

**DEMOCRATIC DECENTRALIZATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF
DALITS: A DIACHRONIC STUDY OF TWO VILLAGE
PANCHAYATS IN ANDHRA PRADESH**

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BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the research work embodied in the present thesis entitled “**Democratic Decentralization and Empowerment of Dalits: A Diachronic Study of Two Village Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh**” is an original research work carried out by me under the supervision of Prof. Arun Kumar Patnaik, Department of Political Science of the University of Hyderabad. This thesis or a part thereof has not been submitted for the award of research degree or diploma to this or any other university or institution.

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This is certify that Nageswara Rao.A, Student of Ph.D in the Department of Political Science, has carried out the research work embodied in the present thesis entitled **“Democratic Decentralization and Empowerment of Dalits: A Diachronic Study of Two Village Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh”** for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science under my supervision during the academic session 2002-2011. This thesis or a part thereof has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma to this or any other University or Institution.

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Dedicated

To

MOTHER

&

FATHER

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Abbreviations

BCs	-Backward Classes
BC-C	-Backward Classes-Christians
BJP	-Bharatiya Janata Party
CPI	-Communist Party of India
CPI (M)	-Communist Party of India (Marxists)
DPO	-District Panchayat Officer
DWACRA	-Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas
HIV/AIDs	-Human Immune Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
KVPS	-Kulavivaksha Vyatireka Porata Samithi
LDCs	-Less Developed Countries
M.Phil	-Master of Philosophy
MPTC	-Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituency
MRPS	-Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi
NGOs	-Non-Governmental Organizations
OAPs	-Old Age Pensions
OC	-Open Categories
Ph.D	-Doctor of Philosophy
PRIs	-Panchayati Raj Institutions
PSU	-Public Sector Undertaking
RGNF	-Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship
R.C.Hs	-Roof Covered Houses
SCs	-Scheduled Castes
SGRY	-Swarna Jayanthi Gram Rojgar Yojana
SFC	-State Finance Corporation
SHGs	-Self Help Groups
STs	-Scheduled Tribes
TDP	-Telugu Desam Party
TRYSEM	-Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment
TRS	-Telangana Rastra Samiti
TV	-Television
ZPTC	-Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituency

Chapter- I

Introduction

The system of Panchayati Raj, based on the principles of democratic decentralization, peoples' initiative and participation, was introduced in India early in the sixties. More than 72 % Indians live in rural areas and the participation of people in Panchayati Raj Institutions in the rural areas could be regarded as an important indicator to assess the participation of the Indian citizen in the political process.

The village panchayats of India have had a long history and it is a unique feature of Indian political system. These village panchayats are basic units of administration at village in the third stratum of local government. Soon after independence the framers of the Indian Constitution decided to give them importance and directed the states to organize village panchayats as units of local self-government. Mahatma Gandhi believed in panchayats' immense potential for democratic decentralization and for devolving power to the people. He had a vision to make all the villages as village republics, with this idea wanted to create village swaraj in the country side. B.R. Ambedkar argued against panchayats and he was apprehensive about the continuation of caste Hindu hegemony. Further he opined that villages in India were caste-ridden and had little prospects of success as institutions of self-government. George Mathew puts it aptly 'his (B.R. Ambedkar) stand should not be interpreted as the one against democratic decentralization or the concept of giving power to the people'. He was only speaking from his experience of what a caste-ridden village society in India had meant to him and to millions like him. Undoubtedly, his perception was as realistic as that of others. The remedy lay in creating an egalitarian and truly democratic panchayat raj system in the country. He also fought for providing reservation in panchayats to involve all depressed classes in the rural governance.

Andhra Pradesh, one of the first to accept the recommendations of the Balwantrai Mehta Committee (1957) decided to establish one Panchayat Samithi in each district on an adhoc basis, learnt from its working and then brought legislation thereafter to create a three-tier system. With the success of the experiment with adhoc Samithies, the Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Samithies and Zilla Parishads Act, 1959 was enacted. According to this Act, a representative of Scheduled Castes and another representative of Scheduled Tribes (ST) if their population was not less than five per cent in the Block or another

representative the SCs (if there were no STs) at Panchayat Samithi level. M.T.Raju Committee (1967) Vengal Rao Committee (1968) did not focus on representation of SCs or STs in its recommendations. The Narasimham Committee (1971) had recommended for limited reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Women. Two to four seats were reserved for women depending upon the total number of seats in the Gram Panchayat. Three functional committees- agriculture, public health and sanitation, communications- were to be constituted with a minimum of three members, the Sarpanch being the chairman and at least one member from the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes being co-opted into each committee. The Andhra Pradesh Gram Panchayat Act of 1964 was a remarkable step taken by State Government to provide reservations for weaker sections of the society.

The original Panchayat Raj Act of 1964 had provided for reservation of one seat in each panchayat to either Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes. This Act did not provide substantial or proportional representation in respect of office of Sarpanch or Members to Scheduled Caste and Tribes. The inclusion of this provision in the amended Act of 1978 reflected a new socio-political perspective, considering the importance of the office. The salient features of the new system were as follows:

Fourteen per cent of the total number of offices of Sarpanch in each block in non-scheduled areas have to be reserved. Further step towards include these groups in local governance, in Mandal Praja Parishad & Zilla Parishad Act 1986 had provided for reservation at Mandal & Zilla Parishad level. 9 per cent for women, 15 per cent for Scheduled Caste, 6 per cent for Scheduled Tribes and 20 per cent for Backward classes. But, Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Act, 1994 in conformity with 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments have provided clear cut proportional reservation to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and 1/3rd for women.

The system of representation of Dalits in Panchayati Raj Institutions is discussed in detail in chapter-II. There have been concerted efforts since late '80 to revitalize the system and to facilitate participation of all sections of the society. The result was the passing the 73rd Constitution Amendment with high hopes and expectations.

B.R.Ambedkar emphasized the need to have the representation of Dalits in decision-making processes and administrative machinery to implement and monitor the policies, measures and programmes. "Representing the interests of Dalits is not just enough", he said, "He believed the interests could be meaningfully ensured by their own representation and participation in decision-making processes at all levels". He

recommended participation of Dalits in democratic polity at all levels from legislature to execution of policies. In the central scheme of Ambedkar, representation and participation are central. He favoured a fair policy of inclusion of Dalits in democratic polity, economy and society and cultural life of society. Thus his approach is holistic.¹ It is interesting to note that the Article 15 (4), the Constitution of India, empowers the state to make any special provision for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes of citizens, women and children. It is the obligation of the state to consider and their claims in the making of appointments to public services and reservation in case of inadequate representation. Again Article 16(4 A) states that nothing prevents the state from making any provision for reservation to promote any class or classes in all sectors including the services under the state in favour of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and according to 77th Amendment Act, 1995 in the opinion of the state the Dalits are not adequately represented in the services under state. Article 17 of the Indian Constitution abolishes the practice of untouchability. It further says that the enforcement of any disability arising out of untouchability is an offence punishable in accordance with law.² Articles 23, 24 and 46 provide economic safeguards to the disadvantaged sections of the society though specific mention of the term Scheduled Castes is not made. Article 23 prohibits bonded labour. Article 24 prevents the use of children below the age of 14 to work in factories, mines and in other hazardous employment. Article 25 (2 b) deals with the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus.

It is well known that there are many bonded labourers, child labourers among the Scheduled Castes even today. Articles 330 and 334 provide for reservation to Backward Sections in the House of the People and in the Legislative Assemblies of State respectively. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment provides for reservation of seats and chair positions to Scheduled Castes in Panchayati Raj Institutions. Articles 243(D) of the Indian Constitution provides that seats and offices are to be reserved for Scheduled Castes (Dalits) and Scheduled Tribes (Adivasis) in proportion to the size of their population within the panchayat, subjected to one-third seats are to be reserved for women belonging to these categories. There is also an enabling clause for states to

¹Thorat Sukhadeo and Narendra Kumar, B.R.Ambedkar: Perspectives on Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policies, Oxford University Press, 2008, Pp.47-48.

² Bakshi P.M. The Constitution of India, Universal Law Publishing Company Ltd., New Delhi, 2004.

provide reservations, on similar pattern for the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). The allocation of reserved positions for various categories is to be by rotation in such manner as may be determined by the states. It is of interest to note that “before the passing of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi visited extensively the village belt. He tried to get first hand information about the hardships, as well as needs of the villagers. Rajiv Gandhi realized that decentralization of power could, to a great extent, solve their problems. The need for devolution of power was fully realized “Power to People” was assumed to ensure democracy at the grass roots level. Rajiv Gandhi on the floor of Lok Sabha opined that, unless there are adequate representatives of the Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Panchayati Raj Institutions, there is the likelihood that the emerging leadership from among the Dalits and Scheduled Tribes may not be able to bestow proper attention to problems of these groups”.³

The amendment under reference had taken special care to provide reservation to the weaker sections which include Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women. Till the passing of the amendment, presence of the weaker sections inadequate numbers in Panchayat Raj was not ensured. The amendment expected to usher in a new era in realizing the goals of Panchayat Raj and in enhancing the role of weaker sections in the processes of development. The weaker sections, in some form or the other were to a large extent, prevented from exercising their power. The traditional power structures, economically strong and social hierarchy came in the way. In the post 73rd constitutional amendment period several changes have been reported, and resultantly there has been a set back to the forces of exploitation. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes representatives began to have a greater say in the affairs of local governance. A young and educated grass roots leadership among Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has emerged. The conventional barriers of caste are breaking. Power shift is visible. However the obstacles have not totally waned where there was a greater need to make the panchayat more inclusive. In the above background an attempt is made in the present study to examine the role of Scheduled Castes’ representatives in gram panchayats through a micro level study.

³ Prasad. R.R., and K. Suman Chandra “ Reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Panchayat Raj Institutions: Policy Implications” in Jain,S.P., and Thomas W. Hochgesang (Ed) Emerging Trends in Panchayati Raj (Rural Local Self-governance) in India, National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad, 1995, Pp 45-49.

1.1 Statement of Problem

After nearly two decades of the 73rd Constitution Amendment came into operation, which is intended, as stated earlier, to strengthen democratic decentralization, people's participation, participation of the weaker sections including women, the situation is hoped better than before. Both in the areas of administrative, political and fiscal decentralization, several issues and concerns emerged and the domination of economically and socially higher sections of society challenged. Any objective analyst would agree that politics should be the realm of all people and that it is important to examine the outcome of the participation of Dalits and women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. It is also essential to examine their new roles in local governance in relation to family, community and state as enabling or inhibiting factors in the performance of these marginalized groups. Available literature suggests that change is evident in the attitudes and behavioural pattern of the dominant as well as deprived sections in the arena of Panchayat Raj. Joshi and Narwani "examined the emerging trends across Indian states in relation to Panchayati Raj. They point out that despite their social, educational and economic backwardness, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes representatives have now a greater say in rural local governance. These communities have also noticed improvements in their lives. A new grass roots leadership of the weaker sections among Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes is emerging and conventional barriers of the caste system are breaking. The pressure of dispossessed people in the local bodies is felt, though with prejudice by higher castes and land lords who have been relatively disempowered. Power shift is visible. However, conflict is inevitable. It could be due to caste, economic, religious and other factors. Available research suggests that the demand for the exercise of rights is seen in some cases. The peoples' representatives in panchayats, especially assertion of identity by the Dalits/SCs is evident".⁴ In the above background it is proposed to study the role of Scheduled Castes' Members and Sarpanches.

The studies conducted so far indicate that the participation of Dalits in Panchayat Raj Institutions is evidenced, to some extent, as a result of 73rd Constitution Amendment to the Constitution of India. The Indian society specially in rural sector is still dominated by upper castes, economically powerful sections including muscle men. It may be stated,

⁴ Joshi RP and G.S. Narwani, Social Justice through Panchayati Raj in Panchayati Raj in India: Emerging Trends Across the States, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2005, Pp.164-188.

here that these sections of the society may not give up easily and shut the dominance over the weaker sections of the society. It may be simple and easy to talk about the constitutional amendments, legislative acts, rules and regulations which would bring the change, but in reality the said forces may not easily give up their power and create several hurdles and barricades in the process of implementation of the provisions of 73rd Amendment. Though some change could be witnessed with regard to discrimination against disadvantaged sections of the society, yet there is a lot of evidence to show that there exist the discrimination, domination and exclusion of the downtrodden sections, and Dalits are not an exception to this phenomenon in rural areas and more especially in the Panchayat Raj administration. Most of the studies discussed this aspect as highlighted in chapter III- Review of Literature.

For the study proper two districts i.e Krishna, Ranga Reddy are chosen from the two regions-Andhra and Telangana respectively. Krishna comparatively is more advanced than Ranga Reddy district. Ranga Reddy is backward though it is nearer to capital city. The present study covers two villages in the districts of Krishna and Ranga Reddy in Andhra Pradesh. The representation of Kamma community in Krishna District is higher than other community. A large percentage of Kamma community is involved in lucrative agriculture business and industry. They are spread over mostly in a greater number, in rural as well as urban areas. They are most advanced politically, economically, socially and culturally. The lobby of this community is greater at the union and state level governments. There were several incidents and instances to show the arrogance of Kammas towards the disadvantaged sections of the society the famous case of Karamchedu⁵ is in point as an example.

It is beyond once imagination to see that their power is passed on to Dalits in these areas by Kamma community. Strongly enough socio-economic, political power, not in totto but in some extent passed onto, gradually, to Kapus a forward community and Goudas one of the backward communities. The change occurred on account of the awareness created by various political parties in the rural scenario as regards to Panchayat Raj. Ranga Reddy district, as stated earlier is nearer to twin cities of Secunderabad and Hyderabad. Yet the district is quiet backward socially, economically, culturally for various historical backgrounds. One of the chief reasons for its backwardness is the step motherly attitude of the respective successive state government.

⁵ Karamchedu massacre was took place on 17th July 1985 in Prakasm District of Andhra Pradesh in which Dalits were attacked by the Kammas.

It is very strange to note that though Ranga Reddy district closer to twin cities their impact over the district is hardly seen in some pockets. There are two communities for the purpose of the study, Reddys and Goudas are dominant in all the sectors of life. The influence of these communities is greatly seen in all walks of life. The large percentage of people living in poverty gave scope for these two communities to become influential and dominant in all the sectors more especially in the arena of Panchayati Raj. There is representation of Dalits in various politico-administrative bodies of Panchayat Raj but in actual operation there is lot of socio-political exclusion whereby Dalits can not exercise under circumstance explained supra the real power in the administration of Panchayat Raj. The narration given above compels one to think that the real power has not reached though laws have given the opportunity. It appears that there is a great vacuum between perceptions and practices. The situation might improve when several instruments of state, NGOs and caste based organizations create more awareness and an element of agitation among the Dalits to seize the opportunity. The study therefore examines the entire scenario and comes forth with theory to help improve the prevailing situation.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the present research are

1. to study the socio-economic, political background of respondents;
2. to study their perceptions in relation to community at large and the Scheduled Castes in particular and to examine the factors leading to the assumption of leadership positions;
3. to assess the nature of performance;
4. to analyse the influence of caste politics, sub-caste dimension, economic status groups and political leaders;
5. to examine the position of leaders in village politics in pre and post 73rd Constitutional Amendment era and to identify the changes if any; and
6. to suggest measures for improving the quality of and for empowering Dalit/SC leaders.

1.3 Hypotheses

It is generally held that the 73rd Constitution Amendment has facilitated increased scope to Dalits to participate in decision-making and implementation process. It is also felt that the Dalits of rural India are gradually, strengthening their place in leadership

roles and transfer of power is also taking place, facilitating their empowerment. The present study proposes to examine the validity of stated assumptions with the help of research in a micro setting.

1.4 Universe of Study and Rationale for the Selection of Villages

For the present study two villages have been selected after carrying out a pilot study in Andhra Pradesh. They are *Pedda Thummidi*⁶ village in *Bantumilli Mandal* of *Krishna District* of Coastal region and *Pedda Amberpet* village in *Hayatnagar Mandal* of *Rangareddy District* from Telangana region. *Pedda Amberpet* is an exterior village and is very close to Hyderabad, the state capital and the latter i.e., *Peda Thummidi* is an interior village and is 35 kilometres from Machilipatnam, the head quarters of Krishna District and 450 Kms from Hyderabad. During 2001-2006, the position of Sarpanch in *Peda Thummdi* village panchayat was reserved for SCs. But in the consecutive term i.e., 2006-2011 the position of Sarpanch was reserved for BC woman. During 2001-2006, the position of Sarpanch in *Pedda Amberpet* was reserved for SCs. During the period of 2006-2011 the seat of Sarpanch in *Pedda Amberpet* village was reserved for B C woman candidate. It is proposed to select a village where the panchayat was formed during the pre-independence period and another in the post-independence times. Caste politics, sub-caste dynamics, economic status of the Dalits, geographical location and history of the villages have also been considered in selecting the villages.

I. 5 Methodology

A sample of 262 respondents which consists of 58 peoples' representatives (Dalits and non-Dalits), 200 primary respondents (Dalits and non-Dalits) and 4 panchayat officials are covered for the study. The methods chosen for the study are essentially comparative and empirical. Both spatial and diachronic comparisons pertaining to the period of 2001-2006 and 2006-2011 respectively are made. A detailed schedule consisting of closed and open ended questions is prepared and administered in person to the Dalit representatives as well as non-Dalit representatives. Informal discussions (ID), focussed group discussions⁷ (FGD) with village elders, officials, group members both Scheduled Castes and non-SCs and youth associations have been held. A field diary is maintained to note personal observations. The data are analysed with the help of

⁶ But according to official records it is called "Peda Thummidi"

⁷ Focussed Groups Discussions.

Statistical Package for Social Science Research (SPSS). Available research forms the secondary source material. Data are also drawn from government reports, periodicals and news papers.

The purpose of interviewing the non-Dalit representatives also is to identify the differences in socio-economic and political background, perceptions and performance. But the focus is essentially on Scheduled Castes' representatives. Each interview lasted for 2 to 3 hours. A number of visits have been undertaken to the research area to get detailed information. The respondents include the elected representatives, contestants, officials, villagers. Each category has been represented in collecting their opinions separately.

1.6 Problems during Field Investigation and Limitations

Field investigation, especially in villages is a difficult task. The researcher made three visits to each of the villages under study to establish rapport. There was high amount of suspicion about the purpose of the work. Some members of panchayats especially the Sarpanches doubted the credentials of the researcher, suspecting that there is an indirect effort to elicit information by the income tax department, party leaders of political parties and CID⁸. The husband of a Sarpanch began to seriously question the purpose of the present research. However, the researcher could gain the confidence of the person in question and elicit the required information.

Another problem encountered was getting correct information. Based on face to face interviews and cross checking, every effort is made to arrive at objective assessment. It is learnt that some of the respondents were involved in criminal cases and with a great difficulty and persuasion they cooperated to furnish the information. Further it came to the light of the study that the force of circumstances led a Sarpanch to commit suicide in one of the two villages. Another problem is relating to obtaining records. The panchayat records have not been appropriately maintained and perturbing factor was that the minutes of meetings were neither properly recorded nor recorded at all. Therefore the researcher had to depend heavily on the interviews to assess the nature and extent of participation. The village secretaries were found scared to give the information required. After prolonged persuasion, some information was obtained.

⁸ Criminal Investigation Department.

1.7 Scheme of the Thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters including the introduction and conclusion. The first chapter deals with introduction. The second chapter gives details of the concepts of democratic decentralization, Panchayati Raj System and empowerment of Dalits. The third chapter is devoted to a survey of contemporary literature relating the role of Scheduled Castes/Dalits in Panchayati Raj Institutions. The fourth chapter gives detailed account of the background, participation and perceptions of the members of Peda Thummidi village panchayat. In order to assess the role of Scheduled Castes representatives the non-Scheduled Castes representatives' background, participation and perceptions have also been detailed. An analysis of the perceptions of a cross sections of the villages would also form part of this chapter. Chapter fifth is designed in a manner similar to chapter four. In this chapter the background, perceptions and participation of Scheduled Castes and non-Scheduled Castes representatives of Pedda Amberpet village are analysed. The perceptions of a cross sections of villagers are also included in this chapter. The sixth chapter makes a comparative assessment of the respondents' background, perceptions and performance in the villages selected for study. The concluding chapter (chapter-seventh) presents a summary of findings and it also contains suggestions for a better and effective performance of Scheduled Castes representatives in particular and for more effective implementation of 73rd Constitution Amendment Act in general. In all stages, care is taken to identify and to assess the position before and after the 73rd Constitution Amendment in respect of the role of Scheduled Castes in the process of empowerment.

Chapter-II

Theoretical Framework: Conceptualization of Democratic Decentralization, Panchayati Raj System and Empowerment of Dalits

Conceptual clarity is very much essential for the objective assessment of social and political behaviour. The present study is related to democratic decentralization and the empowerment of dalits in two village panchayats in Andhra Pradesh. Decentralization is the essence of democracy because it emphasizes on people's power and participation up to the grass roots level. The following discussion would focus on the concepts- democratic decentralization, empowerment of Scheduled Castes, who are referred, here, as Dalits, participation and reservation as a means for the uplift of the community under discussion.

2.1. Democratic Decentralization

Democratic Decentralization is made up of two words- democratic and decentralization. Decentralization is devolving authority for decision-making from higher levels to lower levels. Decentralization does not necessarily contain any democratic connotation. The adjective democratic is used to give special meaning to them. Democratic implies that the government draws its authority from the people. In this type of system, the rulers are elected by the people and are accountable to them and the authority is transferred to the elected representatives by way of election.

Democratic decentralization, as a concept has obtained great importance in contemporary times. It implies the assignment of fiscal, political and administrative responsibilities to lower levels of government. Political changes worldwide gave voice to local demands. Political decentralization transfers policy and legislative power from central government to autonomous, lower level bodies democratically elected by their constituents. Administrative decentralization places planning and implementation responsibility in the hands of locally placed civil servants. The local civil servants should be under the jurisdiction of local governments. Fiscal decentralization gives revenue collection power and expenditure autonomy to local governments. Democracy lays emphasis on the sovereignty of the people. Democracy becomes meaningful when people shape the state and the state in turn creates an enabling social, economic, political and legal conditions wherein people can exercise their rights. The basic idea of decentralization is sharing of decision-making authority with lower levels in the organization. Power can be shared within

the system at a lower level, or by creating new mechanism in the system. Decentralization creates a corporate sense of responsibility in local decision-making agencies with more or less independent existence and power.¹

“Decentralization is a process of sharing powers by central ruling groups with other groups each having authority within a specific area of the state”.² It takes many forms and has several dimensions. To an economist, “decentralization means dispersal of industries and other productive units. In local government context, it implies devolution of functions and responsibility to small territorial units. To a managing director, it denotes the necessity of starting new branches in the areas below. The rationale for decentralization is that it is useful to attain allocative efficiency in the face of different local preferences for local public goods”.³ Further “another argument in support of decentralization is that local governments achieve goals more effectively than central government. The outcome of decentralization depends heavily on the institutional arrangements as well”.⁴ It ensures participation by locals who are more aware of local needs. Decisions could originate more from the bottom, which would be helpful in bringing about meaningful socio-economic and political changes. Another important rationale for decentralization is that good governments are closer to the people. As is well known since John Stuart Mill, till now, this argument is closely related to political participation and democracy. Decentralization helps to accommodative pressure for rational autonomy and to increase the legitimacy and sustainability of heterogeneous states like India.

Successful decentralization depends on institution’s specific design. In democratic systems, political decentralization accompanied by elections is helpful to political accountability by diffusing responsibilities across different units.

Drèze and Amartya Sen refer to the interconnection between democratic practice and social equality to promote local democracy. They point out that local

¹ Sundaram Meenakshi, Decentralization in Developing Countries, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1994, P.55-58.

² Encyclopedia of Decentralized Planning and Local Governance, Vol.3, Laxmi Shishkan Santhan, Lucknow and Anmol Publications Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 2001.

³ Musgrave, Richard A, quoted in Rethinking Decentralization in Developing Countries, Jennie Litvack, Junaid Ahmad and Richard Bird, World Bank Report Washington DC, P.5

⁴ Jennie Litvack, Junaid Ahmad and Richard Bird, Rethinking Decentralization in Developing Countries, World Bank Report, Washington DC, 2005, Pp.7-29.

democracy is one means of participation in the larger democratic system which is relatively more accessible to the disadvantaged and can be potentially a stepping stone towards other forms of democratic participation.⁵ According to Narayana, the success of democratic decentralization depends largely on the achievement to include the marginalized groups in local decision-making and power structures effectively through institutional reform. In addition, substantial and effective devolution of powers and resources could be achieved.⁶ Palanithurai and Raghupathi refer to the basic objectives of decentralization of power which in under deepening of democracy, ensuring and enlisting people's participation more responsibility to the people, harnessing human energy, administering development and social justice, planning from below, capacity building of the people's good governance, pro-poor programmes.⁷ Datta states that democratic decentralization is a concept which associates people with local administration through popularly elected bodies. It recognizes the right of the people to take initiatives and to execute policy decisions in an autonomous way. It is therefore, both an end and means. It is only a political ideal.⁸

Decentralization is an ideological principle associated with the objectives of self-reliance, democratic decision-making, popular participation in governance and accountability of public officials to the people. "Decentralization is a political decision and its implementation is a reflection of country's political process", according to Mishra.⁹ He further assumes, "decentralization can be conducive to more effective coordination and consistency, greater access to governmental services, increased involvement of the people in development planning, more effectively

⁵ Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen, Democratic Practice and Social Inequality in India, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol.37, No.2, 2002, PP. 6-37.

⁶ Narayana D, Institutional Change and its impact on the poor and the Excluded: The Indian Decentralized Experience, OECD, Development Centre, 2005, Pp 43-44.

⁷ Palanithurai, G and Raghupathy V, Governance for Development at Grassroots a paper presented at the Third International Conference, Pp.177-193.

⁸ Datta Prabhat, Democratic Decentralization and Panchayati Raj in India: Perspectives and Practices, *Administrative Change*, Vol. XXII, No.1, July-Dec 1994, P.36.

⁹ Mishra Suresh, *Decentralization, Development and Panchayati Raj* in S.P. Nagendra (Ed) *Development and Change: Emerging Perspectives*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1994, P.95.

delivery of public services for meeting basic human needs and increased accountability of governmental agencies”.¹⁰

2. 1. 1. Decentralization

Decentralization helps to empower the local people. Devolution of authority, an important aspect facilitating levels to decide, involves a rebalancing of power relations between the centre, the periphery. When carefully planned and implemented, decentralized democratic process can lead to improvements in the welfare of the people at the local level. Decentralization empowers the disempowered by creating space for them in the power structures at the local level. Decentralization promotes good governance, accountability, transparency; people’s participation and empowerment are important characteristics of good governance. When these are ensured, the system gains legitimacy. Decentralization creates conditions for a pluralistic political arrangement in which competing groups can voice their interests and demands in local democratic institutions. In essence, decentralization implies political and administrative autonomy to local bodies, devolution of revenues to local bodies, periodical elections to local bodies, provision of seats for weaker sections including Dalits, Tribals, and women in local bodies, preparation of local data base on administration, collaboration with non-political organization in addressing development issues and building of local human capabilities through access to education, healthcare, employment and decision-making. Democratic decentralization gives scope for empowerment to various sections of the society and more especially the oppressed. The discussion below explains the term empowerment and illustrates as to how empowerment takes place in local democracy.

2. 2. Empowerment

Empowerment literally means giving authority or power to, creating power within and enabling. It is a multidimensional process, which enables individuals and groups to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life, social, economic, cultural, political and others. The Oxford Dictionary defines empowerment as the action of empowering, the state of being empowered.¹¹

¹⁰ Ibid, P. 93

¹¹ Simpson, J.A and E. S. Cweiner, The Oxford Dictionary, Second Edition, Vol.V, Oxford University Press, 1989, P. 137.

The root of the word empowerment is power, ability to do, accomplish, to give strength and confidence and performance. The 'em' comes from Latin and Greek meaning 'in' or 'within'. Therefore as Dhar and Dhar point out, "empowerment suggests semantically the power within people. It is giving power to make one's voice heard, to contribute to plans and decisions that have impact on public. Empowerment is a process of identifying and removing the conditions, which cause powerlessness while increasing the feeling of self efficiency".¹² It should be pointed out, here, that it is not merely external actions that facilitate or ensure empowerment, but it is also a process of changing the internal beliefs of people. Both the external and internal factors have relevance for empowerment.

According to Gitte Sorensen and Helle Poulson, "empowerment means gaining autonomy and control over one's life. The empowered become agents of their own development, and able to exercise choices, set their own agenda and are capable of challenging and changing their subordinate position in society. The several components of empowerment are social, economic, political, cultural and others. Empowerment also brings legal and moral powers to individuals and groups".¹³ The collective and individual dimensions of empowerment are brought out by Hapke, to whom; empowerment is autonomy, both collective and individual. It encompasses several mutually reinforcing components.¹⁴ Closely related to this view is that of Rapport who says that "empowerment suggests both individuals' determination over one's own life and democratic participation in the life of one's community through different structures. Empowerment conveys both a psychological sense of personal control or influence and a concern with actual social influence, political power and legal rights".¹⁵

The need for redistribution of power is emphasised by Benerjee. To him, it is a process of achieving equality and enhancement. Empowerment is a vehicle, which

¹² Dhar Upinder and Santhosh Dhar, Empowerment and Human Resources, Indian Society for Training and Development, New Delhi, 2002, P.2

¹³ Sorensen Gitte and Helle Poulson, SHAKTI- on Organizing Poor, Rural Women at the Grass Roots Level in Tamilnadu (A Note) IDS, Roskilde, Denmark, P.3.

¹⁴ Hapke Holly M, Projects with People: The Practice of Participation in Rural Development, Oxford IBH Cooperation, Pvt, Ltd, 1992, P.5.

¹⁵ Rappoport J, Terms of Empowerment/ Exemplars of Prevention: Towards a Theory for Community Psychology, American Journal of Community Psychology, Vol.15 (2) Pp.121-144.

enables individuals and groups to renegotiate their existence on an equitable basis.¹⁶ Lieten considers empowerment as process. It is for parity and in the process; the need for emancipating the deprived emerges. It also implies emancipation from oppressing social and political forces.¹⁷

According to Gutierrez, “empowerment is the process of increasing personal, interpersonal or political power so that individuals, families and communities can take action to improve their situation”.¹⁸ According to Navale and Sharma, “empowerment is a multidimensional social process that helps people to gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is the capacity to implement) in people for use in their own lives, their communities and in their society for acting on issues that they define as important. In essence, as noted it is multidimensional, social and economic process. The individual and community are fundamentally connected. Empowerment also speaks of self-determined change. Access, influence, control and evaluation are also associated with empowerment. Ability to make meaningful choices and opportunity structure influence effective choice”.¹⁹ To Sachchidananda, “empowerment means different things to different users of the term. The idea of empowerment has been used in different contexts such as human rights, basic needs, economic security, capacity building, skill formation and social dignity”. The essence of empowerment is that it wants to change society through rearrangement of power. Empowerment of some sections of society has to be accompanied by the disempowerment of other sections argues, Sachidanda. It is tacitly acknowledged that the empowerment of disadvantaged groups will affect the major institutions of society, particularly their mode of functioning. In short, empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building to greater decision making power and control and to transform action. It can also be perceived in individuals and communities. However in a specific setting, it affects different people and communities differently. The impact would depend on the psychological

¹⁶ Benerjee Narayan, Grass Roots Empowerment: A Discussion Note, Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi, 1991, P.4.

¹⁷ Lieten, G.K, Caste, Gender and Class in Panchayats, Economic and Political Weekly, 18th July 1992, P.1567.

¹⁸ Gutierrez L M, Beyond Coping: An Empowerment Perspective on Stressful Life, Event, Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, Vol. 21, Pp. 210-219.

¹⁹ Navale Anil S and Mona Sharma, Empowerment: Concept, Evolution and Strategies, in Verma RBS, Verma HS and Raj Kuman Singh (Ed) Empowerment of the Weaker Sections in India, Serials Publication New Delhi, 2006, Pp.64-81.

preparedness to absorb change, the extent of their attainment to the past, resignation to fate and their capacity to combat entrenched power groups.²⁰

Sen defines empowerment as the process of gaining power, both control over external resources, and growth in inner self-confidence and capacity. External change agents can catalyze the process or create a supportive environment and ultimately people empower themselves. Genuine empowerment may not be a neutral process and those embarking on it must be prepared for social upheavals. Empowerment is not a zero sum game although there may be winners and losers in certain senses. Group process and personal transformation of individuals are essential.²¹ According to World Bank, “Empowerment refers to expansion of freedom of choice and action to shape one’s life. It implies control over resources and decisions. For poor people that freedom is severely curtailed by their voicelessness and powerlessness in relation particularly to the state and markets. Access to information, inclusion, participation, accountability and local organizational capacity and the key elements of empowerment”.²²

The above discussion makes certain points very clear. It implies fundamental redistribution of power as well as structural adjustments. It is a process to ensure equality and enhancement. It is a journey from one position to the other. It is a vehicle which enables individuals and groups to negotiate their existence on an equitable basis. It is an agent for development, enables individuals and communities to exercise choices, promotes capacity and ability for participation, helps for self-assertion and creates and improves capacity to challenge domination and subordination. It implies the ability to mobilize, capacity to influence people’s perceptions in order to legitimize one’s own agenda. As Bandura rightly observes, it develops the ability to trust in one’s personal abilities in order to act with confidence.

