UNDERSTANDING THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE GRAM PANCHAYAT:
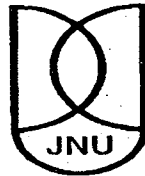
A CASE STUDY IN UTTARAKHAND

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the award of the Degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

CHITRA BISHT

CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

NEW DELHI – 110067

2010

Date: 28.07.10

DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "**Understanding the Participation of Women in the Gram Panchayat: A Case Study in Uttarakhand**" submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of either this University or any other University.

CHITRA BISHT

CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Prof. AMITA SINGH
Chairperson, CSLG/JNU

Prof. Amita Singh
Chairperson
Centre for the Study of
Law and Governance
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067

Prof. NIRAJA GOPAL JAYAL
Supervisor

Dr. JAIVIR SINGH
Supervisor

Contents

Acknowledgements

PRELUDE

"One day they stood in the middle of the village to transact village business, and they....[decided to] do good works; so they would get up the bedtimes, and go out with knives, axes and crowbars. With the crowbars they rolled away the stones on the four highways; they cut down the trees ·which caught the axles of their carts; they leveled the irregularities [of the road]; they build embankments and dug tanks; they made a village hall; they showed charity and kept the [Buddhist] commandments"

Jataka tales (quoted from A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that India Was,* pp.192.)

This fable suggests, that the earliest structures of rural local governance, *panchkulas[1]*, (village councils) were premised on the notions of a self conscious community with its capacity to articulate concerns and undertake tasks of collective action. Calling them as 'historical survivals' and 'inventiveness of a great civilization', Wendy Doniger, in her recent book 'The Hindus, An Alternative History' exhorts her readers to emulate these ancient ways of life[2]. The 'knowledge', they embody, is held today as 'indispensable' for the health of polities and economies, leave aside society. Development plans can afford to ignore them, only at their peril. Markets enthusiasts marvel the *incentives* they so often provide. Bereft then, of their *ways of life*, communities are barren, poor and vulnerable to manipulation.

'Problems of collective existence propels common political interest'

In order to show how collective *way of life* produces common interest, that can be used to advance groups political claims, I turn to couple of examples. During the ancient times, around 200 B.C., merchant communities called *shrenis* flourished through out the subcontinent. Following the spurt in trade, merchants, artisans and craftsmen considered it *pragmatic* to organize themselves into *shrenis* for hedging themselves from the risks arising out of increased competition. *Shrenis*, soon emerged as powerful regulators, not just fixing the rules of the work, qualities of products, providing credit but often intervening into the private lives of it's members. So powerful were the *shrenis,* that even the kings feared them and consequently made handsome investments in their

---

[1] Romila Thapar, *A History of India, Volume One,* Penguin, New Delhi, 1966, pp 246.

[2] Wendy Doniger, *The Hindus: An Alternative History,* Penguin, New Delhi, 2009,pp 687-690

1

commercial enterprises. As long as the kings looked after their wellbeing, they did not consider it 'rational'to change ongoing *rules of game* and on their part, shied away from the challenging the royalty. For seizing political power required that the guilds ally themselves with one another against the royalty. 'Such cooperation, maintains Romila Thapar, an eminent historian, may have been prevented by customary rules, such as forbidding eating together which was an effective barrier between guilds of different castes'.[3] 'Political stability was self enforcing'[4] to the extent the caste rules prohibited guilds from aligning against the royalty. Under the circumstances in which they lived, and the corresponding incentives that it generated, made it reasonable *for shrenis* to continue their existence and advance the interest of its members but never challenge the King. The royalty on its part, as an institution regulated the competition among the rival *shrenis*, thereby securing *collective benefits* to all.

The story then, like most texts of history represents a *brief narrative* on the evolution of 'shrenis', and just as surely also captures it's' *validity*-- how, under the conditions of uncertainty, agents, given their capacities, manipulate and strategize. As one pours over all the evidences that one comes across in politics today, one is convinced of an underlying process at work, similar to one put forward above. Put briefly, the process can best with summarized in the words of none other than, Weiner-

"...political process influences the ways in which groups organize, demands they make, issues over which policies are debated and coalitions that are formed."[5]

Group identities or consciousness have been in an integral part of politics in India. Distinct consciousnesses built around the themes of common existence produce a unique sense of belonging making groups *an empirical thing in themselves* and a force to reckon with. The 'politics of castes' provides itself as a full-blown example of how collective

---

[3] Romila Thapar, *A History of India, Volume One,* Penguin, New Delhi, 1966, pp 112.
[4] Avner Greif, "Self Enforcing Political Systems and Economic Growth: Late Medieval Genoa" in Robert Bates (eds), *Analytic Narratives,* Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1998.pp 24-63.
[5] Myron Weiner, *The Indian Paradox, Essays in Indian Politics,* Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1989, pp 172.

action and mobilization of people around the notions of purity and pollution can make communities a compelling political force capable of bargaining for it's members.

Women's mobilization and historic patterns of public engagement however, behaves in ways, very different from caste. Based on the empirical evidences across the globe, there exists some consensus, that women in general have a great penchant for non institutionalized forms of politics. Being vanguards of activism they invoke reciprocities and not to forget, virtues like trust, cooperation, collective spirit all of which, some how fall short of spontaneously transforming themselves into *resource for bargaining.* Sooner or later, one is bedeviled to find that regions with a long history of women's agency and civic engagements are also the ones associated by their virtual absence or token presence in formal politics. High capital stock *per se* does not imply higher efficiency to deliver. Social capital matters but unfortunately at times; it is less fungible, making transformation difficult. Technically speaking, given the plethora of evidence from empirical field, fungibility is more or less *'weak and patchy'.* The causal connections between social capital and women's agency are, thus open to question.

The inability of women's capacities to convert these historically piled up stocks of social capital into flows *of political benefits* is a 'persisting disjuncture'[6].

Much of the discussion on the women's persisting disjunctures is presented in the Chapter 2 by engaging one self with alternative, 'inferential' *history of the region that is lies scattered* but nevertheless alive in its folk memory. In order to make concrete relevance women's civic engagement for grass root democracy, I, based on *abductive reasoning,* field observations try to structure the historical narrations in a form of *collusion game* to arrive at my central hypothesis. - *the degree of democratic participation is directly proportional to level of information and strength of the politically engaged social capital.*[7]

Understanding 'participation' should not only cover forms and practices of public deliberation, but also explores popular modes of activism by establishing a technical

---

[6] Paul Brass, *The Politics of India since Independence,* Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, 1990, pp20.
[7] For more on abductive methods, one may refer to Chapter 2.

link between participation in the non institutionalized and more institutionalized forms of political engagements. In seeking to develop a framework on technical links through which social capital transforms itself into flow of benefits, I had been rather brief and selective on social capital for it is impossible for me to cover all the relevant aspects in a single piece. I also feel that many important ideas have been left outside. As I move further, I shall try to an incorporate them where ever feasible.

Having spelt out the broad contours of my research, the rest of the chapter makes a brief look at how the literature in politics and development economics views 'participation' in general. I also wish to clarify that my aim is not to evaluate the existing theoretical conceptualization on participation or to bring to light their partial focus. The study also does not wish to undertake any fresh formulation of the existing concepts. The whole endeavor is directed towards developing a comprehensive understanding on 'participation' by adopting a 'synthetic approach' that seeks to build bridges across the otherwise isolated disciplines.

Participation has seldom been treated as a 'singular category'. It forms an important analytical category when conjoined by democratic or developmental framework. Many aspects of 'participation' have been illuminated in much of the early literature of 1970s that placed emphasis on how groups organized their effort for controlling resources and regulating social institutions[8] .While these preliminary ideas evolved in the context of broader debates on development, the other aspects of crucial importance such as –role of agency, empowerment, social change within wider structures of power and injustice came to the fore front with the growing interest in the 'processual approaches' investigating the nature of decision making. One significant development in this direction has been growing interest in the primary causes of capacity gaps and social exclusion with the

---

[8] The earliest and the popular accounts on the subject were provider by Steifel and Wolfe. While this definition is attributed to A. Pearce and M. Wolfe which put forward in widely cited work *Inquiry into Participation, UNRISD/79/C14*, p 8.

concern on how forms of decision making ensured transformation of inequitable social relations and institutional practices[9].

'Participation' is perhaps the widest and frequently used word in social sciences. It examination has been the focus of attention for at least past fifty years. At the same time, owing to its various connotations, the precise definition of the term has remained elusive and ambiguous. At the most narrowest level[10], such themes as membership to a group, attending meetings, listening without speaking in the proceedings and being informed of decisions ex-post facto, are all brought to bear in the construction of nominal and passive expressions of participation. A broader understanding of how individuals and groups expressed and voiced their opinion rests on the appreciation of the significance of more active and interactive forms of participation. A fundamental breakthrough occurred with Nelson and Wrights conceptualization of *Effective participation*[11] it's significance is evoked in dual sense – first, as tool for seeking better an *efficient* outcomes, and thereby enhancing the capacities capable of bringing about social change (*equity and empowering)*.In course of time, there was proliferation of empirical studies that were asking similar question but seeking answers by forging different linkages.[12]Following Crook and Manor's study on how local actors (elite, political parties, and NGOs) are prone cooptation, many researches have displayed unparallel zest and gusto in providing us with valuable insights on how variables such as levels of literacy, extent of poverty, caste and degrees of social stratification and gender in a given context correlated negatively with 'participation'. Not surprisingly , then there was a near consensus that the tyrannies of existing local power relations can only be tackled in specific contexts which

---

[9] For more o how participation brings about transformation, one may look up , Samuel Hickey and Giles Mohan (ed) , *Participation from Tyranny to Transformation: Exploring New Approaches to Participation in Development* , New York , Zed Books , 2004.

[10] Popular in the works of the Deepa Narayan, Bina Agarwal and Niraja Gopal Jayal. For more one may refer to Bina Agarwal, 'Participatory Exclusions, Community Forestry and Gender: An Analysis for South Asia and a Conceptual Framework', *World Development*, 29(10),1997,pp 1623-1648 and Niraja Gopal Jayal ,'Engendering Local Democracy: the Impact of Quotas for Women in India's Panchayat',*Democratization*,13(1), 2006,pp15-35.

[11] Nelson and Wright cited by Frances Cleaver, 'Paradoxes of Participation: Questioning Participatory Approaches to Development', *Journal of International Development*, 11, 1999, pp598.

[12] Bob Currie, 'Political Authority, Public Deliberation and Politics of Poverty Reduction', in Niraja Gopal Jayal and Sudha Pai , (ed) *Democratic Governance in India: Challenges of Poverty, Development and Identity*, Sage Publications, 2001, pp66 -80.

have past legacy of social movement, endowed with a certain critical mass of social capital and well organized and egalitarian associational life.

As collective action continues to get the scholarly attention from across the disciplines, .These matured perspectives will have to address some unanswered issues-One, is the very denotation of 'trust' itself, an abstract notion ,commonly observed during social and economic exchanges, As an 'expectation' they have multiple and vague sources, making it less coherent as a concept. The other issue that needs more clarity relates to relationship between-trust and cooperation. Much ink has been expended on documenting the well known bottom up processes of mutual trust and assurances in groups and close knit networks of ongoing relationships, where the primary focus of research is how individuals and groups learn and adopt specific dispositional character, intimate knowledge of interest and moral commitments that may be universal or culture specific. Social norms, customary practices and laws may reward one type of behavior while disapproving another. While at one level, participation may be guided by presence or absence of selective incentives. At another level, the successful experiments of collective enterprise at the local level create an expectation of *belief that one's participation would be both generously rewarded and make a difference.* (These latter types have capacity to generate solidarities capable of producing common interests.[13]) Looking at it from the de Tocqueville prespective, in local decision making community institutions appears rational and appealing. It privileges individuals and groups, hitherto excluded, to express their concerns, voice opinions and above all promote their 'interests'. In practice, how ever, whether they live upto their idealistic expectations or not is a different matter altogether.

If one takes these considerations seriously, the questions that comes up foremost in our minds is , whether ' women interest' is a conceptually feasible idea or stated more generally, *do women have any interests in common that can be a sufficient basis for politics.?* Interest, according to many, being inherently utilitarian, is incompatible with

---

[13] Klandermas for instance , holds the view that in most non institutionalized forms of protests, riots ,there exists no problem of free riding because promoter build solidarities and raise consciousness to the extent that opportunities are created collective action, hence common interest. This view has been cited by in Heckathorn, Douglas D, 'Dynamics and Dilemmas of Collective Action', *American SociologicalReview,* 61(2), 1996, pp 250-277.

feminist praxis. They also argue that there exists very little empirical and theoretical plausibility of 'women's interest' .The commonalities, wherever found, are particular *concerns* that arise from their specific gendered experience.[14] The specificity and embeddness of women's gendered experience creates an ambiguity and confounds us to the extent it becomes almost impossible to *disentangle,* an *'affect'* from an *'interest'*[15]. Infact, Molyneux ,herself feels that the real issue not of separating the two but one of virtually reconciling the desire motivated by an *'affect'* with that of *'self fulfillment'* *outside home.*Building on Jhappans' and Molyneux work , Vikers , premising her arguments on a rather liberal frame ,lends some support to theoretical plausibility of women's interest , when she optimistically writes

" My methodological assumption is that ,although common interests *may* exist, it is more likely that *any* aggregate of women has both shared and conflicting interests."

Elsewhere[16], she continues to say,

"if women aggregate their issues, goals within a coalition........and articulate their projects in the name of women, they may become an *organized interest*............Where women constitute a mutually agreed on politically banner, it can be used to pursue common goals. "

That such an interest exists needs an empirical validation. Most of liberal claims become weak for the want of evidence. However, this should not preclude us from suggesting that such a possibility of a distinctive woman's agenda however does exist.

The urgency for empirical elucidations, chimes in well with contexts where I conducted my preliminary inquiries .At least; I thought it to be so. A relatively egalitarian (at least less oppressive) society coupled with shared cultural and historic legacy of 'Chipko' made Dausoli (Chamoli , district , Uttarakhand) a veritable laboratory for my explorations .In environments, such as these, it is not uncommon and unthinkable to find women pursuing their strategic interests collectively ,albeit for a short duration. Virginia

---

[14] Feminists, generally, believe that women driven by altruistic emotions and values as opposed to rational self interest. For instance, Gayatri Spivak claims that women may often adopt strategic *essentialism,* where in they may work together for a short period towards a particular goal but this does not mean that share other interests as well. For further details on Spivak's work, one can look up Gayatri Spivak, 'Subaltern studies: deconstructing historiography', in D.Laundry and G.Maclean (eds), *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Spivak, New York, Routledge,* 1995.

[15] Maxine Molyneux, Analyzing Women's Movement in Cecile Jackson and Ruth Pearson, (eds), *Feminist Vision on Development: Gender Analysis and Policy, Routledge,* Oxon, 1998, pp81.

[16] Jill Vickers, 'The problem with Interests: Making Political Claims for Women' in Chappell, Louise and Lisa Hill (eds), *The Politics of Women's Interests, New comparative perspectives,* Routledge, 2006 pp 7.

Seitz made a similar observation while documenting the experiences of white, working class Appalachian women in a coal mining company, and remarked with dismay

'....sharing the set of experiences does not necessarily translate into shared political analyses, organizational strategies and leadership styles.' [17]

Transformations were *less fungible* and *liquid* more *spotty* and *weak* than I had assumed. Equally disappointing was my second locale, where more educated and well informed, Gorkhali women's living on the fringes of state capital has her public presence being crowded out by larger and more pervasive notions 'Gorkha identity'. These findings question the widely cherished virtues of democratic theories that establish close connection between higher levels of education and democratic deepening. The belief rests on the assumption that higher educational attainments of the community would correspondingly produce 'well informed citizens' that will actively participate in creating a vibrant democratic culture. But to one's utter dismay, political information, even in highly literate democratic societies as Dell Carpiini and others have shown in their studies of electoral behavior, remains woefully at very low levels.[18] The quality of democratic participation is contingent on the informed citizenship practices, created by agents in the past and fostered by their current deliberative nature of civic engagements.

In practice, sociability both limits and fosters democracy in diverse ways. While at a preliminary level , very often, an asymmetrical order may be erected when information is withheld from 'outsiders' and allocated to peers through group specific and informal modes of communication creating as we shall see in the Chapter 3 , problems of 'misinformation'. At another level, unconscious engagement in collective enterprise may be crucial for gaining and storing knowledge that can be utilized to meet future tasks. Information may be vital in yet another important sense- in creating 'expectation' about self and others and therefore go a long way in shaping outcomes.

---

[17] For more on Seitz's account one can look up Virginia R Seitz, *Women Development and Communities for Empowerment in Appalachia,* State University of New York Press, Albany, 1995, pp213.

[18] The 1991 study by Dell Carpini and Keeter, cited in the Russell Dalton and others (ed) *Oxford Handbook of Political Behaviour,* Oxford, 2007, pp5.

Many aspects of community practices that aid and abet democracy in the India, are 'residual' of its rich historical past when based on Gandhian ideals, men and women waged a bitter anti colonial struggle to establish an egalitarian order. Many of the Gandhian ashrams became virtual *public spheres* where people from all walk of life, communicated and shared information about likely outcomes of the collective struggle against the formidable Raj[19]. While creating 'new meaning' to their collective existence, they were, simultaneously, also rationally engaging in the evaluation of the alternatives and options they had, building strategies on the basis of their capacities and constraints.

Not surprisingly then, Gandhi emerged as a principal votary of greater participation through decentralized a structure of governance. He therefore, strongly advocated revival and reorganization of panchayats. But for Nehru, 'village' was intellectually and culturally backward, from where no progress could be made. These backward locales were, nevertheless, producers of the quintessential wage good that placed India as a 'major producer' of food grains in the world market, was desperately needed for feeding the growing urban population. Impressed by the liberalism that flourished in the soils of Western Europe, deeply influenced by Nurkse, Rosenstein Rodan, Hirschman and others, elusive development for latecomers like India ,could then only be prefigured by embarking upon a capital intensive frame with it's distinct urban bias. Congress with a 45% vote share and a strong rural support ensured by it's huge organizational structure extending very deep into villages since the colonial days, made it only easier and politically viable to pay lip service to rural issues. The polite dissenters of Mahalanobis model had to wait for couple of decades to have them heard, when in 1980s, Congress organization was being dismantled and vote share crumbled. Although betrayed, the interest in the 'Indian village' was kept alive by anthropological monographs that contained an all round picture of a village society[20], or functionalist detailed ethnographies of caste based village[21]. Studies of jajmani system threw light of how caste

---

[19] For more details one can look up Susanne H Rudolph and Lloyd L Rudolph , The Coffee House and the Ashram, Gandhi , Civil Society and the Public Spheres, in Carolyn M. Elliot, (ed), *Civil Society and Democracy: A Reader,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003, pp394.
[20] Oscar Lewis's seminal work, Village life in Northern India: Studies in Delhi Village of late 1950s is detail monograph on the all round picture of village in India.
[21] M.N.Srinivas's seminal work on the Coorgs in South India followed by the dominant caste of Rampura.

based social exchanges were instrumental in producing permanent group boundaries and identities. These popular *"relational perspectives'* coupled with growing empirical tales from the countryside threw upon ideas on behavioral aspects community life wherein joint action towards common vulnerabilities often resulted in organizational frame characterized by common attachments, interdependence, trust and above all loyalty. Complementing these approaches, writings of 50s and 60s, there was growing emphasis on the collective norms, values and belief patterns groups produced *human agency* leading to empowerment and social transformations.

By then , the Nehruvian strategy had backfired. The disfigured Indian poverty was a phenomenon not of the Keynesian variety. 'Growth with Social justice', the initial *mantra* of the First Plan had failed to trickledown. 'Growth pole and industrial dispersal' strategies failed to generate the positive externalities.

Rural institutional concerns could no longer be ignored. Agrarian economists struggled hard to show how underutilization of the existing capacities in the agriculture could be explained by structure of private incentives embedded in the sociology of village level transactions[22]. Internationally, the idea of 'institutional restructuring' was gaining currency. Emasculated and weak institutions, in Africa, had made growth unattainable. That, development can best be promoted by redesigning institution, became a recurrent theme. Occasionally, there was a growing sense of realization that state capacities could be enlarged when citizens directly participated in decision making[23]. Not surprisingly then, many states undertook massive decentralization drives

The idea that local participants have nuanced understanding of how to manage their common property resources had been in vogue since Scott days, but it became appealing and more sensible with the growing thrust of environmental advocacy on indigenous , balanced, modes of resource use practiced by peasants and forest dwelling village communities . Seen as keepers of conservationist ethic, there was newfound interest in their 'agency', particularly of the women that could be well utilized

---

[22] For synoptic view on the organizational studies, norms, incentives one can look up J. Mohan Rao and Servas Storm, 'Distribution and Growth in Indian Agriculture' in Terence J. Byres (ed) *The Indian Economy* : *Major Debates Since Independence,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, pp193-248.
[23] Brian Levy and Sahr John Kpundeh, '*Building State Capacity in Africa: New approaches, emerging Lesson'* WBI Development Studies, 2004.

for achieving developmental imperatives. Popular as 'eco-socialist project'[24], there was optimism that by decentralizing responsibilities of social and economic plans to local level institutions and making panchayats functional would help meet the *basic needs* and stimulate all-round village development. Impressed by experience of export led growth model of East and South East Asia, where 'growth with equity' had been brought about, as Sen points out by[25], '.....widespread participation of the population in the economic change......the relevant features include high rates of literacy and fair degree of female empowerment and radical land reforms' and least chastened by failure to trickle growth , Congress passed the 73rd amendment act , that brought nearly three million elected representatives, of which nearly one-third were women, into the democratic process.

The primacy accorded to 'women' in the new paradigm of development is indeed significant. Being less corrupt, more inclined towards all round progress, women came to be viewed as an 'agents of change and development' and a 'constituency' that have historically been mobilized to invigorate patriarchal claims of their communities. Reforms are justified 'publicly' in name of female uplifment, without adequately addressing their preferences needs or rights.[26] The fact that there exists indissoluble positive linkages between women's visibility in public sphere, her sensitivity towards ecological issues and developmental goals are put forward as genuine and primary reasons to empower her. Working with this assumption, a disillusioned Congress driven more by pragmatics of politics and logic of development and less by the genuine considerations of empowerment, pushed through the Amendment with clause reserving

---

[24] Subir Sinha, Shubhra Gurrani ,Brian Greenberg, 'The 'new traditionalist' discourse of Indian environmentalism' in *Journal of Peasant Studies,* 24(3),1997,pp67.

[25] Amartya Sen., 'Theory and Practice of Development' , in Isher Judge Ahluwalia and I.M. D Little (eds) , *India's Economic Reforms and Development, Essays for Manmohan Singh* , Oxford University Press, Delhi , 1998.pp.82-83

[26] Analogy is drawn between the revivalist movements of the 19th and early 20th century with the Post colonial state in India. During the colonial India there is the 'revivalists' glib about the women's education and active life in community. Female education in Urdu during the colonial days was opened up in the North India to integrate women's seclusion with Islamic teachings and eradicate the cultural practices that Muslims and Hindus shared in common. For more details on this one can look up Sumit Sarkar and Tanika Sarkar (eds) *'Women and Social Reform in India, A Reader'* Vol I, Permanent Black, Ranikhet. 2007.

11

one third seats for women. Driven by this logic[27], it seems plausible to criticize the 'intentionality' of the Amendment for no women's movement had, till then, explicitly voiced demands for their representation in the local bodies. Nevertheless, a brief perusal of literature on women's movement in India would tell us women had been exemplar in numerous forests and anti dam struggles, demanding land reforms, minimum wages for agricultural workers, micro credit for the self employed challenging the developmental state. Although disparate, many women groups, notable being the ones that were offshoots of the sarvodaya movement had been very critical of Nehruvian model of development for abandoning the Gandhian vision village self sufficiency[28] . They had crafted varying visions of the state and employed strategies sometimes challenging while at other times, working in partnership with the state[29]. Though seeking a more egalitarian and participatory social and political orders, they are deficient in providing the 'synergy', that so often comes from below, and complements an enlighten state action.[30]

Though imposed from above, top down decentralization design offered opportunities, at one stroke, to millions of women to not only represent but address more substantive issues that shaped her life. Experience of *women in panchayats* brought fore the earliest ideas on *capabilities and well being of women* and how they influenced the day to working in local bodies. Not surprisingly, then, much work on participation in the local political institutions is of either of a *co relational* variety deeply concerned with evaluating the impact of citizens participation on efficiency of local institutions, or, *contextualized,* where the analysis of patterns of participation presupposes their embeddness in specific, unique cultural configurations. The most telling features of these studies have been the general agreement that *women participation does make a*

---

[27] Peter D'Souza shares the similar view that decentralization in India should be placed primarily within the larger discourse of development. For details, one may look up Peter Ronald de Souza, 'The struggle for Local Government: Indian Democracy's New Phase' in Gellener, David N and Krishna Hachhethu (ed), *Local Democracy in South Asia:Microprocesses of Democratization in Nepal and its Neighbours, Governance, and Civic Action : Vol1*, Sage, New Delhi,2008,pp 301-326.

[28] Manisha Desai, 'Multiple Mediations: The State and Women's Movement in India' in David S.Meyers, Nancy Whitter, Belinda Robnett (eds), *'SocialMovements: Identity, Culture and the State'*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 2002, pp 66-84.

[29] ibid

[30] Jonathan Fox in context of Mexican case study calls such state-society interactions as 'sandwich movement', essential perquisite to bring about 'effective change' in democratic politics. For details one can look up Jonathan Fox *'Politics of Food in Mexico'*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993, pp153.

difference. This consensus seems to peter out on the issue of tokenism vs. non tokenism. The relationship between democratic deepening and women's substantive representation is sadly, weak. Some argue that the reservation of seats in panchayats results in policy decisions that are closer to women preferences[31] , while others argue conversely, that owing the structural and institutional factors, reservations have resulted in mere token appointments[32] .By and large they are valuable but neither of them do full justice to evolve a more comprehensive understanding on the complexity of women's democratic engagements. In order to deal with this complexity, we need to have some clarity to assess *how* the rising levels of women's existential security *can* bring about values and attitudinal shifts that makes women more autonomous and agents capable of self expression.[33] Like any other actor, women's attitudes and values do not exist in isolation from the cultural worlds, in which they live. Culture informs its agent s about what is valuable and what is not. It makes them knowledgeable about *valuable ways of beings and doings*. As a set of capabilities, habits and knowledge, it is resource that is *rationally* employed by actors to determine and implement public goals. I, therefore, begin my analysis by devoting few pages on how conventional and narrow conceptualizations of *Rationality* can be enlarged, (to embrace culture) to understand *feminist praxis*. By treating culture something that is *relational,* contingent on its specific *history,* I put forward some basic ontological premises (nature of politics) that guide this research. From ontology, I move on to questions of epistemology – *what we can know*. Drawing upon ideas contained in history, social capital, game theory and collective action, the second chapter makes an attempt to explain how knowledge of various disciplines is transferable and can be converged to arrive at hypothesis. The rest of this chapter is devoted to methodology adopted for this research. Empirical observations are presented

---

[31] Radu Ban and Vijendra Rao in their study have shown that the positive impact of reservations, for details one can look up Radu Ban and Vijendra Rao, 'Tokenism and Agency? The Impact of Women's Reservations on Panchayats in South India', *Economic Development and Cultural Change,* 56, 2008, pp501-530.

