

Gender Mainstreaming and Intersectional Inequalities: A Study of Tonk Municipal Council in Rajasthan

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Abstract: *The study investigates the extent to which the local government can implement gender mainstreaming and to create an equal community of decision-makers at the grassroots level to improve the lives of women councilors by taking the experiences of all women councilors of Tonk Municipal Council which comes under Ajmer division in Rajasthan into count and eliminate gender bias in governance and service delivery. This research focuses on how leadership and staff capacity are affected when gender mainstreaming policies are implemented in the context of local party politics and intersectional oppression. The study aimed to advance the application of gender mainstreaming by the local government and cast light on its potential as an inclusive developmental strategy. The data for this research was gathered by interviewing the participants with the help of a structured questionnaire, who had been carefully selected, and also through document analysis. The paper's primary goal is to assess the empowerment of women representatives through gender mainstreaming interventions adopted by Rajasthan government, which are the reservation policy of 33% for women; two child norm policy, what challenges they face in urban governance that are related to their empowerment and how much these local women politicians are capable enough to perform the functions of a counselor for good governance. The results illustrate that despite a commitment to gender mainstreaming in the municipal councils, the institution still faces many challenges in its implementation. These challenges are linked to the absence of an institutional gender specialist or a gender grievance redressal committee, poor understanding of gender mainstreaming, gender roles and stereotypes, party politics, the*

political background of a councilor, crime in politics, and political interference in the form of corruption that hinders the process of implementation. The analysis confirmed that a lack of skilled, aware, open-minded, and dedicated human resources hinders not only the empowerment of women councilors but also hinders the development of that particular region, failing municipal councils for the overall development of the region.

Keywords: Political participation, Party politics, Marginalized Women, Crime in politics, Women Councilors, Municipal Council, Gender Roles

Introduction

"Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with the absolute truth."

-Simone de Beauvoir (1949), *The Second Sex*

When all systems of oppression are interlocking to keep the disadvantaged section marginalized, when there is no such thing as single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives, while the theory of functionalism states women's biological and sexual function should fulfill foremost as mothers and wife to think of participating in public sphere; government's intervention for intersectional political environment at decision-making institutions of the region and the country becomes crucial in a democratic setting. As for the country to succeed and prosper, the concerns of invisible women have to be taken into consideration as half of us can't be held back, and hence the personal becomes political yet it still becomes a matter of discussion even in today's times.

Male default thinking is so prevalent in a world which is after all 50 percent female. It's just a feature of human psychology. There is a concept in social psychology called 'naive realism' also sometimes called 'projection bias' where people assume that their way of thinking about or doing things is common sense or typical. And this projection bias is certainly amplified by a form of confirmation bias, which is evident when one comes across male bias masquerading as gender neutrality. And as in present times when the majority of the political power is with males, they are unable to comprehend the diversions or differences of perspective another gender can give, or what an intersectional unequal woman has to say. It appears to men as common sense, but is in reality a gender statistical gap in representation and participation in the political arena.

Male and female councilors inevitably bring different perspectives to politics because they lead different lives, they are treated differently, experience the world differently, hence it leads to different needs and priorities. Hence, male dominated councils therefore suffer

a gender static gap, which leads to serving female citizens inadequately. Considering the concerns of women who face intersectional inequalities feels like asking way too much. The practice of excluding women from decision-making is widespread. It is the most efficient way that the male-biased system has of siphoning off gendered data in the form of female life experiences and perspectives. (Caroline Perez, 2020)

Therefore, gender statistics and analysis in the politics of difference and equality are important not just at the national level but also at the grassroots level in the context of not just political representation but also participation to better comply with national-international conventions or so to realize the target 5.5 of Sustainable Development Goal 5 which is to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. Empowerment is a fluid and unpredictable process, which leads to fundamental social transformation of society that enables individuals or marginalized women to make decisions that enable them control over their lives. (Scheyvens 1998; Parpart et al. 2022). And to politically empower half a section of society intersectionality in the era of complex intersectional inequalities and operations an individual has to go through, measures of positive equality become a mandate to increase not just formal representation of women but also substantive representation of women so to achieve equal political participation. Thus, by including gender analysis in the public policy process, gender could be mainstreamed to realize the goal of gender equality by 2030 and hence now the capacities, capabilities, and opportunities for women would have reached such a level playing field that we can think of moving forward to the path of negative equality which describes absence of privileges and foundations equality.

