PART I

INTRODUCTION AND THEORY

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Introduction

Citizenship and Social Welfare

In the spring of 2009, I met a woman named Chandibai[1] in Udaipur, a remote, rural district of Rajasthan in northwestern India. Udaipur is among Rajasthan's poorest districts, and is home to one of the state's largest *adivasi* (tribal or indigenous) communities – a population that is often among the poorest of the poor. Chandibai was a self-described leader in her village: a person to whom others (particularly other women) turned for help when seeking services such as the provision of drinking water, ration cards, or other welfare benefits. She wore a mobile phone around her neck and had numbers for village and district officials on speed dial. She explained:

> I know the system. I know who to call, and they will not ignore my call. And so everyone comes to me with their problems. Even men, who did not think a woman could do this work, know that I can assist them.[2]

I found Chandibai's activism remarkable, particularly in a region known for its restrictive gender norms. As a tribal woman with little formal education, she seemed all the more unusual. She was, in fact, the kind of person – poor, female, uneducated, living in a remote, rural region – from whom we might least expect active engagement with the state. And yet, as I extended my research across Rajasthan, I came to realize that Chandibai was not simply an anomaly. While she was in some ways unusual, particularly in her boldness, she was also part of a broader pattern of active citizenship practice that extended across the state. The vast majority of citizens who I encountered actively sought *and made claims on* the state, taking up a wide range of strategies – both formal and informal, direct and mediated – in an effort to secure public resources. Such

[1] Names have been changed.
[2] Quote from a focus group discussion, Gogunda block, Udaipur district, Rajasthan, April 14, 2009.

high rates of citizen action were striking in Rajasthan – a poor, agrarian, caste-divided, and erstwhile "princely" state with strong feudal legacies.[3]

How could I explain citizen voice, which Hirschman reminds us can range from "faint grumbling to violent protest,"[4] among people and in a region where most democratic theory would be unlikely to predict it? What, moreover, could account for varied repertoires of action and inaction among similarly situated individuals, living in the same local communities? Why did some, like Chandibai, make claims on the state – voicing needs, interests, and demands – while others did not?

Scholars of India, and of democratic practice more generally, know a lot about the electoral arena – about who votes and why. The experiences of the rural residents recounted in this book, however, take us far beyond that well-studied realm, instead highlighting the everyday practices through which citizens attempt to navigate access to the state. Around the globe, large numbers of citizens regularly turn to the state for education, health care, shelter, clean drinking water, and – for the poorest – income support, food rations, and other forms of social protection. In many places, though, it is a constant struggle to secure access to even the most basic services and entitlements. Water pumps break; health clinics are located at prohibitive distances; teachers are absent; and applications for services are ignored, lost, or subject to bribe requests. Numerous people are thus regularly denied the social rights that enable a "life of civilized being."[5] This book is about how citizens seek to overcome these problems by making claims on the state for social welfare through everyday and seemingly mundane acts such as attending a meeting, filing an application, visiting a government office, or approaching a local leader for assistance. Claim-making of this kind is an essential but often overlooked form of political participation that unfolds "beyond the romance of elections and the grandeur of social movements."[6] Quotidian acts of claim-making, while not the gripping stuff of voting booths or barricades, are no less consequential. Materially, they can mean the difference between the maintenance of a community pump and seeing that water source fall into disrepair; between securing and not securing access to a pension or employment on a government job site; between disciplining an absent teacher and sending one's children to an empty schoolroom. They are, moreover, fundamental political acts through which citizens forge and navigate their relationship to the state.

Who, then, makes claims on the state for social welfare, how, and why? Such questions are particularly salient in developing democracies across the Global

[3] India's princely states, described in greater detail later in this chapter, were nominally sovereign bodies that, while allied to the British Crown, retained partial autonomy, and which were noted for their feudal social and political relations.

[4] Hirschman 1970, p. 16. [5] Marshall 1950, p. 149.

[6] I thank Ashutosh Varshney for this phrase.

