Understanding the influence of caste, gender, and religion in community-based sanitation programmes in rural India

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Abstract

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This thesis aims to understand how caste, religion and gender influence the implementation of community-based sanitation programmes that aim to eradicate the practice of open defecation by convincing people to use toilets in rural India. However, open defecation and toilet adoption in India are deeply steeped in caste relations, religious norms, and political ecology. Through interviews with government bureaucrats, government workers, development actors from NGOs and the World Bank, and rural residents, this thesis examined the implementation of Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS) in rural areas of two districts in India: Mandi and Churu. Three papers emerged from this research. The first paper examines how shame-based sanitation governance engages with rural spaces and bodies already imbued with the affects of caste as the government frames open defecation as a moral choice rather than inequalities based on caste, economic resources and gender. In the second paper, as part of the sanitation programme, rural residents, religious leaders, and the government negotiate the need for the convenience of toilets in the homesteads with a caste-based understanding of purity and pollution. The third paper uses a policy mobilities framework to examine how CLTS was transferred as a model policy from Mandi to Churu by the World Bank by translating the sanitation policy to local contexts by adhering to dominant caste relations and norms. Overall, this research proposes that sanitation interventions in rural India follow a governmentality of caste, where Western norms of hygiene are married with caste-based understandings of purity and pollution to create rural spaces and institutions adhering to local caste norms. This has important implications as the world aims to provide equitable sanitation for all without leaving the vulnerable behind, following the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Inevitably, as sanitation programmes privilege dominant power relations, such as caste, to ensure the success of these programmes, the vulnerable, such as women and marginalised castes, are excluded.

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List of abbreviations

BPL: Below the Poverty Line

CLTS: Community-led Total Sanitation

CRSP: Central Rural Sanitation Programme

DHS: Demographic Health Survey

GC: General Caste

JMP: Joint Monitoring Programme

KII: Key informant Interview

NFHS: National Family Health Survey

PHAST: Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation

OBC: Other Backward Class

RTA: Reflexive Thematic Analysis

SBA-G: Swachh Bharat Abhiyan-Gramin

SC: Scheduled Caste

SDG: Sustainable Development Goals

ST: Scheduled Tribe

TSC: Total Sanitation Campaign

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

UNOPS: United Nations Office for Project Services

WASH: Water and Sanitation Hygiene

WHO: World Health Organization

WSP: Water and Sanitation Program

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श्री ललित शर्मा, श्री कुंदन सिंह राठौर, श्रीमती पुष्पा राठौर और श्रीमती बिमला विश्वप्रेमी की शोध सहायता के बिना यह शोध संभव नहीं हो पाता। उनके सहयोग और कड़ी मेहनत के बिना, मैं अध्ययन स्थलों में ग्रामीण निवासियों का साक्षात्कार नहीं कर पाती।

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Author's declaration

This thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for the award of a higher degree elsewhere. This thesis contains three papers that have been submitted or are in preparation for submission. They are listed below with a brief description of the contribution that my co-authors and I made. The word count of this thesis is ~69,311 words, and it does not exceed the permitted maximum.

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Mehta, N. *Mobilising sanitation policies: A critique of Community-led Total Sanitation in rural India*

To be submitted.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Open defecation, or the practice of defecating or disposing of human faeces in open spaces and bodies of water, is detrimental to the health of the people living in the surrounding areas (Mara, 2017). Through faecal pathogens, the people living in surrounding areas, particularly children, are vulnerable to diseases such as diarrhoea, typhoid, and cholera (Saleem *et al*., 2019). Articulating this concern, successive Indian governments have implemented national sanitation campaigns for nearly 40 years, to eradicate the practice of open defecation and ensure that people build and use toilets in their homes. However, following Doron and Raja (2017), the central concern for this thesis is: how do the binaries of the healthy and pathological body, instrumentalised by sanitation programmes, superimpose themselves on existing understandings of 'dirt' that play a key role in ordering Indian rural societies. As the authors put it (Doron and Raja, 2017, P.195):

"...How do we liberate the conceptual distinction between the 'healthy' and the 'pathological' body (the latter symbolized by the term 'open defecation') from its biomedical (objectivist) overtones? How do we begin to underscore the disciplinary function of such binarism, not to mention its normative influence?"

Caste-based understandings of who and what is considered 'matter out of place' (Douglas, 2003, P.41) or a cause of disorder, continue to bear influence in implementing sanitation programmes, reinforcing gendered caste relations in rural societies under the garb of creating sanitary citizens. Overall, sanitation programmes engage with social relations in villages to fulfil basic needs such as sanitation. However, this thesis also explores how sanitation programmes also serve as instruments of governance and forms of domination (Kotsila and Saravanan, 2017). This research centres on caste in examining sanitation programmes, the motivations of people who implement them, and the people who experience them. Particularly, I examine the implementation of

Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS) in rural areas of two districts in India, to understand how sanitation interventions to tackle open defecation engage with caste, gender, and religion. By examining the implementation of CLTS in two districts of India, I delve into the multiple dimensions of ideal sanitary subjects framed through particular norms of caste, religion and gender, that are articulated by the government under the normative goals of ensuring the adoption of toilets by rural citizens. By government, this thesis marries a Foucauldian understanding of government (Foucault *et al*., 1991) with a critical caste lens. That is, this thesis examines how a diverse range of authorities shape the will of rural residents, through emotions and religious practice, to become sanitary citizens, while maintaining the hegemonic caste-based order in domestic and public spaces. This introduction lays out an understanding of open defecation and how it is shaped by unequal power relations, particularly related to caste and gender, before delineating the aims and research questions of this thesis. Then, this chapter will briefly summarise the contents of the thesis, before identifying the key overall contributions of this thesis.

1.1. Understanding open defecation in India

The practice of open defecation is a public health concern as it can cause a high burden of disease, especially in children under the age of five years (Galan *et al*., 2013). Open defecation results in faecal contamination in the environment exposing those living near the open defecation sites to faecal bacteria and pathogens. These bacteria and pathogens particularly affect young children whose immune systems and brains are not yet fully developed (Mara, 2017). The adverse health effects of open defecation include: stunting of growth and malnutrition, diarrhoea and enteric parasite infection in young children, and subsequently, associated childhood death (Gauri *et al*., 2018; Spears *et al*., 2013). Chronic environmental exposure to faecal germs has been proven as an important cause of growth deficits (Spears, 2017), while diarrhoeal germs are spread by human excreta of one person to the mouth of another as it is transmitted through water, food or soil (Giribabu *et al*., 2019). Meanwhile, open defecation can lead to psycho-social stress for people, particularly women, adolescents and children, due to the need to find times and places when they can defecate without being spotted by other people (Biswas and Joshi, 2021; Kuang *et al*., 2020; Sahoo *et al*., 2015). Women and adolescent girls who defecate in the open, also face a particularly high threat of violence and sexual assault as they

often use the cover of darkness to avoid being seen, and are often alone (Saleem *et al*., 2019).

For these reasons, ending open defecation and providing safe sanitation are a major part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 6.2 which aims to achieve by 2030 access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end to open defecation (Bankole *et al.*, 2023). Between 2000 and 2020, the proportion of the global population practising open defecation decreased from 21% to 5% (VerKuilen *et al*., 2023; WHO, 2023). This was achieved as more people gained access to toilet facilities. However, an estimated 420 million people still practice open defecation, of whom 44% live in Southern Asia (WHO and UNICEF, 2021). India is one of the major centres in the world where the struggle to end world open defecation is ongoing. The most recent government sanitation campaign, *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan* (Clean India Mission) declared India open defecation-free, meaning every household in India had access to a toilet (Anonymous, 2019). However, this claim has been contested by other studies and this thesis (Gupta *et al.*, 2020; VerKuilen *et al.*, 2023). Typically sanitation programmes in India use a combination of financial incentives – in which individuals and communities are rewarded monetarily for activities to reduce open defecation - and behavioural change campaigns, to motivate rural residents to build and use toilets (Jain *et al.*, 2020). The complexity of the issue of sanitation, however, cannot be reduced to the number of toilets built. Open defecation, access to toilets, and individual experience of sanitation infrastructure in India are influenced by a person's caste, class, and gender.

An increasing number of people living in informal settlements face inadequate water and sanitation facilities - access to which depends on class, caste and gender (Desai *et al*., 2015; Truelove, 2011). In informal settlements, many people may have access to toilet blocks or a toilet that is shared by many, overused and smelling, poorly maintained and requires long queues (Doron and Jeffrey, 2014). So, many residents in informal settlements use improvisation strategies such as collecting resources for the construction of makeshift toilets or using lock and key arrangements on a public toilet to ensure the cleanliness of public toilets. However such improvisations can restrict access to sanitation infrastructures for other less powerful groups, causing them to resort to open defecation (McFarlane, 2019). Gendered experiences of open defecation can influence the spatiality and temporality of bodily processes for women, but also caste relations influence open defecation practices for women and girls (Kulkarni *et al*.,2017).

Meanwhile, risks are amplified for adolescent girls resorting to open defecation, as they face threats such as sexual assault and lack of privacy (Nallari, 2015).

Research on rural sanitation has given us key insights into sanitation policy implementation in villages. O'Reilly and Louis (2014) theorised rural sanitation uptake using the toilet tripod framework, highlighting three key analytical points: First, sanitation is primarily a human-environment relationship in rural places; second, sanitation depends on the interplay of environmental conditions, government policies, and social relations; and third, toilet usage is a complex phenomenon based on lived experience. Meanwhile, Jacob *et al.*(2021) argued that for sustained toilet use, the convenience and prestige attached to toilets must be communicated to rural residents, instead of coercing them into using them (rampant in sanitation programmes). They further showed that the quality of toilets built for and by rural residents is an important factor in their adoption. The types of toilets rural residents prefer have also drawn the attention of researchers.

Coffey *et al.* (2017) have argued that caste-based notions of purity and pollution are responsible for rural Indians building toilets with larger septic tanks and preferring to defecate in the open if they are not able to afford to build those. They attribute this preference to reluctance by toilet users to clean toilet pits of affordable toilets as this work is considered impure according to caste-based norms. Other studies have shown that Hindu households are more likely to defecate in the open as compared to Muslim households despite owning toilets, attributing this to caste-based purity and pollution norms being stronger in Hindu households (Gupta *et al*., 2020). However, other studies have disputed this reason for open defecation, arguing that resorting to open defecation could be attributed to habit, economics and dwelling space, and not related to beliefs about ritual pollution (Borooah, 2022; EP *et al.*, 2019; Jain *et al*., 2019). Caste relations play an important role in the adoption of toilets. Social contacts having toilets can lead to the adoption of toilets, but this social effect is more likely to be found among people of the same caste, according to a study in rural Karnataka (Shakya *et al*., 2015). Another study in Tamil Nadu showed that due to the caste-based power relations in the villages, poorly constructed latrines for Dalit people of the village, the reluctance to clean toilet pits among all castes, and open spaces providing adequate privacy for open defecators, most castes avoided using toilets (O'Reilly *et al*., 2017).

Thus, government sanitation interventions to tackle open defecation, are knowingly or unknowingly likely to tinker with caste relations in the village. However, there is limited research to understand how rural sanitation programmes aiming to tackle open defecation, can reify material and symbolic manifestations of caste and gender. Particularly there is a need to examine how CLTS strategies adapt sanitation programmes to various sites by adhering to caste-based norms so that hygienic domestic and public spaces are produced under the ambit of a caste-based social order.

1.2. Aims of the thesis and research questions

The central aim of this thesis is to understand the influence of caste and gender on the intended or unintended outcomes of government sanitation programmes aiming to tackle open defecation practices in villages. Water and Sanitation Programmes serve to order society along certain patterns of domination (Kotsila and Saravanan, 2018). Unequal treatment of native and colonial areas was built into the sanitation system, serving as a key instrument of colonial spatial domination (Prashad, 2001; Chapin; 1999). These colonial legacies continue in contemporary cities in the form of visible and invisible sanitary divides on the lines of race, class and caste, resulting from historical processes and power relations (Biza, 2023; Ranganathan, 2022). Sanitation programmes can reinforce gendered inequalities when toilets take on meanings as status symbols that enable women's seclusion in certain patriarchal societies (O'Reilly, 2006). Meanwhile, the impacts of failing sanitation infrastructure and unpaid labour are disproportionately borne by women (Alda-Vidal *et al*., 2023). With this context in mind, it is important to understand which relations of domination and subordination are entrenched through particular governance strategies of community-led sanitation programmes in rural areas in India.

Caste relations in a village can play an important role in people's adoption of sanitation infrastructure in the most unexpected ways and are highly dependent on the context (O'Reilly and Louis, 2017). An incident narrated by a former bureaucrat in Himachal Pradesh in an interview at the start of this research illustrates the importance of caste in sanitation interventions:

"We once faced a problem that needed considerable intervention to fix when the rivalry between one upstream and one downstream village was acute. And it was a caste

rivalry. The upstream village was one caste, and the downstream village was another dominant caste, and the rivalry was so acute. The people of the upstream village said that we are not building toilets, we want our shit water to go to this lower village. So, you have these acute situations and there, you need to go down to do mediation, you need the administration to come together and bring people together and somehow get them on the same platform to sort out the old grievances and find ways to deal with it."

For CLTS to be successfully implemented and adapted to these study sites, it was adapted by local stakeholders to the particular caste and religious norms in those areas. There are multiple ways in which caste can be implicated in open defecation and patterns of inequality when it comes to sanitation. CLTS-style programmes that involve shame and humiliation to dissuade people from defecating in the open may work under the assumption that rural spaces and bodies are neutral, ignoring the emotions that are already inscribed on certain spaces and bodies based on their caste and gender (Guru and Sarukkai, 2019). These emotions are borne out of historical context and differential experience (Ahmed, 2004), based on caste and gender interactions with spaces. There is a gap in existing research to understand how shame-based sanitation governance interacts with the material and symbolic inequalities produced by caste-based relations to reproduce a caste-based social order. Through examining the material and symbolic meanings of human excrement and the attempts by various authorities to govern it in rural spaces, this thesis aims to interrogate how affective registers of sanitation interventions are not just fulfilling the normative goals of toilet usage but may also be reinforcing certain inequalities by framing open defecation as a moral choice.

This brings us to the first research question:

Research question 1: How do sanitation interventions interact with caste-based power structures in the villages where they are implemented?

At the centre of sanitation interventions and their aim to make rural India open defecation-free is the need to control open spaces and domestic spaces, in terms of who can occupy them and for what purpose. Notions of sanitation in colonial India led to a demarcation of urban spaces based on European and native habitats, which were synonymous with a healthy and unhealthy dichotomy (Prasad, 2015). The colonial authority's sanitary regime perceived any spaces where a large number of Indians gathered as threats to European health and epicentres for epidemics (Arnold, 1993). In

contrast, control of the spread of epidemics was dependent on control of such spaces including *bazaars*, fairs, and pilgrimage centres (Beattie, 2003). The relationship between public spaces and filth in India has been at the centre of opposing ideas of hygiene. While the British were left befuddled by the Indian indifference to filth or excreta in their surroundings as compared to the detailed attention to cleanliness inside their houses, Kaviraj (1997) argued that this was because the Brahmanical ideas of purity and cleanliness were very different to Western ideas of hygiene. So, when the *Brahmins* cleaned their houses and threw the filth outside, it was more to do with throwing the dirt out of the conceptual boundary of 'inside' to the street, which was 'outside' or not one's own (ibid). Further, the control of spaces in the Indian context, even today, can be characterised as the need to distinguish between the 'inside' and 'outside' where the inside' is continuously 'produced by symbolic enclosure for protection' against potential intrusion from malevolent forces associated with the 'outside' (Chakrabarty, 2002). The malevolent forces associated with the outside are strangers or people not from the same kin, class, or caste groups, where there is no single set of (enclosing) rules and rituals defining a community (ibid). Rodrigues (2009) contends this argument and postulates that the 'outside' and 'inside' cannot be dichotomised and that there are people of certain castes who are forced into the margins of even these outside spaces. Dalits[1] continue to be excluded from public spaces in rural areas, often through continuing violence by upper castes as they attempt to occupy, thus creating a dominant public space that leads to continuing marginalisation of certain castes (Waghmore, 2013). Doron (2017) argued that when people defecate in public in India, they do so with the expectation that the excreta will be cleaned up by people of certain Dalit castes. The upper-caste 'purity', he added, is even reinforced by forcing certain castes to perform the task of cleaning public spaces of the faeces.

Open spaces in rural areas can include public spaces, open fields owned by landowners, and government-owned open land. The government, religious institutions, rural elites, and a diverse range of authorities with different motivations, aim to ensure that villagers do not defecate in the open, but rather, build toilets in their homesteads and use them.

[1] The term 'Dalit' is used as a political term of resistance for and by formerly Untouchable castes or Dalits who have been discriminated against by the upper castes in Indian society for centuries (Kalapati, 2022). Though the Indian constitution guarantees equal rights and liberties for all, Dalits are still treated as untouchables in many parts of the country. This thesis will use the term Dalit for formerly untouchable castes.

However, changing patterns of land use in villages and the changing political ecology play an important role in how patterns of open defecation are changing in the villages (O'Reilly, 2017). Meanwhile, caste-based understanding of public and domestic spaces of villages is steeped in the social and material understandings of dirt or excreta, but also the emotional histories of caste. With this context in mind, it is important to understand how sanitation interventions can influence domestic and public spaces in a changing rural landscape. Particularly, as caste-based religious norms lead to the reluctance of rural residents to use toilets in domestic spaces, there is a gap in the literature to understand if government sanitation programmes have aimed to change these religious norms. This would, therefore, lead to an understanding of how rural residents, through the mundane everyday practices of cleanliness in domestic spaces, negotiate Western understandings of hygiene and caste-based understandings of cleanliness (Browne, 2016).

This brings us to the second research question:

Research Question 2: How do sanitation interventions aiming to make villages open defecation-free order domestic and public spaces in relation to human excrement?

Through national sanitation programmes, Indian governments have attempted to reduce the practice of open defecation by encouraging people to build toilets in their homes through behavioural change programmes and by providing them with financial incentives or subsidies. The benefits of building and using toilets in a household have been proven to be beneficial, not only to the household but also to the surrounding households, neighbourhoods, or communities (Dickin *et al.*, 2017). This can be due to reduced contamination of the surrounding environment and water supplies in densely populated areas (ibid). Other studies have shown that the accessibility of public toilets in the community, rather than better sanitation at the household level, has a much greater impact on child health urging that the community context should not be ignored when it comes to sanitation interventions aiming to reduce open defecation (Fuller *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, the government has been integrating community-led strategies in its sanitation programmes that aim to make whole communities or villages open defecation-free. One such policy instrument, that was piloted in Bangladesh in 1999, and then adopted in several districts in rural India to eradicate open defecation over

subsequent years, is Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS). After CLTS was imported from Bangladesh as a policy instrument to tackle open defecation in villages in India, it was transferred by the World Bank's Water and Sanitation Programme (WSP) to the two districts researched in this thesis. This thesis uses the policy mobilities framework to examine the various mechanisms used by the World Bank to 'educate the attention' (Montero, 2017, P.340) of the bureaucrats and development practitioners towards open defecation as a problem and CLTS as a solution. The adoption of CLTS in different districts in India and its increasing influence in national sanitation programmes is an example of fast policy transfer and can be situated in the policy diffusion of CLTS across the Global South[2]. Through examining the implementation of CLTS in two districts of India in two different periods, and how it was mobilised within Indian districts, this thesis aims to understand the policymaking spaces within India and how these can be situated in transnational policymaking spaces. Particularly, by examining the framing of open defecation as a problem and the framing of toilets as a solution, the thesis aims to examine how sanitation programmes focus on toilet building, while participatory elements of community-based approaches to sanitation are diluted in the rapid transfer of policies from one district to another in India.

This leads us to the third research question:

Research Question 3: How was CLTS as a model policy instrument mobilised between the study sites in India and how was it changed in the process?

1.3. Outline of the thesis

Chapter 2 is a literature review that primarily aims to outline key considerations for caste and sanitation in rural areas in India to situate the findings of this thesis. The chapter first gives an overview of sanitation research in India, before outlining the main gaps in the sanitation literature. The chapter then gives a critical review of how caste is understood in academic literature and how this understanding has evolved over the years, while also introducing key terms relevant to this thesis including caste,

[2] The term 'Global South' has primarily been used in academic scholarship to refer to Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and parts of Asia (including India) and Oceania (Haug et al., 2021). 'Global South' can mean different things including in reference to socio-economic marginality due to post-colonial underlying forces, multilateral alliances and/or counter-hegemonic agency. In the case of this thesis, Global South is used in the context of the South-South policy exchange between countries in South Asia, South-Eastern Asia, Africa and Latin America.

untouchability, Dalit, and Scheduled Caste (SC). The chapter then draws a picture of how caste manifests in rural geographies in India, particularly focusing on land ownership, segregation of villages along caste lines and untouchability, and finally examining how gendered caste relations manifest in villages. The chapter then delves into colonial and postcolonial views on spaces and sanitation in India, and how these views might influence sanitation interventions today. Finally, the chapter ties caste and sanitation together to explain how caste and gender explain how Dalit communities still benefit the least from sanitation interventions while also shouldering the burden of cleaning human excrement from public and domestic spaces.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the theories and practices that guide the governance of open defecation in India. This chapter outlines how the government has tackled rural sanitation through national sanitation programmes before examining the key debates related to community-led total sanitation and its use of shame-based governance through community-based strategies. This chapter then proposes the lens of governmentality of caste to show how sanitation governance in India shapes domestic and open spaces along the lines of a caste social order. Providing the theoretical considerations, the chapter outlines the two tenets of the governmentality of caste explored through Chapter 5 and Chapter 6: the affects of caste and the governing of sacred spaces. This theoretical framework is informed by a 'government through community' lens (Rose, 1999; Li, 2007) in which community is the main area of intervention and is rendered technical, that is CLTS techniques instrumentalise the religio-cultural practices that manifest through spatial organisation of rural communities, thus entrenching caste and religious social order.

Chapter 4 elaborates on the research philosophies underlining this thesis which is a social constructivist approach with a critical caste lens, leading to a critical constructivist approach. It then elaborates on the researcher's positionality that guides this thesis and how it influenced the research design, data collection and data analysis decisions. Finally, the chapter elaborates on the methods used for the thesis including data collection, data analysis and the ethical considerations guiding the thesis.

Chapter 5 is the first empirical paper of this thesis. It examines the case of CLTS implementation in Churu, Rajasthan. Using the lens of affective governmentality and caste, this chapter examines how the spatial and temporal levers inherent in the CLTS

implementation in Churu, reinforced caste and gender inequalities. Particularly, this chapter critically examines the use of shame, disgust, honour and humiliation in spaces where shared caste-based understandings of these emotions have been used historically to oppress Dalit castes and women.

Chapter 6, the second empirical paper of this thesis, examines the case of CLTS implementation in Mandi in 2005 when CLTS was relatively new in the country. This paper shows a case of government and development agencies actively engaging with religious norms of a site where toilets are considered ritually polluting. Through the theoretical lens of religious governmentality, this paper shows the importance of engaging with religious norms and institutions to ensure the acceptance of toilets and sanitation programmes in a country where such norms play a key role in sanitation. However, although caste Hindus in the district decided to adopt toilets in the face of modernity and the institution of *Devta* supporting the sanitation mission, they did so while adhering to norms of sacred spaces in line with Brahmanical norms.

Chapter 7, the third paper, ties the two study sites together by examining how CLTS was mobilised in the two states by the World Bank, development actors and government actors through various policy transfer instruments. Expanding the policy mobilities framework, this paper examines how 'community' was used as a primary area of intervention for faster mobilisation of the policy, thus diluting the community participation elements of CLTS. Finally, the paper also examines how the mobilisation of CLTS was dependent on successful engagement with institutions and actors that dominated caste relations in both these study sites.

Chapter 8 is the concluding discussion of this thesis. This chapter summarises the key findings of this thesis and then shows how the three papers contribute to answering the research questions raised in this introduction. Finally, the chapter presents the researcher's concluding thoughts and potential for further research that has emerged from this thesis.

1.4. Key contributions of the thesis

Overall, there are three key contributions of this thesis:

1) This thesis contributes to the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) research by examining how sanitation interventions serve as instruments of domination, ordering society along particular lines of precarity including race, caste, gender and class. This thesis contributes to academic discourse through chapter five's examination of how the use of emotions intersecting with the temporality and spatiality of sanitation programmes can ignore how gender, caste and class play an important role in a person's experience and access to sanitation infrastructure. Further, chapter six shows that while an effective engagement with religious norms can lead to the acceptance of sanitation infrastructures, the domestic spaces are still governed by Brahmanical ideologies. This is particularly important because the domestic politics of caste have critical implications on the way caste is practiced in public, and vice versa (Guru and Sarukkai, 2019). That is, people may disguise their caste-based practices in a public space which is also a secular place where constitutional laws of equality apply, whilst in domestic spaces where there is no such obligation, caste-based practices deeply influence who people let in the house, and what they keep out of the house. This thesis thus builds on and contributes to, other studies on waste and sanitation infrastructure in the Global South to show how spatial, temporal and affective dimensions of sanitation governance and practices unequally shape residents' routines, bodies, and experiences of rural spaces (Biza *et al*., 2022; Fredericks, 2014; McFarlane and Silver, 2017; Truelove and O'Reilly, 2021).

2) There is a major strand of research that has shown that many Hindu upper caste households defecate in the open despite having toilets because of ritualistic notions of pollution associated with toilets (Coffey *et al*., 2017). Other studies have shown that Muslim households are less likely to defecate outside if they have toilets, compared to Hindu households with toilets and similar income. This difference is also attributed to the stricter adherence of Hindu households to caste-based norms of ritual pollution. However, chapter 6 fills a major gap in this literature by describing a case study where government and development organisations actively targeted religious norms. In the study site, these religious norms had dissuaded rural residents from adopting toilets. Persuading locals in this study site to adopt a new cultural practice was the first domino in the acceptance of toilets in Mandi. In the process, the paper also outlines a unique

and under-researched form of religious governmentality through the institution of *Devta* that plays a key role in the functioning of rural societies in Mandi and wider India, including influencing sanitation practices.

3) The theoretical contributions of this thesis are twofold. This thesis proposes that sanitation governance in India uses the governmentality of caste by centring caste in understanding how diverse authorities use emotions and religion to make people behave the way they want them to. Using these theoretical lenses, this thesis argues that sanitation governance in India essentially entrenches caste-based ideas of spaces, and gendered roles, and reinforces the dominance of dominant castes in informal and formal institutions. Finally, through the examination of CLTS policy transfer between the two study sites in India, this thesis connects transnational policy spaces with rural areas to present a case of rural policy mobilities. This expands the focus of policy mobilities literature which has hitherto focused primarily on policy models circulated in urban centres of the world. This thesis contributes to existing policy model research by arguing that model policies are adapted to local contexts by various stakeholders by leaning into localised dominant power relations and norms. Further, by showing how the World Bank and local bureaucrats push for particular policy solutions, such as CLTS, this thesis contributes to an understanding of the reconfiguration of policymaking in the world through South-South policy learning even as Global North institutions continue to pull the strings.

Chapter 2: Open defecation in a caste-based society: Roots, trajectories, and consequences

2.1. Introduction

Caste system is a graded form of inequality in which people of certain caste groups are considered ritually purer than other caste groups, in accordance with ancient Hindu scriptures (Ambedkar, 1987). This perpetuates a system of endogamy where caste groups marry among themselves, a labour regime in which certain caste members are conscripted to carry out tasks that are considered ritually polluting, and land and resource inequality in which the lowest caste groups continue to be the most excluded (Jodhka and Naudet, 2023). As you go up the caste system, the power and status of a caste group increase; as you go down the scale the degree of contempt for the caste increases as these castes have less power, are of low status and are regarded as dirty and polluting (Ambedkar, 1987). At the centre of caste-based exclusion is untouchability, which although outlawed by the Indian constitution, manifests in the form of residential segregation in villages of various caste groups, restrictions on socialisation such as inter-dining among different caste groups, and physical and symbolic violence, particularly against Dalits (formerly untouchables) who are deemed ritually polluting in accordance with Hindu scriptures. Caste remains a key lens for understanding sanitation interventions for a variety of reasons.

Firstly, caste and gender relations are mediated by the material and symbolic manifestations of human excrement. The cleaning of the faecal waste is based on caste-

based notions of occupations and ritual notions of pollution and is historically forced upon people of certain Dalit communities (Sreenath, 2023). Even though specific material manifestations of caste and racialisation are changing because of technological advancements in faecal sludge management and laws preventing exploitative caste-based sanitation labour in India, caste and gender based sanitation labour persists (Gupta, 2022). Open defecation garners much attention in politicians' speeches, promotional campaigns, and public discourse; however, faecal sludge management remains invisibilised in this discourse (Gatade, 2015). Secondly, while financial means play an important role in the ability to adopt toilets, poorer Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) households lag disproportionately when it comes to access to safe sanitation and hygiene as compared to privileged castes who are economically poor (Kumar and Kharb, 2024). Thirdly, coercive tactics involving shaming and humiliation, which seem rampant in sanitation campaigns in rural areas (Jacob *et al*., 2021), disproportionately target people of SC and ST communities (Gupta *et al*., 2020). Fourthly, caste relations in villages steeped in spatiality, power relations, patronage, and practices of untouchability play an important role in influencing toilet usage and open defecation (O'Reilly *et al*., 2017). Finally, Hindu households are more likely to defecate in the open as compared to Muslim households, despite owning toilets due to caste-based purity and pollution norms being stronger in Hindu households (Gupta *et al*., 2020).

There is a gap in research to understand how shame-based sanitation governance interacts with the material and symbolic inequalities produced by caste-based relations to reproduce a caste-based social order. Further, there is a need to understand how the mobilisation of CLTS and its implementation in different sites in India were based on adaptation strategies that adhered to caste-based power relations, particular to those sites and ordered public and domestic spaces in accordance with religion and caste-based norms. Before attempting to fill these gaps in research, this chapter reviews existing literature to understand caste and its evolving understanding. Then this chapter builds an understanding of caste-based power relations in villages in India that would provide a base to understand the social stage on which sanitation interventions are implemented by governments. Then this chapter proceeds to examine colonial and postcolonial discourse about hygiene and public spaces. Finally, this chapter concludes by reviewing differential access to sanitation for Dalit communities, even as certain

Dalit communities continue to bear the burden of sanitation work in urban and rural India, despite legal provisions to ensure these practices are discontinued.

2.2. Understanding caste and untouchability

This section provides an understanding of the various characterisations of caste and its manifestation in the form of untouchability. Next, this section outlined how attempts to govern caste led to bureaucratic categories of caste that form the basis of all government programmes in India today. Caste or *Jati* is a segmented social unit based on endogamy, occupational specialisation and ritualistic opposition of pure and impure (Dumont, 1980). The caste of a person traditionally decides their place in the social hierarchy, who they can marry, who they socialise with, and their occupations (Beteille, 2020). The legitimacy and dogma of caste and the foundational notions of purity and pollution are rooted in the Hindu religious texts (Aktor *et al.*, 2010). Ritual purity is considered crucial for a *Brahmin* man to be able to offer prayers and so a degree of purity is a relentless concern for Hindus (Deliège, 2011). The ways to maintain purity can be endogamous marriages within castes to maintain group purity, maintaining a vegetarian diet, and using certain materials, such as silk, which are considered ritually pure (Deliège, 2002). Human waste such as excreta, urine, and menstrual blood; and people who are in a mourning period due to the death of a family member, or a menstruating woman, or a woman who has just given birth, are considered ritually polluting (ibid). There is, however, a temporality to the purity and pollution depending on the caste. While people of higher caste can purify themselves after contact with sources of ritual pollution through ritual baths and purifying rites, Dalits are considered permanently polluted and are forced into work on polluted occupations such as cleaning faeces, and carcasses, cutting hair, sweeping the streets (Deliège, 2011). Caste-based ideas of purity and pollution are also practised among Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and other religions in India (Jodhka, 2002; Levesque, 2023; Mosse, 2012).

Dumont (1980) argued that caste, and not state, held Indian society together, along with its constituent village republics and communities. He characterised the ideology of caste as based on hierarchy; the political and economic spheres of social life in India function under an overarching religious sphere which is based on purity and pollution. This understanding of caste, and its relation to Indian society, has since proved highly

influential, while also recently challenged for its lack of attention to the inherent inequality in caste. This is because caste undeniably has a religious dimension in that it is based on Brahmanical Hinduism, where ideas of purity and pollution play a critical role in influencing cultural values and everyday social practices (Aktor *et al.*, 2010). However, caste is not just a dichotomy between the pure and the impure but also is the basis of other forms of opposition such as domination and subordination, and exploitation based on unequal access to material resources (Chakravarti, 2003). Jodhka and Naudet (2023) critique Dumont's conceptualisation of caste by arguing caste was never simply an ideological system, prescribing a social order of hierarchy based on a cultural consensus, but has always carried with it a system of domination and power which has led to privileges for some and deprivations for others.

An integral element of the caste system, through its ritualistic notions of purity and pollution, is the practice of untouchability. Based on his experiences, Ambedkar (1945, P.266) defined untouchability as "…not a case of social separation, a mere stoppage of social intercourse for a temporary period. It is a case of territorial segregation and of a *cordon sanitaire* putting the impure people inside a barbed wire into a sort of a cage." Untouchability, thus, dictates that higher castes are purer and contact with Dalits can pollute them (Chaudhry, 2013; Mendelsohn and Vicziany, 1998). Sarukkai (2009) argues that the idea of the 'untouchable' is an essential condition of being 'touchable', and untouchability is key to the formation of *Brahmin*hood to emphasise that *Brahmin*s cannot be touched by the Dalit. Through the interpreted prescription of the Hindu scriptures, Dalits are forced to perform tasks necessary to maintain the ritual purity of the caste community by removing the impurity that endangers the competencies of the caste members (Aktor *et al.*, 2010). In this way, untouchability operates through the outsourcing of untouchability by the upper caste to the outcastes (Dalit), particularly through the outsourcing of occupations and tasks that are considered ritually impure to certain Dalit castes (Sarukkai, 2009). Illiah (1996) argued that *Brahmin*s are afforded the privilege of pursuing leisurely spiritual pursuits only due to the extraction of surplus labour from the Dalit producers.

The way untouchability is practised in different regions and religions of South Asia may vary, but the common thread is that a certain category of people placed at the bottom caste category, who were formerly untouchables, face economic deprivation, discrimination and exploitation (Jodhka and Naudet, 2023). Besides the sociological

aspects of caste such as endogamy (marriage within the caste) and purity and pollution, an inherent aspect of caste is how it is experienced through humiliation and violence by those placed at the bottom of this hierarchy (Guru, 2011). This is key to emphasising that the caste system is not based on the consensus of all who are part of it. According to Ambedkar (1989, P.167), "the caste system is marked not merely by inequality but is affected by the system of graded inequality. All castes are not on a par. They are one above the other. There is a kind of ascending scale of hatred and a descending scale of contempt". The overemphasis on the religious foundation of the caste system and its purity/pollution dichotomy by some caste researchers such as Dumont (1980), obscures the reality that untouchability is also an issue of economic and social deprivation. In accordance with the Hindu scriptures, 'Untouchables' were not only those groups that were ritually impure but were also prohibited from owning land, forced to perform stigmatised occupations for the rest of the caste population, barred from political expression, and thus denied human dignity (Deliège, 2010). These patterns of exploitation continue to varying degrees in modern Indian societies, but great many changes to this oppression have been achieved, largely due to the resistance of Dalit leaders and anti-caste movements. Today, the formerly Untouchables, constitutionally categorised as the Scheduled Caste (SC), or Dalits as the term chosen by the community in resistance, have the right to vote, own land, and work any occupation (Kalapati, 2022). However, the persistence of caste-based inequalities based on the practice of untouchability in modern societies continues to manifest in the form of restrictions on occupational mobilities, the share of land, housing, public health, and housing segregation, and violent atrocities against the Dalits.

2.3. The evolving characterisation of caste

There are many theories regarding the origins of caste. Among key theories that have held ground regarding what led to the origin of caste are: One, the invasion of the subcontinent by the Indo-European speaking people known as the Aryans and their quest to establish racial superiority. Two, Brahmans looking to consolidate power in the face of the rising threat of Buddhism. Third, caste started as a benign division of occupations in the Vedic period (Ambedkar, 1990; Dumont, 1980; Mendelsohn and Vicziany, 1998). Meanwhile, Dalits have been defined by Viswanath (2014, P.8) as a "racialized subpopulation and the descendants of agrarian slaves". What can be

surmised is that there is no single point of origin of the caste system and that the different features of the caste system developed and were perpetuated at different periods influenced by cultural, economic, and political contexts (Jodhka and Naudet, 2023). There are two main forms of caste, as presented in scholarship: the *Varna* and the *Jati*. The origin of *Varnas* or social order is based on the sacred text of Hindus – *the Rigveda*, which states that there are four groups better known as *Varna*. These groups, that is, *Brahmans* (the priests), *Kshatriyas* (warriors), *Vaishyas* (traders and craftsmen), and the *Shudras* (the peasants), are arranged hierarchically, one above the other respectively (Deshpande, 2015). Brahmans used dogmas related to caste to impose their control over the state and religion and to establish their social and religious supremacy (Olcott, 1944).

One of the key dogmas was given by the Hindu lawgiver Manu, who said that the primal man, *Purush*, destroyed himself to create a human society and that different parts of his body created the four different *Varna*s and the related occupations (Mendelsohn and Vicziany, 1998). The *Brahmin*s came from his head representing the intellectual priests, the *Kshatriya*s came from his arms and were responsible for the protection of people, the *Vaishya*s came from his thighs would-be traders and land cultivators, and the *Shudras* from his feet were in service of the other three orders (Milner, 1994). At the bottom of this chain was the fifth order, or the outcastes or the *Avarnas*, which were added later to do the work considered menial or lowly, such as scavenging, removing human faeces, and working with dead carcasses and human bodies. This is the group of people that came to be known as the Untouchables eventually (Mendelsohn and Vicziany, 1998). Caste is often used as a translation for *Varnas* and *Jatis*, but the two concepts which although often used interchangeably, represent completely different realities.

