over time, as Table 2 demonstrates. The turnout differential between men and women has dropped from seventeen in 1962 to eight in 1999. In terms of state legislatures in Table 3, generally speaking, more men than women turn out to vote. However the gap is relatively small between the two in most cases. One of the larger gaps between men and

women is demonstrated in Rajasthan in which 67.45% of the male population turned out

in comparison to 58.88% of the female population.

Table 2:
India: Women's Representation in Parliament & Voter Turnout Differential

Year	Turnout Differential Between Men and Women	% Women in Lok Sabha
1952		4.4
1957		5.4
1962	17	6.7
1967	11	5.9
1971	21	4.2
1977	11	3.4
1980	9	5.1
1984	10	7.9
1989	9	5.3
1991	10	7.9
1996	9	7.3
1998	8	7.9
1999	8	8.8

Table 3:
Women's Participation and Representation in Indian State Assemblies:

State	Election Year	Turnout – Men	Turnout-Women	% of Women in the State Legislature
Andhra Pradesh	1999	72.07	66.34	9
Arunachal Pradesh	1999	72.83	73.58	3
Assam	2001	77.23	71.82	8
Delhi	1998	50.89	46.41	13
Bihar	2000	70.71	53.28	6
Goa	2002	69.90	68.23	3
Gujarat	1998	63.34	55.03	2
Haryana	2000	69.97	67.85	4
Himachal Pradesh	1998	70.26	72.21	9
Jammu & Kashmir	1996	60.57	46.08	2
Karnataka/Mysore	1999	70.62	64.58	3
Kerala	2001	74.39	70.67	6
Madhya Pradesh	1998	66.45	53.53	8
Maharashtra	1999	63.62	58.03	4
Manipur	2002	90.09	91.07	2
Meghalaya	1998	74.20	74.83	5
Mizoram	1998	76.42	76.22	0
Nagaland	1998	80.65	77.07	0
Orissa	2000	63.6	54.25	9
Punjab	2002	65.92	64.27	7
Pondicherry	2001	69.51	70.70	0
RAJASTHAN	*1998*	*67.45*	*58.88*	*7*
Sikkim	1999	84.36	79.10	3
Tamil Nadu	2001	61.30	56.83	11
Tripura	1998	81.96	79.65	3
Uttar Pradesh	2002	56.75	50.33	6
Uttarnachal	2002	55.96	52.89	6
West Bengal	2001	77.83	72.53	9

Source: Chhibber, 2002: 413

As women already participate less than men in politics, it is reasonable to question what the impact of decentralization has been on women in rural India in terms of their effective and substantive participation in PRIs. The goal of decentralization, particularly in the Indian context, is to enhance the development of rural villages and allow local people to determine their development goals (Bryld, 2001: 152-53). PRIs have a direct affect on those they are designed to serve. The mandated inclusion of women in this process is designed to insure that they have a say in this process.

However, mandating women as elected representatives does not ensure that the views of women are necessarily represented nor does it ensure that female citizens are participating in their decentralized governments. The context of Rajasthan presents many challenges to the participation envisioned in decentralization theory.

The Context: Women in Rajasthan, India

India is a large and diverse country and the situation of women differs from state to state and within states themselves. This includes their participation in their local political system. This study has chosen to focus on the North Western state of Rajasthan. Rajasthan presents a particular challenge to decentralization and women's participation in the local government system as it is a state well known for discriminatory practices against women. The state also displays some of the lowest development indicators for women in the country.

Education is an issue for women across India. Women's education rates are dismally low throughout the country, though some gains have been made between the 1991-2001 period. In Rajasthan the situation is particularly dire as literacy and education rates for women consistently fall below the national average. According to the United Nations Human Development Report on Rajasthan (2002) (see Table 4), female literacy rates have increased since 1991 for both men and women in the state. However for women, the positive change has not been nearly as dramatic as it has been for men. As can be observed in Table 4, women's literacy rates have increased from 21% to 44%, below the national average of 54%. For rural women the literacy rate (2001) is even lower at 38% compared with the national average of 47% and displays a large gap with

rural men who comprise 73% of the overall rural literate population. Though gains have been made in the 1991-2001 period, women's literacy in Rajasthan is amongst the lowest in the country and displays the highest gender gap in literacy in all of India (GOI 2006: 265). With the current (2001) number of male and female children enrolled in primary education there is hope that literacy rates will continue to improve. However the enrollment for boys is significantly higher than that of girls, 138 compared to 84 respectively. Interestingly the enrolment rate for boys in Rajasthan is above the national average of 104. The enrolment rate for girls in Rajasthan (84) is slightly lower than the national average of 85. However it is evident that many families are not choosing to educate their girls in Rajasthan. There are numerous factors that inhibit parents from educating their girls. They are issues of both supply and demand. On the supply side, there is often a lack of schools close to homes in rural areas (GOI, 2006: 265). Other issues such as a lack of separate toilet facilities, a lack of schools specifically for girls and a lack of female teachers also act as barriers to girl's education. On the demand side, cost is a major factor that inhibits parents from sending their girls to school particularly in a culture that favors investment in boys. Even when schooling is free, there are other costs associated with education such as books and uniforms and the opportunity cost of sending girls to school so that it is not possible to have her labour in the home for domestic chores (GOI, 2006: 265).

Retention for girl's education is also an issue with Rajasthan displaying a high drop-out rate. Enrollment rates for girls in upper primary and secondary schooling drops sharply from enrollment in primary education. In 2001 32% of girls were enrolled in upper primary education while boys faired much better at 80%. Most often girls are

pulled out of school for the purpose of domestic work in the home or for the purpose of marriage. Though the legal age of marriage is eighteen, the average age of marriage in Rajasthan is fifteen (GOI, 2006: 258). 68% of women reported being married before the age of eighteen in the state in 2001. Women's lack of education constrains their opportunities and often degrades their ability and power in decision-making even inside the household (GOI, 2006: 258). Women's lack of education is also a mark of their status in society and the lack of value with which they are regarded.

An equally important indicator of female status is the sex ratio. This is an issue that affects all of India but it most prevalent in North Western India where Rajasthan displays one of the lowest sex ratios in the entire country (Bhan, 2001: 7). As reflected in Table 4, the all India sex ratio saw little significant change between 1991 and 2001. In 1991 the sex ratio was at an all time low at 913 women per 1000 men. By 2001 it had increased to 922 (UNDP, 2002). On a state-by-state basis, North Western India has the lowest sex ratios in the country: Punjab (874), Haryana (861) and Rajasthan (922). Rajasthan did display some improvement with sex ratio's increasing from 913 to 922 but continues to lag behind the national average of 933. However there is reason for concern given that the sex ratio for girls between the ages of 0-6 has actually declined between 1991 and 2001. In this age group the sex ratio in 1991 stood at 917 and had fallen to 909 in 2001 (GOI, 2006: 258). The poor sex ratio in India and particularly the North Western region of the country, is often described as an indicator of women's poor status and oppression in the country (Bhan, 2001:7).

One of the dominant explanations for India's poor sex ratio is the cultural practice of arranged marriage and the giving of dowry. Dowry is the gift given by the parents of

the bride to the family of the groom and is often the equivalent of several years income (Bryld 2001: 154). Raising girls is therefore much more costly than raising boys who are considered a pension for the future. Boys will remain with the family while the girl will be married and become part of someone else's family. Rajasthani society remains patrilineal following the practice of moving a woman from her natal home to that of her husband after marriage. The practice is extreme in Rajasthan where women migrate further at marriage than in any other state in India (Billig, 1991: 346). For this reason girls are often considered unworthy of investment in health and education (Bhan, 2001: 8). The expense of raising a female child is also thought to contribute to the abortion of female children and female infanticide.

Table 4: Rajasthan: Human Development Fact Sheet

INDICES				
INDICES	**Rajasthan**		**India**	
Human Development Index Value	**1991**: 0.347	**2001**: 0.424	**1991**: 0.381	**2001**: 0.472
Human Development Rank 2002 (out of 32)	27		N/A	

Indicators: Demography		
INDICATORS	**Rajasthan**	**India**
Total Populations **1991**	43,880,640	843,930,861
Total Population **2001**	56,473,122	1,027,015,247
Sex Ratio **1991**: (females per 1000 males)	913	927
Sex Ratio **2001**: (females per 1000 males)	922	933
Sex Ratio Children 0-6 Years: **2001**	909	927

Education		
Indicators	**Rajasthan**	**India**
Literacy Rate (%): **1991**	39	52
Literacy Rate (%): **2001**	61	65
Male Literacy Rate (%): **1991**	55	64
Male Literacy Rate (%): **2001**	76	76
Female Literacy Rate (%) : **1991**	21	39
Female Literacy Rate (%): **2001**	44	54
Rural Literacy Rate (%): **2001**	56	59
Rural Male Literacy Rate (%): **2001**	73	71
Rural Female Literacy Rate (%): **2001**	38	47
Gross Enrolment Rate: Class I-V (6-11 years) **1999-2000**	112	95
Boys: Gross Enrolment Rate: Class I-V (6-11 years) **1999-2000**	138	104
Girls: Gross Enrolment Rate: Class I-V (6-11 years) **1999-2000**	84	85

Sources: (all 1991 statistics: Bose, 1991: 47 & 315)
(all 2001 statistics: Human Development Report: Rajasthan,: 2002)

The data generally indicates that women, particularly in rural areas, are undervalued in society. This is particularly evident by the incidence of missing women. It is also apparent that women are lacking in terms of education and literacy, which is a potential barrier to their participation in PRI's. In order to better understand the context of these indicators, the next section of this paper will examine women's role in Rajasthani society and the patriarchal traditions that continue to impact them today.

Women in Rajasthani Society:

Rajputs ruled Rajasthan from about the seventh century onwards and had a significant impact on the customs and traditions that continue in much of the state today. The Rajput state was a male-oriented political body that centered around the idea that they belonged to a sacred brotherhood, which allowed them to rule over the land (Unnithan-Kumar, 2000: 52). The preservation of this brotherhood was considered integral and the duty of every man and woman. Rajputs have been traditionally regarded as brave, noble protectors of both the land and its people. The notion of Rajputs as protective rulers bears particular significance on women. Women were regarded as dependants of the brotherhood, which in turn defined both their roles and relationships (Harlan, 1992: 36). The notion of protection was a double-edged sword for women. On one hand they were honored and important, and thus protected. However if women can preserve honor, they can also take it away, and it was this aspect that male Rajputs were often most concerned with (Unnithan-Kumar, 2000: 53). Thus the honor of men was attached to the honor of their women. It was honor that was often being protected and it

was this honor that shaped the lives of Rajput women and other lower castes that attempted to emulate Rajput traditions.

The protection of women and their honor took many forms, many of which continue, particularly in the villages, to this day. One such tradition was (and is) the seclusion of women, which varied according to class. Traditionally women's seclusion often took the form of purdah, which literally translates into curtain (Harlan, 1992: 37-38). Purdah in Rajput times involved the tradition of the separation of the household into men and women's quarters and in many cases, restricted the mobility of women limiting them to the household, kept out of the public eye and the presence of non-family men (Unnithan-Kumar, 2000: 53). The separation between the sexes usually manifested itself in elite Rajput households. The seclusion of lower and middle caste Rajput women generally took the form of veiling in public, in front of their husbands and non-family males (Jamanadas, 2002). Their ability to seclude women was limited as it was necessary for women to take part in agricultural production:

> Historically, only the land-owning families could afford to hire labour to work on their fields and as menials. As a consequence, wealthier families could 'save' their women from the shame of work outside the protection of the home. This situation prevails even today. (Unnithan-Kumar, 2000: 53)

Purdah and the ability to seclude women continues to be desirable in many parts of Rajasthan, though to a lesser extreme in modern times. At the time of marriage, a woman's life changes drastically and many of these changes are based upon the traditions of the ruling Rajputs. Seclusion for women, which generally takes the form of purdah, begins at the time of a woman's marriage. As women adopt the practice of purdah in Rajasthan they will often veil themselves in front of their husbands, male family members, all outside males and their mother in laws as a sign of respect and modesty

47

(Jeffery & Jeffery, 1995: 274; Burja & Caplan, 1979: 265). The practice of purdah at marriage, carried on from the Rajput era, sequesters females to the home as much as possible in Rajasthan so that they have a reduced level of social contact. The attachment of status to women's seclusion prevents them from participating fully in the social life of their communities. In her interpersonal relations, a young bride generally does not have the freedom to choose her companions. Her everyday relations are generally confined to her marital family (Mandelbaum, 1988: 45). It is the responsibility of women to keep their modesty in tact. Therefore it is women who must withdraw from situations that compromise their modesty and/or involves unnecessary contact with men (Burja & Caplan, 1979: 270). Seclusion of women as a status symbol of her family continues today in many parts of the state.

Women in Rajasthan migrate further at marriage than in any other state in India (Billig, 1991: 346). Villages are made up of many castes; therefore, spreading caste diversity throughout the state and creating alliances beyond the village is part of the tradition of marriage in Rajasthan. This tradition of marital migration is the result of the traditional long-standing ties of the former ruling Rajputs and the low population density of the state. Women gain in status with age by having born children, particularly sons, and are regarded as matriarchs in contrast to the subordinate status of a new bride. A mother in law is the charge of her daughter in law and their relationship is often a zero-sum game in which traditional, subordinate views of women are reinforced (Jeffery & Jeffery, 1995: 217; Burja & Caplan, 1979: 266).

