

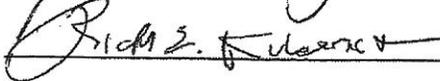
THE GULABI GANG AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIC CHOICE

by

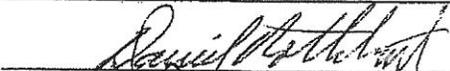
Katy Miller
A Thesis
Submitted to the
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of
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in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Science
Conflict Analysis and Resolution
Master of Arts
Conflict Resolution and Mediterranean Security

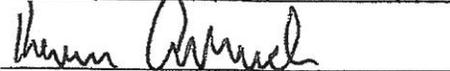
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Fall Semester 2013
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA
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The Gulabi Gang as a Social Movement: An Analysis of Strategic Choice

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science at George Mason University, and the degree of Master of Arts at the University of Malta

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the Gulabi Gang and marginalized communities all over the world that fight for justice in the face of overwhelming oppression.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my family and friends who have helped me through this process. I must especially acknowledge my parents for their unwavering support and encouragement. Many thanks to my sister, Penny, for guiding me through the thesis process and helping with the polishing of this text. Finally, a big thank you to Oscar Ellul for his patience and love.

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ABSTRACT

THE GULABI GANG AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIC CHOICE

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George Mason University, 2013

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In the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh exists a women's collective who calls themselves the 'Gulabi Gang'. Founded by Sampat Pal Devi, the gang formed in 2006 and has since has gained more than 20,000 members, most of which are Dalit women or 'untouchables'. Focusing, though not exclusively, on promoting women's rights and stopping corruption, The Gulabi Gang strives to empower women, promote childhood education, especially for girls, prevent child marriages, stop abuses of power, and end domestic violence. Often taking matters into their own hands they tackle issues ranging from domestic violence to police corruption to land disputes. This thesis aims to prove that the Gulabi Gang meets the criteria for a social movement, as put forth by Charles Tilly, and in doing so will also analyze the strategies and tactics that the gang has chosen to use.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The unofficial headquarters of the Gulabi Gang is located in the arid agricultural town of Badausa, centered within the poverty-stricken Banda district of one of India's poorest and most populated states, Uttar Pradesh (Sen, 2012). This particular district has suffered from years of severe drought, and is one of the poorest in all of India (Sen, 2012). Of the 1.6 million people, dispersed throughout Banda's 600 villages, over 20% are members of the lowest caste, Dalits (Sen, 2012). Dalits continue to suffer from extreme oppression and discrimination, despite laws stemming from the 1950 constitution that ban any form of discrimination against them (Sen, 2012). The laws and policies implemented on behalf of Dalits and other lower castes have done little to correct the social practices which maintain caste discrimination, and as a result, Dalit communities continue to be oppressed and segregated from society by higher caste members, especially in rural areas (Sen, 2012).

Women are also subjugated under patriarchal Indian society; especially in rural areas, such as Uttar Pradesh, which has been found to have one of the highest rates of dowry related deaths (Sen 2012). Uttar Pradesh also boasts one of the highest rates of domestic and sexual violence against women, regardless of caste association (Sen, 2012). “The area is also reputed for continuing the practices of child marriage, female

infanticide, and son preference; and for the mortality rate of its young brides during childbirth (Arnold et al., 1998)" (as quoted in Sen, 2012, p. 3). All marginalized communities in India suffer from structural and physical violence, however the combination of low caste and female gender identity heighten the extent to which one is marginalized (Govinda, 2006). While there are many caste movements in India, as well as many women's movements, there have yet to be any significant solidarity movements including both women and women from low castes (Govinda, 2006). A member of the Gulabi Gang, Chanda Devi (46), said, "not only is it a curse to be a Dalit, but it is just as difficult being a woman" (Sen, 2012, p. 3). While Hindu caste traditions and a deeply entrenched patriarchal society have managed to oppress millions of people throughout India, it is obvious that change is coming. When the media spoke to people living in the Banda district, most of the villagers were not surprised or shocked by the formation of a 'women's vigilante group', given the hardships that people in the area had to endure (Sen, 2012, p. 3).

The Gulabi Gang was officially formed in 2006, under the leadership of Sampat Pal Devi. As a low caste woman herself, she had not completed schooling and suffered many hardships throughout her life. Pal Devi had a long history of helping victims of injustice, and as the number of people asking for her help grew, she formed the Gulabi Gang, under which she could continue to help those most in need. After five years, the Gulabi Gang had more than 20,000 members, all fighting for an end to corruption and discrimination; they were also equally focused on female empowerment (Sen 2012). The Gulabi Gang has had to make strategic choices every step of the way. They have had to

make choices about how they want to be portrayed to different audiences. They have had to decide which tactics they should employ, of the ones available to them, and when, and how often. They have had to decide whether their cause would be better served by becoming involved in politics or not. The organization of the gang itself was a strategic choice. The Gulabi Gang had to choose who they would advocate for, and if they would cooperate with the police or rally against them. These are only a few of the thousands of strategic choices that the Gulabi Gang has made. The Gulabi Gang is no different from other social movements in respect to the tough strategic choices they have to make. These choices are influenced by personal experience, emotions, societal norms, history, culture, available political opportunities and constraints, external audiences, and structure. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the Gulabi Gang and the strategic choices they have made. In the following text, the context in which the Gulabi Gang is operating is briefly explored, followed by Sampat Pal Devi's personal history, and then the history of the Gulabi Gang itself. Once the Gulabi Gang has been sufficiently explored and contextualized, this thesis will prove they are a social movement and will qualitatively analyze their strategic choices and the theories that underlay them.

Specific Story

Banwari Devi, a Gulabi Gang member, told the following story:

C mon [sic] take your clothes off (chal kapde utaar), my rapist barked at me. He was a high caste man, [sic] he followed me into the field. I shouldn't [sic] have headed to the pastures alone, especially when the crops had already been harvested. But I really wanted to pee. When the crops are reaped, they are sliced off by sharp sickles, not uprooted, the dried ends of chopped stems are like a bed of nails & [sic] If [sic] I tried to run barefoot it would be like running over a field of spikes, the bottom of my feet would have been lacerated... [sic] I tried to run on

the mud path and not through the field. But the man caught up with me and slammed my head against a tree& [sic] Then [sic] he took me. After he was finished, he spat on me. I was only eighteen. I went to the police, the politicians. Everyone said I had asked for it, going into the fields by myself. I wept a lot& [sic] didn't [sic] want to go near the pastures again& [sic] yet it was our only source of sustenance. My husband finally left me, and he took our boys. I was left with nothing at a young age. Now I am 52. Yes, I do go around beating men who attack village girls. You asked me why I joined the Gulabi Gang& [sic] So that women after me can walk through fields with long, fearless strides& [sic] (Personal interview with Banwari Devi at a public demonstration in Delhi, 17th September 2009 as quoted in Sen, 2012, p. 2).

India Context

Since gaining independence in 1947, India has struggled to achieve modernization in the face of structural and political inadequacies, as well as deeply entrenched traditional, cultural and religious values. India's population has exploded to 1.2 billion (World Bank) and is expected to surpass that of China by 2030 to become the world's most densely populated country (Haub & Sharma, 2006). Over the past few decades, India has made phenomenal economic strides in its development as a newly industrialized country (Branson, 1987). India began economic liberalization measures in the early 1990s, which transformed its post-independence economy from operating under restrictive, self-reliant principles into a largely open-market one (CIA). The economic reforms for international trade and investment, industrial deregulation, initiation of privatization, and tax reforms (CIA; Wadhwa, n.d.) have all contributed to India's reputation as a future economic powerhouse, as is evidenced by its inclusion into the G8+5 in 2005 (Lee, Silver, & Laub, 2013). Such rapid urbanization has had numerous positive impacts on the population. More people now have access to health care, which has led to better overall health, as well as doubling the life expectancy, literacy rates

have risen to 61%, and an estimated 53 million people have risen from poverty, although the majority are high risk for slipping back into poverty (World Bank; CIA People & Society). However, it should be noted that only a mere 31% of the total population lives in an urban area, the other 69% live in rural areas which rarely see positive impacts from the urbanization process (CIA People & Society).

Indian society is an apparent dichotomy between urban and rural lifestyles. In contrast to those in urban areas, the majority of the rural populace lives their whole lives in a fairly limited geographic area (Haub et al., 2006). Rural inhabitants suffer from lower educational levels and higher poverty, mortality, and birth rates than their urban counterparts (Haub et al., 2006). Indian rural society is deeply embedded in religious and cultural traditions (Haub et al., 2006). It is not only the geographically remote location of rural areas but also the religious and cultural traditions that maintain the inequalities and disparities of economics, education, political power, life expectancy, and so forth (Haub et al., 2006). The role that women must operate under is also defined by these traditions (Haub et al., 2006).

Caste System

The caste system has existed in India for around two thousand years; while we do not know precisely how it was created, we do know that over time it has become inextricably linked to the Hindu religion through the Veda, its' ancient text, which illustrates a strict social hierarchy similar to the contemporary Indian caste system (Grinsell, 2010). Considering over 80% of India's population adheres to the ancient Hindu religion, as reported by the 2001 Indian Census, the religion's principles and

traditions dictate life for the greater part of the Indian populace (Haub et al., 2006). The significance of these traditions are evidenced through the evolution and dominance of the caste system, which is the classification scheme of hierarchal relationships of Indian society (Haub et al., 2006). The Oxford Dictionary defines 'caste' as "each of the hereditary classes of Hindu society, distinguished by relative degrees of ritual purity or pollution and of social status" (Oxford, 2013). Based upon the Hindu concept of Varna (order, class, or kind), the caste system is permanent, has four main divisions, and is based upon a family's line of occupation, rather than merit (Narasimhachary, 2002). Hindu society is divisible into the following categories, ranked by precedence: the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra (Haub et al., 2006); these divisions transcend local or regional associations (Narasimhachary, 2002). Brahmins, associated with spirituality, are traditionally priests and other spiritual teachers (Haub et al., 2006; Narasimhachary, 2002). Kshatriyas, associated with protection, are traditionally kings and warriors; while the Vaishya are traditionally associated with occupations such as merchants, landowners and craftsmen (Haub et al., 2006; Narasimhachary, 2002). The Shudra are traditionally known as laborers and artisans (Haub et al., 2006; Narasimhachary, 2002). There is also an additional caste, which is not a part of the Varna scheme and is considered below it, known as the Pañcama, and commonly referred to as the 'untouchables' (Narasimhachary, 2002). The 'untouchables' have traditionally undertaken occupations that involve 'unclean' services, such as working with corpses, cleaning garbage and latrines and other unskilled, degrading jobs (Haub et al., 2006;

Narasimhachary, 2002). At present the 'untouchables' are politically known by the term they favor, Dalits, which can be translated to mean 'the oppressed' (Haub et al., 2006).

The discriminatory nature of the caste system has long been acknowledged and contested, however it is difficult to eliminate from society due to its foundations in Hinduism and ancient texts (Haub et al., 2006). Hindus believe that Brahma, the creator of the universe, created these social divisions (castes) as a reflection of the way the universe is structured, and as such is the natural way of life (Haub et al., 2006; Grinsell, 2010). This belief provides "a deep religious justification for the stratification of society according to caste" (Grinsell, 2010, p. 203). As one is born into a caste, it is impossible to move up through the hierarchy, and it ranges from strongly prohibited (in urban areas) to strictly forbidden (in rural areas) to even marry outside one's caste (Sana, 1993; Grinsell, 2010). Castes tend to be segregated from one another due to the implications that come from belonging to one caste versus another (Grinsell, 2010); the hierarchy is based on the belief that lower castes can pollute the purity of higher castes, and are also able to damage their spirituality (Grinsell, 2010).

Today, the caste system is most pervasive within villages and rural areas. There is a strong interdependency between rural caste members, usually amongst a few well connected villages, where they are either "offering or receiving services in exchange for food or money" (Sana, 1993, p. 10). Due to the perceived difference in purity between castes, the fear of becoming less pure through contact on the part of the higher castes has resulted in unjust societal rules that must be abided by, for both social and religious reasons (Sana, 1993; Grinsell, 2010). These rules dictate much of the lives and

interactions of Hindu society. There are rules stating which castes may dine together, or even which caste one may accept food from (Sana, 1993). The lowest caste, the Dalits, are believed to pollute others through any form of contact, in fact in some isolated areas of India they are still required to drag a bush behind them in order to erase their footprints from the earth (Deliége, 1999). Despite government efforts to eliminate the caste system, it has persevered through religious approval, social and economic isolation and persecution of people deviating from their assigned caste (IDSN).

In practice, the caste system, especially regarding upper castes, has less to do with one's actual occupation and has more to do with one's social standing and innate spiritual purity, as revealed by the caste they were born into (Narasimhachary, 2002). For example, Brahmins and Katriyas have a higher social standing because it is known through their caste that their ancestors were not laborers, nor did they take part in 'unclean services' (Narasimhachary, 2002). In theory, it is not socially acceptable or natural for higher caste Hindus to have close social contact with lower caste Hindus, as it is generally considered that the caste one is born into directly reflects that person's innate quality, nature, and pureness, as stated in ancient Indian texts (Narasimhachary, 2002). If taken literally, these texts suggest that those born into higher castes, despite merit, wealth, or circumstance, are innately more pure than others, which has led to the discrimination and exploitation of lower castes (Narasimhachary, 2002). However, in contemporary times these caste ideals have come to be widely contested, and have even began to be transformed through both political and cultural agendas, as well as by the growing economy (Narasimhachary, 2002).

Women

The status of women in India is best described through the saying, "Baichi jat" or "all women constitute a caste" (Bhoite, 1995, p. 3). Women generally have a lower social status and hold less relational power than men (Bhoite, 1995). Women, particularly poverty-stricken women, tend to suffer the brunt of abuse, inequality, and hardship in India, due to their generally low social status. Women throughout India are intimately familiar with abuse, ranging from neglect of female children to setting brides on fire, thereby freeing the man to collect another dowry for a new wife (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006). Even children are not safe from discrimination as male children are often given better nourishment and medical care than female children, at times to the point of neglect and sometimes leading to premature death of the girls (Haub et al., 2006; Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006). Girls are traditionally less likely to attend school as evidenced by the large gender gap in literacy. The 2011 Indian Census stated a disparity of 17 % between literate males and females, with literate males at 82. % and females at only 65%. These disparities are in all likelihood much higher considering that many rural populations cannot be reached for the census, and also considering that many illiterate people cannot fill out the form.

The proliferation of new medical technologies throughout India has led to the phenomenon of sex-selective abortions for female fetuses, as evidenced through India's unusually high male to female ratio, especially amongst younger ages (Haub et al., 2006). While the typical demographic profile in most countries is approximately 105 boys per every 100 girls, in India, the average ratio is 113 boys for every 100 girls (Haub et al.,

2006). While, this ratio varies across the country, the largest difference is in Punjab, where there are 129 boys per 100 girls; the gender gap has increased over time due to the previously mentioned advances in medical technology (Haub et al., 2006). While abortion became legalized in India in 1972, sex-selective abortions were outlawed by the 1994 the Prenatal Diagnostics Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act (Haub et al., 2006). However, despite their illegality, sex-selective abortions have been on the rise in both urban and rural areas. In urban areas, particularly wealthier ones, people have long had access to ultrasounds and other prenatal tests that are able to determine a fetus' sex (Haub et al., 2006). However, the introduction of portable sonogram machines, combined with widespread access to abortion, have now made the practice available to the rural population as well (Haub et al., 2006).

Modern Indian families are having less children, with the 'ideal family' being described as two boys and one girl, leading to families with two daughters and no sons to seek sex-selective abortions of future female fetuses (Haub et al., 2006). There is no way to effectively ban the practice, as a couple can find out the sex of a fetus at one medical center, then go to another for an abortion, citing various health issues (Haub et al., 2006). The introduction of home gender-testing kits, have made it even harder to eliminate sex-selective abortions, by allowing the couple to know the gender of the child without medical assistance (Haub et al., 2006). It should be noted that the boy-girl ratio is more skewed amongst wealthy families than poor ones, leading to the belief that money and bribes are used to obtain sex-selective abortions (Haub et al., 2006).

At the core of India's sex-selective abortion problem is the fact that women are seen as culturally inferior, as such, the government has introduced nationwide policies and campaigns aimed at elevating the status of women in society as well as placing greater value on daughters within the family unit (Haub et al., 2006). The government has involved highly respected and widely influential people in their campaigns such as doctors, religious leaders, teachers, politicians, and television personalities to help heighten the value of females within society (Haub et al., 2006). The government's aspiration to end sex-selective abortions and heighten the value of girls within society led to the decision to choose a baby girl as the official 'billionth baby' of India, who was born on May 11, 2000 in New Delhi (Haub et al., 2006).

Arranged marriages are still normal practice in India, where they are planned to fulfill familial or societal duties, and the marriage ceremonies are considered significant social, religious, and traditional events (Haub et al., 2006). One custom associated with arranged marriages is that of the 'dowry'. The Oxford English dictionary defines a 'dowry' as "an amount of property or money brought by a bride to her husband on their marriage" (Oxford, 2013). Although dowries were outlawed in 1961, the practice remains widespread and has even elevated into a status symbol amongst wealthy Indians (Haub et al., 2006). The tradition of receiving an appropriate dowry is taken very seriously to the extent that it can lead to numerous problems if the amount is deemed too little by the husband's parents (Haub et al., 2006). Dowry related violence against women is a persistent, extremely underreported problem in India (Haub et al., 2006). For example, brides have been burned alive, often through mysterious kitchen fires, or have been

mistreated until they commit suicide, so that the man can remarry for a higher dowry (Haub et al., 2006). In 1929 the legal age of consent for marriage was set at twenty-one for men and eighteen for women (Haub et al., 2006). Despite this, most Indian women marry well before their seventeenth birthday, and while this trend is slowing, especially in urban settings (Haub et al., 2006), child marriage is still a major issue in rural villages with deeply rooted traditions.

In her autobiography, Sampat Pal Devi describes women's plight:

Gradually I realized the extent to which we are powerless in the face of men's violence, the extent to which society has stripped us of the simple right to dignity. Look at the swear words or the *gaalis* for example. Why are they always about women? *Behenchod* (sisterfucker), *matherchod* (motherfucker), *betichod* (daughterfucker). Take any crude expression and it's always about women. The other day I was asked to settle a conflict between two brothers who were tearing each other to shreds because one brother's goat was grazing in the other's field. The argument became more heated. One called the other *behenchod*. What did his sister have to do with this goat? The other replied, '*Matherchod!*' What was that all about? Those two idiots has [sic] the same mother! It never occurred to them that they were insulting their own sister and mother, the woman who brought them into the world. It was ridiculous!

This tells us a lot about the position of women in society. The time I've spent with the Chamar women, the women of my own community, my sewing students and the policemen's wives, has given me the opportunity to think deeply about this issue. Theoretically, women are equal to men. We live in a free country, with modern laws, and the constitution gives us the same rights. In recent years the government has bombarded us with slogans asserting women's rights to education, job opportunities and divorce. But the laws that are supposed to protect women cannot be implemented. In reality, as soon as she tries to overcome barriers, she is criticized, her reputation suffers and she's classified as a fallen woman. In villages if a woman decides to stop covering her head with her sari *pallu*, if she speaks to men other than her husband, she's called indecent. If she decides to live with her chosen partner, it's assumed that she's run away from home. If she has run away from home to be with her partner and her family finds her, they will kill her. Meanwhile her partner risks nothing. Even if he's a married man, no one will ever say he has run away from home. If she decides to go back home, her parent's will throw her out. The man just gets a lecture and is then congratulated for having seen sense. Worse, if a woman is raped, it's her fault. The police refuse to record

her complaint. If she's raped by a married man, she's still the guilty party. Social sanctions bear no relation to legal sanctions.

