Community-based Tourism Development as Gendered Political Space: A Feminist Geographical Perspective

Neha Nimble
Tata Institute of Social Sciences

Abstract

Drawing from a doctoral thesis on the construction of gender in livelihoods, this paper analyzes women's experiences of participation in a local decentralized governance body (Village Tourism Development Committee) within a State implemented community based rural tourism development program that aims at political empowerment of women and the marginalised. Building a theoretical framework located in Feminist Political Geography, this paper adds to the knowledge on the gendered nature of space by examining the unexplored role of local decentralized governance and development agencies as political space in which culturally and historically embedded gender and caste roles intersect to impact the outcome on women's political assets. Methodologically, the article uses data collected within a feminist phenomenological framework to elaborately investigate women's experiences of gender and caste relations in political space

It is argued that women face various socio-cultural constraints that pose challenges to optimum realization of their political capacities. The constraints faced by them are gendered and casteised with a historicity of marginalization and spatial discrimination. The main argument here is that gendered construction of space presents challenges to full and meaningful participation of women in the state created local and decentralized political agency. By building a topographical understanding of women's political participation, the paper also emphasizes the significance of scales and shows how broader structures and processes work with local ones in local space and place to impact women's immediate political realities and experiences. It is suggested that processes like United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) guidelines, increasing international tourist in-flow, national policies, schemes and projects on tourism development and empowerment of women, patriarchy, capitalism, and casteism operate at broader global and national scales and affect women's lives at their local regional levels. Multiple socio-economic structures and relations existing at local, household, community and individual scales like gendered division of labor, local economic relations, cultural and religious beliefs and norms, and household and community power relations also affect and are impacted by the broader processes and structures. These, in turn, together influence the extent to which women can gain political power.

The findings of the analysis suggest that when a political empowerment program is implemented in practice, top-down by the State, in the overall space of unequal gender and caste relations, the women's experiences of political participation are unsurprisingly those which suggest that tourism is borne out of and developed in a gendered society with gendered impacts.

Introduction

Through an analysis of women's experiences of participation in a local decentralized governance body (Village Tourism Development Committee) in a community based rural tourism site, this paper aims at understanding the impact of a community based tourism development program on women's political assets. It analyses the various ways in which gendered and casteized socio-cultural constraints manifest themselves as challenges to optimum realization of women's political capacities. Significantly, by giving attention to space, place and scale, it describes the construction of community based tourism development as gendered political space.

This paper is organized thematically and begins by explaining the theoretical and methodological frameworks used for analysis. It then provides a description of the evolution and role of community based tourism development practices in empowering the marginalized sections in a destination community. It also includes a description of state intervention for tourism development in the village as a community development strategy and introduces Rural Tourism Scheme (RTS), Endogenous Tourism Project (ETP) and Village Tourism Development Committee (VTDC). Then, it moves to build topography of the research site, Naggar in an effort to make further analyses easy to locate. A basic topographical analysis assists in drawing the particularities of the locale. The description of the historical, socio-economic and cultural context of Naggar sets the base to further the analysis of role, gender and intersectionality in the construction of women's political struggles. This is followed by a discussion on caste and gender as categories of socio-political exclusion in Naggar. Building on women's lived experiences, the next section describes the various ways in which these categories of social exclusion manifest themselves as categories of political marginalization as they participate in ETP through VTDC. Further, it analyzes VTDC as a space for political marginalization which constructs and is constructed by spatialised gender relations. Lastly, the paper builds topography of women's political participation in tourism development for their empowerment by linking their immediate everyday lives with the processes taking place at broader scales. Basically, it

questions the assumption that state created spaces for political participation for women can enhance their political asset in a particular place without carefully altering historically and culturally embedded caste and gender norms.

Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks

This paper adds to the knowledge on the gendered nature of space by examining the unexplored role of local decentralized governance and development agencies as political space in which culturally and historically embedded gender and caste roles intersect to impact the outcome on women's political assets. Thus, the paper draws from feminist political geography. Feminist political geography offers alternatives to the study of political sites, spaces and practices across scales of analysis (Peake, 1999 and Kodras, 1999). Such study goes beyond the inclusion of women's issues and involves a rethinking of the different relationships between politics and power and brings to attention all different forms of political activities in which people are engaged (Brown and Staeheli, 2003). The paper particularly draws from Cyndi Katz's counter-topographies (a term coined by Cyndi Katz (2004)), which allows for examining the linkages between the particularities of marginalization and political challenges in different locales. By focusing on the micro geographies of sites like family and community and macro geographies of state as a development agency, the effort is to demonstrate how private space interacts with public space to construct experiences for women that transcend the public private divide in political decision making.

Methodologically, the article uses data collected within a feminist phenomenological framework to elaborately and investigate women's experiences of gender and caste relations in political space. Staying true to the demands of feminist phenomenology, the paper draws from an extensive amount of fieldwork conducted in a rural tourism site, Naggar[1] to execute qualitative research methods of oral histories, interviews, community profiling, analysis of available literature and observation.

Tourism as a Tool for Community Development and Political Empowerment of the Marginalized

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[1] A rural tourism site in the Himalayan state of Himachal Pradesh in India

Tourism is considered as one of the most desirable and sustainable economic development options for developing and underdeveloped countries (Harrison, 1992, Mowforth and Munt 1998; Singh et al, 1989; Telfer, 2002). Researchers have emphasized on tourism as being not merely an economic phenomenon but also a highly social and political phenomenon. Tourism processes and activities result in social change and involve complex linkages between cultural values, attitudes towards materiality, gender and politics in the community (Fillmore, 1994). Such linkages are found to have complex and serious implications for people in host communities (Kinnaird and Hall, 1996).

While overall, tourism is celebrated for having a catalytic role in broader socio-economic development as well as political change, recent researches have added that tourism benefits are unequal and polarized (Telfer 2002). Tourism development is now often associated with unequal distribution of its benefits among host communities (Devedzic, 2002; Fillmore, 1994; Greenwood, 1989; Kinnaird and Hall, 1996; Rao, 1995). It has been established that tourism is a part of the existing patriarchal, social and economic structures and thus has unequal implications for the people depending on their position within those structures (Kinnaird and Hall, 1996).

