



**LUND UNIVERSITY**

Faculty of Social Sciences

Graduate School

Course: SIMV07

Master of Science in Development Studies

Term: Spring 2015

Major: Development Studies

Supervisor: None

**'An Empowerment from Within: Social Structures and its  
influence upon a Woman's Identity and Agency.'**

**Author**

Nilab Totakhil

## Table of Content

Chapter 1. Introduction.....	4
Chapter 2. The Research Area – India and Development .....	8
Chapter 3. Research Method .....	11
3.1. Data Collection .....	12
3.2. Participant Observations.....	13
3.3. Sampling Frame.....	14
3.4. Interviews – semi structured .....	15
3.5. Self-completing Questionnaire with Closed Questions .....	16
3.6. Focus groups .....	17
3.7. Critique of the Empirical Framework.....	18
3.8. My role as researcher – ethical concerns and Limitations .....	19
Chapter 4. Empowerment: Before, Now and in the Future?.....	20
Chapter 5. Culture and Social Relations – How Identities are formed .....	24
Chapter 6. Theory of Practice – Pierre Bourdieu .....	27
Chapter 7. The Capability Approach – Amartya Sen .....	30
Chapter 8. Analysis.....	32
8.1. The Reality of Society.....	33
8.2. Self-Perception and Agency – a Creation of Social Structures?.....	43
Chapter 9. Discussion.....	54
Chapter 10. Conclusion .....	57
Afterthoughts.....	58
List of litterature.....	59
Appendix 1. Questionnaire .....	62
Appendix 2. Interview Questions .....	69

## Abstract

Empowerment is a concept that is well-known and used within the development, but is also a concept that is highly contested within the field where there is no coherence in *what* empowerment really is and *how* it is achieved. The main purpose of this thesis is to look into the concept of empowerment and how the perception of it is inefficient in terms of the discourse existing within the paradigm. This thesis argues that within empowerment the process of developing an identity - and by that an understanding of being an agent of change is of key and cannot be overseen during the empowerment process something that has been neglected in many of the debates existing within the paradigm. This is seen into within the framework of social structures hence this thesis argues that social structures has an influence upon the identity of an individual and by that their agency. Subsequently this thesis is based upon fieldwork in India, the region of Rajasthan – the village Jatoli in the town of Bharatpur, based upon 8 interviews, 25 days of participant investigation, 2 group discussions and 100 questionnaires were conducted. Finally the conclusion of the thesis is that identity and self-perception in the sense of seeing oneself as an agent of change is not only relevant but of key importance during an empowerment process.

*‘Empowerment is more than participation in decision-making; it must also include the processes that lead people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to make decisions’*

- Jo Rowland (1997)

*‘Empowerment is strength. It makes one capable of believing in yourself. It gives you capabilities and takes away your doubt’.*

- Archena (2014)

## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

To look into empowerment was not exactly what I had in mind when I landed in India January 2014 to start my internship with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and conduct fieldwork for my research paper. The ground for my research at that time was to look into child marriage and how empowerment could be a tool that could be used to eradicate child marriage.

However during my anthropological field study consisting of, among other things, 10 days of participant observations, I quickly discovered that ‘empowerment’ as a concept was something that I did not grasp completely, and if I did not grasp it fully then how would I use it as a tool to eradicate child marriage? More than that, I found that the reason I did not grasp the concept of empowerment as such was that I felt it was lacking something; a coherent understanding and definition of the concept that could be used and put into practice in the context of women in the rural area of Rajasthan - in the town of Bharatpur. My focus then shifted from child marriage to the paradigm of empowerment itself.

It was not until 1980s when a declaration of women being ‘*agents and beneficiaries in all sectors and at all levels of the development process*’ was made in the International Development Strategy by the United Nations (UN), that women as such was acknowledged as having an important role in the development

process (Kabeer, 1994; 1 & 2). This new consciousness within development got further marked with changes in the organisational structures of the United Nations, where several organisations working towards ensuring women was integrated into the development paradigm was created. These organisations included the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Development Fund for Women: the legal committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement for Women etc. (Ibid). As a direct result of the gender and development discourse within development – which among other things was marked by the 1980s - the concept of empowerment emerged, and has today become a well-known and used term within development. It took off by the 1990's where the concept had developed to a discourse and was adopted by highly influential development organisation such as the UN, Oxfam, World Bank (WB) and European Union (EU), where it become an unquestioned development goal (Parpart, 2008; 355).

Thus it was first in the work of Caroline Moser (1993), Gita Sen and Caren Grown (1987) that the issue of empowerment surfaced in gender and development debates. Although the critiques and debates were of different nature, where Moser argued for empowerment being about self-reliance and inner strength by stressing that *'empowerment was best defined as the ability to determine choices in life and to influence the direction of change, through the ability to gain control over crucial material and non-material resources'* (Parpart, 2008; 356). While Sen and Grown urged for a collective empowerment (Ibid). The debates have since developed to a different direction, where in 1994 scholars from the south warned that empowerment was about to lose its transformative edge and needed a review. Here it was especially Srilatha Batliwala, Naila Kabeer and Jo Rowland that came into the picture. Batliwala's argument was based on the notion of power which in her opinion was vague. She called for a more precise understanding of power, where her take on power was having control over material assets, intellectual resources, and ideology while empowerment was about *'the process of*

*challenging existing power relations and of gaining greater control over the sources of power* (Ibid). Contrary Kabeer had a more ‘self-development’ focus on her take on power, while criticizing the material take on empowerment and called for a focus on the ability to control discussion/discourses and agendas by drawing on Luke – for a ‘power within’ (Ibid). Subsequently Rowland stressed on the self-development aspect of empowerment, arguing that the focus should be upon building a self-reliance within the agents making them able to see themselves as being able and entitled to make decisions for themselves (Ibid). Her most fundamental argument for empowerment was that it involved moving from insight to action. An argument that Sara Mosedale took up and build further upon, stressing that ‘*women’s empowerment is best seen as both the process by which women redefine and extend what is possible for them to be and do in situations where they have been restricted compared to men, and the process in which women redefine gender roles in ways which extend their possibilities for being and doing*’ (ibid).

This outline of the debates that has formed the empowerment discourse shows that not only are there many perceptions of the concept, but that there are also very different takes on the concept – going from material focus to a focus on individual inner strength.

Looking at the given tendencies within the empowerment discourse, it is quickly found that there are several meanings to *what* empowerment is and *how* it is to be used – one of the reasons for me not being able to fully grasp the discourse. I argue that both sides are right in their arguments, the one cannot be done without the other: if empowerment is about power and resources then self-reliance and inner strength is necessary in order to achieve this, while at the same time empowering from within does not do any good if it is not put into use by gaining resources and power because without that change cannot be achieved. This argument of mine is based mainly upon my anthropological field study where I discovered that women did not have a self-perception per say but saw themselves in the light of their families and mainly husbands – they did not believe or trust

upon the fact that they could or would be able to do something on their own if necessary. My notion thus is that when the subject in matter cannot find herself as being an agents of change or self-dependent, then it does not matter what material access or tools she gets to get empowered – she will not be able to use them. The empowerment has to start from within before it can be facilitated in practice.

This thesis is based upon anthropological fieldwork carried out in Bharatpur as a case study for the importance of self-perception when talking about women and empowerment. The case study consists of 8 women from two different castes, Gurjar caste (lower caste) and Thakur caste (upper caste), 2 employed women from each caste and 2 unemployed women from each caste, hence it is believed that this scenario will provide the best possible understanding of how social structures influences one's self-perception and by that one's empowerment . On a theoretical level the influence of culture and society on women and their self-perception will be looked upon while also looking into how a factor such as having a job can change the self-perception and understanding of culture and society among the women in focus. In order to achieve these goals theories of Amartaya Sen and his notion of the capability approach and Pierre Bourdieu and his Theory of Practice will be drawn upon during the analysis and used during the whole research. Finally a discussion and conclusion will be drawn with the aim of reaching a conclusion to the research questions laying the ground for this thesis.

The research questions leading this thesis are:

1. To what extend is identity important during women's empowerment process – this seen in the context of the rural area of the state Rajasthan – Jatoli village.
2. How do social structures influence women's identity and their understanding of their role within an empowerment process?
3. In particular, how does access to employment outside the home influence the individual's identity and by that their empowerment process?

## Chapter 2. The Research Area – India and Development

According to the United Nations (UN) half of the world's population consists of women, women perform 2/3 of the entire world's work force, receive 1/10 of its income and own less than 1/100 of its property (Richa & Ashutosh, 2010; 60).

In India, being the world's 10<sup>th</sup> largest economy, 48,1% of the population are women and 51,9% are men. Women are a vital force of the country, producing for example 30% of all the food but get only 10% of the income and own the same amount of the country's wealth (Ibid). Similarly the National Family Health Survey of India (NFHS 2005-2006) shows that women status in India is very low almost 35% are undernourished, 43% are illiterate, 33% participate in the labour force and 4% of married women do not make decisions regarding their own health care (Chaudhuri, 2013; 58). India has one of the world's largest rural sectors, coming second after China with 74% of their population living in rural areas (Dewangan, 2011; 297).

This research is based in the region called Rajasthan, at the town Bharatpur where the village called Jatoli which was the research area. Besides being the least densely populated region of India, Rajasthan has the lowest literacy rate among women, especially among women with a low per capita income (Richa & Ashutosh, 2010; 60). In India there is a big difference between the development state of the country from region to region, for example in South India women are considered more emancipated due to their higher education status, employment rates and cultural practices, than the Northern part of the country, where the region Rajasthan has its residence: here women are likely to be a part of a rigid social and interpersonal relationship grounded on gender bases (Singh, 2010; 170). During my research it also was found that there is a strong patriarchal structure existing within Jatoli village, making sure that there is a clear role distinction between women and men – a clear separation of the roles more specifically. In her research about family structures, marriage and caste system in the rural areas of the region of Rajasthan, Susan Seymour found similar findings,



noting that women were associated with roles and responsibilities that were associated with the ‘inside world’ (private sphere) and the males with the ‘outside world’ (public sphere). This was done in order to uphold social regulations and institutions such as *purdah* (covering your face against men that are not your husband or close relative in the sense of a brother or a father), and arranged marriage (Seymour, 1995; 71). This will be looked further into later in this thesis.

### **India – a Society Constructed by the Caste System**

Furthermore, it is also important to note that India is a country constructed on, and still influenced by, the caste system. It is very visible how the Indian social structure has been influenced by the caste system both in actual social interactions and in the understanding of what the ideal scheme of values is (Deshpande, 2010; 24). The caste system is a hierarchy consisting of basically 4 ranks with an additional rank at the bottom, which is not really considered a part of the caste system, called ‘the untouchables’, each rank determines your occupation, access to wealth, power and privilege, in the big cities it is less applicable than in the rural areas where it is still very actual to follow caste. On the top are the *Brahmans* which are priests and scholars, next comes the *Kshatriyas* which are political rulers and soldiers, third comes *Vaishyas* know as merchants and fourth comes *Shudras* consisting of labourer, peasants, artisans and servants. And at the very bottom are ‘the untouchables’ who are individuals seen as being unclean and polluting and occupy for that reason also work that fits their position: scavenging and skinning dead animals for example (Deshpande, 2010; 3). Furthermore there are sub-castes within each caste, these are called *Jatis*. This makes the caste system even more restricted and rigid since individuals from the Brahmans for example are not only to marry a Brahman, they are to marry an individual from their own jati. Each jati is composed by a group that has a specific occupation as livelihood which by that automatically lays out the occupation for the individual that is born into the given jati (Deshpande, 2010; 13). In every village there is a Panchayat which is the ‘local court’ consisting of the elders of the high ranking castes in the given village. The Panchayats traditionally has the role of helping the

weak and poor, usually it is in matters of marriage, agriculture and feuds between the families in the given village that the Panchayat comes in, but this has slowly changed to a more politic and power house, where the focus is not always the well-being of the villages, but the upholding of the rigid structures and norm existing in the villages (Sharma, 2010; 256, 257).

Caste has power. It is a code of conduct and enforces a range of rules and norms about behaviour, marriage regulations, and interactions with other castes and between the sexes. It is an instrument of the division of labour and gender in society (Sharma, 2010; 252). This I noticed very much during my research in Jatoli village where I was following to families from the Thakur (upper caste) caste and Gurjar (lower caste) caste. Here it was clear that not only did the caste system conduct behaviour and structures for the member's lives and interactions, it also laid the grounds for their possibilities in the sense of freedom of movement, work outside the house and power within the society.

### **Fieldwork in the Making**

During my research I choose two different castes to focus upon. This was based on the fact that studies show that there is a big difference between how women's life conditions are all according to what caste they are from: coming from an upper caste give women more freedom and movement than when coming from a lower caste. For example during her research in 2002 of analysing the Indian National Sample Survey for over 120.00 households, Deshpande found that women in 'backward castes' had less decision-making autonomy than women in 'upper castes' due to them being able to buy jewellery and accessing health care. In the same time she found that women in the 'backward caste' had a higher level of freedom of movement than women in an 'upper caste'. And finally another note was that the highest incidence of physical violence was reported among the 'backward caste' women. (Singh, 2010; 175). These findings has had some influence upon my choice of following two different castes instead of one,

showing that caste does not only influence society but also has an important factor to play when it comes to the conditions under which women live.

Finally it is important to note, that India is a country that has had some progress in its work towards a development of the country and equality between the genders. For example, the 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment of the Indian Constitution makes sure of women getting a secured spot at the *panchayats* and other political activities. The initiatives from the government has made women increasingly more politically aware and conscious about the programmes and schemes available for their development, improving their conditions within society and going towards a more gender equal path (Pal *et al.*, 2012; Xiii). This development is not only something that looks good on paper but also something that was found during my research among women in the villages. Here a clear development from the older generation to the younger generations were seen in the sense of the younger women being more aware of their rights and understanding of their current position within society and their male counterparts than the older generations. This will be looked more into in the analysis.

