DIFFICULT DIALOGUES

A compendium of
contemporary essays on

GENDER INEQUALITY

in India

Edited by:

Dr. Shamika Ravi

BROOKINGS INDIA

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ABOUT DIFFICULT DIALOGUES

Difficult Dialogues is an annual forum examining issues of contemporary relevance in South Asia. The theme of the forum changes every year, yet each topic examined is approached from a broad-based perspective — with a belief that social change can only be achieved by initiating dialogue amongst the various actors, and not by discussing issues in isolation.

Hosted in Goa, the forum promotes intensive discussions between diverse stakeholders ranging from academics, young talents, celebrities and grassroots activists, to politicians and leaders from the media, business and international organisations. All discussions are moderated so as to be respectful, factually accurate and courageous. The goal of the forum is to establish new paths for Indian policy, by drafting innovative recommendations of perpetuating and promoting dialogues established during the forum.

Difficult Dialogues 2018 in partnership with University College London, Goa University, International Center Goa and Brookings India, focused on how Indian gender constructs affect fundamental aspects of daily lives and citizenship. The aim was to share knowledge about gender – its determinants, expressions, diversity, and positive and negative consequences – to start a dialogue on how gender norms can be transformed to improve the lives of everyone.

In its first edition in 2016, Difficult Dialogues focused on themes such as global finance, physical infrastructure and human capital, and the role of civil society. In 2017, the forum explored the challenges India faces in creating conditions for good health and healthcare access for all citizens.

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PREFACE

This collection of essays emerged out of ideas and presentations at the Difficult Dialogues conference on Gender Equality in February 2018, where Brookings India was a knowledge partner. In a short span of time, Difficult Dialogues has evolved as a platform that bridges the gap between policymakers, academics and scholars, and NGOs involved with implementation, by bringing them together to discuss vital issues – health, gender, education — that lie at the heart of India's development story.

The motivation behind this compendium was to extend the conversations and questions sparked by the conference. Many of the presentations at Difficult Dialogues 2018 turned into essays for this volume and Dr. Shamika Ravi, Research Director at Brookings India, took upon the mantle of editing and weaving them together.

The compendium seeks to provide a lens to view gender inequality in contemporary India, from political participation to wage parity and economic opportunities, to the interplay of gender and poverty in street situations. Every essay in the compendium is rooted in empirical evidence and peer-reviewed by experts in the field, making this a handy guide for those looking to study both India's progress and challenges through the prism of gender.

This compendium would not be possible without the efforts of several people. We would like to thank all the contributing authors, who brought their scholarship and sharp analysis to this volume. We would also like to thank the peer reviewers, who remain anonymous to preserve the sanctity of the review process, but whose expertise and valuable feedback were instrumental in honing the essays.

We would like to extend gratitude to Surina Narula, Seema Solanki and the Difficult Dialogues team, whose collabouration and continued support for this partnership made this compendium possible. We would like to recognise the research, editorial and design assistance provided by Geetika Dang, Prerna Sharma, Zehra Kazmi, Rohan Laik, Aditi Sundan and Karanveer Singh at Brookings India.

This publication reflects Brookings India's absolute commitment to our values of quality, independence, and impact. The analysis and recommendations found in these essays are solely determined by the authors. Brookings India does not take an institutional position on issues.

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6.   **'Missing' Women Leadership in Indian Higher Education: Broken Pipeline or Fields of Power?**

Manisha Priyam: Manisha Priyam is an academic and researcher and she works on issues of development and politics in India. She is currently an Associate Professor at the Department of Educational Policy, National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), India's leading policy advisory body for the Ministry of Human Resources Development (MoHRD), Government of India.

7.   **Gender in Street Situations: Challenges and Prospects of Street-connected Girl Children and Implications for Policy-Making in India**

Anita S. McMillan: Anita is a Senior Research Fellow in the Centre for Evidence-Based Interventions, at the Department of Social Policy and Intervention at Oxford University. She is a social psychologist working in both the UK and low to middle-income countries on the promotion of child mental health within public health, prevention of child abuse and neglect, and the state of children with limited or no parental care, including street and working children, child migrants, and children in institutions, with a focus on family reintegration.

Nilisha Vashist: Nilisha Vashist is a Doctoral researcher at the Division of Psychiatry at University College London. She has been trained in social anthropological methods of research at University of Delhi, India with a specialisation in medical anthropology. She has also conducted research in other fields, with a focus on gender and power relations.

Surina Narula: Surina Narula is the Founder & CEO of Difficult Dialogues. With an MBA and a Master's in Social Anthropology from the University College London, she has raised large funds for charitable causes through numerous high profile events. She was formerly the President of the Consortium of Street Children (CSG).

Sanjay Gupta: Sanjay Gupta is a devoted social activist with 18 years of experience in the field of developmental work and the Director of the NGO Childhood Enhancement through Training and Action (CHETNA). He is an engineering graduate from Pantnagar University and represents many government/non-government committees responsible for advocating children's rights.

INTRODUCTION

Existing literature has documented a significant gender gap in various sectors including health, labour market opportunities, education and political representation in India. The objective of this compendium is to move the gender policy focus towards the underlying trends and causes of these gender gaps. In particular, we highlight three areas of interaction of gender inequality with modern Indian society. The first three essays in this book explore the relationship between gender and electoral politics including women as voters, as candidates and as agents of change. The second part of the compendium includes essays on gender inequality in opportunities through labour market and education. Within the education space, we particularly analyse the area of science and higher education within India. The final chapter in the compendium focuses on street children, particularly girls, as a very vulnerable section with multiple risk factors at play. Each essay makes specific policy recommendations to alleviate gender inequality within a heighted area.

There is a growing literature within development economics with focus on gender inequality in India. Duflo (2012) provides an excellent overview of the literature by reviewing the relationship between gender inequality and economic development. In contrast to existing literature which finds stark persistence in gender inequality over time in various outcomes, in this compendium, we also report some positive phenomenon. One such remarkable trend is the sharply declining gender bias in political participation measured by voter turnout across states of India, consistent over several decades. We document the growing political empowerment of women voters in India. The reason why this is an important development is, as we discover in our research, because it is not an outcome of any specific top down policy intervention targeting female voters. Our research shows that this is largely by the voluntary act of self-empowerment of women across India.

There is a vast literature in politics which establishes the necessity of universal suffrage for representative democracy. And yet, while advocating universal suffrage, James Mill had argued that in order to keep expense of representative system down, women need not have separate voting rights because their interests were included within those of their husbands and fathers (Ryan 2012). This was later criticised by T B Macaulay who said, "Without taking the trouble to perplex the issue with a single sophism, he calmly dogmatises away the interests of half the human race." We study the data on Indian elections over the last 50 years and explore the increasing significance of women voters in a democracy. Our study contributes to the existing literature on female empowerment by analysing the role of women as voters. It is a critical area of research as women voters comprise a significant share in any election within India's representative democracy. And a vote is a formal expression of an individual's choice for a particular candidate or political party within a democratic system. We find that systematically the gender bias in voting is being reduced, over time and across all states of India. Voluntarily, more and more women electors are actually casting their votes. We interpret these results as a testimony to self-empowerment of women voters in Indian democracy.

But does increased women voter participation have any impact on the electoral outcomes in Indian elections? This is where, we provide empirical evidence of women voters in India as 'agents of change'. Our analysis shows that women voters have distinct voting behavior from their fathers and husbands. Using a natural experiment setting, we provide evidence which shows that in the same election, while women overwhelmingly voted for change, the men voted for status quo in the constituencies. The compendium also explores the role of women as political candidates in elections. We have very counterintuitive results which show that women are more likely to contest elections in relatively backwards places with lower sex ratios, rather than progressive places with higher sex ratios in the population. We provide careful reasoning using data from all assembly constituencies across India over 50 years. Finally, we also discuss whether reserving quotas for seats in parliament (and assemblies) will improve the representation of women in India democracy. We show that given the framework of electoral politics, reservations for women is unlikely to have any immediate impact. However, we also make a case for why women's reservations could be considered a necessary legislative "external shock" which can take Indian democracy towards a more equitable representation of women in the long term.

While it is a positive trend in itself, this increased turnout of women voters in India has not yet converted into greater representation of women at the central or state level. The lack of representation at the Parliament and the State Assemblies comes in the way of highlighting and addressing the grievances of women as a social group. India continues to perform poorly on the United Nations' Gender Inequality Index, ranked lower than several of her neighbouring countries. These countries have begun to perform better due to several reasons, but also by ensuring reservation of seats for women, recognising them as a historically subjugated class of citizens.

While India gave all its citizens the right to suffrage simultaneously, due to the orthodox and patriarchal set up of the Indian society, women did not emerge as a strong voter constituency. Much of the progress came from the imperatives of designing policy in line with the Fundamental Rights and the non-justiciable Directive Principles of State Policy, for example, equal pay for equal work, safe working environment and maternity leave. The last decade, however, has had a different story unfolding where the 17% gender gap recorded in the Parliamentary election of 1957 has been reduced to little over 1% in 2014. This trend has been complimented with an associated increase in women standing up for elections. This explains the recent surge in states considering or passing bills that target women voters are a witness to this finding, for example, liquor bans, widow pensions and policies targeting girl education in various states.

While the gender gap in voting is closing fast, there remains a significant gender gap in the proportion of voters who voted independently. About two-thirds of women report consulting family, friends or colleagues when considering how to exercise their vote as against just one-third of men. However, the extent of political socialisation is greater among men with many reaching out to people outside of their immediate family. This could possibly explain why women as a group— and by extension their issues— still don't constitute a vote bank

for politicians. The argument is that, since women's voices and concerns don't find space in the political discourse, their presence in the political sphere remains marginal even today. The question about what tectonic shifts in the Indian democratic landscape caused a pink revolution of sorts in terms of women turnout continues to be a labyrinth— with a number of factors interplaying with each other. However, it is certain that this silent revolution is no longer going unnoticed by the political parties in India.

The historic 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments not only embarked India on a route of decentralised governance— a recognition of the fact that governance should be responsive to the local contexts— but also a momentous time for the women in public life. While the 73rd amendment dealt with rural areas and established the three tier Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI's) , the 74th amendment ensured local governance in urban areas by establishing urban local bodies (ULB's). The constitutional amendment mandated that at least a third of all members and chairpersons at all the levels of PRI be women. This quota for women further intersected with reservation for people from the historically disadvantaged sections, such as, the scheduled castes (SC's) and the scheduled tribes (ST's) resulting in a double-edged emancipation of sorts.

In India's context, state with greater percentage of rural landscape often also have poor socio-economic indicators, especially, among women. In this compendium, we have a chapter focused on how the magnitude of increase in female voter's turnout was distributed across states of India. We find that the greatest increase was among the traditionally backward North Indian states. The impact of PRI's on the various dimensions of political participation of women cannot be discounted. Seeing the positive impact of PRI's on a number of indicators of female empowerment and the likely impact on the self-perception of leadership skills among women, most Indian states passed state level bill mandating 50% reservation of seats at all levels of PRI for women. Equipping women with leadership skills, however, is simply not enough. The chapter also finds that while there is an increase in agency for women on domestic issues, it does not always translate into greater economic independence. It is encouraging that states like Haryana and Rajasthan have gone so far as to experiment with the minimum qualification for elected women representatives of PRIs. Minimum eligibility norms such as a two-child policy, toilet construction at home, minimum education up till class 10 for General Category women (class 8 for SC/ST women) will incentivise a progressive change in social norms within local communities. Recently, the Rajasthan government further allowed leprosy patients to contest PRI elections if they met other eligibility criteria. We cannot ignore the fact that as a result of such policies, households and the community at large will be encouraged to keep female children in school which may further result in progressive changes in demographic indicators such a child sex-ratio.

Moving on to gender inequalities in opportunities, this compendium has two chapters focused on wage gap in the labour market and inequalities in opportunities within the higher education sector of India. A wide gender pay gap is a pinching reality for women across the globe, it is not peculiar to India alone. The extent of discrimination varies across regions and ethnicity. Monster Salary Index finds that Indian women on average earn about a fifth less than men

performing the same job. While this is naturally discouraging for a young and aspiring country like India where a large number of women are educated and trained to join the job market, this is also consistent with global trends. Such disparities not only discourage market entry but also strengthen regressive gender norms apart from encouraging gender based occupational sorting–women systematically taking up jobs that are not considered, stereotypically, challenging or competitive; roles that are seen as cut out for women due to the lack of their masculine character, such as, teachers, receptionists, and nurses. Wage parity would encourage a greater number of women to enter the job market besides pulling a number of women out of poverty. Unlike, the private labour market, the government sector has better gender parity of wages. This is also true of the NREGA jobs, of which 30% are reserved for women. There is a growing literature which has studied the impact of this on long term household wellbeing in rural India.

India has a long history of differential gender socialisation leading to a lopsided access and agency over assets. Limiting women to the house for the sake of their safety is associated with perverse spill-overs such as developing lack of their way around the outside world, risk of backlash when stepping out and a general sense of dis-empowerment. The lack of access to opportunities outside the four walls of a house is antagonistic to Sen's capabilities theory. It is hostile to the idea that every individual should be allowed to develop their natural core competencies such that they become productive assets socially whilst pursuing their individual interests. The limitation of choices is the most punishing at the intersection of rural landscape, poverty and gender. A poor rural woman has to navigate not just the societal norms and the cultural contexts she finds herself in, but also her own conditioned biases vis-a-vis her capabilities. The intersection of these limitations with the imperative of attending to economic needs results in multiple burdens. Lack of training in terms of understanding how to access public services, being able to communicate needs, being able to demand that which is constitutionally and/or legislatively guaranteed— knowing what is guaranteed, making providers of public services accountable to needs are some of the key hindrances such women have to traverse.

Our constitutional forefathers (and mothers) provided for equal pay for equal work in the, non-justiciable but essential for efficient governance, section of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP). The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, provided legislative muscle to the normative Article 39 of the DPSP. However, equal pay for equal work continues to be elusive in Indian labour market as in most developing economies. Within the domain of unskilled work, the general belief that women aren't as strong as men and hence unable to do intensive labour work further exacerbates intra-occupational sorting and differential wage.

What are the various means with which we can empower rural poor women? A potential solution, as discussed in a previous chapter on elected women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions, may lie in introducing them to the working of local government, the manner in which they could effectively make their demands heard and needs met. Overall, interventions at the rural level to ensure wage parity through the means of leadership skilling seems like an effective policy tool in rural Indian context.

Extending the discussion on gender inequality in opportunities, is the chapter on women in STEM careers (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). What happens when women break rigid barriers to enter traditionally "masculine" STEM careers and disciplines? The answer is that their struggle continues, facing subtle and sometimes not as subtle hue of prejudice. The differential gender socialisation, that stems from patriarchal social norms, results in not only male experts having little experience of interacting with female experts in the same field but also young girls having a dearth of positive role models in the discipline of their interest. While the industry reality makes it difficult for women to be taken seriously and to grow, its potential spillover is that young girls have trouble identifying themselves as a "scientist". It seems that this negative feedback loop is key in sustaining gender gap in STEM careers.

To encourage greater representation of women in science it is pertinent to understand what motivates them to take up research in the first place as well as what helps them stay in research. When trying to understand the common underlying factors that motivate women to take up science, parental support and guidance by mentors stand out. Spousal support emerges as a key factor in helping women stay in research. Further, to ensure institutional growth there is a need to address the "leaky" pipeline effect. It would be germane to not only conduct gender sensitisation of the male-dominated hiring committees but also design policies that encourage healthy representation of women in the power structures of higher education to introduce a balance in such hiring committees. Further, the general lack of willingness to report to female administrators needs to be addressed.

If we try to analyse the potential sources of gender gap in STEM disciplines, then one of the key emergent factor that keeps women from growing, in line with their merit, is their role in child bearing. Critical years of professional growth coincide with many personal milestones such as marriage and motherhood. A key realisation is that all dimensions of society– politics, employers, and the families themselves – have to support women in re-entering their disciplines by forming new norm to partake in childcare. Further, discouraging the hiring of a married couple in the same department and the general lack of quality institutions in close geographic contours introduces strains on the marital relations. Since women scientists report that spousal support is key to staying in research, this is a factor that institutional policy should investigate and address. Giving maternity leave, while progressive, is also likely to make hiring women more "costly". This could have long term distortionary impact on women's job opportunities. So, we recommend that paternity leaves must be made mandatory along with maternity leaves. This equalises the costs to firms while hiring employees who bear and rear children. This must be treated as a social cost to cover the social benefit of having and raising children in society.

The theory of pipeline with regards to women in positions of power in higher education posits that once there is a large enough pool of women in higher education, they will organically move up to positions of authority and power. Intuitively, it would imply that the first step towards reducing the gender gap in the structures of authority and power in the realms of

higher education would be to provide young girls equal access to quality higher education. This way the question is reduced to one of self-selection by talented and capable women that once they gain access to higher education, their merit will take them to the corridors of respect, reputation, and influence. In other words, they will get similar opportunity of growth as their male colleagues and will grow to secure tenured positions in universities, hence, securing themselves academic growth and financial stability.

Historical data shows that the representation of women has both grown in numbers and percentage in terms of access to higher education. Women now form approximately 50% of all enrolment in higher education in India. However, they continue to be poorly represented among instructors at institutes of higher education in India. This would imply that there is a gendered progression where women seem to be filtered out. Besides, there is a growing casualisation of the profession— being appointed as ad-hoc and temporary teachers— and it is here that women instructors seem to achieve parity with their male peers. Women hold about a quarter of full tenure positions in the United States and the story is little different in the central and state universities in India. However, the key difference is that the United States has gained near parity at the entry level, Associate Professor, positions whereas only 40% of Associate Professors in India are women.

The curious case of missing women in the corridors of power in the Indian central and state universities becomes all the more acute when we consider the radical impact of Women Studies centres that were set up during the time of "emergency in 1975"[1]. These centres, based in Indian central and state universities, have historically challenged many established academic traditions, including application of western theoretical models to Indian context without regard to socio-cultural differences. Further, they spearheaded the academic inclusion of the often ignored, but important in India's development agenda, sections of society that found themselves at the intersection of gender, caste, class, religion, and different geographic settings. However, there was little investigative work, leave alone rigorous analysis, in terms of the gendered power structures within universities where they were housed.

When it comes to leadership roles, women seem to be best represented as college principals of undergraduate colleges followed by directors of research institutes (17 percent, ~4000 in actuals). The trend holds in the United States as well wherein women seem to perform better at Community Colleges and Baccalaureate levels versus doctoral institutes of prestige. With women representing just nine percent of all Vice Chancellors (~500 in actuals) in India the question arises— What holds women back and what are the policies to lower the costs of entry for women leaders. Some of these questions have been addressed in the chapter on women in STEM careers.

The final chapter in the compendium addresses the case of Children in street situation (CSS) which refers to any minor associated to the street, such as, homeless children, children living

[1]   *In India, "the Emergency" refers to a 21-month period from 1975 to 1977 when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had a state of emergency declared across the country.*

in slums, and children begging on the roads. A child can land in a street situation in varying degrees and due to a multitude of reasons. These range from a child going missing, to a child being abandoned, from a child escaping a situation of domestic servitude to a child begging on streets, and from a child being orphaned to a child being born in a street community. Hence, the degree of engagement with the street itself varies from child-to-child depending upon the unique circumstances which lands a child in a street situation. Girls in street situations, albeit a minority amongst street children, are the extremely vulnerable section with multiple risk factors at play. International data reflects a higher probability of young boys landing up on the street as they are encouraged to be independent from a young age while the nature of socialisation of girls often limits them to the house. However, given the vulnerability involved, young girls tend to have far worse health and education outcomes compared to similarly situated boys. These girls are extremely vulnerable in that they are at a risk of not just physical violence, as most boys, but also an increased risk of sexual violence, servitude, and stereotypical stigmatisation. Hence, street-connected girls have to cope with the double burden of their "street" status and its interplay with their biological gender.

The United Nations Convention on Child Rights is a step in the right direction. It emphasises the rights of children as citizens – to give children participatory rights, to be heard as individuals in their own right over and above their needs as a vulnerable section being highlighted. In the spirit of such discourse, it is pertinent that policy neither encourages compulsory family reunification nor child institutionalisation without taking into account the unique circumstances of each child. In furtherance of India's accession to the UN Convention on Child Rights, India enacted the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015. It's a child friendly law that provides for care and protection for children in need in India. It is important to initiate a gendered discourse on the adversities faced by street-connected girls to highlight the hardships and vulnerabilities to document the extent of their social exclusion which then feed into their personal coping mechanisms. Additionally, street girls see teen-pregnancy, marriage out of wedlock, and marriage in general as a safe exit route from their association with the street. Decades of health policy targeting young mothers also ensure that such girls finally have access to institutionalised care.

This compendium has been curated with an objective to capture some contemporary gender issues within modern Indian economy. They range from political representation, women in leadership positions, labour market opportunities as well as identifying the extremely vulnerable women in our society. Each chapter is followed by policy recommendations by Brookings India on the identified topic within the chapter. Some recommendations lend to immediate implementation and impact, while others are more in the nature of long term policy nudges which can take India towards a gender balanced future of shared growth and prosperity.

1

Women in Indian Democracy: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

Shamika Ravi

Women play various roles in modern India's vibrant democracy. This essay explores the role of female citizens within India's democracy and electoral politics, in their specific capacity as voters, political candidates and leaders.

1. Silver Lining: A Dramatic Increase in Women Voter Participation

We begin with the most positive and consistent trend of rising female voter participation over the last five decades. In an earlier academic paper, Mudit Kapoor and I (EPW 2014) study the voter turnout in all the Indian state assembly elections over 50 years from 1962 to 2012. Based on an improving voter sex ratio, we establish that the gender bias in voter turnout has steadily fallen in India over the years.

The data used in is constituency-level data from the Election Commission of India (ECI) for all assemblies across all states. There are significant variations in the voter sex ratio across states of India, (sex ratio of voters is defined as the number of women voters to every 1,000 men), however there are some remarkable trends that emerge in our analysis. We list the three most striking results: (1) There is a steady and a sharp decline in the gender bias in voting over time. In particular, we find that the sex ratio of voters (the number of women voters to every 1000 men voters) increased very impressively from 715 in the 1960s to 883 in the 2000s. (2) This phenomenon of declining gender bias in voting is across all the states of the country, including the traditionally backward "BIMARU" states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. (3) A closer look at the data revealed that the dramatic decline in gender bias was solely driven by increasing women voter participation in the elections since the 1990s, while men voter participation has remained unchanged over the years.

These findings becomes especially significant because there has not been any deliberate policy intervention at a national or state level to increase women voter turnout over the 50 years. We also note that the sex ratio of electors (those who are registered to vote, and on the electoral roll of the ECI) in different states does not display the same increasing trend. This indicates that the increased sex ratio of women voters is not because more women have begun to register themselves as voters, but essentially because more women are going out to cast their votes. This is why we term this remarkably positive and significant phenomenon as a "silent revolution".

The right to equality in voting is a basic human right in liberal democracy. Women enjoy this right to equality in voting, and by casting a vote, they make a formal expression of their individual choice of political parties, representatives or of broad policies. The fact that more women are voluntarily exercising their constitutional right of adult suffrage across all states in India is testimony to the rise of self-empowerment of women to secure their fundamental right to freedom of expression. This is an extraordinary achievement in the world's largest democracy with 717 million voters of which 342 million voters are women.

Figure 1: Rising Female Voter Turnout across States of India

This increase in sex ratio of voters is almost entirely driven by the rising female percentage. In sharp contrast to this phenomenon, when we look at the male voter turnout we do not observe a similar pattern. In fact the male poll percent has remained stable through the decades while increasing only marginally in the 2000s. This result confirms that more women relative to men are turning out to vote in the elections. This voluntary act of self-empowerment is the key driving force in reducing the gender bias in voting amongst Indians over the last five decades.

2. Women as Agents of Political Change

Given our initial finding that more Indian women are going out to cast their voting rights, the next line of enquiry, is then, to evaluate whether this has any significant impact on the electoral outcomes. Does an increase in the number of women voters actually cause tangible change in elections? Mudit Kapoor and I have a second paper (2016) which shows that women voters indeed significantly affect election outcomes. We study the 2005 Bihar state elections which provides a "natural experiment" setting. Typically, it is difficult to draw a causal relationship between the gender of a voter to electoral outcomes. This is because, during its tenure, a government enacts different legislations that affect men and women differently. However, the 2005 Bihar state elections were a unique opportunity to examine the different choices men and women make as voters. The natural experiment setting was because no political party or coalition emerged as a clear winner in the February 2005 assembly elections. The existing Assembly was therefore dissolved, and President's rule was instituted for eight months until the re-election in October of the same year. The re-election provided an opportunity to study the impact of women voters on the electoral prospects of political parties in all the 243 Assembly constituencies in Bihar for two sets of elections, in February and October 2008, when no new State legislations were enacted.

In the re-election, the winning party changed in 36 percent of the Assembly constituencies which together comprised a whopping 87 out 243 constituencies. The Rashtriya Janta Dal party under Lalu Prasad Yadav was voted out after 15 years of rule, and the Janta Dal (United) government, under Nitish Kumar, was voted in. Upon analysing the ECI data from both the elections, our study found that the change in electoral outcome was caused essentially by women voters. First of all, between the two elections, the poll percentage of women went up from 42.5 to 44.5, while the male poll percentage declined from 50 percent to 47 percent. Next, in constituencies where the electoral results changed between the first and second election, the rate of growth of women voters was nearly three times more than in constituencies where the same candidate was re-elected. In contrast, the distribution of growth of male voters in both types of constituencies was similar. Finally, accounting for district-level variation, the data showed that while the growth rate of male voters was positively correlated with the probability of a candidate being re-elected, the growth in women voters was inversely correlated with the probability of an incumbent winning. Therefore fundamentally, women came out in hoards to defeat the incumbent RJD candidates and elect JD(U) candidates in their respective constituencies. Women voters played the crucial role of change agents in the 2005 Bihar Assembly Elections.

Figure 2: Bihar Assembly Elections

3. Women as Political Leaders

While there is growing evidence that reservation policies of countries have improved women's representation globally (June 1998, and Norris 2001), Norris and Inglehart (2000) write that the gap between men and women has lessened the least with respect to political representation, than in the fields of education, legal rights and economic opportunities. Women representation has also been shown to impact policy decisions in countries. Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) show that reservation in village Panchayat Pradhan seats affect the types of public goods provided. Though a subsequent study by Bardhan et. al (2005) shows mixed results of women's reservations. (Besley and Case (2000) show that women and child support policies are more likely to be introduced in places where there are more women in parliament. Dollar, Fisman and Gatti (2001) conduct a cross sectional comparison, and find a negative relationship between women representatives in parliament and corruption. Despite this evidence of women's representation on policy decisions, there is little insight about why such few women participate in politics as representatives even in advanced countries.

Data from ECI shows us that in the 16th Lok Sabha (the Lower House), only 66 of the 543 seats are held by women. Out of the 8070 candidates that contested in the 2009 elections, only 556 or 6.9 were women. Of these 556 women candidates, only 29 percent were candidates fielded from national or state political parties, 34 percent belonged to Registered Unrecognised parties while the remaining significant 37 percent contested as independents (Ravi and Sandhu 2014). The cost of contesting is significantly higher for independents when candidates do not have support of political parties. However, the presence of few women political representatives is not endemic to India, and it is worthwhile to study the experiences of women at a global level. While only 11.3 percent of current Indian parliamentarians are women, this number is twice as high globally, at 22 percent.

Figure 3: Women Political Representatives in India

Note: Data source is the Election Commission of India.

4. Women's Reservation, India and Across the Globe

In India, the Women Reservation Bill, that proposes the reservation of 33 percent seats for women in the Parliament and State Assemblies, was first introduced in the Parliament in 1996 by the Deve Gowda government. It has since been proposed several times, failing each time to get passed. In the global context, however, the last 20 years have seen 17 countries legislate reservation of seats for women candidates, and 44 countries legislate quotas for women candidates in political party lists.

Figure 4(a) below is a graphical representation of the countries that have reserved a percentage of seats for women in their Parliaments. These include India's neighbours, Pakistan and Bangladesh, that have reservation between 10 to 35 percent. Figure 4(b) shows us countries that have mandated political parties to field a specified percentage of women candidates. Starting with Argentina in the 1990s, this has been implmented up by numerous countries. Nepal, France and Korea are some of the countries that have legislated a mandatory share of women candidates from political parties to be as high as 50 percent.

Figure 4(a): Percentage of seats reserved for candidates in Parliament

Note: data source is the Quota Project, International IDEA, Stockholm University and Inter-Parliamentary Union

Figure 4(b): Legislated quotas (percentage) for women candidates in political parties, by year

Note: Data source is the Quota Project, International IDEA, Stockholm University and Inter-Parliamentary Union.

In our paper titled "Why so few women in politics: Evidence from India" (Kapoor and Ravi, 2014), we demystify the reason for the limited number of women political representatives relative to their share in the population globally, using data from India. We provide a theory using 'Citizen Candidate model' of representative democracy, to explain women's decisions to contest elections. Our paper then tests predictions of the model using ECI data between 1962 and 2012, for 16 large states of India, together comprising 93 % of the Indian population. The ECI data includes election data for every single parliamentary and assembly election constituency. For each constituency, we report the data on the total number and gender of voters and electors, personal details including the name and gender of every contestant, their party affiliation, and the total number of votes that each candidate secures.

Our study finds interesting patterns across states of India. We find that women are significantly more likely to contest in constituencies where the population gender ratio is skewed against them. For instance, women are more likely to contest elections in backward states, such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, where the sex ratio is less favourable. On the other hand, they are less likely to contest elections in socially advanced states, such as Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Our theory predicts that since contesting elections are relatively costlier for women compared to men (not merely monetarily but also in terms of various implicit costs), all else held constant, women seek political representation through voting in constituencies where they are in larger numbers in the population. This is true in states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu etc. where women chose not to contest as candidates, yet seek political representation through voting. This is why, women's political concerns cannot be ignored by male candidates in these places. Conversely, in places where women are fewer in number in the population (backward states with lower sex ratios), they cannot seek representation through voting alone because they are fewer in relative numbers. In these places, therefore, women have to contest as political candidates. But beyond contesting, our study also shows that while women might choose to contest, they are more likely to win elections in constituencies where they are well represented

in the population. These two trends together reveal that in advanced places, women don't contest, and in backward places they contest but don't win. Together these two trends provide a potential explanation for low female political representation in our parliament and within our state assemblies.