[32] For details on women's token presence, one can look up Raghbendra Chattopadhyay and Esther Duflo, 'The Impact of Reservations in Panchayati Raj: Evidence From a Nationwide Randomized Experiment' in *Econometrica,* 72(5), 2004, pp 1409- 1443.

[33] Ronald Ingelhart and Wayne E.Baker, 'Modernization, Cultural Change and the Persistence of Traditional Values', *American Sociological Review,* 65(1), 2000, pp19-51.

in the following chapter, in form of ethnography, to be followed by analysis and conclusion.

1 *PREMISES*

Ever since the Mancor Olson published the 'Logic of Collective Action' there has been a proliferation of literature that probes into collective patterns of human existence by adopting an interdisciplinary approach that seeks to builds a healthy dialogue between rationalist and cultural interpretive approaches. Such an interdisciplinary approach explains human behavior on the assumption that individual while indulging in collective forms of life are not solely guided by self interest. Social behavior, by virtue of being cultural in content, is also guided by prevailing rules of engagements that have evolved temporally owing to repeated human interactions. These stabilized and institutionalized patterns of human engagement (define the rules, norms, customs and procedures) explain how a community collectively makes social and political decision. Understanding participation is a challenging task as it is both rational/ autonomous response and at the same time embedded/ cultural.This first chapter seeks to build some basic ' premises', which in my view are essential for understanding the 'participative behavior' of individuals in general and women in particular.

While rationalist grapple with the questions of *instrumental* rationality which in it's thin version seeks maximization of individual self interest, some especially the anthropologists express the anti rationality fervor that looks at many of these approaches with disdain, for overlooking some of the benefits of collective spirit that motivate men to indulge in such social actions, a last thing Homo economics would indulge in. To venture into details of *how and why* these differences exist, is in my view, be tautological exercise. Instead, it would be more fruitful to engage in discussing how the gaps between the two 'schisms' have been bridged.

Rationalist and cultural approaches are no longer oxymoron, chalk and cheese. There is plethora of literature to suggest how rationality can be *thickened.* That an individual is both egoist and altruistic, is a view that is endorsed well within the positivist's traditions.

Like wise a 'methodological individualism', though a pejorative term for many anthropologists, proliferates in the works of many who trace their genealogy to Edward Leach and transactionalists like Frederick Barth.

P1 Reconciling Rationality and culture

If positivists have incorporated contexts, culturologists have not lagged behind their rival in embracing rationalist approaches in some form or the other[1].Rationalist are increasingly incorporated in the study of collective action.[2]Actors whether, individual or in groups, indulge in the cognitive process of decision making. Group and individual choices are shaped by the actor's perception of strategic *calculation of* expected risks and reward of the available outcomes. By engaging one self in rational calculus individual choose their destiny and course of institutional evolution.

Which one of these reconciliatory approaches is the *most appropriate* frame for understanding behavior - I am unable to provide a firm answer here. But they certainly do provide us *viable* alternative frames, through which causality can be established.

Citizens, unlike consumers have range of concerns that go *beyond the narrow definition of 'self interest'*. Neither are individuals always egoistically oriented nor do they exist in isolation. They live in groups, (that are collective/composite) engage themselves with interactive relationships with others that influence their behavior in profound ways. Quite often, they undertake joint political actions wherein the decision to participate is motivated by factors other than narrow self interest. Studies on collective action have unfolded the fact people sometimes bear personal costs to help others. These *other regarding preferences[3]*, which were once commonly regarded as 'irrationality' (to avoid it's conflation with conceptualization of rationality) have lately, garnered the acceptance as 'motivators' of actions. Altruistic kin based actions and ethical considerations like

---

[1] Prominent among them being Charles Tilly who calls it' *context specific rationality' to study social movements.*

[2] For details one can look up James B Rule 'Rationality and Non-Rationality in Militant Collective Action' *Sociological Theory,* 7, 1989, pp145-60.

[3] Self regarding=rationality, other regarding = beyond rationality

principle of fairness or motivational norms have intruded into decision making calculus of *Homo economicus.*[4]

Strategic This is not so in social and political contexts where in individuals have some prior knowledge about preferences of others. Individuals evaluate the behavior of others, before making their choice explicit 'Beliefs' determines the willingness to engage in given collective tasks.(free riding).Despite this, the concept of strategic interaction has been comfortably employed to study specific problems of cooperation. How under *specified and observable circumstances, it* is rational to cooperation. (Axelrod, 1984); *'conditional cooperation'* to explain the origin of state and revolutionary action (Michael Tylor,1987); successful *coordination can solve problems of collective action.(* Hardin, 1982) and more recently how *quasi voluntary compliance and contingent* consent evolve when citizens act reciprocally , complying when others comply and withdrawing their compliance on the *expectations* that there are very few people willing to comply(Margret Levi, 1988, 1997).

To begin with, one cannot dispute the fact, that democracy, laced with ideas of individual autonomy and equality , enable one to undertaking rational thought and equal expression in- deciding what is good for them, is by far the superior, if not the best, to all other known forms of decision making. Given Universal adult franchise, free and fair elections, this would mean that citizen has an *agency* -with his endowments, tastes and preferences is thus, capable of creating, changing and sometimes sustaining democratic practices that promote his interests, through persuasion, negotiation and bargaining and at times forging consensus, making joint decisions.

An important aspect that is often blithely ignored is the ethical dimension of the decision making- how do these deliberative practices evolve into common understanding on values that enter decision making. If decision-making making is indeed a collective

---

[4] Economists studying political behavior are primarily concerned with unraveling twin problems-1. kin based altruistic motivations , though strongly influence behaviour, they do not provide the adequate basis for cooperation (both in natural and experimental setting) because in these cases preference includes not only the concern for well being of others, or fairness but RETRIBUTION. SUCH social preferences of minority within the group can dramatically affect group behaviour.
2. Altruistic motivated social behaviour will have lower pay offs, so the question is how did they evolve.

enterprise, who makes choices and for whom and what ends is a question that needs to asked once again. The departure this time being that I ask this question into unpacking the decision making at the grassroots level .In the process, I take up Sen's ethical strands that are popular in economics- one that seeks to understand *how rationality should proceed-* where that rationality is framed in terms of plausible ethical ends beyond the narrow concerns of survival, deprivations , capabilities to valuable beings and doings; secondly, as process involves the scrutiny of these goals – *critical reflection* on the traditions and cultural resources, innovations; *deliberative-* involves pubic discussion.[5]

P2 Rules governing interaction are stable, continuous, patterned and structured.
Empirically, democracy in India has been hailed as an 'exceptional', one that succeeded despite many odds. A hierarchically ordered society, deeply divided into ethnic, religious groups with widespread poverty and illiteracy, was prophesized as an unsuitable terrain for institutions of European provenance. Besides granting universal adult franchise and holding free, fair and periodic elections, democratic governments in India have shown some seriousness in pursuing developmental goals; maintain internal and external security and promoting a political culture of freedom, liberty, and equality among citizens , thereby facilitating the rapid institutionalization of ' democratic culture'. The temporal stability of democratic institutions India makes her *par excellence, and* certainly well above the post colonial states in Asia, Africa and Latin America were political instabilities and transience have made democracy doubtful. Rules of citizen's participation, under the latter, remained less blurred and at times ill-defined.

The salience of India's democratic institutions lies in its *regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive* basis. The robustness of parliamentary form of democracy, judiciary, election commission, and press and above all the civil society have displayed in creating explicit regulatory processes like rule and agenda setting, monitoring and sanctioning.

---

[5] Sabina Alkire,, *Valuing Freedoms, Sen's Capability Approach and Poverty Reduction,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002, pp92.

"Each of these institutions has produced professionals, who live off them, value them and share notions about the norms that should govern them," [6](p324). Through diffusion of formal and informal mechanisms, they tend to perform well-"to the extent that they have acquired value …..they are likely to be stable and enduring." (p325)Take for instance, the case of the state policy of extension of privileges and recognition to certain castes have profoundly influenced their positionality and ways in which groups organize themselves , form coalitions thereby producing fundamental changes in their proportional share in resource allocation and distribution. Amidst the chaotic and disturbed situation of proportionality, state in India has been more, if not less, through it's sheer coercive and accommodative capacity has emerged as 'conflict manager'[7]variety that plays a vital role in creating identities and boundaries around actors define their goals, strategies , tactics and patterns of alliances and can even channelize a conflict or dissent[8].

While rules of democratic engagement have been more or less stable, the same cannot be said about strategies and tactics. While 'negotiations' has been the single most important mode of power distribution, there has been change in style, tactics and strategies of functioning. With a less mobilized citizenry, and strong congress organizational linkages that extended deep into villages, Nehru could well afford to employ the strategy of bargaining with the leaders in the provincial capitals. There was thus, reluctance on the part of many provincial bosses to devolve power beyond the state, for the fear that may become alternative competing centers of power, patronage and prestige. Not surprisingly then, panchayats were superseded whenever this threat became apparent. The direct political linkages between the centre and the village were unheard of. The rapidly growing population spread of commerce, education and industry, the rural landscape experienced the increased pace of political mobilization. This coupled with proliferation of alternative bases of power in Indian villages weakened the congress organizational

[6] ibid
[7] Myron Weiner, *The Indian Paradox, Essays in Indian Politics,* Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1989
[8] For more details, one may look up David S.Meyers, 'Opportunities and Identities: Bridge Building in the Study of Social Movements', in David S. Meyers and others (eds), *Social Movements: Identity, Culture and the State,* Oxford University Press, New York, 2002, pp 3-25.

machinery. Factionalism became rampant along caste, jati lines, sometimes cutting across caste lines. Congress continued to rule but with weak organizational links and dwindling vote share. Very often and in many cases, local factional disputes were resolved in favor of loyal followers of the central leadership with little evaluation of the strength and the weakness of power bases in the country side. With the replacement of the old colonial elite with the ' new entrenched social classes' comprising of the rich farmers , industrial capitalists and bureaucracy , .tin the post Nehruvian days , these struggles became more pervasive and intense. Under changed political contexts, 'bargaining with state capitals' became less appealing. The earlier indirect mediating links of caste networks were superseded by forging direct demogoging links with poor residing the villages. "Garibi Hatao' thus, was voiced loudly. With broadening and deepening of democratic culture,factionalism will only increase[9]

A noteworthy feature of Indian politics in the countryside has been the proliferation of the non state actors is service delivery, management of resources of common use. The increasing presence of the nongovernmental organizations, user committees and self help groups have produced myriad of interfaces between traditional and more modern forms of governance structures thereby enhancing rural complexities that go in to shape quality of participation[10]. The rules, strategies of civic engagement are being defined and redefined by continuous and changing patterns of overlapping interactions in the countryside. In pure structural terms, these interfaces become new spaces of political opportunity and mobilization both within and outside the state. They shape political choices, practices, beliefs and expectations of actors. Given these opportunity structures the actors, (individuals and groups) engage themselves in calculating and evaluating the possibilities of the actions and options available to the state, coalition partners and their information and pay offs. Seen this way politics becomes a dynamic interplay of – 'tactics, organizational forms and leadership.'[11]

---

[9] Most part of the ideas spelt out in have based on analysis put forward by Paul Brass, Weiner.
[10] For more one can look up , Niraja Gopal Jayal, Amit Prakash, Pradeep K. Sharma, *Local Governance in India: Decentralization and Beyond,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006.
[11] For more details, one may look up David S.Meyers, 'Opportunities and Identities: Bridge Building in the Study of Social Movements', in David S. Meyers and others (eds), *Social Movements: Identity, Culture and the State,* Oxford University Press, New York, 2002, pp 3-25.

The pragmatic and temporal resilience of democracy in India coexists with some continuity stability in social and political life in the countryside. Village life in India is *patterned and structured* to an extent that renders itself viable to rational analysis. Barrington Moore, for instance, in his well known work, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy,* explicitly illustrates 'rationalist basis' to peasant's conceptions of justice, by stating

"in an interdependent relationships, peasants evaluate the contributions of the overlord to the community in relation to surplus they extract in deciding whether injustice is being done"[12]

Some of the early village studies that unraveled the democratic processes at the grass root level, for instance Retzalf's study [13] of a village in the Saharanpur district of U.P. showed that panchayat elections was more *pragmatically driven* rather than *ideologically oriented.* The political behavior of the electoral candidates displayed tendency to secure their position and achieve *a reasonable degree of personal ambition.* The voting behavior of peasants was explained *more in terms of emerging and encompassing political order*[14]. Building on the these works, Subrata Mitra, in his seminal electoral study of Kashipur, a village in Orissa , brings out vivid description of how, fierce local and regional struggles for power transform into full fledged bargaining contexts during elections when groups use all their capacities- power and resource to collectively pursue their ends.[15]

In his rather brief introduction to *Culture and Rationality,* Mitra, clearly unfolds the underlying rationalist basis of 'agency'

" while culture remains the main source of values, preferences and resources available to the actor , it is upto the individual rationality to weave all the strands into strategies of change. Neither culture nor history unfolds on their own. It is the actors who make history or fail to, even when the potential exists.------Macro

---

[12] Most cited quote by Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy,* pp 471 1961.
[13] Cited in Harold H Gould, 'Local level /Grass root Political Studies in Veena Das (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of Sociology and Social Anthropology,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, pp 1496.
[14] Perceptions about what their MLAs and MPs could do for them.
[15] Subrata K.Mitra, 'Ballot box and Local Power :Elections in an Indian Village', in Subrata K.Mitra, *Culture and Rationality: The Politics of Social Change in Post Colonial India ,* Sage Publications, New Delhi,1999,131-150.

21

processes are the aggregation of micro processes of the desire for change. They gain strength and forces from their inner world, from the social forces of which they are a part...."[16]

The evaluative and obligatory dimensions of our sociality that are visible in the values and norms that create roles and normative expectations about our behavior are of no less importance for those seeking rationalist basis to know why people obey them. On the contrary, with the rise of new social movements- forest struggles and anti dam protests that challenge the normative systems of human existence have been well analyzed by seeking rationalist basis for human agency that brings about change. Human Agency is capacity to reflect, innovate and seek change. It is the contexts that make any agency possible. Contexts are like Weberian frames through which existing values are questioned and common understanding is forged.

P3 Indian democratic experiment has been 'contextual and path dependent'.
The word 'context' is derived from a Latin word '*contextus*' which means joining together of organism and his environment. It is a key concept employed widely in pragmatics and ethnographic studies to understand/interpret a given focal event by juxtaposition of the event and its field action.[17]Contextualizing informs one about the relationship between the event and its social environment, how the two reinforce each otherwise how a given social phenomenon is shaped by its cultural settings and shared background assumptions.. Contextualizing is *problematic* yet at the same time *enabling.* They are 'problematic' because they give undue wieghtage to particularities, making generalization a cumbersome exercise. Theories ought to be light and succinct but can gain greater incisiveness by privileging contexts. By contextualizing, some of the limitations/shortcomings implicit and latent in meanings, contained in the existing theories, come to forefront .Theories , thus , improvise as well as metamorphize into newer ones by challenging themselves. Such an evolutionary process facilitates a superior and refined understanding of a given casuality.

---

[16] Subrata K.Mitra, *Culture and Rationality: The Politics of Social Change in Post Colonial India* , Sage Publications, New Delhi,1999, Pp16.
[17] Charles Goodwin and Alessandro Durranti , ' *Rethinking Contexts' Language as an Interactive Phenomenon* , Cambridge University Press, New York, 1992, pp 1-43.

Democratic practices of the citizens are contingent on the culture and history of civic engagement. The cultural attributes and shared assumptions that are embedded in ones social environment form a *resource base for appropriate manipulation and interpretation*

Culture is about *relationality* – relationships between individuals in a group, among groups, between ideas and perspectives. Relationality depends on how actors and their actions being interdependent, jointly determine outcomes. They are channels for the flow of ideas, resources. They provide us with some ideas about the properties about the structural aspects of the contexts- opportunities and constraints it provides. The relationship and patterns of interactions among social entities gives cues about how people collectively make social and political decisions, prevailing values and belief systems underlying their behavior – their persistence and change, how and what kind of consensus emerges.

Culture is with identity, aspirations, symbolic exchange, coordination, structure and practices that serve relational ends like ethnicity, ritual, heritage, norms, meanings and beliefs[18]

P4 Cultural processes and norms of reciprocity are a resource, exhibiting different degrees of fungibility

Culture is a resource , that facilitates desired outcomes. Beginning with Putnam, *thick descriptions* on how strong civic culture fosters democratic participation have well documented. Culture is indispensable. It contains valuable *information* about how social cohesion can be utilized to sustain strong democratic practices. Cultural repertoires contain valuable information about *how* communities evaluate and manage *risks and uncertainties.* This importance of culture as important variable that influences development initiatives are now being increasing recognized.[19] Cultural processes with and inbuilt notion of relationality constitute a set of *Sen's capabilities which actors possess which can be appropriately utilized to achieve developmental goals.* Capabilities

---

[18] For details look up Vijendra Rao and Michael Walton (2004) ' *Culture and PublicAction'*, Permanent Black, Delhi, 2004, pp 3-37.
[19] Ibid.

can be catalyzed in successful coordination for collection action like provision of public good. But not all capabilities are endowed with same *degree of* agency. Social networks and forms of associational life may be successful in bringing about transformation in one realm but not in the others, making *social capital less fungible.*[20] Social capital is contingent of the level of trust in a given society. People, through reciprocities and civic engagements imbibe trust and use it for variety of purposes in other domain.[21]

While much of the empirical research in India[22] and elsewhere would regard social capital as crucial mediatiating variable that has the capability of producing desired outcome in the form of effective participation of actors and groups, hitherto excluded from mainstream developmental and political life, little attention is paid too contexts well endowed with social capital but where participation is less visible. Thus, participation has to be *'effective'; we need to look into how social capital is structures itself in a given locale.* The patterned forms of associational life of region constitute the 'power' available at the grassroots level need to be ethnographically documented in order to some meaning to ones analysis. Therefore, emphasis of the research should not just be on how to measure social capital[23] in a given context, but on *how the social capital organizes itself to achieve the required functionality.*

Politics has always has been a competitive enterprise in which actors engage themselves in making decisions about control, allocation and distribution of resources. Such a decision making is dynamic interaction among actors, who in their <u>various capacities</u> think strategically by clear articulation of their preferences, interests and *'evaluating'* the likely benefits and costs of outcomes of their available alternative course of actions. In democratic politics where groups compete with one another, outcomes are determined not by what an individual thinks and does but also on what others think and do. Situations

---

[20] James S Coleman, 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', in Partha Dasgupta and Ismail and Serageladin, *Social Capital: Multi faceted Perspective,* The World Bank, Washiington,D.C.,pp 71-94.
[21], Luigino Bruni and Robert Sudgen, 'Moral Canals: Trust and Social Capital in the Work of Hume, Smith and Genovesi', *Economics and Philosophy,* 16, 2000, pp23.
[22] Anirudh Krishna, 'Creating and Harnessing Social Capital', in Partha Dasgupta and Ismail Serageldin (eds), *Social Capital: A Multifaceted Perspective,* The World Bank, Washington D.C., 2000, pp 72-90.
[23] ibid

like these can be treated and structured into *'games'* where in the strategic interdependence of actors determines how, why and which equilibrium is achieved. Games provides us with an alternative, where abstract agents engage *reflexively* in anticipation of his future states as well as the states of other actors with whom he interaction. Actors *participate* in decision making process on the basis of their *capacities* -what they know and how efficiently they can act on it. The most vexing question is how does one validate the claims made in a *game* .If rationality in games involves the selecting the *best response*, then to determine it one needs to *infer* how the actor in a context employs his motives and intentions to achieve his goal and also *observe* what were the available means to achieve those goals. The problem then is not just about selecting a case that qualifies to fit into structure of the given *game*- details about the why and how strategic interaction and suggest both by providing a *'compelling tale'*[24] to establish the causality. Such an approach entails juxtaposition of rationalist frames with interpretive one. Drawing inspiration from the *Analytic Narratives,* I (in the following chapter) try to construct epistemological basis for understanding democratic participation in *panchayats by applying contrafactual reasoning contained in the games.*

Understanding participation by applying *contrafactual* reasoning means that one indulges in the reappraisal of the well received wisdom by putting forward a more compelling causality, redescribing events that juxtapose internal and external explanations in a convincing manner to explain discontinuities *'preference reversal'.* They are internal in a sense as Ferejohn convinces one in that they tell us that those who act rationally do so intentionally and they are external in the actor's capacity to act in accordance with the norms.[25] Beginning with set of historical facts of a given case, which many would agree upon, I move on to larger question by specifying the conditions that triggered action. An important aspect that the analysis seeks to cover is finding the ethical basis of democratic decision making.

---

[24] Margret Levi, 'Model, Method and Map: Rational Choice in Comparative and Historical Analysis', in Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman (eds), *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture and Structure, Advancing Theory in Comparative politics,* Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp34.

[25] For details on External and Internal Explanation , on can look up John Ferejohn, 'External and Internal Explanations', Ian Shapiro, Roger M Smith and Tarek E Masoud (eds), *Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics,* Cambridge University Press, U.K.,2004, pp 144-167

2. EPISTEMOLOGY

Chipko ! ' they wondered in disbelief and looked at each other inquisitively.

'We begged. But were asked to leave. Even the *sarkar* is deaf. *Hamare aadmi unke saath mil gaye hain*[1]. We have no choice.'

'Yes. If we are weak and yielding, we will never be able save them'.

Misgivings fizzled out. 'However quixotic, time had come to enact it.' Every body seemed to agree, that evening. Early next morning, when they saw them, climbing up , they were already there. Before the first axe was raised, they all shouted 'Chipko'and *hugged them*. Defiant as one could be, unrelenting as ever, they all broke out in unison 'The trees are our life, they give us water, soil, no government has right to axe them', they all said in unison. "Startled by our defiance, the enemy was in disarray and we saved them from felling." Thus recounts an old woman in Mandal, nostalgically, how she along with other women in the village emerged as the savior of trees.

The news of their success soon reached the neighboring hills which became a spectacle of formidable resistance .Villagers resorted to Chipko tactics in Phata Rampur, (June-Dec1973), Gopeshwar, Bhyundar (near Joshimath) Dungari Paintoli (all in Chamoli district) .The villagers in Tehri (Philki, Nandgaon, Bararpatti , Dumttu, Chapdhar) Pauri Garhwal (Satpuli, area along Nayar river, Kotdwar) Uttarkashi (Gevela, Barsoli, Matli Bhimkoli, Kailsoo) Rishikesh and Dehradun too ,were stirred up . Chipko did not fail to imbue its significance in the neighboring Kumaun hills particularly at Almorah [2](Katyur and Someshwar valleys), Pithoragarh (Rai Agar, Khela, Tawaghat, and

---

[1] Our men have colluded with them.

[2] At Charidhar in Dwarahat in Almorah district, 10,000 trees were saved in the catchments of Gagas river Shishupal Singh Kunwar (ed), *Hugging the Himalayas: The Chipko Experience,* Dasholi Gram Swarajya Mandal, Gopeshwar (Chamoli), 1982 pp 8.

Palpalla)[3]. It's success , however varied from village to village , from district to district but no one could deny that conservation spirit was gradually imbuing the minds of the present and future generations. Its heart, however, lay in the Reni village, close to Joshimath, where the heroine Gaura Devi, a poor, illiterate woman in her mid fifties along with a band of just 27 women used Chipko strategy to save around 2415 trees .Soon after this incident, the felling of trees in the vicinity of Chamoli was officially banned.

The story however, begins with war of 1963 that shattered Nehru. Himalayas could no longer be regarded as bulwark against any Chinese onslaught. New Delhi's strategic interest lay in building up dense network of communication in the otherwise, inaccessible and in hospitable Himalayas, to facilitate easy and fast movement of troops and logistics in face of Chinese threats. Thus, began the process of felling of trees along with the flurry of contractor's engineers and outsiders pouring into border areas. With declining tree cover, barren hills had became sites for frequent landslides and the devastating floods of Alkananda in early 1970s only added to an urgency for collective action in hills. Watching helplessly their barren hills which were once a splendor of Bans and Burans[4], a vague sense of unease and anxiety dawned upon all. "As mother saves the child from tiger by hugging the child to take upon herself the wrath of the tiger, so will we cling upon trees and save them". Argued one of the villagers at meetings in Mandal village.

For many 'Chipko' was meaningful as it evoked and legitimized their claims. While seeking to resolve their every day problems, villagers, especially women, armed with inchoate ideas about 'collective action', were simultaneously, pushing in for a more egalitarian social order. Imbued and induced by Chipko, women engaged themselves, in some worthy cause in the village.--constructing pavements, foot paths, pedestrian passages, discussed the issue of collectively combating and protecting their fields from wild animals, constructing boundary walls, food for work programme, irrigation, drinking

---

[3] Ibid.
[4] 'Bans' is bamboo and while 'Burans' is rhododendron.

water, education etc. The movement, thus, unconsciously sought explicit linkage with a feminist activism. What if, these women were sneered at their *doings /functioning's*, they seldom swerved. Radha Kumar's valuable compilation of history of women's movement in India (*The History of Doing, An illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India 1800-1990)* makes an interesting reading in this regard,

' in both Reni and neighboring villages the Dals now clashed with the male dominated panchayats over the protection of their crops. The men when they took the cattle to graze habitually cut through the fields. The cattle would trample the crops, or worse eat them. The Dals decided to build walls around the fields to protect the crops. The men were furious and called the panchayats meeting. The panchayat expressed outrage at the Dal's temerity in taking such a decision and insisted that only they could decide such matters. The women, however, asserted since they were the people who tended the fields, they were the once who should decide'[5]

Once the reports of women's success in asserting their rights became a 'common knowledge', it generated a sense of confidence that their strategies of civic engagements, laced with 'Chipko' was indeed, capable of producing *desired outcomes*. The certainty of benefits realized from hugging trees, encircling the government buildings, demonstrations and issuing threats of protests and non institutional forms of public engagement created an atmosphere of normative expectations of obligations, trust and mutuality. At a more subtle level, as women engaged themselves, in groups, planting saplings of Walnut, Poplar, Baken, Ku-Babool trees, they were in many ways instutionalizing these normative expectations by forging emotional linkages of shared ideas about their common problems and solutions. Upon being ingrained as the region's folk culture, it soon showed signs of transcending itself into a norm that tells us something about the appropriateness of action. With increasing frequency of confrontation, Panchayat –Dal fights acquired an element of *regularity*.