In the second sense, caste exists as *Jati*, an endogamous subgroup of a *Varna* or *Varna*s with similar dietary practices, and in which intermarriage is almost always permitted (Ingole, 2021). In the day-to-day lives and experiences of ordinary people, caste primarily manifests itself as *Jati* (Ingole, 2021). Srinivas (1957), who equates caste with *Jati* and not *Varna*, argues that "the *Varna*-model has produced a wrong and distorted image of caste. It is necessary for the sociologist to free himself from the hold of the *Varna*-model if he wishes to understand the caste system" (Srinivas, 1957):66). In vernacular literature, *Jati* can refer to communities associated with certain occupations

such as ironsmiths and goldsmiths, or religions such as Hindus and Muslims, or tribes, endogamous communities, gendered communities such as men or women, or based on languages (Samarendra, 2011). A segment of sociologists since independence have surmised that caste, in its current perception and conceptualisation, was a creation of the colonial British (Dirks, 1992; Samarendra, 2011). Dirks (2002) argued that caste as we know it today is not just a residual survival of ancient India but a specifically colonial form of civil society. Dirks questioned the assumption in comparative sociology that before the British colonial rule, the Indian crowns were hollow, and argued that the kings were not inferior to Brahmans and that in Indian society, caste itself was shaped by political struggles and processes (ibid). For the British, India was not just a land to be conquered and exploited; in order to rule it effectively, it was also a society to be understood and enumerated (Denault, 2023). At the top of the colonial British curiosity were caste, tribe and religion (Mendelsohn and Vicziany, 1998, P.28). Much of the administrative scholarship and colonial statistical view of Indian society resulted in the census of India starting 1871-2 (ibid). These Census operations from the middle of the 19th century brought with them a number of fundamental changes, ushering in an era of a caste system conceived in the context of counting and classification (Samarendra, 2011; Denault, 2023).

It is important to note that the above arguments by researchers consider these colonial classifications of caste as a 'colonial census idea of caste', not that caste was invented by the colonial authorities or that no attempts at the enumeration of castes had happened at the state level in the pre-colonial era (Lardinois, 2023). Omvedt (2010) cautions against any arguments that caste was a colonial construct, and argues that its pre-colonial forms were equally important, and more importantly the process of classifying and enumerating caste during colonialism was not a project exclusively of British rulers, but this work was conducted with the active collaboration with the Indian upper-caste elite.

A key influence of the colonial census categorisation of caste is that it continues to categorise people in postcolonial India into governable bureaucratic categories, that is the General Caste, Other Backward Class, Scheduled Caste, and Scheduled Tribe (Jodhka *et al*, 2023). That is, in postcolonial India, compensatory discrimination measures were included in the constitution (commonly known in India as reservation) which reserves a certain number of seats in legislatures, positions in public

employment, and educational benefits for the Dalit communities. In postcolonial India, Untouchables as a political group were unified, under state control as per the Indian Act of 1935, under the category known as Scheduled Castes (SC). While the Adivasi groups were categorised as Scheduled Tribes (ST). The ambit of the policy of positive discrimination was expanded in 1990 to a new group of beneficiaries, that is, the intermediate caste groups grouped under the bureaucratic category of Other Backward Classes (OBC) (Kumar, 2021). The OBC includes the castes belonging to the *Shudra Varna*, while the caste classified as General Category (GC) encompasses the three higher *Varna*, that is *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, and *Vaishya*. Due to the historical and structural privileges enjoyed by these castes, particularly in terms of education and employment, these castes are excluded from the benefits of compensatory discrimination policies (Lardinois, 2023). These bureaucratic categories of caste form the basis of social provision and government programme implementation in India, and this includes sanitation programmes.

The next section examines the key features of caste-based geographies in the villages of India, that inform sanitation programming.

2.4. Caste in rural geographies of India

This section examines the literature to show how land ownership and the socio-spatial organisation of villages are closely tied to practices of caste-based segregation and untouchability. A key feature of the rural power relations is the dominance of upper and dominant castes, in positions of power in government institutions and in terms of land ownership. These key features have a substantial impact on the governance and implementation of state programmes, including sanitation in the villages. These power relations were articulated by Ambedkar (1990, P.167), which holds true for most villages today: “Castes are so distributed that in any given area there is one caste which is major and there are others which are small and are subservient to the major caste owing to their comparative smallness and their economic dependence upon the major caste which owns most of the land in the village.”

The dominance reinforced by the upper-caste landed elites using the nexus of the colonial administrators and upper castes continued post-independence with a proliferation of upper-caste networks linking bureaucrats and politicians to landlords in

the countryside (Witsoe, 2011). The colonial British rule had solidified caste-based ownership of land through the Zamindari system instituted in 1793 under which individuals or landlords were considered owners of the land and were owed rent from the peasants living on those lands (Prasad, 1973). The Zamindari system gave the landlords or their individual families, who would be of the upper caste, administrative power in the lands assigned to them; this way, they would consolidate land and properties and become landlords of the village (Kumar, 2013). This system was abolished in India post-independence which weakened the dominance of the upper castes substantially (Trivedi, 2022). Further, increased access to non-agrarian work opportunities through migration and gradual changing of rural places so that people gain urban connections and qualities have ensured some escape routes and occupational mobilities for lower-caste labourers from the oppression of upper caste-landed elites (Jodhka and Naudet, 2023). However, land ownership in rural India continues to be skewed towards the upper-caste and dominant caste groups and is directly related to the practice of untouchability. A recent study showed that the land share of the upper castes is almost double their population share, while the land share of the SCs is about half of their population share, making the SC community the most deficient in terms of land ownership (Dasgupta and Pal, 2021). Importantly, the same study showed that the castes that owned about 70% of the total land in their sample, also were most likely to self-report practicing untouchability, that is the upper castes and OBCs. Across India, on an average 60% of rural Dalit households are landless, much higher than households in any other social group, and nearly 70% of Dalit farmers are labourers on farms owned by others (Ranganathan, 2021). The practice of caste and untouchability is thus intimately linked to the ownership of land and labour in villages.

Caste further manifests in the socio-spatial organisation of villages in India which are collection of hamlets and sub-hamlets that consist of members of the same caste. One of the key features of caste is the restrictions it imposes on social intercourse between members of different castes, whether it be upper and Dalits or different castes that are high up in the caste hierarchy (Ghurye and Seth, 2017). This restriction of intermingling between castes is upheld through the socio-spatial organisation of villages along caste lines. The directions of the settlements not only reflect perpetual, age-old religious and caste-based traditions but also have an inherent logic of upper-caste hamlets avoiding sights, sounds, and smells that they associate with the Dalit hamlets (Guru and

Sarukkai, 2019; Patel, 2021). Caste discrimination has existed not only in the form of social hierarchy but also in the location of habitations, in that the Scheduled Caste hamlets are always located on the periphery or at a distance from the rest of the caste hamlets. An Indian village can be seen as a string of ghettoes based on caste, where Dalit groups are confined to the fringes of the villages, a system that perpetuates untouchability and the untouchables (Ambedkar, 1945; Deliège, 2011; Patel, 2021).The rural economy is thus characterised by caste, as different hamlets are organised along caste lines, while the SC hamlets are usually distanced from the rest of the village (Munshi, 2019). A distinct feature of Indian society is the manner in which communities and their members often get identified by not just their religious and cultural practices but also associations of smells and eating habits, and this has major consequences for the way the caste-based organisation of residential areas is organised in rural and urban areas (Waghmore and Contractor, 2015). The maintenance of social distance based on notions of purity and hierarchy can be best understood through its manifestation in the spatial organisation of communities (ibid). So in contemporary India, untouchability not only traps certain people into an exploitative cycle of landlessness, indebtedness, and often degrading labour, it is also continued through spatial segregation and demarcations of property (Ranganathan, 2022).

2.5. Gendered dimensions of caste

Caste and gender are closely intertwined with each other and shape each other as the structure of marriage, sexuality and reproduction are an integral component of reproducing the caste system (Chakravarti, 2018). The structure of marriage, particularly the endogamous marriage norms between the same sub-caste groups, is critical to how caste inequality is reproduced (ibid). Proposing Brahmanical patriarchy as a concept, Chakravarti (1993) drew attention to how the honour and respectability of upper-caste men is protected through the protection of the honour of women through the closely guarded sexuality of women. However, it is important to not undermine the agency of women as upper-caste women, who are themselves complicit in the structures of caste that create inequality and lead to their own subordination (Chakravarti, 2018). This is because their compliance with the caste system rewards them with material and symbolic gains, and deviance from caste norms leads to expulsion from material resources of the family (Chakravarti, 2018). Upper-caste and dominant-caste women's

practice of untouchability, particularly in domestic spaces, is key to the maintenance of caste norms and boundaries (Guru and Sarukkai, 2019).

Physical spatial divisions along caste, religion, and gender lines ensure the exclusion or limited participation of women and lower-caste men in different spaces (Chowdhry, 1993; Devi and Kaur, 2019). Land and spaces can often be closely linked to caste-based masculinities, which can also distance women and lower-caste men from these spaces. A study of Jat men in Punjab shows how ownership of arable land and the ability to work on it is considered crucial to a Jat man's identity, meanwhile, it is considered immodest for a woman to be seen in spaces related to agricultural work (Kaur, 2024). Meanwhile, Dalit women often grapple with feelings of rejection or being at the receiving end of disgust when they occupy public spaces dominated by upper-caste men (Faustina, 2012; Pawde, 1992; Virmani, 2020). On the other hand, Dalit literature has also demonstrated defiance from the Dalit women who aim to occupy spaces from which the upper caste people have historically sought to push them out (Pawde, 1992; Virmani, 2020).

With such diversity of embodied experiences based on caste and gender location, bringing the lens of intersectionality is critical for recognising the socially differentiated and gendered dimensions of sanitation infrastructure and sanitation programmes (Truelove and O'Reilly, 2021). Within Water and Sanitation Programmes, women find ways to assert themselves within patriarchal systems, even if this sometimes goes against the goals of the development projects, by accepting, contributing to or resisting gender oppression (O'Reilly, 2006). The category of 'women' in development projects has also been questioned by development and feminist researchers arguing that international and national development programmes can often frame women as a homogenous entity that needs to be empowered by external actors (Cornwall, 2003; O'Reilly, 2004). In the case of India, the intersectional lens of caste, gender, age, and class become key to development programmes such as water and sanitation, as based on caste and class location, women and men may interpret their needs and gains from programmes differently (O'Reilly, 2006) and resist differently (Birkenholtz, 2015). These arguments frame this research as much of the sanitation programme advocacy and public messaging is based on essentialised gendered ideas of women as mothers, daughters and sisters who need to be protected by men and communities from the indignities of open defecation (Chapter 5).

This section has shown how gender and caste are intimately linked to embodied experiences of spaces and government programmes such as sanitation programmes. The next section explores how ideas of hygiene and spaces are linked closely to ideas of caste and dirt in India.

2.6. Understanding hygiene and dirt in a caste-based society

Key to understanding sanitation interventions and caste-based understandings of how human excreta must be governed is Mary Douglas' (2003) influential contention that if you remove concepts of pathogenicity and germ theory from dirt, then dirt is 'matter out of place'. Douglas elaborated (2003, P.36):

"[Dirt] implies two conditions: a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order. Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements."

With the idea of dirt as matter out of place, Douglas aimed to examine symbolic systems of purity, and one such system she alludes to extensively in her book is the caste system. Due to caste-based notions of purity and pollution, contact with excreta is considered ritually defiling for higher caste Hindus and can be cleaned only by certain Dalits that are considered impure per the caste order, thus designated to clean excreta and latrines (Douglas, 2003). Caste pollution, thus, represents a symbolic system whose primary concern is ordering social hierarchy. Following Douglas' analysis, Doron and Raja (2017) argue that the notions of purity and pollution associated with the caste system govern individual conduct and the body politic. Much like activities such as eating and dressing, in India, defecating also reproduces the social order (ibid).

However, researchers, particularly in waste studies, caution against a purely social constructivist approach to waste, as followed by Douglas. Gille (2007) highlights waste's hybridity, urging researchers to acknowledge that material and social are two sides of waste and that in order to understand waste, we need to pay attention to culture, materiality and economy all at once. In researching the politics of waste, Gille (2007) urged understanding whether or to what extent waste issues are a subject of public discourse, what is taboo, what tools of policy are mobilised to deal with waste issues, and what non-waste goals such political instruments serve. Liboiron (2021) suggests

that Douglas' conception of dirt as matter out of place gives us a way to examine systems of power as where there is a system of power, there are necessarily rejected elements (or dirt), and one way to investigate systems is by studying what they reject, abject, and oppress. As dirt, or in the case of this thesis, faeces, are culturally framed as sources of pollution by their potential to disturb social order, they lead to social sanctions that exclude certain practices and groups of people deemed unclean to produce socio-spatial order (Moore, 2012).

The persistence of dirt in Indian public spaces has concerned colonial as well as postcolonial authorities and has been attributed by Chakrabarty (1992, P.77) to a resistance by the economically and socially marginalised to not receiving the benefits of capitalism and their 'refusal to become citizens of an ideal, bourgeois order'. Rodrigues (2009) disagrees with Chakrabarty's approach by arguing that the presence of filth in public spaces has less to do with certain classes' refusal to become citizens of the ideal bourgeois order, and more to do with the refusal of higher caste people to clean up public spaces that, according to caste-based norms, are expected to be cleaned by certain castes. Lee (2017) further contested Chakrabarty's claim with his study's respondents' contention that it was the systematic flow of privileged caste filth into Dalit spaces that was responsible for the filth and bad smell (*malador*) in public spaces, rather than the poor disseminating waste in dominant spaces. In postcolonial India, the production of the middle-class identity has been dependent on the politics of spatial purification, which prioritises middle-class claims over public spaces by cleansing such spaces of the poor and the working class (Fernandes, 2018). Arguing that the power of caste purity is deeper than the disciplining abilities of the liberal state, Waghmore and Contractor (2015) elaborate that the caste-based ideology of hierarchy normalises incivilities, creating a sphere of pure citizens, which inevitably involves the framing of some citizens as impure and polluted citizens.

When it comes to open defecation, the government discourse frames the practice as a public nuisance and offensive to the urban and rural aesthetic. But this privileges the urban middle class and elites' sensory experiences over the experience of the poor who are forced to choose between waiting times for public toilets, which are kept in poor and unhygienic conditions, or the open space (Desai *et al*., 2015). Similarly, in a study in Indore, India, Truelove and O'Reilly (2021) argue that many informal settlers in the city do not want to defecate in the open but do so due to poorly maintained sanitation

infrastructure. This also challenges the discourse of poor, uneducated people stubbornly sticking to the practice of open defecation, when it is actually a rejection of the citizen contract offered by the state (O'Reilly and Budds, 2023). Doron and Raja (2017) emphasise the importance of challenging the healthy/ pathological body dichotomy as framed through the biomedical discourse of open defecation. Further, it is important to enrich this discourse with the subjective experiences of the people who are accused of defecating in the open and provide a much richer interrogation of the practice of open defecation (ibid).

Following this section's contextualisation of hygiene discourses through various understandings of public space and who must be kept out of it, the next section reviews how Dalit communities remain excluded through the implementation of sanitation programmes in India.

2.7. Pathways to sanitation poverty for Dalit communities

Dalit communities are likely to benefit less from government sanitation interventions in terms of access to sanitation technologies, while also being burdened with the task of cleaning human excreta due to the structural exclusion and discrimination perpetuated by the caste system. Dalits face inequality and exclusion in India in many ways, as untouchability leads their exclusion from public transport, homes of higher caste people, equal wages, government jobs, entry into religious institutions, and health services (Bhattacharjee, 2023; Mander, 2015; Shah, 2006; Thorat, 2008; Trivedi, 2022). The social inequality faced by the Dalits also affects how they experience the impact of sanitation interventions. Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe households have been found to have higher levels of deprivation in access to latrine facilities in the house and also a low annual rate of decline for the deprivation in access to latrine facilities in the house as compared to other households (Kumar, 2017). As detailed earlier in this chapter, Dalit hamlets are often separated from the villages and close to the areas where the upper caste defecates. While upper caste and dominant caste people also avoid defecating in the same areas as Dalits, Dalit settlements in a village are often near open defecation spots (Guru and Sarukkai, 2019; O'Reilly *et al.*, 2017). While women who defecate in the open have to do it in the cover of darkness and in areas of the village that are used as defecation points for their caste communities, many fear violence, sexual harassment and embarrassment (Kulkarni *et al*., 2017).

Globally, accessible and reliable water availability is a key factor influencing rural latrine use, otherwise, it is more convenient for people to defecate near local water bodies (Routray *et al*., 2015). In India as well, assured daily access to water from multiple sources is an important factor in the usage of toilets and latrines (O'Reilly and Louis, 2014). However, access to water in India is politicised and often varies on the lines of caste. Due to the importance accorded to water as a purifier and due to the perception of people of Dalit as polluters of water, Dalits have historically struggled for equal access to water in their households, especially in rural areas (Tiwary and Phansalkar, 2007). In many villages in rural India, Dalit settlements are separate and segregated from settlements of other castes (Kethineni, and Humiston, 2010). Segregation of upper caste and Dalit settlements and placement of sources of water in upper caste parts of villages are used as tools to exclude the Dalits from access to water. Studies have shown that in parts of India, there is not only segregation of water sources of upper caste and Dalit hamlets but also distribution networks of water are also without any connections (Banda *et al*., 2007), showing discrimination and segregation at the level of a service provider. Another study showed that while all higher-caste households had personal water connections, very few in lower-caste settlements had household connections to water (O'Reilly *et al*., 2017). This compromises access to water for SC households which is a key factor that directly affects their ability to have functional toilets.

The types of toilets built by people can also depend on their caste location, which is important as the types of toilets have a major influence on whether people use them or not. Since Dalit residents in the villages are often, on average, poorer, they build government-subsidised toilets, and upper castes build self-financed toilets (Routray *et al*, 2015). This can influence open defecation rates as well. A study in rural Odisha showed that households reported that their government-subsidised toilets, which were used by Dalit households, required 12 litres of water for cleaning after defecation but the water supply points were far from their households, so they resorted to open defecation (Routray *et al*., 2015). Government-subsidised latrines are often not used because of unsuitable structures, because they are a model that requires faecal emptying work from the owners, or the toilets start to smell due to structural issues (O'Reilly *et al*., 2017). Another common factor for SC households not building toilets is that the financial subsidies given by the government for these households are often captured by

the upper caste or dominant caste households, due to clientelist relations between the village government and dominant caste households (ibid). This means that certain caste members in positions of power ensure that government financial subsidies are diverted to their caste members in the villages. There continues to be a high disparity between upper and dominant caste groups and SC groups in terms of access to drinking water, toilets and bathrooms, in rural and urban areas (Mishra, 2023). They further show that this disparity is connected to vulnerable groups being denied equal access to housing and basic amenities due to prejudices and biases against their social identity (ibid). Thus, the government, in its provision of toilet subsidies to the poor, again neglects the need for attention to Dalit communities, which in many cases, despite being poverty-ridden, are not able to access government benefits due to caste relations in the village.

2.8. Invisibilised caste-based sanitation labour

The types of toilets built as part of the sanitation programmes and the faecal sludge management are deeply connected to caste relations in India. As explained in section 2.2, the Dalits, or formerly untouchables, fall outside of the four-tier *Varna* system of caste which consists of the rest of the upper castes. As per the caste customs, Dalits are structurally forced to carry out occupations that are considered "ritually polluting" by the upper castes, including cremating dead bodies, clearing animal carcasses, cattle skinning, leather tanning, and cleaning human faecal waste (Kapoor, 2021; Mander, 2020; Monteiro, 2022; Valmiki and Mukherjee, 2008). This engagement with waste preserves untouchability, with those forced to perform polluted tasks being perceived as dirty, thus further entrenching their caste status (Harriss-White, 2020). People of the upper caste do not clean their faeces as their religious law identifies the act as ritually polluting and demeaning (Permutt, 2011). Most importantly, this division of labour brought about by the Caste System is not a division based on choice, but is based on the "dogma of predestination" (Ambedkar, 1936, P.45).

The practice of manual scavenging, as part of sanitation labour, remains rampant in India, despite being outlawed along with caste-based discrimination. Manual scavenging refers to any task involving carrying or cleaning human excreta with bare hands or only hand tools (Wankhade and Kahle, 2023). Sanitation workers are employed to clean dry latrines (toilets unconnected to a disposal system), railway

tracks, streets, septic tanks, or sewers (Gupta, 2022). The people hired to do this work are usually of a certain Dalit caste, work under hazardous conditions and face much stigma (Sreenath, 2023). Manual scavenging is, essentially a caste-based occupation, highly gendered in nature, and is rooted in Hindu philosophy and religious practice (Permutt, 2011; Wankhede, 2021), which was institutionalised by British colonisers (Bhakta *et al*., 2022), and continues as a practice by households, government and private companies today (Gupta, 2022). It is estimated that 99% of Manual Scavengers in India are Dalits, and among these, 95% are women (Mander *et al*, 2020). There is clearly a gendered aspect to sanitation work as evident in these figures and most of these women do not have a choice, are poorly paid and are threatened with violence if they try to quit from the village or communities or their own families (Chandran, 2016). However, the labour of the sanitation workers underpinning sanitation programmes, the hazardous and poor conditions they work in, and the caste-based nature of conscripting certain castes to carry out this labour are hidden in sanitation policies (Gupta, 2022).

There is a growing question regarding whether the programme interventions to ensure the villages are open defecation free, are perpetuating the age-old caste hierarchy through modern technology. According to the government, nearly 100 million toilets were built across rural and urban India during the Clean India Mission in just five years (Friedrich *et al.*, 2020). The preference for toilets with septic tanks as opposed to twin-pit latrines, which are promoted by governments in rural areas, has been shown by multiple studies across India, including this research in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 (Bhol *et al*., 2019; Deshpande and Kapur, 2018). One of the reasons for this is the perception of septic tanks as better faecal management technology, and the other is a lack of awareness of issues related to the safe confinement of faeces in twin pit latrines (Deshpande and Kapur, 2018). Another study in northern rural India showed that the vast majority of the interviewees were not aware that decomposed faeces were safer to clear by hand as compared to fresh faecal sludge (Coffey and Spears, 2016). The researchers, however, argued that although there may be scientific explanations as to why emptying out the pit in a twin-pit latrine after a few months is safe and is practised in many countries, it would not work in India as cleaning faeces is considered ritualistically polluting and demeaning (ibid).

There have been attempts over the years by successive governments to provide alternative employment to manual scavengers, but the practice continues. The current

government has started the Self Employment Scheme for the Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers which is implemented by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (PIB, 2015). However, there have been challenges in implementing such schemes as even though scavengers are trained and assisted in taking up alternative occupations, many a times the beneficiaries relapse into manual scavenging due to being boycotted in their alternative occupations by upper-caste people in (Singh, 2009). Sanitation workers also face substantial challenges when they try to look for alternative employment. This is because despite having the required qualifications, workers from certain castes are hired for cleaning jobs by the government, Panchayat or even private companies after they reveal their castes in the recruitment process (Bhattacharjee, 2014).

This demonstrates that there is a clear dissonance between the laws and the way caste is practiced on the ground through labour hiring practices. Gupta (2022) argues that if caste is made through space, then the invisibilisation of workers within the policy allows caste-based differences to be perpetuated (Gupta, 2022) . The governments in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods have perpetuated a sanitation discourse based on the modernisation of certain aspects of sanitation (such as offices of engineers, while neglecting other areas of sanitation such mechanisation of sanitation work or conditions of sanitation workers (Koonan, 2021). The consequence of this politics of sanitation, according to Prashad (2001, P. 126), is the development of a sanitation system that relied on ‘manual labour…to resolve its sanitation problems’.

2.9. Conclusion

The practice of open defecation is distinctly gendered and caste-based in India. This chapter examined the distinct ways caste and gender are inscribed into the socio-spatial landscapes of villages and how sanitation and open defecation have been viewed by researchers and tackled by successive Indian governments. Through an analysis of caste and sanitation literature, this chapter shows that sanitation programmes aiming to make domestic and public spaces in villages open defecation-free are deeply embedded in caste and gender relations, leading to multiple subjectivities. Thus, this chapter outlines the following gaps in sanitation literature.

Firstly, if rural governance is based on caste-based relations of domination and subordination, it is important to understand how sanitation interventions are adapted to these local governance structures by implementers of sanitation programmes to achieve successful sanitation outcomes. Secondly, if domestic and public sanitation are based on caste-based socio-spatial norms, is important to understand how sanitation programmes interact with these norms to examine the sanitary spaces and subjects that are created. Finally, if sanitation labour is entrenched in caste-based labour relations, then a major gap in research is to understand how preferences for certain toilets in the study sites can lead to invisibilised entrenching of sanitation labour obscured by the massive build-up of toilets through sanitation programmes.

Chapter 3: Tackling open defecation through governance: Practice and theory

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explained how caste relations and caste-based understandings of dirt are closely intertwined with sanitation governance and rural spaces. By examining sanitation policy processes in the implementation of CLTS, this thesis examines how space is governed by norms of caste and religion in the study sites. This thesis proposes that sanitation governance in India follows a governmentality of caste through which spaces are ordered along caste lines. Using a Foucauldian understanding of affect and religion in Chapters 5 and 6, respectively, the thesis draws attention to various governance strategies aimed at creating sanitary subjects that adopt toilets and abandon open defecation. This chapter first reviews the literature regarding the implementation of Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS) in various countries, including India, and its various critiques. Next, this chapter explores Foucauldian understandings of how community is used for the practice of government, particularly in sanitation interventions such as CLTS. Then, this chapter outlines the theoretical frameworks guiding this thesis: governmentality of caste and policy mobilities.

Through governmentality, this thesis combines an understanding of affective dimensions of government sanitation programmes and affective dimensions of caste to contribute to a particular affective governmentality. Further, by examining how devout rural residents adapt domestic spaces as they negotiate Western notions of hygiene and religious understandings of purity and pollution, this thesis contributes to an understanding of a unique form of religious governmentality. Finally, through a policy

mobilities framework, this thesis explores how CLTS-inspired sanitation policy was transferred between different districts and nationally within India by the World Bank, and how this policy transfer changed the national sanitation policy and the places it was implemented in. Overall, this thesis proposes sanitation as a governmentality of caste in which caste-based understanding of space is used in the governance of open defecation as government actors nudge rural bodies into thinking of defecation as a domestic bodily activity rather than one for the open spaces. But within these normative goals of creating open defecation-free villages, government sanitation interventions maintain a caste-based order reinforcing existing inequalities.

3.2. Community-led Total Sanitation: A background

Behavioural change has been a common objective of government sanitation programmes since the failure of the Central Rural Sanitation Programme in 1986 (Hueso and Bell, 2013). One of the policy instruments that has gained popularity in the Indian context, as well as in the Global South, is the Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS) strategy. CLTS was piloted in Bangladesh in 1999 and was subsequently adopted in several states as part of the Total Sanitation Campaign, Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan and the Clean India Mission (Hueso González, 2013). CLTS was also implemented at both the study sites of this thesis, Mandi and Churu, in 2005 and 2013. The approach aims to use a combination of participatory techniques of behavioural change and support with household latrine construction, through procedural advice and further action for those unable or unwilling to construct latrines (Kar and Chambers, 2008). However, the original approach staunchly is against financial support by the government or NGOs to help villagers build toilets (ibid). The participatory techniques involve community trainings by trained facilitators, transect walks involving walking in various common defecation spots, and community mapping of households that do not have toilets and defecate in the open (ibid). Health messaging steeped in cultural norms is used to make people understand that they are each other's shit (in colloquial terms) so that the collective shame and disgust 'triggers' the community into taking action and building toilets (ibid). The scholarship on CLTS is mixed in terms of the findings and raises many questions about the efficacy of CLTS.

CLTS has been shown to increase toilet coverage and toilet building in communities with high rates of open defecation in South Asia and Africa (Crocker *et al.*, 2017; Mehta, 2009). However, one of the major challenges has been the scalability and sustained use toilets in these communities after toilets have been built (Kar, 2012). Sustained use of toilets is seen to be dependent on the behaviour of others in the community, community approval of latrine ownership, self-confidence in latrine building, and also a clear understanding of the health benefits of building toilets in the community (Harter *et al*., 2018; Stuart *et al.*, 2021). In other countries, sustained use has been connected to people finding the physical convenience of using toilets or a perception that people who own and maintain toilets have a low risk of diseases such as diarrhoea (Mosler *et al*., 2018). Meanwhile, there have been many debates between proponents of CLTS about whether or not a 'pure' form of CLTS should be implemented, that is without financial assistance or subsidies to the poor for building toilets (Harvey, 2011). Many countries, including India, now use a 'hybrid' form of CLTS which permits the use of financial subsidies or incentives along CLTS (Mehta, 2009). Other experts, such as Sanan (2011) argue that providing financial subsidies creates division in communities, prevents community mobilisation and hinders community ownership of the programme. Harvey (2011) argues that the implementation of CLTS according to its 'pure' principles that social drivers such as a sense of pride and self-determination, can lead to large-scale community mobilisation, but the driver of this social change is not humiliation, coercion or external awards offered by external actors.

Meanwhile, questions have been raised regarding the impact of CLTS shame-based activities on the marginalised members of society. The no-subsidy approach of CLTS depends on the ability of better-off villagers to cross-subsidise those villagers who are financially unable to build toilets. Mehta (2011) shows that in many villages in Bangladesh, the rich have provided land, bamboo, and labour to help poorer households in building toilets. However, the same study in another region in northwest Bangladesh showed that rich Muslim households refused to provide financial assistance or land to poorer households to build toilets as they considered them 'dirty and unworthy of help'. Bateman and Engel (2018) question the uncritical use of shame and humiliation-based strategies as part of CLTS, which although are not recommended as part of CLTS, still occur on the ground. They argue that CLTS claims of benefits should not be seen to

outweigh its costs, as negative experiences of shame do not disappear and are highly contingent on self-esteem and experiences of poverty. Finally examining the use of CLTS in Indonesia, Engel and Susilo (2014, P.147) argue that the use of social shaming and punishments by CLTS is not only an insufficient approach for tackling the sanitation issues but one "which echoes coercive, race-based colonial public health practices".

Sanitation programming across India involves tinkering with caste relations and religious norms in India where symbolic understandings of impure clash with biomedical understandings of cleanliness (Srivastava, 2021). The examination of the material and symbolic conceptions of human excrement and how these interact with government sanitation programmes, requires an understanding of the caste-based governmentality of these programmes. Understanding the affective registers of shame-based sanitation governance and how those reify caste and gender-based inequalities in rural India requires a spatiotemporal understanding of how CLTS interacts with the material dimensions of caste. Further, understanding how ritual notions of purity and pollution can play an important role in the governance of domestic spaces requires the theoretical lens of religion as a governing power that influences particular adaptation of domestic spaces considered sacred by devout subjects. Overall, these theoretical lenses will operationalise a governmentality of caste, as this thesis explores its central objectives of understanding how sanitation interventions are not just fulfilling the normative goals of toilet usage but may also be reinforcing certain inequalities by ordering rural society along the lines of caste, class, and gender.

3.3. Governing open defecation through communities

The primary objective of sanitation interventions has been the governing of human excreta by restricting its presence in open spaces by urging rural residents to construct and use toilets. The CLTS approach aims to transform rural defecatory habits through collective action of the 'community'. The CLTS approach exemplifies the kind of intervention that Foucault refers to as government (Foucault *et al.*, 1991). By government, he referred to any rational activity undertaken by a diversity of authorities to shape the conduct of a population by using certain forms of knowledge and techniques to influence their desires (Dean, 2010). Through the concept of

governmentality or governmental rationality, Foucault aimed to draw attention to the multiplicity of authorities and not just the bureaucratic apparatus and the ruling regime (Foucault *et al*., 1991). The wide ambit of 'government' in the Foucauldian understanding makes it a suitable guiding framework for this research, which not only examines how bureaucrats and government workers influence policy implementation but also how caste and religion and those who stand high in the hierarchy constituted by these systems play a key role in creating sanitary subjects and assembling sanitation policy in particular ways.

Inherent to governmentality is defining a problem and then framing a solution systematically through a whole set of problems that represent "the domain to be governed as an intelligible field with specifiable limits and particular characteristics … defining boundaries, rendering that within them visible, assembling information about that which is included, and devising techniques to mobilize the forces and entities thus revealed" (Li, 2007, P. 7). These practices are referred to by Li (2007) as 'rendering technical'. This follows Foucault's use of 'problematization' where analysis does not examine the best ways to solve an issue but pays attention to how an issue 'is questioned, analysed classified and regulated' in specific circumstances (Deacon, 2006, P.127). Through CLTS, communities are rendered technical so that problems and solutions related to open defecation can be devised based on the characteristics of communities that have been mapped through various techniques. This approach can be defined as 'government through community', a term devised by Rose (1996) to describe a variety of strategies that are devised to invent and instrumentalise dimensions of individuals and communities to facilitate projects of regulation and reform. To govern through community requires that the community's characteristics are analysed by an outsider's expertise who teases out the communities' characteristics through techniques of community mapping and documentation (Li, 2007).

In such government through community programmes, the community is referred to not just as a geographical, social, or sociological space but as a moralising space in which people are bound to it through microcultures of values and meanings (Li, 2007). The CLTS criterion recommends that its techniques are most effective in small, remote, and socially and culturally homogenous rural communities exhibiting how development programmes often render communities as natural and unified units that can be improved through calculated techniques (Bateman and Engel, 2016). Li (2007) argues that

constructing community in this way ignores the various socio-economic factors that perpetuate inequality and differences in village social structure and constructing communities as such can lead to the intensifying of such inequalities within communities. Through CLTS, government through community techniques aim to control open and domestic spaces, to ensure that rural residents do not defecate in the open space by framing open defecation as not just a public health issue, but a moral one. This form of government through community also follows Lupton's (2005) argument that risk has become a key cultural and political construct by which individuals, social groups and institutions are organised monitored and regulated. At the same time, the belief that risk is something that can be managed or minimised through human intervention is generalised and therefore risk is associated with notions of choice, responsibility, morality and blame (ibid).

Following Massey's (2005) argument that space is a product of social relations and is thus constituted and produced by how people interact in relation to it, CLTS programmes provide insight into how government programmes aiming to govern spaces are influenced by the social relations of the villages. The space of the village, thus, is never completed or permanent but is continually produced through social relations, which can also be ordered or reordered by government sanitation programmes (Cháirez-Garza, 2014). By rendering the communities technical, CLTS techniques instrumentalise the social and religious practices that manifest through spatial organisation of rural communities, thus entrenching caste and religious social order.

3.4. Towards a governmentality of caste through sanitation interventions

"Caste shapes the very bios, the political life of the human collective in India, permeating institutions, driving practices and giving governmentality the specific form that it has in our part of the world" (Vajpeyi, 2020, P.313). Sanitation programmes are an ideal doorway to understand how caste is operationalised by the bureaucratic and development apparatus 'to constitute a "hygienic" public sphere full of "appropriately" domesticated bodies' (Doron, 2016, P. 720). What emerges is a governmentality of caste that can be used as a lens to understand localised caste relations manifesting through religious institutions and community monitoring groups in the study site.

Hindu geographies in India are primarily concerned with separating ritually polluting elements, such as human excreta, from sacred spaces including domestic households (Doron, 2016). The second concern is that groups of people are deemed ritually polluting due to their place in the caste hierarchy and are to be distanced from higher-caste people. This leads to the segregation of villages on caste lines and the particular construction of public spaces (Cháirez-Garza, 2024). Meanwhile, paying attention to practices of caste-based untouchability in domestic spaces is particularly important, as the domestic space is where caste is practised most freely in India as the domestic sphere is the space of sovereignty for the upper caste. In public, one might still be pressured into following constitutional values that are not in line with untouchability (Guru and Sarukkai, 2018), such as the ones prescribed by a government sanitation programme. But what the caste body politic does in the domestic space is intimately linked to what it does in the public, including open defecation and the construction of toilets in domestic spaces. Thus, government authorities and other institutions involved in the governing of open and domestic spaces while tackling the practice of open defecation will follow a governmentality of caste and religion. This thesis, thus, further follows Hodges (2018), who stresses the importance of examining the production of caste power within institutional practice and how institutional practice is shaped by caste power. Overall, sanitation programmes interact with social relations in villages to fulfil basic needs such as sanitation. However, they also serve as instruments of governance and forms of domination (Kotsila and Saravanan, 2017).

As shown in Figure 1, to examine how a governmentality of caste produces self-governing sanitary citizens through community-led sanitation interventions, this thesis focuses on two tenets through the papers in Chapters 5 and 6. First, the affective dimensions of caste are used by the government to create open defecation-free villages that are structured along dominant caste norms. Second, how religious institutions create sanitary citizens that adapt domestic spaces to modern sanitation infrastructure while maintaining caste-based norms of purity and pollution.

Figure 1: Governmentality of Caste in government sanitation programmes

The next section outlines the theoretical considerations for the first tenet of the governmentality of caste, that is, affective governmentality used to interrogate CLTS programmes in Chapter 5.

3.4.1. Affective Governmentality of caste

Space is an arena where social relations are (re)produced through experience (Guru and Sarukkai, 2019). How we experience ourselves is deeply shaped by historical processes that turn us into subjects, and the body gives us key knowledge about our own subjectivities (Anderson, 2002). The body then becomes a site for the production of knowledge, feelings, emotions, and history, all of which are central to subjectivity (ibid). Caste particularly manifests as spatial-sensory order based on a Brahmanical premise that every caste has its place in the caste hierarchy, making it important that the habitations of the subordinate castes should be distinctively different, in terms of appearance and smell, from the rest of the society (Lee, 2017). Spaces are experienced

through the sensations of smell, sound, taste, touch, and sight and these experiences are always infused with historical feelings and emotions (Guru and Sarukkai, 2012). There is a definite socio-religious order in the rural landscape that sustains and perpetuates untouchability in India, particularly through the segregation of *Mohallas* (hamlets) by caste, and the placement of Dalit hamlets on the outskirts of the villages. Untouchability, thus, is also deeply connected to feelings as described by Shinde (1976, P.129) translated by Guru (2009): "Untouchability is a kind of repulsive feeling, a sort of nausea, that sits deep at the bottom of brahmanical mind". This description of untouchability demonstrates that one, emotional underpinnings are key to an understanding of caste relations, and two, the practice of untouchability is not a naturalised phenomenon in Indian society and puts a name to the perpetrating mindset, that is the Brahmanical mind.