South in settings marked by high levels of clientelistic exchange, discretion, and rule bending among officials, where the gap between policy and implementation – between de jure social rights and the substantive realization of those rights – looms large.[7] Access to public resources in these settings is not simply a matter of legal entitlement but rather of who can "extract them from the political system."[8]

From Karl Marx to classical modernization theorists, scholars have long predicted that the poor (and the rural poor in particular) would be less engaged in politics than their wealthier urban counterparts.[9] Similar predictions extend to other markers of social standing, for example race or caste.[10] In rural India, echoing Barrington Moore's famed portrayal of the "docile" Indian peasant, residents have been regularly referred to as "passive," "fatalistic," and "politically accepting."[11] And yet, as the chapters that follow will demonstrate, active citizen–state engagement is possible – and even likely – under remote and poor conditions. In an original survey of more than 2,000 citizens across more than 100 villages of Rajasthan, I find that roughly three-quarters have personally engaged in state-targeted efforts to claim social welfare goods and services. These patterns, though, are not uniform: a significant number – almost a quarter – are notably *disengaged*, reporting that they have never made any contact with officials around issues of service delivery. These patterns of citizen action and inaction cannot be adequately explained, I will show, by differences in formal political institutions, by local economic development, or by individual socioeconomic standing. Claim-making practice varies both across and within localities set apart by wealth and literacy rates, as well as among individuals who share features of economic class and caste. We therefore need to look beyond boundaries of locality, class, and caste to consider the broader spaces in which citizens learn about, develop expectations of, and seek access to the state.

The central argument of this book is that citizen claim-making is both state induced and socially produced, shaped by direct encounters with public officials and by narrated accounts that circulate within and beyond communities. Claim-making is shaped, first, by the *institutional terrain of the state* (assessed in terms of its reach, visibility, and accessibility) and, second, by an individual's *social and spatial exposure* to people and places beyond the immediate community and locality (that is, beyond boundaries of class, ethnicity, neighborhood, or village). Claim-making, I argue, is most likely where the state's terrain

[7] O'Donnell 1993; Holston 2008; Bénit-Gbaffou & Oldfield 2011; Houtzager & Acharaya 2011; Jayal 2013.
[8] Banerjee 2004, p. 13.
[9] Lerner 1958; Lipset 1959; Marx 1978; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady 1995. See Chapter 4 for a broader discussion of these works.
[10] Verba, Ahmed, & Bhatt 1971; Verba, Schlozman, Brady, & Nie 1993.
[11] Moore 1966; Narain [1978], cited in Singer 2007; Hardgrave and Kochanek 2008.

is broad and uneven – marked by visible but variable social welfare provision. Institutional breadth increases citizens' sightings of and encounters with public resources, while unevenness generates a sense of grievance (and entitlement) when the state does not deliver. Under these conditions, social and spatial exposure is a *catalyst* for citizen action – building knowledge of, aspirations toward, and linkages to the state.

CLAIMING SERVICES, CLAIMING THE STATE

Claim-making, as it is here defined, consists of citizen action in pursuit of welfare goods and services, which are broadly understood as resources intended to protect and improve the well-being of citizens and, in particular, of the poor.[12] Claim-making is, by definition, *state targeted*.[13] The state, in Weberian fashion, may be understood as an organization that exercises "legitimate" force over a designated territory and, as such, has the authority to tax, regulate, conscript, and otherwise coerce the people within that territory. It is also, in classic liberal fashion, the purveyor of public goods that would be underproduced by private actors and the market. It is, as such, charged with ensuring public security and well-being. And yet the state is not a unitary or cohesive entity; its contours are unclear and constantly shifting, appearing differently to different people. I therefore employ an intentionally loose notion of the state as an amalgam of actors, institutions, and practices through which governmental power is exercised and public resources are distributed.[14] The state exists simultaneously at the national, subnational, and local levels. It is constituted and embodied by particular actors (politicians, police, bureaucrats, and street- or village-level officials), by agencies (ministries, departments, local offices), by documents (birth or death certificates, land titles, certifications), by policies (from taxation, to conscription, to social security), and by infrastructure and services (roads, schools, hospitals, water, and other amenities).