Pushing the envelope on women reservation, this paper suggests that, if the objective of reservation is indeed to promote and safeguard the interests of women it may not be effective to have blanket or random quotas for women candidates. The study recommends that reservation quotas for women should then be aimed towards those constituencies, where the sex ratio is the worst, and women are an electoral minority. There is no natural reason for a low sex ratio, and this can be regarded as an outcome measure of gross sustained neglect of women in the population.

5. Will Reservation Solve the Problem of Gender Bias in Electoral Politics?

India's Women's Reservation Bill proposes that a third off all legislative seats, at national and State levels in India, be reserved for women. However, it is questionable whether such a move will actually solve the fundamental problems that Indian women face— Although elections are held regularly in India, with or without reservation, they do not capture the will of the total Indian people because of the large number of women "missing" from the electorate. Kapoor and Ravi (The Hindu 2014) estimates that there are more than 65 million women (or approximately 20 percent of the population of the female electorate) missing in India. Therefore, election results exhibit the will of a population that is artificially skewed towards male preferences.

Amartya Sen was the first to speak about 'Missing Women' while noting the suspiciously low sex ratio in some parts of the developing world, which could not be dismissed easily using biological, cultural or economic explanations (Sen 1990). The deteriorating sex ratio in countries such as India and China points towards the gross neglect of women. For instance, the preference of a male child at birth is a phenomenon that has been seen in both countries. Based on the idea of missing women, Anderson and Ray showed that excess female mortality is universal, and can be seen across all age groups in these countries (Andesron and Ray, 2012) . They conducted a detailed analysis of missing women by age, and cause of death. A noteworthy, and disturbing observation was the highest number of female deaths from "intentional injuries" or reported violence in India.

The sex ratio in India should be correctable by persistent and long-term political action and public policy. However, all policy must be based on an estimate of how many women are missing from country. Therefore, we analyse the electorate date from 1962 to 2012, to study whether a solution can developed from within the political system itself. Following the methods used by Dr. Sen, we first calculated the sex ratio across the electorate. Next, using data from Kerala as the benchmark of the best sex ratio in the country, the number of missing women is computed through backward calculations.

The numbers throw up some striking results: First, the number of women that are missing from the electorate has increased fourfold, from 15 million to 68 million. This indicates that the trend of missing women has exacerbated over time, and become even more dangerous— the percentage of women missing from the female electorate has risen significantly, from 13 percent to approximately 20 percent. Second, the adverse sex ratio of most Indian states has largely remained the same over the time period of the data set, and in some state it has actually worsened. The latter category include large Indian states such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. The 'missing women' in these states means that the current electorate's political preferences underrepresent the female population, and are more likely to reflect male voter preferences. Finally, the sex ratio of the electorate always compares badly against the general sex ratio of the population. This means that women are not only underrepresented because they are missing from the population, but also because they are simply not on the electoral rolls, even if they are eligible to vote. In the traditionally backward states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the different in the sex ratio is as high as 9.3 and 5.7 percentage points, which convert to millions of women missing in absolute numbers.

Will the reservation for women in India's legislature actually help the causes of Indian women? As mentioned before, in a democracy, citizens vote for a political representative based on their policy preferences. The reverse is also true— to get elected as a political representative, a candidate must cater to the median voter. Given that women are missing from the Indian electorate in such large numbers, the median voter is inevitably male. Therefore, even a woman candidate will have to cater to male preferences to win an election. Additionally, even if a male candidate who is unbiased to women's needs is elected, he will be forced to choose policies that benefit the average male elector.

This can be seen as a market failure of democracy, and may be able to explain the pressing concerns that Indian women still have, and the persistent gender bias in the political economy. Therefore, it is unsurprising that despite India's robust elections, the country is one of the worst performers on the UN's Gender Inequality Index (GII) which captures measure of health, labour force participation and empowerment. It is outstripped even by the neighbouring countries of Pakistan and Bangladesh, despite having higher per capita income and a democratic government (Human Development Report 2012). Coming in at 133rd out 146, it comes in behind war torn governments such as Iraq and Sudan (Human Development Report 2012).

So is reservation a suboptimal policy? Our analysis reveals that it is unlikely to solve the immediate concerns of political representation for women. Reservations, however, are seen as an exogenous shock to move us out of the current bad and stable equilibrium of poor political representation. This is mainly going to be achieved by lowering the cost of entry of women into electoral politics. This will, most likely, also lead to the creation of a pipeline of women leaders for the future of India's democracy.

Conclusion

This chapter explores the role of women citizens in Indian democracy – as voters, political candidates and as agents of change. We document the significant rise, across all states of the union, of female voter participation in elections over 50 years. This is a remarkable finding given the self-empowerment nature of this phenomenon. While several factors have made is easier for women to vote in elections, there has been no concerted policy effort for this. We term this a 'silent revolution' and a movement towards self-empowerment. Additionally, we exploit a natural experiment setting to gauge whether rising women voters is making any difference to electoral outcomes in Indian elections. We establish that women are agents of change in modern India, as they vote distinctly than their male counterparts and often for change.

Next, we explore the role of women as political candidates in Indian elections. The robust empirical finding is that women are contesting in constituencies where the sex ratios are more adverse while they are less likely to contest in more progressive constituencies with higher sex ratio of women in population. We also establish that a majority of women candidates are contesting as "independents" without the backing of a political party. This makes the cost of entry into politics significantly higher for female candidates. We suggest reservation of party tickets as done in South Africa which lead to the creation of a significant pipeline of women leaders at community levels throughout the country.

Finally, we discuss whether women's reservations in parliament and assemblies will make any difference to representation. We show that given the nature of electoral politics and the skewed sex ratio of electors in the country, reserving seats for women is unlikely to have any immediate impact. This is because women candidates will contest to win election by catering to the preferences of their average voters who are male in their constituencies. So instead of randomly reserving seats for women, they should be targeted to the constituencies with worst sex ratios in the country. Adverse sex ratio of a constituency reflects years of neglect of women citizens in those places. If the objective of reservation is compensatory justice, then they should be targeted to those constituencies where the problem is the worst.

Policy Recommendations

1. No random reservation of seats for women in parliament and assemblies-instead target the constituencies with worst sex ratios. These must be moving targets as constituencies improve their sex ratios over time.

2. Political parties must have women quotas for the party tickets or seats they give contest. This reduces cost of contesting elections for women, and creates a pipeline of women leaders over time.

3. The adverse sex ratio of electors within a constituency can be partly addressed by election commission of India. The ECI must make a concerted effort to enroll women electors within the population.

4. The adverse sex ratio of electors also reflects the adverse sex ratio within the population of the constituencies. So ECI has a limited role in improving this. The larger role is of local government, civil society and the community themselves – which must proactively target public health, education towards women which improves their probability of survival.

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2

A Paradigm Shift in Women Turnout and Representation in Indian Elections

Sanjay Kumar

Women constitute close to half of the total Indian electorate, yet they continue to play a secondary role in the politics of the country. Women's participation in the political process becomes all the more important if one considers the marginalisation of their interests and voices from the larger discourse. While the Indian democracy continues to grapple with inadequate women's representation in the political arena and a gender gap in voter turnout, there has been a considerable change on both these accounts, especially with respect to voter turnout. This paper is divided into two sections, one illustrating the nature of women turnout in Indian elections and examining the reasons for the same and the second, describing women's electoral representation and participation in electoral activities other than voting.

Women turnout in Elections- A major shift in the political arena

Even though elections in India have consistently witnessed a reasonably higher turnout than the most advanced democracies, a gender gap in voting in India continues to exist. Ever since the first Lok Sabha election held in 1952, there has been a gender gap in voting until the recent elections. While the gender gap in the first few Lok Sabha elections was much bigger (about 15-17 percent) it has narrowed down significantly in recent decades. During the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, the gender gap in turnout got reduced to 4.4 percent while in the most recent Lok Sabha elections held in 2014 it got further reduced to 1.5 percent. Though India continues to fare poorly on gender parity as reflected in its 87th rank in the latest Global Gender Parity Report (2016) of the World Economic Forum[1], major changes seem to be occurring in the political arena. Recent trends in women turnout in Indian elections indicate the country could soon witness a gender reversal in electoral participation. The analysis of gender wise turnout/voting for various elections (data from the Election Commission of India) over the last four decades, indicates that there has been a significant decline in the gender bias in voting in recent years. The decline can be attributed to higher participation rate of women as the change in the gender ratio of voters is higher than the change in the gender ratio of the electors. An intriguing dimension of this emerging story is that the change has been sharp in most of the backward states (Kapoor and Ravi 2014). Considering how an increase in women turnout impacts the overall turnout and the larger process of democratisation, it becomes crucial to dissect this change and understand the factors behind it.

Recent upsurge in participation of women

There has been a decrease in the gender gap and an increase in women turnout in both national and state assembly elections. During the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the gender gap

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[1]   The Global Gender Parity Report provides an overall rank to countries based on a composite index with variables on gender differences in various arenas. The report is released annually by the World Economic Forum.

in the turnout was almost negligible. The gap has decreased substantially from nearly 16 percent during the 1962 Lok Sabha elections to less than two percent in 2014. After a period of stagnation from 1984 till 2004, there has been a sharp decline in the gender gap in turnout during the last two general elections falling from eight percent in 1999 to 4.4 in 2009 and dropping to a little over one percent in 2014. Many states have recorded an all-time high women turnout and the lowest ever gender gap in the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections.

Figure 1: Electoral Participation: Men/Women Turnout 1962-2014 (percent)

Figure 2: Gender Gap in Turnout: Lok Sabha Elections 1957-2014 (percent)

Note: Calculated as the difference between Men Turnout (percent) and Women Turnout (percent) for the Lok Sabha Election.
Source: Authors' Analysis of data released by the Election Commission of India.

Figure 3: Gender Gap in Turnout: State Assembly Elections 1990-2018 (percent)

Average Gender Gap in Assembly Elections

Period	Value
1990-92	-5.2
1993-95	-4.5
1996-98	-4.3
1999-2001	-4.7
2002-04	-3.3
2005-07	-1.8
2008-10	-1
2011-13	1.13
2014-15	1.17
2015-18	2.82

The analysis of the aggregate data released by the Election Commission of India on turnout in various assembly elections held in India between 1990 and 2016 suggests that the gender gap in turnout did not change much between 1990 and 2001. The turnout amongst the women voters begun to increase from 2002 onwards and most assembly elections held after that witnessed a higher turnout amongst women voters. We could notice this change in most of the states in varying degrees. While some change in the turnout amongst women voters began in mid-1990, the most significant change in women turnout happened from 2008 onwards, when women turnout increased significantly in many states. In fact, the states which had witnessed a very narrow gender gap in men and women turnout in the 1990s witnessed a reversal of this trend. During the period 2008 and 2016, these states witnessed a higher turnout amongst women voters compared to men.

It is widely believed that the orthodox social norms in India have limited the role of women in mainstream electoral politics and also restrained them for emerging as independent voters and reduced the importance of gender issues in the policy discourse. In this context, the significant rise in women turnout in the state assembly elections held in recent years and the recently concluded 2014 Lok Sabha Election raised the questions of what resulted in this significant rise in women turnout in Indian elections. In many states, not only has the turnout amongst women voters increased compared to the previous elections, in some of these states, women voters have outnumbered men in voting. What explains this significant shift in voting amongst women voters in India? Do we see this as a result of the weakening of traditional barriers as women in large numbers are coming out of their homes to vote on election days? Does this indicate that women voters, in much bigger numbers, are now taking their voting decision on their own compared to the past? Do we see this change as

a result of an increasing level of educational attainment amongst women voters? Is this the impact of greater exposure of women voters to the media? Do we see more women voters coming out to vote as the issues which concern them while voting is different from the ones which concern men? Are more women turning out to vote due to their concern for safety and security? Has improved security around polling stations made it more conducive for women to come out and vote? Or do we see this as a result of their increased participation in the third tier of the electoral system, namely the Panchayat by way of reservation?

Table 1: Difference in gender gap in turnout in different states: Assembly Elections 1990-2013 (percent)

	Category 1 States: High Gender Gap	Category 2 States: Moderate Gender Gap	Category 3 States: Low Gender Gap
1990-1995	10.48	4.81	0.68
1996-2001	10.94	4.39	1.74
2002-2007	6.09	3.86	-0.45
2008-2013	0.94	0.76	-2.64

Note: States with a high gender gap are Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, and Gujarat. States with a moderate gender gap are Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Sikkim, and Haryana. States with a low gender gap are Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Goa and Uttarakhand.

Source: Author's Analysis of data released by the Election Commission of India.

Table 2: Declining gender gap in turnout in different kinds of states: Assembly Elections 1990-2013 (percent)

	States with High Gender Gap		States with Moderate Gender Gap		States with Low Gender Gap	
	Men Turnout (In %)	Women Turnout (In %)	Men Turnout (In %)	Women Turnout (In %)	Men Turnout (In %)	Women Turnout (In %)
1990-1995	64	53.5	72.1	67.3	79	78.3
1996-2001	65.1	54.2	69.6	65.2	76.7	74.8
2002-2007	61.3	55.2	70.9	67	73.6	73.8
2008-2013	67.6	66.3	73.8	73	79	81.5

Source: Author's Analysis of data released by the Election Commission of India.

Table 3: Turnout amongst men and women voters: Assembly Elections since 2012 (percent)

Election	Year	Men Turnout (In %)	Women Turnout (In %)	Difference (In %)
Tripura	2018	87.42	91.4	-3.98
Nagaland	2018	81.68	86.08	-4.4
Meghalaya	2018	83.91	87.23	-3.32
Punjab	2017	75.88	77.9	-2.02
Goa	2017	78.4	83.9	-5.5
Gujarat	2017	70.49	66.11	4.38
Uttar Pradesh	2017	59.15	63.31	-4.16
Uttrakhand	2017	61.11	68.72	-7.61
Himachal Pradesh	2017	70.58	77.92	-7.34
Kerala	2016	75.97	78.14	-2.17
Assam	2016	81.95	83.24	-1.29
Tamil Nadu	2016	74.16	74.33	-0.17
West Bengal	2016	82.23	83.13	-0.9
Bihar	2015	53.32	60.48	-7.16
Delhi	2015	67.63	66.49	1.14
Andhra Pradesh	2014	74.22	74.18	0.04
Arunanchal Pradesh	2014	63.23	66.76	-3.53
Haryana	2014	76.59	75.59	1
Jammu Kashmir	2014	64.85	66.27	-1.42
Maharashtra	2014	64.33	61.69	2.64
Odisha	2014	72.95	74.42	-1.47
Sikkim	2014	80.31	81.31	-1
Jharkhand	2014	65.9	67	-1.1
Tripura	2013	90.73	92.4	-1.67
Rajasthan	2013	74.67	75.4	-0.73
Mizoram	2013	79.5	82.1	-2.6
Meghalaya	2013	85.17	88.4 4	-3.27
Madhya Pradesh	2013	73.86	70.9	-2.96
Karnataka	2013	72.4	70.47	1.93
Chhattisgarh	2013	76.93	77.32	-0.39
Nagaland	2013	89.09	91.33	-2.24
Manipur	2012	76.94	81.36	-4.42
Himachal Pradesh	2012	69.39	76.2	-6.81
Gujarat	2012	72.94	69.5	3.44
Goa	2012	78.6	84.57	-5.97

Source: Results from the ECI.

What may affect gender gap in turnout?

The narrowing gender gap in turnout between men and women should be looked at with a certain degree of caution as it can take place under three scenarios. First, there could be a situation where turnout amongst women does not increase, but there is a sharp fall in the turnout amongst men. Another situation could be that there is a decline in turnout both amongst men and women but the decline in men turnout in much sharper compared to the decline in women turnout. There could be another situation where there is a rise in turnout amongst both men and women, but the increase in turnout amongst women is much higher compared to men. And lastly, there could be a scenario, where there is a decline in men turnout and an increase in women turnout. Based on the magnitude of the gender gap in the early years in the period under analysis (1990 onwards), the states have been classified into three categories-states with High Gender Gap, States with Moderate Gender Gap and lastly states with Low Gender Gap. Interestingly there is a broader regional pattern that emerges in this classification— the socially and economically backward states of North India (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh) along with Odisha and Gujarat fall in the category of first type of states (High Gender Gap) while the second category of states (Moderate gender gap) primarily includes all the states in southern India states except Kerala, and the third category of state, include mostly the north-eastern states, West Bengal, and some of the hill states. The unique thing about this third category of states is that most of these states are small states. The gender gap remained almost constant during the first two periods in all three categories of state grouping, but this gap narrowed down substantially in states with a high gap during the period– 2002 to 2007. During the last five years, women turnout has increased in most states. During this period the gender gap in turnout has reduced in all the three categories of states but the sharpest decline took place in the states where the gap in turnout was highest. Figures in Table 2 indicate how men and women turnout has changed over the years in the three groups of states. The average men and women turnout seems to be higher in states with a lower gender gap. While the decline in the gender gap in the recent years (2002-2007) in category one states could be attributed to a fall in men turnout, the decline in the latest period has been due to a relatively high increase in women turnout in all three categories. It is interesting to see that there is no uniform trend across all states. In some states, the change in gender gap has taken place without any substantial increase in the women turnout. In the first group, for example, there has been a substantial increase in women turnout in all states except Bihar. Although the 2010 election in Bihar is often cited as an instance of substantial contraction of the gender gap, the decrease in the gap was primarily due to a decline in the men turnout. The women turnout in the 2010 election (52.7 percent) was almost equal to the average in the state from 1990 onwards (52.3 percent) while the men turnout was 51 percent, much lower than the post-1990 average of 61.1 percent. In the second group, women turnout increased as compared to earlier years in around two-thirds of the states but in the third category it has declined or remained constant in most states as it has reached the threshold levels. Thus, we can see that the increase in women turnout could be witnessed more in relatively poor and socially backward states. The regional epicenter of this surge in women participation is the Hindi heartland and the magnitude of the increase is such that there would definitely be factors other than the low base. The intriguing aspect of the story is that all these states except Gujarat rank low on the Human Development Index for Indian states. Even Gujarat, despite its relatively higher per capita income, has a moderate HDI score.

The aggregate analysis above clearly delineates this emerging trend in political participation amongst women in India. Many social scientists and political commentators have attempted to understand the broader implications of this rise in women turnout. Often larger sociological and demographic changes lay behind trends and patterns in the aggregate data. The objective of this article is to move beyond recent work on political participation amongst women in India by trying to discuss why these changes are taking place. The idea is to understand why more women are turning out to vote and identify possible factors behind this recent upsurge in their political participation. The analysis is based on a combination of both aggregate data from various government sources, survey data from the National Election Studies series conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies for the 2004, 2009, and the 2014 General Elections and data from the Census of India 2001 and 2011. It seems this rise in women turnout particularly in states that have traditionally lagged behind in various social indicators and measures of gender parity cannot be explained through a single factor. Rather than one factor playing across the country, there seems to be an interplay of multiple factors. This paper makes an attempt to identify a set of possible factors and try to understand their role in causing this upsurge in the participation of women.

The self-empowerment argument is based on the belief that more women are voluntarily turning out to exercise their right to vote due to greater self-consciousness and deeper understanding of political issues. There is a common belief that a large proportion of women do not have the independence to participate in public life and many women, both as voters and representatives, participate as proxies of male family members. At the outset, it must be understood that a substantial proportion of voters take into account the opinion of others before deciding whom to vote for. Deciding whom to vote for is not always a solitary decision as voters discuss politics with family members, friends, colleagues, local elites etc. Survey data from national polls have consistently shown that more than 40 percent of the voters accepted that they did not decide entirely on their own and the opinion of others mattered while making up their mind. Still one must note that there is a gender gap in the proportion of voters who voted independently. While more than two-thirds of the men claimed to have decided without taking anybody else's opinion, the proportion was much lower amongst women at around a little more than half.

Table 4: Proportion of voters who voted on their own, without anybody else's opinion: Lok Sabha elections 2004-2014 (percent)

Year of Election	All	Men	Women
2004	63	71	53
2009	58	65	50
2014	63	69	56

Source: National Election Studies 2004, 2009, and 2014 conducted by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS).

Table 5: Whom do voters normally consult while voting?: Lok Sabha elections 2009-2014 (percent)

Voters who consulted--	Year	All Voters	Men	Women
Spouse	2009	30	13	45
	2014	21	11	30
Other Family Members	2009	30	30	31
	2014	34	31	37
Local Political Leader	2009	16	24	9
	2014	17	22	13
Caste/Community Leaders	2009	12	17	8
	2014	16	21	12
Friends, Co-workers and Colleagues	2009	8	11	4
	2014	9	13	6

Note: The rest said that they consulted others.
Source: National Election Studies 2009 and 2014 conducted by the CSDS.

Even amongst those who took others' opinion while deciding who to vote for, there is a gender difference in terms of whose opinion mattered most. Men tend to interact with a broader group of people as more than half of them who did not vote on their own consulted individuals outside their immediate household – friends, colleagues, caste leaders, and local leaders. On the other hand, for more than two-thirds of women who didn't vote entirely on their own, the opinion of their husbands or other family members mattered most. Socialisation and independence in decision-making should not be understood as either or between voting on your own and taking someone else's opinion. An individual who interacts with a wider range of people and discusses politics outside the household would be considered to have a greater degree of political socialisation. Also, it would be safe to assume that even in a discussion on politics within the household; on an average, women, especially daughters-in-law and unmarried daughters would have the least say.

The self-empowerment hypothesis would explain the higher women turnout as a result of a greater degree of socialisation amongst women as compared to earlier, and independent decision-making with a lesser influence of other family members. The analysis of the survey data from the National Election Studies 2009 and 2014 for eight states which have seen a significant fall in the gender gap due to an increase in women turnout, mostly the low-income states of the country – Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha indicates mixed results. In four of these states – Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, and Chhattisgarh there was a sizeable increase in the proportion of women who voted without taking anybody else's opinion. In other states, the proportion has either remained constant or in fact decreased. One cannot say for sure that the higher turnout of women voters in recent elections in India is due to their ability to take independent voting decision.

A broad concept like the self-empowerment hypothesis cannot be accepted or refuted completely based on mixed evidence of changes in the proportion of women voting on their own. One must look at other dimensions of the concept before drawing a larger conclusion.

Let's try and see if the issues which motivate voters to vote are different for men and women and does that have any impact on increasing turnout amongst women?

Table 6: State wise analysis of proportion of voters who voted without taking anybody else's opinion (percent)

State	Increase in Women Turnout between 2009 and 2014	Gender Gap in Voting		Change in proportion of women voting without anybody else's opinion
		2009	2014	
Rajasthan	16.6	6.7	3.2	27
Uttar Pradesh	13.2	6.5	1.7	22
Assam	12.4	5.3	-4.8	11
Chhattisgarh	16	6	2.7	9
Madhya Pradesh	12.7	13.7	9.5	2
Jharkhand	15.8	6.2	0.7	1
Bihar	15.1	6.5	-2.6	-1
Odisha	10.4	1.5	-2.4	-8

Note: Gender Gap estimated as the difference in the Men Turnout (percent) and Women Turnout (percent).
Source: National Election Studies 2009 and 2014 conducted by the CSDS.

What women voters vote for: Issue-centric voting

Figures in Table 7 indicate that there is no significant difference based on gender about the most important issue while voting. The most important issue has been the same for both men and women— drinking water in 2009 and the price rise in 2014. On the other hand, corruption and unemployment seem to be more important for men as compared to women. This could simply be attributed to greater awareness and higher labour force participation amongst men. Women issues and crime against women are the most important issue for less than three percent of women voters and less than one percent of men voters. Clearly there is hardly any difference in the concerns or the issues which motivate the women and men to vote and certainly, the issue of crime against women is hardly an issue which has motivated women voters in recent years to come out to vote in much bigger numbers compared to the past.

Table 7: Gender wise opinion on issue which influenced voting decision: Lok Sabha Elections 2009-2014 (percent)

Issue	2009		2014	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Price rise	8	9	18	20
Road, electricity, water, and development	31	33	24	22
Corruption	1	1	13	9
Unemployment	15	10	9	6
Women issues and crime against women	1	1	1	3

Note: An open-ended question was asked to all respondents and the responses were coded later. Others either gave different answers or had no opinion.
Source: National Election Studies 2009 and 2014 conducted by the CSDS.

If the increase in women turnout is indeed a result of women emerging as a separate political constituency then one would also expect women being considered as a vote bank by political parties just like caste and communities are considered by different political parties. In the recent elections with an increase in turnout amongst young voters, they are being seen as a vote bank by parties and findings of the CSDS surveys does indicate that the young voters did vote decisively in favour of one party (BJP) during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. Research on gender voting in India has primarily demonstrated the existence of a gender gap in the support base of the principal national parties – the BJP and the Congress. The Congress has traditionally been known to have a slight gender advantage amongst women. Its votes share amongst women normally had always exceeded the proportion of votes the party gets amongst men (Yadav 2003). This difference for the Congress narrowed down in 2014 as the party received almost the same proportion of votes amongst both genders. The BJP, on the other hand, has been known to have a gender disadvantage as more men are likely to vote for the party as compared to women (Deshpande 2009).

Figure 4: Gender gap in voting for Congress and BJP (percent)

Note: Difference in the percentage vote amongst women voters and men voters.
Source: National Election Studies 2009 and 2014 conducted by the CSDS.

Rajeshwari Deshpande in her analysis of the voting behaviour in the 2009 general election indicated that gender was not a major social cleavage determining voting patterns and women do not always vote as gendered beings (Deshpande 2009). This can be seen through the CSDS post-poll data as well as the fact that the gap in support amongst men and women for both the BJP and the Congress is marginal if compared to uneven support for the parties amongst different social groups like caste, religion, and class.

Increase in socio-economic development and voting

It is possible that relatively lesser access to information and knowledge necessary for participation, and restrictions on participating in activities outside the household sphere, has been responsible for lower political participation amongst women in the past. It could be argued that as a result of the rise in the literacy amongst women and the rapid spread of information (a natural consequence of the development process post-liberalisation); there

has been a moderation of patriarchal norms and an improvement in the position of women in households. This may have made it possible for a large number of women voters to move out and participate in public activities. It is possible to relate turnout with literacy as women who are non-literate might have relatively less information about the significance of political participation (Giné and Mansuri 2011). Globally, there is mixed evidence for the relationship between education and turnout. A few studies in America have shown how the level of education affects turnout by raising the political skill level of voters and lowering their cost of voting. Fornos et al used pooled data from Presidential and Legislative elections in Latin American countries and showed that there was an insignificant relationship between literacy and voter turnout (Fornos et al 2004).

Analysis of the data presented in Table 8 indicates the relationship between education and women turnout which has been relatively lower amongst non-literate women in both 2009 and 2014. There seems to be a sharp difference in the turnout if one compares the middle and lower category. Basic education is adequate for increasing political participation as it provides an individual with the required degree of political awareness and information. A lot should not be read into the lower turnout amongst highly educated women as it could simply be a reflection of the class effect as turnout has traditionally been lower amongst the upper class across gender. Having demonstrated a relationship between education/literacy and the probability of turning out to vote, I now try to match improvements in the educational attainment of women voters with the rise in women turnout in various states.

Table 8: Level of educational attainment of women voters and turnout:
Lok Sabha Elections 2009-2014 (percent)

Level of Educational Attainment	2009	2014
Non-Literate	53	65
Up to Matric	58	67
College and above	55	63

Source: National Election Studies 2009 and 2014 conducted by the CSDS.

Analysing data from the 2001 and 2011 Census of India, suggests that in category one states (states where women turnout has increased over the years) no clear relationship exists between changes in women turnout and literacy. Improvement in women literacy was considerably higher than the national average only in Uttar Pradesh and Odisha. While Gujarat performed at par with the national average, improvement in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh was slightly lower. Except for Tripura, in all category two states, the improvement in literacy was lower than the national average. Low improvement in Tamil Nadu and Delhi is not surprising as these states had limited scope due to their high base. An interesting finding is that there has been no major long term increase in women turnout in Bihar which has recorded very high improvement (61 percent) in the literacy rate amongst women. Even though there seems to be no perfect matching between the quantum of change, one mustn't ignore that there has indeed been a substantial increase in the literacy rate amongst women. It may possibly be incorrect to completely disregard literacy as a factor in changing patriarchal norms and facilitating higher political participation amongst women.

Table 9: State wise pattern of increased literacy rate amongst women and declining gender gap in literacy (percent)

State	Gender Gap in Voting		Increase in Literacy rate amongst women(2001-2011)
	2001	2011	
All India	21.6	16.6	22
States with traditionally High Gender Gap in turnout (Category I States of above mentioned classification)			
Uttar Pradesh	26.6	19.9	40.5
Odisha	24.8	18	27.5
Rajasthan	31.9	27.8	19.8
Madhya Pradesh	25.8	20.5	19.3
Gujarat	21.9	16.5	22.3
States with traditionally Moderate Gender Gap in turnout (Category II States of above mentioned classification)			
Tripura	16.1	9	28.2
Chhattisgarh	25.5	20.9	16.8
Delhi	12.6	10.1	8.3
Haryana	22.8	18.6	19.9
Tamil Nadu	18	12.9	14.8

Source: Census of India 2001 and 2011.

Increased media exposure and its relationship with women voters

Alongside the increase in literacy, the last decade has also witnessed rapid technological progress which has led to a major increase in media exposure in the country. Newspapers, television, and the radio are sources of information for people across the country. The media plays an important role in inducing political participation by generating awareness about rights and issues. It also aids various civil society organisations and the Election Commission of India who use it as a platform for voter awareness campaigns. Similar to education, there seems to be a sharp difference if one compares turnout amongst women without exposure to media with those with limited exposure. Lower turnout in the top category could again be a reflection of the class and locality effect. The exposure to media has been estimated based on the frequency with which they follow news through the three main sources – Television, newspaper, and radio. Comparing data from the 2011 census with the previous round shows that there has been an increase in TV ownership from 32 percent in 2001 to more than 47 percent in the latest census[2]. Data from the National Election Studies shows that there has been a massive upsurge in media exposure in the last half-decade. Figures reported in Table 10 indicate the proportion of voters who had no or very low exposure to media. It is quite evident that there has been an overall increase in the exposure to media and now more than half the electorate seems to be following news through television, newspapers and/or radio with different frequency. In the last half decade, there has been a massive increase in media

[2]   *Census 2011 and 2001: Household Ownership of Assets.*

exposure amongst both men and women and the proportion of women with very low or no media exposure has dropped sharply from 65 percent in 2009 to 39 percent in 2014. The trend continues state wise, and the states that have recorded a high increase in women turnout in this general election and a decline in the gender gap, have also seen a massive upsurge in media exposure.