Following such observations, scholars have suggested alternative sustainable models of development to mass tourism development and recommended community based and community owned small scale tourism development practices. Such community based alternative models include rural tourism, eco tourism, etc. Timothy (2002) argues that while community based tourism is the best for sustainable tourism development and effective empowerment of the marginalized in the host community, it also faces challenges. The local power and socio-political traditions and relations in the community usually mean that the local elites have decision-making power for the rest and the concerns of the socially marginalized are largely ignored.

It has been found in studies in general that women have not been able to gain politically from tourism development (Kinnaird and Hall, 1996 and Rao, 2000). It is asserted that economic, cultural, political, social and environmental aspects of tourism activities interact with the gendered nature of societies and the ways in which gender relations are constructed over time. Women take up any kind of low paying menial jobs for lack of other options and for flexibility; with little rewards for socio-political status. Studies have found that women occupy lower positions and are paid less as compared to men in the tourism industry (Ramchurjee, 2011). This

gap is worse in developing countries than developed countries (Cave and Kilic, 2010). Without political representation of women in important tourism and state agencies, the concerns of women have been ignored in tourism development programs aiming at their empowerment However, studies confirm that tourism has the potential to give livelihoods and leadership opportunities to women, despite continuing to lack in fully realizing that potential by great margins (Ramchurjee, 2011). Within their socio-economic positions, women are exerting their agency are are navigating whatever little space they are able to make for themselves in tourism (Boonabaana, 2014).

Recognizing the need for sustainable tourism development that also empowers the host communities, the tenth five year plan of the Indian Government had a major shift in approach towards tourism development as it put thrust on small and rural segment tourism. Rural Tourism Scheme (RTS) is one of the schemes conceptualized and implemented in various parts of India with the plan's goals. Also, around the same time, responding to the push from feminists, human right activists and global guidelines for gender sensitivity in planning and development processes, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (MoT-GoI) acknowledged that the tourism industry, with its large female presence, started adopting the principles of gender sensitization and gender equality in its schemes and programs (MoT-GoI, 2010-2011). After the adoption of "New Tourism" and sustainable tourism principles by United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism is seen as a priority sector for bringing greater social justice and equality especially for women. As a result, the components of women's participation and gender equality were taken into the schemes of tourism in India. RTS is the result of such efforts and has been implemented through various projects in different rural sites with tourism potential. With the stated aims of infrastructure development, empowerment of women and the socially disadvantaged as well as tourism promotion, the RTS was implemented through Endogenous Tourism Project (ETP) in twelve rural tourism sites across the country. ETP is a joint project of the Ministry of Tourism and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Considering the long history and huge potential for tourism, among other places, ETP was implemented in Naggar, Himachal Pradesh with the focus on expansion of tourism from 2005-2010; after which the project was handed over to the community. The work of the project was done under two components: hardware and software. The software component focused on capacity building and trainings and was taken care of by the UNDP which employed the NGO

SAVE for the same. UNDP acted as a supplier of financial capital and human resources for investment in tourism development in Naggar because of its lack of government tourism sector spending. The work done under this component includes the composition of the Village Tourism Development Committee (VTDC) for carrying out the project, the formation of Self Help Groups and the organizing of gender sensitization programs, etc. Many other capacity building programs and trainings were provided to local men and women in hygiene, hospitality, history, tradition, heritage, toilet building, guides, trekking, tailoring, weaving, embroidery, cooking, etc. The second component, hardware, was directly managed by the Department of Tourism, Himachal Pradesh and was implemented by VTDC. The work done under this component included the construction of roads, buildings, provision of trekking equipments to youth groups, renovation of heritage buildings and temples of historical and tourism importance as well as the implementation of home-based stay scheme, etc.

Constructing a Topography of Naggar, the Field Site

The historic socio-cultural, economic and spatial conditions of Naggar impact the way in which women's political assets are affected. A basic topographical analysis providing background data on the region was fundamental in developing particularities of the place and thus constructing topography of women's political participation in Naggar. Naggar is a *gram panchayat* village[2] in Kullu district of the Himalayan state of Himachal Pradesh in India. It offers rich natural and cultural heritage and is home to many buildings and temples of historical importance. Tourists have been coming to Naggar since pre-colonial times and it is a preferred destination for foreign tourists who come to experience the nature, culture and traditions of the indigenous community. People of Naggar have traditionally been hosts to tourists for centuries and are primarily engaged in horticulture, agriculture, livestock rearing and tourism related economic activities for livelihoods.

Historical Context

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[2] A *gram panchayat* is formalised local self-governance system in India at the village level. One *gram* panchayat may comprise one village or several small hamlets. A *sarpanch* is the elected head of the *panchayat*.

Naggar, as a place, has been constructed by a long history of kingly rule and royalty. This includes the British administration under colonialism, traditional institutions like religion and caste, a long lived identity as a tourist place and of some significant livelihood transitions over decades. The history of Naggar can be placed within the history of the Kullu valley. It was one of the major corridors of trade between the Gangetic plains and Central Asia and the kingdom of Kullu. It was founded by the Pal kings in the first century A.D. Naggar was the center of the British administration during the period of 1845-1910 (Chetwode, 1972). It is because of this history of centuries of royalty and administrative importance under colonialism that apart from being a quaint, serene and beautiful village in the lap of inner Himalayas, Naggar has the reputation of being a prosperous and resourceful village.

Physical Topography

The physical topography of Nagger is characterized by peculiar geographical features. Including mountains composed of high ranges, sharp crests and steep terrains (Shabab, 1999). Hail and snow are common during winters, which are very harsh. With *Dhauladhar and Peer Panjal* mountain ranges on two sides and the River Beas flowing by its lowlands, the land of Naggar**,** as that of the whole Kullu valley, is rich and fertile. During the whole year, crops are grown and gathered in the typical terrace-step style and on the lowlands along the banks of the river Beas. The topography of hilly Naggar is such that common resources are accessible or less accessible to persons depending on their spatial location within the village. The difficult *kutcha* roads or no roads exclude a part of the population from readily availing many resources. These groups do find it difficult to access roads from their places of stay. Spatial and geographical arrangements of community resources reflect spatial marginalization of some groups in the community.