### **Chapter 3. Research Method**

This thesis is based upon fieldwork. The reason for the chosen research method is that it was found to be the best way to answer the research questions laying the ground for this thesis by requiring the researcher to do participant observations in a community by observing modes of behaviour and the organisation of social life with the process of recording and interpreting other people's lives (Robben & Slukka, 2012; 8).

Hence in order to obtain the best possible insight and data for the aim of this research a mixed research method and participant observations has been used as a method for the data collection. Mixed research method is a research approach that is defined as “(...) *research that integrates quantitative and qualitative data within a single project*” (Bryman, 2008; 603). Subsequently I argue that by mixing the two research approaches I get a much broader and stable ground to

work out from by making sure that I am not only having a ‘into depth insight’ to the field with gathering information by participant observations and interviews with selected individuals but I also get a ‘more broad insight’ to the field by gathering quantitative data in the form of questionnaires conducted with 100 women. Hence the criteria of having a holistic approach to the field and data gathering can easier be obtained when mixing individual insight with a broader insight – studying all aspects of society and no single cases. Thus I am well aware of the fact that most of my data collection is of qualitative form, but when having in mind that this research paper is about women empowerment and identity, it is seen that qualitative data can give a better insight and understanding to the purpose of the research than quantitative data.

### **3.1. Data Collection**

This fieldwork has been conducted in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The main data collection has been based upon participant observations (totally of 25 days), semi-structured interviews, and a survey of 100 questionnaires and groups discussion with women from two different castes: Thakur and Gurjar.

In the beginning of this research the focus was not upon women empowerment but upon cultural and traditional knowledge and how that can enhance a women’s bargaining power within marriage. Hence when I started my fieldwork, I did not know at all what to expect from my field of research, so I decided to start out with participant observations in order to gain as much insight and knowledge about the field as possible. Subsequently, quite early in my participant observation I came to the conclusion that if I wanted the most fruitful research possible, I needed to change my focus and angle from what I originally wanted to investigate women, identity and empowerment.

During my whole research, I had the company of a research assistant (her identity will be hidden according to her request) assigned to me by WWF. This was due to

safety reason – it is easier to get around the villages and also stay away from harm, when going around with a known figure, which the assistant was. Also, the dialect which was used in Jatoli village was not one that I was easily accustomed with, while also the villagers not being used to the Hindi that I was using (the common dialect). Therefore I needed a research assistant, not only to get around and access, but also for translation purposes.

The village in which the fieldwork was carried out was mainly Jatoli village and when conducting questionnaires the village Malai was included as well. This was due to the fact, that there were not enough women from Jatoli village to answer the questionnaires, and since both of the villages are within the town of Bharatpur and by that next to each other, it was not seen to affect the results by involving women from Malai village when conducting the questionnaires. These two villages were chosen due to the fact that WWF had a foot inside them because of their work there, so it made it easier to get the relevant access and materials for the research. The participants in the research are women from the age of 16 and up because most girls in the villages are already married at that age and considering that the focus is on self-perception and empowerment among women that seemed like a good starting point. Finally, since the project aims to compare women with employment verses women without employment; both of these categories of women have been included in the data collection.

### **3.2. Participant Observations**

During my observation I made sure to take note of every significant observation made and wrote it all clean with a reflective mind in the evening when I came back to my room after the fieldwork. My approach was based on the guidance that participant observations are defined by the ethnographer going into depth with his/her observation in the sense of asking question, participating in the daily tasks, rituals and traditions and gathering further material on any stumbling data if necessary (Bryman, 2008; 402). As mentioned before my fieldwork consisted of total 25 days. During the 10 days of only observations I was following two

families from the Thakur caste and the Gurjar caste, here I took turns spending a whole day with each family which gave me a great opportunity to make reflections from one family to another and relate their doings and work to each other by comparing notes on their doings and sayings, while at the same time as a researcher being observant on their similarities and differences in their daily live and regarding the social structures.

My field notes according with secondary literature are laying the base for my understanding of the culture and society in the town of Bharatpur, more specifically the village: Jatoli. Thus I will mainly use my fieldworks as background in my analysis and discussion chapter, with the aim of contributing to a greater understanding and insight to the field and the data gathered during my research.

### **3.3. Sampling Frame**

Due to a limited time-frame and resources I had to be reflective and strategic about my choice of interviewees, using purposive sampling which is defined by: *“to sample cases/participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed”* (Bryman, 2008; 415). Within each method, I had to decide on what criteria were to be set up in order for me to be able to get the knowledge and data necessary to be able to answer my problem formulation.

My goal with the interviews was to get an ‘into-depth’ view of women and their understanding of themselves and their empowerment and see if a difference was seen between the employed women and the unemployed women. Hence I decided to have 4 interviewees within each category in order to make sure that I, considering my limitations, got the best possible insight while at the same time trying to make sure that the women differed in age, marriage status and were equally represented from both the Thakur caste and Gurjar Caste, which lead me to having two unemployed women from both the Thakur and Gurjar caste and two employed women from both caste, ending up with 8 interviews in total. The

interviewees where: 1) Archena, 25 years, Gurjar, employed as a teacher. 2) Radha, 28 years, Gurjar, Seamstress. 3) Shima, 23 years, Gurjar, unemployed. 4) Sumitra, 27 years, Gurjar, unemployed. 5) Manju, Thakur, 20 years, unemployed. 6) Ramshri, 60 years, unemployed. 7) Shruti, 23 years, Thakur, WWF worker. 8) Sunita, 23 years, Thakur, WWF worker.

When planning for the questionnaires, I first of all wanted to get the broadest view possible of the situation within Jatoli village. Therefore I went for getting minimum 100 questionnaires filled out. Furthermore I based the questionnaires on the interview questions, with a change and more simple form of questioning, due to the fact that I wanted my questionnaires to be a backup for the interviews – getting a different insight to the information gathered from there (appendix 1).

Finally I had two separate focus group session according to caste – one with the Thakur caste and one with the Gurjar caste. Here 10+ women were participating all from an age of 18+, all married. It was especially important for me to have a good mix of elders and young women in order to see how their understanding of the society and themselves differed according to this.

### **3.4. Interviews – semi structured**

According to Bryman (2008) there are two main interview forms; *structural interview/standardized interview* and *semi structured interview* (Bryman, 2008; 193). The latter, is defined as “*a context in which the interviewer has a series of questions that are in the general form of an interview schedule but is able to vary the sequences of question*” (Bryman, 2008; 196). The reason that a semi-structured interview was selected was that I wanted to be able to pursue leads and necessary information as it came up along the way during interviews while at the same time being able to enhance the interviewee’s own personal reflection of herself. Hence when planning my semi-structured interviews, 6 different themes were created (appendix 2): 1) general information, 2) culture and society, 3) self-perception and understanding, 4) empowerment and development, 5) working at home, 6) working outside home. Each theme is made with the aim of covering all

the aspects that are to be looked into when trying to answer the research questions laying the base for this thesis. The last two themes were made for each category of interviewees – women working at home and women working outside the home – and they were not used for the category of women that were not fit for the theme.

When preparing the interviews and finding the interviewees, an insight to the research purpose, and more specifically the interview's purpose, was given to the interviewees with the knowledge that they could at any time refuse to have something included in the thesis and also appear anonymous if wanting to. Here none of the interviewees had any reluctance towards appearing in the thesis while also approving of their interviews before they were used.

### **Assessing the Data**

The interviews will be incorporated in the analysis by the use of open coding. This method is described as a: *“process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data”* (Bryman, 2008; 543). Hence the coding has been conducted in several stages: 1st stage) reading the transcripts with an open-mind to get an overview. 2nd stage) Looking for specific codes and highlight/write them down. 3rd stage) Start to give meaning to the different codes and maybe find more. 4 stage) organising the different codes into categories which will be used in the analysis.

### **3.5. Self-completing Questionnaire with Closed Questions**

The questionnaires were created as self-completing questionnaires which means that the respondents answers questions by completing questionnaires themselves (Bryman, 2008; 216). The aim was to keep the questionnaire as simple and straight forward as possible which was the reason behind the questions being framed in the form of closed questions *‘with a closed question they are presented with a set of fixed alternatives from which they have to choose an appropriate answer’* Bryman, 2008; 231). This form of questioning of course has its advantages and disadvantages where it is easier for the researcher in the sense that



there are limited options of answers and by that it is easier to transform the answers into coherent quantitative data. It also makes it simpler for the respondents in the sense that it is more easy to comprehend and can also help them if they find a question hard to understand – the limited options of answers can lead the way for the understanding of the question. On the other hand, closed ended questions does not give the respondents the chance to elaborate on their answer, and sometimes they might even just cross something out without thinking much over it. But taking the advantages in mind, and also the fact that we are in a village where most women are not highly educated, the closed ended questionnaire is found to be the right choice to make.

The main purpose behind the questionnaires is to support the interviews conducted with 8 women, therefore the questions in the questionnaire are based upon the interview questions. Since I don't have any Hindi writing skills, I got help from a friend to translate them to Hindi, and got my boss from UNESCO to review the result in order to make sure, that the translation was fitting and the questions did not lose their meaning in the translation (see appendix1). The questionnaire has been transformed to solid data in the form of diagrams and this will be used in the analysis of this thesis with the aim of giving a broader view to the data gathered.

### **3.6. Focus groups**

Focus group is a research method that involves more than one, usually minimum four, participants (Bryman, 2008; 473). By conducting focus groups the interviewer gets an opportunity to study the collective notion existing within a specific topic among the individual's participating and construct a meaning around it. Moreover the chances for the individuals to argue and challenging each other on their opinions and views are high which gives the researcher a unique chance to get an insight to the issues that are important for the participants (Bryman, 2008; 475, 476). Hence in focus groups it is harder for the researcher to control the outcome due to the fact that a focus group discussion is supposed to be

conducted in a free method where the participants have greater control than the researcher. Furthermore there is also the factor called ‘group effects’ which is that in a group some will always dominate more than others, also factors such as social norms, traditions and culture can play a significant fact during focus groups. In this case it is up to the researcher to make sure that the other participants are involved and make space for a more broad view and input for the discussion by coming with relevant questions and inputs if such a situation appears (Bryman, 2008; 488).

The aim with the focus group sessions was to get a broader insight to the ideology towards the social structures and women’s role within society, while also getting an idea of women’s behaviour and opinions when being around other women. The focus groups were carried out in two separate sessions according to caste due to the fact that different perceptions and notions are formed according to caste while also a sense of belonging to a certain group can make women feel more open and free to talk. The focus group will be incorporated in the analysis when looking into social structures and its influence upon women and their identity.

### **3.7. Critique of the Empirical Framework**

One of the downsides of a small village is that everybody knows everybody, and therefore it is impossible to avoid the ‘keeping up a good and decent face’ charade when conducting fieldwork. This was very visible during my fieldwork, due to the fact that the woman being my translator was a well-known figure within the villages, and often this made the other women hold back with their opinions in the beginning of all interviews. It was as if we had to crack a shell before getting to the real thing, something that got easier to deal with when knowing the issue.

Secondly the asymmetrical power relation within the interview between the interviewer and the interviewee can be noted. While we as interviewers decide what kind of questions are to be used in the interview, the interviewee as the respondent has the power to decide what to tell the interviewer (Kvale 2009; 50-52), something that was quite visible during some of the interviews, where some

of the respondents would avoid questions or try to pursue subjects that they found of more interest but that was irrelevant for the interview.

Finally during the focus group session it was hard to get some of the participants to talk due to social norms such as: respecting elders, not talking too much when being the youngest in a forum, not speaking against the elders and showing a good attitude towards culture and traditions. In order to meet these restrictions attempts such as asking direct questions to the more ‘silent’ participants while also asking open questions that are more relevant for the younger generations were made. Also it is argued that this observation only contributes to the findings of the focus group by showing the importance and relevance of the social structures within the daily lives of these women.

### **3.8. My role as researcher – ethical concerns and Limitations**

My role as participant observer is according to Bryman (2008) defined as *participant-as-observer*. This entails that members of the community are aware of one’s role as a researcher but the ethnographer undertakes a fully participatory form by involving and taking part of kinds of chores and activities taking form during a day (Bryman, 2008; 410). Surprisingly enough, it was found that exactly for this reason, me taking part in every chores and activity, I was accepted faster by the families I was conducting participant observations with. Thus being an ‘outsider’ and having limited time with the families, I did not have the chance to get fully integrated within the community and families.

Moreover during my research I was very much aware of ethical principles that were to apply for my data collection. These ethical principles are according to Bryman in four main areas:

1. Whether there is harm to participants
2. Whether there is an invasion of privacy
3. Whether there is a lack of informed consent
4. Whether deception is involved

Subsequently it can be stated that during this research all four categories were upheld in the sense that no privacy was invaded, no harm or deception was done to any of the participants during my research. They all were informed of the purpose of this research and was given the freedom to back at any point wanting to.

#### **Chapter 4. Empowerment: Before, Now and in the Future?**

In the introduction chapter there was a small layout of the debates within the empowerment paradigm. Giving the reader an insight to the incoherence existing within the discourse and why this thesis finds it important to look further into empowerment. Hence this chapter will aim to give the reader a more in depth overview of the empowerment paradigm.

In general, one can sum up the empowerment paradigm into four phases revolving around: 1) women and development (WAD), 2) women in development (WID), 3) gender and development (GAD) and 4) women, culture and development (WCD). One thing to note is that all four phases has the same ground but represent different perspectives. When looking at WID and GAD one will find that they both emphasize on society and its institution's influence on women's participation in development, but differ in their perspectives on the well-being of women where WID focuses on economic utility and what women gain from economic change while GAD focuses on patriarchy and how the unequal relations effects women. On the other hand WCD and WID focuses on the agency of women rather than institutions, but again differ in their perspective of it where WID mainly focuses on the economic part of it while WCD looks at the social aspect of it. Also WID sees agency as a collective action while WCD gives it an individual take across groups and cultures (Singh, 2007; 101).