Table 10: Level of media exposure and turnout amongst women voters:
  Lok Sabha Elections 2009-2014 (percent)

	2009	2014
High Media Exposure	58	69
Moderate/Low Media Exposure	62	67
No Media Exposure	54	63

Source: National Election Studies 2009, and 2014 conducted by CSDS.

Table 11: Declining proportion of voters (Men and Women) not exposed to media:
    Lok Sabha Elections 2004-2014 (percent)

Not exposed to Media	2004	2009	2014
All	57	53	30
Men	49	43	22
Women	67	65	39

Source: National Election Studies 2004, 2009, and 2014 conducted by the CSDS.

Table 12: State wise analysis of change in level of media exposure and gender gap on voting:
    Lok Sabha elections 2009-2014 (percent)

State	2009		2014	
	Gender Gap in Turnout	Proportion of Population with no media exposure	Gender Gap in Turnout	Proportion of Population with no media exposure
Rajasthan	6.7	50	3.2	43
Uttar Pradesh	6.5	79	1.7	30
Assam	5.3	59	-4.8	58
Chhattisgarh	6	79	2.7	57
Madhya Pradesh	13.7	72	9.5	31
Jharkhand	6.2	85	0.7	37
Bihar	6.5	89	-2.6	56
Odisha	1.5	66	-2.4	39

Source: National Election Studies 2009 and 2014 conducted by the CSDS.

An interest in politics also influences the voting behaviour of women. Out of those women who had an interest in politics only nine percent did not vote, while 20 percent of those women who had no interest in politics did not cast their vote (Table 13).

Table 13: Interest in politics and voting

Factor	2009	2014
Interest in Politics	91	9
No interest in politics	80	20

Source: National Election Studies 2014 conducted by the CSDS.

Role of the Election Commission of India

One of the principal objectives of the Election Commission of India is to conduct free and fair elections and ensure maximum electoral participation of voters in all the state assembly elections and national elections. In the last few years, most of the Commission's activities for voter awareness and ensuring maximum participation have been integrated and conducted under the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) program. The program focuses on information, motivation, and facilitation which have been identified as the key drivers of participation. To implement the program nationally, the commission has partnered with various civil society organisations and media houses. A formal engagement has been made with the National Literacy Mission Authority of India for electoral literacy in rural areas and Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA), Anganwadi and other female field workers have been engaged at the local level. Apart from the voter awareness programs, the ECI should also be credited for its concerted efforts for cleaning of the electoral rolls. The deletion of ghost voters from electoral rolls would naturally increase the turnout (Kumar 2013). While there is an indication of this move of the ECI helping in greater enrolment of voters and higher turnout amongst all voters, which should normally apply to women voters as well, but there is no evidence to suggest as to what extent this effort of the ECI helped in increasing turnout amongst women voters in recent elections in India.

This section of the paper has tried to delineate possible reasons and implications of increased turnout of women at the polling booth. From this analysis, the first important finding is that it is near impossible to generalise the diverse nation-wide trend. The increase can be attributed to a multiplicity of factors interacting with the unique social and political contexts of each of the states. Thus, there is no one narrative that can be used for the entire nation. Having said that, there are some other factors that do have a nearly consistent relationship with turnout across states. Interest in politics and levels of media exposure do point to a possible correlation with increased voter turnout among women. The traditional factors which are usually thought of as drivers for this change, such as increased levels of literacy and reducing patriarchal control over women's lives, however, do not have an unambiguous relationship with voting. While we do not dismiss the possibility of the betterment of literacy rates among women to be a reason for increased turnout, research available in the Indian context is still at a nascent stage for us to conclude anything. Similarly, the implication of greater self-empowerment to voting is a phenomenon that is still unfolding; women appearing in greater numbers at the polling booth is not enough evidence to suggest their unequivocal presence in the political space in the country. One important reason to be wary of prematurely coming to this conclusion is that women and their issues still don't constitute a vote bank for politicians. Essentially, since

women's voices and concerns don't find space in the political discourse, their presence in the political sphere remains marginal even today.

Another important marker of this marginality is the lack of representation of women in the country's politics. In the following section, we examine the presence of women in the country's legislature. The effects of increased voter turnout and reservation in local level elections become the basis of understanding the trends in this regard.

Representation of women in legislatures and local bodies

Women's turnout in India's electoral politics is an emerging and positive trend in the sphere of electoral politics in the country. While higher women turnout is an encouraging sign in its own right, its implication on various other markers of political participation is an important concern. In the following section, political participation of women through direct representation in elections is sought to be studied.

Although, the proportion of women in the Lok Sabha has increased only marginally between 1996 and 2014 – from 7.4 percent to 11.2 percent— there has been a significant rise in the number of women candidates over the years. However, there seems to be no clear connection with women candidates and women turnout. A study of participation of women in state assembly elections in India has shown that the victory of women candidates only leads to an increase in the share of the women candidates in subsequent elections and has no effect whatsoever on women turnout or spillover effects to neighboring seats (Bhalotra et al 2013). No correlation has been found between the vote share of women candidates and voter turnout amongst women (Chari 2011). It seems therefore that women candidates in elections don't contribute to bringing more women to the booth. However, at the local level (Panchayat level) there seems to be some evidence for a positive impact of increased political representation of women through reservation on the participation of women in the activities of the Gram Sabha (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004). Findings reported in Table 14 indicate how the number of elected women representatives in local bodies has increased over the years. Since in many states, the reservation of seats for women has been increased from 33 percent to 50 percent, the proportion of elected women representatives has increased further after 2009. Bihar was the first state to introduce 50 percent reservation for women in Panchayats when in most of the states it was 33 percent. Now barring Gujarat, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh which still have a system of 33 percent reservation of seats for women in Panchayat, most of the other states have followed Bihar and increased women reservation to 50 percent in Panchayats. A Constitutional Amendment Bill guaranteeing 50 percent reservation at the Panchayat level across all states is pending in the Parliament.

Table 14: Increasing number of elected women representatives in gram panchayats:
2001-2014 (percent)

Year	Total number of Elected representatives	Number of Women	Percentage of Women Elected Representatives
2001	27,39,666	6,85,155	25
2002	16,30,327	5,48,794	34
2004	20,65,882	8,38,227	41
2006	26,56,476	9,75,116	37
2008	26,45,883	9,75,057	37
2009	26,45,880	9,74,255	37
2014	29,16,000	12,71,050	44

Source: Ministry of Panchayati Raj.

Though it is reasonable to expect that the entry of more than a million women into political life would have had an impact on the socialisation of women, one would need to exercise some restraint and shouldn't draw larger conclusions without adequate empirical evidence. What has been achieved at the level of Panchayat elections is markedly different from the picture at national and state level. The failure to pass the Women's Reservation Bill is one important reason why representation of women remains abysmally low in politics in the country.

The Women's Reservation Bill which was first introduced in the Parliament in 1996 by the H.D. Deve Gowda government has not been passed since. The current version of the bill, the 108th Amendment, which seeks to reserve 33 percent of all seats in governing bodies at the centre, state, and local level for women has been passed by the Rajya Sabha but has been stalled by the Lok Sabha. This reflects an inadequate commitment of the Indian democracy to women's political representation.

Despite the lack of political will to pass the Bill, there has been some, albeit limited, development in this regard. The number of women contestants and elected leaders have consistently risen. Since 1957, there has been an increasing trend in the number of women contesting in the Lok Sabha elections. While only 45 women stood for elections in 1957, this number rose to 668 in 2014 (Figure 5). Though the increase has been largely gradual, a sharp rise was seen in 1996, where 599 women contested elections. However, in the following two elections, there was a decline in this number as well. The failure of passing the Women's Reservation Bill and the disenchantment that followed can be a reason behind the same. However, since then a steady increase in the number of women candidates has resumed.

Figure 6: Number of Male Contestants in Lok Sabha Elections (1957-2014)

Figure 7: Proportion of Increase in Men and Women Contestants

Interestingly, one can observe that the success rate of female candidates winning their seat has always been higher than that of male candidates. In 1957, the success rate of female contestants was considerably higher to that of male contestants, 49 percent as opposed to 32 percent. This gap has reduced since then, with 2014 having a difference of only 4 percent between the two success rates (Figure 8). This information can give the impression that the electorate does not vote in a gender biased manner, however, it is important to examine this data more closely before reaching that conclusion. One reason for the consistently higher

success rate of female contestants is the fact that lesser number of women stand for elections as compared to men, therefore it appears that women have a higher chance at winning the election if they stand for it. One possible reason for the declining success rates for both male and female candidates is that increase in competition, through increase in number of candidates per election, stunts the chances of victory for individuals.

Figure 8: Success Rate of Male vs. Female MP Contestants (percent)

Despite an increasing trend in the number of female contestants and a high female success rate, women's representation in parliament remains abysmally low. Out of 545 seats in the Lok Sabha, only 66 are held by women (Figure 9). This is a meager 11 percent of the total number of MPs in the Lok Sabha (Figure 10). Though there has been an increase in the proportion of women's representation in the Lok Sabha, from 4.4 percent in 1952 to 11.2 percent in 2014, India still stands very low in terms of women's representation in parliament with a world rank of 148 (Report by Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women, 2017).

Figure 9: Number of Women MPs in the Lok Sabha (1952-2014)

Figure 10: Proportion of Women Representation in the Lok Sabha (1952-2014) (percent)

% of Women MPs

India's low rank in women's representation in political life foregrounds the need for reservation of seats at the state and national level. Even amongst its South Asian neighbours, India fares poorly, with just Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bhutan having a lower rank than India. These nations are opposed to reservation policies for women. All the South Asian countries with some policy on reservation for women's seats in parliament secured a considerably higher rank. Nepal was ranked the highest at 47 with nearly 30 percent of the total MPs being women. Its recently instated policy of 33 percent reservation for women candidates in parliament has played a part in this achievement (Table 15). Afghanistan, a nation riddled with rampant oppression towards women was ranked at 53. Here again, 27 percent of the seats in the lower house, Wolesi Jirga, are reserved for women. This has drastically improved representation of women's interests and given women a strong political voice. Pakistan too has done better than India with a world rank of 89. Pakistan has a reservation policy of reserving 17 percent of the seats for women in the National Assembly and in its last general election in 2013, 21 percent of the seats were won by women candidates, a significantly higher proportion than that in India. Bangladesh got a much higher rank than India as well at 91. Bangladesh has also introduced a reservation policy where 50 out of the 350 seats in parliament are reserved for women. By gauging the performance of all these neighboring states of India, a direct correlation can be seen between reserving seats for women in legislatures and the country's performance in reducing the gender gap in political representation.

Table 15: Women's Representation in Parliaments of South Asian Countries

Country	Afghanistan	Bangladesh	Bhutan	India	Maldives	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
Year of Last General Election	Lower House: **2010** Upper House: **2015**	**2014**	**2013**	**2014**	**2014**	**2013**	Lower House: **2013** Upper House: **2015**	**2015**
Percentage of Seats held by Women in the Parliament	Lower house, House of the People, Wolesi Jirga: 27.7% Upper House House of Elders, Meshrano Jirga: 26.47% *The Upper has 102 seats but in 2015, elections only took place in 68 seats.	**20.3%**	Lower House, National Assembly: **8.5%** Upper House, National Council: **8%**	Lower House, Lok Sabha: **11.8%** Upper House, Rajya Sabha: **11.1%**	**5.88%**	**29.6%**	Lower House, National Assembly: **20.6%** Upper House, Senate: **18.3%**	**5.8%**
No. of Seats held by Women/ Total Number of Seats	Lower House: **69/249** Upper House: **18/68**	**71/350**	Lower House: **4/247** Upper House: **2/25**	Lower House: **64/542** Upper House: **27/244**	**5/85**	**176/595**	Lower House: **70/340** Upper House: **19/104**	**13/225**
World Rank in Women's Representation in Parliament	**53**	**91**	**169**	**147**	**177**	**47**	**89**	**178**

Representation of women in state assemblies also remains low- below 10 percent in most states. On an average, the proportion of women in state assemblies is six to seven percent and in Kerala, this proportion is as low as five percent. There have been instances where there have been no women in state assemblies like in Pudduchery in 2001, Nagaland in 2003 and Mizoram in 2003, and in some states, there has been only one-woman representative such as in Manipur and Goa. These facts highlight the extent of the gender gap in political representation in India and that there has hardly been any change in the pattern of women's representation in legislatures. This further calls for a step to be taken in this direction.

Participation in democratic process is not limited merely to voting and standing for elections but also extends to participation in election meetings, processions, door-to-door canvassing etc. Here we can see an increase in women's participation in election meetings and rallies, from nine percent in 2009 to 15 percent in 2014 (Table 16), which provides a basis for greater women involvement in grass root political engagement and can thus be seen as a positive change. With respect to 'nukkad-nataks', processions, and door-to-door campaigning, there has been a meager change or no change between 2009 and 2014. Therefore, we need to do more research to get a holistic picture of women's political participation at the local level.

Table 16: Electoral Participation beyond Voting and Contesting Elections

Forms of Electoral Participation	2009		2014	
	Men	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**
Election meetings/ rallies	9	28	15	34
Participation in processions/ nukkad-natak etc	5	20	6	15
Participation in door to door canvassing	6	17	6	14

Source: National Election Studies 2009 and 2014 conducted by the CSDS.

Conclusion

This paper is simply an exercise in trying to understand the phenomenon of increase in female voter turnout and female representation in politics. Possible hypotheses were tested to figure what may be the factor/factors contributing to higher electoral participation of women in recent years. The trend of higher women turnout is only a recent phenomenon (last 5 years). Stability in this trend could indeed be an indicator of a possible structural change in political participation in India. The analysis of the data does indicate some positive correlations between these factors and a higher turnout and does help in finding some answers to this big question, but still, more research is needed to understand what may be the other factors which have contributed in the higher turnout of women voters. More importantly, detailed and systematic research is required to find out if this higher turnout amongst women voters has left an impact on the life of the Indian women outside their household domain. Overcoming the gender gap in turnout is indeed a landmark moment in the democratisation process in India like in any other country. If the gap continues to remain low and differences in the quantum of change in men and women turnout are eliminated in most states, India would join a group of established

democracies like some of the Nordic countries (Seppälä 2004), United States of America and Britain (Norris 2002) which had managed a gender reversal in electoral participation more than three decades ago. But if this achievement does not lead to their empowerment in the political sphere, the full potential of this substantive change would remain unrealised.

Further, we observed the trends in women's representation in the parliament and compared India's performance in this area to other South Asian nations in order to understand where India stands in terms of gender parity in political representation of women as well as if there is a relation between policies on reservation and improvement of the existing gender gap. Examining the above as well as seeing the poor level of women's representation in state legislatures, there seems to be a need for active political intervention to increase women's representation and give greater political accessibility to women in legislative bodies. Women do not get represented in legislatures as parties do not nominate a sizeable number of women as candidates for contesting elections nor do women find a place in important positions within the parties. An important case study for the need for reservation could be the impact of such representation at local level politics, where increased female participation in the political sphere has a substantive relationship with the increase in women's candidature.

Increased female political participation brings core concerns of women voters to the fore and contributes to transforming women voters into an important voter constituency. But for this to be achieved, a lot more women representatives would need to enter the political arena. Only having some women in few positions of power does not lead to a transformed society, rather women need to be represented at all levels and spheres of the political process. There has been a rise in female contestants in elections and their success rates have also consistently been higher than male contestants, and while change has been slow to come, there have been no negative reversals to the trend of increasing female participation.

Though representation of women remains low, the rise in their voter turnout, the marginal increase in their representation in parliament, the positive change in representation of women in Gram Panchayats and their increased involvement in other electoral activities mustn't be discounted as these demonstrate the faith women have in democracy and its institutions and their strong belief in the power of a vote. All these factors show a slow, but a desirable shift in women's increased role in Indian democracy.

Policy Recommendations

1. **Reservation:**
   Victory of a female candidate leads to an increase in the share of female candidates but has no statistical effect on either women turnout or spillover effects on neighboring seats (Balhotra et al 2013). Further, the vote share of female candidates and female turnout are found to be uncorrelated (Chari 2011). Hence, to achieve gender equity in elected offices at the state and national level, there is a need for affirmative action. The case for such affirmative action becomes stronger when we consider Panchayat level evidence of the impact of female political representation on the participation of women in gram panchayat activities (Chattopadhyay and Dufflo 2014).

2. **Voter Education:**
   The trend of increasing female turnout in assembly and parliamentary elections is encouraging, but the emphasis needs to be on translating these votes into independent votes. This is important for ensuring that women emerge as a political constituency. Offices of elected representatives will be more responsive to the needs of women when women vote independently based upon issues that matter to them. It's essential to increase political socialisation of women such that they discuss their voting preference outside of their immediate family. About two-third women as against just a third of men report consulting family, friends or colleagues when considering how to exercise their vote. Hence, the Election Commission should extend their efforts in educating female voters on the importance and impact of their independent vote based on agendas that directly impact them.

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3

Elected Women Representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions

Shreyasi Jha and Prerna Sharma

Over two decades ago, the Government of India undertook one of the most progressive experiments in modern history aimed at liberating rural Indian women "from the kitchen and the courtyard...into positions of authority and responsibility in their village communities."[1] Through the 73rd and the 74th Constitutional Amendments quota-based reservation for women was provided at the panchayat, block and district level in India. This saw the legalisation of affirmative action for women and disadvantaged groups, reserving a minimum of one-third of seats for women (both as members and as chairpersons) within all Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). It was expected that the women's reservation in PRIs would ensure women's greater political empowerment and that seeing women in power positions would help women liberate and break out of traditional gender roles. Two decades down the line, there is growing realisation that guaranteed political representation and affirmative action does not necessarily guarantee effective participation and leadership for women. Women elected representatives to the PRIs continue to face a number of institutional and social hurdles that prevent them from fully exercising their voice, agency and representation in the political process.

In the case of reservation, literature and statistics pose a promising picture. Political reservation has resulted in more women contesting elections and taking up leadership positions. However, evidence also shows that bottlenecks to women's political participation and leadership persist at almost all levels and there remains tremendous scope for institutions and structures to be more gender-responsive, towards creating an enabling environment for women's political participation. In the context of the constitutionally guaranteed affirmative action, there remains a large scope for democratic decentralisation and understanding of persistently dismal gender outcomes. Much of the research on women elected through quota-based reservation often gets restricted to 'for' or 'against' quotas. This chapter seeks to look beyond quotas and understand the determinants of women's political effectiveness.

This chapter aims to explore and provide evidence from a UN-Women & Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India commissioned survey across six Indian states and 591 elected-women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions. In exploring and presenting the evidence from this study, this chapter will seek to provide a demographic picture of the elected women representatives and document and present their empowerment and representation at the local governance level. To better document and understand the struggles that women elected representatives face in India in their quest for political leadership, the overarching aim

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[1] *Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MOPR), 2008.*

of the chapter is to understand and highlight some of the structural limitations that women experience in different regions/states in their struggle for gender equality in politics. We also aim to identify the ways in which women impact political processes through the kind of issues and agenda points they bring up and if they exert agency in doing so.

Background

Evidence shows that in India, despite having the highest number of elected women representatives globally, their participation is severely curtailed due to "discrimination, lack of access to information, illiteracy, the double burden faced by women at work and at home, deeply etched inequalities, social stigmas, political barriers and limited efforts to equip Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) with requisite skills"[2]. Social norms continue to command the roles, voice and status of women in both public and private domains and the gender equation remains difficult, largely unchanged and well seeped into social, structural and institutional barriers that restrict access and equal rights. This disadvantage in case of women, is perpetuated by historic inequities[3] like social and economic dependence on men, illiteracy, restricted social mobility, violence and discriminatory social practices— thereby continuing to maintain the status quo of inequality . In the case of India, caste and class create an added dimension of disadvantage impeding equal participation of women in public life and access to public resources.

High levels of female deprivation in India start from the right to life itself. This is acutely manifest in the declining sex ratio across the country. As per the 2011 Census, the child sex ratio (0-6 years) has shown a decline from 927 females per thousand males in 2001 to 919 females per thousand males in 2011.[4] While poverty may be an explanatory factor in declining sex ratios, it is also an indicator of the value given to female life in society. In the Indian context, hence the declining sex ratio is a stark indicator of the low value of female life in the country.

Women are primarily engaged in agriculture in India constituting over 30 percent of the total agricultural workforce.[5] However, women are deemed invisible within the agricultural value chain due to lack of land titles, limited resources and inadequate access to credit, seeds, fertilisers and extension services.[6] Women remain highly engaged in the informal economy and the paradox is that even with global market expansion and economic growth, women's Labour Force Participation (LFPR) in India has been declining while women's unemployment has globally been increasing. Labour Bureau data indicates that women's LFPR in 2015-16 stood at just 27.4 percent and International Labour Organization (ILO) data indicates that female participation rates declined from 34.1 percent in 1999-00 to 27.2 percent in 2011-12. Household duties confine women to the four walls of their homes and when women do enter the workforce, they must do so in addition to their familial duties, entering only as auxiliary workers.

[2] *United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2009.*
[3] *United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2009.*
[4] *http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=103437*
[5] *Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), 2011; The State of Food and Agriculture: Women in Agriculture-Closing the Gender Gap for Development 2011- 2012.*
[6] *Sources: NSSO (2009-10); ILO (2010); UN Women (2011).*

Whether physical, psychological, emotional or economic, all forms of violence against women (VAW) in both private and public spaces is linked to widespread gender discrimination fueled by patriarchal values. This manifests itself not only in violence, but also in harmful gender norms that subjugate women into submission, unequal resource distribution and unequal decision-making power. Taken together, these facts present a dismal picture of women's position and participation in Indian society, economy and politics that requires policy commitment and interventions at multiple levels. One such intervention was the Constitutional Amendment of 1992 that gave women a reserved quota in local governance councils.

The Panchayati Raj System

The modern Panchayati Raj system was legalised by the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act, following recommendations by various committees to implement more decentralised systems of governance and administration. This paved the way for the largest decentralised governance system in the world. The provision for setting up urban and rural local government institutions was mentioned in the 11th and 12th Schedules of the Indian Constitution, giving the impetus to set up a uniform structure of three-tier local government institutions in rural areas. Following the amendment, the panchayats were recognised as the third tier of government with reasonable substance and contents in terms of powers and authority. These amendments also created space for women's representation in local government institutions by introducing a thirty-three percent quota for women to be directly elected to these bodies. The Constitution 74th Amendment Act (1993) extended this reservation policy to urban local government institutions. The representation of historically marginalised groups (scheduled castes and tribes) was also institutionalised. The specific powers and functions of the panchayats was left to the discretion of the state legislatures. Currently, the Panchayati Raj system exists in all states across India except Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram, and in all Union Territories except Delhi. The discretionary provisions include issues such as the functions and powers of the Gram Sabha, reservation for backward classes, financial procedures and elections. It was expected that gradually the subjects listed in the 11th schedule of the constitution (that includes 29 subjects from agricultural development, land reforms, irrigation to education, health and other social services) would also be transferred to the panchayats (the three F's of decentralised governance – funds, functions and functionaries).

Women's political reservation

One of the most important provisions of the 73rd constitutional amendment was the legalisation of affirmative action for women and disadvantaged groups. The Constitution (73rd Amendment Act), reserved a minimum of one-third of seats for women (both as members and as chairpersons) within all PRIs. In 2009, the Indian government approved 50 percent reservation for women in PRIs and many states, such as Rajasthan and Odisha, passed similar legislations[7].

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[7]   *16 states mandate 50 percent reservation for women in Panchayati Raj institutions. Ministry of Panchayati Raj, 2013; Strengthening of Panchayati Raj: Comparing Devolution Across States. Empirical Assessment 2016-17.*

At present, there are 250,000 panchayats in the country, with more than 2.9 million elected representatives.[8] Of these, Elected Women Representatives constitute 44 percent of the Gram Panchayats (village council) level, 40 percent of the Block Panchayats and 43 percent of the Zila (district) Panchayats - making it the largest absolute number of women in grassroots politics globally.

Theory suggests that having women in political spaces may account for gender specific concerns in political agenda and even policy making. Beaman et. al. (2006) assert that "women provide more and better goods and are less likely to seek a bribe". However, Beaman et. al. (2006) find that despite the overall increase in quality of services, villagers tend to be more dissatisfied with female leaders. This is often attributed to an inherent bias among villagers in assessing the competence and performance of female leaders[9], which can curtail the efficacy of female leaders. This further shows how persistent gender bias and discrimination can exacerbate the potential long-term benefits of women's political participation.

Women's representation in politics and governance gives a stronger voice to women and impacts gender equity. An evidence of this voice is seen in the increase in the reporting of crimes against women, in areas where women are seen in political leadership positions[10]. Iyer et. al. further state that a greater voice leads to a greater resistance to violence against women[11]. Reflecting on women's leaders from vulnerable groups like the Scheduled Tribes in India, Clots-Figueras (2009) present a promising finding in the context of political reservation providing a stronger voice to these doubly disadvantaged groups. She notes that women leaders from these groups not only have influenced higher investment in health and education services, but have also been instrumental in implementing "redistributive land reforms and inheritance legislation favourable to women"[12].

Devolution of finance and functions to the PRIs

The establishment of the Panchayati Raj system in India was a watershed legislation by any measure of decentralisation and local governance. Responding to the lack of decentralisation and devolution of functions and finance, the Government of India accepted the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission to devolve a greater share of resources to the local bodies. The total fund transferred to local bodies between 2015 and 2020 is expected to be nearly two lakh crore rupees (approximately USD 3 billion). A bulk of these grants do not have any strings attached, however a fraction of grants has been linked to improvements displayed by PRIs. The primary emphasis has been on provision of basic services like infrastructure for sewage, sanitation and water supply. However, the most important parameter against which the success of democratic decentralisation can be assessed is the extent of devolution of power to the local level. The 14th Finance Commission provides an enormous opportunity for responsive local governance down to the level of the Gram Panchayat. The huge transfer of resources to gram panchayats also requires urgent empowerment of the gram panchayats, to be able to deliver their mandate with respect to the delivery of basic services responsibly and efficiently.

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[8]   Annual Report 2014-15, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India
[9]   Duflo, E. and P. Topalova (2004) 'Unappreciated Service: Performance, Perceptions and Women Leaders in India.' Mimeo, MIT.
[10] Iyer, L., A. Mani, P. Mishra, and P. Topalova. 2010.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Clots-Figueras, I. 2009

Data

The study entailed, collecting, synthesising and presenting data on Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in India. The methodology consisted of conducting a detailed individual level survey on a representative sample of EWRs from six states in India— Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka. 591 elected women representatives were surveyed across the study period. Within states and districts, using Female Literacy as a key gender indicator, blocks in which research was to be conducted were selected. All blocks in the district were ranked and categorised as top 33 percent, middle 33 percent and bottom 33 percent blocks based on female literacy. Two blocks with the highest female literacy from the top 33 percent, two with the lowest female literacy from the bottom 33 percent and one from middle 33 percent were selected. This way, the coverage and representation of EWRs was ensured from a cross-section of population based on female literacy, to ensure balanced findings.

The overarching aim of the study (and the survey) was to seek answers to the following questions:

- *Who is Participating in the local governance of PRIs and what are the circumstances of their participation?*

Data on the demographic characteristics of women who were currently elected or had been elected in the past three previous elections was collected. Socio-economic information on age, marital status, literacy level, caste background, bank account status, income, family size, husband's education, husband's occupation etc. was also collected.

- *What is the quality of participation of elected women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions and what are the factors that influence it?*

Several sub-questions were asked to analyse the quality of participation and whether women were able to meaningfully participate in panchayat meetings. What their perceptions were of their participation as EWRs and if they felt they could make a difference, shape the agenda and outcomes through discussion, debate and activism.

- *What issues or political agendas were brought up by elected women representatives (EWRs)?*

Several sub-questions were examined to understand what issues and agenda points women bring-up when in power or when they contest elections. What are the key issues brought forward by EWRs at the panchayat level and do these issues correlate with the main concerns raised by the community? What are the perceptions of elected women representatives of their own successes and their satisfaction levels with their own role in decision-making?

Quantitative data on socio-economic characteristic was obtained at four governance levels – Gram Panchayat, block, district and state– and this was used to examine the numeric and quality of women's participation in the selected districts across all six states. Simple correlation and, where possible, regression analysis was done on the survey data on women's participation.

Emerging Findings

- *Who is Participating in local governance of PRIs and what are the circumstances of their participation?*

Table 1: Age of respondents

Age of Respondent	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Under 25 years	18	3.05	3.05
25 – 40 years	315	53.3	56.35
41 – 60 years	226	38.24	94.59
Above 60 years	32	5.41	100
Total	591	100	

Table 2a: Caste of respondents

Caste	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
SC	136	23.01	23.01
ST	122	20.64	43.65
OBC	228	38.58	82.23
General	105	17.77	100
Total	591	100	

Table 2b: Disaggregated by State

States	SC	ST	OBC	General	Total
Madhya Pradesh	21	34	43	16	114
Rajasthan	9	36	31	15	91
Odisha	27	21	37	9	94
Andhra Pradesh	34	9	25	25	93
Telangana	32	16	31	29	108
Karnataka	13	6	61	11	91
Total	136	122	228	105	591

Table 3: Religion

Religion	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Hindu	529	89.51	89.51
Muslim	19	3.21	92.72
Christian	43	7.28	100
Total	**591**	**100**	

Table 4: Literacy Level

Literacy level of the respondent	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Illiterate	176	29.78	29.78
Neo-literate (can read and write)	72	12.18	41.96
Primary	159	26.9	68.87
8th standard passed	65	11	79.86
10th pass/Matriculation	60	10.15	90.02
12th pass or Intermediate	28	4.74	94.75
Graduate	23	3.89	98.65
Post Graduate	6	1.02	99.66
Others	2	0.34	100
Total	**591**	**100**	

Table 5: Occupation

Main Occupation	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Unemployed (Homemaker)	250	42.3	42.3
Agriculture	198	33.5	75.8
Labour	115	19.46	95.3
Trade	1	0.17	95.4
Small business	16	2.71	98.1
Service	2	0.34	98.5
Other (specify)	9	1.52	100
Total	**591**	**100**	

Table 6: Main Source of Income

Source	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Husband/family	257	43.49	43.49
Agriculture	172	29.1	72.59
Labour	111	18.78	91.37
Trade	8	1.35	92.72
Small business	26	4.4	97.12
Government Job	5	0.85	97.97
Manufacturing	2	0.34	98.31
Service	3	0.51	98.82
Other	6	1.02	99.83
Total	**591**	**100**	

The mean age of all respondents surveyed was between 25 and 60 years and a majority of the EWRs surveyed were OBCs, Hindu, Illiterate (or had attained functional literacy – could read and write or only had a primary education) and were homemakers (or unemployed) who depended on their husbands or families for resources and money. Interestingly the second largest percentage of the EWRs surveyed depended on agricultural income followed by labour income, highlighting once again the engagement and participation of women in the informal economy as workers in agricultural land or as daily-wage labourers. It may also be noted that the fact that a majority of EWR's surveyed belonged to the OBC or SC/ST caste category remains consistent with other studies. Many of such studies have noted that the "mandatory provision of reservation based on caste has provided the space for disadvantaged groups to represent and participate in institutions of rural local governance."[13]

- *What is the quality of participation of elected women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions and what are the factors that influence it?*

Given the fact that women in general will be more participative and expressive in the local governance processes under female leadership changes how the political process aggregates preferences EWRs were asked what their perception of the value of their contributions to the Panchayat were. Across all states, almost all female EWRs felt that their contributions were valued. However, Madhya Pradesh stood as an outlier, with around 20 percent female Panchayat EWRs feeling that their contributions to the Panchayat were not valued.