Look at what happens among the Brahmins who claim to be so wise and learned. If a woman is widowed at the age of eighteen, even if she has only just married, she can never marry again. The law allows it but not her caste. Throughout her life she is regarded as a widow. If her father decides to marry her to someone else anyway, he is ostracized; no one will even drink the water he serves. But in cases where the wife dies prematurely, the husband remarries at once. In my own community widows who remarried were called '*udries*'. *Udries* means the one who is different, and different is not considered good. So, for example, a [sic] *udrie* is not allowed to perform religious rituals (Berthod, 2008/2012, pp. 80-81).

Pal Devi has also said of women's place in Indian society: "in my country women have no power at all; the husband is the master" (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 80). She believes that "it's important to fight against these outdated practices" (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 82).

Dalits

'Untouchables', suffer from extreme oppression, marginalization, discrimination, poverty and violence. People belonging to this caste, existing outside of and below the Varna castes, prefer the term 'Dalits' (IDSN). This word, meaning 'broken' or 'ground down', is used to describe the oppression they face, while simultaneously representing their collective identity and their potential power to free themselves from oppression (IDSN). It was the Dalit leader, Dr. Ambedkar, who first fought for the term 'Dalit' to be used, and as such is responsible for the evolution of their collective identity and power in recent times (IDSN). The higher castes help to enforce the caste system, as well as Dalit oppression and marginalization through the strict enforcement of social exclusion and economic penalties in case of deviations from caste order (IDSN). The Dalit caste has

even been forced to fracture into many sub-castes based upon specific occupations (IDSN).

Caste-based discrimination, defined by the UN as "discrimination on the basis of work and descent", is a daily struggle for Dalits (IDSN, p. 2). Their oppression has been justified through observance of the Hindu orthodox Brahminical system, which states that people not born into one of the four Varna caste divisions would be 'untouchable', and would spiritually and physically desecrate caste Hindus through close contact (IDSN). This type of caste discrimination is wide-reaching, affecting Dalits in numerous ways. They suffer from the degradation of segregation, especially in rural areas, and a lack of access to basic rights, such as being able to seek criminal justice or obtain an education (IDSN). These caste rules govern who they marry, even who they eat with (IDSN). They ensure that Dalits will not have access to new technologies, and thus available jobs in new sectors (IDSN). Dalits who try to better their lives either through economic or social means are often assaulted or even murdered by higher castes, crimes categorized as 'atrocities' in India (IDSN).

Dalits are subjected to working the jobs that Indian society considers the most degrading, which higher caste members refuse to do on principle. Official estimates state that there are around 100 million Dalits employed as manual scavengers, although unofficial estimates put the number much higher (IDSN). This job consists of clearing feces from public and private toilets, and also disposing of dead animals (IDSN). In the state of Andhra Pradesh, one activist who worked with manual scavengers stated, "In one toilet there can be as many as 400 seats which all have to be manually cleaned. This is the

lowest occupation in the world, and it is done by the community that occupies the lowest status in the caste system" (IDSN, p. 7). In India's southern states, young Dalit girls are often forced into temple prostitution, before reaching puberty; they are referred to as 'Joghinis' or "female servants of god" (IDSN). After a girl is forced into this occupation she is no longer permitted to marry, and must prostitute herself to higher caste community members (IDSN). Ultimately, the girl is auctioned off to an urban brothel (IDSN).

Starting in the early nineteenth century, Hindu academics have been examining the historical effects of the caste system and had begun to advocate the abolishment of the caste system to guarantee India's future competitiveness amongst other modern nations (Grinsell, 2010). Upon independence in 1947 the Indian Constituent Assembly aimed to create a constitution that would abolish the caste system, facilitate social reform and restructure society, hopefully leading to the emergence of an Indian nationalism (Grinsell, 2010). The assembly knew that the caste system was much too pervasive to be abolished through legal means alone, so they also devised social reforms aiming to restructure society, which would gradually lead to the elimination of the caste system and its associated inequalities (Grinsell, 2010). Assembly member M.R. Masani expressed how historically marginalized castes would be granted greater equality under the new government, and blamed India's delayed political development on the stratification of the caste system, stating,

I hope . . . [sic] that these minorities which exist in our country, will, along with the majority, continue their progress towards becoming a nation, a process which in this ancient country was happening through the absorption of new groups that came into it through the centuries, but a process which seems to have been

retarded through the rigidity of caste and through the exclusiveness of society in the past few centuries (Grinsell, 2010, p. 206).

The Indian constitution was finalized in November of 1949, and adopted in 1950; commitment to social reform and the abolishment of social inequalities related to the caste system are evidenced through many of its laws and articles (Grinsell, 2010). For example, Article 14 states that the "State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India" (Grinsell, 2010, pp. 206-207), while Article 15 prohibits prejudice based on religion, race, caste, sex, or birth place (Grinsell, 2010). The practice of 'untouchability', meaning "the imposition of social disabilities on persons by reason of their birth in certain castes" (IDSN, p. 4), was also made illegal per Article 17; "[t]he enforcement of any disability arising [from it] an offence punishable in accordance with law" (Grinsell, 2010, p. 207).

The constitution also has articles promoting benefits for Dalits and other low castes, referred to as Scheduled Castes by the government, as well as Scheduled Tribes through progressive policies (Haub et al., 2006; Grinsell, 2010). Scheduled Tribes consist of native communities that have been historically discriminated against on a level on par with Dalits, and as such are considered lower caste or 'backwards classes' for the purposes of benefits afforded to them by the constitution (Grinsell, 2010). For example, seats in the legislature are reserved for Scheduled Castes and Tribes on the basis of their proportion to the population per region through Article 330, while Article 335 grants Scheduled Castes and Tribe members preference when applying for governmental jobs and posts (Grinsell, 2010). The implementation of the Quota System, also known as the Reservation Policy, protects certain sub-castes of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes,

categorized by the government as the 'Most Backward Class' (Narasimhachary, 2002). The 'Most Backward Class' receives preference amongst all others for admissions to educational institutions, including universities, and for job selection in a variety of occupations (Narasimhachary, 2002). However, there are downsides to this policy, the most important being that the root causes of inequality are not being rectified. A secondary flaw is that people are being placed in jobs without qualifications or knowledge of the position (Narasimhachary, 2002).

In 2006, a major study on the scope of untouchability in rural India was undertaken (IDSN). Covering 11 states and 565 villages, it revealed the daily struggles of millions of Dalits despite the constitution and government policies in place to protect them (IDSN). Shockingly, much of the oppression against Dalits comes from local government institutions; this oppression ranges from tolerating to even encouraging the practice of untouchability. One example highlighted by the study showed that in 38% of the villages Dalit school children were separated from higher caste children in government schools. Additionally it showed that Dalits were barred from entering police stations in 28% of the villages and they were refused care from public health workers in 33% of the villages. The study showed that in 24% of the villages mail carriers would not deliver Dalit mail and in 14% of the villages Dalits were not allowed to enter local government buildings, called 'panchayati' (IDSN). Harsher still, in 12% of the villages Dalits were banned from polling booths or segregated if allowed to vote and in 48% of the villages Dalits were not given access to clean water sources (IDSN). The survey also found that 64% of Dalits were banned from local Hindu temples, while 36% were not

allowed inside village shops (IDSN). In 73% of the villages Dalits were not allowed inside the homes of higher caste members, and in 70% of the villages Dalits were prohibited from even eating with higher caste members (including school children) (IDSN).

Dalits often suffer exploitation in the job market as well. The study showed 35% of the villages prohibited Dalits from selling their produce in local markets, 47% from selling milk, and 25% even prohibit Dalits from purchasing milk (IDSN). Additionally, in 25% of the villages surveyed Dalits are paid lower wages while working longer hours than their higher caste counterparts, and also subjected to more verbal and physical abuse in the workplace (IDSN). In 37% of the villages Dalits are treated so poorly that they are paid their wages from a distance in an effort by their employers to avoid physical contact with them (IDSN).

Crimes against Dalits, officially termed 'atrocities' in India, are defined by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities Act of 1989 (IDSN). The term atrocities is fitting, considering that crimes against Dalits are often horrendous and humiliating, to the extent that they are not usually committed against any other caste. These atrocities could include:

forcing Dalits to eat obnoxious substances, dumping excreta or carcasses in Dalit premises, assaulting a Dalit women with intent to dishonor or outrage her modesty, using a position of dominance to sexually exploit a Dalit woman, parading Dalits naked or with painted face or body, forcing Dalits to do forced or bonded labor, dispossessing Dalits of their land and forcing Dalits from their homes, preventing Dalits from voting, corrupting or fouling a Dalit water source, publicly humiliating Dalits, using fire or explosives to damage Dalit property, or fabricating evidence in order to convict innocent Dalits (IDSN, p. 5).

Even more sobering than the type of crimes committed against Dalits are the official Indian statistics stating that between 2000 and 2005, twenty-seven reported atrocities were committed against Dalits every day; as many crimes against Dalits go unrecognized there is a great probability the actual number is much higher (IDSN). Every week, an average of thirteen Dalits were murdered, six were abducted, and five had their homes set on fire (IDSN). The official statistics also reported that per day, three Dalit women were raped and eleven Dalits were beaten (IDSN). In total, the official reports between 2000 and 2005 cited that a crime was "committed against a Dalit every eighteen minutes" (IDSN, p. 5). Keeping those numbers in mind, it is not hard to believe that The National Human Rights Commission of India's chairperson, Justice As Anand, had this to say in the foreword to the Atrocities report in 2004:

Despite elaborate provisions in the constitution and other laws, it is an unfortunate reality that social injustice and exploitation of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and other weaker sections persist. There are reports in the press about atrocities against persons belonging to these groups and the frequency with which they occur is a cause for disquiet. The humiliation which persons belonging to the scheduled castes in general and the Dalits in particular suffer even today, more than half a century after India proclaimed itself to be a republic, is a matter of shame (IDSN, p. 6).

Perhaps worse than the atrocities that Dalits must suffer is the impunity given to the majority of offenders. The Indian Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment stated that by the end of 2002, 19% of atrocities against Dalits were still pending with the police, and of the cases brought to court, 78% were still pending (IDSN). In fact, of the total cases involving crimes against Dalits only 22% were resolved, of which a mere 2% ended in a conviction (IDSN). By 2005, impunity had become even more of an issue, as evidenced by Indian police statistics for that year which showed that 24% of atrocities

committed against Dalits were 'pending investigation' by the police and of the cases that were able to move on, 80% of the cases were pending trial by the courts (IDSN).

Regarding the problem of impunity, The National Human Rights Commission of India said:

The problem starts with registration of the case itself. Police resort to various machinations to discourage scheduled castes/ scheduled tribes from registering [a] case, to dilute the seriousness of the violence, to shield the accused persons from arrest and prosecution and, in some cases, the police themselves inflict violence...usually where atrocities get a lot of publicity, the local officials promptly provide compensation and relief to the scheduled castes victims to tide over the public concern. But their repose to other incidents of violence is characterized by apathy, negligence and passivity (IDSN, p. 6).

Dalits endure hardships in their everyday lives that higher caste Indians are not exposed to. Dalits generally live four years less than their counterparts, 50% of Dalit children suffer from malnutrition, and 33% of the women are anemic (IDSN). "For every 100 Dalit children born in . . . [a] community, twelve would already be dead before they reached their fifth birthday" (IDSN, p.7). The surviving Dalit children have a hard time obtaining an education with only one in five finishing secondary school (IDSN). Dalit men have "less than one in 600 chance of gaining a postgraduate diploma" and that statistic jumps to one in 1,200 for Dalit women (IDSN, p. 7). Despite the fact that 67% of the general population is literate, only about 50% of Dalits are (IDSN). Dalit unemployment rates are at 5% while the unemployment rate for higher castes are only at 3.5% (IDSN). Shockingly, Dalits are 40% more likely to become a bonded laborer (a form of slavery), of which there already exist 24.2 million (IDSN).

The constitution and government policies were created not only to reduce Dalit poverty and discrimination but also to facilitate a new social order and rectify the

disparity between Dalits and higher castes (IDSN). However, not enough has been done when it comes to tackling the cultural basis of the caste system, and the disparities only continue to grow (IDSN). While the number of Indians in poverty is gradually falling, the people largely lifted out of poverty are non-Dalits (IDSN). Research by the Indian Institute of Indian Studies shows that the poverty gap has been steadily increasing between Dalits and higher castes, regardless of rural or urban locale, since the 1990s (IDSN). The fact that Dalits continue to get poorer whilst higher castes become richer also contributes to the disparity in power and power relations between the castes, making it easier for higher castes to exploit Dalits (IDSN).

While caste discrimination is more likely to occur in rural areas considering that 80% of Dalits reside in the countryside, it is a fact of life for Dalits no matter where they live (IDSN). India's urban population is made up of only 12% Dalits, however they account for 17% of urban slum populations; approximately 7.4 million Dalits reside in urban slums (IDSN). The cities with the largest proportion of Dalits living in slums are Chennai, Delhi and Bangalore, each with 33% (IDSN). While all marginalized communities suffer, life is especially hard for Dalit women.

To be a Dalit woman in India is to know true inequality. The majority of Dalit women are exceedingly susceptible to a variety of discrimination and violence, such as forced prostitution, bonded servitude (a form of slavery), and rape (Human Rights, 2013). Rashida Manjoo, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, stated “Many experience some of the worst forms of discrimination. The reality of Dalit women and girls is one of exclusion and marginalization, which perpetuates their subordinate position

in society and increases their vulnerability, throughout generations” (Human Rights, 2013).

Sampat Pal Devi

In 1958, Sampat Pal Devi was born in the Banda district of Uttar Pradesh to low caste parents (Gulabi Gang). Her caste can be deduced by her name 'Pal', which means 'Shepherd' in Hindi, and is the name given to members of the Gadaria caste (Berthod, 2008/2012). She recalls having a happy childhood, spoiled by her grandmother and having light chores during the summer months which mostly included tending to goats, cattle, and seedlings with her siblings and cousins (Gulabi Gang). She began leaving her duties in the fields to follow the local boys to school, where she would sit on the sidelines and follow the lessons, thus teaching herself the alphabet and later to read and write (Berthod, 2008/2012). One day the seedlings she left unattended in the fields were eaten by animals, infuriating her uncle who then tracked her down. He found her following the lessons from afar and, as an educated man, was delighted by her interest in education (Berthod, 2008/2012). Her uncle enrolled her in school and she excelled academically, able to skip several grades before settling into the fourth grade (Berthod, 2008/2012). Two years later her family moved to the isolated village of Hanuman Dhara, and Pal Devi was no longer able to attend school (Berthod, 2008/2012). Situated in the Chitrakoot highlands, their new home had no electricity, running water, and Pal Devi again contented herself with her chores until her life changed at the age of twelve (Berthod, 2008/2012).

On May 3, 1970 Pal Devi, then twelve, was subjected to an arranged marriage to a Gadaria man, named Munni Lal Pal, who was ten years her senior (Berthod, 2008/2012). She moved in with him and his family when she was fifteen, and shortly after had her first child (Gulabi Gang). Pal Devi describes being married at such a young age as extremely difficult, both physically and emotionally (Berthod 2008/2012). Sex is an extremely taboo topic in rural India and as such, Pal Devi had never been informed about sexuality, desire, or marital relations, and had no inklings that they existed (Berthod, 2008/2012). Eventually her mother was forced to clarify these new experiences to Pal Devi after the first sexual experience with her new husband, that Pal Devi interpreted as "assault", forced her to flee her marital home (Berthod, 2008/2012, pp. 27-28). When Pal Devi did have intercourse with her husband for the first time, she suffered from a severe vaginal tearing due to her pre-pubescence (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi has been quoted as saying, "I didn't bear him any grudges, but I have never forgotten the pain of that first night. Without it I would not have had the same empathy with all the women I defend today" (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 31). A few months later she experienced shock when she started menstruating, having never been educated on her own anatomy and menstrual cycle; she assumed her vaginal tearing had re-opened until a friend informed her of what was really happening (Berthod, 2008/2012). She quickly became pregnant and nine months after starting her menstrual cycle she went into a difficult labor (Berthod, 2008/2012). She described her body at that time as "immature and no more prepared for pregnancy than it had been for sex" (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 32). She endured three days of painful labor before being taken to the hospital where the baby was

finally delivered with forceps (Berthod, 2008/2012). Eventually she would go on to have four more children (Gulabi Gang).

Pal Devi had always had a natural repugnance of the societal norms that maintained inequities of gender and caste. As a child she preferred to climb trees with boys and attend school, despite not needing to be literate to herd sheep (Berthod, 2008/2012). She often got into confrontations with higher castes, especially the Brahmins in her new husband's town of Rauli (Berthod, 2008/2012). For example, she once committed what her mother-in-law called a 'blasphemous act' when she uncovered her face and sternly rejected the advances of a Brahmin who was a guest in her home before telling him to leave (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 34). On another occasion, Pal Devi staunchly refused to give one of her family's mats to a Brahmin who was expecting guests (Berthod, 2008/2012). She described the situation as such:

This was a well-established tradition in Rauli. Whenever, they needed something, the Brahmins would help themselves to the property of the lower castes, preferably the Gadarias, who are way down the social scale, a little better than the Dalits. Nothing was refused to the Brahmins; they ran the village. Of course, anyone who lent them a mat never so much as saw a corner of it ever again (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 35).

This event led to mixed reactions amongst the villagers. Many men in the village quietly told Pal Devi that they approved of her actions, which she saw as useless praise if they weren't willing to support her publicly (Berthod, 2008/2012). Contrastingly, the women were extremely critical of her actions; by behaving so insolently with the Brahmin she not only gave herself a bad reputation, but also had "shaken the established order, and consequently endangered the community" (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 36). Eventually, Pal Devi's in-laws sent her and her husband to live in a wood shack on the

property, as they didn't want to be so closely associated with what they considered to be Pal Devi's trouble-making (Berthod, 2008/2012).

This new independent lifestyle, away from the control and scrutiny of her in-laws, afforded Pal Devi the chance to take advantage of new opportunities. Needing a way to help her husband earn money, she invested all of her savings into a sewing machine and taught herself to sew; shortly after she opened a sewing school (Berthod, 2008/2012). The sewing school was ideal because Pal Devi could look after her own children while making money, and the parents of the students were happy their daughters were learning a domestic skill (Berthod, 2008/2012). Her students were between the ages of ten and thirteen, and she noticed that they were all illiterate, so she began to teach sewing for one hour and reading and writing for an additional two hours (Berthod, 2008/2012). It was the creation of this school that led to Pal Devi being invited to attend a large meeting about social issues in her hometown of Chitrakoot (Berthod, 2008/2012).

The attendance of this meeting would alter Pal Devi's life and is what led her to become a true advocate; also cementing the idea that fighting for women's rights was a legitimate cause (Berthod, 2008/2012). She was delighted and amazed to find out that there were others advocating women's rights for education, work, respect, and freedom of speech (Berthod, 2008/2012). This meeting left Pal Devi wanting to learn more from these experienced and educated people regarding their mutual "desire to see the intellectual and social emancipation of women" (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 45). Pal Devi put her new knowledge and natural passion for social issues into practice. She started meeting with women in her village and eventually began to organize "informal meetings

to talk about women's hygiene, education and work" (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 52). She describes the process as:

gradually I got them to form groups. I suggested, for example, that they should pool their savings to make a fund, which they could then lend to a member of the group who needed it, say to buy a sewing machine (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 52).