To understand how caste operates through sanitation programmes in India, examining the deliberate use of emotions in the governance of rural communities and their defecatory habits is a critical gap in sanitation and caste literature. The way caste is practised imbues bodies and spaces with emotions that have collective meanings for communities. Notions of the identity of a group, as well as experiencing common emotions and feelings of injustice, humiliation, betrayal, and harassment, for example, are based on a phenomenological experience of the social self (Guru and Sarukkai, 2019). Affective governmentality is used as a lens in this thesis to interrogate how emotions govern the will of different villagers, and how the government aims to tinker with existing social norms to moralise behaviours way beyond the sanitary habits of the villagers. The theoretical scope of affective governmentality is expanded by applying a caste-based understanding of the use of shame and disgust in sanitation policy. This framework uses as its base Ahmed's (2004, P.119) contention that emotions "do things" and push people towards certain collectives, resulting in bodily space becoming a part of social space. Based on this contention, Ahmed emphasised the importance of understanding how emotions operate in tangible and particular ways to shape the relationship between the psychic, social, and collective. Ahmed's (2004) work on how emotions stick to surfaces and people to produce affective intensities, also informs how the use of shame and humiliation by the government and communities in rural areas, can lead to the accumulation of these emotions on certain castes and landless rural residents, rendering such programmes ineffective in some ways.

In this way, this research contributes to a body of work in geographies of emotions which has examined how emotions are tied with feelings of exclusion for people based on various intersecting identities and how these emotions are tied to certain spaces (Dwyer, 1998). Emotions can act as a boundary-making force as Shee (2023) shows in her examination of how childhood experiences of racist health policies in public schools negatively affected the body images of South Asian women in adulthood, making them avoid public gyms. Negative feelings experienced in public places by certain people can also lead to emotional detachment, as another study shows, in which elderly people who have ingrained emotional attachments to certain places and public transport change their everyday routines and rhythms to avoid the ageist behaviours of others (Milligan *et. al*., 2020). And so, this thesis follows Ahmed's (2010) argument of how emotions do the work of creating boundaries between an 'us' and 'them' and are infused with the past histories of encounters in a space. Thus, how bodies interact with each other is dependent on how those histories are already impressed upon the surfaces of their bodies. In this way, emotions used by the government and citizens through the implementation of CLTS are a boundary-drawing force, that should be seen through the lens of how historically certain emotions are already impressed on bodies of certain caste and gender and certain places. As this research will show, a good sanitary subject is framed as a patriotic and honourable subject deserving of citizenship, or one that adheres to the principles of the religion and the will of Gods. A villager who built a toilet was framed as an ideal, clean citizen, contributing to the pride and accolades of the village by making it an open defecation-free village, while the government frames people who defecate in the open as abject outsiders.

The next section outlines a governmentality of religion framework that is essential in understanding how a multiplicity of authorities tackle open defecation in rural areas that are governed by belief systems steeped in ritual purity and pollution.

3.4.2. Governing sacred spaces to create sanitary spaces

In the Hindu household, purity and auspiciousness of domestic spaces are dependent upon spatially restricting all potential sources of pollution: from impure materials to polluting people (Doron and Raja, 2015). Examining cleanliness practices in domestic

spaces is key to understanding how sanitation governance is approached through Hindu upper-caste sensibilities in public spaces, as the people implementing sanitation programmes are predominantly caste Hindus. Space is where power is produced, not just concretely through control of access, but also through the creation of norms and rules that dictate social relations (Patel, 2022). The attempt to control spaces, thus, becomes an important part of a dominant ideology, power structure, or government (ibid). Hindu upper-caste beliefs play an important role in the adoption or rejection of toilets (Coffey and Spears, 2017). In attempting to govern villagers in Himachal Pradesh, Chapter 6 explores how government and religion played a pivotal role in the way villagers self-govern their defecatory habits.

Religion is a key component to understanding the construction of societies and in order to grasp the relationship between power, space, and social order, the spiritual must be examined in the geographic research of political and cultural phenomena (Holloway and Valins, 2002). In India, village deities or Gods can control the territories outside of the democratic system, where they are responsible for the spiritual well-being and the day-to-day lives of the constituents. This form of spatio-religious structure, in which villages that identify with particular village gods, can be seen in many parts of India where the territory associated with *gramadevta* (village god) is clearly defined by ritual boundaries and regularly asserted by space-marking rituals (Henn, 2008). In the study of deities and their influence on the local politics of Kullu, Himachal Pradesh, Mahajan (2023) argued that the institution of deity calls for an expansion of the concept of governmentality, considering that the deities share a very visible relationship with the state-run structures of governance. Foucault's notion of governmentality characterises regimes of power beyond the state apparatus, positing that religion plays an important role in maintaining the knowledges, truths, and social order associated with governmentality and self-regulated governance (Garmany, 2010). Following their understanding of the inextricable link between religion and the concept of governmentality, the sixth chapter contributes to this theoretical body of literature by characterising a form of governance in the South Asian context where village deities are often territorially linked and crucial to any political and development programmes in the villages. Particularly important is the understanding of this form of governmentality in the success of development programmes such as sanitation, which are intricately linked to forms of purity and pollution that such religious institutions deeply adhere to.

Governments and administrations adhering to the norms of religious organisations to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the governed, can often be a form of governmentality (Ladwig, 2020; Jeffreys and Singley, 2009). In this context, examining how the government and religious institutions worked together to sow the seeds of the acceptability of toilets in the context of religious beliefs, expands the understanding of a South Asian understanding of governmentality. This thesis, thus contributes to the importance of the body and bodily practices as central to the enactment of sacred space, emphasising that the body is not a mere vessel for the representation of religion (Gökarıksel, 2009). Additionally, in India space is not only a stage where caste relations are played out, but a crucial instrument in the social production and maintenance of identities, particularly along the lines of caste (Cháirez-Garza, 2014). The sacrality of space is particularly governed by bodily movements in Hindu homes as these can pollute the spatial purity of the house (Beck, 2005). Sacred space constitutes the interaction of embodied selves with physical environments (Tweed, 2011, P.122). The formation of modern subjectivities is a continuous process of negotiation between various and often contradictory social practices rather than a final result (Jung and Sinclair, 2020). Examining non-official sacred spaces, such as domestic spaces, offers an opportunity to examine how adherents of religion negotiate their conceptions of sacred spaces in relation to larger and social-political contexts, such as modernisation in the forms of sanitation programmes (Kong, 2001). Characterising a particular religious governmentality, this thesis will analyse how sacred spaces are negotiated or reinvented in the face of modernity. The framework is expanded first through embodied acts and bodily practices, and second, through adaptations in domestic houses by building toilets in the homesteads.

This particular affective governmentality and religious governmentality were used in the study sites of this thesis to import CLTS, a policy instrument piloted in Bangladesh, and adapt it to the Indian context. Chapter 7 used a policy mobilities framework to understand the process of mobilising and translating a sanitation policy instrument between different states in India. Through this framework, this thesis interrogated how CLTS was changed through its implementation in various geographies and the power relations inherent at various scales to ensure its mobilisation and implementation.

3.5. CLTS policy transfer in India

Using the policy mobilities framework, this thesis contributes to an understanding of how CLTS was mobilised and implemented in the two study sites, particularly focusing on how rapidly transferred policy models may be similar but differ geographically because of how they are finally implemented locally by local administrators, stakeholders, and frontline workers (Peck and Theodore, 2015). Rather than envisage power as a thing stored in the bureaucratic apparatus, the analytic of governmentality asks, "how different locales are constituted as authoritative and powerful, how different agents are assembled with specific powers, and how different domains are constituted as governable and administrate" (Dean 1999, P.29). Through the policy mobilities approach (McCann and Ward, 2012), the seventh chapter seeks to examine the actors, practices, and discourse that influence the reproduction, adoption, and travel of policies across space and time. CLTS was imported from Bangladesh by various powerful actors to India including the World Bank and Indian government officials, as this research will show. In ensuring that CLTS could be enacted successfully in the study sites, the policy mobilisers of CLTS ensured that it had the support of local caste elites and religious institutions, so it would be acceptable to the people in those sites.

McCann and Ward (2013) noted that policies and the spaces they are implemented in are not imported as a whole from foreign geography. They are assemblages of different kinds of knowledge, institutions, and guidelines that are put together by different actors with specific motivations. Clarke *et al.* (2015) draw attention to the interactions between policies and places through the lens of translation and assemblage to answer the question of what policies become in the process of moving. The idea of assemblage is important for this thesis as it draws attention to the heterogeneity of elements that go into making policy, for example, people, objects, and places, as well as different sorts of policy texts and presentations (Clarke *et al*., 2015). Following Savage (2021), Chapter 7 pays attention to the conceptual grounds of policy assemblage to examine how policy cannot be seen as defined by the sum of its constituent parts but by how these components interact with each other. That is, assemblage thinking draws attention to understanding how different components of a policy are arranged and the power relations that ensure that particular arrangement of components in a policy. That is why a policy or a best practice cannot just be transported as a whole from one place to

another, and expected to have the same impact, as the components are assembled in a new context by different actors with different motivations (Savage, 2021).

In Chapter 7, we see that policies change during translation, and re-assemblage as they are moved between different policy contexts (McCann and Ward, 2013). In this vein, policy mobilities also pay attention to mutations and translations through which policy is transformed when it is adapted to a new socio-spatial context due to being interpreted and reinterpreted by various actors (McCann and Ward, 2012). Translations do not always take place in the policy design or text but are more related to how the policy interacts with the discourse and political ideas underlying the instrument while travelling in space and time (Porto de Olivieria, 2021). This means that often policy translations provide an opportunity to examine the process of resistance when adopters or other types of transfer agents reject parts of policy models (ibid). This thesis pays attention to the elements of CLTS that were mobilised, the ones that were discarded and the ones that were transformed, as these sites of resistance reveal diverse political motivations and how these are negotiated by various actors in the policymaking spaces. Through examining such points of resistance and adaptation in the study sites, this thesis shows how various authorities achieved normative success in sanitation interventions, while simultaneously reifying particular religious and caste norms and transforming others in the face of modern sanitation.

Policymaking is thus seen to be a geographical process as different places are constructed through it and the subjectivities of the actors involved in the policymaking also evolve in the process of policy transfer (Ward, 2006). Policy models are transformed by the people who advocate for them or buy into them, such as government bureaucrats and NGO workers, who make them a part of their own social and political trajectories (Mosse and Lewis, 2014). These policies have to be translated to align with the goals and ambitions of the actors they bring together, who are responsible for implementing them. Thus, it is important to pay attention to the motivations of actors who move policies to understand how they influence policy movements and the subsequent implementation of policies. Assemblage also draws attention to the labour of forging alignments by which the objectives of different stakeholders in the assemblage including those who aspire to govern conduct and those whose conduct is to be conducted. (Li, 2007*)*. Li (2007) posited that many actors take up the position of ‘trustees’ as they attempt to improve other people's lives and express their intent to

"develop the capacities of other" and present themselves as experts. 'Meanings' assigned by various trustees to the importance of toilets, in the case of this thesis, are central to forging and fracturing alignments to assemble CLTS programmes.

Overall, this thesis examines how for a policy to be mobilised and implemented in different geographies, it requires adaptation to the social norms in those particular sites. This thesis thus follows the emphasis on the importance of translation as it can encompass an act of domination, a means through which power, hierarchy and rule are reinscribed (Clarke *et al.*, 2015). Assemblage thinking challenges claims about power and the state, borrowing from Foucault *et al.* (1991) who do not believe that power is primarily located in the state apparatus, but that power moves in and out of state and across political terrains in complex and non-linear ways (Bignall, 2008). In this thesis, through chapters 5 and 6, the power of caste and religious institutions, alongside the bureaucracy and state is examined to understand how policies are mobilised, translated, and implemented in various contexts. By examining the influence of caste and religious institutions in mobilising CLTS between two districts, this thesis contributes to policy mobilities research by examining how the notion of 'community' is tinkered with within the dominating social norms of the site to ensure that a policy instrument is successfully entrenched in various rural geographies.

3.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I outline the key theoretical considerations that guide this thesis. In its examination of Community-led Total Sanitation is used to create sanitary citizens in the two study sites, this thesis operationalises a governmentality of caste. Understanding how the problem of open defecation is problematised in terms of caste and religious norms, enables an understanding of a particular 'government through community'. In this 'government through community', complex social and political issues related to caste, gender and religion are framed as technical characteristics of communities that can be solved through proposed technical solutions such as CLTS. The governmentality of caste has two tenets: affective governmentality of caste and religious governmentality governing sacred spaces. In Chapter 5, an affective governmentality of caste is used to understand how historical understandings of spaces and certain emotions such as shame, can interact with shame-based governance strategies such as CLTS. Chapter 6 uses a

governmentality lens to understand how religious and government institutions govern domestic spaces to ensure caste-based religious norms of purity and pollution do not clash with the state goals of building toilets in each household. Finally, Chapter 7 uses a policy mobilities framework to understand how CLTS was transferred as a policy by the World Bank between the two study sites and wider India. Further, it aids in understanding the power relations that persisted in these sites as CLTS was translated and adapted to localised power relations.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1. Introduction

This research set out to understand how government sanitation programmes that are considered successful interact with social relations and social norms in rural areas where they are implemented. Particularly, this study aimed to understand how sanitation interventions targeting the practice of open defecation interacted with gender, caste, and religion in states that have high rates of casteism. This chapter first reflects on the research philosophy, guiding the research and the three empirical chapters that follow, by reflecting on the researcher's ontological and epistemological stance. Following the epistemological stance, there is a reflection on the positionality of the researcher and the various factors that influence research decisions and analysis. After that, the chapter delves into the research strategy, followed by the data collection strategy, leading to data analysis, and finally challenges regarding research ethics.

4.2. Research philosophy

Ontologically, this research falls in the constructivist paradigm which states that multiple realities are constructed through our lived experiences and interactions with others (Cresswell and Poth, 2018). In examining open defecation interventions and how the government and the people it seeks to govern perceive human excreta, I take Douglas' highly influential conception of dirt as 'matter out of place' as the departure point for this research which examines how caste relations influence the implementation of sanitation programme in villages and vice versa. This draws attention to how dirt is constructed in relation to systems of power and how these systems of power reject certain elements or dirt. One way to investigate these systems is by studying what they reject, abject and oppress. This question is central to this thesis, which not only focuses on the materiality of faecal waste but also how the faecal waste orders rural societies based on caste-based understandings of dirt and how these influence the outcomes of sanitation programmes. The study of how reality is socially constructed is a key endeavour for this thesis as according to constructivist ontology, reality is not something

that is naturally a given (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). The roots of constructivism lie in *The Social Construction of Reality* (Luckmann and Berger, 1966), which says that society is created by humans and human interaction and that not only do we construct our society, but we also accept it as it is because others have created it before us.

Within the various branches of constructivism, this research would align with social construction-as-refutation where its proponents utilise constructivism to challenge the claims about the world or refute taken-for-granted beliefs about the essential nature of societal structures such as caste, by showing that these are not natural but are socially constructed even if they have real social and economic consequences (Demeritt, 2002). Further, this thesis interrogates or challenges ideas related to hygiene and dirt as I delve into a world where socially constructed ideas of dirt are equally or arguably more important than pathological ideas of dirt. Through the examination of sanitation interventions, this thesis examines a caste-based society and its governance through a constructivist lens. In the first two empirical chapters, I build on Mary Douglas' (1966) ideas related to dirt as 'matter out of place' and that where there is dirt, there is a system in place that classifies what counts as dirt and how people should behave around it based on their caste positionality. Similarly, spaces are constituted out of social relations and are an extension of social relations (Massey, 1994). As the thesis examines how the government and people govern themselves and their spaces to create open defecation-free spaces, I use a constructivist approach to understand social structures, and the resulting knowledge, emotions, and spaces as organised through those social structures based on caste, gender, and religion.

Epistemologically, I combine a constructivist approach to enquiry with Critical Theory, particularly Critical Caste Studies. I follow the constructivist philosophy that if people are constituted through culture and society, then that culture and society's body of knowledge is socially constructed, meaning that researchers should approach knowledge as not objective (Flick, 2022). The Indian bureaucracy and the elected leaders in the village councils responsible for governing the villages are predominantly people of upper castes (Vithayathil, 2018), which means that the knowledges and cultures influencing policy would be based on those knowledges. Through this research, I sought to critically evaluate sanitation policy instruments, decisions and motivations of various actors while examining the policy implementation in the villages in the study sites. Although the constructivist approach helps us to understand how knowledge is

produced through symbols and institutions, complementing it with other approaches allows for the analysis of power relations inherent in social practices and actions (Phillips, 2023). Following Maxwell's (2011) suggestion that multiple philosophical views can be employed for a research study and that a singular philosophical stance can be misleading, I use philosophical views as a toolkit, similar to theories.

This is where Critical Theory and its methodological beliefs of starting with assumptions of power and identity struggles come in (Cresswell and Poth, 2018). Critical theory analyses power interests between groups in a society, examining who gains and loses in specific situations (Kinchloe and Mclaren, 2011). Privileged groups, in the case of this study, higher caste groups, have an interest in maintaining the status quo to protect their advantages. At the centre of critical research is understanding the dynamics of such efforts to maintain a status quo, often perpetuating structural and physical violence. This also tackles a critique of constructivism wherein the approach is found wanting when it comes to addressing or resisting entrenched power structures and related forms of knowledge that perpetuate certain types of marginalisation (Phillips, 2023). Critical Theory works interpretively in that it seeks to question the dominant structures by challenging and problematising them. Further, Critical Theory focuses on studying the influencing processes rooted in domination, which is what I set out to do (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). Critical theory combines with constructivism to provide a critical constructivist approach for this thesis. As people are often unable to discern how their environments shape their perceptions, that is, construct their consciousness, developing modes of analysis that expose this complex process becomes very important in our critical constructivist effort (Kinchloe, 2005). Following Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1996), critical constructivists reiterate that knowledge from some societies is privileged over that of others and that critical constructivism is the practice of unearthing alternative discourses and new ways of thinking, while also exposing invisibilised knowledge (Kinchloe, 2005).

Within Critical Theory, this thesis addresses the growing calls for scholarship in the emerging field of Critical Caste Studies which seeks to interrogate the ways caste power is produced through cultural, religious, political, and economic mechanisms (Ayyathurai, 2021). Through this thesis, I was interested in understanding sanitation programmes through a critical caste lens, as the primary concern of the interventions was the placement of human excrement, which is a subject so inextricably steeped in

caste relations. Through Critical Caste Studies, caste is subjected to an interdisciplinary critique for its naturalisation of domination and subordination through different pathways (Ayyathurai, 2021). The caste system creates a canyon of echoes or an institutional atmosphere where upper-caste academics who dominate academia engage with each other and validate each other's claims while people of Dalit groups face gatekeeping and fewer opportunities for interjection (Dixit, 2023). This means that upper-caste knowledge dominates academic discourse while other viewpoints are sidelined or missing. According to Dalit scholars the continuing preservation of Hindu traditions in upper-caste knowledge has often avoided critiquing Brahminical violence (Costa, 2023). Through this thesis, I aim to challenge some of the dominant taken-for-granted understandings of the sanitation policy's normative objectives of making villages cleaner, and critically analyse how this policy orders society to maintain certain power relations along caste the lines of caste and gender.

4.3. Positionality

Critical constructivism encourages reflection on the production of the self (Kinchloe, 2005) following from Critical theory which aims to extend a person's awareness of herself as a social being by examining how dominant power structures create knowledge. Further, it encourages the researcher to reflect on how dominant cultures and subcultures have influenced her political opinions, religious beliefs, gender beliefs, and caste-based self-concepts (ibid). My positionality significantly impacts knowledge production and is vital in this research which seeks to understand the effects of the caste system and religion on sanitation policy formulation, its implementation, and the differential impacts of these policies on higher caste, dominant caste, and Dalit communities (formerly known as untouchables). As a woman from an urban, upper-caste family, my positionality shapes my constructions of the world and consciousness. I align with Komalam's (2023) argument that caste should be used as an epistemological framework to shape how knowledge about the world and self is produced and transferred. Komalam (2023) emphasises that studies that claim to focus on gender, but neglect to address caste, can sustain an epistemology of ignorance and obscure a significant power disparity. In my research, particularly in chapter five, I use a gendered approach to caste, as the systemic patriarchal structures in India have the underlying ideologies of caste its its maintenance.

Through this research, I aimed to nurture my journey towards contributing to anti-caste research epistemologies. I studied journalism at the University of Delhi, a university dominated by upper-caste and dominant-caste students, worked as a journalist for newspaper companies whose employees were predominantly upper caste and then worked in the development sector where the NGOs were also dominated by the upper caste employees. This played a key role in constructing my consciousness which was primarily steeped in upper-caste ideologies and consciousness. I also grew up in an upper-caste middle-class urban household which would also shape my consciousness. At school, I learnt about the Indian independence movement, but not about the anti-caste movement that ran parallelly, I was taught poetry and stories written predominantly by upper caste and dominant caste authors. At home, my grandmother asked the surname of every friend I invited home, which I realised much later in my childhood was to do with knowing each friend's caste. Most of our Hindu festivals, are inevitably steeped in Brahmanical patriarchy or celebrate the defeat of a demon or nemesis belonging to Dalit castes, something most caste Hindus, including I was unaware of growing up. Being the child of an Indian army officer also meant an upper caste socialisation as the Indian army as an institution is dominated by the upper and dominant castes. Dalits along with their cultures were knowingly or unknowingly invisibilised in my childhood, while the upper caste and dominant caste structural violence against Dalits that led to their domination over various institutions and resources in the country were also invisibilised. While I was interested in caste and inequality during my childhood, my efforts were negligible until university when my interest in anti-caste literature and activism started and grew in earnest, which itself feels like a privilege. This plays a crucial role in my positionality as the absence or silence of certain discourses from the researcher's lived experiences results in research where those discourses are knowingly or unknowingly ignored. This places an epistemic impunity on me which Dixit (2023) defines as the impunity with which privileged scholars are allowed to make knowledge claims that do not account for the history and agency of marginalised subjects.

During the interviews I undertook during the fieldwork, it is almost impossible to hide one's caste identity as most of my interviewees asked for my surname as the first question, and others would further ask which state I was from. This was to understand my caste. The effects of my response are not easy to assess as the conversations would

carry on smoothly, but I can assume that my caste position opened more doors for me than if I was of another religion or Dalit. Through colleagues and friends in India, I know that these interviews do not going as smoothly for researchers of castes that are considered lower than of the interviewees, or researchers of religions other than Hinduism. In research, information coded into names can influence access to information, data, respondents, and trust in abilities (Patel, 2017). This inevitably places an invisible privilege on me.

In terms of my research, this privilege started with my name in a country where all surnames are a marker for caste identity that could be perceived as being an equal by some respondents, inferior to by some respondents, and as superior to certain respondents based on their caste. The upper caste privilege also comes in the form of castelessness, a subjectivity that renders the caste identities of upper castes invisible through modern forms of capital and the caste identities of Dalits hyper-visible (as beneficiaries of the state) (Deshpande, 2013). A key example of this is how when I was in university, the merit of Dalit students would always come under question due to the affirmative action in India that ensures government universities reserve some seats for Scheduled Castes, but the question of merit being linked to caste would never come up when talking about General Caste students like me. Further, an issue has been raised by Dalit academics about upper-caste researchers using Dalit respondents as data, creating the hierarchy of upper-caste theorisers and the Dalit doing empirical research or being the data themselves (Guru and Sarukkai, 2018).

One way that I decided to navigate this issue by understanding how gendered caste-based power structures are maintained through upper caste respondents, rather than only putting the burden on Dalit respondents to understand processes of exclusion through their interviews. Hence, to understand the influence of casteism sanitation policy and implementation, I focused on the upper caste gaze in governance and the differential access of communities based on caste and religion. This way the burden to understand how exclusion in sanitation policy takes place was focused on institutions dominated by upper caste cadre, rather than just focusing only on Dalit respondents to understand their experiences. Hence, the data collection primarily focused on bureaucrats, academics, NGOs, and CBOs as participants, while participants from rural communities of various castes were interviewed to understand how rural residents experienced these sanitation interventions. This research design was also more suitable for remote research

during the COVID-19 pandemic when travel to the study sites was not possible due to travel constraints.

Being a woman who grew up in India in a Punjabi household also played a role in the kind of reflexivity I had during this research project. My first paper examines the gendered and caste-based nature of honour and shame in a study site, and the way the government and people in the village used these affective tools to convince villagers to adopt toilets instead of defecating outside. While these themes were found inductively during the thematic analysis of the interviews, growing up as a girl in a Punjabi household and having seen how honour and shame work to control the lives of women, heavily shaped my own affective journey while doing the research. The context of a village in Churu would be starkly different from my household in Delhi, but the parallels were surprisingly many as I took a gendered caste approach. Being a woman plays a key role in conducting fieldwork in India where women's safety can be a concern while traveling alone. This concern has affected my work in India prior to starting my PhD, when I conducted fieldwork and field research. However, for this PhD, as the fieldwork was conducted remotely, this concern did not apply to me. There was, however, a duty of care, particularly for a female research assistant in one of the research sites. Since she was an experienced researcher and NGO worker, I respected her to ability to ensure her safety, but I also ensured that her fieldwork stayed as local as possible and any drives to the field sites were undertaken during hours that she was comfortable in during the day. I also ensured that the households that she entered in, she was comfortable acting as a mediator between the respondent and myself. Through our conversations and meetings, I tried to ensure that she knew she only had to work when she wanted and where she wanted and had control over any decisions that affected her safety.

For me, the field was constructed virtually, but I had to be mindful of my identity as a woman even while conducting fieldwork over the phone and video calls. With many male respondents, questions about my marital status, caste, and whether I stayed with my parents would inevitably pop up, especially with respondents I had to maintain a rapport with and had many conversations and interviews with. I had to cut contact with some male respondents as I started receiving crank calls, requests for personal photos and late-night chats. However, overall, most respondents were welcoming and helpful with no possible or foreseeable benefits for them from the research, with many

respondents going the extra step to help with remote research saying “they want young women from the country to be successful in their careers”. Many male respondents would show ‘brotherly’ conduct to help ‘a sister’ as they would give me contact details of other respondents I could talk to or introduce me to potential key informants. While other respondents, that is rural residents, wanted to arrange conversations with children, especially young girls, so that they could learn about potential careers from a working woman.

As a researcher from a UK-based university, many doors may have opened for me, particularly with senior bureaucrats and multilateral organisations, due to some kind of perceived respect for international researchers. This privilege, I believe, entitled me as a researcher to conduct interviews with the respondents. However, I also used my identity as someone who lived and worked in India most of her life, to reduce any power imbalances in interviews. Finally, my identity as an international researcher could also have been as a threat, as my project could be critical of a national programme that has been highly publicised by the government as a success. This could have been uncomfortable for government workers and influenced their responses regarding the sanitation programme. Constant reflection on my positionality was needed throughout the data collection process and how it would influence the research design.

4.4. Research approach and design

4.4.1. A distended case study approach

There were three main objectives for this research. One, to examine how Community-led Total Sanitation interacted with caste-based power structures in the villages of two purposively selected districts in India. Two, to understand how sanitation interventions aiming to make open defecation free villages influence domestic and public spaces. Third, to explore how CLTS as a model policy instrument was mobilised between the two study sites and how it was changed in the process. To fulfil these objectives, the distended case study approach was adopted which uses the follow-the-policy method outlined by Peck and Theodore (2012). This approach involves a multi-site study to understand how the studied places relate to each other in terms of the policy that is introduced there, while paying attention to the network of policy actors mobilising this

policy. Particularly, this method works laterally through networks and multiple sites while remaining “attentive to hierarchical and nodal sources of power, asymmetries in capacities and resources, and so forth” (Peck and Theodore, 2012, P. 25).

The research focused on CLTS adoption and implementation in two districts in India, Mandi in Himachal Pradesh and Churu in Rajasthan. The study utilised a qualitative approach, primarily employing semi-structured interviews to gather in-depth insights from various stakeholders. To select the case studies, research was conducted by reviewing newspaper articles, government documents, World Bank documents, government documentaries, official presentations, and academic research. Since this research was to be conducted remotely, it was important to have a strong base knowledge of the sanitation interventions conducted in the study sites, to build this PhD research. Based on this research, two districts, Mandi and Churu were selected. The reasons were the following:

1)Both study sites had been lauded as successfully open-defecation-free by the government after implementing a community-led total sanitation approach.

2)I know regional languages in the states, along with Hindi which is my native tongue and is spoken by most people in the states. This was particularly important as recruitment of interviewees would have to be done through phone calls and online calls, often depending on phone calls without intermediaries (as is possible with physical fieldwork). Comfort with language was hence, of utmost importance.

3)The two states had been shown to have high rates of rural population practising untouchability. This would make these states useful study sites to examine whether successful sanitation interventions further entrench gender and caste-based power relations.

Within the two districts, two villages each were chosen based on easy reachability for the research assistants. The names of the villages are confidential to protect the confidentiality of the respondents, who can be traced if the names of the villages are revealed.

4.4.2. Research during COVID-19

My PhD began two months before the COVID-19 pandemic began. The first year of the pandemic came with much uncertainty as governments, institutions, and people attempted to tackle the pandemic and grasp how lives would change. It was the same for my research. At first, fieldwork plans were put on pause as the pandemic unfolded. However, once successive COVID-19 variants led to many elongated restrictions for borders, travelling, and research, the PhD research had to be adapted to a remote fieldwork strategy. The importance of fieldwork in human geography research has been noted by many highlighting its contribution to challenging our preconceptions, deepening our understanding of the world through enhanced affective response, and aiding grounded empirical investigation in the development of rigorous ideas and arguments (Hope, 2009; Bracken and Mawdsey, 2006). For many qualitative studies, the importance of fieldwork is that it allows for immersive engagement with participants 'in their own setting' (Wood, 2007, P. 123). On the other hand, there is 'no such thing as total immersion' (Massey, 2003, P.75); as researchers have their own implicit biases and subjectively overlook things while in the field, even if unintentionally.

With the change of the research strategy to an online one, I was forced to be creative with the research design and data collection strategy and to question the power imbalance of the research. Originally, I wanted to conduct an ethnographic study of sanitation interventions and their differential impacts in a sample of villages in Himachal Pradesh to understand how sanitation programmes interact with caste relations of the state which had a relatively successive record with sanitation interventions. As I had to resort to an online research strategy, I decided to reflect on how these remote strategies could be used in the best possible way to contribute to the original research goals of understanding how caste relations affect sanitation interventions and vice versa. First, with my experience of interviewing bureaucrats and government officials during my time as a journalist in New Delhi, I believed I could gain access to people implementing the sanitation interventions in the rural areas of my study sites. This would provide new and interesting insights into how CLTS was implemented in the study site. Second, if I were to conduct the research remotely through the phone and video calls, I could possibly cover more study sites within a limited period of time. This is why I decided to do a comparative case study of how

CLTS was implemented in two study sites in Rajasthan and Mandi. Based on how these two sites were interconnected and how they varied, I could provide new insights on how CLTS was adapted to different geographies and their caste relation, what were the commonalities that could emerge from the implementation, and whether I could glean insights on how caste and gender norms are further entrenched or challenged by CLTS implementation. To understand this implementation comprehensively, I had to interview rural residents, even if small samples due to the restrictions of COVID-19, to gain an understanding of their experience of sanitation interventions. I would thus need, research assistants to act as mediators between myself and the rural residents to be interviewed.

1. Recruitment of research assistants

The study received ethical approval from the Faculty of Science and Technology Research Ethics Committee on 21 April 2021. In both study sites, I decided I would recruit research assistants who were residents in the villages that were in the study site that I had also interviewed as key informant interviews. This provided important insights regarding how to purposefully select rural residents in the area that would include members of the General Caste, Other Backward Class and Scheduled Caste, due to their own knowledge of the villages. In Himachal Pradesh, I recruited as a Research Assistant, a worker of an NGO, *Mandi Saksharta Evum Jan Vikas Samiti*, who had worked on sanitation and literacy initiatives in the study district and had extensive knowledge of the selected villages in this regard. I also recruited another research assistant, the convenor of *Parvatiya Mahila Adhikar Manch* to gain insights into the state and to help with recruitment of interviewees, particularly to understand the dynamics of sanitation interventions and women's groups in villages. For Churu, I recruited two rural residents, male and female, to facilitate purposive sampling. While the female research assistant worked as an Anganwadi worker and had extensive knowledge of the issues faced by women in the village, the male research assistant had volunteered to support the government in the implementation of the sanitation programme. A third study site in Bihar was initially chosen for this research, but by the time it was time to conduct data collection in the state, the risks posed by COVID-19 had amplified, and I decided not to pose risks to the research assistant or the research participants. Bihar was thus removed from the scope of this research.

After initial meetings to explain the project, the need to interview rural residents and the ethical considerations for the research, the research assistants were recruited. After that, meetings were held to understand the extend of COVID-19 risks and restrictions in the areas they would facilitate data collection. Although there were travel restrictions between the UK and India due to COVID-19, at the time of the data collection the travel restrictions and safety rules within these study sites fluctuated regularly. The research assistants only conducted research when there were no risks due to COVID-19, according to their respective government advisories and government advice suggested it was safe to enter homes of other people or interview them. I regularly held meetings and exchanged texts regarding their feelings about safety and to check that it was safe in the study sites for the research assistants and the research participants. I personally kept myself updated on the rules, regulations and politics regarding COVID-19 during the periods of data collection.

During data collection involving rural residents, once the households were selected for interviews, the research assistants would go the households or arrange for some of the interviewees to be present in a village hall. They would brief the research participants about my research and ensure that they understood the consent forms. At a time decided between the research assistant and myself, I would call the research assistant on their mobile phones. They would take these mobile phones to the respondents, after which I would read out the various points from the consent form to the residents in their local language and gain verbal consent over the phone. This was to ensure that they understood the research, its objectives and how their interviews would be used, but written consent was not used for rural residents in case they could not read or write, and there was the possibility that the consent was not informed.

2. Reflections during remote research

Due to the online nature of research and the time difference, there was the need to be mindful of interviewees' workdays, household chores and gave them the opportunity to not take the interview calls if need be. This way, there was a balancing of power between researcher, intermediary and the interviewee. The invasion of space and time of various respondents could also be avoided as it was their prerogative when/whether to take the phone call. The 'new normal' during the COVID-19 pandemic has in some ways disrupted established hegemonic structures of knowledge production as researchers are

forced to look for creative methods to collect data and to involve researchers from the Global South in the data collection process, while researchers from the global North are now tasked with envisioning field activities without the benefit of direct observation (Bhakta, 2022). As I redesigned my research project and the data collection, I had the opportunity to rethink the nature of fieldwork. Particularly, I thought about how vulnerabilities are produced and challenged through research encounters and engaging with vulnerability by reflecting on the ability to affect and to be affected. While I tried to have honest and open conversations with the research assistants about their safety and COVID-19, one of the main concerns some of them expressed were issues regarding how there is a lack of work opportunities during the pandemic and that was a big source of vulnerability for them. I had to carefully find the balance between ensuring there were no risks around COVID-19 in those study sites and ensuring the research assistants are given this employment opportunity. I further tried to have conversations with research assistants about their work, families and issues in the study sites as I believed the relationships, I built during the fieldwork were as important if not more, than the outcomes of the research. I also felt there was an over reliance on the local research assistants for recruiting interviewees in the village. This can lead to bias in the inclusion of residents that are interviewed and sometimes, power imbalances can force interviewees to participate in the interviews if the research assistant has worked on government projects. To mitigate this as much as possible, I ensured that the research assistants understood that there were no targets for the number of interviewees they recruited, and that the quality of conversations were more important than the quantity. Further, they were asked to ensure that the interviewees knew that they were completely free to say no to the interviews, and then I would ask before starting the interview that they were free to stop the interview if they wanted, or if they were busy with any work.

A major limitation of conducting research remotely is that senses of space and place and connection to people and community are compromised by not knowing how the field physically looks and sounds, and loss of pleasure through immersion (Bracken & Mawdsley, 2004), which can only be imagined through reading the data gathered. Being away from the site of study, it was challenging to recruit interviewees or carry out participant observations as I would have preferred. My discomfort with having conversations about sanitation and their private bodily processes with the respondents, without having the opportunity to build a face-to-face rapport, also meant I did not

expand the scope of telephonic interviews to more rural respondents. The COVID-19 pandemic along with digital technologies that were used to conduct the fieldwork, challenged my understanding of the 'field' (Howlett, 2021). To construct the field for this research from the UK involved extensive cold-calling of phone numbers available on government websites, NGO websites, and documents of government conferences. Through cold calling, e-mailing, and local networks, I was able to conduct interviews with key informants who were in turn able to provide contact details for other relevant sanitation. The interviews for this research were conducted on video-calling through Microsoft Teams when the interviewee had access to laptops and the internet. For calls with government officials, workers, and residents in villages, a combination of WhatsApp and phone calls had to be used as internet connections would be poor in the study site.

4.4.5 Sampling Strategy

The selection of interviewees followed a purposive sampling strategy to ensure a diverse and representative sample of the key stakeholders involved in the implementation of sanitation interventions in the two study sites during two separate periods. There were two phases of interviews that were conducted. Institutional actors and rural respondents. Since the research aimed to understand how the programme was formulated and implemented at various levels of governance, key stakeholders could be identified based on those aims through the various officials and government workers at the district, block, and panchayat levels. The sampling was designed to capture a wide range of perspectives from different sectors and communities. Creswell argued that within qualitative research, the sample size is usually small mainly because phenomena need to occur once to be a part of the analytical map. In this study, the recruitment of key informants continued until saturation was reached and repetition of responses started occurring (Dako-Gyeke, 2019). Using a purposive rather than sampling selection strategy, the aim of the research was to reach theoretical saturation, that is when major themes have already been identified (Shawar *et al*, 2015). Through the snowball sampling technique, other important actors were identified at block and panchayat level based on interviews with respondents.

To purposively select rural respondents to understand their perspective of how the sanitation interventions were implemented, research assistants were recruited. In Mandi, a research assistant was recruited from a local NGO, Mandi Saksharta Evum Jan Vikas Samiti, which was responsible for supporting the CLTS implementation in the district in the period of study. In Churu, a research assistant was selected from one of the interviews during the data collection phase with institutional actors. During these interviews, a volunteer who had supported the implementation of the *Chokho Churu* (Beautiful Churu) programme in Churu was recruited as a research assistant. Through these research assistants, 10 rural female residents from each study site were selected based on caste and class, to get a holistic picture of the sanitation programme. The flipside of collaborating with NGOs to reach respondents would be that the respondents who benefit from the work of NGOs in their communities might feel compelled to agree to the interviews requested by the researcher through NGO contacts. While explaining the research and requesting to participate, the respondents were made aware of their right to not participate in the interview. I recruited other rural residents that were key informants were recruited through snowball sampling, that is recommendations from interviewees regarding people I should speak to and obtaining contact details from them.

