

Seat Reservation for Women in Local Panchayats: An Analysis of Power

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Since independence, both governmental and non-governmental organizations have initiated a number of projects and programs in India with the intention of empowering and advancing women in society. While there have been attempts to empower women in all areas of society, including the social, economic and religious sectors, some of the most visible attempts have occurred in the political realm. The most recent policy change in government occurred in 1992 when Parliament passed the seventy third amendment of the Constitution, reserving 33% of the seats for women in the panchayats, the local governing system. While this constitutes a positive step for women, it is necessary to assess the extent to which this legislative action has affected women's position in Indian society. In order to do this one must first consider carefully the nature of women's power in society, and then determine to what extent women's power in government influences the other spheres of women's lives. Are there other modes of exercising power within society that are not affected by this so-called progressive action for women? Some questions that must be addressed are: What were the motivations behind implementing this seat reservation? Who supported the amendment? What types of programs actually assist women assimilate into this structural system? What aspects of the political structure limit women's power in politics? And finally, what factors outside of the political sphere affect women's position of power within politics?

While advancements in the political sphere are essential for the overall "empowerment" of women, the implementation of seat reservations with the intention of empowering women carries a number of assumptions concerning power. One of these assumptions is based on the overall importance of political power in comparison

with power exercised in the social or economic spheres. Increasing the number of women in governmental positions does open doors for women in terms of presence and visibility. Moreover, the critical mass of women in political life itself increases the potential for the transformation of gender consciousness. However, it does not guarantee it. Numbers alone do not indicate that the situation for women has improved. This is the case for a few reasons, the most important being that there are certain norms, values and everyday practices that legislation simply cannot change or even affect. It is very important that those who fill the seats are aware of the problems that women face and are interested in creating change within the community. Often, it is argued that changes in legislation will be ineffective without the support of educational or training programs that promote gender consciousness. The presence of women in politics alone has very little affect on the status of women in society. Therefore, if the actions taken by women in positions of political power do not benefit women outside of politics, then this legislative change provides a limited form of agency for women.

This study was conducted in a Hindu community and all the women interviewed were Hindu women. Although women are subjected to many similar forms of oppression across religious boundaries in India, the situation for Hindu women does differ from that of Muslim and Christian women. For example, there are fundamental practices within the religion that serve as barriers to women in both the public and private realms. And with the recent rise of Hindu fundamentalism in government, Muslims and Christians have increasingly faced religious prosecution and oppression. Since Hindus are the majority in India, it makes sense that Hindu women are more prevalent in politics and generally hold more political power than Muslim and Christian women. However, under the Hindu fundamentalist government, Muslims and Christians face more than just oppression from numbers.

DECONSTRUCTING POWER

The concept of power itself must be deconstructed, along with its relationship to gender and repression, in order to understand why quotas in the legislature may not lead to women's agency in the long run. In his evaluation of the history of sexuality, Michel Foucault refutes the typical Victorian view of sexual repression. He explains,

We are informed that if repression has indeed been the fundamental link between power, knowledge, and sexuality since the classical age, it stands to reason that we will not be able to free ourselves from it except at a

considerable cost: nothing less than a transgression of laws, a lifting of prohibitions, an irruption of speech, a reinstating of pleasure within reality, and a whole new economy in the mechanisms of power will be required. For the least glimmer of truth is conditioned in politics.¹

However, Foucault believes we have been misinformed. Foucault attacks the views projected by previous Victorian thinkers by questioning the source of repression and society's ability to reverse it. While Foucault's argument dealt more with the issue of sexuality and the repression of sex itself in society, his argument carries over into the discussion of the repression of women. At some point women were imbedded into their roles in society, and Foucault acknowledges an interesting connection between power, knowledge, and sexuality. However, he goes on to ask if sex is so repressed, why then was it so widely discussed in Victorian times. Foucault examines the widely discussed "repression hypothesis" put forth by Freud, and others similar thinkers and comes up with his own new set of questions and in fact refutes this hypothesis. He does not believe that women are confined to these positions in society as the "repression hypothesis" suggests. Foucault chooses not to focus on the outward limitations and the reasons the situation has evolved in this manner, but rather he focuses on the values in each person that support these repressions, thus arguing counter to the Freudian analysis of Victorian values. The Victorian values assume that if women simply became oppressed by the laws of society, a removal of these laws will remove the oppression. Foucault chooses to "to locate the forms of power, the channels it takes, and the discourses it permeates in order to reach the most tenuous and individual modes of behavior, the paths that give it access to the rare or scarcely perceivable forms of desire, how it penetrates and controls everyday pleasure..."² Following Foucault, it is important to further analyze the extent to which the patriarchy, defined as male structural dominance, is rooted in society in order to evaluate the type of power women embody in different realms of life. If the governmental system is based on a patriarchal structure, then admittance into and acceptance by that structure will only be effective in advancing women in that structure but will fail to bring women to an equal status in society.

Power, Patriarchy and the Problem of Gender

As Foucault suggests above, there are many forms of power that dictate behavior and patterns within every culture. Before further evaluating the role of power in society, there must first be an understanding of what power actually is and what type of power the governmental structure provides. V. Spike Peterson and Anne

Sisson Runyan argue that there are a variety of ways of looking at power. Political power offers what they refer to as “power-over,” which is basically the ability of one person to make someone do something they previously had no intention of doing. They argue that the conceptual notions of power themselves are based on masculine qualities and ideals. “This definition of power is masculinist to the extent that it presupposes androcentric notions of strength, competition, aggression, and coercion, and because it focuses on power understood only in terms of public-sphere activities that are dominated by men.”³ Historically, women have been able to effectively assert this type of power on an individual level, but it can be argued that they are merely becoming part of a patriarchal power structure that omits other important forms of power. This is the reason definitions of power exercised by women that pertain to the private-sphere and the public sphere outside the realm of politics are often overlooked. Peterson and Runyan go on to argue that the more “power-over” power that women receive; the more their gender becomes invisible, simply because they are taking on a male-dominated definition of power. They state: “....not only are very few women ‘at the top,’ but even those who succeed in achieving positions of power remain largely gender-invisible in conventional accounts of how power works in the world.”⁴ To follow this point, traditionally feminine qualities are not recognized as powerful qualities, which could explain why women often are seen as abandoning the women’s image to become more ‘powerful’ in the political structure. Women’s gender often becomes invisible because “...feminine women (passive, dependent, domestic; engaged in meeting private, familial needs) are by definition inappropriate political agents (active, autonomous, public oriented; engaged in meeting collective, not personal needs).”⁵ They further their argument by asserting the importance of this dichotomy between the public and the private sphere. Because many of the qualities valued in the public sphere are labeled as unfeminine, women’s ability to break out of the private sphere is thwarted.⁶

Patriarchy by definition is a social system in which the father is the head of the family and men have authority over women and children. The structure of the governmental system, which exists in India and throughout much of the world, is based on a patriarchal system. However, it is important to acknowledge that the forms patriarchies take depend on cultural and historical factors. “Patriarchy” does not look the same in every society. Relating to politics in India, even if there are members of government and policies within the

government that support women or give particular powers to women, the basic system still benefits men over women. But the goal of many feminists is not to establish a matriarchal governmental structure in its place, but rather to find a way to remove the engendered structure that causes the oppression of one gender over another. Peterson and Runyan address this issue in discussing gender ideologies. They emphasize that, "although not all whites endorse racism, all men masculinism, or all heterosexuals homophobia, *all* whites, men and heterosexuals *benefit* from their positions of relative privilege within the structures of racism, sexism and heterosexism. It is in this sense that the hierarchies are *structural* and not simply individual or idiosyncratic."⁷ Therefore, in order to create long-term change for women's involvement in politics, there must be structural changes. Individual advancement does not promote the progression of all women in society. Peterson and Runyan also point out that those who hold positions of power within these structurally biased systems are typically the people responsible for adjustments and changes within these structures.⁸ Government legislation and quota systems are an excellent example of this type of situation.

When making this policy change in a patriarchal system, it is often the case that those creating the change do not fully understand the complexity of the position of women in society and especially how women came to take on the roles that they did. Before an effective method of eliminating these barriers can be found, the key issues that women face must first be evaluated. The patriarchal ideology that stems from this type of structure can be found in other realms of life besides the public political sphere. However, the origin and the role of the ideology within the structure are essential, given that it dictates the policies and actions visible in government today.

Robert Connell has done extensive research on the role of gender in politics. He argues, "If the modern state is itself 'the general patriarch,'...then demanding that the state redress injustices worked by the 'individual patriarch' in the family (or any other setting) is merely appealing from Caesar unto Caesar. Seeking reform through the state is an exercise in futility, perhaps even in deception."⁹ He creates a convincing argument that the state cannot assume control of removing 'power-over' type relationships since the state itself is responsible for this type of relationship that is found within the public and private spheres. They are in many ways strengthening this relationship rather than breaking it down since the same type of relationship is being

translated from the private sphere to the public sphere and vice versa. However his argument goes much further than this point. At the forefront of his argument, there is an understanding that “the state as an institution is part of a wider social structure of gender relations.”¹⁰ The “power over” relationship that Peterson and Runyan refer to is widely found in gender relations. Connell’s argument emphasizes the importance of legislative change by showing that the gender relations found in government or state institutions extends to the gender relations in the social and economic sphere. Both the private and public spheres do have an affect on each other.