2. 3. Dalits

The word Dalit, in its literal meaning, refers to the oppressed people. This word is derived from the Sanskrit word ‘dal’ which means burst, downtrodden, oppressed

²⁰Sachchidananda, Empowerment of Elected SC Members through PRIs in Bihar, Sulabh Institute of Development Studies, Patna, 2006, Pp.82-84.

²¹Sen Gita, Empowerment as an Approach to Poverty, Indian Institute of Management Bangalore, 1997, background paper to the Human Development Report, 1997, Working Paper Series. 97.07 December, 1997, P.6.

²²Poverty Reduction Group, A Framework for Empowerment: Summary, World Bank Report, 2002, Pp.2-3.

and scattered.²³ According to Gangadhar Pantware, “Dalit is not a caste. A Dalit is a person exploited by social and economic traditions of this country. He does not believe in God, Rebirth, soul, holy books, teaching separatism, fate and heaven because they have made him a slave. He does believe in humanism. Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution”.²⁴

According to a standard Bengali to English Dictionary, the Dalits are trampled underfoot, downtrodden, chastised, coerced and quelled.²⁵ The term Dalit is understood in broad and narrow senses. In the broad sense, it not only includes Scheduled Castes, but also tribals, women, bonded labourers and minorities.²⁶ The Dalit Panthers, in their manifesto of the year 1973, explained the term to include Scheduled Castes and Tribes, neo-Buddhists, the working people, the landless and poor peasants, women and all those being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion. The narrow definition is based on the criterion of caste only. In its narrow sense, the later refers to the original ancestors of the untouchables. Since 1970s, the term is increasingly used in the press on the public platforms and by individuals and groups in the narrow caste based sense. As Sankaran puts it, “the term Dalits has become synonymous with the constitutional category of Scheduled Castes, signifying an assertive expression of untouchable heritage, rejection and oppression”.²⁷ It is a fact that even at the beginning of the 21st century; the Dalits who constitute a substantial section of Indian population suffer from varying degrees of alienation, oppression and denial of human dignity.

Scholars have written about Dalits in two different ways. Some have adopted a class analysis of Indian society and view Dalits as forming part of occupational categories such as peasants, agricultural labourers and factory workers. This approach is mainly that of the Marxist writers. The second type of analysis is caste and religion based. Here the Dalits are the people within Hindu society who belong to those castes which Hindu religion considers to be polluting by virtue of hereditary

²³Sarkar R.M (Ed) Dalit in India: Past and Present, Serial Publications, New Delhi 2006, P.148.

²⁴Cited by Eleanor Zelliot, from Untouchable to Dalit: Essay on the Ambedkar Movement, Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 1996, P.268.

²⁵Cited by Gouranga P Chattopadhyay, The Dalits: A Fresh Approach Towards Interpreting their experience of Reality (Sarkar R.M (Ed) Dalit in India: Past and Present, Serial Publications, New Delhi 2006, P.3.

²⁶Saxena Ashish, *Quest for Subsistence of Dalits in the Era of Globalization* in Sarkar R.M (Ed) Dalit in India: Past and Present, Serials Publications, New Delhi, 2006, P.35.

²⁷Sankaran, S R, Fifty Years of the Indian Constitution-Human Rights of Dalits, Indian Journal of Human Rights, Vol.4, Nos 1&2, Jan-Dec,2000, Human Right Programme, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, P.69.

occupations. But the generally accepted fact is that caste alone has determined who is a Dalit. Social stigma and a variety of disabilities were based on caste. These were and to a significant degree, still are the defining characteristics of a Dalit, even if a Dalit moves up in social class or change of religion, says Webster.²⁸

It is admitted that Dalits are at the lower rung of society in the caste hierarchy based on the concepts of purity and pollution. Their societal position limits them to choose occupations. They have been oppressed and are forced to be engaged in jobs like agricultural labourers, disposing dead bodies, working with leather, cleaning toilets and sewage. Touching them has been considered as a source of pollution. “They were denied access to schools, temples, wells, water tanks and others. They bear the anguished burden of a long, unbroken legacy of the deepest social degradation, according to Saxena. Sidhartha Sankar Laha and Anil Bhuimali say that the measures adopted so far by the central and state governments are not sufficient enough to overcome the continued subordination of the most deprived section of Indian society, i.e Scheduled Castes”.²⁹

The National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes opines that the imposition of social disabilities as persons by reason of their birth in a particular caste is still widely practiced in many forms through out the country.³⁰ Verma rightly observes that legislative and constitutional protections only to mask the social realities of discrimination and violence faced by Dalits. Despite the fact that untouchability has been abolished under Article 17 of the Constitution in 1950s, the caste of imposition of social disabilities on persons by reason of their birth in certain castes remain very much part of our society, particularly in rural areas.³¹ He further says that empowerment capabilities of lower castes is required to fight against the menace of discrimination and unequal practices.³² Dalits, a substratum of Indian population, have continued to be the subject of cumulative domination by the rest of

²⁸ Webster John C B, who is a Dalit? In Michael S M. (Ed), Dalits in Modern India: Vision and Values, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2007, P.85.

²⁹ Laha Siddhartha Sankar and Anil Bhuimali, Genesis of Scheduled Castes and Constitutional Safeguards for them, in Bhuimali Anil (Ed), Development of Scheduled Caste, Serials Publications, New Delhi, 2007, P.169.

³⁰ National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, National Crime Records, Government of India, New Delhi, 1997.

³¹ Verma, D.K, Discrimination and Inequality: Theoretical Reflections, in Bhuimali Anil (Ed) Development of Scheduled Caste, Serials Publication, New Delhi, 2007, Pp.27-28.

³² Ibid, P.38.

the population and encounter the same type of seclusion and exclusion as faced by the untouchables says Mishra.³³

It is now important to point out that caste and casteism have tremendous impact on the social and political life of Dalits. Decentralized governance is becoming mockery; higher castes' opposition prevails and caste prejudices have become a stumbling block in the way of functioning of Dalit representatives, particularly at the grassroots level. Caste has emerged as a very powerful force in Indian politics. Ambedkar once said "A Hindu's Public is his caste. His responsibility is only to his caste. His loyalty is restricted only to his caste... there is appreciation of virtue only if a man is a fellow caste man". The Dalits are the lowest among the low. Facing acute problems, some of them sought to get the same degree of emancipation through conversion to Christianity, Islam or Buddhism. But conversion has not been helpful to get out of the problems. Instead, they face cultural and value crisis.

However, the Dalits today are becoming politically conscious of their rights and are becoming determined to build a better future. The discriminatory practices against the Dalits have now become less frequent than before though they have not disappeared. The emergence of the middle class among the Dalits and the young Dalit leadership coupled with self assertion have definitely contributed to a changing situation. We now see a 'vibrant human collective striving for the reconstruction of society'.³⁴ Dalits today have begun to resist subjugation and discrimination through peaceful and violent means and through movements outside and participation in representative bodies. Dalit movement and Dalit literature has become significant in their attempt to achieve parity in all aspects of social life including the political arena.

2. 3. 1. Scheduled Castes-Constitutional Safeguards and Laws

The expression Scheduled Castes was first created by the Simon Commission, which visited India in 1928, and was incorporated in the Government of India Act, 1935. Before 1935, the Scheduled Castes were known as untouchables, depressed classes and exterior castes. They were exterior in the sense they were not allowed to live within the village settlements where people other than those live. They are also

³³ Mishra Bikram Keshari, Dalits and Caste Discrimination: Reexamining the Caste System in the 21st Century, in Sarkar RM (Ed) Dalit in India: Past and Present, Serial Publications, New Delhi, 2006, P.46.

³⁴ Shah Ghanasyam, Dalit Politics: Has it Reached an Impasse, Niraja Gopal Jayal and Sudha Pai (Eds) Challenges of Poverty, Development and Identity, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2001, P.230.

known as the Harijans, Anthyajas, Dalits, Panchamas and Chandalas etc. According to 2001 census the population of Scheduled Castes in India is 16,66,3570 which constitutes 16.20% of the country's population. More than 90% of the Scheduled Castes population lives in rural areas. The proportion of Scheduled Caste population to the total stands highest i.e 28.9% in Punjab and the lowest could be seen in Meghalaya (0.5%). The states of Nagaland, Mizoram and the Union Territories of Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar Islands have no Scheduled Caste population. The percentage of the Scheduled Castes population to the total population in Andhra Pradesh is 16.2%. More than 1/2 of total Scheduled Castes population is concentrated in these states Uttar Pradesh 31.5 millions), West Bengal 18.4, Bihar 13.0, Tamil Nadu 11.8, and Andhra Pradesh 12.3.

The Government of India expressed its commitment to inclusive growth of Scheduled Castes. The details are given in the 11th Five Year Plan 2007- '12. It is pointed out that inclusive growth demands that all social groups have equal access to the services provided by the state and equal opportunities for upward economic and social mobility. It is also necessary that there is no discrimination against any section of society. The Eleventh Plan provides an opportunity to restructure policies for faster, more broad-based and inclusive growth. Among the Scheduled Castes in respect of education, the children of scavengers are found to be most backward and the funding is to be increased for their development. The need of the Scheduled Castes students to study in quality institutions to maximize their capabilities is stressed in the plan and the liability of the states in this regard is emphasized. The need for government's reimbursement of the fees to Scheduled Castes' students for their higher, technical and professional education in private unaided educational institutions is stressed.

In the Eleventh Plan, a commission on Land Reforms has been set up which will specifically look into the issue of continued possession and effective use of land distributed earlier to Scheduled Castes under various programmes and availability of land for distribution to Scheduled Castes , Scheduled Tribes and landless families . In all these, care will be taken to ensure preferential and joint ownership by women.

Training of Scheduled Castes women under the Apprentice Act, 1961, revision of agricultural wages and restructuring of schemes regarding financial assistance to Scheduled Castes by Public Sector Banks and National Finance and Development Corporations form part of the plan. The need for the implementation of the scheme

called Self-employment Scheme for the Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers as a missionary mode with commitment and zeal is emphasized.

Establishment of equal opportunities helps to eliminates caste-based discrimination and harassment in educational institutions and reservation of jobs in private sector are envisaged as mentioned in the Eleventh Plan. Effective implementation of Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan is a primary issue in the said document.³⁵

In sum and substance the brief statements made above leads one to ponder over various provisions of law and political opportunities for the Dalits taken up for critical analysis in the discussion that follows. The term Scheduled Castes is adopted because of the realization of the need to provide some socio, economic and political safeguards to the castes that suffered discrimination by the upper castes. The importance of positive discrimination and affirmative action to bring these castes into the mainstream is felt seriously. In other words, positive preferential treatment to those depressed people which is called with different names like protective discrimination, special treatment, preferential treatment, reverse discrimination, compulsory discrimination is considered to be essential. Hence some constitutional safeguards have been provided. The details would be discussed at a latter stage in this chapter.

2. 3.2. Political Reservations

Reservation literally means the action of reserving, an arrangement whereby the action of reserved. It is an arrangement for a seat or ticket to be kept for the use of a particular person or persons. The policy of reservation is India's version of affirmative action and the policy provides opportunities for the disadvantaged to have share in society, education, employment in political institutions. Reservation in political decision-making bodies could be regarded as very important because these are the platforms for taking decision on various socio-economic and cultural problems. In India, as stated earlier seats are reserved for disadvantaged groups like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women. Reservation definitely increases access of the disadvantaged groups to decision-making structures. There is also the possibility of ensuring the legitimacy of democratic politics. Democracy becomes meaningful only when all sections of the society including the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and

³⁵ Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-12) Document, Inclusive Growth, Volume-I, Planning Commission, Government of India, New Delhi, 2008, Pp.101-110.

women participate in adequate numbers. Reservations will have to be supported on the ground that the needs of the disadvantaged are best known to them only and there should be channels and platforms to express their views and ventilate their grievances.

2. 3.3. Consequences of Reservations

The main intention behind reservation policy, at the risk of repetition, is to ensure social justice and thereby empower the Dalits and other disadvantaged groups. The policy of job reservations in proportion to strength is based on the principle of distributive justice and of compensation for prolonged injustice and disadvantaged position. It is a means of reducing imbalances and facilitating right share for the Dalits. The policy of reservation brought about some positive benefits. The spread of education among the Dalits through initiatives like scholarships, reservations in educational institutions, setting up of hostels have brought improvements in the access of Dalits to educational institutions. There is reduction in the gap between drop out rates of the total population vis-à-vis the Scheduled Castes at all levels. The response under the Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowships (RGNF) for Scheduled Castes' students scheme for pursuing higher studies leading to M.Phil and Ph.D degrees reported to be very encouraging. The percentage of Scheduled Castes living below poverty line has shown a decline in rural areas for 48.11 in 1993-94 to 36.80 in 2004-05. The decline in urban areas is for 49.48 in 1993-94 to 39.50 in 2004-05. The literacy rate of Scheduled Castes increased from 10.27 in 1961 to 54.69 in 2001. The Scheduled Castes got access to get jobs through reservation. Access to jobs in public sector undertaking and opportunities in politics are also visible. There has been an increase in Scheduled Castes representation in Central Government Services for 16.9% in 1991 to 17.05 in 2004.³⁶ Evidence also suggests that the Scheduled Castes have achieved recognition and status, to some extent, in society. Jogdand points out that the entire history of reservations in independent India has several stages where crucial decisions have guided their implementation. In several cases, the constitution was amended to sustain the policy of reservation.³⁷

It is also important to assess the deficiencies and unexpected or unwanted consequences. The job categories for which the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled

³⁶ Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-12) Document, Volume-I, Planning Commission, Government of India, New Delhi, P.107.

³⁷ Jogdand, P.G, Reservation Policy and the Empowerment of Dalits, in Michael S.M, Dalits in Modern India: Visions and Values, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2007, P. 322.

Tribes quotas as per provisions have been filled are those of Class III and Class IV jobs. The representation of Dalits in the public services for other categories is not encouraging. The unintended consequences of patron-client relationship between donors and recipients within the administrative system. Because the Dalits occupy positions filled through reservations, the device of reservations is used to control them and keep them silent. Consequently the autonomy of the Dalits gets limited. There is the possibility of these Dalits beneficiaries being placed in a stigmatized and separate category functionally caste labels continue to prevail. Further reservations have been helpful to benefit the Dalits marginally. The Dalit masses continue to suffer and are not able to improve their position. Some progress has been achieved in this regard. Again those who got benefits and are uplifted themselves began to identify themselves with the higher strata of society, ignoring the interests of the Dalit community at large.

In the political arena, reservations have benefited the Dalits to the extent of quantitative presence and in some cases, qualitative upliftment too. But stringent application of protective legislations is necessary. “Conscientization, politicization and training would go a long way in improving the situation” according to Jogdand.³⁸ The policy of growth with social justice will have to be implemented both in letter and spirit. The Dalits are now a powerful vote bank and no political party could ignore their numerical strength and their consciousness. Better organization, greater self confidence and stronger mobilization are essential to keep themselves as an effective and cognizable force. While this is the general scenario as regards to reservations, it will be pertinent to discuss the representation and related issues of Dalits in the Panchayat Raj sector.

2.4. Panchayati Raj and Representation of Scheduled Castes

Panchayati Raj is one of the most important political innovations of independent India. It is intended to give effect to the principle of democratic decentralization. Mahatma Gandhi’s vision of village swaraj is that was a “republic, independent of the neighbours’ for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many other. The government of the village will be conducted by the panchayat, elected by the adult citizens - male and female. The Panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office. In the village

³⁸ Jogdand, P.G, Reservation Policy and Empowerment of Dalits in Michael, S.M, (Ed) Dalits in Modern India: Visions and Values, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2007, P.333.

republic, there will be perfect democracy based on individual freedom³⁹ and he expressed strong faith in village reconstruction and felt that independence must begin at the bottom. He said every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs. When Panchayati Raj is established, the public opinion will do what violence can never do. The present power of Zamindars, the capitalists and the Rajas can hold sway so long as the common people do not realize their own strength”.⁴⁰ Jayaprakash Narayan⁴¹, the architect of the Total Revolution Movement said that by dispersing the ownership and management of industry and by developing the villages into democratic village republics, we could attenuate the danger of totalitarianism. Vinoba’s⁴² Gram Swaraj was a declaration of independence by the villages. They believed in the existence of autonomous village governed by autonomous village assemblies. He also felt that such autonomous villages could function only when they were economically self-reliant and the state must withdraw from interfering with the internal life of the villages. He emphasized on the need for setting up Gram Sabhas and self government which implied absence of control by any outside power and absence of exercise of power over any other.

In this context, the views of B.R. Ambedkar, the Chairman of the drafting committee deserved to be mentioned. Addressing a meeting of the Constituent Assembly on the draft constitution, he vehemently criticized those who romanticized the villages as republics and argued that a “village is nothing but a sink of localism and a den of ignorance, narrow minded and communalism”.⁴³

Giving due recognition to the consensus, the Constituent Assembly inserted Article 40 in part IV of the Constitution. It was declared that the state shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with adequate powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government. The decision to incorporate of village panchayats in the constitution was hailed all over country. Rajendra Prasad, the Chairman of the Constituent Assembly opined that the

³⁹Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand, Harijan, 26.7.1942, Quoted by Bishnu C.Barik and Umesh C. Sahoo, (Ed) Panchayati Raj and Rural Development, Rawat Publications, Jaipur and New Delhi, 2008, P.43.

⁴⁰Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand, Harijan, 1.6.1947, Quoted by Bishnu C.Barik and Umesh C. Sahoo, Panchayati Raj and Rural Development, Panchayati Raj and Rural Development, Rawat Publications, Jaipur and New Delhi, 2008, P.43.

⁴¹A renowned National Socialist Party Leader of India.

⁴²Who launched the movement called ‘Bhoodhan’ to distribute gifted land to landless poor.

⁴³Constituent Assembly Debates 4th November 1948, Vol. VII, P.39.

villages were the basic units of administration in India since ancient times and that we were took up the idea of organizing village panchayats and vesting in them most of the functions concerning the welfare of the village citizens as its own merit.

Panchayati Raj, like democracy at the national and state levels, points out a core committee on Panchayati Raj, is both an end and a means. As an end, it is an inevitable extension of democracy and as a means; it would continue to be responsible for discharging the obligations entrusted to it by the national and state governments. Panchayati Raj should contribute to the philanthropy as well as practice of a rich and rewarding life in rural India.

According to Sachchidananda, Panchayat Raj, when worked well, possessed all potentials for the creation of a new social order. It provided a platform for grassroots actions. In many places, it had been an instrument of liberation, education and collective intervention and critical thinking of marginalized groups to shape their future.

Balwantrai Mehta committee appointed by the Government of India to study the Community Projects and National Extension Service, in its report of the year 1957 made important recommendations for democratic decentralization and rural reconstruction. The committee pointed out that in the process of community development; local initiative and local interest which are necessary for development have not been promoted. Therefore the government should divert itself completely of certain duties and responsibilities and devolve them to a body which would have the entire charge of all development work within its jurisdiction reserving to itself only the functions of guidance, supervision and higher planning the committee felt.⁴⁴ The committee made recommendations relating to the setting up of elected self-governing institutions; encouraging people's participation in community work; tribal development; cooperation; communications; promoting rural industries; health; education; agricultural and animal husbandry, promoting the Welfare of Weaker Sections and women. In the section relating to democratic decentralization the committee referred to the need for the inclusion of Scheduled Castes' representative in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. It specifically mentioned that the constitution of panchayat would be purely an elective basis with the provision for the co-option of two women members and one member each from the Scheduled Castes and

⁴⁴ Government of India, Report of the Team for the Study of Community and Projects and National Extension Services, Government of India, New Delhi, 1957, Pp.2-8.

Scheduled Tribes and no other groups need to be given special representation.⁴⁵ It might be pointed out, here, that the committee was concerned with the inclusion of a representative from Scheduled Castes to voice their needs in village Panchayat. But the social conditions were not conducive for the representation of Scheduled Castes in panchayats through the process of direct elections. Hence adoption of the principle of co-option is suggested to ensure the presence of one Scheduled Caste representative. It is a well known that the Scheduled Castes are at the lower rung of social hierarchy and the method of co-option is undemocratic. The status of a co-opted member would definitely be lower than that of an elected member, to whichever group he or she belonged.

The Ashok Mehta committee in its report (1978) made significant recommendations in the context of representation to Scheduled Castes in Panchayati Raj Institutions. The inclusive aspect of the Scheduled Castes in Panchayati Raj Institutions was detailed by the committee. It was categorically mentioned that seats should be reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes based on their population size.⁴⁶ In the section dealing with weaker sections, the committee pointed out that the inability as well as the structural inadequacies of the Panchayati Raj Institutions to benefit the weaker sections of society were anxious to provide structural as well as programmatic remedies to ensure the planned development of the country, inadequate measure. It was made very clear that representation to Scheduled Castes should be ensured at all levels of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Reservation system can be supplemented by formation of social justice committee where the chairman should be only from Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes. The Ashok Mehta committee also recommended the constitution of a committee of the legislature to review the working of the programmes meant for these communities. It also pointed out that the Panchayati Raj Institutions should be involved in opening up occupational vistas in rural areas in such fields as dairying, poultry farming, piggery, fisheries and scrub jungle forestry. The Panchayati Raj Institutions could provide the field-level support to Finance/Development Corporations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the committee felt.⁴⁷ It has to be mentioned that the Ashok Mehta Committee

⁴⁵ Ibid, P.228.

⁴⁶ Government of India, Report of the Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions, 1978, IV.II.3, VII.8.3.

⁴⁷ Ibid, VII. 9.2, 2, 10.1 and 10.2; IV.13.1, VII. 14.2 and VII 1.5.

gave considerable thought to ensure the representation of Scheduled Castes in Panchayati Raj Institutions, ensuring the benefits relating to development and reviewing the working of state governments and Panchayati Raj Institutions.

The need for revitalization of the Panchayati Raj Institutions and that of endowing them with necessary resources and powers to discharge the functions and responsibilities assigned to them was stressed by the G.V.K.Rao Committee which presented its report in 1985. Revitalization and reorganization of Panchayati Raj Institutions were suggested. The Committee felt that the fine goal of rural development programme was to enable the community to become self reliant and manage all their day to day affairs in the spirit of Gram Swaraj.⁴⁸ The involvement of voluntary agencies in rural development was also emphasized.

A Committee appointed by the Government of India under the chairmanship of L.M.Singhvi recommended that the Panchayati Raj Institutions should be constitutionally recognized and protected. It also suggested constitutional provisions for regular and free elections of Panchayati Raj Institutions. The then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi took keen interest in those recommendations which were incorporated in the 64th Constitutional Amendment Bill of 1989. The amendment bill made it obligatory to all states to establish a three tier system of panchayats at the village, intermediate and district levels; proposed a fixed tenure of 5 years for the panchayats and provided for the constitution of Finance Commissions in the states to review the finances of the panchayats. It also stated that the State Election Commission should be in charge of superintendence, direction and conduct of elections to Panchayati Raj bodies. It also proposed to audit the accounts of panchayats by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India. As regards representation to Scheduled Castes, reservation of seats in proportion to the population was suggested. The bill was passed by Lok Sabha but was defeated in Rajya Sabha by a nominal margin of vote.

2. 5. Structural Patterns of Panchayati Raj in India

The structural patterns of Panchayati Raj in India have been varied. There are departures, variations and innovations. The ideal thing every where is the same and the Mehta committee recommendations and subsequent committee's suggestions have been the base. In the initial stages, Panchayat Raj was implemented enthusiastically in Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh. The states of Maharastra and Rajasthan adopted a

⁴⁸ Cited in Documentation on Panchayati Raj: Summaries of Major Reports, Centre for Panchayati Raj, National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad, 1991, P.103.

strong Zilla Parishad pattern at the district level. In the 1980s and 1990s Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka showed greater interest in making the Panchayati Raj Institutions more powerful. The structural patterns of Panchayati Raj before the enactment of 73rd Constitutional Amendment came into force are as follows.

2.5.1 District Level Structural Institutions

The states of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamilnadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Nagaland set up district level institutions. The names given include Zilla Parishad, Mohkuma Parishad and District Development Council. In states of Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, some members are directly elected. In all the other district level structures the bulk of the members are ex-officio, by virtue of being presiding officers of lower level bodies. Mode of election of the head of the institution is indirect except in Andhra Pradesh where it is direct. In Gujarat and Maharashtra, seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are on population basis. Minimum number of seats to be reserved is specified in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. In all states except Nagaland, Punjab and Tamilnadu, reservation of seats to women is provided. Reservation of chair positions of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is provided only in Andhra Pradesh. There is also a provision of reservation for Backward Classes (20%) in this state.

In all the states except in Orissa and Maharashtra legislators are members of the middle level institutions. In most of the states, if two women are not elected in the normal course, one or two women are co-opted by the concerned tier. In Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat, Arunachal Pradesh, Orissa, Punjab and West Bengal the Executive Officer is the ex-officio secretary. The nomenclature of the designation of Executive Officer differs from state to state.

2.5.2. Other Level Panchayat Raj Institutions

The lower level Panchayat Raj institutions in all the states is the Village Panchayat. The middle level body of Panchayat Raj is called as Panchayat Samithi or Mandal Panchayat. The mandal panchayat as a middle level body is found only in Andhra Pradesh and in other states it is called with different nomenclatures like Taluk Board, Panchayat Samithi. In all states, except in Bihar, all the members of panchayats are directly elected. In Bihar, four members are elected and four appointed by the presiding officer who is an elected person. In all the states except in

Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal the head of the institutions is directly elected. The designations include Sarpanch, Pradhan, President, Mukhia and Adhyksha.

As regards reservation of seats to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, in West Bengal, the government has power to nominate. In Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Manipur, Orissa, Tripura and Uttar Pradesh reservation is in proportion to population. A minimum number of seats is specified in Assam, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamilnadu and West Bengal. In no state except in Andhra Pradesh, the post of chairperson is reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and women. In all the states except in Punjab, reservation of seats to women is present. In Orissa a minimum number is specified instead of reservation. At all the three levels four committees exist.⁴⁹

There is a two tier system in Assam, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Kerala, Orissa and Sikkim. In Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamilnadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal a three tier system is operating.

The elections to village panchayat is direct. At the middle and district levels direct as well as indirect elections are held. Care is taken to see that the reservation or nomination for the representation to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes and women is ensured. All the states and Union Territories introduced Panchayati Raj. The principle behind the constitution of Panchayati Raj Institutions is an extension of democracy to the grassroots.

The 73rd Constitution Amendment bill, after having being passed by Parliament and after getting it ratified by the legislatures, not less than one half of the states, received the assent of the President of India on 20th April, 1993. The amendment inserted a new aspect i.e part IX in the constitution. The salient features of the amendment are as follows:

- 1) Panchayats should be constituted in every state, at the village, intermediate and district levels. Panchayats may not be constituted at the intermediate level in states having population of not exceeding twenty lakhs;

⁴⁹Vyas Kokila & Malti Mehta (Eds) Panchayati Raj: Emerging new Leadership, All India Mahila Congress, May 1994, Pp.72-75.

- 2) All the seats in a panchayat have to be filled in by persons chosen by direct elections from territorial constituencies in the panchayat area;
- 3) The legislature of state may by law provide for the representation of chairpersons of lower level bodies in the higher level bodies;
- 4) Seats have to be reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In every panchayat and the number of seats so reserved should be nearly, as may be the same proportion, to the total number of seats to be filled in and such seats have to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a panchayat;
- 5) Not less than one third of the number of chairpersons reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the Panchayats at each level should be reserved for women. The principle of rotation has to be followed.
- 6) Not less than one third of the total number of seats in a panchayat and of the chair persons should be reserved for women. Here again, the principle of rotation applies;
- 7) The states can make reservation for the position of members and chairpersons to Backward classes of citizens and one third of such membership and chairperson positions have to be reserved for women;
- 8) The duration of panchayat, unless dissolved under any law, is five years from the date constituted for its first meeting;
- 9) The legislatures of states may, by law, endow the panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government. The legislatures may also authorize the panchayats to impose taxes, duties, tolls and fees;
- 10) The amendment also requires the Governors of states to constitute Finance Commission to review the financial position of the states and to make recommendations;
- 11) The amendment provided that in all states, there shall be a Gram Sabha in each village comprising of all eligible voters in the village to which the panchayat will be accountable. The powers and functions of Grama Sabha are to be assigned by law passed by state legislature;
- 12) The Panchayati Raj bodies will prepare plans for economic development, social justice and social welfare and the subjects enumerated in XI schedule of the Constitution of India.

The amendment included a new schedule in the constitution by inserting as many as 29 subjects including the welfare of the weaker sections, in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, are enumerated in the article 243 (G) and these subjects have to be transferred to the Panchayati Raj Institutions by state governments. The amendment is important in several respects. It is provided structural adjustments conducive to include the excluded in larger numbers than before. It is broadened the space, for participation, for the disadvantaged sections i.e Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and women by making reservation of specific number of seats and chair positions mandatory. A uniform pattern is envisaged. When implemented purposefully, the concerned interest would definitely provide a way forward to widen the democratic base of Indian polity.⁵⁰

As Lele pointed out, “constitution amendment has really opened up a new legitimate space where the marginalized groups of people can legitimately have a say in decision-making, a space for them to say what they think is good in their interest.”⁵¹ The need for enacting this constitutional amendment embodied in the Statement of Objects and Reasons published in the Gazetteer of India (September 16, 1991), it is mentioned that in many states, local bodies have become weak and ineffective on account of a variety of reasons, -the failure to hold regular elections, prolonged suspension and inadequate devolution of powers and functions including funds crunch. As a result, local bodies have not been able to function effectively as vibrant democratic units of self-government. Having regard to these inadequacies, it is found necessary that provisions relating to the functions and taxation powers; arrangement for revenue sharing; conduct of regular elections timely elections in the case of suspension and inadequate representation to the weaker sections and women in the local bodies are specified in the constitution.

Commenting on the amendment, Mathur says that it provides for a constitutional recognition to the local bodies, which was non-existent in the pre-amendment period. Simultaneously, it lays out a platform for initiating wide spectrum reform in such areas as local electoral systems, mechanisms for local planning and development and state local relations in matters concerning functional

⁵⁰ Mathew George, Panchayati Raj Institutions and Human Rights in India, Economic and Political Weekly, Jan, 11, 2003.

⁵¹ Lele Medhar Kotwal, Local Government: Conflict of Interest of Legitimization, Economic and Political Weekly, Dec 22, 2003, P.4782.

and fiscal powers and responsibility.⁵² He further says that substantial progress has been achieved in terms of implementing the mandatory provisions of the constitutional amendment. A bold experiment in decentralization and empowerment of local governments has begun.

The amendment is also good in that periodical elections are made mandatory. The Panchayati Raj Institutions are entrusted with the work of planning. The inter linkage between Panchayati Raj bodies is recognized because chair persons of lower level bodies are to be members of higher level bodies.

The amendment made periodical elections obligatory. But as Rajni Kothari observes, “mere holding of elections to panchayats does not ensure decentralization. Significant powers and resources have to be tapped. Healthy interrelationships between the different tiers have to be established. The temptations of the national leaders to engage in a direct appeal to lower levels without permitting the intermediate structures to go has to be avoided. Further there should be a check on the power of the regional overlords”.⁵³

2.6. Stages

The system of Panchayati Raj passed through three main stages and is now in the stage of revitalization. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India, inaugurating the introduction of Panchayati Raj System in Rajasthan on October 2, 1959 stated, “the reason for our slow progress is our dependence on official machinery. Panchayati Raj is the real swaraj of the people as even as we put our faith in our people, so will they respond and help in building up this great country of ours”.⁵⁴ In the first phase 1959-1966, there was high level of enthusiasm for implementing Panchayati Raj. It was because of the initial stages and the highly supportive role of a number of top civil servants in different parts of the country. Shivayya points out that the speed was heartening, though perhaps not exceedingly impressive”.⁵⁵ Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan were pioneering states in implementing Panchayati Raj. The situation was one of enthusiasm, and

⁵² Mathur Om Prakash, *India's Experiment with Decentralization: A Review*, (Unpublished) 1999.

⁵³ Kothari Rajni, *Perspectives on Decentralization: First Training of Trainers Programmes New Panchayati Raj*, IIPA, New Delhi, 1993, Pp.263-73.

⁵⁴ Government of India, Planning Commission, *Third Five Year Plan*, New Delhi, 1962, P.9.