The best known of these is the well known episode that took place in the Dugari Paintoli, a village not far from Mandal, on the banks of river Pindar (tributary of Alkananada).[6]

---

[5] Extract from Radha Kumar , *The History of Doing, An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India 1800-1990* (Kali for Women New Delhi,1993) ,pp. 183-184

[6] The story narrated to me personally by noted environmentalist and Magsaysay award winner Shri Chandi Prasad Bhatt.

The men in the village along with sarpanch colluded with contractors and secretly sold the large forest tract abundant in oak. Women, on hearing, felt humiliated and tricked. Tempers ran high and discontent was loud and fierce. The Pradhan and his men initially dismissed it as a mere 'howling' that would soon subside. Clearly, village headman and his fellow colluders had underestimated the 'sense of unity'-premised on the indissoluble historical link between women and the forests and that only strengthened with initial Chipko victories in the Alkananda valley. The out cry grew only louder and much stronger. When the sarpanch didn't budge in, women adopted a novel technique of socially boycotting the traitors. The wife of Sarpanch, who herself was a member of the Dal, joined by other women for her family refused to cook food for him. Now there were two *chulhas* (hearth), one for the Sarpanch (and colluders), which was kept outside and the other for the rest of the family members. Ultimately, the humiliated and ostracized Pradhan gave in.

Women were more adamant then men. They were seen issuing unusual forms of threats. 'In one village the women fought the sarpanch over the distribution of grass from the afforested patch. A woman from the sarpanch family carried away the grass that had not been authorized by the MMD. Usually the Dal announces the day when one person from each household can come ad take the grass as a simple way to ensure equitable distribution. The village women protested strongly against the sarpanch, who in turn had the case filed against them. But the district magistrate had to withdraw the case when faced with combined protest from the women....'[7]

.

These empirical snapshots, though sporadic and scattered through out hills are used as spring broad to establish distinct conceptually linkage between social and political realms.

At the theoretical level, couple of trends can be distinguished.

First and foremost, Chipko emerged as important mass base for tactical advantage. Initially, very few women came forward, however, as their numbers swelled up; the argument build around environment issues inextricably was linked up with women concerns. The women's role was emphasized as being vital and no less important than

---

[7] Centre for the Study of Environment Report 1987, quoted in Radha Kumar , *The History of Doing, An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India 1800-1990* (Kali for Women New Delhi,1993) ,pp.-184

men. By collectively indulging in the action to save forests, women in the hills developed a sense unity and consciousness born of their intimate relationship in the *shivir*. *Shivir* became *public spheres* where women reinforced their commitment to solidarity as a means of buffering themselves against risky and uncertain situations. Based on friendship and bonds of solidarity, the networks of women between the villages were formed. The overall recurrent message that appears in every context was more or less the same. What these examples in particular demonstrate is that the main driving force that enabled these women to struggle and assert themselves for creating an egalitarian order was the *shared belief* that justified their demands.

Second and more important aspect emerged was that many of these women's every day problems were in some ways being transformed into inchoate and fledgling ideas 'collective interest'. In course of their collective engagements, women were commonly seen using their solidarities as a 'resource' for political action. They were laying down the organizational basis for democratic culture creating *politically relevant social capital*[8] endowed with expertise and information that is freely communicated among them selves. Many of these empirical instances thus, point towards some kind of linkage or fungibilty between social and political realms.

At a conceptual level, the issue of fungibility has been treated rather lightly. For some like Putnam, it is an empirical question, less open to conceptual analysis.[9] With the works of Krishna[10], on social capital in Rajasthan serving as templates, the issue of *fungibility* has been taken up by number of scholars. Kenneth Newton for instance, provides us with the plethora of empirical evidence, to establish that society and politics are more or less dichotonomous, each made of up different configurations, which seldom overlap, making

[8] Ronald La Due Lake and Robert Huckfeldt, 'Social Capital, Social Network, and Political Participation', *Political Psychology,* 19(3), 1998, pp567-574.
[9] Robert Putnam cited in Ashutosh Varshney, 'Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society', in Carolyn M.Elliot (ed), *Civil Society and Democracy: A Reader,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003, pp 424.
[10] For on how Krishna uses the idea of fungibility, one can look up Anirudh Krishna, ' Creating and Harnessing Social Capital' in Partha Dasgupta and Ismail Serageldin, *Social Capital: A Multifaceted Perspective,* The World Bank, Washington D.C.,2000, pp-71-93.

these transformations *less fungible,* weak and sometimes patchy.[11] Building upon these, the study takes *fungibility* and its stability/permanence overtime, seriously.

Overtime as these societies moved forward accompanied by increased levels of literacy and education, one does expect corresponding increases in citizenship skills and resources for political engagement. Along with proliferation of citizenship practices, people thus tend to embrace more rational, trusting and participatory value systems[12] which should in practice stabilize and get ingrained in public memory that can be called into use, at short notice. This, however, did not happen. Before one leaps from the history of Chipko to the present state in the hills, it is necessary to structure the anecdotal past, if possible to make deductions which could serve as some kind of template to guide this study.

Building on the empirical snapshots presented so far, a thing that comes out clearly is that as long as the women shared their beliefs, or were in some kind of communication with one another, their shared beliefs was more or less fungible .While engaging in reciprocities, they were simultaneously creating social capital that was politically relevant for asserting themselves in public spheres- panchayats an other local bodies. All this can be illustrated in a more dramatic way by structuring it into a *collusion game*[13]. Before one proceeds to game, I wish to clarify the *game* is used here as heuristic device to understand how agents, whose choices are interdependent, coordinate their behavior, in a given situation. One could plausibly argue that game theory is an inappropriate as a heuristic device to interpret the context under the study, since it belongs to theoretical lineage that is deeply rooted in positivists traditions lying far away from the narratives. Using game, would tantamount to making a *volte face*.

---

[11] Kenneth Newton, 'Trust, Social Capital, Civil Society and Democracy', *International Political Science Review,* 22(2), 2001, pp 201-214.

[12] Ronald Ingelhart and Wayne E.Baker, 'Modernization, Cultural Change and the Persistence of Traditional Values', *American Sociological Review,* 65(1), 2000, pp19-51.

[13] Avner Grief, 'Self Enforcing Political Systems and Economic Growth: Late Medieval Genoa', in Robert Bates and others (eds), *Analytic Narratives,* Princeton University Press, Princeton ,New Jersey,1998, pp23-63.

While most of these skepticisms are valid, I feel they should not result in the complete rejection of the use of game theory[14]. Much of the ink in the previous chapter ,on 'premises', has been spent in elucidating how rationalists these days are becoming sensitive to contexts . I sincerely hope that the reader by now is somewhat, if not fully convinced with arguments presented under the sub theme of – *reconciling the rationalists and interpretvists*. The use of game elucidates clear and logical presentation of the context. It tells us why and under what conditions a actor makes a choice. What are actor's preferences and perceptions how do they evaluate alternatives available to them and under what conditions they chose a particular decision and not the other. What is the information in decision making and what are their corresponding expectations and strategies. To put it more succinctly, I am tempted to invoke the following argument-

'games provide contra factual assumptions theoretical justification. It outlines the range of sequential choices available to actors – and to understand why one path becomes the equilibrium path, it becomes necessary to understand why actors did not choose other path'[15]

By invoking history however, one can validate the use of game, in this study. History matters, as it gives us a theoretical leverage to understand the basis of participation when rationality goes beyond the narrow domains of aggregate self interest. It provides us with compelling reasons, why actors choose one path and not the other. The use of history contextualizes the game. The real problem, however, in our context is that while history was being made at a very fast pace, it has been poorly documented, leaving too much to speculate about linkages between present and antecedent configurations. In the absence of social and cultural history, one is left with little choice but to pick up one or two instances and use it to suggest some kind of endurance. Calling it *'synecdoche'*, Wendy Doniger makes a useful comment,

"Beginning thus, with minimal backbone of infrastructure, of basic historical facts and concepts that people would agree upon, we can move to larger questions...."[16]

---

[14] Margret Levi, ' An Analytic Narrative Approach to Puzzles and Problems', in Ian Shapiro and others (eds),*Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics,* Cambridge University Press,U.K.,2004, pp-207.
[15] Beno de Mesquito and Weingast in Margret Levi, 'Models, Methods and a Map: Rational Choice in Comparative and Historical Analysis ', in Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture and Structure,* Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp 25.
[16]Wendy Doniger, *The Hindus: An Alternative History,* Penguin, New Delhi, 2009, pp 7.

By constructing *alternative history,* [17] one can have insights about unobservable conjectural linkage and make assessments about their motives and achievements. Recombining these stories with *collusion game* only validates our narrative.

'All the world is stage and all the men and women are players'

In collusion game, there are three players A, B and P where A and B can be regarded as 'men in the village' and 'women's groups in the village respectively, P is the local institution – panchayat in this case. In case of dispute between A and B say over forests - which being a matter of public importance, both parties would take the matter to local body P. Given our context, A or men who have connived with outsiders, would try and bribe the members of P so that they can gain political control of P and have their way , while B or women who are seeking amore egalitarian order, will organize themselves into Dals that will pressurize the P and prevent it from colluding with men or A. The ultimate decision then lies with the local institution P which would then calculate of costs and benefits of either colluding with men and accepting their offer, or being fair /yielding to the Dal's pressure. If the offers of bribe < then costs incurred on P, owing B's pressure tactics, P will not collude with A. However, as the game show, if B does keep up it's pressure, then P will collude with A.

The abstract outcome can illustrated at the most elementary level as a *sub game perfect equilibrium* [18]

To examine how the problem can be mitigated in a self enforcing manner, it is useful to begin by examining a *collusion game* between two parties A and P where. The question that the game addresses is the extent to which   A can exante commit to reward expost P who colluded with it against B.

The notations used in the game are as follows ----

$V_i (mj, m_{k}, m_i)$ probability that 'i' will win a war against j and k given the power of

        m_j, m_k, m_i The probability that i is winning is declining in

---

[17] Borrowing the phrase from Doniger.

[18] The solution has been adapted from the Grief's model on Genoa. While the original model put forward by Grief stands for different context where the clans A and B were fighting /compete each other to have control over *podesta* but the underlying principle is congruent with this study , as the agents in both cases compete with one another and the prevent the other ,especially the powerful one , from gaining control over the local governing body and maintain political order. The structure of Grief's game is indeed very appealing and in my opinion can be applied in studies that give primacy to the role played by the grass root movements in ensuring transparency and preventing elite capture of governing bodies. Avner Greif, " Self Enforcing Political Systems and Economic Growth : Late Medieval Genoa" in Robert Bates (eds) , *Analytic Narratives,* Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1998.pp 24-63.

m_j, m_k

c   cost of confrontation to each player A,B and P

V_i net present value (NPV) to a player i for controlling the locality

V_p net present value (NPV) to a player i for controlling the P

     $V_i >= V_p$

A and P have colluded against B and gained control of the locality .In such a case, A rewards R_p to P where

$R_p > 0$. Once R_p is known, P can accept or rejects it and fight

1) if P accepts the payoffs V_i- R_p , R_p for A and P respectively.

2) if he rejects, the payoffs are calculated in the following manner,

    probability of winning X value of gaining control – cost of war

   for P the payoff is $v_p(m_i)$ V_p - c while A gets [1- $v_i(m_p)$] V_i- c

Clearly, P will not fight if the reward $R_p >= v_p(m_i)$ V_p – c ,payoff

Likewise, A will not offer R_p , that makes it indifferent between fighting and not fighting , V_i- $R_p >=$ [1-$v_p(m_i)$] V_i- c

Solving this, R_p =or < $v_p(m_i)$ V_i + c

i.e. A is willing to pay P more for colluding with him (than what is required to prevent P from fighting)

the payoffs associated with this equilibrium (subgame perfect) are

to A ----- V_i -V_p^c while P gets V_p^c = Max. {0, $v_p(m_i)$ V_p – c}

reward thus depends upon P's ability to confront B.

taking the game further, and introducing the following notations

I_i income in period i , if neither A nor B assumes control

W wage to third party, P

   discount factor

co colluding with A

If A challenges B , B can either fight ,F or refuse to fight DF and the third party has three options, co(

collude with A) ,p (prevent), dp (not prevent the fight)

A does not challenge

the payoffs are (I_A, I_B ,W) to A , B and P respectively.
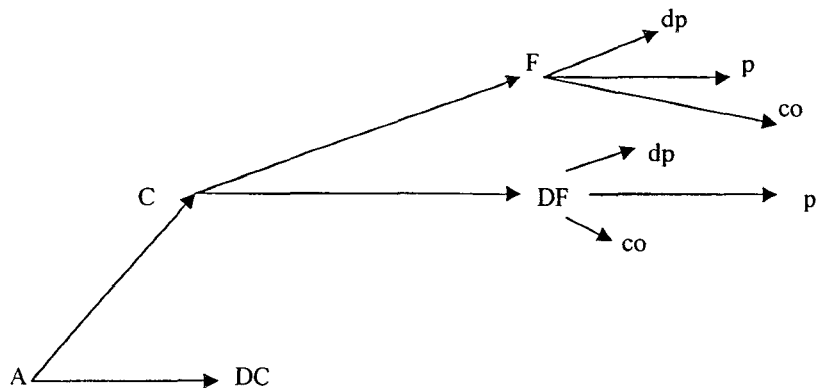
If A does challenges and B does not fight

then A controls the locality without resistance from B the payoffs are as follows

  1) if P does not prevent, dp, (V_1,0, 0)

  2) if P colludes, A will reward P by V_p^c , payoffs thus are , (V_1 -V_p^c , 0, V_p^c)

  3) if P prevents , the payoffs are , ($v_i(m_p)$ V_i- c ,0 , $v_p(m_i)$ V_p – c)

If A does challenges and B fights

4) if P does not prevent, dp, ( )

5) if P colludes, A will reward P by V_p^c , payoffs thus are , ($V_1 - V_p^c$, 0, V_p^c)

6) if P prevents , then P gets a W, then there two possibilities

    a) A succeeds in controlling and gets a payoff V_1 while B gets 0

    b) A fails and in that case the pay offs will be $V_1(m_p, m_B)$ V_1- c + (1- $V_1(m_p, m_B)$) I_1 (1- $V_1(m_p$ m_B)) I_2- c (1- $V_1(m_p, m_B)$)) (W-c)

Each player, A and B analyzes this problem from his /her point by taking into consideration, what the other player can do. If B reasons that if it chooses not to fight, then there is a danger of P colluding with A (as shown above) while if it keeps up the pressure on P , then if A challenges, it would be prudent for P to be fair .

The strategy in which if A challenges, it is optimal and prudent for to B to fight and makes it less profitable for P to collude and thus that every player would do better by following this unique sub game perfect equilibrium . Seen this way, during the Chipko days, women, through their well coordinated and collective pressure, could prevent the men from subverting the local panchayat. This equilibrium, however, as the events unfold themselves, was short-lived. Once Chipko became weak, women's movement started declining. In the event of women or B not electing to fight, the pressure of panchayats declined. It , thus made more sense for P to collude with A.

"Bargains *are not time less or immutable entities but are susceptible to historical transformation*"[19]

Haripriya Rangan in *of Myths and Movements: Rewriting Chipko into Himalayan History* recounts, how, as a school boy in Doon valley he had opportunities to hear stories of 'How Chipko motivated people in Garhwal to nurture new seedlings for sustainable development n their villages and communities'[20].Upon revisiting region, after a gap of about 30 years, he notes '…it became apparent that Chipko rarely provoked the sort of *unequivocal enthusiasm*….My reference to the movement evoked a *blank stare…..shrug.*'[21] Chipko, for Rangan, is a history, inconsequential and *myth* – a form of *self validating truth* which '… in eagerness to prove its trans historical and trans regional significance has……*stripped the region and community of their histories*'.[22] Rangan's observation of near absence of *regularity* compels him to believe that the movement has died out. Historians studying social conventions and movements provide us with convincing set of arguments to doubt the plausibility of Rangan's claim. However, this absence of *regularity* should not be a real worry. Conventions could, as Margret Gilbert tells us that, exist with out the 'correlative' of regularity. It could be situation where, every body knows that they *ought to* do such and such thing. There is common knowledge but no body obeys it. Moreover, such a *convention* exists because people *know* what they are normally expected to do. Very often, as Gilbert maintains, norms *may* exist but with the absence *of expectation of conformity.*[23]

My preliminary fieldwork in the Mandal valley compels me to adopt a weaker version of Rangan's observation. Barely, 37 years have elapsed since Chipko-the memories are still afresh in the minds of villagers. Chipko exists, albeit with its dwarfed spirit, vigor and prosperity. Having achieved initial goals – ban on felling of trees, the movement soon reached its limits. Like most of caste movements that had fallen into disuse, Chipko too,

---

[19] Deniz Kandyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy", *Gender and Society,* 2(3), 1988, pp 275.

[20] Haripriya Rangan, *of Myths and Movements: Rewriting Chipko into Himalayan History,* Verso, London, U.K., 2000, p6.

[21] *ibid*

[22] Ibid, pp11.

[23] Margaret Gilbert, 'Notes on the Concept of Social Convention', *New Literary History,* 14(2), 1983, pp225-251.

lost *some,* if not, all of its vitality[24]. But unlike Rangan, my reference to the movement, as I trekked along the women of Koteshwar village (Mandal valley) up to their forests, elicited a welcoming response '*Arre! Youu to Chipko Kaa Barre Maa Jaani da.* '*(Oh! She knows about Chipko)*. Less aware of Chipko's trans regional significance, these women ensure, through their every day practices of social existence, that there is no break from the past.

Even if one accepts Rangan's claim that Chipko is dead and best forgotten, there exist ample of evidence to suggest that dormant Chipko soon reaffirmed itself by adopting idioms and ideology of demands for separate hill state. But to say that movement is alive, we need to convince ourselves of theoretical possibility of historicity of movements coupled with empirical evidence that says *how and why*, the two are intrinsically linked. Writing about historicity of such movements, Rajendra Singh, provides us with convincing set of arguments on how different social movements link themselves overtime,

"Social movements in historical perspective, present their various mutable appearances and forms not like a stream flowing through to a sea, ...but rather in the interflow of relations: aspirations, volitions, actions, percolating the teleological porosity of the ensemble of society., here at a time , forming a strong undercurrent , emerging there insight in the form of collective mobilizations such as riots, rebellions, ...In their natural course, they offer disintegration , only to rise again, possibly in another time and at another place. They produce and reproduce themselves ..... through the sui generis process of self production and reproduction."[25]

Once the goal is achieved, there is imminent possibility of it, as we are told, either falling into disuse or reverting back to *old ways of living*. This has particularly been the case with many caste movements in the south. Vijendra Rao, in his fieldwork in Karnataka, makes an interesting observation 'Virsava movement survives today, and Lingayats are an important force, caste based distinction seem to have crept back'[26]. This could never have been the case with Chipko, thanks to the region's skewed levels of industrialization,

---

[24] This seems to be the case with Lingayat movement in the south. Rao,in his fieldwork in Karnataka notes that the movement after becoming political force soon reverted backs

[25] Rajendra Singh, *Social Movements, Old and New, A Post Modern Critique*. Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2001 pp 138-139.

[26] Vijendra Rao and Michael Walton (ed), *Culture and Public Action,* Permanent Black, Delhi, 2004, pp 39.

low yielding , and fragmentary agricultural sector, where over 40% still have no access to roads and basic connectivity ,with acute shortage of drinking water in most of the villages. When regions are backward and generally held levels of well being are inadequate, there is distinct tendency of the social movements, be of that on environment, identity or any thing else to submerge into regional demand for statehood. This happened with Chipko, where environmental protests transformed themselves into demands for statehood. The argument that Chipko was the historical source, a kind of progenitor of all that happens today, is indeed an unobservable yet an inescapable fact. The evidence in support of this linkage lies primarily in the *utterances* of the people.

The thing to ask then is not whether Chipko is dead or alive, the thing to ask is of what valuable import it is, after all, as the struggle to save trees did usher in an era of progressive gender relations, ample testimony of which exists today in the oral traditions, some of which survive to this day. These unlettered women were seen shaping public opinions in variety of new ways. Benefiting from the spurt of the movement and the new found consciousness, women in the hills were critical of the existing state of gender relations in the hills. As the corpus of such events grew, women with their new found 'agency' could transform their worlds.

By 1990s, it was once again, business *as usual.* Women had been to schools, earned college degrees, and some had even managed to get gainful employment in the neighboring towns of Gopeshwar and Chamoli. Those, who were left behind, continued with their lives around forests. Many of the formative experiences of these women were showing some signs of difference. Entry of educated hill women was accompanied by their changing life style in the villages strengthening the gendered norms of relations[27]. Forests activism continued with some vigor. Despite these repeated skirmishes, activism in the hills showed signs of weakening. With the estrangement of women from public sphere not only made 'social' and 'political' became distinct but also links between them

[27] Ingehart and Norris have shown on the basis of their world value survey, that entry of women in education and paid labour produces attitudinal shifts that are favorable to more gendered related norms. For details one can have a look at Pippa Norris and Ronald Ingelhart, 'Cultural Obstacles to Equal Representation', *Journal of Democracy,* 12(3), 2001, pp135.

were *weak* and *patchy*. Chipko today, as a myth, is traditional past, as bundle of ideas that is best remembered for *what people* experienced, some 40 odd years back. Though shrunk and dwarfed in its spirits, the conservation ethic that it embodies is still well ingrained in collective memory of people and can in many ways be the basis, for collective action in local politics. But the women today are down spirited, reticent and the let the things run their course. Chipko refuses to obliterate itself from the public memory; it has lost its vigor as a stimulus. It fails to shake up complacency. What ever, then, one comes across these days, is nothing in comparison to or even equals, *that*. Why was the history becoming irrelevant?

By the mid 1990s, the state was seething in discontent over the extension of the OBC reservation. If the skewed level of industrialization and backward agrarian economy left much to be desired, average man in hills himself believed that progress would come about inevitably with the creation of the separate state of Uttarakhand. This widespread belief was indeed tantalizing. From the view point of literacy and health, the state was way ahead of its peers. But most of its aspirations, however, have more or less been elusive. The new state came into being , in November, 2000 , with a total liability of Rs.3185.91 crores and accompanying accumulated deficit of Rs.3630 crores and an extremely low tax buoyancy. With this huge debt reeling under their belt, the state's successive finance commissions have found it extremely hard to devolve funds to local bodies- the biggest casualty being the panchayats. The state's first finance commission made a recommendation of devolving 11% of the state's net tax revenues to local bodies (45% of this was allocated too PRIs) of which, the second finance commission found that only 6.06% was devolved.[28] This insufficient devolution has created a precarious condition of the resource availability for the huge structure of 7227 gram panchayats spread over 13 districts of the state, to undertake and operate development schemes Thanks to abysmally low levels of financial devolution, the burden falls heavily on nearly 78% of total poor who live in the rural areas[29]. While men migrate, the burden of poverty hits directly many women, who are left behind as subsistence cultivators.

---

[28] Planning Commission, Government of India, *Uttarakhand Development Report,* 2009, pp151-152.
[29] Ibid pp 197.

Agriculture in the state ,(according to the *Uttarakhand Development Report,* prepared by the Planning Commission) practiced only on the 14% of the geographical area that supports nearly 70% of the population, is woefully backward , low yielding ,high cost and fragmentary . With nearly, 54% of total engaged in crop production being women, not to forget 87% (of the total) associated with animal husbandry; the agriculture in hills is essentially a female centered activity.[30] These women cultivators practice subsistence agriculture on an undulating topography that is prone to land degradation – nearly 17% or 914 thousand hectares is under severe degradation problems.[31] With the small average size of the landholding at 0.8 hectares in hills, of which less than 44% are irrigated, the output per hectare is barely sufficient to meet their needs. Not surprisingly then, most undernourished and mal nourished children and women are found in rural areas.[32]

The picture , however , is impressive, as one looks at other indicators of wellbeing. The state of Uttarakhand is characterized by admirable high overall levels of literacy at around 72%, which is well above the all India average of 65%[33]. Between 1991 and 2001, female literacy in the state showed a marked jump from 21% basis points from about 41 to 60% respectively. Among the women, the literacy rates varies from the highest in Dehradun and Nainital (71%) to the lowest in Uttarkashi at about 47%. Given these overall trends, one is not surprised to take find (the study reports) that only 17.6% of the Ward members while only 3% of Pradhan were illiterate. As many as 78.6% of the Pradhan and 51.2% of the Ward members had received education up to either middle level or beyond. Also as many as 81% of the Pradhan and 63% of the ward members were according to the study, comfortably placed above poverty line. The enthusiasm and the expectations generated by these figures are soon dissipated by the dismal performance in the other indicators of women agency.[34]

Women's agency plays an important role in enrolment rates. The goal of universalizing primary education can be catalyzed using women' agency at grass root level. It hardly

---

[30] Ibid pp 279-299.

[31] Ibid pp290.

[32] Ibid pp224.

[33] Government of India, *Census of India* , 2001

[34] Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India, *Study on Elected Women Representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions,* 2009, pp25-50

needs to reiterated then that women Pradhan and Ward members , who at least had some kind of education should take a lead in mobilizing their communities to improve the quality of education in their village. The study notes that in terms of the initiatives to improve access to elementary education and increase the enrolment rates or reducing drop outs at primary level, the performance Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) of the state is not just poor but ranks well below some of the worst performing states like Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh not to forget Gujarat and Maharashtra[35]. The other aspects of the women's agency and hence her well being measured in terms of the constraints faced while filling nomination, lack of financial resources, increasing political rivalry between groups, resistance from spouse and household members and the content of training received by the members is more or less in along expected lines.[36]

Women's individual well being, understood largely as empowerment bears some relation to political collective action and in their abilities to mobilize their communities the on the general conditions of living in their village. Being panchayat members, the women are to begin with, expected attend and encourage other villagers too attend Gram sabha meeting and discuss budget proposal, identify beneficiaries of government schemes and BPL families, job cards incase of NREGA etc.[37] The performance of the women Pradhan and the ward members in terms perceptions of women usually attending these meetings is not very encouraging.[38]In terms of the interaction with line department officials, while 63% of the women pradhans reported that they were comfortable interacting with the local bureaucracy, the corresponding figure for the ward members was extremely disturbing at 23.2%. The indicators of women's sub substantive presence in the panchayats is not very encouraging either, particularly in terms of their articulation and openness to discussion or adopting issues and matters of general interest to women.- drinking water education and health.

---

[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid pp92-126.
[38] Planning Commission, Government of India, *Uttarakhand Development Report,* 2009, pp 79.