Given this book's focus, I am concerned in particular with the "developmental" arms of the state, which I define, borrowing from Corbridge et al., as "those agencies of the state and governmental practices that are charged with

[12] Here I build on Cammett and MacLean (2014, p. 6), who define social welfare provision as the "direct delivery or indirect facilitation of services and programs that promote well-being and social security." Social welfare, in this sense, encompasses a broad array of types of social spending, from public transfers – including basic income support, employment programs, and social security – to public services in the arenas of education, health, housing, and other basic infrastructure.

[13] Globally, non-state service providers are increasing in both number and in type (Cammett & MacLean 2014). While often important sources of social welfare (and thus part of the broader landscape of service provision), these actors are not the targets of claim-making as it is defined here. Instead, claim-making entails contacting or petitioning of *state* actors and agencies.

[14] Here I follow Corbridge, Srivastava, and Veron (2005, p. 5), who define the state as "bundles of everyday institutions and forms of rule."

improving or protecting the incomes, capabilities and legal rights of poorer people."[15] Citizens encounter this dimension of the state as they seek welfare goods and services in the fields of health, education, housing, employment, basic infrastructure, and social security.[16] Claim-making involves efforts to navigate the state's social welfare apparatus: that is, engaging the actors, agencies, and institutions that directly and indirectly shape the provision of such goods.[17] This, by nature, entails a seeking behavior: it involves contacting, petitioning, or otherwise approaching public officials or intermediaries. The resources in question can be both collective goods with high-spillover benefits that accrue to entire groups and localities (for example, communal drinking water, roads, schools, or health clinics), as well as selective goods with low-spillover benefits to households or individuals (for example, rations, cash transfers, pensions, or public employment).[18] They also encompass both legal entitlements and goods allocated in a more discretionary manner – a distinction that often becomes moot as the frequent bending of rules makes access even to entitlements highly unpredictable.

It would be misleading to attempt to attribute the distribution of these resources exclusively to bottom-up processes of claim-making. A wide range of "supply-side" factors, from public-sector capacity to technocratic and political decision-making and bureaucratic norms at the national and subnational levels, inform the allocation of public resources. The linkage between citizen voice and access to services is thus seldom direct. The nature of a particular good and the structures through which it is allocated will also inevitably inform whether and how citizens seek that good. Some services, such as income support through employment on a government worksite, are by nature demand

[15] *Ibid*, p. 7. This definition differs from the notion of the developmental state popularized in the 1980s and 1990s, which centered on the objectives of rapid economic and industrial growth. For a discussion of social development and the developmental state, see Evans and Heller (2015).

[16] In the rural Indian context, the social welfare sector is most often defined by the governmental budgetary categories of "social services" (health, education, housing, social security) and "rural development" (income support and employment) (Mooij & Dev 2004; World Bank 2011).

[17] Claim-making in pursuit of social welfare is one part of a broader array of practices that shape and reflect citizen–state relations. Citizens also engage (or attempt to disengage from) the state around issues of public security, dispute resolution, taxation, or conscription. These other arenas of citizen–state engagement play a critical role in conditioning the claim-making environment. Predatory state behavior with regard to taxation or property rights, for example, can create a climate of distrust that is hardly conducive to claim-making. I return to a discussion of the conditioning effects of the state in Chapter 2.

[18] On the distinction between high- and low-spillover services, see Besley, Pande, and Rao (2004). I distinguish "publicly provided" welfare goods from the more narrowly defined notion of "public goods," which refers to services and infrastructure that are non-rival (one person's consumption does not detract from another's) and non-excludable (where it is impossible to prohibit access to the good). Certain welfare services may also be "public" in this narrower sense, but others can be rival, excludable, and selective in nature.

driven and thus *require* citizen action in the form of applications. Others – for example, large-scale infrastructure projects – may be the subjects of planning and budgetary decisions taken far from the local level.