⁵⁵ Shivaiah, M, *Panchayati Raj: A Policy Perspective*, National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad, 1986, P.8.

hope, albeit a guarded in some cases. In its formation states, there has been sense of pride and satisfactions.⁵⁶

The second stage (1967-76) has become bleak for several reasons. During this period, the phenomenon of dominant castes assumed importance as they became prominent in the Panchayati Raj set up. The castes down below began to feel aggrieved because of their relative weakness. This has significant political implication. Panchayati Raj came to be identified, wrongly, with the political interests of the dominant castes. This has long time and implications and impact.

The green revolution and its effect aggravated the phenomenon of relative poverty among small and marginal farmers. The programmes, introduced in the years following 1969, aimed to benefit the target groups, have been intended to correct the imbalances. But these programmes have not been favoured by the political leadership of Panchayat Raj. Certain cooling off attitudes towards the dominant castes became politically expedient. The direct approach to the largest groups through the bureaucracy gained strength, by passing the Panchayati Raj Institutions to a considerable extent. Adding to these factors, the wars with China and Pakistan tended to encourage centrist direction. Emergency led to centralizing trends. This period could be described as stagnant.

The period between 1977-1986 represents the third phase. In fact during 1977-'78, steps were initiated to revitalize Panchayati Raj. The Ashok Mehta Committee Report (1978) was not accepted by the government though report contained positive proposals. Factors affecting economic development, dominance of dominant castes and administrative performance were required to be considered in this context. Economic development is closely related to non-economic factors—cultural, social and political. The magnitude of the task of rural development demanded considerable organizational and educational efforts, geared to locate specific needs and utilization of local resources. The Singhvi Committee felt that the decline of Panchayati Raj Institutions was due to lack of conceptual clarity, absence of political will and lack of research, evaluation, feedback and corrective measures. Absence of infrastructural facilities, administrative delays, and other factors led to decline. Grassroots bureaucracy often failed to be apolitical or politically neutral. Creation of goals might be easy. But working for the goals had become difficult. In

⁵⁶ Ibid, P.9.

general, there has been disappointment with the working of Panchayati Raj Institutions. However the working of the system cautions that the defects should be checked. The system has not forfeited the faith of the people, but has reached to a stage of resurrection. The process of revitalization is still on.

Whatever might be the reasons and bottlenecks for the decline of the Panchayat Raj institutions, the benefits that reached several population and social change that took place through these institutions can not be ruled out. The fruits of works carried out by Panchayat Raj bodies may not stand up to the expectations of the people, yet the amount of positive development that gained in rural India could not be constrained as meagre. The discussion that follows would deal with the gains of Panchayat Raj institutions.

2.7. Gains

The system of Panchayati Raj brought about some degree of social change. There has been a change in the value orientations of people. The system was able to establish its roots in the larger politico-administrative structure of the state. Ashok Mehta Committee reported that politically speaking, Panchayat Raj has become a process of democratic seed drilling in the India's soil by making an average citizen conscious of his or her rights than before. Administratively speaking, Panchayat Raj has bridged the gulf between the bureaucratic, elected and people. Sociologically speaking, it generated a new leadership which is not merely relatively young in age but also modernistic and pro-social change in outlook. Finally, looked at from the development angle, it helped the rural people to cultivate a developmental psyche.⁵⁷ The socially marginalized and excluded groups not only inducted (in) the Panchayati Raj Institutions but are also empowered by giving space.

Despite the hindering factors like male domination low level awareness, economic dependence and less experience, women in Panchayati Raj proved that they do things different to what men do. Women have a real impact on policy decisions. A new young women's leadership has emerged and empirical evidence proves that some women leaders are very active and committed. This is definitely an encouraging trend. It is to be noted that after receiving training at the National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad at the state's level and other places, women leaders in Panchayati Raj have been assertive and active in participation. The so called

⁵⁷ Government of India, Report of the Committee on Panchayati Raj, 1978, P.8

objection to women coming out of their homes for campaigning does not have relevance today. Reservation, especially, to key positions, when purposefully utilized brought about beneficial results. During the early years of the inception of Panchayati Raj, in some villages, women were not allowed to vote by men who were bound by old traditions where in women were not allowed in participating public functions. It was considered that success in elections with the support of women votes was significant and defeat without women voting is better. But today women are considered as an important vote bank and no political party or no candidate can think of excluding women either in manifestoes or in electioneering. Politically women in key positions have increased in number and are improving in quality contribution/performance also. Wherever women's organizations extend support, women candidates are winning with considerable majority. In states like Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh all women panchayats in Maharashtra are reported to have functioned very well. In a study conducted on Leadership in Panchayati Raj, the women presidents of middle tier panchayats said "If women vote only for women candidates, women could secure the largest number of seats in representations and a day might come when men have to fight for reservations"⁵⁸

Rural women could get the benefits of all the programmes meant for rural development in general. In addition, some special schemes have been introduced. Important among them is DWACRA (Development of Women and Children of Rural Areas) which is recently extended to the urban areas also. This programme intends to generate income through self-employment to women below the poverty line brought about positive results in some places. In the context of recruitment of members of Panchayati Raj Institutions some states stood in the forefront. West Bengal Panchayats have recruited new people into politics. They are reported to have given to the elected representatives on-the-job exposure to the art of self governance from the grass roots level upwards. They have served as new nurseries for new entrants and have created a rich and poor of experienced leaders. Successful "Sabhapathis" have become ministers in the state government.⁵⁹ The process of empowerment of Dalits has started in Panchayati Raj Institutions. Despite the efforts of economically

⁵⁸ Manikyamba, P., Leadership in Panchayati Raj: A Study of Mandal Parishads in Ranga Reddy District of Andhra Pradesh, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, 1998, P.41. (Unpublished)

⁵⁹ Kumar Kalan and Mani, Panchayati Raj: Gram Sarcar, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, 1993, P.24.

and politically powerful higher castes' leaders to have control over decisions, even when they are women or Scheduled Castes, the Dalits are getting elected to unreserved seats also and are showing assertiveness.

Government of India intends to involve and train voluntary agencies in the process of development with the co-operation of international agencies like United Nations etc. The United Nations Development Programme has, among its objectives, the aim of providing external agencies' support to Panchayati Raj Institutions. The process is on.

Close relationship between customary village councils and Gram Panchayats are found to be providing beneficent results. In the state of Karnataka, the customary village councils have adopted over time to India's democratic political institutions. The councils operate in a relatively more democratic and pluralist environment.⁶⁰

The system of Panchayati Raj emphasizes on the development role of administration. Close coordination between elected representatives and officials has good yields in the process of local governance.

2. 8. Problems

One important problem coming in the way of effective functioning of Panchayati Raj is the domination of the socially and economically privileged classes. In addition, absence of the proper understanding of the philosophy of Panchayati Raj, unenthusiastic attitude of ex-officio members, unsatisfactory response of the bureaucrats, factionalism and other factors have contributed to the unsatisfactory working of Panchayati Raj in India. These aspects would be discussed in more detail at a later stage. It has to be noted that the system still survives and what required is concerted efforts for better results.

2. 9. Post 73rd Constitutional Amendment Phase

In accordance with the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, the state government passed a new Act called The Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act which came into force in May, 1994. The salient features of the Act are as follows: The Act provides for organic linkage between the three tiers of Panchayati Raj. Accordingly, the Sarpanches of Gram Panchayats in a Mandal Parishad can participate as members of Mandal Parishad, similarly the Presidents of the mandal Parishads are entitled to attend the meetings of Zilla Parishad concerned with out the right to vote. The

⁶⁰ Kripa Ananth Pur, Rivalry or Synergy? Formal and Informal Local Governance in Rural India, Development and Change, Volume No. 38, Issue 3, Blackwell and Synergy, 2007, Pp.401 -421.

Collector is a permanent invitee to the meeting of the Mandal Parishads and Zilla Parishad standing committees.

The Panchayati Raj Institutions have wide range of maintenance, regulatory and development functions. They are to take up programmes under agriculture, animal husbandry, cottage industries, pre-primary and primary education, wealth and sanitation, welfare programmes for women, children and the destitute and land reforms. There is a provision of two child norm, according to which a candidate with more than two children will be disqualified from contesting to election or from continuing as a member in any of the Panchayati Raj bodies. Now there is no this restriction. A member who is absent for three consecutive meetings will be disqualified as member. Elections to the panchayats at intermediate and district levels will be on political party basis. There is provision for cooption of members belonging to minorities. Only directly elected members can participate in election or moving no-confidence motion could be moved against the chairpersons/president only after two years from the commencement of the term and it can be moved against a person only once in the entire term of five years. Voting against the political party whip attracts disqualification. Gram Sabha meets at least twice a year with break of 180 days in between two meetings. Specialists could be invited for any of the meetings of the Panchayat. Cheque drawing powers are given to Sarpanch of village panchayats.

The above provisions theoretically ensure legitimacy and continuity to the elected bodies. There is also ample scope for the involvement of BCs, SCs, STs, Women and minorities in these bodies and for facilitating their participation. Functionally, it is seen that not all the powers are transferred to the Panchayati Raj Institutions and there is resistance on the part of the state governments to transfer, though they have to according constitutional provisions. The Panchayati Raj institutions do not have adequate infrastructural facilities to perform the allotted functions, since they suffer from inadequate resources. The entire growth process is inhibited by party politics and favoritism as well as bureaucratic apathy. Slackening of political will, decline in quality of leadership, and other factors are coming in the way of effective functioning of Panchayati Raj institutions in India.

The experience with Gram Sabha during the last one decade say Balaramulu and Ravinder many a time, the Gram Sabhas are not held and if at all they are conducted citizen participation is very poor. Divergent socio-economic background of the people, domination of upper castes and classes, lack of participation of women

due to patriarchy, domination of traditional leaders in villages, political rivalries, lack of support and encouragement from bureaucracy and involvement of caste associations and leaders in community affairs are among the important factors for this solution, according to them.⁶¹ Despite the play of manipulative practices, some positive trends are also identified. Young and enthusiastic leadership has emerged in the states in some villages. The weaker sections, especially, the Scheduled Castes and women have been asserting their rights and are positively contributing to development leadership equalities like decisiveness, persuasiveness, good communication, participation, group orientation are on the increase. The office of the Panchayati Secretary was introduced on 1st January 2001 with functions to implement the policy decisions of the panchayat. Some chair persons of the Panchayati Raj Institutions received international awards.

Bhargava reports that the state government is exercising excessive powers of control and supervision, which cripple the autonomy of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Such control extends to person both elected and appointed working for the institutions as well as their decisions, actions and finances.⁶² The Janmabhoomi Programme introduced by government during the Telugu Desam regime virtually led to Collector Raj and not Panchayati Raj.

2.9.1 Status of Panchayats in India

In the interest of the research study, it is necessary to probe into the statistics of representatives of Dalits in Panchayat Raj bodies in various states of India to draw some inferences on the inclusion of Dalits or for that matter their empowerment in politico-administrative arena in Panchayat Raj. There are 2,32,855 panchayats in India with a total membership of 2645883 of which 975057 are women constituting 36.85 per cent. The number of elected Scheduled Castes representatives is 4,85,825 forming 18.36. The number of Scheduled Tribes representatives is 304350 which constitute 11.50%. The number of representatives from non-SC/ST categories is 1855632 (70.13 per cent). Uttar Pradesh stands first in having the largest number of panchayats i. e. 52,000 and 703294 representatives. Daman and Diu have the smallest number of panchayats (14) with 77 representatives. One important point is to

⁶¹ Balaramulu, Ch and D.Ravinder, The Indian Journal of Public Administration, Special Number on Governance for Development, Jan-March, 2004, Vol.1, No.1, Pp.85-86.

⁶² Bhargava, B.S, Panchayati Raj in Andhra Pradesh in Palanithurai, G (ed) Dynamics of New Panchayati Raj System in India, Vol.II, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2002, P.212.

be mentioned is Bihar has the highest number of women representatives (54.6) because of reservation of 50% of seats for women. In Andhra Pradesh the legal requirement of 33% is seen. The percentage of women representatives is more than 40% in Karnataka (43%) and Manipur (43.6%). As regards intermediate panchayats 6094, the position of representatives is as follows. The total number of representatives 1,56,794 of which 58191 are women comprising of 37.11%. The number of SC representatives is 32,968 (21.03%) and that of STs is 11,406 (7.27%). It is interesting to note that the percentage of SC representatives at the intermediate is higher by 2.67 points than at the national level.

In the case of STs it lower by .73%. The number of representatives of non-SC/ST categories is 112331 coming to 71.64%. Uttar Pradesh stands first with 820 intermediate panchayats having total membership of 65,669. Chandigarh stands at last with one intermediate panchayat of 15 members. There are no intermediate panchayats in Goa, Jharkhand, Manipur, Sikkim, Dadar & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu and Lakshadweep.

There are 625 districts panchayats in India with total membership of 15,613 of which 5810 (37.21%) are women. The number of SC representatives is 20729 (17.5%) and that of the Scheduled Tribes representatives 1723 (11.04%). The number of representatives belonging to non-SC/ST categories is 11,161 (71.48%).⁶³ Further details could be seen in Annexure-II, IIA, IIB and III.

The aforesaid discussion gives a glimpse of Panchayat Raj institutions, their strength and weaknesses. But the subject proper, for the research purpose, requires to throw light on the working of Panchayat Raj system in general and subject under reference in particular scene the villages selected fall under state of Andhra Pradesh. The in-depth analysis of the research study indicates the status of empowerment of Dalits in the power structure of Panchayat Raj. The following discussion in all the chapters amply deals with the subject and guides to draw some conclusion on this area.

2. 10. Panchayati Raj in Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh, at the risk of repetition, is one of the two states, the other being Rajasthan to introduce the system of Panchayati Raj immediately following the Balwantrai Mehta Committee recommendations. There used to be Village Panchayats and District Boards and those were replaced by the Gram Panchayats, Panchayati

⁶³ Status of Panchayat Raj Institutions, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India, New Delhi, 2008.

Samithies and Zilla Parishads at the village, block and district levels respectively. This three tier system of Panchayati Raj was introduced in 1959 in Andhra Pradesh. The government of Andhra Pradesh, taking into consideration the recommendations of the Mehta committee, decided that there should be organic link between the three tiers and that all the development programmes should be implemented through the Panchayati Raj Institutions. It is also felt that the system should be able to facilitate devolution of powers. The Panchayati Raj Institutions, says Jain, gave a good account of themselves during the first five years i.e from 1959-1963, both years inclusive. There was great enthusiasm in the rural masses and there was also good support of state governments.⁶⁴

During the second phase i.e 1963-1972, some amendments to Panchayati Raj Acts were required to revitalize the Panchayat Raj. In order to strengthen the system, the state government appointed a High Power Committee with M.T.Raju as the Chairperson and entrusted the committee with the work of examining the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions. The committee recommended the establishment of District Development Boards with Collector as chairperson. The Government of Andhra Pradesh created the District Development Boards in accordance with this recommendation. This led to legitimizing the supremacy of civil service and elected representatives. There was high amount of dissatisfaction among the elected representatives. The Congress Legislative Party appointed a committee headed by J.Vengal Rao in 1968 to suggest improvements and amendments to the acts. The committee was critical of the undemocratic attitude and behaviour of the political elite. It was also critical of the role of the officials. It found that District Development Boards were functioning as 'Super Bodies' giving upper hand to bureaucracy at the expense of the elected bodies. The recommendations of the committee to abolish District Development Boards and to place the Collector under the control of Zilla Parishad did not have impact on the attitude of the government. The system of Panchayati Raj has shown symptom of decline because of several reasons. Failure of the political elite to arouse public enthusiasm towards the system, absence of harmonious relations between the different tiers and between elected representatives

⁶⁴ Jain, S.P., Panchayati Raj in Andhra Pradesh: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, in Empowerment of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in India (Ed) Verma, S.B, Sitaram Sharma and Bhushan Lal Laha, Sarup and Sons, New Delhi, 2006, P.239.

and officials, and resistance of the leadership to devolve powers to Panchayati Raj institutions were among the contributing factors.

During 1973-1982 some important developments took place. The Government of Andhra Pradesh appointed committee headed by Narasimham in 1979 to suggest measures for strengthening the Panchayati Raj Institutions in the direction of playing more effective role in development, planning and management. But before the report was submitted, some minor changes were made to the Acts. The government adopted the Andhra Pradesh Mandal Praja Parishad, Zilla Praja Parishads and Zilla Abhivrudhi Sameeksha Mandals Act in 1986. The Act replaced the Panchayati Samithies by Mandal Praja Parishads. These are smaller in area and nearer to the people. This Act also provided for association of ex-officio members in the Zilla Parishad and Mandal Parishads.

2.10.1 Scheduled Castes' Profile of Andhra Pradesh

The Population of Andhra Pradesh as per 2001 census is 76,210,007, of which 12,339,496 (16.2%) are Scheduled Castes. The SC population in the state constitutes 7.4% of the country's SC population. Andhra Pradesh occupies the fourth (4) position in terms of SC population in India. There are 59 notified SCs (sub-castes) in Andhra Pradesh. Out of the 59 notified SCs Mala, Madiga, Adi Dravida, Adi Andhra together constitute 93.6 of the SC population. Madigas are numerically largest SCs with population of 6,074,250 constituting 49.2 per cent of the states' SC population. They are followed by Malas having a population of 5,139,305 (41.6 per cent); Adi Dravida with a population of 194,806 (1.6 per cent) and Adi Andhra (1.2 per cent); Nineteen sub-castes of SCs have been reported to have a population below one thousand each in 2001 census.

As per 2001 Census, 82.5 per cent of SCs are living in rural areas of the state. Among the numerically major SCs, Adi Dravida has the highest (88.7 per cent) rural population, followed by Madiga (85.1 per cent); Mala (81.9 per cent) and Adi Andhra (76.8 per cent). The sex ratio of SC population in Andhra Pradesh 981 females per 1000 males.

As regard the literacy of SCs it is 43.5% which is lower than that of the state population as a whole. It is important to point out that there is 21.9% increase from 1991 to 2001. The female literacy rate is 43.3%. The Work Participation Rate of SCs, i.e, the percentage of SCs to the total population 50.5 per cent. As regards the category of workers, that has been decline in the SC main workers from 95.6 per cent

in 1991 to 79.2% in 2001. The percentage of marginal workers has increased 4.4% in 1991 to 20.8% in 2001. A majority of the workers are agricultural labourers constituting 68.3 per cent. Other workers constitute 21 per cent. The cultivators constitute 9.7% and the remaining 1.9 per cent are workers in the household industry.⁶⁵

The system of Panchayati Raj under the 73rd Constitution Amendment came into effect, since 1993. The first elections after the coming into force of the 73rd Constitution Amendment were held in 1995. Due to delays in holding second round of elections were scheduled in 2000, Special officers are appointed to Mandal Parishads and Zilla Parishads. The tenure of existing bodies was continued till 2001 at the village level. Elections were held in 2001 to all the three tier bodies, the next round of elections were held in 2006.

2.10.2 Status of Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh (Status of Dalit Representatives in Panchayats)

The system of Panchayati Raj under the 73rd Constitution Amendment came into effect, since 1993. The first elections after the coming into force of the 73rd Constitution Amendment were held in 1995. Due to delays in holding second round of elections, they were scheduled in 2000, Special officers were appointed to Mandal Parishads and Zilla Parishads. The tenure of existing bodies was continued at the village level. Elections were held in 2001 to all the three tier bodies, the next round of elections were held in 2006.

According to the Report of the Directorate of Economics and Statistics of Government of Andhra Pradesh published in 2005, the state of Andhra Pradesh has 21910 Gram Panchayats. The Chittoor district has highest number of Gram Panchayats i.e. 1399. The District of Rangareddy has 705, which is lowest in number. Krishna district has 973 Gram Panchayats. The district wise list of Gram Panchayats and Gram Panchayats reserved for SCs, STs and women is appended to the Thesis. Again Chittoor district stands first in having the largest number of Gram Panchayats, reserved for Scheduled Castes, it being 304. The smallest number of Gram Panchayats reserved for Scheduled castes is found in Vizianagaram. The highest number of Gram Panchayats i.e, 416 reserved for Scheduled Tribes is in Khammam district. Kadapa district has the lowest number of Gram Panchayats, i.e, 9 reserved

⁶⁵ Data Highlights: The Scheduled Castes, Office of the Registrar General of India, Census of India, 2001.

for Scheduled Tribes. As regards reservation of Gram Panchayats to women, Chittoor district stands first with 459 such panchayats. Vizianagaram has the smallest number of Gram Panchayats i.e 39 reserved for women. As regards membership positions reserved for Scheduled Castes Chittoor stands first with 2909 for them. Vizianagaram occupies the last place in respect of membership reserved for Scheduled Castes, which is 91. Khammam district occupies the first place 2825 seats reserved for Scheduled Tribes and Kadapa stands at the bottom with 114 seats for Scheduled Tribes. Chittoor district has largest number of seats 4365 reserved for women. The smallest number of seats reserved for women is seen in Vizianagaram district, the being 342.⁶⁶ The details could be seen from Annexure-IV.

The Panchayati Raj Institutions at district, intermediate, village level are called Zilla Parishads, Mandal Parishads and Gram Panchayats respectively in Andhra Pradesh. An interesting feature of the Andhra Pradesh Panchayati Raj System is the largest number of Mandal Panchayats (intermediate panchayats). The Government of Andhra Pradesh passed legislations in 1986 to reorganize the middle level institutions into smaller units with the objective of providing administration at the door steps of people.

There are 1095 mandals in Andhra Pradesh i.e middle tier institutions in Panchayati Raj System. Chittoor has the largest number of mandals i.e., 65 of these 33 mandals are Un Reserved. The number of mandals reserved for Backward Classes is 18, that for Scheduled Castes is 13 and for Scheduled Tribes one. Of the 13 mandals reserved for SCs 7 for SC-Men and 4 for SC-Women. Of the 18, reserved mandals for BCs, 12 are for men and 6 for women. Among 33 Un Reserved mandals 22 for men and 11 for women. Rangareddy occupies the bottom place with 33 mandals. Of these 10 chair positions of mandals are Un Reserved; 14 are reserved for BCs, 7 for SCs; 2 for STs. Of the 10 unreserved mandals the chair positions 7 reserved for men and 3 for women. Of the 7 mandals for which chair positions reserved for SCs, five are for men and two are for women. Of the two chair positions reserved for STs, one goes to men and other for women. Altogether of the 1095 chair positions in the state 83 are reserved for STs; 193 for SCs; 272 for BCs; 447 for unreserved categories within each groups reservation of 1/3rd positions for women ensured. The total number of elected representative at the mandal is 14,617. Of these

⁶⁶ Statistical Abstract of Andhra Pradesh 2007, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, 2005, P.414.

17.7% per cent are Scheduled Castes representatives and that of the Scheduled Tribes representatives is 7.5%

There are 22 Zilla Parishads for rural administration in Andhra Pradesh. Of these 9 chair positions are unreserved of which 3 must be allotted for women. The number of chair positions reserved for BCs is 7, of which two must be allotted to women. Four chair positions are allotted to SCs, of which 1 must be given to women. Two chair positions are allotted to STs, of which 1 must be given to women. It must be noted that women can contest to any position in unreserved category but men can not contest positions reserved for women. It should also be noted that of the chair positions reserved for STs Women got equal share. The total number of elected representatives at the Zilla Parishad level 1095 of which 364 are women the percentage coming to 33.2%, 17.9% Scheduled Castes representatives 7.9% are the representatives of STs.

The Panchayati Raj Institutions at the district, intermediate, village level are called Zilla Parishads, Mandal Parishads and Gram Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh. An interesting feature of the Andhra Pradesh Panchayati Raj System is the largest number of Mandal Panchayats (intermediate panchayats). The Government of Andhra Pradesh passed legislations in 1986 to reorganize the middle level institutions into smaller units with the objective of providing administration at the door step of people.⁶⁷

Summary

Panchayati Raj in India brought about mixed results-success and failures suggesting the need for more concerted efforts for improvements. In addition it may not be out of place to state that the relationship, with all the description made above, it appears, centres around love-hate relationship between Panchayati Raj Institutions and state political leadership. The later love Panchayati Raj Institutions since they help it in the general elections and hate because the former are future contenders. Further there should be strong political will to transfer powers, functions and finances to Panchayati Raj Institutions.

⁶⁷Status of Panchayati Raj: State Profile – Andhra Pradesh, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India, 2007, P.2.

Chapter-III

Democratic Decentralization and Empowerment of Dalits: An Assessment of Contemporary Literature

Introduction

The detailed review on the study proper centres around relevant books, research articles and committee reports. Further each review is specific and distinct from one another. A review of literature and assessing it helps to prepare base for any objective study. It also helps to identify the gaps to be taken up for further research and to suggest measures for empowerment. A number of studies –micro and macro –have covered both theoretical and empirical aspects relating to the Scheduled Castes and Panchayati Raj Institutions. The studies were conducted by Government Organizations and Researchers. The following discussion would focus on the findings of the studies with regard to background, perceptions, participation, empowerment and the related aspects of the Scheduled Castes Vis a Vis Panchayats Raj Institutions.

3.1 Democratic Decentralization in Panchayat Raj

While the decentralization as concept is discussed in chapter II, the present chapter discusses the following the application part of decentralization, as found, in the Panchayat Raj Institutions. Democratic Decentralization has been debated at length by researchers and policy-makers. “Decentralization is the transfer decision-making to more directly concerned. It is adopted in 80 percent of all developing and transition countries, and local government has become a major arena of policy formulation. According to one important report, decentralization produces mixed results. It facilitates good governance, improves participation and gives opportunity to non-discrimination. Local governments could be more effective and more legitimate. Involvement of civil society is possible to a greater extent. But poor governments became worse governments. Instances of increased accountability are relatively less. If decentralization is assessed only quantitatively, the issue of empowerment gets missed”.¹

¹ Report on Local Government and Human Rights: Doing Good Service, International Council on Human Rights, 2005, Pp.1-106. (http://www.ichrp.org/paper_files/124_p_01.pdf)

About democratic decentralization, James Manor writes that “it has the benefits of stimulating greater popular participation and civil society activity, increases transparency and enhances accountability. In most cases, democratic decentralization brings about improvement to Less Developed Countries (LDCs) to some extent. For reducing poverty, as force for reducing poverty, it has mixed record, but the likelihood of democratic decentralization’s impact reducing poverty is more positive than before. The impact of women on local bodies sometimes increases because of the taking up of services such as ante and post natal care. Especially when civil society organizations, committed to assisting the poor and women, support women members of local councils, positive results follow. Unwillingness/ Lack of willingness of government to devolve powers to local bodies and taking back of already conferred powers would come in the way of democratic decentralization. The need for encouraging governments to be more generous in devolving power to local bodies, preventions of higher level bodies to victimize local bodies, (reorganizing/recognizing) the administrative and fiscal decentralization and supporting civil society organizations committed to decentralization is considerable”.²

Referring to the need for reforms, Manor points out, “reforms can make government more open, responsive and accountable and can increase its legitimacy and popularity, even when conditions are difficult. Decentralization can assist the poor and disadvantaged. Downward accountability, constitution of user committees, reduction of cynicism through reforms, bottom in promoting decentralization”.³

“The involvement of self appointed activities and local opinion of leaders, community participation development of participatory planning process need to be encouraged. Ensuring accountability, skill development, adoptability and exchange of information between countries also are desirable” say Andy Inglis and Ced Hesse.⁴

² James Major, Local Governance, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, 2003, Pp 1-14. (www.gsdr.org/docs/open/PO40.pdf)

³ Manor, J., ‘Democratization with Inclusion: Political Reforms and People’s Empowerment at the Grassroots’, Journal of Human Development, Volume 5, Issue 1, March 2004, Pp. 5-29.

⁴ Andy Inglis and Ced Hesse, Local Government and Participation, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) London U.K / Russell Press, Nottingham, 2002. (<http://www.iied.org>)

Craig Johnson⁵ says that, since 1993 in India the experience has been highly variable, ranging from ambitious attempts at Gram Swaraj or (village self-rule) in Madhya Pradesh to political re-centralization in Karnataka. Based on a study of five hundred villages in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and TamilNadu Timothy Besley, Rohini Pandey and Vijayender Rao found “Grama Panchayats created by the massive experiment in democratic decentralization have had an effect on delivery of public services, especially in the targeting of beneficiaries of welfare programmes. It is found that having a reserved Pradhan would further the end of getting better targeting towards Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes households. However, there are some unresolved politicians remaining opportunistic is one of the unresolved issues.”⁶ A study in Madhya Pradesh by Shashank Kela⁷ notes that limited fiscal, political decentralization has not led to any fundamental change in country side. Caste still defines social and political identity and the oppressed groups are represented only by tiny sections. Mehta argues that despite linkages with the multinational corporations, multinational investment and technological cooperation, the communications revolution has spread political awareness and is empowering the poor. Weaker Sections are getting confidence. There is accentuation of dissatisfaction, sharpened conflicts and exposing indifference, bureaucratic collousness to grievances and the neglect of public good. The efforts of organizations like Institute of Local Self Government and Responsible Citizenship established at Udaipur in 1997 brought about encouraging results he points out. Mehta says that “with the help of non-ulterior voluntary organizations, Panchayat Raj may well become a model of the ‘city on the Hill’ for democracy in the developing world.”⁸ Singh opined “the 73rd Constitutional Amendment has strengthened the democratic values and has emerged

⁵ Craig Johnson, Decentralisation in India: Poverty, Politics and Panchayati Raj, Overseas Development of Institute, London, U.K, February 2003, Working Paper No. 199 (Source: <http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/working-papers.asp>)

⁶ Timothy Besley, Rohini Pandey, Vijayender Rao., Political Economy of Panchayats in South India, Economic and Political Weekly, February 24, 2007, Pp.661-666.

⁷ Shashank Kela., Towards Elections: Disaffection and Co-Option, Economic and Political Weekly, July 5, 2003, Pp.2814-2816.

⁸ Mehta Jagat. S, Panchayati Raj (Grassroots Decentralisation in the age of Globalization), Man and Development, Dec 2006, Pp.9-16.

with a new and resounding consensus about the value of democracy in the process of social transformation.⁹

Prasad discusses the methods of enabling people “to participate in development process and to improve governance. Capacity building, promotion of participation, devolving the sense of ownership and trust in Panchayati Raj Institutions, training and using of new tools like e-governance can bring about positive results he says. Access to authentic information, encouragement of interactions and new skills’ development would go a long way for a better situation.¹⁰

Based on the Karnataka experience Aziz discusses the decentralization process and planning. The article says that the planning process is not happening because: Absence of regular gram sabha meetings, lack of autonomy to panchayats planners and absence of co-ordination of governance and planning process are identified as the reasons. Aziz suggests concerted efforts to train the panchayat officials in the art of science of decentralized governance and planning. Especially training among the weaker sections to create some degree of awareness will promote attitudinal changes and impart governance skills.¹¹

Aziz develops a general theoretical perspective based on a review of the actual experience of decentralized planning in the state of Karnataka. Starting with a brief account of the theoretical and methodological issues involved, he delineates the institutional structure necessary to achieve the ends of decentralized governance. Among the main elements are capacity to identify both local level needs and problems and the aspirations of the people to facilitate people's participation and to formulate and implement appropriate projects.¹²

Mathew’s research paper focusing on the working of Panchayats in the villages of Madhya Pradesh, “is a critical examination of certain violent incidents in

⁹ Singh Kesar, Panchayati Raj in India: A Journey from an Informal to Formal System, Man and Development, Dec, 2006, Pp.17-47.

¹⁰ Prasad, R.R, Panchayati Raj and Rural Development: Challenges and Opportunities, Man and Development, Dec, 2006, Pp.63-81.