A total of 40 interviews were conducted across two phases: the first phase with institutional actors and the second phase with rural residents. Please refer to Table 1 for details.

1. Phase One: Institutional Actors

- Participants: Government officials, government workers, volunteers, NGO staff, and supporting agencies.

- Rationale: After the selection of the study sites, I planned my first phase of remote interviews that could be conducted online or over the phone. I decided to start recruiting participants for the first round of key informant interviews which would include respondents who could provide insights on how the policies were designed at the central, state, and district level and how these were implemented. The key informants were identified by reviewing government documents, presentations, conferences, and letters of correspondence between government officials (that were public).

2. Phase Two: Rural Residents

- Participants: Residents from rural areas within Mandi and Churu districts.

- Rationale: The second category of key informants was recruited to understand how residents in the study villages had experienced the sanitation interventions. These key informants were village residents with a relatively high understanding of the residents of the village and how the government programmes had affected community members. Key informants in these villages included auxiliary nurse midwives (village health workers), schoolteachers, priests, and Swachhgrahis (volunteers from villages that assist in sanitation programmes) or members of Nigrani samitis (community monitoring groups). These community key informant interviews further helped in understanding which people benefitted from the sanitation programme and which members had been excluded. Through these key informants, rural residents were purposefully chosen for interviews to get the perspective of various caste communities. As part of the sanitation programme, every resident was entitled to certain benefits to help them build toilets. But in the context of caste relations, this programme could mean differential experiences for people of different castes. Through the snowballing technique, contacts were obtained to identify and reach members of the villages that had been excluded. Then they were interviewed. Residents in villages in each of the studied states were interviewed to get an understanding of their lived experiences of the sanitation programme and to gain an understanding of the situation on the ground when CLTS was implemented.

Table 8: Respondents for the research

	Mandi			**Churu**	
State secretary, rural development (2003)	Oversees the implementation of various centrally-sponsored, state-funded and externally-aided schemes and the provision of basic amenities and services including sanitation	Respondent 1	World Bank Water and Sanitation Program coordinator, Rajasthan	Facilitated technical assistance to the Government of Rajasthan in scaling up rural sanitation.	Respondent 20
District magistrate (2005)	A civil servant who serves as the head of a district's administration in India. They are also known as the district magistrate,	Respondent 2	District magistrate (2012)	A civil servant who serves as the head of a district's administration in India. They are also known as the district magistrate	Respondent 21

	depending on the state or union territory.			or deputy commissioner, depending on the state or union territory.	
NGO 1	An informant from a non-government organisation that supported the government in the implementation of the sanitation programme	Respondent 3	NGO 2	An informant from a non-government organisation that supported the government in the implementation of the sanitation programme	Respondent 22
Residents	Residents of study villages.	Respondent 4-13	Nigrani Samiti (Community monitoring group) members	A team of community volunteers responsible for discouraging open defecation and encouraging safe sanitation practices in their village.	Respondents 23, 24
State coordinator, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan	Coordinator for Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Himachal Pradesh	Respondent 14	Block Coordinator	As part of the district sanitation programme, in charge of coordinating and overseeing the sanitation programme at the block level.	Respondent 25
Resource person	Individuals having sufficient experience in training in participatory approaches including CLTS or similar tools	Respondent 15	Key Resource Centre facilitator	Responsible for developing training modules.	Respondent 26
CLTS Trainers	Government-approved CLTS trainers, specialising in CLTS and participatory approaches, who deliver CLTS trainings in villages.	Respondent 16,17	Sarpanch	President of a Gram Panchayat, and is elected by the panchayat, which is a village-level constitutional body of local self-government. The sarpanch is the focal point of contact between government officers and the village community and retains power for five years.	Respondent 27
Kardar, *Devta* committee	Responsible for the management of the temple's affairs and the	Respondent 18	Resource person	Individuals having sufficient experience in training in	Respondent 28

	deity's land holdings. The government administration treats the kardar as its point of contact concerning the deity's affairs and holds him or her accountable for the deity's funds and their appropriate utilisation (Mahajan, 2023).			participatory approaches including CLTS or similar tools.	
UNOPS	UNOPS provides meaningful technical expertise to countries in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.	Respondent 19	Anganwadi worker	Employed to provide additional and supplementary healthcare and nutritional services to children and pregnant women.	Respondent 29
			Residents	Residents of the study village.	Respondent 30-40

4.5. Reflecting on Key Informant Interviews (KII) as a method

Key informant interviews (KII) were at the centre of the remote research strategy of this thesis. KIIs are a valuable method for understanding the perspectives of those in power and decision-makers; revealing how power-holders maintain their privilege and perpetuate dominant paradigms (Lokot, 2021). KIIs are useful to obtain insider insights into complex issues and to facilitate access into communities (ibid). Key informants, as a result of their position within a society or administration, can provide more information and a key insights into what is going on around them (Marshall, 1996).

There have been critical takes on the criteria of partiality for an ideal key informant. According to Scott, since key informants have their own perspectives and politics that influence their views, information and responses, objectivity is a myth (Lokot, 2021). Stressing on the subjectivity of the experience of the KII, Scott stated: "What counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straightforward; it is always contested, and always therefore political" (Scott, 1991, P. 797). Key informants are individuals who hold positions of authority and respect and are used to provide intimate knowledge and experience of the subject area (Marshall, 1996). In research related to policy analysis,

KIIs may be used as pragmatic and efficient methods for cost-effectively gathering information (Gilchrist and Williams, 1999, P. 74). KIIs can also be seen as "strategic informants" and two types of informants can be considered in research. All key informants are regarded as exceptional by those around them and usually hold a position of responsibility and influence (Marshall, 1996).

Semi-structured interviews were used with participants as they provided the space for me to expand the scope of the interview based on the responses of the interviewee, hence providing a useful tool for this exploratory research. The bureaucrats were interviewed about the process involved in interpreting government sanitation programmes for their respective states. The interviews aimed to understand how they attempted to ensure access to toilets and not just the construction of toilets in villages and what their communication strategies were to ensure that villagers had the required knowledge to use the latrines. Further, the interviews delved into the measures that were taken to ensure social norms related to caste would not prevent the use of toilets for different communities. Finally, interviews were conducted using telephone and video calls with residents from a sample of one Gram Panchayat in each state so as to have an understanding of lived experiences on the ground and how differential or similar they are across caste groups and gender. To triangulate the findings of the interviews secondary data will be collected using existing surveys, policy documents, studies, documentaries and grey literature.

Feminist research has highlighted that the gendered consequences of using KII for knowledge creation. It is important that efforts are made to equally interview women as research can often lead to disproportionately higher male key informants than female key informants. Power hierarchies lead to men being accepted as experts over women (Lokot, 2021) and due to structural inequality, men are more likely to be present in leadership roles in the government. Feminist research also suggests that the positionality of the researcher can affect their decisions during the recruitment process for KIIs and “the situatedness of the researcher may influence the choices made about who is deemed a key informant” (Lokot, 2021). My gender and the remote data collection strategy had a major influence on my decision to interview women residents of the villages to understand their experiences of sanitation interventions. I assumed that women respondents would be more comfortable talking to a woman researcher as compared to men respondents, as many of my questions dealt with private bodily

processes such as defecation. Researchers have also highlighted that the perspectives and priorities of key informants may be different from those of community members, especially when in the case of this research, key informants from village communities are interviewed (McKenna *et al.*,2011). They recommend that researchers recruit and interview key informants with an understanding that neither key informants nor community members constitute homogeneous groups. Hence, I tried to recruit interviewees from different caste groups to inform the research. Researchers have highlighted that especially in policy-related research using KIIs reinforces power and privilege held by key informants and that it is important to balance the KII perspectives with "ordinary" voices of community members (Lokot, 2021). I attempted to use these reflections to interview villagers in the research sites, who had volunteered to work for the sanitation programme, or women from women's organisations such as Mahila Mandals, and gave their interviews and expertise as much importance as the bureaucrats in my analysis of the interviews in relation to my questions.

4.6. Data Collection Process

The data collection process involved several steps to ensure the reliability and validity of the information gathered:

4.6.1. Preparation and Planning

- Remote Communication Tools: Given the remote nature of the fieldwork, interviews were conducted using digital communication platforms such as telephone calls and Microsoft Teams. Whatsapp was used to establish contacts with interviewees or mediators, but the interviews were finally conducted over phone calls or Microsoft Teams. The decisions regarding which communication tool to use for the interviews or recruitment were based on available of networks where the interviewee was present, and which platform the interviewee was comfortable with. However, while WhatsApp was used for messaging, conversations and to make online calls, it was not used for the interviews which were recorded. This was because the university did not grant ethical consent for using WhatsApp for interviews. This posed challenges, particularly in villages, where telephone calls would get interrupted by bad networks, thus compromising smooth-flowing in-depth interviews in many instances.

- Interview Guides: Two separate semi-structured interview guides were developed for the two phases, that is interviews with sanitation policy implementers and interviews with rural residents. These guides included open-ended questions tailored to each group of participants to facilitate in-depth discussions while allowing flexibility for interviewees to express their views freely.

4.6.2. Conducting Interviews

Interviews were scheduled at convenient times for participants, considering their availability and the time zone differences. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the interviews. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and the confidentiality of their identities in the research outputs. I included confidentiality for government workers and bureaucrats to ensure their comfort in describing their experiences of implementing sanitation programmes. Since these sanitation programmes were highly publicised as successful, I worked with the assumption that government workers and supporting agencies would not be able to talk openly if their names were to appear in the thesis and during dissemination. During the data collection process, I could not fully foresee what my research would look like or what themes the research would focus on. I wanted to ensure that any critiques of the sanitation programme would not harm the careers of the people interviewed, hence I applied a blanket confidentiality rule for all government workers. For the rural residents I interviewed, I again used confidentiality in the informed consent forms so that the interviews were not an uncomfortable process for them, especially as we talked about their defecation habits, routines etc. Informed consent was obtained through written consent forms from those who were able to send consent forms over email. However, with others, consent was obtained verbally over the phone before starting the interviews. This was particularly to ensure that rural residents and key informants with whom I had unscheduled conversations, due to a phone being passed from one interviewee to another, there was a clear understanding of the objectives of the research.

Institutional actors: One of the biggest challenges in terms of conducting interviews and in terms of conducting research ethically was that I could not be present on the field. The first phase of interviews, that is, with institutional actors, presented less of an ethical challenge as the power relations were not too skewed in the researcher's favour.

Most of the interviewees in the first phase of interviews were high-ranking bureaucrats, consultants from supporting agencies, NGOs and government workers. At the lower level of governance, however, such as block and panchayat level interviewees, I had to ensure the respondents did not feel obligated to speak with me as they were referred to me from government officials that were senior to them in the hierarchy. I had to ensure them that I had no association with their superiors and that they could freely refuse the interviews or arrange for them at a time that suits them best.

Rural residents: Since the research was conducted remotely, this researcher did not have the opportunity to explore the villages and to build a rapport with the residents before choosing the interviewees. Instead, the rapport building of the research assistants was depended on to arrange the interviews. The research assistants were requested to recruit interviewees only if they were willing to speak for the research and if they had the time and not to coerce them in any way. After the interviews were arranged and scheduled, the research assistant would hand a phone to the interviewees on which I would call, introduce myself and explain the terms of informed consent. I also made an effort to ask informal questions to break down barriers and to make respondents more comfortable. However, on many occasions due to a bad network or shortage of time for the respondents, the interviews became more clinical and shorter.

Recording and Transcription: With participants' permission, interviews were recorded to ensure accuracy. I used a Dictaphone to record the interviews. After the data collection, I transcribed the interviews verbatim when the interviews were in English. I translated and transcribed the interviews when they were in Hindi, Pahadi or Marwadi languages. Occasional technical difficulties were encountered, including poor internet connectivity and disruptions during calls. These were mitigated by rescheduling interviews or switching to more reliable communication methods when necessary. Establishing rapport remotely posed a challenge. I made considerable efforts to create a comfortable and trusting environment through clear communication, active listening, and showing empathy and understanding of participants' contexts.

4.7. Data Analysis

The collected data were systematically organised and managed to facilitate thorough analysis. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data, allowing for the

identification of common themes, sub-themes, and unique insights across different participant groups. For the qualitative data, a thematic analysis method outlined by Braun and Clarke (2017) was used which defines a theme-building method. Thematic analysis is a method used for 'identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data'. A rigorous thematic approach can lead to an insightful analysis that answers particular research questions (Judger, 2016). After data collection was completed, my first analytic activity was to review and re-review interview transcripts from all participants. Then, I returned to each respondent's account to identify significant statements, to spot portions of the interview responses that could be relevant for the research questions. This phase of the analysis can be used to produce a descriptive account of the phenomenon experienced by the respondents and a collection of significant statements for all cases (Ayres *et al*, 2003). Then, significant statements from each individual account with every participant's account were reviewed, paying particular attention to the commonalities across respondents.

When data collection started, this research aimed to understand how government sanitation interventions interact with caste and gender relations in the study site. After the interviews, the themes showed how emotions and affect were used in sanitation governance and became the focus of the coding process. Braun and Clarke's (2017) Reflexive thematic Analysis (RTA) follows the constructivist epistemology which encourages the researcher to accept reflexivity and subjectivity in knowledge production. Central to the RTA is that while recurrence is important, meaningfulness is the most important criterion in the coding process. While the RTA can be a mix of inductive and deductive coding approaches which was the case with this research, this research followed a predominantly inductive approach to coding after which a deductive approach to analysis was undertaken based on redefined research questions. The following steps of reflexive thematic analysis were followed as per Byrne (2021) and Braun and Clarke (2017):

1) Familiarity with data: The researcher manually transcribed and translated the interview recordings. Then the researcher read and re-read all the transcriptions while also listening to the recordings, writing down thoughts and observations.
2) Generating initial codes: The researcher printed out the interview transcripts and manually started the coding process with highlighters. The process of coding aims to produce succinct interpretive labels for pieces of information that may

be relevant to the research. Then the researcher started the coding process on MS word using track changes to label codes. The initial codes that guided this thesis can be seen in Appendix A and Appendix B.

3) Generating themes: The reflexive thematic analysis approach emphasises that themes do not emerge from the data but that the researcher actively pulls out themes from the codes based on how they relate to the research question and aims of the research. The importance of the themes is not based on the recurrence of the codes but that the pattern of codes and analysis produces something meaningful in relation to the research aims. The initial themes can be seen in Appendix C.
4) Reviewing potential themes: This is when I went through the codes and the themes to ensure that the codes adequately inform the themes and that the themes are meaningfully interpreting the dataset in relation to the research question.

Quantitative data analysis: For the quantitative data, survey datasets were obtained from the Demographic Health Survey Programme of USAID in the form of National Family Health Survey 5 (2019-2020) to understand the provision of toilets at a district level, disaggregated by caste. Authorisation was obtained from the DHS Programme to use the survey datasets for analysis. SPSS was used to analyse the latrine data from a sample of 698 households in Churu district to understand two main patterns: Type of toilets being used by the rural residents and access to toilets by different caste groups.

4.8. Conclusion

To summarise, this research follows a critical constructivist epistemological approach combining Critical Theory with Critical Caste Studies to understand how public and domestic spaces are governed through government sanitation programmes. The key to a critical constructivist approach is to reflect and examine how a researcher's positionality influences the construction of knowledge and research that she generates. Reflecting on my caste and gender positionality and my commitment to anti-caste scholarship, played a pivotal role in designing this research to examine how upper-caste-dominated

bureaucracies and government can reproduce structural inequalities. To fulfil the research objectives of this thesis, I adopted a distended case study approach which uses a ‘follow the policy’ method in multiple sites, which in the case of this thesis included Churu in Rajasthan and Mandi in Himachal Pradesh. Both of these sites adopted CLTS at different points in time which was circulated between them by the World Bank’s WSP, and then adapted to caste-based power relations of both sites. This translation is what the thesis will uncover and examine. Key informant interviews were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic through a remote data collection strategy. After this a thematic analysis of qualitative data was conducted and quantitative data was analysed using SPSS. Based on the findings, three papers were drafted which form the next three chapters as I answer the research questions.

Chapter 5: Affective governmentality and the intersection of caste and gender in sanitary subject-making in rural India

Abstract

Shame, a powerful social construct, is increasingly being used as a governance tool. For governments working on eradicating the practice of open defecation, the mobilisation of shame has proliferated, as evident in the Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS) programmes. This paper contributes to the growing body of research examining the role of shame in policy and answers the calls for: evidence from lower and middle-income countries; interdisciplinary engagement and culturally appropriate and non-western understandings of shame. Drawing on the concepts of affective governmentality, this research shows how the government utilised shame and disgust as technologies of governance to create sanitary subjects. In a context of shared caste-based and gendered understandings of these emotions and affect, this research demonstrates how such shame-based governance legitimises the reproduction of inequalities and strengthens the caste-based order in a district in rural India. This study shows that, since the implementation of the CLTS-style Swachh Bharat Abhiyan sanitation programme, toilet construction and usage increased in Churu district. However, the magnitude and consequences varied along caste lines. Unsurprisingly, the spatial and temporal levers inherent in the shame-based techniques were influenced by the existing caste and gender-based power relations. This research reflects on and raises concerns about, the use of shame as a governance tool in communities where certain castes and genders have historically borne the burden of shame.

Keywords: Caste, gender, governmentality, India, sanitation, shame, emotions

5.1. Introduction

"… In the social construction of ecology Dalits become dirt and dirt is them (Guru, 2013, P.41)."

The 2011 census in India presented a bleak picture for rural India, showing that nearly 70% of the households did not have toilets (Coffey *et al*., 2017a). This put growing pressure on successive governments to tackle the issue, culminating in the launch of Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan in 2012 and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) in 2014, of which Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS) was a major component in some districts. This paper contributes to the growing research critically examining the role of shame in sanitation policy through CLTS-style programmes (Engel and Susilo, 2014; Mehta and Movik, 2011;) by evidencing how various emotions are used by actors in power to create sanitary subjects while maintaining a caste-based social order. This research uses the concept of affective governmentality to explore how emotions and affect are used by various actors to create willing self-conducting sanitary citizens, and how multiple subject positions can arise out of the instrumentalisation of affect by a government sanitation programme.

The challenge of open defecation is more complex than constructing toilets, and one that the Indian government has been struggling to tackle through national programmes for at least 40 years. Research has revealed several reasons why people do not build or use toilets and resort to open defecation. These include a lack of space in dwellings (Jain *et al*., 2019); unsuitable toilet designs (Routray *et al*., 2015); a lack of adequate water supply (O'Reilly and Louis, 2014); and remoteness and infrastructure deficiencies (O'Reilly *et al*., 2017). Poor conditions of public toilets and the time spent while waiting in queues also lead to people resorting to defecating in open spaces (Desai *et al*., 2015). Meanwhile, changes in land use in terms of occupation and enclosure of government or common lands have also meant difficulty in defecating in the open (O'Reilly, 2018). In India, scholars also identify caste-based norms related to purity and pollution as vital factors influencing toilet access and usage. These norms are so entrenched that some households refuse toilets, considering them profane and a barrier to the entry of Gods (Juran *et al*., 2019). Particularly, households in which open defecation is practiced are rejecting affordable toilets considering them as ritually polluting (Coffey *et al*., 2017b).

Post-independence, successive Indian governments, through sanitation programmes, have used strategies for sustained collective behaviour change alongside financial incentives to encourage citizens to build toilets. This paper observes that the majority of the tactics that the Indian government has been using to tackle open defecation in rural India were built on the technique of shame, alongside financial incentives, with mixed results. To evidence both the shame-based tactics and the mixed results these tactics have had in India, we analyse the implementation of the CLTS programme in two villages of Churu in the northwestern state of Rajasthan. The CLTS-inspired programme was launched in 2013 as part of Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan and continued under the aegis of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) launched in 2014. Launched in 2014, SBA was implemented by the Indian Government as a way to make India Open defecation-free by 2019, through a combination of localised behaviour change strategies and targeted financial subsidies for building toilets. Different strategies were used as part of SBA by various authorities in different regions of India, while in Rajasthan many districts implemented the CLTS approach. Churu was one such district that adopted the CLTS approach, which uses locally adapted shame-based messaging and community training to implement an end to Open Defecation at a village level. Churu was declared open defecation-free by the government in 2019.

However, what is obscured by the status of an open defecation-free village are the shame-based tactics that local officials and those thrust into positions of power, through the incurred authority of the CLTS, use. There remains a gap in the acknowledgment and understanding of the subjectivation that has occurred in CLTS-style programmes in rural India, particularly through the way that officials weaponise shame as a tool for discipline during CLTS. Subjectivation here takes from Foucault's concept of self-making and being made through power relations that produce consent through surveillance, discipline, control, and administration (Foucault, 2017).

Using the district of Churu in Rajasthan as a case study, there are two strands of findings that this research draws attention to. First, this research contributes to a growing understanding of sanitation subject-making in rural India by showing how government sanitation programmes can reify material and discursive manifestations of caste. Particularly, by exploring the differential impacts of the programme on the

villagers based on their gender and caste, this research answers the calls to examine how various emotions, particularly disgust and shame, can play a key role in the reproduction of caste and gender relations (Lee, 2021). The government sanitation programme further entrenches a caste-based social order that puts the upper-caste man in the most powerful position to be able to dispel the negative emotions such as shame, disgust and humiliation while the effects stay burdened disproportionately on the upper-caste woman, the Dalit man and the Dalit woman.This case study, thus, contributes and builds on a growing body of literature focusing on the affective dimensions of caste in space (Guru and Sarukkai, 2019; Lee, 2017; Kanjilal, 2023). Secondly, this study draws attention to the implications of problematising sanitation as open defecation and using shame-based technologies to frame the solution as building toilets. While the achievement of open defecation-free villages may be presented as caste-blind in the sanitation programme, the types of toilets built for this achievement present imminent challenges for the safe management of faeces, a system built on the labour of certain Dalit castes.

5.2. Affective governmentality in a caste-based society

Termed as the 'conduct of conduct'(Foucault *et al*., 1991), governmentality involves influencing human conduct by employing controlling means such as educating desires, and shaping habits, beliefs, and aspirations so people (as subjects) eventually do out of their own will what the government thinks they should do (Li, 2007). To do this, this form of government often problematises issues around morality, in that such policies and practices of government assume to know with specific forms of knowledge, what constitutes good, virtuous and moral conduct from individuals and collectives (Dean, 2010). Governmentality, then, is an array of governmental rationalities, tactics, and practices that shape individuals and populations (Foucault *et al*., 1991).

Used in a study to analyse the use of disgust by various actors to govern homosexuality in Uganda, Affective Governmentality was defined by Ashworth (2017) as the manner in which the conduct of conduct is achieved through the instrumentalisation of affect by diverse authorities. Link and Phelan (2014) observe that shame has undeniably become a powerful tool to the exercise of governmentality in an increasing range of contexts. Examples include: Strong's (2021) research on charity-run foodbanks in Britain where

shame not only governs individual bodies but pushes for austere conduct onto a larger population; Pultz' (2018) research on how shame dissuades unemployed youth from accessing unemployment funds in the Danish Welfare State; and Parker and Pausé's (2019) examination of the utility and ill-effects of shame in driving fat pregnant women to govern themselves into becoming healthier. What is common in these examples is that the research participants are involved in practices that are regarded as undesirable by the state and, hence shameful. When compared with these examples, open defecation offers itself to be defined as even more shameful and an ideal practice to be governed using shame. While the use of shame to achieve a greater social good may deliver programme goals (in this case, eradication of open defecation practice), this often leads to unequal effects on society based on existing social inequalities (Walker, 2014). Shaming can work as a smokescreen and help pervade the infrastructural and granular governance inadequacies through which the socio-economically marginalised can be excluded.

The relations of domination and subordination in Indian villages which were encouraged by colonial strategies of governance, continue to prevail in the villages today as members of dominant castes are given access to support from governmental institutions (Witsoe, 2011). This is in line with Paik's (2009) theorisation of *Chhadi* which directly translates to a cane, but symbolises how Dalit bodies in India are disciplined, policed, and controlled through overt and covert means by upper caste people in positions of power. Paik's study shows humiliation and shaming as primary means of disciplining and dissuading Dalit girls from trying to access education in schools. The humiliation came in many forms including: Dalit students being made to sit outside or at the back of the classroom separate from all other students; verbal and psychological caste-based abuse by teachers insisting education was not for Dalit children; discrimination from fellow students; and corporal punishment from teachers for refusing to clean the classroom (Paik, 2009). If emotions and affect are major instruments of disciplining bodies, then these can be seen as powerful tools for the exercise of governmentality.

As emotions, feelings, and affect are infused with power relations, affective governmentality can characterise state power and other forms of authority in which citizens are governed not only through disciplinary measures but also "affective

persuasion" (Zembylas, 2023, P.333). Following this, this paper examines the disciplinary measures and methods of affective persuasion used by the government and other powerful actors to ensure that the villagers abandoned the practice of open defecation.

5.3. Understanding the intersectionality of defecation practices in India

Open defecation among Indians is a differential experience based on a person's gender, caste, and class location, making an intersectional approach to understanding open defecation crucial. In a study in rural Tamil Nadu, higher caste groups showed reluctance to share their open defecation lands with Dalit households, while higher caste groups refused to go to lands where Dalit women defecated (O'Reilly *et al*., 2017). In cities, the pursuit of the national goal of making India can inflict infrastructural violence, inequities, and corporeal suffering on specific groups of citizens, that is poor residents, women, and lower-caste groups (Truelove and O'Reilly, 2021). Women and men usually use separate spaces to defecate based on safety and privacy needs, and sometimes at different times to avoid each other (Desai *et al*., 2015). For women, open defecation can be a major source of psycho-social stress due to factors including lack of privacy (Sahoo *et al*., 2015), safety (Mishra, 2021), and fear of disapproval from community members (Kuang *et al*., 2020). A study in slums in Jaipur showed that although all women and girls felt a fear of sexual harassment and violence when defecating in the open or using public toilets, the fears were much less if they belonged to a caste which was a majority caste in the slum (Kulkarni *et al*., 2017). This was because they felt protected by the men of their community from outside men (ibid).

Meanwhile, Dalits face inequality and exclusion in India when it comes to sanitation as they have a long history of struggling for equal access to water and land, especially in rural areas (Dutta *et al*., 2018). Certain castes within the Dalit or Scheduled Castes are historically conscripted to clean faeces under degrading and perilous conditions, work that is denigrated as ritually polluting work by the upper caste (Gatade, 2016). However, there is growing resistance from Dalit communities to clean the toilets of the

upper caste, as O'Reilly found in rural Tamil Nadu (O'Reilly *et al.*, 2017). Doron and Raja (2017) argue that in India, it is not an individual but a body politic that defecates, in that, when a large number of people defecate in public, there is an understanding that it will be cleaned up by sweepers, who are usually of certain Dalit castes. "If anything, upper caste 'purity' is seen to be reinforced by having the 'untouchables' perform the unclean task for them" (Doron and Raja, 2015, P.193). In the Indian village, those who live on the outskirts or outside of the village are considered dirty due to their association with caste-based social callings such as cleaning toilets, carting dead animals, and 'those who are part of that dirt have to live with it' (Rodrigues, 2009, P.117). The visceral feelings of humiliation and disgust of 'living with it' come through clearly in this powerful autobiographical account of Omprakash Valmiki (2008, P.1) describing the Dalit hamlet his family lived in:

"The homes of the Chuhras (Dalit caste) were on the edges of the pond. All the women (upper caste) of the village, young girls, older women, even newly married brides, would sit in the open space behind these homes at the edges of the pond to take a shit. Not just under the cover of darkness but even in daylight.... All the quarrels of the village would be discussed in the style of a round-table conference at the same spot. Muck was strewn everywhere. The stench was so overpowering that one would choke within a minute."

The interconnection between caste, defecation, and emotions is profoundly intertwined in Indian villages, as illustrated in the aforementioned account, through the location of residences (decided by caste). A person's caste and gender positioning grant them varying capacities to distance themselves from 'dirt' and its accompanying stigma. This underscores the significance of contextualising affective governance technologies within the caste and gender dynamics of the research site.

5.4. Emotions as structuring of caste order in India

The scholarship on emotion is distinct from that of affect. However, this article follows suggestions that affect and emotions are inseparable from each other. Ahmed (2014) describes emotions as bodily processes of being affected or affecting, emphasizing how emotions emerge through contact with objects and others. Seigworth and Gregg (2010)

define affect as those visceral forces beyond emotion that accompany conscious knowing and drive us toward movement. Anderson (2017) asserts that in practice, affect, feeling, and emotion cannot be separated and that affects and emotions are always entangled in encounters. This article follows Anderson's suggestion that emotion, affect, and feeling cannot be separated, using them complementarily to enhance the understanding of affective governmentality in the South Asian context. Feelings, meanwhile, express the affected body's existing capacity to affect and be affected (ibid). However, this research aligns more with the body of literature related to emotional geographies as it draws from Ahmed's (2014) description of emotions as 'doing things' in that emotions involve moving closer or away from others, thus shaping social and bodily space. Indeed, in the study site and Hindi-speaking regions in India, the emotions that are central to this study involve the act of doing or *karna.* This includes *Lajja karna* (doing shame), *Grinha karna* (doing disgust), *Izzat karna* (doing honour), and the doing of these emotions involves the shaping of spaces according to gender and caste order.

All social hierarchies, including caste order, shape emotions in specific manners and rely on these structured emotions for their sustained reproduction over time (Lee, 2021). In India, shame is a multifaceted phenomenon that is used by people in power to sustain entrenched social hierarchies based on caste, gender, and class (Shah, 2018). Stigma may be considered a key mechanism through which shame is produced (Roelen *et al*., 2020), while shame enables social elites to manipulate the generated stigma to maintain social order and control over people and places (Jha and Sharma, 2016). *Lajja*, which was inherent to the CLTS strategy in Rajasthan, commonly translates in English to shame. However, *Lajja* encapsulates a complex set of social norms and is also a practice that is distinctly gendered, particularly evident in rural Rajasthan. Vital to preserving *Lajja* is the practice of *Ghunghat,* which involves women in specific contexts veiling their face and head using a saree or dupatta, elongated pieces of cloth. *Ghunghat* is commonly interpreted as creating a spatial demarcation between the realms of privacy and the public, the latter being primarily the domain reserved for men (Chowdhry, 1993). In this way, not only are spaces gendered using shared practice of cultural norms, but gender is itself constructed and understood (Massey, 1994). Central to comprehending the practices and social values of *Lajja* and *Ghunghat* is the underlying notion of threats to honour or *Izzat* (Devi and Kaur, 2019). The concept of *Lajja* or *laaj* and the practice of *Ghunghat* collectively serve to uphold the cultural object of *Izzat* or

honour, not only for individual families but also for the caste community and broader society. These practices can be seen through the lens of Chakravarti's (1993) conceptualisation of Brahmanical patriarchy which argues that the caste structure is safeguarded through the highly restricted movement of upper caste women as the purity of caste is dependent on the purity of its women and prevention of their mixture with other castes. *Lajja*, as a weapon of Brahmanical patriarchy, is thus integral to the performance of upper caste and dominant caste male control.

The shaming and humiliation strategies that were inherent to the localised implementation of CLTS align with the existing structures of 'institutionalised humiliation' (Guru, 2011) which is embodied by the caste system, an institution that embodies disrespect for, and systematically violates the self-respect of a group of individuals, that is the Dalits (ibid). In this way, the negative emotions used in CLTS, that is *Lajja* (shame), *Grinha* (disgust), and humiliation, accumulate on existing lived experiences and understandings among different caste communities. The subsequent section introduces the study site and the sanitation intervention under scrutiny in this research.

5.5 Context and Methods

5.5.1 Geography and social backdrop

The north-western state of Rajasthan is one of the largest states in India but lags on the human development index (Aayog, 2019). During 2019-2021, Rajasthan ranked 10 among 28 states and union territories of India in terms of poverty, health, education and standard of living. In Churu 25.18% of households are Scheduled Caste, 1.19% Scheduled Tribe households, and 73.4% are other castes (which would include Brahmin, Rajput, and Jat castes) (SECC, 2011). Churu is one of 50 districts in the north-western region of Rajasthan which, although it has a majority Hindu population, is highly fragmented along caste lines. It comprises 89% Hindus, 9% Muslims and 2% other religions. Most villages in Churu are dominated by the Jat community in terms of numbers and influence, along with the Rajput and Brahmin communities which are considered ritually pure upper castes. Although the Jat community in Rajasthan is included under the Indian bureaucratic category of Other Backward Class eligible for

reservations in public education and jobs (affirmative action), in most villages in Rajasthan they are the most powerful due to numbers, networks and landholdings (Jaffrelot and Robin, 2012).

Churu was one of the first in Rajasthan to be declared open defecation-free, a state that historically had a large proportion of the population without sanitation (PIB, 2022). The *Chokho Churu* (Beautiful Churu) sanitation campaign, a CLTS programme supported by the World Bank's Water and Sanitation Programme, was implemented from 2013 (as part of Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan) to 2019 (as part of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan), to ensure that villages in the district were open defecation-free. CLTS employs community-based research methods and shock-and-shame-based trainings aimed to encourage community members to acknowledge the extent of open defecation in their surroundings and how food and water contaminated by faeces can adversely affect their community's health, finally "triggering" collective action (Kar and Pasteur, 2005). In the CLTS vocabulary, this process referred to as "triggering" entails the gradual generation and thickening of feelings of repugnance among the villagers toward open defecation, ultimately catalysing proactive measures against it. As the evidence below will show, despite the rhetoric of 'participation', CLTS implementation has been top-down. This makes Churu an interesting case to study, demonstrating how the CLTS method has progressed from its initial triggering and mobilisation into toilet building and ultimately becoming one of the first districts in Rajasthan to be officially recognised as open defecation-free.

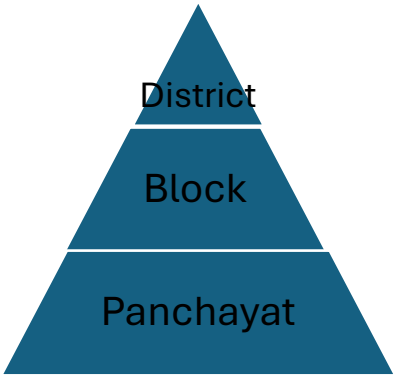
5.5.2. Methods

The data collection for this study was conducted remotely due to the mobility constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The primary researcher for this study hails from India but is a postgraduate researcher at a university in the UK. Both countries imposed travel and mobility restrictions at different points in time in the period between 2020 and 2022 which made travel for data collection not possible. The research had to be adapted to a remote data collection strategy involving online and telephone interviews so that the research could be completed within the funding period. The interviews for this research were conducted on video calls through Microsoft Teams when the interviewees had access to laptops and the internet. For calls with local government officials, workers, and residents in villages who did not have access to

laptops and computers, phone calls were used in the study site. The researcher partnered with research assistants in the village who would take their cellular phones to the residents so that the researcher based in the UK could call and interview them.

This research was conducted in Churu in the northwestern Indian desert state of Rajasthan, one of the many districts in the state that implemented CLTS-style sanitation programmes. Churu presents a valuable case study as it provides the opportunity to examine the technologies of government used in community-led sanitation approaches in rural Rajasthan where more than half of non-Dalit households explicitly practice untouchability and more than 90% of the women practice *Ghunghat* (veiling of the heads and/or faces) (Coffey *et al.*, 2018). Considering this context, along with a sanitation campaign that attracted government and media recognition for its successful interventions, this research site provides a valuable opportunity to understand how such sanitation approaches interact with gender and caste relations in a village. To select the case study, research on the sanitation programme was conducted by reviewing newspaper articles, government documents, World Bank documents, government documentaries, official presentations, and academic research. Further, the researcher is well-versed with the regional language spoken in the state having grown up in the state for some years. This was particularly important as recruitment of interviewees was done without the opportunity to meet interviewees face-to-face and initial rapport had to be built over the phone with volunteers, government officials and residents of the villages. Comfort with language and prior familiarity with the study site was hence, of utmost importance.

Figure 2: Government officials from these three levels of the Panchayati Raj system were interviewed.



Village 1 has a total population of 2734 and 481 households. Village 2 has a population of 1919 and 383 houses. To recruit participants, a male resident of the study site who had extensive experience with assisting government programmes in the village and a female resident of the study site who was an Anganwadi worker were recruited as research assistants. Both had an extensive understanding of the sanitation programme and the local community, thus helping in a purposive sampling of residents. With the help of the research assistants, 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted remotely with

two overarching objectives, i.e. to understand the implementation and rationale of *Clean District* sanitation programme. Key informant interviews were conducted with government officials and volunteers at the district, block and panchayat levels (Figure 2). Further interviews were conducted with the field officials of non-governmental organisation (NGOs) and international development agencies that supported the implementation of the programme. Interviews were conducted in two villages of Churu, including key informant interviews with Nigrani Samiti members (community monitoring groups), Anganwadi workers (heath centre workers) and residents.

This research used a mixed-methods approach. For the qualitative data, a thematic analysis method outlined by Braun and Clarke (2017) was used which defines a theme-building method. When data collection started, this research aimed to understand how government sanitation interventions interact with caste and gender relations in the study site. After the interviews, the themes showed how emotions and affect were used in sanitation governance and became the focus of the coding process. Quantitative data was obtained from the Demographic Health Survey (DHS) in the form of National Family Health Survey 5 (NFHS 2019-2020) to understand the provision of toilets at a district level, disaggregated by caste. Authorisation was obtained from the DHS Programme to use the survey datasets for analysis. For quantitative data, SPSS was used to analyse the latrine data from a sample of 698 households in Churu to understand two main patterns: The type of toilets being used by the rural residents and access to toilets by different caste groups.

Table 9: List of interviewees

No of interviewees	**Role of interviewee**	**Identifier in results section**
1	District Magistrate	Respondent 1
1	Block coordinator	Respondent 2
1	Sarpanch (Village council official)	Respondent 3
1	World Bank official	Respondent 4

2	Nigrani Samiti	Respondent 5,6
2	Resource persons	Respondent 7 Respondent 8
2	CLTS trainers	Respondent 9 Respondent 10
1	ASHA worker	Respondent 11
3	Supporting NGO staff	Respondent 12, 13, 14
1	CLTS advisor	Respondent 15
15	Residents	Respondent 16-30

5.6. Results

5.6.1. Disgust as a technology of sanitation governance

This section examines affective encounters based on three approaches to sanitation subject-making followed by government and supporting agencies in their pursuit of Open Defecation Free villages. First, the use of shame in CLTS training to make faeces lying in the open a source of disgust. The second is the weaponisation of local social norms related to *Lajja, Ghunghat,* and *Izzat* to position toilets as a household necessity. The third part of the section examines the increase in toilet construction. Here we see the differentiation of toilet access in Churu along caste lines, leading to negative affective encounters for the socio-economically disadvantaged.