Pal Devi described the early years of her social activism in her auto-biography:

I continued running my school and setting up groups in the villages around Rauli. Now women were coming to seek my help from all across the region. They would ask me to come and organize an awareness-raising meeting or consult me on how to set up a group. I also had visits from various official representatives. They usually wanted to know what my work consisted of. Often they asked me to come and work in their village. I seized every opportunity to spread my ideas about women's emancipation and equal rights. Of course, I never missed any meetings. I went to Lucknow, and even as far as Delhi to attend them. Once there I would meet social activists, who gave me the benefit of their experiences. I'd become an important person in my village (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 53).

One day Pal Devi saw a local boy from the Chamar community being beaten by a Brahmin (Berthod, 2008/2012). She said of the incident:

The Brahmin sent his victim flying with two powerful slaps. The Chamars are leather tanners, a sub-caste within the Dalits. They are considered the lowest of the low since no activity is more despised than leather crafting. I don't know what provoked the rage of this particular Brahmin, but I was there when it happened. What is certain is that the boy struck had done nothing to deserve such treatment. He probably just looked at him in a way in which the Brahmin considered insulting, or perhaps the Chamar's only fault was that he was in the upper-caste person's way. Whatever it was, he had no right to raise his hand on that boy. In my women's meetings, I often broached the issue of caste. In Rauli, the Gadarias - that is my own community- have always been subject to the law of the Brahmins. I'd never accepted this archaic supremacy and have always fought for equality. I had already defied the Brahmins before and this one didn't frighten me any more than the others had. When I saw the poor Chamar on the ground I rushed over to take his attacker to task (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 54).

Pal Devi engaged the Brahmin in a shouting match and became so incensed when the Brahmin told her that he had "every right" and that the Chamar boy was a "miserable

wretch" and amounted to "nothing", that she slapped him in the face, an act that left him and other witnesses staring in a state of incomprehensibility (Berthod, 2008/2012, pp. 54-55). Realizing that the Brahmin community would ensure severe reprisals for such an action, Pal Devi formed a plan (Berthod, 2008/2012). She quickly gathered a group of Chamar women, whom she had previously helped organize into a self-help group, and asked them to help her assemble as many women as possible (Berthod, 2008/2012). They quickly assembled 100 women who accompanied Pal Devi to the police station to file a complaint against the Brahmin for attacking the Chamar boy (Berthod, 2008/2012). The police refused to register the complaint, which led to Pal Devi and the other women engaging in a sit-in outside the station until the police changed their minds (Berthod, 2008/1012). The police eventually registered the complaint and arrested the Brahmin; however he didn't stay in prison for long as he was from an influential family (Berthod, 2008/2012). Although he was let out of prison he still had a legal accusation against him, and a few days later the Brahmin appeared at Pal Devi's door ready to apologize (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi told him that she was not the one who was owed an apology, and that if he was truly sorry he would go see the Chamar boy who was assaulted (Berthod, 2008/2012). The Brahmin became infuriated and said he would never apologize to the boy nor touch his feet, which is a sign of respect in India (Berthod, 2008/2012). However, the Brahmin realized that this would be the only way to have the complaint dropped, so the next day he went to the Chamar boy, touched his feet and apologized (Berthod, 2008/2012). When Pal Devi was notified of this, she immediately went to the police station and withdrew her complaint (Berthod, 2008/2012). It was this

act of defiance that gave Pal Devi a reputation as a champion for the poor and oppressed.

She states that,

After this incident I became a heroine of the Chamars. It was the first time someone had fought on behalf of a member of their community. The other communities in the village were also impressed. They had realized that a Brahmin could be made to back down (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 58).

After this incident, Pal Devi's involvement in social crusades become absolute.

She began eating with lower castes as a statement against the caste system and the untouchability of Dalits (Berthod, 2008/2012). She worked with Chamars and Kols (traditionally stone-breakers) helping them obtain land under a 1976 law, stipulating that landowners owning over a certain limit must surrender the excess to the government, who would then redistribute it amongst the poor (Berthod, 2008/2012). Additionally, she even encouraged some Kols to go on strike for a decent salary; to their surprise, after ten days their demands were met (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi gained the respect and admiration of those she helped.

Next, Pal Devi went on to organize an informal NGO, as she was not funded and focused solely on the dissemination of information, rather than materials (Berthod, 2008/2012). The NGO, founded in 2003, was called the 'Organization for the Promotion of Tribal Women in Rural Industry' (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 83). Pal Devi used this NGO as a platform to organize and educate local Kols (Berthod, 2008/2012). She explained,

I organized meetings with the Kol women to tell them about their rights at work and in the home. India has an elaborate system of aid and grants for the poor, but poor people in the villages don't know this and never apply for them. I also helped them to become more aware of issues concerning hygiene and the environment, insisting on the need to save water by constructing tanks. Most, importantly, we talked a lot about the equality of men and women, and the traps of marriage. Women unquestioningly accept that all household property is in their husband's

name though they have a legal right to half of it. If they are divorced or their husband dies, they are left with nothing, condemned to live on charity. Most women don't know that they have the right to inherit a share of the legacy left by their parents-in-law. Still fewer know that women too have the right to obtain a divorce. I would persuade them to assert themselves, to insist, for example, that the mother's name appears on the child's school documents. This is very important symbolically (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 83).

Pal Devi also worked to educate the women about both their bodies and the act of sex. Ignoring the cultural taboo, she spoke openly about sex in her NGO meetings, explaining that "my first night of conjugal relations had convinced me that these things had to be talked about before marriage" (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 83). She also educated them about the risks associated with sex, as well as with multiple pregnancies (Berthod, 2008/2012). She used her own story to try to persuade women against continuing the tradition of child marriage:

I kept telling the mothers that girls were not sufficiently prepared for what was going to happen to them, that they had to be warned that one day they would start losing blood. I told them what had happened to me: my prepubescent body, the hemorrhage and the forceps delivers. If it wasn't for that traumatic night, I might have known what desire is. I was sure that with a minimum amount of explanation beforehand, it would be possible to find pleasure in sexual relations (Berthod, 2008/2012, pp. 83-84).

She informed the women about family planning and options available to them, such as free contraceptive pills and condoms provided by various state sponsored programs (Berthod, 2008/2012).

The fundamental lessons she taught during her early NGO days are still the same ones she preaches today: "raising awareness about the exploitation of women, about their need to emancipate themselves and to take control of their financial situation to gain

independence" (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 84). As such, Pal Devi is still an advocate for education for all, but especially for women, explaining that:

Education is crucial for women; it's the only thing that gives them access to the world. Learning to read and write is fundamental....[sic] An illiterate woman can't write an official application, she can't make a claim for land or check what is written on her food ration card by crooked officials. She can be made to sign anything, with no means of protecting herself (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 85).

She encourages women to form their own groups, and to pool their savings so they can loan each other money (Berthod, 2008/2012). This money should be used to invest in an occupation for themselves, such as sewing or selling vegetables (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi stresses that while women should have knowledge about government policies in place to help them, they should not wait for the government to save them; they should act now to improve their lives (Berthod, 2008/2012).

In 2004, Pal Devi met a social worker by the name of Jay Prakash, who worked for an official NGO that helped women create self-help groups (Berthod, 2008/2012). His job entailed organizing these groups, as well as helping them receive a loan from the bank in order to fund a chosen start-up business (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi began to work for Prakash, assisting him with his NGO, until Prakash's employees stole the NGO's money, leaving the two with nothing save the groups they had set up (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi persuaded Prakash, whom she called Babuji, to work with her on her terms when she voiced:

The main thing is not to turn back, Babuji. You must go on with what you've started. All these groups we set up still exist; we have to help them develop, with or without bank loans. You know what I think about these self-help groups – [sic] the women find it too complicated. What's the point of borrowing money if it means you're in debt for years? With my system the women don't take risks. They

invest only their savings, and then their profits when they make them. There's so much to do if we are to help all these women! (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 94).

They became true partners, visiting towns to mentor and motivate the self-help groups they had set up. Pal Devi describes Prakash as a "profoundly decent man with grand ideas of social justice" (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 150), and their partnership as mutually dependent, saying, "He's my eyes and I'm his voice; he thinks and I act" (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 150). Prakash primarily deals the paperwork, doing everything from writing an official complaint to preparing documents and petitions (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi is the brains behind the operation, designing effective demonstrations, organizing rallies, and helping the people that seek her out.

Word of Pal Devi and her work began spreading through the villages, and she found more and more women showing up at her doorstep for help or advice (Berthod, 2008/2012). Eventually, the steady stream of women coming to Pal Devi's house was straining her marriage and causing her children to be distracted from their studies. After much thought, and with blessings from her husband and father, she decided the best course of action would be to establish an office with Prakash in the nearby town of Atarra (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi and Prakash did not have a lot of money to start their new venture, so they found a house that could function as both their office and residence (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi had the trust of her husband and family, and was not worried about what society would think of her living with a man to whom she was not married (Berthod, 2008/2012). Atarra, a town of about 50,000 people, was the perfect place to set up headquarters; it was easily accessible for women using public transportation, and also well situated for traveling to work in surrounding villages

(Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi took every village meeting seriously, discussing each woman's personal issues, as well as self-help group functioning and activities (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi found herself increasingly intervening on behalf of women having problems with a corrupt official or an abusive husband (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi stated:

I couldn't help it; all injustice disgusted me and drove me to action. By word of mouth, more and more women came to me for advice. They no longer waited for me to come home, but directly came to the office, at all hours of the day. Soon our office was a hive of endless activity. Women with problems would queue up and I would receive them on the concrete porch, sitting on a charpoy. We were not only consulted on matters related to the self-help groups, but women were coming to us with all types of problems, ranging from dealing with a tyrannical mother-in-law to addressing an inheritance issue or resisting a powerful villager who was laying down the law (Berthod, 2008/2012, pp. 98-99).

One day a woman with a broken hand came to see Pal Devi and asked for her help, saying that Pal Devi was her "last hope" (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 102-103). She told Pal Devi how her neighbor's goats had started grazing in her fields and eating her crops, so she shooed them away, at which point her neighbor accused her of mistreating their goats (Berthod, 2008/2012). The neighbor then proceeded to beat her with a lathi (a large stick) and ended up breaking her hand (Berthod, 2008/2012). The woman went to the police to register a complaint and despite the police assuring her they would follow the law, they did not, and the neighbor was never even questioned (Berthod, 2008/2012). She returned to the police station when she saw nothing was being done, and the police sent her away (Berthod, 2008/2012). The woman then contacted two political representatives for assistance, but neither would listen to her, so she decided to go and see Pal Devi. (Berthod, 2008/2012).

The woman told Pal Devi her story, and that she assumed the neighbor had bribed the police for impunity (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi assured the woman that she would help her, and the two women went to the police station to file a new complaint (Berthod, 2008/2012). The policeman exploded, tearing the complaint to shreds and yelling at the woman, calling her a liar and saying he had more important things to do than worry about goats (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi intervened and warned the officer to take the situation seriously and file the complaint, or face the consequences (Berthod, 2008/2012). The officer laughed at Pal Devi and said that he wasn't scared of them; he had seen "fifty women" like her before (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 105). The two women left, only to return the next day with fifty women that Pal Devi had mobilized from the groups she mentored (Berthod, 2008/2012). They conducted a sit-in outside of the police station, and after only two hours, the police gave in and agreed to register the woman's complaint (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi said of the supporters that gathered to help the woman, "That's women's strength: they support each other. None of them knew the woman with the complaint, but they all knew what it is to be humiliated because you are considered to be the weaker sex" (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 105).

That case pushed Pal Devi to realize that she needed solidarity with women in order to continue her social crusade. She explains in her autobiography,

Men are cowards, and you just have to shout louder than they do. The main thing is to dare, which women rarely do. For generation after generation women were gagged. Over time they accepted the barriers that tradition imposed on them. Today the law gives them the same rights as men, yet they don't dare defend themselves when their husbands insult them, or file a complaint when he hits them, or claim their pension from the authorities. They don't realize that, if they dare, they can have it all. Everything I had obtained, from husbands, *pradhans*, policemen, and magistrates, I had simply demanded in the loudest voice supported

by the voices of other women. Our power is our presence, our unity as a group. Why was I the first to understand this? I don't know. Again, I never thought it all out beforehand. But my vocation had become clear. I had a gift for mobilizing women using just my power of persuasion, where hundreds of organizations were spending millions to less effect. It was my duty to use my gift. One woman alone can do nothing. Several women can apply pressure, overturn power relations and even halt the corrupt administrative machine. It was my job to give them the initial push to organize (Berthod, 2008/2012, pp. 105-106).

The Gulabi Gang

“We are not a gang in the usual sense of the term, we are a gang for justice.”-

Sampat Pal Devi (Gulabi Gang).

Pal Devi and Prakash realized that their social crusades would be more effective if they operated under an official context, and also that they needed to be an identifiable force in society (Berthod, 2008/2012). Thus, Pal Devi gathered 25 of her most fervent and reliable supporters from the immense pool of women she had helped throughout the villages, and asked them to join her and Prakash in their plight to defend women and fight injustice (Berthod, 2008/2012). All of the women, aged between 40 and 70, had met Pal Devi through sewing classes or self-help groups, were familiar with the methods she employed to help others, and were themselves from low castes, all of which would be useful when persuading new women to trust Pal Devi and join the gang (Berthod, 2008/2012). In March 2006, when Pal Devi was 45, the Gulabi Gang was formed (Berthod, 2008/2012).

The word 'gulabi' originates from 'gulah' meaning flower, and means 'pink' in Hindi (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pink is associated with happiness, and is the color of life; it is feminine, suggestive of the essence of womanhood, and is understated in its strength

(Berthod, 2008/2012; Gulabi Gang). Pink is a color exclusively worn by women, and is bright enough to stand out in a crowd (Berthod 2008/2012). Accordingly, a pink sari, specifically a bright pink or fuchsia, was chosen as the gang's uniform, which fostered a collective identity and strengthened members' sense of belonging (Berthod, 2008/2012). The color pink was also chosen because it is not affiliated with any political party (Berthod, 2008/2012).

The Gulabi Gang was able to grow exponentially due to their success in demanding justice for the poor and fighting domestic violence against women (Sen, 2012). It is well known that the gang spends time training in self-defense, learning how to protect themselves from attack using their lathis (large sticks) as weapons (Sen, 2012).

Pal Devi had this to say about the rapid growth of the gang,

I wanted to work for the people, not for myself alone. I was holding meetings with people, networking with women who were ready to fight for a cause, and was finally ready with a group of women. Over a span of five years, the gang grew into a powerful posse of 20,000 women, including ten district commanders who ran the gang s [sic] outposts across Bundelkhand (a subdivision of Uttar Pradesh) (Sen, 2012, p. 4).

Members of the Gulabi Gang range in age from 18 to 60 years old, and are mothers, daughters, sisters, wives, widows, and grandmothers (Sen, 2012). Most, if not all, are members of lower castes; however, the gang fights for the rights of women regardless of caste (Sen, 2012). Some gang members are unemployed, some work in agriculture, either on their own land or as landless laborers, and some make their living in jobs set up through self-help groups, such as selling vegetables, sewing, or trading other commodities (Sen, 2012; Berthod, 2008/2012). The Gang has several stations set up across Uttar Pradesh, including their headquarters in Atarra, where women come to talk

about their problems (Sen, 2012). Each station a section head, sanctioned to handle daily activities and smaller problems on their own; they send regular updates and report larger problems to Pal Devi (Berthod, 2008/2012).

The main component of the Gulabi Gang organization is mutual support. Pal Devi tells women they must fight against the injustices done to them, and while the Gulabi Gang supports this fight, they won't fight for you, only with you (Berthod, 2008/2012).

Pal Devi describes the idea of mutual support:

This is a crucial point. My gang isn't a welfare office and the women have to understand this. We're a unified group whose members support each other. When we help someone, she has to commit herself to the gang and be ready to help the others when the situation presents itself. It's also a way of giving the victims responsibility. It's up to them to take control of their lives into their own hands. I'm there to give an impetus, provide moral support and help the women put their plans into action, but not to do all the work while they twiddle their thumbs. For this reason too I have set an entry fee. It costs [a] hundred rupees to join and new members have to pay another fifty rupees to buy their pink saris. If a woman doesn't have the means to provide the sum I am flexible – [sic] she can always pay later. [sic] And the sari is not obligatory. But often it's the women themselves who insist on getting one as soon as possible. The uniform is reassuring; it gives the women a sense of belonging to a community. The membership fee also covers the cost of running the group. I don't get any kind of salary for my work or my time. I don't get any help from the government, but I do still have to pay for my travel, for my phone calls, and for photocopying complaints. I'm not asking for charity! (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 136).

While many women join the gang after experiencing positive benefits from its methods, others join because it has become trendy to do so (Sen, 2012). For example, a 22 year old member admitted, "Everyone was joining in drives. So I went along with the herd" (Sen, 2012, p. 4). With membership increasing at a steady rate, there are many capable women in the gang, but Pal Devi has never handed over any of her responsibilities. She still works seven days a week, morning till night, constantly advising

women, counseling victims, organizing sit-ins and demonstrations, and heading rallies, protests, and campaigns (Sen, 2012).

The Gulabi Gang is known just as well for their pink saris as they are for carrying their lathis for protection. Pal Devi grew up using a lathi, as Gadarias use them to herd livestock; she learned to use her lathi as a weapon by imitating the boys and men in the fields as they sparred (Berthod, 2008/2012). Using a lathi as a weapon is a common practice in rural areas, as they are easy to make from tree branches (Berthod, 2008/2012). By adulthood she had mastered the art of the lathi, and believing it is important for women to know self-defense maneuvers, taught what she knew to her gang members (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi held many training seminars on how to use a lathi effectively, and continues to devote ten minutes of every meeting to teaching women how to defend themselves with one (Berthod, 2008/2012). The Gulabi Gang had made a lot of enemies along the way and Pal Devi has even been held at gunpoint by hired assassins (Berthod, 2008/2012). As such, Pal Devi always encourages the gang members to bring their lathis to any activity they participate in, explaining:

There's nothing like the lathi to impress our enemies. When we arrive somewhere in a big pink bunch with these pieces of wood in our hands, we're taken seriously and we're heard. The aim is not to trash anyone at the drop of a hat, but to use the lathi as a weapon of dissuasion. Then again, you never know – [sic] many men use lathis, including policemen. If they take it into their heads to use them against us, we have to be able to defend ourselves. I don't believe in violence, but one has to be pragmatic. Women don't know how to use their fists, so they're much more vulnerable than men. When they're armed they feel stronger. Fortunately, we have seldom had to use our lathis and we've only ever given one policeman a thrashing (Berthod, 2008/2012, pp. 128-129).

Pal Devi insists that the lathi is only used as a last resort, and the gang have never killed anyone with them (Berthod, 2008/2012). In fact, Pal Devi notes that she has never advocated violence for settling a dispute.

On the contrary, I've always advocated dialogue. I fight with my ideas, not my stick. When I try to persuade someone, I'm happy to keep talking for hours, using loads of examples to get my point across. I might not be that obvious, but I'm very patient! I can easily fly off the handle with a corrupt official, but I always try to win with words. Believe me, my unbeatable arguments are my most effective weapon (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 129).

One incident led to the beating of a police officer, which started when a gang member's husband and brother-in-law got into a fight and were arrested. The brother-in-law was released, but police held the husband because they learned his wife was a member of the Gulabi Gang (Berthod, 2008/2012). The police refused to stop holding the man in jail without cause, and turned Pal Devi and the wife away when they came to discuss the matter, so Pal Devi organized a sit-in outside the police station with members of the gang (Berthod, 2008/2012). While arriving at the police station the gang was intercepted by a man whose warehouse had been previously raided by the police (for government food racketeering) at their behest (Berthod, 2008/2012). The man ran towards Pal Devi and tried to attack her with his lathi, luckily she was able to block the blow and responded by hitting the man with her lathi (Berthod, 2008/2012).