Quotas for women’s representation in governing institutions are largely a response to liberal feminist demands for equality. Liberal feminists believe that the answer to women’s subordination is the acquisition of individual and equal rights. Since individual rights and the state are interconnected, Connell maintains, the liberal feminist argument is based on the assumption that the state can reverse this subordination and lesser status of women.¹¹ Furthermore, he asserts that liberal feminism lacks a solid understanding of the actual structure of government and the extent to which gender is institutionalized. Connell suggests that,

Liberal feminism has brought to the surface the suppressed truth that the state is gendered, and has used this truth to inspire a formidable and sustained politics of access. But it has not been able to grasp the character of gender as an institutional and motivational system, nor to develop a coherent analysis of the state apparatus or its links to a social context.¹²

While the efforts of liberal feminists have been influential to a degree, their theory’s effectiveness is limited by its failure to comprehend the nature of gender relations within the public and private sphere. Connell explains that liberal feminism assumes patriarchy is a surface problem that can be really removed with laws. He asserts that liberal feminism “understands men as a category overrepresented in the state structure.”¹³ Under this assumption, it seems logical that a seat reservation quota would be implemented as an effort to reverse men’s “overrepresentation.” But the patriarchal structure of the state goes much deeper than the overrepresentation of men.

The state’s role in women’s oppression is often difficult to identify because it is not always direct and is often combined with other oppressive cultural factors. According to Connell, perhaps one of the most influential factors of oppression in the state’s structure is the state’s ability to appear neutral on issues, specifically those affecting women, while operating under gender biased procedures and systems. Connell contends that the state

“plays a part in establishing or regulating ‘systems’ (the family, wage labor) in which women are oppressed. But the state can appear in itself to be gender-neutral; and this is a vital aid to legitimacy.”¹⁴ The state’s neutral stance comes from the fight for equality and sameness between the sexes. This creates an excuse for the state to ignore problems related to women by ignoring their differences and thus operating under a neutral system.

Simplistic notions of patriarchy and male domination suggest falsely men intentionally oppress women and consciously attempt to hold power over them. However, often it is more the support of a system that is built on patriarchal ideals that endorses the further oppression of women, rather than individual view points and individual actions. Women’s entrance in politics may simply further support this patriarchal structure than reverse women’s position in society. Connell insists that generally there “is a broad *similarity* between women’s and men’s political attitudes, interests, and partisanship. This contradicts the theoretical idea that men’s domination of the political apparatus arises from natural differences in motivation or outlook between the sexes.”¹⁵

Assumptions of Male Dominance and Cultural Differences

In theory the state is the central location of power. Connell makes the argument that the family, while an important source of power, is peripheral and isolated into individual situations, or “cells.”¹⁶ Connell is referring to the state of power relations in the modern era. Foucault would agree with Connell’s assessment of the present day allocation of power and its implications in relation to the private sphere. Connell believes that the state is the central location of all power relations. Through laws, programs and policy, according to Connell, the state is able to assert this power in an administrative and far more central way than the family structure ever could. However, Connell fails to account for the inability of the state to implement these state laws and policies which they create. While potentially the state could hold power over violence, property, sexual violence and other male-dominated practices, it is often unable to influence these actions as much as it claims it will. He overestimates the effectiveness of the state to have total control over the everyday life of people. Therefore, it may not be the state’s power that dominates the private sphere but rather a different type of power relationship that does not necessarily result from the state’s laws, programs or policies. In India, seat reservations for women are based upon a similar assumption about state power. The implementation of the reservations differs greatly from its

conception in theory. However, Connell does argue that women's economic and religious involvement in society has placed gender at the base of the state structure. This, he argues, proves that the political structure of government is much more complex than a simple "male state."¹⁷

Seat reservation for women in government at the local level is advancement towards empowerment in the political realm and a step forward in the dismantling of the repression of women in this sphere since this is a visible change for women. However, questions that follow this statement must be: To what extent does the seat reservation translate into changes in the rest of society? Is this policy change as monumental for women's advancement as it appears from an outside perspective? If it does not translate into other realms of society then other questions need to be addressed. What are the factors that cause this method of change to be a limited form of empowerment for women? And, What are the reasons behind this limitation? These factors include social values, patterns of governance, limitations in or gains from political parties, basic modes of establishing political power and the lack of a gender-conscious education.

Some of the greatest obstacles in cross-cultural research are the assumptions embedded in the differing perspectives. The Western perspective especially creates barriers for researchers and impinges our ability to make accurate assessments of women's roles in developing societies. In her article "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," Chandra Talpade Mohanty criticized earlier work by Western feminists who failed to acknowledge their own assumptions about non-Western women. Liberal feminists, specifically during the 1970s, typically characterized "third world women" as one large homogeneous group under the heading of the "Other." Certain Western feminists gave the impression that women in India, Africa, and the Arab world are all culturally bound by something that men of the same culture are not also bound by.¹⁸ Their assumptions removed women from their culture and lives by alienating them to this position of an "oppressed individual" in society. However, women cannot be looked at apart from their culture. By doing this, women's roles in society are largely discredited. Women's roles are necessary and often recognized within their cultures as being important. While women may experience oppression in both the public and private spheres, they are certainly still members of their culture and not an entirely separate entity simply bound by shared oppression. Women still have agency even in the context of being oppressed. Western feminists often overlook

this fact. Mohanty reasserts that “this is what the ‘colonizing’ gaze of Western feminism does not acknowledge.”¹⁹

This notion of the “other” that Mohanty found in modern Western feminist writings has been very influential in anthropological research as well. Kamala Visweswaran finds this notion of the “other” extremely prevalent in most cross-cultural anthropological research. She emphasizes that the elimination of ethnic studies from ethnographic and anthropological research, as well as the elimination of gender studies, makes it impossible to ever remove this concept of the “other.” Without the understanding of the use of this concept of the “other,” the researcher will not be able to adequately represent the situation as it actually is.²⁰

Mohanty goes on to address the issue of “male dominance.” She believes that the misinterpretation of the concept of male dominance is one of the greatest barriers when performing anthropological research in third world countries. She argues, “An analysis of ‘sexual difference’ in the form of a cross-culturally singular, monolithic notion of patriarchy or male dominance leads to the construction of a similarly reductive and homogeneous notion of what I call the ‘third world difference’ –that stable, ahistorical something that apparently oppresses most if not all the women in these countries.”²¹ This implies that women in third world nations are held down by a singular force in a way that women in the Western world are not. By making that sort of statement, feminists discount the importance of the cultural, political and social history of the country in which these women live. They are almost implying that women have not been affected by the changes in culture, let alone played a role in forming the culture, based on the fact that they have been oppressed by this “monolithic notion of patriarchy.” If the researcher enters the field with this assumption, it becomes difficult to evaluate what the actual situation for the female interview subjects is since they have already placed a barrier between themselves and those they plan to interview. A solid knowledge of the history behind the Indian women’s movements as well as a clear understanding of present-day efforts by Indian women themselves, are two important forms of understanding that would be helpful to acquire before beginning the research. Similarly, this should also be the case when implementing legislation such as the seat reservation. The implications of the women’s movement in India and other factors that affect the seat reservation will be discussed below.

Mohanty also highlights the tendency among feminists to omit an analysis of the cultural basis of particular societies and attempt to create what she calls a “basis of secondary sociological and anthropological universals.”²² The first example of generalization is the homogenization of all women under the assumption of “shared oppression.” She emphasizes that by eliminating the biological make up of women as the common factor among women and replacing it with “oppression,” women have thus been labeled as powerless and in a lower position in all realms of life throughout history. “This results,” Mohanty explains, “in an assumption of women as an always already constituted group, one which has been labeled ‘powerless,’ ‘exploited,’ ‘sexually harassed,’ etc., by feminist scientific, economic, legal, and sociological discourses.”²³ This eliminates the drastic cultural and religious portions of women’s lives that define their power and position in society differently from each other. Finally, Mohanty argues that there is no such thing as universal male dominance or patriarchy. Rather she says: “There is, however, a particular world balance of power within which any analysis of culture, ideology, and socioeconomic conditions necessary has to be situated.”²⁴ This is relevant to this particular study because the governmental structure, cultural practices and religious ideology in India differ significantly from other nations and therefore cause a very different effect on the women who are subject to them. Studies such as this one must be very culturally specific. Generalizations, whether it is through assumptions of male dominance or of shared oppression, can hinder the evaluation of legislation and creation of other strategies to clarify women’s status in the society.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND SETTING

My research was conducted in Amreli District, Gujarat in May, 2003. Gujarat is located in central India, and Amreli District is situated in the southeastern section of the state. The district has a total population of 1,393,295, with the male population of 701,384 and a female population of 691,911 making the sex ratio 986 females to every 1,000 males.²⁵ The data was collected through a series of twelve interviews with women in nearby villages and towns, who are presently, or who have in the past, held positions on the panchayats at the district, taluka or village level. Gujarat was chosen for a number of reasons. It is presently a very politically active state under the domination of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The BJP plays a large role in politics in the state of Gujarat and will be addressed later in this paper. As a result, in recent years there has been a great deal of

tension over religious issues and violent outbreaks directed at Muslims and more specifically at Muslim women. Gujarat is also the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi. As a result, there are numerous individuals and programs in existence today dedicated to the Gandhian values aimed at bettering society in general and the status of women specifically.