The debate started in the 1970s where Women in Development (WID) emerged as a policy, due to a direct result of women being viewed as primarily housewives, mothers and 'at-risk- reproducers' (Kabeer, 1994; 5). This change within development was argued into place by Ester Boserup and Barbara Rogers who

both argued for women being rational economic agents that society just could not afford to leave out from the development process (Kabeer, 199; 25). This argument was based on the reasoning that when women are allowed to take care of themselves and their children according to their fitting, the economic growth in a society (birth control has an effect on fertility rates which has a direct effect on the economic growth in a country) and health status rises and the quality of workforce as well (when women are in control of their own economy they are able to provide the right health care and education for their children and themselves) (Mehrotra, 2012; 11).

There has, since the beginning, been different takes, focuses, definitions and perspectives on *what* empowerment is and *how* it can be facilitated the best way, here a few examples of this: from the very end of the spectrum, to the other end of the spectrum, will be shown. The World Economic Forum (WEF) and their take on women empowerment is focused upon five important dimensions of empowerment, which also laid the pillars for future discussion of the paradigm: 1) economic participation, 2) economic opportunity, 3) political empowerment, 4) educational attainment and 5) health and well-being (Pal *et al.*, 2012; Xiii). These dimensions are quite simple and easy to understand due to the fact that for example 2/3 of all illiterates are women – makes education as the most important resource for women within empowerment (Pal *et al.*; Xiii). Also another fact is that approximately 17 billion people lives in poverty where 70 percent of these are women (Sharma, 2012; 2), subsequently studies show that when women are heading households more money goes for expenditures such as health and education than when men do (Chant, 2003; 25). Thus one important thing to note here is that all five dimensions are of ‘*secondary factors*’ meaning assets that are gained by obtaining something in a material or participatory form. Whether it is economic opportunity, political empowerment or health and well-being – none of them touch upon ‘*primary factors*’ which are assets that are gained from a personal or inner development process.

Furthermore Dixon links empowerment to the association of Human Rights. She argues for 6 clusters of empowerment: 1) sexual rights, 2) reproductive rights, 3) education and training, 4) employment, 5) right to property and 6) freedom of movement, association and political activity (Bakshi & Pathak, 2012; 83). Also Dixon argues that empowerment can be seen in the *status of women* – relating to the positions that women have within the society and families in relation to other countries, classes and time and *female autonomy* - referring to women's capacity to act independently in relations to the authority of others and environment (Bakshi & Pathajm 2012; 84). Hence she defines empowerment by:

*'Female empowerment refers to the capacity of individual women or of women as a group to resist the arbitrary imposition of controls on their behaviour or the denial of their rights, to challenge the power of others if it is deemed illegitimate, and to resolve a situation in their favour'* (Ibid).

Dixon's take on empowerment has taken into consideration not only the secondary factors but also the social relations in which these factors come into term. She furthermore argues that both status and autonomy are vital components to achieve empowerment and by that touches a bit upon the primary factors of empowerment. Her definition of empowerment shows that empowerment does not only come in an individual context but can also come from groups, and as something that is consisting within the discourse of empowerment, she refers to the notion of power and challenges existing hegemonic structures.

Finally in her UN discussion paper Naila Kabeer presents a different take on empowerment which focuses on the primary factors. She argues for empowerment being the ability to choose and having power, hence she argues that the notion of choice has to be qualified in order to get a full understanding of how to be empowered. She then differentiates between *first order choices* and *second order choices* in the analysis of power where the *first order choices* are strategic life choices (livelihood, freedom to marriage, reproduction etc.), choices that are critical to be able to make in order to live the life that one wants. These first order

choices help to frame the *second order* choices that are important for the quality of one's life but not as defining as the first order choices (Kabeer, 1999; 3). Kabeer then goes on with her theory and divides her *first order choices* into 3 dimensions: 1) resources (pre-conditions), 2) agency (process) and 3) achievements (outcomes). In other words, each process is a state of power that is to be achieved, in order for an individual to be able to make first order choices – also called strategic life choices. The first dimension: resources, is seen in the form of material power – economic resource and in the sense of relationships conducted and created within the different domains of family, market and state. The second dimension, power, relates to agency which is defined by the ability to define one's goal and act upon them (Ibid). Thus in her paper Kabeer stresses that agency is much more than just observable actions, it is the motivation, purpose and meaning that an individual puts into their goal and activity – it is the *sense of agency* or also called *the power within* (Ibid). Kabeer then does not elaborate on the third dimension of her theory, which is a loss and disappointment, but mainly the dimension says it itself: what is the final outcome of the process? Hence Kabeer's take on empowerment is focused upon the sense of agency and power, giving us a different perspective to the discourse than seen before in the sense of talking about a *power from within*. Hence her theory is not fully defined which can be seen in the fact that she does not elaborate much on the second order choices in her discussion paper, and she relies a lot of her theory upon Luke (1974) and his theory of Justice and by that his notion of power, and forgets about the secondary factors of empowerment which has a vital part to play in the final empowerment outcome of an individual.

What the outline above shows us of debates within the empowerment discourse is that there are different takes and views of empowerment. Also there is a lot more focus and tangible arguments when it comes to the material aspects of empowerment (the secondary factors) than the primary factors of empowerment. This can especially be seen in Kabeer's try on this in her discussion paper where she presents a half finished theory of empowerment being a process of agency.

Therefore this thesis has a focus upon the primary factors of empowerment with the aim to contribute to the empowerment discourse where a gap is seen when it comes to empowerment being a process from within.

One thing that is clear in the empowerment paradigm though is that empowerment is seen in relation with power, what this power is being associated with and how it is to be achieved is where the fluidity of different understandings come in. After all the word in itself: ‘to be empowered’ is ‘to be invested with power’ (Peake 1999) (Sharp *et al.*, 2003; 282). Hence this thesis positions itself in the middle of the debate, stating that power is found both as a ‘strength from within’ and in material assets such as economy, human rights, education, freedom of movement etc.

With that said, the definition of empowerment which will be the one this thesis refers to is:

*‘Empowerment as a concept is the process which enables an individual to know about herself/himself about what she/he wants and then to try to achieve and fulfil the needs by enhanced confidence, awareness, mobility, choices, control over resources and decision making power’ (Pal et al., 2012; Xiii).*

## **Chapter 5. Culture and Social Relations – How Identities are formed**

More recent debates accepts that it is not just the formal mechanisms of decisions making that can hinder life improvements for women, less tangible elements of cultural and social organisations has an influence as well. This in such a level that the individual in question will not even be able to consider that she can improve her situation.

It was first in the 1990’s that culture was seen as having a role within development. This was mainly shown by the concept gaining more and more space in the literature within the development paradigm where scholars increasingly recognised that it was impossible to understand the political, social



and economic changes the developing countries were going through without taking culture into the picture as a factor (Schech & Haggis, 2008; 50).

Culture is constant changeable. It is understood as an overarching system of meaning that constructs social arrangements and definitions in different ways for women and men – laying the ‘rules of the game’. These codes can be found in religious tenets, state constitutions, legal codes etc. Culture lays the structure in society on the basis of gender (Bradley & Khor, 1993; 349)

Subsequently, it can be stated that culture has more than just one role to play in society, but in this paper the focus is solely upon the role it plays when shaping and forming human beings within the society which they exist in. More specifically, relating culture’s influence upon women and the identity which they obtain during their lives and upbringing within a certain society – dominated by a specific culture and structures. Drawing on Karl Marx it is argued that social relations ascribe a meaning to people and things - it is what puts them into place (Kabeer, 1993; 55). This ideology gets further analysed by Rubin whom by the following quote clearly demonstrates the link between social relations and the present condition of women:

*‘What is a domesticated woman? A female of the species. The one explanation is as good as the other. A woman is a woman. She only becomes a domestic, a wife, a chattel, a playboy bunny, a prostitute, or a human dictaphone in certain relations. Torn from these relations, she is no more the helpmate of man than gold in itself is money (...)’* (Kabeer, 1994; 55).

On the same note, Kabeer argues that underlying structures in society, seen in the sense of family, caste, class and gender has an influence upon the distribution of valued resources which different individual members will be influenced by when pursuing their interest and promoting the voice of agency. She argues that these underlying structures shape individual interests so the individual members of a society define their goals and values in such a manner so that it reflects the values and their social positioning within a society (Kabeer, 1999; 10).

It is hence here that the term ‘identity’ comes in and gets a role to play. Already in the late 1990s identity had for more than a decade played an immense role on feminist thoughts about gender, where the ground breaking work was done by the Combahee River Collective, a group of US women of colour, who put identity at the core of their work; ‘*identity in many ways spoke for itself – its mission was to identify black feminist issues and empower black feminists, particular lesbians, to find the resources, space, and political support to work on those issues*’ (Chinn, 2010; 104). It was within this discourse that Denise Riley (1988) argued that women had through history always been identified with specific ideas of gender and personhood, something that later on was also pointed out by Chandra Talpade Mohanty where she argued that women in colonised countries were always portrayed as victims and dehumanised in a sense in contrast to their western female counterparts that were seen upon as strong and independent (Chinn, 2010; 159). These views upon identity and its relation to social sciences created a debate where it was mainly essentialism (who we are) vs. social construction (how we are formed), where this thesis positions itself within the social construction by having a focus upon *how identities are formed*.

Hence one can track the discourse of ‘identity’ through the enlightenment philosophy and the Romantic period where the notion was the identity was a universal and timeless core that was to be developed by the inner being – by the self – in the form of education and self-development (Benwell and Stokoe, 2010; 82). Subsequently this humanistic view of ‘identity’ has been replaced by a more holistic view of the paradigm where the mantra is: ‘*an individual’s self-consciousness never exists in isolation, it always exists in relationship to an ‘other’ or ‘others’ who serves to validate its existence*’ (Benwell & Stokoe, 2010; 83). Hence this laid the ground for identity to be understood as a social phenomenon ‘*produced and interpreted by other people, in discourse and other social and embodied conduct*’ (Ibid).

When looking at the word itself *identity* it is claimed (by Peter Cleason – American Historian (1983) that the term ‘identity’ comes from the Latin word

*idem et idem* (The same and the same). Hence the word itself is a noun and it implies an object or distinctive fixed essence which a group, a place or a person could possess (Wetehrell, 2010; 5). Thus the most influential theorist within, at the time newly found field, the field of identity, was Erik Erikson (1950, 1968) who argued that identity was not something that was created by one alone, it was an outcome of a process of dialogue with social expectations. It was the understanding of one's place within culture and society and the understanding that one shared with the community of commitment that was crucial for the development of identity (Ibid, 6). And it is also this definition and understanding of identity, that will be used in this paper, where I would like to draw upon Habermas' theory of justice and his take on the importance of social relations in the construct of the identity and consciousness: *The 'I' becomes an 'I' only among a 'we' in a community of speech and action. Individuation does not precede association; rather it is the kinds of associations we inhabit that define the kind of individuals we become'* (Kabeer, 2012; 223).

In order to sum it all up, this paper argues, that the importance of culture, social relations and identity cannot be overlooked when talking about empowerment. Especially since the main focus of this research is the primary factors of empowerment which is defined by the sense of agency women get from their identity: *their inner strength/power*.

## **Chapter 6. Theory of Practice – Pierre Bourdieu**

In his book 'Outline of a Theory in Practice' Pierre Bourdieu introduces his *Theory of Practice* which looks into the structures that lays out the schemes (norms and traditions) that an agent follows in order to uphold his 'honor' (status), among other things, within society (Bourdieu, 1977; 11).

Bourdieu argues that society is structured by a set of schemes which exist to regulate and control the agents within the society to follow lines of behavior fitting to the given structures build within the society. Here he specifically takes up the 'code of honor' which according to Bourdieu is nothing else than a set of

rules embodied from childhood and followed by the agent with no will (Bourdieu, 1977; 15). When Bourdieu talks about schemes and rules he refers to what he calls ‘collective realities’ also more commonly known as a *social norm*. This he argues is nothing more than a moral law sometimes seen in the sense of a *theoretical model* which exists to account for their practices - all existing within the agents’ practice and not in their consciousness or rather their discourse (Bourdieu, 1977; 27).

Another term that Bourdieu has a huge focus upon in his Theory of Practice is *Doxa*. Doxa is an agent’s *sense of reality*; it is the system of classification which produces the objective classes defining the structures and schemes regulating the objective reality contributing to power relations. Doxa, in its perfect form, is ‘(...) *when there is a perfect correspondence between the objective order and the subjective principles of organization and the natural and social world appears as self-evident*’ (Bourdieu, 1977; 164). The world of common sense is self-evident and comes without saying. Customary law, traditions and norms are all silent to be followed without question, not only because it is structured that way but also because there are no answers to the questions asked: it is as it is without further investigation. Doxa is the absolute form of legitimacy non-questioned, fought over by groups claiming to possess it (Bourdieu, 1977; 167 & 168). Something that has a huge interest for the dominating classes since this is their way of holding the power, when being in position of Doxa one is in position of reproducing the social structures (Bourdieu, 1977, 169).