Religion in Naggar

'This is the village of gods.' This is one sentence one can hear from many locals when they talk about their village, Naggar. In books on Kullu, the whole valley has been many a time referred to as the Valley of Village Gods (Shabab, 1999). Naggar is a strictly Hindu society that observes and practices religion rigidly. Religion is the single most important institution for the community as a whole. The people of Naggar worship gods in the form of local *devtas* in the temples of the

village and nearby. Religion/ Hinduism as practiced in that part of the Kullu valley is the source of people's self-identities and their culture. People are God fearing and have been living their lives as per God's word which is being transferred generation to generation until today through *goors*[3]. While this religious thread binds the community in a close knit unit, it also binds them in a manner that there are different sections which operate functionally to sustain the religious guidelines. The different sects divide people on the basis of their duties in community and family depending on the caste and gender group they belong to. Religion is the biggest institution that makes strict gender and caste norms for people, affecting their participation in any livelihood activity. In the local interpretation of religion among elderly men and their followers, women and people of historically oppressed caste groups have no rights but should assist and serve the dominant caste men. Any deviation from caste and gender norms is supposed to bring the wrath of the Gods upon the community and thus invites a penalty from the community members. Despite no written words, women and disadvantaged caste groups segregate themselves in terms of occupations and physical location of their houses and paths. They do not touch the deities are not allowed to enter temples. Religious norms require women of menstruating age to stay with cattle in the lowest storey of traditional three storey houses during menstruating days in chilly weather. Sharing water or food among different caste groups is also denied. Such religiously ordered and sanctioned forms of discrimination continue to guide people's lives in Naggar.

Caste Composition of the Village

Castes in Naggar can be categorized as below: *Chamars, luhars*, *hassis, Koli,* (Scheduled Castes, SCs); *Nath, Dhaagi, Acharyas.* (Other Backward Classes, OBCs); and *Brahmins, Rajputs, Thakurs, Vaishyas, Khash* (General). Dalit communities or 'untouchables' comprise Scheduled Caste category in the Indian administration. Caste is a very significant identity in the religious and traditional society of Naggar. People draw their identities, strength, power, roles and vulnerabilities from the caste groups they belong to. Traditionally and contemporarily, there are strict differences in the class, opportunities and fortunes for people belonging to different caste groups. In the primarily agricultural society, the SCs are either landless or have uncultivable land. Resultantly, they form the lowest economic class with little to no productive resources.

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[3] *goors* are human beings who are treated as messengers of Gods in the community. People approach *goors* for any problems that they might have. *GOORS* are treated as God in Naggar.

While the SC population faces various social and economic disadvantages (untouchability, lack of land and restricted access to common community resources), the OBCs and general category people are comparatively privileged in the society. They form socially, economically and politically dominant caste groups in the community.

Caste and Gender in Naggar: Categories of Social Exclusion

Naggar has inherited historically embedded and strengthened practices and patterns of differences and disadvantages. These have led to the creation of various kinds of exclusionary practices on the basis of caste and gender. Such practices and oppressive relations of caste and gender, created and maintained by the institutions of religion, patriarchy and new forms of capitalism, have determined social exclusion and resulted in reduced access to political assets and restricted political lives for many groups of people in Naggar.

Being a Woman in Naggar

Ever since the kingly rule, women have been treated as laborers with no rights. The kings used to marry as many as 100 women to assist the king in his daily needs. Polygamy was common among other local elites too. It has been reported by village elders that the purpose of marrying more than one woman was to have personal slaves and when the man died, the wives were burnt alive on their husband's pyre. Since then, much has changed but women's condition as people without equal citizenship rights continues. Family is the primary site where the category of women as category of social exclusion is constructed. Naggar families give differential socialization of girls and boys depending on perceived gender roles in society. The families in Naggar reflect gender differences and inequalities in acceptable actions, behavior and morality for women and men. These gender norms of the family are more important than market transactions while allocating resources between family members (Sen, 1983). Despite being the primary workers in the hilly society, women are considered and raised to be primary caregivers and men are socialized to become primary bread winners. Thus, women control, own and access little or no resources on their own. Ironically, it is rare to see men working in the village while women have to bear a triple workload of productive, reproductive as well as community management work in Naggar.

The table below represents the day-time schedule of a typical Naggarian woman:

Time	Task
6 am	Wake-up
6 am-8:30 am	Milching and feeding cows cleaning cows and their excreta Making and having tea Making breakfast and lunch Getting the children ready and leaving them at school Heating water for everyone in family Having breakfast
8:30 am to 8 pm	Taking bath Cleaning up kitchen Cleaning up and doing up the house Washing clothes Working in fields and orchards Feeding and grazing cows (1-2 pm) Collecting fuelwood (only in three-four months of the year) Sleeping for half an hour Bringing back children from school Knitting, weaving and chatting Achar and chutney making (seasonal) Milching cows (7 pm) Making evening tea Visiting market for daily needs Preparing for dinner. Making dinner Cleaning up kitchen Preparing the beds
10 pm	Go to bed

Table 1. Day-time Schedule of a Naggarian Woman

The table shows the day-time schedule of women who do home-based work or are not involved in paid work outside their homes. Women engaged in paid work activities have to do all the tasks listed above and then struggle to make time for her economic activities in tourism. They use skills developed domestically to make livelihoods in tourism- like hospitality, knitting and weaving souvenirs, cooking, making pickles and other farm based products. Despite, such physical hardships, women themselves do not perceive these tasks as work and reflect the general attitude towards women's reproductive and domestic work in the patriarchal societies.