A policeman heard the commotion and ran towards the group; instead of trying to protect Pal Devi the policeman tried to restrain and hit her (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi managed to push him off, and hit his leg with her lathi, bringing the policeman to the ground (Berthod, 2008/2012). Furious, she started to hit the man with her lathi and the other gang members joined in the trashing (Berthod, 2008/2012). None of the other

police officers came out of the building to help the man, and Pal Devi quickly ordered the members to stop the beating (Berthod, 2008/2012). Police with pistols and machine guns soon arrived from the neighboring city, called by the police who refused to exit the building (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi spoke to them, explaining "we have no quarrel with you. We are simply fighting against people who have stolen the food of the poor and who encourage corruption. Look, we aren't armed, we only have our lathis . . . surely you don't want to cause a massacre?" (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 125). The armed forces stayed to protect the Gulabi Gang against further assault until the magistrate and sub-magistrate arrived (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi and 40 members of the gang were charged with eleven different offences, including "unlawful assembly, disturbing the peace by inciting a crowd to commit a crime, causing a riot, deliberately causing hurt, assaulting with a weapon, defamation, insulting and deterring a public servant from discharging his duty", among others; the policeman involved in the incident was not faulted for anything (Berthod, 2008/2012). However, no one in the gang was technically arrested, and the trial dates keep getting postponed (Berthod, 2008/2012). In fact, it could be years before any of the gang members get a chance to explain themselves in a court of law (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi attended a preliminary hearing, wherein a judge asked why she put herself in such risky situations (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi responded, "I'm fighting for freedom, as others in this country have done before me. And as you know, freedom can't be won without a fight" (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 127).

The gang members take great care not to put themselves in harm's way. They always carry their lathis with them, and are careful not to go out alone whilst wearing

their pink sari (Berthod, 2008/2012). While the pink sari is a great tool for the gang's collective use, it can make individual members more visible, and therefore more vulnerable, to people who oppose the Gulabi Gang (Berthod, 2008/2012). When the gang meets for an activity, the women leave their villages wearing regular clothes, or 'civvies', and change into their pink saris once they are among the safety of the group (Berthod, 2008/2012). A woman who walks around alone in her pink sari, is at risk of becoming a victim. The police might use violent tactics against her, in order to set an example for the rest of the gang (Berthod, 2008/2012). However, it is not just the police that are a threat, as there are men from all castes who oppose the Gulabi Gang; they see membership as a threat to the 'natural' patriarchal and caste order (Berthod, 2008/2012).

The Gulabi Gang also tackles a large amount of domestic violence. Pal Devi describes the process of handling with this issue:

When my Pink Gang arrives in a village to speak to an abusive husband, everyone comes to watch. We always attract attention, because we all wear pink saris. People are shocked when they see hundreds of us all turn up, in pink, with our big bamboo sticks, called *lathis*. We always try to reason with men first. We tell them that they must treat their wives with respect – [sic] if they listen to us, then it's good for everybody. If they don't, then we come back and sometimes rough the man up a little bit. I don't believe in violence, but for some people, it's the only way they learn (Khan, 2011).

A gang member, 40 year old Chamania, agrees saying,

First we go to the police and beg them to do something. But the administration won't listen to poor people, so we end up taking matters into our own hands. In the case of a wife-beating, for example, should the police refuse to arbitrate, gang members first speak directly to the husband and demand he change his ways. If the man does not relent, gang members then invite his wife to join them in thrashing the husband (Sen, 2012, pp. 4-5).

Pal Devi tries her best to resolve these issues within the family unit, as many rural women would have nowhere to go if they left their husbands. According to Pal Devi these domestic missions have a "100 percent success rate" (Sen, 2012, p. 5). In fact, the Gulabi Gang has beaten hundreds of men who had either abandoned or abused their wives (Sen, 2012).

During their formative years, many men refused to let their wives join, so the Gulabi Gang, decided to become more pro-active in regards to informing men about their goals. The gang spent time explaining to men that the issues hurting their wives, daughters, sisters, and mothers also affect them (Khan, 2011). Gradually, lower caste men began to trust the gang, and could see that fighting for women's rights was beneficial for everyone. It is now common for men to come and seek help from the gang (Khan, 2011). Fathers have asked for help on behalf of daughters who have been raped or assaulted (Khan, 2011). Men who are victims of exploitation by higher castes also solicit help from the gang; a man came for help after being fired from his job for having glaucoma (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi said, "Today many men, from dispossessed farmers and shopkeepers who are victims of extortion to low-caste officials suffering discrimination, call on my gang's services. They too are victims of injustice, which is completely unacceptable to me" (Berthod 152) and also that "In these parts, men suffer a lot too, so we are happy to help them. We want justice for all, not just women" (Khan, 2011). While Pal Devi has reservations of men joining the Gulabi Gang, she says that she defends male victims of injustice as ferociously as female victims (Berthod, 2008/2012).

While the Gulabi Gang fights on behalf of all, there are no official male gang members. However, the gang has the support of many men, which they depend on for a variety of reasons. Pal Devi has noted that gang members are reassured by the company of males during public campaigns, so more often than not, a few men accompany them to such gatherings (Berthod, 2008/2012). The presence of men lends to the general safety of gang members, and makes other men think twice about confrontations (Berthod, 2008/2012). It is now customary for a few of the gang member's husbands, or male supporters, to be found at the office in Atarra (Berthod, 2008/2012). In rural areas, as it is usually just the men who have received an education, male gang supporters often help with issues requiring knowledge of reading, writing, and mathematics, such as ordering saris and maintaining a register of gang members (Berthod, 2008/2012).

While grateful for male supporters, Pal Devi maintains that men should not be admitted to the gang for two main reasons. The first being that men would be easy targets for the police during organized raids and public demonstrations (Berthod, 2008/2012). Her second reason is that she cannot trust men to take action (Berthod, 2008/2012). She notes that even her partner, Prakash, who is well educated and more socially aware than most, is content with issuing advice, but stops short of true agency (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi states, "it takes courage to wear a pink sari, the courage to reject social conventions and to assert one's beliefs. Men aren't ready for that yet" (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 152).

The Gulabi Gang's main overarching objectives are to "protect the powerless from abuse and fight corruption to ensure basic rights of the poor in rural areas and discourage

traditions like child-marriages" (Gulabi Gang). Of course, these objectives manifest themselves in a variety of ways. They carry on a practical mission of empowering women, through support and training, to "enhance their basic skills to become economically secure and develop confidence to protect themselves from abuse through sustainable livelihood options" (Gulabi Gang). For example, as part of her pre-Gulabi Gang work, Pal Devi helped Prema Rambahori, a Dalit, set up her own leaf-plate making business in her village (Gulabi Gang). The plates, which are environmentally friendly, are sold to surrounding towns for weddings and other events (Gulabi Gang). The business flourished and Rambahori now employs 500 other women, each earning up to 150 rupees per day (Gulabi Gang).

The previously mentioned success led to the Gulabi Gang helping women set up wedding related businesses (Gulabi Gang). The Indian wedding industry is a lucrative one, as the wedding ceremony is universally practiced and revered. This is especially true in Uttar Pradesh, where lavish ceremonies and rituals can last for days (Gulabi Gang). As there were not many wedding industry related businesses in rural areas, the gang saw a huge opportunity for women to forge wedding related careers in these regions (Gulabi Gang). They facilitated rural women with the training and skills to provide venues and services that are able to hold complete weddings, all while being cost-effective enough to cater to the modest needs and means of rural communities (Gulabi Gang). Services offered include "tailoring bridal trousseau, catering for guests, flower arrangements, [and] henna make-up application" (Gulabi Gang).

As rural vocations in rural India are largely agricultural, and therefore seasonal, the gang has strived to find non-agrarian employment opportunities for women, and as a result, have helped to establish small-scale cottage industries (Gulabi Gang). Through the organization, training, and expansion of the development of rural cottage industries, such as sewing, making clay dishes or handicrafts, the gang is also working on a strategic plan that will develop better marketing and production of these types of industries, with the aim of attracting companies and a wider market of buyers (Gulabi Gang).

The gang is best described in Pal Devi's own words,

My gang is called the Pink Gang, or Gulabi Gang, and we are a gang for justice. That is because in Uttar Pradesh, the state where I live in India, getting justice is very hard, especially for women. Unlike criminal gangs, we do not rob or kill. We just try to help women who have no one else to turn to... I always tell them to go to the police first. If they are scared to go on their own, I go with them. If the police do nothing, then that is when the Pink Gang steps in (Khan, 2011).

The Gulabi Gang's website states that they bring "about system changes by adopting the simplest of methods – [sic] direct action and confrontation" (Gulabi Gang). They do not discriminate against any form of injustice brought to their attention. They have handled issues as small as neighborhood quarrels. The gang also tackles familial issues, such as domestic abuse, abusive in-laws, and dowry demands. They support mixed caste marriages, and mediate disputes that arise from them. The gang has been involved in resolving land disputes. Often they help the poor apply for socio-economic benefits, such as school admissions and filling out food cards. The gang is active in stopping police corruption and bribery. Many times the gang is the only ally available to people being extorted by higher castes. They have even investigated the theft of

government subsidized food-grains from those in poverty (Gulabi Gang; Longinotto, 2011).

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Overview

Social movement scholarship and theory have flourished under the dominant structural models. While these models have contributed a mass of excellent research, they may have reached the limits of their usefulness. The structural paradigm has analyzed how characteristics of a given socio-political context determine the opportunities and constraints of a social movement or contentious collective action (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, n.d., p. 8). From this paradigm came the resource mobilization approach, which “examines the variety of resources that must be mobilized, the linkages of social movements to other groups, the dependence of movements upon external support for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements” (McCarthy & Zald, 1977, p. 1213). The paradigm later evolved into the political process approach, which focuses on the external conditions conducive to forming social movements, such political and institutional changes or opportunities (Goodwin, Jasper, & Khattri, 1999, p. 30). The post-industrial west saw a rise in new types of social movements, focusing on human rights instead of materialistic values (Miller, 1978). The social-constructivist 'new social movement' approach focused on social changes relating to framing, identity, culture, and emotions (Van Stekelenburg et. al., n.d.; Buechler, 1995). One of the most influential new social movement theorists was Alberto Melucci,

one of the first in his field to be particularly interested in collective identity and the social construction of it (Buechler, 1995).

In short, there are numerous contemporary approaches to social movements, all focusing on different aspects of them. Resource mobilization explores the organizational aspects and resources of social movements (Van Stekelenburg et al., n.d.). The political process approach analyzes the political dimensions of collective action (Van Stekelenburg et al., n.d.). Finally, social-constructivist theories focus on how individuals and groups interpret socio-political conditions and explore the cognitive, emotional, and ideational roots of contention (Van Stekelenburg et al., n.d.). In effect, theorists have used all of the above mentioned paradigms, in an effort to provide answers to questions pertaining to social movements; they look to explain: “‘Why do people protest?’; ‘Who is protesting?’; and; ‘What forms of protest do protesters take part in?’” (Van Stekelenburg et al., n.d., p. 2).

Structural Models

Promising new paths for exploration can be related to the question: ‘Why are certain strategies and tactics chosen, while others are not?’. The study of strategic choices and agency within social movements can lead to a more nuanced understanding of social movement dynamics. The current breadth of research exploring the significance of structure on social movements, has led to scholars pressing to see more research regarding the role of agency (Buechler, 1995; Jasper, 2002; Goodwin et al., 1999). This pressure has led to the appearance of agency's role throughout social movement scholarship, in one form or another. One theory that incorporates agency, although in a

very structural manner is that of game theory. Game theory can be defined as, “the study of mathematical models of conflict and cooperation between intelligent rational decision makers” (Myerson, 1997, p. 1). In this model, agency is reduced to a static objective of maximizing one’s own “expected utility” or benefits (Myerson, 1997, p. 2).

Political opportunity, or political process approaches, were first popularized by Doug McAdam, and have since been researched through a largely structural lens (Goodwin et. al., 1995). Over time, process theorists have added the variables of 'mobilizing structures', which encompass non-structural variables, and 'framing' in an attempt to include cultural aspects (Goodwin et al., 1995, p. 29). However, the research on these categories has been critiqued due to the exceedingly structural and macro-political approach to analysis (Goodwin et al., 1995). It can generally be agreed upon that political opportunity does play a role in the formation and sustainability of social movements.

Culture and Emotion

Shifting away from structural orientation theories, both cultural surroundings and personal emotions have been studied in an effort to understand the experience of social actors within contentious movements. Both were explored as a way to understand agency, choice, and strategy in James M. Jasper’s 1997 book, *The Art of Moral Protest*, and also in his article *Emotions of Protest*. In this approach, cultural meanings, including emotions, are central to the goals, strategies and interests of social movements (Jasper 1997). Jasper and his colleague, Jeff Goodwin, argue that social movement research should incorporate the cultural, emotional and historical aspects of a movement, as

opposed to large scale universal inflexible models, which do not take these micro aspects into consideration (Casa-Cortes, Osterweil, & Powell, n.d., p. 24).

Framing and Agency

While cultural aspects do play causal roles within social movements, they are inadequate to fully explain agency. Robert Benford and David Snow's work on framing incorporates agency as well. Their scholarship illustrated the construction of social movement meanings (Casa-Cortes et. al., n.d.). It has been shown that a successful frame, or 'frame alignment', is fundamental for a social movement's ability to recruit participants, mobilize, and realize their expectations for outcomes; it can even influence their success or failure (Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986). The careful construction of framing, along with the frame alignment process, has significant effects on the entire movement or organization. While this aspect has been thoroughly researched there is still a gap for the agency and strategic choices amongst social movements and organizations in regards to choosing one frame over another.

Effects of Agency

The effects of strategic choices were thoroughly evaluated by William Gamson in his 1975 work *The Strategy of Social Protest*; however, this production did not elaborate on how the strategies were chosen. He also explored how the construction of a collective identity is fundamental for the sustainment of a social movement (Gamson, 1991). Throughout his studies he found long-term agency to be dependent on a collective identity, but did not devote time to research the agency that inevitably exists behind the

construction of a collective identity. Gamson's research is extremely influential; however, only focuses on the macro-level of the strategy of social protest.

Strategic Capacity

According to Marshall Ganz, a social movement's strategic capacities are responsible for their successful mobilization and movement goals (as sourced in Kimeldorf, 2010). He placed importance on whether or not the strategic capacities of a movement could produce innovative strategies and tactics (Kimeldorf, 2010). In fact, he found that groups who are lacking material provisions can use their commitment and creativity as a powerful resource (Kimeldorf, 2010). Ganz focused on the power that innovative strategies can have; however, he did not concentrate on why certain strategies were chosen over others (Kimeldorf, 2010).

Agency and External Funding

In Clifford Bob's book *Marketing Rebellion*, he focuses on strategies used by different groups to stimulate external funding for their movements (2005). Bob notes that due to intense competition amongst movements for external funding and support, the strategies they choose to market themselves, are of the utmost importance (Bob, 2005). He also notes that groups can even go so far as to change certain characteristics about themselves in order to "meet the expectations of patrons" (Bob, 2005, p. 5). Bob shows that agency is certainly an aspect of groups' self-promotion; however, the scope of his research did not extend to a comparative analysis of strategic choices (2005).

Agency Framework

Downey and Rohlinger (2008) criticized the lack of research on strategic choice within social movement theories and likened new social movement research as a ‘bridge’ between structure and agency. They created a two dimensional framework upon which actors’ choices, based on the ‘tradeoffs’ of where they fall within the dimensions, could help to illuminate both “aspects of their strategic orientation” as well as interactions between them and their opponents, and allies (Downey & Rohlinger, 2008, p. 8). They emphasize that the strategic choices and decisions social movements make have “consequences for subsequent developments” (Downey & Rohlinger, 2008, p. 8).

Strategic Choice

James M. Jasper has contributed numerous works to the field of social movement theory. He coined the term “taste in tactics” to describe how the tactics one chooses to employ are influenced by both culture and history (Jasper, 1997, p. 204). His article *A Strategic Approach to Collective Action: Looking for Agency in Social-Movement Choices*, puts forth and analyzes a number of dilemmas, along with various possible responses, that social movements must make strategic choices about, either implicitly or explicitly (2002).

CHAPTER THREE

Discussion

The foundation underlying all social movements is contentious collect action (Tarrow, 1998). According to Sidney Tarrow (1998), a leader in social movement theory, “collective action becomes contentious when it is used by people who lack regular access to institutions, who act in the name of new or unaccepted claims, and who behave in ways that fundamentally challenge others or authorities” (p. 3). While contentious collective action does not necessarily involve violence or radical actions, it generally becomes the major, and many times the only, available alternative that citizens can utilize against state powers or resource-rich opponents (Tarrow, 1998). When supported by large social networks and pushed forward by the implementation of cultural and emotional vitalizing symbols, contentious collection action leads to continuous interaction with opponents, better known as a social movement (Tarrow, 1998). Since their formation, the Gulabi Gang has been engaged in contentious collective action due to the fact that their members are mainly marginalized, poor, lower-caste women who lacking access to institutions of power, who have acted contentiously for societal claims of equality, anti-corruption, and female empowerment, and have behaved in ways that have fundamentally challenged the patriarchal and caste hierarchal systems of Indian society.

Social Movements

Social movements can be defined as “sequences of contentious politics that are based on underlying social networks and resonant collective action frames, and which develop the capacity to maintain sustained challenges against powerful opponents” (Tarrow, 1998, p. 2). In his ground-breaking book *Power in Movement*, Tarrow (1998) suggests that we depart from past models of social movements as expressions of deprivation, radicalism, and violence, and instead conceptualize them as “collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities” (p. 4).

Social movements nearly always involve conflict with authorities, simply because these authorities, ranging from police to politicians, are accountable for setting societal norms and maintaining them through law and order (Tarrow, 1998). While social movements sometimes do employ violence, this is not because their leaders and members are innately prone to violent behavior; rather, it is an available resource amongst movements that lack other stable resources, such as money, political access, and organization (Tarrow, 1998). Violence can be one of the few, if not the only, resources that movements have at their disposal (Tarrow, 1998). The use of violence is threefold; it allows movements to easily gain the attention of their opponents and external third parties, it appeals to potential members, and it cements solidarity amongst existing members (Tarrow, 1998).

Contentious politics, an umbrella term which includes social movements, are realized when political opportunities become available and political constraints lessen,

allowing movements to strategically choose from within their repertoire of collective action, thereby creating new opportunities used by others in broadening cycles of contention (Tarrow, 1998). According to Tarrow (1998), contentious politics emerge “when ordinary citizens...respond to opportunities that lower the costs of collective action, reveal potential allies, show where elites and authorities are most vulnerable, and trigger social networks and collective identities into action around common themes” (p. 20). Unlike money and power, political opportunities are external resources, and can be utilized even by weak or disorganized movements, which only adds to their importance. There are various patterns of political opportunities and constraints that lead to the formation of social movements; these conditions vary across time and place, with the bottom line being that, social movements can emerge through various levels of opportunities, threats and constraints (Tarrow, 1998).

Tarrow also notes that “conventions of contention” are learned through each society’s culture and history (Tarrow, 1998, p. 20). In fact, social movement’s repertoires of contention and routines are often taken from their society’s contentious history. This helps them to use innovative and creative strategies in order to overcome the lack of resources and network communication generally found in poor and disorganized agents of contention (Tarrow, 1998). These conventions of contention can vary among different societies, and can have forms which “are inherited or rare, habitual or unfamiliar, solitary or part of concerted campaigns. They can be linked to themes that are either inscribed in the culture or invented on the spot or – more commonly- blend elements of convention with new frames of meaning” (Tarrow, 1998, p. 21).