In her study of women in Rajasthani history, Unnithan-Kumar (2000) argues that the British were fascinated by the Royal Rajput lifestyle during the colonial period. She

claims that the British held a particular affinity for the Rajputs, identifying with their aristocracy and feudal lifestyle. For this reason, the British allowed the Rajputs to continue to rule (though in a limited form) the territory that would eventually become Rajasthan throughout the colonial period. This made the Rajputs distinct in India due to British perceptions (54). It also served to reinforce the hierarchies and patriarchal customs of the Rajputs. Unnithan-Kumar argues that during the colonial period, unlike the rest of India, women were absent from politics of the nation-state. She argues that this is due to the privileges granted to the Rajputs by the British that set them apart from the rest of India, allowing Rajput traditions to continue, including those that impacted women. The state that became Rajasthan was rather insular from the rest of India before and immediately after independence. Therefore the impact of changes to India as a whole, and Rajasthan itself, had a limited affect on the traditional role of women.

The role of women in Rajasthan's history is important to understanding the context that they operate in today. In many areas of Rajasthan, the traditional customs of the Rajputs continue. Rajput dominance was never truly broken by the British and at independence in 1947, Rajasthan continued to be insular for quite some time. Thus the affect of merging into independent India was some what diluted. India is a relatively new country and the long-standing traditions of Rajputs are not broken easily.

While Rajasthan and Rajput traditions in general are more acute than in other areas of the country, India, has traditionally been a patriarchal country. This is reflected in the structures and functions of the state that are often depicted as bearing extreme shades of patriarchy. The state, it is argued by several female scholars, does not have a particularly positive record in terms of supporting women and their empowerment. Lakshmi

Lingham (1998) is particularly critical of the state in relation to women's rights in India. She argues that though the Indian state was designed as democratic, making space for the negotiation of rights and privileges, it continues to display strong shades of continued patriarchy (172). Lingham points out that the state has made women a priority in its planning but that efforts are often fragmented and superficial:

> The record of the state in adopting a 'pro-woman' stance is largely limited to rhetoric, or enacting a piece of legislation. The legislations have built in loopholes, the policy documents remain inoperative and unoperationalized..... By its inaction the state sanctions discriminatory personal laws. While the state plays the roles of benevolent patriarch, the arms of the state – the police and the judiciary are either gender blind or anti-women (173).

Authors such as Mayaram (2002) argue that the state is only willing to tolerate a limited level of empowerment when it comes to women. She argues that the Indian state fails ultimately to support women when initiatives are actually significant and meaningful both at the state and national level. Women's empowerment tends to take place within the patriarchal initiatives of the state that inevitably has its limits regarding the amount of empowerment it is willing to accept for women.

An example cited from Rajasthan regularly is the Bhanwari Devi case. Working on a government sanctioned Women's Development Program (WDP) for empowerment, Devi was campaigning against the practice of child marriage, as programmed by the state, at the village level in Rajasthan. In 1992 her efforts resulted in her gang-rape by five high-caste men from her village (Mayaram, 2002: 400). The male villagers viewed the police presence in their village in response to the child marriage taking place as bringing dishonor to their entire village. The gang rape was punishment for the dishonor. In spite of the fact that she was working for the government, her attackers were acquitted in 1995 (Srivastava,: 6). The high-caste men who raped Devi gained the support of

powerful politicians who considered the men's caste group a significant voting base (Mayaram, 2002: 402). It was the judgment itself however, that demonstrated the deep-rooted nature of patriarchy and caste based discrimination. The lower court judge argued that the rape could not have taken place as many of the men were older and therefore incapable of committing the act. In addition he held that these were respectable men who would not commit such an act. The judgment states that "since the offenders were upper-caste men and included a Brahmin, the rape could not have taken place because Bhanwari was from a lower-caste" (Sinha, 2003: 24). The testimony of Devi's husband who witnessed the rape, was discredited as the judge did not believe that it was possible in a society where it is the role of the husband to protect the wife, that he could stand by and watch his wife be raped. Though Devi was working for goals set out by the state, the same state failed to protect her and deliver justice in her case. Well over ten years later, Devi continues to seek justice in her case and attempts to have her case heard in a higher court are ongoing.

There is clearly a tension between the state and the actual advancement of women. Though the constitution of India (1947) has been viewed as one of the most progressive in the world by granting women the right to vote and run for office, in light of social constraints, political participation is challenging to social norms.

Chapter 4: Methodology:

This study takes place in rural Rajasthan in the Jaipur district of the state in three Panchayats located within fifty kilometers of the capital city of Jaipur. This location was chosen as it has the possibility of being indicative of women's participation in PRI's elsewhere in the state. Women in the Jaipur district tend to have more advantages than women elsewhere in Rajasthan due to their close proximity to the capital city. Education and literacy rates tend to be higher closer to the capital, thus women are more likely to have the ability to participate. However, if women in the Jaipur district are failing to participate, the results would therefore suggest that women in other parts of the state without similar advantages are not participating in their GP's.

This research utilized a feminist methodology in its approach to conducting research. Feminist research methods define women as a focus for analysis with the goal of reflecting their experiences and every day lives and making their point of view heard (Webb, 1993: 417). Although feminist researchers often debate and view feminist research differently (see Bernhard, 1984), many like Ladino (2002:2) view feminist research as concerned with the underlying causes of persistent gender inequalities. While the goal of this study is to test decentralization theory, women are the major focus of analysis and gender inequalities are naturally at the forefront of concern.

In order to adequately reflect women's diverse life experiences, mixed methods for data collection were utilized in this study. It is my opinion that the use of multiple methods of collecting data provides a better contextual understanding of the situation at hand and ensures that indicators are being properly targeted. Women in particular have incredibly diverse realities that cannot be properly understood through only one method

of data collection. In order to adequately reflect the diverse situation of women the use of mixed methods was necessary. This research project utilized secondary data, archival data, participant observation, surveys and semi-structured individual interviews in order to gain a fuller understanding of the situation of women and their participation in Gram Panchayats.

This study took place in three Gram Panchayats: Shivdaspura, which consists of seven villages and eight hamlets (very small residential areas set away from the main village), Nimbodiya which consists of nine villages and five hamlets and Chandlai which consists of one large village. While this study's sampling cannot be considered as fully representative, the participants involved shed a great deal of light on the situation of women's participation in the GP's. Seventy-four interviews were conducted through the duration of the field research. In total thirty-six female and twenty-three male community members were interviewed through qualitative surveys and semi-structured interviews. Community members were chosen based on caste according to the caste make-up of the area. As caste groups often live in particular areas of a village, the easiest method to identify participants was through tree or snowball sampling. Participants had to be over the age of eighteen and able to vote in the Gram Panchayat in the particular village where research was taking place.

In addition to community members, twelve female and nine male GP members were interviewed using surveys and semi-structured interviews. Two female, former GP members were also interviewed using semi-structured interviews. Additionally, Mrs. Shobha Chouhan from the NGO: The Center for Community Economics and Development Consultants Society (Cecoedecon), that works with women in the area was

interviewed using a semi-structured format. The village Secretary for two of the GP's in this study was also interviewed using a semi-structured format. Lastly, Dr. Sharma, an expert of GP's in Rajasthan, from my host organization, the Institute for Development Studies Jaipur (IDSJ), was interviewed and regularly provided a wealth of information during the course of this research.

Methods:

Secondary sources were a significant part of this research. In order to understand the Gram Panchayat system of government and to understand women's political participation in general and in India specifically, secondary source data has been invaluable. Other studies on women's participation in Gram Panchayats from other states in India were examined in order to better understand what women in the country were facing and assisted in contextualizing the situation and in creating interview questions. The history of Gram Panchayats was also examined to gain a full understanding of traditions in the villages and how they have evolved in the present day. I fortunately had access to documents and papers at my host organization, IDSJ that were invaluable in assisting me in contextualizing Gram Panchayats and women's involvement in Rajasthan specifically. Archival data in the form of government records was also used in this research in order to glean the size of the Gram Panchayats, which block they belonged to and caste make-up in the area. Such records were also used to ensure the presence of female members in the Gram Panchayats to be studied.

The use of mixed interview types, surveys and semi-structured interviews was necessary in order to appropriately capture women's diverse realities and ensure that

required indicators were targeted. As this research was based on the idea of testing

decentralization theory, the quantitative approach of using surveys was the best method

of data collection. I designed the survey instrument (attached in Appendix 1) in order to

ensure that particular indicators were targeted appropriately. In order to understand

women's lives and barriers to their participation or the data for multi-causal analysis,

surveys were insufficient. Surveys were also not always appropriate for all research

participants.

While survey interviews are often considered limiting, this research saw them

only as a starting point for data collection from participants. It is always possible to ask

follow-up questions, and often the survey questions themselves created conversation

points. The use of a survey style of interviewing was also necessary in the case of this

research. Before undertaking field research, semi-structured interviews were piloted in

villages in the research area. The field-testing assisted in the creation of the survey and

also revealed that semi-structured interviews alone were utterly ineffective. As many of

the women interviewed often had little or no education and were not accustomed to

speaking out, the semi-structured interview generated very little information. Conducting

the survey prior to the semi-structured interview (usually based upon the survey

responses) allowed female participants to become more comfortable with my translator

and I creating more favorable conditions for follow-up questions. Essentially, the survey

allowed me to attain the information that was absolutely necessary for this research and

acted as an icebreaker for follow up questions. Additionally, given that a translator was

in use, the survey made clear the intent of the questions and the indicator that was being

sought. It also allowed me to generate follow-up questions for participants as the survey

interviews were being conducted as their responses were instantly translated by the survey itself. The information gathered was coded and run through SPSS software to generate descriptive statistics for the purpose of analysis.

ICDS:

Before the presentation of this research goes forward it is significant to report an unexpected discovery that has an impact on the field data collected. Villagers were often insistent that my translator and I speak to women who worked for the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), a program that focuses on the health of young children, mothers and adolescent girls in the villages. ICDS has been operating in Rajasthani villages since 1975 in an effort to improve child mortality rates and improve women's health (GOI 2006: 262). This program has had many different sources of funding over the years including UNICEF, and currently the World Bank (Ibid.). ICDS centers are run by local women and are under the supervision of the Gram Panchayat.

Prior to conducting my research in the villages, I had no idea the significant role that the women who carry out these programs in their communities had. Not only do they run the centers, having a great deal of contact with the women in their villages, they are often also involved in running the Self-Help Groups (SHG's) involving women's empowerment and micro-credit programs. In addition, due to their jobs, attendance of Gram Sabhas is mandatory for these women.

Not realizing, their significance, I interviewed the women identified as working in the ICDS centers in the same pool as other female community members. At first I lamented this decision and my lack of knowledge of their significance to their

communities, wishing I had interviewed them separately since their realities were so different from women in the general community. By the time I made this realization, it was too late to make changes. As shall be demonstrated in both the presentation of data and analysis, the women working for ICDS present a very different picture of women in the villages in comparison to women in the general community. However, I came to realize that not only did ICDS women provide a plethora of information, they also presented an interesting juxtaposition to other women in the communities. Due to the jobs that ICDS women hold, they have an entirely different experience than the majority of women in the villages. The six ICDS women interviewed as part of the sample have a unique ability to step out of their homes and liaise with their communities. While, these women proved to be much different than the majority of women in the community, it provides an interesting and unique opportunity for analysis. For this reason, they have been left in as a part of the general sample.

Chapter 5: Presentation of Data:

Profile of Respondents:

In the phase of data collection, this study attempted to gather as much data as possible from a variety of participants. As can be observed in Tables 4 & 5, a relatively wide variety of participants of age groups and caste took part in the study. As discussed in the methodology, participants were chosen based on caste and caste representation in the village. The majority of participants, 33 % of women and 35% of men, were of the General caste group, traditionally the most advantaged in Indian society. Other Backward Castes (OBC), 29% of women and 35% of men made up the second largest

group in the research villages. The Scheduled Tribes (ST) comprised 19% of women and 13% of men in the sample. Scheduled Castes (SC), comprised 19% of female and 17% of male respondents. ST's and SC's are traditionally the least advantaged caste's in Indian society. In the case of the research area, economically, ST's were generally more advantaged in the villages, owning significant amounts of land, particularly in the village of Chandlai. While caste groups are generally more or less advantaged according to tradition, this study quickly learned that there are no hard and fast rules when it comes to caste and that traditional roles have changed in some cases. However, as shall be demonstrated later on in the presentation of data and analysis, there are still stark differences among caste groups in terms of human development indicators.

As was expected, the majority of participants were married, 92% of women and 91% of men, as is shown in Table 6. For the majority of women, the research village was her marital village, while for men, it was their natal village. As is tradition in India, the majority of participants, 62% of women and 67% of men, live in a joint family household.

Table 4: Age of Participants

Age	Female %	Male %
18-25	27	18
26-35	31	26
36-45	28	30
46-55	6	22
55-65+	8	4

Table 5: Caste of Participants

Caste	Female %	Male %
SC	19	17
ST	19	13
OBC	29	35
General	33	35

Table 6: Marital/Family Status

Marital Status	Female %	Male %
Married	92	92
Single	6	8
Widowed	2	0
Joint Family Home	62	67
Single Family Home	38	63
Natal Village	6	100
Marital Village	94	0

Awareness:

After over twelve years, it would appear that women have a relatively good level of awareness about the reservations for women in the PRI system.