Gender specific 'important' and not so 'desired' roles are well assimilated in women's psyches for most of the women in Naggar. However, their devotion to families and socialization that demand a complete acceptance of their woman's role in a family has implications for their freedom, their decision making as well as access to political spaces and roles. For instance, women in Naggar know that they have a legal right on their fathers' lands. But they still seldom

own the property. Women are excluded from such decisions like what is to be done with the house and land in relation to livelihoods.

The prescribed role for a woman and the idea of a 'good' woman and a 'bad' woman are also taught in the family. The 'good' woman values her family relationships and reproductive responsibilities more than any claims to productive resources or a decision making role. Women grow up internalizing such values of being 'woman' and 'good woman'. It is considered uncomely and immoral for a woman to claim a stake in their father's land or try to make any family or community decision. Women are treated as apolitical beings. Decision-making is not considered a 'woman's job'. Despite being the primary agriculturists, they do not have much say in agricultural matters either. The decisions regarding selling of produce and buying of seeds are all matters of men.

There are restrictions on women with regard to mobility as well. They are not allowed to be in public spaces like streets, roads or markets unless a male family member gives permission. They have to seek permission from the men (husbands or fathers) in matters of where to go and which reasons are legitimate for them to move outside of their homes or their village. Women's decisions, big or small, have to be approved by the men of their families. Even their personal decisions regarding a visit to their friends or relatives, buying bangles etc., have to be approved by the men. Usually men don't allow women and girls to go out of Naggar unless they have some work of concern to the family. Women, however, seem to have no qualms about it. They have internalized this system where they naturally feel obedient following the decisions of the males in their lives as if they were their own decisions. Women's familial roles and expectations are reflected in the manner in which they behave when made to participate in community matters.

Gender as a Category of Social Exclusion

Social exclusion is experienced by certain groups of people as they find themselves out of or constrained in their participation in active social, cultural and economic life (Kabeer, 2000). Kabeer (2000) argues that certain processes occur that actively create such disadvantages and social exclusion for certain groups in societies and thus social exclusion is not a given category

that results out of marginalization and impoverishment. In Naggar, caste and gender form two major categories that determine social exclusion of many in Naggar. Gender as well as caste determines distribution of labor, land, reproductive labor and also of the other productive and needed resources of the household or the community in Naggar. In Naggar, gender as a category structures access to land, labor, rights and entitlements in favor of men. As discussed above, women find themselves living a life of work with fewer rights and resources. Similarly, caste as a category also structures people's access to land, occupations and work, and thus incomes and livelihood outcomes. The castes groups of *koli, haasi, chamar* and *luhar* in Naggar are considered 'lower' castes as the dominant traditional and cultural values in Naggar devalue their identity, labor as well as morality. Things and values associated with women and people of these marginalized caste groups are considered to be of low value. This devaluation is rooted in religiously ordered and sanctioned economic disadvantage, ordering and segregation of roles for different gender and caste groups. Scheduled Castes form a socially despised and exploited caste group in Naggar. Practices of social exclusion and discrimination are religiously ordained and socially approved. Inter-dining is prohibited as these people belonging to the castes in lowest rung of caste hierarchy are considered to be causing pollution for others through direct or indirect contact (Nayak, 1994). This has implications for spatial, geographical as well as societal segregation that these groups find themselves to be facing. They are found at the margins of not only the village but also on the margins of the progress, growth and empowerment. Men of dominant caste groups in Naggar have traditionally devalued, marginalized and exploited women and families of *koli, haassi, chamar* and *luhaar* castes from not only access to means of livelihoods but have also controlled their political representation and visibility of their values and concerns. Thus, the political exclusion is rooted in the social and cultural ways of distribution of access and capital in the rural society of Naggar.

While participation in tourism, in informal and low-paid economic activities, has definitely increased the economic status of some women, their political status remains far from transformed due to the strictly embedded gender roles in the society. The social exclusion is manifested in women's restricted access to political assets during their participation in tourism development. The various ways in which these socially excluded groups experience political exclusion are discussed in the next section.

Manifestation of Political Exclusion of Women

Women are navigating existing and newly created political spaces within state intervention programs aimed at developing and empowering them (Krishna, 2007; Singh, 2002). Singh (2002) argues that when women are fairly represented, it improves the efficiency of the programs while simultaneously ensuring political empowerment for them. VTDC is one such space that aimed at ensuring women's rights while ensuring political engagement for their own empowerment in Naggar. VTDC promised a community driven political space for women and other marginalized sections of the society where they had the power to decide what tourism activities are required to be developed in the village that may address their economic and social needs. The space was created to give power in the hands of all irrespective of their traditional power status within the community. VTDC provides a site to study how far the objectives of political empowerment of women through community based tourism development could be met. This section describes various manifestations of challenges faced by women in their free and meaningful participation in the VTDC and their community development (through *mahila mandal[4]*).

Uncritical Formation of VTDC

Critical formation of the VTDC for tourism development is the most fundamental requirement for implementing the community based tourism in its principles of sustainable tourism development for the empowerment of the marginalized. However the process of its formation belies the fundamental goal of systematic tourism development in Naggar. Despite being a community based tourism development project, the VTDC under ETP was formed in an undemocratic manner. In the words of Rashmi, one of the very few community members who knew about RTS-ETP,

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[4] *Mahila Mandal* is a formalization institutional association of women belonging to a *gram panchayat* (a unit of village or cluster of villages with a single *panchayat)*. It is a women's collective which aims at bringing women's issues to the *panchayat* and subsequent levels of administration. The membership of such organisations includes any or all women between the age of 18 to 45 years. The organisation of *Mahila Mandal* is based on democratic pocess and has a formally elected Executive Committee comprising Seven, Nine or Eleven members. The offices in the social organisation of Mahila Mandal a President, a Secretary and Treasurer, all of whom are women from one village.