Table 7: State-wise perception of valuation of female contributions to the Panchayat

State	Yes	No	Some what	Total
Madhya Pradesh	81	22	11	114
Rajasthan	79	4	8	91
Odisha	71	8	15	94
Andhra Pradesh	87	2	4	93
Telangana	104	2	2	108
Karnataka	88	2	1	91
Total	**510**	**40**	**41**	**591**

Affirmative action and the resultant boost in women's agency, also impacts their overall social standing,[14] thereby improving the status of women and facilitating further participation in governance, decision-making and resource allocation at all levels. This fact has been corroborated by our data where across states, castes and literacy levels, elected women representatives felt that being an EWR had changed their status within their family for the better across various outcomes – whether it was household level decision-making, mobility, share in domestic responsibilities or respect and affection by people. Taking the example of household level decision-making, Table 8 presents a state, caste, and literacy-level distribution of perceptions of EWRs status within their families.

[13] Tadros, M. (Ed.). (2014). Women in politics: Gender, power and development. Sed Books Ltd.
[14] ICRW-UN Women Joint Publication, 2012.

*Table 8: Has being an EWR changed your status within your family on the following aspects:
Household level decision-making*

By State							
	Madhya Pradesh	**Rajasthan**	**Odisha**	**Andhra Pradesh**	**Telangana**	**Karnataka**	**Total**
Changed for worse	0	1	0	0	0	4	5
Remained same	29	25	27	44	51	25	201
Changed for better	**85**	**65**	**67**	**49**	**57**	**62**	**385**
Total	114	91	94	93	108	91	591

By Caste					
	SC	**ST**	**OBC**	**General**	**Total**
Changed for worse	1	0	3	1	5
Remained same	50	36	69	46	201
Changed for better	**85**	**86**	**156**	**58**	**385**
Total	136	122	228	105	591

By Literacy Level									
	Illiterate	**Neo-literate**	**Primary**	**8th Standard**	**10th Standard**	**12th Standard**	**Graduate**	**Post Graduate**	**Other**	**Total**
Changed for worse	0	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	5
Remained same	78	14	54	20	16	13	4	2	0	201
Changed for better	**98**	**57**	**104**	**45**	**42**	**14**	**19**	**4**	**2**	**385**
Total	176	72	159	65	60	28	23	6	2	591

It must be noted that while across most outcomes, the greatest number of EWRs stated that their status within the family had improved or changed for the better, where they stated it remained the same was in the case of 'share of economic responsibilities, control over resources and incidences of domestic abuse.' This shows that while being an EWR may give women better agency in exercising control over the household in the form of domestic responsibilities or decisions, this does not necessarily translate into greater economic empowerment, either in the form of controlling finances, household resources or the amount of economic responsibility they have. Furthermore, what remains disturbing is that those surveyed in the sample stated that being an EWR did not impact or change the incidences of domestic violence they suffered.

In must however be noted that the difference between the highest category of "remained the same" and the second highest of "changed for the better" is very negligible in the above three outcomes, however it is still important to highlight what the majority of the respondents stated.

Table 9: Has being an EWR changed your status within your family on the following aspects –
Control Over Resources

Control Over Resources	Total
Changed for worse	9
Remained same	**315**
Changed for better	267
Total	591

Table 10: Has being an EWR changed your status within your family on the following aspects –
Share in Economic Activity

Share in Economic Activity	Total
Changed for worse	16
Remained same	**303**
Changed for better	272
Total	591

Table 11: Has being an EWR changed your status within your family on the following aspects –
Incidence of Domestic Violence

Share in Economic Activity	Total
Changed for worse	38
Remained same	**297**
Changed for better	256
Total	591

There exists substantial evidence in literature that quotas for women, and consequent political office, improves the self-confidence and gives a sense of agency to women leaders, in particular, and women in general.[15] Following quotas and reservation, women are motivated to articulate and raise issues in public spaces and work towards getting them addressed.[16] This is, in fact, corroborated by our data, where across states, castes and levels of literacy, women's perception of confidence remains high across the sample surveyed.

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[15] *ICRW-UN Women Joint Publication, 2012*
[16] *Singh, Pitam. 2003.*

Table 12: What is your perception about your skills/abilities as EWRs – Confidence

By State							
	Madhya Pradesh	**Rajasthan**	**Odisha**	**Andhra Pradesh**	**Telangana**	**Karnataka**	**Total**
Poor	15	4	10	7	4	0	0
Moderate	**53**	**47**	**31**	**46**	**58**	**12**	**12**
Good	**45**	**40**	**53**	**40**	**46**	**79**	**79**
missing	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	114	91	94	93	108	91	91

By Caste					
	SC	**ST**	**OBC**	**General**	**Total**
Poor	6	11	18	5	40
Moderate	**58**	**61**	**81**	**47**	**247**
Good	**72**	**50**	**128**	**53**	**303**
missing	0	0	1	0	1
Total	136	122	228	105	591

By Literacy Level									
	Illiterate	**Neo-literate**	**Primary**	**8th Standard**	**10th Standard**	**12th Standard**	**Graduate**	**Post Graduate**	**Other**	**Total**
Poor	25	3	9	2	0	1	0	0	0	40
Moderate	**102**	**31**	**60**	**25**	**16**	**6**	**5**	**1**	**1**	**247**
Good	**49**	**37**	**90**	**38**	**44**	**21**	**18**	**5**	**1**	**303**
missing	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	176	72	159	65	60	28	23	6	2	591

STRUCTURAL BARRIERS IN THE LEGISLATION OF PANCHAYATI RAJ

In a study conducted by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India, elected women representatives shared how barriers and biases curtail their agency and fulfillment of their roles as leaders . A significant majority of women representatives stated feeling limited in capacity for fulfilling their roles, and considered the work to be 'unsuitable' for women. Furthermore, structural barriers, such as literacy levels, may hinder women from taking meaningful steps to represent issues or be forces of change. For example: Rajasthan Panchayat Act requires that the leader of the local self governance body be able to read and write Hindi. While this clause may appear gender-neutral, it creates an invisible barrier for potential women candidates given the low rates of literacy among rural women in Rajasthan. This limits the number of possible women candidates alongside excluding the best candidates.

- *What issues or political agendas were brought up by women elected representatives (EWRs)?*

One of the central aspects of political participation is the role of women in agenda setting in their respective political spaces and how they advocate for specific concerns, especially gender-related issues and the women's empowerment. Research has established that the identity of lawmakers (or political representatives) has a significant bearing on policy agenda and direction; and that 'increasing the political representation of a group increases its influence on policy'[17]. While the evidence provided in the study cannot assess the impact or influence on policy, it does throw light into the kind of issues women raise and contest during elections, Table 13 below provides a disaggregation of the kind of agenda points the surveyed EWRs brought or contested during elections.

Table 13 : Main agenda points during elections: Caste-level disaggregation

	SC	ST	OBC	General	Total
Agriculture productivity	9	6	19	5	39
Water	**65**	**69**	**119**	**55**	**308**
Infrastructure	23	16	27	23	89
Health	3	3	4	2	12
Education	5	6	3	0	14
Employment	5	5	8	3	21
Sanitation	7	0	10	2	19
Violence against women	0	1	2	1	4
Household level decision	0	0	1	0	1
Control over resource	0	0	0	2	2
PDS/Pension	0	0	2	0	2
Others	1	2	12	2	17
Not raised an issue	18	14	21	9	62
Total	136	122	228	105	591

What stands out in the tables above is how across castes, water stands out as an agenda point that is raised in elections by most elected women representatives in our sample. This fact has been corroborated by other evidence in the Indian context, where women leaders have been noted to invest more in drinking water facilities, across electoral cycles— given that drinking water is a critical public good, both in rural and urban India. There is also evidence that in parts of India "female policymakers who have come to power through quotas provide more public goods that benefit and are valued by female voters such as water and roads."[18]

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[17] Osborne, Martin J., and Al Slivinski. 1996. "A Model of Political Competition with Citizen-Candidates." *Quarterly Journal of Ec onomics,* 111(1): 65–96.; Besley, Timothy, and Stephen Coate. 1997. "An Economic Model of Representative Democracy." *Quarterly Journal of Economics,* 112(1): 85–114

[18] Chattopadhyay, R. and E. Duflo. 2004. "Women as Policymakers: Evidence from a Randomised Policy Experiment in India." *Econometrica* 72 (5): 1409-43.

A well-founded critique of political reservation for women is that men (husbands) may act as proxy for female leaders. But Table 14 illustrates that across the sample women themselves decide and set agenda points during elections. However, state-wise disaggregation presents a different picture. For example, in Madhya Pradesh, across the sample of 114 EWRs surveyed, 65 (majority) claim that their husbands or families decided agenda points to raise in elections. However, in Karnataka, across a sample of 91 EWRs surveyed, none stated that their husband or family were involved in setting the election agenda points and almost 99 percent (or 89 EWRs) stated that they themselves decided agenda points during elections. This sheds light on the need to highlight and consider state-level differences when formulating policies and studying the narrative of women's meaningful political participation in India.

Table 14: Who decided these agenda points? (Multiple response possible)

Who decided these agenda points?	Madhya Pradesh	Rajasthan	Odisha	Andhra Pradesh	Telangana	Karnataka	Total
Self	**41**	**68**	**55**	**27**	**26**	**89**	**306**
Husband/ Family	**65**	22	14	29	24	**0**	154
Community decision makers (temple, priest, local admin)	4	0	7	12	26	**2**	51
Others	3	1	1	1	0	**0**	6
Missing	1	0	4	1	1	**0**	7
Total	114	91	81	70	77	**90**	524

Once elected, the EWR's surveyed raised a range of issues and of the ones that were brought forward to the panchayat, how they were addressed showed interesting results. A very high percentage of respondents stated that they were interested in bringing up issues of migration, household level decision-making and domestic responsibilities, but did not bring these issues up. Surprisingly a majority of respondents did not raise basic development issues such as agriculture productivity, water, infrastructure, health, education, violence against women and so on. Of the ones that did raise these issues, a majority of them were resolved at the panchayat level.

Table 15: After getting elected, what were the main issues that you brought forward to the Panchayat? How were these addressed?

	Agriculture productivity	Water	Infra-structure	Health	Education	Employ-ment	Sanitation	Violence against women
No action taken	61	51	38	40	51	63	44	47
Issue discussed by Panchayat members, but no further action	24	61	55	22	16	36	51	10
Issue resolved at Panchayat level	104	203	211	115	125	113	216	92
Issue dealt by relevant authorities above the panchayat	61	114	67	87	64	61	65	8
Interested but could not bring forward	1	3	1	2	3	7	1	4
No issue raised	329	145	203	308	316	298	192	412
Other	11	13	14	15	13	12	20	16

	Early marriage	Dowry	Property related disputes	Migration	Forest Rights	Household level decision making	Domestic responsi-bilities	Control over resources
No action taken	38	39	42	40	40	32	36	49
Issue discussed by Panchayat members, but no further action	4	5	7	11	6	5	8	4
Issue resolved at Panchayat level	67	63	67	76	63	73	79	74
Issue dealt by relevant authorities above the panchayat	12	14	15	14	14	11	11	15
Interested but could not bring forward	3	1	2	435	1	426	417	1
No issue raised	444	452	425	9	452	40	39	430
Other	21	15	31		8			17

	Alcohol abuse	PDS/Pension
No action taken	38	39
Issue discussed by Panchayat members, but no further action	4	5
Issue resolved at Panchayat level	67	63
Issue dealt by relevant authorities above the panchayat	12	14
Interested but could not bring forward	3	1
No issue raised	444	452
Other	21	15

Moving forward

With the attempt of providing some insights into women's political participation at the local governance level in India, we have aimed to provide a lens into the findings of the survey conducted across six states in India. The chapter aims to shed light on the demographic nature of EWRs in the six states surveyed, the kind of issues that were raised and the level of empowerment, freedom and agency women had in influencing the political process. However, whether women are able to exercise political participation and power in local governance warrants us to understand the larger questions of their inclusion, the role and influence of traditional authorities in local government and the extent to which the rules of decentralisation enable or allow for gender empowerment.

Literature suggests that while capacity building of women has been well researched, and interventions implemented in this regard, there is a need to analyse the capacities of governance institutions on the gender responsive governance paradigm. It is relatively unexamined how governance institutions and officers understand the concepts of gender equity and enable policy that internalises these concepts fully. A probe into this aspect of the state-women interface is imperative to 'evaluate accountability of the state, political parties and social movements to gender equality outcomes at the local level'.[19]

It is essential that for women's participation in institutions at local and national levels to be impactful, evidence on gender equity and political responsiveness be generated both within governance structures and women political representatives. Relevant indicators must be ascertained to track progress on change in gender inequities and policies. Importantly, structural and institutional barriers and inherent social biases against women's empowerment need to be addressed in a systematic manner at all levels.

[19] *ICRW and UN Women, 2012*

Policy Recommendations

1.   **Enabling social infrastructure to move towards economic independence:**
Socio-economic empowerment is a natural outcome of political representation. To ensure maximum gains from reservation, it is essential to strengthen other pillars of social infrastructure, such as education, that enable women to gain economic independence. Economic independence is the cornerstone of empowerment and access to education is key. (Minimum eligibility norms such as minimum education up till 10th standard for General Category women and 8th standard for women belonging to the SC/ST communities enacted by states like Haryana and Rajasthan will incentivise gender-inclusive change in social norms).

2.   **Need for micro-behavioural studies:**
It is pertinent to investigate to what extent women who hold elected offices at the panchayat level are able to impact agenda and how their work is perceived by the community at large. Further, it important to understand how do ground realities change for other women with a female head of Panchayat. These studies have to have a representative geographical spread and have to be repeated at regular intervals in order to track improvements.

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4

Unlocking Potential, by Bringing in Gender-Based Wage Parity

Charu Anand and Prakash Gus

About Plan India

Plan India, a member of Plan International Federation, is a nationally registered independent child development organisation committed to creating a lasting impact on the lives of vulnerable and excluded children, their families and communities. For over 35 years, Plan India and its partners have improved the lives of millions of children by providing them access to protection, basic education, proper healthcare, a healthy environment, livelihood opportunities and participation in decisions which affect their lives.

This paper discusses the Samanta Project that was undertaken in Ambedkar Nagar district in Uttar Pradesh. The Samanta Project's objectives were designed around the overall aim of promoting gender equity, and ensuring non-discrimination at the work place, as well as the provision of greater choice to women in households in terms of investing in healthcare, particularly their own health and welfare and that of their children.

Background

India is home to 1.21 billion[1] people with a density of 382 persons per sq. km. 48.5 percent of the population is female with a sex ratio of 940[2] females per 1000 males (rural- 947, urban- 926). Almost half of the population is below the age of 24 years[3], of whom 48 percent are girls and young women. The traditionally excluded groups of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) constitute 17 percent and 7 percent of the total population respectively. Additionally, there are also newer categories[4] emerging as vulnerable populations who have yet to benefit from the gains of a rapidly expanding economy. The overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 7.9 percent[5] in 2015 is yet to filter down adequately to these vulnerable groups.

The GDP in India was worth 2088.80 billion[6] US dollars (USD) in 2015. The GDP value of India represents 3.37 percent of the world economy. GDP in India averaged 484.56 billion USD from 1960 until 2015, reaching an all-time high of 2088.80 USD billion in 2015 and a record low of 37.68 billion USD in 1960. In spite of the rapid economic growth, poverty remains a pressing issue in India with the poverty[7] head count at 23.63 percent in 2011-2012

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[1] http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/india/paper_contentsetc.pdf - Accessed on 5th May 2017 at 11:05 AM

[2] http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/india/Final_PPT_2011_chapter5.pdf

[3] Government of India (2011). Census of India, India, Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner.

[4] Newer categories such as urban poor, female sex workers, homeless people, migrant communities.

[5] http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=IN, accessed on 11th May 2017 at 1.05 PM (IST)

[6] http://www.tradingeconomics.com/india/gdp accessed on 7th May 2017 at 16:30 PM

[7] Proportion of population living below $1.25 (PPP) per day- https://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2015/Snapshots/IND.pdf

and the proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption at 15.2 percent[8]. India ranks 97 out of 118 countries in the Global Hunger Index[9]. It ranks 131[10] out of 188 countries on the Human Development Index and 125[11] on UNDP's Gender Inequality Index.

Though in recent years economic growth has seen a rapid increase, it is to be noted that income disparity has seen a concurrent increase. As per the World Economic Forum report, India is the second most unequal country globally with a few millionaires controlling 54 percent of its wealth. In India, 10 percent of the population owns 76.3 percent of the national wealth. Although considerable progress has been made in many areas, about one third of the population lives below the poverty line. Economic reforms introduced as part of structural adjustment programmes have in certain respects exacerbated the plight of this vulnerable population. Overall, health standards remain poor, particularly for disadvantaged and rural populations. The responsibility for education rests primarily with individual state governments and there are wide regional disparities in the quality of education. Many children either never get to school or drop out at an early age, especially girl children. Girls' right to survival, to development, and to protection and participation are frequently denied or violated in the country.

The burden of poverty is carried by women. At their own home, or in society, poverty impacts women disproportionately and women are at an absolute disadvantage in many respects. Inequality and poverty damage the realisation of their human rights and consequently, their human dignity. In isolation, gender equality is of pivotal importance. For the poor, it is a fundamental input towards upward social mobility and empowerment. We say this because even if a society's poverty status is improved, girls and women are still likely to remain vulnerable. For instance, Saudi Arabia ranks relatively strong on the Human Development Index, while its ranking in the Gender Inequality Index is fairly low, at 135. On the other hand, gender equality can lead to sustainable reduction in poverty. This calls for transformative change in gender dynamics and inclusive development, especially in our approach to poverty. Gender inequality is correlated with extreme poverty and the group-based disadvantage that women face is immense. Women from poor socio-economic backgrounds are amongst the least-advantaged in society and experience the damaging symptoms of poverty throughout the course of their life. Poverty is an injustice to human capability and human development. Impoverished women are more likely to experience gender-based violence, as well as worse health and education circumstances.

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[8]   https://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2015/Snapshots/IND.pdf
[9]   India ranked 97th among the 118 countries surveyed in 2016 Global Hunger Index (GHI). In 2016 GHI, India has scored low 28.5 on a 0-100 point scale of the index. It describes India's hunger situation as "serious. The index was released by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) - http://ghi.ifpri.org/countries/IND/ - accessed on 7th May 2017 at 12.41 PM (IST).
[10] http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2016_human_development_report.pdf
[11] http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII - Accessed on 7th May 2017 at 16:28 PM

History of Wage Parity: International & National

The term 'wage' implies a sum of money that is remuneration or reimbursement for a service performed by a 'worker'. The terms distinguished here do not carry differential values, and yet, across the world, workers are distinguished according to gender and given discriminatory wage rates as per their sex. For those who view increased economic opportunities as having a lasting outcome and impact on development, i.e. on improving health, education and political capital/influence, achieving wage parity between female and male labourers must be a crucial step forward.

Gender Wage Discrimination, Globally

In its decades-long efforts to protect and ensure ongoing child development in India, Plan India has come to recognise that the disparity in the skill, and overall training that female children receive in comparison to male children, within schools and without, has a direct and negative impact on the number of economic opportunities they receive in their lifetimes, as well as their annual pay. More importantly, women's labour is accorded a lower value in comparison to that of their male counterparts, across sectors, and globally. In more than 100 countries, women are paid no more than between 50 – 60 percent of the pay their male counterparts receive[12]. Women workers' reduced training (or lack thereof) is cited by employers as a key deciding factor when it comes to determining their value to the employer. However, a number of gender wage parity studies suggest that even in the case of white-collar sectors, where there are fewer and smaller/non-existent qualification gaps between female and male candidates, the latter still receive better pay and benefits, comparatively.

Global organisations that measure gender wage parity, such as the World Economic Forum, have found that there is a considerable "education-employment-leadership mismatch"[13]– data from 97 countries in their 2016 report suggests that while more women enrol in university than men, skilled women workers are a majority of the workforce in only 68 countries, and the majority of industry leaders in *only four*. Globally, women earn about half the amount men do, per annum. Women take on more caregiving, housework and unpaid services than men, and their economic participation, after having improved in global averages till 2013, has returned to the neighbourhood of figures recorded in 2008. Gender disparity in pay remains a stubborn developmental inequality.

Plan's finding has been that this disparity, especially when it comes to wage labour, is driven by patriarchal biases, a lack of appreciation of female productivity and contribution to society, and tenuous arguments based on 'cost-cutting'. Globally, and in India, there are laws and conventions formulated by international bodies such as the International Labour Organisation, that aim to protect women labour from discrimination – on remuneration specifically, the ILO has framed the Equal Remuneration Convention, that aims to ensure equal pay for both male and female labourers, and has been ratified by 163 countries. Despite this, several countries have struggled to implement gender wage parity laws.

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12   *Global Gender Gap Report 2015, World Economic Forum*
13   *Global Gender Gap Report 2015, World Economic Forum*

Gender Wage Discrimination in India

India has ratified ILO's Equal Remuneration Convention, as well as its frameworks stipulating minimum wages. India has its own legal provisions that are aimed at protecting labour from wage discrimination as well, particularly the Equal Remuneration Act, or TERA, passed in 1976; more recently Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Gurantee Act (MGNREGA), which stipulates that at least 33 percent of those employed under the scheme should be women, and that they be paid at par with the male labour for performing the same jobs. Before either of these, Article 39 of the Constitution was formulated by an equal wages committee to ensure that women and men workers were paid the same sum of money, for the same jobs. Even so, we have struggled to implement these laws, to encourage women to enter the workforce, and to ensure equity in pay and opportunity.

Female economic participation in India was a matter for concern pre-Independence, with women being underrepresented in the Indian workforce –percent– despite comprising half of India's population[14]. As with men, the majority of the female workforce in India is unskilled and only has a basic education, likely pre-5th or seventh grade. NSSO data suggests that Indian women work largely in farming and agriculture – about 68.5 percent of working Indian women in all, or 77 million, working in crop-farming or livestock management[15]. Other sectors of choice include domestic work, or else in unorganised or semi-organised, cottage industry set ups like tobacco-rolling, clothes-making, embroidery, etc. (ranging roughly between 2 and 3 percent of the work force). They are typically assigned (or take on) non-labour intensive tasks such as grain sifting or the spraying of pesticides; stitching and embroidery; and carrying loads. Typically, women labour isn't hired for tasks that are considered more labour-intensive, risky or requiring skills such as operating heavy machinery. This, despite the fact that their male counterparts have the same physical and mental capabilities and (lack of) qualifications. In addition, male labourers also tend to receive more training on the job, despite their qualifications or education status. In farming, in particular, NSSO data suggests that not only is pay unequal for women labour, but also the percentage of land owned by women is significantly lower, despite them doing most of the farm work. The only exceptions to India's wage disparity can be seen, according to NSSO data from 2009 to 2010, in parts of North India – in Bihar, where women labourers get significantly higher wages per day, as per both rural and urban averages; Haryana and Punjab (higher urban income per day average), and Jammu and Kashmir (higher rural income per day average).

Women should have equal access to productive and fulfilling work as well as safe and equitable occupational circumstances. Social value systems which lead to child marriage, young motherhood, the burden of care and poor educational attainment among other factors often dictate their labour force participation and self-sufficiency. Equal economic opportunity can lead to economic empowerment of women and higher household incomes. The capacity and choice to participate in gainful employment and economic decision-making are important to

[14] *Gender Discrimination and Growth: Theory and Evidence from India, 2004; Berta Esetve-Volart, LSE,*

[15] *India – Employment and Unemployment, July 2011 – June 2012, NSS 68th Round*

reduce gender vulnerability and close the gender gap. Economic inequality and participation can take the shape of inequalities in ownership and control of land, access to information and services and political participation.

Indicators below show the status of women's participation in India

percent of women currently married who usually participate in household decisions (percent)	84
percent of Women having a mobile phone that they themselves use (percent)	53.55
percent of Women who worked in the last 12 months who were paid in cash (percent)	24.84
percent of villages electrified	96.69
percent of Women owning a house and/or land (alone or jointly with others)	39.66
percent of Women having a bank or savings account that they themselves use (percent)	54.96
percent of women taking part in labour.	23.7
percent of women working	21.7
percent of women Unemployed (available for work)	8.7
percent distribution of workers available for work for 12 months and worked for 12 months (percent)	49.5
percent distribution of workers available for work for 12 months and did not get any work (percent)	7.6
percent of women graduated and unemployed	10.9
percent of Non-Workers (Female)	82.916

The Indicators clearly show that women's empowerment and their equal rights for work are still a long way.

Gender Discrimination in Uttar Pradesh, and the Need for Wage Parity

Everybody agrees that women should be paid at par with the men they work alongside—it's only fair. However, there are more pressing concerns that women are faced with when they demand wage equity. As our own findings will show to the reader, women in rural India often enter the organised or unorganised job market when hard-pressed to find new income streams for themselves and improve their socio-economic conditions. When they take up a job outside the house, the wish to be paid so that they can invest in the family's well-being, and particularly that of their children. Increased family income means that the working woman, along with other working members of the family, can buy food and feed her children a little better than before, can invest in good clothes for them, and send them to school. Our findings suggest that with increased incomes, women are not only able to feed and send, both boy and girl children to school without worrying (perhaps even invest in after-school tutorials to help in their academic training) – they also spend on the family more reliably, than their male relatives. Education, health and income are tied to each other inextricably. Achieving wage parity can give women an additional boost, in that they are further empowered to take better care of their children.

In Uttar Pradesh, not unlike the rest of the country, gender disparities begin from the start of the girl child's life. Patriarchal systems and bias towards the male child either preclude the female foetus' arrival, or else the infant's survival; if the girl child survives, she is faced

with disadvantages and reduced options at every stage of development. Following a data collection exercise across *Anganwadi* in U.P. earlier in 2017, the state ICDS office reported that girl children continue to be tasked with tending to the home, assisting their parents in their work and chores, and raising younger children, because of which they fail to attend school regularly, and eventually drop out, their instruction left incomplete. In 2016-17 alone, approximately 70,000 female students were reported to have dropped out of school.

Unsurprisingly, Uttar Pradesh falls in lot with the rest of the country when it comes to gender wage parity. NSSO data from 2009-10[16] suggests that in urban UP, women receive around 80 percent of the wages their male counterparts get for the same work, while rural women labour get approximately 60-65 percent of the male wage rate. A 2012-13 study[17] on women's empowerment through MGNREGA in UP suggests that female participation in the workforce under-represents UP's growing female population: the study found that, of the state's MGNREGA employment status in 2011-12, 26.68 crore person days were generated, of which women labour generated a little less than 17 percent.

Above all, as the data cited above also suggests, gender parity in wages and higher education are both inextricably linked with questions on agency. When it comes to women, in India, particularly in North Indian states, every developmental indicator begs the question – are women here in control of their own lives? Are they able to educate themselves, study and work as they please, look after their mental and physical health by themselves, invest in their own welfare and in that of their loved ones, among other actions? Are their families and communities supportive of their decisions? Financial independence determines the answers to many of these questions.

Economic decisions, involving the family's health, education and overall welfare, are largely in the man's or older male members' hands. With the restriction of the woman's autonomy/agency, overall family incomes are limited. Rural consumer behaviour shows that rural households likely spend a majority of their incomes on food items, followed by fuel. Little is saved, especially for health care and education. Plan India's intervention with working women based in Ambedkar Nagar reveals that, with growth in the woman's autonomy and the family's income, along with an increased communal sensitisation towards gender equity, new economic decisions can and are being made vis-à-vis children's health and education, as well as women's health.

Ambedkar Nagar in Uttar Pradesh is one of the most backward districts in India and the status of women participation and equal wages are very bleak.

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[16] *NSSO 66th Round; Employment and Unemployment Survey; 2009-'10.*
[17] *Women Empowerment Through Rural Employment in Uttar Pradesh, 2013; Vishuan Kant Sharma, Ashvine Kumar, International Journal of Engineering Management and Sciences.*

Indicators below show the status of women's participation in Ambedkar Nagar

Population	2,397,888
Females (percent of Total)	1,185,478
Sex Ratio	978/1000
Female Literacy	640,263 (62.7 percent of district population)
Total Female Workers	239,992 (20.2 percent participation rate, of district population)
Total Female Agricultural Labourers	113,292, (47.2 percent of total district workers)
Total Female Household workers	20,748 (8.6 percent of total district workers)
Total Other Workers (Female)	57,577 (24 percent of total district workers)

Plan India has implemented a project called Samanta in the district of Ambedkar Nagar to address the issue of gap in wage parity. Samanta's project objectives were designed around the overall project aim of promoting gender equity, and ensuring non-discrimination at the work place, as well as the provision of greater choice to women in households in terms of investing in healthcare, particularly their own health and welfare and that of their children. Specific objectives included the following:

Objectives of Project Samanta
- To organise women labour, towards securing their right to equal wage and non-discrimination at the work place;
- To create community-based vigilance systems that monitor and report gender wage gaps and discrimination in work environments around them;
- To sensitise employers and compel them to fulfil their legal obligations towards women labour, and in so doing promote gender equality;
- And, to create a sustainable model of government-citizen partnership, in the implementation of equal remuneration laws and gender equality.

Achievements of the Project

The project aimed to reach 10,000 women across 9 blocks, and 90 Gram Panchayats in Ambedkar Nagar. As of July 2017, the final tally of working women under Samanta was 10,678. Samanta's overall objective was to promote gender equality and women's rights in the work environment in Ambedkar Nagar district of Uttar Pradesh. Focus group discussions captured the changes brought by project Samanta in the lives of the target group and the role played by the community-based vigilance groups in supporting the redressal of grievances to implement the Equal Remuneration Act.