¹¹ Aziz, Abdul, Process of Decentralized Governance and Planning. Prashasika, July-Dec-1998, Vol. 25 (2), Pp.113-119

¹² Aziz, Abdul, Decentralised Planning: The Karnataka Experiment, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1993, Pp.1-2

four village panchayats of the state. The paper analyses these violent incidents (stripping a woman sarpanch, gang rape of a woman panch, brutal attacks on Dalit panches, etc) against the backdrop of the age-old customs and traditions of the villages, especially a factor in poor villages in northern India". The author further states, Panchayats, which are institutions of self-government, cannot function in a society that is ridden with caste, feudalism and poverty. It attempts to fathom the social factors behind them and to provide a clear perspective. The paper argues strongly that Panchayati Raj Institutions should be made effective instruments for social change. Therefore, "Panchayats can become instruments of social transformation through a vibrant democratic political process at the local level."¹³ Mathew's study of the working of Panchayati Raj in West Bengal, Karnataka and Orissa helps to understand the issue of decentralized governance in India. It is argued that mere statutory changes are insufficient to have healthy local bodies. There must be strong people's movement to make the constitutional changes in reality.¹⁴

Mukarji argues, "the fundamental question before panchayats everywhere in the country has for long been whether they are there for development functions only or for the wider purpose of self-government. The central objective of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act must, therefore, be seen as self-government, unabridged by the quite unnecessary references to economic development and social justice." The theory he has propounded in this article is that the amended constitution requires the states to constitute panchayats as institutions of self-government not only for villages but also at intermediate and district levels. Consequently there will be, henceforth, be three strata of government: the union, the states and the panchayats. According to him, a more radical change is difficult to visualize. Its implications are far-reaching, perhaps not fully grasped even by those who legislated the measure. He says that the 73rd and 74th Amendments and says that the two acts have created artificial dichotomy between rural and urban self-government. To him, the union must first decentralize to the states so that the states will have enough to decentralize to the lower strata. It is argued that India should abandon the distortion of over-

¹³Mathew, George and Ramesh C. Nayak, Panchayats at Work: What it means for the Oppressed? Institute of Social Sciences, Occasional Paper Series - 19, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi, 1996, Pp.2-4

¹⁴ Mathew, George, Panchayati Raj from Legislation to Movement, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1994, P. 4

centralization. The earlier principle of federation with a strong center should give way to a federation with strong center and strong states.¹⁵

Mukarji study of Panchayat Raj in West Bengal provides insightful information on West Bengal and also on the general process of evaluation of elected local government that is relevant to all the other states in India. Based on two broad lines of enquiry, one conceptual and the other programmatic, Mukharji and Bandopadaya identifies the inherent structural weakness of the panchayats as the root cause of the mood of despair into which they have sunk. Self-governance and autonomy are theoretically and ideologically central to the long-term prospects of Panchayati Raj but they have sunk, they point out.¹⁶

Mukarji and Datta argue for bringing power down to the people through the panchayats, and stressing on the need for organic linkage between the three strata of governance local, state and central. The findings are based on the fieldwork done in Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Punjab in 1995. Two districts from each of the three states were intensively studied.¹⁷

Singh, commenting on the 73rd Constitution Amendment argues, “comprehensive understanding of local government is needed today. It must involve both development and planning components in it. Panchayati Raj in India has to work as an agency of decentralization having both political and administrative powers. Panchayati Raj Institutions must be encouraged and developed for mass participation and self-governance. Therefore, he says that there is a need to strengthen the planning process at the micro-level for overall rural development and to provide opportunities for the poor to participate in the decision-making process in the local bodies”.¹⁸

Sivanna, “finds many operational constraints which come in the way of meaningful planning process. Added to this is the inter-relationship between the officials and the non-officials, which was seen as one of ‘love-hate’ relationships. To him Gram Sabha is a mechanism people could participate as beneficiaries of the programs and there is need for the decentralization process to be strengthened by

¹⁵ Mukarji, Nirmal, The Third Stratum. Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.28 (18), 1993, Pp. 859-862.

¹⁶ Mukarji, Nirmal and D.Bandyopadhyay, New Horizons for West Bengal's Panchayats: Government of West Bengal, Calcutta: Government of West Bengal, 1993.

¹⁷ Mukarji, Nirmal and Abhijit Datta, New Perceptions of Local Government, ISS Occasional Paper Series No. 20, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi, 1996.

¹⁸ Singh, Hoshiar, Constitutional Base for Panchayati Raj in India: The 73rd Amendment Act, Asian Survey, 34 (9), September, 1994, Pp.818-827.

further devolving necessary powers and resources to the panchayats. Then only is it possible, the author argues, for the grassroots level institutions to make a concerted effort to meet the onerous tasks of ameliorating the living conditions of the rural poor and developing social and economic rural infrastructure”.¹⁹

A study, based on primary field research conducted by Johnson, Deshingkar and Start in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh concludes that Indian decentralization has been articulated and defended principally on the basis of two normative goals- political inclusion and social advancement. It is found that the government of Andhra Pradesh has not devolved power to the extent that proponents of the decentralization would have liked. However, government programmes like poverty reduction programmes have empowered the poor to an extent. This is present to a lesser degree in Madhya Pradesh.²⁰

An extensive study sponsored by Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Centre, Paris on the impact of democratic decentralization on the chances of socially excluded groups to participate in the local governance institutions in Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu by Narayana brings out interesting findings. Awareness, support or social capital, literacy, structure of governance, and gender are determining factors for participation. Women's participation is lower than that of men, though in Kerala women fared better. In Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh the participation of the socially disadvantaged was lower in any aspect of governance. In Kerala participation of Scheduled Castes is higher compared to other backward castes and forward castes. In Kerala, participation of the poor is higher compared to that of the rich.²¹

The experience regarding decentralization has been varying. In general there is limited decentralization and even efforts to re-centralize is seen in some states. The communication revolution has been useful to spread awareness. But unwillingness of the government to devolve power, indifference of bureaucracy limited training are

¹⁹ Sivanna, N, Role of Panchayats in Poverty Alleviation Programmes: A Study in the State of Karnataka. *Journal of Rural Development*, 16(4), 1997, Pp. 633-650.

²⁰ Craig Johnson, Priya Deshingkar and Daniel Start, *Grounding the State: Poverty, Inequality and the Politics of Governance in India's Panchayats*, Working Paper No.226, Overseas Development Institute, 11 Westminister Bridge Road, London, U.K, September, 2003, Pp.1-41.

²¹ Narayana, D, *Institutional Change and its Impact on the Poor and the Excluded: the Indian Decentralization Experience*, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and International Labour Organization, Development Centre, Working Paper 242, Paris, January 2005.

²² Fenella Starkey, *the 'Empowerment Debate': Consumerist, Professional and Liberational Perspectives in Health and Social Care*, *Social Policy and Society*, 2003, Vol.2: 273-284, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

some problems associated with effective implementation of decentralization. Wherever self appointed activists involve, the effects have been encouraging.

3.2 Empowerment

The following description deals with brief review of literature on empowerment of Dalits. Fenella Starkey's article on the 'Empowerment Debate': Consumerist, Professional and Liberational Perspectives in Health and Social Care, aims to clarify the meaning of the much-used term 'empowerment' in order to contribute to a more theoretically coherent development of policy and practice aimed at facilitating the empowerment of health and social care service users. The liberational and consumerist models of empowerment are highlighted, with the former having a broader emphasis on people's roles within society than the latter. The concept of 'empowerment as professional practice' is also critically explored, with the conclusion that professionals can work with people in empowering ways if they recognise and work to address the structural causes of oppression.²² According to an important paper, decentralization is increasing in all parts of the world. Assessing the efficiency of decentralization as a means to mitigate ethnic conflict is then of primarily importance. This paper builds a simple model of decentralization as an empowerment mechanism. It suggests that decentralization could promote peace conditional on a set of countries and groups characteristics. Typically, decentralization should empower minorities which are small at the national level, while representing a critical mass of the population in the regions they live in. Empirical results confirm that decentralization impacts ethnic conflict only when those conditioning factors are controlled for. Furthermore, decentralization dampens all forms of ethnic violence for groups spatially concentrated enough and/or for groups having a local majority. In contrast, it fuels protest and even rebellion for groups lacking one. The paper then highlights the crucial need to build checks and balances mechanisms at the regional level for local minorities not being harmed by the decentralization process.²³

n, Development Centre, Working Paper 242, Paris, January 2005. ²² Fenella Starkey, the 'Empowerment Debate': Consumerist, Professional and Liberational Perspectives in Health and Social Care, *Social Policy and Society*, 2003, Vol.2: 273-284, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

²³ Tranchant Jean-Pierre, Decentralization and Ethnic Conflict: The Role of Empowerment, CERDI-UNRS, Munich Personal RePEC Archive (MRPA Paper- 3713) May 2007. (Source: http://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/3713/1/MPRA_paper_3713.pdf)

Writing on the empowerment of elected Scheduled Castes members through Panchayati Raj Institutions in Bihar, Sachidanda says that the orientation, training imparted by government officials and voluntary agencies is not found useful by the representatives. The representatives, though hailing from the socially depressed communities have not been silent spectators, but too active part in the functioning of panchayats. They did raise awareness among the villagers about different schemes; prepared annual plans and budget- they also selected beneficiaries and supervised the implementation of schemes. It is also noted by Sachidanda that membership to Scheduled Castes in Panchayats has given them a new lease of life more than three fourth of the representatives gained self confidence, commanded respect and served society. They have made a fruitful entry into the democratic process. In fact there took place social transformation in rural society because of reservation.²⁴

Sharma, writing about the empowerment of Dalits in the Panchayati Raj Institutions in Himachal Pradesh observes that the process of sharing of power by the Dalits began in the country and that the commitment of the government of Haryana to accord reservation in the leadership structure to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women to enable them to share power is visible. The field study in Sirmaur district of the state revealed that the process of change did not involve violent reactions and resistance. The response of the non-Dalit leadership towards the transfer of leadership to the Dalit community is found positive.²⁵ Hidden simmering of caste sentiments and same type of acrimony and resistance between the Dalits and non-Dalits is seen. The Caste and class hierarchy among the Dalits and non-Dalits is noted. In some cases, the Dalits are better placed than the non-Dalits in respect of education, land ownership and related matters. The Dalit leadership is found to be very actively participating in decision-making. However in view of same 'blurred spots', periodical holding of orientation programmes, organizing the Dalit youth are among the suggestions made by Sharma. The entry of Scheduled Castes in Panchayati Raj Institutions has led to a beginning of the process of sharing power. The process of empowerment is on.

²⁴ Sachidanda, Empowerment of Elected Scheduled Castes Member through Panchayati Raj Institutions, Report of the Project Sponsored by Planning Commission, New Delhi, 2006, Pp.82-91.

²⁵ Sharma Satish K, The Empowerment of Dalits in the Panchayati Raj Institutions: The Himachal Pradesh experience, in Surat Singh (Ed) Decentralized Governance in India: Myth and Reality, Deep and Deep Publications, New Delhi, 2004, Pp.178-184.

Kumar points out that the process of decentralisation presently lacks a methodology for community participation. Participatory Rural Appraisal and associated participatory methodologies could be used to aid decentralising programs. He further says that decentralising programs need to be accompanied with a participatory methodology and participatory methods need to be institutionalised and suggests the constitution committee to draw out a structure for implementing and using participatory techniques. Universities need to address participation in their courses to create professionals who understand the importance of community participation, and promote research. To him, data collection and documentation of lessons learned and experiences of other organisations and Non-Governmental Organization's need to be carried out and further research commissioned. Traditional vertical prevention programmes are inappropriate to deal with the emergence of HIV/AIDS which needs to be addressed at a social level - budgetary constraints, social taboo, awareness issues and inequalities should be addressed using community based planning. Some Problems associated with decentralization are identified by Kumar.²⁶

A research study of Kripa in Karnataka examines the role of customary village councils as promoters of democracy, she finds that the customary village councils are actively taking on new roles including developmental and electoral. They have become more and more pluralist and democratic, providing a wide range of services to the villagers. The paper concludes by suggesting that the major reason why customary village councils continue to enjoy significant authority is because they operate in a relatively democratic and pluralist environment in which the formal state provides many services quite effectively. For this reason, it is argued, Customary Village Councils have no monopoly and must continue to earn the authority which they exercise.²⁷

Balaramulu and Raghavendra Rao point out that democratic decentralization was a complete break from the traditional system and had brought in democratically

²⁶ Kumar, Uday, Decentralising of Health Policy and planning using Participatory Rural Appraisal: Indian example, Decentralization without participation: India's Health Policy Lacks a Participatory Methodology, Global Development Network (GDN), U.K, 2001. (<http://www.gdnet.org/pdf/kumar.pdf>)

²⁷ Kripa Ananth Pur, Rivalry or Synergy? Formal and Informal Local Governance in Rural India, Development and Change, Volume No. 38, Issue 3, Blackwell and Synergy, 2007, Pp.401 -421.

elected members. In many cases the traditional authority itself manages to come in because of their social background of influence, resources and education. The emerging leadership in Panchayati Raj institutions is neither traditional nor modern in nature, it is somewhere between both and if these are assumed as forming a continuum, then the author calls it 'Neo-traditional' leadership.²⁸

Bhargava's paper "Panchayati Raj in Orissa" describes and analyzes Orissa's experiments with rural local self-government at different points of time and under various regimes. The author adopts a historical perspective to study the local self-government in the state, tracing the evolution of Panchayati Raj Institutions from the pre-independence period. They are of the view that the nature, character and functioning of the Panchayati Raj Institutions vary depending on the attitude of the ruling elites, the quality of their leadership, governmental control exercised upon the local bodies from time to time, and the way the government looks at them. Those at the helm of affairs at the state level are often suspicious of the emerging leadership at the local level institution and see a potential threat to their hegemonic leadership and therefore take little interest in the conducting of regular elections.²⁹

Choudhary and Jain's work on democratic decentralisation contains with specific studies on Panchayati Raj system in India till 1998. It looks at among other issues, the extent and effectiveness of autonomy, functional and financial devolution, empowerment of the poor and the disadvantaged sections of society and the involvement of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in the planning and implementation of central and state schemes and programs.³⁰

Asha Kaushik in the chapter on 'Constitutionalization of Panchayati Raj in the Gandhian Perspective' focuses on the Gandhian perspective in the context of constitutionalization of Panchayati Raj and contends that the attempt to realize 'Gram Swaraj' through the 73rd Amendment is a hasty conception which ignores the political reality in India as well as the key premises of the Gandhian framework. P.C.Mathur in 'Constitutional Panchayats of India: A Radical Innovative Improvement over the Pre-

²⁸ Balaramulu and Raghavender Rao, Political Leadership in Panchayati Raj: A Study of Mandal Praja Parishad Leadership in Andhra Pradesh. Administrative Change, Jan-June, 1995, Vol. 22(2), Pp. 168-176.

²⁹ Bhargava, B.S and Avinash Samal, Panchayati Raj System: The Orissa Experiment. Prashasnika, Vol. 25(2) 2, July -December, 1998, Pp. 91-105

³⁰ Choudhary, R.C and S.P.Jain. Patterns of Decentralised Governance in Rural India, Volumes I & II, National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad, 1999.

1993 Developmental Panchayati Raj Institutions' is of the view that Article 243-G has a non-mandatory status and leaves the Panchayati Raj Institutions at the mercy of state legislatures. The author says that the conferment of a constitutional status upon the Panchayati Raj Institutions is neither a radical-structural nor a radical-functional innovation in rural India and their gains in democratic improvement in organization of local-level panchayats are not commensurate with the functional agenda of the panchayats as units of self-government.³¹ The discussion made supra gives a positive impression and slightly so, the decentralization in politico-administration arena bringing positive results and peoples' participation in decision-making and its processes are ensured by decentralization. At the same time there are functional problems that work as barriers in decentralization and good governance in Panchayat Raj. There are several important aspects that need to be given not only as a supportive material to the subject proper but also they are essential factors to be discussed only to drive at appropriate factors to be studied and conclusion given- the aspects, as supportive notes for the study, are as follows:

- (a) Background;
- (b) Participation;
- (c) Reservations;
- (d) Women;
- (e) Problems;
- (f) Summary.

3.3 Emerging Leadership among Dalits

Studies on the background of elected representatives are considerable in number. The findings of some important studies are discussed below. Shymala's study in the state of Karnataka finds that a 40% are youth and a majority of them are literates, Hindus and a greater number among them are land owners. Males outnumber women with regard to experience. Males, well-informed citizens and educated are included. In general, landless, tribals and women to a large extent are excluded.

Singh's study of Panchayat members in Uttar Pradesh observes that most of the rural Scheduled Castes leaders are now young and literate and hail from dominant

³¹ Kaushik Asha, Constitutionalization of Panchayats in Gandhian Perspective in Jain R.P., (Ed) Constitutionalization of Panchayati Raj: A Reassessment, Rawat Publications, Jaipur and New Delhi, 1998, Pp. 37-63.

castes and well to do families among their caste groups. Their exposure to mass media, political awareness and political participation is on the increase, but it cannot be rated as very high or satisfactory, which may be the consequences of their socio-economic backwardness. Their entry to the power and authority structure is by and large moved through the process of reservations. But it would be wrong to say that they cannot share power otherwise. Some of them are emerging as leaders by contesting unreserved seats also. This reflects that they are fitting into the larger political processes in the body politics. But their emergence as successful leaders depends upon the group support structure they have. Generally only those persons are able to emerge as leaders who have strong caste, kin and village factional bases. From the point of view of social values they stand half-way between tradition and modernity; they are highly development oriented but feel helpless and are not able to do much because of the oppressive attitudes of the higher castes and classes.³²

Ravi notes that a large proportion of Schedule Caste men than Scheduled Castes women are found to be elected. However, at Gram Panchayat level relatively more of Scheduled Castes women got elected than at the other two levels. Most of the Scheduled Castes women representatives are aged below 40 years where as most of the Scheduled Castes men are above the age of 40 years. A majority of male and female representatives are educated. The percentage of illiterates, especially women is more at the Gram Panchayat level. A majority of the Scheduled Castes leaders have come from nuclear families. Most of the Scheduled Castes' representatives have come from agricultural background followed by business which includes people working as contractors and traders. A majority of the women representatives are house wives. It is clearly found that the new Panchayati Raj System paved way for the participation of poor Scheduled Castes people in the democratic organizations particularly the mandal and village levels. At the Zilla Parishad level, in general the Scheduled Caste representatives are from sound economic background. A majority of Scheduled Castes' leaders have been elected from Telugu Desam and Congress Parties. New entrants, though small in percentage have given way for the

³² Dharam Raj Singh, Rural Leadership among Scheduled Castes, Chugh Publications, Allahabad, India, 1985, Pp.1-238.

participation of Scheduled Castes in democratic process. Non political family background is seen in a majority of the castes.³³

Yet another study about political leadership in the Panchayats in Karimnagar District of Andhra Pradesh Balaramulu and Raghavender Rao found that 44.7 per cent of the seats were reserved for Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Tribes and Women. The upper castes constitute 10 per cent of the total population and they had captured most of the seats. The leadership is emerging from middle-aged groups and the majority of them have intermediate, degree and post-graduate education. Most of them come from agricultural backgrounds. From the study, it was evident that 53.6 per cent had previous political experience. The respondents suggested that elections should be on party basis; all development programs must be brought under the umbrella of Panchayati Raj Institutions. The respondents were of the view that the local bodies do not have sufficient autonomy.³⁴

Based on interviews conducted in Thiruvarangulam Panchayat Union in Pudukottai district of Tamil Nadu with 450 rural poor, 137 ward members and 38 panchayat presidents, randomly selected, explores the leadership pattern in the Panchayat Union through comparing the socio- economic condition of the panchayat leaders and the rural poor and tries to identify the factors that affect them. The findings of the study are, inter-alia, points out that while a number of ward members were elected from lower castes and lower income groups, the panchayat presidents were mostly from a stable economic background among the numerically superior backward castes. The factors attributed by the author to the emergence of such caste and class composition of the panchayat leadership are: the numerical dominance of the caste; voting behaviour of the rural poor; the caste and economic background of the candidates contesting in the panchayat elections. The votes of the lower castes decide the winning candidate in the panchayat president elections. In such contests a number of backward caste candidates aspire for positions. This situation creates a tough competition among them to plan and implement many welfare measures for

³³ R.Venkata Ravi, A Study on Scheduled Castes Members in Panchayati Raj Institutions, Nellore District of Andhra Pradesh, Study Report, Council for Social Development, Hyderabad, 2002, Pp.36-54.

³⁴ Balaramulu and Raghavender Rao, Political Leadership in Panchayati Raj: A Study of Mandal Praja Parishad Leadership in Andhra Pradesh. Administrative Change, Jan-June, 1995, Vol. 22(2), Pp. 168-176.

their development. It invariably influences the shifting of power structure in favour of the less-privileged sections. This is a good article on caste factor in Panchayats.³⁵

Santha's report is the outcome of a study conducted in Haryana, Kerala and Tamil Nadu to assess the performance of elected women representatives and their relative independence in decision-making at the local bodies. The role of sociological factors like caste, class, educational status and religion on the political participation of women has also been taken into consideration. These three states were selected for the study, according to the author, these states put together constitute a representative sample of the social, political and economic realities that exist in India, particularly regarding the development of women. The report gives a comparative overview of women's political participation in these states and describes the factors that influence the level of their participation and also attempts to broaden out understanding of the wider impact of the 73rd Amendment on the role and status of women in rural India.³⁶

A positive development is that the young and middle aged among the Dalits are showing interest in contesting elections to Panchayati Raj Institutions. Gender difference exists and males outnumber females. The educational levels and economic status of the dalits is lower to that of the non-dalits. Emergence of women's leadership is also visible among the Dalits.

3. 4 Caste

Caste plays a significant role in the Indian politics. Several Studies on caste and politics have brought out interesting findings. The following discussion focuses on this aspect. George Mathew³⁷ says that knowing entrenched caste system in villages, it would have been almost impossible to imagine that there will come a day when a village will be headed by Scheduled Castes' man or woman. India has had an unbroken history of village panchayats and caste panchayats; they were not true democratic as privileges attached to caste, land holding and other factors prevented them from functioning as the forum of common people. In those panchayats, these marginalized groups like women, Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes had no

³⁵ Roy, Sam. M. Emerging Panchayat Leadership and Polarisation of Political Power at Grassroots level. *Journal of Rural Development*, Vol.14 (4), Oct-Dec, 1995, Pp. 341-356.

³⁶ Santha, E. K., Political Participation of Women in Panchayati Raj: Haryana, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Institute of Social Sciences, Occasional Paper Series, No. 24, 1999, Pp. 1-72.

³⁷ Mathew, George, 'Power to the People' in M.K. Santhanam (Ed) 50 Years of Indian Independence, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broad Casting, Government of India, 2000. PP. 27-62.

voice at all. Vijaya Lakshmi Purwar in her study in Uttar Pradesh states that the experiment of democracy at the grass roots also brought into play the parochial forces of caste and social hierarchy as well as partisan conflicts and factional strife.³⁸ Lal gives details of the caste based problems of empowerment of Dalits. The Scheduled Castes, in order to survive, surrender to the forces exploiting them; he says claims for equality of treatment are met with cruelty as caste is the basic determinant of equality of Dalits. They remain exteriors encountering social restrictions situated on the margin of economy; the Scheduled Castes face prejudiced treatment. Despite several failures, the Dalits have acquired impudence to question the perpetuation of exploitation against them.³⁹

Khan points out that the Scheduled Castes did not have access to 'power' in the past, not only because of the absence of any of the factors which the caste Hindus had, but also due to their low social status and economic dependence on the caste Hindus. Even the limited franchise that was made available to the people possessing education and property qualifications, till recently was denied to the Scheduled Castes since they lacked these qualifications too. Political freedom which the Scheduled Castes have got is a 'novelty'. It was a thrilling experience to vote, though under influences by the dominant castes and consequent torture, particularly by the employers. Increasing awareness of the voting power, interaction with caste Hindus, membership in the Panchayats, casting of votes are some positive trends, observes Khan⁴⁰

A study on caste and patriarchy in panchayat by Mahipal in Haryana finds that the caste system and patriarchy still exercise a strong hold on panchayat institutions leading to making a mockery on decentralized governance. Referring to strengthen the participation of women elected representatives. It is suggested that adequate support system and education are necessary to make them effective leaders. Special arrangement for women representatives; economic support; sensitization and reorientation of social administrative system; promotion of good practices are suggested by Mahipal⁴¹

³⁸ Vijay Lakshmi Purwar, *Panchayats in Uttar Pradesh*, Tej Kumar Press Lucknow, 1959, P.129.

³⁹ A.K.Lal., *Problems in Empowerment of Dalits* in *Social Exclusion: Essays in Honour of Bindeshwar Patak*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2003.

⁴⁰ Khan, Mumtaz Ali., *The Scheduled Castes and Their Status in India*, Uppal Publishing House, New Delhi, 1980, P.172-185.

⁴¹ Mahipal, *Caste and Patriarchy in Panchayat*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, August 7, 2004, Pp. 3581-3583

Joshi and Narwani point out that the clashes between the higher castes and the newly emerging women/Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes. The struggles have given to the weaker sections the taste of the fight for rights. Some of them are keen for contest from unreserved seats in the next election women contestants are getting support from Mahila Mandals, Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes women candidates, the marginalized among the marginalized got a chance to participate in governance. Though strong women's leadership is resisted by men, women are making head way. It is true that a number of negative factors are coming in the way of affirmative action, legal ambiguities, caste and gender prejudices, poverty, and other factors do come in the way. But the deprived sections have found in the panchayats a forum to ventilate their grievances, a training ground for learning and to work for social justice. The new woman and dalit leadership got strengthened through information, linkages for effective functioning and change in the attitudes of society.⁴² According to Chaudhary the practice of untouchability is present and there is no effort on the part of panchayats to eliminate this evil practice.⁴³

Suresh Misra and Rajvir S.Dhaka⁴⁴ have attempted to review the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in democratizing the decision-making process at the local levels and in mobilizing the people for social and economic development in the State of Haryana. A range of issues including the legal basis of the Panchayati Raj Institutions, the electoral process that has brought new leadership to the forefront; the socio-economic background of the elected representatives, the way they function and the role that they play; the motivations that prompt them for action or no action and this study suggests the reforms still needed to make the system work in accordance with letter and spirit of the Constitution of India have been examined. The study found a nexus between law, social milieu, economic structure, and host of other factors that make a society as a grassroots democracy.

Yatindra Singh Sisodia⁴⁵ points out that the enactment of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act and the subsequent state-wise Panchayati Raj Acts in India have

⁴² Joshi RP and G.S. Narwani, Social Justice through Panchayati Raj in Panchayati Raj in India: Emerging Trends Across the States, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2005, Pp.164-188.

⁴³ Chaudhary, S.N, Dalit and Tribal Leadership in Panchayats, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2004, P.54.

⁴⁴ Suresh Misra and Rajvir S. Dhaka., Grassroots Democracy in Action: A Study of Working of PRIs in Haryana, Concept Publications, New Delhi, 2004, Pp. 1-175.

⁴⁵ Yatindra Singh Sisodia., Implementation of Panchayati Raj and Political Empowerment of Scheduled Caste Women: A Study with special reference to Ujjain Division of Madhya Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh Institute of Social Science Research, Madhya Pradesh, 1998.

brought to frontline significance of grassroots democratic processes. The Statutory provisions for the reservations for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, other backward classes and women are significant decisions so far as the political empowerment of the depressed sections of the society is concerned. This study, aimed at studying the socio-economic background of Scheduled Castes women' leadership in panchayats, implementation of Panchayati Raj and roles of Scheduled Castes women' leadership and attitude of Scheduled Castes women leadership towards the political processes, done in five districts in Ujjain division of Madhya Pradesh. Sarpanch of Gram Panchayats reserved for Scheduled Castes women as unit of observation brought some pertinent findings. The socio-economic status of Scheduled Castes women Sarpanch is average and this more or less the same as that of Scheduled Castes members of society. From the point of view of implementation of Panchayati Raj the Scheduled Castes women leadership has played a very significant role in some specific cases related to their groups while this kind of leadership is in the process of learning for the last four and a half years the basic ideas and principles of Panchayat Raj. As far as their level of consciousness is concerned it leaves much to be desired. However, what is more important to note is that this backward group of society has at last become a part of political process at the rural level. It is also worth mentioning and also significant that, what was the most backward segment of the society was till yesterday is now introduced to the political process and this will provide opportunities of equality and social justice to this section.

A study conducted in Uttar Pradesh from 1990-96 in three districts; Muzzafarnagar, Rae Bareilly and Jaunpur finds the stark reality of a deficient democracy through the Panchayats. The authors opine that the Panchayats have remained an affair of the rich with intense factionalism Panchayati Raj, it remains the raj (rule) of the village strongman and the poor villagers by and large continue to comply as a co-opted caste." Although this is the general trend in Uttar Pradesh, the authors recognize a slow movement of Muslims, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Other Backward Castes (OBCs) emerging in the villages. This study also underlines people's perception that they need a corruption-free panchayat. Lack of land reform is

cited as the single most factor for the ineffective Panchayati Raj system in Uttar Pradesh.⁴⁶

A comparative study in the state of Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana regarding Dalit leadership in Panchayats brings out interesting findings. This study by Narendra Kumar and Manoj Rai focuses on three aspects- representation, inclusion and participation. In Himachal Pradesh, the absence of an oppressive social order, rise in literacy, improvement in the economic conditions and employment opportunities offered by the State have provided Dalits confidence and capability. The panchayats have become more inclusive to them than in the past. But full access to decision-making is not present low social status has to be overcome. The process of inclusion began.⁴⁷

In Uttar Pradesh, Dalits are attempting to improve their position in the new Panchayats. Meaningful and effective participation, though they attend, in the panchayats is not seen. Illiteracy, factionalism and lack of unity among Dalits, continuation of various forms of social discrimination are some hindering factors. Local bureaucracy is unhelpful or helpless. Uttar Pradesh presents an example of a state which is in transition. One good aspect is some non-Dalit leaders are making efforts to improve their position.⁴⁸

The position in Madhya Pradesh is that the state still continues to have an oppressive social structure which does not allow Dalits to make full use of reservations. Illiteracy, low level social and political awareness are coming in the way of Dalits to question the hold of upper and middle classes participation in the meetings is high but not productive. Madhya Pradesh experience has shown that the provision of reservation alone would not help Dalit and much more has to be done.⁴⁹

As regards the influence of castes, it can be observed that the parochial forces of castes and social hierarchy have not disappeared or diminished but the influence is less than that earlier. The Scheduled Castes face prejudiced treatment in general. But there is increasing awareness of the voting power. Caste based struggles have grown

⁴⁶Lieten, G.K and Ravi Srivastava, *Unequal Partners: Power relations, Devolution and Development in Uttar Pradesh*, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 1999.

⁴⁷ Narendra Kumar and Manoj Rai, *Dalit Leadership in Panchayats: A Comparative Study of Four States*, Rawat Publications, Jaipur and New Delhi, 2006, Pp.43-85.

⁴⁸ Narendra Kumar and Manoj Rai, *Dalit Leadership in Panchayats: A Comparative Study of Four States*, Rawat Publications, Jaipur and New Delhi, 2006, Pp.86-117.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, Pp.119-163.

among the weaker sections and also the taste of fights and consequent tendency of assertion. The dalits are not able to fully use the benefits of reservations.

Singh notes, when elections were held to 100 and odd posts in local bodies, across Tamil Nadu in September 2004, four panchayats reserved for Dalits remained untouched. The upper caste leaders prevented Dalits from contesting. Those who dared to contest had to bother consequences including leaving of the village and hiding in some distant place. Their names have been struck off from the electoral rolls through manipulations. Disgusting discrimination, though not accepted by the upper castes is very much seen.⁵⁰

Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) notes that the systematic and historical domination by upper caste groups implied that the constitutional provisions (reservations) are likely to be resisted fiercely. Despite being elected to public offices, a vast majority of the dalit representatives are unable to effectively perform their roles.⁵¹

Based on a study of six villages in Karnataka Parvathamma finds that a majority of weaker sections are agricultural labourers and they depend on the upper castes for their survival. The representation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on village statutory panchayats has not brought about substantial changes in the situation. Political representation has not been helpful to bring about the emergence of Scheduled Castes' leaders in rural India. Scheduled Castes' political leadership at upper levels is very much divided. Local Scheduled Caste leaders are not able without the economic base and reduced them to economic dependence. It is social justice and not distributive justice that is more important.⁵² An effort on the part of Dalits to fight against caste based subjugation is evident.

3. 5 Dalits' Participation in Panchayat Raj

Participation of all sections of society including Dalits is important in democracy. The following description gives details of the participatory trends of Dalits in Panchayat Raj. Gurumurthy points out that the participation of weaker sections as Panchayat Raj functionaries at the village level/grass root level is not satisfactory. They continued to be passive participants in its meetings and proceedings.

⁵⁰ Singh.R. Bhagwan, Where Dalit don't contest Polls: Upper Caste make some reserved panchayats post remain vacant, Deccan Chronicle, 24, September, 2004.

⁵¹ Rajesh Tandon, Dalits Can Lead, Participatory Research In Asia, New Delhi, 2004 (Unpublished), Pp.1-3.

⁵² Parvathamma, C., "Panchayati Raj and Weaker Sections" in Scheduled Castes at the Cross Roads, Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi, 1989, Pp.94-107.