> …NGO people chose two *oopar wale*[5] local friends as VTDC members and then left it to them to compose the whole committee. The members were selected by these local elites keeping in mind who will support their decisions in the VTDC so as to ensure minimum confrontation in decision making by those few. Everybody who got to know about the project, wanted to be associated with SAVE, the implementing NGO, as they wanted to reap the benefits offered by ETP…

As Rashmi remembers about the formation of VTDC, the involvement and participation of the local community was done in a very uncritical manner. It is suggested that the formation of the nodal body of ETP in the village violates the principles of community driven development project. The implementing agency SAVE (chosen by representatives from UNDP) chose VTDC members on the recommendation of two influential (dominant caste and class) people in Naggar who were the friends of the NGO representative from SAVE. These two were automatically chosen to be President and Secretary of the committee. Further, out of the total 15 VTDC members, five (four men and one woman from dominant caste groups) were nominated to do most of the work as these are the ones who are politically powerful owing to their historical social and economic standing in the community. The committee included one SC man and overall five women; four of whom belonged to the dominant caste groups. Women were listed in the community to fill in the reports and so were included SCs. These groups had no say in the decisions taken by the VTDC with respect to the conceptualization as well as implementation of the project. Women and other less privileged caste groups have learnt historically to be decided for and are in their 'comfort' zones as they agree with anything that is decided for them.

Uncritical and Non-strategic Participation of Women and SCs

The periodic VTDC meetings with respect to the ETP work happened without any careful attempt to include the participation and interests of the marginalized groups of the community. Local people were treated as objects of development not subjects. This has secured power and related benefits in few hands within in the community. Under such conditions, the disadvantaged groups of the community i.e., women, the *kolis, haasis, chamars* and *luhars* and the low economic class people, are being turned into low paid workers in tourism. In many cases, with the expansion and monopoly of certain and few rich people's businesses, tourism is ironically turning entrepreneurs into laborers. Ownership is getting lost as poorer people, especially poor women find themselves ill equipped to compete.

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[5] *oopar wale* literally translates to the ones from above/ higher place. These *oopar wale* live in the upper part of the village and are also members of 'higher' castes.

Participatory activities and meetings as part of the project too were conducted in a very technical manner. Representation of women and SCs in VTDC and their invitation in meetings of community matters were only name-sake, just to fill some columns in the papers to be shown to UNDP representatives who would visit and inspect once in one year. There was clear caste bias while conducting meetings and participation of women and people from *koli, haassi, luhar* and *chamar* castes. The nominal vice-president of the VTDC resentfully remembers,

> …Inclusion of 'caste people'[6] in any decision making body or meeting is a farce. Their participation is mostly just for paper work. They feel they are favoring us if they allow us to sit next to them in meetings. One can easily sense their disgust at the forced physical proximity for those hours or minutes. But then, we don't feel humiliated or anything, we are used to this treatment. Let them be…

On the other hand, women were happy enough to be called for meetings as they have traditionally learnt to be decided for. In VTDC, they were functional members for they went to support the dominant caste male view. Kamla, a dominant caste woman, shares,

> …The women members of the committee were seldom present. You know, it is not normal or easy for a woman to some out and present such meetings so most of the members stayed in their homes. If ever called, to show to external *babujis* (Ministry level officers), they would go, sit, have tea and come back. We all know who took decisions. There is nothing new about it. I was the only woman who used to regularly attend the meetings of VTDC, but I always knew certain things are for papers. Let these men decide…

The experience of a woman from SC community of her participation and representation in VTDC manifests how her experience as woman was casteized;

…I was the only 'caste woman' who actually ever went to any of the meetings of VTDC. I was given the membership to show in their registers. I would go there and see people do their work. You know how it is… I tell you, inclusion of women and 'caste people' in any decision making body or meeting is a farce. My participation was mostly just for paper work. I stopped going after the first couple of meetings… Who cares…? One can easily sense their disgust at the forced physical proximity for those hours or minutes.[7] But then, we don't feel humiliated or anything, we are used to this treatment. Let them be… You know how it is; it always has been a farce! The affluent and powerful families worked with each other's help and made decisions that brought the entire fund into their own pockets. You should go to these people's homes and see how big mansions they have created with the money which should have helped the poor and the needy…

This statement shows that even the power given by the state and economic status does not protect a woman from exclusion one has to face in a strictly casteist society like Naggar. Not

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[6] *caste people*- Locals call Schedules castes as caste people as it is believed only these communities have caste while rest of them are human beings.

[7] Dominant caste groups practice untouchability against castes in Scheduled caste group and avoid any kind of physical closeness, inter-dining and interaction 1owith them in Naggar.

surprisingly, the mandatory inclusion of women in VTDC and its meetings brought into the political space those women who already had the higher political and cultural capital (due to their dominant caste and thus 'higher' class status) and in the casteist society of Naggar, these were dominant caste, upper class women. Under such participation and involvement, most in the local communities reap few direct or big benefits from tourism because they have little control over the ways in which the tourism activities and enterprises are developed. The project was conceptualized in the centers of power in Ministry offices and given to the selected few in the community to run. It is this very few local elite that take the form of 'community' and derive gains from such tourism development. The actual needs of the women and especially SC women were neither sought nor considered in developing activities under VTDC.

Lack of Need Assessment in Conception of ETP by VTDC

While the formation of VTDC was uncritical, the conception of the ETP was also done without considering the needs of the women and other disadvantaged groups. It was reported that the mandatory need assessment survey was not done before designing the activities of the project. Manki, the first *sarpanch* under whom the RTS work began, points towards the fact that because the decision making body lacked the voices of women, the architecture of the project and thus formation of VTDC did not consider the needs of women. She adds,

> …The architecture of the heritage project did not suit the needs of women. There was no scope in it to empower women. I had suggested making stalls near the castle, where most tourists come, so that women can sell their products. Women have the skill but do not have a link with the market. At least, most of them do not. However, it was not considered necessary by these big men and subsequent *sarpanchs* to build such market stalls, because you know who listens to women here and even a *sarpanch* is just a woman for them…

Resultantly, the trainings and other capacity building programs were not really needed by the women who already were skilled in weaving, cooking, knitting, tailoring etc. This also points towards the disconnect between the two agencies of VTDC and *panchayat* and between the different *sarpanchs* and their different approach to tourism development for the empowerment of women and other needy groups.