By the beginning of this century, the state presented some of the most admirable levels of socio economic indicators. The high female literacy levels coupled with low levels of population growth rate and IMR are commonly attributed to high status that women enjoy in hills. Like wise, one is happy to find that out of the total 15, 761 villages in the state nearly 13, 998 have been electrified.[39]These figures however, conceal some of the darker aspects of life in mountain societies. Nearly 60% of the villages are without primary and as many as 86% are without upper primary schools. The availability of the health infrastructure is quite depressing. The road density in the state stands at 45.26 km per '00 Km which is less than 50% of the national average. Only 60% of the villages have been connected by roads. About 48% of the rural habitations are without adequate supplies of drinking water. The UDR makes two disturbing observation s, in this regard, one, relating to state of drinking water,

" about 40% of the water resources tapped for feeding are environmentally vulnerable.... Most of the drinking water sources have either dried up or nearing to extension possibly due to weaknesses in planning and poor management of discharge of rivulets and gadheras"[40]

While the other relating to the state of health,

"As regards MMR, no data is available from any known sources for the state. However , the state's health and population policy document observes that the MMR is expected to be quite high because of the physiographic features and inaccessible terrain"[41]

Despite and accompanying , this dismal state of well being , as suggested above , is the remarkable feature, that makes the study worth pursuing.Uttarakhand is the second state, after Bihar, to hold elections to panchayats, under the provision of 50% reservation for women. The substantial presence of nearly 30,473 women in the rural local governance structures is, indeed astounding. Their massive presence has changed the character and conduct of service delivery in the villages but has made little headway with the articulation and promotion of issues, specific to women. In order to substantiate my claims , I present two small case studies from state, that will serve to enhance the relevance of my argument.

---

[39] Ibid, pp 420.
[40] Ibid pp455.
[41] Ibid pp226.

Out of the 3871 women Pradhan (of the total 7239) exemplary story of courage shown by Radha Devi, Gram Pradhan of village – Methi Beri, Sahaspur block, Dehradun, who has been elected Pradhan for the third time in a row. Methi Beri had a dubious distinction for being infamous for bitter feuds and rivalries. Defying the bitter opposition of the men in her village, Radha Devi, started off her career as an anganwadi worker and later took up other areas of work, roads, sanitation, health, pensions etc.With persistence and hard work , she revived the dying heath care system in her village and became *Gaon ka neta*. Jealous of her fame and her large following in the village, some men tried to prevent her contesting third time in row, and connived with the local authorities to strike off her name from the electoral rolls. She, on hearing this, went straight up to the higher authorities and won their support. Today, as I write this, Radha Devi has earned the unique distinction of being the "Outstanding Woman Panchayat leader of 2010", awarded by ISS. Radha Devi is a very hard working woman, whose perseverance and unrelenting spirit is also judged by the fact that she recently at the age of 52 cleared her 10th standard board exams.[42]

The second is the case study on pradhan of Kusumkhera Gram Panchayat , Nainital district, cited in the recent all India study (on the ' elected women representatives in panchayats) stating the female pradhan , who is widow yet engages herself actively in solving village level problems

'.. the pradhan, with the help of ward members visits each houses to mobilize community women to attend meetings........frequently visits schools to monitor mid day meal programmes and supervises the activities of the angandwadi centre....works on the equal footing with the male members as she has undertaken several civil works such as the construction of drains, installation of hand pumps and street lights. The villagers expressed their satisfaction regarding the selection of beneficiaries for various schemes and programmes and the pradhan's knowledge about the scheme'[43]

Despite much talk about the emerging self confidence and high literacy levels and activism shown by women at the grass root levels, there are very few instances of women

---

[42] While she cleared, her daughter failed. Hindustan Times, *Politics is no-no for this Pradhan*, 23 May 2010.
[43] Ministry of Panchayat Raj Institutions, Government of India, *Study on Elected Women Representatives in Panchayat Raj Institutions*, New Delhi, pp-147, 2009.

activism today. The relationship between the level of democratization and women's substantive representation appears to be weak. More over, change or empowerment cannot be conceived in terms of few individual stories of successful Pradhans. Empowerment is produced by agency, which is inherently collective in nature, and becomes effective in our case, when Pradhan and ward members move and work together as a group. Pradhans as the recent survey shows, on average spent more time on the village work than the corresponding women ward members. Even more worrisome, is the fact, as shown by survey, that many women ward members treat panchayat work as a secondary to their other preoccupations[44]. The central dilemma is then not of finding adequate / critical mass of women but one of *missing agency*. The woman's agency today appears to more dwarfed, petered out. With so much of wellbeing around, there continues to be complacency. Why do women fail to act rationally, and achieve the same sub game perfect equilibrium, as they did years back. For one thing , one can suggest , that despite the given hype that education / literacy receives, democratic practices in decision making is driven less by education and more by *information* and *awareness* that citizens have. Certainly, states should fund and promote education and literacy, but then the problem is not lack of education but the gap between education and information.

Information plays a vital role in every decision making context. Mill, who privileges local participation in decision-making over any thing else, was cognizant of its significance but did not conceive it in/weave it into his analysis. [45] For Mill informed participation was more an outcome of citizen's deliberation, when he says that local political institutions are the schools of political capacity that make them capable of genuine and informed participation[46] But for many who study democratic participation, Information is but a crucial mediating variable.[47] Krishna, in *Poverty and Democratic Participation Reconsidered: Evidence from Local Level in India,* has shown based on his econometric study in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh that of the among variables

---

[44] Ibid pp73.

[45] Joseph E.Stiglitz, 'The Contribution of the Economics of Information to Twentieth Century', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics,* Economics,115(4), 2000, pp1441.

[46]Quoted in Niraja Gopal Jayal, Amit Prakash and Pradeep K. Sharma (ed) , *Local Governance in India: Decentralization and Beyond,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi,2006 pp 2-3.

[47] Quote by Larry Diamond, cited in Anirudh Krishna, 'Poverty and Democratic Participation Reconsidered: Evidence from the Local level in India', *Comparative Politics,* 38(4), 2006, pp1.

influencing participation, information matters much more than social and economic inequalities.[48] Informed citizens can deliberate rationally. They can form a frame of plausible ends and means, and seek to link the strategies to something more fundamental, critically reflect on the kinds of society and culture they value and engage in public discussion in judgments.[49] Put briefly, the argument runs as this. Many aspects of democratic deliberation were not, as had been generally supposed, the result of high educational or literacy levels but were borne out of well *informed* publics. Information is *empowering.Criticism*, reasoned deliberations come from *awareness* – of what they are as a 'group' are capable of doing .Only on being aware and knowledgeable, can one engage in valuable *functionigs and* exercise agency.

Female education is valued not for it's prospective economic returns, but more for social returns.- affecting child' health, attitudes towards contraception etc.[50]Informed agency had been utilized effectively to meet family planning targets and bring down gender differences significantly. The UDR , points out NFHS – II data

" information about different contraceptive methods, their side effects and follow up services by the health workers have been an important indicator of family planning. …. Data showed that knowledge about contraceptive use is almost universal among currently married women in Uttarakhand. And that there is lower unmet need of family planning"[51] High levels of female literacy coupled awareness have provided the right incentives for contract farming in many villages in the hills

" private sector and cooperatives are playing a key role in harnessing the potential of marginal and small farmers by providing them information , technical know how. …… the recent successful case of the Mamta Organization, NGO that tied up Safal for the sale of tomatoes."[52] Community, says Finnis, assumes some unity in the nature or the ability of communication, in shared knowledge and understanding, in language cultures and technology.[53] The village level watershed development programmes, including GAREMA (Gaon Resource Management

---

[48] Anirudh Krishna, 'Poverty and Democratic Participation Reconsidered: Evidence from the Local level in India', *Comparative Politics*

[49] Sabina Alkaire, *Valuing Freedoms, Sen's Capability Approach and Poverty Reduction,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002, page 92.

[50] Ibid pp266.

[51] Planning Commission, Government of India, *Uttarakhand Development Report,* 2009, pp 229-230.

[52] Ibid pp 297.

[53] Quoted as a footnote in Sabina Alkire, *Valuing Freedoms, Sen's Capability Approach and Poverty Reduction,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002, pp131.

Association) as per the UDR , is more successful and promising because of informed participation and decision making .[54] Alkire-

" when more than one decision maker is engaged , the process of act of choosing will may also show an intrinsic value in instantiating friendship, excersing sociability, or the consolidation of the sense of community , purpose and cooperation among the decision making group"[55]

Much of the discussion in the democratic participation is understood largely in terms of broad diffusion of liberal and democratic values, denial of civil and political rights. The role of knowledge and awareness is often concealed by preoccupations with widespread diffusion of education and literacy. High literacy level, though admirable and necessary are not sufficient. Stiglitz, for instance , throws some light in this regard

'The private returns to education- the enhanced probability of getting a getting a good job-might differ from the social return. Indeed, it was possible as that as people got educated, the private returns got higher even though social return to education might decline.'[56]

The divergence between in social and political returns is caused when citizens have less than sufficient knowledge about the working of the political system. Writing about Civic Culture, Almond and Verba considered 'cognition' to be a defining aspect of "political culture"

"the quality of the political debate as a precondition of an *enlightened understanding*"

If democracy expects its citizens to manage the complexities of politics and make *reasonable decisions,* reasons must be publicly produced and openly exchanged to show that favored outcomes in the interests of all. Citizens then, have sufficient knowledge and capacity to reflect and innovate and make agency possible. If, on the other hand, information is less diffused, politicians, bureaucrats, media and many in the civil society have an advantage in withholding information; citizens will not know which policies will produce what outcomes. Competitive populism will ensure that citizens with imperfect information are mobilized in ways that stands little in the way of abuse of power. Even the 'rule of law' cannot sustain itself without the modicum of *awareness.*

A good democracy ensures that citizens not only have civil, political rights but rights of information and comfortable access and sufficient freedom to exercise such rights.

---

[54] Planning Commission, Government of India, *Uttarakhand Development Report,* 2009, pp 293.
[55] Ibid pp 229-230.
[56] Joseph E.Stiglitz, 'Information and the Change in the Paradigm in Economics', *The American Economic Review,*92(3),2002, pp 463.

46

"Individuals and groups with better education and more information and other resources have power to shape public debates and preferences and to determine individual choices."[57]

Information is contained in the socially established ways of doing things. Culture is the repository of old information, and can be handy and useful in contexts where obtaining new information may be costly. Culture is a resource that can be drawn upon by groups for desired outcomes.[58] Cultural practices have *histories that* entail *interaction among persons.*[59] These citizenship practices, however, as Beteille reminds us[60] are 'historical categories', articulated over time by cultivating "habits of heart and mind". Upon entering as the folk conception, they provide the basis of undertaking rational evaluation.[61] When women in the Chipko struggle were mobilizing themselves around environmental issues, they were simultaneously creating history by transforming their practical gender needs into strategic needs by establishing political links through knowledge creation, dialogue, praxis and discussion. Because they embody history, they are vulnerable to change. Tactics and strategies of the antecedent may be of little use in the present contexts, but some the value and attitudes that lay beneath their success are worthy of being bequeathed.

What is, then, the relationship between level of information and norms of civic engagement? Is there, some casual connection between democratic deepening, on the one hand, strength of civic culture that coexists with low levels of awareness and, on the other. Do strong norms of political deliberation arise in the condition of high/low levels of information. In the following pages the link between information and community norms is examined to bring fore the conditions under which the two may collectively augment or weaken the local capacity of women to deliberate rationally.

---

[57] Larry Diamond and Lornado Morlino, ' The Quality of Democracy : An Overview', *Journal of Democracy,* 15(4),2004,pp 20-31.

[58] Vijendra Rao and Michael Walton (ed), *Culture and Public Action,* Permanent Black, Delhi, 2004.

[59] Sabina Alkire, *Valuing Freedoms, Sen's Capability Approach and Poverty Reduction,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002, pp139.

[60] Andrè Beteille, 'Citizenship, State and Civil Society', *Economic and Political Weekly of India,* 34(36), 1999, pp 2588.

[61] Barrington Moore , also cited in Frank Cunnighnan, *Theories of Democracy a Critical Introduction*

Information

	LOW	HIGH
Norms of Civic and Political **WEAK** Engagements		
STRONG		

On the basis of the *abductive* inference[62] , I would like to put forward the following hypothesis:

the degree of democratic participation is directly proportional to level of information and strength of the politically engaged social capital.

Contexts with combination of high trust and high information levels are also the ones that are associated with superior democratic performance. Strong norms of civic and political engagements when conjoined with high information contexts produce maximum payoff for women or B. Well informed citizens would show capacities to reflect and innovate, which in many ways, as we will see, makes agency to assert possible. On the other hand , when community groups evolve strong sanctioning mechanism , intra group ties, but are poor in information about resources that exist outside (exit is not allowed) , the returns from collective action may be very high but there are dangers of cooptation . Low levels of information may divert agency towards issues that fall short of interest articulation, thereby crippling their bargaining capacities.

---

[62] Abductive inference can be briefly described as an inference to the best explanation that goes from the data describing something to the hypothesis that best explains or accounts for the data. Suppose, D is the data collected (facts, given, observations), hypothesis H explains D such that, no other Hypothesis can explain D as well as H does. Then H is probably true.. This explanation is borrowed from John J Josephson and Susan G, *Abductive Inference: Computation, Philosophy and Technology*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1994, pp 5-14.

II Methodology

In this section, I briefly spell out the 'working *strategy*' – methodological foundations adopted in this study. Because of the broad and open ended orientation of the study, I tend to be less canonical in my approach, (if one looks at this work from a pure disciplinary point of view). As the ultimate aim is to undertake a comprehensive view on participation, the study seeks to be more flexible and interdisciplinary in nature combining diverse streams. What differentiates this strategy from the conventional one is that it begins its inquiry without explicitly stating the hypothesis. The absence of well defined and rigid hypothesis does not mean that one was unclear about what was being explored. The epistemological stance of the study being open ended, interdisciplinary, I did not prefer to start my research with a pure well defined proposition. Once in the field, I was reasonably confident that definitions would emerge by themselves. Variables would show themselves up as one engages one self 'intensively' in the field. The familiarization with one's 'contexts' and 'agents' , their purposes and actions , the information is gathered and is processed into *ideas* ,thereby increasing the analytic incisiveness of the study. While the preliminary field experience brought one closer to the contexts, they were 'technically' insufficient for elegant /scientific portrayal of reality. The observed continuity and regularity in behavior created 'necessity' for some type of generalization, that some how had to be explained. The deductive logic contained in the games was, therefore, invoked as a heuristic device to build one to one correspondence with the contexts. Deductions explain why all A's are B's. But that, infact, and unfortunately, is a 'very strong statement'. Ethnographic observations reveals that All A's are not B's, therefore there is a break, a kind of discontinuity, deviations implying that while the pattern of regularity may exist in some cases, there are other disturbing cases that fall 'off the equilibrium path', making a case for 'weak form of generalization'. This raises two important concerns -

1) either the causality was too 'weakly' premised that invalidates deductive logic
2) there exist a possibility of something ' indeterminate' that requires further elucidation.

Both concerns are valid, and it would be a big mistake to down play any of them.

Generally speaking, causality in game theory is based on a *contra factual reasoning.* How counterfactuals are constructed, then forms the most challenging part of the research design. In order to explain an event E, to use Dahl's words at this point, the usual thing is to find a cause C, that not only accompanies E but also precedes E .Once the relationship is established, then the contra factual can be generalized in the following form,

'If C occurs, then E happens,

If not C, then E does not occur'.[63]

What is , then, of crucial importance here is the 'salience of the relationship between C and E'. It is the 'randomness'' with which C occurs with E, that determines the strength of argument. The greater the probability of number of cases in which C precedes and accompany E, the greater the strength of the causality, vice versa. The research design should therefore, adopt a more cautious approach in identifying the independent variables C.

Second concern, is that very often C may be present, but the event E does not occur, a perennial problem cited in many researches. For instance, Almond in '*Clouds, Clocks and the Study of Politics*' calls it an 'inherent instability of variables'[64], a case for studying political change by focusing on the accidental conjunction and concentrating on the low probability of occurrence.[65] Change, he says,

"is not just the function of the determinate aspects , but also *adaptive and problem solving aspects*'.[66]

While the deductive and the axiomatic logic contained in games may be seriously limited in their capacity to handle the above mentioned problems solving aspect, all is not well either by pursuing a pure anthropological approach. Anthropology, says Bloch, links adaptation to knowledge that is 'stored' and therefore equates cultural and individual representations[67]. The principle drawback is that adaptation is not just a function of knowledge that agents store in their minds and recall when confronted

---

[63] Causality is explained by Robert Dahl, also cited in Gabriel A Almond and Stephen J.Genco, 'Clouds, Clocks and the Study of Politics', *World Politics*, 29(4), 1977, pp501.

[64] Ibid , pp 495

[65] Ibid pp 497

[66] Ibid.

[67] Maurice Bloch, Language, Anthropology and Cognitive Science, *Man*, 26(2), 1991, 183-184.

with similar task, but also of how they utilize the stored knowledge to variety of new contexts- the uncertain and unheard ones. Possessing information and knowledge is one thing, how this information is processed by agents and brought into produce variety of outcomes, is another. Efficiency in delivering favorable outcomes is contingent on the cognitive capacities of the agents.

Agency resides in the capacity of the agents to innovate and come up with new set of ideas to handle uncertainties and risks. One of the reasons, why Chipko appears to be fascinating is the new kind of response and an idea - hugging the trees that actors could innovate. The ideas about of Chipko and associated values are found in abundance, today, but the corresponding 'response' is seldom triggered. The problem of the 'missing agency' in the hills then is not, of the deficiency of the beliefs but has something to do with how information is processed and utilized.

Ignoring, how information is processed, can have very serious consequences. If the outcomes are contingent purely on what agents have learnt and stored, then the variety of the failures so commonly associated with functioning of democracies and developmental practice could be conveniently located in the deficiency of knowledge that agents have – information that culture provides. Culturally rich environment would always progress well, while the poor ones would impoverish perpetually. Such an approach, would, then, take us in a different direction altogether.

Understanding of experiences entails that complexities are acknowledged. Adopting a middle ground would mean alluding to both the frameworks. The study *of participative behavior, thus , takes a functional form , dependent on multiple independent factors, internal as well as external; a 'given' at the same time 'constructed', the relative weights of which will vary with social or political configuration of a context '*. Participation, to begin with could both rational and cultural in orientation. Focusing, exclusively on the external aspects while down playing the cognitive aspects, would produce partial accounts. 'Causality', therefore, has to simplified by alluding to configurations that are both external and internal to agent .Externally, this would mean incorporating positivist interpretation, internal would mean – hermeneutic, identifying the agents reasons,

motives etc. Understanding, according to Robert E Stake[68], entails a psychological dimension relating to thoughts, feelings and motivations of the objects of the study. It seeks to uncover 'intentionality' contained in a social action i.e. the aim, purpose and meaning of sign.

"An action therefore, is internally an outcome of the deliberative process in which the agent is assumed to act for reasons and take actions which are best on the reasons available to him."[69]

Building upon the core epistemological concerns presented in the first half of the chapter, it combines the logic contained in the *games and* validating it with the qualitative methodological techniques – ethnography appeared to be a sensible strategy. Ethnography is one of the options that may be utilized for gaining incisiveness. Ethnography has in the recent times emerged as an important 'a mode of knowledge acquisition for understanding and validating the limits of game theory.[70] The study, therefore, uses ethnography to explore some of the questions raised so far.

Though, the study may appear to less canonical in orientation, yet in designing its research strategy, it follows some percepts which are commonly pursued

It sketches each variable, *argues that the wisdom is right and then reflects*[71]

And

"choose a case that guarantees us *range of variation on independent variable*"[72]

Following two contexts were undertaken,

One, in Chamoli, where, on the one side of the Alkananda river valley, a distinct continuity with the past was maintained, while in the other part, discontinuities showed

[68] Robert E Stake, 'The Case Study Method in Social Inquiry', *Education Reseracher*, 7(2),1978, p6.
[69] John Ferejohn ,External and Internal Explanations, in Ian Shapiro and others (eds), *Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics,* Cambridge University Press, U.K.,2004pp153.
[70] According to Morrow, rational behaviour entails the best means to gain predetermined sets of ends , it is evaluation of the consistency of the choices and not of the the thought process of implementation of the fixed goals and morality of goals ,.. but most of the researches infer 'intention' by observing 'expost facto' the same action, and--- to infer actor 's rationality one has to infer that actor intended to employ certain means to achieve the goal and observe the actual means employed. cited in Jan Kubik , Ethnography of Politics: Foundations Applications and Prospects in Edward Schatz (ed), *Political Ethnography: What Immersion can Contribute to the Study of Power,* University of Chicago Press,2009, pp32.
Elinor Ostrom fro instances uses ethnography to show how decentralized system of Collective Action emerge and remain stable over centuries.
[71] Ronald Rogowski , The Role of Theory and Anomaly in Social Scientific Inference, *The American Political Science Review,* 89(2), 1995, pp469.
[72] Ibid , pp 470.

up. For displaying the quality of continuity, Teda Khansal Gram Panchayat , lying on the banks of river Alakananda was selected, while for the latter, Bariangana Gram panchayat , the Mandal valley , lying on the banks of the Balkhila river , a small tributary of the Alkananda river was chosen .Both the gram panchayats covered three villages each, come under the same development block – Dausoli, were active in during the Chipko and the subsequent state movement. An attempt was, thus, made to show, how and why each sub context, maintained its distinctiveness, differences today, despite once, being a part of the undifferentiated history.

The other context, an all Gorkhali village ' Purohitwalla' , Sahaspur Block , lying on the fringes of the state's capital Dehardun, urban in content, constitutes marginal and a departure for being unconnected with Chipko/ statehood movement ,although having it's own unique historical, cultural and political context .

The two cases have an intrinsic value, one where 'temporality 'of Chipko is explored ,and other context where women were unconnected with either Chipko or statehood movements,presents us with 'variations across the space'.

A clear 'range of variability' has been maintained by selecting one 'all women gram Panchayat' – Purohitwala ,a 'women headed Gram panchayat' with male and female ward members in the - Tedakhansaal gram panchayat and 'a male headed gram panchayat' with male and female ward members in the Bariangana gram panchayat.Further, the problem of 'missing agency' was diagnosed by selecting one village which was more urban in orientation, life styles and values-Purohitwala , and other two in Chamoli , which is more rural life styles, to facilitate the identification of key independent variables that are critical in determining participation.

Both the stories are then coordinated to provide a comprehensive understanding, by locating the two unifying themes, commonalities across the two contexts, -

1) privileging 'community wide processes'- village level and patterns civic reciprocities sometime sustain , while at the other times , produce rapid change in values and attitudes.

2) Information and level of awareness.

The two variables are not insulated from one another. The experiences of many women in Panchayats are irreducible to any one of these two common identifiable variables. The problem was finally illustrated in a form a grid type of presentational style. The square grid in the previous section, simplifies the tasks classifying each village / unit of analysis /data according to the strength and weakness of the two independent variables and to obtain greater precision and clarity for analysis.

As I reached closer to developing my hypothesis, I refrained from making sweeping generalizations rather, the idea was to have a hypothesis of general relevance that may go a long way in explaining, a given situation. The interpretations, therefore, may or may not correspond to other contexts. My field observations, presented in the next chapter in the form ethnography of 'Pahari village' is not based on a strict representative sample, usually employed in 'rigorous' research[73]. The selection of villages and women were to a determined to large extent by accessibility, acceptability and availability (of time and finances (hard pressed on both).

It is very difficult to comprehend a social life in a Pahari village. Uttarakhand villages exhibit subtle variations especially in the degree of importance attached to shared and collective activities as compared to independent atomistic existence. Interestingly, as will be seen differences exist, not only between the Garhwali and Gorkhali villages, villages of plains and hills , villages of Alkananda and Balkhila valley but also between villages falling under the same 'gram panchayat'. The ethnography outlined in the following chapter seeks to build a link between these less rigid, idiosyncratic differences with the participative behavior of women.

Limited accessibility, should not viewed as a serious handicap. Very often, one's own identity proves to be hindrance. Being Rajput by caste meant that Brahmin women were unwilling to come forward. The hindrance, however, was to a large extent down played by involving a Brahmin as a key informant. Puspa Kimothi, from neighboring village, who works with an NGO Bharat Gyan Vigyan, was indeed very helpful and in many ways for bringing down my anxieties. Groups constituted for discussions, were formed

---

[73] By rigorous research, I mean the conventional methodology adopted in the pure disciplinary pursuits, where games theory is validated by adopting experimental methods. The approach, however, is eschewed here.

keeping in mind the 'composite' and 'representative' character of the region.[74] Difficulties were experienced in contacting and finding women. Pahari women, as has been said earlier, have a busy schedule. Not every one could be contacted. Door to door interviewing was impossible, as women spent much of their time, either in the forest, tending fields, or with the cattle in the *chan*[75]. Most of the discussions were, thus, held late in the afternoon when women were back from the forest or had finished their morning household chores. The meetings were usually called by the Mahila Mangal Dals and were held either in the panchayat building (Kunkuni), temple courtyard (Purohitwala),or an open space like *chowk.*For me these meeting were something more than a serious research undertaking. They were mini *kitty parties* and *coffee meets,* occasionally lavishly organized. Not a single village, greeted me without flowers, nor allowed me to leave without *Kalyu.*[76]

I lived in the valley for only few days and only occasionally among the villagers; as they spent most time in the woods, collecting fuel, firewood. Very often, I was interacting with only few women and my key informants. Nevertheless, this limited contact was of no less significance. Communicating with few enables one to enter into their daily lives, *ways of living* and finally, one finds one self in direct communicating with the interacting with entire village itself. There was little reason to believe that women were not lying, but one always had to caution oneself to prevent any distortions in the facts. Validity of their descriptions was restored by maintaining the consistency between observation and descriptions.

Because of Chipko, the villages in the hills have been center of attraction for many decades now. They are the hot favorite sites of social and ecological inquiry, even today. Many of them have been researched umpteen times. Before my own my visit to the valley, the villagers had been quizzed by researchers, from home and abroad. They looked wearied and tired of answering and narrating the same stories of Chipko and its aftermath. Some of them were clever enough to trick us. They know, what we want and

---

[74] This by itself was an important finding that caste matters.

[75] Cow shed.