This is because they lacked the essential requisites of participation like education and sufficient income. This is a pre 73rd Amendment Analysis.⁵³

Shymala opines that the findings of the study lend credence to the hypothesis that instead of continuing the old and traditional, the leadership emerging among SCs is new and development oriented and mobility oriented and large sections of them belong to landless working class. Secondly, the process of transfer of power to the people at the grassroots level has begun. The reservation policy has altered the rural power structure in favour of the marginalized. The new generation has started participating in the activities of Panchayat Raj Institutions. But this does not mean that one can afford to be complacent. The new entrants have yet to acquire the knowledge and skills required to become meaningfully functional. Quite a few of them have been only mouthpieces of strong sections, given the ando-centric nature of the society, it is more so in the case of women. Grama Sabha is yet to go along way to play its decisive role. The study is makes a changed situation clear after the amendment.⁵⁴

Vijay Kumar's study on Scheduled Caste Panchayat Pradhans in India spreads over six village panchayats in four Community Development Blocks. With the main objective of looking into the political changes in rural community with respect to time and space. In regard to performance of the Pradhans, it was found that, the Scheduled Castes Pradhans could ensure that the various benefits provided by the government reach the Scheduled Caste masses. Development schemes became more successful during the tenure of Scheduled Castes Pradhans, where as non-Scheduled Caste Pradhans paid less attention to these programmes. On the other hand, certain complication of social structure became apparent with the upper caste creating hurdles for the Scheduled Castes Pradhans.⁵⁵ The contribution of Scheduled Castes' Sarpanches to Scheduled Castes is noted in this study. Besley, Pande, Rahman and Rao have examined critical questions relating to the impact of political geography,

⁵³ Gurumurthy, U, Panchayati raj and Weaker sections, Ashish Publications, New Delhi, 1987.

⁵⁴ Shymala, C.K., Elected Representation in Rural Decentralized Governance: Socio-Economic Analysis of Zilla Panchayat Members of Karnataka, Man and Development, Vol.23, No.2, June 2001, P.8-18.

⁵⁵ Vijay Kumar., Scheduled Caste Panchayat Pradhans in India: A Study of Western Uttar Pradesh, Ajantha Publications (India), Delhi, 1989.

political identity and reservation of post on providing public goods at the grass roots level. They find that final decision-making power rests with the Grama Panchayat head and that there is little consensus on how to develop governance structures that are responsive to the interests of the poor.⁵⁶

A case study of the Pappapatti Panchayat in Madhurai district of Tamilnadu by Sumathi and Sudersen opine that the Dalits elected as panchayat presidents are not allowed to function. Where the position of sarpanch is reserved for Dalits the fight in fact will be between the various upper castes. The upper castes that supports the Dalits would be called as people belong to Dalitnadu. There is also feeling among upper castes their that own slaves can not rule them. They would argue that tradition and devine order can not be intergreted by any agency in the name of Constitution and Parliament. The youth from upper castes/higher castes expresed their anguish at the Dalits holding chair position. In fact the sprit of 73rd Constitution Amendment Act is subotaged.⁵⁷ This study speaks of the efforts of Upper Castes' domination

Venkata Ravi has conducted an extensive study on the participation of Scheduled Caste members in Panchayati Raj Institutions of Andhra Pradesh. He states that Scheduled Castes leaders of Panchayats are found to be facing problems from upper castes' members. There has been communication disability and problems relating to awareness. But the upper age group (above 40 years) Scheduled Castes leaders have faced less problems than the lower age (below 40 years) group Scheduled Caste leaders. Thus there has been significance in participation. The lower age group Scheduled Caste leaders have been found to be possessing less communicating facilities and less accomodating attitudes, especially with officials and senior leaders. Domination by the upper castes' senior local leaders is found. It is found that the participation of Scheduled Caste men is more frequent than that of women. Scheduled Caste leaders who were close to political parties attended

⁵⁶ Besley, T., Pande, R., Rahman, L. and Rao, V., 'The Politics of Public Good Provision: Evidence from Indian Local Governments', 2004, Yale University, London School of Economics, World Bank and IMF <http://econ.lse.ac.uk/staff/tbesley/papers/politics.pdf>

⁵⁷ Sumathi.S and V.Sudarsen., What Does the New Panchayat System Guarantee? A Case Study of Pappapatti, Economic and Political Weekly, August 20, 2005, Pp.3751-3757.

meetings regularly. At the panchayat level Scheduled Caste leaders especially women have not discussed or interacted.⁵⁸

Sisodia examines the role of the representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions in the tribal regions of Madhya Pradesh, which is a rich treasure house of tribal communities. It is found that the level of participation of people at the grass roots has been very low and the Gram Sabhas are almost formal institutions with no participatory role in various assigned works. Both the leadership and bureaucracy have not been able to strengthen the Grama Sabha. A majority of the Panchayat representatives are not aware of the quorum required for Gram Sabha meetings; caste, class and gender divide the villages. Sarpanches and other influential people dominate the decision-making process.⁵⁹

Chaudhary observes that Dalit representatives are asked to sign on papers sent to them. They are not asked to attend meetings.⁶⁰ Based on field work during 1991 to 95, Lietau finds that in West Bengal, Panchayats ensure the democratic participation of the poorest because the state resorted to agrarian development through strengthening Panchayati Raj with a strong pro-poor orientation.⁶¹

The extent of participation of the Scheduled Castes in the Panchayati Raj Institution is varying. It ranged from passive participation to active participation. The leadership emerging among Scheduled Castes is new and development oriented. The process of transfer of power has begun. Reservation policy has altered the rural power structure in favour of the marginalised. Scheduled Castes' representatives are giving a helping hand to their community to develop.

The extent to which numerical representation has been successful in the actual exercise of power by weaker sections is examined by Patnaik. Her study of four gram panchayats in Orissa's Dhenkanal district finds that elected representatives were not able to properly articulate important specific interests. They have not also been able to exercise their own judgement in panchayat decision-making, thus bringing into

⁵⁸ R.Venkata Ravi, A Study on Scheduled Caste Members in Panchayati Raj Institutions, Nellore District of Andhra Pradesh, Study Report, Council for Social Development, Hyderabad, 2002 Pp. 83-85

⁵⁹ Sisodia Yatindra Singh, Panchayat Raj in Tribal Regions of Madhya Pradesh: Law and Practice in Functioning of Panchayati Raj System (Ed) Yatindra Singh Sisodia, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2005, Pp.143-156.

⁶⁰ Chaudhary, Shyam Nandan, Dalits and Tribal Leadership in Panchayats, Concept Publishing Company, 2004, P.50.

⁶¹ Lietau, G.K, Development, Devolution and Democracy: Village Discourse in West Bengal, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1996.

question the very notion of representation of marginalized groups through affirmative action. However, she says that there definitely exists scope for change among those representatives, who with time and experience will be able to effectively represent their constituency.⁶² Another study reveals that only a limited proportion of Scheduled Castes representatives have put poor attendance at the Grama Panchayat meetings. Women members' attendance has been less than that of male members. A majority of Scheduled Castes members attend the mandal meetings. Less educated put poor attendance, caste hierarchy played an important role in attendance. Participation during discussion is very less. Men have not allowed women to take part in discussion. Lack of education and participation are positively related. A notable difference is observed between trained and untrained leaders' degree of participating in decision-making.⁶³

Pundir conducted a study of Participation of Scheduled Castes in political process and decision-making in four villages of Uttar Pradesh where the Scheduled Castes are numerically preponderant and occupationally diversified, they have emerged self confident and efficacious through participation in the decision-making and political process. Numerical strength contributed to participation. It is clearly found that participation of Scheduled Castes in the political and decision-making process has increased quantitatively and qualitatively.⁶⁴

3. 6 Reservations

Reservation is a means of including the excluded. Dharam Raj Singh⁶⁵ rightly points out that after independence, large scale efforts were initiated to induct the weaker and the deprived sections of the society in the wider political culture of the country. Constitutional safeguards, reservations and other facilities for the Scheduled Castes were source of the important steps in this direction. The Scheduled Castes participation in politics and leadership was considered all the more significant for rural socio-economic development and mobility. Reservation in Panchayati Raj

⁶² Patnaik Pratyusna, Affirmative Action and Representation of Weaker Sections: Participation and Accountability in Orissa's Panchayats, Economic and Political Weekly, October, 29 2005, Pp.4753-4761.

⁶³ R.Venkata Ravi, A Study on Scheduled Castes Members in Panchayati Raj Institutions, Nellore District of Andhra Pradesh, Study Report, Council for Social Development, 2002 Hyderabad , Pp.53-86.

⁶⁴ Pundir, J.K., Changing Patterns of Scheduled Castes, Rawat Publication, Jaipur and New Delhi, 1997, Pp.85-98.

⁶⁵ Singh, D.R., Rural Leadership among Scheduled Castes, Chugh Publications, Allahabad, India, 1985.

Institutions is a process through which they could seek entry into village power structure and articulate the interests of their castes and communities.

Reservations paved the way to all weaker sections to become sarpanches or members of panchayat. There are more than half a million men and women from Scheduled Castes who have contested and won panchayat elections to occupy political spaces at local level by 1996. However, caste and patriarchy have larger implications in the emergence and performance of leaders belonging to Scheduled Castes at the grass root level. A majority of people suffering from the effects of traditional oppressive power structures are unable to utilize effectively the new opportunities provided through panchayats. Serious conflicts have taken place during and after the elections in their functioning in the villages because of the new system of powerful panchayats.⁶⁶ In one study Aziz found more or less the same phenomena. While dealing with the relationship between local level traditional power structure, Panchayati Raj and the Dalits he said,“ attempts made to access power to weaker sections by reserving seats and executive positions have altered hitherto dominant caste centered rural power structure. It should not go to the credit of the makers of law to have given seats and executive positions to the extent of 18 per cent to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe candidates and 33.3 per cent each to backward communities and women. However, since most of the elected representatives are first generation politicians there is a need for providing training to them.”⁶⁷ This study reveals a changed scenario with regard to empowerment of Dalits.

According to a study conducted by Duflo and Chattopadhyay, male, well-informed citizens and educated people are included; and landless people, tribals and women are excluded. Original assumptions relating to caste and wealth as determinants of exclusion were found not to be true. Reservation of elected positions in Panchayati Raj Institutions, which has been supported on the grounds that it will equalize power differentials between privileged and under-privileged castes, as well as between men and women, has had a limited impact. Data from the study shows that

⁶⁶ Mathew, George, 'Power to the People' in M.K. Santhanam (Ed) 50 Years of Indian Independence, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broad Casting, Government of India, 2000. Pp. 27-62.

⁶⁷ Abdul Aziz, Decentralization: Mandal Panchayat System in Karnataka, National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad, 1994, Pp.132-47. (For further details see S.N.Chaudhary, Dalit and Tribal Leadership in Panchayats, Concept Publications Company, New Delhi, 2004, P.17)

levels of inclusion are not higher for either women or tribal people when a position is reserved for a person from that category. The study also found that the majority of rural people did not regard panchayats as particularly relevant to their lives, and had low levels of interest in the panchayat as an instrument of democracy and development. The study recommends policy interventions to improve inclusion and spread benefits more equitably among village populations.⁶⁸ Political reservation is relevant for within-village allocation of low spill-over goods but not for overall village allocation.

Peter Ronald de Souza in his paper “The Struggle for Local Government: Indian Democracy’s New Phase”, says that the 73rd Constitutional Amendment of 1993 giving local government a constitutional status introduced new institutions into the working of Indian democracy through several significant innovations, such as reservations of seats for marginal groups, women, Dalits, and Adivasis; creation of a decentralized planning mechanism; establishment of state election commissions to oversee local elections and state finance commissions to prepare a blueprint for sharing of state revenues; and institutionalization of the village assembly (gram sabha). This article examines the implications of these innovations for local government and vulnerable groups in the context of Indian democracy. It does so within the larger debate on the capability of political institutions to produce outcomes and so a new political culture.⁶⁹

Raghabendra Chattopadhyay and Esther Duflo examined the impact of reservation through a nation wide randomized sample. The findings suggest that reservation has positive impact. Women representatives have given preference to invest more in goods that are relevant to the needs of women, like water and roads. They prefer to invest less in goods that are less relevant to the needs of women. Scheduled Castes’ Pradhans preferred to invest a large share of public goods in Scheduled Castes’ hamlets than the non-Scheduled Castes’ Pradhans. It is found that

⁶⁸Ruth J. Alsop, Anirudh Krishna and Disa Sjoblom, Inclusion and Local Elected Governments: The Panchayat Raj System in India, South Asia Region, Social Development Unit, Paper No.37, World Bank, Washington D.C, 2001.

⁶⁹ Peter Ronald deSouza, The Struggle for Local Government: Indian Democracy’s New Phase, Publius: The Journal of Federalism, Oxford Journals, Oxford University Press, 2003, Vol.33 No.4, Pp.99-118.

the Scheduled Caste women could exercise effective control over decision-making processes. It is pointed to note the Women representatives are not entirely controlled by the husbands. This study in West Bengal and Rajasthan found that reservation of elected seats is an effective tool to safeguard the interests of the weaker sections.⁷⁰ The study reveals that there are positive trends found in that regard. Further the study is mainly intended to examine the interface between panchayats and Dalit leadership using a semi structure interview schedule and informal discussions, Chaudhary finds the impact of the new assignment in Panchayati Raj Institutions, positive as well as negative; knowledge of reservation facility is not complete; training facilities are limited and even those who received have not had intensive training and their awareness levels are low.⁷¹

According to Gowda the statutory reservation of seats in the Panchayati Raj Institutions provided an opportunity to rural women to formally involve themselves in the development process at the grassroots level and to secure as many development benefits as possible to the local community. An attempt to examine the extent to which women members of Mandal Panchayats (the lower tier in the Panchayati Raj System of Karnataka between 1987 and 1992) secured development benefits to the people in their villages under different development programs is made. The study reveals that the majority of women members had put up fairly better development role performance; they secured development benefits to the people of their villages mainly in the fields of agriculture, public works and civic amenities, welfare and education. They had also involved themselves in organizing health programs for the benefit of people in their villages or Mandal area. The assistance secured by women members to the people under different programs was economic in nature and this reflects upon the basic needs of rural communities. The study revealed that among the socio-economic attributes such as age, education, caste, annual household income and land-holdings

⁷⁰ Raghavendra Chattopadhyay and Esther Duflo "The impact of Reservation in the Panchayati Raj: Evidence from a Nationwide Randomized Experiment", November 2003.

⁷¹ Chaudhary, S.N, Dalits and Tribal Leadership in Panchayats, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2004, Pp.40-47.

of women leaders, only education and annual household income had significant and positive relationship with their developmental role performance.⁷²

Karnataka's Panchayati Raj Act of 1983 was considered one of the most progressive pieces of legislation. The act had made it possible through various measures for the majority of the rural people to participate in the functioning of the panchayats. However, according to the author, the 1993 Panchayati Raj Act was a retrograde step in many ways. The paper considers the participation of disadvantaged groups such as women and Scheduled Castes in the panchayats, particularly in the Mandal panchayats of the 1983 Act, and the Grama Panchayats of the 1993 Act respectively. It tries to gauge the effect of their elections on the mandal and grama panchayat representatives' social and economic status and the 'power', and 'social honour' that have accrued to them. The general conclusion reached is that, although reservations to the panchayats enabled a very substantial number of people from various socio-economic groups, elected members, their participation, for the most part, can hardly be considered independent or effective. The handicaps faced by most members of these groups have, through the present form of reservations, made it much easier for the dominant groups of rural society, the elite's, to continue their dominance and control of the panchayats. There is still some time before the disadvantaged groups in society can find a space for themselves in the political structure at the local level.⁷³ Reservation, to some extent helped the Dalits to find place in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Original assumptions relating to caste, wealth as determinants of exclusion have been less relevant now. Reservation, in a way produced to a small extent positive impact. Women members are giving preferences to women's concerns.

After reviewing the literature on the aspect of reservation provided to Dalits in Panchayat Raj institutions in various states, it becomes pertinent to focus on Dalit women and their participation in rural local bodies.

3.7 Women

As already pointed out, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment provided for reservation of one third of the seats and chair positions to women who include dalit

⁷² Gowda, S. Govinda, M.S.Dhadave and M.V.Srinivasa Gowda, Developmental Role of Women Members of Panchayati Raj Institutions: A Study in Karnataka. Journal of Rural Development, Vol.15, No. 2, 1996, Pp.249-259.

⁷³Inbanathan, Anand, Decentralization and Affirmative Action: The Case of Panchayats in Karnataka. Journal of Social and Economic Development, Vol. 2 (2), July-Dec, 1999, Pp. 269-286.

women also. The experience of women in the period following 1993 is discussed below.

Kanango writes about women's leadership in the Panchayati Raj Institutions with special reference to the state of West Bengal. The main purpose of this paper is to examine women's leadership in the political arena in the background of the 73rd Constitutional amendment. He further observed that all women candidates were not necessarily formal members of political parties. Another factor for selecting women candidates is for their background and training in different areas. For example, quite a few Anganwadi workers got nomination and got elected too. It was also seen that women instructors of Adult Literacy Centres were selected for nomination. Besides, many of the women candidates had undergone a number of training under Training Programmes the scheme of Self-Employment (TRYSEM-Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWACRA) and some other programmes carried out by the Development Block. Women entered in panchayat politics for various reasons. Some entered because they were asked by the party, but some other entered to get high status. Women representatives also face difficulties. One of the representatives said 'I spoke in the meetings about the needs of my area I had been attending the meetings quite regularly in the beginning but the men folk did not pay any attention to what I said' she conveyed.⁷⁴

Writing about the journey of women towards empowerment through Panchayati Raj Institutions, Bidyut Mohanty⁷⁵ says where voluntary organizations working for Women's Welfare and Mahila Samakya (Women's Federations) are active, women panchayat members are contributing effectively to women's development.

E.K.Santa reveals that the reservation of 33 percent of seats for women in Panchayat Raj, Institutions enabled thousands of women to contest elections and entered local government bodies for the first time. This work assessed the performance of elected women representatives and their relative independence in

⁷⁴ Kanango, S.D, Panchayati Raj and Emerging Women Leadership: An Overview, Social Action, 46 (1), 1996, Pp.76-91.

⁷⁵ Bidyut, Mohanty, (Ed) "Women and Political Empowerment", Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi, 1995, 96 and 97.

decision-making at local caste, class, educational status and religion on the political participation of women has also been taken into consideration⁷⁶.

A.Karam points out that women's participation in politics is an essential part of the democratic process. However, there are many socio-economic and socio-cultural obstacles to participation. This concluding chapter forms an International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance publication gives an overview of these obstacles and offers recommendations on how to overcome them, drawing on case studies from Russia, Egypt, Scandinavia, India, Costa Rica and South Africa. The main impediments to participation are: lack of political party support, male orientated norms, male dominated structures, insufficient media support, a lack of quotas, electoral systems that are not conducive to women's participation, a lack of leadership orientation and training for women, and insufficient networking with women's organisations. These impediments are similar in all the countries studied, despite their cultural and geopolitical differences. The aim of participation should be to go beyond 'tokenism' and move towards a women's perspective so that changes can be made on issues that affect women. This can be achieved by bolstering their numbers in parliament, using the electoral system and quotas.⁷⁷

Another Study of Chattopadhyay and Esther Duflo find that gender definitely influences policy decisions. It is noticed that reservation affects policy choices. Women representatives give preference to women needs and the process of bargaining is seen.⁷⁸

Sachidanda argues that the 73rd Constitutional Amendment has the most profound impact on the socio-economic and political empowerment of women. In his study on the empowerment of elected Scheduled Castes members through PRIs, when the panchayat elections were announced, more than 1/3 of the 358 women representatives decided to contest on their own. Despite problems like lack of funds, absence of security, resistance from dominant persons and vested interests as well as anti-social elements, the women representatives did perform their duties; but

⁷⁶ Santha,E.K., 1999, Political Participation of Women in Panchayat Raj Haryana, Kerala and Tamilnadu, Institute of Social Sciences Occasional Papers Series, 24,1999, Pp.72.

⁷⁷ Karam, A. 1998, 'Beyond Token Representation', in Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers, ed. A Karam, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Stockholm, pp. 191 - 198.

⁷⁸ Raghavendra Chattopadhyay and Esther Duflo "The impact of Reservation in the Panchayati Raj: Evidence from a Nationwide Randomized Experiment", November 2003.

improvement in their status; commanded respect from the public and created awareness among the Scheduled Castes women of their rights and also the schemes. They motivated Scheduled Caste women to organize themselves. A sense of accommodation between the Scheduled Castes and other segments of the population began. Building up an integrated rural society is noticed.⁷⁹

Only Scheduled Caste men could get chance to head the panchayats and Scheduled Castes women are given very less chance for heading. Thus Scheduled Castes women are empowered for limited extent of participation under the new panchayat system.⁸⁰ Singh gives a detailed account of the empowerment of Scheduled Caste women in Panchayati Raj Institutions in Haryana. He notes that a majority of them are illiterates, married and belong to the age group of 35-45years. They assumed the roles because of reservation facility. They are housewives and daily wage labourers. The maximum annual family income is Rs. 15000. A majority of them did not have association with political organizations other than the Panchayati Raj Institutions. It is the support of the family members and their community that brought them into these positions. Though they did not know the procedure of nominations, even they conducted active door to door campaign. Their attendance to the meetings of the Panchayati Raj Institutions was irregular. Preoccupation with household activities, family matters and health problems were cited as reasons for not attending. They remained very much dependent on their families, communities and men in performing their expected roles. Skills relating to political participation and using political power are very limited.⁸¹

Chaya studied the role of women members of PRIs in Gujarat in relation to their empowerment. It is observed that the 73rd Constitutional Amendment has brought about a sea change in the involvement and participation of women in PRIs.

⁷⁹ Sachidanda, Empowerment of Elected Scheduled Castes Member through Panchayati Raj Institutions, Report of the Project Sponsored by Planning Commission, New Delhi, (Unpublished), Pp.82-91.

⁸⁰ Vekata Ravi, A Study on Participation of Scheduled Caste Members in Panchayati Raj Institutions of Andhra Pradesh, Council for Social Development, Southern Regional Office, Hyderabad, 2002, P.54.

⁸¹ Singh, A.N., Empowerment of the Scheduled Caste women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions in Haryana: Opportunities for Participation and Aailed Status, in Verma. RBS, H.S.Verma and Raj Kumar Singh (eds) Empowerment of the Weaker Sections in India, Serials Publications, New Delhi, 2006, Pp.335-347.

In a way, says Chaya 'it is silent revolution i.e a sudden and invisible change'. Being a woman social customs, traditions and practices have hindered real empowerment. Setting of women's agenda in the Panchayati Raj Institutions is a mere nil. Role conflict and male domination are noticed. Challenges regarding power relationship at house, in society and office may not change for a long time to cure. And to that extent, she thinks, their role would remain names sake formal and restricted.⁸²

Deepika Gupta examines the selection process, background awareness levels and performance of women representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Madhya Pradesh identifying the causes that came after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, she says that women stopped wearing veils, gained confidence and realised the need of being literate and educated and (around 30%) were very articulate and capable. They began to discuss women's issues among themselves. Women's participation should be an enthusiastic picture. The percentage of Scheduled Castes women getting elected unopposed is very less (8.5%) and that of candidates in general is 58.59. The findings support the fact that all women are not dummy candidates. Even the dummy candidates, began to perform their role independently after getting elected. It is found that 2/3 of the women representatives are literate and the SC Woman Sarpanches are educationally better than their male counterparts. A high percentage of women representatives (86.17) regularly attended meetings. Half of the SC woman representatives, who have attended meetings, have proved that they are not mere spectators and they had put their views on various proposals. In general 1/3 of the women leaders have proved to be very articulated. Women have proved that the powers given to them and the trust reposed in their ability to work were not erroneous.⁸³

Baviskar's case studies of Mandume, Alwadi and Pilkod village Panchayats in Maharashtra, where Other Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and other castes women have served as Sarpanches respectively produced interesting findings. Women entry into the political institutions at the village level is the beginning of long journey

⁸² Patel Chaya, Empowering Women through Panchayati Raj Institutions in Gujarat: Some Field Experiences, in Yatindra Singh Sisodia (Ed) Functioning of Panchayati Raj System, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2005, Pp. 165-173.

⁸³ Patel Chaya, Empowering Women through Panchayati Raj Institutions in Gujarat: Some Field Experiences, in Yatindra Singh Sisodia (Ed) Functioning of Panchayati Raj System, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2005, Pp. 176-184.

of empowerment. Presiding over the meetings, signing as office bearer are sign of empowerment, however limited it might be. The process of getting benefits is also acquired by them. First, women leaders did work for the benefit of women and also for that of community despite gender based discrimination, poverty, limited educational qualifications and social background, women did show their abilities.⁸⁴

Patil's paper on empowerment of Scheduled Castes women in three villages of Kolhapur district in Maharashtra finds that the percentage of women, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe women Sarpanches has increased over the years in Maharashtra. There are examples of all women Gram Panchayats which have done commendable work in various aspects. There is evidence of efficient role performance by women. Though the problems of illiteracy, non-co-operation from officials, male domination, harassment, pressure of dominant caste leadership on dalits existed, a changing situation is visible. Women are marching on the challenging road towards empowerment. Because of the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act, women could come to the political fore and their status moved upward. A majority of the Gram Panchayat members favoured reservation.⁸⁵

Kamble and Salunkhe studied the factors influencing women's participation in Panchayati Raj. Based on their empirical study of elected women representatives, they found that 69.2% of the Schedule Castes representatives have reported active participation in discussion in Panchayati Raj Institutions and the percentage of the women belonging to other categories less than that. The Scheduled Castes women did enjoy relatively better freedom to participate. Age, education, occupation family income, caste; community background and political background of the family have had their impact on participation even in discussions. Higher levels of education, exposure to the world outside of the house, higher levels of income and influential family political background are positive associated with active participation⁸⁶

Santhosh Kumar's Study of marginalized sections in rural governance in relation to positive discrimination notes that change has varied between various

⁸⁴ Baviskar, B.S, Including the Excluded, Empowering the Powerless: Case Studies of Panchayati Raj in Maharashtra in Bishnu C.Barik and Umesh Sahoo, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2008, Pp. 11-38.

⁸⁵ Patil, R.B, Empowerment of Scheduled Castes and Women: A Study of Three villages in Kolhapur District, in Bishnu C.Barik and Umesh Sahoo, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2008, Pp. 58-73.

⁸⁶ Kamble Archana (Jagatkar) and Salunkhe, Factors Influencing Women's Participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions, in Bishnu C.Barik and Umesh Sahoo, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2008, Pp. 175-203.

regions of the state. Effective or ineffective women and dalit leadership is the result of a combination of factors cutting across socio-economic culture, gender, caste and class. Reservation policy has provided avenues for social and economic mobility and for climbing the social ladder through political steps. Santhosh Kumar suggests a two pronged strategy for getting positive results education and financial benefits are necessary for self emancipation and empowerment. Access to natural resources through redistribution is also necessary these would enable the socially and economically peripheral sections of society to organize and fight against discrimination and subjugation. Then a meaningful participation in governance is possible.⁸⁷

Discrimination leading to denial of rights and the need for protecting the rights of the marginalised groups focussed in the study of Sahai. He says that the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are stopped and even forcibly stopped by upper castes, from enjoying their rights. Humiliation, prevention from voting, manipulations are some of human rights violations that have occurred. Scheduled Castes representatives are made to follow the wishes of the upper/ dominant caste, similar is the position of the Scheduled Tribes. Some Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes women panchayat representatives have experienced serious backlashes. There have been instances of the tribal women representatives of panchayats being stripped by dominant caste people. Sahai proposes that civil society mainly Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and parties could play significant role in making the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act a ground reality. In other words, serious intervention of civil society in the process of decentralization is necessary.⁸⁸

Joshi in his paper on the functioning of Panchayati Raj in Scheduled Areas of Gujarat finds that people's representatives have shown interests in discussing issues like woods, electricity, drinking water, which are among the basic needs. Low level of awareness, illiteracy, low level attendance at Gram Sabha meetings by officials are some of the bottlenecks. However, the functioning of Panchayati Raj in Scheduled

⁸⁷ Santhosh Kumar, Impact of Positive Discrimination on Leadership of Marginalized Sections in Rural Governance: Some Concerns in Bishnu C.Barik and Umesh Sahoo, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2008, Pp.175-203.

⁸⁸ Gaurang R. Sahay, Decentralisation, Panchayati Raj and the Rights of Marginalised Groups in India: A Case for Civil Society, in Bishnu C.Barik and Umesh Sahoo, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2008, Pp.103-120.

Areas of Gujarat has opened up possibility of self rule. The tribals slowly understanding the importance of Panchayati Raj and are becoming conscious of the rights and responsibilities.⁸⁹

Narendra Kumar and Manoj Rai's study of Dalit leaders in the panchayats of Madhya Pradesh reveals that Dalit women, despite being elected to the panchayats, continue to suffer on both the counts of caste and gender. Participation of women in the Panchayats is supported by the leaders but they are sceptical about the tasks given to women.⁹⁰ Continued prevalence of caste based discrimination, role of vested interests are coming the way of Dalits' participation in Haryana. Entry of young Dalits in Panchayats is a positive trend in the state. The condition of Dalits is better than Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Reservation did not bring larger avenues to Dalits. The picture is not a completely negative in the context of the role of Dalits. Provision of education and employment by the state which help to raise the capabilities of Dalits and political mobilization through civil society and political parties are considered to be useful. "The process of change from aristocratic to democratic politics is going on". The authors say "but it remains incomplete"⁹¹

Singh and Bahmani's study of Scheduled Castes women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions of Haryana is mainly carried out to examine their empowerment and political experience and motivations. It is found that a majority of the Scheduled Castes women contested due to the opportunity of reservation. They did not have political experience before they contested (75.5%). They have held door to door campaign in general only less than 20% of them have regularly attended all the meetings and a little less than this had participation in the meeting. Training, advance notice of meetings, careful discussion of the agenda and independent role of women members are among the suggestions made.⁹²

⁸⁹ Joshi Satyakam, Functioning of Panchayati Raj in Scheduled Areas of Gujarat, in Bishnu C. Barik and Umesh Sahoo, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2008, Pp.158-173.

⁹⁰ Narendra Kumar and Manoj Rai, Dalit Leadership in Panchayats: A Comparative Study of Four States, Rawat Publication, Jaipur and New Delhi, 2006, Pp.152-164.

⁹¹ Narendra Kumar and Manoj Rai, Dalit Leadership in Panchayats: A Comparative Study of Four States, Rawat Publication, Jaipur and New Delhi, 2006, P.216.

⁹² Singh A.N and B.S Bahmani, Scheduled Castes Women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions: Experience and Approaches for Betterment, in Surat Singh (Ed) Decentralized Governance in India: Myth and Reality, Deep and Deep Publications, New Delhi, 2004, Pp.185-191.

Ravi and Sunder Raj, examining the emerging situation and concerns in decentralisation and development in India identified several successful cases of women's participation in local self governments. Nirmal Thapar, Dhaneshwari Devi, Swaran Kumari and Santhosh of Himachal Pradesh have successfully carried out developmental works in their areas. Women Sarpanches are found to be encouraging and bringing of other women into the panchayats. Experiences in village level organizations have helped these women to take advantage of reservation. They gained collective bargaining strength. They have raised voices on many social issues affecting their lives. The entry of women in panchayats brought an interesting change in population control movement. Small family norm is propagated by them. Some of them stood as role models in this regard. In Madhya Pradesh, Kiran Kanchet, a proactive woman Sarpanch used her position for the promotion of women welfare. She worked for the construction of maternity and child centre in the land which was brought back to the panchayat from the encroachers. Premlatha Jain of Madhya Pradesh worked to get more class rooms to girls in a school. A woman Sarpanch of Andhra Pradesh worked for the effective use of waste land for public purposes. Ravi and Raj note that women elected to Panchayati Raj Institutions have effectively proved that they can make significant contribution to rural development and also to nation building. "Factors like illiteracy, less experience, male domination and untouchability, are some problems faced by these women creating unfavourable environment", the authors say.⁹³

Gill conceptualises the experiences of women members in his paper on Empowering Women through Panchayats. Based essentially on the information from Panchayati Raj update, the success and struggle stories of women representatives are evaluated. Gill argues that the beginning has been impressive, with the anxious and some times aggressive reactions from the male patriarchs. It also argued that gender per se does not make much impact. But when it is supplemented by caste and class, things get worse. Dalit women are often traumatized by their male colleagues. There is need to bring changes in the mind set of the electorate, make incumbents and bureaucrats. Women have to be prepared to participate in decision-making on par with their male colleagues. Gill notes that women have got the taste of freedom, confidence and exposure to the outside world with women being elected to

⁹³ Ravi. R, Venkata and D.Sunder Raj, Decentralisation and Development in India (Emerging Situation and Concerns), Man and Development, Dec, 2006, Pp.49-61.

panchayats the agenda underwent significant change. All women panchayats have done very good job in providing public amenities. Innovative, honest and committed women came to the fore front to assume leadership roles. Interaction with villagers by these women helped a lot. In 2005 Tilia Devi, a member of Lakhnore Block Panchayat was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Fatima bee, the Sarpanch of Kalva village in Andhra Pradesh was given Best Sarpanch Award. Dalit women Sarpanches, Shanta Bai (Scheduled Tribe), Uma Arsay (Scheduled Castes) leaders hoisted the national flag, despite opposition. Women representatives did face problems like enrobing, insults leading to suicide attempts and illtreatment. Threats of rape, kidnaps have been present. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment has ‘feminized the very patriarchal agrarian political scene in India’ and made the rope walk light for women. It is necessary that the ground situation should be shaped in the way consistent with the Constitution Amendment, says Gill.⁹⁴

Bhargava and Sudha’s study on Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions adds to the existing literature on political empowerment of women. The paper gives valuable data on elected women panchayat members in the 1987 elections in various districts of Karnataka. It gives an account of positive aspects of women's reservation with empirical evidences, but concludes that there is a need to raise the consciousness of women so that they can bring about social change. The authors say “it is a herculean task in view of the low literacy, health, lack of consciousness and poor living conditions. Now women are more than nominal in the political bodies and this is an epoch-making step in women's empowerment and political participation”, say the authors.⁹⁵

Datta’s paper examines the problems and prospects of political empowerment of rural women through participation in village self-government in India. It provides an overview of the evolution of local self-government institutions in India and focuses on the empowerment of rural women through them. This paper discusses against the backdrop of the approaches to the problem by the various committees and commissions on Panchayats and women. The author argues that if women's empowerment has to be successful then the existing feudal-patriarchal

⁹⁴ Rajesh Gill, Empowering Women through Panchayats (Stories of Success and Struggle from India), Man and Development, Dec 2006, Pp.83-103.