The CLTS campaign aimed to evoke a sense of revulsion (*Grinha karna*) toward faecal matter lying in public spaces among villagers and thereby create social pressure to start building latrines, according to a village official (Respondent 3). CLTS trainers

(Respondents 8 and 9) explained that, at the start of an CLTS intervention in a village, they would first ask the villagers to walk them to important or well-loved sites in the village. In the villages of The District, these sites were the school, the Anganwadi (daycare centre), the panchayat office, and the farmlands. The trainers would show appreciation for these buildings and the beauty of the village. They would then attract villagers to the village centres such as the temple by arranging folk music and *nukkad naatak* (local theatre). Next, after gathering the villagers for a training meeting with the help of village officials, the trainers would ask the villagers to carry out community mapping as the trainers would draw or paint on the ground all the households in the village, based on inputs from villagers. The villagers would be asked specifically to depict on the map the households that did not have toilets and the places that were commonly used for defecation. The first acts of sanitation subject-making had begun and the households of shaming targets had been fixed. Respondent 8 described the aims of these activities:

"The point of this training was that we had to create Grinha (disgust) in their minds towards faeces laying in the open. So once the residents had gathered, we would take them on a walk without telling them why. Then we would arrive at a spot which is a common defecation spot. This would make people feel disgusted and they would ask why they have been brought here, this is no place to visit. So we would ask them why are you ashamed now, you come here every morning to do your business?"

CLTS trainers would endeavour to convert the prevailing feeling of indifference among villagers toward excreta laying in the open far from their dwellings, into feelings of shame and disgust. The trainers would go on to pour water in a glass, mix faeces in it, and tell residents that this is what happens to their water as flies sit on the faeces and then fly to their homes and contaminate their water and food. Thus, the villagers were presented with a visual and spatial representation of themselves being the source of germs in their village. In this way, as a key element of governmentality, sanitation is problematised as open defecation and the solution is presented as household toilets.

A key policy of the district, block and village administration was to make 'Open Defecation Free an aspirational category', a block official explained (Respondent 2). An NGO staff member (Respondent 11) involved in facilitating various activities, described how prominent figures, such as high-ranking officials from the district, had

participated in the CLTS-based Open Defecation Free campaign and attended several trainings in the village. The interviewee recalled how the district collector injected a performative statement by refusing to accept water offered to him by the villagers in public, saying that since open defecation was still taking place in the village, the water in the village was dirty. Such acts were aimed at engineering collective shame and motivating villagers to aspire to achieve Open Defecation Free status.

These affective training activities were not the only tool used in the drive to reduce open defecation. After these trainings, according to respondents (Respondent 2 and Respondent 7), villagers were invited to volunteer to ensure no one would defecate in the open in the village. Through the performativity of standing up as volunteers, these villagers expressed their disgust with the practice of open defecation, with the community as witness, so that people defecating in the open become objects of disgust. Feeling disgusted is not just a bodily state but also a psychic state constructed in social encounters where the 'other' is created, which in this case is the open defecator (Ahmed, 2005).

In this manner, training techniques encouraged upper-caste villagers to distinguish themselves from the open defecating 'other' who thus became deserving of *Grinha*. In Lee's (2021) study, '*Grinha karna'* or 'doing disgust', is a phrase used by Dalit interviewees to encompass upper caste people practicing untouchability towards them. Untouchability refers to certain practices of the "upper" castes such as refusing to touch or share water with people who have been called the "Untouchables" and who are today collectively called Dalits. Techniques such as government officials refusing water from the villagers mirrored the untouchability practices the upper castes practiced, where upper caste villagers might refuse hospitality from Dalits on the basis that they, and therefore the refreshments they proffered, were unclean. Hence, through these technologies of disgust, mobilising both affect and established cultural practices relating to intra-caste relationships, the villagers are nudged into self-governing themselves as model citizens of an Open Defecation Free village. The ways in which these volunteers then went on to utilise emotion and affect in their own policing of the village, will be explored later in the following section.

5.6.2. Surveillance and shame intensify caste order

Once the practice of open defecation was injected with disgust and feelings of collective shame, the sanitation programme implementers strived to imbue the toilet with norms related to honour or *Izzat* and not having a toilet with *Lajja.* The Water and Sanitation Program which supported the district in implementing CLTS in Churu observed in its formative study that whilst sanitation programmes focused on health benefits the biggest motivator for spending money on toilets in Churu's rural areas were social norms of honour and prestige (Respondent 4). The *Chokho Churu* programme was based on this core finding. Village officials (Respondents 3, 6 and 7) emphasised their explicit intention to link the sanitation campaign with notions of honour, reputation, and respect.

Government workers and volunteers articulated a keen awareness of maintaining and working with caste boundaries in the village (Respondents 2, 3, 5, 8). For example, CLTS trainings were organised in different caste hamlets of the village (Respondent 2). Those implementing the scheme felt that villagers would be more receptive to the training if they were undertaking it alongside others from their own caste. Maintaining caste order in the village was felt to be for the greater good of sanitation (Respondent 2). However, there was also evidence from the interviews, that CLTS trainings may have exacerbated caste-based social order through norms aligning with Brahmanical patriarchy. A trainer (Respondent 9), described CLTS-style training:

"*If you hold a village meeting for sanitation training, women...well, normally they don't come. But if they come, then they sit on one side and men are sitting on the other side. The women are in Ghunghat, and men have their huge turbans. We asked them that why do you have this turban, and they would say this is a matter of pride (Izzat)…. And this Ghunghat? This is our culture… Then the next trigger tool is we tell them, when a woman is wearing Ghunghat on her face but going out in the field sitting in the open, removing her sari like that. How do you feel? Then this turban does not matter? And then they get triggered and excited. This trigger tool, particularly we utilised in Rajasthan."*

Here '*Ghunghat*' is used to shame the men in the village for the women going out in the open to defecate, hence undermining their own culture and pride. This messaging legitimised the *Ghunghat,* making women the ultimate targets of sanitation subject-making, as then built toilets to protect the honour of the women in their household, and in turn, their own honour. We see a triad of *Lajja, Ghunghat,* and *Izzat* being operationalised to ensure the villagers' buy-in to make their villages Open defecation-free. For men belonging to the upper caste Rajput, and dominant caste Jat, communities, their masculinity is intrinsically tied to providing for their families and ensuring their protection (Kumar *et al.*, 2002). These gender norms consequently require men to be providers, thereby precluding the necessity for women to venture outside for the same purpose, which in this case translates to providing toilets so the women do not have to venture outside. Applying a caste lens, we see variations in how high-caste villagers were conforming to gendered sanitation governmentality in Churu.

These variations also played out through the voluntary village enforcing groups. These volunteers along with village officials constituted the *Nigrani Samiti* (Community monitoring group). In one of the study villages, a *Nigrani Samiti* consisting of seven men and four women was formed by the village government in 2014. In the early mornings, the *Nigrani Samiti* members would stand guard at common open defecation sites and dissuade people from defecating there, shaming people for not using toilets and hoping, by doing so, to convince them to build one. The purposeful timing of the session in line with human bodily metabolism meant the interventions percolated down to the most personal geographical scale: the body. Ranjan, a 34-year-old member of the Nigrani Samiti, recalled waking up at 3 am daily to stand guard at the edge of the village to stop people from going to their usual defecation spots in the morning. In an interview, he said he had decided that he wanted his village to become Open Defecation Free first (in Rajasthan) and that he would not let anyone in the village defecate in the open, demonstrating a felt sense of responsibility and pride in the village's status of ODF. A village official (Respondent 3) explained how they often resorted to threats of sanctions to build social pressure to build toilets:

"*We told them that if you come outside to defecate, this is so bad for the village and also bad for the women and that diseases are spreading because of your behaviour. And they*

understood. We would tell them your pension will get stuck, your ration will get stuck, so this way they have some fear."

A village head said that the village had been made open defecation free "with a little bit of love and a little bit of fear". A volunteer at Nigrani Samiti added:

"*In Nigrani Samiti, it is important to have people who are influential and respected in the community, so that people feel ashamed of their behaviour. When we saw open defecators, we put garlands on them, or children would go after them and blow whistles. We would tell them that we would get the material for you to build toilets, but if you don't do this, we will stop ration and any such thing we will make hard for you."*

The temporality (early mornings) and the spatiality (location of common defecation sites mentioned in the initial community maps) of the follow-up through volunteers and government officials meant that poorer residents who were predominantly landless, Scheduled Caste, and Scheduled Tribe, would inevitably be the groups that would be the subjects of shaming. While the government did attempt to ensure that all residents had the necessary documents to make them entitled to receive financial incentives once the toilets were built, the need to shoulder the initial outlay for building placed a disproportionate burden on marginalised residents. In this way, the state delegated the responsibility of maintaining the hygiene of the village to the upper and dominant caste groups who use shame and fear to target those who continue to defecate in the open, disproportionately poorer and Dalit villagers.

Defecation was a varied experience based socio-economic and caste distinctions. Meena, [3]a 41-year-old woman residing in the Rajput hamlet said:

"It is embarrassing to go out to defecate. When people pass by while you're relieving yourself, you have to get up. You feel ashamed and scared when they see you. But this was 10-15 years ago. Most people in the Rajput hamlet have toilets now, only Dalit people go out now."

[3] Pseudonyms are used for the villagers quoted in this paper.

Pushpa, a 23-year-old woman who works on the millet farms in the village and lives in the Dalit hamlet, said:

"We do not have a toilet. We have thought about building it. But what can we do, do we run the household or build a toilet? We did not get any financial help or subsidy. We have to go to the fields to defecate. It is quite distressing, having to go the fields to do my business. People try to chase you out, or men can pass by. I have to go really early in the morning and hold it in the rest of the day. I avoid drinking water or eating too much. I can't go in the afternoon if I want to because I could be seen. Then the only option is to go late in the evening in the dark when it is unsafe."

There are distinct forms of subjectification at play in the village as a result of the techniques of government as part of the sanitation programme. Pushpa's feelings of distress, shame and fear at having to defecate in the open are in stark contrast with those of Ranjan, who expressed feelings of responsibility, authority, and pride at being a volunteer who prevented people from defecating in the open. In the case of Pushpa, shame is a lived, experiential process through which stigma is internalised, and through that stigma acts over her and the places she can visit and becomes a key exercise of governmentality (Strong, 2020; Link and Phelan, 2014). Her way of minimising the shame and fear that accompanies defecating is to avoid too many trips to defecate by controlling her water and food intake. Several village motivators and government officials (Respondents 5, 6 and 7) also highlighted the strategy of connecting women's safety to the sanitation programme. Most interviewed women echoed this need for privacy and convenience while defecating. Volunteers would tell villagers that toilets would provide a way for women to be safe and dignified, warning them that there is a risk of being sexually harassed, or having their photos taken by miscreants if they continued to defecate outside (Respondent 3). Defecating outside was a matter of inconvenience, distress, and shame for all women, but multiple subjectivities are evident based on caste, gender, and access to resources.

5.6.3. Mass toilet building and the hidden challenge for faecal waste management

Between 2013 and 2019 toilet usage increased substantially in Churu. 83.8% of the households in Churu had access to toilet facilities by 2019, while 16.2% of the households were defecating in the open, according to data analysed as part of this research. However, despite the substantial increase in toilet usage, open defecation persists; the highest proportion of people without access to toilets are Dalit households. Interviewees also reported that open dumping of faecal sludge by tankers takes place in fields behind the village. While toilets had become a norm in the villages and government campaigns may have succeeded there, there are some factors hidden in the data. Poorer Dalit households in the periphery of the village said that government data would show they have toilets because they had received government-built toilets years ago (Resident interview). Those were dilapidated quickly, and they did not have the money to rebuild or maintain them. So, they can't receive new government subsidies as government records show they have toilets but do not have functional toilets. This supports the recent contention by O'Reilly and Budds (O'reilly and Budds, 2023) that the state-citizen relationship is not just mediated by the provision of sanitation infrastructure, but also by the condition of that infrastructure and its maintenance and repair over its life course. In this way, poorer Dalit villagers' lack of toilets is hidden within the government data, and they are held responsible for still indulging in a practice now considered shameful by those with toilets.

The below tables summarise the toilet facility access and usage patterns in Churu, including rates of open defecation among different caste groups in rural areas.

Table 10: Type of toilet facilities in rural households of Churu

Type of toilet facility	**Percentage**
Flush to piped sewer system	0.9
Flush to septic tank	51.7
Flush to pit latrine	20.9
Flush to somewhere else	0.4
Flush, don't know where	0.1
Ventilated improved pit	3.4

latrine (VIP)	
Pit latrine with slab	4.3
Pit latrine without slab/open pit	1.7
No facility/bush/field	16.2
Composting toilet	0.1
Other	0.1
Total	**100**

Source of data: Demographic Health Surveys 2019-21

Table 11: Open defecation rates by caste categories in rural Churu

Caste group	**Percentage with no toilet facility**
General Caste (Upper caste)	7.4%
Other Backward Class	15%
Scheduled Caste (Dalit)	24.3%

Source of data: Demographic Health Surveys 2019-21

This data and the interviews with residents showed that by 2021, most people in villages in Churu wanted toilets and had toilets. However, this research demonstrated a preference for septic tank flush toilets as opposed to affordable pit latrines - latrines promoted by the government, across caste groups and despite financial constraints. A reason highlighted by Respondent 3 and Respondent 7 was that the twin pit latrines promoted by the government were unsuitable in the desert where Churu was. Respondent 3 said:

"In reality, no one is using twin pit latrine here. Because here it is impossible to even fill one pit as the water absorption is so high here. So now people build twin pit latrines because then the government will not give money otherwise. But they change it somehow later."

Half of the rural residents who had toilets had built flush-to-septic-tank toilets, according to analysed data. This seems to be because residents perceive septic tank toilets to be convenient and of good standard (Respondent 6). These results are in line with previous research in rural India that shows a preference for toilets with large septic

tanks that minimise the frequency of cleaning faecal waste (Coffey and Spears, 2017). Thus, the responsible sanitary citizen chooses toilet construction based on convenience as well as status and pride.

However, the affective governmentality of this sanitation programme problematises sanitation in terms of open defecation and frames toilet-building as a way of containing harmful pathogens. In so doing, it obscures the challenge of waste management beyond the containment of faeces in toilets. A growing concern among interviewed government officials and sanitation experts concerned the ongoing management of faecal waste in septic tanks (Respondent 7,10). An interviewed villager (Respondent 8) said that the trucks collect the faecal sludge from the septic tanks and then dump on the grounds behind the village, which may be more harmful to public health than open defecation. Caste-roles related to cleaning of faeces also do not change even if faeces are now contained in toilets. Rather, through sewer and septic tank cleaning they are entrenched further through modern sanitation. On December 2, 2021, Minister of State of Social Justice and Empowerment said in Rajya Sabha that 73.31% of manual scavengers in India are from Scheduled Castes (Pais, 2021). In a workshop attended by this researcher, Bezwada Wilson, convenor of *Safai Karamchari Andolan*, an advocacy group working against caste-based manual scavenging, raised concerns about how the increasing septic tanks, built as a result of the national sanitation campaign, mean more caste-entrenched labour for Dalit men employed to clean the tanks under exploitative conditions (Wilson, 2024). Interviewed residents of the village said there were private tankers that would be contacted to clean the septic tanks which, studies show, sub-contract Dalit men, often under hazardous conditions (Shekhar, 2023).

Hence, the government sanitation programme leads to the mass building of toilets and modern septic tanks as some citizens construct themselves to be modern and model sanitary citizens. Meanwhile the caste-based society continues to build sanitary citizens on the back of the labour of certain Dalit castes. This is in line with Sarukkai's (2009) assertion that at the core of untouchability is that the untouchability of the Brahmins is outsourced to the Dalits who then carry that burden through various occupations in which certain Dalit castes carry out tasks that distance the privileged castes from untouchable substances (such as faeces) or undesirable behaviours unbecoming of caste

status. The next section examines the securitisation measures undertaken by the government after the behaviour change campaigns to ensure that rural residents did not defecate in the open.

5.6.4. Securitisation of fields and catching the defectors

In Churu, the government recommended that village residents start building toilets and that they would receive financial incentives after the toilets were built, according to Respondent 2. Once the village residents had been asked to build toilets, the work to prevent them from defecating outside began. According to a village official (Respondent 3) one of the first actions he took as part of the sanitation programme was asking all the landowners to fence off their lands that were being used as open defecation sites. Several interviewed landless residents (Resident 18,19) who used to rely on the fields for defecation, said they did so because they did not have the financial resources to build toilets. Securitising of the fields meant that spaces for defecation shrank for these residents and the process of defecation became a source of added shame and psycho-social stress, while the power to control public defecation behaviour rested on the powerful elites of the village. By asking the landowners to secure their lands by putting up fences, poorer open defecators were made to become 'matter out of place' and disenfranchised sanitary subjects. This confirms Doron and Raja's (2015) observation that the upper caste and middle-class agenda for cleaning up public spaces often ran parallel to forcing people who do not seem to heed the call of responsible citizens committed to self-governing themselves to the regime of cleanliness and hygiene. Meanwhile, fields that used to be the sites for defecation for many poorer residents were now fenced off and/or guarded by the volunteers, which meant that in some ways private spaces expanded and public spaces shrank. In this way, cleanliness is framed as an individual responsibility while ignoring the infrastructural and social exclusion that leaves the Dalit residents in these villages unable to build toilets.

According to Respondent 2, the Scheduled Caste livelihoods often make such villagers hard to reach as they work on the farm or with free-roaming cattle. Reaching them as part of the door-to-door campaign strategy was challenging for Churu government teams as those villagers had to leave for work in the early mornings. Due to their work, they would not be able to attend CLTS meetings or Gram Sabha meetings where awareness campaigns would take place (Respondent 2). And so, the communities that

could not be reached through trainings and awareness campaigns were targeted by Nigrani Samiti, so that they could be caught in the morning when they went to defecate. One government official explained **(**Respondent 2):

"So to reach them, Nigrani samite was very important, they would catch hold of these last mile, backward people who they (district officials) just couldn't find."

Meanwhile, there were other perceptions and biases among government officials regarding toilet use and various communities as evidenced by the following interaction with Respondent 3:

"*Respondent 3: The biggest problem convincing people, it is with the scheduled caste. Below middle class, that is where the problem is. Middle class, it is not a problem, upper class, not so much.*

Researcher: Why is it a problem there?

Respondent 3: They are illiterate, not educated. So, they believe in following age-old customs. So, in those communities, when they have decided that they do not want to use toilets, they won't make it."

Due to their livelihoods and community relationships, poorer and Scheduled Caste residents of the village were missing from the participatory processes involving village hygiene training that elaborate on the need to build toilets and government financial subsidies available to them. Instead, they would only encounter the authorities through fear and shame in their encounters with the Nigrani Samiti members, which could be seen as the *Chhadi* wielded by the upper caste and the powerful (Paik, 2009). These are clear examples of what Munt (Munt, 2017) referred to as 'shamed subjectivities', that is individuals who do not meet state imposed or elite supported standards of good and proper citizenship and, consequently, internalize the stigma of shame. The powerful cultural curators of social norms expect that outcast individuals must consistently work on improving themselves, and shame is their main weapon of choice.

5.7. Conclusion: Sanitation's turn on affective governmentality - winners and losers

Set in the empirical context of the Northwestern Indian state of Rajasthan, the paper makes three main contributions. Firstly, the paper finds evidence of positive but differential shifts in India's paradoxical relationship of public/private space in relation to excrement. The age-old cultural practice of open defecation in the public space is waning in favour of toilets being built in the private spaces inside the homestead. As of 2019, more than 80% of the households in Churu have toilets. Most households want to have a toilet regardless of their financial ability to build one. However, Dalit households still lag behind the upper castes and dominant castes as more Dalit households continue to defecate in the open than privileged caste households, leaving them vulnerable to shaming. Importantly, the government focuses on creating citizens who want to build toilets, while willing sanitary citizens are building flush-to-septic tank toilets. The problematisation of sanitation as lack of toilets hides the challenge of how the septic tanks will be managed safely. The seemingly caste-blind sanitation policy thus maintains a caste-based occupational hierarchy as the labour of cleaning the septic tanks will inevitably fall on men of certain Dalit castes.

Secondly, it demonstrates how *Lajja* (shame), *Izzat* (honour), humiliation, and *Grinha* (disgust) flowed between actors of power and villagers within an existing shared caste-based understanding of these emotions. Evidence found in Churu, Rajasthan echoes previous research highlighting that although sanitation is gendered, women are often instrumentalised or weaponised through sanitation interventions (Joshi, 2011). The paper evidences how officials and cultural curators conflated a triad of inter-linked concepts - *lajj*, *Ghunghat* and *Izzat* - that allowed the local caste elites to deflect the sanitation subject-making measures from themselves towards more marginalised lower-caste populations in their villages. Such findings are consistent with scholarship on the dominant culture's ability to side with and being brought into well-meaning policies to ensure the curation of the prevailing cultural choices, with adverse outcomes for the most marginalised. Disproportionately, the marginalised members of the village community were subjected to shame-based tactics: the economically poor, the socially marginalised castes, and the women. These are, as Truelove and O'Reilly (2021) see it, ways in which gender, class, and caste

discrimination intersect to subject economically disadvantaged lower-caste women to more pronounced forms of oppression than their male counterparts or upper-caste women in the sanitation context.

Relatedly, the paper demonstrates the roles that affective governmentality played in creating the space and avenues for shame-based sanitation subject-making to be more adverse and permanent for the poorer and Dalit families in general and the women members in particular. The SBA was driven by indicator-based results. The consequent unequal subjectification began with the rolling out of the 'build (toilet) first, get incentives later' strategy that enabled financially solvent households to take it up quickly, but not by those who needed the toilets most – the poorer households. A concurrent strategy to fence-off open defecation sites (owned by the caste/economic elites) added to the stress of poorer families who could not build their toilets. The outcome was visible. The wealthy upper-caste and dominant caste families had options to use their toilets and were able to escape the reach of shame-based punitive measures. However, the poor and lower-caste could not afford to pre-finance their toilet and lost their access to open defecation sites, intensifying their exposure to the shame-based punitive measures. In a country where Dalit people feel historical discrimination that can often lead to humiliation and shame imprinted on them even since childhood (Pal, 2015), such shame-based policies can lead to an avoidable accumulation of shame on the marginalised.

The paper's third contribution is the application of a geographical lens in the study of affective governmentality's turn on sanitation. From the outset, the study applied geographical framing to detect how governmentality penetrated from the macro (central government), through the meso (the State and village), micro (homestead/ families/livelihoods), and ultimately to the body/affective scales. The study incorporated the emotive and cultural geographical concepts to detect not just explicit but also implicit role of masculinity and gendered use of shame at the micro scale of intra-family dynamics and affective scale of female members. At a household level, men were appointed as the guards of honour and dignity of the households. The micropolitics presented the honour of the households as synonymous with building a toilet and ensuring women did not have to leave the households to defecate in the open. This way, the government may have been successful in making toilets acceptable in the

private space. But it did so by operationalising the social institution of *Ghunghat* which sits at the heart of local culture and prestige. Finally, Churu case serves as a reminder that gender and caste-based injustices are likely to be widespread across rural India. It, therefore, calls for government sanitation programmes to include a duty of care towards marginalised citizens to minimise the type of sanitation subject-making that this paper reveals.

Chapter 6: Land of deities: Sanitary subject-making by state and religious institutions in Himachal Pradesh, India

Abstract:

In India, domestic toilets and Hindu notions of purity often tend to be at odds. this research critically examines the case of a rural district in Himachal Pradesh, India, which claims a relatively successful record of government sanitation programmes to reduce open defecation. It brings forth how the Hindu institution of Devta, which encapsulates a form of governance that operates through religious spaces, works to discipline bodies, practices, and domestic spaces, while continuing to maintain caste-based norms of purity, pollution, and untouchability. Through interviews with members of government agencies, religious bodies and civil society that have been involved in implementing sanitation programmes in the state over the past 20 years, and rural residents of the district, it becomes evident that the government engaged with institution of Devta to legitimise the sanitation programme, leading to an adaptation of domestic sacred spaces. This study uncovers how government and development bodies partnered with religious institutions to convince a largely religious population that by building toilets, they would not only be good citizens but also ideal devotees. The findings thus add a spatiality to the understanding of governmentality of religion by showing how a religious institution governs the daily lives of its constituents in a way that domestic spaces are subjected to self-regulating practices, making villagers adhere to the perceived will of the Gods.

Keywords: Sanitation, religion, sacred, Hinduism, caste

6.1. Introduction

'Shit is a more onerous theological problem than is evil' (Kundera, 1995, P.129).

Historically, excrement has a complex relationship with religion. The concern of religion with defecation, and placement, containment, and disposal of faeces, pre-dates modern public health's concern with germs (Chidester & Linenthal, 1995). These religious concerns can be related to negotiating the boundaries of the sacred and the profane, the pure and impure, pleasing the gods, and incurring the wrath of the gods. Many religions, including Judaism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam, dictate precise directions and instructions for distancing a sacred space from excrement and purifying the body after the act of defecating (Lebens, 2021). In India, the Hindu notions of purity often clash with the idea of toilets inside domestic spaces, thus acting as one of the reasons for the persistence of open defecation (Coffey *et al*., 2017). Through a case study located in a rural district in the state of Himachal Pradesh in India, this paper traces how a state sanitation programme and the religious institution of *Devta* paved the way for creating sanitary subjects who would accept toilets in their domestic spaces instead of defecating in the open. This paper further argues that the institution of *Devta* encapsulates a form of religious governmentality (Garmany, 2010), a form of power that operates through religious spaces and rituals to discipline bodies and maintain caste-based norms of purity and pollution.

Through this argument, this paper contributes to Kong's (2001, P.226) new geographies of religion agenda, calling for attention to be paid not just to 'official sacred spaces' such as churches, temples, and mosques but also to unofficial sacred spaces such as domestic shrines. Examining non-official sacred spaces, such as domestic spaces and shrines in the case of this study, offers an opportunity to examine how adherents of a religion negotiate their conceptions of sacred places due to changing larger social and political contexts (ibid). This means that the sacred space and the secular space must be continuously contested or negotiated. Jones (2019) challenges the binaries of

sacred/profane and official/unofficial and argued that the everyday production of sacred spaces does not just hinge on ritual, but also on modification and negotiation between a range of actors and practices. This is also seen in Singapore, where traditional Chinese rituals are being modified, reinterpreted, and invented to adapt to modern living in Singapore, as citizens negotiate and reinvent sacred space and time in response to the forces of modernity and government housing regulations (Kiong & Kong, 2000). By examining the governmentalising of religious constituents to domesticate defecating bodies in Himachal Pradesh through religious rituals, this study examines the coexistence of pure/sacred places and secular/polluted places or the blurring of these dichotomies as suggested by Della Dora (2018).

Many reasons have been ascribed to the persistence of open defecation in India. These include poverty; lack of access to natural resources, particularly land and water; a preference for open areas as opposed to confined spaces; and lack of adequate dwelling spaces (Jain *et al*., 2019; O'Reilly and Louis, 2014). Meanwhile, the focus on creating demand for toilets has led to important findings about individuals' and households ' motivations to build and use toilets having more to do with comfort, convenience, status, privacy, and dignity than with perceived public health benefits (O'Reilly and Louis, 2014). Religious norms, however, play a critical role in sanitation in rural India. Many people defecate in the open due to a belief drawing from Hindu norms that having toilets located within the dwelling could ritualistically pollute the house (Juran *et al*., 2019). Another barrier to realising rural Indian sanitation relates to low-cost composting pit latrines used to reduce faecal germ transmission in other developing countries being perceived as 'ritually polluting and socially undesirable' (Coffey *et al*., 2015, P.33).

The northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh shows a relatively successful record of sanitation interventions over the past two decades (Hueso González, 2013), even as successive national governments have struggled to ensure universal sanitation and toilet access. In rural Himachal Pradesh, a religious institution called the *Devta* is central to the religious belief system of residents; their daily lives are influenced by what the *Devta* would consider acceptable. *Devta* (God) or *Devi* (Goddess) usually preside over the spiritual well-being of a collection of villages, and these deities are seen as rulers of their territories and guardians of the land and its religious constituents by their followers (Mahajan, 2023). Twenty years ago, in rural Himachal Pradesh, with toilets being

perceived as unacceptable to the *Devta*, sanitation interventions also faced resistance. Yet, the focus of this paper is how sanitation interventions engaged with the institution of *Devta* and brought symbols of modernisation, such as toilets, within acceptable norms, which played a vital role in the acceptance of modern sanitation. With religious beliefs related to ritualistic pollution playing a key role in influencing household decisions regarding sanitation in India, it seems important to explore how religious institutions have been effectively engaged in government interventions to ensure sanitary behaviour in India.

This study shows that the successful engagement of the government with the religious institution of *Devta* was the essential linchpin in the acceptance of toilets as pushed by the Community-led Total Sanitation campaign in the study district. The use of public religious rituals to influence the conduct of religious constituents in becoming sanitary citizens characterised a form of religious governmentality that maintains social control through embodied behaviour in the domestic spaces in these villages. Meanwhile, the convenience of modern sanitation and religious norms influenced the sanitary behaviour of rural residents as well as religious leaders, the latter being interested in shaping subjectivities of the rural residents in line with religious norms, but also being seen as modern and interested in the well-being of the religious constituents. However, while toilets were pushed into the domestic spaces of rural residents over the last 20 years, toilet technologies and adapted domestic spaces continue to adhere to caste-based norms of purity and pollution today. Through this analysis based on interviews with actors responsible for implementing sanitation interventions over the last 20 years in the district, this paper contributes to sanitation research as well as geographies of religion research.

6.2. Sacrality in India: Purity and pollution

Sacrality of spaces in India is inextricably linked with notions of purity and pollution. Conceptualising sacredness in the context of Hindus in India, Srinivas (1957) argued that the world is divided into sacred and non-sacred and that purity is a form of good-sacredness, like auspiciousness, while pollution" is a form of bad-sacredness, like inauspiciousness. And so, the living space of the Hindu household is sacrosanct because it constitutes two sacred spaces—the place of worship and the place of cooking—both

of which are to be kept pure by following the prescribed norms (Sahney, 2019). In his anthropological work delineating sacred and profane spaces in terms of ritual pollution and purity, Khare (1962) drew out the distinctions between physically dirty and ritually polluting by highlighting the paradox that while some objects can be ritually polluting and physically dirty, others can be ritually pure but physically dirty. An example of this paradox is the Ganges River, which is considered ritually pure by the Hindus and a bath in the Ganges is considered to have the power to absolve Hindus of ritual pollution. However, the Ganges is polluted with human excrement, dead bodies, industrial waste, household waste etc, an issue that governments have been struggling to tackle (Alley, 1994). The Hindu sacred law, the *Dharmshastra* describes pollution as defilement and impurity of higher caste bodies and spaces encompassing activities and occurrences such as birth, death, sexual intercourse, and bodily excretions (Aktor *et al.*, 2010). To the Hindu, home is a sacred space, the setting for sacred events, sacred rituals, and the home of the household deities and ancestors (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 1993).

Lee, (2017) however, stresses that Brahmanical ideology is the basis for the organisation of contemporary spaces in India observing that sacred space should not be uncritically examined as products of a culture. The Brahmanical ideology entails that Indian villages and households are spatially organised in a way that higher caste households can distance themselves from people and objects considered ritually impure, including faeces (ibid). Ritual notions of purity and pollution intertwine Hindu religion with caste, wherein one of the significant justifications for caste separatism (manifested in their rejection of inter-caste marriage, shared meals, or physical contact) is the belief that certain castes possess greater ritual purity than others, and that impurity can be transferred from one caste to another through such interactions (Chakravarti, 2018). While Dalit households are in areas in the villages that are in close vicinity to objects such as faeces and animal carcasses, upper caste households are organised in a way that their residents can avoid contact with Dalits who are usually forced to carry out work that is considered ritually polluting, such as handling human waste, certain animals, washing clothes and assisting childbirth (Gupta, 2022). Hence, while Hindu religious institutions, such as the *Devta* might open up to the idea of toilets inside domestic spaces of higher caste Hindus, the adapted domestic spaces must still adhere to the demarcation of ritually pure and ritually impure which is the essence of the belief system. In India, caste, class and gender are the organising principles of cleanliness, and

cleanliness practices reinforce existing hierarchies (Jack *et al*., 2022). As Chidester and Linenthal (1995) observed throughout the history of religions, the production of sacred space has depended upon control over purity.

These findings will further contribute to the infrasecular geographies, a spatial paradigm characterised by the coexistence of multiple forms of beliefs and non-beliefs in a space, that is sustained through continuous processes of unmaking and remaking (Della Dora, 2018). Domesticated ritual practices around shrines and the adaptation of the domestic sacred spaces to accommodate toilets and modern sanitation would thus enrich the scholarship on geographies of religion by expanding on the government and practices of the religious institution of *Devta*. This study examines the case of a unique religious landscape in India where the government, religious institutions and rural residents negotiated with each other through years of government sanitation programmes to introduce toilets, perceived as threats to household purity, into households. The success of the government sanitation programme hinged upon its legitimisation by a unique religious institution, the *Devta*, that governed the everyday life of rural residents in Himachal Pradesh. Through this case study, we see that in rural India, the domestic spaces which exist in line with Hindu boundaries of purity and pollution, evolve alongside the social ordering prescribed by religious institutions.

6.3. Negotiating sacred spaces and governmentality of religion

The body and bodily practices are central to the enactment of sacred space (Holloway, 2006). This was in line with Chidester and Linenthal's (1995) contention that the human body plays a crucial role in the ritual production of sacred place, as embodied practices can contribute to creating sacred spaces through rituals but can also defile sacred spaces. As this study aims to examine this negotiation of sacred spaces between the state and religious institutions, this provides an opportunity to examine the nexus of state and religious institutions that govern the day-to-day lives of people through ritual and processes. Foucault's notion of governmentality characterises 'regimes of power beyond the state apparatus, positing that religion and churches also produce and maintain the knowledges, truths, and social order associated with governmentality and self-regulated governance' (Foucault *et al*., 1991, P.19). Here we note Garmany's (2010) study of favelas in Brazil which interrogated the role of churches and religious

practices as key to governance in a context where the material presence of the state was minimal and crime rates were high, demonstrating how power operates through religious spaces to discipline bodies and maintain social order.

Meanwhile, governments may lean into certain religious practices to gain legitimisation from religious institutions that influence the religious constituents that they aim to govern. Ladwig (2021) notes how French colonial governmentality was established in Laos and Cambodia through an enmeshed relationship of secular and religious governmentality as Buddhism was supported in state rituals, renovation of Buddhist temples and monuments and other such initiatives. Religious institutions can also influence the social norms of their constituents to facilitate the government's interventions for the well-being of the people. An example of this was the role of faith sector actors in earning the trust of people in the Ebola-affected regions of Liberia and Sierra Leone to accept safe burial practices promoted in response to Ebola which challenged their long-held beliefs on respectful treatment of the deceased (Greyling *et al*., 2016).

This study extends the existing understanding of governmentality of religion through a study site where religious constituents govern their day-to-day lives to adhere to the norms dictated by the *Devta*, thus revealing its importance in legitimising government programmes but also maintaining religious norms through adapted sacred spaces. Through the governmentality presented in this case study, we also see the government sanitation programme's push to eradicate the practice of open defecation as an instrument of modernisation, which Elias (1939) describes as 'civilizing process' of the modern individual, in which outer constraints have gradually been transformed into self-restraint. This research aims to consider how Hindu religious institutions that are deeply embedded in governing the behaviour of people, were engaged with to produce sanitary citizens in a rural district in India. In the process, it examines the role of a unique Hindu institution that maintains social order based on an understanding of sacred spaces and spatiotemporal conceptions of purity and pollution. The next section provides an understanding of the *Devta* institution as a form of governance that runs parallel to the state governance structures in the sacred landscapes of Himachal Pradesh.

6.4. Understanding the sacred landscapes of Himachal Pradesh

The northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, which is nestled in the Himalayas, is also known as the abode of the deities or *Dev Bhumi*. Home to many sites of pilgrimage, the Himalayas hold a special place for Hindus as their many mountains, caves, rivers, tributaries and forests gained divine characteristics in the eyes of Hindus through a dynamic historic process interacting with folklore and sacred texts, occurring over thousands of years (Chanchani, 2019). The sacred space on the *pahar* (mountain) is shared by many other spirits and *Devta*s, including those of the Buddhists and the Hindus (Negi *et al*, 2016). *Pahari* culture, found in Himachal Pradesh, is defined largely by a belief system that includes living deities. There are an estimated 2,000-3,000 *Devta* in the state as a group of villages or Panchayats can have a *Devta* of their own, but most Hindu families will have a *Kul Devta* or a family *Devta* (Jodhka, 2015). Though *Devtas* look like totems, they are treated as active and alive, and speak to devotees through their interpreters called *gurr* (Sehgal, 2015). These living deities or *Devta* and *Devi* (Gods and Goddesses) and the associated folklore are deeply embedded in the social fabric of the state and play a crucial role in governing and ordering society.

These *Devta* and the temples they reside in are not restricted to the religious aspects of the communities but also direct social relations and caste hierarchies in rural Himachal Pradesh (Jodhka, 2015). Each deity is believed to exercise his/her power within a bounded area, the *har*, and the inhabitants of this area turn to him/her to ask for good weather, or good health or to mediate between parties during village conflicts (ibid). A *Devta* committee is formed which consists of an administrator called *Kardar* and other groups of villagers who are high caste, meanwhile Dalit villagers are the musicians and devotees (Berti, 2009). This committee in every village administers all the festivals, family events, the running of the temples, the celebrations of Dussehra (a Hindu festival of social and political importance in the region), blessing of a new child that is born, and every big and minor event in the village (Jodhka, 2015). Every decision about sacred forest groves, to agriculture, and of course, sanitation has to receive the blessing of the *Devta* committee.