Claim-making, then, can be best understood as an often *necessary* but also often *insufficient* condition: citizen voice is rarely enough, alone, to ensure the delivery of public resources, but it can play a critical role in influencing their provision. It follows that this book is not a study of service delivery *per se*, nor is it primarily a study of citizens' material receipt of resources – although these themes are taken up in later chapters.[19] Rather, in studying the conditions under and strategies through which citizens *seek* resources from the state, I raise questions that are prior to – and so set the stage for – discussions of material distribution and access to social welfare.

Claim-Making as Active Citizenship Practice

Claim-making is not only materially important as a potential means to resources. As a set of practices through which citizens navigate access to the state, it is also of *intrinsic* value as an end (and subject of study) in itself. In making claims on the state for social welfare, citizens are negotiating the bundle of rights they are due by virtue of their membership in a given political society. They are, in other words, practicing citizenship. Citizenship is at once a legal status, an identity, and a set of obligations and rights.[20] Citizenship rights, following T. H. Marshall's foundational typology, encompass civil rights (that allow for personal freedom), political rights (to participate in the exercise of power), and social rights (to economic welfare and human well-being).[21] It is these social rights – and the means through which citizens claim them – that are the primary concern of this book.

Historically, in democracies in both the North and South, social rights were rarely codified in law but rather were promoted through social policies in the areas of education, health care, unemployment insurance, and social security.[22] Recently, though, some states – among them Brazil, South Africa, and India – have moved to legislate social rights. Brazil's "Citizen's Constitution" of 1988 lists rights to "education, health, work, leisure, security, social security, protection of motherhood and childhood, and assistance to the destitute."[23]

[19] See, in particular, Chapter 7 on the consequences of claim-making.

[20] As Somers (2008, p. 5) puts it: citizenship is the "right to have rights" including "both *de jure* and *de facto* rights to membership in a political community."

[21] Marshall 1950. Social rights, for Marshall, are both cultural (the right to "social heritage") and socioeconomic (the right to a modicum level of economic and human well-being, secured by the state through "the educational system and social services").

[22] On the evolution of social spending in Europe and the United States, see Lindert (2004). On the extension of social welfare in the Global South, see Seekings (2005).

[23] Constitution of the Federal Republic of Brazil, Article 6, Constitutional Amendment No. 26, 2000.

South Africa's post-apartheid constitution of 1996 similarly asserts the right to basic nutrition, housing, health care, and social services.[24] India's constitution recognizes, among other fundamental rights, the "right to life" – and, in a series of directive principles, lays out mandates for India's states to provide for adequate means of livelihood, social security, and a "decent" standard of living.[25] And yet, across all of these settings, a great divide exists between the seemingly progressive rhetoric of the state at the national and legislative levels and the often regressive implementation of social policy at the local levels. There is, in other words, a profound "gap between the status and the reality of citizenship."[26]

The effort of citizens to bridge this gap is an essential element of *active citizenship*, understood here as the quotidian practices through which citizens negotiate their social rights vis-à-vis the state.[27] Citizenship in this sense is both a status (a set of rights) and an exercise (a set of practices).[28] This conception draws on a long tradition that sees "citizenship as participation" and as an "expression of human agency in the political arena."[29] Claim-making is integral to active citizenship practice in this sense. Indeed, the very notion of citizenship can be understood, as Tilly asserts, as a "set of mutually enforceable *claims* relating categories of persons to agents of government."[30] Importantly, though, claim-making does not necessarily or consistently conform to democratic ideals of participation that rest on assumptions of political equality and effective representation. Acts of claim-making, as we will see, can be narrowly particularistic as well as dependent on powerful brokers and intermediaries.

[24] Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, chapter 2, "Bill of Rights," ss. 26–29.

[25] The Constitution of India, "Fundamental Rights," Article 21 (21A), and "Directive Principles of State Policy," Articles 38–39, 41–43, 46–47.

[26] Houtzager & Acharya 2011, p. 4.