For this matter, the Government of India has been working towards implementing the principle of gender equality through mainstreaming gender by the inception of the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women in 2001, several intersectional policies and schemes for women like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao in 2015 have been implemented quite well to eliminate gender based discrimination.

Women Political Leaders in Governance

Sex is a status category with political implications (Kate Millet, 1970). The Human Development Report (1995) points out that women are essential agents of political and economic change, development, if not engendered, is fatally endangered. Such engendered development to tackle the concern of women's exclusion from power and gender equality at large, women should be involved in the decision-making process of the country.

Women's role in urban governance is the most important consideration for a grassroots gradual change in the status of women as a community in society. Women are nearly half the population, but their representation is

half of that and participation is at miniscule. Even if they are a bit aware of the functioning of municipal councils, their participation is only limited to formal roles of attending municipal meetings that too because of the government mandate, so to not get disqualified altogether and also often their influence in government is limited by their exclusion from male dominated patronage networks. Women may be present at formal talks, but this isn't effective when the men are forming back room quid pro quo networks and going off to have the real discussion in 'informal spaces that women cannot access' thus, the role of a catalyst a woman representative could execute remains far from reality also because of increased dependency level, lack of capacity training, mobility and of course patriarchal norms and attitudes, even this is internalized among women. Women have been taking too long to let their voices be heard, as well said by Penelope Barker.

But affirmative policies through gender quotas of one third of elected seats in urban local bodies for women has been a mandate under 74th Constitutional Amendment act 1992, also called according to Naila Kabeer as Gender aware redistributive policy, which meets not only the practical needs and interests of women to empower women but also takes into consideration the strategic needs to challenge the power, authority or controlled relations among gender in public and private sphere. As professed by Kate Young, sometimes policies like two child norm policy, which though takes only practical needs of women into consideration, plays gradually a transformative role towards strategic needs of a woman, which indirectly acts as a catalytic component of mainstreaming gender in policy practice. It is important to focus foremost on needs than just wants to empower women from equality of opportunity to gradually move forward to equality of outcome, from moving from principle in ideas to principles in action. (Dahlerup, 2006)

Objectives

The objective of the study is to explore the effectiveness of the gender mainstreaming initiatives like reserved gender quotas and two childnorm policy; over the perspectives and experiences of women councilors in the context of political empowerment and gender mainstreaming. It is to know the extent of gender mainstreaming in Tonk Municipal Council of Ajmer district in Rajasthan, as an effect of implementation of such gender mainstreaming policies which act as to take the regard of practical and strategic needs of a woman into consideration to realize the goal of gender equality. The significance of this study is as significant as studying politics in a democratic political system.

Study Setting

This study was conducted on all women councilors of Tonk Municipal Council, which is one of the six municipal councils of Ajmer division in Rajasthan among 10 administrative divisions of the state. Tonk Municipal Council consists of 67 wards, of which 47 are governed by male councilors and 20 by women councilors. The town of Tonk is situated 95 km by road south from Jaipur, near the right bank of the Banas River where Ajmer is to the west of Tonk and Bhilwara at the southwest. It is the administrative headquarters of Tonk district. Tonk was also the capital of the eponymous princely state of British India from 1817 to 1947. But in 2006, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj named Tonk one of the country's 250 most backward districts out of 640 thus receiving funds from the Backward Region Grant Fund. Tonk is a Municipal Council while Deoli, Malpura, Newai, Todarasingh and Uniara are Nagar Palikas or Municipalities. There are 1093 villages in the district. The district has a rigid patriarchal pattern of family system. According to the 2011 Indian census, Tonk had a population of 165,294 with 48% being female and also has an average literacy rate of 68.22% where 77.68% in males and 59.18% in females. This shows how females constitute almost half of the population of Tonk but still half of them are illiterate despite Tonk being Rajasthan's largest women university named as Banasthali Vidyapith. On top of the literacy rate and gender statistics, Tonk is one of the few regions in Rajasthan where the national Muslim minority becomes almost a majority religion which stands up to 48% against Hindu population at 50%, Jains at 1.8% and 0.2% others. This shows how the interlocking oppressions of religion, gender, caste, race could be acting over a Muslim female who wants to enter politics, could so easily be marginalized when we seek the present mainstreaming policies are enough for the equality of gender and empowerment to be achieved at grassroot level. Under such a backdrop, the study on Municipal Council threw a light on what marginalized goes through despite a few mainstreaming policies in practice and how marginalized could be mainstreamed.