Now that this paper has reviewed the basics of social movement theory, it will analyze the Gulabi Gang to confirm that they are a true social movement. This will be done by analyzing the Gulabi Gang through the conditions constituting a social movement set forth by Charles Tilly (2004). Tilly (2004) identified three components of social movements. The first element is “a sustained, organized public effort, making collective claims on target authorities (let us call it a campaign)” (Tilly, 2004, p. 3). The second is “employment of combinations from among the following forms of political action: creation of special-purpose associations and coalitions, public meetings, solemn processions, vigils, rallies, demonstrations, petition drives, statements to and in public media, and pamphleteering (call the variable ensemble of performances the social movement repertoire)” (Tilly, 2004, p. 3). The third, and final, element is “participants’ concerted public representations of WUNC: worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment on the part of themselves and/or their constituencies (call them WUNC displays)” (Tilly, 2004, p. 4).

The Gulabi Gang’s campaign is clearly identifiable. The gang has been operating in an official capacity since March 2006, which illustrates their sustainability (Berthod, 2008/2012). Their organizational capacity is shown through their membership and hierarchy; they keep a registrar of members (Berthod, 2008/2012), boast a headquarters as well as sub-stations across Uttar Pradesh (Sen, 2012), and have appointed numerous section heads reporting to one director, Pal Devi (Berthod, 2008/2012). The members are easily mobilized to take part in public efforts on behalf of their causes, such sit-ins and processions to hand in petitions (Berthod, 2008/2012). The Gulabi Gang makes several

collective claims against targeted authorities, with three notable examples. First, police corruption will not be tolerated (Berthod, 2008/2012). Second, they fight against men, calling for an end to domestic abuse and violence against women (Berthod, 2008/2012). Third, they target those who uphold the caste system, and fight for equality and an end to caste system hierarchies (Berthod, 2008/2012). Additionally, the Gang has prioritized social and financial empowerment as a cause for women in India (Berthod, 2008/2012). Based on this evidence, the Gulabi Gang fulfills Tilly's requirements (2004) of having a campaign of empowerment and social justice.

The Gulabi Gang also employs a combination of political action performances from those listed in Tilly's (2004) second element of social movements. The gang has held public meetings with local citizens to push for new roads (International, 2013). They also hold rallies, demonstrations, petition drives and utilize the media extensively (Longinotto, 2011). They often engage in sit-ins as a way of pressing the police to either file a complaint or drop a charge against an innocent person (Berthod 2008/2012).

The Gulabi Gang also meets the criteria for showing concerted public representations of WUNC. They show worthiness through their "sober demeanor" (Tilly, 2004, p.4), as seen in the seriousness with which they approach problems of social injustice. For example, when Pal Devi turned down an offer to run for a political office because she didn't want to be associated with corrupt politicians or jeopardize the integrity of her social activism (Berthod, 2008/2012). Their unity is easy to see and hear, as they wear coordinating pink saris and chant while marching (Tilly, 2004; Berthod, 2008/2012). They display their numbers through their membership registrar, large public

demonstrations, and petition signatories (Tilly, 2004; Berthod, 2008/2012). The members of the Gulabi Gang show their commitment in numerous ways. They campaign continuously, even in extreme weather, on one occasion marching in 45 degree Celsius heat to file a complaint (Tilly, 2004; Berthod, 2008/2012). They have elderly members who actively take part in public contentious action (Tilly, 2004; Sen, 2012). Members of the gang are “resistant to repression” (Tilly, 2004), willing to take self-defense training and accepting the criminal offenses filed against them (Berthod, 2008/2012). The members further demonstrate their commitment by paying a registration fee to join the gang and purchasing their saris, and even giving what they can to Pal Devi for administrative tasks when gang money is running low (Tilly, 2004; Berthod, 2008/2012). Taking this evidence into consideration, the Gulabi Gang meets Tilly’s final element of a social movement; and as all three elements are fulfilled, they do constitute a social movement in their own right.

In general, social movements combine program, identity, and standing claims (Tilly, 2004). In the case of the Gulabi Gang, the program claims they make are in opposition to corruption, violence against women, and caste inequality (Longinotto, 2011). The identity claims they make are quite obvious: Dalit women, thousands strong in pink saris who will not tolerate social injustice (Longinotto, 2011). The gang’s standing claims are made through their ties to politicians (Pal Devi has been asked to run for office, though she refuses), their ties to the politically influential Gandhi family, their ties, both social and physical, to other excluded minorities, including women and those of

lower castes (Khan, 2011). These facts further cement that the Gulabi Gang does constitute a social movement.

Tilly (2004) notes that it is not a single element, “but the combination of repertoire and WUNC displays within campaigns”, that creates distinctiveness among different social movements (p. 5). Every social movement is distinct, which is why pursuing a case study on a particular movement will produce specific data, rather than broader theoretical information. Additionally, there are a range of organizational models for social movements to follow (Tarrow, 1998). Hanspeter Kriesi (1996) developed a four-cell typology that identifies organizations based on “whether constituents participate directly or indirectly and on whether they aim their activities primarily at authorities or within society” (p. 153). He states that classical social movement organizations, unique from the other three types of organizations, combine “two factors: the direct participation of constituents in action and an orientation that makes claims on authorities” (Kriesi, 1996, p.153). The Gulabi Gang's constituency can be easily mobilized to take part in collective contentious action, and when doing so, they heavily make claims against authorities. As such, the Gulabi Gang falls under Kriesi's definition of a classical social movement.

Now that this paper has reviewed social movements and conceptualized and contextualized the Gulabi Gang, the next step is to explore the gang's strategic choices; this will be done by qualitatively analyzing the strategies they employ, as well as their underlying social movement theories. Social movements are created when members employ social and historical repertoires of contention, when they develop collective

action frames and collective identities, and when they build mobilizing structures around social networks and organizations (Tarrow, 1998). While the political opportunities and lacks of constraints in their environment have given the Gulabi Gang a chance and incentive to mobilize, as Tarrow (1998) states, “it is their cultural, organizational, and practical resources that are the foundations for [their] social movement” (p. 141). The introduction gave a thorough conceptualization of the Gulabi Gang, and this chapter will delve further into their strategy, strategic choices, and underlying social movement theories.

Cycles of Contention

Cycles of contention, as illustrated by Tarrow (1998), refer to “a phase of heightened conflict across the social system: with a rapid diffusion of collective action from more mobilized to less mobilized sectors; a rapid pace of innovation in the forms of contention; the creation of new or transformed collective action frames; a combination of organized and unorganized participation; and sequences of intensified information flow and interaction between challengers and authorities” (p. 142). India has a long history of women’s rights initiatives. These initiatives have been marked with scattered examples of women’s outraged contentious politics, most notably protests against rape and dowry deaths (Basu, n.d.). Unfortunately, until recently, women have been unable to mobilize themselves sufficiently, or event to construct enough solidarity among them to bring about political pressure and draw attention to the issues affecting their societal status and roles (Basu, n.d.). The Gulabi Gang, combined with the public's recent outcry against what has been deemed India’s rape culture may be enough to spark a new cycle of

contention amongst Indians (Wolf, 2013). Widespread contention gives challengers an advantage, as it creates externalities that can be utilized by contentious action agents lacking a strong resource base (Tarrow, 1998). The outcome of cycles of contention is the result of the dynamics of interaction, including the actions of both sides (Tarrow, 1998). Pam Oliver (1989) states that “actions can affect the likelihood of other actions by creating occasion for action, by altering material conditions, by changing a group’s social organization, by altering beliefs, or by adding knowledge” (p. 2). Clearly, actions have significant consequences for not only the members of social movements, but also for the goals, and outcomes of the movement. Therefore, the agency behind such actions should be explored, as actions are the results of choices, not only available opportunities.

General grievances and conflict become a cycle of contention when “early risers” take advantage of new available political opportunities (Tarrow, 1998, p. 144). The claims of these early risers must resonate with other citizens, who then form organizations or coalitions which either create or reinforce instability of elites (Tarrow, 1998). These new organizations are then strengthened when the state denies or renounces the claims of the early risers; this, in effect, only serves to encourage more people to join these groups, furthering the contentious action (Tarrow, 1998). Pal Devi is the early riser of the Gulabi Gang, and perhaps even of a larger, still expanding cycle of contention amongst women in India. She was the first to take advantage of available government policies for lower caste members, as well as to disseminate information to fellow lower caste members, who were largely illiterate and therefore without knowledge of government help, about how they, too, could take advantage of these programs

(Longinotto, 2011). Additionally, through her tactics, Pal Devi was the first to create instability amongst the elites in Uttar Pradesh, which in essence forced police to help lower caste members by arresting the corrupt higher caste members whom until then had gone unpunished (Longinotto, 2011). Police and other politicians refused to hear Pal Devi's claims in the beginning, but eventually she forced them to listen and to act, thereby gaining many supporters (Longinotto, 2011).

Cycles of contention are usually sparked through narrow, group-specific claims and goals (Tarrow, 1998). These cycles demonstrate three important things (Tarrow, 1998). “First, they demonstrate the vulnerability of authorities to contention, signaling to others that the time is ripe for their own claims to be translated into action” (Tarrow, 1998, p. 144). This was demonstrated by Pal Devi the first time she publicly condemned a Brahmin’s beating of a Chamar boy, simultaneously showing that the police could be forced into filing a complaint, and that higher caste members could be made accountable for their actions (Berthod, 2008/2012). Second, they “challenge the interest of other contenders, either because the distribution of benefits to one group will diminish the rewards available for another, or because the demands directly attack the interests of an established group” (Tilly, 1993, p. 13). The Gulabi Gang does not necessarily challenge the interest of other contenders, but their interests have been challenged several times. There have been rumors spread by other NGOs that the gang is corrupt and making money off the poor people they help (Berthod, 2008/2012). On another occasion, an NGO worker accused Pal Devi of unfairly charging poor people to help them fill out free government forms. To this, Pal Devi replied that while the NGO worker receives grants,

the Gulabi Gang works for free, and they charged the fee money only in order to cover the associated costs, such as photocopies and travel (Berthod, 2008/2012). Finally, the third thing they do is “they suggest convergences among challengers through the enunciation of master frames” (Tarrow, 1998, p. 144). Pal Devi has made the need to further female solidarity clear through her belief that “if women are united they can change the world” (as cited in Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 143). She also broached the subject during a speech made in Delhi regarding the city's recent highly publicized gang rapes, calling for an end to impunity for rape cases, and for the blame of rape to be rightly placed on men, instead of on female victims (Pal Devi, 2013). Furthermore, cycles of contention widen through members of the same group whose “embedded identities are activated by new opportunities and threats...” (Tarrow, 1998, p. 144). The Gulabi Gang's initial cycle of contention has spread amongst women and low caste members, both of whom directly relate to the gang's embedded collective identity, and share the threat of gender and caste violence, rape, and inequality. They are brought to action through the opportunities made available with gang membership and/or through taking part in mass anti-rape protests.

Introduction into Strategic Choice

Social movement members and leaders are almost constantly making strategic choices. James M. Jasper (2002), who has produced a wealth of research on agency and strategic choice says that “strategic choices are made within a complex set of cultural and institutional contexts that shape the players themselves, the options perceived, the choices made from among them, and the outcomes” (p. 5). Additionally, he notes that there is not

just one person making decisions, but different actors under different contexts, all making strategic choices within a collective contentious conflict (Jasper, 2002). These actors range from individuals, whom Jasper calls “simple players”, to any group, network, or organization, which he calls “complex players” (2002, p. 5). Within complex players there will be instances where the group acts as unified actors, but also instances when sub-units within the group or individuals will act independently from the group, as is evidenced through findings based on game theory (Jasper, 2002).

Within complex players, individuals are likely to have loyalties to other entities simultaneously, such as religious institutions and family units (Jasper, 2002). This is certainly true of the Gulabi Gang, where most members have familial loyalties and duties, which are not easily negated in patriarchal India, in addition to their commitment to the gang. Furthermore, each actor inherently has several goals, each one made salient by certain contexts (Jasper, 2002). In the case of the Gulabi Gang, there are times when their gang related goals and their familial goals are in competition with one another. The gang in itself is an example of this, for the simple fact that in the early stages of the gang, many members had to seek permission from their husband and family before joining (Khan, 2011). Another example of competing goals was demonstrated by Pal Devi Devi when she allowed her three eldest daughters to get married at the age of fifteen; despite her convictions against child marriage, her equally salient goal of keeping peace amongst her in-laws won out (Berthod, 2008/2012). Regarding this situation Pal Devi has said, “It’s easier to reform the world than one’s own family” (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 86).

Jasper goes on to state that “even simple players have goals (usually termed motivations) of which they are unaware, in addition to their conscious ones. These cannot easily be compared or rank ordered, in part because the salience of each changes according to circumstances” (2002, p. 5). This statement resonates with Gulabi Gang members; they have motivations connected to gang and familial goals, and even goals motivated by self-interest. The salience of actors’ goals and motivations depends partly on the strategic choices made to obtain them; in other words, goals become more prominent as the chances of obtaining them increase (Jasper, 2002). Contrastingly, goals become less salient when the likelihood of attaining them lessens (Jasper, 2002). Complex players can struggle in their collective goals’ sustainability, while individuals and sub-units can try to push their own selfish or altruistic goals to the top (Jasper, 2002). This is one of the reasons that Pal Devi is hesitant to join governmental politics, citing the accession of Mayawati as such an example (Berthod, 2008/2012). Mayawati, a Dalit who had managed to rise to power on the votes of lower castes, was elected chief minister of Uttar Pradesh in 1995, and eventually tried to maintain her position by appealing to the higher castes (Berthod 2008/2012). Upon her rise, Mayawati became an icon for the lower caste, and according to Pal Devi, lost her ideals along the way (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi has said,

for me, Mayawati has betrayed the cause she believed in and deceived those she said she would defend. Most importantly, Mayawati of all people should have defended women and encouraged them to express themselves. She never has. Moreover, she’s implicated in several cases of corruption, like all the rest. What a disappointment from such a fervent activist (as cited in Berthod, 2008/2012).

This illustrates how the goals of an individual can overtake the goals of a complex group depending on circumstance. While Jasper (2002) notes that the agency of all players should be treated symmetrically under a strategic approach, as all players meet dilemmas and make strategic choices, the scope of this paper solely focuses on the strategic choices made by the Gulabi Gang, their leader Pal Devi in particular.

All actors, while equally important in the same arena, are not equal in the resources they possess (Jasper, 2002). Jasper defines the term “arena” as “sets of resources and rules that channel contention into certain kinds of actions and offer rewards and outcomes. They may be formal and legal at one extreme or informal at the other, relying on traditions and reputations” (2002, p. 5). Contentious actors strategically choose certain arenas for action, but must also be aware of other possible arenas in which they may find themselves in the future, and what resources and skills they possess or control for possible strategies in those arenas (Jasper, 2002). Some resources and skills are more useful in certain arenas, than others, while other resources and skills transcend arenas. For example, the Gulabi Gang’s vibrant demonstrations are not only useful for obtaining the attention of the police when filing a complaint or making a claim about their impunity, but also for capturing the attention of the media, and therefore reaching a wider audience and arena than the locality of the demonstration. However, one of the gang's staple resources, the lathi, is not useful in formal arenas, such as the courtroom (Jasper, 2002). Jasper notes that “players normally seek arenas where their resources and skills are comparatively valuable” (2002, p.5). This is demonstrated by the Gulabi Gang’s use

of public space and the media as their preferred arenas, as opposed to filing lawsuits or becoming involved with party politics.

The choices that social movement actors face will vary in their degree of difficulty. Some choices will be hard, while others will be so easy or such normal daily matters, that they will not be regarded as choices at all (Jasper, 2002). Jasper has termed the choices that players face as “dilemmas”, but notes that they may not be interpreted as such by protestors (Jasper, p. 6). Of dilemmas, Jasper says,

some may be invisible, underlying tradeoffs (when they are faced explicitly, they are choices and dilemmas; when left implicit, tradeoffs). Nor do all of them represent simple either-or alternatives. In some cases there are three or four general possibilities, in others a whole continuum of options. They are meant to show that there are different ways to engage in politics, that protestors are continually making decisions (2002, p. 6).

The majority of classical models of social movements tend to center on deterministic structures that negate the agency of choice, but in reality, social movement actors make strategic choices at every turn; these choices warrant more investigation (Jasper, 2002).

An important consideration influencing strategic choice is that humans “develop institutions and culture . . . so that we do not have to face so many choices all the time,” according to mainstream theorists (Jasper, 2002, p.7). Habits, values, and traditions are created so that humans can act in a normative manner without much thought behind it (Douglas, 1986). The structuralist insight, thus suggests that many of our choices are produced as a result of our respective social contexts (Jasper, 2002). Jasper (2002) goes on to say that “one of the most important moments, and source of creativity, is when strategic players manage to break with expectations and make another choice, taking their opponents by surprise. This is how structures change, after all” (p. 7). This is what the

Gulabi Gang has done in order to gain awareness. They have broken out of their gender and caste societal roles to take their opponents, including corrupt officials, higher caste citizens, and abusive husbands, by surprise in order to change the social structures that have bound them for so long. Players always have choices. Sometimes they choose outside of their societal norms, which can lead to social movements, contestation, and ultimately, change. The structural aspect of social agency is important because structures often shape choices, but it is the agency and process of choice itself that is now evolving as a new research focus; perhaps further research will illuminate what choices tend to bunch together (Jasper, 2002).

“Out of all the possible choices that players might make, only a minority are explicitly examined and debated” (Jasper, 2002, p. 10). The identification of choices that players typically face could allow for comparisons to other players or movements, thereby further helping to understand how choices are either made or refused (Jasper, 2002). The choices that social movement actors must face can be thought of as variables, such as the degree of formal organization, which was used in Gamson’s (1975) *The Strategy of Social Protest*. If strategic choice were to be more fully developed, we could potentially compare social movements more accurately based on these choice variables (Jasper, 2002). Social movement research is ripe with case studies and would benefit from comparative methods; by using choices as variables it might be possible to study multiple movements at a time (Jasper, 2002). This could be a starting point for a midrange theory showing why different social movements make different choices (Jasper, 2002). The research of strategic choice could lead to a wealth of new theories on

mobilization and collective contentious action (Jasper, 2002). Of course, choices must be contextualized within their cultural, psychological, emotional, and structural contexts, as these factors influence, consciously or subconsciously, which choices are ultimately made (Jasper, 2002). The future of social movement theory could be about the causal mechanisms that lead to making different choices (Jasper, 2002). Jasper (2002) acknowledges the vast undertaking that gathering the appropriate research, including an analysis of long-term dynamics among multiple actors and each of their numerous decisions, would entail. Fortunately, Jasper (2002) also notes that the types of methods needed to eventually gain this needed research are already widely used, such as participant observation and ethnography, and should be able to generate the subtle understanding and information that new theories of strategy and choice would require.

Future research into strategic choice should focus more on meaning and social contexts than the classical approaches, such as game theory. Jasper notes that “it is time to take social movements seriously as agents, as well as to recognize the role of individual agents within social movements—as leaders, decision makers, spies, potential defectors” (2002, p. 12). Not only does there need to be more research into strategic choice as an agent, also on how it relates to context, recruitment, tactics and ideologies, and responses to opponents' choices (Jasper, 2002). It should be noted that not all action is considered strategic; much of what humans do is routine or habit, rather than aimed at attaining a goal. Jasper states that “within social movements, there are a number of routine activities that are not questioned— [sic] but many of them could be. Almost every action of a protest group reflects an explicit or implicit choice: it could have been done

differently” (2002, p. 12). Though most choices of social movement actors are strategic in nature, they do not all hold the same weight (Jasper, 2002). For example, Pal Devi’s decision to exclude male members from her organization is a consequential strategic choice (Berthod, 2008/2012). Contrastingly, the choice of many gang members to purchase a pink sari immediately upon joining, instead of waiting or opting out of the uniform, is a strategic choice, though not a significant one (Berthod, 2008/2012).