[76] Kalyu is a basket of gift usually containing homemade *Arase* (kind of cookie made out of rice flour and jaggery, common in hills), local berries-*Kafal ,* fruits and bottle of locally made *Burans ka sharbat(* Fruit juice, burans is rododenderon-red colored flower, commonly found in hills)

fabricate their answers to please us and have fun. The experience is best summed by Basu's words, who makes similar observation, while conducting fieldwork around Hyderabad, 'Sir, please tell me whether this for an Mphil or Phd and I will accordingly make my answer.'[77]

The danger of falling into trap is so great, that one has to give up relying on 'questionnaire' as a tool to unearth the data. I had initially, prepared a long list of questions. The inappropriateness of 'survey' as a method of inquiry was made evident by inconsistent responses of many women. While on one hand, they may not deny that the equal opportunities for women, do not exist, on the other, in their urge to live up to ideals and virtues of womanhood, they may not hesitate in ascribing their personal experiences as 'women *possible paths of lives*[78] .The risk of default with standard questionnaire type research, under these circumstances, is indeed, very high. One should, therefore , eschew being a *'rapid collector'*[79] instead try to ferret out details by adopting more *experiential* approach- learning to feel , see and behave as an ' insider participant'[80].

Understanding 'participation' in the collective village level meetings such as *gram sabha or* panchayat, one needs tools to evaluate women as *situated agents*[81]- giving them a chance to be heard and involved in collective village level meetings.

The task of demonstrating 'empirically' the relationship between women's *situated agency and choice* (particularly reproductive choice) is problematic, more so in rural areas. It is commonly held that spread of female literacy and education leads to declining fertility rates. While this is true and indeed evident from the census figures that are usually shown to us. On the contrary, face to face casual and often long drawn interaction with women may reveal that declining fertility rates may not necessarily mean that women *prefer* fewer children. One often overlooks the fact that spread of new

---

[77] Kaushik Basu 'India and the Global Economy: Role of Culture, Norms and Beliefs', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 36(40), 2001, pp.3837-3842.

[78] Barbara Tedlock , 'Ethnography and Ethnographic representations' in Norman K Denizen and Yunnova S.Lincoln, (ed), *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*, Sage Publications, California,2003,pp185.

[79] Phrase coined by Alfred C Haddon, quoted in Barbara Tedlock, 'Ethnography and Ethnographic representations' in Norman K Denizen and Yunnova S.Lincoln, (ed), *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*, Sage Publications, California, 2003, pp167.

[80] Point put forward by Malinowski, quoted by Barbara Tedlock, in the above book, pp167.

[81] Bina Agarwal and others (ed), *Capabilities, Freedom And Equality: Amartya Sen's work from a Gender Perspective*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006, pp 3.

technologies of birth control can and does bring fertility levels significantly down without changing her *preferences*. Women in hills, as elsewhere, do have a preference for male children and consequently the spread of newer technologies may be utilized more for identification of child sex and female infanticides. In a normal 'questionnaire' based survey, women being educated may, for various reasons conceal her *subjective* preferences. They may fail to overtly express themselves. The ideas of women's well being and her consequent 'empowerment , if understood in terms of one's abilities to resist oppression , then have to be gathered by means other than · those that rely exclusively on surveys.

'Flaws in our methodology can have very serious consequences. Rather than asking if voters meet ideal expectations......, which has often been the implicit standard; it would be more productive to observe how people are regularly making choices.'[82]

Field taught me to switch over to 'observation' as tools – *an* ethnography involving 'participation' in their everyday lives to capture the essence. 'Participant behavior' that entails at one level, accessing collective expressions of village culture – folk songs, festivals often rituals , and community works , thereby facilitating the study of community/ village level belief systems , values that enter into the decision making process. On the other level, as decision making being an individual enterprise involves focusing upon agent's interests, actions, preferences and value orientations that may or may not be at congruence with collective expressions of the group, which could not be ignored. Hence, once again, one is caught itself up in the dilemma of reconciling 'holism' and. 'individualism' of how one should place one self as researcher between the two poles. The field work report, presented in the next chapter seems to have some what shifting orientation.

There is another inherent danger commonly encountered in ethnographic fieldwork, if carried out in one's own state of domicile, especially when the researcher and researched have different socially acknowledged identities. Frequent visits, conversation or verbal encounters between ethnographers and 'natives' can take serious turn, more if the village is ideologically driven.

---

[82] Russel J Dalton, Hans- Dieter Klingermann, (ed), *Oxford Handbook of Political Behaviour,* Oxford University Press, Oxford,2007,pp 5.

The method generally followed to collect data was of participant observation, combined with limited questioning.[83]For holding group discussions, I contacted on the NGOs like Bharat Gyan Vigyan, Dausoli Gram Swaraj Mandal that spear headed the sarvodaya movement in the Chamoli, and of course the Gorkhali Sudhar Sabha in Purohitwala, explaining them my work. Occasionally, the help of the panchayat and ward members was taken, since they tend have a large following within their 'respective' villages. An important outcome of the discussions was that there was considerable variation in the value attributed to the shared activities undertaken in a village. Some were more independent and autonomous, willing usually to free ride, on the other hand there were many who placed heavy emphasis on the group complementarities and solidarity. As a result of which the data collected was insufficient to arrive at a feasible 'generalizable' interpretations. This is another problem, which I feel is extremely frustrating to handle.

---

[83] Often called incognito interviewing, by anthropologists

3. ETHNOGRAPHY

Ideally speaking, for a comprehensive understanding of *way of life*, *'community'* appears to be a relevant unit of analysis. But the notion of *Pahari* community is untenable. To begin with, the term 'pahari' is ambiguous, for various connotations it may suggests. First, it refers to the *geographical region* of lower Himalayas from western Kashmir to eastern Nepal. Secondly, it may signify the *'shared cultural and historical traits'*. Finally, it may describe a distinct *language* family in taxonomy of languages. Given the sheer size, plurality of cultural traditions and fragmented history of hills, it is difficult, intellectually, in my opinion, to conceive a *distinct* idea of community built around unidentifiable and vague notions of 'Pahari'.[1] Communities, to quote Berry man again, should be 'manageable units'[2] permitting, at least some amount of detail study.

Not surprisingly then, 'village' emerges as a basic viable unit of analysis, around which people in India, have historically organized their social and political lives. There exists a vast literature on village communities in India, the comprehensive review of which is unwarranted here .While describing the aspects of village life, ethnographers have not hesitated to invoke essential ideas of community – commonalities of needs, problem and interest.

The reason why village is so in our case, held up as a 'community' is because at one level it represents a *social milieu* capable of nourishing its people, while at the other, it exits as an *idea* endowed with practical and ideological significance. People in the hills use 'village' as means of identifying 'themselves' from 'others'. Village, as a symbol of identification is invoked commonly while arranging marriages. One should not be surprised to find that *paharis* have good recollect ions regarding the natal villages of their grandmothers and great grandmothers and often invoke their names while in conversation with one another. In their everyday utterances, village imbues them with a sense of idea of who they are and how they relate themselves. Following the 73rd amendment act and resurgence of politics at the gram panchayat level, 'village' is invoked, as will be seen in

---

[1] Gerald D. Berreman, takes the whole region as a distinct unit, I on the other hand, hold a different view. For ideas on Berreman's account, one may refer to Gerald D. Berreman, *Hindus of the Himalayas: Ethnography and Change*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1963, pp9.
[2] Ibid, pp259.

the following pages, more aggressively. Village, thus, exists as an economically self sufficient, distinct and displaying varying capacity for endurance. The ontological premises of its corporate existence, cognitive disposition, 'affective' aspects that give meaning to the village life, in hills, have, sadly, in the recent times, been diminished.

Family, nuclear or joint, continues to be basic social, economic and ritual unit. Households, though living separately are bound together by mutual aid and common agricultural land, owned by the family. Even today, one's family or *kutumb* is identified with kin members who may or may not live together under the same roof, or share common hearth but trace there decent from common mythological ancestor and jointly participates in social and religious activities. Family- thus, becomes the basis of primary socialization, providing stability, security in times of hardships and in many cases organization of agricultural labor. With the diffusion of electoral politics in the countryside, family has emerged as an important unit of local politics. Large families compete with one another for political advantages. In order to have political leverage over rivals, families often unite with the kinsmen to gain strength and cohesion for local political processes. Families form alliances with distant kinsmen or the members of the same caste to shape 'outcomes' of political decisions- panchayat elections, village meetings. Often alliances are formed with the promise of extending special favors, concessions, which may or may not be met. The renege of promise, leads to breakdown of alliance and thereby creating possibilities for new formations making village politics *fluid* and *uncertain*.

What , however, is harder to escape is that the social life in the hills foregrounds itself in *such* forms and principles , existing within and beyond villages- kin, kutumb, caste, affines but are of ,no less in importance , for the expectations they are capable of creating. Village is, though, 'basic' but not the exclusive groupings into which villagers organize themselves. It loses some of it's prominence to these sub and supra local yet contingent groupings.

In regards their social structure, people in the hills have definite ideas and since early times, and divide their communities into discreet castes *Bith and Dom*[3] . Being the *dwijas,* the *Bith* consists of the Pahari Brahmins and Rajputs while *doms are* former untouchable castes. In addition to these two or three fold classification, the villagers recognize the existence of a parallel commercial business class- group of shopkeepers or *Banias* from the plains and *marchchas- Bhotias ,* now a scheduled Tribe , that lie apart from the two fold caste structure.[4] In the hills, the *dwijas* and the *doms* are less integrated socially and economically, (unlike the plains.).Consequently, the hostilities are also less pronounced than in the plains. In structural terms, these castes are less elaborate. The social relations, which unfolds, then makes the region appear less socially strained and *egalitarian,* at the first glance. However, this is may not always be the case.

In ancient times, the villages in hills were more or less single caste and the 'village' and 'caste' reinforced each other. While today, the villages have assumed a more multicaste character.Even with this dissolution of territorial link, caste is compelling, a provider of political identity. Through the preservation of ritual idioms, castes have merged as an alternative explanation of commonalities and differences, a distinct consciousness capable of producing common interests. With the introduction of the democratic politics, the salience and pertinence of caste, as a criterion for defining boundaries of groups can hardly be ignored. The pattern of social interaction that unfolds is characterized with political tension and inter caste hostilities between the Brahmins and Rajputs on one hand, and Kumaonis and Garhwali's, not to forget the Gorkhali, on the other.

Other than one's kutumb, family and caste, friendship between the non kin members forms the 'residual category ' of bonds that may be valued for instrumental reasons , a practical , rational and reasonable response , though voluntary yet loaded with political and moral ideas and ways which regulate individual behaviour. By evaluating and assessing each others behaviour against the widely held expectations, the vague

---

[3] For details on the on the caste structure, one may look up H.G. Walton, *Gazetteer of Garhwal Himalayas* ,Natraj Publishers, Dehradun , 1989, pp 60-64.
[4] The caste structure in the hills is different from the four fold model found commonly in plains. Banias are conspicuous by their absence.

and flexible social life in the hills provides it self with opportunities to manipulate the existing structures of reciprocities for variety of aspirational goals.- preservation of the group identity, foster individual claims, undertaking 'ringal ropan' , village collective action and so on . Being inherent part of the culture, these reciprocities are laced with locally cognitive and appropriate frameworks to undertake tasks of collective nature. They are 'communicative' and at times, explicitly determining and implementing public goals, strategies, leaving little room for individual 'enterprise'. Following decentralization and the grant of statehood, these features of social life play supplementary and parallel role in the political structures at the village levels.

As a moral and self regulating system, the voluntary aspect of the community life in the hills allows being conscious of its existence but, at the same time, is poorly equipped to reach its full potential. With the redundancy of many community practices, problems of information and uncertainty tend to loom large. Information is seldom evenly shared among community members .Information is a 'scarce commodity', the control of which tends be located strategically in the hands of few 'intermediaries- state and non state actors'. Most of the villagers particularly women are then less autonomous agents , highly dependent on these intermediaries who possess bulk of information and expertise- how to obtain loans, where to get employment- NREGA , technology , education ,health and other services considered 'critical' and other matters of direct importance to cultures. While village continues to be provider of the *basic needs but upon assuming multi caste composition,* it's traditional modes for transmitting and sharing information, regulatory capacity stand some what diminished.

Post Chipko, the villages in the Chamoli as, elsewhere, have witnessed a huge influx of agencies- community of middle men / brokers who mediate between villagers and the state and maintain near exclusivity in performing and guarding these functions by patterning themselves along fictive kinship ties- 'Didi bhuli.' These personalized terms of addressing are frequently used to gain legitimacy and acceptance. Besides, 'didi Bhuli', *'mere kutumb', 'mere gaon'* are commonly invoked to spread the message. Generally speaking, most of these agencies are either woefully corrupt (based on the narratives

provided by women) or are characterized by poor functioning and organizational styles that has resulted in destroying some of the pre existing communicative channels between the villages.

Often governed by customs, villages in the hills are weak societies, with poor resources of enforcement and lack of social control. By invariably maintaining the mix of identities, hill societies *strategically* provide themselves with diversified portfolio of social capital as an insurance against the 'uncertainties'. Villager's value certain affiliations in certain times while at other times find it convenient to appeal to all together different social configuration. The complexity and 'flux' permit the *flexibility and variability in tracing relatedness, adherence and group reckoning patterns. But in all , the outcomes though less predictable, thanks to flux in social life, are product of unique blend of rational calculations of costs and benefits , where ever, information is available, while at other times, based on shared meanings.*

Before one moves further, it is necessary to cull out some important themes that are of relevance to our research. First, villages as 'communities' create expectations concerning one's behavior, how others expect one to behave in a given context. The convergence of these expectations and beliefs produces trust and mutuality that help in building up social capital, the outcomes of which may be contingent on the structural aspects of village life. Second, given their atomistic nature, if one is permitted to call them so, the communities in the hills have developed mechanisms to counteract these rather divisive aspects and promote cooperation through micro structural face to face contacts, interpersonal relations, and networks. One needs to 'unpack' the village life; and study whether the above mentioned expectations are based on notions of *'necessities'* or *'affinities'*[5]*or both.* Generally speaking , communities of 'necessities' are short lived while those based on shared affections, common goals and unity of vision and ideology survive longer. This may be a difficult to adjucate, but nevertheless a goal worth pursuing if the research seeks

---

[5] Stephan A Marglin, *Dismal Science: How Thinking like Economists Undermines Community,* Harvard University Press, U.S, 2008, pp 20-36.

to understand role of motives – self interest or altruism behind women's strategies and responses.

The last but not the least, we need to uncover how village communities in the hills *deliberate,* and regulate their lives.


I

For many, 'Garhwal' evokes an image of, *an* insurmountable Himalayas, a rugged and an irregular terrain, steep mountain ridges, a *dev Bhoomi,* abode of mighty rivers , thick forests cover endowed with their bounty of flora and fauna, inhabited by , simple, yet trustworthy, somewhat sturdier men and women whose height seldom exceeds 5 ft 4" but who make a good and natural soldier.

As a region, it corresponds to rectangular landmass lying between Tibet in the north, Bijnor on the west with discontinuous boundaries in the south and east, and appears more distinct today, at least 'administratively', as it covers seven districts of the newly carved hill state. In all of them except Dehradun and Haridwar, development is woefully retarded. Poor industrialization, backwardness in agriculture has resulted in 'money order economy' in the hills. Most of the men in the villages seek employment outside, notably in army; while the women are left behind to practice subsistence type farming.

While the word 'Garhwal', *may,* etymologically, refers to the 'country of forts', in practice , thanks to the mighty Himalayan rivers, the 'fortification and isolationism that word suggests has never been complete .The rapidity of these mountain rivers has on one hand, made them unfit for navigation , on the other , the ferocity of these rivers and sheer pace permits the Himalayan timber to float conveniently down to factories in plains. The isolation of hills was also to some extent limited by border trade with Tibet carried on usually by the *Bhotias,* the elaborate account of which is provided to us by Walton[6]. Much of the trade has been discontinued, following the Chinese aggression

---

[6] H.G Walton,
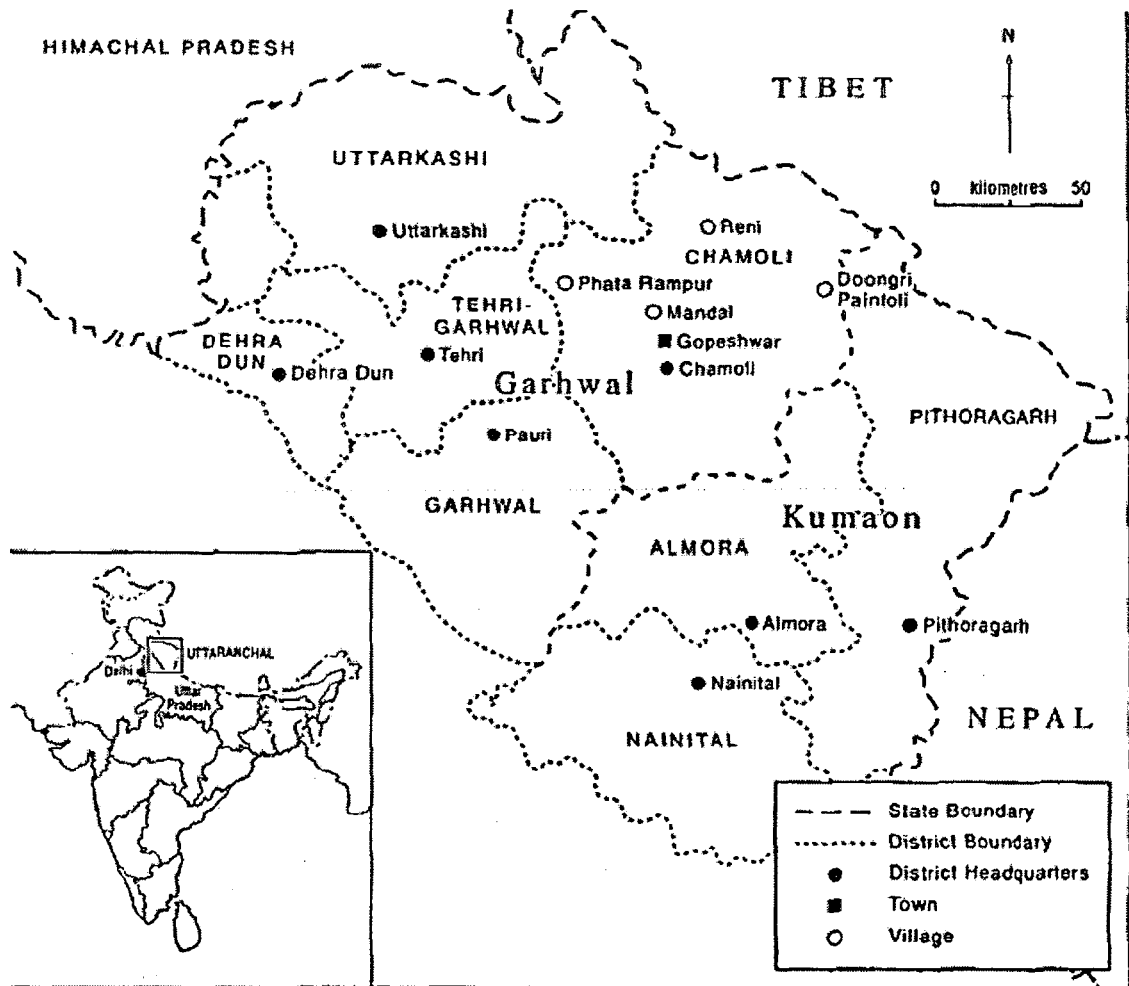
Source: Emma Mawdelsky, 'After Chipko: From environment to region in Uttaranchal', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 25 (4), 1996, pp38.

The awareness, regarding the scale of natural devastation caused by Alkananda floods did exert a powerful force upon the character of villagers and submerged their collective psyche into unheralded complexity that unfolded in the hills, sparking off concerns for evolving a rational and a reasonable response against the vagaries of nature by activating women networks, forest management practices and being attentive to specific organized aspects of group and community life. Driven largely by their total dependence on forests, being prone to common problems, perspectives requiring joint and organized action, women in the villages, even today, inform and sustain /transcend the diversities offered by caste and express a some what subtle variety of common *concern*.

The geographical area covering intermontane valley located to the east of Alkananda, at an altitude of around 12, 000ft , devoted to the cultivation of wide variety of crops rice, wheat , coarse cereals like *jhangora* and *mandua ,* lies Dausoli drained by Akananda and its tributaries , integrated with and well connected to the district head quartes Gopeshwar that lies on the main *yatra route* to Badrinath and Kedarnath. Dasouli villages have a long, yet, less remembered history of their trade with Tibet but more recently, has gained prominence, for being crucible of well known *Chipko andolan.* While, the whole Dausoli block, may appeared as a culturally distinct in the past, this may no longer be the case, today. In recent times, one notes that while villages in the Alkananda valley show some kind of continuity with the Chipko, the link appears to be some what broken in the Balkhila valley . The study was thus, undertaken in two parts , one that covered the Bariangna gram panchayat lying in the Mandal valley on the banks of river Balkhila , a tributary of Alkanada and the other covers the Tedakhansal gram panchayat in the Alkananda valley. For convenience, I shall be referring to them as the Balkhila valley and Alkananda valley, respectively.

Balkhila valley

Caste based factions, fluidity in social life, prolonged hostility between the groups are the common features of political community of the Baraigana Gram Panchayat.

The affairs of the gram panchayat are not of much interest to many inhabitants of 'Kunkuni'. A day before my first visit, the meeting of the Gram Sabha had taken place. Not all the women present in the meeting were aware of the fact, that Gram Sabha was held a day before. Not much importance was attached to the matters taken up during the meeting, either. Only Prema Kimothi, a young ward member and Parvati, a poor old woman from village had attended the meeting. NREGA was the most important issue that came up when, Prema, raised the issue of the job cards in the meeting.

"the job cards for may women in my village , who work on daily casual basis had not been made . I raised the issue in the Gram Sabha, asking the Pradhan to intervene and take action. Rana is deaf man'. M.S. Rana, a young man from Bairangana heads the gram

panchayat that consist of members from two other villages besides Bairangana, Badhakoti and Kunkuni. Rana is powerful man, but very unpopular in Bhadha Koti and Kunkuni. "He came only once, that too for asking votes" said Prema

"He need not ask that too, because he knows how to get votes' said Manju

The women disclosed that Rana had used corrupt ways to win election. He lavishisly distributes money and liquor to win votes. "he has misled many of our men especially youth, many of whom spend all day drinking"

As expected Rana did not give a damn to what Prema uttered. "I was humiliated and felt insulted", she continued,

"He has a larger faction, clout of men who are always with him .As I started to speak; they began howling and creating noises. Not everyone present in the Gram Sabha meeting could hear what I was speaking"

Prema was indeed right. To elucidate her point, it is necessary to have brief idea about the political community in Bairangana gram panchayat. The panchayat covers three villages namely Bairangana, Bhadha koti and Kunkuni.All the three villages extend from the banks of Balkhila river (a tributary of Alkananda) onto the surrounding hills. The entire region is intensely cultivated and there is no possibility of extending the cultivated area. While most of the lands in valley bottom are 'sere', (irrigated), those extending high up in the mountains are rainfed. Among the three, Bairangana is the largest and has more *seras*, than the other two while topography in Bhadhakoti has stepper gradient with barren mountainous tracts. Practically all land, especially the *sere* are owned Rajputs or Brahmin families[7], co residing in all the three villages. Most of the villagers were either cultivators or were employed in the nearby town of Gopeshwar. . The essential asset of villagers is his ownership to land- irrigated and well terraced, and only through control of these resources can clans claim to have some moral authority of being political powerful. The main relevance of the agnatic ownership of *sere* is commonly seen in gram Sabha meetings.

The socio – political structures of many of these villages can be traced to times when villages were controlled by *feudatories, - 'thokdars', patwaris – managed the land*

---

[7] Backward castes or doms do own some tracts

records, forests, along with some civil and police duties, *and the pradhans-* responsible for collection of village revenue. In the modern times, the functionalities of have transformed. While 'thokdars' have gone, their decendants maintain a mere symbolic presence and the Patwari and Pradhan have lost hereditary s ascribed status. But to some extent, their symbolic existence serves as a means of validating and socially acknowledging their status, if not, a kind of dominance that is commonly occurs in the plains.

Formally all adults above the age of 18 are the members of the Sabha By it's formal constitution, Gram Sabha is to meet bi annually to discuss the tax proposal, undertaking the review of the existing schemes and work, identification of the beneficiaries, undertaking family welfare, approving village plans. It is required to be an egalitarian institution where decisions are arrived at democratically, based on the popular participation. But in practice, there is little convergence and consensus. Villagers and families align against one another in debates. Alignments' and opposition have become structural features of such meetings.

Village panchayats are characterized by what Evan's Pritchard called

" situational balance opposition of groups, although groups tend to split into opposed parts, these parts tend to fuse in relation to other parts and the political system becomes a system of fusion and fission, of relativity and opposition of segments"[8]

In the gram panchayat, the situational balance was in favor of Rana and Baraingana a numerically preponderant village.

A long and heated discussion ensued. It became an " an all talk and no action' work shop, where each side is allowed to engage in the long arguments, air grievances and display their oratorical skills to villagers and thereby try and score points over the other.

Rana's clan owns the largest *sere* in Baraingana.Every one will abide by their wishes".
"Our matters will never be taken up seriously'
Parvati is a poor woman, who lives with her old husband in Kunkuni and had been struggling hard to get herself job card. "We own nothing, except, two goats. Most of the

---

[8] Evans Pritchard, cited in Fredrick Barth, 'Segmentary Opposition and the Theory of Games: A Study of Pathan Organization', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland,* 89(1), 1959, pp 6.

time of the year, my husband is without job. He is old and we have no children to take care of us. I am in desperate need of work." Parvati is a casual laborer says that she remains without work for most part of the year and that she and her husband are dependent on other kin members for their sustenance. She also recalled how difficult it was for her and her husband enrolled as the BPL beneficiaries. Parvati along with Prema and other women from the neighboring village of Badhakoti had raised their concerns of inaccessibility of NREGA work at the recently held gram Sabha meeting.

"Pradhans and his men did not allow us too speak. We came back empty handed. We don't know where to go".

NREGA, now known as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, is a national law that entitles every poor unskilled rural household 'right to work' for not less than 100 days on public works. Though funded by union it is implemented across all the states in which local administration – panchayats are required by law, to provide work on demand, within 15 days of receipt of application. In case the panchayat fails to provide the work, the family is entitled to an "unemployment allowance". The only precondition for which is that the family should be registered and have a job card. Women generally prefer NREGA for it guarantees statuary minimum wage in case of work and unemployment allowance otherwise. It has a higher predictability and regularity. Women prefer public work to working under private contractors as the latter are poorly paid, irregular and exploitative. However, many women in Kunkuni and the neighboring village of Badhakoti were less aware of entitlements and rights under NREGA .