Challenges in Collaboration with Local Democratic Structure of Panchayat

The 73rd constitutional amendment in India required reservation seats and posts of chairpersons for women in all village level decentralized democratic institutions, known as *Panchayats*. With this step, political empowerment of women in rural India assumed considerable significance

(Datta, 1998). The committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions stressed on the need for recognizing and strengthening women's role in the village level decision making process through engagement in Panchayats. To ensure women's effective involvement in decision making at *panchayat, mahila* mandals were organized as an important supporting component to panchayat structure. A *mahila mandal* is the democratic political unit where women meet every month and discuss the everyday issues faced by them in their village. These may include alcoholism, safety, water problems etc. These issues are then presented in front of the *panchayat* which is supposed to address and solve the issues, together with the *mahila mandal.*

Mahila Mandal in Naggar is also a body where women discuss the issues every month in *panhayat* house. However, women shared that their decisions in *mahila mandal* are not seriously considered by the *panchayats*. Over years, the participation of women in *mahila mandal* meetings has become less active and very few women continue to come for the meetings. Reyashree shared,

> …I used to be very happy to go to the meeting. Every month, I would wait for the meeting date so that I could share what I had to. It seemed it was the only space where I could talk about the problems I face. But after few months of such meetings, I realized the meetings are a farce because the *panchayat* members did not care about our issues. Every month, we had a list of problems to discuss in *panchayat* meeting but we would never get a turn to bring them to the discussion because those big men always had 'bigger' and more 'important' issues. Then, I understood …

To understand community concerns, VTDC worked in collaboration with *panchayat* and *mahila mandal* was one contact point between women's concerns in tourism development and the activities conceived and implemented by VTDC. However, the generic lack of seriousness with which women's issues are adopted by *panchayat* meant that these did not reach VTDC.

Restrictions on Women's Right to Dissent and Expression of Opinions

As discussed in a previous section, the cultural norms for a woman extend to the ideas of morality. It is manifested in many ways- like in traditionally disallowing women to have opinions and much less share it with men, or in front of men. The experience of participation in VTDC on the cultural norms of decision making in Naggar is reflected in the following statement,

> …Sometimes I felt I did not agree in meetings. I thought the parking construction should not be done where the men decided…that place could have a local market for women… but then I should not argue with men. I wanted to speak, but it does not look good… Nor is it moral… can't disapprove of men's decisions… - Kamla Verma

The idea of disagreeing with men being wrong and immoral is very strong in Naggar. Even if women want to and have a reason to disagree with men over something in family or community, the cultural norms do not allow that. Such moral high groundings bind women in their roles as the receivers in the community despite being the primary workers. Working women often find themselves in role conflict as to what a good woman should do. Despite economic betterment, women have failed to have a political role in decision making or influencing decisions.

Labeling of Women as 'Bad' or 'Immoral'

Labeling of women as 'bad' or 'immoral' is connected to their breach of the norms of denied decision making and lack of freedom of self-determination. Women in initial contacts shared that they were free to make decisions in family matters. But on digging deeper, it was found that though they were usually 'told' about the decisions by the males in their families, they never take decisions themselves. They find it natural to think that they agree with decisions of their men. This they do to avoid any disharmony as

> …what will children think if we get into arguments with our husbands… whatever they think, it is always for our own good. They have better minds and what good is our sense. Also, good women do not argue with men…

Women prefer stability and harmony in family relations more than independent decisions. This cultural restriction on decision making and personal freedom of making choices become significant factors when women come in contact with the community decisions through VTDC. Full and significant political participation in VTDC becomes differential as women and men find themselves differently-abled through these constructs of good and bad women. Further, the cultural ideas of morality, right and wrong are internalized in most women as part of being women. They are not allowed to talk to other people outside their homes. Men have complete authority and right over the mobility and freedom of speech for women. Statements like,

> …We are not the kinds who will say or do things as we like. Why do we need to open our mouths in front of men…?

are commonly spoken and lived. Women have learned to not look at desiring freedom of speech or mobility favorably. They consider it a 'bad' and 'immoral' thing to go out of house and express themselves publicly without their husbands' and fathers' permission. At the same time, it is considered against the honor of men to allow their women freedom. It is considered a bad thing if a man gives freedom to his wife of daughters and is laughed at in the society.

This is explained by Neera who questions,

…Clearly, the burden of family's honor falls on girls and women. If we speak in front of men, all these men, including our families, will call us names. These people do not hesitate to label us as bad if we ever try to talk in family spaces, let alone public space of VTDC… Initially, I tried to tell in one of the meetings that there should be a road connecting the inaccessible hamlets to the main market of the village so that women like me could find it easy to take and sell our wave products. The secretary did not agree but I insisted again. When I came back home, my husband was ready to blast me as everybody in the village knew I spoke out of turn and my husband lost his respect among them… Then, I was never allowed to attend the meetings…

Thus, women's experiences show that their familial and community gender and caste roles and expectations carry on in the political space of VTDC and *mahila mandal*. Due to various restrictions on expression, decision making, physical mobility in public space, etc, women continue to be restricted in their effective political roles as VTDC members.

Gender Relations and VTDC as a Space for Political Marginalization

Space as understood in feminist geography literature, is a site where social relations are spread out and it plays a significant role in creation of identities and experiences for women. Each space has inclusion and exclusion criteria for groups and individuals depending on which side of the power relations they fall on. The relations of caste and gender are played out in all the spaces (home, community, farms, kitchen, market, etc.), yielding different experiences at different times and in different spaces. The politics of gender, caste and class identity is best explained by the spatial exclusion that women and men face in their homes and in the society. Similarly, women have been spatially marginalized even inside homes which are considered to be 'female' spaces. For example, women's place at home, in the kitchen is theirs as long as the men in the family allow it. Also, in the community, it is a tradition and common for women to confine themselves with the cattle in the lowermost part of the traditional three tier houses during their menstrual cycle days each month. Such confinement ensures that the denied access to 'public' space extends even inside the walls of the house they consider their space.