Sampat Pal Devi as Leader

Social movement leaders are defined as “strategic decision-makers who inspire and organize others to participate in social movements” (Morris, 2002, p.1). They are a major catalyst to social movement formation; inspiring commitment, mobilizing resources, utilizing opportunities, framing demands, claims and a collective identity, developing strategies, and maintaining the sustainability of the movement (Morris, 2002). The various roles of social movement leadership have amounted to a breadth of scholarship; researchers have also analyzed the ways that leaders attain legitimate authority over social movements and their members (Morris, 2002). Many of these analyses are based on “Weber’s theory of charismatic leadership, a relational approach that assigns a key role to followers in imputing charisma to leaders” (Platt & Lilley, 1994). Weber found vision to be the most important component for a charismatic leader, saying “the bearer of charisma enjoys loyalty and authority by virtue of a mission (or vision) believed to be embodied in him” (1967, p.1117). This vision combined with the gap between the current and the ideal, drives followers, convinced of the leader’s competence, to become involved in the movement; their shared identity is then fostered

by the stakes they share in helping to create this ideal vision, such as threats of violence and participating in social crusades (Weber, 1968; Bass, 1985; House, 1977).

The chief resource used by social movement is their intelligence, most likely coupled with a university education (Morris, 2002). One thing that all successful social movements all have in common is that their founders, as well as some of their members, must perform intellectual tasks (Morris, 2002). These tasks include:

framing grievances and formulating ideologies, debating, interfacing with media, writing, orating, devising strategies and tactics, creatively synthesizing information gleaned from local, national and international venues, dialoguing with internal and external elites, improvising and innovating, developing rationales for coalition building and channeling emotions (Morris, 2002, pp. 8-9).

Leaders often manipulate language and symbols to advance their movements (Morris, 2002). As advanced reading, writing, speaking and analyzing skills are often obtained through a university education; social movement leaders coming from poor communities are likely uneducated. Therefore, they take advantage of having similar backgrounds and interests as their class, or in this case, caste (Morris, 2002).

The importance of having an educated leader is shown through Pal Devi's partnership with Prakash. Pal Devi obtained a 4th grade education, as a result she is much more educated than the majority of her fellow lower caste counterparts, many of whom are illiterate (Berthod, 2008/2012). Much of what Pal Devi learned regarding social issues came from her harsh life experiences and attending socially-oriented meetings. Prakash, on the other hand, was educated to a much higher degree. As a result, he must handle all the paperwork for the gang, as he is able to understand all of the official documents (Berthod, 2008/2012).

Pal Devi combined her life experiences and what she learned at mass social meetings with historical, political, and cultural traditions, as well as with tactics demonstrated in India's past social movements (Morris, 2002). To mobilize social movements, leaders need to produce frames and strategies that allow members to construct a collective identity and share in the movement activities (Morris, 2002). Leaders accomplish this by using their charisma and sharing their vision, but also by drawing from shared experiences, cultural traditions, gender and societal roles and social networks (Morris, 2002).

Framing

The successful coordination and sustainment of collective action is dependent on social movement member cooperation, which is developed through collective action frames, also known as ideologies that rationalize, justify, legitimize, and prompt collective action (Snow & Benford, 1988). According to prominent scholars, social movement actors are actively involved in creating their own frames, as opposed to frames resulting automatically from grievances (Snow & Benford, 1988). Much effort is put into forming collectively resonate frames from mutual grievances (Snow & Benford, 1988). The process of framing not only includes the projection, amplification, and generalization of a grievance (or grievances), but also works to define who the "us" and "them" referred to by a movement's conflict structure (Tarrow, 1998, p. 20). By basing collective identities on mutually inherited identities, leaders place boundaries on who may be included in their prospective constituencies and also define their opponents through assigned characteristics or identities (Tarrow, 1998). Leaders construct frames not only

through their ideological messages, but also through the projection of images relating to themselves, their allies, and their opponents (Tarrow, 1998). A popular way for social movement members to project their collective identity frames is through the costumes they wear in public, which symbolically frame their claims (Tarrow, 1998).

The general frames of the Gulabi Gang are evident. Pal Devi created frames based upon the collective grievance of inequality. Within the realm of inequality, she included both gender and caste. In order to successfully mobilize a social movement, leaders must frame their claims in a way that will attract followers and build on existing social networks, while also creating a shared vision of 'us' and 'them' (Tarrow, 1998). The 'us' in this frame are the members of the Gulabi Gang and those they fight for, who suffer from inequality and discrimination; principally those from lower castes, the poor, and women. The 'them' in this frame are those who perpetuate this inequality, such as corrupt police and politicians, higher caste members who actively maintain caste discrimination through their actions, and abusive or neglectful husbands. These general frames were actively constructed by Pal Devi and other Gulabi Gang members believing in Pal Devi's ideological messages of both caste and gender equality and female empowerment. These frames are used to project images of the Gulabi Gang as female, vibrant, numerous, loud, and vital. These images are in turn projected through the gang's costume of bright pink saris, symbolizing the aforementioned adjectives.

Symbolic mobilization is a fundamental part of the beginning of any social movement (Tarrow, 1998). The struggle in creating social movement symbols that inspire action, the formation, and identification of new identities is that these symbols must also

be rooted in people's cultures, and be familiar to them (Tarrow, 1998). Pal Devi chose the fuchsia sari precisely for these reasons. The sari is an outfit worn by the majority of women in India on a daily basis. The color of the sari, pink, is exclusively worn by women, and also matches the color of sindoor, a traditional Indian cosmetic powder that all Indians are familiar with (Berthod, 2008/2012). Through their electrifying pink saris, the Gulabi Gang has managed to create a symbol that simultaneously leads to action, while also being familiar (Tarrow, 1998).

Audience and the Importance of Framing

Only recently has the concept of framing and the question of audience become relevant for consideration by social movement organizations. Social movements, states (or other powerful opponents), and even different movement organizations must now compete for public opinion, support, and even, since globalization, the support of international allies (Tarrow 1998). In order to appeal to these third parties, collective contentious action has become largely performance oriented (Tarrow, 1998). Social movements use their public contentious action performances to compete for public space, attention, and support; they must compete for coverage against "entertainment, news, other movements, and the government's attempts to monopolize the formation of opinion" (Tarrow, 1998, p. 107).

Every actor operating within a contentious collective action is an audience for other player's actions, statements, and symbols (Jasper, 2002). Therefore, strategic action is interpreted through a cultural and psychological lens (Jasper, 2002). If every actor is an audience, this means that each action, statement, and symbol will be interpreted by an

extremely wide and diverse audience (Jasper, 2002). Like other actors in contentious politics, social movement actors want to have different effects depending on the audience, so they create different messages for each (Jasper, 2002). They take into account who their “audiences will be, and what the cognitive, emotional, and practical effects will be on each, for each action” (Jasper, 2002, p. 6). This goal of creating certain effects within certain audiences is what led strategy scholar, Erving Goffman, to use game and theater metaphors (Jasper, 2002). The effects aimed at being created within an audience range from “emotions, understandings, moral sensibilities, and/or actions” (Jasper, 2002, p. 6). Emotions play a large role in strategic action. They are present during both the start of any action and the development of goals, they are behind loyalty to a social network or movement organization, and they influence choices, sacrifices, and especially outcomes (Jasper, 1998). Internal social movement audiences include “grassroots followers, specific factions of members, influential individuals, or rivals for office and control” (Jasper, 2002, p. 6). External audiences include “potential recruits and allies, the media, bystanders, rivals, opponents, philanthropies, and various units of the state (police, military, courts, regulators, elected officials, and so on)” (Jasper, 2002, p. 6).

Regarding collective action frames, Bert Klandermans (1997) has stated “the transformation of social issues into collective action frames does not occur by itself. It is a process in which social actors, media and members of a society jointly interpret, define and redefine states of affairs” (p. 44). Their interpretations result, in part, from their cultural and psychological experiences (Jasper, 2002). Additionally, David Snow and his

colleagues drew upon Erving Goffman's concept of framing collective action, and suggested that collective action frames are actually a type of cognitive understanding that explain how social movements are able to produce meaning for actions (Tarrow, 1998). Snow and Benford went on to explain that a frame is an "interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses that 'world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one's present or past environment" (1992, p. 137). One of the main purposes of collective action frames is to either "underscore and embellish the seriousness and injustice of a social condition or redefine as unjust and immoral what was previously seen as unfortunate but perhaps tolerable" (Snow & Benford, 1992, p.137).

Identity Framing

The construction of a collective identity frame is one of the most crucial components of any sustainable social movement (Gamson, 1991). Collective identity frames help foster loyal social relationships and help to unify values amongst a group; one frequent value is community participation, which helps to empower group members (Gamson, 1991). Identity has been a topic of social movement research for the past sixty years, and despite losing face in the 1960s and 1970s, it has since reemerged as a force within social movement theory (Gamson, 1991). Essentially, collective identity "refers to a process in which movement participants socially construct a 'we' that becomes, in varying degrees with different individuals, part of their own definition of self" (Gamson, 1991, p. 45).

While the concept of identity has yet to be clearly defined, Gamson suggests that it embodies three layers: organizational, movement, and solidarity (1991, p. 40). “The organizational layer refers to identities built around movement carriers...” (Gamson, 1991, p. 40). In the case of this paper, the organizational layer is the Gulabi Gang organization itself, whose official trust name is the Adivasi Mahila Utthan Gram Udyog Seva Sansthan, translated into English as the Tribal Women’s Advancement and Village-Development Service Organization (Sen, 2012). This identity is then embedded into a broader movement identity (Gamson, 1991). The movement identity of the Gulabi Gang and its supporters is largely based on their respective experiences of discrimination, corruption, and hardships. The movement layer identity is therefore, part of a much larger collective identity based on common experiences (Gamson 1991). The Gulabi Gang’s solidarity group identity rests on the fact that the members are all low caste women.

Tarrow expanded upon Gamson’s three layers of collective identity by examining not only the ways in which existing identities could contribute to or constrain movements, but also how contention leads to the formation of new identities (1998). He suggests that collective identity can be summarized around four points, the first of which is that inherited identities are generally the foundation of the formation of social movements (Tarrow, 1998). Again, in this case study, these inherited identities are gender and caste. They were able to spur a social movement, as opposed, say, inherited religious identities, because both caste and gender discrimination is rampant in India. Tarrow's second point is that the creation of solidarity is crucial for collective action; this is accomplished through the formation of identities centered on their claims (Tarrow, 1998).

The Gulabi Gang members have formed their identities, in part, around their claims of non-tolerance regarding corruption, abuse, and discrimination. They have also formed self-help groups, the majority of which have started small businesses, reflecting their goals of women's empowerment and independence. On the other hand, the gang members simultaneously identify with being oppressed, poor, and mistreated. The third point is that solidarity amongst the movement's members is often based on intimate or specialized communities (1998). The solidarity of the Gulabi Gang comes largely from the previously mentioned self-help communities, from their sewing businesses and informational meetings, and also from the help they give and receive to each other. Fourth and finally, Tarrow states that while movements build around ties of collective identities, that does not in itself facilitate mobilization (1998). In order for mobilization to occur, framing identities must be done in a way that encourages both action and interaction (Tarrow, 1998). Pal Devi has managed to frame their collective identity in this way, by trying to tear down oppressive gender and societal norms, and also by spreading information to rural women about their untapped power and future emancipation. One downside to identity politics is that they often produce rigid guidelines regarding who falls under their collective identity, making it difficult to expand social movement's membership further than their particular group (Tarrow, 1998). This shortcoming has not gone unnoticed by Pal Devi, who expressed that she cannot trust men to join her group, although she hopes this will change in the future. It is also evidenced by the fact that there are few members of the gang from any of the upper castes. While the process of creating a collective identity is certainly strategic, it does not mean that they are

permanent or protected from external influences (Tarrow, 1998). Like other aspects of contentious politics, a collective identity may respond to changes in the political context, strategic needs, or a changing cultural matrix (Tarrow, 1998).

Emotion Framing

A significant amount of the framing process is rooted in cognition and evaluation, by identifying grievances and developing them into broader claims against opponents, and through the formation of a collective identity based on mutual experiences and traits (Tarrow, 1998). The process of framing should not be thought of as merely creating ideologies; instead attention should also be focused on the importance of creating or harnessing emotional energy as a main foundation for transforming claims into action (Tarrow, 1998). Verta Taylor has said that emotions are the “site for articulating the links between cultural ideas, structural inequality, and individual action” (1995, p. 227). She continued to say that “it is emotions that provide the ‘heat’, so to speak, that distinguishes social movements from dominant institutions” (Taylor, 1995, p. 232). The creation or harnessing of different emotions produces different results. For example,

some emotions, like love, loyalty, reverence, are clearly more mobilizing than others, such as despair, resignation, and shame. Some, like anger, are ‘vitalizing,’ and are more likely to be present in triggering acts of resistance, whereas others, like resignation or depression, are ‘devitalizing,’ and are more likely to be present during phases of demobilization (Tarrow, 1998, p. 111).

In Pal Devi’s autobiography, she describes the anger of being attacked by a corrupt or violent man that the gang has gone to reason with (Berthod, 2008/2012). It is this anger that often causes her to retaliate in self-defense with her lathi (Berthod, 2008/2012). Additionally, it was the anger of experiencing corruption and violence that

led to an incident where gang members were arrested for using their lathis on corrupt policemen (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi has tried to create the emotions of loyalty, love, and respect within the group in order to foster solidarity and action. An example of this is how Pal Devi helps her followers form self-help groups that pool their resources in case any of them comes into financial need. Such positive emotions also helps lead to easily mobilizing gang members when another is in trouble, or is a witness to corruption that needs to be stopped. Pal Devi facilitates respect among members by listening to their problems with patience and seriousness, and encourages the section heads to do the same.

The deliberate construction of a certain emotion within a movement, such as anger or hatred, can lead to the formation of ‘emotion cultures’, as found by sociologist Arlie Hoschschild (1990). A large motivator for Gulabi Gang members is the anger that they have always felt, and that Pal Devi has amplified, about their situations. Many members did not know that their anger could be transformed into any kind of action until they saw that Pal Devi engaging in and winning confrontations with higher caste, powerful people. She also cultivated anger towards corrupt officials who took bribes and refused to help lower caste members. Many of the gang's rural members were not aware of governmental programs available to help them, as employed officials were profiting from government supplies intended for the poor. When Pal Devi informed her followers of these programs, including grain allowances and sponsored jobs, the simple fact that such assistance was available to the low castes, but never publicized by local officials, generated anger amongst her followers. The foundations of collective action are the frames and emotions that mobilize people out of their compliancy and into contentious

collective action; social movements would never emerge without the emotional valance that transforms compliance into action (Tarrow, 1998).

Media Framing

The roles of visual symbolism and public contentious performances have been reinforced through the media and the globalization of the media, especially through the impact of television (Tarrow, 1998). Visual symbolism has two aims, the first is to foster the construction of collective identities, the second is to “project an image to bystanders and opponents of a movement’s mourning or joy, ferocity, or spirit of play” (Lumley, 1990, p. 223). Both of these aims are largely realized through the mass media (Tarrow, 1998). The media is a way to disseminate a movement’s claims, actions, and help in consensus formation over an extremely large audience, often an international audience, one that movements’ would not have access to without the mass media (Tarrow, 1998). Societies’ predispositions and attitudes regarding certain topics are often changed through the collective contentious action that social movements stage, and the new information and perceptions that they introduce to their audience in the process; the larger the audience, the larger the impact (Tarrow, 1998). Additionally, over time, social movement tactics can even change the way that the media chooses to portray them (Tarrow, 1998).

Social movements try to take advantage of sympathetic journalists in order to be portrayed in a positive light (Gitlin, 1980). On one occasion, Pal Devi stopped a jeep containing stolen government grain, intended for the poor, and after the policeman and a sub-magistrate refused to take action, she took matters into her own hands by grabbing the keys to the jeep and letting the air out of all the tires so the men could not leave

(Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi then decided the best course of action was to call a sympathetic journalist who had interviewed her two years prior (Berthod, 2008.2013) Pal Devi described the situation in her autobiography,

He answered at once. When I told him that I was holding a jeep full of stolen goods, his excitement was palpable. ‘Don’t move! I’m on my way!’ he said, animatedly. The journalist appeared fifteen minutes later on a scooter. His first reaction was to inspect the sacs in the back of the jeep. When the driver refused to speak he turned to the policeman, but met with little success. He didn’t give up and used his cell phone to call the district sub-magistrate, the same person whom I myself had called earlier. I didn’t hear what the sub-magistrate said, but I realized that the journalist’s call did the trick when the sub-magistrate arrived at top speed, gesticulating grandly with his arms to make himself look important. An article in the local press describing his incompetence could have cost him his job. The business was soon settled (Berthod, 2008/2012, pp. 119-120).

This example illustrates that the media is an invaluable asset to social movements that lack many other resources. The Gulabi Gang often uses the media as a way to publically shame officials into doing a better job.

The media can help or hurt a movement, as they can choose to frame a movement however they feels will attract the most viewers (Tarrow, 1998). Its main motive is not to create sympathy for protesters, but to attract a large audience by framing the story in a newsworthy way (Tarrow, 1998). In capitalist societies, including India, the media is a business whose main interest lays in reporting, or framing stories that will attract readers or views (Tarrow, 1998). The structure of the media industry affects how social movements are portrayed (Tarrow, 1998). Kielbowicz and Scherer (1986) note that,

Movements are affected by the media’s preference for dramatic, visible events; by journalists’ reliance on authoritative sources; by news cycles or rhythms; by the influence of reporters’ processional values or orientations; and by how the media environment – mainly the degree of competition – influences the news (pp.75-76).

As a result, social movement organizations have a limited ability to control what is portrayed through the media (Tarrow, 1998).

Since the media tends to prioritize violent news, this reinforces a shift from disruption strategies to violent strategies that often happens within protest cycles (Tarrow, 1998). According to Kielbowicz and Scherer, the media accentuates any elements of violence within a social movement which in effect provides “incentives for disruptive or violent elements” to attain media coverage (1986, p. 86). The media has accentuated the fact that the Gulabi Gang sometimes uses violence and has taken to calling them ‘vigilantes’, as opposed to a social movement. For example, the Gulabi Gang’s ‘vigilante activity’ has been described by one media source as targeting abusive husbands and corrupt officials to beat them up with “whatever weapons are available including walking sticks, iron rods, axes, and even cricket bats” (White & Rastogi, 2009, p. 313). Other reports state that gang members force police officers to register domestic violence complaints by slapping them, and also that they have ordered roads to be built by forcefully dragging the appropriate officials to the site where a new road is needed (White & Rastogi, 2009).