The divine governance of the *Devta* runs parallel to the secular governance structures of the State in Himachal Pradesh. In rural Himachal Pradesh, a collection of Panchayats

(village councils), usually three to six, are also spiritually governed by the *Har*. Berti (2009, P.2) explains the divine jurisdiction of the *Devta* and the Har in the following way. "…the area in which devotees of a particular deity reside. It refers, essentially, to a territory inside which the inhabitants use to honour a specific deity (*Devta* or *Devi*). In a wider sense, *hār* can designate the people who live in a particular territory belonging to a deity, which are also called its *hārye* (inhabitants of the hār) and who are considered as the political subjects of the deity. The inhabitants of a *hār* are territorially linked to one another by the ties they have with the deity." The *Devta* and the state are interconnected in Himachal Pradesh and reinforce the legitimacy and authority of each other as institutions (Chophy, 2019). In fact, many religious institutions have been bestowed semiformal status and have been integrated into the local governance structure in Himachal Pradesh (Berti, 2009). The deity institution or *Devta* committee can be seen as a representative of a governmentalised set-up, functioning in a pastoral realm, as it conducts the behaviour of subjects through multiple avenues of influence (Mahajan, 2023). The *Devta* committee, usually dominated by male members of the Rajput caste, also plays an important role in maintaining a caste-based social order in the villages (Rani & Agnimitra, 2021).

In the recent past, members of the *Devta* committees have registered their opinions about various state projects revolving around modern infrastructure through what has been dubbed *Devta* activism. *Devta* committees have protested hydroelectric and luxury tourist developments following the expression of disapproval by particular *Devta*s (through the *gur*) (Chhatre and Saberwal, 2005). There are instances of clear directions given by *Devta*s to resistant villagers to give up their lands to make way for roads; in one case, the *Devta* committee banished an entire village until it agreed to the extension of a road network (Negi *et al*., 2016). The wrath of a *Devi* or *Devta* of a village is one of the primary forces of social control deciding what is considered transgressive behaviour, specifically in spaces considered sacred. The *Devta* controls the conduct of the villagers in their domestic spaces, which are home to domestic shrines considered sacred. Thus, embodied behaviour that could threaten the ritual purity of areas around the domestic shrine, such as defecating in the toilet, could be considered offensive to the deities. Chophy (2019) provides an ethnographic account of a village in Himachal Pradesh where the medium of the *Devi* expressed her anger to the villagers in a public ritual because alcohol had been consumed in a household where the village's *Devta* was

worshipped, thus defiling the domestic sacred space. The wrath of the *Devta* often holds more importance than a government mandate or government health programme as was seen a village close to Mandi where residents refused to be vaccinated during the COVID-19 pandemic as they were told by the *Devta* committee that it would anger the Gods (Jaswal, 2021). In the folklore and the belief system of the villagers, bad things can happen if the deities are angered, such as bad harvest, bad weather, floods, and even skin diseases (Rani and Agnimitra, 2019). It flows naturally that in these parts of Mandi, where rules of purity and pollution are decided by the deities, any behavioural change campaign aiming to introduce toilets would need to be legitimised by the deities. Purity is an essential condition for Hindus to communicate with the Gods. This means that convincing villagers that toilets would not be defiling their domestic spaces, was essential in assuring villagers that by being hygienic modern sanitary subjects, they would preclude themselves from worship of the deities (Dumont, 1980).

Using governmentality as a framework to look at government as a multiplicity of authorities aiming to influence the conduct of citizens, this case study provides a governmentality of state and religious institutions, aligning their motivations to convince rural citizens to accept toilets into their homesteads. This remaking of domestic sacred spaces that cohabitate with secular spaces containing sanitary infrastructures, expands the understanding of religious geographies by highlighting the multiple motivations of religious subjects and the religious institution that governs them. But first, the next section details the sanitation history of the study site before elaborating on the methods used in this research.

6.5. Sanitation history of the study site

Himachal Pradesh is one of the smaller states and also one of the more developed states in India (Niti Aayog, 2021). As compared to the All-India poverty ratio of 25.01%, 7.62 % of the population in Himachal Pradesh is multi-dimensionally poor, which includes deprivations in health, education, and living standards apart from income poverty (Niti Aayog, 2021). 89.97% of the population lives in rural areas (Census, 2011). The research for this paper was conducted in Mandi district of Himachal Pradesh. One of the primary sanitation policy instruments credited with the mass behaviour change regarding open defecation in Mandi was the Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS).

In 2005, CLTS was chosen to be employed in Himachal Pradesh to dissuade people from defecating outside and to see toilets as a way of disease containment. The CLTS strategy was growing in popularity in South Asia as it was attributed to many open defecation-free villages in Bangladesh and had advocates among bureaucrats and transnational organisations such as the World Bank's Water and Sanitation Program in India. To implement CLTS in Mandi in 2005, the district administration created an institutional arrangement of government departments, officials at the district, block, and Panchayat level, and partnered with NGOs to ensure that every household builds and uses toilets in the district.

Toilet coverage in Mandi district increased from 28% in 2005 to 82% in 2011 (Hueso *et al*, 2017). Due to the progress made in sanitation interventions in the decade between 2003 and 2012, the state was already on strong footing with a high toilet coverage when the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Mission) programme started in 2014. As per the fourth round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), more than 72% of the population had access to improved sanitation facilities. As per the fifth round of NFHS (2019-2020), after the latest sanitation programme, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, more than 81% of the population had access to improved sanitation facilities. Compared to other states in India, Himachal Pradesh is exceptionally homogenous in its religious composition: about 95 percent of the local population is Hindu (Das *et al*., 2015). Hinduism would therefore be expected to play an important role in the governing of the rural population. Hinduism, however, is not a singular monistic faith system and is practiced differently in various regions of the Indian subcontinent. In Himachal Pradesh, the unique practice of Hinduism involves the *Devi* or *Devta,* or living deities that speak through human representatives. The origins of *Devi* and *Devta* can be traced to them being seen as incarnations of various Hindu Gods and Goddesses, or as descendants of past rulers, representing divine kingship. This research found that it is the *Devta* committee, which is responsible for managing the affairs related to the *Devta* and its communication with rural residents, that influences the everyday life of rural residents, including their sanitation habits. This makes Mandi a fascinating case study to explore how a religious institution that runs parallel to the state in terms of jurisdiction of the residents of an area, co-produced sanitary subjects while also maintaining caste-based norms of purity and pollution.

6.6. Methods

This research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which posed challenges for travel from the United Kingdom (where the researcher was based) to India. A remote data collection strategy was implemented based on telephone and online interviews. Two phases of semi-structured interviews were conducted which included a total of 24 interviews. The first phase of semi-structured key informant interviews was conducted with government officials who implemented sanitation interventions in Himachal Pradesh and Mandi in the past two decades. These interviewees were recruited using cold-calling and emails to government officials and then acquiring contact details through the snowballing technique (see Table 5 for details). Then, NGOs that supported the implementation of sanitation interventions in Mandi were interviewed. These interviews were conducted via phone calls and on Microsoft Teams, depending on the technology available to the respondent.

For the second phase of interviews, a collaboration was set up with a local NGO to reach local residents. Here, a research assistant from the NGO would identify residents to be interviewed and take the phone to them so that the author could conduct interviews using a telephone. Through snowballing techniques, trainers, volunteers and members of Mahila Mandal (community-based organisations) were interviewed. Finally, interviews were conducted with members of *Devta* committees. Over the course of the research, many of the interviewees were interviewed multiple times (between three to five times each), in that some of these interviews became more like ongoing conversations over a period of three years (2020-2023). A reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) based on the methodology of Braun and Clarke (2017) was used to analyse the semi-structured interviews. While the RTA can be a mix of inductive and deductive coding approaches, which was the case with this research, this research followed a predominantly inductive approach to coding after which a deductive approach to analysis was undertaken based on redefined research questions.

Table 12: List of interviewees

Designation	**Role**	
State secretary, rural development (2003)	Responsible for the implementation of various centrally sponsored, state-funded and externally aided schemes and provision of basic amenities and services, including sanitation	Respondent 1
District	A district collector is a civil servant who serves as the head of a	Respondent

magistrate (2005)	district's administration in India. They are also known as the district magistrate or deputy commissioner, depending on the state or union territory.	2
NGO 1	An informant from a non-government organisation that supported the government in the implementation of the sanitation programme	Respondent 3
Residents	Residents of study villages.	Respondent 4-13
State coordinator, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan	Coordinator for Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Mission), Himachal Pradesh	Respondent 14
Resource person	Individual having sufficient experience in training in participatory approaches including CLTS or similar tools.	Respondent 15
CLTS Trainers	Government-approved CLTS trainers, specialising in CLTS and participatory approaches, who deliver CLTS trainings in villages.	Respondent 16,17
Kardar, Devta committee	The *Kardar* supervises the overall management of the temple's affairs and the deity's land holdings. The administration treats the *Kardar* as the representative regarding the deity's affairs and holds him accountable for the deity's funds and their appropriate utilisation (Mahajan, 2023).	Respondent 18
United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)	UNOPS provides meaningful technical expertise to India in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, including goals related to sanitation.	Respondent 19
Block Development Officer, Kullu	In charge of development activities at the block level of administration.	Respondent 20
Mahila Mandal members	Members of women's groups that work on village development activities including sanitation programmes.	Respondent 21-24

6.7. Results

6.7.1 Resistance to sanitation in the land of deities

In 2005, when a new district official was posted to Mandi, one of his mandates was to ensure universal sanitation in the district as part of the ongoing national sanitation programme called the Total Sanitation Campaign. He recalled how he knew this was not a straightforward issue of building toilets in every household in the village and providing financial subsidies for households to build them (Respondent 2). In a pilot

study in another district in Himachal Pradesh, he had seen that most toilets built in rural households as part of a previous sanitation campaign were left unused. Some toilets were dilapidated, some were used to store fodder, and many were being used as small temples for the household. People were still defecating in the open (Respondent 2). Based on his experiences, the new district official was sure that he would have to implement an approach, such as CLTS, with a strong focus on behavioural change, and not just provide financial assistance to rural residents for building toilets.

CLTS advocates different approaches to trigger a community into adopting toilets, of which support to build toilet infrastructure is only one aspect. First, the community is made aware of the impact of open defecation on the health of the village by taking the residents on a walk through the village's common defecation sites, which are indicated by the residents. The CLTS facilitators use shaming tactics such as asking gathered villagers questions like who went out to defecate today, and whose faeces are lying on the ground. The crude terms for faeces in local dialects are used deliberately to generate feelings of shame and disgust in residents (Respondent 16). Scientific performances are also used as part of the 'shock and shame' toolkit, such as collecting water from village rivers in vials and using chemicals to show the level of contamination of water. A CLTS trainer explained a related approach (Respondent 17):

"*We would take the villagers to common defecation spots in the village and make them look at it. We would explain how the same flies that sit on these faeces enter their homes and sit on their food. That got a visceral reaction from many, and they would look disgusted*."

As rural residents were confronted by this behavioural change campaign that used a mix of performance and emotions to drive home the consequences of open defecation on the village's health, they seemed convinced about building toilets in their homes. The CLTS approach had been very effective in many of the Indian districts it had been implemented, leading to rapid building of toilets (Respondent 1). But the government officials and NGOs working in the area were puzzled by many villages in the Mandi where no toilets were made. An NGO official explained how in one Panchayat, none of the residents were building toilets. After the NGO started talking to people and asking about their reluctance to build toilets, one theme started emerging: *If they built toilets in*

their homes, the Devta would get angry (Respondent 3*).* An NGO official (Respondent 3) who worked extensively on sanitation campaigns here described the issue:

"In the higher, more mountainous regions of Mandi, the influence of the Devta is deep among the society and the worshippers. Everything they do is mandated by the Devta and anything they might think will anger the Devta will never happen. They would think that this is so strange that you would sit inside the house and defecate, that would be so bad, sinful. They would feel very strange about it. That this is a dirty act and we have to keep it far from our homes. How can we do it at home?"

And so emerged a missing piece of the jigsaw in the government sanitation campaign.

6.7.2. Modern sanitation is legitimised by the deities

The resistance to toilets in many of the villages was intertwined with the deep beliefs around the ritually polluting toilets defiling their domestic space where they have their domestic shrines. A government official who worked on the state sanitation campaign explained (Respondent 14):

"It was very challenging. The people here felt that at the doorstep of the gods, we can't build a toilet, it will spread impurity. How can we go to the temple where we go to pray after having a toilet at home? Such beliefs were rampant in the villages."

Government officials and NGO officials in their interviews expressed the importance of engaging with these beliefs in the sanitation programme. An NGO official explained that they realised it was crucial to first engage with the administrators of the *Devta* committee, as they would be key actors in transforming the behaviours of the rural residents in Mandi. The NGO in charge of implementing the sanitation programmes and the government decided to hold a workshop and orientation session for the *Kardaar* or administrators of the *Devta* committee in one of the Panchayats in Mandi in 2005. Within these workshops, the CLTS approach of shock and shame was used to convince the *Kardaars* of the importance of toilets and the harms of open defecation. The messaging was adapted to cause visceral reactions and behavioural change among the men who governed the spirituality of villages. The NGO official described how they adapted their CLTS approach to connect to the religious leaders. Instead of showing them how the flies sitting on the faeces were entering people's homes, they were shown

how these flies were sitting on the idols of the *Devta* and entering the temples. In this way, the *Devta* committee was convinced that the best way to avoid ritualistic pollution was through the containment of faeces using toilets rather than defecating in the open away from the temples and homes. An NGO worker (Respondent 3) explained:

"After the workshop, their mindset changed a lot. They (Kardaar) also thought making these toilets was important, so the toilet constructions actually began with a Devta complex. And then the community toilet funds were given to all famous temples, and so toilets were constructed on the complex of the Devta. With that, a message went out to worshippers that this is important and that this is acceptable."

What is inherent here is the acknowledgement that ritual beliefs are provisional and subject to transformation triggered from the top (*Devta* committee) to the bottom (devotees). After the workshop by the NGO and the government, a *Kardaar* from one of the *Devta* committees in the study site was among the many who approached the *Har* to intervene in villages to convince the residents that toilets were acceptable in accordance with the *Devta*. After the NGO and the government engaged with the *Kaardars*, they also decided to bring up the issue with the *Devta* committee of each village. *Devta* committee members explained that it is the duty of the *Devta* committee to ascertain how the will of the *Devta* will be taken forward in the community (Respondent 18). The *Gur* was integral to the strategy of convincing the villagers that toilets and hygiene were a way of pleasing God rather than angering them. For this divine communication, a *Jhaada* was organised, which is a gathering of *Devta* committee members and worshippers where a decision made by the *Devta* committee is communicated to the worshippers. A Kardaar (Respondent 18) involved in the sanitation campaign explained:

"If a decision is made, everyone has to abide by it. So with regards to the subject of cleanliness, the gur through a public ritual communicated to the people that the Devta will not consider a toilet to be dirty or filthy. Through the Gur, they were told to keep your surroundings clean, and don't keep your surroundings filthy. And if the Devta has made a decision, then they don't refuse it. The Devta is above all here, their word and decision is above all (sarvopar)."

This demonstrates, as argued by Ghatak and Abel (2013), that technologies of interaction, such as the ritual described above, mediate individuals' response to the

institutional apparatus of state power, in this case, the CLTS programme. The *Kardaars* also decided to support the CLTS programme in the villages by approaching the *Har* that overlooks the *Devta* committees of three to four Panchayats. Through the *Har*, the villagers were also to get the message that it was important to start building toilets. Community funds from the government for building toilets were also provided to all influential temples in the area, so that worshippers would be convinced even further once they saw toilets present in the complexes of the *Devta*. Parallel to this, the NGOs and the government continued their work on Community-led Total Sanitation awareness campaigns with the villages. This way in 2005-06, villages received trainings about the health risks associated with persistent open defecation, while the *Devta* committees communicated to them that this was in line with the belief systems of the Gods.

While government CLTS campaigns aimed to use scientific facts and performance about pathogen transmission routes to trigger behavioural change among rural residents, rituals such as the trance of the *Gur* were equally important, if not more, in setting the stage for the government sanitation programme. The rituals of the *Gur* communicating the will of the *Devta* to the villagers, along with the *Devta* committee reiterating that toilets are acceptable in the eyes of the deities, was an important step in building the rural community's trust in the government programme. This way, the government acknowledged that the sanitation programme had to address the spiritual well-being of the villagers. On the other hand, faced with the inevitable arrival of modern sanitation and an opportunity to guide the well-being of the community, the religious leaders also supported the government sanitation efforts. Through the ritual of the *Gur,* the religious leaders unified the spiritual well-being of the villagers with the sanitary well-being of the villagers. The *Kardaar* (Respondent 18) from a village in Mandi talked about the many misconceptions among the villagers about the will and mandates of the *Devta* regarding hygiene and how they set out to change those misconceptions:

"*In our village and many villages around us, young girls would be shunned from their homes during their menstruation cycle and kept with the cattle because they were considered impure.*[4] *The logic of not constructing toilets at home is linked to this. Villagers believed that keeping such impurity at home would anger the Gods. But this*

[4] In order to preserve the purity of inner space of the household, according to Hindu standards of purity, different sources of ritual pollution must be separated through segregated spaces, this may include women during their menstrual period (Mohanty and Devi, 2019).

kind of segregation of girls or beliefs about toilets are not mandates of the Devta, these are just beliefs passed on from elders from one generation to the next."

Interviewed villagers, who deeply believe in these rituals, started to self-govern their behaviour to ensure their homes and surroundings are clean. Thus, these spaces become governmentalised by the state and the *Devta* alike. An interviewed 41-year-old woman from the study site (Respondent 5) explained the shift in attitudes among the villagers towards toilets:

"I have a deep belief in the Devta. We really like it (the folklore). We go to the temples regularly, and we believe in our Kul Devta from Naan. There are fairs and processions that take place for our Devta, these are all very old practices. People used to not make toilets before, but now everyone makes them. You see the other person doing it, so you also do it. Things change."

6.7.3. The arrival of toilets and convenience

The motivations of the *Kardar* and the leaders of the *Devta* committee were not only steered through the sanitation programmes. With the government programmes propagating hygiene-related behaviour change and with rural residents seeing the benefits of toilets in the cities, toilets had become synonymous with status and convenience. Interviewed residents would visit relatives in the city and see toilets in the houses, and wanted that convenience in their homes (Respondent 6, 7,11). The act of going out to defecate near the rivers in the cold and rainy season also started seeming daunting to many residents as they would get drenched or had to face the punishing cold when going out to urinate or defecate (Respondent 5, 11,12,13). An interviewed *Kardaar (*Respondent 18), said he could also see the advantages of a toilet and felt the inconvenience of defecating outside. He described the inconvenience of defecating in the open in the extreme winters of the Himalayas or trying to find a spot to defecate in during the pouring monsoon, and how filthy the areas near the river would get as they would be covered in human faeces during the summer.

For many residents, it became a matter of shame not having a toilet at home now as most of their relatives and neighbours have them. There were many who would also find it embarrassing when guests and relatives would come to their home to visit and would have to go outside to urinate or defecate. For others, it became a matter of protecting the women and children in their households from having to go out and

defecate. An interviewed female resident (Respondent 7) explained her motivations for building the toilet when she did:

"*We started feeling ashamed when guests would come home to stay, and they would have to go out to do their business, especially the elderly. I decided we needed a toilet because it was very difficult going out to do our business. The girls were also young. Everyone used to go to the Nalla (river), and there used to be so much filth there. My girls would sometimes not go to defecate for 2 days because of all this, there was so much filth. So, just seeing this, we built a toilet."*

This is in line with the contention by O'Reilly and Louis (2014) that proximate social pressure driven by economic change was one of the main factors for successful sanitation uptake in Himachal Pradesh. The study showed that many people were influenced to build toilets by their exposure to urban lifestyles through government jobs, education, and marketing of commercial produce. With the government sanitation campaigns, social pressure building as neighbours started building toilets, the village residents started feeling that their religious beliefs and toilets were not at odds. The social pressure to build toilets was, however, gendered and steeped in gender norms. In the study area, much of the messaging in the government behavioural change campaigns was focused on protecting women from the indignity of defecating outside. An interviewed state coordinator for the Clean India Mission or *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan* (government sanitation programme 2014-2019) in Himachal Pradesh emphasised that women's safety was an important and effective part of the campaign messaging. Many of the women residents in the villages recounted their experiences of defecating in the forests, fields, or near the rivers. For them, building toilets was as much about convenience and health as it was about the indignity of defecating outside. A 40-year-old woman (Respondent 9) who worked on the fields explained:

"My daughter and I used to go to the fields in the morning for it (defecating). It was quite a problem because every time we felt like we needed to go, we had to think of the time. We would have to go when it was dark or early morning, when people cannot see you, otherwise we have to hold it in until we could go. I didn't want that for my children anymore."

At the junction of social pressure, the need to be seen as modern, and the need for convenience, however, the social norms seem to have shifted to make space for

domestic toilets through early engagement with religious institutions by the government. However, in the higher mountainous regions of Himachal Pradesh, such as Kullu, the government continued to run workshops for *Devta* representatives during *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan* (Clean India Mission) between 2014-2019 (Respondent 20). This demonstrates the continuing need for governments to engage with religious institutions to ensure the relative success of sanitation missions. The next section examines the negotiation between domestic sacred spaces and spaces for toilets in the rural households of Mandi.

6.7.4. Negotiating sacred spaces in the face of modern sanitation

As toilets started becoming a condition of a modern household and convenience, the ritual purity of the households still had to be preserved. With the arrival of modern sanitation through government programmes, interventions by the *Devta committee,* and the social pressure, toilets started building up rapidly in the villages of this district. But this modern sanitation was adapted to the needs of religious notions of purity and pollution. The household is considered sacred as that is where the household temple and the *Rath* (chariot of *Devi*/*Devta*) are placed and where prayers are offered to the *Devta* (Respondent 18). Over the years, as sanitation programmes between 2005 and 2019 continued to promote toilets as a way of maintaining hygiene in the villages, modern sanitation was slowly accepted and brought to the homes, but without disturbing the sacred spaces of the *Devta*. A member of the *Devta* committee (Respondent 18) explained that while it is important to maintain sanitation and use toilets, it is also important to maintain the ritualistic purity of the house by following *Vaastu Shaastra*, a traditional Indian form of architecture based on ancient Hindu texts:

"The house is where the temple is, the idol is inside the temple and so is the rath. This is a sacred space. According to the principles of Vaastu Shaastra[5]*, the toilet and the temple cannot be together in the same complex. The wall of the toilet has to be separate from the house. Inside the house is where the offerings are made to the Devta."*

[5] The Indian traditional *Vaastu shastra*, for example, involves careful site planning and orientation of rooms prior to designing a home (Patra, 2009; Patra, 2006). In *vaastu shastra*, toilets are recommended to be built along the Northern and Southern axes and located towards the Western sides, avoiding constructing any toilets, septic tanks or kitchen towards the Northeast side (Othman and Buys, 2016).

Cultural traditions and religious teachings have significant influences on the design, location, and the way users use the toilets, but in many ways, these are self-governed practices. In the villages in the study site, most residents now have toilets. But in many higher caste households, these toilets are still not inside the household but are built in the *aangan or* courtyard of the house, as it is not considered auspicious to have a toilet inside the house where the temple or *rath* (chariot) is (Respondent 7). On the other hand, many interviewed residents have built toilets inside their homes, as it is considered modern to have toilets inside the house, but the toilet will not share a wall with the worship room (Respondent 9). These actions by religious people display a form of power, a governmentality that manifests through their bodies rather than over them, and how space comes to be governed through self-regulating practices that villagers in Mandi adhere to, keeping in mind what they think will please the deities (Garmany, 2009). The maintenance of sacred purity through adapted spaces and architecture has been noted elsewhere. A study of diasporic Brahmin Indians manipulated the architecture of their houses to honour the sacred purity of the domestic shrines by ensuring that the pipes to the bathroom did not pass through the room where the shrine was placed (Sahney, 2017). This negotiation between secular spaces and sacred spaces has been observed in the work of Kiong and Kong (2001) where residents in government regulated high-rise buildings in Singapore adapted domestic spaces to *Feng Shui* norms by sacrificing some spaces like balconies that could be used for drying clothes to make space for an indoor garden with flowing water which symbolises prosperity in ancient Chinese tradition.

This adaptation of norms of ritualistic purity to modernisation can also be seen in the types of toilet pits that are dominant in the villages here. A recent study showed that 74 % of toilets in Himachal Pradesh are septic tank toilets while only 15% were pit latrines (Bhol *et al*., 2019). An interviewed resident in the village explained that most of the households in the village had septic tanks of at least 20 feet and more, so that they would not have to be emptied frequently. Faecal sludge management, which involves emptying pits and tanks of faecal matter and transporting the sludge to treatment and disposal, is also inseparably linked to caste relations in India where certain Dalits are made responsible for clearing waste and other castes would find the activity of clearing waste ritually polluting (Gupta, 2022). In this context, interviews with government officials in Himachal Pradesh showed that while twin pit latrines are the government's

recommended solution for an affordable and safe way to dispose of faeces and reuse them as fertilisers, adoption by rural residents is still very low (Respondent 14). Most of the interviewed residents were not aware of the twin pit technology or thought that it was not a good quality toilet. Interviewed residents said that they had not been informed about technology options, but they believed septic tanks worked best in the rocky surfaces. Interestingly, even households that could not afford to make septic tank toilets, would save money, and get large septic tank toilets constructed. Despite government recommended toilets being subsidised and much cheaper. One interviewed resident (Respondent 20) said:

"Septic tank toilet is the only one we wanted to build because it is the comfortable option. The government toilets are not of good quality. The toilet is outside. We want a good toilet, but we have our beliefs as well."

Since for most Indian villagers, only people from "untouchable" castes can empty latrine pits, and the fact that resisting such work has been an important part of untouchables' struggle for equal treatment, makes pit latrine adoption less attractive in rural India than in other countries (Gupta *et al*., 2020). A study conducted in north India found that although some conservative rural Hindus find latrines in general undesirable, most people felt that expensive latrines with large pits or septic tanks are not polluting (as pit emptying is avoided for a lifetime) and are a sign of wealth (Coffey *et al*., 2015). Interviews with residents from the villages confirmed this aspect of toilet technology. One interviewed resident (Respondent 12) said:

"We built the toilet with the septic tank as that is the type of toilet everyone builds and it will be generations before it has to be emptied out."

Interviewed government officials in Himachal Pradesh echoed that toilets are a sign of prestige and that, since most of the rural residents had built single pits or septic tank toilets, safe disposal of faecal sludge from these pits is the biggest concern for the government in the coming years (Respondent 14, Respondent 1).

6.8. Conclusion

The blurring lines between sacred spaces and secular spaces have been a key concern for geographies of religion scholarship recently. This includes Kong's (2001) call for

more attention to be paid to 'unofficial sacred spaces' and Della Dora' (2018) 'infrasecular geographies' paradigm, where sacred and secular practices intersect and are negotiated (Dempsey, 2023). To these geographies of religion agenda, this study contributes by highlighting the role of governmentality of religious institutions in nudging their religious constituents through public rituals, into opening up their sacred domestic spaces to the secular sanitary infrastructure of toilets. In this way, this study highlights the role and motivations of religious institutions in blurring hard lines between sacred domestic spaces that are to be kept ritually pure, and the profane spaces, such as toilets, that can be ritually polluting. However, higher caste rural residents and religious leaders adapt their needs for modern sanitation infrastructure by ensuring that ritual pollution is avoided through their choice of toilet infrastructures and placement of toilets in domestic spaces. This demonstrates the multiple forms of beliefs (*Devta*, caste) and non-beliefs (modern hygiene) co-existing in domestic and policymaking spaces, thus enriching the infrasecular geographies scholarship by infusing it with a particular type of religious governmentality.

Through the case of Mandi in Himachal Pradesh, this study has made visible how religious institutions can play a role in productively shifting collective attitudes and shaping social norms to produce sanitary citizens in novel ways. In the land of *Devta* where toilets were considered as ritually polluting and potentially incurring the wrath of the *Devta*, government campaigns based on scientific facts had to be preceded by rituals and ceremonies mandated by the *Devta* committees to convince rural residents that toilets were acceptable. The struggle to tackle the prevalent practice of open defecation continues in India today as sanitation programmes fail to tackle religious beliefs and caste-based norms related to defecation (Coffey and Spears, 2017), among other issues related to infrastructural intersectionality (Truelove & O'Reilly, 2021). This paper examined the arrival of modernisation in the form of sanitation in the villages of the Himalayan state of Himachal Pradesh where religious beliefs deemed toilets unacceptable in households.

We see these villages as sites of negotiation as religious institutions such as *Devta* adapt ritualistic notions to co-produce sanitary citizens along with government and development institutions. A religious governmentality emerges as we see a gradual liberalisation of religious rigidity, where health and science are communicated to villagers through carefully reconstructed notions of ritual purity to create willing

sanitary citizens. For sanitation to become acceptable to rural communities, it had to be certified acceptable by the deities, as governments and local bodies were not adequate. That means that liberalisation of religious practice had to occur before the modern toilet facilities could arrive and this study of Himachal Pradesh gives a particularly vivid example of that. Himachal Pradesh is portrayed as a state in India where some of the more effective engagements with religious institutions could be seen. The ancient religious institution of *Devta* has progressively accepted and incorporated the advent of toilets, and we have presented here that this led to the arrival of sanitation campaigns and programmes, the gradual shift towards accepting toilets inside homes. Hence, this study shows a change in domestic spaces over the years in that toilets shifted from outside of homes to inside of homes among some residents who preferred convenience and a modern house. However, many others still keep the toilets in the house complex, but on the exterior of the house. But once this progress occurred, a space was created that could be occupied by different agencies that promote improved toilets. This showed that for CLTS to be successful in the study site, religious norms and higher caste norms had to be actively engaged with by the government, to make space for toilets in the homesteads of the religious constituents.

The research, however, also shows that sanitation that was co-produced by the government and the institution of *Devta* seeks to uphold ritualistic notions of purity and pollution, guided by caste-based norms of untouchability, even as the convenience of modern toilets is accepted. This has an influence on the particular subjectivity of the sanitary subjects in these villages. Many households continue to build toilets outside of the complex of homes to avoid ritualistic pollution of sacred spaces, while the choice of toilet technologies also reflects an aversion to engaging with the cleaning of faeces. While the issue of open defecation has been tackled with relative success, these notions of purity and pollution, along with the perceived convenience of septic tanks, make them a dominant choice in these villages, posing a challenge to policymakers on the faecal sludge management needs in the future.

Chapter 7: Mobilising sanitation policies: A critique of Community-led Total Sanitation in rural India

Abstract

This paper examines how the World Bank and a network of government and non-government actors circulated Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS), a policy approach to improve rural sanitation, to two rural districts of India. Using the policy mobilities framework, it examines the fast transfer of CLTS policy to Mandi and Churu districts of India, based on interviews with key informants in the government, the World Bank, non-government organisations, and rural residents. The study identifies three key aspects of CLTS policy mobilities in rural India. Firstly, how policy tourism was used as a key instrument of policy mobilisation through the creation of CLTS champions among the Indian government's bureaucratic cadre. Secondly, how the community-led focus was (mis)used in the national sanitation policy to speed up the creation of open defecation-free villages, through a much-diluted version of community participation of the original CLTS model. Finally, how cultural adaptation became key to the transferability of CLTS in different geographical contexts, but varied across the study sites due to differing policy assemblage approaches by local and transnational actors. The paper contributes to the policy mobilities literature by drawing attention to villages' emergence as nodal sites of policy negotiation and advocacy in the rapid spread of CLTS across two Indian districts, also evident in the Global South.

Keywords: CLTS, policy mobility, rural, World Bank, community

7.1. Introduction

This paper examines the case of a sanitation approach called Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS) and its growing influence on the Indian national sanitation policy by studying its movement between two districts of India: Mandi and Churu. CLTS is used in communities where toilet usage is low to create a demand for toilets through shame-based behaviour change techniques, which are intended to push communities into action (Kar and Pasteur). This study examines how the World Bank's Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) and national policy actors in India mobilised CLTS between the two

study sites in the context of different political motivations and socio-cultural contexts. For this research, the policy mobilities approach (McCann and Ward, 2012) is used to examine the actors, practices, and discourse that affect the reproduction, adoption, and travel of policies across space and time. The rapid spread of policy models in various sites nationally and transnationally prompted the field of study known as policy mobility. CLTS is one of the many policy models that have proliferated across many countries as best practices are rapidly disseminated through multilateral organisations, facilitating the adaptation and adoption of policy from one place to another. McCann and Ward (2013) noted that policies and the spaces they are implemented in are neither completely local nor a foreign export, but are "assemblages" of different kinds of knowledge, institutions, and guidelines that come together due to specific motivations. The mobilisation of CLTS between states in India can demonstrate how rapidly transferred policy models may seem similar but are different geographically because of how they are finally implemented locally by local administrators, stakeholders, and frontline workers (Peck and Theodore, 2015). The journey of CLTS, since it was piloted in Bangladesh in 2000**,** to its being mobilised between the Indian states of Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, and Rajasthan reveals the story of how policies are assembled, mutated, and mobilised by the government, NGOs, and the World Bank.

The sanitation journeys in Mandi and Churu showed a clear link through the knowledge and policy transfer between the districts over the years, facilitated by a transnational agency, the World Bank. In the process, this study will examine, firstly, how policy tourism in the form of exposure visits was a key instrument used by the WSP to facilitate the diffusion of CLTS to different districts in India. Secondly, through the increasing influence of CLTS in national policy after 2014, this paper argues that the focus on 'community' is used by the government and the World Bank as a strategy to rapidly make villages open-defecation free, rather than to encourage community participation. Finally, this study shows how cultural adaptation is a key feature of CLTS, adding to its mobility, and in the process, how alignments between different stakeholders were forged in the study sites as they assigned their own meanings to toilets that could encourage toilet use from the rural communities. In the process, examining how policy meanings are made through the lens of translation enables us to understand which meanings are privileged and which ones are silenced or ignored (Clarke *et al.*, 2015).

While much research has contributed to the theoretical and empirical expansion of policy mobilities in the past decade, the focus has mostly been on urban policy mobilities, that is, how policies have circulated in various urban centres of the world. The adoption of CLTS as a policy instrument to improve rural sanitation across the Global South is a story that warrants a closer examination of how intra-state politics shape rural policy mobilities. Overall, this study draws attention to how villages in developing countries such as India become the nodal points in the south-south policy mobilisation of CLTS, as rural sanitation was pushed by supranational organisations such as the World Bank.

7.2. Policy mobilities and fast policy regimes

Policies can be tools to understand political processes through which actors, concepts, and technologies interact with different sites to create new rationalities of governance (Shore and Wright, 2011). In the early 2000s, CLTS emerged as a new policy instrument to eradicate the problem of open defecation by using community-led approaches in villages (Zuin *et al.*, 2019). Central to the story of CLTS in India and the Global South was its transfer within and outside countries as facilitated by various multilateral agencies and NGOs. Dolowitz and Marsh (1996, P.344) define policy transfer as "a process in which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions, etc., in one time and/or place is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, and institutions in another time and/or place." The policy transfer literature examines model policies, that is policies that were successfully developed and implemented in one context with the expectation of replicating their success in another context (McCann, 2008). To bring a more critical focus to policy transfer, the concept of policy mobilities derives from the New Mobilities paradigm (Shelley and Urry, 2006) which drew attention to the power relations inherent in the control over mobilities. As Peck (2011, P.791) argues, the mobilisation of policy "is saturated by power relations ... [shaping] what is seen, and what counts, in terms of policy innovations, preferred models, and best practices".

The replication and adaptation of CLTS in different districts in India can reveal crucial insights into how local power relations intersect with global actors to make and remake policies. Drawing attention to the power relations inherent in transnationalised policy

transfer by examining international organisations that play an increasingly critical role in steering the policy diffusion across and within states, Stone (2004) coined the term transfer agents. Transfer agents are actors involved in policy transfer, including international organisations, state actors, and non-state actors such as NGOs, think tanks, and consultant firms (Stone, 2004). A closer examination of national state policymakers reveals how state transfer agents collaborate with local consultants and international organisations to create forms of policies that can be easily transported, thus making it a model policy (Bennell and Das, 2010).

The implementation of CLTS, as facilitated by the World Bank, in various Indian districts, would constitute the fast policy regimes conceptualised by Peck and Theodore (2015). Fast policy regimes are characterised by policies that are borrowed from elsewhere after being branded as model policies by powerful actors, involve short frames of policy development and implementation, and include rapid sharing and promoting of best practices (Montero and Baiocchi, 2022). Through the example of Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT), which entail cash payments to poor households, on the condition that they comply with a range of rules related to school attendance, family health, nutrition etc, Peck and Theodore (2015) highlighted how CCT was mobilised and changed from Mexico to New York, through its interaction with international institutions, local actors, and entrepreneurs. Notably, policy mobility also involves model cities or districts (in the case of this study) that become the key sites of dissemination of policy expertise after initially being the importer of a policy. For instance, Whistler in Canada adopted The Natural Step, an indicator-based sustainability model for cities, and then became the centre of mobilising this sustainability model by sharing lessons from its municipality's experience of implementing it (Temenos and McCann, 2011). This came to be known as the Whistler model. Ward (2006) argued that the proliferation of a model policy is a political process, by using the example of the export of Business Improvement Districts from New York to the UK. This is because powerful actors mobilised the idea that urban centres with similar problems, that is declining urban economies, could be tackled with similar solutions, that is Business Improvement Districts. Meanwhile, Ward argued, the subjectivities of the actors involved in the policymaking also evolve in the process of policy transfer as UK public officials attended seminars and conferences to remake themselves as more enterprising and neoliberal.

As this paper will show, the creation of model districts based on their implementation of CLTS, and using villages from those model districts for policy tourism to influence district-level bureaucrats was a key instrument of policy transfer by the World Bank within India. Crucial to this process of policy transfer were district-level bureaucrats who became policy champions after the immersion trips and policy transfer agents who alternated wearing the hat of a government bureaucrat and consultants for the World Bank.