⁹⁵ Bhargava, B.S and K Subha, Political Empowerment of Women: The Case of Karnataka’s Experiments with Panchayati Raj. Political Economy Journal of India, 1994, Vol. 3(2), Pp. 28-36.

structure in most parts of the country has to be dismantled. Moreover, women's empowerment through the panchayats requires a sustained campaign and vigorous efforts for creating awareness about their rights and duties.⁹⁶

Snehalata discusses the changes in the rural power structure after the induction of women into the Panchayati Raj Institutions and the pattern of decision-making in rural local government in selected Panchayats of Orissa. The study concludes that women have not been able to occupy higher levels in the Panchayat Raj Institutions structure. The well-known disabilities of women are standing in the way of their role performance. However, women's growing interest in public life is seen as a positive factor for the future.⁹⁷

Rajasekharan points out that India has made a legislative expediency over political initiative in ensuring participation of women at the grassroots level. He enumerates the major criticisms against the reservation for women in the political sphere. It underlines the role of political parties and non-governmental organizations and the mass media in ensuring better participation of women in local government bodies.⁹⁸ It has to be pointed out that the impact of the amendment on women in Panchayati Raj Institutions definitely is positive. They are coming to the fore front, despite problems.

Writing about Panchayati Raj and Development, Mahipal⁹⁹ says that most of the Scheduled Castes women panchayat leaders are facing the problem of non-cooperation from officials and the upper castes/dominant sections of the Gram Panchayats. But affirmative action for women and marginalized groups in local governance has resulted in social identities and political awareness. An urge to become part of mainstream political, economic and social life is visible. Initial clashes between higher and lower castes are reducing and are giving way to social cohesion at local levels. They have been fighting against the forces of higher castes and landlords. Though the weaker sections' women are not participating as effectively as they ought to, they are learning to prepare plans for the development of marginalized sections.

⁹⁶ Datta, Prabhat, Political Empowerment of Rural Women in India. *Administrative Change*, January-June, 1997, Vol. 24(2), 129-148.

⁹⁷ Panda, Snehalata, Decision-Making in Panchayats: Role of Women, *Yojana*, July, 1998, Pp. 11-15.

⁹⁸ Rajasekharan, K, Reservation: Boon or Bane? *Social Welfare*, April, 1996, Pp. 7-9.

⁹⁹ Mahipal, Panchayati Raj and Development, *Yojana*, August, 2004, Pp.49-53.

Sutar, writing about the emerging women leadership in Panchayats in Karnataka, points out that the caste background of women representative is an important factor in their emergence as panchayat leaders. Most of the panchayats women leaders are from the lower social order. Upper castes are reluctant to let their women folk to enter village panchayats. Lower castes women are also seen elected to seats not reserved for women. A majority of the women of lower castes are those with out any political background. The insistence of the community in the case of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes women and that of family in the caste of upper castes women to contest is noticed. It is a fact that reservation for women has posed challenges to the customary caste panchayats which consisted of the elderly male members of the community. The prevailing rigid caste system and cultural values and social norms surrounding the systems of patriarchy have stronger implications in good governance at the grass roots level. The emerging women leadership from the lower castes is found relatively more democratic and people-centred precisely because of the lesser degree of patriarchy practiced among them and the more like rating and radical ideologies of their castes. Rising of assertive leadership is more among lower castes.¹⁰⁰

A visible positive trend is noticed in a study made by Participatory Research in Asia after field investigations in six states. It is found that 25% of women noticed and remarked on the visible change in their status within their family after they are elected. About 60% of women said that they were encouraged by women to stand for election and the same percentage is contemplating to contest Panchayati Raj Institutions again.¹⁰¹

Based on sample survey of members of Panchayati Raj Institutions at the Zilla Parishads, Mandal and village levels and officials Venkata Ravi finds that the positions are occupied by men of major political parties in general. Only the reserved positions are given more chance than women to contest.¹⁰²

Reddy writing about the post 73rd Amendment scenario in decentralized local bodies, says that the amendment has thrown up political opportunities for the disadvantaged sections. Some women chairpersons have clear role perception,

¹⁰⁰ Anil Sutar, The Emerging Women Leadership: Panchayats in Karnataka, University News, 58 (1) January 2008, Pp.82-83.

¹⁰¹ Gender Projects, Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), 2000

¹⁰² Ravi R. Ventaka, A Study on Participation of Scheduled Caste Members in Panchayati Raj Institutions of Andhra Pradesh, Council for Social Development, Southern Regional Office, Hyderabad, 2002, P.54.

promoted income generating activities to women and also adopted a pro-poor attitude. However, the proxy role of husbands, in particular, is seen. Some women leaders have shown great dedication and honesty. But women are unable, in general to break free and take advantage of the position of power offered to them. He finds that there are a few cases where although inducted by men in panchayats, did perform reasonably well in implementing developmental programmes. There are also women sarpanches who have totally surrendered to proxy rulers. He concludes that on the whole, it would be too optimistic to expect an overnight change in gender relations because of the 73rd amendment.¹⁰³

3. 8 Problems

The afore said analytical explanation of various facts hindering Dalits to perform their tasks etc drives one to highlight in a nut-shell the problems faced by Dalits in Panchayati Raj institutions. Malcolm Adiseshaiah (1964) aptly pointed out that that the actual beneficiaries are not getting their due and only those beneficiaries who aligned with Pradhans receive benefits. There is also corruption. Even schemes, which were meant for the Scheduled Castes are manipulated in favour of those who are close to the Pradhans. The most deserving cases remained deprived of the benefits of such development schemes. This became possible because of the in-built scope for manipulations at different levels. The well- to-do pradhans had the capabilities and resources for carrying out such manipulations.¹⁰⁴

Ali's report brings out that, by and large, the Panchayat Raj Institutions have not been able to devote any special attention and render any significant help to weaker sections mostly due to limited financial resources. Under the existing circumstances and limitations, Panchayat Raj Institutions have not exhibited any special solicitude for the welfare of the weaker sections of the community. Awareness about sources of finance, standing committees, plans, and schemes is reasonably high. But they are totally ignorant of the control of plan schemes. Further, their participation rate in decision-making, planning process and programme monitoring are high but they do not know the rights and importance of Gram Sabha. It is also observed that the effect of training at the grassroots level has been limited to creating awareness and inducing

¹⁰³ Reddy Gopinath, M., Decentralized Local Bodies: Post 73rd Amendment Scenario, in CH.Hanumantha Rao and S.Mahender Dev (Ed) Andhra Pradesh Development: Economic Reforms and Challenges a head, Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Hyderabad, 2003, Pp. 613-619.

¹⁰⁴ Cited by S.N.Choudary in Dalit and Tribal Leadership in Panchayats, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2004, P. 15

participation among Panchayat Raj functionaries, it has not been successful in conscientizing them to become fully functional.¹⁰⁵

Desai says that Panchayati Raj has provided a new framework for a political caste struggle between rival landlords, jealous of the prestige of each other and determined to maintain their strength at the cost of the rival group. On the positive side of the Panchayati Raj System, he maintained that, the villagers are becoming election minded because it represents their choice.¹⁰⁶

Mahipal says that there are possibilities that the disputes at the local level might increase in future as reservation given to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women have created animosity among the established social forces, which have resulted in conflict and disputes on various issues relating to decentralized governance, planning and development.¹⁰⁷

Parvathamma had analyzed the impact of Panchayat Raj Institution on weaker sections. One of her observations is that political representation has not helped to bring the desired level of development among the Scheduled Castes. She contends that there are built-in drawbacks which prevent the people of these categories from becoming vocal and assertive and much less to mobilize. 'Poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, the mere total dependence on upper castes and above all the lowest ritual rank which make them a constant source of pollution to caste Hindus certainly limits the scope of the roles they could play as panchayat members.'¹⁰⁸

Prasad and Suman Chandra say that, the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) have developed over the years not only as units of Self government but also as the media for development activities. Though the legislations governing the Panchayati Raj Institutions in the state and Union Territories include safeguards to protect the interests of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes their involvement in the democratic processes and in decision-making for development activities has been

¹⁰⁵ Sadiq Ali Report, Government of Rajasthan, Jaipur, Rajasthan, 1964.

¹⁰⁶ Desai, A.R., Rural Sociology in India, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1969.

¹⁰⁷ Pal, Mahi, 1999, July- Sept, "Village – Level Decentralization of Judicial System: Desirability and advantages", Indian Journal of Public Administration, July- Sept, 1999, Vol. XLV (3) Pp.544-555.

¹⁰⁸ Parvathamma, "Panchayati Raj and Weaker Sections" in Scheduled Castes at the Cross Roads, Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi, 1989, Pp.94-107.

marginal owing to their vulnerable position in social and economic hierarchy of the rural areas.¹⁰⁹

Gopal Iyer had done a study of democratic decentralization, social movements and predicament of tribals in Jharkand and Madhya Pradesh. He finds that the emergence of Sarpanch Patis, use of veil by women and their poor attendance in Gram Sabha meetings. Absence of awareness, influence of dominant caste and class and their strong nexus with political and bureaucratic power structure were observed by him.¹¹⁰

Specific problems faced by the Dalits have neither been addressed by the Dalit nor by the non-Dalit representatives.¹¹¹ It was hard to get members of the vulnerable groups to participate or to assess the feasibility and sustainability of suggested projects.

Randhawa rightly says lack of understanding of decentralized planning, restrictions imposed by the government on the panchayats in the performance of their function, lack of technical knowledge and dearth of suitable personnel, inadequate financial resources, politicization of the system, unwillingness of the politicians and bureaucrats to devolve power to the local bodies are some very important problems coming in the way of effective working of panchayats.¹¹²

It can be concluded that the 73rd Constitutional Amendment did bring about changes in the political roles of dalits in Panchayati Raj Institutions. The process of change has begun and concerted efforts for improving the situation is necessary.

A study conducted by Bhaskar Rao on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes elected leaders in two talukas of Bellary district in Karnataka notes local level of exposure of these leaders in terms of mass media, information and technology, social awareness, development and outside world. The officials are also not interested

¹⁰⁹ Prasad. R.R. and K.Suman Chandra, "Reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Panchayat Raj Institutions: Policy Implications" in Jain, S.P., and Thomas W. Hochgesang (Ed) *Emerging Trends in Panchayati Raj (Rural Local-Self-governance) in India*, National Institute of Rural Development, 1995, Pp. ()

¹¹⁰ Iyer Gopal. K, *Democratic Decentralization, Social Movements and Predicament of Tribals: A Comparative Analysis of Jharkand and Madhya Pradesh, Functioning of Panchayati Raj System* (Ed) Yatindra Singh Sisodia, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2005, Pp.157-163.

¹¹¹ Chaudhary, S.N, *Dalit and Tribal Leadership in Panchayats*, Concept Publishing Company, 2004, P.53.

¹¹² Randhawa cited in Chaudhary, S.N, *Dalits and Tribal Leadership in Panchayats*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2004, P.2 (Cited)

in interacting with these lower strata community leaders. These leaders are not allowed into the rooms of officials. The participation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and women was nominal and proxy.¹¹³

A micro study of Pappapatti village panchayat in Madurai district of Tamilnadu reveals that Dalits elected as Panchayat presidents are not allowed to function. The Dalits are regarded by the upper castes as those belonging to slave family. The upper caste people feel that if they allow Dalits to become leaders, they would be regarded as belonging to Dalit Nadu.¹¹⁴

3. 9. Conclusions of Different Studies

The study has taken care to furnish the conclusions of various studies made in this area. This information is added to the thesis only to state the suggestions to the prevailing problems studied by various authors. In addition researchers who worked on the participation of Weaker Sections in Panchayati Raj Institutions have suggested measures for improvements in participation. The following information is towards that end.

Sachidanda notes that the task of empowering Dalit elected representatives should be looked a part of the overall vision for the future of the Dalits. Psychological mobilization to reinforce equality, justice and absence of exploitation; conscientization and identity formation; promotion of healthy interface with bureaucracy efforts for increased involvement of Dalit members in Panchayati Raj Institutions; awareness generation, training and functional education; energising the Gram Sabha; compensation for loss of income due to working for the panchayat and focus on new areas of work for Dalit and women representatives are the important suggestions made by the researcher for an improved position.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Bhaskar Rao, Y, Emerging Leadership among SCs and STs, National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad, 1998.

¹¹⁴ Sumati.S and Sudarsen, What does the New Panchayat System Guarantee? A Case Study of Pappapatti, Economic and Political Weekly, Aug, 2005, Pp.3751-57.

¹¹⁵ Sachidanda, Empowerment of Elected Scheduled Castes Member through Panchayati Raj Institutions, Report of the Project Sponsored by Planning Commission, New Delhi, (Unpublished), Pp.129-138.

For a better participation of Scheduled Castes women in Panchayati Raj Institutions, Singh suggests some measures. These include promotion of literary provision of information, through media and officials, relating to the purpose and working of PRIs; training; regular holding of Grama Sabha meetings; discussion of agenda when the view points of women members should be given due importance; interaction between women members of PRIs and others like Anganwadi workers, Grama Sachiv and Panchayati Secretary and appointment of female Panchayat Secretaries.¹¹⁶

Chaudhary points out that in a situation characterised by lack of social capital to the Dalits, they face problems which include lack of capacity, economically weak position, limited awareness and limited facilities for training. But some of the Dalit leaders have done wonderful work. Dependence on secretaries and others gave scope to suffer from manipulations. Chaudhary suggests the strengthening of Grama Sabha, honest addressing of common cause and training for Grama Sabha members. There is need for public demonstration of achievements of Panchayats under the emerging leadership of Dalits.¹¹⁷

Bryld's research on increasing participation in democratic institutions through decentralization in the context of empowering women and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes through Panchayati Raj Institutions in six villages of Karnataka attempts to disclose the potential and the pitfalls in the processes. Pointing out that among the least favoured sections of Indian society are women and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and more importantly women. He says that tradition, disinterest, control on mobility, male domination, absence of awareness and some pitfalls. It is noted that women themselves were often more eager to hinder the participation of their own gender in the public sphere than men. Women are to a large degree reproducing the social structures which keep them out of active participation. Very active women as well as a women excluded from decision-making process were encountered. Escorting of women by men, men advising women as to what they should do. Low level participation questions the effectiveness of reservation. The rule of rotation adds to the ineffectiveness of reservation. The wishes and thoughts of

¹¹⁶ Singh, A.N., Empowerment of the Scheduled Caste women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions in Haryana: Opportunities for Participation and Aailed Status, in Verma. RBS, H.S.Verma and Raj Kumar Singh (eds) Empowerment of the Weaker Sections in India, Serials Publications, New Delhi, 2006, Pp.335-347.

¹¹⁷ S.N.Chaudhary, Dalit and Tribal Leadership in Panchayats, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2004.

women are often neglected. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes representatives are either prevented or discouraged to participate in decision-making. Lack of capacity due to illiteracy, language barriers, inexperience or less respect among fellow villagers are among the main problems. Unless reservation is backed by increased education, networking, and training it will not succeed in reaching the needy. There is an unstable balance between the empowerment and disempowerment of the weaker sections of society. The balance should not try to disempowerment. He argues that participation for all through decentralization can only be achieved through 'genuine devolution' of power in a context specific set of arrangements. He concludes by saying that mere technocratic regulations are not sufficient to ensure genuine empowerment for all in democratic decision-making.¹¹⁸

Narendra Kumar and Manoj Raj have made a comparative study of Dalit Leadership in four states- Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana. The study suggests that reservation has enabled Dalit to enter into the panchayats in large numbers. But effective and meaningful participation by Dalit leaders is determined by the specific social, economic and political context in which the panchayats are embedded. Social factors age, education, economic situation and the presence and absences of social discrimination play a central role in determining the extent to which Dalits able to participate meaningfully. Training helps to overcome inhibitions instils confidence and increases knowledge about the running of the panchayat and its programmes. Helping attitude of the bureaucrats would be useful to bring positive results. In Himachal Pradesh, Dalits have not only entered the panchayats but in comparison other states, also initiated a process of participation to a limited manner. In Madhya Pradesh, least change has taken place and the entry of Dalits has yet to show substantial change. Uttar Pradesh and Haryana fall in between. Change in Uttar Pradesh is due to political mobilization. Reservation helped in making the social process move faster in Haryana. In this state caste system's welfare is milder than that in the other states. Dalits fail to know that reservation has been a major factor in empowering them. Partnership between Dalits and Non-Governmental Organizations has shown positive results. Political socialization of

¹¹⁸ Bryld Erik, Increasing Participation in Democratic Institutions through Decentralization: Empowering Women and Scheduled Castes and Tribes through Panchayati Raj in Rural India, *Democratization*, Vol.8, No.3, Autumn 2001, Frank Cass, London, Pp.149-172.

Dalits, transforming role perception of leaders, imparting functional education and training, civil society initiatives would bring better results, the authors suggest.¹¹⁹

Summary

A careful study of the available literature on the empowerment of Dalits in Indias' democratic decentralization process has made certain points very clear. The delivery of effective benefits to SCs when a Scheduled Caste's Sarpanch is present is found by researcher like Craig Johnson. As regards participation of SCs, studies of experts like Sachidananda, Venkata Ravi, Sharma and Kumar noted that the SC representatives have not been silent spectators; the non-Dalits in same places are positively designed to Dalits' active participation; there has been a break from the traditional system and that a leadership which is neither traditional nor modern has emerged. The emergence of young and middle aged development oriented Dalit leadership; inclusion of poor SC people in Panchayati Raj Institutions are some significant results. SC women are on the journey towards empowerment through Panchayati Raj. However, caste based clashes in the process of empowerment of SCs, the domination of rich, the control of the influential on the SC; communication disabilities are some important problems which deserve considerations for identifying solutions. The studies have noted that limited fiscal and political decentralization; impact of caste on defining social and political identity; use of violence; casteism, feudalism and poverty. But it is evident that the 73rd Constitution Amendment has contributed to create democratic values and to the process of social and political transformation. The need for training for capacity building, promotion of participation is often emphasized by academic experts and activists.

¹¹⁹ Narendra Kumar and Manoj Rai, *Dalit Leadership in Panchayats: A Study of Four States*, Rawat Publications India Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 2006.

Chapter-IV

Empowerment of Dalits in Peda Thummidi Panchayat

Section-I

Profile of District, Mandal and Village

One of the villages selected for micro level study, as stated earlier, is Peda Thummidi. Before proceeding into details, it is inevitable to understand the profile of Krishna district, Mandal where in the village Peda Thummidi lies. The main focus of the discussion is on the background, elections, perceptions, participation and development experiences of the elected representatives of the Gram Panchayat. Special emphasis is laid on the S.C membership and their performance. The pertinent discussion on the subject proper is as follows:

Krishna District Profile

Krishana is one of the oldest districts in Andhra Pradesh. It was formerly called as Machilipatnam district and in 1859 certain taluks from the neighbouring Guntur district were merged with it and was renamed as Krishna after the river Krishna. The district spreads over an area of 8,727 Sq Kms. The density of population per Sq Km is 480. The Sex ratio is 978 females to 1000 males. The District has 49 Mandal Parishads. There are 948 villages out of 986 are inhabited and 38 uninhabited. There are seven towns in the district.

Demographic Profile of District

The total number of persons in the Krishna district is 4, 187,841 of which 2,117,401 are males and 2,070,440 are females. The Scheduled Castes population of the district is 7,46,832 and that of Scheduled Tribes is 1,07,611. The percentage of Scheduled Castes population to total population is 17.83 and that of Scheduled Tribes 2.57%.

The three main religious groups in the district are Hindus, Muslims and Christians. There are 3,72,2040 Hindus, 2,65,617 Muslims and 1,82,614 Christians. The three main Scheduled Castes in the district are Madigas, Malas and Rellies. There are

3,87,577 Madigas, 3,40,811 Malas and 7,386 Rellies. The Scheduled Tribes Population mainly consists of Sugalis, Erukulas, Enadies. There are 53,232 Sugalies, 32,442 Erukulas and 15,225 Enadies.

Of the 948 villages in the district, 944 have safe drinking water facility. Every village has electricity supply. There are 931 primary schools, 482 middle schools; 281 secondary or senior secondary; and 19 colleges. Medical facility is available for 643 villages. The district has 64 primary health centres 427 primary health sub centres. 838 villages have post, telegraph and telephone facilities. Andhra Pradesh Transport Corporation's bus services are available to 870 villages. The literacy rate of the district is 68.85%. The male literacy rate is 74.39% and the literacy rate of female is 63.19%.

Employment Profile

The work participation rate is 43.97%. The work participation of the males and females 58.16% and 29.47% respectively. The percentage of main and marginal workers is 89.55 and 14.45 respectively. The percentage of male main workers is 91.98 and that of the female main workers is 72.56. The percentage of male marginal workers to total male workers is 8.02. The Percentage of female marginal workers to total female workers is 27.44. It can be seen that among the marginal workers the female figure significantly.

The agriculturists in the district constitute 11.38%. Agricultural labourers are 47.64%, house hold industry workers form 2.94 % and those who are engaged in other types work is 38.04%. Female workers out number male workers as agricultural labourers and house hold industry workers. Among the agriculturists and other workers males out number females.¹

Bantumilli Mandal

Peda Thummidi village is in the Bantumilli Mandal of the Machilipatnam division of Krishna district. The following is the brief account of Bantumilli Mandal in which the selected village Peda Thummidi falls. Bantumilli has an area of 120 Sq Kms. The Mandal has 18 villages and the total population is 52,257. The Scheduled Castes

¹ Census 2001 Andhra Pradesh, A Profile of the District Krishana District, Joint Registrar General & Director of Census Operations, Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, 2004.

population is 6,250 and the population of STs is 971. The percentage of SCs to the total population is 12% and that of the STs is 2%. The total number of households in the mandal is 14,544. The literacy rate is 58%. The number of agriculturists is 5133 which comes to 10% of the total population of mandal. Agricultural labourers constitute 7,239. The percentage of this to total population is 13.85%. Schemes which include Old Age Pensions (OAPs), Indira Kranthi Pathakam, National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and Rajiv Arogya Sri schemes are in vogue in this mandal.

Profile of Peda Thummidi village

Peda Thummidi village has an area of 2573.26 acres of land. The cultivable land in the village is 1,169.22 acres and the non-cultivable land is 399.87 acres; 353.77 acres of land is waste land. The village has 650 acres tanks in the area of 650 acres.

Population

The Population of the village is 6,735 of which 3,383 are males and 3,352 are females. The registered voters number is 3366 of which 1,774 are males and 1,592 are females. The SC population consists of 1087 of which 559 men and 528 are women. The number of Scheduled Tribes is 58 of which 23 are men and 35 are women. The Backward Classes population comprises 5093 out of whom are 2,566 men 2,597 are women. Population of other category which includes Brahmins, Vyshyas, Kammas, Kapus and others consists of 427 out of whom 335 men 192 are women.

The village consists of 1460 families of whom 398 are Scheduled Castes; 7 are STs and 1055 are others. The number of families under below poverty line are 1310 and that of above poverty line is 150. The percentage of poor people is very high. The village is divided into 14 wards. The membership of the panchayat is 15 including the Sarpanch. It is reserved for BC-Women. The Sarpanch of the village is Mrs. Matta Vijayalakshmi who belongs to Gouda Community. Of the fourteen wards of the village, 5 are reserved for SCs 7 for BCs and 2 for others. The BCs stand first in numerical representation followed by SCs and Others.

Personnel in the Panchayat

Officially the village should have an Executive Officer, Junior Assistant, Bill Collector, Attender and two sweepers but only two i.e, The Bill Collector and Attender presently are working. The vacancies of the Executive Officer and Junior Assistant and

Sweepers are kept unfilled. Two sanitary workers; two workers under Protected Water Supply (PWS) Scheme and one electrician are working on contract basis.

Sources of Income

The sources of income to the panchayat are: house taxes, lease of fish ponds, auctions to collect sales fees (Ashilu Patalu) from market yards and mobile cart vendors, income from tree products. The average income of the panchayat per year is Rs. 5,150,80.

Hamlets

The Gram Panchayat has 8 hamlets named Sunkaripalem, Bandlagudem, Narasappacheruvu, Arjavanigudem, Kamashipuram, Satyanarayanapuram, Penumalagudem and Aandaraopet.

Houses

There are 1460 houses in the village out of which 1,117 are Pucca; 155 are Kuccha and 135 are huts.

Public Amenities

Protected water is supplied to the village and hamlets. The supply of water is one lack twenty thousands litres per day. The number of taps through which the protected water supplied is 394: 324 are household connections and 70 are public taps. The number of wells supplying water is 24. There are 25 tanks in the village. Two of these are for protected water supply and 23 are used for aquaculture (fish ponds).

Roads

There are three Zilla Parishads roads extending to 7 kms and one Roads and Buildings (R&B) road extending 2.5 kms. The number of Gram Panchayat roads is 70 out of which 5 are metal, 5 are gravel roads and 60 are mud roads.

Those who have their own individual latrines number 130 and those who do not have are 430. As regards electricity, there are 469 street lights; of these 280 are tube lights; 180 are lights with bulbs and remaining are others. Electrical connections for agriculture are 26. There are three fair price shops. The total number of ration cards are 1460: 1190 are white cards, 115 pink cards and 115 Annapurna Anthoydaya cards. There are five elementary schools in the village located at Penumalagudem, Narasappacheruvu, Kamashipuram, Sunkaripalem and Peda Thummidi. The number of

children getting educated in these schools are 177 of whom 65 are boys and 112 girls. The strength of teachers is 12. In addition there is one Aided School and one Zilla Parishad High School; the Aided School is located in Bandlagudem with 51 students of whom 25 are boys and 26 are girls. Two teachers are working in the school. The Zilla Parishad High School located at Peda Thummidi has 516 students of whom 269 are boys and 249 girls. The strength of teachers is 25. There are 8 Anganwadi Centres in the village. Of these two are located in Peda Thummidi, one in Penumalagudem, one in Bandlagudem, one in Kamakshipuram, one in Arjavanigudem and one in Narasappacheruvu. There are 362 children, in these Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) centres, of whom 184 are boys and 178 are girls. The staff working in the centres is 16. Except one, all these centres are being run in rented buildings. There are 9 mothers committees. The literacy of the village is 96%.²

The persons receiving pensions include old aged (OAPs), Widows, Handicapped and Weavers. There are 117 Old Age Pensioners, 10 Widows, 5 Handicapped Persons. Under Indiramma Pensions Scheme 77 Old Age Pensions, 118 Widows, 33 handicapped, 1 Weaver are receiving pensions. This category of persons' number is 216. The number of pensions of all categories is 348. The total amount distributed to the pensioners is 87,000 per month.

Under National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme 815 persons have job cards of whom 122 attended to the work. The number of works under this scheme is 10 and amount spent is 21,460.

There are 133 Self Help Groups (SHGs) of which 66 groups have received revolving fund amounting 6,60,000 rupees. The number of groups that have received linkage loans are 113 and amount given is 1, 81,96,000. In the form of group loans 5 lakhs are distributed towards group loans.

As regards the sanction of houses under Indiramma Housing Scheme, in the first phase 259 houses have been sanctioned of which 181 are R.C houses.

From the general funds an amount of 2,08,700 is spent. From SFC funds an amount of 1,00,500 is spent. From 12th Finance Commission the funds received and

² Information was provided by Panchayat Secretary of Peda Thummidi.

spent amounted to of 15,711. From SGRY funds an amount of 1, 91,096 rupees were spent.

The income details of Gram Panchayat are as follows (2008-'09). Arrears from house taxes are 2,498.68. The arrears of library cess is 2,175.32. The income from house taxes is 1,88,543.43. The library cess is 15363.57. Arrears of water tax amount 15,872 rupees. Income from water tax is 1,34,400. Arrears from Ashilu (auction of collection of tax rights) are 5500. Income from Ashilu auction is 18,100. Arrears from auction from Fish Ponds (Tanks) is 2,17,195 rupees. Income from Grant of Licenses and other fees is 21,000. The total income of Peda Thummidi was 6,62,185 during 2008-09. It is clear that the major part of the income comes from house tax, water tax and auctioning of Fish Ponds.

Till date, fifteen persons have occupied the Sarpanch position in Peda Thummidi village. The Office is occupied generally by a person of Backward Classes communities except in the first three terms, when persons of Other Castes have held the position. The Sarpanchship has been occupied by Scheduled Castes persons during 1981-'88; and during 2001-2006. The present Sarpanch is Mrs. Matta Vijayalakshmi hails from BC-Gouda community.³ The details of the successive Sarpanches of Peda Thummidi Gram Panchayat are given below:

³ Data collected from Panchayat Office of Peda Thummidi and Compiled

Sl.No.	Name of the Sarpanch	Caste	Term/Period From - To
1	Lakkapragada Adinarayana	OC-Brahmin	Not Available
2	Adapala China Venkataswamy	OC-Kapu	N.A
3	Atluri Satyanarayana	OC-Kamma	N.A
4	Bolla China Veeraiah	BC-Gouda	N.A
5	Adapala Venkateswara Rao	O.C-Kapu	09.05.1953 to 14.03.1956
6	Bolla Ramulu	B.C-Gouda	02.09.1956 to 15.11.1958
7	Gelam Veeraiah	B.C- Yadav/Golla	12.01.1959 to 25.06.1964
8	Bolla Ramulu	B.C-Gouda	04.07.1964 to 25.06.1970
9	Ekula Krishna Murthy	B.C-Gouda	30.06.1970 to 11.06.1981
10	Koduri Ramaiah	SC-Mala	12.06.1981 to 30.03.1988
11	Bolla Venkataswamy	BC-Gouda	31.03.1988 to 20.10.1995
12	Bolla Sampurna	B.C- Gouda	21.10.1995 to 22.08.2001
13	Dasari Rameshbabu	SC- Mala	23.08.01 to 24.10.2004
14	Arja Chalamaiah	SC-Mala	28.06.2004 to 22-082006
15	Matta Vijayalakshmi	BC-Gouda	23-08-2006 to till date (2011)

Source: Panchayat Records, Gram Panchayat Office, Peda Thummididi

Section-II

Socio-Economic and Political Background of Elected Representatives

A study of the socio-economic and political background of people's representatives is important for several reasons. Political power is open for all sections of society including the exploited and excluded sections. A study of social, economic and political background of representatives also helps to assess the nature and extent of influence, behavioural traits and roles. The way in which the factors influence others could also be assessed. This chapter also deals with the socio-economic and political background of the elected representatives in the selected panchayat. During 2001-2006, the position of Sarpanch in Peda Thummdi village panchayat was reserved for SCs. In the present tenure i.e., 2006-2011 the position of Sarpanch in panchayat is reserved for BC woman. Data for period pertaining to 2001-2006 and 2006-2011 wherever it is needed the data is clubbed and analyzed and wherever it is necessary disaggregated and analyzed. Age, gender, castes, religion, educational, occupational background, economic status and political experiences are the main indicators on the basis of which the socio economic and political background has been studied.

4.1 Gender

Gender is an important indicator that influences behaviour and participation in Panchayat Raj institutions. The areas of interests and the approaches in the realization of goals differ between men and women. The percentage of seats reserved for women is one third. But it is found that the percentage of women representatives is more than one third. This is because women got elected also to seats not reserved for them. The details could be seen from Table 4.1 Gender wise Members of Peda Thummdi Grama Panchayat

Table 4.1

Gender-wise Elected Representatives of Peda Thummdi Grama Panchayat

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Gender	Male	10	9	19
		66.7%	60.0%	63.3%
	Female	5	6	11
		33.3%	40.0%	36.7%
Total		15	15	30
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

4.2 Age

Age is an important factor that influences the nature and extent of participation in Panchayat. Men and middle aged in general are expected to participate actively in any institution. Increase in age is likely to be less active and youth are, generally, vigorous and active apart from dynamic. They are likely to bring new ideas. Representatives who enter politics at a young age have more opportunities to learn act. Their experience helps to motivate others to participate in the developmental programmes.