The portrayal of the Gulabi Gang solely as vigilantes through the media has led to the question of whether or not, in addition to a social movement, they can also be constituted as vigilantes. Scholars have different opinions on whether vigilantism is a social movement or a social reaction (White & Rastogi, 2009). They also disagree on whether vigilantism is always “violent, extra-legal, organized, conservative, directed only towards crime, or a subcategory of political violence” (Johnston, 1996, p. 221 as quoted

in White & Rastogi, 2009, p. 315). This paper will now analyze the Gulabi Gang through sociologist Les Johnston's definition of vigilantism. In order to meet Johnston's first criteria of vigilantism, violent contentious actions must be premeditated by group participants (Johnston, 1996). While specific instances of violent action are not premeditated by Gulabi Gang members, they do learn self-defense tactics, and are prepared to use them at all times. This does meet the first criteria put forth by Johnston. The gang also meets the second criteria of engaging in the violent action voluntarily (Johnston, 1996). The third prerequisite is that the violent action must occur within a social movement operating without the state's authority or support (Johnston, 1996). This criteria is met, considering that often the Gulabi Gang engages in action against the state, or at least state representatives, and also meet the criteria for a social movement as previously shown. Vigilantes must also use or threaten force, which the gang does on a regular basis (Johnston, 1996). The next criteria is that vigilantes must be under threat of "transgression, the potential transgression or the imputed transgression of institutionalized norms" (Johnson, 1996 as quoted in White & Rastogi, 2009, p. 315). The threats that the gang members face every day are results of the transgressions of Indian societal norms relating to discrimination and inequality. The final criteria put forward by Johnston (1996) is that vigilantes must "aim to control crime or other infractions by offering assurances of security to participants and others" (as quoted in White & Rastogi, 2009, p. 315). One of the main goals of the Gulabi Gang is to protect the oppressed from violence and the corrupted. The Gulabi Gang members do meet the conditions of

vigilantes, according to those set forth by Johnston. The Gulabi Gang is therefore, a social movement that is using vigilantism as a resource.

Consensus Formation and Mobilization

The symbols of collective action initially impress people through the changes brought about by the collective action itself. However, in the long-term these symbols permeate people's consciousness through a "capillary process of consensus formation and mobilization" (Tarrow, 1998, p. 112). The initial impressions of social movement symbols can be seen through the performative aspects of contentious collective action (Tarrow, 1998).). The long-term acceptance of social movement symbols can be seen through group interaction with the media, other independent actors, and sources of culture (Tarrow, 1998, p. 112). There is an important distinction to be had between consensus formation and consensus mobilization. Bert Klandermans explains that "consensus formation results from the unplanned convergence of meaning in social networks and subcultures and takes place outside anyone's direct control" and that within these networks "processes of social comparison produce collective definitions of a situation" (1988, p. 175). This is illustrated by the segregation and discrimination of lower caste citizens and women that is hidden behind the hierarchal and patriarchal acceptance of Indian societal structures. While consensus formation produces collective perceptions and definitions of a situation or context, it does not offer any way to mobilize people into a social movement (Klandermans, 1988). This is where consensus mobilization comes in (Klandermans, 1988). "Consensus mobilization consists of deliberate attempts to spread the views of a social actor among parts of a population"

(Tarrow, 1998, p. 175). Actors within social movements, as well as movement organizations themselves, try to facilitate consensus mobilization (Tarrow, 1998). This is often a competitive process, competing with other organizations, the media, the state, and even cultural predispositions (Tarrow, 1998). The Gulabi Gang takes part in consensus mobilization through their demonstrations aimed at exposing the corruption of the police or changing cultural predispositions about gender and caste.

Movement Organization

Framing is not the only important aspect of social movements. Social movements need to be able to mobilize people in the field, making them confront their opponents, draw on their strategies, and continue to act contentiously, long after the first exciting peak of mobilization has passed (Tarrow, 1998). In order to accomplish this, movements must set mobilizing structures in place. The organization of social movements and its effects on contentious collective action have long been a topic of research for scholars, with varying opinions (Tarrow, 1998). Hobsbawm (1959) has argued that without leadership over social movement organizations, there only exist primitive rebellions that will soon fizzle out. Contrastingly, other scholars argue that organizational leaders can deprive movement members of their most powerful resource, disruption (Piven & Cloward, 1977). At present, the Gulabi Gang has only benefited from the presence of its leader, Pal Devi. She actively utilizes and encourages the use of disruption tactics. In fact, Pal Devi herself wonders what would become of the Gulabi Gang movement if she were to die (Berthod, 2008/2012).

Considering the facts that social movements generally do not offer specific incentives or restrictions over members and followers, and that they do not have institutional routines and rules to adhere to, the role of leadership often takes on a creative function when strategizing and choosing types of collective action (Tarrow, 1998). “Leaders invent, adapt, and combine various forms of contention to gain support from people who might otherwise stay at home...” (Tarrow, 1998, pp. 20-21). For those living under a veil of desperation and misery, as many low caste women do, the simple offer of an exciting and possibly beneficial campaign or demonstration may constitute an incentive for action (Tarrow, 1998). As Tarrow pointed out, “some leaders, working through certain kinds of organizations in particular situations, do transform contention into movements and sustain conflict with opponents”, which is certainly the case with Pal Devi and the Gulabi Gang (1998, p. 123).

There are three different aspects of social movement organization (Tarrow, 1998). Within social movement discourse, movement organization is referred to as ‘formal hierarchical organization’ (Zald & McCarthy, 1987, p. 20). A formal hierarchical organization, the first aspect, is defined by Zald and McCarthy (1987) as “a complex, or formal, organization that identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or a countermovement and attempts to implement those goals” (p. 20). The second aspect of social movement organization is the organization of contentious collective action when interacting with opponents (Tarrow, 1998). In the case of this paper, this aspect includes the formal network of Gulabi Gang members, their informal network of supporters, the different self-help groups the members create in their villages, and the village section

heads. Additionally, research has shown that social networks at the bottom of society produce the most recruits to social movements; this is well demonstrated by the Gulabi Gang (Tarrow, 1998). The third aspect of organization “refers to the connective structures that link leaders and followers, center and periphery, and different parts of a movement sector, permitting coordination and aggregation between movement organizations and allowing movements to persist even when formal organization is lacking” (Tarrow, 1998, p. 124). A social movement can only be an organization once the connective structures are internalized and collective contentious action is controlled by a leader (Tarrow, 1998). Today it is generally agreed upon that a movement must have some degree of organization in order to be sustainable.

The Gulabi Gang has taken part in what Breines calls ‘prefigurative politics’, meaning that it has tried “to create and sustain within the live practice of the movement, relationships and political forms that ‘prefigure’ and embody the desired society. More specifically, the relationships and forms are egalitarian, nonhierarchical, and mutually supportive” (1982, p. 6). The gang members have emphasized that their organization does not follow hierarchies, and everyone is treated equally while pursuing a common goal; gang members have even described it as a “team” (Sen, 2012, p.6). Social movements vary in the types of organization they employ, though research has shown that heterogeneity and interdependence produce more collective action, contentious and otherwise, than resorting to fear and severe group restrictions (Tarrow, 1998). The most effective forms of organization have all been implemented by the Gulabi Gang. They are partly autonomous and contextually rooted, with section-heads handling disputes and

only calling upon the leader when necessary, and self-help groups spread across different villages (Tarrow, 1998). All of the members, section heads, and groups in various villages are linked by connective structures - their gender, caste, and small businesses- and are all coordinated by a formal organization, in this case, the Gulabi Gang itself and its leader, Pal Devi.

Repertoire of Contention

“Contention crystallizes into a social movement when it taps embedded social networks and connective structures and produces collective action frames and supportive identities able to sustain contention with powerful opponents” (Tarrow, 1998, p. 23). Social movements are able to transform external opportunities into resources through contentious collective action, of which they employ the forms they are familiar with (Tarrow, 1998). The familiar forms of contention called a ‘repertoire of contention’, has been defined by Charles Tilly as “the ways that people act together in pursuit of shared interests” (1995, p. 41). Tilly elaborates on repertoires of contention saying that “the word *repertoire* helps describe what happens by identifying a limited set of routines that are learned, shared, and acted out through a relatively deliberate process of choice” (1992, p. 7). Charles Tilly has said that repertoires of contention are specific to a certain time and place, and are how contentious groups express their claims (Tarrow, 1998). Repertoires are created from both the skills of the group members and the cultural forms of a society (Stinchcombe, 1987). Therefore, repertoires of contention have both structural and cultural elements, “involving not only what people do when they are engaged in conflict with others but what they know how to do and what others expect

them to do” (Tarrow, 1998, p. 30). The combination of repertoires of contention, well connected social networks, and familiar cultural frames bolster group members’ confidence and solidarity, as well as assert a broader importance of their claims (Tarrow, 1998).

Contentious collective action allows groups with few resources and opportunities to demonstrate the possibilities of forms and effects, and of collective action to others (Tarrow, 1998). Contentious collective action can also expose opponents’ weaknesses, that without challenge might never been identified (Tarrow, 1998). Repertoires of contention are formulated from different tactics within the three major types of contentious action (Tarrow, 1998). The oldest type of contentious action, and the most direct form, is termed a violent encounter (Tarrow, 1998). The most widely used contentious action today are forms of conventional collective action; which includes public demonstration (Tarrow, 1998). The third type is creative disruption (Tarrow, 1998). “Though violence, disruption, and conventional protest differ in a number of ways, they share a common thread: all are to some degree public performances” (Tarrow, 1998, p. 93).

Violent Encounters

Violent encounters tend to be the most attention-grabbing type of contentious action, as evidenced through prominent coverage in the news and also in the historical record (Tarrow, 1998). This is largely due to the fact, that violent news coverage tends to attract more readers or views and draws the attention of authorities charged with keeping order (Tarrow, 1998). Additionally, for small or resource poor groups, violence is the

easiest form of contentious action, as it costs nothing and requires little organization or control (Tarrow, 1998). Sometimes violence is strategically chosen as a tactic because it creates greater solidarity among group members, and is an effective way to demonstrate a movement's valor (Tarrow, 1998). It also fosters the creation of a collective group identity based on "virility and power" (Tarrow, 1998, p. 94). Tarrow suggests that we view violent encounters as "a function of the interaction between protester's tactics and policing", and goes on to say that the isolation or marginalization of extremist groups often leaves them with only violence as a resource (1998, p. 95). Violence has a powerful effect on opponents and can impress people, however, it also has a major downside; it can scare away potential sympathizers (Tarrow, 1998). When violence is only threatened in order to bolster the power of contentious action, the group gains psychological leverage over their opponents through an air of uncertainty and the potential for violent encounters (Tarrow, 1998). While the potential for violence does level the playing field to some extent, actually employing violent tactics gives authorities legitimization for repression (Tarrow, 1998).

The Gulabi Gang does employ violent tactics through their vigilantism. The issue of morality associated with violent vigilantism has been explored by Sundar through her research on modern vigilante practices in India (2010). In the article she states, "a long tradition of writing about peasant or working-class resistance addresses issues of morality, people's culpability for violence and notions of justice in situations where the protection of the law is unequally available to different classes of citizens" (Sundar, 2010, p. 116). She notes that the need for vigilante forms of contention highlight the

inequity of hierarchies of caste and gender, which undermine the formal processes of law (Sundar, 2010). Other scholars have asserted that vigilantism is a type of power struggle, in which “if a rebellious (imaginary) community takes up arms against local injustices, the state, with all its legal shortcomings, will attempt to reclaim its position as the only legitimate deliverer of violent punishment” (Anderson, 2006 as quoted in Sen, 2012, p. 9). Universally, it is the state that ultimately retains power over retributive justice (Sen, 2012). Women’s vigilante groups operate outside the scope of the state and they “further emasculate the malfunctioning state by highlighting its paternal failure to protect vulnerable women” (Sen, 2012). Sundar suggests that vigilante groups’ main goals are focused on obligating the state to uphold its’ promises and modern laws, and are actually less focused on reorganizing the state and its structures (2010).

The Gulabi Gang could eventually disband should the state enforce the laws that deliver goods and services to the poor, holds officials accountable for their corrupt actions, and enforces caste and gender equality (Sen, 2012). Alternatively, if the violent vigilantism enacted by the Gulabi Gang becomes intolerable to the state, then police may end up imposing a ban on the gang, which would severely affect their effectiveness and transform them into a secret society (Sen, 2012). The potential negative effects of vigilantism tend to pressure group members to cultivate identities as moderate activists, in order to foster their visibility and acceptance amongst rural societies (Sen, 2012). This is shown through the Gulabi Gang’s collective identity’s emphasis on social justice and community activism, rather than on the violent tactics that exist within their repertoire.

The media and scholarly accounts of the Gulabi Gang have tended to focus on their vigilante activities, which is one reason that they are not thoroughly explored as a social movement, and it also diminishes the inestimable untold resistance against gender and caste discrimination that is enacted throughout India every day (Sen, 2012). These untold actions, as well as the popularity of the Gulabi Gang within India, suggest that although women and low caste members are severely subjugated, their tolerance for violence and social marginalization is dwindling (Sen, 2012). While many scholars assume that intimate violence against women, and other socially acceptable forms of marginalization, have become normalized through repressive patriarchal and hierarchal systems, the emergence and popularity of the Gulabi Gang shows that this is not the case (Sen, 2012). Pal Devi says that violence is necessary, stating that “to face down men in this part of the world, you have to use force” (White & Rastogi, 2009, p. 314). As Sen states, “the Gulabi Gang is a testament to the power of informal women’s collectives to implement change without elite intervention or leadership” (2012, p. 10). In fact, Sandoval Girón, found that “populations living under conditions of intense tyranny do not comprehend or imagine any framework for seeking justice beyond the use of armed violence” (2005, p. 12). Therefore, weak communities who suffer from a corrupted state or state structures (that operate based on clientelism) often turn to vigilantism as a form of social control and justice (Sen, 2012). Considering this research, it is important to highlight that Banda women living in violence-prone rural societies, may have no other resource to turn to than vigilantism; through enacting public vigilantism they will

eventually become exposed to other possibilities for contentious collective action (Sen, 2012).

Vigilantism has led to a plethora of research associated with the limits of illegal violent action (Sen, 2012). Several feminist psychologists (Meth, 2004; Grindstaff, 1998; Barnard, 1993) have said that in non-Western societies, female vigilantism could be placed in the paradigm of feminist opposition, “but only as long as the vigilantes remained within the limits of ethical, extra-constitutional violence” (Sen, 2012, p. 10). Gelles and Loseke (2005) state that “the legitimacy of collective violence in the pursuit of political ends reflects a retributive model of justice” (as sourced in Sen, 2012, p.10). Viewed through the context of a retributive model of justice, an appropriate punishment for crimes against women is morally acceptable (White & Rastogi, 2009). Contrastingly, restorative models of justice “emphasize cooperation and healing relations between perpetrators and victims” (White & Rastogi, 2009, p.323); although the degree of oppression still in place against women and low castes, suggests that the perpetrators would not be willing to actively engage in a restorative model. White and Rastogi have suggested that the Gulabi Gang engages in both retributive and restorative justice models, due to the fact that they employ violent tactics as well as push for social redevelopment (2009). The Gulabi Gang does not place much emphasis on a restorative model of justice, in that they have not focused on the relationship between women and men or upper and lower castes, as much as they have on purely equality. The Gulabi Gang is primarily concerned with holding the state accountable for not enforcing laws benefiting women and low castes, they accomplish this by publically shaming corrupt police officials. While

the Gulabi Gang does use violence, it is a last resort for them; they have tried to emphasize that every other possible measure is taken before violence is used.

Additionally, they have employed the use of human rights language, and fostered support from men in order to portray ethical legitimacy for their contentious collective actions (Sen, 2012). It is important for the Gulabi Gang to maintain the acceptance and sympathy of the common people, as they lack any type of institutional financial or supportive backing (Sen, 2012). The use of violent tactics, combined with their wider repertoire of contention, have been employed in order to sustain the long-term, collective vision of the members while demonstrating opportunities for justice (Sen, 2012). Groups portrayed in the media as merely ‘vigilante groups’ often represent “women with grassroots feminist sensibilities, offering psychological, social and justice-related assistance to poor women who have been failed by the local state’s judiciary system” (White & Rastogi, 2009, p. 314). Once the context is taken into consideration, many women’s groups who engage in violent activities are often acting rationally, and making “community-oriented informed choices, despite the media’s inclination to portray them as irrational, spontaneous mob violence” (White & Rastogi, 2009, p. 314). This is certainly the case with the Gulabi Gang.

Disruption Strategies

Disruption, even in its most direct forms, is merely a threat of violence (Tarrow, 1998). Disruption strategies serve several purposes simultaneously. First, they illustrate the movement’s determination by employing a physical performance (Tarrow, 1998). Through “sitting, standing, or moving together aggressively in public space,

demonstrators signal their identity and reinforce their solidarity. At the same time, disruption obstructs the routine activities of opponents, bystanders, or authorities and forces them to attend to protester's demands" (Tarrow, 1998, p. 96). Disruption calls attention to the movement and its claims by blocking traffic, inconveniencing bystanders, interrupting businesses, potentially causing public disorder or violence, and thus drawing authorities into conflict (Tarrow, 1998). It is in this way that disruption strategies also widen the "circle of conflict" (Tarrow, 1998, p. 96).

Contemporary movements utilize periodic, rapidly organized, mass public demonstrations as their main activity (Tarrow, 1998). Additionally, many employ small scale disruptive tactics and activities designed to gain the attention of the public and the media (Tarrow, 1998). Demonstrations are popular movement activities because they do not require daily work for members; instead requiring only that movement members and supporters can be mobilized quickly for brief high-impact performances (Tarrow, 1998). Demonstrations are a form of non-violent direct action (Tarrow, 1998). India has a long history of imploring non-violent direct action. In fact, the "practice first received formal theorization by Gandhi after he and his followers used it against South African discrimination and British colonial rule in India" (Tarrow, 1998, p. 97). Gandhi emphasized that the movement's tactics should be disruptive, though never violent (Tarrow, 1998). Disruptive strategies are the most powerful resources that social movements possess, because they give weak actors power against opponents, and also foster uncertainty among their opponents and the state (Tarrow, 1998).

Disruption tactics were employed by Pal Devi after the police refused to arrest a man stealing government subsidized wheat, even though the gang showed evidence of it. Pal Devi chose to organize a demonstration publicizing police incompetence and laziness, in an effort to shame the police into doing their jobs (Berthod, 2008/2012). Pal Devi called the media and mobilized two hundred gang members, telling them to bring as many street dogs as they could manage (Berthod, 2008/2012). The gang proceeded to paint the dogs pink and put 'Atarra Dog Police' signs around their necks (Berthod, 2008/2012). When the procession started, the streets were so full, that traffic became obstructed and people started to come out of their houses to follow the procession (Berthod, 2008/2012). The gang members continued their procession chanting slogans they had prepared: "Have you heard? It seems the police department is full of fleas!", and; "Want to know who's creating a ruckus? The pink sari gang is on the march!", and even; "Want a fight? Whoever you are, we'll grind you into the dust!" (Berthod, 2008/2012, pp. 121-122). After an hour of procession, which grabbed the attention of hundreds of people along the way, the gang and the pink 'police' dogs arrived at the Atarra police station, their destination (Berthod, 2008/2012). The commotion alerted the police who came outside and asked Pal Devi what the meaning of the dogs was (Berthod, 2008/2012). To which Pal Devi replied, "They're the new recruits. We're showing them their new assignments" (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 122). The policeman then asked for further clarification, upon which Pal Devi elaborated,

It's perfectly simple. When we call upon you to provide protection, you don't come and when we ask you to arrest a thief, you run away. But if we ask a dog to 'attack', it attacks. Dogs are much more loyal than you, so we've engaged them to replace you (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 122).

Pal Devi and the gang managed to embarrass the police in front of hundreds of onlookers (Berthod, 2008/2012). The media present for the demonstration caught every detail of the public collective contentious action and helped to spread the news the demonstration and the claim of police incompetence to an even larger audience (Berthod, 2008/2012).