Methodology

The study is based on both the quantitative and qualitative research approach following a mixed methodology in order to understand the general pattern as well as specific individual voices. It was a deliberate decision to have both approaches as a quantitative analysis gives an overarching view of a complex reality, and it's easy to detect general trends and patterns to reach comprehensive conclusions, while the qualitative approach helps in more context-sensitive understanding by bringing to the fore the uniqueness of each particular case.

The sample is collected conveniently in one of the 6 Municipal Councils of Ajmer administrative division in Rajasthan, which is Tonk Municipal Council. All the 20 women councilors from 20 wards among a total of 68 wards were selected. The structured questionnaire was administered to the respondents to elicit information about the participation of the women councilors in Tonk Municipal Council. They were interviewed and personally observed to understand their interests, experiences, role in decision-making, awareness and constraints faced by them. Besides interviewing, discussions with the officers were made. Secondary data was collected from office records, books, articles, journals. The systematic analysis of data gave significance to themes and subthemes.

Findings

After analyzing data in the context of gender mainstreaming policies such as gender reserved quota and two child norm policy implementation effect on mainstreaming the marginalized for political empowerment of women councilors of Tonk Municipal Council, 7 major themes were identified. These are participation, awareness, gender equality and perception, policy and effectiveness, resource allocation and budgeting, intersectional conflicts and growth.

1. Participation

Table 1: Statistics of Participation of Women Councilors in Tonk:

S.No.	Participation	Answers			
1.	Attendance in Council Meetings	Always (10%)	Sometimes (50%)	Never (40%)	
2.	Level of Participation of Meetings	Full (5%)	Mute Spectator (25%)	To fill the quorum (30%)	No participation (40%)
3.	Raising an Issue in Meetings	Always (5%)	Sometimes (15%)	Never (80%)	
4.	Grievance Redressal Capacity	Good (75%)	Fine (20%)	Poor (5%)	
5.	Participation in Budget Estimation	Yes (17%)	Oftentimes (7%)	Occasionally (5%)	No participation (70%)
6.	Interaction with Males in the Community	Always (65%)	Sometimes (25%)	Rarely (5%)	Never (15%)
7.	Participation in Election Campaign	Independently (5%)	Dependent on Spouse (80%)	Dependent on Family Member (15%)	
8.	Training for Election Campaign	Yes (0%)	No (100%)		
9.	Influencing Decisions in Meetings	Greater Influence (5%)	Moderate Influence (30%)	Not at all (65%)	

Data from the interviews reflected several aspects of political participation, both quantitatively and qualitatively. We consider here the quantitative ones, which show us directly the nature of participation. From the outset, we see there's a dearth of councilors who would be regular in attending the council meetings, more than 40% of the councilors in Tonk come in this category. The causes for lack of attendance are several, but the most significant reason is lack of meetings conducted in the first place. Moreover, if a year's meetings do happen regularly, the councilors who are dependent on their male partner would rather let the spouse handle the meetings and decision-making than be involved in it. Thus, this inherent patriarchy still influences directly the participation of councilors in the meetings.

The councilors who do attend the meetings, have shown a radically low amount of participation. More than 25% of the women councilors would act as a mute spectator, while major decisions are being taken regarding the council, this corresponds with the fact that about 80% of councilors would not raise any issue in the council meeting. Thus, in crucial concerns such as budget estimation, the women councilors have shown meager participation. Considering this, one can understand that the same women councilors have not independently participated in election campaigns either, 80% of them had to be dependent on their spouse while the other 15% have to depend on one of their family members (in most cases a male, such as father or brother).