The persisting opposition prevents fusing of women's interests into one. Villagers direct their collective energies to gain advantage over the rival villages. Villagers from Kunkuni and Badhakoti, generally find themselves on weak footing vis a vis Bairangana. The only option for them under such circumstances is to make the best use of kinship and caste relations that often extend into preponderant neighbors, either through friendship or marriage. While Braingana and Badhakoti were preponderant with Rajputs , Kunkuni had a mixed profile. " hamare yahan , Barthwal (rajput) aur Kimothi (Brahmin) bhi hai."[9] Continued Prema, who was a Brahmin by caste. " but Badhakoti is village inhabitated by

---

[9] We have Barthwal families and Kimothi families too.

69

some 11-12 Rana (Rajput) families and only two Semwal (Brahmin) families". Given the caste composition and caste ridden politics it is difficult for many women too conceive of something of joint platform against the Ranas.

Sharing and community spirit was stronger within the village, especially, over the issues of forests. Not surprisingly then the villagers especially, women take interest in the management of their forest. Of the total area of 34,000 sq.km (over 60% of the state's total area), nearly 12% of the forests are managed by van panchayats. Garhwal has more land under forest as compared to Kumaun with over 34% of forest cover is concentrated in the three districts of Uttarkashi , Chamoli and Rudraprayag, Kumaon, on the other, has about two thirds of the van panchayats.[10] Since the colonial days, van panchayat have been an integral part of the administrative set up in the state. The Uttaranchal Forest Rules, 2001, latest guidelines, stipulate the procedures for the formation of van panchayats.[11] The three villages falling under the Bairangana gram panchayat had their own van panchayat to protect and manage their village forests. All women in the Mandal, took keen interest in the forest affairs.Kunkuni van panchayat had an all women nine member, van panchayat headed by Meenu Kimothi, a young and an educated woman.

"We usually meet once month in the Mahila Milan Kendra that has been made recently made by Zilla Panchayat, (Chamoli), to discuss our plans and finances." The villagers make an annual contribution that Rs50 to Rs.60. for it's upkeep .van panchayats also impose fines on defaulters. The money thus collected is used to build fences and boundary walls to protect the trees from the neighboring village's stray cattle. In case of trespass, "we hold up their cattle till its owner from the neighboring village pays us fine" said Champa. "They some times do it deliberately, *our* forests are better than *theirs*. Each village has a Mahila Raksha Samiti - an all women squad constituted to guard the village forests. The idea of women's guarding dates back to Chipko days, when all

---

[10] Ashok Kumar ,Van Panchayats in Uttaranchal ,in Niraja Gopal Jayal, Amit Prakash, Pradeep K. Sharma, *Local Governance in India: Decentralization and Beyond,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006, pp91.
[11] Ibid pp61-63.

women in the village volunteered, on an alternate turn basis, to guard and protect trees at night.

"We use to go in the evening and come back next morning." said an old women, recounting Chipko days, "we often could raise alarm, when contractors tried to trespass in nights.' "We were one against the outsiders –contractors; today we protect our forests from our kinsmen, our neighbors" ". As villagers protect their forests interests, they construct and make use rudimentary ideas of 'us' and 'them' which occasionally flares up into inter village conflicts.

Most the collective action is organized at village level , involving forest issues in which the van panchayat takes a keen interests and shows leadership by drawing plans and executing them.

"Recently, we collectively undertook the *Ringal Ropan*,[12] in which the whole village participated in the planting bamboo saplings in the forests." ONGC as a part of it's corporate social responsibility had undertaken the task of regenerating bamboo forest in about 5 hectares in the Mandal valley in which the Van Panchayats Kunkuni and Bhadha Koti had played an important role.

Villages function more like a community with Van panchayat emerging as truly local institution, as it is confines it's activities to particular village. The relationship between the van panchayat and gram panchayat were not very cordial. The gram panchayat and the van panchayat had no member in common. The sarpanch and theother members had never been to Gram Sabha meeting. While the gram panchayat and van panchayat rarely interfered in each other's functioning, and no instance of conflict, the general unpopularity of gram pradhan , makes hard for one to conclude the relations were cordial.

---

[12] Funded by ONGC

Badhakoti

Closely related to Kunkuni culturally but a distinct physically, given its steep gradient is Badhakoti, a village extending between Bariangana and Kunkuni. As a consequence of its steep topography, the settlement pattern of the village looks different from the other two. While the Mangal Dals had been established since 80s but they have not made much progress. There relative muted presence of women's public presence is in a large part a consequence of weakness and lack of any organized women's network. Women generally, showed a tendency of being pre occupied in their private lives with little concern for politics. The context was representative of *'culture of apathy'*[13]Amidst the general air of apathy , if there is one thing that made every woman turn up and speak , it was NREGA. Being casual laborers, most of the women initially welcomed NERGA.

The initial euphoria soon died out. The Act was considerable disappointment.

The consequences have , especially, been grim for many as their names were deliberately excluded from the job cards. Those who had job cards came up with stories that were not very different to one encountered in Kunkuni.

" Paise bhi nahi diye aur hazri bhi nahi li.[14]" said Bharti Rana . Sharing their experience of as a NREGA worker, women came up instances where they had been duped by local NGO-Jagheshwar Sansanthan. The NGO is an offshoot of the sarvodaya movement of 1970s. It usually hires casual labour to undertake public work.- making primary walls, digging pits etc. " they came to our village and told us that it was a NERGA work, we will pay Rs.100 per day for work which was to last for three months June, July, August" continued Bharti. "They made us do more work and paid us less. We were paid at the rate of Rs.100 for only 14 days only and for the rest of the days we were paid at the rate of RS.65 per day, when everywhere NREGA wage was Rs.100 ."

"They made us work for longer hours"

"We planted some 3000 trees and took 17 quintals of grass from our village forest for which no payment has been made , so far"

---

[13] Mary Douglas , 'Let's Hear No More About it' in Vijendra Rao and Michael Walton (ed), *Culture and Public Action,* Permanent Black, Delhi, 2004, pp 85-110.

[14] Neither were we paid , nor our attendance was taken.

In course of my visit, I was introduced to Sarla Devi, a woman who was the ward member from the village, who had attended the Gram Sabha meeting, where she too like Prema of Kunkuni had raised the issue, but was ignored. Others in the village continued with unpopular tales about Rana. Women, in village were least interested in the affairs of gram panchayat.They were less aware of their rights under NREGA, only few out of the group of 20 had heard about RTI Act. They were unaware of how to get redressal mechanism available to them. Women, though educated were poorly informed,

"Rana is bad man, we cannot do anything about him" they said.

"if he is bad, why not have woman Pradhan ? " I asked

"The last Pradhan was a woman Pradhan, a relative of Rana.she was comfortably elected, because of his support. Today she is an 'aganwadi'worker"

"Why didn't she seek reelection", I enquired

"Her seat was a reserved seat for woman, which Rana could never claim for himself. This time it was a *gent's seat. How could she or any women contest for gents seat, exclusively for men.*" They all said confidently. For whatever reason, the women have been the victims of mis information.

Alaknanda valley

Culturally related to villages of the Mandal valley but distinct physically, are number of villages, large and small that lie of the banks of Alkananda river. The valley is fertile endowed with a mountain- submountane climatic conditions receiving ample rainfall.

In contrast to the villages in the Balkhila Valley, these villages are especially notable for *continuities* between pre and post Chipko days.

While the social and the economic life have remained virtually unchanged since Chipko Days, the village politics has changed in very may ways.

However, the women mangal dals receive much larger support and are more effective here, as compared to Mandal. Backed primarily by sarvodaya movement, women in the village have undertaken many collective works like drawing up plans for fencing their forest and grazing lands, mobilization against anti liquor, roads, electricity

Bakhti Devi, a 40 year old woman is the Pradhan of the Tedakhansaal gram panchayat covering three villages –Tedakhansaal, Sitodha and Tildobha. Bhakti had been married young to school teacher, Kripal Singh Rawat of Tedakhansaal. Educated up to 8th standard, Bakhti inspired by the sarvodaya movement and encouraged by her husband started organizing women in her village into Mahila Sanganthan and solving their everyday problems. Following 73rd Amendment Act, the seat of Gram Pradhan was reserved for women, Bhakti emerged as a natural choice. Since, then she has never looked back. Upon becoming Pradhan, she had the village bridles roads and alleyes cemented especially the path leading into forests , so that women can have access to fuel and fodder needs, every home was given piped water connections and most important of all , she proudly, mentioned " *hamne apne Gaon mei van panchayat Khulie aur mahilaon ko protosahan kiya ki whe bhi isme ayaien.*[15] " Given the encouragement, many women came forward to become members of van panchayat. As women especially Pradhan, acted as a link, the relationship between gram panchayat and van panchayat had been cordial. Given the activism and interest shown by the woman Pradhan, the mangal dal and mahila sahmoh, appears to be much stronger. In general, on the basis of the response received from the women, I witnessed greater enthusiasm among the women in Alkananda valley as compared to their counterparts in the Balkhila valley.

"Jab ban hi gaya baheno ka sanghtan, isko mazbhoot karene ka vada karo,
Chaar din ki saheli, saheli nahin, umar bhar saath dene ka vada karo"[16]

Women groups have been very active in these villages, very often using their collective power to get their rights and entitlements, as in the case of NREGA-

While the women under NREGA had been paid their minimum statutory wage of Rs.100, the real issue here was that women under the NREGA work were made do more arduous physical work. "*hum* pathar nahin Pohdege"[17], she continued. "Men and women have equal rights" women, then being organized could take up the matter in the village meeting. They collectively debated with men and won when no option but to acquiesce. Women in the village were better aware of their rights under NREGA, had heard about

---

[15] We opened van panchayat in our village and encouraged women to join it
[16] When the women have organized themselves into 'sanganthan',then lets us take oath to strengthen it, Friendship for four days (few days) is not a friendships, lets us take oath to help each other through out our life.
[17] We will not break the stones

74

RTI, could discuss confidently about the local administration. Unlike the women in Badhakoti, they were not all apathetic. Not surprisingly, then Bhakti Devi was elected the Pradhan, three times in a row. "I won from a *gent's* seat, defeating 4 candidates, 3 of whom, were men". The women in the village, given their higher level of awareness could spell out clearly that the 'gents' seat was infact, 'general' seat for which even they have a right to contest.

The women in village showed welcoming signs of participation. They were well organized, mobilized and highly politicized. "We contest elections, fight for rights" .The striking feature in the village, was women's concerns that extend beyond the forests, to organizing collective action in other spheres – festivals especially the *Devi Bhagwat*[18] during the navratra festivals. All the women in village get together and draw up plan for the nine day navratras. Every body in the village is expected to make a contribution either in cash or in kind- *ghee, chawal , dal, milk, chini , atta*[19]. The items, thus, collected are put under the supervision of the committee appointed to execute the work throughout the nine days.

"We are self sufficient, we grow every thing except for sugar and salt" Agriculture, being the main pursuit of the village, both men and women work their fields throughout the year. Unlike the villages in the Balkhila valley where men plough the fields and women underatake all the field operations thereafter- planting harvesting, the men and women complement each other throughout the year. Men, plough while both the sexes take care of fields thereafter. The context, there fore , was more egalitarian than the villages in the MandalValley.

The women had taken a lead in collectively organizing *Lisa factory* - . " We have so far earned Rs.32,000/- and desposited the money in the village post office, the proceeds of which are used for the village welfare and sometimes giving loans for marriages, education" .

"Mahila Dughdh Dairy is our biggest achievement". Every morning the women in the village, milk their cattle and carried and sold their milk to middlemen who supplied it to the nearby towns of Chamoli and Gopeshwar.Middle men used to buy milk at the low

---

[18] Navrata festival is the nine day festival, devoted to worshiping Goddess Durga, observed twice a year in the months of March and October.

[19] Sugar, rice, pulses , milk wheat

prices and sell them at higher places. The women being unorganized, soon realized that they were being cheated and that they were having bad bargain. They organized themselves into dairy that has a collection and distribution point, in the village. Middle men are gone and the office bearers of the dairy now buy and sell milk. Women now have managed to get a fair price. Soon even, the men joined the women in executing the dairy business. Initially, everything went out smoothly until men politicized the elections to Dairy's management board.

'They brought politics into the village. They used politician's money to buy votes and prevent from contesting elections"

"Some were lured by trips to Nainital and Ranikhet. Others were taken to Dehradun"

The village was in the grip of factionalism and politics and when the meeting was called to invite nominations for members of dairy management, only eligible men came forward. As the meeting progressed the candidates were narrowed down to 2.Some of the women withdrew their candidacy to make way for men in the family.

"We failed to present a united front, our village was divided along caste and clan lines"

Despite this failure, the women groups in the Alkananda valley receive and a have a larger support base, are well led and extremely effective.Given that Mahila Sanghathans had independently undertaken programmes of collective action, the local governance structures – gram panchayats had been more responsive and inclusive in its operations. Unlike the village in the Mandal, it seems the contemporary pattern of women's participation seems to be consistent with the Chipko days. Women dependence and use of community structures, since the Chipko days have led to an effective and strong organizational base.

II Gorkhali Village-Purohitwalla

The village is located/ spans on the beautiful airy spur that adjoins the Birpur cantonment and houses some 100 Gorkhali households, mostly pensioned from the Indian army. The village has a small temple and primary school but no dispensary or primary health centre or market place. A small *pucca* road stretches from the cantonment, for about half a kilometer that soon leads one into the *kutcha* forest road. One finds house of stone

masonry built on the either side of this road. The Gorkhali houses are, generally, small to medium sized , made up of stone masonry, with two well equipped bedrooms, dining and living room and of course a kitchen . Each house has an *open and well tiled or cemented chowk* occupied by flower pots, forming a pleasing picture of rural prosperity. [20]The houses generally open and face the either side of the main street with the houses of the kins built close together, often with common walls, rendering the settlement pattern a *'clustered or 'compact'* picture with a 'strip like' development with unplanned extensions on the either side of the road. This general picture of village layout thus, at a slight departure from the pattern commonly found in the hills[21] . The houses have been constructed without proper plans on haphazard plots sizes and shapes. Village alleys are very narrow, winding and poorly maintained. Other amenities like piped water supply, electricity, and sewerage and garbage disposal are either absent or poorly planned and managed. The village, as a whole, appears to be poorly planned.

Although located in the fringe zone, Purohitwalla departs in many ways, from the standard conceptualization undertaken in 'settlement studies'. For instance, it is not an area of mixed rural and urban land use or population. Not a single piece of land is or was devoted to any kind of agricultural or allied pursuits. All most all the houses are the residential in nature as the village is emerged has favorite place for settlement of gorkha army pensioner, since the colonial days. Unlike most of the villages on the fringes of the cantonment, Purohitwalla was never relocated or dislocated by colonial or Indian government for want of space for newer construction. The village inhabits a literate population engaged in non rural pursuits and is functionally dependent on the city and cantonment for its existence. The villagers commute daily to the town for their day to day needs (grocery, marketing, education, and of course health and postal services). *Being*

---

[20] This observation is in line with similar observation made about a century back by H.G.Walton, who has not hesitated to devote few lines describing the well planned houses of gorkhali military pensioners located on the outskirts of cantonment in the valley. For details one can look up *The Gazetteer of Dehradun by H.G. Walton ,ICS (1910)* pp 106-107

[21] Although, it is difficult to generalize on what are the main features of a Pahari Village in Western Himalaya. However, the intention here is to simply highlight the fact that settlement pattern here is not characterized by twin village settlement pattern (talla – low altitude *and malla* – upper altitude)found in Garhwal and Kumaon region.

predominantly urbanized in its life style and orientation, how does Purohitwalla qualify as 'village'?

Idea of a village

The general picture of the village under investigation falls short of many qualifications that many 'village studies', although seminal in nature, would boast of. For instance, it is difficult to apply Gaikwad's description of an Indian village as 'an atomized mass composed of individuals who are not in any organized fold except the family and extended kin groups which form a sub caste to Purohitwalla for the obvious reason that not all families in the village belong to same caste or are connected to one another by bonds of kinship. Brahmins and Rajputs distinctions appear more in symbolic terms; i.e. caste distinctions are apparent and visible but are not the central organizing principle of the village life that is commonly understood from Dumont's description.

Little is known about its primordial origins. The settlement pattern that developed contiguous to the cantonment can hardly treated as a *survival of the past*. Its functional dependence on neighboring cantonment takes it far away from Henry Maine's communitarian ideals and others autonomous and isolated frames that so often employed to describe an idyllic village. This disqualification, however, does not make it a colonial *state sponsored* invention, either. It is difficult to ascertain whether the village was not a conscious outcome of specific historical and administrative relationship that between the colonial state structures and the gorkhali settlers. All that can be said with certainty is that, all those who valued the salubrious climatic conditions that Doon valley offered, irrespective of race, and took pride in martial traditions made it their favorite residential spot. Over a period of time, the state by its natural existence and extensions does enter the picture and aids and abets the formation of village. This is particularly so, after the grant of state hood in 2002. Purohitwalla was formerly a part of a village called 'Jetinwalla' in the same block (Sahaspur). According to the preliminary information supplied by the villagers, the former was too big and heterogeneous in its composition .Many of the

development and the day to day needs of the villagers were left unattended or poorly handled by the Jetinwalla *gram* panchayat. The formation of the new state of Uttarakhand and changes in the rules and regulations pertaining to the population threshold requirements, the villagers – mostly gorkhali women of this area expressed their conscious choice for carving out a separate village of Purohitwalla at the Block office. This expression of desire by educated gorkhali women was uncharacterized by any conscious mass mobilization or movement but was one of first instance collective *social/political aspirations* that in my opinion make it a village and it came into its existence in 2006.

The idea of a 'village' involves the *collective representations* that reflect a *common sense*, a common purpose , rationality, a way of thinking and carrying out every day business without consciously engaging in sophisticated level of organizing. The idea of village resides in the *'sense of belonging'*, *mutuality and common desires and aspirations*.

These collective representations are not historically *given* or *fixed, natural but are specific contextual and sometimes enduring*. Other instances of village collective representations are found in the organization of the annual village festival, when villagers come together to execute a task of common public commonly called *'shram daan'*- village cleanliness and other organized community level activities

While Dusshera is regarded as the main festival of Gurkhalis, Holi is held up as the high point of all that takes place in village. Characterized by feasting, drinking, dancing, brings Gurkhalis, wherever they are back to their homes. At the functional level, the Holi celebrations tend to promote group solidarity and ethnic identity, collective enactment of which has psychological benefit not only for the group but also from the individual's point of view, exposes him to network of *fellow* Gurkhas, who are placed on the same social position as he is vis a vis the other communities. Village celebration is both a 'resource' and 'opportunity' that enable him to use such networks of reciprocities rationally. Holi thus, becomes an Gorkhali celebration in which only those who belong to Purohitwalla are welcomed. On the day of holi, villagers form themselves into groups of

men often accompanied by children and wives, move together through out village, visiting every house in the village, eating and drinking and asking for *chanda (donation)*. These bands are mixed in age and sex, homogeneous in composition but fluid; as women and children may prefer to abandon it once they find men tipsy. Upon arriving at each the house, the band calls out the name of the owner loudly and often mockingly. First, the Holi greetings are exchanged; colors are applied, followed by a small dance, music in the small *chowk*. "At times our *chowk* are small, it is difficult to accommodate everybody' said Meenu, describing the occasion, "some how we adjust ourselves, as the men beat the drums and dance. The emphasis of the visits renews our collective existence. It is a *custom*". At times, groups forcibly drags unwilling and shy hosts out of houses and color them up. "One is not under the obligation to give *chanda*, nor is the amount of chanda fixed but we *feel obligatory to* give something", added Meenu who is also the *gram* Pradhan. Collecting the donation, the group moves on to next house. People generally have positive feeling s about Holi, but one cannot rule out the possibility of bout or hostile exchanges between two or more drunken men. Visits reassure people of one's goodwill and the desire to keep the community ties going. These reciprocities and acts of collecting *chanda* to finance feasts are considered vital for the 'wellbeing' of the group and hence, it is in the individual interest to abide by and take part in them.

By celebrating Holi collectively or indulging in shram daan the whole village reifies their group identities by 'reinforcing cohesion' among themselves and promoting group ties. Community functions as a mechanism to solve many of the village level coordination problems that would otherwise, remain unattended. It builds the 'social capacity' to undertake tasks of collective action.[22] The political benefits of engaging in such collective village pursuits are used to build political support. Ties between the household are 'capital 'that can be used for making group claims. How and in what form the village community uses this social capital in the realm of 'politics' is spelt out in the following description of the 'temple meeting'.

---

[22] Using Durkheim's logic that culture events help build cohesion that reinforce community ties, maintain social control- regulating the behaviour of members through common knowledge. for details one can look up the introductory chapter in Vijendra Rao and Michael Walton (ed), *Culture and Public Action*, Permanent Black, Delhi, 2004, pp3-37.

Temple meeting

'Why should the Garhwali's be allowed to dominate politics', he said.

"We should devote all our energy and spirit to enhance our competitiveness vis a vis them"

Having said so, the Brigadier exhorted the women seated on the floor of the temple courtyard to catch up with the Garhwalis and Kumaonis who had cornered state resources.

Community is thus put forward as the solution to many ills. Invoking community helps in *reducing risks*.

The monthly meeting held in the courtyard of the temple is significant in couple of respects. One, it takes village as a whole unit – temple becomes a 'discursive' sphere. Secondly, although functioning largely as a 'community wide association', the meetings are functionally significant for the variety of 'issues', they take up. Monthly meetings, usually, begins by paying tribute to the Gorkhali *martyrs*-- army jawans who died recently fighting insurgency in the Kashmir and North East. Martrydom is regarded as the supreme act of sacrifice and held up in high esteem by all. Martyrs families are highly respected and whole village displays active interest in their financial and familial problems.

The initial few minutes, before the Brigadier with his men from the Gorkhali Sudhar Sabha arrived were spent in casual gossips and discussing their every day problems -how increased consumerism and spending habits have spoilt their teenage kids. The topic also, occupies a central focus in the Brigadier's message.

"If we give expensive mobiles and bikes to our children, they will get spoilt and not study. If they fail, we fail as parents and guardians."

"How will, we produce educationist and intellectuals, administrators-IAS, PCS"

"We have many ex –service men, army jawans who have laid down their precious lives fighting insurgency in Kashmir and North east. But that has not been enough."

"If we want the *sarkar* to listen to our grievances, we must make ourselves visible in politics and education like others. Only then, will they hear us and we can *bargain* for our rights."

"Until then they will play *politics with* us and ignore our demands."

Traditionally a martial race, Gorkhalis has been intimately connected with the history of the region. Beginning with occupation of Almorah (Kumaon) in 1790, the Gorkha rulers hailing from Nepal, annexed Doon following a short but pitched battle fought at Kharbara[23], in 1804. Until 1814, when, Gorkhas came into direct confrontation with the British, the administration of the annexed territories of Kumaun and Garhwal were held under Gorkha General Amar Singh Thapa. Following the murder of British police officer in Gorakhpur, Lord Hastings declared war on the Gurkhas with the determination to attack Nepal and annex their territories in India. On 24th October 1814, British forces under General Gillespie stormed the Kalanga fort, not far from Dehra, where Balbhadra Singh Thapa, (Amar Singh's nephew) was stationed with nearly 400 Nepali soldiers. The battle was long and Gillespie was had been badly humiliated. Eve after the month long shelling, the Gorkhali had managed to check the British advances, when suddenly by the end of November; English discovered that there was no water left in Kalanga fort. Helpless, Balbhadra Singh with 70 of his men abandoned the fort to take refuge in the neighboring hills[24].

The women of Purohitwalla to day this day recall the heroic battle of 1814 and whole community takes pride in the stiff resistance shown by Gurkhas that almost brought Gillespie to his knees, thanks to water shortage. Amar Singh and his nephew Balbhadra Singh are household names. The map showing the area held by Amar Singh and his men adorns the living room of many Gurkhalis who show immense pride recalling the Gorkha rule in the region. "Amar Singh, Gurkhalis key liye Fakr hein" says Uma, "*Goan mein shayd hi asai koi hoga jo unki veerta ke bare meiin nahi janta hoga'.*[25]

Amar Singh is best remembered for his stiff defiance against the English in Pinjor Dun. With 3000 Gorkha soldiers, Amar Singh fought General Ochterlony, for six months and finally had concede defeat following the British occupation of Almorah in April1815. By November that year, the Gorkha territories lying between Sutlej and Kali, were annexed and made part of the Saharanpur district. Gorkha soldiers, since then became a part of the

---

[23] Now in Dehra Dun.
[24] For details of this battle of 1814, one may refer to H.G.Walton.,*The Gazetteer of Dehra Dun,* Natraj Publishers, Dehra Dun,1911, (reprinted 2007), pp 180-181.
[25] We are proud of Amar Singh. There is hardly anyone in the village, who is not aware of the 1814-episode.

British army and played an important role not just in Anglo military expeditions abroad but were commonly employed to combat local bandits. Kallu, a Gujar from Saharanpur had created a menace in the regions in and around Dun, was finally crushed by Gurkhas of the 'Sirmur' Battalion. Walton notes,

"The Gurkhas cut down the trees and trimmed the branches, leaving trees with their *Khukris* and roughly trimmed the branches....much hand to hand fighting ensued in which, Mr. Shore, received a severe wound. After the resistance, had ceased,, many rebels had found refuge in the sugar cane fields. Thence, they were driven out and suffered sever slaughter. In all 152 men were killed and 41 taken prisoners. The Gurkhas lost 16 men killed and 29 wounded."[26]

The villagers to this day take pride in describing how their fore fathers armed with traditional *Khukris, waged* a brave struggle crushing Kallu, at famous battle of Kalwagirdi. Today however, meaning have undergoing a change. 'Khukri', pride of Gurkha, is held in low esteem by the non Gurkhali population of the state. "because of our 'Khukris', our men and children , are looked down with contempt. We face difficulties in socializing and making friends with them," said of the women in meeting.

"They call us Nepali with a Khukri"

"We are not Nepalis but Indians"

The bitterness in their voices can be historically traced to the infamous Gurkha rule in the valley. Gurkhalis commanders were unpopular for their notorious style of administration. Walton notes that the "The notorious rule of the Gurkhas virtually reduced to desert."[27]

The local men and women feared them. The rigour of their rule is best described in the Walton's words

"at the foot of the pass leading to Har ki Pauri[28] is a Gurkhali post , to which slaves are brought down from the hills and exposed to sale. Many hundreds of these poor wretches, of both the sexes, from three to thirty years in age, are annually disposed of in the way of traffic. These slaves are brought down from in the parts of the hills and sold at Hardwar at from ten to one hundred and fifty rupees"[29].

---

[26] H.G. Walton, *The Gazetteer of Dehra Dun,* Natraj Publishers, Dehra Dun,1911, (reprinted 2007), pp 187,
[27] Ibid pp 179.
[28] Now in Hardiwar.
[29] H.G.Walton, *The Gazetteer of Dehra Dun,* Natraj Publishers, Dehra Dun, 1911, (reprinted 2007), pp179.