Table 7: Female Respondents: GP Awareness

	% responding yes
Are you aware that your GP has a female member?	94
Are you aware that there are GP seats reserved for women?	94
Are you aware that 1/3 of all GP seats are reserved for women?	11
Female respondents able to name GP Sarpanch	94

As is reflected in Table 7, the majority the vast majority of women in this study, 94%, were aware that there are female members in the GP and that there are seats reserved for women. Women in all three of the GP's studied, whether the Sarpanch was a man or a woman, could name the Sarpanch in their GP. However, only 11% of women were aware of the extent of the reservation; or that one third of all seats are reserved for women. While women's awareness regarding the GP is imperfect, it is does appear to be good.

Participation:

Participation in the GP's includes several indicators. In this study, those include voting, motivation for voting, attendance of Gram Sabhas, motivation for attending Gram Sabhas, approaching ward members with concerns, and participation through family members and/or friends. Voting is the most basic form of participation in a democratic form of government. In the case of the men and women surveyed, 100% of women voted in the most recent (February 2005) election. In this case women actually performed better than men in voter turnout (See table 2) in which male only 91% of men voted in the most recent election in comparison to 100% of women.

Table 8: Voter Turnout

	Female % Responding Yes	Male % Responding Yes
Did you vote in the last election (February 2005)?	100	91

While women had no problem in terms of turning out to vote, their motivation for turning out to vote are telling as reflected in Table 9.

Table 9: Voting & Motivation

Why did you vote in the last election?	Female% Responding Yes	Male % Responding Yes
The GP is important to development to the ward	92	86
I am interested in the GP	47	71
My vote makes a difference in a GP election	81	91
It is my duty to vote	94	100
My family made me vote	53	10
To support a particular candidate	53	62
Because there was a female candidate I wanted to support	19	5

As can be observed in Table 9, men and women expressed different motivations as to why they turned out to vote in the February 2005 election. 92% of women and 86% of men agreed that they were voted in the last election because the GP is important to their ward. Male respondents, 71%, agreed that they voted because they were interested

in the GP as opposed to 47% of female respondents. Slightly more men, 91% as opposed to 81% of women agreed that they voted because their vote makes a difference in a GP election. The majority of men and women, 100% and 94% respectively, agreed that they voted because it was their duty. More than half of the women interviewed, 53%, agreed that they voted because their family made them vote compared with only 10% of men. In other words, just over half of women surveyed did not turn out to vote based on their own motivation. Interestingly, just over half of women agreed that they voted to support a particular candidate compared with 62% of men. The mandatory inclusion of female candidates in the GP did little to inspire voter turnout in either women or men. Only 19% of women and 5% of men agreed that they voted to support a female candidate suggesting that the presence of a female candidate makes little difference to voter turnout.

Men and women in the sample were also asked about other forms of participation including attending protests and signing petitions. None of the men and women in the sample has participated in either of these activities.

The most significant indicator of participation in the GP is the attendance of Gram Sabhas, the bi-yearly meetings held by the GP. The purpose of Gram Sabhas is to allow all members of the village or villages that are part of a GP an opportunity to view the plans and budget laid out by members of the council. This meeting is designed to promote transparency and accountability in the GP and to allow residents to participate in their local government. The community has the opportunity to pose questions to the council and raise their concerns about their community at these sessions. It is at the Gram Sabhas that the council unveils the programs to be implemented in the villages that have been designed at higher levels of government (state and national). Everyone

interviewed in this study, from organizations to GP council members, community residents (including women themselves) and the secretary for two of the Gram Panchayats acknowledge that attending the Gram Sabhas is the most significant form of participation in the Gram Panchayat. Expressing ones self in the public forum of the Gram Sabha (rather than individually approaching a ward member or getting others to raise concerns for you) is considered the most effective and substantial form of participation.

Mrs. Shobha Chouhan from the Centre for Community Economic Development Consultants Society (Cecordecon) encourages women in the organizations Self Help Groups (SHG) to participate in the Gram Sabhas. Mrs. Chouhan claims that attending Gram Sabhas is the only way that women will have their voices heard in the GP. She contended that participation gives women the opportunity to have a public voice and gives them the chance to meet with people from other wards outside of their own villages. At the Gram Sabhas women have the ability to discuss issues with other women. Mrs. Chouhan expressed that this is one of most important aspects of women's GP attendance as it leads to the potential for women to team up to affect the council.

In spite of the significance and importance of attending Gram Sabhas, only 44% of women report that they have ever attended a meeting compared with 65% of men (see Table 10).

Table 10: Male & Female Gram Sabha Attendance

	Female% Responding Yes	Male % Responding Yes
Do you or have you ever attended a Gram Sabha?	44	65

However, the number of women who attend GP meetings is skewed in this case as a result of interview respondents who work at ICDS Centers as was acknowledged in the 'Methodology' section of this study. Women who work for ICDS are employees of the state and their program is administered by the Gram Panchayat. As a result, for ICDS workers, Gram Sabha attendance is mandatory. Consequently, it is relevant to take them out of the sample to get a more accurate picture of women's Gram Sabha attendance. As can be observed in table 10.1, the rate of women's Gram Sabha attendance drops significantly from 44% to 27% when the women who work for ICDS are removed from the sample.

Table 10.1: Gram Sabha Attendance (ICDS, General Female & Total Female)

	General Community Female Responding Yes (No ICDS)	Female ICDS Responding Yes	Total Female Responding Yes
Do you or have you ever attended a GP meeting?	27	90	44

Women's reasons for attending meetings are also significant. Women (including ICDS workers) who attended Gram Sabhas out of general interest, or to find out what was going on in the GP totaled 63%, compared to 80% of men. The majority of women, 81%, attended Gram Sabhas to get information about an issue and/or programs compared with 60% of men. Only 56% of women who attended Gram Sabhas did so to voice their opinion compared with 73% of men.

Table 11: Motivation for Gram Sabha Attendance

Why do/did you attend Gram Sabha/s?	Attending Females% Responding Yes	Attending Males % Responding Yes
To find out what was going on in the GP/ General interest	63	80
To get information about an issue/s and/or programs	81	60
To voice opinion	56	73

However, when ICDS women were removed from the sample, some significant changes were observed. Attendance of Gram Sabhas for purposes of general interest dropped to 43% for women in the general community. Women who attended to find out about issues or programs did not change as significantly with 71% of the general female community attending for this purpose. Only 8% of women in the general community attended Gram Sabhas to voice their opinion compared with 78 % of ICDS workers and 73% of men.

Table 11.1: Motivation for Gram Sabha Attendance (ICDS, General Female, Total Female & Male)

Why do/did you attend Gram Sabha/s?	Attending General Community Female Responding Yes % (No ICDS)	Attending Female ICDS Responding Yes %	Total Attending Female Responding Yes %	Attending Males % Responding Yes
To find out what was going on in the GP/ General Interest	43	78	63	80
To get information about an issue/s and/or programs	71	89	81	60
To voice opinion	8	78	56	73

Also significant is Gram Sabha attendance by caste. Of those women responding 'yes' (excluding ICDS workers) to attending Gram Sabhas, all were of lower castes groups, particularly Scheduled Castes (SC).

Table 12: Gram Sabha Attendance by Caste (Excluding ICDS)

% within caste	SC (% yes)	ST (% yes)	OBC (% yes)	General (% yes)
Do you or have you ever attended a Gram Sabha?	57	29	25	0

As can be observed in Table 12, 57% of women who had attended Gram Sabhas belonged to Scheduled Castes (SC), 29% belong to Schedule Tribes (ST) and 25% belonged to Other Backward Castes (OBC). None of the women belonging to General Castes had attended a Gram Sabha. In follow-up questions, women who attended meetings revealed that they generally did so to find out about programs that were being made available through the Gram Panchayat. In particular, women, mainly of scheduled castes, indicated that they were interested in government work programs. The Gram Panchayat also handles the "Below the Poverty Line" (BPL) list, a program that assists poor families. Many women indicated that they attended meetings to get on the BPL list.

Dr. Sharma, a Panchayat expert at the Institute for Development Studies Jaipur (IDSJ), explains that women have to be enticed to come to meetings. "Women must see a direct benefit in order for them to attend Gram Sabhas. If there is a program or initiative that directly benefits them, then they will come out. Otherwise they will not". The GP secretary for two of the participating GP's also echoed this sentiment saying that women will only come out if there are programs that they perceive they can benefit from. One of the GP council members, stated: "When women come its 'I need', not 'we need'", while men will come to pressure the GP.

Mrs. Couhan explains that women often experience a triple burden in the villages of Rajasthan. Women care for the home and the children, work in the fields and will often take jobs outside the home as well in order to support the family. This is particularly true

in the off-season for agricultural work. Mrs. Couhan explains that men don't have nearly as diverse livelihoods as women do. In the off- season, men will do little. It is women that will take additional work to support the family. It is also during this time that the government initiates work programs that were initially geared primarily for men. However it is women that come out looking for work in this season and it is their primary motivator for attending Gram Sabhas. Ward members interviewed also expressed that the primary motivator for women's Gram Sabha attendance is work related.

Mr. Raj Sharma, a ward member from Nimbodiya explains that men can easily migrate for work while women have to remain in the village. Thus women were more concerned with work they could take up in their villages. The livelihood motivator also explains why it is women of more traditionally disadvantaged castes that attend Gram Sabhas, as they are more likely to be in need of work than women from the upper caste groups. This is also reflected in women's responses to the reason why they attended a Gram Sabha(s) with 81% of the total female sample responding positively to attending to get information about issues and/or programs.

The frequency of meeting attendance is also significant. As can be observed in Table 13, women in the general community (excluding ICDS) have generally attended only 1-2 Gram Sabhas. 71% of women interviewed had attended 1-2 Gram Sabhas. The remainder, 29% had attended 3-4 Gram Sabhas. Women, who were ICDS workers, naturally had attended a significantly higher number of meetings due to their employment. Keeping in mind, that at the time that the interviews took place, Gram Panchayats and the corresponding Gram Sabhas had been in existence for twelve years, this is a rather dismal rate of meeting attendance for women.

Table 13: Number of Gram Sabhas Attended

How Many GS's have you attended?	Attending General Community Female % (No ICDS)	Attending ICDS Female ICDS %	Total Attending Females %
1-2	71	0	31
3-4	29	0	13
5-6	0	11	6
7-8	0	11	6
9-10	0	0	0
10+	0	78	44

There are a variety of reasons why women are not attending Gram Sabhas. Women themselves as well as Dr. Sharma and Mrs. Chouhan agree that a lack of information about the meetings is certainly part of the reason for their lack of attendance. They are often unaware of what is planned to go on in Gram Sabhas. Perhaps most debilitating is the fact that a significant number of women are unable to read and thus the posters and flyers letting the community know that a Gram Sabha is taking place are lost on them.

In follow-up questions, women indicated that though they have relatively high levels of mobility to go about work related to their home. Generally, however, women indicated that they require a purpose to leave the home. One ICDS worker explained that before gaining employment with the agency, she rarely left her home unless it was for purposes related to her domestic role. She explained, "Women need a reason to leave the home. It needs to be justified as there are many responsibilities for women at home". Many women indicated that it would be okay for them to go to Gram Sabhas if they were elected as the reason would be justified, but generally not otherwise. Former female ward members also made these similar claims. Interviews conducted with two female former GP members (one of whom was a former Sarpanch), revealed that neither are attending Gram Sabhas. One woman indicated that her husband and father-in-law no

longer allowed her to attend now that she was no longer an elected member. A former female Sarpanch said that her family felt that she had dedicated enough time to the GP as an elected member and that now her time should be spent at home.

In addition the location of the Gram Panchayat office is often a great distance from villages and hamlets that are often remote. Gram Panchayats are often comprised of more that one village based on population. One of the Gram Panchayats in this study, Shivdaspura, includes a remote hamlet located 6 kilometers from the Gram Panchayat office. In order to attend Gram Sabhas, residents have to walk the distance to the office, as there is no public transport provided. This hampers all residents from attending Gram Sabhas but is most debilitating for women's attendance. Many indicated that they could not leave their homes for long enough to attend as it takes too much time. Gram Sabhas are meetings that take place all day and many women indicated that they do not have time to take a full day to attend. In addition, they were not comfortable going this distance alone or without family members present.

Young women, particularly young brides that are new to their villages indicated that they had little knowledge of their community as they had just arrived to their new families. Young brides made it clear that if their mother- in- laws attended Gram Sabhas that they could then attend. Otherwise, it was not a possibility. Young brides have extremely low levels of mobility and thus little knowledge of their communities and the Gram Panchayat making it nearly impossible for them to participate. In addition, new brides often practice the strictest forms of purdah and will not sit with men who are not family members. Some expressed concern that her attendance would cause conflict with her in-laws.

Another factor identified is the view of women in society. Mrs. Chouhan says that even if women do attend meetings they are openly discouraged from participating through the expression of her opinion. As women tend to come alone or with only one other female, it is difficult for them to form alliances and be heard. ICDS workers acknowledge that the fact that women don't tend to "team up" with one another is a problem. Men, Mrs. Chouhan explained, will come in groups with a 'we' mentality. Women are looking for programs that benefit them personally. Ward members also echoed this sentiment. Both male and female ward members claimed that they could not help but hear men's voices in comparison to women's because men came out in groups to pressure the council.