This gives a rough sketch of the statistics surrounding political participation of women councilors in Tonk, and how the whole representation of the reserved seats for women in Municipal Councils doesn't translate to women participating at a considerable scale.

2. Awareness

Table 2: Statistics of Awareness in Women Councilors of Tonk

S.No.	Awareness	Answers			
1.	Powers and functions	Yes (60%)	No (40%)		
2.	Reservation for Women in 74th Constitutional Amendment	Aware (90%)	Ignorant (0%)	Essential (10%)	Not Essential (0%)
3.	Working of Urban Local Bodies	Aware (70%)	Ignorant (20%)	Essential (10%)	Not Essential (0%)
4.	Extension of Reservation from 33% to 53%	Aware (50%)	Ignorant (30%)	Essential (20%)	Not Essential (0%)
5.	Understanding the functions of Local Government	Not at all (10%)	Very little (27%)	Moderate (15%)	Sufficient (58%)
6.	Roles and Duties of Women Councillors	Not at all (0%)	Very little (5%)	Moderate (10%)	Sufficient (85%)
7.	Two-child norm Policy	Yes (95%)	No (5%)		

The 'Awareness' indicator consists of quantitative and qualitative questions that were asked during the interview to understand the level of understanding and knowledge the councilors possessed regarding the workings of ULBs. As the table above suggests, a high number of councilors (60%) showed a considerable amount of understanding of their powers and functions, qualitatively they also showed awareness of how these things worked, particularly in their own ward. A considerably high number of councilors also showed a fair understanding of the major policy changes that have been made for women in local and national politics. Over 90% of female councillors could describe knowledge of the 74th Constitutional Amendment that reserved seats for women. Similarly, over 53% of the women councilors were acutely aware of the extensions made for reservation of women seats, while 20% of them considered it essential there's also some (30%) who showed no knowledge of this extension. While this number is low, it does concern how the women who are in hold of the seats by virtue of reservation could ignore such a drastic change. The causes for such ignorance seems to be highly correlated to being highly dependent on their spouse for field work. The women who responded of having little to no understanding of local government working, also responded as being absent across most of the field work, which was done solely by their male counterparts who usually also have a good political background (see the previous section for the data on Participation).

Thus, while the numbers do indicate a high level of awareness across the most important concerns, the lack of participation despite awareness is concerning. As the correlations suggest, while being aware of their powers and workings of municipal council, these women are unable to actually hold that power and bring them into action without having to depend. Thus, we show the illusory nature of awareness, as is boasted by political parties to show 'women empowerment', which disguises real participation at the grassroots level, where dependence still exists.

On the other hand, one cannot but admit that this awareness is still a positive change, which was a direct effect of necessitating women to be involved by reserving a certain number of seats exclusively for women participants. Without such reservation, there would be far lower women who would have such awareness and knowledge of their own powers.

3. Gender Equality and Perception

Table 3: Statistics of Perceptions of Gender in Women Councilors of Tonk

S.No.	Gender Equality & Preception	Answers			
1.	Gender Equality in the the Council	Complete Equality (75%)	Somewhat Equal (5%)	Rarely Equal (5%)	Not Equal (15%)
2.	Sensitive towards Women Issues	Yes (85%)	No (15%)		

S.No.	Gender Equality & Preception	Answers				
3.	Gender Issues	Aware (30%) (20%)	Ignorant (20%)	Essential (50%)	Not Essential	
4.	Consideration for Gender Issues	Always considered (60%)	Sometimes considered (20%)	Rarely) considered (10%)	Never considered (10%)	
5.	Gender Specialist in the Municipal Council	I don't know (40%)	I know, we don't have (60%)	I know, we have one. (0%)		
6.	Gender Stereotypes	Highly Prevalent (35%)	Somewhat prevalent (20%)	Rarely prevalent (15%)	Not at all Prevalent (30%)	
7.	Capacity for Gender Analysis	To the fullest extent (5%)	To a great extent (0%)	To a extent moderate (5%)	To a limited extent (5%)	Not at all (90%)
8.	Gender Analysis in Project Design	In all project (0%)	In most project (0%)	In few project (0%)	None of the project (60%)	I don't know (4%)

The indicator 'Gender Equality & Perception' consists of qualitative and quantitative questions where the councilors' ideas about gender equality overall and their peculiar perception regarding gender issues. The table above needs to be taken into consideration, along with the last two tables on Participation and Awareness. While one can see that 75% of the people agree on the fact that there's equality of gender, the same women councilors would be in the category of those who do not raise issues in meetings or have significant influence in decision-making. This raises a difficult issue, because why would the councilors have the perception of apparent gender equality when their own participation seems to be extremely marginalized?