Furthermore Bourdieu argues that every group (here he talks about class) has their own pre-deposited set of schemes in their incorporated state more known as their *habitus* which is defined by: *(...) a system of schemes of perception and thoughts which cannot give what it does give to be thought and perceived without ipso facto producing an unthinkable and an unnameable* (Bourdieu, 1977; 17 & 18). Said with other words it is a *system of durable transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures (...)* (Bourdieu, 1977; 72). Subsequently the habitus is also what sets the ground when

the agent has to act according to any given situation. An agent gets his/her habitus by the earliest experiences in life: from school, home, society and experiences. It is here that one learns the positions within labor divisions and sex divisions for example. An agent's habitus speaks inseparably and simultaneously of his class which is his position within the social structure (Bourdieu, 1977; 87). Hence all according to what habitus the agent has, he/she will have certain predisposed qualities and knowledge which will enable him/her to act within certain limitation in the given situation – the better the habitus, the better a chance to get a good outcome (Bourdieu, 1977; 72 & 73). According to this the agent is more possessed by his/her habitus than the habitus being possessed by him/her. This is due to the fact that the agent follows his/her habitus without a thought or reflection over it since it comes through deeply embedded structures that are hard to avoid or perceive without having the perspective to it. Hence the agent will be so devoted to his practice that he/she will not be aware of it – they will be under *learned ignorance* which is a mode of practical knowledge not comprising knowledge of its own principles (Bourdieu, 1977; 18 & 19). He furthermore argues that one of the main 'tricks' of the *habitus* is that the agent gains more by obeying the rules than to going against it. In social formations rules can only be followed if they are recognized by the group itself in the values and language which is valuable to the group. Hence by following the practice of the rules the agent gains respect, prestige and 'a step ahead' in relation to the rest of the group – something that is desirable in every way (Bourdieu, 1977; 22).

To navigate around the habitus is a task that requires an 'outside' perspective on one's social reality while also an understanding of the structures that regulates and determines one's daily life – said with other words; quite hard for the common agent (Bourdieu, 1977; 76). This is specially seen in the context of that agents are rational beings that regulate their behavior, motivations and needs all according to what seems as being the best way to success. Here it is especially the *ethos* that Bourdieu refers to as the main regulator of actions hence '(...) *the ethos which, being the product of a learning process dominated by determinate type of*

*objective regularities, determines 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' conduct for every agent subjected to those regularities'* (Bourdieu, 1977; 77). Finally Bourdieu argues that one's social position within the social structure that determines whether an agent strives to go ahead in life or chooses to 'know it's place' and accept the current condition in which he/she is in. Here it is easier for the dominating agent to strategically and symbolically manipulate and work towards a break in structures than the dominated agent (Bourdieu, 1977; 82).

The theory of Bourdieu will be used in this thesis when looking into the existing social structures in Jatoli village, how they are laid out and how these social structures influence women's daily lives and if this has an influence upon their identity.

## **Chapter 7. The Capability Approach – Amartya Sen**

In his book *'Development as Freedom'* Amartya Sen takes a whole different take on development. He talks about human development being seen in the sense of freedom, this in two levels: *the process* which allows freedom of action and decision and *the opportunities* that people have all according to their personal and social circumstances (Sen, 1999; 17). According to him development is a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. He argues that by expanding the overall freedom of an individual one enhances the opportunities and agency that the given person will have, which in the end is crucial for the development of a society. This is due to the fact that freedom is not only the basis of evaluation but also important when it comes to an individual's sense of action and initiatives – his/her social effectiveness. In the end *'greater freedom enhances the ability of people to help themselves and also to influence the world'* (Sen, 1999; 18).

When Sen talks about *agency* he refers to the 'grander' definition of it, as he puts it himself, where it entails *'someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives, whether or not we assess them in terms of some external criteria as well'* (Sen,

1999; 19). This will also be the definition that will be used during this paper when referring to agency.

Thus, Sen sees the expansion of freedom as both *the primary end* and *the principal means* of development, more known as *the constitutive role* and *the instrumental role*. When talking about *the constitutive role* Sen refers to the elementary capabilities like being able to avoid starvation, premature mortality as well as literacy and enjoying political participation, etc. (Sen, 1999; 36). Subsequently he has laid out 5 types of *Instrumental freedom* which he refers to when talking about the *instrumental role* of development, these are: 1) political freedom, 2) economic facilities, 3) social opportunities, 4) transparency guarantees and 5) protective security (Sen, 1999; 10). Looking more into the *instrumental roles* of freedom one will find that with *political freedom* Sen refers to the basic democratic rights than an individual has right to vote and choose political parties, freedom of speech, political dialogue, criticize authorities etc. *Economic facilities* refers to the means an individual has in enjoying the utilization of economic resources when it comes to consumption, production and exchange, this all depending on the economic resource available for an individual all according to family, shares, wealth and income. *Social opportunities* entails the arrangements that society makes for education, health care etc., which are necessary for an individual's substantive freedom of being able to live a good life. *Transparency guarantees* is about trust in society and state, it is *the freedom to deal with one another under guarantees of disclosure and lucidity* (including the right to disclosure) which are vital instruments when preventing corruption, financial irresponsibility etc. Finally *protective security* is about social security, to create a safety net for the population in order to prevent poverty, starvation and misery within a state, here Sen argues that basic benefits such as unemployment benefits and statutory income supplements to the indigent or emergency public employment should be standard measures taken within any state (Sen, 1999; 38 – 40). Sen argues that each of the given rights helps to advance the general capability of a person as well as they serve to complement each other by being

interrelated and freedom of one type might greatly advance freedom of another type which is something that is to be noted and focused upon when working with development according to Sen (Sen, 1999; 38).

Basically in his theory which he calls *the capability approach* Sen argues for a different take on development which is focused upon two levels: the freedom *to achieve* something and the *capability set* of alternatives which are the real opportunities a person has (Sen, 1999; 75). Here the former has to be laid out before the later can be done. One of Sen's most popular examples of this is that one cannot prevent starvation just by giving an individual the economic means, it is also necessary to make sure that the given individual does not have any other issues or obstacles in the way, such as health, restriction of movement, access to healthy food etc., in order to demolish the problem totally. In this sense it is of vital importance to ensure the individuals freedom to act before ensuring the freedom to access of means. Moreover individual freedom is essentially a social product and there is a two way relation between the social arrangements that are to expand individual freedom in the sense that social arrangements has an influence upon the specific uses that an individual make of their freedom, and the use of individual freedom in the sense of improving one's life while also improving the social arrangements to become more appropriate and effective (Sen, 1999; 31).

Subsequently, in this research, Sen's theory of the capability approach will be used when looking into empowerment and how an individual's self-perception can have an influence upon this. Also his notion of freedom being a social product is drawn strongly upon when looking into society, identity and agency.

## **Chapter 8. Analysis**

Based on Bourdieu's *Theory of practice* the initial part of the theory will focus upon the social structures existing within the town of Bharatpur and how this influences the actions and self-perceptions of the women in question. This will be



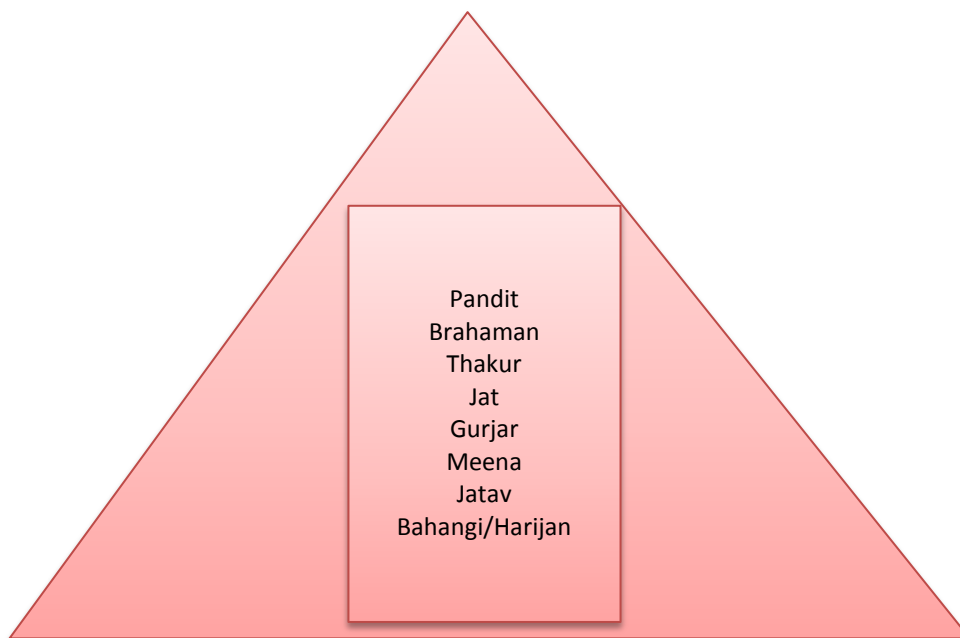
done by drawing on the data collected during the fieldwork and secondary material presented earlier in this thesis.

Hence the second part of the analysis will look into how women's self-perception influences their empowerment options and whether change in this can be seen between women holding an official job and women being at home. Here Sen and his theory of *The Capability Approach* will be drawn upon.

The data will be presented as the analysis proceeds in order to give the best insight and overview of the material and arguments laying the base for this thesis.

### 8.1. The Reality of Society

According to Bourdieu social structures are the main influential factors on an agent's life and actions. These set of rules are embodied into the agent from childhood and followed with no will. Hence one can argue that the caste system in



itself is a huge social scheme made to regulate and control the agents in question.

This was especially evident in Bharatpur, where the habitants define themselves and act according to their caste system by keeping themselves within the limits of their own caste and families. During my participant observations I was following a family from the Gurjar caste and a family from the Thakur caste. Already the second day I found that there was a feud between the castes due to having troubles going from one family to the other, because each caste preferred to keep away from the other caste (Fieldnotes, 2014). The castes structure differs from region to region in India, meaning that one can find 100 different variations of castes and jatis. In Bharatpur the caste system is build up as shown in the pyramid above.

These castes systems lay out the values, norms and religion that an individual is to follow. Relating this to Bourdieu's notion of habitus it is clear that when the caste system is one of the main schemes regulating the daily lives of the agents it is also one of the main grounds of their habitus. When Bourdieu talks about class in Jatoli they talk about caste. One way of portraying how embedded these schemes are, is to unfold the practice of marriage. During my research I found that there are very specific symbols, rituals and norms connected to the practice of marriage (see table 1). One thing is that the marriage is chosen by the village elders (from their own caste) and only when the guy has been approved in relation to his family and wealth, the marriage is accepted. Even here, the girl and boy do not meet each other, this first happens after the marriage (Fieldnotes, 2014). Subsequently it is found that there are many marriage symbols that only get validated after marriage. Some of these things are practices that young girls strive and desire for their whole life, they upgrade it to become some sort of 'magical practice' that only can be achieved when the ultimate goal is achieved: to get married (Fieldnotes, 2014).

**Table 1:**

Marriage Symbols
<b>Mangal Sutar</b> (neckless for married woman)
<b>Ring on the toes</b>
<b>Bindia</b> (red symbolic dot or line on the forehead)
<b>Saree</b> (traditional indian clothing)
<b>Bangles from the in-laws</b> (always in hand)

This notion of marriage being an end in itself in one's life was especially visible during one of my conversations with the Gurjar family where the conversation was about when *I* was getting married. It was obvious that for them I was too old for being single and marriage could not happen fast enough. Hence when they got to know that marriage was not an aim as such, the question; '*what are you going to do then?*' popped out several times, showing a total lack of understanding for how life could possibly unfold without a man by a woman's side. Another fact is that among the Gurjars they don't keep the girls home with their parents for long. The notion is that she will either fall in love with someone and ruin the family's name or do something else that will be harmful for them. The ideal age for marrying them off is 15 and the maximum is 20 while at the Thakurs one sees the same trend but here the age of marriage normally starts from 18 and above (Fieldnotes, 2014). In this case one can clearly say that these women are prepared to marriage from childhood which by that also is the habitus that they have embedded within them.

Looking more into the castes it is found that there are some quite distinctive differences between the upper and lower caste. As shown in table 2 the main differences are seen in their mode of behaviour and freedom of movement. When

it comes to dressing and behaviour in front of men, it seems like the Gurjar caste has less restrictions than the Thakur caste, while on the other hand the Thakur caste seem to have an advantage when it comes to economic gains and education. A note to have in mind is that the Gurjar caste is one of the wealthiest and strongest castes within the village even though they are one of the lowest castes, while the Thakur caste is not as wealthy and small in size which by that makes them less influential.

**Table 2:**

<b>Gurjar</b>	<b>Thakur</b>
Less free with men	More free with the men
Less Formal with the men (sits equal to them)	Formal with the men (don't sit equal to them)
Less educated – stop studying when ready for marriage or do not study at all	More educated – tries to continue education even after marriage
More formalities and norms to keep when having a guest	Less aware of formalities and hospitality when having a guest
More wealthy in land and economy	Less wealthy in land and economy
Women are not allowed to have their own money	The women are given pocket money – either from own family or from their husbands
Less aware of their clothing and appearance in front of the men of their house	Aware at all times of their clothing and appearance in front of anybody specially men
Do not try to implement rules and norms on strangers as such	Tries to implement rules and norms on the strangers as well
Has a better understanding for a western or different culture being applicable for others	Less understanding for a western or other culture being applicable for others
Do not talk openly bad about the other families or castes	Talks bad openly about the other families and castes

The striking element here is that one would think that the norms and traditions within society applies equally for all, but it is obvious that they are of different degree all according to caste, which again goes back to Bourdieu and his argument of habitus being the most vital part of an agent's life and behaviour. Here it is found that the Thakur caste cares more about how society perceive them than the Gurjar caste does, one can argue that this has something to do with their status within the caste system – putting more pride in having a good name than the lower castes does. Subsequently I observed that the Gurjar caste is more prone to changes, breaking regulations, than the Thakur caste, they seem a bit more free which might come with the fact that they have less to lose by being low ranked within the hierarchy in relation to the Thakur caste. Thus this shows that caste does not only put down schemes and rules for the agents to follow it also regulates how rigid the frames for this is and how severely they are taken.

