Politics and Local Realities in the Darjeeling Himalaya – Lessons for Climate Gender Discourses: Deepa Joshi
The Himalayan Water Towers and local
carvings

Origin of Asia’s eight largest rivers, the “water towers” for over two-fifths of the world’s population.

This staggering image of the “water holder and provider” masks the reality of local challenges in highly varied geology and structure of the mountain belt (ACWADAM 2011)
60% of the Himalayan population, rely on groundwater springs

Only 12.5% of total land area is cultivated and around 11% of the cultivable land irrigated, almost 64% of which is fed by natural springs.

The intense folding, faulting and development of an unpredictable mountain aquifer severely limits access.
So why the silence!

Why the silence – intense political noise, women emerge as new leaders?

Climate and gender:

*Women often have critical knowledge and experience in adapting to climate change and managing natural resources... high rates of male outmigration, land use change, and other drivers of change.*
Gender Myth Complex 1: Women and water relationships

- Women, water and class privileges:
  Community; state and private – systems of water management

- The dilemma of a political isolation:
  An identity crisis

- Exclusions from environment/water coalitions
Relationships with water are often essentially and unequally gendered... a subordinate female domain’.

these binding relations to the environment are not what women seek to nurture

“technology helps...” to unbind – as does migration – exit

‘development constructs a category of “women”... [ready to take on] popular mainstream practices relating to environment and development’ but reality speaks differently (Tamang 2002).
Gender Myth Complex II: Women in political spaces

If women gain access to political power, they will opt for politics and policies that promote social and gender equality, peace and sustainable development’ (Batliwala and Dhanraj 2007).

In the political domain too, ‘women tend to either by compulsion or choice address narrow political/party interests’
reluctance as well as inability or both of “mountain women” [if such a group were to exist] to fulfil the assumed roles of inherent, natural champions of the environment, especially, if and when, elected to positions of power.

BJP cadre of women leaders – Gujarat carnage/ SEWA
Nepali women and the Maoist struggle
Nari Morcha – GJMM

Conclusion