We see here that the most women councilors of Tonk have internalized the systemic patriarchy so internally that they can't categorize their own lack of participation as a sign of gender inequality. This creates an illusion of equality which replicates what we saw according to the Awareness indicator, where awareness didn't translate to direct participation. Similarly, although most (above 85%) women councilors claim to be 'sensitive towards women issues', we also have most (above 60%) councilors who acknowledge that there is no gender specialist who takes care of gender issues. These disparities suggest we should deeply analyze the way representative data can mislead us. During our qualitative questioning we did find several situations where one could see the direct inheritance of patriarchal values which inhibit the councilor from properly working towards gender equality.

Thus, Tonk virtually has no gender analysis done at an operational level in the council (as per 60% of the councilors) and this means there are no

steps being taken to effectively implement the strategies of gender mainstreaming. Moreover, the roots for this lie in the perception of gender that is heavily influenced and restricted by several factors such as stereotypes, and religion (Cf. section on Intersectional Conflicts).

Policy and Effectiveness

Table 4: Statistics of Policy Implementations in Women Councilors of Tonk

S. No.	Policy and Effectiveness	Answers			
1.	Extension of Reservation of Seats has enhanced awareness	Yes (100%)		No (0%)	
2.	Resistance against women exploitation after reservation	Yes (85%)		No (15%)	
3.	Enhancement in Economic Independence after reservation	Yes (60%)		No (40%)	
4.	Value of Women's Education and Employment after reservation	Yes (70%)		No (30%)	
5.	Accessibility of Opportunities after two-child norm policy	Yes (80%)		No (20%)	
6.	Freedom among women after two-child norm policy	Yes, more free (10%)	Not really different (85%)	Less free (0%)	Not free at all (5%)
7.	Violation of two-child norm policy	Yes (1%)		No (99%)	

The data table provides insights into public perceptions surrounding specific policies and their effectiveness in addressing various social issues. The first aspect under consideration is the extension of reservation of seats, where a unanimous 100% agreement suggests that the policy has been successful in enhancing awareness. This collective acknowledgment signifies a positive reception to the measures taken, indicating that the intended goal of creating awareness about social issues related to seat reservations has been achieved.

Moving forward, the focus shifts to the impact of reservation on combating women exploitation. An 85% consensus among respondents indicates that the reservation policy has indeed contributed to reducing exploitation against women. While this majority support is encouraging, the dissenting 15% suggests that there may be pockets of the population where the policy has not had the desired effect or where concerns remain. This underscores the importance of a nuanced understanding of the policy's impact across diverse segments of society.

The analysis extends to economic aspects, exploring the enhancement of economic independence after reservation. Data shows a more balanced response, with 60% expressing agreement. This suggests that, while a significant portion of the women councilors perceive an improvement in

economic independence, there is still a substantial 40% who do not share this sentiment. This division in opinions highlights the complexity of economic empowerment issues and signals that further examination and targeted interventions may be necessary to address the varying degrees of success in achieving economic independence through reservation policies.