### **Doxa – the absolute form of legitimacy**

Besides the practice of marriage the village is filled with schemes and rules that are hard to avoid. One thing that is especially worth noticing is the strong patriarchal structure existing within the society. Even though India is known for its low rate of gender equality, this especially in the region of Rajasthan, it is still astonishing how current and visible these patriarchal structures actually are. The women in Jatoli were very much regulated by the *pardah* (practice which entails to cover your face), here they are not allowed to show their faces to any man besides their husband, and even towards them they have to cover their faces when other men or women are present in the room at the same time. Women are not to sit higher than men, eat before them during meals or come to their own needs before the men's in any sense (Fieldnotes, 2014). Furthermore they have limited movement in the sense that it is not seen as a good thing for a woman to walk outside the village alone which goes along with the notion that a woman belongs to the 'inside world' of a home and not the 'outside world' which is the domain of men, showing a strong segregation of gender roles within the society (Fieldnotes, 2014).

At one point I asked the women from the Gurjar family if they never felt like going outside the village, here I found that

*(...) the women likes being home rather than going out due to all the restrictions they have on them by their husbands and the norms existing within their society. Ramvati said that she felt ashamed always having to put on a veil on when being out in a restaurant for example, so she would rather prefer to be home and free (fieldnotes, 2014).*

Here Bourdieu's notion of Doxa can be drawn upon, hence as shown above the schemes as structures forced upon these women has become so normal and accepted that comfort is chosen above their own desire. At one point during my participant observations I went to a religious ritual with the Gurjar family. Here they were praying for the tree spirit by singing, offering fruits and water and the elder women sat in the middle of everything and told stories. These stories were religious folklore about their gods all bringing some kind of a moral or ethics with it telling women how to behave and act. When I asked why this ritual was done and what the purpose of it was the women could not really answer me. Their answer was that like everything else in life they followed it because it was a part of their traditions and culture, this was what the elders told them to do and this was what made sense for them – their guidance in life, their Doxa.

Subsequently one can also refer to the practice of wife-beating which is so common in the village that they mention it with a smile on their faces. It has become a joke among women to talk about their husbands beating them up and then compare how mean their husbands are in their beatings, *'the worst kind of beating is when the man beats his wife with a stick. The mildest and best form is when they only slap and push'* (Fieldnotes, 2014). One can argue that the reason behind this is that the issue is so common and they find themselves so helpless in the given issue that they don't see any other way of handling it than taking it as a natural part of their daily life and make it a joke. Here according to Bourdieu the agents are restricted in their actions according to their habitus, they do not have

the relevant knowledge and means to do much about the given problem. Instead different levels of violence has come to surface where the ideal situation is to have a level of violence that is so low that it is not seem harmful at all: slapping and pushing: *'nothing, there is not much to do, if you resist they just beat you more, so it is better to take what comes and don't provoke it to get worse'* (Fieldnotes, 2014).

During my group discussions it also became very clear that women only live and work to upholding their honour and name within society – more precisely their family's names within society. Here it is especially interesting to note that it seems to be the woman's job to do so, since all the focus and regulation are upon her. During my group discussions with both castes it was very clear that *Izat* (honour) is the most important thing to maintain. Everything that you do – you should do with that in mind. Here a direct line to Bourdieu and his argument of an agent's habitus can be drawn hence he in his theory draws a lot upon the meaning of honour and how the upholding of their honour and by that their status within society is a part of an agent's habitus. All the rules and norms existing within the society are for keeping your *izat*, if you break the norms and rules you ruin your *izat* and that is not attractive for anybody (Group discussions, 2014). When talking about how a woman should maintain her status within society it is clear that the focus group agrees upon that this can only be done through her work. A woman has to show by her work and doing that within society she is worth having a status that is reputable and good.

What the above shows us is that the social structures within Jatoli village is so deeply embedded that it is hard to live within the given society without following it. Hence the *doxa* in this case is not only strong, it is of highly legitimacy followed by and claimed in all aspects of society. It has become so deeply embedded within the agents that they see it as a goal in life to obtain the given *doxa*, to uphold their *izat* and behave as the ideal woman even if they do not know the notion behind it as Bourdieu argued for in his Theory of Practice.

### Being a Producer of Objective Meaning

In their daily lives, these women have a tight daily routine keeping them busy and occupied at all times. A typical daily schedule for women looks at shown in table 3 (Fieldnotes, 2014).

**Table 3:**

Time	Work
6 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wake up</li> <li>- Get the kids ready for school</li> <li>- Make lunch-boxes for their husbands</li> <li>- Bring water from the veil to drink</li> </ul>
10/11 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Start making cow-cakes (fuel made out of dried cow poo formed in round cakes: dried in the sun).</li> <li>- Cut plants for the cow's food mixture (weed)</li> <li>- Do the domestic work in the farmhouse (laundry etc.)</li> <li>- Takes a bath, eat and rest</li> </ul>
15/16 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wake up – all according to the workload</li> <li>- Bring water again</li> <li>- Prepare food for dinner</li> <li>- Milk the cows</li> </ul>
9/10 om	When all the work in the farmhouse is done they go back to their houses and help with the last work and then sleep around 11 pm

All the money that women earn during the day by working in in the field, with the cattle and what else they get they give to their husbands. If they need rations for the house or anything else to be bought, they can ask their husbands, and if it comes to food they always get it but if it comes to material things, it is not always that they get it. This entails that women never go to the local market to buy stuff for the house which can be seen a way of limiting their freedom of movement.



Furthermore during my group discussion I found that house work is seemed as important for women, they find it as their major contribution to the daily life, and if one does not uphold it, it is wrong and out of custom since the housework is not really seen as ‘work’, it is women’s way of ‘earning’ their bread for the day (Fieldnotes, 2014).. They like doing their part of the chores and it is seen as their contribution to taking care of their families.

Bourdieu argues that because the habitus is so embedded and unquestioned by the agent in question that she/he is not even aware of its effects when following it. He/she is the producer of the same objective meaning which he/she is ‘slaved’ to. This was especially evident during one of my observation with the Gurjar family which had given me the idea that the youngest daughter-in-law in the family was lazy and not quite normal because she never did as she was bid. Hence one day when spending time with her, I got quite surprised to note that she was doing quite a lot of work, she was even working when the rest was resting. When I asked into this their answer was that she was only doing the house work – she never helped out in the farm house (the Gurjars, because of being rich, had a different house placed right by their fields for all the farm work such as taking care of the cattle, working in the field, making cow-cakes etc.), and therefore she was seen down upon (Fieldnotes, 2014). Little did they note that when they worked in the farm house she was the only one left in the main house doing all the chores there while they did their chores in the farm house, the question here is then: why is the work at the house seen as less important than the work at the farm house?

Another case showing this was seen with the Thakur family where the second youngest daughter had come home to Pushpa due to a fight with her husband. Hence her husband is Manju’s husband’s brother, and Manju was blaming her sister for the problems she had with her husband because of her not being nice with him and refusing sex with him among other things. According to Manju when you act like that with your husband you ask for having problems with him – it is up to the wife to make sure that the relationship between you and your husband is good. If it is good it is because of your good doings, if it is not it is

because of you being a bad wife (Fieldnotes, 2014). Therefore she had not much support from anyone in her ‘rebellious’ act which was just seen as an attempt to go against culture and traditions – not something that is seen nicely upon. Seems like everything within the society falls and stands upon women, and ironically enough it is women themselves that uphold these structures by punishing the ones rebelling in any way against them as portrayed in the former picture by freezing them out or blaming them for being in a bad situation on own choice. Hence, according to Bourdieu, these women, knowingly or unknowingly, make sure to uphold the same social structures that they are ‘slaved’ to due to their habitus, making it hard to bring in changes as such.

### **Beating on the Right Horses**

I asked the women if they didn’t feel like they wanted to make up with some of these restrictions, like getting married at the age of 15 or getting beaten up, and they told me that if they do so the men would punish them by taking away their food and shelter. Then they would not be able to feed their children either and that was something that they were not willing to go into (Fieldnotes, 2014). The same went for them never leaving the village – it seems like women likes being home rather than going out due to all the restrictions they have on them by their husbands and the social norms existing within their society (Fieldnotes, 2014).

Hence as shown above women automatically put more restrictions on themselves due to many of the rigid restrictions put on them by their men and society – having to put on a veil in front of others for example. Here it is clear that, according to Bourdieu, women are acting according to their habitus and social status within society, this by following their *ethos* – only acting within the limits which they find reasonable. As Bourdieu argued, an agent is not going to bet or aim on/for things that are out of his/her reach. Being a rational being the agent will act according to his social status and habitus making sure to act only within his/her limits, in order to have the safest and best option possible in life, something that these women quite clearly are doing by restricting themselves

within their own structures and accepting their conditions as they are. And since their social positioning within the society is not high, these women do not strive to go ahead in life as such, they more aim for the most comfortable way of living possible within their framework and have made it as their goal in life to follow social structures even if they are aware of the fact that other options are possible. There is a saying in the village that goes: *'if you have a good name within society you have fame'* (Fieldnotes, 2014).

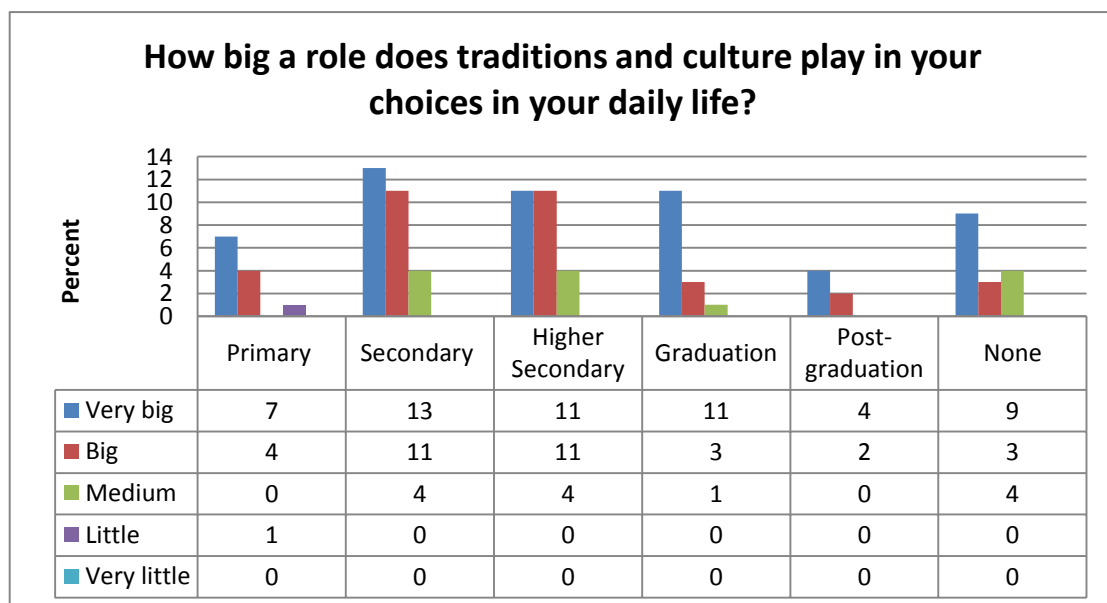
## 8.2. Self-Perception and Agency – a Creation of Social Structures?

Not far from Bourdieu, Sen argues in his theory *the capability approach* that social conditions have an influence on an individual's freedom and by that their agency. Subsequently as shown in the first part of the analysis a strong social structure exist within the Jatoli village which has an influence upon the behaviour and actions of the women in question. Here Sen argues that the social structures have an influence upon how an agent makes use of his/her individual freedom and that one cannot enhance one's agency if the *freedom* to do so is not given by a dominant factor, in this case it is society, as such.

But Sen also stresses upon the fact that an individual is restricted by the capability set of alternatives which they have when trying to develop their freedom - this seen in the individual sense of action and initiatives. During the interviews, an attempt to look into this was made – the agents understanding of their own capabilities and freedom. One of the themes of the interview was about culture and society: how it was structured and influenced the individual's lives. Here it was clear that all the interviewees were quite clear about how big an influence culture, social norms and traditions had on their lives. Manju, the youngest interviewer portrayed this pretty well: *'yes society has an influence. Because that is all they see and value: how much we work? How we work. When we work. Do we follow tradition? It all makes a difference'* (Manju, 2014). Looking at table 4, which shows the connection between the notion of culture's influence upon the individual's life and education level, one can see that in total 55% women, no

matter what education level, say that culture and traditions play a *very big* role in their lives and 34% says that it has a *big* influence upon their lives, which gives a total of 89% women from all education levels, stating that culture and traditions have an influence. This shows a picture of women being aware and influenced by the social structures around them, hindering their freedom, and one can also note that education level has little to do with the awareness of this.