[27] In emphasizing citizens' state-targeted pursuit of social welfare services, I build, in particular, on Houtzager and Acharya's (2011) notion of active citizenship, which they define (p. 3) as "present when individuals negotiate the terms of their access to mandated public goods and services in ways that are publicly sanctioned and protected." My own notion of active citizenship, however, is not restricted to "sanctioned" practices; rather, citizens pursue goods and services in diverse ways – both formal and informal, sanctioned and unsanctioned. My conception is also distinct from that employed in neoliberal theory, in which active citizenship implies self-provisioning by civil society and a *lesser* role for the state (Cf. Miraftab & Wills 2005).

[28] Oldfield 1990; Somers 1993; Lister 1998.

[29] Lister 1998, p. 228. Also see Cornwall and Gaventa (2000), Mettler and Soss (2004,) Isin and Nielsen (2008). The notion of claim-making thus straddles two interlinked conceptions of citizenship. In the first, citizenship is a status that confers a set of civil, political, and social rights. In the second, one's status as a citizen is derived from participation in the political community. The two conceptions are interrelated since, as Somers (1993) argues, legal frameworks granting citizenship rights are the product of social mobilization, which, in turn, responds to those rights.

[30] Tilly 1999, p. 253, emphasis added. These include both "bottom-up" claims (citizens' demands for state-controlled resources) and the "top-down" claims (by states on citizens) for resources and compliance, through taxation, conscription, and regulation, which states make on citizens.

Claim-making practices thus often reflect the hierarchies of social exclusion in which they are embedded. Claim-making is also an inherently costly undertaking, requiring investments of time and various forms of capital (human, social, and financial), while also carrying risks of political or social reprisal. And yet, claim-making remains an important manifestation of citizen voice, made all the more salient in environments where such voices have historically been lacking.

How might citizens respond when faced with material needs? Some, simply put, might *not* respond. Indeed, scholars have long puzzled over a lack of citizen action, particularly among the poor and marginalized who seemingly would stand to gain the most from activism. Banfield, for example, highlighted a lack of political engagement – what he called "amoral familism" – among rural Italian peasants who turned inward to insular familial networks.[31] Gaventa, writing from a very different perspective, similarly sought to explain inaction in poor mining communities in rural Appalachia, asking: "Why in an oppressed community where one might intuitively expect upheaval, does one instead find, or appear to find, quiescence?"[32] And yet some citizens, far from quiescent, take action. Hirschman, in his seminal work on responses to declining organizational performance, suggests that citizens have, broadly, two available responses: exit or voice. Exit involves a *dis*engagement from the state. Some might "vote with their feet," moving to a place that better meets their needs, or might purchase private alternatives.[33] We can imagine, for example, a community in which residents buy bottled water, run their own generators, visit private hospitals, and send their children to private schools. Traditionally, these have been the retreats of the wealthy, who purchase private services rather than contend with deteriorating public systems.[34] In recent years, though, non-state service providers – ranging from kinship networks, to nongovernmental organizations, to charities, and private companies – have expanded in poorer communities as well, thus increasing opportunities for a partial exit from the state by substituting private for public services. For others, exit might involve rejection of – or even outright resistance to – the state.[35]

In most places, though, the state – even where weak, corrupt, or capricious – remains an important provider of services, particularly for the poor. This is true despite decades of economic liberalization that sought to reduce the size and

[31] Banfield 1967. Also see Putnam's (1993) portrayal of southern Italy.
[32] Gaventa 1980, p. 3. Also see Bennett and Bennett (1986) on apathy and political indifference, and Ferguson (1990) on depoliticization.
[33] Tiebout 1956; Oates 2006.
[34] See, for example, Baviskar (2003) on Delhi, and Coy and Pöhler (2002) on Latin American cities.
[35] Such resistance is manifest in "everyday" forms of noncompliance – for example, squatting on public land, dodging fares, or siphoning off public water or electricity (Scott 1985; Chatterjee 2004; Holston 2008). At the most extreme, it can take the form of full-fledged uprisings motivated, in part, by low levels of service provision (Berman et al. 2011; Cammett 2014).