Resource Allocation & Budgeting

Table 5: Statistics of Budget Management by Women Councilors of Tonk

S.No.	Resource & Budgeting	Answers				
1.	Staff training on gender issues and analysis	To the fullest extent (0%)	To a great extent (0%)	To a moderate extent (0%)	To a limited extent (5%)	Not at all (95%)
2.	Resources for Gender Integration	To the fullest extent (10%)	To a great extent (0%)	To a moderate extent (0%)	To a limited extent (20%)	Not at all (70%)
3.	Allocation for gender fullest policy enforcement	To the fullest extent (0%)	To a great extent (0%)	To a moderate extent (0%)	To a limited extent (10%)	Not at all (70%)
4.	Fraction of budget on essential services for women (Avg.)	>3%				
5.	Awareness of Grant	Yes (30%)			No (70%)	

The data on resources and budgeting for gender-related issues among municipal councilors paints a stark picture of limited commitment in several key areas. The overwhelming majority (95%) indicates that staff training on gender issues and analysis is not prioritized at all. Similarly, a substantial portion (70%) asserts that resources for gender integration receive no attention, with only 10% acknowledging efforts to the fullest extent. The allocation for gender policy enforcement follows the same trend, with 90% indicating little to no commitment.

The quantitative aspect, specifying the fraction of the budget allocated to essential services for women (>3%), suggests a modest financial commitment, but a detailed breakdown is necessary for a comprehensive assessment. Additionally, the awareness of grant sources is notably low, with 70% of councilors lacking awareness. This implies a potential missed opportunity for external funding to support gender-related initiatives.

In summary, the data signals a pressing need for increased dedication to staff training, resource allocation, and policy enforcement for gender-related issues within municipal councils. The limited awareness of grant sources further underscores the importance of enhancing information

dissemination to facilitate external financial support for gender initiatives. Addressing these gaps is crucial for fostering more effective and equitable approaches to gender equality within municipal governance.

Intersectional Conflicts

Table 6: Statistics on intersectional conflicts faced by Women Councilors of Tonk

S.No.	Intersectional Conflicts	Answers			
1.	Conflict from opposite gender	A lot (20%)	Sometimes (5%)	Rarely (30%)	Never (25%)
2.	Conflicts between participants (grudges, etc.)	A lot (15%)	Sometimes (5%)	Rarely (40%)	Never (40%)
3.	Conflicts between political parties	A lot (50%)	Sometimes (30%)	Rarely (15%)	Never (5%)
4.	Difficulty in implementation due to conflicts	A lot of difficulty (80%)	Somewhat difficulty (10%)	Little difficulty (5%)	No difficulty (20%)
5.	Religious conflicts within the council	A lot (75%)	Sometimes (10%)	Rarely (10%)	Never (0%)
6.	Structural conflicts due to differences (political, religious etc.)	A lot (85%)	Sometimes (5%)	Rarely (10%)	Never (0%)
7.	Steps taken to mitigate conflicts	Immediate (5%)	Sometimes (25%)	Rarely (20%)	None taken (50%)
8.	Chairperson's actions amidst conflicts	Proactive (10%)	Passive (65%)	Dismissive (25%)	Unaware (0%)
9.	Impact on ward due to conflicts	Drastic impact (85%)	Mild impact (5%)	Noticeable impact (3%)	No impact (7%)

The indicator concerning 'Intersectional Conflicts' is specifically designed to qualitatively and quantitatively assess the very nature of conflicts among different sections of the society in ULBs. Moreover, the indicator tries to analyze how the response has been to these conflicts and the causes for their emergence in relation to certain political inclinations. As the data above shows, while there are quite low (~20-30%) though, still considerable, conflicts on gender or between participants, the major causes of conflicts happen to be between different political parties, religious communities, and the people holding different powers in the structure. With 75% of women councilors agreeing over the fact that religion has indeed caused conflicts in the council, we see that Tonk suffers from this quite distinctively in contrast to other municipal councils in the Ajmer division.

This quantitative data is also supported by relevant qualitative findings. One of the councilors' socio-cultural background and her qualitative inputs can shed some light on this. From our interaction with the aforementioned councilor (who hereby is to be anonymous), we confirmed that she is the most able and the most empowered of all women councilors. This is verified by the amount of work she continues to do in public service for the community, despite facing backlash from the community for being a Muslim widow. While as we've seen before, the stereotypes are quite rigid in Tonk for a woman, they are significantly worse for a Muslim woman (as our data statistically confirms). She gave her testimony about the ongoing religious discrepancies in the council and how Tonk's development has suffered because of it. Across our wide research in every municipal council of Ajmer, she stands out as one of the ideal examples that one can refer to for a demonstration of empowerment and what a woman councilor can do once she tackles patriarchy and religious fundamentalism. This has been endowed to her because of her being educated at a level that is usually not seen across women councilors in Tonk. Thus, we do indicate that education beyond the secondary level does bring significant change in the political participation of women. This, along with financial independence from their spouse and adequate political training, is a necessity for her to be able to fulfill all the duties of a councilor.