**Table 4:**



Survey conducted with 100 women (Nilab: 2014)

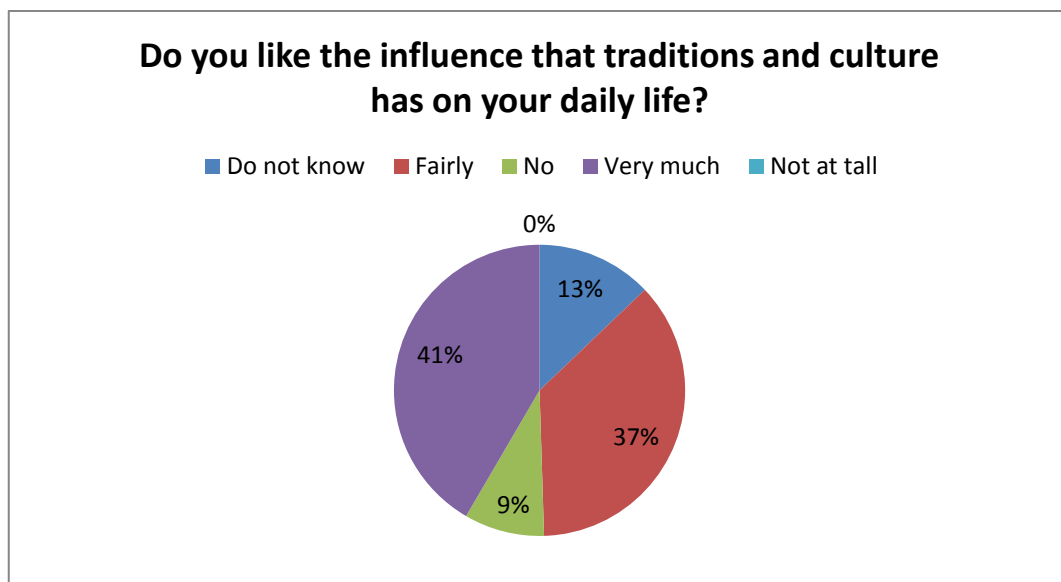
Thus in one case when talking to the Sunita, from the Thakur caste, who is employed at the Ghana Nationalpart we got a positive view of the social structures where she argued that:

*'In my opinion my work is important to the society, my family - actually everybody. Because of my work my husband's name gets high within the society because people will say that 'look his wife works and handles the house, her family, her child – she handles everything' so in society this has an importance, everybody thinks that the ladies which work do not have any time for anything, nor can she fight with anybody nor can she talk extra with anybody, when society*

*sees her like this; that she is nice, goes and comes in the morning and evening – one makes a reputation. With this people's minds changes' (Sunita, 2014).*

This tells us that one can also get a high status within society by having a job, and by that access to economic means and freedom of movement, which are factors that rises one's reputation within society as argued for earlier in this thesis, and creating a good name for oneself and one's family by that. But it still requires that the woman attends both the housework and her job, and during the group discussions it was very clear that if one has to choose between housework or ones job, it is always the housework that comes first (Group discussions, 2014).

**Table 5:**



An interesting point here to note though with table 5 is that a fairly high percentage of women likes the influence that culture and traditions play in their daily life: 41%. Thus 9% percent says straight no to the question and 13% answers do not know. This gives us a picture of women being quite content with the social structures regulating their lives which in relation to Sen's theory of social structures having an influence upon the specific uses that an individual makes if his/her freedom: an agent will work the freedom that he/she has in order to maintain his/her life.

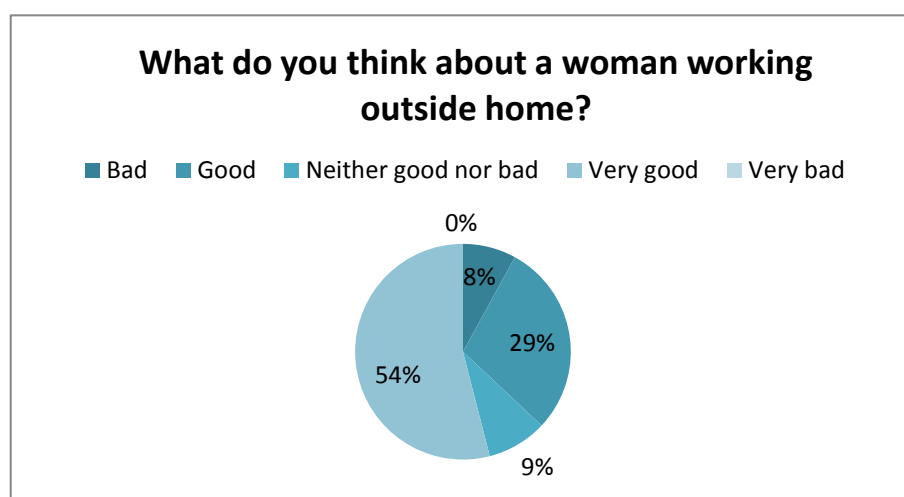
## Caste, education and employment

Moreover during the interviews it was found that there was a difference of perception between women having a job and women not having a job. And there was also a difference when different levels of education kicked in. As shown above Sunita which holds a job gives a picture of society being in change and more positive towards women while Manju and Radha who are unemployed show that society does not think much more than a woman working at home and following social structures (Table 6). Furthermore when asked if there was anything within society that they did not agree upon it was mainly the employed women that portrayed a view of dislike in the manner while the unemployed women mainly agreed with things as they were:

*'I do not agree with for example with not educating our girls; not sending girls to school, keeping girls at home at all times and make them do the housework. (...) in my opinion a woman should have as much freedom as a man has'* (Archena, 2014).

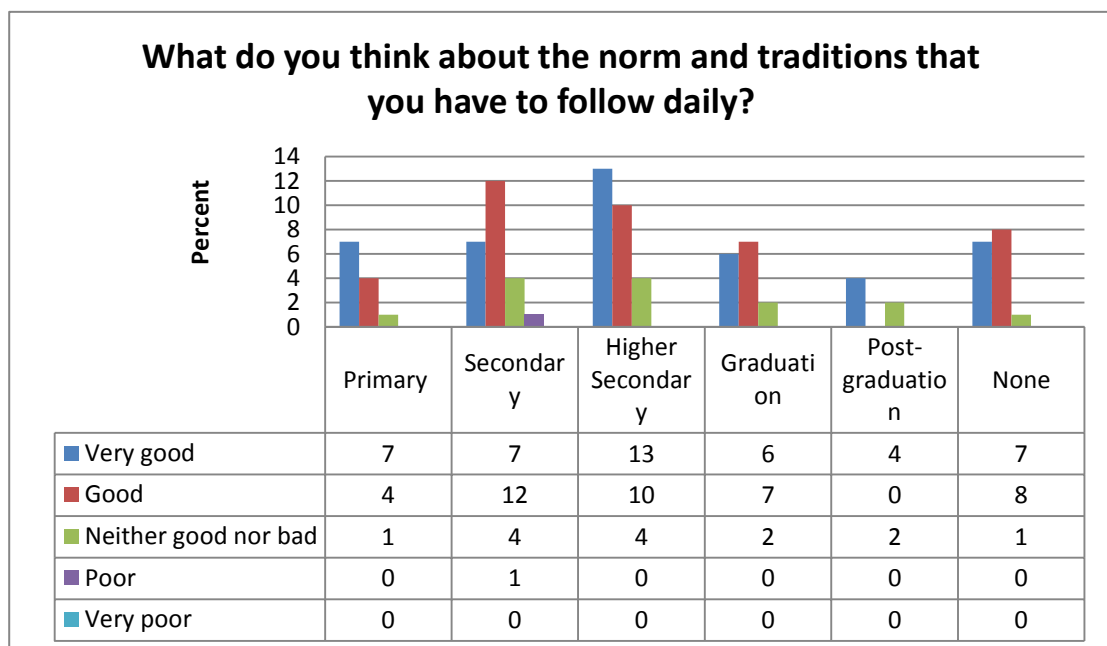
*'In my opinion it is right because it seems right. I live at home and I follow it by that I do not know how it looks like for the outside world but for me it seems fine'* (Sumitra, 2014).

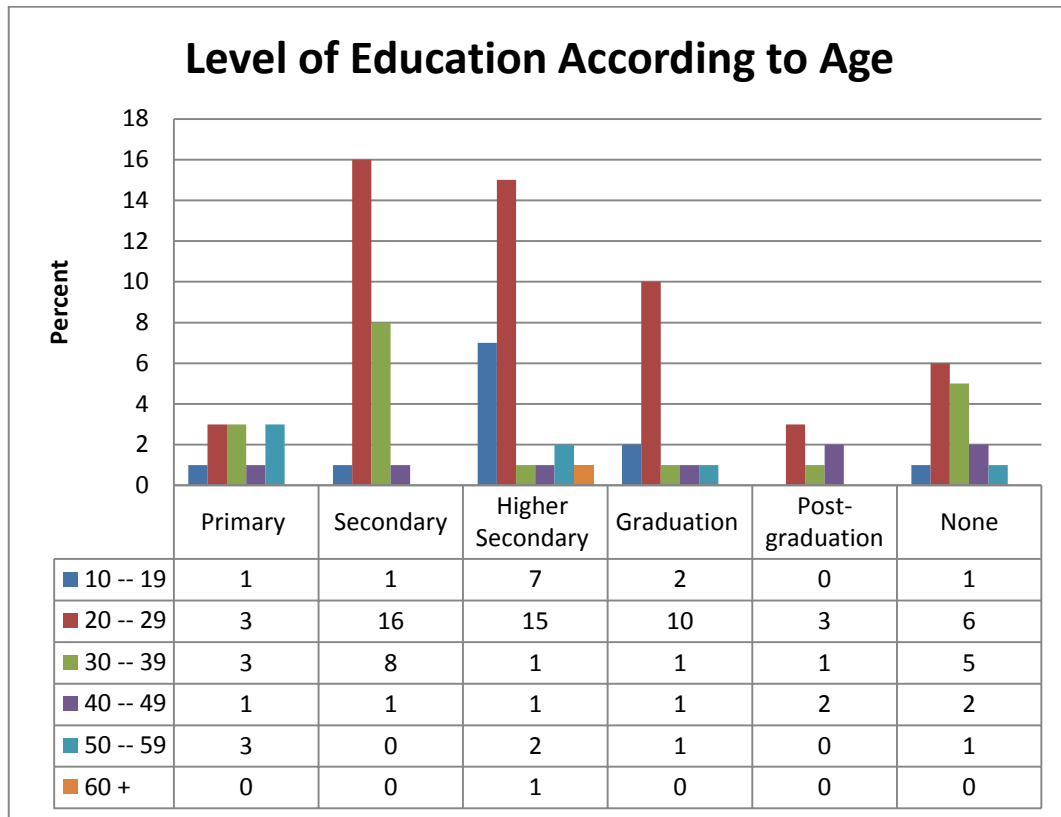
**Table 6:**



Subsequently it is also seen that the more educated the woman is the more critical view she has towards society, even if she is unemployed, which was the case with Manju during her interview showing us a will to follow social structures but also had a critical point to it: *‘they should live according to a modern society (...) in a modern society nobody covers their faces or touch people’s feet. They talk openly and walk around openly without covering their faces’* (Manju, 2014). And finally we also found that all women found education to be of importance, this was especially seen among women that had low education level: *‘Yes when a girl is educated she can stand on her own feet while when she is not she is dependent on her husband’* (Shimra, 2014). *‘How can I become something?! It is the ones that are educated that can do so what I am to do’* (Sumitra, 2014). This can also be seen in table 7, where 44% of the women say ‘very good’ to the social structures according to education while 41% says good. Nobody says very poor and only 1% says poor while 14% says neither good nor bad. Linking this with table 8 which shows the education level according to age, one will find that participants with high education level are low, which goes with the high percentage of satisfaction towards the social structures.

**Table 7:**



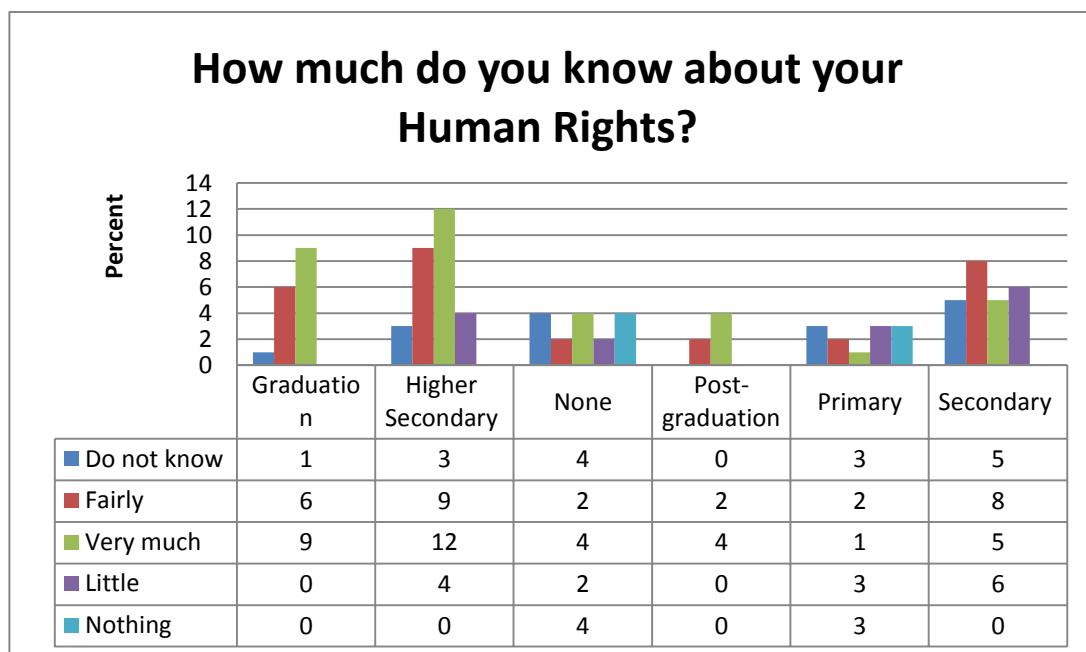
**Table 8:**

This shows us that not only do social structures have an influence upon women and their understanding of society and themselves, factors such as education and employment outside the home has an influence upon this as well. Subsequently this can be related to Sen and his notion of instrumental capabilities where he as the third instrumental capability refers to education being one of the main means to an individual's substantive freedom. Hence he also mentions political freedom as one of the first instrumental capabilities which in this case can be seen in the sense of Human Rights. During the interviews it was found that women had different understandings and knowledge about their Human Rights. This could differ in education level, employment status and caste even. It was found that when coming from the Gurjar caste where the education level also is low and employment status as well (it was quite hard to find two women within the Gurjar caste which had an employment for the interviews) the women knew little about their Human Rights, while in the Thakur caste where the education level is higher



than average and more common for women to be employed, the women knew a bit more about their rights, they definitely knew the right to vote and for the ones being employed the knowledge was higher in the sense that it got expanded to knowing about the right for education, the right for speech and freedom of movement (Interviews, 2014). This can be looked more into with table 9 which shows the direct link between education level and knowledge about Human Rights.