Further, unlike the Garhwali Rajas that yielded revenue of lakh of rupee per years, the Gurkhalis, quotes Walton, could never realize more than Rs.20, 000 per year.[30]

Not much can deduced from Walton's work about the village administration except for the fact that the villages in the Western Dun were under headman called *sayana* , whose post was hereditary , passed on to the eldest son . A woman could never dream of becoming a village *sayana*.Only men were members of the local panchayat that dispensed with the justice – a system drawn up keeping in mind the customs and traditions of the people. The villages in the Western Doon, including Sahaspur, were placed under *zamindari system*. The sayana and his *patwari – village* accountant were very unpopular and over time the office of the sayana either disappeared or was replaced by more efficient system of revenue assessment. – 'zamindars'. The most important landed propertied class of the Western Dun was the offshoots of Tomars- Rajputs of the plains. Besides Rajputs, Brahmins and Doms including the Koltas and Hajis were commonly found in the region in and around Sahaspur. The region was home to several Muhammadan castes, an elaborate list of which is provided to us by Walton.[31] Of which Muhammadan Telis were most important,

"The preservation of the old feudal system has, however not been without its good effects", writes Walton,

"the panchayat still settles the dispute I no uncertain fashion and people exercised a very real degree of local self government . the bonds of the social system were found so strong in 1908, that the Koltas and Hajis, claimed maintenance during the famine at the hands of their overlord , who unanimously accepted the responsibility which the claim implied"[32]

Many villages in the Sahaspur still rely on many of communitarian values to overcome their every day crisis. There is, however, a difference. Following the disappearance of the erstwhile 'sayana' a kind structural deficit was created and many of their traditional institutional functions like maintaining solidarity, organizing collective action, village festivals were taken over by organizations like the Gorkhali Sudhar Sabha in Purohitwalla. The Gram panchayat becomes a secondary institution that mediates

---

[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid 99
[32] Ibid, pp1 17.

between state and Sabha. Sabha by its constitution, and given its activism assumes the role of local institutions in these contexts.

The Gorkhali Sudhar Sabha, since it's inception had played a vital role in mobilizing and politicizing these women. Being the only visible organization in the village, it has a huge following in the village. Given the range of activities it undertakes, it is central nodal agency in the village that organizes the festivals, monthly meetings that are held in the temple courtyard and other matters of collective interest in the village- *shram daan.* By penetrating deep into their private lives, taking up family problems- health, education of children, pension and retirement, jobs, ration cards. It has an all purpose contact with the villagers. These quotidian and seemingly banal fictive ties with villagers have overtime evolved into polymorphous strong bonds of trust and mutuality that *are time and again by invoking the idea of Gorkhali community.* In the village, every villager customarily uses a kinship term for the Sabha office bearers, irrespective of their caste differences. The use of terminology does not in any way confuse them; nevertheless its use strengthens their identity.

The analyses of political communities in the villages generally fall in two types. One that stress on the narrow conceptualization of the state structures – 'gram panchayat', which is by law, has the authority to engage itself in the activities contained in the Eleventh Schedule of the Parliament. A second and the broader perspective on the whole organization of the collective activities at the village level that involves how societies take collective decision and maintains order. Political community of village, then includes others, than the gram panchayat- persons and organizations, outside the states, playing visible and well recognized roles in managing the political affairs.

"I was nobody, until they motivated me to contest for the election. I didn't know how much work the Pradhan had to do. I was blind to amount work that had to undertaken." "the Gorkhali Sudhar Sabha, removed all my doubts. It s now easy and I am confident" said Pradhan. The 2008 elections to the village panchayat were an all women contest in Purohitwalla. One set of women fought against the current incumbents. The electioneering was tough battle. "Going from door to door during the campaign and asking votes, opened me up.I knew every one in the village, but more as a *beti* and

bahu[33], I instantly became their *neta,* all because of the Sabha". Panchayat elections shook their lives in many ways. "Until few days back, I thought elections was all about voting – a thing only Big *netas* could indulge in, I could never dream of myself contesting the elections. I owe everything, I experienced to the Sabha."

The village, today, has an all women Gram panchayat headed by Meenu. Since it's inception,, it claims to have held regular panchayat meetings and undertaken several village level tasks.

"We don't need primary health centre, ANM or ASHA, we are faujis and can use the M.H. in the Cantonment.'

"Our children attend schools in the town, we don't need a primary school"

"We want speedy connectivity to the town" said the villager. The women were right. The village, though lying on the fringe of Birpur cantonment is poorly connected to Dun. The road that connects village to Town passes through the military cantonment area, where entry of private vehicles gets restricted. Public transport system- 'vikrams' and buses are not allowed to pass through the cantonment area. From the Birpur entrance gate, one has to either walk for 3 Km.or drive through one's private conveyance into the village.

"I have written several time to Army, to give us through fare." said Meenu

"Even Sabha has been helping us in this regard"

"But there has been no success so far"

"The Clement Town[34] cantonment board had through fare allowed to fringe villages, what is stopping them from giving us the permission."

"Not every one in the village can afford private conveyance. We have to walk down to the Birpur gate to get the first Bus to the town"

Purohitwalla, lying on the fringes, has witnessed variety of problems. Every body in the village seemed to be concerned about the deplorable state of the village road – that was half *pucca,* while the stretch extending into the forest was kutchcha, thanks to the Forest officials and was not electrified. While attempts were on to electrify the road, its

---

[33] Beti is daughter, while Bahu – daughter in law.
[34] Another cantonment in Dehradun

extension in the nearby forest lie in bad condition. "We have contacted the Forest officials; they are not prepared to hear us".

"The main problem is that sitting MLA is deaf to our problems. He never visits us, even during the elections" said one of the ward members. "If we have our own representation, some body ,who can stand for Gurkhalis, our voices will be heard."

Street lighting and water emerged the problems commonly faced by the women in the village. Though these issues were seldom taken up during the village monthly meeting, women ward discussed there problems in the neighborhoods, in narrow alleys, while carrying out their daily chores.

"I want the water pipe, from the main source to pass through my backyard' said one of them.

"If we do so then others will be put at disadvantage" replied Pradhan

"But Pradhan ji, I will not be the bear the extra costs of connection line if it fails to pass through my agan"

"Others will be at loss, they will not get water supply. You will have to compromise. We will discuss the matter in the Sunday's meeting and decide collectively."

The matter, was however, forgotten at Sunday's meeting.

The system as whole was less favorable to women. The fear of the women falling into hands of Gurkhas maurauders created an atmosphere that less conducive to female child. While less evidence is available in support of the claim to practice of female infanticide, but that should not preclude us to conclude that it was never practiced.[35] The region has earned the dubious distinction of furnishing worst sex ratio since the British days, which continues more or less even today. Such distinctions no longer exist in the village.

There were more women than men, present in the village meetings. While the men along with the Pradhan made themselves comfortable on the chairs, women including the ward members sat quietly on the floor listening to proceedings. They, neither, questioned nor expressed any dissatisfaction with working of the village bodies. Except for few murmurs, they patiently listen to the office bearers of the Sabha - the meeting was used

---

[35] Women who repeated gave birth to females were repudiated. page 85

as mode of expressing their consciousness and dissatisfaction with the *sarkar*. Towards the end, one of the women got up and said " *Hum Vidha Sabha ke samne dharne karenge. Ho saika to Dilli bhi jayenge* ".[36]

Towards the end of the meeting, the Pradhan of the village panchayat, Meenu Kshetri, a young educated woman in her early 40s, reads out loudly the plan for the electrification of the only village road ,specifying clearly the number of poles to be laid, time and labor to be utilized, and the total outlay of the expenditure. Menu is wife of an army *jawan* posted in Delhi, but stays with her two children in their village along with her husband's family members. Most of men in her family are and were in army. Hailing from Moradabad were she had been educated upto a college level, Meenu was married in her 20s and since then had been living with her in-laws in the husbands joint family. Being a house wife initially, she used to spent most time in family looking after in-laws and children. When her children were old enough, she like many other women who had similar story, joined the Gorkhali Sudhar Sabha , an NGO that looks after the interests of Gorkhali living in the vicinity of the Dehradun. Headed now by Brigadier N.S. Bisht, the Sabha has its office located close to *Garhi* cantonment, where most Gorkhali live. It has been the nodal agency looking after the affairs of the village, ever since its inception. Surprisingly, no other NGO or women organization is active in the village. Ever family in the village is well acquainted with the GSS and it's office bearers.

'Had the Brigadier *sir,* not been there, I would have not managed to get my pension, soon.' said a one women, who recently lost her husband.

"The Sabha gave us confidence that we could also contest panchayat elections, which had traditionally been the male preserve,' replied one of the ward members.

"I was very shy, could never dream of anything beyond my *chaukhat.* I casually came in contact with the Sabha one day, and since then I became regular member and worker and joined many social activities. My husband is in *fauj*, so I and many women like me are self sufficient." said Uma Upadhyay, who has since then not looked back. She is member of Shetriya Panchayat samiti – block level and had along with Meenu taken keen interest the village matters. As the Pradhan of the village, she acts as an intermediary between Sabha and the villagers emerges as main transmitter of the information and resources.

---

[36] We will protest in front of the Vidhan Sabha, and if need arises, will go to Delhi.

She emerges more as an eloquent defender of the Gorkhali rights persuading her fellow villagers to join the Sabha to defend and claim their rights. "This being the only course of action available to us". With the involvement of Pradhan and ward members socialization is accomplished without much effort and legitimacy for Sabha is acquired. Most of the women, who had been married into the village, have their natal homes as far as in Darjeeling, Allahabad, and Gorakh pur. Thus village though miles away from these places intimately connects itself with world and problems of Gorkhali elsewhere and becomes a larger part of the 'translocal identity". Emerging then as the "community of necessity", it has succeeded in keeping the many other non state actors out of the village. " we don't need any one, Sabha is capable of taking care of our interests". The Pradhan and the ward members were not the members of any other women's organization. They did not see any reason of attending the training programme meant for them, run by NGOs like RLEGK or PRAGATI.

The process of recruitment and the consequent socialization in the values and beliefs produces versions of *shared identity* that strengthens their community life, which consequently informs their perceptions, choices. The belief that one's contribution to community will make a difference to the outcomes shapes individual psyche. This realization becomes a strong *incentive to acquire group membership.*Perceptions under these circumstances, emerges as an outcome of participation. The actual social engagement channelizes the capacities and commitments of women towards a form of collective action that may look participatory but is less empowering, - minimally be called *feminist fading.*[37]

The picture of Purohitwalla that emerges from this field work is much closer to Hayami's account of rural life that conceptualizes village as not only as place of inhabitation but also a community capable of mobilizing collective actions for supply of essential public goods. While much of Hayami's work and of later economists have tended to concentrate on villages displaying very high level of sophistication and

---

[37] Benita Roth, 'Gender Inequality and Feminist Activism in Institutions: Challenges of Marginalization and Feminist Fading', in Louise Chappell and Lisa Hill (ed), *The Politics of Women's Interests: New Comparative Perspectives,* pp 157-175.

organization in the provision of goods of collective nature like irrigation, forest management etc, this study is devoted to class of villages that are display lesser degree of sophistication in the matters of collective and corporate existence. The village of Purohitwalla as universal norms and sanctions that compel villagers to behave and act in particular way. Being urbanized and literate there are no visible forms of taboos, sanction and boycotts. Nevertheless, the village does expresses certain rudimentary forms of cooperation , forms of association , solidarity and joint action that are essential for it's every day existence. A village is social unit that defines itself by its *corporate existence* that varies over time and space.

III

While the internal social structure permits groups formation that are essentially *affinal* in nature, the groups in the outer public or political sphere have structurally emerged as *communities of necessities.* A somewhat complex balkanized , disjointed yet at times distinct and loosely integrated groups, all mesh up to produce *fluid, unstable, unclear* social fabric in the hills. This state of *flux* in the hills is largely responsible for creating *insufficient community feelings-* villagers in particular, were unclear about goals. If one undertakes the tasks of mapping the extent of civic engagements in the hills, one is sure to be impressed by their *thick presence* and massiveness and the loud media outbursts that abound the tabloids. A closer look would provide evidence to change one's opinion. The villages in general, lack rigidity *to produce coherent constitutive frames.* Local democracy, thanks to the competitive nature of politics, has made hills *untidy*[38] realms where active social engagements have structurally created uncertainty and constrained the opportunities for undertaking collective work. Making a similar observation, while studying the pattern of democratic engagement in America, Theda Skcopol, once made an insightful remark that may well be worthy to recall at this juncture. Calling them as 'couched potatoes', she says,

---

[38] Borrowing the phrase from Hayek , cited in Frank Cunnighan, ,*Theories of Democracy: A Critical Introduction, Routledge, New York,*pp123.

" may be the problem today is that many Americans , quite rightly no longer feel that they can band together to get things done, either through or in relationships to the government. The issue may be the recent shifts in society and the styles of the politics that may be less inviting"[39]

The structure become less fluid, more stable as one moves down the hills to villages like Purohitwalla , where social realm has been built and glued by essentializing 'race'. All in all, the thick civic life in all the three contexts constrains the possibilities of consensus making apparatus available to its citizens. Local democracy comes closer to *thin variety* of Weberian democracy, where politics is practiced for *instrumental reasons* devoid of opportunities for deliberation.

The scenario in the hills provides it self with *weak forms of regulatory mechanisms* where defection and free riding are rampant and tolerated. Weak patterns of solidarity that the social life in the hills allows for, is apt for producing goods that are in *imminent* in nature.

"Imminent goods are produced in all societies whether solidarities is high or low because individuals engage in myriad of activities and interactions and dense interaction in not required"[40]

In other types, the strength of solidarity matters. In the collective goods of general interest, like village works- roads, water, electricity, and protection of forests, village level solidarity can be invoked, however, in others like NREGA, issues , collective action is less forthcoming.

One of the areas where the collective action has produced collective interest is the management of village forests. Empirical studies on the Van Panchayats in hills suggest that the self -regulatory regimes to manage village commons- forests, appears to be strong as defection is detected early and punished fast . Self governance is possible in such cases of common pool resources because of, as Ostrom and Roy Gardner reminds us,

[39] Theda Skocpol, 'The Tocqueville Problem: Civic Engagements in American Democracy', *Social Science History*, 21(4), 1997,pp 472.
[40] Imminent goods – recreation, festivals, for details Douglas D.Heckathorn and Judith E.Rosenstein, 'Group Solidarity as the Product of Collective Action: Creation of Solidarity in a Population of Drug Users', *Group Cohesion, Trust and Solidarity*, 19, 2002, pp37-66.

"their capacity to organize themselves, with credible commitment mechanisms to monitor each other's behaviour. Self organizations of common pool resources have a capacity to sustain themselves over a large period of time."[41]

However, the corresponding regulatory mechanisms are absent in the case of gram panchayats. The scattered geographical spread and thinly populated villages in the hills lack the resources to enforce compliance. Coupled with the existing self sufficiency, the possibilities of building bridges across the villages are rather weak. The unclarity about of the nature incentives results produces inconsistency in outcomes.

Beliefs about Chipko exist and flourish in both the contexts, while only in the second case- in the Alkananda valley are the women able, in some respects, to transcend from *imminent* problems to issues of the more *immanent* in nature-(strategic interest). In the third context- all Gorkhali villages, the regulatory mechanism succeeds to bring about some convergence in the actors' inclinations and expectations. Here,the social practices, behaviors, conventions all are a *common knowledge*. It is comparatively easier too detect defection and enforce rules. While in the former, it is the inability of the beliefs to align themselves procedurally with ideas relating to the women's emancipation, in the latter case , the beliefs build around the ideas of race tend to *crowd out* some of the possibilities of articulation of women's interest. I will discuss more on these matters in the next chapter.

In "An Evolutionary Approach to Norms" , Robert Axelrod reminds us that even weak regimes based on underlying principles of voluntary membership can sometimes sustain themselves , when the group consists of like minded people with the prior agreement ,such that the defections are made less attractive. [42] Most of the in-group feeling appears, he continues, when the members are in some kind of strategic relationship

"Voluntary membership can acquire a social contract , if it has large number of supporters" [43]

In the somewhat similar logic, Bardhan finds that small groups can some times avoid the severity of the agency problems when they collectively engage in producing collective

---

[41] Elinor Ostrom, James Walker, Roy Gardner, 'Covenants With and Without a Sword: Self-Governance is Possible', *The American Political Science Review,* 86(2), 1992, pp405.
[42] Robert Axelrod, An Evolutionary Approach to Norms', *American Political Science Review,* 80(4), 1986, pp1105.
[43] Ibid pp1106.

goods that not only are crucial for local development but also are characterized with by high level of interdependence.[44] Chipko, with underlying principle voluntarism, provided reasons to abide by its logic of cooperation. Sustenance of such practice, as Bardhan reminds us, requires complete *internalization* of values and non existence of the *outside option*. Both these prerequisites are fulfilled to a large extent.[45] The vibrancy of the forest management practices is testimony to it, and explains some links, continuity with the past. Politicization and the spread of the democratic culture has indeed, eroded this practice.

Every where in the hills and more so in Purohitwala, women show a great penchant for non instutionalized forms of protests. The vibrancy of the activism associated with the Van Panchayats, seems to suggest that some links and the continuity with the past has been maintained . In such matters of the everyday concern like forests, fuel wood, water and roads, people take keen interest and whole village comes forward on the expectation that their participation would be generously rewarded. Given the voluntarism and absence of strong regulatory mechanism, the contexts in the hills, easily lend themselves to Klandermass's suggestion that,

"Participants participate when they believe that they can succeed and their own participation would make a difference"[46]

There is less temptation to 'free ride' as the collective good is highly valued , both by men and women. Where as in the matters that are specific to women's interest – NREGA , the general expected valuation of the good goes down, because lack of communication or the absence of mechanism to raise the consciousness of agents to such threshold levels , that can bring about change. Given the fragmentary nature of politics, women's issues face *start up* problems.[47] The state of incoherence witnessed in the hills, has produced unhealthy consequences for participation and articulation of women's interests.

---

[44] Pranab Bardhan, 'Analytics of Institutions of Informal Cooperation in Rural Development', *World Development,* 21(4), 1993,pp 630.
[45] Ibid, pp 636.
[46] Quoted in Douglas D Heckathorn, 'Dynamics and Dilemmas of Collective Action', *American SociologicalReview,*61(2),1996, pp 250-277.
[47] Douglas D Heckathorn, 'Dynamics and Dilemmas of Collective Action', *American SociologicalReview,*61(2),1996, pp 250-277

In spite of the ambiguity or may be owing to ambiguity, the *expectations* tend to somehow, align themselves , where there is enough room for clarity – race, caste, village , endowing an agent with sufficient reasons to undertake an action. Villagers, in most cases , trust each other not because of the assurance they offer but because , as Putnam puts it

"people have knowledge and disposition. You know what is his predispositions are, options , consequences , his ability and so forth are , you expect that he will choose so."[48]

Knowledge and information are the bases on which agents build their expectations and are diffused through out the landscape through prevailing networks of civic traditions. In recent times, some of these traditions have been disrupted with rise in democratic culture of elections, campaigning and factionalism. Disruptions have produced serious and unhealthy consequences for the articulation of the women's interest.

Knowledge appears to be less diffused and information bottlenecks abounds. In all the three contexts, women were less aware of the options and alternatives they have. Women in Badhaokti were poorly informed about how to make NREGA claims, or pressurizing the panchayat by forming a collective front by aligning with the women in the other villages. Their expectations, in each of the cases, are governed by prevailing democratic practices. In the following chapter, I discuss some of the agency problems that arise from variety of information problems that abounds the hills.

---

[48] Nancy R Buchan , Rachel T A Croson, Robyn M Dawes, 'Swift Neighbours and Persistent Strangers: A Cross Cultural Investigation of Trust and Reciprocity in Social Exchanges', *American Journal of Sociology*, 18(1),2001,pp182.

4 PERSISTING DISJUNCTURES

The three different case studies have been described in the preceding chapter. They differ in subtle ways, but there are some underlying patterns of convergence that these different contexts convey. The contexts can then be fitted into the four part typology that was presented in the chapter 2. The observed behaviour in the three contexts needs to elucidate more in terms of the variables (civic engagements and information) that were initially selected. Some of the ideas about the nature of prevailing cooperative regimes in each of the three contexts have been elucidated in the concluding part of the preceding chapter. In practice, most of these organizational forms may show some variations across the villages. The problem of how the women's preference is 'mediated' by two variables is central theme that this chapter engages itself with. Consistent with methodological approach outlined in the chapter 2, the present chapter locates the problem of *missing agency* by unpacking the dynamics occurring primarily in this meditating sphere. Based on the ethnographic information, I begin my analysis by locating the anomalies in the internal - cognitive domain of the agents psyche, followed by problems in the external – organization domain, and then finally try to show how the two mediate to produces patterns of *weak fungibility*.

The problem of missing agency in the hills necessitates that we undertake an interdisciplinary comprehensive approach by putting forward *internal* and *external* arguments .Much of how and why such an approach should be undertaken has been more or less outlined in the chapter 2 under the section titled 'methodology'. While the arguments contained in the section did talk convincingly on why reconciliation should be undertaken, they particularly, Ferejohn, is silent how reconciliations should be forged. While efforts in this chapter seek to build such reconciliations, I urge the reader to be attentive to the possibilities of 'mediations' that are contained in discussion devoted in each of the following sections.

I

The ethnographic profile, do seem to suggest that despite the proliferation of *thick* civic life, democratic participation is less visible. Evidence indicates that women show a penchant for non institutionalized forms of political participation but instutionalized political participation appears to be more or less of symbolic variety. Women in each of the context, except to certain extent in the Alkananda valley, do indeed, and in many instances face the problems of fungibility. There is a need to explicate this point more clearly. Most of the studies concerned with transformation of power from social to political spheres have overlooked some of the invisible aspects that a produce these *weak patchy* and *persisting disjuncture*. For instance, Hans Blomskvists study locates these links on *prevalent values and behavioral patterns* and *actor's expectations*[1]. By merely focusing on the *tangible* links – how social and human capital determine participation, he tends to take values, ideas and expectations as *given* and unchanging. The study though valuable (in terms of conjecturing the mechanisms through which transformations are produced) overlooks the *intangible connections* that problematize fungibility. Ideas and expectations are less stable. Being *interpretative,* endowed with meaning, Cristina Biccheri says that

"There is nothing *natural or intrinsic* about them. ...Ideas are *broad* and have *complex applicability*...they are *multidimensional*...."[2]

In other words, if one wants to illuminate the effects of ideas on behaviour, one cannot take them as *given* or as an *exante common knowledge*.[3]

The issue associated with the fungiblity of social capital has been incorporated in Krishna's study of watershed development in rural Rajasthan[4], where social capital is decomposed into structural –*institutional* dimension (roles, rules, procedures) and

---

[1] Hans Blomskivists, 'Social Capital, Civil Society and Degrees of Democracy in India' in Carolyn M.Elliot (ed), *Civil Society and Democracy: A Reader,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003, pp 405-423.

[2] Cristinna Biccheri, , *Grammar of Society: Nature and Dynamics,* Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006, pp 21.

[3] Albert S. Yee,'Thick Rationality and Missing "Brute Fact": The Limits of Rationalist Incorporations Of Norms and Ideas', *The Journal of Politics,* 59(4), 1997, pp 1026..

[4] For details on can look up Anirudh Krishna, 'Creating and Harnessing Social Capital', in Partha Dasgupta and Ismail Serageldin (eds), *Social Capital: A Multifaceted Perspective,* The World Bank, Washington D.C., 2000, pp 72-90

relational dimension (values, attitudes and beliefs).As the outcome depends on the interaction of these two realms, one can locate the malady and refashion the elements to produce beneficial results. While not in disagreement with his analytical frame, this study differs from it in two respects by one, by placing emphasis on *historicity* and *legacy of* social capital that Krishna likes to debunk. The divergence can be traced to the difference in contexts that the study engages with. In states like Rajasthan, where there is rather muted history of social capital, it makes sense to divert one's attention towards building incremental social capital and refashioning the institutions. However, contexts with rich legacy need to, address the third dimension – history, why do women, endowed with legacy, fail act 'rationally'.

One of the important components invoked by Krishna is *social learning.* Social learning and experience enables one to renew and reinvigorate the existing stocks of capital. Through process of social learning, individuals *store knowledge* in their memories .The *information thus stored* in collective memories can be utilized again to accomplish collective tasks of similar nature, in future. The stored knowledge becomes a part of *folk memory,* conception and practice. But not every folk conceptualization and information can be called upon /relied upon. In contexts with rich history and legacy of social capital, such as the one under the scanner, one needs delve deeper into the realms of cognition. Cognitive and Psychological studies have shown that social learning is not just a product of memory but its capacity to be utilized in the variety of tasks depends upon the *cognitive apparatus or design* that determines how people store information and process it. The cognitive design determines the ability of the individuals to utilize the stored information *efficiently* in variety of contexts from social to political. Poor *fungibilty can then be located in poor cognitive designs.* Belief formation is, thus, not a structurally *stable* process. In general, many of these studies show that it is comparatively easier for cognitive design to undertake tasks of collective action that are essentially *practical* in nature- water, common resource, forests, roads etc. But the issues that are more fundamental and *strategic* – ideas that would bring fundamental reorganization of the society are held in abeyance because it entails organizing and reorganizing of the information. Before one explains how this happens, it is important to explain how the findings of the research support the claim.

In each of these cases of practical interests, what people know includes what they have learnt either through imitation and have thus, formed cognitive apparatus that is quite capable of handling similar tasks in future. The familiarity with tasks and there recurrence coupled with *designs* of their cognitive apparatus to deal with them , enables agents to *efficiently* store, process and access information when ever required. For instance, let us take the case of women headed gram panchayats in the Alkananda Valley. Given their close association with *sarvodaya* movement, the women in the village including the Pradhan display behaviour that exhibits some continuity with the *past*. The *internalization* of the ideas values, knowledge, appears to be rather complete, well ingrained and stored in their memory, which they use it to undertake variety of collective action tasks in the village. Perhaps , one could attribute the exemplary performance shown by women in hills(both in the Mandal and Alkananda valley) in managing there forests through Van Panchayat, to efficient cognitive capacities recalling the socially learnt information in handling analogous situations involving practical tasks. Similarly, in the case of Purohitwala, the all women panchayat is no less efficient in undertaking matters of service delivery. On the other hand, the lack of enthusiasm observed among women in the Mandal valley is a matter of grave concern which could be attributed to cognitive anomalies that prevent processing of information

" evolution and social learning may enable people to adopt broad *strategic* principles that are not so *irrational* as to endanger survival and in rough sense promote happiness."[5]

Many scholars working on these similar issues of beliefs formation, stability of preferences etc attribute consistency and stability of ideas and beliefs to widespread presence of strong, pervasive, coherent institutional features- *core beliefs- religion and race* that are reinforced through social learning[6] because, people have *reasons* to identify with them

" the conditionality of rational trust corresponds with the feature of *us-we rationality*. It is here that the *agency* resides –*collective reason* of the group" [7]

---

[5] Daniel Mc Fadden, 'Rationality for Economists', *Journal and Risk Uncertainty*, 19(1), 1999, pp 99.
[6] Stanley Feldman and John Zalller, 'Political Culture of Ambivalence: Ideological Responses to the Welfare State', *American Journal of Political Science*, 36 (1), 1992, pp269.
[7] Luigino Bruni and Robert Sudgen, 'Moral Canals: Trust and Social Capital in the Work of Hume, Smith and Genovesi', *Economics and Philosophy*, 16, 2000, 26.