Following this particular case and the data from the table regarding religious and structural conflicts, we try to look at this more closely. Accompanied by the personal information that was also collected, we report that most (above 75%) women councilors who are Hindu and working in BJP wards are unable to make any significant contribution towards the development and growth of the council. The main cause for this has been the boycotting of meetings by the party in consideration. Moreover, in wards where Congress holds a majority of the women councilors, we see them being benefited because of the direct influence of the Chairperson being in Congress, and also a Muslim. If we consider the conditions of Muslim women councilors closely, we see that despite a high number of them being adequately educated and belonging to the upper middle class, they show a tremendously high amount of fundamentalist patriarchy instilled in them. These councilors portray a significant lack of being able to speak or act in any manner that isn't already confirmed by their spouse. We report that one of the councilors refused to take part in the interview, claiming: "It is not her business". She would speak quite directly of her not being involved in any work concerning the council, which her husband handled while she handled the household. We infer from her interaction that she didn't consider this a problem, and this directly implies the deep roots from which patriarchy has been emerging. Moreover, this also helps us understand how religious, political, and structural conflicts cause something where the representation of women is only considered as a placeholder that holds the power and value of patriarchy.

Structural conflicts, i.e., conflicts between councilors and the chairperson, were also of concern to our research. We fulfill several councilors' experiences with the chairperson and while religious and political issues can arise, the councilor can also suffer due to the position of the chairperson itself. One of the councilors reported being attacked at night by allegedly paid criminals as she worked towards being a nominee for the seat of chairperson. While anecdotal, this particular case does shed light on deeper structural issues that are manifold (religious, political, patriarchal).

Politically, the conflicts have been more drastic for the council. As councillors report, politics has been heavily influenced by religion. The last chairperson of Tonk from BJP had implemented several policies that would directly empower women, such as free mobility in auto rickshaws or better healthcare treatment for maternity. After the change of the board and the chairperson to that of Congress, the council saw a direct boycott of all the preceding policies. The policies that were necessary for the development and help of women in the ward were discarded primarily because of religious and political concerns. This directly corresponds with our quantitative data (in the following section) to account for the decline in growth across several factors in the council of Tonk. Women empowerment has to suffer through these conflicts, ranging from political, religious and, structural before reaching the real needs of women. And this is directly reflected in the municipal councils of Tonk

Growth

Table 7: Statistics of Growth in the Council of Tonk

S.No.	Growth of the Council	Answers			
1.	Economic growth of women	High (20%)	Low (80%)		
2.	Educational growth of women	High (40%)	Low (60%)		
3.	Growth compared to the previous term	Improved (90%)	Deteriorated (10%)		
4.	Causes for Growth	Fewer conflicts (10%)	More funding (0%)	Better implementation (60%)	Personal efforts (30%)
5.	Causes for Lack of Growth	Heavy conflicts (5%)	Scarce funding (75%)	Poor implementation (10%)	Personal obstacles (10%)
6.	Steps taken to analyze and plan for further growth	Yes (20%)	No (80%)		

The indicator on the 'Growth' of municipal councils reveals a mixed picture of the changes that the council has gone through since the previous term. The economic growth of women is reported as low by the majority (80%), indicating potential challenges or disparities that need attention. Educational growth fares slightly better, with 40% reporting high growth,

though the overall sentiment still leans towards a lower level (60%).

Councils generally report improved growth compared to the previous term, with a significant 90% indicating positive progress. The causes attributed to this growth highlight better implementation (60%) as a major factor, suggesting that effective execution of policies and initiatives contributes significantly to positive outcomes. Personal efforts also play a role, as reported by 30% of the councils.

Conversely, the lack of growth is mainly attributed to scarce funding, with 75% pointing to this as a significant obstacle. Poor implementation is cited by 10%, indicating potential inefficiencies in executing growth-oriented strategies. Personal obstacles are mentioned by 10%, and heavy conflicts by 5%, emphasizing the diverse challenges faced by municipal councils in fostering growth.