In Peda Thummidi village the percentage of young and middle aged coming to power is high. Those in the age group of 36-40 constitute the first largest group. The age-wise distribution of the representatives of Peda Thummidi Gram Panchayat is given the following table.

Table 4.2
Age-Wise Distribution of the Elected Representatives of Peda Thummidi Gram
Panchayat

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Age	24 - 29	0	1	1
		0.0%	6.7%	3.3%
	30 - 35	1	5	6
		6.7%	33.3%	20.0%
	36 - 40	4	5	9
		26.7%	33.3%	30.0%
	41 - 45	4	3	7
		26.7%	20.0%	23.3%
	46 - 50	4	0	4
		26.7%	0.0%	13.3%
	51 & above	2	1	3
		13.3%	6.7%	10.0%
Total		15	15	30
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The table indicates that persons elected to panchayat in the age group of 30-45 are higher in number compared to other age-groups. It vividly shows that voters prefer the youth and middle aged rather than old persons since they feel the young and middle aged can work and devote more time than the old people.

4.3 Caste

Caste and politics are closely related in the Indian context. Selection of candidates is essentially based on two factors- caste and economic status. These will have considerable influence on election chances. Study of caste in Indian politics has become so essential that giving less importance to caste in state politics obviously leads to deficiency of the study.⁴ Some research studies pointed out that caste feelings inevitably swayed electoral loyalties and political parties impose party ideology on the candidates representing Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes⁵. According to the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act, certain seats are reserved for SCs and STs and Backward Classes, as stated earlier. In Peda Thummidi village the BCs constitute a majority. SCs occupy the next position followed by OCs in numerical strength. It is important to note that the majority of BCs is because of the conversion of SCs into Christianity and converted Christians categorised as BC-C group. Such converts are of 17% in the sample. This could be seen from table no 4.3. Table 4.3 gives the caste-wise break up of the respondents of the village.

Table 4.3
Caste-Wise Break-up of the Elected Representatives

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Caste	BC	7	5	12
		46.7%	33.3%	40.0%
	BC-C	1	4	5
		6.7%	26.7%	16.7%
	OC	1	2	3
		6.7%	13.3%	10.0%
	SC	6	4	10
		40.0%	26.7%	33.3%
Total		15	15	30
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

4.3.a Sub-Caste

Sub-Caste i.e caste within the caste has relevance in villages. Table 4.4 gives a picture of Sub-Caste composition.

⁴ Prasanna Kumar, A., Caste and Leadership in Government and Politics, S Chand & Company, New Delhi, 1982, Pp.46-53.

⁵ Shivalal, Elections to India's State Legislatures since 1952, Election Archives, New Delhi, 1978, P.5 and Ghanashyam Shah, Politics of Scheduled Castes and Tribes, Vora Publishing House, Bombay, 1974, P.4.

Table 4.4

Sub-Caste wise Composition of Elected Representatives

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Sub-Caste	Christian (Mala)	1	3	4
		6.7%	20.0%	13.3%
	Gouda	5	4	9
		33.3%	26.7%	30.0%
	Kapu	1	1	2
		6.7%	6.7%	6.7%
	Kuruma	1	1	2
		6.7%	6.7%	6.7%
	Mala	6	4	10
		40.0%	26.7%	33.3%
	Mangali	0	1	1
		0.0%	6.7%	3.3%
	Vaishya	0	1	1
		0.0%	6.7%	3.3%
	Yadav	1	0	1
		6.7%	0.0%	3.3%
Total		15	15	30
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In Peda Thummidi village (caste-wise BCs, SCs, OCs) 16 out of the 30 representatives are BCs. The sub-castes among the BCs are Christians, Goudas, Kurumas⁶ and Mangalies. Among the BCs, the Goudas form the first largest group. The O.C representatives are from two castes namely Kapus and Vyshyas. Only sub-caste of SCs i.e Mala is present. Among the 30 representatives, the Malas constitute the first largest group followed by Goudas and Christians. The Kapu and Kuruma representatives equal in number. One representative belongs to Vyshya and another one belongs to Kapu.

4.4 Educational Qualifications

According to Mahatma Gandhi education brings out a person from darkness. Darkness, here, he meant ignorance. The more the person is educated, the more would be, in general, the capacity to study, understand and analyze. The Indian Constitution does not prescribe any educational qualifications to get elected as representatives either

⁶Kuruma is a part and parcel of Yadav community.

for local bodies, or state legislature and Parliament. It is only the age that is prescribed for contesting elections. The respondents in the sample are divided into five categories:

(a) Illiterates; (b) Primary Education; (c) Secondary; (d) Intermediate; (e) Graduation.

The persons who can not read and write are categorised as illiterates. Persons with educational qualifications from 1st and 5th class are categorised as primary educated. Possessing 6th and 10th classes having secondary education. Respondents who had studied up to intermediate are placed in the category of intermediate education. Representatives who possess graduate degree are termed as graduates. Table 4.5 gives a picture of educational backgrounds of respondents in the village under study.

Table 4.5
Educational Levels of Elected Representatives

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Educational Qualifications	Literate	5	3	8
		33.3%	20.0%	26.7%
	Primary	5	3	8
		33.3%	20.0%	26.7%
	Secondary	2	4	6
		13.3%	26.7%	20.0%
	Intermediate	2	2	4
		13.3%	13.3%	13.3%
	Graduation	1	3	4
		6.7%	20.0%	13.3%
Total		15	15	30
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

It is found that nearly 30 per cent of the respondents are illiterate and a similar percentage of them have completed primary education. The representatives who possess secondary, intermediate and degree qualifications constitute 26%. Illiterates are in a minority constituting 27%. In a way a large percentage of the representatives are educated and enlightened. Their participation in Panchayat Raj will be, to a large extent, meaningful.

4.5 Occupation

The occupational stratification given above indicates that majority of the representatives of the village panchayat are engaged in agriculture and agricultural

labourers. Among 30 respondents 14 (47%) are labourers i.e agricultural and casual labourers. Further, it is interesting to note that 70% of the respondents, as stated above, are engaged in agriculture and its related activities. Only seven (24%) representatives are into different occupation. But on the whole agriculture as an occupation is found to be primary in the village. It is not an uncommon feature, since the same scenario is found throughout rural India.

Table 4. 6
Occupational Background of Elected Representatives

		Term		Total	
		2001-06	2006-11		
Employment	Self Cultivation	6	3	9	
		40.0%	20.0%	30.0%	
	Agricultural Labourer	6	6	12	
		40.0%	40.0%	40.0%	
	Casual Wage Labourer	0	2	2	
		0.0%	13.3%	6.7%	
	Self Employee	1	0	1	
		6.7%	0.0%	3.3%	
	Petty Business	0	1	1	
		0.0%	6.7%	3.3%	
	Private	1	1	2	
		6.7%	6.7%	6.7%	
	Artisan	0	1	1	
		0.0%	6.7%	3.3%	
	Others	1	1	2	
		6.7%	6.7%	6.7%	
	Total		15	15	30
			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Self cultivators are those who cultivate their own land. Agricultural Labourers are the one working in other's lands; self employed include owing petty shops, selling fish, working as agents to sell fish pond products. The others include casual labourers earning daily wage, artisans, welders, photographers, laying tiles, laying leaves on thatched house, toddy tappers, masons, painters etc.

4.6 Land Ownership

Ownership of property is an important factor that determines the economic status of citizen. An attempt is made, in this study, to give details of land and houses owned by respondents. In Peda Thummidi village, respondents whose land ownership between 1 and 2 acres are exactly half of the total number of respondents. The details of land ownership or absence of land ownership are given in table 4.7

Table 4.7

Land Ownership or Absence of Land Ownership

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Land	Nil	6	4	10
		40.0%	26.7%	33.3%
	1 - 2	6	9	15
		40.0%	60.0%	50.0%
	3 - 4	1	0	1
		6.7%	0.0%	3.3%
	5 - 6	0	1	1
		0.0%	6.7%	3.3%
	6 - 7	1	0	1
		6.7%	0.0%	3.3%
	9 - 10	0	1	1
		0.0%	6.7%	3.3%
	11 above	1	0	1
		6.7%	0.0%	3.3%
	Total	15	15	30
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

4.7 Residence

Possession of a house is an indicator stating the economic status of the citizen. Pucca house, here, we mean dwelling with RCC⁷ slab with brick walls and cement finishing. A thatched house is one which has wall constructed with cement and bricks or mud and the roof is covered with toddy leaves. Generally the poor who can not afford to lay the slab go into this type of roof and it does not cost much. It is within the reach of the poor. All respondents in Peda Thummidi village have their own houses. A majority

⁷ Roof covered with cement concrete

of representatives (70%) have pucca houses and less than 30% of them have Kuccha houses i.e Thatched houses.

4.8 General Awareness

In Peda Thummidi village the woman Sarpanch said “we get two News Papers- Eenadu and Andhra Jyothi, “reading news paper is useful to update political matters and to derive knowledge about several things obtaining in the world. Further states, “watching T.V also is helpful to improve our knowledge”. Arja Dayakar a converted Christian and originally a Dalit said that he would depend mainly on news papers and Door Darshan for getting information. Arja Chalamaiah a former Sarpanch of the village and belonging to SCs goes to party office every day morning to read News Papers. He said “I am very much interested to know what is happening around, especially politics”. He also watches T.V and his desire to acquaint himself with the latest information regarding politics is immense. None of the representatives is seeking internet information. Battu Shyamson, a Dalit converted into Christianity mainly interested in reading news papers for news and politics. His main area of interest is politics. A Dalit woman representative Koduri Indira, depends mainly on T.V for getting information. Arja Israel, a Dalit representative who can only sign depends on electronic media for securing information. Dasari Koteswaramma, a Dalit woman representative, watches T.V for getting information about politics. It is observed that information about politics in particular and other aspects in general is obtained by the respondents through personal discussion, reading news papers. J. Ramesh depends mainly on news papers. He said “mainly I read Sakhsi a regional news paper” and “I interested in all politics. I would watch T.V. occasionally”. Similar is the opinion of Dalit representative Arja Dayakar would watch T.V for getting information. A Dalit woman representative Maddala Nagasubbulu who can only sign her name doe not seem to have interest in acquiring herself with political knowledge.

4.9 Political Background: Entry into Politics

Political background, here, is referred to participation in political process, affiliation with political parties, contesting elections, experience in politics, assuming elected office and managing the affairs of the political and administrative institutions. The discussion below brings out the political background of the elected representatives of

the gram panchayat. The discussion below throws light on the aspects of party membership, party worker, party leader, Sarpanch, member of Grama Panchayat are some roles that are mentioned in the study. The span of experience is also examined. The details of experience of the elected representatives in politics is seen as follows:

Table 4.8
Political Entry of Elected Representatives

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Year of Political Entry	1981	1	0	1
		6.7%	0.0%	3.3%
	2001	14	1	15
		93.3%	6.7%	50.0%
	2005	0	1	1
		0.0%	6.7%	3.3%
	2006	0	13	13
		0.0%	86.7%	43.3%
Total		15	15	30
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The sole respondent who entered politics in 1981 is Arja Chalamaiah. He served as party worker, member of Gram Panchayat and Sarpanch. The persons entering in politics in 2001 include K. Indira, K.Shasirekha, P.Venktaravamma, D.Subbanna, M.Yesubabu, T.Narasamma, B.Seetaiah, M.Veeraraghavamma, B.Radhakrishna, P.Veeravenkateswara Rao, N.Ahobalara Rao etc., Radha Krishna is born in a political family. The persons who entered into politics in 2006, are G.Jagan Mohan Rao, K.Subhakara Rao, A.Israel, P.Remesh, B.Shyamson, G.Krishna Murthy, J.Ramesh, D.Koteswaramma, M.Nagasubbulu etc., deserve mention. It is observed that among representatives, the persons entering politics after 2000 constitute a very high percentage are greater in number. The majority of the respondents are new comers and less than 40% of the respondents have experience in politics.

4.10. Political Experience

In the present context, experience includes experience as party workers, membership in political parties, experience as MPTCs, ZPTCs and community

leadership. The details of the political experience of elected representatives are given in table 4.8a

Table 4.8a
Political Experience of Elected Representatives

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Political Experience	Yes	6	5	11
		40.0%	33.3%	36.7%
	No	9	10	19
		60.0%	66.7%	63.3%
Total		15	15	30
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Half of the members of the panchayat have eight (8) years political experience. Arja Chalamaiah 60 years old is one with longest experience of 28 years. Koduri Indira with 8 years experience has been very active. Dasari Subbanna alias Subba Rao also is an active member. Arja Dayakar has been active in Grama Panchayat as well as in politics. Members with 8 years experience include Venkatravamma, Seetaiah, Papayamma, Venkateswara Rao, Veeraraghavamma, Sashirekha etc., Israel, Jaganmohan Rao, Ramesh, Shyamson etc., have 3 years experience in politics.

4.11 Positions in Political Organizations/Associations

A majority among 30 respondents were party workers before they became the office bearers. Arja Chalamaiah earlier Member of Market Yard Committee, Kaikaluru and President of village unit of the congress party became the Sarpanch. He was also a member of Water Users' Association. The community leaders are essentially caste group leaders influencing politics. Members elected are from different wards, Upa Sarpanches and others belong to different organizations like Peasants Associations, Self Help Groups (SHG) and party organizations. The details of position held by Elected Representatives are given in table 4.9.

Table 4.9
Positions held by Elected Representatives

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Capacity	Party worker	5	4	9
		33.3%	26.7%	30.0%
	Community Leader	1	0	1
		6.7%	0.0%	3.3%
	Others	9	11	20
		60.0%	73.3%	66.7%
Total		15	15	30
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In Peda Thummidi village persons mentioned in the table 4.9 from 1 to 5 are small in number compared to others who did not hold any positions either in Political Organizations, Associations and Panchayat Raj bodies. Koduri Subhakar Rao is a community leader. Among the other leaders prominent party workers include Dayakar, Indira, Veeravenkateswara Rao, Potla Remesh etc.,

4.12 Inspiration for Political Entry

Entry into politics would be inspired by several factors or agents. In other words political entry could be due to encouragement from family members, party or caste members. It may also be on account of personal interest with service as the motive. It may also be result of a combination of said factors. The views of some respondents on political entry are worth mentioning here. Arja Dayakar stated “I have worked in Ambedkar Youth Association. I have been interested in community and social work. My community and youth encouraged me to join politics”. According to Potla Ramesh, elders of the colony (Dalits) and a leader of SCs named Dasu encouraged me to enter politics. One SC woman representative Penumala Venkateswaramma has been persuaded to enter into politics by Bolla Radha Krishan a BC. One SC woman member of Gram Panchayat by name Maddala Nagasubbulu was fielded by a defeated Sarpanch candidate by name Mohanthy. Paladugula Veeravenkateswara Rao, a journalist by profession and a member of Gram Panchayat stated “politics has become a profession. Honesty and impartiality are lacking. The political situation has invited me to enter into politics”. Battu Shaymson pointed out that service to society can be done through political roles. It is self interest that inspired him to enter politics. Koduri Indira, a Dalit

woman representative, said, “either I or my husband has any thought of entering into politics. Dasari Ramesh (who served as the Sarpanch) encouraged her to file nomination. It is the youth support and encouragement that has lead Arja Israel to enter into politics. Dasari Koteswaramma, a Dalit woman representative, who belongs to CPM⁸ conveyed that CPM leaders, especially Nageswara Rao the District Secretary to CPM encouraged her to file nomination. In the case of Jaldula Ramesh, family members’ encouragement is responsible for his political entry. Konala Shasirekha stated that she is interested in contesting. It is the ward voters that enabled her to enter into politics.

4.13 Political Party Affiliation

A study of the party affiliations of the respondents has revealed that a majority of them have affiliation either to the Congress Party which is a national party or to the Telugu Desam Party, a regional party.

In Peda Thummidi, the largest group of respondents are of Telugu Desam Party (TDP). The other political parties like Congress, CPM and Others. The respondents from Communist Party are having C.P.M affiliation others are less in strength compared to TDP independents. The following table 4.10 gives a clear picture of party affiliations.

Table 4.10

Political Party Affiliation of Elected Representatives

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Party Affiliation	Congress	9	3	12
		60.0%	20.0%	40.0%
	TDP	6	7	13
		40.0%	46.7%	43.3%
	Communists	0	3	3
		0.0%	20.0%	10.0%
	Others	0	2	2
		0.0%	13.3%	6.7%
Total		15	15	30
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

⁸Communist Party of India (Marxists)- A national party in India

4.14 Inspiration for Contest

Contesting elections is a part and parcel of democratic process. In systems adopting the principle of democratic decentralization, the avenues for contest are more as the political institutions are set up to the grass roots level. The encouragement to contest might come from self interest, party leadership, friends, family and others. In the village under study it is observed that in the case of a majority of respondents several factors contributed for the respondents to contest the elections.

Table 4.11
Inspirational Factors for Contest in Elections

Factors for Inspiration	No. of Respondents	Percent
Party	2	6.7
Caste	2	6.7
Service Motive	1	3.3
Others	4	13.3
Family and Party	1	3.3
Family and Caste	5	16.7
Family and Service Motive	1	3.3
Party and Caste	1	3.3
Party and Others	2	6.7
Caste and Service Motive	2	6.7
Caste and Others	3	10
Family, Party and Caste	1	3.3
Family, Caste and Other	1	3.3
Party, Caste and Service Motive	1	3.3
Family, Party, Caste, Service Motive	2	6.7
Family, Party, Caste, Other	1	3.3
Total	30	100

In Peda Thummidi village, a single factor as a source of inspiration is identified by 16.17%. Combined factors include party, caste, service motive and other. In this village only one member stated that service motive as factor of inspiration to contest elections. Caste as a factor of influence among others is identified by 63.33% respondents. Party as a factor of inspiration is identified by 36.66% of the respondents.

4. 15. Campaign

Campaign occupies an important place in the process of contesting the elections. An aspirant for membership or chair position of panchayat or any other political organization has to seek the help of others in electioneering. At the village level, campaigns usually would be interactive and face to face. The element of caste plays a

dominant role in village politics. Campaign is an essential part of election process. It includes discussions with leaders of caste groups. In cases where the Scheduled Castes' candidates are sponsored by forward caste leaders, they accompanied Scheduled Castes contestants and impress upon the leaders of the Scheduled Castes that the persons are contesting on their behalf and hence votes may be given to Scheduled Castes' candidates. In cases where Scheduled Castes' candidates contest as a result of pressure from within their castes the possibility of open categories accompanying them is less. It is observed from reliable sources that gifts in the form of money and material have been distributed to the voters during the campaign. The items distributed include steel vessels, sarees, beer bottles and hens, apart from money. Contestants for the post of Sarpanch have provided delicious food stuff for their supporters including Biryani and other food stuff.

Arja Chalamaiah a former Sarpanch of Peda Thummidi village said "I found door to door campaign very useful because I could make personal requests to the voters". According to Matta Yesubabu "my campaign, which is door to door has been very useful especially women and youth came with me". Arja Israel a sitting member of Peda Thummidi Gram Panchayat said "I visited every house four to five times and I could convince the voters to cast vote in my favour".

In this context it is important to point out the views of some respondents. Arja Chalamaiah a former Sarpanch of Peda Thummidi village said "I was in agriculture; I improved the quality and extent of my agricultural land. I have purchased 15 acres of land. In our village, the domination of the Goudas (a BC community) has increased. The SCs of our village forced me to enter into politics. Many a times I was defeated. The defeats resulted in greater urge to contest and get elected to village panchayat". He further opined "two questions often were lingering in my mind. Is justice done to my community? Are our people fairly treated" Chalamaiah has become a popular leader of the Congress party in the village. He happily states "I will go directly to D.Srinivas, President of Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee with out taking any appointment".

Dasari Subba Rao, a member of Peda Thummidi Gram Panchayat stated "I am an agricultural labourer. Most of my family members are engaged in agricultural work. The seat for our ward is reserved for SCs. Because there is no other SC person willing to contest, I have been asked to enter into election fray". Personally I am not interested but

the youth in our community encouraged me to stand for elections. I don't have any party affiliation". It is the community that encouraged him to enter into politics and contest. Dasari Subba Rao is a fresh member.

4.16 Elections

Free and fair elections are essential conditions in a democratic society. Conducting elections with out the presence of violence is also important. It is observed from the field investigation that there has been occasional violence during the elections. In Peda Thummidi village 93.3% representatives conveyed that elections have been peaceful in their village and 6.7% of the representatives mentioned that violence of minor nature took place during the elections.

It has been pointed out by a majority of the respondents that money plays a prominent role during the elections. One respondent pointed out that even for election to a Gram Panchayat, a contestant has to spend between 2 to 3 lakhs and the aspirant to the post of Sarpanch has to spend 40-50 lakhs. One respondent of Peda Thummidi village opined, "with out money nothing can be done". The former Scheduled Castes Sarpanch spent good amount of money during the elections. Another respondent of Peda Thummidi village said "money is necessary at the time of elections. Voters expect either cash or kind from the contesting candidates". Another respondent said "now a days no service motto is found, money is deciding factor. It has become customary for contestants to give money and voters accept it. Some times voters demand money. Yet another respondent said "as competition is increasing the role of money increases. Money occupies the first place and character and good nature of candidates comes next". Yet another respondent said "distributing money during elections a very common phenomenon and even contestants from reserved category required to spend money in order to win the elections".

4.17 Role of Money

An attempt is made to assess the role of money in election based on respondents' views. The details are given in table 4.12.

Table 4.12
Role of Money in Elections

Role of Money	No of Elected Representatives	%
Strongly agree	28	93.3
Agree	1	3.3
Can't Say	1	3.3
Total	30	100.0

It is found that a very large percentage of representatives strongly felt that influence of money was seen.

4.18. Use of Reservations

The positive and negative views of respondents' relating to utilising the facility of reservations are elicited from the panchayat members. A greater percent of the respondents have positively responded to the need for reservations. It is only one single representative who argued against reservation from O.C representatives. He said "reserving seats and preventing others to contest in elections is not fair. It deprives the political rights of others". The neutrals in this regard constitute a very small percentage. The details can be seen from table 4.13 given below:

Table 4.13

Use of Reservation in Elections

Use of Reservations	No of Elected Representatives	%
Positive	25	83.3
Negative	1	3.3
Neutral	4	13.3
Total	30	100.0

4.19 Role of Caste

Caste, as a deciding factor during elections, is mentioned by a number of respondents. Caste is often used as a card for influencing voters by the parties. It is pointed out by the respondents that caste feeling is not only present but it is leading to caste conflicts. The influence of caste in local politics is more compared to the elections to higher levels Panchayat Raj bodies. Caste considerations arise very often. Even in cases where caste has played a predominant role, the respondents denied its presence. This shows a deceitful attitude of the respondents. In Peda Thummidu there is the

domination of Gouda. But the entry of the leaders of Kulavivaksha Vyatireka Porata Samiti⁹ (KVPS) an organization whose objective is to work against caste discrimination, changed the election scenario to some extent. The Goudas who were discriminating the deprived castes i.e Scheduled Castes in the village, are forced to change their attitude because of certain developments obtained on account of interference of the State Government in the SCs land encroachment cases. (See for details in Pp. 76-78) This does not mean that caste discrimination ended but the intensity of discrimination is reduced. The Gouda community has realized that it has to be cautious in dealing with deprived castes in the village. One respondent of Peda Thummidi village said that influence of caste is greater than that of the party in his village and directly or indirectly caste influences voting behaviour. The impact of caste will be less in cases where the influence of friends, sympathisers and supporters is more.

The panchayat representatives when asked about the role of caste stated that it is certainly an influencing factor, a key factor and a determining factor. A very small number of them said that caste has no impact. The details are given in table 4.14.

Table 4.14
Role of Caste in Elections

Role of Caste	No of Elected Representatives	%
Influencing Factor	16	53.3
Key Factor	4	13.3
Determining Factor	8	26.7
No Impact	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0

A majority of the respondents (53.3%) stated that the caste is an influencing factor. It is only 2% conveyed that caste has no role at all. The above description shows that caste politics are there in this village.

4.20 Number of Votes Obtained

An attempt is made to assess the number of votes obtained by respondents in their elections. They are grouped into five categories i.e the persons obtaining fifty and less than fifty, 51-100; 101- 250; 251and above and elected unanimously. In the village under study respondents who obtained the votes between 50 to 100 constitute the first largest

⁹ Organization fighting against Caste.

group followed by the unanimously elected. Respondents obtaining 50 and less than 50 votes, between 51 and 250 votes are equally divided. A few of the respondents got unanimously elected. They are Konali Shashirekha, Koduri Indira, Guduri Jagan Mohan Rao, Tummididi Narasamma, Mayara Veera Raghavamma, Meka Venkateswara Rao and B.V.Radhakrishana .

The Sarpanch defeated several time earlier, got elected with 1003 votes and this is the highest votes polled. It should be noted that he had put in greater efforts. The representatives obtaining more than 250 votes are Dasari Koteswaramma, Matta Vijayalakshmi should be mentioned.

In villages, the number of votes may not be that big when one views the number of voters in each wards range between 450-600. It should be mentioned that the number of votes cast to a contesting candidates is influenced by the money and gifts distributed and also caste also was a contributing factor apart from village politics and other factions. Table no. 4.15 gives details of the majority obtained by the representatives.

Table 4.15
Number of Votes Obtained by Elected Representatives

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Majority	Less than 50	2	3	5
		20.0%	23.1%	21.7%
	51 - 100	3	5	8
		30.0%	38.5%	34.8%
	101 - 250	0	1	1
		0.0%	7.7%	4.3%
	Above 250	5	4	9
		50.0%	30.8%	39.1%
Total		10	13	23
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

It is interesting to note that slightly less than 23.3% (7 elected representatives) of the respondents are unanimously elected. These include Konali Shashirekha, Koduri Indira, Guduri Jagan Mohan Rao, Tummididi Narasamma, Mayara Veera Raghavamma, Meka Venkateswara Rao and B.V.Radhakrishana. Respondents securing below 51 and 100 votes constitute the first largest group followed by unanimously elected representatives. In the ascending order are those who got above 250 votes and those who

secured between 101 and 125 votes. The representatives securing greater number of votes are Arja Chalamiah, Yesubabu, Shyamson etc., The unanimous elections could be attributed to caste factor, money power, party decisions. For people securing majority votes the factors helped them are contestants' popularity and background, youth, money etc.

Section-III

Perceptions and Participation of Elected Representatives

Perceptions

Representatives are drawn from different strata of society i.e educated, politically experienced, elected on basis of caste and personality etc. It is proposed to study the perception of respondents regarding reservations, violence in politics, performance of Panchayati Raj Institutions and other related aspects. The perceptions of Gram Panchayat members, Sarpanches and some villagers on the said factors have been elicited. Opinions of the respondents regarding democracy, democratic decentralization, working of Panchayati Raj Institutions, empowerment and other related aspects are given below.

4. 21 Democracy

Democracy as a form of government is considered as the best. Democracy is also to be understood as a way of life. The importance of citizens in choosing the government, solving problems peacefully, responsibility of elected to the citizens including welfare orientation are the indicators identified to assess the perceptions of respondents on democracy. It is important to note that a majority of respondents have well defined view on democracy.

Table 4.16
Opinion on Democracy

Opinion on Democracy	No of Elected Representatives	%
Well Defined	19	63.3
Unable to Define Properly	1	3.3
No Clear Idea	10	33.3
Total	30	100.0

In Peda Thummidi a woman respondent admitted “she does not have any idea of democracy and she simply laughed when asked about democracy”. Paladugula Veeravenkateswara Rao, a member of Panchayat and also a reporter said “when we work with democracy, we should follow certain principles. If we can not respect democracy

there is no meaning in having it”. Arja Dayakar a middle aged representative and a converted Christian said “democracy implies peoples’ power. A representative shall work for development. He shall not go back from his responsibility”. Boina Radha Krishna said “democracy implies people’s power. Power belongs to all. Government should hold responsibility to the people and this is democracy”. Namgedda Ahobala Rao opined “Representatives should do good to the people. The representatives are elected through faith by their voters and hence it is democracy that will provide good governance”. Matta Yesubabu a preacher-cum-representative of a ward said “democracy is nothing but people’s power. It is necessary that initiative shall come from the people. It is also necessary that good people should get into political positions. In villages, party politics and not contribution that are counted”. B.V.Radha Krishna a B.Com graduate and BC representative quoted Abraham Lincoln’s famous view of democracy saying that it is government of the people, by the people, for the people”.

Referring to the evil effect of money, a woman representative Mayara Veeraraghavamma said “money is essential along with alcohol to get elected hence democracy is getting weak”. Meka Venkata Subba Rao, has comprehensive view of democracy, he took voluntary retirement from police service. He states that effective form of democracy depends on both people and government.

Konali Sahasirekha a middle aged representative has no view of democracy. A young representative Jaldula Ramesh converted Christian said “democracy is peoples’ government intended to solve peoples’ problems”. Arja Israel did not express a clear view of democracy. Koduri Indira (SC) spoke of responsibility of representatives in doing good to the people. Battu Shyamson a converted Christian and a young representative feels that democracy is serving people. Paladugula Veera Venkateswara Rao, a journalist by profession, opined that certain principles should be followed in democracy. Caste factor and village politics should not obstruct the functioning of democracy. Maddala Nagasubbulu a middle aged SC representative does not know democracy and its implications. Simililar is the case of another middle aged representative named P.Venkatravamma. Koduri Subhakar Rao said “service to people is democracy”. Veeranki Veknateswara Rao a young B.C representative has no idea of democracy. M. Vijaya Lakshmi the sitting Sarpanch elected to a seat reserved for B.C

woman said “democracy means solving peoples’ problems”. Y.Papayamma a middle aged B.C representative has no idea of democracy. An O.C representative Guduri Jagan Mohan Rao feels that democracy is that the peoples’ problems should be identified and solved. Ahobala Rao elected to a seat reserved for B.C feels that solving peoples’ problems is democracy. T. Narasamma a middle aged woman, B.C representative, said “democracy implies power to the people and the power should be exercised through the representatives”. Matta Yesubabu, a converted Christian from B.C community won from a seat reserved for O.C in 2001 said “it is nothing but peoples’ power. Emphasis on local democracy is essential and good people should be involved in the working of democracy. He further says that peoples’ development should be seriously attended to”. G. Krishna Murthy a B.C representative educated upto intermediate said “democracy means people run the government”. A middle aged O.C representative Bethu Seetaiah (OC) does not have any view of democracy. A young (26 years old) Veeranki Rani belonging to B.C community does not have any idea of democracy. Another 41 years old O.C representative Kunapareddy Venkateswara Rao educated up to 5th class said “in democracy power belongs to people”. Boina Radhakrishana a middle aged B.C representative feels that decentralized democracy is peoples’ power. Representative should be responsible to the people and work for their welfare.

4.22 Democratic Decentralization

The system of Panchayati Raj, as stated earlier, is based on the principle of decentralization. Democratic decentralization has been discussed in detail in chapter II. The representatives are into the system of democratic decentralization and it is pertinent to know their working experience in the system. Therefore the views of respondents about democratic decentralization are sought and given below:

Table 4.17

Opinion on Democratic Decentralization

Opinion on Democratic Decentralization	No of Elected Representatives	%
Well Defined	11	36.7
Unable to define properly	7	23.3
No clear Idea	12	40.0
Total	30	100.0

The field study indicates that 50% of the respondents are aware of the implications of democratic decentralization. They said that power is located at different levels, and democratic decentralization, here, implies that power is shared by three tiers in Panchayati Raj system. Matta Vijaya Lakshmi, the Sarpanch of the Gram Panchayat said, “it is helping the villagers to know problems and solving them”. In the opinion of Boina Radhakrishnan, a BC representative “it is good because development activities are carried out after decisions are taken at different levels”.

Meka Venkata Subba Rao said “democratic decentralization facilitates larger scope in sharing of power”. B.V.Radhakrishana (BC) said “it facilitates distribution of powers at different levels. Hence administration would be good. But people should utilize it proper way”. Paladugula Veera Venkateswara Rao does not know about democratic decentralization. Konali Shashirekha, Dasari Koteswaramma, Penumala Venkatravamma, Maddala Nagasubbulu do not have any idea about democratic decentralization. According to Arja Israel (SC), said “when power is there it is possible to do good things. It is good that democratic decentralizations helps locating powers at different levels”. Similar is the opinion of Koduri Indira, SC representative. Expressing the view that “democratic decentralization facilitates location of power at different levels”. Battu Shymson SC converted Christian (B.C-C) said “opportunities would be available to many if democratic decentralization is there”.