The panchayat raj itself was a body instituted in 1957 as a method of decentralizing the government and allotting power to the village for the purpose of local developmental needs. It is composed of three levels: the gram panchayat at the village level, the panchayat samiti at the middle level and the zilla parishad, at the district level. While the panchayats lost much of their power throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, by 1977 the Janata party, a predecessor of the BJP, decided it was necessary to strengthen this unit of government.²⁶ While the panchayat raj system has attempted to implement economic and rural developmental programs, especially during the 1980s, a number of factors that prevent the success of these types of programs still exist. The first limitation in implementing developmental programs is the structure of the body of the panchayat. Due to the structural set up of the panchayats, the councils have difficulty communicating with the development administrators.²⁷ Hoshiar Singh pinpoints the major constraint of the panchayat system. He believes that not only is the increase in number of power elites in the panchayat a problem, but also the fact that many of these members are “discarded” state officials who are either highly corrupt officials or unqualified political leaders. Singh insists the panchayat raj,

... is working for elite groups or for groups of big farmers and rich businessmen, and the system has thus lost its appeal...[furthermore] State level leaders began to see these local institutions as rivals, and they started withdrawing important functions from them, making them dumping grounds for discarded state cadre administrative officers.²⁸

A significant change occurred in the panchayat system when the 73rd amendment was passed in 1993. The amendment was introduced under Rajiv Gandhi in 1989, and faced difficulty getting passed in the Rajya Sabha, or the upper house of the national government. For the next three years there was a struggle as the bill was reintroduced multiple times. Finally, on December 22 of 1992, the bill was passed in Parliament and then ratified by 17 state assemblies, including the state of Gujarat on April 24, 1993.²⁹ Along with the 33% seat reservation for women the amendment also proposed a variety of changes in other areas. First, it established the

three-level provincial government mentioned above. Second, it established direct elections for panchayat members. Third, it established that members would have the right to vote in meetings, but could not vote in elections for other panchayat members at the gram, intermediate, or district levels. Fourth, the amendment established five-year terms with control of the state over the elections.³⁰ However, the portion of the amendment that is most relevant to this study is the section that reserved seats for women. Along with the seat reservation for women, it also designated that seats be reserved for members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes at all three levels of the panchayats. In the Hindu religious structure there are certain castes that are designated as below all other castes and this amendment provided special provisions to integrate these castes, known as Scheduled Castes, into the political structure of society alongside women. While Hoshiar Singh feels there are many beneficial aspects to this act, he argues that there are some limitations as well. Singh admits that, “it offers little to the *panchayats* by way of functions, powers, and resources to shape them as ‘units’ of self government.”³¹

Since the 73rd amendment was passed in 1993, it is useful to take a comparative look at the statistics for men and women in 1991 and in 2001 to gain a sense of the changes that have occurred statistically over the past ten years. The district of Amreli has a total population of 1,393,295. In 1991, the sex ratio for Amreli district was 985 females for every 1000 males, showing fewer women than men, and in the 0-6 year age group the ratio of girls to boys was even lower at 923 females for every 1000 males. But in 2001, while the overall ratio stayed the same, the 0-6 age group shows a drop in females with a ratio of 894/1000. In 1991 women had a 49.68% literacy rate, compared with a 71.21% male literacy rate. In 2001 both genders showed an increase in literacy rates with women at 57.77% and men at 77.68%. As expected, the statistics differ somewhat in rural and urban areas. In 1991, the rural literacy for women was at 46.22% and at 68.18% for men, compared with urban statistics of 61.16% for women and 80.73% for men. In 2001, the rural literacy rate was 54.51% for women and 75.24% for men and the urban literacy rate was 69.26% for women and 85.72% for men. In both the rural and urban setting, the gap between literacy rates seems to have been closed by 2% or 3%.³²

Currently in the district of Amreli, the total number of workers is at 43.12%. Of these workers, 55.15% are male workers and 30.93% are female workers. As expected, when looking at non-workers, the percentage of non-working women is greater than that of non-working men, at 69.07% to 44.85% respectively, which is important

since non-workers make up 56.88% of the population. Women hold a much higher percentage in the marginal workers section than do the men at 15.94% to 2.8% in a category that makes up 9.33% of the people. The men well out weigh the women as the full time workers, as opposed to marginal workers. 33.79% of the population is fulltime workers outside of the household with 52.35% of them male and only 14.99% female.³³ There are more men in the work force than women. This most likely means that women are taking care of the domestic responsibilities while men are working outside of the home.

Lack of experience working outside of the home is an inhibiting factor for women entering politics. Furthermore, women maintain their domestic responsibilities when they become involved in politics and often find themselves caught between their domestic and political duties. Therefore, family support is a necessity for women who want to become involved in the village panchayats. Generally women do not want special consideration based on the fact that they bear the burden of the domestic responsibilities. In a study done in the state of Kerala, the researcher found that “the familial responsibilities of all respondents seemed to conflict with their public duties, but women generally did not like partisan considerations to enter the field of panchayat work.”³⁴

The base of my research was in Babapur, a small village just outside the city of Amreli. The population of Babapur itself is 2,838.³⁵ Babapur is the location of Gunvantrai S. Purohit’s ashram and Gandhian school which he and his wife started over forty years ago. This ashram is a community residence in which all the members contribute in some way to the school, whether through teaching, cooking, sewing or other necessary tasks. Although all the members of the ashram are Hindu, they belong to a variety of different castes. The Purohits moved to this area from Mumbai in order to educate the children living in this rural setting. The children in this area had previously not had access to quality education or, in a number of cases, had no access to education at all. When the Purohits first arrived, this was the case for almost all the women and girls in the area. Mrs. Purohit worked for nearly forty years to convince girls and their mothers in the area to leave their houses and begin attending school. She said, “At 10:30 every morning I would go to the village and ring a bell as a way to tell all the girls in the village to complete their household chores and then go for their education.”³⁶ Resistance came from both the fathers and mothers, who failed to see the necessity and benefits of educating their daughters.

According to the parents, education was merely an impingement on the domestic chores and could only have negative results.³⁷ Girls were not expected to find work outside the home, so there was, in the eyes of the mothers, simply no need. The parents' objective was to have a daughter who would be a desirable candidate for marriage.

One of the greatest changes that has evolved in recent years which contributed to a widespread increase in women's education is that education became a prerequisite for marriage. According to many of the women I interviewed, men started to demand that their prospective wives receive an education.³⁸ Following this turn, mothers and fathers encouraged their daughters to attend school. Mothers and fathers were supportive of this because "an investment in education is seen to benefit their conjugal families and, once again, is known to be tied to notions about *paraya dhan* (someone else's wealth). These refer to practices of dowry-giving and the giving away of daughters, thus defining the outflow and inflow of property, consumer goods, money, and even skills derived through education."³⁹

Today the Purohit's school has expanded to include a teacher training school. Nearly twenty years ago Mrs. Purohit served on the village panchayat. At this time, when the seat reservation had not yet been implemented, there were three women panchayat members. Mrs. Purohit was a member of the district panchayat for ten years. Over the years she was a member of the Taluka and Gram panchayats as well. Their daughter, Mendalieni Purohit, known as Miniben by her family and friends, has worked at the school since she graduated from college. She has also since started an orphanage for underprivileged children. Recently Mini was elected as the head of the village panchayat of Babapur. She was a guiding source in my research not only as a useful source of knowledge, but also as a translator for all the interviews.

Background of Setting

The conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India plays an important role in the region's dynamics. Gujarat has severely suffered from communalism since India gained independence from Britain in 1947. There has been an upsurge in communal violence in Gujarat in recent years. The most recent instances of violence occurred in February, 2002 when a train full of Hindus, returning from a pilgrimage to a temple in Ayodhya, was burned. Following this incident was an extreme backlash against the Muslim community. The violence that

followed extended from the burning of houses, to the rape of women to the looting of stores and homes. Many scholars attribute the continued violence and heightened tensions to the Hindu fundamentalist political regime presently in power in the state of Gujarat. Cynthia Keppley Mahmood argues that “the changes underway in India today clearly reach far deeper than electoral politics, many commentators continue to look to campaigning, voting and the competition for political office as keys to understanding the obviously increasing communalism.”⁴⁰ The attacks have appeared to be planned and supported by members of government. There have been reports that the police force, backed by governmental support, not only ignored the attacks, but actually encouraged them. Apparently, during attacks on the Muslims in Gujarat, “not only did the police remain inert, when the army arrived on the scene, [the army] was not deployed.”⁴¹ While modern politics did not form these distances between the two communities, the BJP’s policies and actions certainly promote the divide between the two religious groups.⁴² The Muslim community has therefore been extremely alienated from politics in the state of Gujarat. Muslims remain peripheral to the political structure. Arundhati Roy believes that the violence will drive the Muslims to “learn to keep quiet, to accept their lot, to creep around the edges of society in which they live.”⁴³ The serious violence that occurs in Gujarat does not take place in any other state.⁴⁴

The tension between the Hindus and the Muslims has an effect on the status of women in political positions. While Chandra Talpade Mohanty acknowledges that Indian women are often subjected to this concept of “other” by Westerners, Roy believes that Muslims women are seen as subjected to a similar alienation within their own country. She insists that “increasingly, Indian Nationalism has come to mean Hindu Nationalism, which defines itself not through a respect or disregard for itself, but through a hatred of the Other. And the Other, for the moment, is not just Pakistan, it’s Muslim.”⁴⁵ Since Muslim women face both gender and religious oppression in Gujarat, they are at a much lower status than Hindu women socially, politically and economically. Since the Purohit family is Hindu, all the subjects interviewed consequently were also Hindu since all the contacts for the research were made through this family. Had some of the interviewees been Muslim, the findings would have been different.