In addition, Mrs. Chouhan claims that women are discouraged from speaking publicly by both male and female ward members at Gram Sabhas. This situation, she claims is worse for women in purdah as they are often accused of violating purdah when it is not necessary. She further claims that female ward members generally do not encourage women to speak out, as they "have to live in the community after the Gram Sabha is over". In addition, not all female ward members are confident to participate in the GP themselves; therefore they can't encourage other women in the community to do so. Mrs. Chouhan explains that most women in the villages are "not educated, not confident and are not bold" and therefore do not attempt to express their opinions at Gram Sabhas. The result she says is that women at Gram Sabhas are bored listening to men debate issues that they generally don't understand: "After such an experience, she won't go back".

The exception to all of the societal norms for women are ICDS workers. While they do have to attend Gram Sabhas, many indicated that they are very active participants. One ICDS worker claimed that her job made all the difference in her participation. "I attended before I got my job but never spoke out. Now I do". When asked what made the difference she responded: "I have had ICDS training that has helped me to understand the Gram Panchayat. I got out of the house and work with women in my community so I know what concerns them. I am much more confident and bold now. Most women in the village don't attend Gram Sabhas so it is up to us to express their concerns there". When asked about the community's reaction to her willingness to speak out she responded: "Because of my job, it is acceptable for me to be there. They know I have knowledge and I get respect because of my job".

Women in the villages did however often express that there were issues in their community that they would like to see addressed and that they found other ways to get them raised. The majority of female respondents, 86% agreed that there are issues in their community that they would like the GP to address.

Table 14: Female Respondents: Are their Issues in Your community that you would like the GP to Address?

Female Respondents	Yes %	No%	Don't Know%
Are there issues in your community that you would like the GP to address?	86	6	8

Table 14.1: Women Getting Issues of Concern Addressed

Female Respondents		Yes%	No%
Are you doing anything to get these issues addressed?		81	19
What are you doing?			
	Approaching GP Ward Member	58	
	Attending Gram Sabha	39	
	Getting family members to raise concerns	32	

As Table 14.1 demonstrates, the majority, 81% of women who agreed that there were issues they would like addressed, claimed that they were taking action to do something about them in the GP. Many women indicated that they were using multiple methods of getting their concern addressed, which is reflected in their responses. The majority, 58% said that they had approached their ward member about the issue. 39% were attempting to get the issue addressed by attending Gram Sabhas and 32% got family members to raise concerns for them at Gram Sabhas.

Clearly, approaching ward members was the most popular method chosen by women to get issues addressed. Dr. Sharma and Mrs. Chouhan agreed that women find it easier and more appealing to seek alternatives to attending the Gram Sabhas. While attending Gram Sabhas is a more effective means of participation, it is easier for women to approach their ward member without the issues of travel and time impeding them. Ward members interviewed agreed that few women were attending Gram Sabhas, and that if they did, they were not speaking out. They did however acknowledge they they were regularly approached by individual women regarding their concerns. In follow-up questions, most female respondents claimed that they were willing to approach either a male or female ward member.

The female Sarpanch of Nimbodiya said that in her experience, women tend to use two primary methods of participation. They will approach a ward member themselves and/or often will ask their husband to raise issues for them at the Gram Sabhas. While women's participation at Gram Sabhas is low, they are finding alternate methods, through ward members and family members to approach the Gram Panchayat. However, ward members and women themselves acknowledged that they rarely followed up on the concerns that they had raised with ward members or through their husbands.

In spite of women's lack of participation, and often interest in the GP, when they were asked whether they would consider running in a GP election on a seat reserved for a woman, the majority, 61% responded 'yes' (as can be observed in Table 15) compared with 35% of men. Given that the majority of women have not even attended a Gram Sabha and less than half, 47%, expressed that they were interested in the GP, compared with 71% of men, this result is surprising.

Table 15: Would You Consider Running in a GP Election?

Would you consider running in a GP election?	Female Yes %	Female No%	Male Yes %	Male No %
	61	39	35	65

Table 15.1: Why would you consider running?

Females responding yes: Why Would you consider running?	Female Yes%	Male Yes %
Interested in village politics	68	88
Do something for community	96	100
It is important for women to be involved in politics	77	N/A
People in this position are more respected	96	88

The top two reasons women gave for wanting to run (see Table 8.1) in a GP election are to do something for their community (96%) and that women are more

respected in this position (96%). The third most popular response for women, 77% was that 'it is important for women to be involved in politics'. Lastly for women was that they are 'interested in village politics', which 68% responded positively to. Men's responses were less diverse. 88% said that they were interested in village politics and that people in this position were more respected. While 100% agreed that they would run to do something for their community. Ultimately however, women overwhelmingly expressed more desire than men to run for a GP seat in spite of their lack of participation and interest in the GP.

When women were questioned further about their reasons for wanting to run in a GP election many expressed a desire to step outside of their households. Once again they expressed their inability to leave the home without a justified reason. If they were elected, they would have the ability to step outside the house and participate in the GP and it would give them a justified break from their domestic work. For some of the young brides, the appeal of being an elected member of the GP is about more freedom. One young bride stated: "I would have more freedom. My family would let me out of the house alone". For some women, the status or respect that comes along with the position was also a factor. Mrs. Chouhan of Cecoedecon indicated that women's status is certainly elevated upon their election both in their communities and in their families. She also said that women's motivation for being a part of the GP was often "not about the work". Women expressed that as citizens it would not be possible for them to participate, but as elected members they could.

The majority of female members who were interviewed agreed with the sentiments of women in their communities. For women, as citizens it would be difficult

to participate, but as an elected member, barriers that normally existed were no longer a problem. The female Sarpanch of Nimbodiya stated: "When I was a regular community member, I Said 'Why should I go? What will it do for me? Now I am elected, responsible and accountable to people. Its different". Many of the elected women also practiced purdah, but claimed that it did not inhibit them in their work. When questioned about the working affect of purdah, the female Sarpanch of Chandlai stated: "My face is covered, but I can say what I want".

While women do not necessarily participate effectively as citizens, the GP Secretary acknowledges that it is a very different story when they are elected. He stated: "When they are elected they gain status and get trained about the workings of the GP. They will not come as part of the general community but when they have been elected they are active". Regarding general female community members Gram Sabha attendance he further added "It is not essential that they attend if their husbands go" indicating that an attitude that women need not appear in public spaces if it is not necessary.

Why Are Women Not Participating?

The data collected indicated that women in the research villages are not effectively participating in their Gram Panchayats. The question that the remainder of this research pursued is why women are not participating in a significant manner in their GP, particularly in the public forum of the Gram Sabha. The factors that will be examined in this section are education and knowledge, caste, mobility, income earning activities, information sources regarding the GP and society and culture.

In terms of education, women in are generally among the most disadvantaged in the country. A lack of education certainly has the ability to impede women's knowledge

and understanding of their local political body as well as their confidence. Therefore gaining insight into women's education as well as their level of knowledge regarding the GP can provide insight into their lack of participation.

As can be observed in Table 16, the majority of women in the sample, 67% were literate. Comparatively, 87% of male respondents were also literate. Literacy directly correlates with education, which is reflected in Table 17.

Table 16: Literacy

	Female (%)	Male (%)
Literate	67	87
Illiterate	33	13

Table 17: Education

Highest Level of Education Completed:	Female %	Male %
None	33	13
Primary	24	9
Middle	3	16
Secondary	6	27
Senior Secondary	6	0
College/University	6	35
Technical Training	31	26

As can also be observed, men far outstrip women in terms of education. 33% of women have received no education in comparison with only 13% of men. Primary education is the highest level of education completed for the majority of women 24%, in the sample compared with 9% of men. Very few women continued with schooling, other than technical training past primary schooling. The majority of men, 35% have completed college/university.

Caste also has an impact on education. Table 30 reveals the stark differences in literacy among the different caste groups in the villages. Looking at opposite ends of the caste spectrum, 14% of SC women in this study were literate in comparison to 100% of

75

General caste women. As Table 30.1 reveals, attained level of education is also affected

by caste. 86% of SC women had no education. Every women of General caste had been

educated at some level.

Table 16.1: Women, Caste & Literacy

% within Caste	SC	ST	OBC	General
Literate	14	51	70	100
Not Literate	86	43	30	0

Table 17.1: Women, Caste & Education

Education (highest level completed) (% within caste)	SC	ST	OBC	General
Primary	0	43	30	8
Middle	0	14	0	0
Secondary	0	0	10	8
Senior Secondary	0	0	0	18
College/University	0	0	10	8
Technical Training	14	0	30	58
None	86	43	20	0

Education can be correlated with understanding of the local political process.

Respondents were asked whether they understood how the GP works and what it does.

50% of all women responded affirmatively in comparison to 91% of men (See Table 18).

However when female ICDS workers were taken out of the sample, the number of

women who responded affirmatively dropped to 31%. It should be noted that there had

not been any form of training regarding the GP for citizens in the villages.

Table 18: GP & Understanding

	Total Female Yes (%)	General Female (No ICDS) Yes (%)	ICDS Female Yes (%)	Total Male Yes (%)
Do you understand what the GP does and how it works?	50	31	90	91

Although the majority of women that attend Gram Sabhas are SC's, they have the

lowest level of understanding of what the GP does and how it works with 14%

responding affirmatively (Table 18.1). On the opposite end of the spectrum, 92% of

General Caste women agreed that they did understand how the GP works and what it

does. Like many other indicators, understanding of the GP increases as one climbs that

caste ladder.

Table 18.1: Women, Caste & GP Understanding

Do you understand what the GP does and how it works? (% within caste)	SC	ST	OBC	General
Yes	14	29	40	92
No	86	71	60	8

The majority of men, 96%, and women 94% view education as necessary to

participate in the GP (See Table 19). Almost half, 47%, of the women interviewed

viewed themselves as lacking the education to participate in the GP. Men were not far

behind with 39% viewing themselves as lacking the education necessary to participate in

the GP. However the effects of ones self view of lacking the educational necessities to

participate in the GP differ significantly between men and women. 94% of women

agreed that their lack of education resulted in their having little knowledge about the GP

compared with 78% of men. 88% of women agreed that their lack of education did not

give them confidence to participate in the GP compared with 56% of men. 53% of

women agreed that their opinion was not respected due to their lack of education

compared with 22% of men.

77

Table 19: Education & Participation

	Female Yes %	Male Yes %
Is Education Necessary to Participate in the GP	94	96
Do you lack the education to participate in the GP?	47	39
	Female	Male
How Does your lack of education affect your participation in the GP?	**Agree %**	**Agree %**
Have little knowledge about GP	94	78
Not confident to participate	88	56
Opinion not Respected	53	22

Lack of information regarding the GP is a factor that can influence women's

participation in it. Female respondents were asked about whether they had any

information sources regarding the GP. As can be observed in Table 20, 67% of the total

female sample responded affirmatively. When female ICDS employees were removed

from the sample, the results reduced, but not dramatically to 58% of the general female

community responding affirmatively. The majority of women identified multiple

information sources. Most women in the community (excluding ICDS) named friends,

53%, and their male family members, 40%, as their information sources for the GP. 27%

identified attending Gram Sabhas as their information source and 20% of women named

public/gov't officials as their information source. 13% of respondents named female

family members as their information source.

Info Sources re: GP		ICDS Responding Yes %	General Community Female Yes%	Total Female Responding Yes %
Do you have any information sources regarding the GP?		100	58	67
What are they?				
	Public/Gov't Official	50	20	32
	Male Family members	40	40	40
	Female Family Members	10	13	16
	Attending Gram Sabhas	90	27	60
	Friends	70	53	56

The caste of a citizen certainly has the potential to impact his or her participation in local government. For women, caste is often particularly significant as a result of particular traditions and customs that are associated with different caste groups that particularly affect them. The majority of female respondents, 92% initially indicated that caste was not a factor in women's participation when they were asked the question directly. Many stated that caste didn't matter anymore or that it was a social factor but did not impact their lives in any other way. However, when pushed with a more detailed follow up question: 'Do Customs and Traditions Associated with Caste Such as High Caste Women Observing 'Purdah' or Low Caste Women working as Labourers have any affect on GP Participation?" - 42% responded affirmatively.

Table 21: Female Caste & Participation

	Female Yes %	Female No %
Does the Caste of a Female Citizen Impact her Ability to Participate in the GP?	8	92
Do Customs and Traditions Associated with Caste Such as High Caste Women Observing 'Purdah' or Low Caste Women working as Labourers have any affect on GP Participation?	42	58

Women from different caste groups perceived the impact of caste differently as can be observed in Table 21.1. Most notable is the response of the SC female respondents. 29% of SC females viewed caste as having an impact on a woman's ability to participate in the GP. The response was much greater when the follow-up question was asked with 71% of SC women responding affirmatively. 10% of OBC women agreed that caste has impact on participation, which increased to 40% with the detailed, follow up question. Neither ST nor general caste women viewed caste as having impact on participation. In the follow-up question, their responses increased to 29% of ST women and 33% of General caste women agreed that caste did have an impact. In additional open ended follow up questions, SC women in particular named lesser education levels among lower caste groups and the necessity of working outside the home impeded their ability to participate.

Table 21.1: Female Caste & Participation 2

	Female SC Yes (% within Caste)	Female ST Yes (% within Caste)	Female OBC Yes (% within Caste)	Female General Yes (% within Caste)	Female Total Yes %
Does the Caste of a Female Citizen Impact her Ability to Participate in the GP?	29	0	10	0	8
Do Customs and Traditions Associated with Caste Such as High Caste Women Observing 'Purdah' or Low Caste Women working as Labourers have any affect on GP Participation?	71	29	40	33	42

Men perceived caste differently than women, with 17% (Table 22) responding affirmatively to the initial interview question regarding the impact of caste on the participation of men in the GP. Men found that caste had a more significant impact on participation than women (8%). However, when men were asked if caste had an impact on female participation in the GP, only 9% of men responded affirmatively. In follow up questions, men indicated that they felt that caste was more significant a factor for men than it was for women given their more public lives. However, in the more detailed follow up question regarding women and traditions associated with caste and its impact, men came closer to the view of women with 39% responding affirmatively.