After the formation of women's groups in the villages and information that the Constitution of India guarantees equality of wages among genders, women started demanding equal wages from their employers. Equal wages were denied on the basis of various factors such as 'women are incapable of hard work', 'women put in lesser time and profit of employers will recede'.

"Earlier when men used to go for any meeting we would say they are going to eat samosa. But now we realise that these meetings distribute knowledge and information which is bigger than anything else."
- Women in Malipur

The uphill task of being provided work and equal wages by the employers came after many protests by the women at the offices of Labour department in their respective Blocks and even at the office of District Collector of Ambedkar Nagar. Detailed information on other administrative processes like acquiring a job card, stamping it for number of hours worked before registering as labour for MGNREGA at the Labour Department were provided. Capacity building of employers in the project area was conducted to facilitate a conducive and respectful work environment for women. Employers, who had earlier remained aloof and unresponsive towards the project turned friendly as information on Equal Remuneration Act, and methods of increased agricultural production brought understanding of the changed scenario.

Most men in the area travel some distance for work, which fetches them more money. Many children and women reported that their fathers/ husbands migrate for work to Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Lucknow, Ludhiana and Jalandhar and return to their villages during the sowing and harvest season. Therefore, the ground was ripe for women to find work under MGNREGA and other agricultural work close to their home, and the final push was provided by Samanta by bringing women together and building their capacities to demand for work and equal wages.

Besides increased earning ability, the project has affected various aspects of women's lives, especially in decision-making. The flow chart above depicts the changes in decision-making. The Samanta project has positively affected the power of making decisions among women, especially in a group. All members are equal in a group, so the decision made for work or any other development work for welfare of the village is taken by all members of the group democratically. The decision to go to the Pradhan and Block Development Officer (BDO) with

the complaint of unequal wages or not being paid in time has not just benefitted them but also given them immense confidence. However, this feat was not observed at the family level. Her position in the family most often does not allow her to decide about issues related to self, family or children.

> "Earlier women wouldn't even step out of the house, out of fear and lack of confidence. Now we go anywhere. We can go anywhere by ourselves. We've been to the BDO's office, the panchayat, etc….You ask about the police? No, we haven't had occasion to visit them, but if the need comes up, I'm willing to approach the police by myself too!"
> -Working woman, Akberpur

In the family, decision-making power differs by the composition of the family and who earns more. Limited changes were observed in those families having elderly members like mother and father-in-law. Seniors in the family continue to dominate their daughters-in-law. The woman remains the secondary decision-maker for her family, primary being the seniors (in-laws) and husband because he still earns more (when he travels to other cities) and all-round the year. Women though get equal wages (in MGNREGA)

work for only a few days in a year. Earlier the larger decisions affecting the family, like marriage of children or building a house was taken by males alone, women are now asked about their opinion. Reproductive decisions are still made by the elders in the family. Key changes observed from the community are depicted below:

> "They mostly get work because they operate as a unit and take decisions together as a group. If they come to know that a certain rate has been paid by some employer, then they refuse to work below that rate with any other employer."
> -Employer in Tanda

The below graph represents the status of movement over a year in increased income level against average working days per month and average income per day . When the project started the average daily income was Rs.100, which increased by 40 percent and by end of the project, it was at an average of the Rs.140 per day. In absolute terms, though Rs.40 looks a small number but it a gross achievement of the collectivisation.

Average Working Days Vs Average Income Per Day

Since women mostly work at MGNREGA sites the remuneration is credited directly to their bank accounts. Most women have bank accounts in their own names and only very few have added their husbands as joint-account holders. Apart from bank accounts, control over their money was reported by women. They mentioned buying things of comfort for themselves and family including cooking gas and electricity in their houses and things that gave them immense pleasure – ornaments of gold - exclusively for themselves.

Nearly every woman saved money for a rainy day. Women's group advises women to save money, whatever they can, either with the group or at a post office, as that is safer. Women mentioned saving for education of children, building/repairing their houses, marriage of children and food and clothing (in that order) as mostly, daily needs of the family were taken care by the income of their husbands.

In the state of Uttar Pradesh, though the markets are largely patriarchal, they have now become more welcoming for women who wish to go there alone and buy things of need, comfort or pleasure for themselves and their family. Children

> "Women have become clever now. We now buy things of our own choice. All our life we had worn things of other's choice."
> -Women in Jalalpur

in Bhiti and Bhiyanwa mentioned that the men (their fathers) returned to the village (from other cities where they work) during the sowing and harvesting season primarily to sell the produce and buy seeds and till their own lands before sowing the next crop. With markets becoming more accessible, ornaments and garments of their choice also have become

accessible for women. Women are very familiar with the Panchayat and Block offices. They mention that they had to protest to get equal wages, but the officials have become more respectful because of the hard work and grit they display. Similarly, at the police station, though there has been no need to go to the police yet, the assurance of their (police) help is there.

Attitudinal Change of Others

Attitudinal changes among other people have been initiated along with the change in attitude of women— they have become more confident in their approach towards asking for work and equal wages— which reflects on other aspects of their lives like being altruistic by taking up issues for women who have not been exposed to Samanta and equal wages. Women in villages, including those in the Community-Based Vigilance Group (CBVGs) at Jalalpur, Bhiti and Katehari mentioned that there is no going back to reduced wages even for women from the neighbouring villages because they have been informed about the

> Earlier, if we stepped out by ourselves, we would have to face rumor-mongering from the neighbours – 'oh, who does she think she is, what does she need to step out for, where is she going, with whom' etc. Now we can leave our houses, go to work [for long hours] and return, and nobody thinks of it or looks twice at us."
> -Women in Akberpur

labour laws, which give equal wages for equal time to both genders. They did not allow the employers from their villages to bring cheap labour from neighbouring villages. Women have ensured that there is place for rest, water and emergency medicines available at work sites. They have started getting respect at the place of work from peers, employers and the society as a whole. Questioning their movements and character assassinations, if they left home alone, are a thing of the past. However, there are a few challenges they still face – many of them, especially the elderly, being illiterate cannot read and write the forms for redressal of their grievances at the Block. But they get assistance from those who can.

Changes in Spouse/other family members

The respect for women is evident in the sharing of workload by family members. Their opinion is sought, and they are allowed to make decisions for the family (in nuclear families) by the husband. They have earned this respect by accumulating knowledge and information from Plan India, Blocks etc; it cannot only come from the power of money. Very few men work at MGNREGA sites because most men work for higher wages as construction or factory labour

> "Earlier women were called like animals - hey ri….do this, hey ri ….do that, but now women and girls are treated with respect. They are either called by their names or are directly spoken to."
> -Woman in Bhiti

in different cities of India, Hence, there is no competition. Male peers mention the change in their own attitudes towards women during the Samanta project period. Women's ability to approach the village Pradhan, Panchayat and officials at the block level, without any guidance or help from their male relatives, has also been singled out for praise by their male peers. Men often inform the employers which woman would be able to do a certain work.

It is important that women continue to take care of the house too. They should cook and clean before they leave for the day…women don't go very far from the village. That's the only way we can manage with two working parents. If the mother is nearby, the father can go out and find a [more lucrative] job."
– Male CBVG member, Bhiyaon

For many men who have associated with Samanta, either through the CBVG or else as employers, overcoming their biases about traditional roles has been a challenge. In the villages of Tanda and Bhiti, we found that older male respondents still adhered to ideas about duties and chores around the house, and how they should be divided – cooking and cleaning for the woman, giving cattle their feed for the others. Even so, many of them, particularly the younger men, have come to embrace the concepts and practices of gender parity and equity.

Changes among Employers

Constructive and positive feedback about wage increase and quality of work of the women from most of the employers in all blocks brings the focus on the need of such an intervention in the area. Diligence and speed are the two most employer-appreciated

Everything has become expensive. Even we sell our crops at a higher rate. Then what is the problem in giving higher wages to the women.
- Employer at Tanda

qualities in women in the area. Men from this district travel to other cities of the country for work. Most of the MGNREGA work is done by the women. In the agricultural fields too sowing of paddy and its harvesting is traditionally done by the women. The agricultural employers prefer to give their work on contract basis. Women quote the price fairly, but do not negotiate. In a contract, they put in more effort than their daily work and finish off the work before the allotted number of days. This way they can move to other fields and earn more in the limited agricultural sowing or harvesting season. The employers mentioned that they do not employ women with advanced pregnancy, even if she comes for work, because they are apprehensive that if anything goes wrong, they will have to bear a heavy loss.

Sharing of Household Work

One of the major changes perceived by women are that men and children in the household have started working in the house, since women started getting work and bringing in equal wages as men. Women revealed that their spouses now have started taking responsibility of looking after the children, cooking food, taking children to school or for vaccination. Some role reversal was observed during the village interaction at Bhatti. While women were participating at the meeting their spouses took care of the children and fed them. Employers mentioned that men now even cycle their wives to the blocks or other villages for meeting. Women in Baskhari mentioned that they spearhead the work at home and most husbands help in household chores; but if she is sick or not present in the house, the husband takes the responsibility of the house and the children. Here segregation of labour by gender is not evident. Chopping vegetables, washing clothes, dusting and mopping the house, filling water, cleaning the house, tending animals, are also shared by husbands.

Though most young boys and girls reported working at home to help their mothers, a few were of the opinion that doing household chores takes away their study time which affects their education. However, they agree that they continue working even when their mother is home. Men are in the supporting role in these areas. They mostly work outside the house like cleaning and tending the animals, feeding them, cleaning the outer area of the house, filling water etc.

Key Recommendations and Learnings

- It is imperative that by collectivisation women are empowered and are able to negotiate for equal wages and better pay and the same has been observed in end line evaluation.
- For working women, the main focus area is education of their children and especially now, they are determined to educate girls of their families for a better future.
- This project is able to inspire many young girls to get empowered and earn a living before getting married, which in itself is a social change.
- It is also learnt that the project was able to break gender barriers at household level, especially children and spouse have become more responsible towards family activities and have also started sharing burden of household chores.
- Increased understanding and appreciation of male peers towards working women at home and at work site has improved and this also resulted in cohesive working environment.
- Some of the initiatives undertaken during the Samanta project are most likely to pave the way forward, like the interface with the Bank of Baroda mobile counter at BRC Ram Nagar. This will continue and more such initiatives will be demanded by the newly formed women's groups?

Further, the experts from a session at the Difficult Dialogues 2018 conference recommended in light of the Samanta project that:

- **Simple and robust grievance mechanism should be established:** The panel discussion has voiced the need to create a simple and robust grievance reporting mechanism which can be easily accessed by all stakeholders including illiterates and technologically ill- equipped. This also needs to include a well-furnished complaint system at workplaces and corporates

- **The unpaid work done by women should be measured:** The experts also raised the immediate need to quantify the work done by women which is "unpaid", or in other words the economical contribution the women are adding to the family by sharing the burden of household chores.

- **Positive stories on balance of work between men and women need to be documented and shared:** It is also essential to document and create a compendium of positive stories which make evident the balance of work between men and women, and the same to be shared with a larger audience for creating sustainable models.

- **Positive role models of gender equality to be identified and promoted especially in villages:** The panel also identified the immediate need to nourish and promote the positive role models with regard to gender equality and canvass the stories of these role models across all platforms, as inspiring stories of change.

- **Under schemes, budget for awareness generation to be kept and utilised:** The experts also felt the need that in spite of the budget allocation for the schemes related to women empowerment, there is also a need to allocate profuse share for generating awareness about these schemes.

- **Focus on positive parenting and behaviour change:** The panel also suggested the need for programs that promote positive parenting and behaviour change which leads to gender equality.

- **Gender audit in organisation and district planning to be mandatory part of planning and accompanied with training:** The experts also mentioned the need for compulsory gender audit of the organisation and the district level planning of the same, along with training need to be integrated as part of the plans. As there are many laws to protect women but these are seldom enforced, a policy focused on fewer laws and high enforcement should be introduced.

- **Fair amount of GDP to be available for women skill development:** One of the key recommendations is to dedicate a fair share of GDP to women's skill development.

- **Social security schemes to be ensured for women in informal sector:** Finally, the experts said there needs to be strong advocacy for implementing the social security schemes even for the women who are in informal or unorganised sector.

Policy Recommendations

1. **Collectivisation:**
    There is a substantial increase in bargaining power that women experience with collectivisation. With greater bargaining power women are able to negotiate better remuneration from employers. Clearly, collectivisation needs to be encouraged. Alternatively, a simple and robust grievance mechanism could be established to ensure that women have an outlet where they can report differential wage for same work.

2. **Gender audit:**
    It is clear that while India has several progressive laws, the key impediment is implementation. A regular gender audit will ensure that wage distortions can be worked out of the system. Regular monitoring has been established as one of the key tools to pioneer ground breaking changes— as it draws intrest at areas that need attention.

3. **Social security schemes:**
    In addition to the need to encourage collectivisation in the informal and unorganised sector there is a need to strengthen public support to women. One way to provide institutional support to such women is to enroll them in various pre-existing social schemes.

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5

A Qualitative Study Exploring the Gender Gap in Indian Science–
Findings from a Feminist Science Media Project

Ashima Dogra, Nandita Jayaraj, and Mrinal Shah

Abstract

This paper is a summary of the multimedia, feminist science communication project called TheLifeofScience.com. The website has featured the research and journeys of women scientists across India since 2016. The reports have appeared on TheLifeofScience.com and syndicated on TheWire.in, FirstPost.com and The Hindu. Besides increasing visibility of Indian women scientists at public events, schools and mass media (print and online), the project discusses the nuances of the gender gap in Indian academia and weighs solutions to close it through the voices of women scientists themselves. The reasons behind the gender gap, according to our qualitative study, are diverse; a few are similar to those seen in the West, but many are unique to India. Sexist hiring and tenure processes, patriarchal power structures and conditioning, and apathy towards women's issues are the main categories of our findings after interviews with over 100 women scientists currently active in India.

Introduction

That science has a gender representation problem is very clear from the numbers, and more so from male-dominated narratives. A recent report from UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) states that only 28.8 percent of total researchers are female, globally. These numbers are much starker for India. In India, only 13 percent of faculty members in research institutes are women (UIS 2018). This percentage drops as we look further up the hierarchy. In the history of the four major government funding agencies in India which fund basic research in various areas— i.e. Department of Science and Technology, Department of Biotechnology, Department of Earth Sciences, and Council for Scientific and Industrial Research— only twice has a woman secretary been appointed. The All Indian Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) have had only one woman director each, despite the large number of women in medicine.

A study by UNESCO shows that in 2016, the number of women enrolled in tertiary education in India was almost equal to that of males. As their academic career progresses, women tend to slip out of science. The 'leaky pipeline effect' describes the gap between the number of women enrolling in sciences and the small ratio of women making it to the top of the academic ladder (Blickenstaff 2005).

'Women in science' groups and initiatives around the world are trying to foster dialogue to understand the reasons behind this 'leak' to enable bridging of the gaps (Ceci and Williams

2010). Male-dominated and biased hiring committees as well as skewed household responsibilities are thought to be the major reasons behind this gap. Even though this is a global problem, it is clear that what works in one scenario need not in another. The social, cultural, historical, and political context in India demands a more nuanced handling of the gender gap. This can only happen if the voices of women scientists practicing research in India are heard and their experiences considered.

"We started studying gender equality as a value but then we quickly came to the conclusion that people understand gender equality differently in different countries and in different cultures. In India, we talk about equal opportunity - we have a law from the Factory Act that says there should be equal opportunity for men and women. People consider this gender equality... In India it is a culturally construed and culturally respected notion that women should be looking after the family and should not be working after evening. The intention is not to deprive the woman of jobs, nor is it based on a thinking that she is incapable of doing these jobs, but society thinks that she should be protected, taken care of. When people from foreign cultures look at India's gender inequality, they might see it in the same context of gender sensitisation as theirs. But everything has to be seen in its own context," one The Life of Science (TLoS) interviewee, who studies gender and psychology, said.

In spite of extensive sociological and statistical research on the gender gap, an empirical study of women scientists' own perspectives on useful practices to address this issue is largely missing (Hyde et al. 2009). Women scientists are rarely seen in public debate or any spheres that capture the imagination of the Indian public. They are seldom seen in decision-making bodies or in the list of recent science awardees. TheLifeofScience.com is a journalistic attempt to shift the male-centric narrative to a more egalitarian one. The purpose of this study is to investigate, from the women scientist's perspective, some of the factors that they found useful in their journey in science and some engagement practices that could be useful in the Indian scenario.

After over 100 interviews with active women scientists in India, we see that non-male scientists are not purposefully staying out of the limelight, nor are they any less ambitious than their male peers. Their sustained obscurity is largely due to the lack of efforts in academic and research institutions to upturn biases that settled in decades ago. Not helping is a media that is too ignorant or lethargic to present an accurately diverse view of scientific research in India.

Methodology

To understand the social context of the problem of gender imbalance in science, we used in-depth interviewing as the main method of investigation. The central concern for using interpretative research methodology was to understand human experiences at an all encompassing level. The subjects for the interview, i.e., the women scientists, were decided randomly by approaching universities and colleges across the country. To ensure that the experiences of diverse women scientists were accounted for, we interviewed scientists from a wide range of age, seniority, field of study, geographical region, backgrounds and number of years spent in research. The women in this study are practising scientists from the field of life sciences, social sciences, psychology, physics, earth sciences, engineering, mathematics,

computer sciences, astronomy and chemistry; although a wide range of the research we came across is interdisciplinary.

To make sure our subjects represent experiences from all over India, we interviewed women scientists pursuing sciences from 16 states and two union territories in India. The age range of our subjects is 28 to 68 at the time of the interview. Some of the subjects are senior-level scientists approaching retirement, one is freshly retired, while some are early career PhD candidates. Two researchers we interviewed are postgraduates, around five are independent and at least three started their own companies as an off-shoot of their research.

Data collection and analysis

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews based on a topic guide were used to enable a detailed exploration of women's views and experiences of doing scientific research in India. Interviews lasted for about 45 to 180 minutes and were audio-recorded at the interviewee's labouratory, place of work, scientific conference or their home. The topic guide included questions along the following bullet points to elicit participant views and experiences: (i) Details about their scientific research: This was aimed to ease the participant into the interview process to ensure honest responses as well as profile the research she partakes in. (ii) Experiences doing science: An open-ended exploration about their scientific journey, early life influences and motivations to do sciences, their academic journeys mapped along with their personal milestones like moving away from, or back to India, childbirth, marriage, awards, tenure, grants etc. and factors that helped them stay in research. (iii) Suggestions to close the gender gap based on their personal experiences: what are the possible ways to mitigate the gender gap in research in the Indian scenario?

The audio interviews were then transcribed manually and analysed using a combinatorial approach of thematic content analysis and narrative analysis (Moira Maguire, Brid Delahunt 2017). Out of the 105 interviews, 19 reports are a result of interviews by freelance science communicators; the rest were conducted by the editors themselves. All the interviews were carefully analysed to understand the broad themes. Besides in-depth interviews, we have also analysed group discussions, open forums with women scientists and listening lessons we have been part of. We have used Google forms to collect data about the schemes and grants TLoS interviewees have benefitted from and their caste and class backgrounds.

Ethics statement: The quotes in this article were taken with consent from scientists who agreed to be featured on theLifeofScience.com. For the purpose of this study, some quotes presented in have been modified slightly to protect the identity of the women since they have been recontextualised.

Results

During the thematic analysis of interviews with 105 women scientists in our study, we looked for emerging themes underlying the success of the women scientist participants and recorded the challenges they faced in furthering their research. Based on the interviews we have compiled, we present the factors that, in the participant's opinion, help retain more women scientists in the Indian scenario.

(I)   EMERGENT THEMES UNDERLYING THE SUCCESS OF PARTICIPANTS

Successful scientists benefit from support or rebel

The odds are tipped towards women dropping out of science. Women who defy the odds and excel in science come from either of the two extremities, according to a head of department at an institution of national importance in North India.

She said: *"There are two extremes where an Indian woman can be a good researcher. Either she has received lots of dissatisfaction from family, society or workplace, and rebelled or she has received a lot of support in her journey."*

Since the road into science is challenging, the support and encouragement towards science received early in life is one crucial factor for success. Our analysis concurred with this idea. Almost all our participants spoke of strong support received from either or both parents, a relative or a mentor that pushed them towards science. Memorable childhood experiences at science outreach activities and with science media also provided inspiring pushes for some of our interviewees.

"My mother was also a student of science, very interested in chemistry. But she was too shy to protest getting married. She became a housewife. It was her dream that I should do well in education. They gave me full freedom to study whatever I wanted," an interviewee shares.

"Nobody threw any cold water on thought," another said while talking about her childhood. Some of the women scientists interviewed come from 'traditional families' where scientific lives were uncommon. Breaking the norm, they said they could pursue science due to unconditional support from either or both parents or a relative. "In conservative families like mine, the children were usually married off after a bachelor's degree." says a senior scientist. "I belong to a village in Haryana where people don't send their girls to science, they prefer arts or something else. Science takes time and tuitions are required. They don't want to give so much time and money. I was lucky because of my uncle who owned a school and pushed for me to study higher when he saw I was the school topper."

"My daughters are not made for the kitchen," one of the scientist's father was quoted memorably.

In many cases, opportunities knocked in the form of inspiration, guidance and motivation received from teachers/mentors. One of the interviewees said that her journey in geophysics started due to a chance encounter with a professor at an Indian Institute of Technology (IIT). Another researcher studying ocean cores said of her interest in sedimentology: "A professor at my university quizzed me about a geology article I was reading in the library and then encouraged me to research on the topic and make a presentation. I realised by interest in this way at first and later decided to take forward the research area of my mentor." Mentors were often male, presumably because most faculty members in scientific institutes, especially in earlier decades, were male.

In our sets of interviews, most successful women scientists come from urban or, caste and class-privileged background. For example, "My father and all his brothers were working in higher education institutions in the country. I was very motivated to be in academics because of them. In a supportive academic Oriya family, my way into academia was a very straight choice". Many of these scientists pursued the initial part of their research life in the United States of America or Europe. Almost all of them returned to India to reunite with families and/or set up their own labouratories in India, which they now lead.

Around 18 of our interviewees come from rural backgrounds, including small towns and villages in Karnataka, Rajasthan, Haryana, West Bengal, Telangana, and Himachal Pradesh. In these cases, they also attribute their success to exceptional support from the family or to exceptional perseverance. "My parents were not very highly educated but they always encouraged me to study well. I was always interested in science— never believed in superstitions— and I wanted to become an engineer, but my uncle said girls shouldn't do engineering, so he made me take up the Biology-Physics-Chemistry stream in my intermediate (after 10th standard)," shared a biomedical engineer.

A considerable ratio of our interviewees rebelled and live with sour family relations because of the choices they made for themselves. *"Though my father was a university professor with high regard for higher education, being a village, the large family was less excited. If I followed their advice, I would not be here,"* a mathematician confessed.

Husband-wife scientist pairs

A big part of the support system of successful researchers is their husbands. Most of our interviewees suggest that an accomplished research life needed a supportive partner. Here are few of the responses which further explain this statement. "A PhD is not a nine to five job. You can't look after children, do the housework and then come to office— I don't think it's possible to do a good job at any of those if you try all. Therefore there is such a big attrition rate. I was lucky— I and my husband share everything— it's always been that kind of equation."

Around 37 of our interviewees are married to scientists. Often, the husbands pursue research in the same field of study. At least five have authored papers with their husbands. Having a spouse in science seems to make it easier for women scientists to stay in science. "Sometimes we get late if we have some work in the lab, sometimes we go to present our work at conferences... we know each other's struggles very well. It takes time to establish yourself in science. If my husband was in a different field, maybe he would not have understood why I needed to go to Australia for my postdoc. He understood that this was a big opportunity," quoted a scientist working in Bhopal.

Of her first few months as mother, one interviewee said: "Research gave me the flexibility of not reporting to work every single day and working from home. I used to work on papers all day and take care of my son, too. We didn't need much help as we both were in research, we could complement each other."

Support from partners was a welcome relief for a few interviewees who had longed unsuccessfully for such support early in their life. After being pressured to marry by her parents, one of the participants shared the story of strong support she received from her husband when she had an opportunity to pursue higher studies at Oxford University, UK. "Fortunately, I got married and my husband said that it was now between him and me. He said that I should go, even if he could not join me right away." She pursued this opportunity and her husband joined soon after to pursue his own doctorate studies.

"A lot of the scientists are married to other scientists. I think that is partly because of the mental match. But also, there are things that are going to be difficult on the professional path of a scientist and if the spouse understands, then things just go smoothly," said one interviewee.

Childcare support

At least 65 of the women we interviewed are mothers. The 'double burden' of being the primary caregiver as well as an active researcher came up repeatedly in these interviews. Many agreed that it would be impossible for them to work without on-campus or other convenient childcare facilities. "When you don't have a support system like daycare centers, you end up taking care of, a lot more outside your lab and you're preoccupied with so many things. Your efficiency in work is going to go down and that is why you see many women scientists not doing as well as their peer male scientists," said one of our interviewees.

"We have a six-year-old son and a two-year-old daughter. My son was born during my postdoc. Since we do not have our families living in the same city, we rely on the institute daycare system. I do not know of any other way!" said an interviewee, who set up the daycare at her institute out of necessity. Her insights and the report we published on her efforts have inspired a number of other institutes to follow suit, including two IITs.

Several interviewees have credited the contribution of parents or parents-in-law in managing the 'double burden'. While traveling to scientific conferences, the contribution of the elders in the family has been exceedingly helpful. Some of the women expressed their gratitude towards their domestic helps who helped them in the "important years".

Day care centres and other childcare support play an especially important role for field scientists. "Without the crèche, I could not have survived and led this active life. This year, when I went to the field, my daughter was primarily with her father and her grannies," said a paleo-biologist.

However, women scientists also fight a psychological battle between guilt and self-purpose. "I don't feel like I am a good enough mother, or a good enough scientist! That's because you tend to evaluate yourself as only a scientist, or only a mother. And so, you never quite measure up."

"It's not so simple. Motherhood changes you and you need passion to come back to your old self without neglecting responsibilities."

Realising how critical this issue is, some of our interviewees told us about their initiatives to make conferences and other scientific events more child-friendly and accessible by scientist-parents. "Feel free to bring your family along and turn the conference into a 'workation'," announced the organiser of an annual neuroscience gathering.

Science grants for women

There are several awards, schemes and research grants specifically for women offered by the government departments and international agencies. We carried out a survey separately to assess the success of such awards within our pool of interviewees. Out of the 44 complete responses that we received, only 14 women scientists had benefited from such schemes. The rest have been working with grants that are available to all.

(II) CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY WOMEN SCIENTISTS

Institutional failures, sexist hiring, ageism, and tenure processes

A common question encountered when young women are interviewed for faculty positions or research openings: "Why should we hire you? Can you promise you will give the job all your attention despite being married and having kids?" At least two of our interviewees expressed their frustration on being at the receiving end of such interview questions.

Doubts over scientific ability based on biological capacity to bear children are cast only on women. "I get asked questions like how do you do this? [Managing a family as well as a scientific career] What does your family/husband say? – I consider this an invasion of my privacy. My male colleagues don't face this."

Another interviewee said: "The challenge of managing a career and family life may seem daunting, but I am against the perception that both of these things cannot be managed at the same time. It's very important to break this perception and convince people that we can do this."

The gender gap is a result of decades of prioritising men over women for faculty and research positions. Our interviews report a definite gender bias.

"There is definitely a gender bias; it just comes in different shades depending on where you are and how your colleagues are. Sometimes, people tend to take you less seriously... I have faced discrimination, to the extent that I was discouraged from taking up a faculty position".

Doubts over capabilities of women scientists are cast not just while hiring but throughout the tenure track and promotions. For most scientists we interviewed, the time periods and age limits for promotions and securing permanent faculty positions coincided with childbirth and early childcare. A considerable proportion have chosen to stay unmarried, most took breaks for early childcare and there are also some stories of heroic management of this time.

"I have paid with sweat, blood and precious time of my newborn child for my research," said one scientist.

Even at premier scientific institutions in the country, well-published scientists are missing the boat to further their research due to sexist and ageist policies. At many scientific institutions in the country, the upper age limit for being considered for a permanent position is 35.

However, due to familial obligations thrust on them, women scientists often take longer and as a result, end up struggling for a faculty position and instead find themselves working from fellowship to fellowship. One of the interviewees finds herself repeatedly unsuccessful in securing a permanent job. "I am over 35 years old, and despite the fact that I am working on something new, unique, and important, I won't be able to find a job outside of this lab."

To our question: What would you suggest to young women who want to stay in research? At least five recommended pushing for change in tenure track policies at their institutes.

"The biological clock is ticking and so is the tenure clock," one interviewee commented.

In Indian government institutes, researchers are considered for tenure at the end of four or five years. When women scientists take maternity leave this time-frame proves to be less productive than their male counterparts. We have heard from at least two scientists about their efforts in campaigning for relaxed age limits at their institutes. Several women scientists' schemes are also bound by age limit. Several older women scientists end up falling behind the academic ladder.

Two-body problem

At least 17 interviewees have faced the classic 'two-body problem' in Indian science. Two-body problem is dubbed as the challenge faced by partners to find jobs in the same institute or within a reasonable commutable distance from one another, thus separating families and putting the scientists' research under pressure.

The global problem in academics becomes complicated in the Indian milieu because of the lack of multiple 'good' universities in a given geographical location. This problem is instituted by dated policies of most Indian institutes and national academies to avoid hiring a couple in the same department. One interviewee said: "Most of the times it is the woman who must sacrifice her career. The options for a married woman are laid out simply: give up her work or sign up to the challenging scenario of pursuing her career while living in a different place than her husband." A lot of the couples struggled by staying apart for as long as ten years after getting married.

One of our interviewees shares her qualms and the support she got from her husband after she was offered a job at a prestigious research institute in India. She admits that when she got the offer from the institute, it was not an easy decision for her as her husband was in Belgium at the time. "He was the one who forced me to join— he reminded me that this is a big achievement. But it was very difficult for us— we met only once a year." They have been married for five years but she said that she "is grateful that her husband has never suggested that she leave her job to join him."

"If the husband doesn't cooperate then it is not going to work out. They will be left a little behind," said a cell biologist. A physicist who is forced to raise her daughter alone because of her husband's inability to secure a position at her institute, said: "You always crib about brain drain, here there is a person who has the merit and he's trying to come back but he is not being taken just because he is my spouse."