7.3. Policy assemblage and the labour of policymaking

This study concerns itself with the following aspects of policy as Clarke and Benton (2015) suggested: One, when policy moves, it is always translated and made to mean something new in its new context. Second, that policy is never a singular entity: it is assembled from a variety of constituents. In seeing policies as assemblages, policies are composed of elements from various sites, including different kinds of expertise, regulations, and institutional capacities, all brought together for a specific purpose (McCann and Ward, 2012). The idea of assemblage also draws attention to the labour of forging alignments, that is, how various stakeholders who aim to govern people align their diverse motivations to achieve a goal (Li, 2007). This means that the different actors who seek to govern the defecatory habits of the villagers in the study sites of this research had to align their concerns regarding open defecation and what toilets could mean for the villagers before they could improve the state of sanitation in the villages. Li (2007, P.5) posited that many actors take up the position of 'trustees' as they attempt to improve other people's lives and express their intent to "develop the capacities of another" and present themselves as experts. These could include politicians, bureaucrats, international donors, hygiene specialists, and Non-Government Organisations.

As actors interpret and translate policy directives into practical reality in various contexts, they also tinker with social relations during the implementation process (Grimwood *et al*., 2021). In this vein, the policy mobilities framework also pays attention to mutations, which is the process by which policy is transformed when it is adapted to a new context (Broom, 2021). Examining how policies are interpreted and reinterpreted by various actors also means analysing the power relations and the socio-

spatial context through which a policy is often changed in the process of mobilisation (McCann and Ward, 2012). By examining how the policy was interpreted by various stakeholders as CLTS was mobilised between Mandi and Churu, this paper examines how CLTS was adapted to particular power relations based on socio-cultural contexts. Paying attention to these mutations also highlights how various stakeholders assigned themselves as 'trustees' of the villages and gave particular meanings to hygiene and toilets.

7.4. World Bank and the 'Community Turn' in World Development

When it comes to rural policy mobility, community and participatory approaches to development have played a key role in circulating policies globally. Rose (1999) examines how the concept of 'community' emerged in the 1960s as a political language to frame issues that enabled authoritative intervention through strategies and programmes that target community dynamics. By the 1990s, the World Bank funded many programmes that were based on community-based interventions and participatory governance (Cornwall, 2006). Parallel to the World Bank's growing interest in interventions focusing on community and decentralisation of governance, participatory rural appraisal got increasing traction in the Global South (Chambers, 1992). Beginning in the 1980s, participatory rural appraisal was a technique to understand communities in which communities were facilitated to reveal their geographies, histories, livelihood strategies, and institutions in the form of maps, diagrams, charts, and lists, using templates that experts supplied (Li, 2007). Miller and Rose (2008, P.89) would term this as 'government through community' in which community needs to be "investigated, mapped, classified, documented, interpreted" to reveal its key characteristics that can then be intervened on. Originating in India and East Africa, by the 1990s it spread worldwide to at least 100 countries, in the North and the South (Deak, 2008).

It was in this era that community approaches in rural sanitation came into focus after the UN-declared International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation decade (1981-1990) highlighting the poor state of rural sanitation conditions in developing countries. By the mid-nineties, some participatory initiatives such as the Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST) were popular East and Southern Africa, but this approach remained largely an interesting concept rather than an applied programme,

thus losing interest among developing countries (Movik and Mehta, 2010). It is in this context, that CLTS was piloted in Bangladesh in 1999 and, quickly became a popular approach adopted in many developing countries to tackle poor rural sanitation (Deak, 2008). This approach heavily draws from Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques, which already had advocates and policy boosters in NGOs and supranational organisations like the World Bank which was increasingly boosting community approaches to rural development.

World Bank's increasing interest in participatory and community-based governance has been a subject of debate. Some researchers have highlighted the benefits of searching for better ways to make participation, and thus development more effective (Gaventa, 2012; Sondarjee, 2021). Others have argued that participation in development initiatives can often be tokenistic and is often synonymous with narrow forms of consultation and coercion of communities to abide by pre-defined goals of development agencies (Kothari and Cooke, 2001; O'Meally, 2014). Researchers have also shown that participation and community-based development tend to use technical reforms while depoliticising social and economic inequalities in communities (O'Meally, 2014). Within India, policy mobilities are a key component of understanding how CLTS, a community approach to sanitation, has been implemented in several states across India. By using a policy mobilities framework, this paper focuses on the movement of policy, while also paying attention to how its adoption and contestation by people and places lead to its particular character in different study sites (Lewis, 2021). By examining these processes of policy translation, this research shows how model policies are not carbon copies of each other when they are moved from one place to another, but also remain globally interconnected through powerful actors.

7.5. Methods

Peck and Theodore (2015) argued for studying policy mobilities by 'following the policy', which involves examining particular sites where a policy is implemented and then studying how these are linked to other sites to show wider developments of social, economic, and political changes. This research follows this approach to explore how policies from elsewhere are adapted by local actors, and how they are translated, contextualised, and embedded (ibid). Following the journey of policies enables us to

challenge conventional views of states as territorially, politically, and socially bounded entities (McCann and Ward, 2012). However, this study also paid attention to Freeman (2012), who argues that the analysis for policy mobilities lies within the movement, emphasising the importance of paying attention to the communication, negotiations, and iterations of the policy, thus not seeing policies as fixed but the way they are generated and put together. As Freeman (2012) stated, the story of policy mobilities lies in banal activities such as presentations, policy tourism, and conversations and negotiations between various actors.

This research follows a sanitation policy, CLTS, as it was mobilised, assembled, and implemented in two districts of India at two different points in time. One is the district of Mandi in the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, which adopted the CLTS strategy in 2005, and another is the district of Churu in the northwestern state of Rajasthan, which adopted the strategy in 2013. The influence of Maharashtra on CLTS mobilization in the two states was also examined. The data collection for this study was conducted remotely in 2021, due to the travel restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The research focused on two villages (kept anonymous) in Mandi (in Himachal Pradesh) and Churu (in Rajasthan) districts in India. The study utilised a qualitative approach, primarily employing semi-structured interviews to gather in-depth insights from various stakeholders. As Table 6 shows, a total of 40 interviews were conducted across two phases: the first phase with institutional actors and the second phase with rural residents. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the local dynamics, policies, and community responses to the sanitation programme. The interviews were either conducted over phone calls or Microsoft Teams calls (depending on network availability), while WhatsApp was used for making initial contact with potential interviewees. Research assistants were recruited from the villages where the research was conducted to assist the lead researcher in interviewing rural residents over the phone.

Interviewees were purposively selected based on the research of the sites, which revealed key actors involved in implementing CLTS. The ‘follow the policy’ method also evolved to ‘follow the people’ style snowball sampling, as interviewees suggested other actors in the know of CLTS policy implementation. The reflexive thematic analysis method (Braun and Clarke, 2017) was used with the semi-structured interviews. Initially, the study embraced a primarily inductive methodology, wherein the

data underwent open coding, prioritising respondent-based meanings. Subsequently, during the latter part of the analysis, a deductive approach was incorporated to ensure that the open coding effectively contributed to the identification of themes, facilitating an examination of how CLTS traversed between different sites and was adapted by various actors to diverse local contexts (Byrne, 2021).

Table 13: List of interviewees

Mandi		**Churu**	
State secretary, rural development (2003)	Respondent 1 (Key policy transfer agent)	World Bank Water and Sanitation Program coordinator, Rajasthan	Respondent 20 (Key policy transfer agent)
District magistrate (2005)	Respondent 2 (Policy champion)	District magistrate (2012)	Respondent 21 (Policy champion)
NGO 1	Respondent 3	NGO 2	Respondent 22
Residents and Mahila Mandal members	Respondent 4-13	Community monitoring group members	Respondents 23, 24
State coordinator, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan	Respondent 14	Block Coordinator	Respondent 25
Resource person	Respondent 15	Key Resource Centre facilitator	Respondent 26
CLTS Trainers	Respondent 16,17	Sarpanch	Respondent 27
Kardar, *Devta* committee	Respondent 18	Resource person	Respondent 28
UNOPS	Respondent 19	Volunteer	Respondent 29
		Residents	Respondent 30-40

Key policy transfer agents interviewed:

State Secretary, rural development, Himachal Pradesh (appointed in 2003)

State Coordinator, World Bank-Water and Sanitation Program, Rajasthan (appointed 2011)

7.5.1. Study sites

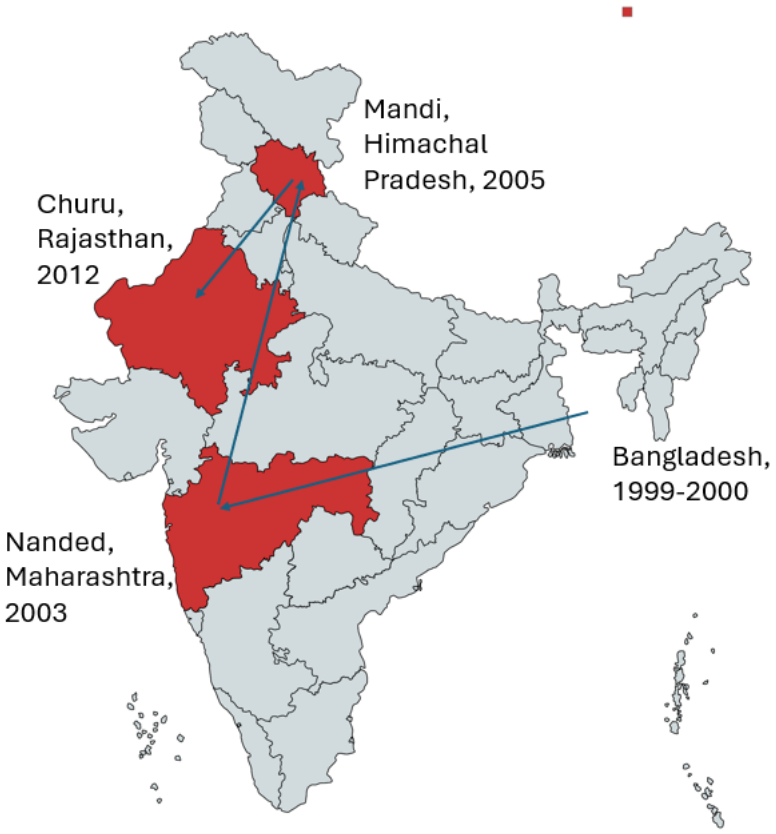


Figure 3 Policy travels of CLTS to study sites (by author)

Mandi: Nestled in the Himalayas, Mandi is situated in a valley surrounded by the Dhauladhar mountain range on one side and the Shivalik hills on the other, with the Beas river flowing through it. Mandi district has a population of 999,777 of which male and female were 498,065 and 501,712, respectively. Primarily an agrarian district, 93.7% of Mandi's population lives in rural areas. While 67.74% of the population works as cultivators, 2.76% of the population work as agricultural labourers, 1.25% work as household workers, and the rest work in other industries. 98.1% of the district is Hindu, making it a uniquely homogenous religious population compared to the rest of the

country. In Mandi, the institution of *Devta* and *Devi* (Gods and Goddesses) which are the local deities, define the religious and social character of Hinduism. These *Devta* are not only restricted to the religious aspects of the communities but also direct social relations in rural Himachal Pradesh (Jodhka, 2015). Each deity is believed to exercise his/her power within a bounded area, the *har*, and the inhabitants of this area turn to him/her to ask for good weather, or good health or to mediate between parties during village conflicts (Berti, 2009). Most rural residents fear repercussions, wrath, or punishments of the *Devta*, or can face social ostracisation from their communities if they do not adhere to norms prescribed by the *Devta*.

Churu: The district of Churu is a part of the great Thar Desert in northwestern India and is covered with vast swathes of sand. With its harsh desert climate and scarce water supply, Churu has a population of 20,39,547. Churu district consists of 71.7% rural and 28.3% urban population (MHA, 2024). Similar to Mandi, the economy of Churu district is mainly dependent on agriculture with 73.1% of the workers in the district working either as cultivators or agricultural labourers. The majority religion in Churu is Hinduism with 87.17% of the population and the second most followed religion is Islam with a 12.24% Muslim population (MHA, 2024). Most villages in Churu are dominated by the Jat community in terms of numbers and influence, along with the Rajput and Brahmin communities which are considered ritually pure upper castes (Jaffrelot and Robin, 2012).

Sanitation programmes in Mandi and Churu

The first national sanitation programme, the Central Rural Sanitation Programme, was implemented in 1986, which led to a massive construction of toilets, but not usage (GOI, 2001). This was followed by the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC), which was launched in 1999, to provide “sanitation for all” by 2012. TSC was renamed the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA) in 2013, finally leading to the launch of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in 2014. In 2005, Mandi saw a concerted effort from the government and civil society to improve its sanitation situation as a newly appointed district collector in Mandi enthusiastically spearheaded the implementation of CLTS in the district. This made Mandi an interesting case study to compare the outcomes of government sanitation policy with Churu in Rajasthan, another district that saw a concerted effort by the government to improve its access to sanitation using the CLTS-style *Chokho Churu*

(Beautiful Churu) programme starting in 2013. Both these districts had experienced the implementation of CLTS at different points in their sanitation history and had significantly increased toilet coverage in the period of implementation.

Table 14 Timeline of national sanitation missions of India

National sanitation programme	**Years**
Central Rural Sanitation Programme	1986-1999
Total Sanitation Campaign	1999-2011 (CLTS implemented in Mandi)
Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan	2012-2014 (CLTS implemented in Churu)
Swachh Bharat Abhiyan Gramin (SBA-G)	2014-2019 (CLTS continues in Churu)

7.6. Evidence

7.6.1. Policy tourism, policy mobilisers and the making of policy champions

The mobilisation of CLTS from Mandi to Churu, was facilitated by a wide network of policy transfer agents consisting of development practitioners, sanitation experts, bureaucrats, and consultants, at the centre of which was the Water and Sanitation Program of the World Bank. In Mandi, which adopted CLTS as its sanitation strategy in 2005, district and state officials along with the Water and Sanitation Program acted as agents of transfer of CLTS. In 2002, a new secretary was appointed to the Department of Rural Development, Himachal Pradesh. The new secretary, who emerges as a key policy transfer agent in this study, had an association with the Water and Sanitation Program because of which he had heard of the then-new approach to rural sanitation called CLTS from colleagues in Water and Sanitation Program in New Delhi (Respondent 1). The groundwork to ensure receptibility to CLTS was laid by this new secretary when the state organised a brainstorming workshop in Solan district (Himachal Pradesh) in 2003 to discuss a new rural sanitation policy based on CLTS principles (Respondent 1). This was followed by a rapid assessment of the sanitation

situation in the state commissioned by the Water and Sanitation Program, which showed that only 28% of the rural households in Himachal Pradesh had toilets (ibid).

A key instrument used by the Water and Sanitation Program to mobilise CLTS was exposure visits for bureaucrats and government workers, which would be used to create role model villages and policy transfer agents or CLTS champions. These exposure trips constitute policy tourism where officials from particular places visit other places to learn about policy implementation. In 2004, the Water and Sanitation Program and the new rural secretary organised a visit for Himachal Pradesh district and state officials, along with NGOs to visit the district of Ahmednagar in another state, Maharashtra, which the Water and Sanitation Program had deemed a role model of CLTS implementation (Respondent 1, Respondent 2). Ahmednagar was one of the first districts in India to have implemented CLTS, after the Principal Secretary of the Water Supply and Sanitation Department, Government of Maharashtra visited (World Bank organised) Bangladesh where CLTS was piloted and was convinced of the efficacy of the approach (Sanan, 2011). The visit of Himachal Pradesh officials to Ahmednagar, facilitated by the Water and Sanitation Program, was an example of a CLTS exposure visit which is usually organised to expose policymakers to the approach as applied in other countries or states. These exposure visits, organised by the Water and Sanitation Program (in these study sites), aimed to mobilise different levels of government and increase interest in deploying the policy in different parts of a country (Zuin et. al., 2019).

The exposure trip to Maharashtra for the officials from Mandi was pivotal in the advocacy of CLTS to be implemented in the state of Himachal Pradesh by various district and state officials, and finally its adoption in the state (Respondent 1, 2). This is in line with the contention of Wood (2014, P. 2655) who termed such immersion tours as mobility events that are 'necessary informal infrastructure through which best practices circulate'. Sanan (2013, P.167) described the exposure visit of the Himachal Pradesh government officials in Ahmednagar and why it was impactful:

"The trip included an impressive presentation in Ahmednagar district and time spent in two ODF villages – Wadgaon Amli and Borban. The visits demonstrated how the often voiced constraints to securing toilet coverage were addressed by motivated communities. The village (In Wadgaon Amli) well was dry and replenished with tanker

supply, once a day. Yet toilets were in use and kept spick and span in every village house."

With the above statement, Sanan (2014) demonstrates the impact of the immersion tour in reiterating the efficacy of CLTS as sanitation policy instrument in resource-constrained households in the visited villages. The statement also draws attention to the fact that immersion tours and presentations, as is also argued by Montero (2017), are not just politically neutral learning environments, but are also governance instruments used to influence policy agendas by persuading policymakers in attendance. By early 2005, motivated state and district officials decided to implement the CLTS approach throughout the Himachal Pradesh state, in the way they had seen implemented in a district in the state of Maharashtra (Respondents 1 and 2). Ahmednagar district in Maharashtra emerged as one of the first CLTS model districts, that were used for policy transfer through the exposure trips facilitated by the World Bank, just as Mandi and Churu later did.

Multiple interviewees for this research suggested that CLTS only works if it has a champion, and that depending on which level of governance the champion works at, whether it be state, district, or Panchayat level, CLTS succeeds on that level (Respondents 19 and 25). For Mandi, the CLTS champion was a newly appointed district magistrate and collector in 2005 who took great initiative to implement the strategy, according to respondents of this research (Respondents 1, 3 and 13). After taking over as district magistrate in Mandi in 2005, he set up an institutional structure for implementing CLTS through the three-tier Panchayati Raj system and enlisted an NGO to support the implementation of CLTS in Mandi (Respondent 2). A rural sanitation monitoring committee was set up to consistently monitor the progress and improvement in sanitation as part of CLTS (Respondent 12). The district officials and the Water and Sanitation Program of the World Bank also opened avenues to interrogate the power relations inherent in how a policy like CLTS was accepted and mobilised across these districts. The organisational affiliations of individuals contribute to the value and acceptability of their ideas for policy reform. In the case of CLTS, the affiliation of individuals with the Water and Sanitation Program, coupled with a district magistrate's bureaucratic experience of implementing CLTS in Ahmednagar district in Maharashtra during the exposure visit, gave the CLTS approach plenty of weight in the

eyes of other district magistrates, particularly the new District Magistrate of Mandi (Respondent 2). Thus, CLTS in India was mobilised by technocrats, bureaucrats, and members of the World Bank's Water and Sanitation Program. Thus, another major implication of the exposure visits is the creation of a ''policy champion'', a government insider who can push the policy through the many bureaucratic procedures and hurdles required for its implementation.

Once CLTS was implemented, and households started building toilets, many Panchayats in Mandi were declared open defecation-free (Respondent 2). Toilet coverage in Mandi district increased from 28% in 2005 to 82% in 2011 (Hueso *et al*., 2017). Mandi was then turned into a model district by the Water and Sanitation Program, which organised several exposure visits for other districts in Himachal Pradesh as well as other states (Respondent 2). According to Respondent 2:

"It was stunning to see that our work was turned into a model. Water and Sanitation Program even funded programmes like this in African countries, based on the participation model we had implemented in Mandi."

Through these exposure visits in 'model districts', the WSP not only created policy champions but also consensus among policymakers around the importance of solving a problem, that is, open defecation, and a particular solution, that is the adoption of CLTS (Montero, 2014). In 2011, the Water and Sanitation Program convinced the Rajasthan state government to send a selected group of district collectors to Himachal Pradesh to see the impact of CLTS or what a Water and Sanitation Program official called the 'Himachal Pradesh model' (Respondent 20). Through the exposure visits organised by the Water and Sanitation Program, the link between rural sanitation in Churu and Mandi becomes evident. One of these district magistrates from Rajasthan who visited Himachal Pradesh on the immersive trip took charge of Churu in 2012. In an interview, he explained (Respondent 21):

"*I think the Water and Sanitation Program played a big role here. And at that time, I was fortunate to attend some of the training programmes from the Water and Sanitation Program. They also took some of the district administrators to Himachal Pradesh where good work had happened. The problem of sanitation was alway at the back of my mind, but the methodology to resolve it came through the Water and Sanitation Program.*

Looking at the field and seeing how things can change. I think that was a trigger for me."

It is interesting to note here that the language used by the bureaucrat mirrors the language used in CLTS guidelines regarding 'emotional triggers' to push rural residents into solving the problem of open defecation. This further emphasises the use of emotions in the policy learning process and in building consensus (Glaser and te Brömmelstroet, 2022) when visiting villages where CLTS has led to good sanitary outcomes, policymakers are inspired as they find a way to change the status of sanitation in their respective districts. Respondent 21's above statement also aligns with McCann's (2008) suggestion that the exposure visits, the trainings held there, and the PowerPoint presentations have mobilities of their own and powerful spatialities. This is because such presentations, workshops, and immersion trips are considered products of expertise and are circulated in intra-state and global policymaking through emails, pen drives, presentations, books, videos, and websites (ibid). Some of the presentations are particularly impactful and mobile. A Water and Sanitation Program official (Respondent 20) described a presentation given by the District Magistrate of Churu in a state meeting in 2012 as a pivotal moment in convincing Rajasthan's state actors of the CLTS as an approach:

"He made a presentation about how CLTS would be implemented and he made a promise that we would facilitate a campaign and that we aim to make one block in Churu open defecation-free within six months. Everybody was surprised by that kind of a statement that in a state like Rajasthan where progress (on sanitation) was nothing in the past 10 years a block would be made ODF. Next day, the presentation got news coverage and then it became a prestige issue for the district magistrate that we have to do it now."

The declaration by the district magistrate of Churu to make the block and district open defecation-free was now connected to the legacy of his tenure as a district magistrate, which also draws attention to the political and personal motivations of the actors who become champions and mobilisers of a policy. Meanwhile, with a champion district magistrate at the helm of the CLTS implementation, the Water and Sanitation Program had the potential to create another role model district as a showcase for CLTS. These exposure trips to Himachal Pradesh, where district collectors would see CLTS in action,

could be seen as “globalising microspaces” where experts work, connections are made, and truths are deployed, legitimised and operationalised (McCann, 2011, P.118).

So far, I have examined how immersion trips were used as key policy mobilisation instruments by the WSP to create consensus among district-level and state-level bureaucrats that open defecation was an issue that could be solved through the implementation of CLTS in the villages. Further, these immersion trips were not politically neutral, but through the mobilising of certain truths about the efficacy of CLTS in model districts, policy champions at different levels of governance were created by the WSP. Model districts were created and branded as globalising microspaces where immersion trips for future policy champions would be hosted to create consensus regarding the efficacy of CLTS. The next section expands on the use of ‘community’ as an instrument of fast policy transfer between districts in India.

7.6.2. Hybridisation of CLTS as policy mobility

Policy mobilities are characterised by the mutations that take place when a policy is circulated between different places and is adapted to the socio-economic, political, institutional, and material specificities of a particular site (Temenos and McCann, 2013). A key characteristic of the movement of CLTS within countries and across countries of the Global South is its hybridisation as it was adopted and adapted according to local socio-political and economic contexts and the motivations of key local actors (Galvin, 2015; Lewis, 2021). At the core of CLTS were the trainings in the village, which could be seen as a site of policy circulation between the district officials, locally trained facilitators, NGOs, and the villagers.

In 2006, Water and Sanitation Program engaged an Indian non-governmental organisation called Knowledge Links to train district-level master trainers, who in turn would train other CLTS trainers for villages (Respondent 26). Kamal Kar, who piloted the CLTS strategy in Bangladesh, was the key trainer for this training session that was attended by district magistrates, including the one from Mandi (Respondent 2). A five-day training module was developed by Kar for the 2006 workshop, which is now the central product of CLTS as the government and multilateral agencies facilitate its circulation (Respondent 1). This five-day CLTS training module has been mobilised by

the policy transfer agents and has been circulated between the two districts that are the focus of this study, wider India, and across the countries in the Global South. The five-day training includes orientation and dry runs for the facilitators, triggering and sharing of community experiences, brief sharing and second triggering of communities, sharing group experiences of triggering, and finally, feedback and follow-up workshop with feedback from communities on plans of action (Kar, 2011). According to CLTS guidelines, key people should be invited to the final day of the training, which, depending on context, may be politicians, people from the government, NGOs, bilaterals, multilaterals, and other agencies involved in sanitation (ibid). The five-day trainings in the villages are thus not aiming to just provoke the community towards action to improve the sanitation situation of the village, but also to pose the village and training as a means to mobilise other key actors such as politicians, bureaucrats, and NGOs into taking up CLTS in their respective geographical contexts.

The community-triggering exercise aims to use participatory rural appraisal methods to encourage community members to analyse the state of sanitation in their surroundings, the extent of open defecation, and how food and water contaminated by faeces can adversely affect their community's health (Kar and Pasteur, 2005). CLTS trainings involve a gathering of villagers in the village where a CLTS trainer constructs a map of the village households that have toilets, and where the common defecation spots are, based on a consultation with the villagers gathered there. The CLTS training then aims to create a sense of disgust and shame amongst the villagers as they collectively realise the key message, which is that as long as they continue to defecate in the open "that they quite literally will be ingesting one another's shit" (ibid). This realisation, which is termed "triggering", is intended to mobilise them to initiate collective local action to improve the sanitation situation in the community (ibid). There are common tools as part of the 'shock and shame' toolkit, which were used in various sites across Mandi and Churu. CLTS trainers would take villagers for walks to various defecation spots so that villagers were forced to be confronted by each other's faeces and feel collective shame. An NGO worker (Respondent 3) who implemented this programme in Mandi district said:

"*We gathered the villagers at a water source and carried out water testing to show them how much of their water is contaminated. In every village, if there was a water body, we would carry out water testing (with the help of a local research institute) and if*

the water turned black, then that would mean that faeces were mixed up in this. So that way we would shock people that our water has shit in it, we are actually drinking somebody's shit."

After these 'shock' techniques, CLTS convinced villagers about the importance of building toilets to avoid spreading diseases and informed them about a range of toilet technology options. Culturally adapted versions of these trainings are used in CLTS implementation across the Global South (Lomas and Hammersley-Mather, 2016).

To facilitate the diffusion of a particular hybridised version of CLTS in India where states can choose a particular form of sanitation programme (Jain, 2019), the government identified institutions that would work as Key Resource Centres that would be responsible for delivering the five-day training modules to state, district, and panchayat level government functionaries as they worked towards open defecation free villages (MDWS, 2015). The objectives of the Key Resource Centres were to upgrade the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the government functionaries at the Panchayat and district level of administration, alongside master trainers who would train personnel on behavioural change communication at the village level (MDWS, 2015). The five-day training modules, which were originally used for CLTS, were converted into Community Approaches to Sanitation (CAS), which were used to impart training to *Swachhgrahis* (grassroots-level motivators), while modules were also developed for district-level bureaucrats. CAS modules would explain the CLTS methodology but would also provide a milieu of other options, such as the Community Approaches to Total Sanitation (CATS), to trainees. The term CATS comes from UNICEF's (United Nations Children's Fund) approach to community-based sanitation approaches, which uses methods from approaches including CLTS but is not averse to financial incentives or subsidies like CLTS (Respondent 26). The use of financial subsidies or incentives to individual households was an important form of hybridisation of CLTS in some of the states in India. The original 'pure' form of CLTS and its proponents (Respondents 1, 2,3,15) are against the use of financial subsidies to individual households as it can divide communities and prove to be a hindrance in community mobilisation towards sanitary goals. Mandi adopted an approach closer to a 'pure' form of CLTS that used community-based financial rewards once a village was declared open defecation-free (Respondent 2). However, a hybridised form of CLTS was adopted in Churu, where the District Magistrate (Respondent 21) believed some households were too poor to be

expected to build toilets without financial assistance from the government. These different forms of hybridisation of a policy reveal important areas of contestation of policy and the motivations of different actors.

Similarly, the training modules developed for the national sanitation programme by the KRC were also hybridised to privilege speed of results, that is, faster open defecation villages. A senior member of a Key Resource Centre (Respondent 26) who was involved in developing the five-day CAS training module explained the rationale behind the training modules:

"*CAS is not an independent approach and methodology, but a generic combination of approaches- participatory approaches or community-level approaches. The focus was on community empowerment for collective behaviour change. It has many components borrowed from CLTS and CATS, etc. But it has had many other things as well. For example, it focused on massive social and community mobilisation, mega communication campaigns are also included, besides this interpersonal communication based on CLTS methods. CATS shares the process with community approaches and methods such as CLTS and CATS as used at the community level, but apart from that, it focuses on achieving ODF results with speed and on scale, but with quality and in a sustainable manner."*

The above response demonstrates that the CLTS used in *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan* is a hybridised approach, an assemblage of various elements of CLTS and other community-based approaches piloted by different multilateral organisations in different places. This situates the sanitation programming in India in the global learning circuits of best lessons for implementing sanitation programmes. Further, Respondent 26 highlights a key motivation in developing the five-day module for *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan*, which was speed and scale. An interviewed former bureaucrat (Respondent 1) said that the public good and community-led approach of CLTS was traded off for five-day trainings that intended to "carpet bomb" rural India with CLTS trainings. The phrase 'carpet bomb' used by the key informant, again, describes the rapid expansion of CLTS trainings across India without focusing on a supporting institutional structure to support community-led action (Respondent 1). The circulation of CLTS ideas through the five-day training might indicate a heightened velocity and coverage of districts during *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan*, demonstrating fast policy transfer. In the interviews about the

national sanitation programme, government officials from the national level to the village level echoed terms such as 'triggering communities' and 'open defecation free', demonstrating the influence of CLTS in national sanitation policy discourse. This demonstrates the cherry-picking of certain aspects of CLTS that can be rapidly disseminated while ignoring other slower aspects of the original approach, such as setting up institutional support for the implementation of CLTS.

As elements of CLTS were infused into *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan*, which had a deadline of five years, the community-led elements of CLTS were diluted as scaling up of the programme was prioritised. The community aspect of CLTS promised policymakers a faster way of pushing villagers to adopt toilets as it aims to make whole villages or communities open defecation-free instead of households. In her letter to the chief secretaries of all states shortly after the launch of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (in 2014), the secretary of Drinking Water and Sanitation urged state implementers to focus on open defecation villages adding that collective action by a village in making itself ODF yields faster results than individual households (ibid):

"The focus is on the creation of complete ODF villages rather than only the construction of individual toilets. This entails triggering the entire village to change their behaviour rather than dealing individually with the beneficiaries. It has also been brought out that "collective action" by the village in making itself ODF yields faster results than an attempt to target individual households."

The above communication emphasises ODF villages as a way of achieving faster results, thus highlighting the motivations of the government in adopting community approaches to sanitation. The letter also demonstrates how the language of CLTS, such as "triggering" and "collective action" to achieve "ODF villages", has percolated down to the national policy communications between bureaucrats. While CLTS is supposed to be community-led, the primary purpose of the adoption of CLTS by state actors seems to be to create open defecation-free villages rapidly at scale, rather than to encourage community-led action. Francis (2001, P. 87) argues that within development agencies and donors, there is an inclination to call a spectrum of activities that may or may not lead to participation as participation, such as information sharing or consultation, or map making. An interviewee who has supported the sanitation programme in multiple Indian states said that in India CLTS could stand for 'Collector-led Total Sanitation' instead of

‘Community-led-Total Sanitation (Respondent 19) because it works in districts that have motivated collectors (district magistrates).

The articulation of the notion of community in development programmes often does not consider power relations within communities and further hides variations in interests and needs based on age, class, caste, ethnicity gender and religion (Cooke and Kothari, 2001). As Chapter 5 demonstrates, the notions of honour and shame used by the government in the CLTS trainings use notions of shame that further entrench caste and gender relations. Further, gendered caste relations are reified by implicitly and explicitly assigning higher caste male members of the villages to ensure that villages are open defecation-free. Meanwhile, the use of shame in the CLTS accumulates psycho-social stress on women and Dalit members of the village. A community focus in the development programmes may be culturally oppressive if members face social pressure to abide by cultural norms and rules that are not truly shared (Etzioni, 1996). Participation and community-led, are used as a means to achieve a goal, which is compliance, and despite the intention of the programmes, they are also underwritten by coercion (Cooke and Kothari, 2001).

The next section shows that Mandi and Churu took very different approaches to how the CLTS trainings were adapted to local contexts and social norms by local stakeholders to gain acceptance from rural communities. In the process of this movement from Mandi to Churu, the approach mutated based on how the government framed the importance of toilets to gain support from various stakeholders in rural communities.

7.6.3. Local adaptation as policy exportability

Local politics and cultural context can influence the way various actors and policy transfer agents assemble an adapted model policy, and in turn how a policy implementation can change local landscapes. Cultural adaptation to local context is built into the CLTS practice and is not an organic process, and adds to the transferability of the CLTS model, making it a more mobile policy. According to the CLTS handbook, users are encouraged to explore different ways of preparing for CLTS, for triggering, for post-triggering follow-up, and for supporting and spreading CLTS that fit with local conditions, cultures and opportunities (Kar and Chambers, 2008). The cultural adaptation in Mandi and Churu differed from each other. In the case of Mandi, cultural

adaptation was integrated into the programme by the local supporting NGO as CLTS was facing resistance from rural residents who felt reluctant to build toilets because of their religious beliefs. There was a deliberate forging of alignments by the government in Mandi with the development agencies and the religious leaders to match the aims of the sanitation programme with the religious beliefs of the people. In the case of Churu, the cultural adaptation took place through the initiative of the Water and Sanitation Program, a top-down approach. The Water and Sanitation Program decided, based on the formative study, that a focus on honour, dignity, and shame in the CLTS training would be more impactful (Respondent 20). In both cases, various actors presented themselves as trustees by assigning different meanings to what toilets should mean for people to ensure that people would adopt toilets. The way CLTS was translated in both study sites adhered to dominant caste relations, demonstrating that policy transfer often depends on the ability of the government and development agencies to adapt to local power relations.

Cultural adaptation in Mandi

The cultural adaptation of CLTS in Mandi was a result of the government and the religious leaders who assembled CLTS when resistance to the idea of toilets remained prevalent in some villages of the district. For a policy to be real or implementable, it must be accepted as legitimate by the people who assembled the policy and the local communities, and this might be one of the points when policies tend to mutate when implemented in different sites (Lysgard, 2019). The work of making the policy real and implementable in the local context required, first and foremost, the forging of alignments between actors aiming to govern the conduct of the rural residents in these villages: the government, the NGOs, and the institution of *Devta*. This involved the labour of aligning the objectives of various parties of the assemblage, both those who aspire to govern the conduct and those who are to be governed (Li, 2007). To implement CLTS in Mandi, institutional alignments had to be forged between the government institutions, development institutions, and religious institutions to

implement a CLTS that could lead to the desired outcomes: that is, villagers building toilets in their homes.

However, after the institutional structures were set up to implement CLTS and the community trainings had begun in the villages, the behavioural change interventions did not have the desired outcomes because many villages refused to build toilets. One of the biggest challenges in Mandi in getting rural residents to accept toilets in their households was the prevalent belief among the people that building a toilet in the house would anger the local deities (Respondent 3). In these parts of the mountainous Mandi, everything residents do is mandated by the *Devi* and *Devta* (Gods and Goddesses) of the village. Here, the villagers had assigned meanings to toilets as potential sources of incurring the wrath of the Gods. According to Respondent 3, an NGO worker who supported the implementation of CLTS in Mandi:

"In a Panchayat (group of villages) that I worked in, people refused to build toilets because there was an important temple in one of the villages. So people believed that if anyone made a toilet there, the Devta will get angry. So we intervened using the medium of Har, which is a Devta interpreter for a collection of 8-10 Panchayats. We went through these religious leaders to convince people that the Devta has allowed them to make toilets."

The above statement demonstrates an important site of contestation for the objectives of the CLTS approach, and thus a key site of negotiation between different actors. To make the toilets acceptable to rural residents, NGOs and government workers intervened by engaging with these religious beliefs and the religious institution of *Devta* to bring acceptance of toilets among rural residents when they implemented sanitation interventions around 2005 (Respondent 3, Respondent 2). The NGO and the government conducted CLTS workshops and a series of negotiations with the *Devta* committees to get the buy-in of key leaders in the institution of *Devta.* Interviewed government officials and NGOs described the importance of training and workshops organised for the members of *Devta* committees to convince them of the importance of the toilets and preserving the cleanliness of their sacred spaces (Respondent 3, Respondent 18, Respondent 17). However, an interviewed *Kardar* (member of the *Devta* committee) explained how by that time there a growing realisation by the members of the *Devta* committee was that toilets were convenient for households and public hygiene

(Respondent 18). This means that toilets were already being associated with convenience even by religious leaders, another motivation for religious leaders to work with the government. Eventually, these key leaders from the *Devta* committee partnered with the government to convince villagers of the importance of toilets using local ritualistic practices. A member of a supporting NGO explained (Respondent 3):

"A ritual was conducted where the Devta conveys through the Gur (the spokesperson) what the will of the God is to the villagers. In the ritual the Gur encouraged people to keep their households clean, and then members of the Devta encouraged people to build toilets."

Once toilets were deemed acceptable by the *Har*, people were more accepting of toilets, and the villagers were more receptive to the messaging of the CLTS trainings (Respondent 18). In this way, the government and the religious leaders in Mandi worked together to align their objectives of reducing open defecation in the villages, as toilets were no longer associated with incurring the wrath of the *Devta*. Several government officials interviewed have said that while religious beliefs are still strong about toilets bringing impurity into the house, and it is still common to see toilets outside of the main house complex, toilets are now the first to be built in the house. As Peck and Theodore (2010a, P.170) put it, 'mobile policies are not simply travelling across a landscape – they are remaking this landscape, and they are contributing to the interpenetration of distant policymaking sites'. In Mandi, where many villages were not open to the idea of toilets in their homes, communities and religious institutions opened themselves to having toilets at home, as pushed by the government's CLTS policy. This way, as seen in Mandi, the places, institutions, and communities through which policies pass are also changed as policies move. The policy was also legitimised in Himachal Pradesh as established institutional and religious practices were conformed to and instrumentalised (Lysgard, 2019) to gain acceptance of a new sanitation policy, thus conforming to the socio-cultural expectation of how communities are organised in a society where the institution of *Devta* is considered foremost.