However, I was able to interview women from a range of different castes within the Hindu religion since the Purohit family is of the Brahmin caste, and thus was accepted by the most elite of caste members. The

Brahmin caste is extremely important in Hindu tradition and this carries over into other realms of life. Mahmood claims that “the Brahmins... [are] the key definers of group identity.”⁴⁶ The caste system has been the basis of the social structure in Hindu society since it emerged between the years 300 and 500 AD. The caste system has thus had a huge impact on women’s lives. However each caste and sub caste follows its own specific practices. In this case, women are subjected to different limitations depending on which caste they belong to. Customs relating to marriage are also interrelated with the caste hierarchy. Carol Anne Douglas believes that “the custom of marrying girls before they reached puberty was developed to ensure that girls were unavailable to men of lower castes than their families.”⁴⁷ Castes are extremely divided through a hierarchal stratification and tend to remain socially within their castes. Marrying outside of one’s caste, especially marrying someone of a lower caste is considered taboo in Hindu society. However, the Purohit family was extremely dedicated to what Miniben referred to as socialist values. The “socialist values” that she refers to are mainly Gandhian values based on dedicating one’s life to helping those in need and providing education and welfare for people in the rural areas of India. Since the Purohit family was very supportive of these ideas, as a result they strongly supported the increased representation of lower caste women, especially in local political institutions. Dalits, who are outside the traditional caste structure, are excluded from the public realm of politics. Even with their efforts, caste remains one of the greatest barriers for ‘universal’ women’s advancement both in and outside of politics. However the Purohitis have been very influential in their community through their support of dalits.

Research Methods and Limitations

The language barrier was a limiting factor in the research. While it was extremely helpful to have a translator who understood the nature of the research being conducted, which in itself lowered the chance of a misunderstanding, the possibility of mistranslation still exists. Moreover, there is also the possibility that the translator, in this case Mini Purohit, could unknowingly insert her point of view into the translation. However, her viewpoint was extremely valuable to the research, given her understanding of the situation, but it is worth noting that the interviews are heavily influenced by her assessment of the situation.

The final aspect of the interview crucial to my analysis is body language. When men were present, women often felt held back and as a result did not seem to share as much as they might have in the interviews. It

is important for the researcher to be able to read a woman's silences. When attempting to assess the amount of control the husband has over his wife's political position, or how held back a woman is by her colleagues and the government corruption. Kamala Visweswaran has done extensive work on anthropological research of women by looking past the outside image of a woman's position within society to find out what the actual situation for women is. She argues that both male and female anthropologists have struggled with this for years because they simply cannot break down barriers with the women subjects. In her essay "Defining Feminist Ethnography," Visweswaran argues that feminist anthropologists stand to learn not only from women's speech, but women's silences as well."⁴⁸ Most silences occurred when the husband was present. One of the most telling actions is when women immediately glance at their husbands, following each question, almost looking for approval or assurance, before either answering the question hesitantly or having the husband take over the answer. This could mean that she was either unsure of the policies due to her own lack of involvement in the position's work, or she was worried about her husband's reaction to the answer she wanted to provide. This was a common feature of interviews with women carried out in front of male family members.

WOMEN'S POSITION IN POLITICAL STRUCTURE

Women's decision making power in the panchayats is limited by male dominance in the domestic sphere, political party dominance in the region, corruption and state control, and religious and caste limitations. While the acquisition of power in politics itself does not necessarily affect the cultural morals and values that contribute to the male dominated atmosphere that exists in the areas that lie outside the political sphere, women also have not attained full decision-making power within the political realm itself, even at the local level. After evaluating the factors above that serve to limit this power, it becomes obvious that a change in legislation requires the support of programs and time to establish a significant form of change. Women's ability to attain and exercise power, as well as create programs, are essential. As explained above, the governmental structure contains gendered power relations that have been present since the creation of the system. This makes it difficult to create a reversal of these power relations through policy changes within the same system. This simply means that if women attain positions in the government, they should attain the type of position that gives them the power to institute the programs that deal with issues they feel are the most important in society and they should be able to

institute them by using their own methods. Otherwise, women's presence in government is simply reinforcing a male dominant structure. Women's fortification of the patriarchal system does, in fact, happen quite frequently. Often, when women individually achieve positions of authority in government, instead of creating change for women, they support a gender biased structured system. Indira Gandhi, for example, was a very powerful prime minister and exercised strong authority during her term, but it is questionable whether she changed the system simply by being a woman in a high ranking position. On an individual level, the sex of a person holding the position may not be as important as restructuring the actual system because the presence of women in political office holds no guarantee of commitment to the betterment of women's position in society.

Not only do women and men differ in their responsibilities within society, they can differ in their modes of affecting change on their communities. Joanna Liddle and Rama Joshi claim that "the contradiction between women's experience and male constructions of that experience, [create] an instability in individual consciousness upon which external factors can act to affect a change."⁴⁹ Women are given much more freedom outside of politics to effect change in their communities and often find themselves to be much more successful. This makes politics less enticing to women. Two of the women interviewed said that they would be much more influential in their community outside of politics, where they could effectively take part in and initiate constructive and socially beneficial programs without all the limitations that politics presents.⁵⁰ This often discourages women from even attempting to run for reelection or continuing a career in politics. This is a typical problem that arises from top-down approaches to empowerment of women. What type of power are women looking for? In the context of seat reservations, there is an implication of "empowerment" in politics, but are women actually attaining power? It is necessary, then, to look into why the above factors impose limits on women holding positions on the panchayat.

Seat Reservations

Women have held positions in politics since independence, although their presence has been marginal. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s especially, talk of reserving seats for women was limited and almost non-existent.⁵¹ Laws that promised improved conditions for women were passed, but little change was seen. However, in 1973 at the All India Panchayat Parishad's Sixth National Conference, discussion of seat reservations

for women was brought to the table.⁵² While many showed support for a 30% seat reservation for women at the local level throughout much of the 1980s, women's groups opposed this move, stressing the importance of women's participation at all governing levels, not just at the local level. According to many women's activists at the time, representation at the local and district levels would prove to be a limited change for women.

The debate over the necessity of seat reservation becomes difficult when the gender relations and other factors that oppress women within the governmental structure are not identified. Kumud Sharma looks at the growing importance of women's political representation and the problems and issues that have resulted from the years of debate and eventual modifications of the Constitution that have taken place. However, Sharma fails to realize many of the assumptions he makes about the type of power women have achieved and the ability of this power to translate into other realms of women's lives. While he alludes to the importance of outside factors, he never develops their importance and centrality to the issue of implementation of seat reservation. It is often assumed that women will universally feel accountable for women's oppression and make attempts to change women's status in society. However, this is not always the case and Sharma does not account for this. He believes that "arguments relating to [the under-representation of women] revolve around two broad issues: the representative character of democratic institutions and their public accountability on women's issues."⁵³ This highlights one of the greatest assumptions about the effectiveness of this amendment. The assumption is that although women are given positions in government, the system does not allow them the freedom to enact change on the community. Women are often held back from creating gender conscious programs. Part of the reason that women have trouble implementing their ideas is that the other members of the panchayat lack motivation to implement new policies. Lilaben Laljibhai Jotaniya explained that her panchayat members were lazy and were reluctant to travel to Amreli to take care of their minor responsibilities.⁵⁴ Another issue addressed above is that women do not also always feel personally responsible for women's problems and therefore do not always directly try to change women's status and create programs that specifically help women.

Sharma's argument largely focuses on the democratic nature of seat reservations and systems of affirmative action along with whether or not these are fair mechanisms for change. He alludes to the contradiction in democracy by pointing out that the, "the persistent paradox of liberal democracy has been the

tension between the notion of political equality and pre-existing social and economic inequalities.”⁵⁵ It is unclear, however, whether this statement presupposes that political equality will lift the laws of oppression governing women’s lives in the social and economic realm or whether he acknowledges that changing the laws in a patriarchal system does not translate into the social and economic realm.

Seat reservations were implemented because women lack governmental representation. Sharma states that according to many political theorists, the lack of female representation is a failure of democracy, and an implementation of seat reservations will establish equality between men and women over time. He also defines equality as equal opportunity. But equal opportunity in which environment? In what context? To do what? Without changing the structural basis of the government, women are simply gaining equal opportunity to support a structure of principles that reproduce their repression. Peterson and Runyan insist that proportional representation “is insufficient. For the potential of [Panchayat Raj] to be realized, it must be embedded in a political culture committed to equality...And it requires strong political leadership and social pressure, which are less likely where conservative (traditional, patriarchal) forces are strong.”⁵⁶ Sharma fails to acknowledge that in order for women to effectively become gender conscious and initiate relevant programs, there must be a different type of equality established. The equality must go well beyond just critical numbers, especially just at the local level. But Sharma does assert that, “The biggest hurdles to transformative politics are the party system, electoral politics, and the polarization between ideological positions and the reality of women’s oppression.”⁵⁷ The problem lies in the lack of understanding of the reality of women’s oppression and the main sources and reasons behind women’s power or lack of power. Sharma talks about how women are beginning to understand how increased representation is necessary “to influence the redistribution of power and resources.”⁵⁸ This is an excellent example of an assumption about the type of power women need in order to be empowered: that the simple act of reserving seats will establish women with that power.