Inconsistency then can be explained, either by the absence strong enforcing mechanism, distorting the ideological structure which holds this consistency- cognitive and evaluative dimension that individual uses to perceive information[8].As beliefs appear to be less uniformly distributed across villages, there are differences between the villagers in each context. In each of these cases, individuals instead of aligning their attitudes with widespread ideas on egalitarianism, may structure them around the prevailing and visible core *beliefs*. Egalitarianism and empowerment are, thus, two different things. The link between the two may be rarely consistent and uniform. At times, egalitarian attitudes may be prevailing but empowerment may not be forthcoming.

"favorable attitudes were not sufficient to provide breakthroughs"[9]

Thus, at least for the villages in Mandal, the collective beliefs bequeathed did exist but were in an *inactivated* state. The findings presented in the previous chapter do confirm the widespread existence of the *Chipko beliefs and the corresponding expectation.* Women in all most all the villages, except Badhakoti, were exemplar in managing forests issues. Many who had been active in the Chipko days, could clearly recollect the episodes of the collective action undertaken by women, how by working together collectively they had succeeded in transforming their lives .Nobody today seems to deny glorious past, but at the same time every body in the hills, especially in the Bairangana Gram Panchayat, was deliberately trying to avoid the confronting a situation of *reactivating some egalitarian ethos and beliefs* learned during *Chipko days.* Evidence, thus seems to suggest that it was not the deficiency of the particular set of beliefs, rather the inability of the existing collective beliefs and attitudes to *procedurally* convert themselves in to *desire for egalitarian order.*[10]

Under most of these circumstances, people are unsure about the *goals* and the *outcomes* of the proposed collective action. The issue why don't these three villages cooperate and take up issues at the *Gram Sabha meetings.* Collective agency to undertake such task

---

[8] The latter point has been borrowed from – the application of individual s differences and scaling To measurement of ideology by Marcus, Tabb and Sul

[9] Pippa Norris and Ronald Ingelhart, 'Cultural Obstacles to Equal Protection', *Journal of Democracy,* 12(3), 2001,pp137.

[10] For details on procedural rationality, one may refer to Brad Hooker and Bart Streumer, ' Procedural and Substantive Practical Rationality' in Alfred R. Meeling and Pierce Rawling (ed), *Oxford Handbook of Rationality,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 2004, pp57-75.

can only be produced by two ways – one, if the women in the three villages had some kind a *prior agreement* to help each other in the times of distress. The possibility of such an understanding, however, appears to be rather remote in two of the three cases. The other interpretation of these contexts would be that women indulge in reciprocations without undertaking any reflective, rational deliberations. Compliance to the existing rules is thus, *automatic*[11].

Given their contexts, then women have little reasons to expect something from another. Cooperation, as Vandershaff, tells us emerges when agents, given their informational background are capable of taking a long term view –*shadow of future*[12]. If women in the each of the villages could foresee the lined up opportunities of future interdependence, they would have enough *reasons* to expect mutual benefit from supporting a common cause. Lack of communication linkages across the three villages has meant that women have little *reasons and willingness to help one another*. It is this link that has been severed since the Chipko days. By undertaking a longitudinal comparison of pre and post Chipko days, one concludes such willingness is contingent on the availability of *communication channels or bridges that send and receive appropriate signals*.

When the prospects are unclear, it is not surprising that the benefits arising out of the membership to well defined community appears to be strong and appealing. Findings of the research confirm that women in each of these contexts were concerned about *security*. Women, in many of these cases are unlikely to select the principle that maximizes their utility. Responses are more rules driven or structured by *contrarian principles – agreement*[13]. Culture is then, a means of coping with subsistence *risks and uncertainty*. Decision making in each of these contexts depends upon *which aspect of risk is* being considered and generally involves a *trade off between* the various risk

[11] Cristina Bichhieri, *Grammar of Society: Nature and Dynamics*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006, pp50.

[12] Agents are aware of the indefinite set of lined up opportunities to do business with one another, there is a sense of interdependence. For details one can look up,Peter Vanderschraaf, 'Hume's Game Theoretical Business Ethics', *Business Ethics Quarterly*,9(1),1999, p58.

[13] Details on contrarian principle , on may look up , contrarian legal theory- Claire Finkelstein in Alfred R. Meeling and Pierce Rawling (ed), *Oxford Handbook of Rationality*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 2004, pp 399-417.

reduction goals. In each of the contexts (except to large extent in villages in the Alkananda valley) the options available to most of the women are rather limited.

.

II

Chipko, unmistakably, has a distinguished and unchallenged history within the region. Promoted by the *sarvodaya movement*, the movement did, indeed, usher in a democratic and egalitarian socialist ethos in the region. The environmental conservation camps that were organized by Dasouli Gram Swarajya Mandal virtually transformed into public spheres where women were freely exchanging and sharing their experiences, conveying vital information on strategies and tactics to save trees. They emerged as the workshops for undertaking *risky mass action*. In the absence of any written historical account, it is somewhat inappropriate to make a claim that the phrases and words used to share and convey a given information (in this case to save trees) may have been packaged in such frames that prompted those who attended the camps to evaluate their preferences in manner which made an individual opt for a *particular preference*.[14] But given the fact that women chose and embraced riskier options of confronting the state and eventually their men, forms a convincing ground that some amount *framing* did take place. One is welcomed to conceptually doubt it s occurrence on account of the fact that the concept of framing conventionally employed in economists covers range contexts that are characterized by either fierce form of elite competition or intense form of citizens deliberations. Even if one less convinced of the occurrence of the framing effects during the Chipko days , one cannot , given the nature of democratic politics in India rule out the second argument. In the following paragraphs, I elucidate how changes in the *organizational design (regime)* in each of the contexts except in the Alkananda valley, permits some *framing effects* that may have lead individuals to alter preferences without changing the prevailing set of beliefs.

---

[14] For details on framing one can look up James N Druckmann, Political Preference Formation: Competition, Deliberation and the (Ir)relevance of the Framing Effect, *The American Political Science Review*, 98(4), 2004, pp 671-686.

Today the sarvodaya movement appears to be rag tag comprising of organizations that are mainly of the offshoots of the Dasouli Gram Swarajya Mandal. They are riddled with sharp competition over resources, institutional legitimacy and power. Most of the fragmentation in the post Chipko days has led to proliferation of number of NGOs that more or less *isomorphic-* similar in goals and structure, showing a distinct *homogenizing* tendency without showing any corresponding *efficiency,* in terms of output.[15] While most of these claim to profess egalitarianism, there appears to be a general *lack of clarity* in aims and means to achieve those aims. Under these conditions of *uncertainty* and ambiguity coupled with distinct homogenizing tendency produces *isomorphic* organizational frames that are vulnerable to elite capture.

"Organizations become vehicles for numerous gratification, necessities and preferences that many groups within and without the organization seek to use it ....where in elite often get their way while at the same time enabling one to understand the irrationality, frustration of power, lack of *innovation*......"[16]

Whilst the influence of Dausoli Gram Swarajy Mandal, it's reliance on the *sarvodaya principles* and it's association with well known personalities like Chandi Prasad Bhat, has somehow kept it's potential alive in select pockets- especially in the Alkananda valley, elsewhere owing to the underlying voluntarism and competitive populism that was apparent subsequent to the introduction of Panchayat Raj and decentralization, redesigned the political landscape (in Mandal area). Most of the villages, owing to their organic strength and self sufficiency continued to reinforce their significance as a symbol of one's *identity,* the clubbing together of two more villages under one gram panchayat ,have reduced them to a status of *subset* of a *whole.* In new organizational designs, multiple identities like village compete with one another resulting in a state of flux and creating ambiguity in the minds of villagers. . Instead of being local, panchayats as the findings suggests become something like supra local in nature, something that exists beyond the every day lives of people.Perhaps,the biggest casualty in this state of flux of competing village and caste identities is egalitarian and social integrative functionality of regime of Chipko days stands distorted, diminished if not eradicated.

---

[15] For details one may refer Paul J DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, 'The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields', *American Sociological Review,* 48(2),1983, pp147-160.
[16] Ibid, pp 157.

The evidence seems to suggest that once the threat receded following the state ban on the felling of trees, the communication channels for signaling and maintaining reputations were broken and consequently the self regulatory mechanism was weakened, to a large extent. On the other hand, in the villages in the Alkananda valley, such a state of flux exists but is countered by the strong organizational presence of organizations like DGSM. Organizational design of the region may be weak, in many respects (voluntary), but efficient combination of conservation and village development created an order that generates some *incentives* for people to maintain continuity with the past. Their *modus operandi* has succeeded to large extent in internalization of egalitarian values and checked *free riding* to minimum levels. The vitality of Mangal Dals in handling women's issues only confirms that mechanisms for signaling and information transmission are well in place.

The greater then, the dependence of panchayats on such organizations, the greater would be tendency of panchayats to *mimic* them. This tendency is particularly rampant in Purohitwala where the lines between the all women panchayat and the Gurkhali Sudhar Sabha have been blurred, at once calling into question their democratic credentials – how can the villagers assert their democratic control over the local institutions. By jointly appealing to historical facts, claims are validated, reasons are put forward and a richly textured deliberative space is created where in the ideas about *uncertainty* are framed by essentializing race. It has created regime in which any *information* tends to get packaged and strategically reinforced around the 'ideas of race'. The *regime* that structurally placed itself in comfortable position also indulges setting moral *standards* and policing village, detecting defection. Organizational design of the village, though quite popular, limits competitions thereby renewing it and at the same time offers very few opportunities to question the arbitrary exercise of power. The only form of accountability that the governance structure in village permits is either ad- hoc criticism or *peer* competition that is witnessed at the time of panchayat elections. Constraining the power of such supporting institutions would only compound the problem, given the strong bonding they share; on the other hand contributing positively to democratic deepening would strengthen their bonding. However, opening up the village to wide array of participants

would introduce competition, reframing the prevailing ideas on values other than race, thereby providing alternatives for more reasoned deliberations.

Before one moves on to the third and the final section, it is important features of the organizational in each of the three contexts. One, in all they signify and define the *rules of game* that may proscribe and prescribe behaviour. Whilst in the Gorkhali case, the institutional feature is primarily directed towards *self preservation*, in other two, the institutional life is weak and in state of flux which impairs their capacity to undertake take tasks of social and political or collective action.

III

The main virtue of panchayat has been in the provision of service delivery in the devolution of development funds at the grassroots level. Despite the gains, it leaves much to be desired. Their deliberative functions is in a sense most fundamental, given that it creates possibility of engaging in a democratic conduct , albeit of minimal type ,nevertheless capable of addressing some of the *empowerment* issues . Most of these issues, strategic in nature are *spontaneous* and unconscious prop up of negotiations and consensus suggesting that some variety of deliberative activity is in underway in many assorted villages- like in one in the Alkananda valley. As this research treats it , not just as consequence of *one's* past but rather as 'feature' constructed by agents, it is compelling and incumbent to provide explanations , for the same.

The panchayat members and the women in general do seem to be less enthusiastic in fundamentally changing the balance of power, at least in two out of the three cases under the scanner. There are some observable episodes of strategic interest. Matters of strategic interest requires *innovation* and *such* capabilities requiring something more than the mere storing and recalling the information and knowledge gained when the agents encountered analogous situations in the past. More than remembering, it requires expert handling, with capacities to handle new situation in new ways. It is contingent on the capacity of the agent to handle situations of *uncertainity*, rather than *risks*. The outcomes, thus depends not only on the *efficiency* of the cognitive and the organizational domain to process the stored information into *such* transformations

that enable them to cope up with new and emerging situations but also accomplishments of such tasks of *strategic* nature is dependent to a large extent on how the two domains, external- organization and internal- cognitive interact to produce new knowledge and valuable of ways of beings and doings. *Persisting Disjunctures* are not the outpourings of the anomalies in cognitive and the organizational domains only but also has much to do with the dynamics, which Maurice Bloch[17], calls "dancing and dialectics" between the two realms. While it may be difficult to be obtaining systematic evidence in support of this claim, the evidence collected does seem to suggest that, intuitively.

Upon becoming members of the panchayat, women in each of the context did experience a feeling of delight, happiness , enhanced social status, sense of achievement in engaging which they perceived to be 'valuable beings and doings'. But in all the three contexts, what women considered as 'valuable beings and doings' where matters of practical interest, every day lives that were too general in nature to be classified as tasks that specific to women's wellbeing[18]. The observations in each of these cases indicate the inability of these women to set and pursue goals that can transform their lives. Lack of desire to undertake such tasks of specific and strategic interest to women lay not deficiency of the beliefs and values but rather in the inability of the women to translate their beliefs into desires and goals that can transform their lives. The defects to procedurally align beliefs with desires may be one of the underlying causes of inactivated agency. The problem of women's empowerment, in this hilly state appears to be less a problem of 'missing women' but one of *missing agency* that remains inactivated owing to *persisting disjuncture.*

---

[17] Maurice Bloch, Language, Anthropology and Cognitive Science, *Man,*26(2),1991, pp185

[18] , Bina Agarwal, Jane Humphries, and Ingrid Robeyns, (eds), *Capabilities, Freedom, And Equality:Amartya Sen's Work from Gender Perspective,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006,pp21.

BIBLIO

Agarwal, Bina, 'Participatory Exclusions, Community Forestry and Gender: An Analysis for South Asia and a Conceptual Framework', *World Development,* 29(10), 1997, pp 1623-1648.

Agarwal, Bina , Jane Humphries, and Ingrid Robeyns, (eds), *Capabilities, Freedom, And Equality:Amartya Sen's Work from Gender Perspective,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006.

Alhuwalia, Isher Judge and I.M.D. Little (eds), *India's Economic Reforms and Development, Essays for Manmohan Singh,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998.

Alkire, Sabina, *Valuing Freedoms, Sen's Capability Approach and Poverty Reduction,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002.

Almond, Gabriel A and Stephen J.Genco, Clouds, Clocks and the Study of Politics, *World Politics,* 29(4), 1977, pp489-522.

Axelrod, Robert ,An Evolutionary Approach to Norms', *American Political Science Review,*80(4),1986, pp11095-1111.

Ban, Radu and Vijendra Rao, 'Tokenism or Agency? The Impact of Women's Reservation on Panchayats in South India, *Economic Development and Cultural Change,* 56, 2008, pp501-530.

Bardhan, Pranab 'Analytics of Institutions of Informal Cooperation in Rural Development', *World Development,* 21(4), 1993, pp633-639

Basham, A.L., *The Wonder that India Was, A Survey of the history and the culture of the Indian Subcontinent before the coming of the Muslims,* Rupa and Co, Calcutta, 1967.

Barth, Fredrick 'Segmentary Opposition and the Theory of Games: A Study of Pathan Organization', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland,* 89(1), 1959, pp 5-21.

Basu, Kaushik, 'India and the Global Economy: Role of Culture, Norms and Beliefs', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 36(40), 2001, pp.3837-3842.

Bates, Robert, Avner Grief, Margaret Levi, Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, Barry R.Weingast (eds), *Analytic Narratives*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1998.

Berreman, Gerald, D., *The Hindus of Himalayas, Ethnography and Change*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1963.

Beteille, Andre, 'Citizenship, State and Civil Society', *Economic and Political Weekly of India*, 34(36), 1999, pp-2588-2591.

Bichhieri, Cristina, *Grammar of Society: Nature and Dynamics*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006.

Bloch, Maurice, Language, Anthropology and Cognitive Science, *Man*, 26(2), 1991, 183-198.

Brass, Paul, *The Politics of India since Independence*, Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, 1990.

Bruni, Luigino and Robert Sudgen, 'Moral Canals: Trust and Social Capital in the Work of Hume, Smith and Genovesi', *Economics and Philosophy*, 16, 2000, pp21-45.

Buchan , Nancy R, Rachel T .A. Croson, Robyn M Dawes, 'Swift Neighbours and Persistent Strangers: A Cross Cultural Investigation of Trust and Reciprocity in Social Exchanges', *American Journal of Sociology*, 18(1),2001, pp 168-206.

Byres, Terence J. (ed), *The Indian Economy: Major Debates Since Independence*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi,1998.

Chappell, Louise and Lisa Hill (eds), *The Politics of Women's Interests, New comparative perspectives,* Routledge, 2006.

Chattopadhyay, Raghbendra and Esther Duflo, 'the Impact of Reservations in Panchayati Raj: Evidence From a Nationwide Randomized Experiment', *Econometrica,* 72(5), 2004, pp 1409- 1443.

Cleaver, Frances, 'Paradoxes of Participation: Questioning Participatory Approaches to Development', *Journal of International Development,* 11, 1999, pp 597-612.

Currie, Bob 'Political Authority, Public Deliberation and Politics of Poverty Reduction', in Niraja Gopal Jayal and Sudha Pai, (ed) *Democratic Governance in India: Challenges of Poverty, Development and Identity,* Sage Publications, 2001, pp66 -80.

Cunninghan, Frank, *Theories of Democracy, A Critical Introduction,* Routledge, New York, 2002.

Dalton, Russel J.and Hans-Dieter Klingermann,(ed), *Oxford Handbook of Political Behaviour,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007.

Dasgupta, Partha and Ismail Serageldin (eds), *Social Capital: A Multifaceted Perspective,* The World Bank, Washington D.C., 2000.

Denizen, Norman K. and Yunnova S. Lincoln, (ed), *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry,* Sage Publications, California, 2003.

de Souza, Peter Ronald, 'The struggle for Local Government: Indian Democracy's New Phase' in David N Gellener, and Krishna Hachhethu (ed), *Local Democracy in South Asia:Microprocesses of Democratization in Nepal and its Neighbours, Governance, and Civic Action : Vol1,* Sage, New Delhi,2008, pp 301-326.

Diamond, Larry and Lornado Morlino, 'The Quality of Democracy: An Overview', *Journal of Democracy,* 15(4), 2004, pp 20-31.

DiMaggio, Paul J. and Walter W. Powell, 'The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields', *American Sociological Review,* 48(2), 1983, pp147-160.

Doniger, Wendy, *The Hindus: An Alternative History,* Penguin, New Delhi, 2009.

Druckmann, James N, 'Political Preference Formation: Competition, Deliberation, (Ir) relevance of the Framing Effect', *The American Political Science Review,* 98(4), 2004, pp 671-686.

Elliot, Carolyn M. (ed), *Civil Society and Democracy: A Reader,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003.

Feldman, Stanley and John Zaller, 'Political Culture of Ambivalence: Ideological Responses to the Welfare State', *American Journal of Political Science,* 36 (1), 1992, pp268-307.

Fox, Jonathan, *'Politics of Food in Mexico',* Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993, pp.151.

Goodwin, Charles and Alessandro Durranti , ' *Rethinking Contexts' Language as an Interactive Phenomenon ,* Cambridge University Press, New York, 1992, pp 1-43.

Gould, Harold H ,'Local level /Grass root Political Studies in Veena Das (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of Sociology and Social Anthropology,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, pp 1494-1523.

Gilbert, Margaret, 'Notes on the Concept of Social Convention', *New Literary History*, 14(2), 1983, pp225-251.

Heckathorn, Douglas D, 'Dynamics and Dilemmas of Collective Action', *American SociologicalReview*, 61(2), 1996, pp 250-277.

Heckathorn, Douglas D. and Judith E.Rosenstein, 'Group Solidarity As The Product of Collective Action: Creation of Solidarity in a Population of Drug Users', *Group Cohesion, Trust and Solidarity*, 19, 2002, pp37-66.

Hickey, Samuel and Giles Mohan (eds), *Participation from Tyranny to Transformation: Exploring New Approaches to Participation in Development*, New York, Zed Books, 2004.

Hindustan Times, *Politics is no-no for this Pradhan*, New Delhi, 23, May, 2010.

Ingelhart, Ronald and Wayne E.Baker, 'Modernization, Cultural Change and the Persistence of Traditional Values', *American Sociological Review*, 65(1), 2000, pp19-51.

Josephson, John R. and Susan G. Josephson, *Abductive Inference: Computation, Philosophy, Technology*, Cambridge University Press New York, 1994.

Jayal, Niraja Gopal, 'Democracy and Social Capital in the Central Himalayas: A Tale of Two Villages', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 36(8), 2001, pp.655-664.

Jayal, Niraja Gopal, Amit Prakash, Pradeep K. Sharma, *Local Governance in India: Decentralization and Beyond*, Oxford Unversity Press, New Delhi, 2006

.

Jayal, Niraja Gopal, 'Engendering Local Democracy: the Impact of Quotas for Women in India's Panchayat', *Democratization*, 13(1), 2006, pp15-35.

Kandyoti, Deniz "Bargaining with Patriarchy", *Gender and Society,* 2(3), 1988, pp 274-290.

Krishna, Anirudh, 'Poverty and Democratic Participation Reconsidered: Evidence from the Local level in India', *Comparative Politics,* 38(4), 2006, pp 439-458.

Kumar, Radha, *The History of Doing, An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India 1800-1990,* Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1993.

Kunwar, Shishupal Singh (ed), *Hugging the Himalayas: The Chipko Experience,* Dasholi Gram Swarajya Mandal, Gopeshwar (Chamoli), 1982.

Lake, Ronald La Due and Robert Huckfeldt, 'Social Capital, Social Network, and Political Participation', *Political Psychology,* 19(3), 1998, pp567-574.

Levy, Brian and Sahr John Kpundeh,'*Building State Capacity in Africa: New Approaches, Emerging Lesson'* WBI Development Studies, 2004.

Lichbach, Mark Irving and Alan S. Zuckerman (eds), *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture and Structure, Advancing Theory in Comparative politics,* Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Mawdelsky, Emma, 'After Chipko: From environment to region in Uttaranchal, *Journal of Peasant Studies,* 25 (4), 1996, pp 36-54.

Marglin, Stephen A., *Dismal Science: How Thinking Like Economist Undermines Community,* Harvard University Press, U.S., 2008.

McFadden, Daniel, 'Rationality for Economists', *Journal and Risk Uncertainty,* 19(1), 1999, pp 73-105.

Meeling, Alfred R. and Pierce Rawling (ed), *Oxford Handbook of Rationality,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 2004.

Meyers David S, Nancy Whitter, Belinda Robnett (eds), *Social Movements: Identity, Culture and the State,* Oxford University Press, New York, 2002.

Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India, *Study on Elected Women Representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions,* 2009.

Mitra, Subrata K., *Culture and Rationality: The Politics of Social Change in Post Colonial India,* Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1999.

Molyneux, Maxine, ' Analyzing Women's Movements' in Cecile Jackson and Ruth Pearson (ed) *Feminist Vision on Development : Gender Analysis and Policy,* Routledge , Oxon, 1998, pp 65-83.

Newton, Kenneth, 'Trust, Social Capital, Civil Society and Democracy', *International Political Science Review,* 22(2), 2001,pp 201-214.

Norris, Pippa and Ronald Ingelhart, 'Cultural Obstacles to Equal Protection', *Journal of Democracy,* 12(3), 2001, pp126-140.

Ostrom, Elinor, James Walker, Roy Gardner, 'Covenants With and Without a Sword: Self-Governance is Possible', *The American Political Science Review,* 86(2), 1992,pp 404-417.

Planning Commission, Government of India, *Uttarakhand Development Report,* 2009.

Rangan, Haripriya, *of Myths and Movements, Rewriting Chipko in the Himalayan History,* Verso, London, U.K., 2000.

Rao, Vijendra and Michael Walton (ed), *Culture and Public Action,* Permanent Black, Delhi, 2004.

Rogowski, Ronald, The Role of Theory and Anomaly in Social Scientific Inference, *The American Political Science Review,* 89(2), 1995, pp 467-470.

Rule, James B. 'Rationality and non Rationality in Militant Collective Action' *Sociological Theory,* 7, 1989, pp 145-60.

Sarkar, Sumit and Tanika Sarkar (eds), *'Women and Social Reform in India, A Reader'* Vol I, Permanent Black, Ranikhet, 2007

Schatz, Edward (ed) *Political Ethnography: What Immersion can do to the Study of Power,* University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2009.

Seitz, Virginia R, *Women Development and Communities for Empowerment in Appalachia,* State University of New York Press, Albany, 1998.

Shapiro Ian, Roger M Smith and Tarek E. Masoud (eds), *Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics,* Cambridge University Press, U.K.,2004.

Skocpol, Theda, 'The Tocqueville Problem: Civic Engagements in American Democracy', *Social Science History,* 21(4), 1997,pp 455-479.

Singh, Rajendra, *Social Movements, Old and New, A Post Modern Critique.* Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2001.

Sinha ,Subir, Shubhra Gurrani ,Brian Greenberg, 'The 'new traditionalist' discourse of Indian environmentalism' in *Journal of Peasant Studies,* 24(3),1997,pp65-99.

Stake, Robert E., 'The Case Study Method in Social Inquiry', *Education Reseracher*, 7(2), 1978, pp5-8.

Stiglitz, Joseph E., 'The Contribution of the Economics of Information to Twentieth Century', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 115(4), 2000, pp1441-1478.

Stiglitz, Joseph E., 'Information and the Change in the Paradigm in Economics', *The American Economic Review*, 92(3), 2002, pp 460-501.

Thapar, Romila, *A History of India, Volume One*, Penguin, New Delhi, 1966.

Vanderschraaf, Peter, 'Hume's Game Theoretical Business Ethics', *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 9(1), 1999, pp 47-67.

Walton, H.G., *The Gazetteer of Dehra Dun*, Natraj Publishers, Dehra Dun, 1911, (reprinted 2007).

Walton, H.G., *Gazetteer of Garhwal Himalayas*, Natraj Publishers, Dehradun, 1910, (reprinted 1989).

Weiner, Myron, *The Indian Paradox, Essays in Indian Politics*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1989.

Yee, Albert S., 'Thick Rationality and Missing "Brute Fact": The Limits of Rationalist Incorporations of Norms and Ideas', *The Journal of Politics*, 59(4), 1997, pp 1001-1039.