Cultural adaptation in Churu

When the government of Churu finally decided to implement CLTS, with support from the Water and Sanitation Program they also decided to adapt the approach to the cultural context of Churu. The CLTS model was also to be adapted to Rajasthan and Churu's

context, which was based on studies conducted by the Water and Sanitation Program to understand the defecation behaviours of rural residents in Churu (Respondent 20). A senior consultant of the Water and Sanitation Program (Respondent 20) explained the key results that inspired the campaign:

"We learned that people do things because of pride. If a toilet were to be promoted by programmes, all the messages were focusing on the health benefits, but studies showed that health was the last priority for rural people. Their first priority was pride and prestige because when they decide to spend money, they think about the pride of the family, the pride of the village, and so on. So when they get money, their priority is to spend on making their house beautiful. So we made pride a key factor for a campaign."

Much of the sanitation campaign messaging in Churu was rooted in Rajasthani norms of pride, honour, and shame, a significant policy mutation as compared to Mandi. At the village CLTS training, villagers were made aware of the ill effects of open defecation on the health of the village, a standard technique of CLTS. However, at these trainings, villagers were also told that not building toilets can be a threat to the honour and dignity of their households (Respondent 22, 27). The campaign also urged villagers to protect the honour of their households by preventing women from their households from defecating in the open (Respondent 22). Toilets were thus imbued with a new meaning by the government and the World Bank to ensure rural communities would adopt them: honour.

Institutional changes were made in Churu to support the implementation of CLTS, while cultural adaptations were made to the CLTS trainings to make the campaign messaging more impactful. The *Chokho Churu* programme was supported by a district support unit, headed by a district Coordinator and consisting of professional staff members in various fields responsible for running the campaign on a day-to-day basis, as well as by a district resource group, consisting of around 30 CLTS trainers (Respondent 21). The resource persons were engaged when needed to facilitate training and programmes or CLTS triggering in the villages. Meanwhile, community vigilance groups or *Nigrani Samiti* were constituted by the district administration, where natural leaders and volunteers from the village would be responsible for preventing and dissuading villagers from defecating in the open. Interviewed *Nigrani Samiti* members said that ensuring that their village was open defecation-free was a matter of pride for them (Respondent 24).

Village volunteers would stand guard at common defecation spots in the early mornings, dissuade villagers from defecating in the open, and encourage them to build toilets (Respondent 23). Many of the techniques included shaming the villagers for going out to defecate or threatening sanctions such as cancelling their pensions or rations (monthly food provision from the government) if they did not build toilets (Respondent 27).

This indicates that the provision of the community-led total sanitation programme was top-down from the district government, as some of the community monitoring groups employed coercive measures in Churu. There is also a tension between those who present themselves as the trustees of the community, that is the government and the World Bank, and the subjects, that is the village communities. The government runs a sanitation campaign to create demand for toilets by trying to attach cultural meanings to open defecation, that is shame, and connects honour to toilets. But most of the villagers think of toilets as convenient and necessary (Respondent 31, 32, 36, 37). Most of the interviewed households that do not have toilets do not have the money to build them but have not received financial help from the government as they have toilets on government records (Respondent 35,36). This line of fracture between the subjects and the trustees endangers the assemblage of the CLTS and its intended goals.

7.7. Conclusion

This article contributes to policy mobility studies by studying how the Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach was transferred by a network of actors between Mandi district and Churu district. In the process, this study makes three important findings. Firstly, it examines how the World Bank's Water and Sanitation Program and the government used policy tourism, that is, exposure visits, as a key instrument of policy mobilisation. Through policy tourism, certain districts that had implemented CLTS to make villages open defecation free, Ahmednagar, Mandi, and Churu were framed as model districts. The villages in these districts became sites of negotiation, where government officials, NGOs, and multilateral agencies such as the Water and Sanitation Program would come together to deliberate and advocate for CLTS as a model policy over any other rural sanitation strategy. Thus, the CLTS trainings in the villages of the model districts became the key sites to educate the attention of bureaucrats towards CLTS as an ideal solution to poor rural sanitation.

Secondly, the work of adapting CLTS to local socio-cultural contexts led to different results in Mandi and Churu. In Mandi, the alignments were forged between the government and the supporting NGO with the *Devta* to ensure that the rural residents felt assured that the mandate to build toilets would not anger the deities, and that consent came from the institution of *Devta*. The institution of the *Devta*, in turn, decided to support the government in implementing the sanitation programme to keep up with the undeniable forces of modernity and work for the good of their religious constituents. A different approach to cultural adaptation was taken up in Churu where the Water and Sanitation Program supported the government in implementing a CLTS campaign that was gendered and based on social norms of honour and shame. These cultural adaptations that were more top-down than bottom-up risked burdening the Dalit and poorer landless residents with social pressure and shaming. Overall, we see that rural policy mobilities in India demonstrate that for policies to be translated and adopted in different geographies, development actors often adhere to existing power relations of these geographies, that is, gendered caste relations in the case of Churu and religious norms that order domestic Hindu households in Mandi.

Finally, this study examines the growing influence of CLTS in the national sanitation policy after the launch of the Clean India Mission through the hybridisation of CLTS. Particularly, how the use of community in CLTS in national policy is used more for the rapid creation of open defecation-free districts, rather than to encourage community participation. The key moveable aspect of the CLTS approach became the 5-day training modules and the CLTS shock-and-shame trainings that would take place in the villages. This study shows that community in the CLTS approach refers to consultation with the community-led as part of the CLTS trainings and then an adaptation to local social norms to lend the approach a local authenticity. This study, thus, shows the dilution of the community-led focus of community-based approaches to sanitation as they are rapidly circulated across geographies in the Global South. By depoliticising the gendered caste-based inequalities through cultural adaptation to achieve normative sanitation goals, the World Bank's participatory development component can be seen as tokenistic or a mask for achieving compliance from rural residents.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Open defecation is undoubtedly a concern for public health and the dignity of people. However, this thesis has interrogated how open defecation is framed as an issue and what government practices and techniques are used to tackle this problem in the villages. Examining the techniques used by the government and diverse authorities to make villages Open defecation-free, and how these techniques interact with caste and gender power relations in the villages, was the key objective of this thesis. By examining Community-led Total Sanitation implementation in two districts decades apart, I explored how 'community' is invoked in programmes that use a governmentality of caste and religion to create open defecation-free villages. The findings reveal a tension between the upper caste construction of the ideal sanitary citizen, the hygienic spaces sought by the government apparatus, and the way the poorer Scheduled Caste rural residents experience sanitation infrastructure and rural spaces.

Researchers have argued that sanitation programmes in India have been enacted with caste-blindness, leading to further entrenchment of caste-based inequalities, particularly when it comes to caste-based sanitation labour (Shekhar, 2023). However, this thesis shows that state sanitation interventions may seem caste-blind in the policy documents, but caste is highly visible and deliberate in the enactment of sanitation programmes in the villages by the combined efforts of the government, NGOs, and other stakeholders. Although sanitation policies, such as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, provide guidelines for how the country is to be made open defecation-free through a mix of behaviour change campaigns and financial subsidies, caste makes an appearance in the policy only in terms of financial subsidies that the SC and ST can claim towards toilet building. However, caste becomes incrementally more visible in the implementation of programmes as we further go down the scales of governance to the villages. Limited research has explored how sanitation interventions aiming to make villages open defecation-free interact with caste, religion, and gender inscribed in rural spaces (Banda *et al*., 2007; O'Reilly *et al*., 2017). This thesis contributes to sanitation research by showing that state sanitation interventions are not just about fulfilling basic needs, even

if it is the official discourse, but serve to order society along existing lines of spatial differentiation, precarity and social norms.

8.1. Summary of research findings

In the process of answering the research questions, the thesis unfolds three stories through three papers.

First is the story of Churu, a district in Rajasthan, where the shame-and-disgust strategy of CLTS was adapted to the existing deeply entrenched social norms related to shame (*lajja*) and honour (*izzat*) prevalent in the state. The research, through an understanding of the spatial and temporal dynamics inherent in the CLTS implementation strategy, showed that CLTS entrenched caste inequalities further. Through the contextual framing of a case-based affective governmentality, we saw how the Rajasthani norms of *Lajja* and *Izzat,* which seek to maintain caste honour by restricting the mobility of women, were used by the state and the World Bank to ensure that men would become the keepers of that honour by building toilets. This way, hygiene in open spaces was imbued with the gendered caste-based affective registers of honour and shame, which ignored the inability of certain rural residents to build toilets. A growing body of scholarship has identified the importance of affective and experiential dimensions of caste (Guru and Sarukkai, 2019; Lee, 2021; Jadhav et.al., 2016; Kanjilal, 2024). Caste can be a deeply personal experience for people of Dalit castes and, as described here by a Jesuit Dalit leader in Mosse (Mosse, 2012, P. 246), "…for me, it is feeling; emotion not intellect [it cannot be] neatly analyzed". The 'caste feeling' for the upper caste is revealed at moments when the line between "outer modernity" and "inner tradition" blurs (ibid). In North India, Lee (2021) posits that asking 'who feels *ghṛṇā* (disgust) towards whom?' can help trace the boundaries of the touchable body politic.

But what happens when the state encourages the citizens to feel disgusted by the sanitary behaviours of people who defecate in the open? Does the state-sanctioned shaming superimpose itself on the existing "inward feeling of defilement, odium, aversion and contempt" produced by caste (Ambedkar, 1982, P.492)? Chapter five, thus, examines the impact of shame and disgust-based sanitation programmes by contextualising these in collective understandings of honour and shame in Rajasthan. The material and affective dimensions of caste are deeply intertwined in the villages, and uncritically using emotions to persuade people to build toilets reifies existing caste

and gender inequalities. Further, these measures ignore the existing material inequalities of caste and how these might impact the ability of rural residents to build and repair toilets, differentially based on their gender and caste location. Thus, chapter five has important implications for research on sanitation interventions, such as CLTS, that use shame-based strategies in South Asia, while ignoring the affective and material dimensions of caste, which are deeply intertwined.

The second story was of Mandi, a district in Himachal Pradesh, where CLTS was implemented in 2005, when the first major hurdle faced by the government and NGOs was the refusal of rural residents to build toilets in their homes due to their religious beliefs, among other factors. There is research on the social innovation of CLTS in Mandi that led to a massive jump in toilet coverage from 28% in 2005 to 82% in 2011 based on its community incentives and institutional mechanisms (Hueso and Bell, 2013). Chapter six traces how the first domino that needed to be felled in the study site among rural residents was their resistance to toilets due to their religious beliefs. The government and the local NGO gained support from the institution of *Devta* by conducting a combination of CLTS-style workshops using the shame and disgust strategy. Subsequently, rituals were conducted by the *Devta* to convince rural residents that toilets inside houses would not invoke the wrath of the deities. This was a startling reversal of social attitudes towards toilets inside the homes from being considered impure to being considered a convenience. Much research has shown how ritualistic notions of purity and pollution can dissuade people from building and using toilets in their houses (Coffey *et al.*, 2017; Gupta *et al.*, 2020). This research fills a gap in the literature to show how a sanitation programme actively worked to change religious norms related to toilets by engaging with the religious institution that governs the daily lives and domestic spaces of its religious constituents. A particular type of governmentality of religion can be seen at work where villagers and religious leaders adapt their behaviours in the face of modernity and adopt toilets while adhering to Brahmanical rules of domestic spaces through the placement of toilets.

The seventh chapter examines the story of how CLTS was mobilised as a model sanitation policy instrument and circulated by the World Bank, government officials, and NGOs between sites through various instruments such as immersion tours for bureaucrats. The chapter shows how ‘community’ was used as a scale-up strategy in CLTS through the use of 5-day CLTS trainings that aimed to make villages open

defecation-free rapidly, thus community was rendered technical in the two study sites. But in the process of mobilising communities to be open defecation-free, the government forged alignments with relevant local upper-caste stakeholders in the Churu and Mandi to ensure that CLTS was successfully adapted in these districts. In the process, the relationships of domination in rural areas, where upper and dominant castes form alliances with those in government to ensure that programmes are implemented successfully, but also while disproportionately benefitting the dominant and upper caste rural residents (Witsoe, 2011).

Overall, after the implementation of CLTS in both sites, the rates of open defecation decreased, in that more households had built toilets and were using them. While open defecation has not been completely eradicated in study sites, although the government claims the opposite, it has reduced substantially since the CLTS programmes were implemented. Although not a primary objective of this thesis, this research found that in both Churu and Mandi, most rural residents had built toilets with septic tanks, which poses concerns for policymakers and government officials regarding the faecal sludge management from these septic tanks. The building of toilets with septic tanks as part of the sanitation programmes also ensures that exploitative caste-based sanitation labour regimes continue and remain invisibilised as government policy fails to tackle this issue, underlining successful sanitation programmes (Prasad and Ray, 2019). In November 2024, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment informed the Parliament that since 1993, 1,243 sanitation workers (dominantly Dalit caste) have died while they were cleaning septic tanks without any protective equipment (Sharma, 2025). Meanwhile, open dumping of faecal sludge remains rampant in villages, which replaces the problem of open defecation with another one while also being an ecological hazard.

As CLTS is circulated from one site to another, this thesis shows that a governmentality of caste emerges in which the norms of the dominant caste in both study sites were appropriated to ensure that rural residents made themselves into sanitary citizens or were coerced into it, as the localised caste-based power relations were strengthened and reified.

8.2. Research questions

The three stories presented above provide evidence to address the questions posed at the outset of this thesis:

- ***How do sanitation interventions interact with caste-based power structures in the villages where they are implemented?***
- ***How do sanitation interventions aiming to make villages open defecation-free order domestic and public spaces in relation to human excrement?***
- ***How was CLTS as a model policy instrument mobilised between the study sites in India and how was it changed in the process?***

1) **How do sanitation interventions interact with caste relations in the villages where they are implemented?**

Water and Sanitation Programs can serve as tools of domination, especially if the programmes are government-led (Kotsila and Saravanan, 2018). This research showed, through studying the implementation of CLTS in two districts of India, that government sanitation interventions actively use existing relationships of domination and subordination to ensure the normative success of the programmes, that is, making villages open defecation-free. This research, thus, contributes to a body of literature that has shown that sanitation infrastructures are embedded with the intersectional power relations of the particular geography, and can be seen as tools of reproducing gender and caste power relations (McFarlane and Silver, 2017; Truelove and O'Reilly, 2021). The first paper shows that the government workers who implemented CLTS were keenly aware of the caste boundaries and spatial segregation of the villages where they conducted training. Keeping this in mind, they conducted separate CLTS trainings in different hamlets, which are organised along caste lines. Similarly, community monitoring groups were also constituted keeping caste in mind, as government officials did not want to disturb caste relations for the sake of the sanitation goals. However, in the process, Dalit hamlets, on the outskirts of the village, were left out of the community trainings. This meant that for most landless SC residents, the only encounter with the sanitation programme was when they were being chased out of the fields where they were still defecating. Spatialised caste relations were inherent in the sanitation programme strategy by which dominant caste landowners of the village would dissuade

villagers from defecating in the fields or open spaces in the villages. This led to a restriction of open land as landowning farmers were encouraged by elected village leaders to fence off farmlands and open spaces. This was to ensure that villagers (disproportionately poor and Dalit) could not defecate in these open spaces. The landowning castes, thus, became the ones who governed, alongside the government, in ensuring sanitary villages and reifying their material and symbolic positions in the villages. Through *Nigrani Samiti*, which was dominated by higher caste and dominant caste men, a government-mandated community surveillance mechanism put increasing powers in the hands of dominant and upper caste members of the village to discipline poorer and disproportionately Dalit bodies. This contributes to existing research that women, poorer people, and Dalits are targeted heavily by sanitation programmes through disciplining and punitive measures (Truelove and O'Reilly, 2021).

In Churu, the upper caste residents and village leaders attribute prevailing open defecation to Dalit and poorer villagers refusing to build toilets. This was in contrast with the landless SC villagers talking about their inability to build toilets as they had not received government subsidies or did not have access to the water supply. This evokes a particular form of spatial purification (Sibley, 2008) where spatio-discursive practices marginalise the other that is seen as a threat or one that embodies filth. Sibley's work on spatial purification was grounded in Douglas' (2003) theory, which describes dirt as 'matter out of place', thus creating a system of classifying the pure and the impure (Modan, 2002). This thesis, thus, contributes to sanitation research examining how cleanliness is framed as an individual responsibility while ignoring the infrastructural and social exclusion that leaves the Dalit residents in these villages unable to build toilets. Participants connect their own as well as others' toilet usage to notions of state building and modernisation through hygiene (Chakrabarty, 2002), while those who do not have toilets are seen as not being committed to the nation and undeserving of citizenship (Jack *et al*., 2020; Rose and Miller, 1992). When caste-based separation and hierarchies are naturalised in the rural environment for thousands of years, these spatialisations can be taken as given when government sanitation programmes are implemented. This production of bodies by taking separations as naturalised leads to particular ways of improving and developing sanitation infrastructures based on race, caste, and class, and has been seen in the Global South (Biza *et al.*, 2022).

In the second paper, in Mandi, the *Devta* committees in the villages of Himachal Pradesh are usually dominated by the upper Rajput castes, which have political as well as religious dominance across the state. The government's strategies to ensure the successful implementation of CLTS, by respecting the religious views of the rural residents, also showed a continuity in existing relations of domination in the district. There is a hidden story of who deserves to be sanitary that emerges through the social norms instrumentalised by the sanitation campaigns. The Churu behaviour change campaign, based on Rajasthani norms of honour and pride, is based on upper caste and dominant caste norms of honour. Similarly, the initial engagement with *Devta* in Himachal Pradesh is meant to make toilets acceptable to one influential group of people, the Rajputs, and the institution of *Devta*. The toilet is then meant to diffuse to the whole community through that influential group, but the spatially and socially marginalised still remain excluded from the sanitation programmes. Such interventions often tried to change the attitudes of a core group of people who would then become agents of change in their communities changing community members' perceptions of what is acceptable in the community (Cislaghi and Heise, 2019).

In the case of Mandi, it was the *Devta* committee that would be the first domino to shift the norms regarding acceptability of toilets in homes. In Churu, sanitation programmes focused on promoting the adoption of technology by the economic and social elite which would lead to further diffusion in communities (Wang and Bailis, 2015). At this point, when toilets become acceptable by proximate social pressure, governance by distance becomes possible, as governance is not about people in positions of power exerting direct control, but norms of a higher caste population are unconsciously produced and reproduced by citizens and subjects (Rose, 1996). This has important implications as caste-based violence in India is not only restricted to physical violence against those who challenge caste-based hierarchies, particularly Dalit people. But it also reproduces a network of laws and policies, ordered historically and in the present through elite 'upper' caste ideology (Dixit, 2023).

In relation to the sanitation programme, these norms translated to the types of toilets adopted in villages in Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan, that is, large septic tanks that users do not have to spend on getting cleaned for many years. These types of toilets are considered by rural residents as more convenient and of better quality, compared to the more sustainable twin-pit latrines promoted by the government. A strand of studies has

recently suggested that this preference is a direct result of ritualistic notions of purity and pollution that dissuade people from adopting twin pit latrines that have to be cleaned by hand (Coffey *et al*., 2017; O'Reilly *et al*., 2017). Decomposed faeces from twin-pit latrines are safe to use and can be used as agricultural fertilizer. However, the above-cited studies suggest that in India where caste-based rules mandate that human excreta has to be cleaned by certain Dalit castes, people will prefer septic tanks that do not have to be cleaned by the users. Research for this thesis showed that the choices of the people for toilets were based on notions of convenience and prestige rather than caste-based beliefs. On the other hand, this research was limited by its remote interviews, which may have been inefficient in uncovering deeper biases in terms of the adoption of toilets.

2) **How do sanitation interventions aiming to make villages open defecation-free influence the use of domestic and open spaces?**

Several key insights emerged from this research regarding how spaces affect open defecation, and how sanitation interventions are engaging with the conception of spaces. The government, through CLTS, aimed to control domestic and open spaces by ensuring that people did not defecate in the open and built toilets in their households instead. The two study sites showed how open defecation practices currently are deeply related to the enclosure of farmlands and landless rural residents. O'Reilly (2018) recently argued that land use changes brought on by demographic changes, changing economies, and village common lands' occupation, have been neglected in current sanitation literature as factors that are dissuading people from defecating in the open. This study answers this concern by O'Reilly (2018) by arguing that enclosures of farmlands were not just naturally occurring in the villages in Churu but were used as a deliberate strategy by the government in Churu to ensure that there were fewer open spaces for people to defecate in, forcing them to build toilets. The government urged landowners to fence off the farmlands in Churu, which led to the enclosure of farmlands.

The people who defecate in the open, however, are adapting their routines due to these farmlands being fenced off, that is some have started looking for newer defecation spots or reducing their food and water intake to avoid defecating during the day. This thesis thus shows a larger trend of how the enclosure of farmlands and common village

grounds shapes defecation behaviours in villages. The change in the availability of open land where people could defecate is controlled by the upper caste and the dominant caste. And landless rural residents, disproportionately the SC, who cannot build toilets on that land or do not have the documentation to receive government subsidies, are susceptible to being disciplined by the upper and dominant castes. This research thus contributed to a political ecology approach to open defecation that pays attention to changing and shrinking spaces for open defecation and how that plays a role in rural residents' abandonment of OD (Jacob *et al*., 2021), or further adds to the psycho-social pressures for villagers unable to build or repair toilets (O'Reilly and Louis, 2014).

Secondly, this paper contextualises CLTS-style shame-based sanitation programmes with a caste-based understanding of how spaces are imbued with emotions and histories. CLTS-style programmes that involve shame and humiliation to dissuade people from defecating in the open ignore the emotions that are already inscribed on certain spaces and bodies based on their caste and gender. This paper draws on an understanding of emotions as having a rippling effect that moves sideways between objects and people, as well as backwards as caste-based repression always leaves a trace in the present (Ahmed, 2004). By examining the use of disgust, shame, humiliation and honour by the government and community monitoring groups in the villages, chapter 5 argues that sanitation programmes' use of these emotions for its normative goals ignores the historicity of these emotions for spaces and people based on caste and gender. This paper further contributes to an emotional political ecology approach which urges researchers to frame resource politics, struggles, access and conflict, as being more than about the 'rational' use of resources, but also about the diverse emotions that are set in motion when people make decisions regarding everyday resource use (Sultana, 2015), such as which land to defecate in, or spaces where toilets are placed. There was a diverse range of emotions at play in the subjectification of rural residents. There was the aspiring ideal villager and citizen who wanted his village to be the cleanest first and thus stood guard in empty fields at night. There was the villager who feared the wrath of his/her *Devta* for building a toilet in their house. Then, there was the villager who did not want her children to defecate near the river where everyone else's faeces were. There was the landless farm labourer who could not afford to repair an old government toilet and had to strategise the times that she could go into the farms for defecating without being caught by the landowner. Then there was the upper caste women who

once felt fear and shame when they had to defecate in the open, but have toilets in the house now. The fifth chapter demonstrates how paying attention to spatial and temporal levers of sanitation programmes can contribute to caste and gendered understanding of affective governmentality. That is, how a diverse range of authorities influenced the sanitary conduct of rural residents, through the instrumentalisation of emotions, which have shared collective understandings based on one's gender, caste and class location. And yet, while access to resources and infrastructure is usually examined in terms of proximity, distance, time needed and physical burdens, it is importantly also associated with sociocultural factors such as caste-based exclusion, gendered spaces and the emotional labour disproportionately borne by poorer Dalit women who need to negotiate access to spaces for defecation (Sultana, 2015).

Thirdly, this thesis through chapter 4, contributes to an understanding of how rural residents' aversion to toilets in domestic spaces based on religious beliefs, can be tackled through an engagement with religious norms. The combined efforts of the government, developmental agencies and the institution of *Devta* in Mandi, to convince villagers that toilets and hygiene were not unacceptable to the deities, acted as the first domino in the relative success of CLTS in Mandi. The change in religious norms also aligned with the forces of modernisation and convenience of toilets which affected villagers and religious leaders alike. Interestingly, once the villagers in the districts adopted toilets due to convenience, prestige, proximate social pressure, and the forces of modernisation, they ensured that toilets were brought into the house within the Brahmanical norms of purity and pollution. There was a governmentality of religion at play where domestic sacred spaces were adapted to ensure that they adhered to modern ideas of hygiene while also adhering to caste norms of purity and pollution. This contributes to research on unofficial sacred spaces, particularly domestic spaces that are adapted to ensure religious norms are met while meeting the secular standards of the government (Kiong and Kong, 2000; Woods, 2013). Many caste households can afford to still build toilets outside of the house's compound to keep their ritual pollution outside. Still, many in Himachal Pradesh are starting to find the idea of building toilets inside the house acceptable, modern and convenient. So domestic geographies are changing slowly and steadily, based on ideas of modernity and convenience.

In Rajasthan, however, drawing on caste and gender-based social norms, an affective governmentality was at play that encouraged men in the villages to build toilets to

protect the families', particularly the women's, honour. Protection of women from the embarrassment or sexual harassment that could accompany open defecation was used as a common message by sanitation programmes in Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan. In Rajasthan, however, the explicit association of honour resting in women and men being the protectors of this honour was used in campaign messaging through billboards and trainings. While implementers of the sanitation programme deemed this an effective strategy, it raises questions regarding whether sanitation campaigns can only be implemented through essentialist notions of gender, or whether sanitation campaigns can be used to challenge gender and caste norms for a more sustained impact that is also equitable. Hegemonic discourses of development serve to essentialise rural women by presuming they are a homogenous, stable group before entering the development process (O'Reilly, 2006). For achieving gender equality, pathways therefore need to produce multiple capabilities and choices that go beyond basic material needs and rights (Leach *et al.*, 2015).

3) **How was CLTS mobilised between the study sites in India as a model policy instrument, and how was it changed in the process?**

The World Bank's mobilisation of CLTS between districts and states in India reveals the story of bureaucrats who became policy champions after attending workshops and CLTS immersion trips. Hybrid actors, such as those who work in the government machinery and with the WSP, played an instrumental role in the circulation of the policy between sites, as they became transfer agents advocating the importance of CLTS as an approach. Further, we also see how bureaucrats and elected village leaders position themselves as entrepreneurial leaders as they attend workshops, immersion trips, and rapid exchange learning workshops, to implement new strategies to create cleaner hygienic villages and be added to the cadre of successful bureaucrats created by WSP. Chapter 7 gleaned several key insights from using the policy mobilities framework to understand the circulation of CLTS within India. First, a successful mobilisation of CLTS involved its adaptation to the particular dominant power relations and social norms in the geography in which it is being transferred and implemented. The mobilisation of CLTS to Mandi and its implementation was made possible, after it was adapted to adhere to the religious norms of Mandi, in accordance with the *Devta*. The

legitimisation of the sanitation programme from the leadership of *Devta* was an essential first step to adapting CLTS in Himachal Pradesh. In Churu, the dominant caste social norms were used in the CLTS messaging, while dominant and upper caste members of the villages were appointed as community monitoring groups to enhance citizen policing and to enclose the vast lands available for defecation.

Second, CLTS used a 'government through community' approach where issues are problematised in terms of features of communities, their strengths, cultures and weaknesses (Rose, 1999). Meanwhile, the solutions to those issues involve acting upon community dynamics. The issue of open defecation was framed in terms of religious and cultural norms in Churu and Mandi, while the solutions framed by the government targeted and appropriated these norms to act on community dynamics. In Mandi, the government and NGOs worked with the religious institution of *Devta* to gain the acceptance of the religious constituents towards their sanitation programme. The religious beliefs of the rural residents were framed as an issue that could be solved using the CLTS trainings on *Devta* leaders to ensure their acceptance of toilets. In Churu, the CLTS trainings were conducted in each hamlet separately, so that caste dynamics were not disturbed in the process of making villages open defecation-free. Open defecation was framed as an issue of honour and shame in Churu, and of religious norms in Mandi. This framing enabled the Word Bank, the government and other stakeholders to propose solutions from the CLTS menu that could be used tackle the issues: that is CLTS trainings for the villagers and CLTS trainings for the *Devta* committee members.

However, power relations remain uninterrogated, and social norms that may entrench gender and caste-based inequalities are further entrenched. The mobilising and implementation of CLTS in various districts of India is characteristic of the anti-politics machine that plagues development programmes, which adopt technocratic approaches that often ignore the political and socio-economic aspects of the issue (Ferguson, 2006). This approach to development has been used in the Global South in the colonial era and continued to depoliticise development challenges in the postcolonial era. In framing development issues, such as sanitation in this case, through particular research methods focusing on local communities as the primary agent of change, agencies like the World Bank turn such development issues into non-political issues (Li, 2007). This was demonstrated by a government official who in an interview said:

"The focus of the sanitation programme was sanitation, we do not want to disturb caste relations in the village."

The implications of this rationale for a sanitation programme so deeply steeped in material and symbolic caste politics would bring the long-term efficacy of such five-year sanitation programmes into question. As (Bächtold, 2015) argued, anti-politics inherent in development programmes can often pose as a deliberate attempt at restricting any challenges to the status quo, and in the process reproduce patterns of dominance by certain actors.

This brings us to the community-led aspect of CLTS. In the case of fast policy transfer of CLTS to achieve open defecation-free villages in India, the community-led aspect was diluted down to community consultation through a menu of PRA-inspired techniques followed in a checkbox manner. The other way the community aspect was integrated into CLTS implementation was through citizen policing as part of *Nigrani Samitis* (community monitoring groups). This has been shown in sanitation programme in this study as well as across India to give the power of shaming and punitive measures on dominant-upper caste men, and disproportionately targets poorer, Scheduled Caste women and men. This is in line with research highlighting the tyranny of participation in development as it often fails to create space for the voices of the marginalised to be heard, but instead focuses on the voices of the vocal few (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Mosse and Lewis, 2005). The nature of community participation in Churu viewed participants as instruments to making the sanitation programme run more efficiently, by enlisting contributions and delegating responsibilities (Cornwall, 2003). Further, the community participation also viewed participants as objects from which to get compliance, minimise dissent and lend legitimacy to the sanitation programme originally based on the principles of *Gandhigiri* (non-coercive community development).

CLTS is also based on idealised notions of community. These would include assumptions such as natural leaders of the community will stand up and ensure that the community does not revert to open defecation or ensure that they build toilets, or that the community would come together to financially support the poorest in the village to build toilets. But natural leaders in these communities would often be higher caste or dominant caste male members, and receiving financial support from the community or

the government is dependent on caste-based social capital which Dalit families would lack. CLTS implementation in India sees communities as fixed units, instead of as social spaces where networks of social relationships, interests and divisions shift constantly and are reshaped every day. When it comes to community-led development programmes, communities can be reshaped through solidarities that can be shaped and reshaped based the needs of people. While toilet coverage has increased through the work of committed bureaucrats, NGOs and *Pradhans*, challenges remain in terms of sustained toilet use and access to toilets for left-behind communities such as SC, ST and landless households. If water and sanitation practitioners fail to recognise the evolving and dynamic nature of these relationships and divisions, community-led strategies relying on collective action may lead to results that are limited and cannot be sustained long term.

This thesis' examination of how CLTS was circulated within India contributes to growing research regarding the reconfiguration of policy learning flows, with increasing South-South exchange between Global South countries. Within policy mobilities research about south-south policy learning, the focus has been dominated by urban policy mobilities. This research presents the case of CLTS, a policy instrument that was piloted in a village in Bangladesh by an NGO and then was circulated to many countries in Asia, Africa and South America. Thus, through the intra-state dynamics of policy transfer in India, this research reveals the importance of rural areas as key centres of policy mobilities in the Global South. However, as cautioned by Wood (2015), the exchange of policies in the Global South is not a complete reconfiguration of power and is not devoid of exploitative power relations at various scales. The CLTS mobilisation in India was primarily undertaken by the Water and Sanitation Programme of the World Bank, demonstrating that while there is a shift in global north to Global South geographies of policy transfer, there is simultaneously an entrenchment of global north institutions influencing the policies that are adopted in countries of the Global South.

8.3. Concluding thoughts and future research

Open defecation is harmful to a village as it leaves people vulnerable to diseases and has been centered by the United Nations through its Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals, and by the Indian government through sanitation

programmes. However, government campaigns aiming to tackle the practice are inherently disciplinary in practice and deeply embedded in existing social hierarchies. This thesis was driven by the question raised by Doron and Raja (2017, P.197), where they asked "how do we liberate the conceptual distinction between the 'healthy' and the 'pathological' body (the latter symbolized by the term 'open defecation') from its biomedical (objectivist) overtones?" While sanitation campaigns in India emphasise the importance of toilets in curbing diseases and maintaining cleanliness standards, these programmes are deeply guided by upper-caste ideas of hygiene (Jack *et al*., 2022). This has implications for citizens who do not fit these standards, and are thus considered a risk to society and therefore must be disciplined.

In creating the binaries of the sanitary and unsanitary while creating open defecation-free villages, this thesis shows that the governmentality of sanitation in India is based on entrenching existing relations of domination and subordination based on caste, gender, and religion. The sanitation programme thus leans into the postcolonial nature of democracy is characterised by the continuing prevalence of relations of domination and subordination in the countryside, which were encouraged in colonial governance strategies (Witsoe, 2011). These strategies allowed dominant caste and upper caste groups to access public resources through patronage relations with the state, thus structuring power in a specific way in rural areas (Witsoe, 2013). In the case of Rajasthan, it was the landowning caste that the government formed alliances with as they were recruited for community monitoring groups, while being asked to enclose their farmlands. In the case of Himachal Pradesh, the government worked closely with the institution of *Devta,* primarily dominated by the Rajput caste, which dominates caste relations in Himachal Pradesh. Thus, we can see a demonstration of how government Water and Sanitation Programs can constitute tools of governance that entrench forms of domination, independent of whether they achieve their objective of providing better sanitation outcomes (Kotsila and Saravanan, 2017).

This thesis, through the study of Himachal Pradesh's implementation of CLTS, also characterised a unique form of religious governmentality that laid the ground for the eventual adoption of toilets by rural residents. In examining government efforts to engage effectively with a religious institution that is so intimately intertwined with the daily lives of its religious constituents, Chapter 6 demonstrated the critical influence of religious beliefs in this region. This has important implications for the Indian political

landscape, where the “purity of the *Dev Bhumi* (land of the deities)” is being weaponised by Hindu nationalists to push for a Hindu state in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand (neighbouring state) and to target Muslims (Ellis-Peterson and Hassan, 2024). Future research could examine the role the institution of *Devta* could play in this increasingly fraught political landscape.

This thesis also uncovers factors related to land use, social relations, and local politics, thus providing insights into how defecatory practices are steeped in changing rural political ecologies. These factors are rapidly evolving in rural areas as practices of enclosure, occupation of common village and government lands, landlessness, land being bought by builders, and breaking of joint families in rural areas affect sanitation practices in rural areas (O'Reilly, 2018). It is imminently important for future research to understand how caste, gender, and class intersect with the rapidly changing rural political ecologies to affect sanitation practices in villages.

The materiality of human excreta provided an opportunity to interrogate how notions of caste-based ritual notions of pollution and modernist notions of convenience can influence toilet usage, while also posing problems for the safe management of human waste from these toilets in the imminent future. These challenges will also entrench existing caste-based labour, where disproportionately Dalit sanitation workers will be forced to clean septic tanks under unsafe and exploitative conditions. With an increasing concern regarding faecal sludge management in rural and urban areas, and the massive build-up of toilets with septic tanks through the implementation of government sanitation programmes, projects regarding the re-use of faecal sludge for agriculture and producing energy are increasingly emergent in the Global South including India (Bhatkal *et al*., 2024). Future research could examine whether such projects challenge caste relations, caste-based notions of ritual pollution and exploitative labour relations or continue to entrench inequalities and precarities.

Finally, this research was conducted remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which posed many limitations. While the research was completed by partnering with local research assistants who facilitated interviews with rural residents, the opportunities to build rapport with research participants were limited. Further, many deeper conversations and follow-up interviews with participants were not possible as many of the women in these villages did not have access to mobile phones. In some ways, this

research is a pilot study this researcher aims to do follow-up research in the future. On the other hand, the remote research method presented opportunities to create a collaborative research design and build close relationships with local research assistants. This is not only an integral objective of research, but arguably one of the most important ones.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Initial codes from data (Mandi)

Behaviour change

CODES	How many times it was mentioned	How many participants mentioned it
Motivated families to build toilets	8	5 yellow
Awareness	18	5 yellow
Religion, God, *Devta*	8	3 orange
Mahila Mandal	9	5 yellow
Sisters and daughters, women security	2	1 peach
Health/disease/ill	6	4

Toilet construction

Subsidy, 12000	8	5 pink
Targets	30	2 green
Build/construct toilets	52	5 red
Twin pit latrines	11	5 brown
Waste	25	5 red

Exclusion

Left/left out/reach	17	6 blue
Poor/economic	7	3 purple
Landless/no land	9	4 purple
Joint family, brothers, separate	6	3 magenta
Forest	4	3 dark green
Labourers/migrant labourers	4	3 light brown

Appendix B: Initial codes from data (Churu)

CLTS	6	5 blue
Trigger	4	4 purple
Landless/no land	12	7 red
Prestige	5	3 magenta
Natural leaders	3	2 dark green
Toilet construction	15	8 light brown
Toilet usage	4	3 dark blue
Subsidies, financial support	12	8 pink
WSP	7	4 grey
Targets	5	3 light green
Rajasthani culture	6	3 yellow
Shame	11	9 orange
Nigrani Samiti	7	4 dark green
Disease/flies	12	6 dark grey
Desert	5	2 light blue

Appendix C: Overall themes from the codes

1) **"Triggering[6]" and incentives**: Triggering, community-led approaches and financial incentives for building toilets used as primary strategies in Swachh Bharat Abhiyan-Gramin (SBA).
2) **World Bank**: Almost every district official or state official who has championed this approach in their respective districts has attended trainings or immersive trips from the Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) of the World Bank.
3) **Community vigilance committees**: *Nigrani Samiti* (vigilance committee) is constituted in villages on a national scale. These committees consist of residents (including children) of the villages who carry out morning-follow ups and stand guard in common open defecation spots to prevent or dissuade people from defecating in the open.

4) **Caste, a pyramid of visibility**: The visibility of caste as a factor influencing implementation of sanitation programme increases lower down the hierarchy. It is the most invisible at state and national level and most visible at the block, panchayat and community level.
5) **Shaming and subsidies**: A blended approach of shaming and subsidies to encourage toilet usage. Classical CLTS (strictly no subsidy for toilets) as developed in Bangladesh not used.
6) **Women's honour and safety**: A major focus of triggering and communication strategy to motivate rural communities to use toilets is women's honour and safety.
7) **Religious beliefs**: In Himachal Pradesh, initial efforts heavily focused on *Devta*-based beliefs.