When it comes to analyzing and planning for further growth, a substantial 80% of councils report not taking specific steps. This suggests a potential gap in proactive planning and analysis for sustained development. The data underscores the importance of addressing funding challenges and enhancing implementation strategies to facilitate continued growth in areas such as women's economic and educational advancement. Additionally, a more systematic approach to planning and analysis could contribute to more effective long-term strategies for municipal council growth.

Suggestions Towards Mainstreaming Women in Local Governance

After considering Tonk and its political situation through all these indicators, we make some suggestions based on the above findings. These suggestions are directed to a much more gender-equal and gender-sensitive municipal council where values of women empowerment and the marginalized aren't overlooked.

1. Firstly, a special Grievance Redressal Committee is to be established that looks over the performance of all councilors and keeps in check whether gender issues are being handled adequately in the wards.
2. Secondly, a Gender Specialist must be available in the council at all times, regardless of whichever party takes the power. This is a necessity that most of the councilors fail to even conceive of, the Gender Specialist would focus on everything that concerns helping and empowering women in issues concerning gender (such as budgeting, organizing resources, etc.), and if needed, address their complaints to the Mayor or the Commissioner.
3. Thirdly, a Capacity Building Training Program for all women who are interested in considering themselves as candidates for Municipal Elections. This shall be provided even before a candidate wins, thus ensuring everyone is given the same set of training and education needed to fulfill the duties of a municipal councilor. This training must be at least a month long and ought to include exposure to the fieldwork.
4. Fourthly, the chairperson supervises whether all women councilors are

actually working in the premises, and takes actions against it otherwise. This would ensure that male proxy no longer happens, and it is women who are actually in charge of power.

5. Fifthly, in the council meetings which are crucial for major decisions being made and implemented in the council, the male councilors should encourage their female colleagues to speak and take part in decision-making. It must be ensured by the chairperson that this happens, and that no male councilor interrupts or discards women while they speak.
6. Sixthly, corresponding to the previous one, the chairperson must also ensure that the husbands of women councilors are not present in the meeting. Women councilors in Tonk are extremely dependent on their spouses, but this shouldn't be the case in the council.
7. Lastly, the council should run awareness programs that try to distill the stereotypes prevalent against women. Gender awareness regarding a woman's capacity to work and earn equally with a man must be ensured so that she doesn't get burdened due to the patriarchy into being a housewife or forced into early marriage.

Conclusion

When you exclude half of the population from a role in governing itself, you create a gender data gap at the very top. The best means of diversity in representation for such a democracy like India, is for a faction like Tonk. Women politicians are not playing on a level playing field. Women's participation in politics or their political empowerment has given rise to many debates favoring it as the most important measure to achieve gender-responsive governance, representative democracy, and gender equality at large. But gender bias in our patriarchal society remains a fact even after the introduction of the reserved gender quota policy under the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act 1992, which is hailed as a trendsetter or a paradigm shift for bringing women as leaders in grassroots politics, thus increasing their representation. The problem lies in the fact this formal representation of women is mostly in reality to fill the quorum or women are present there just as a mute spectator; some for lack of awareness, hence increased dependency and some never wanted to overcome the issue of male proxy through internalized patriarchy. The crime against women politicians or the rampant corruption through party politics also makes women more reluctant, submissive in attitude, and able to trust or rely less on the rules and regulations of the state and country. Thus, the mere presence of women can't transform patriarchal frameworks. The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house, therefore patriarchy, reformed by these empowerment policies or without any reforms, is still a patriarchy. And to expect a radical change like gender equality, grassroots are important. Women themselves becoming

flag bearers of change in their public and private sphere by being connected to education and learning, by saying no to wrongdoing, by making their own identity and leaving their mark; is important. And for that matter, gender-responsive local governance is quintessential which not only considers gender-responsive policymaking but also planning gender across at the local level, financing for gender equality, gender-sensitive assessment of service delivery, an institutional framework for gender equality, and promoting women's rights and concerns at local level.

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