Role of Political Parties

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is the ruling party in Gujarat and also holds the majority in Parliament under the leadership of Prime Minister Vajpayee. The BJP is an outgrowth of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). Jana Sangh was officially the precursor to the BJP, but was largely

supported by the RSS and VHP and has continued to share members since its beginnings in the early days of independence. Jana Sangh came to Gujarat in the 1950s and, along with RSS and VHP, and at that time had a reputation for being fanatical Hindu fundamentalists.⁵⁹ The political basis of the party was to establish unity among Hindus in order to marginalize Muslims and other non-Hindus, namely Christians and Jains. As a result they strongly supported the inclusion of all castes and the break down of negative caste relations. Presently the BJP still stands strongly behind its anti-Muslim pro-Hindu stance and still holds caste unity as one of its greatest goals. Ghanshyam Shah argues that the reason behind the BJP's great effort towards caste unity is that "despite the fact that the Hindu samaj is several times more powerful than that of the Muslims, it suffers humiliation and discredit because of its lack of internal cohesion, community feelings and faith in religion among its members."⁶⁰ In an effort to gain more support from the Hindu community, the BJP has been very supportive of women and their involvement in local politics. Most of the women interviewed were either backed by the BJP or were party supporters. No one commented on the party as an inhibiting factor for advancement. In fact, part of the reason the party rose to power in the recent years is "due to a widespread disillusionment with the other parties and the common feeling that the BJP is an organization led by people of integrity and discipline."⁶¹

However, the Party does present some contradictions, which leads to questions about its record on the issue of women. The first and most important issue is that, while the amendment reserving seats for women at the local level passed easily, the efforts to apply it to the national level have been met with much resistance. Even today it has not been passed by parliament. All political parties, in fact, seem to be hesitant about passing the reservation program at the national level. Sharma compares people's outward support of seat reservations with the actuality of seat reservations in parliament. He explains: "Seventy five percent men and seventy nine percent women favored reservations in legislative bodies...[but] as the predominantly male Parliament developed cold feet and did not pass [81st amendment reserving seats for women at the national level], because opposing a move towards women's political empowerment is regarded as politically incorrect, while supporting the Bill is seen as political suicide."⁶² Why does the BJP support seat reservations at the local level, but not at the national level? What does that say about the amount of "power" local politicians hold?

The BJP seems hypocritical in its views towards women's representation in government. It supports seat reservations for women at low level governmental positions where women will have very little political decision-making power, but are very hesitant on supporting women's participation at levels where they will hypothetically have more influence. Interestingly, the BJP was originally known for its support of centralizing power, which would mean limiting the state's power to some extent, and drastically limiting the power of the panchayats, placing more power in the hands of the national government. Limiting the power of the panchayats places huge constraints on the amount of developmental and social work that can take place in villages and towns. Panchayats are, in fact, under strict control of the state government and encounter much difficulty in attaining approval for simple tasks, such as road work or water systems.⁶³ As regards the issue of state control, all the women interviewed responded that they would support giving more power to the panchayat members and that, if this occurred, it would be much easier to implement developmental programs and create positive changes in their community. Also, M.S. John discovered during her study of political parties in Kerala that "the highly patriarchal nature of the party remains an impediment to the programmatic inclusion of gender issues."⁶⁴

This discrepancy between outward support of women's power and position within society and actual action is reflected in the BJP's treatment of caste unity. Shah finds the BJP support of caste unity hypocritical because the BJP still strongly supports the varna system, which is the official division of caste or social order in the Hindu religion. The varna system specifically refers to the privileging of some castes at the expense of others. Also, the BJP members support the everyday practices that are typically caste-specific. He goes on to say that the leaders openly show this by going to festivals and events that are open only to members of elite castes.⁶⁵ It is difficult to establish unity among Hindus when the lines between castes are drawn so clearly.

The BJP's extensive support of Hindu tradition has had a negative effect on women. The issue that has caused the greatest controversy has been the practice of sati, or widow burning. The practice of sati dates back to as early as the thirteenth century. It was performed by women of particular castes in particular regions of India in honor of the goddess Rani Sati. She represents both religious commitment and a form of community involvement and identity.⁶⁶ The practice was never common or widely practiced. Satis are typically performed by members of the upper castes and are extremely sacred events. Those who witness the transformation of the widow into a

goddess through the burning of her body are said to receive a high blessing. Therefore, usually thousands attend a sati ceremony. Although many regimes that have ruled India since the thirteenth century have attempted to bring an end to this practice, they have failed to do so. According to Anne Hardgrove, attempting to bring an end to this practice was one of the greatest difficulties the British encountered during their more than two century rule over India, since they were continuously met with strong opposition from conservative Hindus who were staunch defenders of the practice.⁶⁷ Finally in 1829, the Supreme Court passed the Sati Abolition Act abolishing the practice altogether. This act was a result of a movement, led by Raja Rammohan Roy, against the practice of sati.⁶⁸

Although the practice had officially been abolished, instances of sati still occurred. The most famous case was performed on a woman by the name of Roop Kanwar in 1987. Hardgrove describes the situation that followed the actual death and its purpose below:

Twelve days after the immolation took place, Deorala villagers persisted in glorifying Roop Kanwar's *sati* by conducting the ceremony of the *chunari mahotsav* (*mahotsav* literally means a 'great festival') in which women offer their *chunari* (wedding veils) on the site of the *sati* in order to obtain the blessings of the *sati* goddess.⁶⁹

The case caused much controversy and served as an opportunity for women and men to strongly assert their disgust over the practice. Although the case was brought to court, there was a huge resurgence from the religious male community of Jaipur, causing riots between the conservative marching men and the feminist protestors. The BJP politicians, perhaps under the fear of losing Hindu support, went along with Hindu tradition of visiting the site where the sati took place to receive the blessing as well as attended the ceremony described above.⁷⁰ Radha Kumar comments that "...almost all the major centre to right wing political parties went to the site, not to enquire into what had happened but to stake their own claim to 'tradition'."⁷¹ Sati is one of the most serious issues that women in India have to face. If the male members of a political party truly support women, why, then, would they allow some women to be sacrificed for the sake of tradition, therefore implying that women hold a secondary position within the party? The BJP often supports the most widespread type of male dominance in Hindu society that takes place under the redeployment of tradition. Along with sati, dowry deaths, inheritance rights and widow's inability to remarry are other examples of assertion of tradition as a mode of oppression for women.⁷²

M.S. John argues that like the political structure, the party is also based on a patriarchal structure. John suggests “the local party committees of leftist parties, dominated by males, alternated as institutionalized sites of patriarchal power.”⁷³ She elaborates that the women who are successful in gaining support from political parties are those who are already “socialized” into the patriarchal political system and therefore are able to assimilate more easily into the patriarchal set up of the party structure. Personal relationships and connections in general play an important role in attaining and maintaining a position in politics. Outside of the state structure there is a system of connections usually between men that dictates much of the power relationships within government. It is extremely difficult for women to enter this network given the history and “pattern of administrative coordination within state structures.”⁷⁴ Also, when women give into this structure and series of relationship, they are often forced to give up their views and ideals to please the head members of the party. John argues the party structure and its procedures are so strong that it “makes the abilities and talents of individual women members worthless.”⁷⁵

Reelection

Once women attain a position within government, they encounter a variety of different inhibiting factors. One of the most influential factors over women’s political involvement is the difficulty of reelection. If women are to create change within the political structure and assert their own ideas, they need to remain in politics well beyond one term. Women, individually, have difficulty remaining in politics for a few reasons. These reasons include lack of outside training, the rate at which seats come up as reserved as well as the discontinuity in the specific seats that are reserved for women, and the lack of support from family and community members.

When a reserved seat opens up, many women are initially encouraged to enter politics by family and friends. However, they often are unable to remain in politics beyond this one term. Recently, seats have been coming up for reelection more frequently. While a seat may be reserved once for a woman, it is highly likely that it will not be reserved when the next election comes around and the woman in the position will be put up for reelection against men. Since the women were supported by their families and parties to run for a reserved seat, they are less likely to maintain the same support for a non-reserved seat. The husband and political party members are likely to return to their original motives and ideals, and are less inclined to support a long-term

political career for their wife or fellow female panchayat member. Rasilaben Mansukhbhai Patolia, presently the president of the district panchayat of Amreli district, was originally encouraged to enter politics by her husband. Her husband had been involved in politics for over twenty years and had planned to run for the position of district panchayat president in the next election. However, when the seat came up as reserved, he encouraged his wife to run for the position. But when the next election occurs, the seat will most likely return to the general election and he expressed his desire to run for the position himself. Therefore, his wife, Rasilaben will lose her political support and would be very unlikely to run for the position again, making her experience in politics very short lived.

Through her research on women's involvement in local politics in the state of Kerala, M.S. John found difficulty in reelection to be one of the largest problems that women faced. John claims that 85% of the women she interviewed were not likely to run again for reelection and 30% would only attempt reelection if they were strongly supported by their friends, family and political party.⁷⁶ As stated above, in Kerala the greatest limiting factor for women was lack of support from political parties, and in Gujarat the greatest limiting factor for women was the overbearing influence of the family, more specifically the husband. Although the factors are different the effect is the same. John asserts that, "Consequently, the experience of the incumbent women representatives will be lost and some of them may disappear from public life altogether, while inexperienced women members elected in the next round will have to start from scratch."⁷⁷ Although most women come into politics with limited educational training to prepare them for the job, they can learn to succeed in their positions through experience. However, the fact that most of the women have difficulty gaining reelection negates the positive impact on gender issues of their participation in local governance to a certain extent.