**Table 9:**



He also takes economic means as an instrumental freedom and as shown in the first part of the analysis these women do not have access to economy as such unless they are employed and earn their own salary. During the interviews it was also found that the one women having a home based employment as seamstress did not gain anything economic from it, since she would hand all her income to her husband showing that to have an income is not equal having the power over it, the woman has to fight to maintain her own salary for herself, making us go back

to Sen's constitutive role of freedom: *'well sister if you have money you can become strong by that'* (Shimra, 2014).

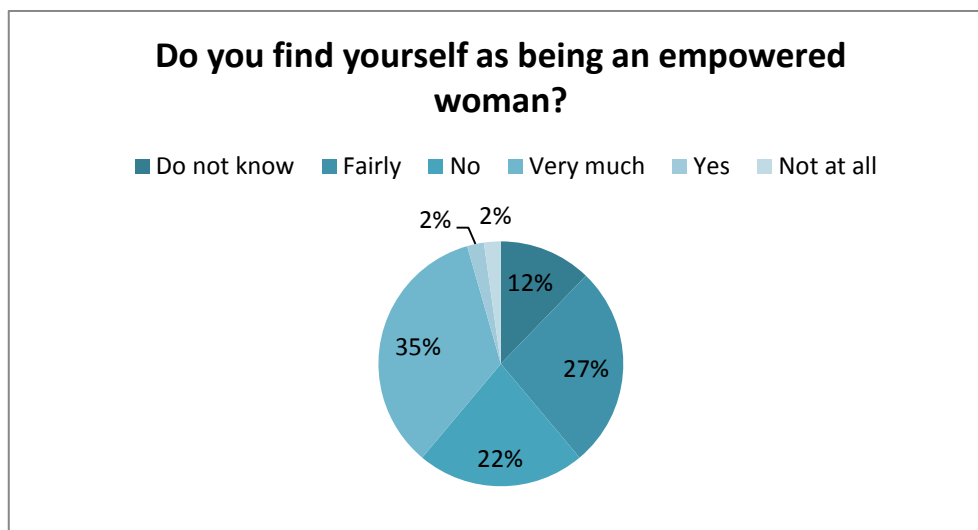
### **Agency and Freedom to Development**

All these notions of Sen are all supposed to lead to two things: agency and freedom to development. Taking this to the group of women whom were interviewed, we will find that agency is not something that is found easily. In this relation during the interviews topics such as "empowerment", "being a strong woman" and "goals in life" were brought up. Here, again, a difference between the women was found according to education and employment, this difference was especially big when talking about a strong woman: how they thought one ought to be and if they found themselves as being one. It was found that women with no employment and low education did not find "a strong woman" as being anything positive: *'no sister, in my mind she is being arrogant/over confident and I don't like that. It might be that she lives nicely, and can take good care of her children and so, but being arrogant/over confident is not nice, I don't find it as a good thing'* (Shimra, 2014). Here one can also read that a strong woman is associated with wealth and independence not much with education or empowerment. Thus women with employment had a different view upon a strong woman and even had troubles saying fully 'yes' to comparing themselves with the character because of the awe they had for her:

*'(...) In my opinion a strong woman is someone that stands by her own, someone that does not listen to anybody or anything, and she is self-dependent. (...). She will manage herself, she will have this attitude that she can do anything; she is neither anybody's mother, neither a daughter, meaning she is only herself, so she can think and plan for herself, for her own development. She knows her rights and what she can or cannot do. (...) 'Ma'am there are some lacks that I see in myself, so I don't feel that I am fully a 'strong woman', I do not find it so. (...) There are some lacks inside of me that are needed for a 'strong woman', but I am working on them'* (Shruti, 2014).

This is further enlightened when talking about empowerment and the women only seem to understand it in a collective sense where a group of women from the village get together and fix existing problems and not something that can be found individually. Hence when hinting to this, women all agree upon that it is a good thing but not often that they relate to it. This can also be seen in table 10 where it is clear that 22% says *no* to finding themselves as being an empowered woman and 2% says directly *not at all* while 12% says *they do not know*, this is a total of 32 percent saying that they do not find themselves empowered which is not bad when seeing that 35 percent has said *yes* to the questions. This can be related to the fact that the term ‘empowerment’ was defined in the questionnaire and that has made the woman understand it in a better way than the women in the interviews.

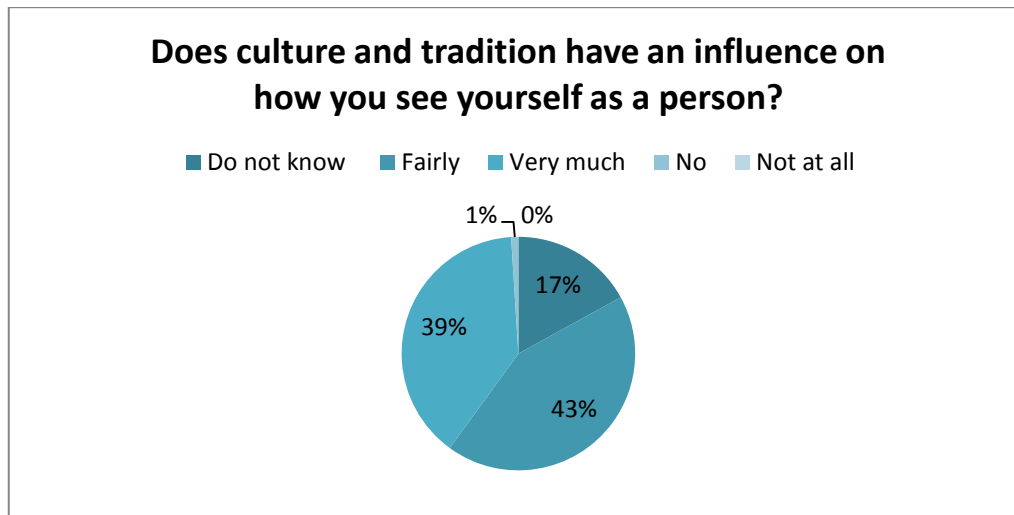
**Table 10:**



Thus looking more into women’s identity and their goals within life – if they have any aims at all, the same difference between employed and educated women vs. unemployed and lower educated women are seen. Women often associate themselves with roles such as ‘a daughter’, ‘a wife’, ‘a daughter-in-law’ and ‘a mother’. When asked if they see themselves in any light outside any social relations, the women seem not to understand the questions. This can be seen in

relation to table 11 which shows that women have a strong connection with social structures when defining their own identity which exactly tells them that the role of a mother, daughter and daughter-in-law is the most important one for them to maintain.

**Table 11:**



Furthermore when going into the goals and aims of women, it is found that the employed women have aims in life which are a bit more untraditional, aiming for a carrier for example, than women not having an employment which do not seem to understand the notion of wanting something for themselves: *'in family I see myself in the mirror of others. I define myself according to others. Meaning there is no such thing that I am something by my own'* (Shimra, 2014). But at the same time it seems like that the unemployed women do find having a job as an advantage that is desirable to gain: *'for ladies it is to have a job (question: what is the most important thing in life?). Because then she will be independent sister, she will be able to do what she wants and work according to her will'* (Shimra, 2014). Subsequently women with employment all had some kind of a goal with their lives: *'My life purpose is that I want to become something ma'am. I want to do something for people. Social work'* (Shruti, 2014). *'I want to serve my country'* (Archena, 2014). Showing us that agency is linked to education and employment in the sense that when women get to work outside the home they get a different

understanding and sense of reality which gives them the perspective to obtain goals and an understanding of themselves that differs from women which are at home and do not get out of the social structures regulating their daily lives.

### **The Will for Change**

Finally it is important to note that women with employment and education also strive for an improvement in the women's conditions. This was especially visible during our interviews where Sunita urged that:

*'For them I only have this one advice and that is I cannot say that they need to be highly educated but they should at least be middle.. Medium..You know that medium educated level (...). Whatever work there is they will be able to handle it like reading or writing there are a lot of such work that requires a bit of knowledge to carry out and that they should be able to do. In this way they will also become self-dependent. To become a housewife, take care of the house and the children etc. this everyone can do, but if you during your free time give yourself just two hours to develop yourself, like some are experts in cooking or making achar then you can develop yourself too for the better. This is my advice, that everybody should be self-dependent in one way or another'* (Sunita, 2014).

This notion towards a development within society can also be seen in the fact that in the questionnaire when asked if the women would live differently if they lived in another city without the existing social structures 78% answered yes. So even though throughout the whole questionnaire there has been a quite positive attitude towards the social structures regulating and influencing these women's lives, it is clear that if a choice were given to them, they would choose differently. Showing us that the capability set that an agent possess' is of quite importance to his/her opportunity to have freedom of development.

## Chapter 9. Discussion

The first part of the analysis shows that social constructions have an influence upon the individual's behaviour and understanding of themselves. It is clear, that social constructions in the sense of social norms and culture dictate the actions and behaviour of the individuals in question. More than that, it becomes a part of their identity and understanding of the world around them and themselves. Drawing strongly on Bourdieu it shows that his notion of habitus and Doxa is not only quite evident in this case but also a factor to have in mind when looking into individual's lives and their options for empowerment.

In the second part of the analysis it is found that the instrumental and constitutive role of freedom has an influence upon an agent's agency and development options. Here, taken from Sen, it was especially seen that instrumental factors such as education, economic access and employment has an influence upon women's understanding of themselves and the world around them by giving them an objective view upon their social conditions which is something that the other category of women were not able to have.

### **Identity: A Social Construction**

This thesis argues that empowerment cannot be achieved by only having secondary factors in mind, one also have to have the primary factors within the process of empowerment before being able to be fully empowered. Also it is argued that two factors are interlinked in the sense that the one enhances the other and by that cannot go by itself. Hence as shown above social structures has an immense influence upon women's understanding of themselves as individuals (their identity) and with that the constitutive role that they have as an outcome of the social structures. According to Bourdieu, an individual cannot act outside his/her habitus without having an objective view upon it by having an role that gives him/her and different perspective of his/her habitus. It is clear, as Kabeer argues, that women see themselves in the mirror of their families and society. The

values (ethics) which follow are created by their family, society and castes and it is within this that they have their loyalty, it is within this that they find their identity. It is also a fact that an individual shape his/her identity through the definitions that are given to them. Subsequently as seen in the first part of the analysis, these women define themselves within roles such as ‘a mother’, ‘a daughter’, ‘a wife’ etc., all roles that limits their self-perception and understanding of their capabilities and by that their agency.

Hence in the second part of the analysis an irregularity is to be found in the nature of having an employment outside the home where women by that get the opportunity to get a different understanding of themselves and their surroundings. This can be argued to be due to the fact that women, through their jobs, get to explore sides and abilities within themselves that they normally would never make use of, and moreover they get to feel that they are capable of being to someone’s help and make a difference that they normally would not make at home. This gives women a different understanding of themselves, creating a confidence that women working at home might not possess in the same level.

### **Education and Employment – A Mean in itself**

Subsequently one can argue that in order to gain a self-perception that entails having an individual identity outside social relations such as being a mother, sister, daughter etc., it is hard to avoid factors such as education, employment and economic means also seen in Sen’s notion of instrumental role of freedom. This, as found in the analysis, is due to the fact that women get a higher independency by having economic means to make use of by their own will and also when having an education level at a medium stage women have a better ground to work out from when working towards empowerment. Here Sen also argues that when women have access to economic means, employment and education they add force to at their voice and agency through independence and empowerment. Furthermore when looking into the women’s knowledge about their Human Rights it is striking to see how low it is. Hence it has been established that Human

Rights knowledge is a part of the empowerment process and cannot be avoided during the process of empowerment. Hence knowledge about one's Human Rights comes with education, which therefore makes it of even more importance, to make sure of an early and ongoing enrolment of the girls within the education system, since as argued for before, knowledge of one's empowerment options are a part of the secondary factors of empowerment.

Another interesting fact to note is that caste is important, this especially seen in the case of education and marriage. During the analysis, it was found that women coming from the Gurjar caste had a higher chance of getting married in a young age and also pulled out of the education system in an earlier age. Another fact is that the women from the Gurjar caste are more submissive to their husbands, and have less freedom of movement than the women from the Thakur caste. This shows that caste is not just a fact when it comes to regulations such a marriage and work, but also when it comes to the empowerment options. Which leads us to the reality of social structures – how they influence an individual's empowerment options.

### **Having the Freedom to Empowerment**

Finally, drawing on both Sen and Bourdieu, agents are restricted all according to the social opportunities they have within their reality - seen in the sense of their habitus and the constitutive role of freedom. Hence an agent cannot be expected to act outside the structures and possibilities that he/she has laid out, this either in the sense of caste or social norms – or both, are found to be one of the major factors when talking about the development of an individual's agency and by that their empowerment. Not only does social structures restrict women within its framework it also has an influence upon how they view themselves and by that their capabilities as agents of change. Furthermore, since this thesis argues that identity is key when talking about empowerment – the fact that the individual in focus is able to see herself as being capable of creating change and set goals for herself within her social reality – it is clear that the starting point in this process is



the social structures. Because as Sen argues, development is to be seen in the *process* which allows freedom of actions and this *process* is defined as social structures within this thesis.

A change in the social structures can thus not appear by itself and it is suddenly not something that can happen over a day. But as discussed earlier, factors such as education and employment outside the home is a starting point that one should look into when trying to change social structures. Hence as shown above these factors have a huge influence when it comes to women's identity and their understanding of what they are and what they are not capable of achieving. Thus it is important to note that it is not enough just to obtain an educational degree or employment status in order to achieve empowerment, it is vital to have process of self-perception with as well and to see empowerment as a process from within first and foremost before it comes as a process in the form of material assets: secondary factors such as economic means, assets etc. Subsequently it is as Sen argues, if a man is starving, one cannot just give him food and think that the problem is solved. It is vital that one go in and remove the obstacles that hinders the man in getting food, this could be bad health, unemployment, capability of holding an employment etc. first when these obstacles are removed, that the final goal of saving the man from starvation can be obtained.