Overall, the restrictions on their participation in the market world, on their mobility in places outside their homes and on their proximity to religious structures and idols create specific spatialities that limit full expression of their lives. Women's experiences become all the more spatialized when coupled with the spatial exclusion demanded by the casteist practices in Naggar. The politics of caste identity is best exemplified by bringing to attention the spatial marginalization that *kolis, haasis, chamars* and *luhars* face in Naggar in the form of physical

boundaries between their houses and the others and the symbolic, religiously ordained boundaries that restrict the movement of these caste groups in the public spaces.

While spaces are gendered and casteist, the specific spaces are also spaces for decision making. The casteized geography thus shrinks the spaces for any political activities further for women as they face bigger human and physical boundaries. Being excluded from certain spaces means exclusion from any form of engagement with anything happening in those spaces. For example, VTDC meetings happened in a space (public community space) which has traditionally excluded women and the *kolis, haasis, chamars* and *luhars*. Despite physical participation, women and Scheduled Class (SC) groups had no political participation and decision making in most of the meetings and around most of the issues. The space for decision making is the space for dominant caste male elite.

The gendered spaces thus created and places thus experienced are reflective of the power relations embedded in history and culture. Similarly, there has been construction of women's spaces over decades in Naggar. Unless the family needs demand, women are restrained in their productive and reproductive activities in their homes and family farms. Women have little freedom in accessing markets outside Naggar to sell the products of their skill and labour, for example. Women's livelihood activities are structured within the spaces where their presence and movement are sanctioned by the religious and traditional norms for their gender. This is not to mean that these spaces and boundaries cannot be upset. Tourism development and resultant increase in public spaces through small scale economic opportunities has the capacity to create spaces for political, social and economic participation. And it is not wrong to say that there is small and slow creation of a socio-political space outside homes and traditional community institutions for women. But the more things change, the more they remain the same.

Building a Topographical Understanding of Political Outcomes for Women participating in VTDC

Understanding the particular experiences of women participating in VTDC brings attention to scale. Analyses by feminist political geographers explore the concepts and use of scale as a mode of inquiry. Research focusing on the inter-linkages between the local and the global has

disrupted grand narratives that dominated human geographical works (Wright 2009; Koopman 2011; Pratt & Rosner 2012). This paper responds to feminist political geographers' calls for examining apolitical private, cultural and social scales, spaces and places as sites that are as important for analysis as macro-scale study of politics and space. Thus, the paper builds topography of women's political participation in tourism development for their empowerment by linking their immediate everyday lives with the processes taking place at broader scales.

It is argued here that the structures and processes, that women engage with historically as well as contemporarily, exist at all levels, places, spaces and scales in the society. These include social, political and economic resources and institutions that either restrict or encourage women's free and meaningful political participation. Thus, women's everyday realities of decision making about production and reproduction are constructed not only by their immediate context, but they result because of a constant interaction between processes, structures and operations occurring at multiple scales of development; from local to more broader (national/ global). A topographical analysis of women's livelihoods in Naggar in tourism allows for addressing and reflecting on shifting power positions and authority as a state intervenes to provide livelihoods to the underprivileged in a community. It allows looking into differences within differences and helps to theorize intersectionality in feminism further. It potentially captures the complex interplay between gender and other social differentiations in complex societies like Naggar.

This section develops a diagrammatic topographical understanding which illustrates the comprehensive and complex system of inter-related factors that affect women's livelihood strategies and outcomes in Naggar as they are contacted by tourism livelihoods. It builds on the various local and national/ global processes of change happening around women. The topographical understanding developed is presented in the diagrammatic form below.
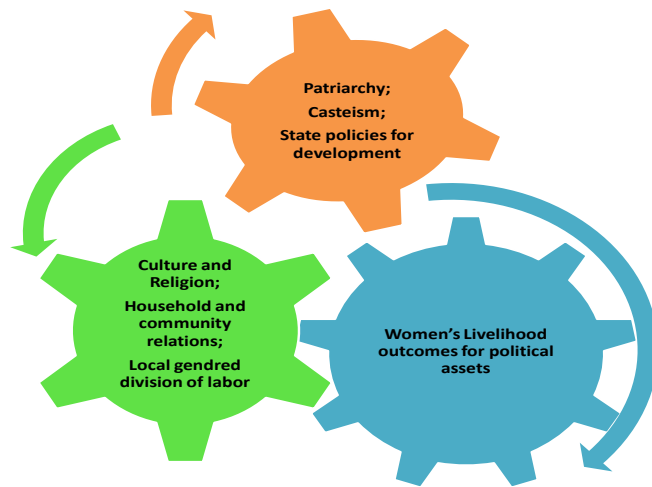
Figure 1. Feminist Topographical understanding of Women's Livelihood Outcomes for their Political Assets.

The understanding developed above, thus points to the fact that power and power relations are continuously being confirmed and constituted through all these processes and structures that operate at various scales. The Orange box represents structures and processes that operate at broader scales, national as well as global. The Green box represents processes and institutions that operate at local, household, community and individual scale. Located in multi-scale approach, it shows how broader structures and processes work with local ones in local space and place to impact women's social and material realities and experiences. It is suggested that processes like UNWTO guidelines, increasing international tourist in-flow, national policies, schemes and projects on tourism development and empowerment of women, patriarchy, capitalism, and casteism operate at broader global and national scales and affect women's lives at their local regional levels. Multiple socio-economic structures and relations existing at local, household, community and individual scales like gendered division of labor; local economic relations; cultural and religious beliefs and norms; and household and community power relations also affect and are impacted by the broader processes and structures mentioned above. These, in turn, together influence the extent to which women can politically gain. Their experience of their daily life and engagement with VTDC is not shaped only in their immediate environment but is rather the result of socio-economic and political structuring at all levels, from global to national.