Creating training programs and support groups are helpful solutions to women's ability to remain in politics. The argument is often made by feminists and non feminists alike that one of the main reasons women struggle initially in politics is their lack of experience working outside the household. However, training programs are more important, because in order for there to be a change in the inheritance structure and practices of government as a whole, women must bring in gender conscious training and ideas of how their own ideals of power can be imprinted on the already existing structure. In her evaluation of women's participation in

government and how this relates to democratic theory, Carole Pateman argues that while there is some basis for the connection between previous work experience and success in the political realm, there are some questions that should in fact be addressed first. She found that many political theorists believe that “experience of participation in some way leaves the individual better psychologically equipped to undertake further participation in the future.”⁷⁸ This supports the argument that women’s inability to gain reelection could be one of the greatest obstacles in the success of the seat reservation in forwarding women’s position within the political realm.

WOMEN’S MOVEMENT AND POLITICS

History of the Women’s Movement

The women’s movement has played a vital role in changing Indian society over the past 30 years. While women first began to become involved under Mahatma Gandhi during the freedom movement in the early part of the twentieth century, the movement was not solidified until the 1970s. Alongside the mass nationalist movement (1920-1947), M.K. Gandhi and his followers encouraged women to become actively involved in politics. This was monumental in that women had previously not drawn women out of the home and especially had not been directly involved in politics. Sujata Patel believes Gandhi “builds a new model of an Indian woman, dedicated to the service of the nation. However, she can perform this role only if she turns her back on sex, reproduction and family life.”⁷⁹ For the first time, women were asked to take part in the movement, albeit in restrictive ways, including the spinning of khadi and maintaining the home. Previous to this time, women had played a role in the Social Reform Movement of the 1800s, but never before had they been present in a movement in such a public way. However, the nationalists tended to ignore the importance of class, caste and religion, and as a result many women felt confined to an ideal image in which many of the same barriers were still in place. But women were able to express themselves during the All India Women’s Conference in 1924 which grew “to become the single largest national voice of the divergent groups and political tendencies, [and] infused all its old and new demands with an equal rights perspective.”⁸⁰ The demand in 1924 was focused on equal rights for women under the law. Women began to fight for better education opportunities, and coeducational environments as well as marriage, divorce, and inheritance rights.⁸¹ Following independence from Great Britain, women’s issues were lost due to

the issues of poverty, health and education. Not until the 1970s did a women's movement begin to fully evolve in India as an autonomous movement. During the years following independence, women remained prevalent in socialist activities but began to move more towards the direct confrontation of laws and seeking methods of change through the political realm.⁸² As a result, the movement that began in the 1970s differed from the previous attempts by Gandhi and his followers to mobilize women in that it was backed largely by women and was a more direct attack on the system, with women's rights at the head of the movement.

Approaches to Change: Centralized vs. Decentralized structures

The feminist and women's movement now is composed of both activity through political parties and through non-governmental organizations. Given the variety of members that make up the movement, it is often argued that the movement is decentralized. Often the centralized efforts did not come from women. However, Nandita Gandhi and Nandita Shah argue that the origins are not as important as the outcomes because "the leadership, circumstances and manner of involvement of women was mainly initiated by men and political parties; nonetheless, it helped women become aware of their militancy and collective strength."⁸³ But, there are both national and non-national organizations headed by women working for a variety of causes ranging from basic human rights to the combating of oppressive societal values to simple policy change, such as the inclusion of women's seat reservation under the 73rd amendment. The women's movement is composed of women from all castes as well as women who live in both rural and urban settings. While centralized government supporters see this as a downfall to the movement because it contributes to the movement's inability to solidify and inability to easily assign roles to implement effective change, others argue differently. Radha Kumar believes the 33% seat reservation for women is a limited form of change for many women participating in the women's movement because "...amongst large sections of the contemporary [women's] movement there is the feeling that singling out individual women not only leads to a biased and partial view of the movements they were or are engaged in, but also reaffirms hierarchical leadership structures and hides from history the majority which makes up the movement."⁸⁴ Not only does Kumar reaffirm the points made earlier by Connell concerning the patriarchal structure of the government, but she brings up an interesting point about how legislative changes overshadow the other, often times more effective work that is being done by women not involved in the government.

Leslie J. Calman assesses the role of the women's movement in political participation by emphasizing the importance of outside support in conjunction with policy change and centralized structure. The purpose of the decentralized structure of the Indian women's movement is to create change in the long run. Calman argues that "centralized movement organizations are thought to be more successful in the short run at influencing established institutions of government...On the other hand, a decentralized movement, while less effective in moving government, seems better suited to organizing and expanding participation at the grass roots and to generating new ideas and strategies."⁸⁵ She argues that creating consciousness about the limitations women face in society as well as exposing the implications of women's position in the relative structures is the central element necessary to create change. She follows by asserting that a decentralized structure is necessary to implement this consciousness. Calman recognizes the importance of consciousness raising efforts and its role in empowerment and argues that

It is the quest for empowerment – through consciousness raising about the place and capacity of women and the poor, through schemes designed to generate economic self-reliance, and through the facilitating of decision making by participants in movement organizations – that most marks movement activity as distinct from politics-as-usual within the electoral system.⁸⁶

While raising gender consciousness would most likely make the seat reservation a more positive change for women, it is not necessarily a solution to the problem. Calman believes the "...success for the women's movement will not be measured in laws passed, but rather in the establishment of access to economic and political power."⁸⁷ It is certainly important that women are able to achieve positions in which they are able to make decisions themselves, whether it is in political decisions or in simple everyday life decisions. Her argument that "the state alone does not have the capacity (even if it had the will) to reform the myriad of social structures that perpetuate women's secondary status..."⁸⁸ is a strong one, however by stating this in conjunction with her support of gender consciousness training and women's self empowered decision making, Calman creates her own assumptions. She gives the impression that economic self-reliance and political decision making power will create equality for women in India. There is no question that this will have a positive effect on many women's lives, however there is little reason to believe that this will completely solve the problem for women as her argument implies. For example, can these changes cause a person set in old patriarchal way of thought to think

and act in non-patriarchal ways? Certainly attempting to create change at the community level has proven to be more effective than starting from a higher position and trying to implement change from the top downward. But, the organizations that are supporting the decentralized women's movement are limited themselves. To what extent can these organizations and their programs have an effect on the male community even at the local levels?

There is also a division within the women's movement over the most important obstacle that women face and how to go about breaking down the barriers in women's lives. Calman identifies two types of women in the feminist movement: those who focus on human rights and equality under the law and those who focus on empowerment through the dismantling of social norms and family control brought about by prevailing ideological ways of thought. The limitations of the former lie largely in the failure of governments and law officials to implement these policies. However those who focus on the latter method have proven to be more effective in creating change. Without the dismantling of these social norms, it is virtually impossible for women to attain power in the public sector. A more effective method would be for women to work from the bottom up. Once they attain power within the home and within the social and economic realms of society it seems that only then will they have a better chance at being able to fully utilize power in the political sphere. Creating a space for women in the political sphere often seemed to have little effect on the women outside of politics. This shows that women's representation did not translate well into the other realms of women's lives. Calman articulates that,

Women cannot hope to exercise public power so long as they are powerless over their own lives because of forced subservience to fathers, husbands, and in-laws; violence within the family; and limited educational opportunity. Nor can they exercise power over their own lives or public life if they are consumed with poverty, ill-health, and a lack of adequate food and clean drinking water.⁸⁹

The latter point is also extremely important to observe. It is difficult for women to focus on change and gain power in the community when they lack basic necessities. Political equality and basic rights are difficult to achieve when the women must first focus on attaining water for basic chores for sustainability. Alternatively, even though these difficulties provide barriers, often it is the most oppressed people who recognize the urgency of their situation.

Environmental factors affect the daily lives of the women and men in Babapur and the surrounding villages in the Amreli District. The main issue for the people is access to water. A few years back a dam was built

about thirty miles away, causing the rivers nearby to dry up, leaving the people with a massive water shortage. The Indian Census states that Babapur has one hand pump, one well and one tap but no tank, tube well, river, fountain, canal, lake or spring.⁹⁰ Babapur serves as an example for all the other surrounding villages in this assessment of its water amenities. Some of the other surrounding villages have access to a tank or other modes of water distribution. A village's access to water depends largely on the ability of the panchayat members to demand water delivery and begin water programs under the tight control of the state government. Therefore the main agenda on all local legislation is water. Most villages are reliant on water delivery by a tank which is then stored in the village center. There are typically no pipeline systems in place to equally distribute the water among the households, so this often leads to minor inter-household disputes. The water shortage especially affects women because they use water to perform most of their daily chores, including cooking meals, washing clothes, and cleaning the house. If the tank is not delivered or if the tank is stationed in an area of the village which is a great distance from their household, the women have to bear most of this burden. Ramuban Dayabhai Mor, a village sarpanch, explained that she was very dedicated to the issue of water shortage because she felt the water situation affected women the most. According to her, women should not have to leave their houses to wash clothes, get water for cooking and other such household chores that require water.⁹¹

Along with the removal of social, economic and political burdens, the women's movement has also focused on empowering women through basic self-esteem building and knowledge on self-reliance. Originally the women's movement had been more focused on gaining equality with men rather than recognizing women as different from men yet still complementary. Kumar notes that the women's movement in India transitioned from the fight for equality to a focus on self reliance and economic independence. She believes "that over the last one hundred and eighty years, the focus of campaigns for an improvement in women's lives has changed from needs to rights and within this from restricted right to parity in selected areas to the larger right of self determination."⁹² An example of an effort to increase women's self confidence and ability to become self reliant is a workshop put together by the Purohit family. About a year ago they hosted a workshop at their ashram to teach women basic self-reliance techniques. Over 1,000 women participated in learning self-defense mechanisms, basic fire safety rules, and other confidence-building skills. Although the skills taught seem simple and limited, they could

actually provide women with a sense of self-worth and self-reliance that can potentially translate into confidence that will be useful in the political realm.