Table 22: Male Caste & Participation

	Male Yes %	Male No %
Does the Caste of a male citizen impact his ability to participate in the GP?	17	83
Does the Caste of a Female Citizen Impact her Ability to Participate in the GP?	9	91
Do Customs and Traditions Associated with Caste Such as High Caste Women Observing 'Purdah' or Low Caste Women working as Labourers have any affect on GP Participation?	39	61

The level of mobility that women have is significant to their participation in the local political process. The majority of women indicated that they have reasonably high levels of mobility (Table 23). 86% of respondents reported that they left their homes several times a day. Women reportedly left their homes for a variety of activities (see Table 23.1), mainly in the area of income earning activities (75%) and shopping (72%). However other activities such as meeting with friends (58%), activities with children (50%) and working with groups/orgs in the community (43%) ranked much lower and are

not associated in any way with the home. 72% of women did report however that they were free to leave their homes whenever they wanted or needed to. As can be observed in Table 15.1, there do appear to be to be some limits to women's mobility. Only 28% of women reported that they could leave their homes without the permission of a family member. The majority of women, 69% can leave their homes alone.

Table 23: Female Mobility

How often do you leave your home?	Female %
Several times a day	86
Once a day	11
A few times a week	0
Once a month	0
Fewer than 3 times per month	3

Table 23.1: Female Mobility & Activities

For What Activities do You Leave your Home?	Female % Yes
Employment/Income Activities	75
Shopping	72
Religious Activities	64
Meet with Friends	58
Collect Water	56
Activities with Children	50
Work with Community Group/Committee/Organization (ie: GP, SHG, etc)	42
I am free to leave the house whenever I like or need to	72
Can you leave the home without permission of family members?	28
Do you leave the home alone?	69

Women's home environments are also telling of their ability to participate in their decentralized, local governments. As can be observed in Table 24, the majority of female respondents, 69% did not view themselves as being busy at home all day, nor did they desire to leave their homes more. In follow-up questions, women indicated that they were often most busy with a variety of income earning activities more so than the home. The majority of women, 89% view themselves as able to express themselves in their

home and 94% view themselves as having a say in how their households are run.

However, the majority of female respondents, 61% affirmed that their homes are

controlled by men and 56% did not view their say in the household as equal to their male

family members.

Table 24: Home Environment

Home Environment	Female Yes %	Female No %
Are you busy at home all day?	31	69
Do you desire to leave your home more?	31	69
Are you able to openly express yourself in your home?	89	11
Is your household controlled by men?	61	39
Do you have a say in how your household is run?	94	6
Are you equal to your male family members in the amount of say you have in the household?	44	56

Income earning activities, particularly for women, are difficult to gage as they

tend to be a complex collection of activities in many cases rather than one occupation.

This study does not go into depth in this area, however the information generated is

indicative of the complexity and time -consuming nature of the income earning activities

that women engage in. As indicated in Table 25, the majority, 83% of women are

participating in income earning activities. 44% work on family land, and of these, 11%

are engaged in additional income earning activities. Women engage in numerous

activities ranging from agricultural to business as is reflected in Table 25.1.

Table 25: Women & Income Earning Activities:

Do you participate in income earning activities?	Female %	Male%
Yes	83	91
No	17	9
Do You work on Land owned by your family?		
Yes	44	48
No	56	52

Main Occupation

Main Occupation	Female %	Male %
Agriculture (Family Land)	33	17
Business	10	22
Service	33	30
Labourer	17	13
Other	7	17

Women of different castes participate in different income earning activities. Women across castes participate in income earning activities, at a similar rate as can be observed in Table 25.2. The group with the least women working is of the OBC caste at 30%. It is the income earning activities women participate in that differ sharply between caste groups. As reflected in Table 25.3, it is mainly lower caste women, 71% of SC's and 100% of ST's who work on family land in comparison to 30% of OBC's and 8% of General caste women.

Table 25.2: Women, Caste & Income Earning Activities

Do you participate in income earning activities? (% within caste)	SC	ST	OBC	General
Yes	86	100	70	83
No	14	0	30	17

Table 25.3: Women, Caste & Work on Family Land

Do you work on land owned by your family (% within caste)	SC	ST	OBC	General
Yes	71	100	30	8
No	29	0	70	92

For many women, working on family land is not the only manner in which they contribute economically to the household (Table 25.4). For SC women, the lowest caste group, the majority, 67%, work as labourers in addition to working on family land. Only 17% of SC's work exclusively on family land. ST's tend to be the main agricultural producers and land owners in the area where this research was conducted. Therefore it is

not surprising to find that the vast majority of ST women, 86%, only work on family

land. The other remaining 14% also work as labourers. The majority of working OBC

women, 43%, work on family land with the remainder working in the business or service

sectors. No General caste women listed working on family land as their main occupation.

The majority, 70%, were employed in the service sector.

As can be observed, the occupation of women can be associated with their caste.

For example, no upper caste women are employed as labourers and no lower caste

women are involved in business. Only 17% of lower caste women are involved in the

service sector in comparison to 70% of General caste women and 29% of OBC's.

Further, lower caste women, SC's in particular, are performing the double duty of

working on family land and participating in other income earning activities. When it

comes to the way in which a woman earns an income, caste does matter.

Table 25.4: Women, Caste & Main Occupation

Main Occupation (% within caste)	SC	ST	OBC	General
Agriculture (family)	17	86	43	0
Business	0	0	29	10
Service	17	0	29	70
Labourer	67	14	0	0
Other	0	0	0	20

Society/ Cultural Views

Societal and cultural views of the GP itself and of women are significant

to women's participation in local government. In examining societal and cultural

views, this study began with both male and female views of the GP itself. Men

and women had somewhat similar views regarding the effectiveness of the GP.

As is reflected in Table 26, when asked to rate the relevance of the GP system of

government from 'very relevant" to "not relevant" the majority of men and women, 61% in both cases, viewed the GP system of government in their villages as "relevant". Where men and women differ is in the "very relevant" category. 39% of men compared with 14% of women viewed the GP as "very relevant" to their village. The remaining women, 25%, responded that they "didn't know" how relevant the GP is to their village.

Table 26: GP Relevance to Village

How Relevant is the GP system of Gov't to your Village?	Female %	Male %
Very Relevant	14	39
Relevant	61	61
Sometimes Relevant	0	0
Not Relevant	0	0
Don't Know	25	0

Similarly, as can be viewed in Table 26.1, the majority of women, 61%, and men, 70%, responded 'yes' when asked whether the GP system of government was effective. Again a significant portion of women, 33%, responded that they 'didn't know' how relevant the GP is to their village.

Table 26.1: GP & Effectiveness

Is the GP System Effective?	Female %	Male %
Yes	61	70
No	6	17
Don't Know	33	13

Faith in the system of elections is also a significant indicator of overall confidence in a community's local system of government. It is integral that that a community views their local government as accessible and that they have the ability to influence it through democratic means in order for them to view it as worth participating in. Respondents were asked whether they viewed elections and voting as influencing the GP (Tables 26.2 & 26.3). In terms of elections, men

expressed more confidence in the system than women. 96% of male respondents

responded affirmatively that elections did influence the GP. The majority of

women, 78%, responded affirmatively. 8% of women responded negatively,

while 14% of female respondents didn't know whether elections affected the GP

or not. Both men and women expressed confidence in their view of voting in GP

elections. The vast majority of respondents, 92% of women and 96% of men

responded affirmatively when asked if voting influences the GP.

Table 26.2: Elections & GP

Do elections influence the GP	Female %	Male%
Yes	78	96
No	8	4
Don't Know	14	0

Table 26.3: Voting & GP

Does voting influence the GP?	Female %	Male %
Yes	92	96
No	8	4
Don't Know	0	0

The perception of both men and women regarding their ability to influence

the GP is also a factor that affects participation. The majority of both men and

women viewed themselves as able to influence the GP in their decisions and

priorities (Table 26.4). Men expressed slightly more assurance than women in

their ability to influence the GP with 83% responding affirmatively compared

with 72% of women. In follow up questions, both men and women stated that if

they were to attend Gram Sabhas, they would have the ability to influence the GP.

Table 26.4: Ability to Influence GP

Are you able to influence the GP in their decisions & priorities?	Female %	Male %
Yes	72	83
No	25	17
Don't Know	3	0

Women expressed more faith in their gender as a whole than they in themselves as individuals with 92% agreeing that it is possible for female citizens to influence the GP in decisions and priorities (Table 26.5). Men expressed less confidence in women's ability to influence the GP with 78% responding affirmatively. In follow up questions with women, they once again expressed that if women attended Gram Sabhas, they would be able to influence the GP. The majority of men expressed the same sentiment. However, the majority of men expressed that they did not view women in the villages as having the education, knowledge nor confidence to attend Gram Sabhas and therefore have influence in the GP. Women themselves often echoed this opinion. "Women have to be bold" was the statement made regarding this situation time and time again in response to follow-up questions regarding this issue. Women also named a lack of education and confidence as barriers to participation. In discussing the matter with ICDS employees, they asserted that women were concerned about issues in their community that they discuss in small groups in Self Help Groups (SHG). One employee stated: "The groups are small, the women know each other and are comfortable to openly express themselves. Women don't feel comfortable, bold or confident enough to go speak out in large Gram Sabhas".

Table 26.5: Female Ability Influence in GP

Is it possible for female citizens to influence the GP in decisions & priorities?	Female %	Male%
Yes	92	78
No	6	22
Don't Know	3	0

88

Table 26.6: Male Ability Influence in the GP

Is it Possible for male citizens to influence the GP?	Female %	Male%
Yes	97	96
No	0	4
Don't Know	3	0

When the question regarding men's influence in the GP was posed, the

vast majority of men and women agreed that it was possible for men to influence

the GP (Table 26.6). 96% of men responded affirmatively that it was possible for

them to influence the GP. Women expressed slightly more faith in men's ability

to influence the GP as 97% agreeing that it was possible for men to influence the

GP.

Societal views regarding women's participation in their local government have

the ability to impact participation. Thus the next section of interview questions (Table

27) focuses on perceptions of women's political activity in society. The initial question

posed was "Should women participate in the GP?". 100% of men and the majority of

women, 94%, agreed that women in the villages should participate. While both men and

most women agree that women should participate in the GP, women are not participating

in a significant way. Thus the remainder of the questions examine societal and cultural

causes of women's lack of participation.

When men and women were asked whether men kept women from participating

in the GP, over half of men themselves, 57% responded affirmatively. Women were less

inclined to blame their lack of participation on men with 42% responding affirmatively.

In follow up questions, women claimed that women themselves had their own barriers to

participation and that the issue was not men. On several occasions women responded

"No, women keep themselves from participating". While it is likely that women do

indeed keep themselves and possibly each other from participating in the GP, Mrs. Chouhan from the NGO Cecoedecon argues that at times it is indeed men that discourage women's participation in village governments. She contends that men discourage women, particularly those who practice purdah, from speaking out contending that if it is not necessary for women to violate purdah they should avoid doing so. Mrs. Chouhan also admits that women themselves also use purdah as an excuse not to be bold or go outside their comfort zone by speaking out.

When men and women were asked whether women had too many responsibilities in the home to participate in the GP, less than half of women, 44% responded affirmatively. The majority of men, 61%, perceived that women did have too many responsibilities in the home to participate in the GP.

Perhaps the most telling indicators in this section as to why women are not participating in the GP are the societal/cultural views of women stepping outside the home and/or participating in the local political process. When men and women were asked if societal and cultural views keep women from participating in the GP the majority responded affirmatively. 67% of women and 74% of men agreed that this was the case. When men and women were asked if women who participate in politics were looked down upon by society women's responses remained the same with 67% responding affirmatively. The majority of men, 69% also responded affirmatively. A response that was heard regularly among those who responded "no" was "I don't think so, but some people do". In follow up questions, many women indicated once again that if they had the support of their husbands and families it wouldn't matter, but agreed that it would be a challenge due to how they were viewed in the community. When men and women were

asked if working or being active outside the home could create a bad reputation for women, the majority of women, 58% agreed that it did. Men on the other hand were somewhat more optimistic with less than half, 44% responding affirmatively. Follow up questions regarding this section of the interview generated lively discussion. Many respondents, both those that responded negatively as well as those who responded affirmatively claimed that societal/cultural ideas regarding women stepping outside the home were changing. Men in particular asserted that women were "coming out of the home" more. Women are often employed or are seeking employment to bring in an extra income for their families and men in particular were supportive of this change. Interestingly, as can be observed in the results, it is women more so than men who perceive that working or being active outside the home can create a bad reputation for women. Again, the response that was often given was "I don't think so, but there are people who do".