Patriarchal power-structures and conditioning at work attitudes-women have to work harder

One of the major problems encountered by women scientists is the implicit or explicit bias against them (Moss-racusin et al. 2012). Especially in the Indian culture, the patronising attitude intended to 'protect' women can particularly deter the progress of a woman's professional path. One of our interviewees shared how such attitudes can deny important opportunities to women. "Some members of my team even travelled to Ladakh for testing purposes - I would have liked to go but the management would not allow a 22-year-old woman to do so," said a scientist from Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

Many confessed that they had to work harder than their male colleagues to prove themselves worthy of their current position or promotions. "Because of the gender stereotypes in our society, if a male misses something, the society will turn a blind eye to the mistakes but it is not the same for a woman. If a woman is in the same position, you are always under scrutiny so you cannot afford to go wrong anywhere," one interviewee said.

A lot of women in our study have shared experiences of being talked down to or ignored in discussions. "As a woman, you have to work four times as hard as any man to get the same recognition. For people to really admit that you are capable, you have to prove yourself again and again."

"I could have joined the institute my husband works at. But consciously I chose not to because when a husband and wife work together in the same institute, many of your accomplishments will be undermined based on the thinking that you are getting promoted because of your husband."

As a Head of Department at a university, one of our respondents felt that "there are people who detest the idea of working under women administrators".

Old boys' clubs

One of our interviewees shared the result of being stuck in the academic world that they see as an 'old boys club'. "Women are more likely to miss out. Suppose a new company is coming into the institute for a consultation. Somehow the men in-charge find male counterparts because there is more camaraderie between them." Another respondent said: "If I had sat and had coffee with those men, they would have started saying that I have a loose character, whereas male researchers could easily sit with them and learn more things."

"You know how it is… in conferences, you invite your friends, people you are close to… you don't always get invited for the work you have done. Networking is easier for men because they will have more men as friends, right?"

Often awards are based on nominations from other scientists. This is one of the most publicly visible areas where accomplished women are overshadowed by the old boys' club. "Men nominate other men," shared one scientist. "Where is the sisterhood, I don't see it," said another.

"You can't use this meritocracy debate. Well, are you telling me genetically we are incapable? Clearly not. The brain is clearly capable of performing irrespective of male female. I think it's reflective of patriarchal society. To think that science itself is not patriarchal is not true because science is practiced by people and people are conditioned that way," lamented a neuroscientist.

Self-perception: How girls see themselves

The image of a scientist involved in critical thinking, rigorous experimentation and analysis is mismatched to the conditioning of girls in the country. This has been recognised as the lack of self-perception as a scientist in young female students. At one of the IITs, questions were invited by female students prior to an open panel of senior women scientists. "Most of the questions we got pertained to tips and tricks for managing families and scientific projects at the same. None of them asked questions about the rigorous scientific method," said one of the organisers of the panel.

One of the interviewees listed the basis of scientific thinking. "We discourage girls from behaving in ways that make a good researcher. Asking lots of questions is most important. Research begins with a research question. But when girls ask questions at home, they are told off for asking too many questions." Second on her list of important scientific behaviours is the ability to think outside the norm. "But we tell our girls to do as asked." Thirdly, she feels that girls are discouraged from field studies and networking, too. "Instead, we tell our girls not to interact with unknown people."

In families and higher education, boys are encouraged to tinker or experiment more, while girls are seen to suit more theoretical work. After unlearning her conditioning, a physicist we interviewed can now share: "In my post-doc, I realised there was a lacuna in my experimental training." Discouraging basic scientific thinking in girls while gendering them according to societal norms is problematic and might be one of the biggest reasons behind the gender gap in Indian science.

Pressure to marry, stay close

Indian families are rigidly patriarchal. Even though the country has one of the highest numbers of rapes and other violence against non-males seen anywhere, those upholding patriarchy insist on "safety" and "respect" for women. This safety and respect is almost always seen standing in the way of the women's own ambitions and desires. Our interviewees are not exceptions.

"My family, especially my father, was very reluctant to let me go far away from the family. Even for my B.Sc. my father wanted me to attend a college really close to my house. It was the 90s and I was not allowed to take a bus to college which was further away. They'd say it's not safe, why do you want to go that far…"

In some cases, freedom to choose one's path comes only after marriage. "I got married. That's what changed," said one of the interviewees and self-proclaimed 'child bride', when asked what made her protective parents grant her the freedom to study abroad.
At the start of their scientific journeys, most of the women were pressured by close or distant relatives to concentrate on their personal life rather than their chosen academic path. "Get married and then do whatever you want," is a universal statement. A senior physicist frequently advises her students to be very firm, as she had to be. "I had told my family that I won't get married because I want to do physics. But very few families will accept that."

Many women admitted to having been pressurised or having seen fellow batch-mates pressurised to get married. A 27-year-old researcher said, "I have had people overtly suggest to me that if I wait for too long, nobody would want to marry me. Old commodities don't sell well in the market," she remarked.

Discussion

An important way to bring women scientists into any discussion is to boost their visibility. The average person in India would struggle to name even a single female Indian scientist. Entering 'Indian scientist' on any search engine throws up a sea of male faces. The only way to spot non-male scientists is by searching for 'Indian women scientists'. 'Indian transgender scientists' shows no relevant results. As a result, a scientist continues to be male by default in the eyes of most Indians.

A lot of this has to do with the lack of women in top decision-making roles. To understand why women aren't progressing to the top as fast as they are being inducted into the science (scientific) community, several factors need to be discussed.

"We need affirmative action for representing women, this might not be happening," said one interviewee.

Apathy towards women's issues

Women in science in India today face a range of challenges that can be minimised by getting rid of defunct and oppressive policies. We recognise, based on the realities we have heard and witnessed, that the gender gap could stay wide and the pipeline leaky despite more and more women signing up to study science every year. This dormancy in Indian science seems to emerge from an apathy towards women's issues. As the voice of Indian women in science grows indignant, instead of change, we see backlash. This continued apathy is a politics, deterrent to the individuals, scientific institutions in the country and the principle of science itself.

Our study shows that institutions lack basic necessities like daycare centers, transport between work and home, re-entry support for those who take maternity and childcare breaks and on-campus accommodation. Women also face the risk of being branded "harsh feminists" when they voice their aggravations. The women's cells grow in number slowly, new daycares are set up every year and the token woman in committees and panels make an appearance. At the same time, an all-male jury awards an equal number of males and females with science awards and expects recognition for being gender equal, and young students challenge claims of the institute being 'safe for women' made by senior women scientists. For every gender sensitivity seminar organised, several male colleagues leave the room.

"We can't do much I'm afraid. If you make it to the top, you can try to make some changes for other women. If you say too much then you are branded a feminist and then you cannot do anything," said one of the interviewees.

"People say there is no bias against women who've taken a break but believe me there is. The thing is, if you take a break for maternity in science, it's not just the one year you miss out on because by the time you can restart it takes twice as long. It's so competitive that two years can be a lifetime."

"After 6 pm you won't get public transport. My house is 22 km far away. Alone in the night is not very safe. But I do not have any option. So I take the risks."

Changes in policy

The Indian government and science academies are acutely aware of the seriousness of this issue. The Department of Science and Technology has been running 'Women Scientist Schemes' targeted at those who have fallen off the pipeline after a break in their careers. Several other schemes like INSPIRE Faculty go to young women every year. The beneficiaries of these schemes have expressed immense gratitude for the fellowships, however, there is an echoing complaint about the structure of these fellowships, crushing delays and failure to ensure permanent employment at the end of the three years.

One interviewee who was able to return to research after a decade-long break said: "It was a very positive thing for me. The committee who interviewed me was very excited to hear about my long break." However, the red tape pulls many down. "Five months into my second year, I have not received the second installment of the grant money. They say they have not yet updated my file. I'm trying to continue my work, but it's disappointing. We work so hard to get it but I heard that this happens with DST."

These delays can have grave impacts on scientists who are resource-starved. "This year, I received my grant in the end of September – I have to utilise these funds by 31st March. If not, the remainder will be deducted from the next installment. I lost a significant amount of money this way the first time around. For people like me, they should be a bit more lenient for the first four years. Let them take the unspent amount at one go at the end of five years, and

not deduct it every year. Now I am left with a limited amount of funds for very novel research. Let me see how far I can go with this," said one interviewee.

While the challenges like the two-body problem and sexist hiring procedures are a challenge in getting a faculty position for women, transitioning into a senior position or getting tenured comes with its own set of additional challenges. The progression of women relies heavily on networking and the 'old boys club' makes it difficult. This has grave consequences on the careers of women like being left out for conferences and meetings leading to decreased visibility of women scientists.

More than a hundred sessions on, the Indian Science Congress continues to be male-dominated. The list of awardees of the top science award in the country, the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize, is sparse when it comes to women. Of almost 550 awardees of the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar award since 1958, only 17 are women. Agencies like Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), which gives these awards, do not sufficiently acknowledge the gender gap and fail to institute corrective measures to address it.

The gender imbalance, however, has been strongly acknowledged by the three science academies in India. The Bengaluru-based Indian Academy of Sciences (IAS), along with National Institute of Advanced Studies, released a report titled 'Trained Scientific Women Power: How much are we losing and why?' (IAS, NIAS 2010) which delves into several aspects of the issue and presents insightful numbers to support their observations and recommendations.

Most scientific institutes conduct periodic gender sensitisation events, but these are often promoted as 'women's issues' workshops and avoided by male scientists.

"When women in science session starts, my male colleagues, who I know very well, walk out of the room sniggering, saying: 'Oh your session has started'. At one of these sessions, we got into a very heated discussion. The men who stayed for the session said: 'Look, the guys in the room are not the problem, it is the guys who left the room that are the problem'. " recollected one of the interviewees.

The government conducts events to honour women scientists on occasions like International Women's Day, but these efforts are often incomplete and superficial. A participant who was flown in from Kerala for such an event in Delhi described to us the patronising tone of ministers who praised women "who are not just good mothers but also good scientists".

A recent show of intent by the government is the Vigyan Jyoti scheme which was announced in 2017 as a "Rs 2,000 crore push for more women engineers". This scheme has been conducting workshops and sessions for school girls in collabouration with local institutes to encourage them to look at science as a career. The exact game plan for this however has not been made clear to the public.

Discussion

The factors discussed here might be relevant to most careers, however, they impact women in science more so because of the unique work culture prevalent in sciences. Science is viewed as a rational enterprise and is thus thought to be rid of all the biases. However, it is important to note that even though science itself is not biased, the scientists and administrators who run institutes are. The closed structure of academia and presence of isolated 'ivory towers' leads to lack of public scrutiny.

In academia, hierarchy is multifold compared to other spheres. As a result, those at the bottom rungs face a lot more pressure and oppression from their seniors. Young women in the early stages of their careers are especially susceptible. Sexual harassment is another patriarchal tool used against women in this power dynamic. "By no imagination is sexual harassment at the workplace exclusive to the world of scientific research, yet some features of how science is organised, makes its authority structure especially perilous for women," read a statement from 165 scientists urging action on sexual harassment earlier in 2018.

The perception of science as a challenging and unpredictable career tends to keep Indian women away from fully committing to it. "Several women decide not to pursue research because it is not an easy choice, because it is not a nine-to-five job. But they don't know science offers flexibility," one interviewee said.

Lack of support and self-care amid normalised patriarchy and taboo on discussions about mental health and sexual harassment leaves very little space for an Indian woman to thrive in science. In the Indian cultural context, where women are the primary care-givers in families, negotiating husband-wife roles in the dearth of daycare centers can be very burdensome.

Also unique to India are its own brand of policies that result in sexist outcomes like the two body problem and ageist career progression programmes. This is compounded by lack of social capital that seems to be reserved only for men in their boys' clubs, leaving women to rely only on their human capital.

Limitations of the study

The aim of the study was to understand the challenges that practicing women scientists face in the Indian research scenario. However, at the same time it introduces a survivor bias in our study. To completely understand the leaky pipeline problem, it is important to hear the perspectives of the women who left science on their way. This study has not done that.

A major part of our research methodology involved approaching scientists through emails and follow up; this automatically introduces a bias towards institutes that have better internet penetration, as well as a bias for English-speaking scientists. The interviewees were informed that the purpose of the interview was publication, so considering the hierarchical nature of academia, it is likely that they shied away from talking about sensitive issues like sexual harassment as well as those concerning their peers and superiors. However, recent incidents prove that sexual harassment is rampant in the system and a nuanced look at this is prudent. It is impossible to get a complete understanding of gender inequalities in Indian science

without considering intersections of caste and the non-binary nature of gender. Our sample does not probe adequately into these aspects and this is something future studies will focus on.

Policy Recommendations

1.   **Balanced hiring committees:**
      A general lack of willingness to work with female administrators needs to be addressed. It is clear that hiring committees are usually male-dominated and, hence, the first step in the right direction is to introduce gender balance in them. This will encourage a larger and healthy representation of women in the power structures of higher education. Besides, gender sensitisation of selection committees should be prioritised.

2.   **Parental leave and childcare support:**
      For women scientists, critical years of professional growth coincide with a number of personal milestones like marriage and motherhood. Social sanctions and cultural narratives impose a lopsided burden of care on women. A key realisation is that all sections of society– politics, employers, and the families themselves – have to support women in re-entering their disciplines by forming new norms to partake in childcare. Introducing day-care and creche facilities at institutions and conferences is also a welcome step.

3.   **Spousal support:**
      In the Indian context, we know that quality institutions of higher education are sparse and they are geographically spread across the country. Additionally, these sparse institutions avoid hiring couples in the same departments. This puts tremendous pressure on marriages. It's clear that spousal support is a key enabler for women to continue and thrive in their careers in science. Such hiring policies need to be addressed urgently.

4.   **Enabling networks:**
      Networks matter— grants, awards, and opportunities for growth rely heavily on professional networks. In India, women are socialised to keep to themselves in the name of social sanctions, safety etc. This gives men a tremendous advantage women in terms of avenues for professional growth. While the larger issue can only be settled with progressive evolution of socio-cultural norms, it's key to form associations and platforms across disciplines that work for women and address their need for an enabling professional network.

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6

'Missing' Women Leadership in Indian Higher Education:
Broken Pipeline or Fields of Power?

Manisha Priyam

I. Introduction

During the course of field-work done recently for a research project on understanding the reasons for decline in public universities in India, I observed a startling fact— women are absent from leadership positions in Indian public universities. Barring all-women's universities— of which there are 14 in India, and with the notable exception of the state of West Bengal, none of the reputed and old Central or state universities of India have a woman as its leader— a Vice Chancellor (VC). Nor would those I interviewed in my research endeavor to comprehend the historical-institutional pathways of development of these once famous public institutions, display any memory of their universities having been served or led by an outstanding woman leader. This piece has its origins in reflecting on the experience and life world of the public university and is an attempt to come to terms with this 'absence'. The 'missing' is accounted for not by testing of any prior theories, but by analytical engagement with the nature of institutional power of the academe— one that systematically excludes women from leadership positions, even as there is evidence of progressive feminisation at the bottom of the pipeline.

I understand the Indian 'public university' along three axis: as an embodiment of ideas— about universality, autonomy, and equality; as an embedded social actor, in its relationship with other institutional actors— the complex federal state, its policy-institutional mechanisms with respect to higher education; and as agency, enabling the capabilities of the least advantaged and marginalised. The arguments herein are stylised as a narrative, with three points of focus: I examine at first the 'pipeline' with respect to women in higher education, and argue that it is based on the misplaced assumption that once women have entered the higher education pipeline, they will ascend to the top in a natural progression. Not only is there poor representation of women at the top, there are weaker chances of their progressing up, and now there are significant structural shifts leading to casualisation and feminisation of the teaching work force. A weaker representation at top levels in teaching positions, combined with invisible variables of state power asserted through 'selection committees' works in ways such that a gendered future for top leadership may be well nigh impossible. Second, I engage with an analysis of an important set of critical ideas— Women's Studies, being located in the university around the late 1970's. A time when access of women to higher education had significantly expanded (confirming an advance of entry in the pipeline), and there was growing radicalisation of the women's movement— these ideas should have interrogated the practice of institutional power of the university itself; it has indeed done so in many important and

creative ways, interrogating knowledge systems and hierarchies, including active engagement with the dalit movement. But women's studies stops short of interrogating the complex ways in which the sum of institutional power in higher education rests with men as the default option for leadership. Third, I compare two critical junctures when women have made it to the top (or nearly so) in two important public Universities— founder VC Hansa Mehta in the MS University, Baroda[1]— India's first woman VC, and India's first full dalit woman Professor— C.Parvathamma in the University of Mysore, who declined an offer to become the VC of her University. In the choices the two make— of acceptance or decline of leadership roles, lies a comparative reflection on women's agency and capabilities, as also the fields of power in which universities are embedded.

The three sections have a running thread— in the first I present the data and evidence on the access of women to higher education, and their filtered progression up. This is used to posit arguments to reconsider the sociological theory of the 'pipeline', which does not seem to work in neutral ways for women. In the second section, the university is seen as a site of critical ideas— in its extensive engagement with inequality and gender, and then caste and gender, even the dysfunctional and weak public university becomes a site of social engagement. Yet, it is unable to interrogate the systematic ways in which adverse social selection with respect to gender seems to persist within higher education. In the third section, the allegorical reference to the story of two women leaders of the public university is used to highlight the comparative conditions under which women have succeeded in rising to the top— in the immediate aftermath of independence, when the spirit of universality, autonomy, and equality found assertion in the national political sphere, and when the hubris of nation-building and high modernity characterised the project of university building. Two decades later, in another equally famous university in an Indian princely state, behind Parvathamma's refusal to take the offer of Vice Chancellorship at the University of Mysore, is her resolve not to bow down to corruption, and to local caste politics of the new 'dominant castes', as it was beginning to grip her university in the late 1970s and thereafter. The same university that contributes to building her agency through education as its student later becomes a site for her to interrogate structures of power— social and political, as she works there in a professional capacity. And in her preference to use the arena (of the university) to critically interrogate inequality in society, and dominant state politics, in place of assuming a position of power therein, including spelling out the reasons to refuse, reflects her capability to make a choice. Even more important however, for her, the classroom, teaching, and scholarly engagements serve as a 'site' to deepen her engagements with a new generation of students from disadvantaged caste-class background— a large number of them being Kannada speaking dalits. In conclusion, the three sections are to be viewed as heuristics, as an aid to help us understand why women are missing in leadership roles in the Indian academia.

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[1]   *She served as VC in SNDT women's university prior to MS University. I do not discuss that example here, as there are unclear opinions in literature whether the SNDT was then a full university at the time that Hansa Mehta was its VC. Besides, the SNDT is an all women's private university that I do not discuss here.*

II. Understanding The Pipeline: Women in Indian Higher Education

That access of women to higher education ought to be open and equal, is an idea that had already gained ground prior to the founding of the independent Indian state and subsequently, in its efforts for higher education as an element of the overall policy of planned modernisation. The All India Women's Conference was a champion of these ideas, and there was a belief that once more women were in the system, there would be equality of opportunity, and women would ascend to the top at a rate similar to men. Literature on liberal education refers to these assumptions as the 'pipeline theory', where the entry of a large number of women in undergraduate and then graduate education would over time yield a large pool for selection, and then flow out of the pipeline to swell the ranks of senior faculty and academic administrative positions (White 2005; Kellerman and Rhode 2014).

The increase in enrolments of women in higher education has been dramatic since independence— Figure 1 reflects this. The All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) 2016-17 estimates total enrolments in the range of 35.7 million, of which 46.8 percent are girls (at 16.7 million). This is a dramatic increase both in terms of the numbers being large, and from the low proportion of just about 10 percent of total enrolled being girls in 1950-51.[2]

Figure 1: Enrolment of Female Students in Higher Education in India,1950-51/2016-17

Source:
1. Data for the years 1950-1951 to 2000-2001 is from the Statistics of Higher and Technical Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MoHRD).
2. Data for the years 2010-2011 and 2016-2017 is from the All India Survey on Higher Education, Department of Higher Education, MoHRD.

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[2]   *There are few scholarly writings on the issue. Of these Chanana (2000) also confirms that there was a remarkable increase in enrolments by 1990-91.*

Table 1 reflects the proportionate share of women in teaching force for higher education over the years. In aggregate terms, it seems to convey a picture of increasing parity in the profession— from a low percentage share of 13 percent of the total teaching force in 1960-61, women are now 42 percent of the entire teaching force for higher education in 2017-18. However, there are two caveats to this: data disaggregated by gender is not available after the early 1990s up until 2010-11, even with the University Grants Commission (UGC)— the federal body directly responsible for standards, regulation, and financing of the university sector for all India.[3] Second, from the available data it is evident that the increase in proportionate share for female professionals has remained at or below 20 percent for four decades after independence, until the 1990s. From 2010-11, when data disaggregated for gender is made available by the AISHE, there is evidence of increase in female participation in the teaching workforce, specially from 2015-16.

Table 1: Higher Education Professionals in India, 1960-61/2017-18

Year	Male	Female	Total
1960-61	54,397	7,832	62,229
1970-71	1,60,423	29,222	1,89,645
1980-81	1,96,093	47,873	2,43,966
1985-86	2,43,801	63,950	3,07,751
1991-92	2,21,431	51,233	2,72,664
2000-01	-	-	4,11,628
2010-11	4,80,555	2,84,794	7,65,349
2017-18	7,45,122	5,39,725	12,84,847

Source: Data for 160-61/1985-86 is from various volumes of "Education in India" 1960-1961, 1970-71, 1980-81, and 1985-86. Data for 1991-92/2000-01 is from "University Development in India: Basic Facts and Figures", University Grants Commission, New Delhi. Data from 2010-11/2016-17 is from the All India Survey on Higher Education, various volumes, MoHRD. New Delhi.

Note: Disaggregated data for female teachers is not available for the period after 1990-91/ 2000-01. It is only after the collection of data for the All India Survey on Higher Education by the MoHRD that data on higher education professionals disaggregated by gender has been available on a regular basis.

However, the disaggregated picture by levels clearly brings out the complexity of what appears to be a rising proportionate share of women in the work organisation for higher education. The hierarchy with respect to gender is illustrated in Figures 2 and 3 for the years 2011-12 and 2017-18 respectively. Both figures show the 'pyramid' at the work place, and the proportionate representation by gender at each level. The base of the pyramid reports temporary teachers— who may or may not enter the tenure roles of Assistant Professor and above. Besides, many states conduct entrance exams for statewide recruitments at the entry level as Assistant Professor, affirming once again that the share of temporary teachers only reflects the structural composition of the workforce. Therefore, the hierarchy for advancement in essence consists of three broad categories— Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and full Professor.

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[3] *The author was directly in touch with senior officials of the UGC, and visited the Information and Statistics Bureau to confirm this. Specific data on female teachers in higher education is not available with the UGC office for the said period.*

The following observations are made on the basis of Figure 2: Overall, men constitute 61 percent of the total teaching workforce, and women 39 percent. There is clustering at the base with 76 percent of all those employed as teachers reported to be serving as Assistant Professor or equivalent. At this level, the proportionate share of women is the highest at 41 percent. As we move up, women are only one third the total number of Associate Professors (34 percent); and less than one fourth are full Professors (24 percent). Although the US too reports a similar structure with a clustering at the base for women (a majority of them concentrated at the entry level as instructors or lecturers), what is different (in the case of the US) is that there is gender parity at least at the base.Women now comprise 50 percent of instructors and lecturers in the US, and these proportions seems to only have increased marginally[4].

Figure 2: Gender and Hierarchy of Higher Education Professionals in India (2011-12)

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education 2011-12, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resources Development, GoI, New Delhi.

Figure 3: Gender and Hierarchy of Higher Education Professionals in India (2017-18)

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education 2017-18, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resources Development, GoI, New Delhi.

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4   *Figures cited are from the American Association of University Professors, for 2011, and as cited by Gangone and Lennon (2014).*

Comparable data for 2017-18 is shown in Figure 3. It reflects that there is no dramatic change in the proportionate share of men and women Assistant Professors— 58 percent are men and 42 percent women. The total number of jobs at this level has increased dramatically by nearly 52 percentage points as compared to similar data for 2011-12 (see Figure 2, and Annexure Table A1 for similar detailed data for 2011-12, and 11-12/17-18, respectively). Also, in 2017-18, gender gaps decline somewhat to 27 percentage points (from 32 percentage points in 2011-12) at the Associate Professor level. But the increase in total numbers of Associate Professors in 2017-18 as compared to total numbers in 2011-12, is somewhat modest at 11.7 percent. This indicates some structural constraints in progression upwards— an issue to which I give some thought in a subsequent discussion based on figures of Table 2. The highest gender gap continues to be at the level of full Professors— 47 percentage points in 2017-18. Universities therefore continue to be the scholarly public sphere of men.

Temporary Teachers in Higher Education

While the broad contours of this pyramid remain nearly the same for the years that the AISHE data is available (2011-12/2017-18), an important structural difference is the growing numbers of temporary teachers. From a mere 63,861 in 2011-12, the number of temporary teachers was over a hundred thousand in 2014-15— a dramatic rise of 57 percent in four years (See Figure 4 on Temporary Teachers in Higher Education). Latest government estimates report only about 6 percent temporary teachers in higher education, but ground reports suggest that the numbers may be much higher (see Chodhury 2018; Varma 2013). The reasons vary— ban on new recruitments in many universities, increase in self financing courses funded by student fees and being run on guest faculty alone, and block grants rather than regular salary being paid for new recruitmenst due to pressure on state finances— are some of the local or state level reasons for this dramatic increase in numbers of temporary teachers. Several other reasons pertain to central interventions, indicating how higher education in India is embedded within a complex set of federal arranagements: For example centrally directed curricular reforms introducing credits and choice, and the introduction of semester system have made it difficult to estimate teacher vacancies in the long-run[5]; introduction of quotas for affirmative action in university appointments have invited court directives, and even temporary ban on recruitments. It is at this level of 'temporary teachers'— a broad category that masks teachers appointed on contract, those appointed for shorter tenures as temporary or ad-hoc, and guest lecturers paid for daily work— that there is near gender parity.This is evident in the 'near equality' represented in the bars for male and female temporary teachers for 2016 and 2017 respectively— this comes where the casualisation of the profession is a reality (See Figure 4 for Temporary Teachers by gender, 2011-17). More recently, the press has been full of news on corrupt practices of VCs in regularisation of these casual teaching

[5] *The UGC has prescribed a "Choice Based Credit System", with a specification of types and numbers of courses, time duration for teaching and examination. In turn the Universities that are affiliating bodies for colleges have used the opportunity to further control the sylllabii and teaching of courses in colleges. The introduction has been top-down and sudden. Teacher vacancies are calculated at the level of colleges, where teachers are teaching courses still in the old annual mode, a new semester mode, and the CBCS. This flux has led to increase in temporary teachers in many universities, including in the University of Delhi where there have been many protests on the issue. Read for example this report in the TOI to assess the teacher vacancy situation in DU. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/after-7-years-du-acts-on-4500-teaching-vacancies/articleshow/58485524.cms. During these 7 years, temporary/ad hoc teachers took on the teaching responsibility.*

jobs as assistant professors— the VC of Bharathiar University, Tamil Nadu, has been arrested on this charge (see Sivapriyan 2018).

Figure 4: Temporary Teachers in Higher Education by Gender, India, 2011-17

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education, Various volumes from 2011-12/2017-18, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resources Development, GoI, New Delhi. Note: Temporary teacher includes the posts of visiting teachers, contract teachers, temporary teachers, ad-hoc teachers, and part-time teachers.

Progression in the Hierarchy of the Academic Profession

With respect to progress upwards in the profession, we have scant academic literature on how much time it takes for promotions at each level in the teaching hierarchy, whether there are constraints that work against women, and how disadvantages of social caste may remain further invisible within the hierarchies of gender. In general academic research on the profession of higher education is scant.[6] On the bais of continuous data available from the AISHE from 2011-12, I propose some reflections in Table 2. The numbers reflect that only 24 percent of all the Assistant Professors progress to become Associate Professors in a seven year cycle. Under the policy norms, Assistant Professors can be considered for advancement to the next higher level as Associate Professor after serving for six years. While this is the norm, there are great differences in practice specially on account of delays in setting up selection committees for consideration of promotion. What is surprising is that all undergraduate colleges have the possibility of promotion upto Associte Professor— the position of full Professor is available only in University teaching Departments and research institutes. In this context the proportions promoted up as Associate seems rather low. The gender gap is evident as only 21 percent of the numbers of female Assistant Professors in 2011-12 are Associate Professors in 2017-18, as compared to 26 percent of the men (See Table 2; Also Annexure Table A1).

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6   Tilak's edited volume is an important volume on higher education, consisting of a selection of articles published in the *Economic and Political Weekly since 1966. Of the 29 articles by 35 authors, none refer explicitly to the organisation of the workplace in higher education, the nature of social exclusions therein, or even on the issue of teachers as academic professionals. Data disaggregated by gender, social caste, and income quintiles is analysed in this volume but only with respect to students (Tilak 2013). The absence is reflective more of the fact that the gender skew in academic hierarchy (and doubly so with caste and gender) has not been considered to be a matter of focused research amongst scholars of higher education.*

The proportions for progress from Associate Professors to full Professors seems better—57 percent of the proportionate share of numbers who are Associate Professors in 2011-12 become full Professors in 2017-18. While 63 percent of the numbers of male Associate Professors in 2011-12 make it to full Professorship, only 45 percent of the women Associate Professors have similar success. The gender gap in this ascendance is therefore very high—at 18 percentage points, it is more than three times higher than for the previous level of advancement (from Assistant to Associate Professor). The anticipated policy norm for consideration for advancement from Associate to full Professor ranges between three-six years, but there are supply side constraints on account of the nature of institutions— as noted earlier undergraduate colleges do not have positions for full Professors. So, it can be argued that more women Associate Professors are in undergraduate colleges, and hence a constraint on advancement. The overall argument however still holds of there being male domination on entry, greater survival in upward transition in the hierarchy, and a shadow presence at the pinnacle of academic achievements as full-time professors.

Table 2: Progression In the Academic Hierarchy for Higher Education, 2011-12 to 2017-18

2011-12			2017-18		
Assistant Professor			Associate Professor		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
342753	240784	583537	88415	51028	139443
100%	100%	100%	26%	21%	24%
Associate Professor			Professor		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
82337	42487	124824	52105	18909	71014
100%	100%	100%	63%	45%	57%

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education, 2011-12 and 2017-18, Department of Higher Education, MoHRD.

Concluding these observations of the 'broken pipeline" in Indian higher education, I may add that we do not as yet have adequate analysis about the intersectionality of gender with region, social status as caste and tribe categories, nor also about the diversity of institutions of higher education where women survive or perish.[7] Comparative perspectives based on data from the US suggest that representation of women at colleges and universities differs significantly by institutional type and faculty rank. Women do better in community colleges and baccalaureate institutions, than in doctoral institutions, and especially in tenure positions. Only 28 percent of full professors in 2010-11 were women as per the National Center for Education Statistics. Further, similar to the Indian scenario, women do better only in low-paid and unrecognised entry-level academic positions (Gangrone and Lennon, 2014 pp.11-13).