Conventional Strategies

Conventional strategies are the most likely to be employed by a social movement, because they consist of forms of collective action already known to the group, are low risk, require less commitment than other strategies, and can still attract a large number of participants and supporters (Tarrow, 1998). The construction of oppositional symbols is a complex task (Tarrow, 1998). Many leaders want to remain within the realm of political acceptableness, either for future political goals or in order to garner political support (Tarrow, 1998). Often times the state has so much power that even if a group did express a controversial message, the state media would re-frame it more favorably (Tarrow, 1998). Another reason that constructing oppositional symbols is so difficult, is due to modern society's communication structure, in which movements wanting to communicate a message to the public must rely either on the media or possess the internal resources to perform protest (Meyer & Gamson, 1995). The media is not a reliable source of communication transmission, as they select what is covered and even reframe events (Tarrow, 1998). One of the most commonly employed conventional strategies is the costume of consensus, which transforms culturally acceptable symbols into oppositional meanings (Tarrow, 1998). Strikes have also become effective conventional strategies, helping workers foster solidarity, protest over issues, seek

external support, and discuss solutions with opponents who generally hold more power (Tarrow, 1998). The Gulabi Gang employs a large amount of conventional strategies.

The implementation of self-help groups and small businesses for women's empowerment and gang independence, which were previously discussed in this paper, as well as the costume of consensus are all examples of conventional strategies. The Gulabi Gang also provides social services for poor women, and assist with many people's basic needs, such as food, shelter, and jobs (White & Rastogi, 2009). The gang also provides emotional support for women who have been victims of abuse, often employing mediation as a tactic in familial or community disputes. The gang teaches their members and other low caste women how to become financially self-sufficient, through growing and selling vegetables, making tin plates, embroidering, and even through the use of homeopathic medicines to treat illnesses (White & Rastogi, 2009). The conventional strategy employed most often by the gang, is that of simple dialogue. The Gulabi Gang exhausts efforts to discuss any issue before resorting to force. They use all types of communication from explanations to negotiation to try to settle a dispute. Sometimes the Gulabi Gang can convince their opponent to listen to "reason", other times less conventional strategies must be employed (Khan, 2011). The gang employs formal conventional strategies as well; before taking matters into their own hands, the gang always asks the police to act. It is only if the police refuse to help that the Gulabi Gang continues their involvement. The gang relies on petitions, filing complaints, being persistent with the police, organizing sit-ins, and the media as some of their most widely employed conventional strategies.

Globalization and External Resources

Globalization has had innumerable effects on social movements. One of the most important effects is that it has brought about international expansion and availability of mass media (Tarrow, 1998). Arguably, the most influential external resource that has come of globalization is the television; the preference of the media to televise dramatic visual images is a tool that has been widely utilized by movement leaders (Tarrow, 1998). The television made it possible to communicate messages to millions of people internationally, which facilitates support of sympathetic viewers and can even lead to group membership growth; thereby lessening the financial burden associated with building mass organizations (Tarrow, 1998). Globalization facilitating available external resources has also led to foundations, governments, and business and civic groups offering financial or administrative resources to social movements (Tarrow, 1998).

Clifford Bob noted that since the end of the Cold War a ‘global civil society’ comprised of informal and formal organizations with members, supporters, strategies, and goals that transcend state boundaries and interests have emerged (2005). Bob goes on to state that “some believe that growing transnational interactions have fundamentally changed world politics, creating an alternative political space distinguished by sympathy and cooperation rather than the anarchy, self-interest, and competition that mark relations among states” (Bob, 2005). In this paradigm, the media broadcasts only those in the gravest distress, then sympathetic organizations offer their resources to that cause (Bob, 2005). In reality, things are not so simplistic. Attracting the attention of the media, and

sustaining it, is an extremely competitive process. Movements must compete, on a global level, for the attention of the media against all of the other innumerable movements and oppressed communities (Bob, 2005). The media is an important resource as it allows movements to raise international awareness and to directly appeal for the support of patrons (Bob, 2005). Social movements must also create frames in order for their international audience to appeal to them (Bob, 2005). They usually reframe their claims, demands, local and state conflicts, and collective identity to match the interests and agendas of international audiences (Bob, 2005). Bob notes that “in this global morality market, challengers must publicize their plights, portray their conflicts as righteous struggles, and craft their messages to resonate abroad” (Bob, 2005, p.4). The Gulabi Gang’s collective frame of fighting a corrupt system and structural oppression for equality and female empowerment, is a struggle that is universally recognized.

The Gulabi Gang has received many awards from civic groups within India and communicates this to larger international audiences. They have received the *Godfrey Phillips Bravery Awards: For the States of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Delhi*, for the Social Bravery Category (Gulabi Gang). They have also received the *Kelvinator 11th GR8! Women Awards*, an initiative of The Indian Television Academy honoring and recognizing women achievers from all walks of life (Gulabi Gang). These external resources bolster the credibility of the Gulabi Gang, and also prove how popular and influential they are within India.

Transnational Advocacy Networks and Networking

Transnational advocacy networks, which include International NGOS, are defined by Keck and Sikkink as “a transnational advocacy network includes those relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services” (1998, p. 2). These advocacy networks are primarily based on information exchange and their relationships are largely formed and founded on mutual principled ideas and values (Tarrow, 1998). The Gulabi Gang networks extensively, as evidenced by the fact that Pal Devi is a key speaker at the Woman’s Forum Annual Summit held each year in Deauville, France (Sen, 2006). She gives a speech, through translators, annually, addressing the future of marginalized communities across the world and emphasizing that contentious violence perpetrated by poor women is a social necessity, not vengeance or a type of irrational behavior (Sen, 2012). Pal Devi has attempted to distance the gang from an identity associated with violence, especially against males, and has fostered an emphasis on the gang’s social development ideals (Sen, 2012). Pal Devi has even stated that “we don't use violence much anymore. Now just our name and [the fact] that [they know] we are coming are enough” (Sen, 2012, p. 7).

The Gulabi Gang has also received support from various civic organizations and companies. One such company is Vitalect Inc., who offer e-learning technology and services (Gulabi Gang). The company is based in California and has a subsidiary in Thiruvananthapuram, India (Vitalect, 2007). Vitalect Inc. has helped Pal Devi and the

Gulabi Gang with their technological needs, including designing and maintaining their official website (Gulabi Gang). The Gulabi Gang has also been supported by Social Solutions India (SSI), a not-for-profit company that aims to promote NGO sustainability (Gulabi Gang). SSI's focus is to "define unique and credible projects albeit with little access to resources and create independence amongst them to mitigate donor-dependency" (Gulabi Gang).

On February 6, 2012 a dinner theater event was organized in association with the Vagina Monologues at the Taj Vivanta President in Mumbai; this allowed Pal Devi the opportunity to network with corporate India to try to mobilize resources for various Gulabi Gang social programs (Gulabi Gang). Another theater event was held sometime later in Delhi (Gulabi Gang). The Gulabi Gang utilizes their networks extensively and actively tries to expand them. A strong network helps social movements to sustain themselves.

Joining Politics

Until recently the Gulabi Gang had strategically opted to act without political affiliation (Sen, 2012). Pal Devi has said that "joining politics is not my chosen way to help people. We will keep up our good work, so the state does not take us for granted" (Sen, 2012, p. 8). This decision has associated downfalls, as the gang operates without political protection and support, and have often been threatened by hired-hands of the local police (Sen, 2012). Pal Devi has survived assassination attempts, been held at gunpoint, and has even been accused of being a militant Maoist by the police (Sen, 2012; Berthod, 2008/2012). Many of the other gang members have been threatened with

violence by the police and political leaders, making them aware of the political and police protection shortcomings that plague rural areas (Sen, 2012).

The Gulabi Gang has edged its way into the Indian political scene, in a strategic attempt to remove themselves from the ‘vigilante’ title that the media has focused on (Sen, 2012). In early 2007, Pal Devi entered herself as an independent candidate for the constituency of Naraini, which included the town of Atarra, and received nearly 6,000 votes, by appealing to lower castes; however, she lost the election to the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) (Berthod, 2008/2012). Jagdambika Pal, one of the most influential members of the Congress Party at the time, had his assistant call Pal Devi in June 2008 to tell her that Rahul Gandhi wanted her to run in a general election on behalf of the Congress Party (Berthod, 2008/2012). This assistant explained to Pal Devi that if she joined the Congress Party, over time, she could rise through positions while spreading both her and their ideals (Berthod, 2008/2012). But Pal Devi turned him down stating,

If I didn’t agree with the people in the party, the party would dislodge me at once. And if I listened to all those corrupt sycophants who would try to win all kinds of favours from me, I would be betraying the poor people I’ve spend my life fighting for. No really, I’m not interested in taking on the responsibilities of a party...I’m only interested in becoming a Member of Parliament (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 169).

Pal Devi goes on to say that she has never regretted not getting involved with specific political parties; as she puts it, “I have never identified with any particular party. There’s a huge gap between their manifestos, the pledges they make while campaigning, and what actually happens on the ground once the politician has been elected” (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 169). Pal Devi also voiced the opinion of many of the marginalized when she stated,

How can we put our faith in politics? India has been an independent country for sixty years, yet the poor still have no idea what it means to live in a free country. The laws are modern, but because the authorities are riddled with corruption, they are not implemented. In sixty years they have neither brought social justice nor an improvement in the living conditions of the poor (Berthod, 2008/2012, p. 169).

While the Gulabi Gang is weary of joining specific political parties, they have managed to develop significant political power (Sen, 2012). In 2010, the Gulabi Gang had a record number of 21 members elected for panchayat (municipality) positions (Sen, 2012). These positions entail supervision of construction and repair work on local roads, ensuring availability of sanitation and drinking water, and implementing development schemes for agriculture (Sen, 2012). As Usha Patel, a villager who rallied support for a Gulabi Gang member said, “Before, the village chiefs never used to listen to our issues, but with the Pink Gang in power, life will become easier” (Sen, 2012). The gang has tried to take on political positions of power, while remaining separate from the political party scene. It is in this way that they remain unaffected by corrupt influences.

The Gulabi Gang members are attempting to move beyond local activism to participation in local electoral politics (Govinda, 2006). They are utilizing their caste identity as well as their identity as village-level workers to garner the support needed to win elections (Govinda, 2006). Through their caste identity, gang members are able to utilize the Panchayati Raj Act of 1993, which ensures “one-third of the seats in elected bodies are reserved for women and the marginalized” (Govinda, 2006, p.185). Their identity as village-level workers helps them win the support of villagers during election time (Govinda, 2006). While the Panchayati Raj Act undoubtedly empowers Dalit women to become involved in elections, Gulabi Gang members, who are already

involved in contestation of structural power inequities as part of their social activism, are further empowered to participate than the average Dalit woman (Govinda, 2006). Gulabi Gang members have more awareness of the practical steps involved in governance and village development as a result of their larger network connections, meetings, and activism (Govinda, 2006). In order for Dalit women to win elections, it is crucial that they have strong kinship ties, linkages to other networks, support structures, and influence (Govinda, 2006). It is more likely that Gulabi Gang members have these necessary resources to win elections than the average Dalit woman. The Gulabi Gang has taken advantage of the Panchayati Raj Act by disseminating information about the opportunities associated with it, for those interested in running for election, campaigning, and offering a support structure (Govinda, 2006).

Scholars have questioned whether or not the Panchayati Raj Act further entrenches women in their caste identity, as they participate in seats reserved for 'Dalit women' (Govinda, 2006). The act has also been criticized for fostering further divides by categorizing women as 'Dalit' or not, leading to further marginalization of women (Govinda, 2006). Other scholars argue that the core of the women's movement, which is the concept of 'sisterhood', demonstrates that dividing women into categories of class, caste, or any other type, is not possible (Govinda, 2006). This paper asserts that whether or not providing a space for Dalit women to participate in politics creates a divide amongst women is not the most pertinent issue. All women within India experience discrimination, as it is socially acceptable to view them as less than men, in this they can create solidarity. It is the caste system that truly fosters segregational divides amongst

Indian society, and one way to combat this is to redistribute power. In this respect, the Panchayati Raj Act is effective in some respect. In fact, it is largely the issue of 'caste' that is the major obstacle to a women's movement catalyst in India (Govinda, 2006). Hopefully, over time the efforts made by state and non-state actors to empower Dalit women in politics will help to encourage a sense of solidarity amongst all women in politics (Govinda, 2006). Dalit women especially, are acting on their own agency as well as the empowerment from their activism, in addition to empowerment received from the Panchayati Raj Act in order to participate in politics (Govinda, 2006).

Furthermore, such initiative on the part of Dalit village-level workers to venture into local electoral politics, shows that these women are aware of the benefits political power can bring in changing the condition of their own community; benefits that organizations involved in social activism may not (Govinda, 2006, p. 188). The Gulabi Gang could also be trying to break through the glass-ceiling that lower castes face when participating solely in activism; while trying to improve their own situations, as well as the social situation, through the participation in local electoral politics (Govinda, 2006). In general Dalits are becoming more informed in the electoral process and are learning to vote and participating much more frequently in politics. It is currently believed that Dalits "have the power to swing or decide elections in five large Indian states" (Deliege, 1999, p.135).

In 2012, the Congress Party again tried to persuade Pal Devi to participate as a candidate in the state elections on their behalf; offering her in exchange a "political platform in a constituency dominated by low-caste communities" (Sen, 2012, p.10). The

Congress Party “has been trying for over two decades to challenge the popularity of their rival, the BSP, in Uttar Pradesh” (Sen, 2012, p.10). While Pal Devi has already stated that she does not want to enter politics under a specific party, instead preferring to become a Member of Parliament, her political goals set her apart from many in the Gulabi Gang; of which the majority's goals revolve around improving their daily lives and situations (Sen, 2012). This can be illustrated through one occasion in particular, when the Gulabi Gang made the journey to Delhi in order to campaign for the succession of Bundelkhand, making it a separate state (Sen, 2012). The Gang’s demonstration attracted media attention; Pal Devi expressed that the gang wanted a separate state so the communities in Bundelkhand could get better facilities (Sen, 2012). Next, she publicly offered to give “pink saris to the Indian President, Pratibha Patil, and the Congress chief, Sonia Gandhi, so that these powerful women, thriving within the domain of formal, constitutional politics, could also express their sympathy” for the Gulabi Gang (Sen, 2012, p. 8). While Pal Devi and other gang members were demonstrating for an independent state, one member of the Gulabi Gang, Neeta, had another reason for coming to Delhi (Sen, 2012). Neeta expressed that she had come to Delhi to try to meet the

female Minister for Railways, Mamata Banerjee, in order to lodge a complaint against her husband Sanjay, a railway employee. Neeta had been abandoned along with her two children after fourteen years of marriage and wanted the minister to take punitive action against her truant husband (Sen, 2012, p. 8).

This illustrates that while Pal Devi and many members of the gang are occupied with gaining political support and pushing their idealistic goals, other members of the

gang are focused on everyday justice for women and bettering their own situations (Sen, 2012). Marginalized women who are realizing their potential as agents for change often experience tension over domestic responsibilities at home (Sen, 2012). Scholars contest that women's activism groups, including the Gulabi Gang, should be aligned with feminist theories (Sen, 2012). This is due to the fact that Dalit women activists continue to reinforce and maintain the oppressive gender hierarchies that they publicly contest (Sen, 2012). Additionally, even though many of the Gulabi Gang members have the support of their family, it

remains debatable whether they will continue to encourage all women in their families to play activist roles without ensuring that someone be designated as responsible for household and farming duties. Thus, power mongering, domestic tension, and emerging political hierarchies are likely to take a toll on the selfless female solidarity displayed by the gang (Sen, 2012, p. 10).

Including Non-Members and Men

Despite the Gulabi Gang engaging in violence against abusive husbands and corrupt officials, most who happen to be men, they have gained the sympathy and support of most villagers (Sen, 2012). The gang has one male member, Prakash, who handles the paperwork, and helps with problems involving “depleting water resources, farm subsidies, and funds being siphoned off government projects” (Sen, 2012, p. 8). One man, a villager named Babloo Mishra, has even risked the wrath of opponents by allowing gang members to use his property as an office (Sen, 2012). He has said of the Gulabi Gang, “The best thing is that these women will take up anyone s [sic] cause as long as its [sic] genuine, not only those of its members” (Sen, 2012, p.8). Many other

men have come to support the gang through their connection with women helped by the Gulabi Gang's actions (Sen, 2012).

One example is that of the father of rape victim, Sheelu Nishads, who sought the help of the Gulabi Gang in freeing his daughter after she was imprisoned on false charges (Sen, 2012). He has been a supporter of the gang since they helped to free his daughter (Sen, 2012). Another story is from Aarti Devi:

My father is an educated man. He has a double Masters from the university despite being a Dalit. He has always had to fight for his rights and the dignity of local villagers. About six months back, an upper-caste man raped a local Dalit woman. Police refused to register the case. When my father protested, he and two others were taken into custody. I went to Sampat Devi and asked for help. That same day I joined the gang and, led by Sampat Devi, we stormed the police station demanding the release of my father and the other villagers. The police still refused to register the case against the rapist. We ended up beating a policeman black-and-blue with lathis. I cannot take injustice lying down. My father is a great inspiration to me, he was very proud when he saw me in a pink sari demonstrating and shouting slogans, rubbing shoulders with the rest of the Gulabi Gang (Sen, 2012, p. 9).

Many male villagers who have benefited in one way or another from the gang's contentious activities openly support the gang and are open to their own female family members becoming gang members (Sen, 2012). Some men even offer to pay for the women's bus fares when they need to travel great distances for a campaign, and other times they accompany the gang members when a public contentious action might be dangerous (Sen, 2012). The gang has been able to foster this support by never wavering their ideals and by supporting all members of society. These are characteristics that are extremely rare to find.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The Gulabi Gang has risen from a small collective of women into a social movement with political influence, and the support of the people, in a relatively short period. India is a developing country that is caught between modernization and its' traditionally entrenched feudalistic and patriarchal society, and religiously legitimized caste hierarchy. The majority of Indians do not profit from benefits associated with urban modernization, as approximately 69% of the population resides in rural areas (CIA). Members of low castes and women, suffer daily discrimination and violence, which is maintained through government and police corruption, and exploitation by higher caste members, even men within family units.

In Uttar Pradesh's Banda District, where the Gulabi Gang orientates from, over 20% of 1.6 million people, are comprised of Dalits (Sen, 2012). The Gulabi Gang is an advocate for well over 20% of the population, as this figure does not include women or members of slightly higher, yet still heavily oppressed castes. The Gulabi Gang receives roughly six women a day at their official headquarters asking for their help (Sen, 2012). Pal Devi, insists that women join the gang in order to receive their help and support (Berthod, 2008/2012). This is because, a core value of the gang is mutual support and solidarity (Berthod 2008/2012). It is in this way, that Pal Devi has created a social

movement that instills values of loyalty, solidarity, mutual support, and individual responsibility.

The Gulabi Gang must make strategic choices at every intersection they face. These choices could be as small as whether or not to invest in another sewing machine for one of their various self-help groups, or as large as whether or not to take violent action against a corrupt policeman; however, all choices are strategic in nature. Each choice is influenced by a variety of factors, thus making the Gulabi Gang's social movement distinct from other social movements. Choices are influenced by emotion, experience, societal norms, audience, structure of media, political constraints, political opportunities, culture, history, and organization of the group, motivations, goals, and ideals, amongst others.

Social movement theories can be advanced through the analysis of social movement actors, the context in which they are acting, and the influences that help produce their strategic choices. Eventually, with enough understanding of the nuances of specific social movements, it could be possible to conduct more in-depth comparative analyses. It is in this hope that this thesis has aimed to thoroughly explore the Gulabi Gang, its context, and its strategic choices, including the theories that underlie them.

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