Table: 27: Women's GP Participation & Societal/Cultural Views

Should women in the villages participate in the GP?	Female %	Male%
Yes	94	100
No	6	0
Is the GP mainly the place for a man?		
Yes	3	26
No	97	74
Do men in the village keep women from participating in the GP?		
Yes	42	57
No	58	44
Do women in the villages have too many responsibilities in the home to participate in the GP?		
Yes	44	61
No	56	39
Do societal and cultural views keep women from participating in the GP?		
Yes	67	74
No	33	26
Are women who are active in politics looked down upon in society?		
Yes	67	61
No	33	39
Can working or being active outside the home create a bad reputation for women?		
Yes	58	42
No	42	57

Chapter 6: Analysis of Data:

Ultimately, the purpose of this study is a simple test of theory: Has decentralization led to participation by women in their local governments? The data collected revealed that women as general citizens in their communities are participating in their GP's to some degree, but not in the most meaningful and significant manner: in a public forum in order to have a maximum level of impact. Given that this is the case, the reasons why women are failing to participate requires analysis. The next section of this paper will connect the theory in the literature review to the data collected in this study.

Participation

Going back to the rationale for decentralizing government to the local level, the reasons are twofold: efficiency and empowerment. In this case the focus is on empowerment, or the participation of women as a marginalized group in a decentralized system of government. The participation rational views decentralized systems of government as having the ability to increase participation in general as they are closer to the people and therefore more accessible. In addition it is assumed that people will have an increased level of interest in local governments as the decisions and allocations of resources that directly affect them are made in such settings. Significant to this study is the idea that decentralized governments are an area where national minorities can gain representation as well as defend and forward their collective interests in order for greater equity in resource allocation.

Was women's participation increased due to decentralization to the local level in the villages involved in the research? The answer as determined in the presentation of data is

more complicated than a yes or no answer. Women do approach their ward members with concerns and have had male family members raise their concerns at Gram Sabhas. However, as has been established, the majority of women are not attending Gram Sabhas and thus are not participating in what is the most meaningful and significant manner: the public forum. Ultimately, women are participating in a way that is comfortable and easy for them. Thus while women's participation is occurring, it has little impact because it is not a public act. The public/private split continues to play a significant role in women's political participation and decentralization has done little or nothing to alleviate this issue.

The following exploration of the data collected will examine how and why decentralization has failed to lead to women's meaningful and significant participation in their local governments through a multi-causal analysis. As cited in the review of the literature, there have been problems associated with participation and decentralization for some time. As Rondinelli and Cheema (1983) pointed out, the implementation of new decentralized structures for decision making and resource allocation along with new processes for participation are not enough to ensure effectiveness. Implementation of decentralization in this case does nothing to address existing inequalities between men and women in society. Women in rural Rajasthan are at an inherent disadvantage in terms of their participation in the Gram Panchayat due to traditional gender norms that inhibit women's political activity, particularly at the local level. The public/private split is a significant factor in impeding women's participation in the villages of Rajasthan. The ultimate result of inequity between men and women in this case is that women are

not on equal footing with men in terms of their citizenship entitlements and ability to exercise their citizenship rights.

Education & Knowledge

The public/private split is reinforced by women's lack of education and knowledge. Gaventa and Valderrama (1999) point to the availability of appropriate skills (ie: literacy), knowledge and experience as both significant and required for effective participation in decentralized systems of government. Women, particularly in developing countries, are often at a disadvantage in terms of their education, knowledge and experience. The public/private split it is argued, determines the resources, power and knowledge that women are able to access in order to exercise their rights as citizens and participate in the political process (Meer & Sever, 2004: 19, Pateman, 1989, Conway, 2001). The women in this study were no exception to this. Most women in this study, 68%, are literate, however the majority, 58%, had little in the way of education beyond the primary level. The majority of their male counterparts, on the other hand, had been educated at the university level. Clearly, a lack of education makes participation a challenge for women and puts them at a disadvantage to more educated males in the community. Given that women have little or no education and that the Panchayats were traditionally exclusively the domain of men, there are few women (with the exception of ICDS) who have experience in this area. The two former female ward members that were interviewed for this study indicated that neither of them were involved with the GP after they were no longer elected to the position. Unfortunately, the trend seems to be that women who gain the knowledge and experience as GP members do not utilize their

knowledge after their term has expired. Further, due to seat rotation, most people who are on council can only run once before the seat is rotated for another form of reservation (ie: from women to a specific caste group), so that the knowledge and experience that is gained while on council cannot be effectively utilized.

This study found women's lack of education affected their confidence to participate with men in a public forum. In addition, women's lack of education has granted men a means of justification to exclude them from participating. 94% of women and 96% of men agreed that education was necessary to participate in the GP. Almost half of the women interviewed felt that they lacked the education to participate and 88% of those agreed that their lack of education affected their confidence to participate. While the men interviewed agreed that women should participate in the GP, many expressed that in order to do so, women had to be educated, and at this point in time, the majority were not.

A lack of education naturally leads to a lack of knowledge. Half of the women in the sample agreed that they did not know what the GP did or how it worked making participation a daunting and unlikely prospect for them. However, knowledge is not gleaned from education alone, it also drawn from life experience, or the ability to step outside the home, something that many women are lacking. Almost half of the women interviewed (with the exclusion of ICDS workers), 58%, indicated that they had no information sources regarding their GP. Those who did relied primarily upon informal sources of information, male family members (40%) and friends (53%). Mrs. Chouhan from the NGO Cecoedecon, acknowledges that the GP has not led to women making demands upon it. She contends that women are not concerned about issues that are specific to them due to a lack of knowledge. She says:

Women are not concerned about women's problems like a lack of vaccinations for their children. They don't think to question because they are not aware of what demands they should be making or that they can make demands. They are not aware of what is planned to go on at meetings or where they are being held because they have no sources of information and they can't read the posters and board messages. They know very little about what is going on in relation to the GP.

The public/private split both creates and reinforces the issue of low education and literacy levels for women. It is contended that socialization in both child and adulthood is a factor that effects men and women's political participation. In particular, women's primary role as childcare provider is highlighted as shaping their orientation to politics and the resources that they bring to the process (Scholzman et al, 1994: 965, Chhibber, 2002: 410 and Verba et al., 1997). Given that women in this study continue to have a limited ability to step outside the home and that their primary role is in the private realm of the household, they are not socialized to take part in politics or public life. As a result of social norms and their traditional role, women are not educated by their families as it is not thought to be necessary. As Scholzman et al (1994) contend, women's role in the private sphere does not allow them the opportunity to gain the skills necessary for political involvement. The result is that women are not properly informed about the processes, mandates, their rights and duties related to their decentralized governments (GTZ, 2001: 1). Women in this case were often not informed about when the GP was meeting, what it did or that they could make demands upon it.

The public/private split it is argued, determines the resources, power and knowledge that women are able to access in order to exercise their rights as citizens and participate in the political process (Meer & Sever, 2004: 19, Pateman, 1989, Conway, 2001).A lack of mobility, formal education and worldly knowledge for women has given men

justification to exclude them from public life, particularly in the political form of the

Gram Sabha. Many women indicated that they did not have the education to participate,

thus justifying their own exclusion from participation in the GP. As Lister (2001:2)

discusses, the public/private split, which is argued to determine the knowledge and

resources that one brings to the table in terms of political participation and the "gendered

citizenship relationship", has both female and male qualities. There is what are

considered the 'male qualities' of rationality, impartiality, independence and political

agency. While women on the other hand are situated in the private realm assumed

incapable of possessing the necessary male qualities for participation in public life. Due

to their lack of education and worldly knowledge, men and women themselves, justify

their exclusion from the political form of the GP. Women cannot be considered rational

or impartial as they lack what the men in their communities possess: knowledge. Women

also lack independence in terms of their mobility. They cannot simply leave the house

for any reason of their own or in some cases by themselves. Thus is simply impossible

that they can possess political agency or any of the 'male qualities' required to participate

in public life.

In the case of this study, it can be argued that education is a significant factor

affecting women's participation. When GP members were asked what the primary

barrier affecting women's participation was, the consistent answer was always

'education'. The same was true when men in the community were asked the same

question. Women themselves identified a lack of education and worldliness as the most

significant factors that kept them from participating. Women's lack of education not only

gives men a justification to exclude them from the local political process, it also allows

women to justify their own lack of participation. This study regularly heard "I/women have no knowledge, education or confidence to participate". Women's low levels of education are undeniably a significant factor leading to women's low level of participation in their local governments.

Interestingly, while education is certainly an important component to political participation, it is not necessarily enough to guarantee it. The most educated women in this study were high caste, yet with the exception of women who worked for ICDS, none of the high caste women that took part in this study had attended a Gram Sabha. This issue will be explored in greater detail later on in this chapter, but it is significant to note that education is only one component in a larger context.

Women's Mobility

Mobility is a factor that undeniably impacts women's ability to participate in a public forum. Gaventa & Valderrama (1999) highlight the history of participation and mobilization as a factor that impacts citizen participation in politics. This argument is relevant to this study. While women initially appeared to have reasonable levels of mobility, it soon became evident that they required a justified reason to leave the home or be absent from their domestic responsibilities. Further, the GP's were traditionally the space of men up until the 1993 amendment to the constitution. Thus there is little in the way of history or mobilization on the part of women in the political arena. A fundamental lack of mobility cannot grant women a history of participation or mobilization in the public realm of politics.

Ultimately, women's lack of mobility is a factor that is both created and reinforced by the public/private split. Women's absence from the public realm is the argument that numerous scholars have used to explain their lower levels of public participation. It is essential that women are able to exercise autonomy both inside and outside the household in order for them to have the ability to participate in the public realm of politics (Chibber, 2002). As long as women are confined to the traditional space of the household, they will not be able to participate in politics as they do not have access to public space. Burns et al. (1997) make a similar argument claiming that it is the relations between men and women in the private sphere that has an impact on women's political participation. Often women demonstrated that their mobility was not their own. The majority of women required permission to leave their homes and required a justified reason to leave, which was generally related to the home in some way. Few women spent time outside the home doing leisure activities such as meeting with friends. Activities were generally those related to the household. Women continue to be the primary domestic providers and thus cannot easily leave their homes as many explained. Relations between men and women inside the household also proved to be unequal. Women revealed that while they do have a say in how their households are run, the majority indicated that their say is not equal nor is their position in the household.

Another example of women's lack of mobility became apparent when female and male interview subjects were asked whether they would be willing to contend for a reserved GP position. The majority of women, 61%, said 'yes' in comparison with 35% of men. This was a curious occurrence as many of the women who indicated a desire to participate as an elected member acknowledged that they were not interested in the GP as

a general citizen and that they had little knowledge of what the GP did or how it worked. When women were questioned about their motives to run for a GP seat, many said that they would be more respected by their community in this position and would have "more freedom" to leave their homes. A young woman, who had recently come to her village as a bride and knew little or nothing of her GP stated: "I would have more freedom because my mother in law would let me out more and I would have a break from the work I do at home. I would have more respect not just by everyone in the village, but in my family too."

What these situations exemplify is that women's mobility is often limited and results in the continued phenomenon of the public/private split that makes it difficult for women to participate in political activity. Women can leave the home when it is justified for them to do so, if it falls within acceptable activities such as employment or is associated with the home. The result of limited mobility is that women have less knowledge of the public sphere and less experience in it. In addition, it also means that women are less informed about what goes on in the public sphere, such as when Gram Sabhas are taking place. As one of the female GP members described women's poor level of participation in Gram Sabhas:

> Women have too many responsibilities to the household to come to the Gram Sabhas. Men can come anytime. For women it is much harder. Women need to be informed of upcoming meetings. They have to know in advance so they can plan. This is much more difficult than for a man. Men are out and about in the market so its easy for them to come. Women need to plan. Their homes take priority over the GP.

As the above quote illustrates, the ability to step outside the household and participate in public life is also dependent upon the resource of time. As is contended by feminists, men's ability to participate in the public realm and exercise their citizenship

rights is created by women upholding the private realm (Lister, 2001:2). Women all over the world are taking on both domestic responsibilities as well as income earning activities leaving them with less time to devote to political activity (Meer & Sever, 2004: 19, Pateman 1989, Conway 2001). Women involved in this study were no exception to this occurrence. In addition to taking care of their households, 83% of the female respondents indicated that they were involved in income earning activities. 33% indicated that they worked on land owned by their family, while the remainder worked in occupations outside the home (10% did both). When women were asked of they were busy at home all day, the majority, 69%, responded negatively. When participants were questioned further, they revealed that they are busy participating in income earning activities in addition to taking care of the home. Women are actively seeking employment in government work programs and are often working more than one job. However, this study admittedly does not adequately reflect the complexity of many women's livelihoods. A group of women in one of the villages in Shivdaspura indicated that they worked on family land during the agricultural season, as labourers in the off season and some had picked up piece work doing embroidery for manufacturing companies. All of these activities took place in addition to the responsibilities that women had in their homes. Taking care of the home in the villages of Rajasthan is no easy task. Most of the villages do not have electricity and many homes do not have running water, making domestic work extremely time consuming. While women are working at multiple occupations, it is not uncommon for men not to work at all in the agricultural off- season.

The result of women's extremely complex and diverse realities is that many do not have the time to participate in their GP's. Some women indicated that their priority was

to provide for their household and that this was their focus rather than the GP or any political activity. As was discussed in the presentation of data, the majority of women who did attend Gram Sabhas did so in hope of receiving aid from government programs, particularly employment or to sign up for assistance programs such as the Below Poverty Line Program (BPL) or the Public Distribution System (PDS). For many women, time is certainly not a resource that they have at their disposal to participate in the political process. Additionally, the evidence supports the feminist idea that women's presence in the private realm allows men to be presenting the public realm, making citizenship unequal in practice.