The role of administrative decentralization of the political structure over the long-term is also necessary in government structure itself. The function of the Panchayat Raj initially was to “establish a linkage between local leaderships enjoying the confidence of local people and the government, and translate the policies of the government into action.”⁹³ Therefore, the most important function of this political body is to provide a bridge between the needs of the local people and the government officials in order to create long-term developmental change within the community. However, Hoshiar Singh argues that the panchayats have failed to be effective in implementing developmental change in both the agricultural and social realm of local communities. Singh also “attributes the limited success of *panchayat raj* to lack of money, lack of cooperation from government departments, half-hearted policies overly penetrated by state authorities from above, and the defective structure of PR institutions.”⁹⁴ It has also been argued that the panchayats are not only ineffective but have become hurtful to the rural poor, the population it had initially been created to help through misuse of power and corruption in government. This raises the question of whether or not women will be able to even gain political empowerment, let alone empowerment in other realms of life.

FAMILY AND RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE

Family Influence

Family members heavily influence women’s involvement in politics. While male family members support their wives and daughters by attempting to create an environment where women can have not only a presence but a long-term involvement in politics, there are numerous cases in which the women become overpowered by their husbands. Husbands of appointed female political officials often make most the political decisions for their wives. This limits the woman’s position to the equivalent of a seat-filler rather than a decision maker. As stated earlier, it is often patriarchal nature of the the political structure itself that is oppressing women rather than the individual men who are themselves members of it. However, often men outwardly support the seat reservation for women and even encourage their wives to participate, but situations show that sometimes men support their wives’ participation just so they can control the seat that she fills. M.S. John, who did similar

research in Kerala, found that the main constraint there was political parties. However, she acknowledges that “instances of proxy rule and back-seat driving by male family members of female representatives, common in some parts of Northern India, were not found in the area of the study.”⁹⁵

While political parties were not the major constraint in the study I conducted, as John stated, “back-seat driving” was. This was the case with Rasilaben Mansukhbhai Patolia, the district panchayat president of Amreli district. She became involved in politics because her husband had been an active member for over twenty years. He had planned to run for Mrs. Patolia’s position, but once he found out that the seat had been reserved for a woman, encouraged his wife to run instead.⁹⁶ Although she expressed ideas of her own, her husband tended to handle most of the responsibilities and attended most of the meetings without her. During the interview itself, he answered many of the questions addressed to Rasilaben. When Rasilaben did answer a question, although her answers were brief, they were very telling. But the overshadowing of the husband remained a huge obstacle in the research. Even if the husband was not present, women were often still hesitant to relay too much information to an outsider without an adequate amount of trust. However, the presence of Mini Purohit was helpful in establishing trust with the interviewees.

When analyzing political theory, it is clear that there is a separation between public and private spheres. Although they are divided they each influence the other greatly. Carole Pateman explains why situations such as the one described above emerge when women enter politics. She examines John Stuart Mill’s argument which claims

... that the relation between men and women, or more specifically between husbands and wives, forms an unjustified and unjustifiable exception to the liberal principles of individual freedom and equality, free choice, equality of opportunity and allocation of occupations by merit that (he believes) govern other social and political and institutions in nineteenth-century Britain.⁹⁷

While Mill’s argument, according to Pateman, is flawed, it emphasizes the point that marriage impinges on liberal democratic possibilities. Pateman also argues that the “individual,” on whom liberal theory is based, is in fact a male individual. Man and individual are interchangeable and women are thus omitted.⁹⁸ This confirms that democracy does not necessarily translate the same way for both genders. So for women entering the political

realm through a reserved seat, contradictions between cultural practices and political theory have serious implications for the way in which women exist in politics.

Community Response

While in general, the women interviewed spoke positively about the community reaction to the implementation of seat reservation in the panchayat system, there were some cases in which women were faced with very strong negative responses. Kamalaben Shanilal Bodar is the president of the Taluka Panchayat in Kahambha. It is important to note that no men were present during this interview. She originally became interested in politics over twenty years ago because of her husband's involvement in government. He encouraged her to partake in this election, and since then she has not only involved herself as a member of the district panchayat but is vice chairman of the education committee as well as a member of the women's security and safety commission for the last six years. Presently, the men in her village, who are members of the same caste as Januben Champrojbhai Dhal, are trying to force her out of office. She explained that the community as a whole has been trying to force her to resign or leave everything. They have been mentally harassing her for years by spreading rumors and trying to make her lose face within the community. They even misguided her husband and caused him to leave her with her son one year ago. Presently the men are even harassing her daughter and criticizing her attempts at raising her daughter to be independent and educated. Kamalaben is caught in an extremely difficult situation. She has remained in her position and continued to make all the decisions herself. She is reluctant to leave the position since she has already lost so much, however she is also tired of the constant harassment and effect it may have on her daughter. Kamalaben did emphasize that her party (BJP), staff and her parental side of the family have been very supportive of her throughout her involvement in the panchayat. She emphasized that in the future she would like to see more independence and equal rights for women. Even though she does not want to break up the family, she feels women deserve equal respect. Although she herself would like to fight for women's rights she feels her situation is difficult because of the constant harassers who claim that she is only fighting that battle because she is unhappy in her own family situation and is therefore looking to break up other families. One of the most important points she makes is that "as bad as my situation is, other women in politics have to struggle even more than me."⁹⁹

Caste plays an important role in Hindu society, particularly in rural communities over which panchayats have authority. Thus it may have the largest effect on women's involvement in politics. Women of higher caste suffer different consequences and are subject to different standards than women of lower castes. However, certain characteristics extend across all castes in the Hindu religion. Joanna Liddle and Rama Joshi discuss the importance of purity for women, especially women of the Brahmin caste. In order to remain in one's caste status, according to Liddle and Joshi, karma is one of the most important elements for maintaining this status. Furthermore, "this ritual purity is in the nature of a religious status, but it usually coincides with economic wealth and social esteem. Three of the major signs of purity are vegetarianism, teetotalism and tight constraints on women, indicating that a significant degree of ritual purity comes through domestic activities."¹⁰⁰ Since the Brahmin caste is held in the highest esteem, women who are members of this caste are held to the highest standard of purity. The most serious expression of this is through the practice of purdah, which is still widely spread in Gujarat today. Purdah is defined by Liddle and Joshi as the seclusion of women. The practice of purdah is extremely restrictive on every aspect of high-caste women's lives. This is the case because "high-caste women's work in a patriarchal caste society is confined to the domestic sphere, and a return to employment marks a significant rejection of the male control over female sexual and economic independence."¹⁰¹ So while women of the highest caste are the more privileged and have arguably more power in society, in general they are also subject to the highest standards.

There were several examples of women's religious confinement during my research in Amreli. Januben Champrojbhai Dhal is a village sarpanch who is subject to the practice of purdah. While she was present at the interview, along with fifteen male family members, previous visitors to the house informed me that they had never seen her come out before. Subsequently the interview was largely dominated by the husband, whose responses often had little to do with the questions asked. When asked about the community response to women's involvement in local politics, the husband responded that the village had been very supportive of this change for women. At first they had been opposed, then remained silent and then finally accepted it and gave their support. However, I was informed by Mini Purohit that this family comes from a very strict Brahmin caste that still

strongly believes in the practice of purdah. She explained that other women in the village in reality did not have a voice in the social and family issues and that Januben was in fact the only one, although technically her husband took over most of the sarpanch responsibilities.¹⁰²

Although purdah is still practiced in many communities around Babapur, there is a movement away from the seclusion of women and a relaxation among the educated middle class. Ursula Sharma observes that Liddle and Joshi believe this change is due to a movement “from caste-oriented to class-oriented strategies for maintaining power and status.”¹⁰³ Although it has economic implications, caste is largely based on the religious structure, whereas class is solely based on the position of one’s family economically. One allows for social mobility while the other does not. Since the rigidity of the caste structure, along with the strict religious practices, limits women’s power in politics, a movement towards a “class-oriented” society could increase women’s independence and power status in the political and economic realm. If the societal structure increasingly becomes based on class, women are less likely to be held to this image of purity. With this flexibility women may be able to achieve higher status in the public sphere. Sharma presents an interesting argument as to why Indian society is making this shift from a caste-based structure to a class-based structure. She highlights that “this exit from seclusion is not part of some inevitable march towards emancipation resulting from ‘modernization,’ nor is it a result of contact with Western culture, as many would like to believe. It is rather a part of the logic of the emerging class structure.”¹⁰⁴ In turn, she argues, women are then subject to a different form of male control under a class society than under a caste-based society. Therefore, while this movement towards class-based societal structure could provide women with more access to politics, women may still face oppression, just a new form of oppression derived from the new class-based society.