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[7] *Although data is now available with the AISHE with respect to social group diversity, and on different types of institutions, a more rigorous analysis requires this to be coupled with surveys and qualitative analysis on the nature of constraints, and the reasons why few selections are being made for VCs or other positions of leadership from the current pool of women candidates.*

Academic Leadership and Reconsiderations on the Pipeline

If this is the academic pipeline, what about the leadership roles? The All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE 2017-18) records that of a total of 546 VCs in different states, a mere nine percent are women. As far as the regional diversity is concerned, West Bengal has the highest number— seven women VCs in a total of 33. Both the numbers and proportionate share are small in each of these states. Women fare better as Directors of research institutes— 17 percent in a total number exceeding 4000 all over India. But where women have the best chance to serve as leaders is in the slightly less recognised role as principals of colleges. 28 percent of the total number of principals of undergraduate colleges are women. However, these are mostly 'all women's' undergraduate colleges, where it is the practice that women are selected for this role (See Table 3 for select statistics on female managers in higher education in India).

Table 3: Select statistics on female managers in higher education in Indian states, 2017-18

States	Vice Chancellor Total No.	Female VC Nos.	Director Total No.	%Female	Principal Total No.	%Female
Andhra Pradesh	17	2	127	16	2381	22
Bihar	17	1	38	5	646	17
Chhattisgarh	17	2	31	13	569	38
Gujarat	43	1	250	17	1345	26
Haryana	26		124	10	680	40
Jharkhand	13	1	28	18	281	23
Karnataka	39	4	246	16	3443	27
Kerala	14	4	107	8	1269	43
Madhya Pradesh	30	5	661	21	1363	37
Maharashtra	38	3	532	21	4185	25
Odisha	19	2	105	3	804	30
Punjab	19	1	142	16	950	47
Rajasthan	44	4	230	12	2443	29
Tamil Nadu	34	6	390	19	2719	36
Telangana	16	1	134	16	1828	22
Uttar Pradesh	31	3	543	15	4134	23
West Bengal	33	7	100	17	1207	23
All India	546	47 (9%*)	4130	17%	32141	28%

Source: All India Survey of Higher Education, 2017-18,Deparment of Higher Education, MoHRD,GoI,New Delhi.

Table 4: State wise women Vice-Chancellors in Central and State universities in the following states in India

States	Central University (Total No.)	Central Universities with women VC	State Universities (Total No.)	State Universities with women VC	Central, State, and Private Universities- (Total No.)
Andhra Pradesh	0	0	22	2	27
Bihar	3	1	15	0	22
Gujarat	1	0	30	1	61
Karnataka	1	0	28	4	59
Kerala	1	0	13	3	17
Madhya Pradesh	2	0	21	2	51
Maharashtra	1	0	23	2	55
Rajasthan	1	0	23	1	77
Tamil Nadu	2	0	22	4	52
West Bengal	1	1	27	5	38
Grand Total	13	2	224	24	459

Source: University Grants Commission. (2017). Annual Report 2016-2017; List of Universities. (2018). Retrieved June 21, 2018, from https://www.ugc.ac.in/oldpdf/colleges/List of colleges as on 31.05.2018.pdf

Note: The above table only shows the women Vice-Chancellors of publically funded state and central universities. It does not include Private Universities. There is a difference in the total figures reported for each state in Tables 3&4 due to difference in data collection procedures of the UGC and for AISHE by the Department of Higher Education.

Table 4 presents data on women VCs, disaggregated by type of public university— state or central, and for different states (as in Table 3) from another source— the UGC's annual report's data on women VCs in publically funded state and central universities. The central universities have greater status and resources of the federal state (i.e.,'national' government). Each of them has a statutory existence under an Act of the Indian Parliament, and policies for autonomy tend to portray that norms of selction for leadership would be fair and the universities are likely to be above the considerations of provincial parochialism and caste politics. Yet, even here the picture remains abysmal, with no more than two of the 13 central universities reporting to have a woman leader. Besides, private universities now are a significant player in the institutional scenario of higher education. Even here studies suggest that the representation of women in leadership roles is very poor— just seven percent of the deemed universities are led by women (Banker and Banker 2017). An older contribution by Chitnis (1993) collates data on women managers in indian higher education, and conforms these trends for the 1980s; in addition to the position of VCs, Chitnis notes a paltry representation of women as Registrars, Finance Officers, and Deans-less than four percent are women in atotal of 598 officers that she makes a note of. What we do not know enough about is the political economy of vested interests or partisan political influences that guide appointments to such important positions. Here, each state, or each bureaucratic-political regime, may indicate a different set of arguments about reconsiderations of the academic pipeline.

The glaring absence of women as leaders in higher education however is another iteration of the all too familiar story of the broken promise of equal opportunity in outcomes, in gender neutral ways, once the statute books have iterated equality as a principle of universalism. Scholars suggest that literature— both from organisational theory and feminist scholarship— has had inadequate recognition of the gendered power of work organisations, despite feminism having recognised early enough that bureaucratic hierarchical organisations (of which the university is also an example) are an important location of male dominance. (Acker 1990).The hope lies in the fact that there is increasing recognition that pathways must be suggested for improving the status of women on campus— from 'pipeline to pathways' as White puts it (White 2005); but also of the different nature of contributions of women as leaders of the academic workplace and life. Kellerman and Rhode (2014) argue that female leaders adopt a participatory, consultative style, well suited to the academic environments. While they may be assertive, they are not abrasive. Kezar (2014) argues that women academic leaders have bold and new conceptions of leadership that may be constrained in practice by the nature of organisations that universities are. Yet, there is increasing recognition of their leadership in ways in which this was earlier done only for the grassroots. Notwithstanding the odds, the future horizon of women's leadership is not simply about setting the equality pointer right, but also about the substantive changes women can possibly bring about to the academy as an open and non-hierarchical workplace.

III. Women's Studies: The Critical Lens in the Indian University

A very critical juncture in reshaping the inegalitarian arena of the university in terms of ideas was the introduction of Women's studies with the explicit support of the federal state— at a time when the authoritarian measure of national emergency was being declared by the same institution (in 1975). None other than Vina Mazumdar— stalwart of the women's studies movement in India, noted that the Indian Council for Social Science Research's (ICSSR) programme on women's studies was conceived as a 'counter-point' to the declaration of the National Emergency in June1975. The late J.P. Naik— eminent educationist and Member-Secretary of the ICSSR called Mazumdar back from leave a few days after the national emergency had been declared, and asked her to concentrate on women, as the implications of such research would not be immediately understood. The focus on 'invisible' women would be also be an alibi for political activity (Pappu,2002, p.224).

The context of these developments was wider than just the emergency (and alibi for political activity)— the beginning of women's studies coincided what Mary John calls 'the first national crisis' of the late 1960's and early 1970's— a crisis of legitimacy of national institutions, failures of Nehruvian planned development, and of political rule of Indira Gandhi. While students, youth, and women agitated on corruption and price rise, social and political movements were challenging the very basis of knowledge and state power (2008,p.2).

By 1971, the Government of India had set up the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI)— it was to help prepare a document for the United Nation's International Women's year to be held in Mexico, 1975. Results of the inquiries and research of this committee in the social, legal, educational, economic, and political status of women came as a major shock

to the committee members. John notes that the report of this committee entitled Towards Equality showed that '...with the important exception of middle class women's entry into education, which had been expanded enormously after independence— the condition of the vast majority of women had been deteriorating since the 1950s, often at an accelerated pace'. Further, that there could not have been a more severe indictment of the claims of the state about progress and national development (2008, p.3).

For Vina Mazumdar, the university was the natural home for women's studies, and her thoughts, those of the ICSSR, and later the UGC would lead to the establishment of Women's Studies Centres in universities. The first of these was at the SNDT University— a women's university where Neera Desai, a noted sociologist, took the lead in setting up a research centre in 1974. Of this Mary John notes: 'A fundamental shift was thus inaugurated— from women as subjects to be educated to 'women' as new subjects of investigation and study' (2008,p.4). By the 1980's, the city of Bombay and the SNDT were hosts to large conferences of the women's movement and women's studies, and convergence of ideas were apparent. This very first conference defined the agenda of women's studies as a critical perspective and not a discipline— a vision that would be borne as the centres would take home in the university. This institutional scaling up was still a while— the leadership of the University Grants Commission under Madhuriben Shah, and the National Policy of Education, 1986 were the final pillars of support here[8]. By 1988, four centres were opened in the Universities of Kerala, Delhi, Punjab and the BHU. Two decades later, by 2007 there were over 66 centres.

The research and critique coming from the women's studies centres were reshaping the very epistemic paradigms upon which much of the practice of the Indian university relied— some of these were the reliance on fragmented, disciplinary knowledge, dependence on theories and methods developed in the West being applied blindly by Indian social scientists, new inclusions in the form of peasant woman in the rural economy, and the struggles and insights of new social movements on the agency and sexuality of women, as also ecological and environmental movements. The women's studies was to play a major role in restoring social investigations to examining social processes as a 'complex mosaic'— a role forgotten in fragmentation of the social sciences (Mazumdar 1994, pp.44-45). Noted sociologist Andre Beitelle confirmed this understanding about established concepts and methods of inquiry being put to question in women's studies', when he wrote in 1995 (in a comment on women's studies) that the ideas about unity of theory and practice in the academic world, once claimed to be a domain of the Marxists, was a space 'increasingly taken over by feminism' (Beteille,1995,p.224— cited in Pappu, 2002, p.224).

Above all, women's studies contested the received notions of development, having its roots in the US centred modernisation theories of the 1950s and 1960s. For Mazumdar, the autonomy of the university had been used as a space to question academic neutrality, and Western concepts of development and value-free social sciences— all of which had their roots in the West, and had penetrated the Indian academia (Mazumdar 1994, p.45).

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[8]   *As chairperson of the UGC, Madhuriben wrote to every university, urging them to open women's studies centres. The NPE 1986 called for education for women's empowerment and equality, and specifically asked that women's studies centres be opened in universities.*

Yet, there was little engagement of women's studies with the system of higher education itself. While a 2003 review of women's studies is titled Narratives from the Women's Studies Family and has case studies from 11 university centres of women's studies; it has an appropriate subtitle 'recreating knowledge' (Jain and Rajput, 2003), there is no assessment of the system of higher education within which a majority of these centres are located. Mary John notes in this regard "..the more difficult and elusive part of the history of women's studies lies elsewhere— in trying to assess the impact of women's studies on the system of higher education itself"(2008, p.7). The shortcomings are evident: with the impact of liberalisation, privatisation, and globalisation on higher education, the system of public university education has itself undergone a drastic restructuring— a change on which a powerful idea and critique such as the women's studies have nothing strong to offer. The system runs now on a vast number of private institutions, and self financed courses within public institutions, with casual labour employed as ad-hoc and temporary teachers, of which a large proportion are women. Besides, this is also the time when a large number of first generation learners, from disadvantaged backgrounds of social caste, have reached the public university as students. Women are poorly represented in the academic hierarchy, except at the entry level of the acdemic workforce and as ad-hoc and temporary teachers.

The 2012-17-XII Plan of the UGC aimed to address the issue of promoting women managers: it merged the UGC schemes of Women's Studies Centres along with a scheme of capacity building for women managers in higher education[9]— a first where there could possibly have been creative and critical engagement with the issue of gender and power in Indian higher education. Since the coming to power of the BJP government in 2014, the Planning Commission itself has been abolished, and a bill is now on the anvil for dismantling the UGC and especially taking away any powers of financing from a new proposed restructured body— the future is now in flux.[10]

IV. Understanding Agency: Capabilities, Functionings, and the Woman Vice Chancellor

This section takes the route of the narrative to present and compare in context, the story of India' first woman VC— Hansa Mehta who led the MS University Baroda[11] in the early years following independence; and two decades later of India's first woman dalit Professor— C.Parvathamma— who declined the offer to become the VC of the University of Mysore after careful considertaion of the fields of power that an academic leader would have to navigate.

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[9]   *See the XII Plan Guidelines 2012-17, Development of Women's Studies in Indian Universities and Colleges & Capacity Building of Women Managers in Higher Education, University Grants Commission, New Delhi. Available at: https://www.ugc.ac.in/pdfnews/8004557_WS-Guidelines_XII-Plan_Revised-Final.pdf, Accessed on July 16, 2018).*

[10] *A proposed bill to set up the Higher Education Commission of India to replace the UGC as a regulator, has been drafted by the Government, and is now under discussion. All financial powers of the UGC will now possibly rest with the Ministry of Human Resources Development, under the supervision of the Ministry of Finance. See for a statement from the government on the proposed Act http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/PN_HECI.pdf. Accessed on July 16, 2018.*

[11] *She was the VC of the SNDT Woman's University in Mumbai (1946-48) prior to becoming the founder VC of MS University Baroda (1949-1958).*

Professor Hansa Mehta is Founder Vice Chancellor of MS University, Baroda

Born to privilege of caste, class, and status, Hansa Mehta was the daughter of the Diwan of Baroda and Bikaner, Shri Manubhai Mehta. Manubhai was also a Professor of Law at Baroda College, and hailed from the privileged Nagar Brahmin caste.[12] Later, she married Dr. Jivraj Mehta— noted physician, Gandhian, Dr.Mehta became the first Chief Minister of Gujarat. Hansa had an undergraduate degree in Philosophy from the Baroda College, and went to England for higher education in Journalism and Sociology. It was in England that she met with Sarojini Naidu sometime in the 1920s, and was introduced by her to Gandhi as well asto the ideas of the women's movement. Immediately upon her return, she became a part of the Congress-led social reform movements and political struggles against the British. Of the former, her leadership and association with the Bhagini Samaj— founded by Gopal Krishna Gokhale, working amongst disadvantaged social castes, and for educational opportunities for women and children was notable.

The platform that enabled her evolution as a woman of national sature, acting in the public sphere, was the All India Women's Conference (AIWC). Set up in 1927 with the help of Irish woman Margaret Cousins, the AIWC was devoted to the cause of public instruction for women, and for their equal rights. Hansa Mehta led the Hyderabad concalve of the AIWC, wherein she steered the demand for a charter of rights of equality for women. She was elected to the Bombay Provincial legislature, and thereafter became one of the few women members of the Constituent Assembly set up to draft independent India's constitution. Here she was a member of the sub-committe for Fundamental Rights.

Her most remarkable role in the arena of rights comes from her representation of India at the UN Human Rights Commission following the second World War, and in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The familiar accounts of the deliberation process of the UDHR aver the US dominance in the drafting of the document— specially the role of the Roosevelts, as also the French origins of the discourse of rights. More recent scholarship, however, emphasises the role of 'small states' or the 'Third World' on the deliberations for human rights in the UDHR, a process where the delegates from India were not passive participants. Hansa Mehta has been described here as a 'determined woman', and its is thanks to her persistence that the UDHR reads "All human beings are born free and equal" –and human rights are not the 'rights of men' (Waltz, 2001:pp.63-64).

In a sense, by the time Mehta came to assume the leadership of the MS University (MSU), her role in the public sphere on account of a strong emergent anti-colonial nationalism, discourse on women's rights of equality, and now an internationalism built on the optimism of building a new world of freedoms was well articlated. She was at the vanguard on the discourse for rights (for women and for equality) at the national and international fora. Education of women was an integral element of her championing of equality for women.

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[12] *Found mainly in Gujarat and the Malwa region, the Nagars have a historical association with the town Vadnagar.*

Her decade long leadership of the MS University is a story of creation of new structures, embued with a spirit of Nehruvianism— universities were an integral part of his project of building 'temples' of modern India, and a Gandhian spirit where Mehta saw the university serving the needs of a welfare state. The founding of the MS University had been under consideration since 1924, and Mehta had been associated with these deliberations. Besides, the princely state gave a generous and large trust fund— the Sayajirao Diamond Jubilee Trust Fund of Rs. 1 crore in 1949 (Mehta, p.158-159).

Mehta's prior experience of handling state-university relationships, and university-college affiliation issues as Parliamentary secretary of education in the Government of Bombay came in handy in her stewardship of the new university, specially as she merged various colleges in Baroda under an umbrella new university, with six different faculties. The diversity of disciplines ranged from Arts, Music, to faculties of Engineering and Medicine. There was resistance from teachers, specially as they saw their prior affilaition with Bombay University being replaced by an affilaition with a new MSU in Baroda. It seems her cordial relationships with the princely state of Baroda (the Chancellor of the MSU was from the royal family, as also generous grants were given to the university by the family), her prior administrative and teaching experience, as also her family background helped her navigate conflictual situations. These founding moments (of the MSU) were were also the times when power of the provinces was strong in the new Indina Union, education was an item on the state list in the division of federal powers, and the University Grants Commission had not been set up yet. National luminaries of the university sector such as Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Dewan of Travancore and eminent lawyer C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer— were noted guests of the University. The highpoint was the hosting of the 42nd Indian Science Congress in 1955. Prime Minister Nehru and several Nobel laureates, and scientists from abroad participated at the Congress.

Mehta's descriptions of how she steered the lives of the student community to a new one through modern education, affirms her cultural beliefs that the university was a route to leading a traditional India to modernity— in the newly built campus and in the hostels, students from rural India did not know how to use facilities of the modern toilet, or even a toothbrush (they used bawal sticks, she notes in Mehta 198, p.159).The dramatic transformation in fields of power in the physical sites of pulic universities are such that student hostels on many public university campus are both sites of upper caste and gendered violence[13]; simultaneously, Ambedkar hostels for the socially excluded dalit and mahadalit communities now serve as a space for realising educational aspiration of the marginalised. Mehta's memories of her decade long leadership are that of a sense of purpose and achievement, an affirmation of her belief in having been instrumental in 'creating' a worthwhile institution.

[13] I have presented the story of armed conflict and violence in the Patna University between Minto hostel and Ambedkar Hostel, and at the Aligarh Muslim University hostel at the 2016 Conference of the South Asia Centre of the University of California, Berkeley, US. For a brief report of the conference, please see http://southasia.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/shared/documents/Modi_Report_WEB.pdf

Scholar Parvathamma refuses Vice Chancellorship of the University of Mysore

Noted scholar C.Parvathamma's life and career trajectory are a complete contrast to Mehta. Having been born to a dalit family in Davangere taluk of Chitradurga district in Karnataka— CP as she was called— opened her eyes as the daughter of a teenage widow. Her birth was recorded by the village schoolmaster as 'June 1928'— just about the years when Hansa was in the company of elite women leading the Indian national movement, and the AIWC. Her father had possibly passed away from consumption, and left the family in debt— land, jewellery, any other assets all mortgaged. Relatives ran away in the name of providing any support. It was her mother who was determined to see CP go through school education. She worked as an agricultural labour in the fields, and saw CP transition from the village school to middle school in neighbouring Lokikere. This was difficult however, given the long distance and the impediment of crossing a river dividing the two villages would be flooded in the rains.

Some local Brahmins in Lokikere came forward with the offer of providing, but relatives opposed it tooth and nail. CP's mother moved with her to Davangere, and started work in an industrial factory, and later sold fruits and vegetables along with working in the field to see CP through school. Such were the hardships that CP went with her mother to the field on the weekends, to avoid what has been described as 'harassment by cousins' (University of Mysore, 1989, p.3). High school presented further challenges, as the medium of instruction would henceforth be English, and no longer Kannada that CP was familiar and comfortable with. The Director of Public Instructions-Kasturaj Chetty— advised her to join Maharani College, Mysore for Inter (pre-college), and approach for living accommodation in a hostel, once CP had completed high school. Perhaps the toughest part of her education at this stage was managing to stay in the government hostel for scheduled caste students— where the warden expelled her[14], then on the mercy of friends, and then with the family of an undergraduate student at the same college. She suffered from a bout of malaria, and from eye sores in this same time period, often staying back in college shivering and with high fever.

Her good performance in examinations changed the attitude of university functionaries and the hostel warden, allowing her to pay when she could. For her undergraduate education, she joined the prestigious Maharaja's College to study an honours course in social philosophy. This was a pre-eminent institution, having been led in the past by noted Kannada scholar and poet— K.V. Putappa 'Kuvempu'; and among its noted erstwhile faculty was Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. She was a scholarship holder for her undergraduate and secured a first class first making a mark for her-self amongst students and teachers. She was also able to find part-time, and then full time employment for herself teaching in the Maharani's College, while she pursued her Masters. It was apparent to her by now that she wanted to pursue intensive research and get training in universities abroad. A scholarship of the government came to her support— but even to avail this, she required to pay a small amount of money as collateral. This came to her from support of others. She left for the US— Radcliffe College at Harvard, Boston, but revised her opinion and travelled to the UK. It was here at the University of Manchester that she was trained under noted anthropologist and Africanist Max Gluckman. Her classnotes from these

[14]   Her inability to pay the hostel fees regularly was the reason for the warden's stern action against her.

years (each lecture noted down with immaculate precision) show the diligence with which CP was absorbing her training. She was exposed to and now conversant with ideas of inequality and race. The theme of poverty and inequality were a running themes of her field work and scholarship.

Parvathamma's real achievements were as an outstanding researcher, and as a teacher—an academic professional in the true sense. As a teacher, she is said to be punctual, and thoroughly prepared for her classes, introducing Kannada students to the ideas of eminent sociologists and anthropologists, Radcliffe Brown, Malinowski, and Evans Pritchard among others. Her students noted that she was not a speaker for the public gallery, but thorough in her academic work and lucid analysis. She would not accept sub-standard writing, and would often make her doctoral students redo and re-write, till she found it coming up to standards of excellence. Students who accompanied her for field work, seemed to enjoy what they did. Her student and noted sociologist R.Indira describes her as a "sociologist-activist" (p.97), and notes that CP de-constructed the myths and misconceptions surrounding such issues as caste-based reservation, socio-political relationships in rural India and inclusion of new groups into the tribal fold only to claim the benefits of reservation. In fact the clamour for backwardness by non-eligible groups in order to corner the benefits meant for the poor, was the bane of reservations. Also, vote politics had worked in a way that power was concentrated in the hands of certain groups to the detriment of social justice and equity (Ramarao, 2018). In other words, cornering of developmental benefits and of reservations by dominant groups was an issue she spoke out against. Her scholarship focused on the poorest of the poor.

Although Parvathamma was not in the public sphere senso stricto as Hansa Mehta was, her scholarship and critical ideas on land reforms, reservations, and on schemes for advancing the social and economic status of scheduled castes and tribes, was in the knowledge of politicians. Many important politicians –among them Morarjee Desai, and Jagjivan Ram— sought her views on government policies for removing poverty or welfare of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The strength of her field-work and critical engagement with inequality were apparent in her research. Her real public sphere remained the Indian Sociological Association, that she had begun participating in even as a doctoral candidate at the University of Manchester, on the advise of M.N. Srinivas. She was also served on the advisory board of the Reserve Bank of India, participating in its deliberations on development schemes.

In due recognition of her ourstanding contributions as an academic, around the time of the emergency Karnataka Governor Govind Narayan offered CP the VC'ship of the University of Mysore. As a true professional, she brought the offer to discussions among her teacher colleagues. She was aware, and strongly opposed to the declining university culture by now— mainly on account of increasing corruption. The VC'ship in her idea was an academic leadership of the university, which as an institution, ought to remain socially embedded as in understanding the problems of society around it. For her, even ascending to the top of the hierarchy did not mean a change in this idea, of her constant endeavour to recast the social hierarchy with respect to marginalised dalits and schedules tribes. She asserted the

autonomy of the university by asking from the state (ie the Government of Karnataka) for competent and unbiased administrative support to run the university. As a precondtion, she requested for capable Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers to assist her in running the university administration in a corruption free, and efficient manner— a senior IAS officer to serve as Registrar, a junior IAS officer to serve as Controller of Examinations,and another officer to look after university accounts. This was a strong demand she placed on the state government— had it been aceded to CP would have been India's first woman Dalit University Vice Chancellor, having been offered the position completely on meritocratic considerations, and on the basis of her being the impeccable professional she was. CP refused the offer after due deliberation with her colleagues— an example of the collegiality in leadership style she would have possibly brought to this office.

Her refusal is an affirmation therefore of her capability— not simply achieved functionings but the choices she could make.[15] In recent interviews that I have begun to conduct with women VCs in the state of West Bengal, I find that a number of them have stepped down, or refused to accept the position simply on account of the power structures they have to navigate. The office is mired in corruption, and women's styles of leadership may possibly be different— as CP demonstarted with her emphasis on collegiality, and 'no compromise' on corruption. Women may not be easily amenable to demands for unfair appointments, or diversion of funds.[16] Besides, many states report exchange of money for the grant of (undue) favour of appointment as VC, indicating clearly that the appointment to this post is a victim of patronage politics.[17] In recent times, elected state governments and Governors appointed by the centre have been at loggerheads woth respect to appointments of VCs. Courts have even struck down appointments of VCs made by the Governor as Chancellor in Bihar (Srivastava 2013), and speculation about corruption has been rife. While more formal research engagement is still due on this account, it is apparent that parochialism, patronage politics, and political conflicts have displaced the quest for universality, autonomy and equity. These latter ideas were once a cornerstone of the public university.

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[15] *This idea is borrowed from Basu and Calva (2011). The two arguethat capability is the functionings that a person could have achieved; we need to know not simply achieved functionings but the choices people make; we need to know both the set and the singleton— set is the range from which he or she was able to make the choices they made; singleton is only what they achieved.*

[16] *I am thankful to Professor Samita Sen, Vere Harmsworth Professor of Imperial and Naval History, University of Cambridge, and former VC of Diamond Harbour University, West Bengal for this insight.*

[17] *Mehta notes how Nehru travelled to the MS University Baroda to participate in the International Science Congress.*

Conclusion

The comparative scoping of conditions in which the two women leaders— Mehta and Parvathamma engaged with the public university and ascended to its 'pinnacle'— is also a story of two 'critical junctures' in the relationship between the university and fields of power. Women such as Mehta seem to have been 'successful' leaders in the hubris of nationalism and development, when arguments about universalism (for example rights of all, equal rights for men and women, non-discrimination) were prevalent both in the public sphere and in the university. At this time, it seemed that it was the Indian state that was dependent on the university, and treated it as a sphere of knowledge, distinct and autonomous from political power wielding . And when the autonomy of the university has been used in the decades following independence— especially after the 1970s— to realise these assertions of universal equality, even more to interrogate deeply and challenge the ideas of inequality by academics and from students themselves, it seems to have become progressively more difficult for women to function amidst fields of power characterised by corruption and patronage politics. A notable paradox has been the inability of women's studies to interrogate the practice of power in modern institutions associated with the production and dissemination of knowledge, although its notable success has been challenging the fragmented and theory laden nature of much of the social sciences, turning its gaze toward field reality. Gendered power in the university therefore has received scant attention in feminist scholarship.

The more recent structural changes in the university have increased the number of casual labour at the bottom of the pipeline— ad-hoc and temporary teachers, of which women form a large proportion. I argue in conclusion that this discussion on 'missing' woman leadership in Indian higher education is not simply an iteration of the vestiges of bias and domination from primordialism or traditionalism in a modern organisation. It is a familiar narrative of inequality that works to the disadvantage of women, amplified this time through public institutions such as the university. It has to be understood in context embedded ways— on an intersection of gender and social status as caste. But also within an understanding of emerging fields of power of the dominant, eroding the autonomy of the university vis-à-vis the state. The road ahead is not further gatekeeping (for example through women's quotas), but of empowerment and reconstruction, the possibility that Parvathamma's leadership of the University could have brought— using the arena of the university for a deeper understanding of the nature of gendered social exclusions in India. The story of the 'missing' woman leadership in higher education is an embedded element of this mosaic.

Annexure Table A1: University teachers in india by level and gender, 2011-12/2017-18

Year	Professor Number and (%)			Associate Professor Number and (%)			Assistant Professor Number and (%)		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
2011-12	47247 (76.3)	14702 (23.7)	61949 (100)	82337 (66)	42487 (34)	124824 (100)	342753 (58.7)	240784 (41.3)	583537 (100)
2012-13	53954 (76)	17017 (24)	22411 (100)	94900 (66.6)	47677 (34.4)	142577 (100)	410182 (59.4)	280132 (40.6)	690314 (100)
2013-14	58294 (76.3)	18144 (23.7)	76438 (100)	103368 (66.4)	52259 (33.6)	155627 (100)	469585 (60.2)	310388 (39.8)	779973 (100)
2014-15	64852 (76.3)	20121 (23.7)	84973 (100)	110265 (65.6)	57731 (34.4)	167996 (100)	566175 (60.9)	364196 (39.1)	930371 (100)
2015-16	67037 (75.6)	21684 (24.4)	88721 (100)	109162 (65.1)	58458 (34.9)	167620 (100)	583342 (60.6)	379754 (39.4)	963096 (100)
2016-17	50916 (73.9)	17941 (26.1)	68857 (100)	87766 (63.9)	49496 (346.1)	137262 (100)	515154 (58.5)	365715 (41.5)	880869 (100)
2017-18	52105 (73.4)	18909 (26.6)	71014 (100)	88415 (63.4)	51028 (36.6)	139443 (100)	511047 (57.5)	377396 (42.5)	888443 (100)

Source: All India Survey of Higher Education Reports, 2011-12 to 2017-18, MoHRD, GoI.
*Notes: * Associate professor includes the numbers of Associate Professors and Readers*
*** Assistant Professor includes the posts of Assistant Professor, Lecturer, Lecturer (Selection Grade) and Lecturer (Senior Grade).*

Policy Recommendations

1. **Affirmative action in teaching positions:**
    Women continue to be poorly represented in among instructors in India inspite of continous improvement in enrollement ratios. There is near gender parity in enrollemnt ratios in higher education in India. Women seem to get filtered out progressively along the path of academic growth. Hence, there is a need for affirmative action to address the "leaky pipeline" effect discussed in the chapter.

2. **Address the gendered casualisation of teachers in India:**
    There is gender parity in hiring ad-hoc and temporary teachers. While there is a need to address growing casualisation of teaching is itself, it is revealing that it is at this level that women find representation. Women hold about a quarter of full tenure positions in the United States and the story is little different in the Central and State universities in India. However, the key difference is that the United States has gained near parity at the entry level, Associate Professor, positions whereas only 40 percent of Associate Professors in India are women.