Women's complex realities and time constraints are often not taken into consideration when their political activity and participation in the development process is being encouraged. As discussed in the literature review, gender advocates and policy makers often see the political arena as a strategic site for the advancement of women and increased gender parity (Goetz, 1995: 55; Banergee & Oquist, 2000: 3). However, in spite of this, as Baden (2000) argues, there tends to be a focus on getting women into political life and strategies for achieving this goal while ignoring what to do once women have achieved presence in politics. In this case it seems that having women representatives through the reservation of seats is considered enough to secure women's presence, and hopefully participation. It is assumed that women in elected positions will represent the concerns of women. Given that women are not a homogeneous group, as this study clearly demonstrates, it is impossible that all women can be represented through an elected official or officials. Thus in order for more balanced and equal participation in decision making and development to take place, it is absolutely necessary

for both men and women to participate as citizens in the political process. However women's involvement in the political process as citizens is challenging. Because traditional gender roles are often assumed to be natural, it is assumed that institutions are neutral in respect to gender (Baden, 2000: 30). This is an impossibility given that men have traditionally dominated the public sphere and its institutions. The Gram Panchayats are the product of a traditional form of village government that up until, 1993 was exclusive to men. The result of male dominance in institutions is that their needs and habits have shaped them resulting in a gendered structuring of time and space. Part of the rational for decentralization is that the government in closer to the people that is serves, making it easier and more appealing for citizens to participate (Smith, 1985: 26; Fisman & Gatti, 2002). In India, particularly Rajasthan, this rational does not hold true. Rajasthan has the lowest population density in the entire country. Unlike other states where villages are often so close together it is difficult to tell where one begins and another ends, the villages and hamlets in Rajasthan are situated with significant distance between them. The Gram Panchayats in Rajasthan often represent more than one village and/or hamlet depending on population levels. The result is that the Gram Panchayat offices where the Gram Sabhas are held are often far away making it difficult for citizens, particularly women, to attend. In some cases, the GP office can be located up to 10km away from a village or hamlet. Many women indicated that they could not leave their homes for long enough to attend, that they had no transportation to the main villages and/or that it was not safe for them to go this distance without males from their family. In addition, Gram Sabhas are all day affairs that can go on for six to eight hours, making it difficult for women to participate. The needs of women have not been taken into

consideration in terms of the working patterns of the GP. While it is easy for men to move about freely, the public/private split persists, making participation difficult for women. As was previously discussed, attending Gram Sabhas or participating effectively is difficult for women as they are not found in public spaces. When women were asked what kept them from participating in the GP, many indicated that a lack of time was a big factors for them. Women continue to exist primarily in the private sphere while men dominate that of the public.

Mobility is a major factor for women in terms of knowledge, information and political participation given that it is naturally a public act. Mobility is integral to women's experience and confidence outside the home in the public sphere. In order for women to feel that they belong in the public sphere, they must have knowledge of it and experience in it. The ability to access the public sphere is essential in shaping ones worldview. There is also a level of comfort associated with the public sphere. As women have little or no experience in the public realm, their desire to be part of that space is curtailed by a lack of knowledge and confidence, in the public sphere that results in low levels of political participation and their ability to exercise their rights as citizens.

Societal & Cultural Views

While education & knowledge as well as mobility are significant factors to women's political participation, they are set against the backdrop of society and culture which impact both. Culture may in fact be the most significant factor affecting women's ability and desire to participate in their GP's.

One of the arguments for the failure of decentralization to increase participation is that the local government has too few resources and is considered ineffective (Gaventa & Valderrama, 1999: 6-9). Societal views of the Gram Panchayats effectiveness are therefore significant to its success or failure in increasing participation, particularly that of marginalized groups. Societal views regarding women's participation are also significant as to whether they will be willing and/or interested to participate in the public, political forum. This study sought to discover how male and female villagers viewed their GP in terms of its relevance and effectiveness. This study found that the majority of both men and women involved in this study found the GP relevant and effective. They also viewed the GP as fair with the majority agreeing that elections and voting had an impact on the GP and agreed that they had the ability to influence it if they attended Gram Sabhas. Therefore, women's lack of participation does not appear to be influenced by a lack of faith or perceived relevance of the GP system of government.

Feminists highlight culture and societal norms as integral to women's ability and/or desire to participate in the public realm. Citizenship is more complex than just a set of rights, it is also affected by culture. While men and women agreed that women in the villages should participate in the GP, when further questions were asked, it appears that the affects of long-standing cultural norms ran much deeper. As both Kabeer (2002) and McEwan (2005) argue, the experience of citizenship is linked to identity that is shaped by culture which often supercedes formal rights. In the case of this study, this absolutely holds true. In a democracy like India, women have every right to take part in their government and to make demands upon the state, however, in the case of rural, Rajasthan, India, this is not the case. Though decentralization occurs for the purpose of

participation and development, women's cultural identities that are entwined with citizenship do not encourage them to participate. Thus when both men and women overwhelmingly agree that women should participate and have the right to participate in the GP – this is about a formal right rather than a right that is being realized. In reality, participation is much more difficult. If rights only become real when citizens are engaged in the decisions and processes that affect them as both the UNDP (2007:7) and Gaventa (2002:2) argue, women in this study are often living without the right to participate in their governments.

As Kabeer (2002) argues men and women are often defined by their roles and reproduce such behavior in the public domain. This does appear to be the case in this study. The majority of men viewed women as having too many responsibilities in the home to participate in the GP, while less than half of women agreed with the same statement. As men are dominant in both society and the home, their perception of women and their role in the home has an impact on their ability to be public actors and thus their ability to participate in their local governments. More men, the majority of male respondents, than women agreed that men keep women from participating in the GP. Additionally, Kabeer (2002) argues that women often base their actions on "anticipated reaction" of men that they are dependant upon for their survival. Therefore if men perceive that women do not have time outside of their domestic responsibilities, it will likely not be an issue that women in this situation will push leaving them without access to the formal right of political participation.

Men and women in the villages acknowledged that cultural and societal views kept women from participating in the GP. The majority also agreed that women who are

active in politics are looked down upon in society. Culture in a country like India has a significant impact on every aspect of life for men and women. As Sinha (2003) argues, culture is by far the most pervasive and uncontrollable factor that keeps women in the country from realizing their formal rights. Social norms are in many cases supercede formal law and structural changes in institutions. Therefore in spite of the fact that the majority of respondents in this study agree that women have every right to participate, and even should participate in local government, cultural and societal views keep this from becoming a reality – keep women's ability to exercise their rights a reality. The majority of women in particular in this study, agreed that working or being active outside the home creates a bad reputation for women. Though men agreed in lesser numbers, acknowledging that women are stepping outside the home more and more, it is the perception. Therefore, participation in a public forum like the GP, may not appear to be empowering at all.

Culture is an extremely significant factor that has an impact on the day to day lives of women. It affects all aspects of their lives and their ability to realize their formal rights. Not only does it have an obvious and direct impact, exemplifies by the questions posed in this study, it also affects women's mobility, education and what they believe is possible in terms of realizing their formal rights.

Women, Caste & Participation

In general it appears, that caste does indeed matter. Women of different castes have different resources at their disposal to participate in the local political process. Women in this study certainly exemplified that they are not a homogeneous group. Lower caste women have far less education than their higher caste counterparts making access to the

formal political power structure less attainable. In addition, lower caste women have less time to contribute to the political process given the type of income earning activities that they engage in and the necessity of working on family land in addition to domestic responsibilities. Lower caste women also indicated that they had lower levels of mobility than women of higher caste groups. All of these make it more difficult for women of lower caste groups to access the GP system of government.

It would therefore appear that higher caste women would make up the majority of those who are participating in their GP's. However, this is not the case. While none of the women in the different caste groups had an overwhelming level of participation, SC women have the highest with 57% having attended at least one Gram Sabha compared with 29% of ST's, 40% of OBC's and 50% of General Caste women (all of which were ICDS workers. No General caste women outside of ICDS attended Gram Sabhas). In general, women's overall participation in the public form of the Gram Sabha is very low. Only 26.9% of women in the general community (excluding ICDS workers) had ever attended a Gram Sabha. The vast majority did so to find out about programs being delivered by the GP and were overwhelmingly from lower caste groups. As has previously been discussed, women only tend to attend Gram Sabhas if they believe that a direct benefit can be derived from their attendance such as information regarding a work or aid program.

Theoretically, it is more difficult for women of lower caste groups to participate in the local political process due to low levels of education and illiteracy that would naturally lead to a lack of information about the GP. In addition, women indicated that their low levels of education affected their confidence in the GP. Further, low caste

women should have less time to contribute to political activity and are less mobile than women of higher caste groups. Yet, it is women from traditionally lower caste groups (SC 57%, ST 28.6%, OBC 25%, General 0%) who are attending Gram Sabhas. The evidence suggests that patriarchal bargains are present when it comes to women and local politics. While almost all respondents expressed that it is acceptable for women to participate in the GP, societal views suggested that women that stepped outside the home are often looked down upon. Further, women expressed that there must be a justified reason to step outside the home and to attend public forums such as the Gram Sabha. For women in the lower caste groups, who are traditionally more economically disadvantaged, looking for programs that can generate revenue for the family is a justified reason. All the barriers of being a woman of a low caste group would disappear if a woman were attending a Gram Sabha out of necessity.

In Sharp et al.'s 2003 study of Bedouin women in Egypt, they found that in their efforts to establish a micro-credit program, that though women could and did enter the market place, it was not a desirable space for women to be. It was widows and the most economically disadvantaged women that entered the market place out of necessity rather than out of desire. The market place was not a place where women gained status, it was the place for men and women that had no other option. In other words, women did not perceive that they would benefit from challenging the existing order, an occurrence that Kandiyoti refers to as "patriarchal bargains".

In this case, it can be argued that a similar situation exists. Women often adopt this strategy do not necessarily realize that they are reinforcing their traditional role in society. Female respondents in the villages studied attended GP meetings in hope of

deriving a direct personal benefit. As one climbs the caste ladder in this sample, the level

of Gram Sabha attendance declines. Not one general caste woman interviewed had

attended a Gram Sabha. This suggests that attending this kind of public form is not a

desirable place for women to be. Women go out of necessity, like the Bedouin women in

the market place, suggesting that the Gram Sabhas are not a place where women as

general citizens gain status.

ICDS:

Women who work for ICDS present an interesting juxtaposition to women in the

general community. Though they attend Gram Sabhas as part of their job, they exude a

confidence that other women in the community do not appear to have. It is important to

note that the majority of the ICDS employees that took part in this study were from

higher caste groups, particularly General Caste. All women that work for ICDS are

literate and reasonably educated, but this study would contend that this is not the reason

for their confidence. ICDS workers have something that other women in their

communities don't have: the ability and justified reason to step outside their homes.

They leave the home to work in the ICDS centers where they interact with women in

their communities. Many are also involved in running the women's Self Help Groups

and other community organizations. At Gram Sabhas, they contend that they are indeed

active with the vast majority agreeing that they attend meetings both for work related

issues and out of general interest. Their confidence is evident as 78% agreed that they

voiced their opinion at Gram Sabhas and were not afraid to speak out in comparison with

8% of women from the general community who had attended Gram Sabhas. However,

ICDS women also have a justified reason to attend Gram Sabhas due to their work. In addition they cannot be excluded due to a lack of education or experience outside the household. ICDS workers interact with women from all areas of their communities and are well aware of the issues in their communities. Thus these women have the experience and knowledge to participate and have a justified reason to be there. Their mobility cannot be hampered by men in their families as it is justified as part of their job, nor can they be put off by society or the men in their community for the same reason. However, what is most striking is their confidence. They know that they are well educated and have knowledge of their communities and the needs of residents, therefore attending and participating in a Gram Sabha is not a problem for them.

To some degree, it can be argued that the ICDS employees have been granted their rights as citizens under male terms. They have developed the necessary qualities deemed necessary to participate in public life. They are educated and have worldly knowledge outside the home so that they can participate effectively in the Gram Sabha. They also have professional jobs, something that very few women have in the villages have. Their positions mandate their involvement in the GP.

Both the caste and employment positions in the ICDS centers makes these women unique in their communities. It also proves that indeed, education and mobility are necessary for participation in public life. The professional positions that these women have ahs brought them respect in their communities and within their own families. Having formal education is of course necessary, but so is knowledge of the world around you which can only be gleaned through exposure to ones community and the outside

world in general. ICDS women indicated some of the highest levels of mobility of all

interview subjects as well as greater autonomy in the home.

Chapter 7: Conclusion:

In evaluating the results of this study, some clarification is required. The conclusions that will be drawn are based on the expectations of decentralization theory. Decentralization theory claims that it will deepen democracy by relocating government to the grassroots level and that by doing so, it will increase the participation of marginalized groups thus creating inclusive representation. Through the ability of citizens to better communicate their needs and preferences, it is claimed, that decentralized governments will be more responsive and effective. As a result of decentralization initiatives, citizens will have a voice in the development of their communities through the local political process. For this reason, the participation of citizens is integral to the success of decentralization initiatives. It is important to keep in mind what decentralization promises in the theoretical aspect of which it is based upon when evaluating the findings of this study. In decentralization theory, there is the notion of a voice in the development process, a communication of needs and preferences to ones local government. Therefore participation in the case of decentralized government is about having a voice in the process of development.