The assumption that women have begun to emerge from their homes into the public sphere as a result of Westernization and modernization is further refuted by the argument that women’s subordination is a result of western imperialism and financial influence. For example, Liddle and Joshi argue, “male domination does not occur on its own, but...it is crucially tied up with social hierarchy,” which supports the influence of caste. However they go on to state, “these two systems of power occur within a third system, the international capitalist order under which the Indian economy is subordinate to Western financial interests.”¹⁰⁵ This emphasizes the

point made earlier by Mohanty that there are multiple types of male dominance and not one universal controlling concept. Carole Pateman recognizes that there is a dichotomy between the private and the public spheres and attributes this largely to the recent influence of capitalism. She believes that although,

as capitalism and its specific form of sexual as well as class division of labour developed, however, wives were pushed into a few, low status areas of employment or kept out of economic life all together, relegated to their 'natural,' dependent, place in the private familial sphere.¹⁰⁶

However, since the caste system has been in place since close to 1500 years, and still remains a strong base for Hindu social structure, it is difficult to attribute women's confinement in the private sphere mainly to capitalism. Liddle and Joshi discuss a number of impacts that caste has on women's status. They assign women's inability to inherit property as the most influential factor that caste laws project. Unlike Pateman, they believe that this is the main reason why women have been excluded from the economy and public sphere.¹⁰⁷ The second impact of caste on women Liddle and Joshi say is the "control exercised by men over women's sexuality, through arranged marriage, child marriage, the prohibition of divorce, and the strict monogamy for women, leading to sati and a ban on widow remarriage, including infant and child widows."¹⁰⁸ All of the restraints on women in the private sphere inhibit their ability to assert power in politics. However, it is important to reassert Connell's earlier assertion that patriarchy is not a surface problem composed solely of controlling men, but rather a system in place that every member of society is a part of.

Often the issues the government chooses to focus on are themselves a hindrance to women. State policy tends to dwell on economic and capitalist endeavors. Connell analyzes Burton's conceptions of the relationship between femininity and masculinity by stating that the origin of many concepts of gender stem from schools and families.¹⁰⁹ By neglecting the social sphere, the state is in a poor position to attack gender ideology and effect change on gendered oppression, which it aims to change with the implementation of reserved seats for women. This argument does have some validity. If policy changes are made without a clear understanding of women's roles in society, the change could end up hurting women or even lessening their already confined position. In Anjali Bagwe's analysis of gender in rural India, she addresses the impact of Ester Boserup's study on the effects of developmental policy on women and poverty. Bagwe insists "what made governments around the developing world sit up and take notice was her clear thesis that the lack of understanding and consequent neglect of

women's role by economists and development planners had itself led to the marginalization and pauperization of women and their families."¹¹⁰ So if developmental programs under colonization and economic adjustments in the recent past are reasons for women's domestication, then it seems obvious why a policy change in government would not necessarily get to the root of the problem. Likewise, however, a reversal of policy in the economic sphere may also not prove to be an effective method of change, given the extent to which women's roles in society and gendered assumptions have been institutionalized within Indian society. Robert Connell also argues that although class and economic situations play an important role in determining women's roles in society and as a result contribute to their oppression, one cannot attribute this as the cause. He believes "we cannot continue to see class dynamics as the ultimate cause of gender dynamics in the state. These social dynamics constantly interact, but one cannot be dissolved into the other."¹¹¹ However, an even stronger argument that Connell makes is that by claiming that a focus on economics excludes women is in actuality discounting the importance of women's role in the economy. Although women are excluded from the public sphere to an extent, and have become more removed in the past few hundred years according to Bagwe, their roles are still extremely important. In fact, "feminist historians have traced the nineteenth-century construction of a feminized 'domestic' realm, increasingly seen as the exclusive sphere of women...[the husband/father] was the economic actor...Though powerful as ideology...it drastically underestimated women's economic activity, and ignored women's role as cultural producers(for example novelists) and lobbyists in church and politics."¹¹²

Many female elected members of the panchayat feel limited when the panchayat council deals with local economic or financial issues. While many involved argue it is women's lack of understanding of public issues that cause them to be less effective in dealing with economic or financial issues, it may rather be their lack of experience and more importantly their lack of experience with the language used to deal with these issues. Connell asserts that "the language of finance and 'economic rationalism' has been the vehicle for an attack on welfare ideology, and a downgrading of women's interests on a very broad front."¹¹³ Women are often blamed for financial mistakes while they are in office, but this is largely due to their lack of training by their surrounding members. Lila Laljibhai Jotaniya, a previous sarpanch of Babapur, encountered this type of situation during her term. She was handed an unsigned check for money owed to the village, and was not trained to check for details.

Consequently the village did not receive the money it was owed and suffered a set back financially. Although she dealt with the consequences, she was still unjustly taken advantage of by a corrupt member of the government.¹¹⁴

Another major issue that limits women's power in politics is the large amount of corruption that takes place in government. Usually the corrupt members are from a high caste or class and are more focused on earning money than providing socially beneficial programs to the community. Arundhati Roy presents a particularly negative perspective on the democratic system that has evolved in India, which largely refers to the panchayat system. She argues,

every 'democratic' institution in [India] has shown itself to be unaccountable, inaccessible to the ordinary citizen, and either unwilling or incapable of acting in the interests of genuine social justice. *Every* strategy for real social change – land reform, education, public health, the equitable distribution of natural resources, the implementation of positive discrimination – has been cleverly, cunningly and consistently scuttled and rendered ineffectual by those castes and that class of people who have a stronghold on the political process.¹¹⁵

While her perspective is strong, she highlights a very important problem. In order for women to promote empowerment, they have to be able to effectively implement programs they feel will benefit the community in which they are governing. This type of corruption within government provides an added barrier for women's advancement.

CONCLUSION

In this study, I examined the effects of seat reservations in panchayats on the status of women in Hindu society in India. Society is composed of numerous forms of power and power relationships. These relationships have different implications in the political, economical, social and religious spheres. In the political environment, many who support legislative changes such as seat reservations often fail to realize that women's position of lesser power in society is not reducible to a single opportunity or even a single power relationship. By examining the different areas in society where women face limitations, the importance of the various relationships and the way in which they affect one another become evident.

This study further analyzes the role of political parties in women's participation in politics and the limitations that arise from the lack of solid support women receive from their political parties. The BJP in particular supports giving women the opportunity to be in politics but restricts their ability to remain in politics

over a long period of time. Therefore it is difficult for women to gain experience and thus achieve a type of power within the governmental structure. Women face challenges with reelection and continuous community and family support.

Furthermore, for this study, the women's movement provided an example of a decentralized effort to empower women in Indian society. Calman argued that this type of approach promoted long-term change since it was based on a wider understanding of the power relationships that women face outside of the political sphere. Centralized approaches to creating change for women are limited because they generally do not affect the moral and cultural values that have forwarded women's disempowerment.

Family, caste and class provide some of the most influential power relationships between men and women. As displayed above, the husband can not only affect women's decisions in politics, but also he can control her political position altogether. Likewise, women of higher castes are subjected to higher standards of purity and tradition within the private realm and as a result are unable to exercise other forms of power freely.

The liberal democratic perspective acknowledges that Peterson and Runyan's "power-over" type relationship does exist in government between men and women and that this situation should be rectified. But often the preconceptions of this type of power are irrelevant and lack a degree of understanding necessary to recognize the implications of such a relationship. The problem of women's status is not merely reducible to the fact that there are more men in politics than women. Rather, the basic system itself benefits men over women. This suggests that there must be structural changes that go much further than surface adjustments. Robert Connell argued that state reforms are often deceptive in nature because they operate under the assumption that they are providing an influential change for women, when in reality they are just further supporting the already existing patriarchal structure.

Liberal feminists have frequently argued for law reversals as a method of gaining equality for women in the greater society. However, the liberal feminist ideology supports this assumption that is largely dominant in the West, which assumes power relationships can be dictated by a clarified procedure. By assuming that power is constituted in the body of the state, the liberal democratic perspective ignores the very important and influential relationships that exist between men and women outside of the political realm. The relationships between

husbands and wives as well as the relationship between single women and both married and unmarried men also have significant implications on the power status of women in society. Often men will support the political participation of unmarried educated women in their community, but will not support their wives' and daughters' political participation. This particular situation results from Hindu men's preconceived notions about women's place in the private sphere and assumption of purity associated with religious ideals.

When analyzing power relationships across cultures from a Western perspective, there is a tendency among liberals to examine oppressive forces in a two-dimensional manner. Often these assessments made by Westerners about power in developing societies are based on foreign concepts of power. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, as explained earlier, criticized feminists for assuming that male dominance was a "singular, monolithic notion of patriarchy."¹¹⁶ The same argument can be used in regards to the assumptions about power in politics across cultures. The implementation of seat reservations is a good example. This once again ignores very important power relationships in the cultural, economic and social spheres by focusing on a simple "singular" power relationship in the political sphere.

Mohanty also emphasizes the importance of culturally situating the study in order to gain a stronger understanding of the power relationships that exist in the different realms of society. There is also an assumption among some Western liberals that democracy not only is effective in all societies but works in similar ways. However, differences in culture and in economic and religious practice play a major role in forming the way in which democratic governments function in each society.

There is a preconceived notion in the liberal democratic perspective as to how power is constituted. It is widely believed that power is achieved through the designation of roles set up by a constitution or a written document. This process involves a clear procedure that suggests the reversal of a law set up by a constitutional structure has the ability to reverse or change the power relationships supported by the law. However, power and power relationships are not simply written practices but in actuality extend much deeper than the written laws that seem to promote these relationships. Therefore we cannot look at the state, or governmental structure in general, as a surface patriarchal structure that contains laws that must be over turned in order for women to gain

empowerment in society. Rather, we must look beyond the laws to how the system functions and what type of relationships exist outside the political structure that affect women's status in society.

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¹⁴ Connell, p. 515.

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¹⁷ Connell, p. 523.

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²¹ Mohanty, pp. 53-54.

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- ⁴⁹ Joanna Liddle and Rama Joshi, Daughters of Independence: Gender, Caste and Class in India, p.109.
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