3. **Affirmative action in offices of authority in higher education:**
    Just nine percent of all Vice Chancellors (~500 in actuals) are women in India. When it comes to leadership roles women seem to be best represented as college principals of undergraduate colleges followed by directors of research institutes (17 percent, ~4000 in actuals). In order to address gender asymmetries in positions of authority in higher education— much of which is associated with female role in childbearing and other care responsibilities— there is a need to design affirmative action that ensures balanced representation.

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7

Gender in Street Situations:
Challenges and Prospects of Street-connected Girl Children and Implications for Policymaking in India

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Abstract

Girls constitute a minority in the ever-rising numbers of children in street situations all over the world. However, a lack of numbers does not imply a lack of issues of concern that street-connected girls face. On the contrary, the street-connected girls are an extremely vulnerable section in the already marginalised population of children in street situations. They are at multiple risks of stigmatisation, physical violence, sexual exploitation, and servitude, and poorer health and educational outcomes when compared to street-connected boys.

This chapter discusses the nature of and challenges faced by street-connected girls through a systematic review of published literature in various street contexts and examples of girls in street situations in India. Inspired from a panel convened in the annual "Difficult Dialogues" summit in 2018, this paper brings together the domains of academic research, civil-society's work and policy implementing bodies to render intelligible the complexity of street-connected girls' situation from the perspective of effective policymaking in Indian context.

1.   Introduction

Children in street situations is a common and at the same time, a highly emotive sight all over the world. A very mobile nature of street-connected children's daily life makes it difficult to assess their real numbers. Dated estimates by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 1998) pegged these at 25 million street children in Asia (cited in Casa Alianza, 2000) with a total of over a hundred million around the globe (UNICEF, 2002:87). Data published through various bodies and researchers from different Asian countries depict a significant underestimation of the numbers of street-connected children. Alderfer (2002) reported a figure of roughly 25 million street children in India alone. Likewise, there are estimates of 1 to 1.5 million street children in China, 10 million in Pakistan, 0.22 million in Philippines, 30,000 in Nepal, and 50,000 in Vietnam (Lam and Cheng, 2012: 132). Rapid economic and political transformation, coupled with rapid pace of urbanisation in most Asian countries correlates to a sharp increase in the number of children in streets over the last 20 years (ibid).

Most children in street situations, world-over, as in Asia, are boys. For example, boys constitute 70 percent of the total registered street children by the Chinese government (Lam and Cheng,

2012). Likewise, most street children in Pakistan are also boys (Ali et al., 2004). This is consistent with findings from non-Asian low to middle income developing countries (see among others, Muntingh 2006, Cheng and Lam 2010, Grundling 2004, Plummer 2008, Thomas de Benitez 2011: 13; Gurgel 2004; Gutierrez 2008; Karmachaya 2012). Based on anecdotal evidence, this could well be due to the nature of socialisation of girls in these countries that promotes their staying at home unlike boys who become independent early on, or due to their contribution in childcare and/or bride-wealth potential. Rane (1994) confirms to the pattern by putting boys as 65-82 percent of the street children population with a largely hidden street girl population. As per this study, most of the street children in the metropolitan cities of India have either full or partial family involvement and support. Contrary to popular beliefs, as high as 89.8 percent street children live either with their parents or other members of their family. The minor and hidden population of girls in street situations are especially vulnerable to instances of domestic violence, servitude and sexual exploitation (see Blagbrough 2013; Cimpric 2010). These girls form an especially vulnerable section among the already marginalised group of street-connected children as they bear double marginalisation from the mainstream society and street-connected boys. This gendered nature of their marginality is discussed at length in later sections.

1.1 Children in street situations and associated terminology

The contemporary understanding of the term "Children in Street Situations", as promoted by UNICEF world-wide is that of a social construct of children variously as "on the street" and "of the street", which, in practice, does not include a homogeneous population (Panter-Brick, 2002). While different terminologies are in use among different circles associated with research and interventions on children in street situation, the Consortium for Street Children (CSC)- the largest global network of organisations working for the rights of street children, describes them as "street-connected children"- those who have a broad range of experiences on the streets- living, working, either maintaining a relationship with their families or severing all ties, and those who are on and off streets depending on circumstances.

In India, the Standard operating procedure released by National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR 2017) constituted under the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005, uses the term "children in street situations", drawing them in four major categories based on the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (hereafter referred to as the JJ Act, 2015). These are- 1) Abandoned or orphan child, 2) Missing or runaway child on the streets, 3) Street-connected child or community child on the streets, and 4) Child begging on the streets (for further details, read NCPCR, 2017: 12-15). For ease of understanding, this paper will use "children in street situations' and 'street-connected children' interchangeably based on the context.

1.2 Human rights approach to children in street situations and the role of UN

The Juvenile Justice Act, 2015, dealing with the fundamental law governing children in need of care and protection in a child friendly approach, was enacted in furtherance of India's accession to the UN Convention on Child Rights (UNCRC), 1989. The UNCRC represents universal recognition of the rights of the children, setting out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children, and demands compliance from the signatory countries for upholding the same. Following years of advocacy by several groups, UN added general comment(s) to include street children in the convention, last of which was published in 2017 (Griffin, 2017). The Convention promotes a significant shift in the prevailing discourse regarding children in situations of adversity with an emphasis on the rights of children as citizens rather than highlighting their needs as a mere vulnerable section. The best interests of children, thus, do not lie in merely protecting and providing for them, but in listening to them and giving them participatory rights to be agents of change in their own lives[1]. This notion of children having inalienable human rights as individuals, though, needs to be negotiated with the notion of group and family rights (giving children duties and responsibilities toward their elders) in non-Western contexts (cited in Panter-Brick, 2002), as in India.

Following this school of thought, our paper tries to highlight the gendered discourse of the minor yet highly vulnerable section of children in street situation- the female street-connected children. The paper moves away from a focus on the harshness of the street as the primary focus of concern to the children themselves, incorporating the diversity of their actual experiences and their own strategies for coping with adversity. We have tended to examine the lives of street children, especially the girl child, considering more general analyses of poverty and social exclusion, vulnerability and, coping and resilience in adversity, vis-à-vis the measures taken and scope of improvement in the Indian policy implementation.

2. Gendered discourse among street children- Findings from research around the world and the Indian situation

Based on literature from three key sources: (i) a book funded by the Consortium for Street Children on adolescent girls in cities, published in 2000, which included a section on girls with limited or no parental care; (ii) a review of peer reviewed articles published in last decade; and (iii) a search of unpublished literature and NGO/UN reports which were accessed online, a few themes can be highlighted for their consistency across the world. These themes cover the causes of girls moving onto the streets, and the experiences of the street for them, with relevant real-life cases from India, as dealt with by the NGO CHETNA[2].

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[1] *Consortium for Street Children- a global network promoting street children's rights through advocacy, research and network development was instrumental in formulating the UN General comment. It has repeatedly emphasises on the right of street-connected children (including girls) to assess basic human rights to thrive and prosper on streets, in accordance with their participatory will.*

[2] *CHETNA- Childhood Enhancement through Training and Action, is a non-governmental organisation active in child welfare through advocacy and empowerment in and around the Capital region of Delhi.*

2.1 Reasons for girls' presence on the streets

While poverty alone does not account for girls' presence on the streets, it is the common background to all studies in developing countries and to some extent in wealthier ones. Attributing factors can be conflict or war, economic crises (Filho 2001), natural disasters (Marrengula 2010), internal displacement and migration (Pinzon Rondon 2008; Young 2004) and loss of kinship networks in the context of HIV/AIDS (Young & Ansell 2010). It is commonplace for impoverished households to teach their male kids to become independent at a far early age while female children are taught to cope through staying at home (Apketar, 1999). While most girls on the street maintain ties with families, those forced to become 'of the street' usually come from extreme hardship such as famine / near starvation, family homelessness (Raffaelli 2000; Plummer 2007) and/or having a parent in prison (Amadkhaniha 2007).

Against the wider background of poverty, violence, abuse and neglect[3] are consistently reported in studies of street living children (UNVAC 2006, Bademci 2012, Young 2004, Thomas de Benitez 2006).[4] As Smeaton (2009: 116) observed regarding street-connected/runaway children and youth in the UK, "Perhaps one of the most shocking findings… is the prevalence and extent of violence in young people's lives." The sexual abuse of girls in their families of origin, and then on the streets, is a recurring theme in studies in industrialised and 'developing' countries alike, and appears to be a major reason why many girls abandon their families (see for example Amadkhaniha 2007; Cauce 2000; Edinburgh 2013; Nada & Suliman 2004; Nixon 2002; Noell 2001; McAlpine 2009; Scivoletto 2006; see also Barker et al 2000). Family violence, and neglect are risk factors even where there is no sexual abuse involved (Ballet 2011).

With reference to the link between forced marriage, domestic servitude and street life, there is evidence that the prospect of forced early marriages pushes some girls to run away, survive on the street, where they are vulnerable to other forms of abuse and exploitative labour (IPEC 2004; Black 2011 cited in Blagbrough 2013). For some girls in domestic servitude, the potential risks of street life are far preferable to sexual abuse and exploitation of their labour by their employer (Blagbrough 2013). Little is known about the development of street connections of children with disabilities and learning difficulties (Thomas de Benitez 2011).

Occasionally, constraint and boredom by limited and limiting home environments have also been cited as reasons of girls ending on the streets (Plummer, 2007; Nieuwenhuys. 1994, and Silvey 2000, cited in Young, 2004). Two included studies found that girls were attracted by the prospect of employment in the cities through the exciting stories of neighbours (Nieuwenhuys 1994; Silvey 2000, cited in Young, 2004).

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[3]   *The Consortium for Street Children has adopted the World Health Organization (WHO) definition of "Child abuse" or "maltreatment" as: 'all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.' Source: WHO (1999) Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention. Geneva: WHO.*

[4]   *While the most common push factor for girls is either violence or harassment/abuse, it is nevertheless important to stress that not all street children have been abused or neglected in their families of origin, as Apketar (1999) observed in his study of boys and girls in Nairobi; boys may start work very young to provide for families they care about and with which many maintain regular contact.*

2.2 Experiences and challenges on the streets

Despite some instances of academic research providing comparisons between girls and boys (Aptekar & Ciano-Federoff, 1999; Conticini & Hulme, 2007; Raffaelli et al., 1993; Rizzini & Lusk, 1995), very few studies have focused specifically on street-connected girls. Conticini and Hulme (2007) highlight that in the case of Bangladesh, boys are more often subjected to a higher degree of violence than girls. Girls, however, are more often the victims of (i) sexual violence and (ii) several simultaneous forms of violence. Kabeberi (1990), Korbin (1981), Aptekar and Ciano-Federoff (1999) for instance point out that girls are generally more likely to be abused in multiple ways, than boys.

2.2.1 Girls experience multiple stigmatisation

The inherent bias against the girl child in many societies, including the Indian, routinely exposes girl child to misgivings because of her gender. For example, she may be treated sub-par when it comes to providing education, healthcare and nutrition, even affection and leisure time in comparison to the male child. This becomes more acute in street situations where parents must actively choose one over other.

They also experience stigmatisation from male members of mainstream society who often perceive them as synonymous with prostitutes; street adults as well as street boys, and non-street girls (Payne 2004; see also CIESPI 2006). The stigma compounds as they carry the double burden of their 'street' label and their gender (Beazley, 2002: 1779, cited in Payne 2004). The experiences of marginalisation within the marginalised street space range from being looked down upon and mistreated to sexual remarks and exploitation.

Sheetal*, a 12-year-old child of internal migrant family living in a Delhi slum describes their plight as girls spending considerable time on the streets:

"Girls are very oppressed here. Parents doubt girls, even if a boy makes eye contact with her. The men in the slum stare at us... Girls should be allowed to study, and to do jobs, and to talk to boys. They don't let girls go out of the slum. We can't go to the park to play, because there are boys sitting there, who harass girls. There is a tiny forest nearby where I have heard of girls being raped. One was raped and then murdered by some boys. We never go to that area. When someone brings good food home, girls have to wait for so long, but boys can eat it immediately. They stop girls from going to college".

"..the biggest problem here is that there is no toilet. Girls go to the bushes or under the flyover. Men look down from the flyover and throw stones at girls when we're defecating. I only go in the morning, with my sister. In the evening, I go with my mother and aunt when it's dark. I find that easier because people can't see you, otherwise we have to go very far. During the day time, we girls have to control, out of helplessness. Even when we go to relieve ourselves at night, boys come and look at us. So, we go at 5 or 6 AM. There is a lack of water here. We have to go and collect water from a distance."

Another girl Rume* adds, *"When I go to use the public washroom, I am charged ₹5 by the attendant."* *The girls are charged more than boys at the washroom, as the attendant cannot confirm if a girl is using the toilet to urinate or to defecate, so he charges her the maximum amount. We bathe under the flyover, where men can see us from above. Two girls try to hide the one who is bathing by standing on either side to cover her body."* *The security of these girls is threatened by the constant presence of men around the area, which is a pervasive problem across disadvantaged communities.*

*Besides facing gender-based d*iscrimination within and outside their households, many children also face discrimination in educational institutions based on their economic status and social background. Girls who work as ragpickers or work at shops are taunted with offensive terminology by their peers in school, which discourages them from pursuing education. It is also a fact that female children in most low-income households very often skip the first meal of the day, leading to a lack of nutrition— which is a threat to their survival and development.

2.2.2 Girls and Complex Sexual Relationships

Girls are often exposed to further physical and sexual violence from street-connected boys and other older males (police, street vendors, taxi drivers, etc.) (Nada & Suliman 2004; Kudrati 2008; Plummer 2008, Mutingh 2006). Several studies have drawn attention to the formation of complex relationships with 'street boys' that are both 'protective' and potentially abusive (see, for example Kudrati 2008). Continuous exposure to violence compromises young people's mental and physical health and sense of self-worth, although like boys, girls develop adaptive strategies to reduce the risk of violence.

There are certain (often co-occurring) factors known to increase the risk of child commercial sexual exploitation / 'survival sex' – including the risks faced by girls with street connections.[5] These may be prior histories of sexual abuse, promotion of child prostitution by parents/siblings/boyfriends, presence of pre-existing prostitution markets, large number of transient males in the area (like truck drivers, etc.) (Godziak & Bump, 2008).

At a slum in Chuna Bhatti, Kirti Nagar; Manisha* (15), currently a student in eighth grade, is a child in contact with the law. She narrates, *"When I was 12, I was going to the washroom one night, when a boy who lives here grabbed me and pulled me into his room. He said if I do anything, he would harm my younger brother. Whatever he asked, I had to do. In the morning, my mother came looking for me..and found me. We called 1098 after that, and he has been in jail since then. I've been to court many times, and the last time I went, his lawyer asked me a lot of strange questions. The judge suggested that I get married to that boy! How can he say that? How can I marry him?"* The boy was himself a minor at the time of committing the crime. His family is willing to get the two married, but Manisha's parents disagree. Manisha migrated from Samastipur, Bihar to Delhi in 2015, after which her education was abandoned due to economic pressures in the city. She works as a domestic help in a nearby house after school

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[5]   *Reported in a review on child trafficking by Gozdziak & Bump (2008).*

hours, to make ends meet for her family, but she has switched various vocations over the past three years. She has previously been subjected to physical violence and harassment at the hands of her own father, who continues to assault her siblings and mother. The local police authorities were not cooperative at the time of filing an FIR and initiating criminal proceedings. Instead, they dismissed this incident of rape as a common occurrence in the area.

2.2.3 Mental and physical health of street-connected girls

Although mental health of street-connected children in general varies according to child and the ambient context. Most studies show that girls appear to suffer more from depression and anxiety as compared to boys (Edinburgh 2009; Plummer, 2008; Barker et al, 2000). Girls in street situations, who have been sexually abused as children are at increased risk of mental health problems (Cauce 2000, Wutoh 2006); and likely to suffer from the repeated trauma of rape (Amandkhaniha 2007). A higher risk of concurrent and compounded risk of HIV /AIDS exists for street-connected girls (Nada & Suliman 2004, Wutoh 2006). Although girls may have a basic knowledge of risks of HIV and other STDs, it is usually seen that protected sex is not a priority among sexually active street-connected girls (and boys) (ibid). In contexts with high levels of poverty, girls may be marked by the effect of early malnutrition including stunted growth (Ali 2004). Often, street-connected girls lack a place to turn for healthcare and receive second-rate treatment by healthcare providers unless they are accompanied by staff from a programme (Barker et al 2000). In this context, it is pertinent to mention the challenges faced by street-connected girls around unwanted pregnancies and access to abortive care. A recent Lancet study pegs the number of abortions in 2015 among women aged 15-49 in India as 15.6 million, at the rate of 47 per 1000 women (Singh et al 2018). While the data on the share of these abortions among street-connected girls is lacking, it is plausible that in face of multiple sexual marginalisation, lack of access to sex education and healthcare make them particularly vulnerable to the risk of unwanted pregnancies and unsafe methods of termination.

Abused and neglected children develop heightened sense of vulnerability, anxiety, anger, fear, and low self-esteem which further shows impact on general health and development (Mathur 2009: 912). Barker et al (2000) in their book 'Urban Girls' discuss how street-connected girls "find expression in violent behaviour, depression, withdrawal, and self-mutilation". Levels of reported sexual abuse were high among pregnant street-connected/runaway girls in one Canadian study (Haley 2004). Given the relationship between maternal sexual abuse and maternal depression, this is something that has grave implications for the next generation.

2.2.4 Substance- abuse among street-connected girls

There is very little research on gender differences in substance abuse by street-connected children. In an earlier Lancet report, it was estimated that a quarter of all Mumbai's street children in the age group of 5-19 consume tobacco in one form or the other, with the mean age

of starting tobacco consumption is 11.3 years for both boys and girls (Sharma, 2009). Barker (2000), based on studies and reports by NGOs, concluded that the pattern of substance abuse among girls from LMI countries differs from that of boys, in that they are more likely to use substances taken solitary (like pharmaceuticals) than those shared in groups (like injectable drugs or glue/inhalants). A recent systematic review of 27 studies confirms that inhalants are the most widely used form of substance abused by street boys and youth, followed by alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana (Embleton 2013), but similar data for street-connected girls is not available.

2.2.5 Education of street-connected girls

Like boys, girls who are on the street are likely to have fallen out of the formal education system (if indeed they were enrolled in it in the first place) compromising their options for the future (Ward & Seager, 2010). The difficulties children can face in accessing the formal education system (e.g. when they lack papers, or cannot attend school because of work) can generate frustration, as well as emotional and behavioural problems (Sen 2009 and Xue 2009, cited in Berckmans 2012). Further, the girls are less likely to have been enrolled in primary school than boys in the first place.[6]

Sheetal goes to the nearby government school and is currently studying in seventh grade. She is scared to attend the school despite a willingness to get educated. *"I hadn't gone to school the last week because my Maths teacher hits kids. Today, I went, but she didn't see me, so she didn't slap me. She says that she only slaps kids so that they study. Once, my friend was talking to me during class. Ma'am saw this and threw a duster at me. She has already hit me three times."*

In addition to formal education, an informal approach to education and skill-development among street-connected children including girls is followed majorly by social workers, NGOs and community partners which provides support to children without access to formal education. The WHO module on teaching street children, for example, emphasises knowledge dissemination that promotes changes in behaviour and developing right attitudes in terms of values and beliefs among children in addition to imparting useful work skills (WHO N.D).

3. Policy framework and the street-connected girls

While the government of each country realises the potential of children for their economy, opportunities provided for their development vary and are governed by numerous factors. Social service and welfare provisions are the usual reaction of most legislatures. In terms of policy intervention, most governments in South and Southeast Asia adopt a flexible stance of including civil society and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) to help street children, while they themselves play a small role. This is the case with Philippines, India, and Thailand, where NGOs cover extensive intervention programmes for street children, like outreach services, shelters, and different educational and career-training programmes. Placing an emphasis on children's participation and preferences, they enable the street children to take control

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6   See for example, World Bank figures for 2013 on http://wdi.worldbank.org/table/2.11

of their own lives, much in accordance with the UN convention. In east and central Asian countries, on the other hand, government plays a much active role focussing on increased institutional care and forcible street cleansing- taking away or forceful relocating of children to their families against their wishes (Lan and Cheng, 2012).

The former model of policy related to street-connected children is much more favourable. However, efforts by civil society alone cannot prove adequate in dealing with the situation. There is an urgent need to ensure inclusivity and holistic sensibilities while drafting and implementing policies and schemes targeting specific needs of street-connected children. While certain vulnerabilities may have been addressed in policy framework, the corresponding implementation of these provisions does not translate to appropriate action in real situations. For example, in the case of Manisha (discussed in section 2.2.2.), according to the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, Manisha should not have been called repeatedly to testify in court. The mental trauma she has suffered due to the incident needs to be addressed through adequate counselling. Section 4.12 elabourates that 'The State shall promote child friendly jurisprudence, enact progressive legislation, build a preventive and responsive child protection system, including emergency outreach services, and promote effective enforcement of punitive legislative and administrative measures against all forms of child abuse and neglect to comprehensively address issues related to child protection'.

While government initiatives like the Integrated Child Development Scheme, Integrated Programme for Street Children and Integrated Child Protection Scheme outline the responsibilities of the State regarding development, care, and security of vulnerable children; they do not accommodate the diverse needs of a healthy and safe living environment, protection against mental trauma, counselling services, and access to health infrastructure for children (specifically the female street child) to not only survive, but gradually grow and prosper despite the unique challenges they frequently encounter. In addition, the sensitisation of local stakeholders and the regular intervention of civil, legislative, and administrative bodies in the care of children is an essential component of ensuring long term progressive impact of these initiatives.

The street-connected girl children operate in a complex toxic atmosphere where they face multiple marginalisation and increased risk of violence both from the streets and the mainstream society. These are further compounded by difficulties in accessing healthcare and welfare schemes due to a lack of legal identity.

Conclusion

This paper presents in broad terms, an attempt to highlight the evidence from published literature on the challenges faced by girls in street situations, and substantiate it with case studies from actual street scenarios. As can be seen, included studies cover the situation of girls in greatly varying circumstances, with varying levels of 'street-connectedness'. Care needs to be taken not to assume that what is true for girls in one context is true for all. Nonetheless, if there are recurring themes, these are, 1) violence; in the home, in the street, and quite possibly in shelter(s), and 2) actual or threats of sexual exploitation. This does not

mean that all girls are equally at risk of violence or that they do not cope in creative ways with the threat of violence.

Child protection in the broadest sense is best achieved through a systems approach-i.e. addressing reinforcing protection at all levels, by government, policy, public services, to community resources, support to families and engagement of children (Wulczyn 2010). This involves universal approaches that benefit the population as a whole-targeted supports for people from demographic groups at highest risk (For example, teenage parents, internally displaced people, etc) and support aimed at reverting the harm done to those in actual danger. This includes girls who either have no supportive families/communities or who have escaped from one form of violence (domestic servitude, child sexual abuse, violence) for an environment that is in most cases fraught with risks of further violence and discrimination. An important imperative for policy measures to succeed is allowing girls to participate in the development and day-to-day work of efforts that are intended to provide alternatives to the street. The history of so called support to children is rife with poor practice, including the incarceration of children in institutions; and this continues to this day, as Lam and Chen (2007) show. For this reason, the active engagement of girls and young women is essential; they know their lives and environments better than anyone.

However, we can conclude that those who set out to help girls with street connections to have alternatives have the responsibility of ensuring that their projects and programmes are free from violence, that they are managed by reliable, well trained and supportive staff, and that girls within these programmes can identify and make choices for their present and future. This toolkit is an effort to explore ways in which this can be done in practice.

4. Suggested interventions for the welfare of street-connected girls

Some of the effective interventions can be listed through the available current evidence, from researches across the world in similar situations. These are:

Listen to girls' perspectives: In developing programmes designed to give girls a wider range of opportunities, to empower them to make good choices – including alternatives to street life – it is essential to listen to girls and to frame interventions within their culture and understanding of their situation. The experiences of different street-connected girls differ making them different in their coping mechanisms and strategy to navigate the street life. Likewise, the context in which girl children live and work can change over time and course of life. This means that interventions need to be attuned to respond to individual girls as well as the group.

Neither institutionalisation nor forced return by girls and boys to their families are acceptable options. The forced return of girls and boys to their families, ostensibly because of their right to family life, is profoundly detrimental when children have escaped from these families in the first place (Lam and Cheng, 2008). There is urgent need for work with families of origin to address the problems that led girls on the street in the first place before 'reunification' is possible and for community based alternatives to institutionalisation. It is essential to work

not only with girls and their families, but also their wider social relationships. Like boys, girls are more likely to leave the street if it is part of a planned strategy involving friends and extended family (Berckmans 2012). It is important to create interventions that are harmonious with local norms and the nature of family relationships, instead of imposing a pre-fixed idea of what other people's lives should be like. This applies for example, to children's desire to earn money through work.

The UN general comment recognises the importance of involving street children in decisions about their own life. Often, despite threats and challenges of street life, the **positive aspects of 'street life'** are reported by girls as well as boys, especially if they had escaped a far worse life of abuse and poverty within their families (Raffaelli, 2001: 411). As evidenced through the work of Consortium for Street Children, the desire of many street-connected girls to be granted rights as an individual to thrive on the streets through education and timely opportunities, is an important mode of empowerment currently amiss in many policy interventions.

Successful outcomes for girls as well as boys are enhanced by programmes that create a family feeling and meaningful and trustful relationships – that are safe (Berckmans 2012; see also Bademci & Karadayi 2012b). The importance of strong, trusting relationships between children and any programme staff is emphasised in much of the literature on street-connected children in both 'developing' and industrialised countries (Berckmans 2012; see also see also Edinburgh 2009). Mutual trust means respecting the child in her vulnerability and having an ability to transfer feelings that she is accepted, lovable and worth listening to. Safe, **'family-like' environments** for girls are likely to involve a high ratio of female staff and peer group educators (ibid). Implicit with this is the need for **rigorous staff training and support.** Particularly for children who have experienced violence, programmes need to be safe from violence – whether from other children, staff or visitors. Girls are at highest risk of re-abuse in closed-door shelters (Kudrati, 2008). Creation of a safe environment requires attention to what girls themselves identify as threats.

Abuse and violence impact on girls' survival strategies, and may be expressed in (mal)adaptive behaviours. When they engage in substance abuse some studies recommend **motivating girls to give up drug use in order to ensure that other gains can be sustained.** 'Drug use makes girls aggressive and difficult to deal with …" therefore "caring for individual [girls] and being able to support change… meant convincing them to give up drug abuse" (Berckmans, 2012: 1262).

Girls (and boys) with street connections value projects with a holistic focus that provide multiple opportunities for intellectual, recreational and creative stimulation. The need for programmes promoting motor development and the need for intellectual, creative, and personal stimulation are something researchers, practitioners and children also request in interventions; spiritual practices of various kinds are also reported to help children's sense of well-being (Van Niekerk 2007 in Berckmans, 2012). Besides developing meaningful relationships and giving children a sense of belonging, centre satisfaction is also related to factors such as: opportunities offered to take up or resume schooling, vocational training, educational outings and becoming involved in recreational activities. Since it is difficult for a

single organisation to provide a wide range of opportunities to children, holistic programmes require **communication and coordination among different organisation** (NGOs, community networks, schools, health services, arts networks, etc.). Coordination between services can help ensure that children also contributes to stronger data collection, advocacy and potentially, better use of material resources.

Increased access to healthcare by street-connected girls- This could imply establishing **street-based services to improve children's health** (Khaled, 2008; Scivoltetto, 2006), where they do not need to pass the bureaucratic hurdles and paperwork for health issues. Also, worth noting is the current limitation of public health system in India in recognising violence as a public health issue. This translates into those surviving such violence not being provided adequate health-care. Similarly, mental health, though increasingly been incorporated into the public health priority in policy-making, remains a neglected subject in India, even among the educated/elite sections. These coupled with lack of identity documentation and cumbersome paperwork render the situation extremely hostile for street- connected girls.

Peer education is a widely used component of work with young people, particularly around health education. Peer educators are generally respected, because they have inside knowledge and can connect to young people in similar situations. Young people may also be more willing to speak of generally taboo subjects with peers. Some studies recommended linking peer education with knowledgeable adults and resources for support (see for example, Mitchell 2007).

One study (Gondijo 2008, Brasil) found that girls who live on the streets find hope in pregnancy, that the **perinatal period is critical for helping motivate girls** to new ways of living and is a promising moment for health interventions. This is consistent with research on the importance of the perinatal period, particularly for first time parents, as a key point for motivating change (Schrader McMillan 2010).

Reintegration- Long term institutionalisation has detrimental effects on street-connected children. An alternative is to integrate children without separating from parental care, including 'street children' to their families. However, there is also widespread agreement that **children should not return to families where they are in danger of abuse or deliberate neglect.** There is limited published research on factors contributing to successful family integration of girls. However, following factors have been associated with failure or reintegration of girls: a lack of understanding of the real reasons why girls left their families and were separated from them (based on a superficial or partial assessment of their situation); girls age and the length of their time on the streets – reintegration is more difficult in older girls, being engaged in sex work; having a child by an unknown father; and the multiple stigmatisation of witchcraft accusations (Gunzberg 2013). Studies involving both boys and girls draw attention to the counterproductive and detrimental effects of forcing the pace of 'reintegration' - i.e. when there is pressure on practitioners from donors or management to encourage the return of girls back to families that do not want them, and where problems have not been resolved. Reintegration also fails where livelihood support options are unsustainable or inappropriate and girls have no financial autonomy.

Policy Recommendations

1.   **Customise interventions:**
Children land up on the street due to various reasons. Additionally, the extent of association with the street itself varies— ranging from homelessness to living in a slum. It is pertinent that policy interventions address the peculiar needs of such children. A one solution approach should be avoided. Often, interventions that are harmonious with local norms and take a community view of a child's situation work better. For example, involving the friends and family of the street associated child in the intervention. Policy needs to be designed to leverage such complementarities.

2.   **Avoid institutionalisation and forced return:**
Often a forced return to family or institutionalisation results in far greater trauma to the children. To avid re-traumatisation, it is key to respect the decision of the child while counselling them of the possible outcomes of their decision. Such children need to be enabled with knowledge that allows them to make good choices.

3.   **Peer-education:**
Peer education as a component of interventions to address the need of children associated with the street should be encouraged. A combination of peer education linked to knowledgeable adults can vastly improve outcomes.

4.   **Re-integration:**
Re-integration with society, especially girls, needs to be dealt with discernment and sensitivity. Forced family reintegration can cause physical, sexual and mental trauma. Hence, policy should encourage research and document field experiences into weaving a holistic approach for re-integration that enables health growth.

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QUALITY

INDEPENDENCE

IMPACT