Significance of Scale in Tourism Development Processes for Political Empowerment of Women

The topographical conceptualization relies much upon an understanding of scales. Scale became important as all development takes place by the interaction between scalar processes. According to Taylor (1982), there are three important scales at which development operates; global, national and local. Feminist geographical approaches emphasize on local scale the most.
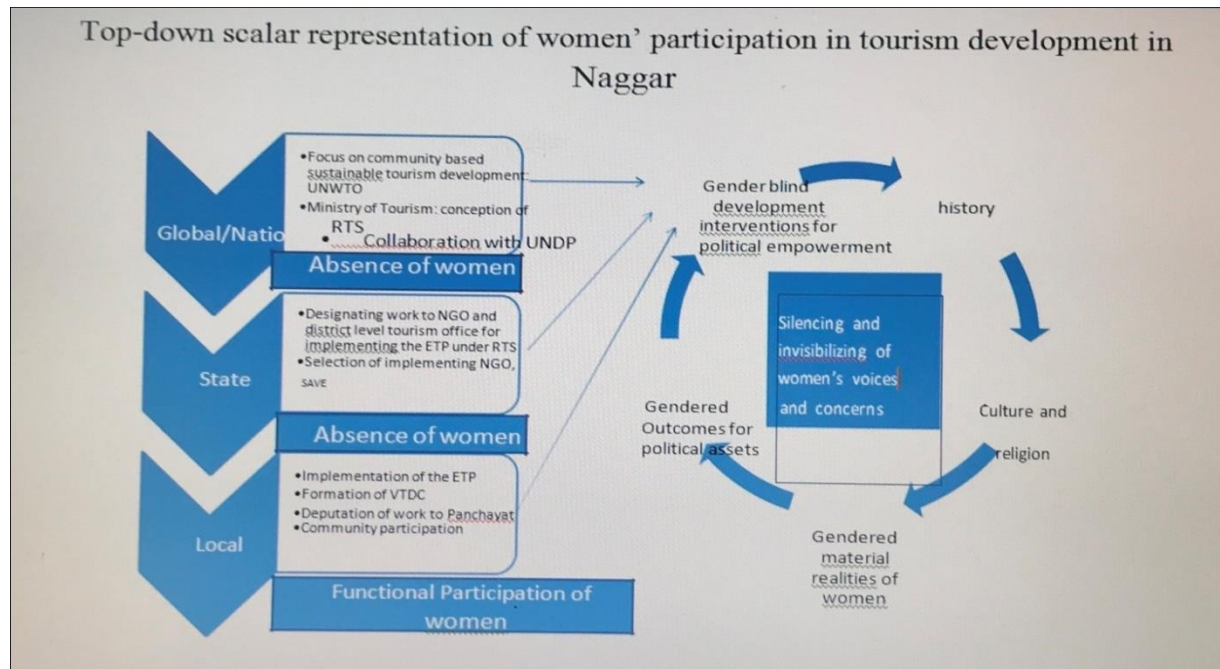

Figure 2. Top Down Scalar Representation of Tourism Development in Naggar.

The study was primarily conducted within local context and suggests that the community, the caste groups and family are the most important and determining scales which influence women's livelihood outcomes.

The changes in the economy, increased tourist arrival, and India's ambition to use tourism as a means for socioeconomic development of host communities in general and women in particular are transforming women's lives and livelihoods in Naggar. The country's national tourism development goals and the ambition to be fully integrated into global ways of tourism development have an impact on how women are treated by the ETP in their immediate environment. In Naggar, historical practices like women's responsibility of domestic and farm labor; lack of or little access to productive resources; restricted freedom of decision making; and segregation of women's and men's spaces have disadvantaged women with little scope for using

VTDC as a meaningful political space. Apart from creating small income activities for women, the new tourism economy fails to empower women or change their political status within the families or in the community.

The scalar understanding emphasizes that the relations of gender and caste are affected by and in many cases strengthened by state ideologies and policies. The localized division of gender, for example, is confirmed by the project conceived in ministry and UNDP offices in the capital which trains women in female occupations and men in jobs 'more suited to them'.[8] The project lacked any woman hand in its implementation at the state, national and district level. The NGO SAVE and its representative in the community also lacked woman presence and understanding of gender issues. Practically run by men in the business, the RTS-ETP operationalizes the upliftment of the already uplifted in the web of power relations of caste and gender.

Such an understanding calls for a need for lobbying by women for progressive community development policies that have a strong woman presence, invest into their human development and also address the structural constraints these women face in their immediate environments. The policy must address the historicity of underdevelopment of these women which arise not only out of patriarchy, but also casteism and capitalist order. The focus does not have to be only the place, but also the scales at which construction of place is conceptualized.

Conclusion

As community based tourism development program approaches women in Naggar, it reaches them in a society which is deep seated in strict patriarchal and casteist structures and practices. Despite opening few small scale and low paying economic opportunities, tourism development does not lead to enhancement of women's political status in their family or community. These women continue to live in a constrained and gendered space which is ready for economic change while shying away from political and social change. The political realities in the community show that it is the local powerful few elites that control who and how tourism empowers. VTDC is formed to carry out ETP without attempting to transform asymmetrical power relations of

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[8] Under ETP, women were trained in knitting, weaving, cooking etc while men were trained in adventure sports, camping, etc.

caste and gender and ends up further marginalizing the already disempowered women, especially the ones from SC community. When a political empowerment program is implemented in practice top-down by the State in the overall space of unequal socio-economic relations and conditions, the women's experiences of political participation are unsurprisingly those which suggest that tourism is borne out of and developed in a gendered society with gendered impacts. In order to ensure better the status of the marginalized the ownership of assets and processes must be vested with the most vulnerable and the marginalized.

Overall, it is seen that as the state attempts to politically empower women through livelihood and development intervention program, women face structural factors that do not let them access and enjoy what is their political right in the country. It has been brought to the fore that women have historically not been accepted even as citizens so as to claim and avail these rights. They continue to struggle to be accepted as complete citizen with all citizenship rights in the country (Krishna, 2007). And this struggle is not only against the state, but rather stems from within their family and community collectives.

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ACRONYMS

ETP	Endogenous Tourism Project
GoI	Government of India
MoT	Ministry of Tourism
OBC	Other Backward Classes
RTS	Rural Tourism Scheme
SC	Scheduled Caste
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
VTDC	Village Tourism Development Committee