It is also significant to contextualize participation in this study. It must be acknowledged that the women in this study are often participating in terms of voting, approaching their ward members and/or getting male family members to raise issues for them. While women are participating through some methods, it is well acknowledged by both male and female community members, GP council members, NGO's and scholars that the most effective and significant form of participation in this form of decentralized government is to attend and express one's self in the Gram Sabha. When women were

asked if it was possible for them to influence the GP, the vast majority, 92%, agreed that it was if they were to attend Gram Sabhas. They were well aware of that this form of participation had the greatest impact. Therefore for the purpose of this study which is examining the claims of decentralization regarding the participation of marginalized groups, it is the attendance of the Gram Sabhas that is the most significant indicator of participation. This is also reflected in the expectations of decentralization theory which indicates that it is the voice of citizens that will lead to greater government efficiency. What this study is evaluating in terms of women's participation is whether women in the villages being studied have a voice in the development of their communities. The data collected in this study has led to the conclusion that in terms of the expectations that decentralization has laid regarding participation, that women are not participating in the most meaningful and significant way: the public forum of the Gram Sabha.

As a test of theory, arguably, decentralization, in this case, has not lived up to the claims that it makes regarding the participation of marginalized groups, in this case women. The women that participated in this study often demonstrated the barriers and challenges that women face in participating in politics. Though the local level, at a glance, may appear to be a more simplified environment for marginalized groups such as women to participate in the local political processes, it is far more complicated. Gender relations at the local level are often both more unequal and very personal, especially in small villages. Women in the villages in Rajasthan face a variety of challenges including low levels of knowledge/education, low levels of mobility and a society/culture that does not always view their public lives as appropriate. Changing the structure of government and transferring it to the lower level arguably, did not alleviate the situation. Women

often did not demonstrate their own agency in voting, did not attend Gram Sabhas to have a voice in the development of their communities and had little information regarding the GP. The women that did participate all had a required, justified reason to be there. Women generally attended Gram Sabhas to insure that the basis needs of their families were met or as part of their jobs. It is reasonable to consider that the women accepted in the GP have been accepted on male terms as is contended by many feminist scholars as the presence of those who did attend did not challenge the existing order. Overall however, the majority of women that took part in this study were not actively participating, or participating according to the expectations outlined in decentralization theory.

For the majority of women in this study there are very real barriers to participation that has the ability to make voicing their needs and preferences in the development process problematic. The result of initiatives like decentralization where skill level, mobility and particularly culture are factors, is that women are often left out of the process. This is concerning because of the role that decentralized government has in development and how significant it has become. It can be contended that decentralization in this case has not led to women's voice in the development process – at least not in the short term. Many women demonstrated that they were not aware of their rights or that they could make demands on their local governments. If they were aware that demands could be made, they often didn't know how to make them. In many cases women did not feel confident to enter the public realm among their male counterparts. Women's inability to step outside the home to gain a formal education, worldly knowledge and

make their own choices regarding their mobility has arguably hindered their political participation by impacting their confidence and justifying their exclusion.

Further it is reasonable to consider that culture has an impact on women's participation. Arguably, culture has an impact when it does not view women as public actors and equal citizens. While blaming culture, particularly from the perspective of a Western women may often be considered inappropriate, it is a very real barrier to political participation for the women in this study that both men and women acknowledged. What is significant is that changing the structure of government does not change the patriarchal structures of society that create the barriers women face in participation. Thus, the expectation that relocating the structure of government will encourage the participation of a marginalized group such as women is arguably unrealistic, particularly in the short term.

In the field of development, the importance of including and considering women in the overall development project has become so significant that the inclusion of a 'gender component' in many cases is mandatory in any project or programming. It can be argued that the same is true of development theory. The mandated inclusion of women may well have led to the opposite of the intended affect. Rather than insuring that women are included in development, it is reasonable to consider that women are getting lip service even in the theoretical aspect of programming. Since the 1980's, participation in decentralized systems was recognized as problematic. However in the era of good governance and citizen participation, decentralization is being promoted as a vehicle for marginalized groups, like women, to have a voice in the development process. However, it can be argued that decentralization has continued to view women for what

they have to offer development rather than what development has to offer them. Even in this case, where participation for women is challenging, women demonstrated that they would insure that the basic needs of the family were met by attending Gram Sabhas. The women who attended Gram Sabhas did so for the purpose of meeting their basic needs. There is absolutely no fault in women supporting their families in this way. However, in terms of what decentralization indicates is participation, attendance of Gram Sabhas for this purpose is not necessarily participation. Often women are using a development initiative to have the basic needs of their families met in the short term rather than as a vehicle for sustainable, long term development that could bring stability to their families.

In order for women to make rights claims through participation, they have to be able to participate. They require education, knowledge, skills and the ability to step outside the home all of which give women the confidence and perceived right to participate have to be present in order for women to have the ability to exercise and access their rights. Women in rural Rajasthan, and certainly elsewhere in the world, are often in a position of deficit when it comes to meeting the requirements necessary to participate at any level of government.

Overall there is arguably a weakness in decentralization theory. The use of the term or concept 'marginalized groups' does not consider the many differences among them. Instead they are treated as a monolithic group. It has been demonstrated that even gender categories, like women, display vast degrees of difference. Thus, the use of 'marginalized groups' can be considered weakness in decentralization theory as it cannot begin to consider the differences among people in them or the differences among people inside them. Different groups who are considered marginalized are naturally going to

experience different challenges associated with participation. The use of the term 'marginalized groups' can be argued to be a generalization that does not consider the various challenges such 'groups' have the potential to face.

Although, it arguably has short comings, it is reasonable to suggest that decentralization is going to continue to play a significant role in development. In terms of this study, decentralization did not prove to lead to a greater voice for women in the development process. However, this does not necessarily mean that the claims of decentralization cannot eventually be realized in the long term. It may be that more support for marginalized groups can be built into decentralization in terms of how it is operationalized. For example, if it is recognized that women have challenges associated with their lower levels of education, higher levels of government that fund local governments, can insist on setting funding aside to insure the education of girls. While this may not assist women in the short term, it can attempt to insure that the next generation of women has the opportunity to have her voice heard in her local government. While cultural views can be considered to play a role in women's lower levels of participation, it is not a static concept. As society becomes more used to the idea of women being a part of the political process, it is possible that societal/cultural views will change over time. There are also methods that can be employed that ease women's participation such as creating a section or time frame of Gram Sabhas that are set aside specifically for women and making them aware of what and when these sections are through community leaders such as in this case, ICDS workers and GP ward members.

Perhaps, decentralization requires more tailoring in the context in which it is being operationalized in order to insure that marginalized groups have a voice or will have a voice in the future. Decentralization theory implies that by relocating the structures of government to the local level, the results will be somewhat instant. This does not seem to be the case. By identifying who is marginalized and the challenges that different groups face in terms of their participation, it is possible that they can be addressed through decentralization. While results may not come quickly, decentralization has the potential to be used as a tool to insure that the voices of those who are currently marginalized be heard in the development process.

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Survey Questions: Female/Male Community Members:

Personal Data

Age	
18-25	
26-35	
36-45	
46-51	
52-60	
61+	

Literacy	
Literate	
Illiterate	

Education	
None	
Primary (5th Classes)	
Middle (8th Classes)	
Secondary (10th Classes)	
Senior Secondary (12th Standard)	
College/University	
Enrolled	
Graduate	
Post-Graduate	
Technical Training	

Marital Status	
Married	
Single	
Widow	
Separated	
Divorced	

Natal Village	
Marital Village	
Joint Family Home	
Single Family Home	

Do you work outside the Home?	
Yes	
No	

Occupation	
Agriculture	
Animal Husbandry	
Business	
Gov't/Service	
Labourer	
Teacher	
Handicraft	
Other	

Do you work on any land owned by your family or contribute to family work that brings an income to your family?	
Yes	
No	

Caste	
SC	
ST	
OBC	
General	

Awareness:

Are you aware that your GP has a Female Member?	
Yes	
No	

Are you aware that seats in the GP are reserved for women? Are you aware that 1/3 of all seats are reserved for Women in the GP?	Yes: No:
Yes	
No	

Do you know who the Sarpanch is in your GP?	
Yes	
No	

Can you name the Sarpanch?	
Yes	
No	

Participation:

Did You Vote In the Last Election (Feb. 2005)?	
Yes	
No	

Why did you vote in the last election?	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
GP is important to ward dev't			
I am interested in GP			
My vote makes a difference			
It is my duty			
Family made me			
Candidate I supported			
Woman candidate			

Do you or have you ever attended a GP/Gram Sabha Meeting?	
Yes	
No	

Why did you attend GP meeting(s)	Agree	Disagree
a. To find out what was going on in GP/General Interest		
b. To get information about issue/s and/or programs		
c. To voice my opinion		
d. Other Reason		

How many meetings have you attended?	
1-2	
3-4	
5-6	
7-8	
10+	

Who/What are your information sources?	Yes	No
a. Public/Gov't Functionary		
b. Male Family Members		
c. Female Family Members		
d. Attending Meetings		
e. Friends		
f. Other:		

Are there issues in your community that should be addressed by the GP?	
Yes	
No	
Don't Know	

Are you doing anything to get these issues addressed by the GP?	
Yes	
No	

Yes

What are you doing to get these issues addressed?	Yes	No
a. Approaching Ward Member		
b. Attending Gram Sabhas		
c. Getting family members to raise concerns		

Would you consider running in an election for a GP seat with a woman's reservation?	
Yes	
No	

YES:

Why would you consider this?	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
I an interested in politics			
I would like to do something for my community			
It is important for women to be involved in politics			
Women in this position are more respected			

Do you understand how the GP works or what it does?	
Yes	
No	

Do you think that education or schooling are necessary for women in the ward to participate in the GP?	
Yes	
No	

Do you think you lack the education to participate in the GP?	
Yes	
No	

YES:

How does your lack of education affect your participation in the GP?	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
a. I have little knowledge about GP			
b. I am not confident to participate in the GP			
c. People do not respect the opinions of the uneducated			
c. Other			

Caste:

Does the caste of a female/male citizen have an impact on whether he/she will participate in the GP?	
Yes	
No	
Don't Know	

Customs and traditions such as high caste women observing purdah or low caste women working as labourers has no impact on their participation in the GP?	
Yes	
No	

Mobility:

In general, how often do you leave your house?	
a. Several times a day	
b. Once a day	
c. A few times a week	
d. Once a week	
e. Fewer than three times a month	

For what activities do you leave the house?	Agree	Disagree
a. Employment/Income earning activities		
b. Shopping		
c. Religious activities		
d. To meet with friends		
e. Collect water		
f. Activities with children		
g. Doctor		
h. Work with community group/committee/organization		
i. I am free to leave the house whenever I like		
e. Other activities		

Can you leave the house without the permission of your family or husband?	
Yes	
No	

Do you leave the house alone?	
Yes	
No	

Society/Cultural Views:

How relevant do you think that the GP system is to your village?	
a. Very Relevant	
b. Relevant	
c. Sometimes relevant	
d. Not relevant	
e. Don't Know	

In general, do you think that the Panchayat system is effective?	
Yes	
No	
Don't Know	

Do you feel that you are able to influence the GP in their decisions and priorities?	
Yes	
No	
Don't Know	

Is it possible for female citizens to influence the GP?	
Yes	
No	
Don't Know	

Is it possible for male citizens to influence the GP?	
Yes	
No	
Don't Know	

Do elections influence the GP?	
Yes	
No	
Don't Know	

Does voting influence the GP?	
Yes	
No	

Do you think that women in the villages should participate in the GP?	
Yes	
No	

Do you think that men keep women from participating in the GP?	
Yes	
No	

Do women in the villages have to many domestic responsibilities to participate in the GP?	
Yes	
No	
Maybe	

Do society and culture keep women from participating in the GP?	
Yes	
No	

Are women who are active in politics are looked down upon by society?	
Yes	
No	

Is the GP mainly the place for a man?	
Yes	
No	

Can working or being active outside of the house create a bad reputation for women?	
Yes	
No	

Are you able to openly express yourself in your home?	
Yes	
No	

Is your household controlled by the men in your family?	
Yes	
No	

Do you have a say in how your household is run?	
Yes	
No	

Are you equal to your male family members in the amount of say that you have in the household?	
Yes	
No	

Are you busy at home all day?	
Yes	
No	

Do you desire to leave your home more?	
Yes	
No	

Appendix 2:
Survey Interviews: Male & Female GP Members

Do women in the ward have the ability to influence the GP?	Yes	No
Do you think that having female members in the GP makes women in the ward or village participate more?	Yes	No

Yes:

How does having a female member increase participation?	Yes	No
a. Women can approach a female member more easily than a man		
b. Women in the ward attend GP meetings		
c. Women in the ward voice their concerns		
d. Women bring issues to female members that they want brought up in meetings or added to proposals		
e. Women will bring the concerns of women to the GP		
f. Women member is there to provide information to women that they would not otherwise have		

No:

Why do you think that having women in the GP makes no difference to the participation of women in the ward?	Agree	Disagree
a. Women GP members do not have the ability to voice the concerns of other women in the GP		
b. Women in the ward are not interested in the GP		
c. Women in the ward have little knowledge about the GP		
d. Not the place for a woman		
e. Other:		

Do members of your ward bring issues to you that they would like addressed in the GP?	Yes	No

Yes:

Do women come to you with issues that they would like addressed?	Yes	No

Do women in the villages from the wards ever attend GS meets to voice their concerns?	Yes	No

Do men in the villages, from the wards attend GS meets to voice their concerns?	Yes	No

Overall how much influence do women in the ward have in the GP?	
a. No Influence	
b. Some influence	
c. Great influence	

Is education necessary for effective participation in the GP?	Yes	No

As women are often less educated than men, is it harder for them to participate in the GP?	Yes	No

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