## **Chapter 10. Conclusion**

Summing it all up, this thesis concludes that identity is not only important as being the primary factor within the empowerment process of a woman it is also what shapes and regulates the individual's aims and understanding of themselves and their lives. Here it was also found, and by that can be concluded, that social structures have a huge influence in the creation of an individual's identity by embedding habitus and restricting the individual's freedom to development which was even more evident when looking into employed women vs. unemployed women, where it was found that an employment outside the home had a big

influence upon women's identity and agency, which by that leads us to the fact that empowerment is not just an individual process, it is a social process.

### **Afterthoughts**

This thesis has its limitations in its methodological form (as explained in the methods chapter), and in its practical form. It was found that the amount of data gathered for this thesis was of too large quantity to be included in this thesis due to the restrictions on the words and length of the paper, this is seen as a loss both in the form of outcome of this thesis and for the readers. Hence the best attempt to portray the most vital part relevant to answer the research questions for this thesis has been made and found achieved as well.

Furthermore one can argue, that for future research, empowerment should not be something that is only restricted to women. It is a process and tool to be used for both men and women, not to mention relevant and current as well. That this thesis has only had a focus upon women is due to the limited time and restrictions laid for the framework of this research.

## List of literature

### Books:

- Bakshi, Sanjeev & Pathak, Prasanta: *'An Analysis of the State of Empowerment of Females Vis-à-vis Males at Old Ages in India'* (2012) in Pal, Manoranjan; Pathak, Prasanta; Bharati Premananda; Ghosh, Bholanath & Majumder, Amita; *'Gender Issues and Empowerment of Women'* (Nova Science Publishers Inc., 2012).
- Benwell, Bethan & Stokoe, Elizabeth: *'Analysing Identity in Interaction: Contrasting Discourse, Genealogical, Narrative and Conversation Analysis'* (2010) in Wetherell, Margaret & Mohanty, Chandra Talpade: *'Identities'* (Sage Publications, 2010).
- Bourdieu, Pierre: *'Outline of a Theory in Practice'* (Cambridge University Press, 1977).
- Bryman, Alan: *'Social Research Methods'* (Oxford University Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2008).
- Chinn, Sarah E.: *'Performative Identities: From Identity Politics to Queer Theory'* (2010), in Margaret, Wetherell & Mohanty, Chandra Talpade: *'Identities'* (Sage Publications, 2010).
- Mehrotra, Santosh: *'Capability Deprivation of Women: Are Women Holding Up Half the Sky in Asia?'* (2012), in Pal *et al.*: *'Gender Issues and Empowerment of Women'* (Nova Science Publishers Inc., 2012).
- Naila, Kabeer: *'Reversed Realities'* (Verso, 1994).
- Pal, Manoranjan; Pathak, Prasanta; Bharati Premananda; Ghosh, Bholanath & Majumder, Amita; *'Gender Issues and Empowerment of Women'* (Nova Science Publishers Inc., 2012).
- Parpart, Jane: *'Rethinking Gender and Empowerment'* (2008) In Desai, Vendana & Potter, Robert B: *'The Companion to Development Studies'* (Hodder Education, 2008).

- Robben, Antonius C.G. M. & Sluka, Jeffrey A.: '*Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader*' (Wiley-Blackwell, A John Wiley & Sons Ltd., Publication, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2012.).
- Schech, Susanne & Haggis, Jane: 'Culture and Development' (2008), in Desai, Vendana & Potter, Robert B: '*The Companion to Development Studies*' (Hodder Education, 2008).
- Sen, Amartya: '*Development as Freedom*' (Oxford University Press, 1999).
- Wetherell, Margaret: '*The Field of Identity Studies*' (2010) in Wetherell, Margaret & Mohanty, Chandra Talpade: '*Identities*' (Sage Publications, 2010).

### Articles

- Bradley, Karen & Khor, Diana: '*Towards an Integration of Theory and Research on the Status of Women*' (Sage Publications Inc., Vol. 7, 1993).
- Dewangan, S.K: Sahu, K. R.: Achari, K.V. & Soni, S; '*Socio-Economic Empowerment of Tribal Women through Sericulture – A Study of Lailunga Block of Raigarh District, Chhattisgarh, India*' (Canadian Center of Science and Education, vol. 6, 2011.).
- Dixit, Richa & Dixit, Ashutosh: '*Post Harvest Operations in Food Grains and Role of Farm Women: An Economic Analysis of Women empowerment in Arid India*' (National Institute of Agricultural Marketing (NIAM), Vol. 3, 2010).
- Chaudhuri, Sanjukta: '*A Life Course Model of Human Rights Realization, Female Empowerment and Gender Inequality in India*' (Elsevier Ltd., Vol. 52, 2013).
- Deshpande, Manali S.: '*History of the Indian Caste System and its Impact on India Today*' (California Polytechnic State University, 2010).
- Kabber, Naila; '*Empowerment, Citizenship and Gender Justice: A Contribution to Locally Grounded Theories of Change in Women's Lives*' (Routledge, 2012).

- Seymour, Susan: *'Family Structure, Marriage, Caste and Class, and Women's Education: Exploring the Linkage in an Indian Town'* (Sage Publications, 1995).
- Sharma, Kanhaya L.: *'Is there Today Caste System or there is Only Caste in India?'* (Polish Sociological Review, 2012).
- Sharma, Sunita: *'Women Empowerment Through Self-help Groups: An Empirical Study of R.S. Pura Tehsil of Jammu and Kashmir State (India)'* (Indian Streams Research Journal, vol. 2, Oct. 2012).
- Sharp, Nabila; Briggs John; Yacoub Hoda & Hamed, Nabila; *'Dong Gender and Development: Understanding Empowerment and Local Gender Relations'* (Royal Geographical Society (with The Institute of British Geographers), 2003).
- Singh, Shweta; *'Deconstructing 'Gender and Development' for Identities of Women'* (Blackwell Publishing Ltd. And the International Journal of Social Welfare, 2007).
- Singh, Shweta: *'Women's Autonomy in Rural India: Need for Culture and Context'* (Sage Publications, 2014).

### **Discussion and Working Papers**

- Chant, Sylvia H.: *'Female Household Headships and the Feminisation of Poverty: Facts, Fictions and Forward Strategies'* (The Gender Institute, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2003).
- Kabeer, Naila: *The Conditions and Consequences of Choice: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment'* (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, Gender, Power and Well-being, 1999, DP 108).

## Appendix 1. Questionnaire

### Questionnaire for fieldwork in Bharatpur – Thesis project

#### Women, Identity and Self-Perception within a Cultural and Traditional context – How does this Influence their Empowerment?

**1. What is your gender?**

Female \_\_\_\_\_

Male \_\_\_\_\_

**2. What is your age?**

Between 10 – 19 \_\_\_\_\_

Between 20 – 29 \_\_\_\_\_

Between 30 – 39 \_\_\_\_\_

Between 40 - 49 \_\_\_\_\_

Between 50- 59 \_\_\_\_\_

Between 60 + \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Are you married?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Do you have children?**

No \_\_\_\_\_

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

If yes; how many? \_\_\_\_\_

**5. What level of education do you have?**

None \_\_\_\_\_

Primary school \_\_\_\_\_

Secondary school \_\_\_\_\_

Higher secondary \_\_\_\_\_  
Graduation \_\_\_\_\_  
Post-graduation \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Do you find education as being important?**

No \_\_\_\_\_  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Do you have a job?**

No \_\_\_\_\_  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_

If yes; what is your title?  
\_\_\_\_\_

---

**8. If you have a job; do you find that your job gives you a personal advantage in relation to a woman that does not have a job?**

Very much \_\_\_\_\_  
Fairly \_\_\_\_\_  
Not thought about it \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_  
Not at all \_\_\_\_\_

**9. If you have a job; do you find that your job teaches you something new regularly?**

Always \_\_\_\_\_  
Most of the times \_\_\_\_\_  
Do not know \_\_\_\_\_  
Not that often \_\_\_\_\_  
Often \_\_\_\_\_

**10. If you don't have a job; if you could, would you like to have a job outside the home?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

**11. What do you think about women working outside home – having a job?**

Very good \_\_\_\_\_

Good \_\_\_\_\_

Neither good nor bad \_\_\_\_\_

Bad \_\_\_\_\_

Very bad \_\_\_\_\_

**12. How important do you find that housework is for you?**

Very important \_\_\_\_\_

Important \_\_\_\_\_

Do not know \_\_\_\_\_

Not important \_\_\_\_\_

Not important at all \_\_\_\_\_

**13. Do you find that your housework teaches you something new regularly?**

Always \_\_\_\_\_

Most of the times \_\_\_\_\_

Do not know \_\_\_\_\_

Not that often \_\_\_\_\_

Often \_\_\_\_\_

**14. What do you think about the norms and traditions that you have to follow daily?**

Very good \_\_\_\_\_

Good \_\_\_\_\_

Neither good nor bad \_\_\_\_\_

Poor \_\_\_\_\_

Very poor \_\_\_\_\_



**15. How big a role does traditions and culture play in your choices in your daily life?**

Very big \_\_\_\_\_  
Big \_\_\_\_\_  
Medium \_\_\_\_\_  
Little \_\_\_\_\_  
Very little \_\_\_\_\_

**16. Are you aware of traditions and culture having an influence in your choices daily?**

Very much \_\_\_\_\_  
Fairly \_\_\_\_\_  
Not thought about it \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_  
Not at all \_\_\_\_\_

**17. Do you like the influence that traditions and culture has on your daily life?**

Very much \_\_\_\_\_  
Fairly \_\_\_\_\_  
Do not know \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_  
Not at all \_\_\_\_\_

**18. Do you know the word ‘an individual’?**

No \_\_\_\_\_  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
If yes; do you see yourself as one?

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

**19. How often do you think only about yourself when making a choice in your daily life?**

Always —  
Most of the times —  
Do not know —  
Not that often —  
Often —

**20. Does culture and tradition have an influence on how you see yourself as a person?**

Very much —  
Fairly —  
Do not know —  
No —  
Not at all —

**21. To what extent does the society influence your behaviour in your daily life?**

Very much —  
Fairly —  
Do not know —  
No —  
Not at all —

**22. Do you like the influence that traditions and culture have on your understanding of yourself?**

Very much —  
Fairly —  
Do not know —

No —  
Not at all —

**23. How much do you know about your Human Rights?**

Very much —  
Fairly —  
Do not know —  
Little —  
Nothing —

**24. Where have you learned about your rights?**

From home —  
From friends —  
From society —  
From school —  
From work —

**25. How often do you make use of your Human Rights?**

Always —  
Most of the times —  
Do not know —  
Not that often —  
Often —

***Definition;** Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of an individual so that he/she can make choices and transform those choices into desired actions and outcome.*

**26. The above sentence defines what ‘empowerment is’, reading that, do you find yourself as being an empowered woman?**

Very much —

Fairly \_\_\_\_\_  
Do not know \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_  
Not at all \_\_\_\_\_

**27. What do you see as being your main role in life (can put more than one X)?**

Serving your family \_\_\_\_\_  
Setting a good example for others \_\_\_\_\_  
Being a good wife \_\_\_\_\_  
Being a good daughter \_\_\_\_\_  
Become a carrier woman \_\_\_\_\_  
Become a front runner for change \_\_\_\_\_

**28. What is the purpose of your life?**

To get as educated as possible \_\_\_\_\_  
Try to make a change in society \_\_\_\_\_  
To be a well - mannered woman – like  
the traditions and culture dictates \_\_\_\_\_  
Change some of the culture and traditions \_\_\_\_\_  
To follow culture and tradition \_\_\_\_\_  
Get a carrier \_\_\_\_\_  
Keeping my family happy \_\_\_\_\_

**29. If you were living in a big city where these traditions and culture would not exist - would you live differently?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2. Interview Questions

### General information

- What is your name?
- What is your age?
- Where do you live?
- Are you married – if so for how long?
- How many children do you have – if yes elaborate on age and gender.
- What is your education level?
- Do you have a job – if so what?

### Culture and Society

- Describe in 5 words the essence of your culture and traditions?
- How big a role does this play in your life?
  - o Do you agree with everything in the culture and traditions?
- How does society perceive women?
- What is the societal ideology about proper behavior and conduct of women?
  - o What is your thought of this view - do you agree with this view?

### Self – perception and understanding

- Describe yourself in 5 words?
- Do you ever define or see yourself outside a second dependent factor such as family or society?
  - o Why and how?
- How big a role does society and culture have on your view and understanding of yourself – of who you are as a person?
  - o Are you aware of this normally – how do you feel about this influence?
- Do you know the word “individual” – do you see yourself as one?

### Empowerment and Development

- Describe a strong woman in 5 words?

- Do those the descriptions of yourself and the description you just gave fit you think?
  - o Do you see yourself as a strong woman anyways? – if so, why?
- What is empowerment for you?
- Do you see yourself as an empowered woman?
  - o Why?
- How much do you know about human rights – your rights?
  - o Give me examples of your rights.
- Where have you learned about your rights?
- Do you ever make use of your rights?

### **Working at home**

- Describe a typical day for you – from morning to evening?
  - o If you work at home – do you like working at home?
  - o Do you find your work at home as being important not only for yourself but others as well – such as society, your family?
- How big an influence does culture and society has on your conduct of work at home?
- Do you find that your work at home gives you any skills and teaches you something new every day?
- Give 5 advantages that you have as a housewife in relation to woman that works outside the house?
- What do you see as being your role in life – your purpose?

### **Working outside home**

- Describe a typical day for you – from morning to evening?
  - o Do you like your work?
  - o Do your work as being important not only for yourself but others as well – such as society, people, government etc.?
- How big an influence does culture and society have on you work?

- Do you find that your work gives you any skills and teaches you something new every day?
- Give 5 advantages that you have as working outside the home in relation to a housewife?
- What do you see as being your role in life – your purpose?