4.23 Empowerment

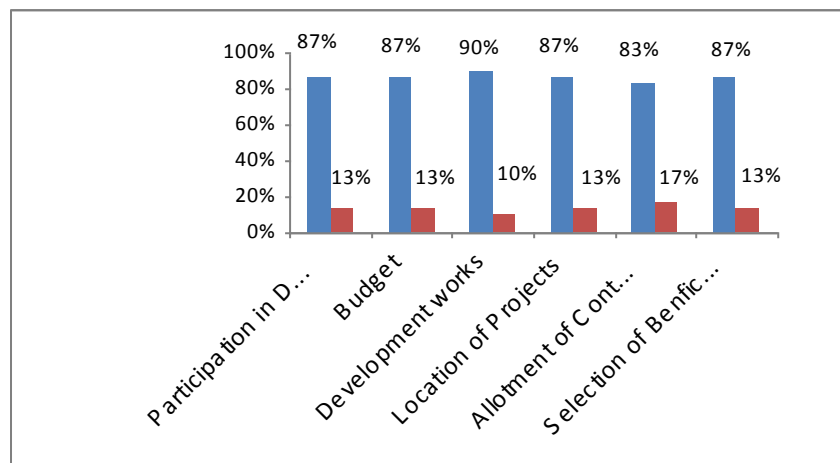
The study focussed on political empowerment of the Dalits in the selected two villages. In a democracy, it is the people who enable the persons by electing the contestants. Political empowerment, here, is referred to as devolving authority from below to the top in the sense, people electing them to perform the responsibilities. Electing the representatives is nothing but enabling the representatives to carry out the functions entrusted to them as per the law of the land. The opinions of elected representatives on several related aspects like political empowerment, political participation etc. Pertaining to villages under study are prominently elicited. The opinion of the elected representatives about empowerment was sought. The following are the responses of the respondents: According to Koduri Indira of Peda Thummidi gram panchayat empowerment implies self confidence, courage to speak and achieving power.

According to one respondent empowerment is nothing but giving power to powerless people. Namgedda Ahobala Rao does not have any idea of empowerment. In the opinion of Matta Vijayalakshmi Sarpanch of Peda Thummidi “empowerment process is started recently. Women are empowered and also dalits are empowered. In fact, courage and confidence, to come out from houses and assertiveness are identified as characteristics of empowerment by the respondents”. Koduri Indira aged 39 years and illiterate has given a very pertinent expression when she was asked her opinion on empowerment. She said, “empowerment implies courage, confidence and power to achieve the objective. She is not much exposed to the modern trends in society but she has a reasonable idea of empowerment. Battu Shyamson said “speaking about empowerment is a recent trend. It implies distribution of power among all sections of society”. B.V.Radhakrishana, a former Upa Sarpanch of Peda Thummidi gram panchayat said “people in general are empowered and mainly women and lower caste people also are empowered on account of 73rd amendment of the Constitution”.

4.24 Participation in Decision-Making Processes

The persons elected to the panchayat have to discharge their obligatory and discretionary functions entrusted by the Act. They have to participate in the panchayat meetings convened as per the Act. Their participation in the Grama Sabha meetings twice in a year is mandatory. The resolutions on the subjects discussed are passed by single majority vote.

Graph 4.1 Participation in Decision-Making Processes



An attempt has been made to identify the areas or subjects in which the representatives participated. It is found that the highest percentage of the respondents took interests in development projects. Participation in decision-making processes, budget distribution, identifying location of projects, selection of beneficiaries are reported have taken interests by a respondents. It is only selection of contracts the percentage is slightly less. This can be noted from the table.

The subjects generally coming up for discussion according to the representatives, before the village panchayat are as follows: The respondents have been asked to express their views on the nature of participation, and subjects of interest, introduction of resolutions, attendance in Grama Sabhas and participation in decision- making processes. The views expressed by the representatives are given below:

4.25 Subjects of Interest

It is observed from the study that the representatives have identified several subjects which were termed by them as drainage, education, pensions, roads, street lights, toilets, water, housing and other problems like family dispute, minor conflicts, caste based conflicts and boundary related issues. The respondents identified more than one problem of their interest.

Table 4.18
Subjects of Interests

Issues /Subjects	No. of Elected Representatives	%
Water	18	60%
Drainage	5	17%
Education	4	13%
Housing	4	13%
Sanitation	7	23%
Pension	3	10%
Roads	11	37%
Streetlight	14	47%
Toilet	5	17%
Other Issues	28	93%
Total	30	

Matta Yesubabu of Peda Thummidi village said, “I am interested in the development of roads, drinking water, sanitation and other amenities. The village should

be free from garbage”. Yekula Papayamma who is not generally that much active in the panchayat meetings said, “she is interested in solving the problems of the village. Functionally she is ineffective. She is initiated into the role by a local leader and the ward from which she got elected is reserved for woman”. Among other subjects, drinking water facility to school attracted Koduri Subhakar Rao. Potla Ramesh said, “All subjects relating to village development are of interest to him. He further said that the needs of his wards are of his primary”. Paladugu Veeravenkateswara Rao, journalist by profession lamented, “Journalism and politics have become business like. Honesty, impartiality are lacking in contemporary politics. I have intense desire to provide amenities to the public but the funds are less to meet the needs. We the panchayat members could do certain things. We have started protected water supply scheme. We received rupees three lakh from NRIs¹⁰. We are happy for providing drinking water to some areas”. It is observed from the field study that the water facility has not been extended to the areas where Scheduled Castes population is concentrated.

4.26 Introduction of Resolution

Introducing resolutions within the limited time available is the initial stage leading to discussion in the panchayat. Very few members took the initiative to introduce the resolutions in the panchayat for discussion. The Sarpanch, usually, makes proposals or initiates resolutions. It is reliably understood that in the case of a woman sarpanch, the husband attends meetings and participates as if he is officially elected member. The husband of the present woman sarpanch used to be present during meetings. But when objected, he started sitting in an adjacent room. If any serious argument takes place, he would enter into meeting hall in support of his wife. This is not isolated case, but it is a common and universal phenomenon in Indian political scenario.

Veeranki Venkateswara Rao, a middle aged member and toddy trapper by occupation did not introduce any resolutions. Some representatives tried to skip away from the question regarding introduction of resolutions by saying that all of us together were taking decisions. Some other representatives said, “During the meetings several resolutions relating to street lights, sanitation, staff are introduced and passed”. Mayara Ramana, a middle aged woman representative, said “how do we keep quiet with out

¹⁰ Non- Resident Indians

demanding the needs of our ward members? I have on my part introduced proposals for drinking water and electricity and sanitations”. Kunapareddy Venkateswara Rao openly said, “Though his proposals for the development of his ward are accepted in the panchayat they are not implemented”. Mayara Veeraraghavamma, middle aged and an illiterate representative said that she used to support the others when resolutions were introduced by them. Maddala Nagasubbulu representative of a ward reserved for Scheduled Castes woman attended meetings of the panchayat along with her husband. Dasari Koteswaramma elected from a ward reserved for Scheduled Castes woman appeared assertive at the time of interview. She specially worked for the installation of hand pumps for Scheduled Castes. She introduced proposal for the water supply through hand pumps. Battu Shyamson a 34 years old representative and also an educated person introduced resolutions relating to minimum requirements. The point is that the village Peda Thummididi where the Gram Panchayat was set up early in 1925, still does not have primary amenities. Boina Radhakrishna said “drinking water, electricity and sanitation are three necessities. I introduced resolutions relating to these and worked for passing of the resolutions. I am interested in meeting the needs of ward members”. Penumala Venktravamma is most often accompanied by her husband and her role in moving resolutions is nominal.

4.27 Participation in Panchayat Meetings

Participation in panchayat meetings is an important aspect of decision-making processes. Attendance at the meetings is the initial stage of participation in the gram panchayats. The respondents are divided into four groups i.e, active participants, participate without fail, some times absent and occasional participation were present and some regular in attendance and proposing resolutions and participating in debates. Those who participated without fail were regular in participation but were less vocal. Occasional absentees are those who show lesser interest to participate. Men used to substitute themselves on behalf of their wives and participate in the meetings. The details of participation of Elected Representatives are given in table 4.19.

Table 4.19
Participation in Panchayat Meetings

Participation in Panchayat Meetings	No of Elected Representatives	%
Actively Participated	12	40.0
Participation Without Fail	15	50.0
Participation With Sometimes Absence	2	6.7
Substitute Participation	1	3.3
Total	30	100.0

It is seen from table 4.19 that participants without fail constitute more than the rest. Occasional absentees are very few in number. Participation through substitute is seen in the case of lone woman representative who is represented by her husband. A cross checking with the villagers and other members revealed that the respondents exaggerated the extent of participation. A gender based analysis of participation makes clear that active participation generally is more among males than females. However the participation of women representatives like Koduri Indira, D.Koteswaramma and Tummidu Narsamma excelled the men. It is capability and left party orientation that have been responsible in the case of these women.

There is evidence to the fact that those who are not active would depend on the secretary. One Dalit respondent from Peda Thummidu village who studied upto 9th class said “I attend meetings; I speak on the needs of my ward”. “The secretary of our panchayat will get our work done”. Arja Israel a Dalit representative, whose livelihood depends on daily wage said very boldly, “I participate very actively, I will not miss any meeting, I place the needs of my ward in meetings”. Potla Ramesh, a Dalit representative, has elementary educational qualification. He is a mason by profession. This young representative said “I go to every meeting though I do not introduce any resolution. I participate in the debates. The moneyed and upper castes’ leaders of panchayat feel “if they do some good to representatives who question, they will keep quiet. We have caste leaders we take their advice in respect of participation. The husband of the sarpanch originally use to attend panchayat meetings now we do not allow him to come to the meetings. There is lot of discrimination towards the Dalits. The Sarpanch’s family is very rich, they have tractors which they offer for rents, lend the money on interest. They

see that roads and lights are located in their places of convenience”. Some respondents said they did so many things but never gave details. The chairperson of Peda Thummidi panchayat Matta Vijayalakshmi did not give details of her participation. She said “I attend and conduct grama panchayats meetings”.

Konali Shasireka a middle aged Dalit representative having elementary education said “I use to attend all meetings with a few exceptions now and then. I had to speak of needs of my ward”. Maddala Nagasubbulu, a Dalit woman representative, who can just sign goes to panchayat along with her husband. Dasari Koteswaramma a middle aged woman representative studied upto 2nd class raises her voice boldly. She has got several amenities to her ward. She is interested on providing hand pumps in Scheduled Castes’ areas. She further told that in the initial months after elections to panchayats the husband of sarpanch use to conduct meetings and preside over the meetings when objected he stopped doing that. Jaldula Ramesh attends most of the meetings though he is a daily wage earner. Koduri Indira, a middle aged Dalit woman representative and relative to former Dalit Sarpanch, has contested due to his encouragement. She has been very active in the meetings questioning budget proposals. The support of sarpanch and her capacity contributed to her active participation.

4.28 Attendance in Gram Sabhas

Grama Sabha is the council comprising all the voters of the village. The panchayat has to convene the meetings, at the risk of repetition, twice in a year. Soon after the election to panchayat, the Grama Sabha meeting is convened. In this first meeting the budget and development proposals are approved. The second meeting is held at the close of the year where in the accounts are submitted and sought the approval of the Grama Sabha. The Sarpanch convenes and presides over the meetings of the Grama Sabha. Generally, it is observed that the meetings of the Grama Sabha, to a large extent, are shown on paper as conducted. But it should be stated, here, that the village panchayat under study is to some extent, an exception to the phenomenon. The discussion on Grama Sabha, under the background, is made in this chapter focussing on attendance. Conducting Grama Sabha is a constitutional requirement. It has been difficult to get information relating to Gram Sabha meetings. Every representative said that Grama Sabha meetings have to be held twice in a year and that the meeting shall be attended by

Mandal Parishad Development Officer (M.P.D.O), Executive Officer Panchayat Raj and Rural Development (EOPRD), Engineers relating to Public Work. The gram sabha meeting is presided by Sarpanch. Local M.L.A, M.P are visiting members and Collector is an Ex-officio members.

Table 4.20
Attendance in Grama Sabha Meetings

Attendance in Gram Sabhas	No of Elected Representatives	%
Actively Participated	10	33.3
Participation Without Fail	15	50.0
Sometimes Absence	4	13.3
Substitute Participation	1	3.3
Total	30	100.0

The representatives conveyed that the meetings of the Grama Sabha are a formality. It is only a few villagers attend the meetings. The ex-officio members rarely attend to meetings. So the Grama Sabha meetings, where opinions and needs of the villagers are expected to be discussed and approved are not able to serve the purpose. The sarpanches also do not evince the needed interest to hold the meetings. In fact the Grama Sabha should be playing a key role in identifying issues. The views of experience and service oriented villagers are expected to be elicited in the meetings. That way the Grama Sabha is loosing its vitality.

There are several reasons for poor attendance at Grama Sabha. The panchayat leaders do not like to be questioned openly. The pairavikars who receive personal favours from the leaders do not either want Grama Sabha meetings to be held or even if they are held they do not attend for simple reason that they do not like to invite the wrath of the leaders. The villagers who eke their livelihood as daily wage labourers, i.e masons, carpenters, cultivators and others can not afford to attend meetings held at inconvenient times.

Whether in panchayat meetings or elsewhere, the prominent persons, especially group elders, openly state that they do not give any heed to the demands of villagers. Some of the leaders of deprived sections like SCs expressed that they prefer to keep themselves away from Grama Sabha meetings since their demand are never taken seriously. The fear that party based difference and factions might create conflicts is

another reason for the sarpanches to complete the formalities of Gram Sabha as quickly as possible. Generally the pensioners, persons seeking favours from panchayat, DWACRA, SHGs groups, teachers and officials, attend the meetings of the Grama Sabha.

Referring to Gram Sabha meetings the respondents stated that the meetings did not take place with genuine interest. Another respondent pointed out that in Gram Sabhas the participants raised problems to be attended to; yet another respondent opined, “Gram Sabha meetings are not taking place in the real sense. They are held name sake only”. There is no scope for the ordinary citizens to raise their problems. One respondent stated, “I did not go to Gram Sabha meetings precisely because of the differences between others and me”.

The respondents said that points of common concern and questions of general public are discussed in Grama Sabha meetings. Identifying and prioritizing schemes and programmes reported were discussed. A majority of the respondents (72%) were not clear about who decided the convening of Grama Sabha. Some said, “it is sarpanch who decides and some other said, “it is the secretary; some said “it is a collective decision of sarpanch, secretary and elected members”. According to one respondent, holding Grama Sabha was simply a bogus thing. Some respondents opined that most of the people attending the meetings of the Grama Sabha were passive and they just attended for namesake. Yet some other felt that they were forced by the Sarpanch to attend the meeting. Some felt that there was nothing seriously discussed. There have been occasions when people are called to sign and go away. Despite limited interest in conducting Gram Sabhas, once they are held several issues came for discussion.

4.29 Agenda Preparation

Agenda preparation is an important activity before holding panchayat meetings. A high majority of the respondents (96%) said it is the sarpanch who decides on preparing the agenda.

4.30 Community Service

Peoples’ representatives will be involved in community related service like social service, attempting to get benefits for the deprived sections women and others. In Peda Thummidi village 16 respondents (53.5%) are involved in community service. Koduri

Indira has been instrumental for organizing SHGs. She herself is the president of the a Self Help Group (SHG).

4.31 Community Share in Development Schemes and Programmes

It will be of interest to know which caste derives more benefits in the implementation of development programmes. It is but natural that the caste bias is witnessed in rural areas since caste is still a dominant factor. Caste-free society is and ideal objective in Indian situation. Therefore it becomes incumbent for the research study to understand the caste wise benefits received from various development programmes. The following are the responses of the respondents about the caste-wise benefits that occurred.

Table 4.21

Community Share in Development Schemes and Programmes

Community Share in Development Schemes	No of Elected Representatives	%
SC,ST and Woman	4	13.3
BC	3	10.0
OC	1	3.3
Eligibility Criteria	13	43.3
More to Main village, Less to Hamlets	2	6.7
No response	7	23.3
Total	30	100.0

4.32 Working of Panchayati Raj

The respondents have been asked whether Panchayati Raj is working well. Everyone stated that it is working well. Only a few respondents said their panchayat is not working well. Koduri Indira said “unfortunately our panchayat is not working well”. Battu Shyamson pointed out that his panchayat is doing good work and funds are not a problem. The problems encountered by the panchayat are explained by respondents and they are: limited finance, non-co-operation of officials and domination of upper castes. Referring to financial sources G.Krishna Murthy said “O.K panchayats are working well but funds are not forthcoming adequately from the state government. Our panchayat has to get a lot of money in the form of arrears from the government. So the financial

problems are coming in the way of effective working of panchayat”. As pointed out corruption and exploitation are hindering the effective working of panchayats.

4.33 Suggestions for Effective Functioning of Panchayat Raj

A number of suggestions have been made by representatives to make the system of Panchayati Raj function effectively. Their ideas mainly focussed on lack of funds and powers, leadership, caste politics; co-operation among the peoples’ representatives and officials. Majority of members emphasised on adequate funds and powers, a less percentage of members composed to the former emphasized on the need for efficient leadership; co-operation between officials; people and representatives and absence of caste politics.

Table 4.22

Suggestions for Effective Functioning of Panchayati Raj

Suggestions for Effective Functioning of Panchayati Raj	No of Elected Representatives	%
Funds and Powers	10	33.3
Efficient, Quality Leadership	3	10.0
Get Rid of Caste Politics	2	6.7
Unity and Solidarity	2	6.7
Co-operation among People, Peoples’ Representatives and Officials	5	16.7
Others	8	26.7
Total	30	100.0

There should be effective leadership at panchayat; differences should be wiped out among several caste groups; panchayats should treat hamlets and main village on par; ‘it is not caste feeling that should prevail’, ‘it is not party feelings that shall not dominate’, are some statements of the respondents.

Speaking about the need to give up caste differences, Arja Dayakar said “If the Sarpanch and members do not show any caste based bias, they would be able to give better services to the village”. The progress of the village requires that there should not be any political party considerations, group and caste. All representatives should work together for the progress of the village”. Another factor emphasised by the respondents is related to leadership, “Active and educated leadership is essential for the successful working of Panchayati Raj”.

Tummidu Narsamma said “officials must extend co-operation to elected leaders in smooth functioning of panchayat in order to develop village and its people”. Awareness and unity among the representatives are considered to be essential for the proper working of Panchayati Raj Institutions. “People should be united, awareness should be generated among them and they in turn should be enabled to freely express their problems” according to Koduri Indira. B.V.Radhakrishna, former Upa Sarpanch of Pedda Thummidu gram panchayat said “awareness among the representatives should be created whenever found necessary. Official domination and corruption shall not find a place in all the programmes taken up”.

Emphasising on the need to participate actively Koduri Indira, a Dalit woman representative said “unity among the members of panchayat is very much essential. All should be participating to meet the village needs. People united or large in number should question the officials on their ineffective functioning”. Battu Shyamson is very much aware of the sources of funds. He said “the MPs, MLAs should allot funds from their quotas for the development of the villages. The allotment should be based on the need. It is also essential to get funds from District Panchayat Officer (DPO)”. A well acquainted representative with Panchayati Raj System and panchayat politics, Paladugula Veervenkateswara Rao elected from a ward reserved for SCs said “the role of the people in choosing the representatives is crucial. They should elect efficient leaders. They should not get tempted by money or any other attraction. It is necessary to elect service oriented persons as their representatives”. A Dalit representative Veervenkateswara Rao opined “the elected representatives are cheating the people after they got elected. Power is corrupting them. Every village has practices and traditions. There would be caste based bonds. These do not come in the way of development in so far as they are not employed negatively. At the same time there should be proper utilization of services, funds and capacity”.

4.34 Empowerment of Dalits in Post 73rd Constitution Amendment Era

In connection with political empowerment of Dalits, the respondents have been asked about the need for reservation for Dalits in Panchayati Raj Institutions, Legislatures and Parliament. They have also been asked whether the Dalits are being politically empowered and are exercising their powers after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment and

to suggest measures for effective performance of Dalit leaders in politics in general and village politics in particular. Boina Radha Krishana of BC representative said “Development shall also be looked at the quantitative side. Earlier Dalits use to stand with folded hands in front of higher caste representatives. Now situation has changed Dalits and women benefited with the provisions of reservations under the 73rd Constitution Amendment”. Another representative from SC community by name Ramesh stated that because of reservations all sections of society getting positions in political bodies. B.V.Radhakrishna, Upa sarpanch and BC representative opined that the reservation definitely should be there. If not today one day or the other they will become bold and active. Arja Dayakar stated there should certainly be reservations. Now a days only moneyed people are becoming members of panchayats and higher level political institutions. Reservations definitely enable them to get into political positions and exercising powers. Veeravenkateswara Rao, a journalist by profession and Dalit representative conveyed “reservations are inevitable but they should be implemented with impartiality. Power should be shared at each level so that a larger number of people can participate in decision-making processes.

The opinions of respondents are elicited regarding empowerment status of Dalits in the post 73rd Constitution Amendment Act. 98.2% of respondents expressed “Dalits are empowered and others 5.8% opined empowerment takes place to some extent”. There is quantitative and qualitative improvement with regard to Dalit representation in political bodies after the amendment. The disadvantaged groups are able to enter into political positions but there is a long way to go for real and effective participation they emphasised. Though constitutional guarantee is provided, old traditional trends still one way or the other way continued are creating problems. Empowerment to Dalits of course now is a symbolic but functionally there is so much needs to be done. According to one respondent, 80% of the Dalits are empowered and the remaining are yet to be empowered. Arja Chalamaiah, Matta Yesubabu, Tummididi Narsamma, Maddala Nagasubbulu, Jaldula Ramesh, Battu Shyamson, Potla Ramesh, Gudavalli Krishnamurthy, Koduri Subhakar Rao felt that the empowerment should completely taken place.

The respondents with the view that the Dalits are empowered include Koduri Indira, P.Venkatravamma, Arja Dayakar, Paladugula Veeravenkateswara Rao, Ahobala Rao, Vijayalakshmi etc., Potla Ramesh a converted Christian from SCs said, “reservations are essential but Dalits who have concern towards the welfare of people must be elected to the political bodies. According to a Dalit woman representative Koduri Indira “along with reservations, courage and confidence are essential for Dalits to work effectively and fearlessly. They should not loose their available opportunities. They shall go ahead for the welfare of the society”. Matta Vijayalakshmi, Sarpanch of Peda Thummidi village, said “Dalits have become politically empowered and are enjoying the power. Their leaders also speaking in the meetings and outside”. Matta Yesubabu a BC representative said, “yes Dalits are increasingly using power. There is a change seen in our area”. Paladugula Veeravenkateswara Rao a Dalit representative pointed out “yes, the Dalits are empowered and they are achieving the goals. They are participating in political, economic aspects with courage and confidence on par with other castes. Ten years before they lived as hapless citizens. Now they have realized the importance of education and they are questioning the authorities and powerful people without fear”.

4.35 Exercise of Power by Dalits

An attempt is made to elicit the views of respondents in the context of Dalit exercising powers. There is definitely recognition that the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act provided opportunities for Dalits to get into the political positions at the local level. Broadly three types of responses have been obtained. Firstly the Dalit have excelled in exercising powers according to one group of respondents. Secondly a group of respondents felt that “O.K they are doing well. Though there are some problems”. Some respondents felt, “there is change in the environment as regards to the Dalits exercising power. Koduri Indira emphatically said “Dalits are exercising their powers. We can do several things with women power. If necessary we can go to Collector and get things done”.

4.36 Contribution to the Welfare of Society and Welfare of Dalits

The desire to do good to the society is evident among the respondents. The services they preferred to do are related to pensions, education, eradication of poverty,

solving problems, changing the attitude of people, library facility and educational facilities. Some examples are given here. Matta Yesubabu and Raju have a strong feeling that efforts should be made to transform the society so that people live with love and affections beyond caste, religion and other considerations.

Konali Shasirekha strongly feels that economically weak people will not be able to do much. She also feels that there is a lot to be done in socio, economic and political fields. Nagasubbulu, a Dalit woman representative, expressed concern over the backwardness and poverty they are living in. She is interested in doing good to the Dalits. Jaldula Ramesh said “many Dalits are poor and it is necessary to promote livelihood opportunities and eradicate illiteracy”.

Veeranki Rani said “I would like to bring change in the attitude of people. I would like to promote unity among the people and work for development of the people”. Battu Shyamson would like to get a hospital and library to his village. Bethu Seetaiah who lives in a hamlet is interested in getting school to his ward. Veeravenkateswara Rao is interested in providing general awareness and service activities among the members of the village.

The respondents expressed their views on what they would like to do for the upliftment of the Dalits. In fact their upliftment should be given priority to realize the goal of social justice. Matta Yesubabu during a prolonged discussion stated “the Dalits are showing a cognizable identity. It is necessary that we should work for unity of all sections of society, whether it is Dalit, OCs or BCs. An attitude of living together should be developed. Right now they do not live in mixed neighbourhood”. According to Jaldula Ramesh “there are many poor among the Dalits and livelihood opportunities very much essential for them. It is also important to eradicate illiteracy among them”. One Dalit representative, Arja Israel opined “there are laws but they should be increasing aware of such laws and we should enlighten them. Another respondent pointed out “Dalits are very backward, employment and health related initiatives for them are necessary. Education is very important. According to Subhakar Rao there should be efforts regarding educational facilities. According to Samson “training centres especially in tailoring should be set up and women should be provided loans to purchase sewing machines. He would work in this direction”.

4.37 Problems of the Representatives

Contemporary politics are complex and the political roles are not smooth to be performed. The role of caste and money, group, party have been explained earlier. The respondents have been asked whether they are facing any specific problems. Certain amount of hesitation and fear are expressed by respondents at the time of interviews when they are asked to identify problems. According to some the deserving people are not given a chance to represent the people in panchayat. The Dalit representatives are sometimes threatened when they do not follow the dictates of upper caste dominants. Some times they are forced they take up to influence of their caste persons on issues. Rich persons generally will have good network and contacts. They use these for personal benefits. It is found from the study the sarpanches have links with contractors, officials and higher political leaders. Instead of Sarpanch, the people in the village question the ward representatives since he is immediately available.

4.38 Performance Satisfaction

83.3% respondents in Pedda Thummidi said that they are satisfied with performance of elected representatives and 16.7% are not happy. “We worked to implement food for work programmes” said Veeranki Rani, a representative from BC community, she further said “I did what I could still we are little behind in development. I have the confidence that I would be able to deliver the good in future also”. P.Veeravenkateswara Rao, a Dalit representative said “previously the SCs faced many problems to perform their roles independently due to interference of rich”. I could work successfully in the implementation of food for work scheme; an area which is full of thorns. But I could successfully get implemented the programme. I could work for laying of the roads in the village. Still there is much to be done”. A representative, unhappy over his performance stated “I could not do what I wanted”. Ahobala Rao has the satisfaction that he worked for the distribution of ration cards to the people of the village.

4.39 Problems from Upper Castes

The traditional caste hierarchy placed the Dalits at the bottom and also bred habits of deference of the lower caste to the higher caste, of the younger to the aged ,

unquestioning obedience of the land less agricultural workers to the landlord, and subservience of the poor to the wealthy¹¹. The following table gives details of problems

Table 4.23

Problems from Upper Castes

Problems from Upper Castes	No of Elected Representatives	%
Yes	16	53.3
No	14	46.7
Total	30	100.0

Arja Israel said “there are so many problems. The Upper Castes neglect SCs. They do not pay heed to our demands”. Speaking about the domination of Upper Castes, Koduri Indira states the Upper Caste create several hurdles to the Dalit representatives in their working. According to Koteswaramma, a Dalit representative felt “there is still a feeling among upper castes that the Dalits are low in status. Such feeling strongly works against Dalits. With the support of CPM leaders, we have become bold. Upper castes people scold us in abusive language. In fact a Dalit Sarpanch died on account of upper castes’ harassment and domination”. Veeravenkteswara Rao openly spoke about the domination of upper castes. Jaldula Ramesh spoke of illtreatment by the upper castes towards the Dalits. P.Ramesh, a converted Christian refers to the attitude of the upper castes. They don’t work and do not allow others to work for the village. Arja Dayakar, BC Christian representative explained boldly that the former sarpanches Ramesh and Chalamaiah faced problems from upper castes. Another representative said “I myself faced problems due to the domination of upper castes”.

4.40 Problems from the Rich

Respondents equally divided to the question relating the problem from the rich. It appears that the Sarpanch is hesitant to speak of the problems arising from the rich. Ahobala Rao, an open minded and service motivated representative did not face problems from rich. It is noted at the time of interview those who said that rich do not give any problems are usually by non-Dalits.

¹¹Dalit Leadership in the New Panchayats, SAS-3, Module 1, Session: Understanding Social Accountability, Participatory Research In Asia, New Delhi, 2008, P.1

Table 4.24
Problems from Rich

Problems from the Rich	No of Elected Representatives	%
Yes	15	50.0
No	15	50.0
Total	30	100.0

Paladugula Veeravenkataswara Rao said “now-a-days the political leaders from rich community are realizing their actual situation and are behaving with caution”. It is found that there are instances when higher authorities solved problems created by rich people in Peda Thummidi village. Referring to caste based discrimination and discrimination on the basis of economic status, B.Samson a converted Christian said the “upper caste people cannot tolerate the Dalits to come up. They do not still allow the Dalits to enter into temples”. Previously rich people grabbed the lands of the poor. Earlier the Dalits were backward, they did not have strength and courage. Now we stand united to fight for our rights and serve Dalit community. “The problems if any to Dalits are from rich people” according to a Dalit representative Koduri India. “The rich people contest elections with money and for money after the elections” according to Arja Israel. In the opinion of Dasari Koteswaramma, “definitely there are problems from rich”. “small matters are converted into big issues by the rich. They abuse the Dalits”.

A very rich Sarpanch M.Vijayalakshmi said that there are no problems at all from rich people. Others who felt that there are no problems from rich include Ahobala Rao, T.Narsamma and Kunapareddy Venkateswara Rao. A marked division is seen between SCs and non-SCs in this regard.

4.41 Problems from Officials

It is only a limited percentage of the respondents felt they face problems from officials. Dalit leaders /representatives expressed the view that the cooperation of the officials is less to the Dalits compared to non-Dalits. It is reliably noted that there has been support of the officials to the non-Dalits in most cases. Expectation of monitor favours by the officials reported by both Dalit and non-Dalit representatives. The details can be seen from Table 4.25.

Table 4.25

Problems from Officials

Problems from Officials	No of Elected Representatives	%
Yes	3	10.0
No	27	90.0
Total	30	100.0

Section-IV

Voters' Perceptions on Empowerment Related Issues

The Panchayati Raj is in vogue since last five and half decades in the state of Andhra Pradesh. There have been a number of steps taken up by the state and union government to better the living conditions of the citizens of the villages and more especially Dalits. Crores of rupees were dumped into this sector. Yet there remain several problems to be attended to especially with regard to the Dalits. Therefore, the study made an attempt to elicit the perceptions of the people on the developments obtaining in village panchayats under study with particular reference to Dalits. In this section, it is proposed to elicit the perceptions of cross section of people. Villagers interviewed include senior citizens, teachers, NGO representatives, officials, community/caste leaders, members and leaders of self help groups and common public. Care is taken to include educated, youth and socially and politically active citizens among the respondents.

a. Need for Reservations

The need for reservation is felt by a very high percentage of the villagers. It can be seen from table no. 4.26 that nearly 89% of the villagers supported the reservations. Only 7% of them held a negative view about the reservations.

Table 4.26

Need of Reservation

Need of Reservation	No. of Voters	Percent
Positive	89	89.0
Negative	7	7.0
Neutral	4	4.0
Total	100	100.0

The reasons for supporting reservations include the need for providing opportunities for the deprived, the need to involve larger number of people in political decision-making and the necessity to represent the interests of deprived sections of the society. Persons opposed to reservations said “reservations are preventing the eligible to occupy positions of power”. One respondent said, “if a seat is reserved for a BC woman,

a BC man would not be able to contest for the same position. If a seat is reserved for SC others would not in a position to contest. So weak woman candidates are fielded and the real power will be exercised by husband of woman representative or a person from upper caste in the case of SC Sarpanch hence the purpose of reservation, if any, is lost. Those who remained neutral are not in a position to think and respond to the question. A middle aged villager Veeranki Sagar, referring to the need or otherwise of reservations for SCs said “even if reservations are there, we should take care to see that they are properly used or not. This is important. Of course reservations are essential. People should avail reservations in appropriate manner to derive the benefits. Another middle aged villager P.Chinna Mohan Rao opined “Reservations should be there because the SCs also must shine in politics”. A young villager Nadikeswara Rao.V, had put a question to researcher “How could there be absence of reservations sir?”. Whether it is in panchayat or else where definitely there should be reservations for SCs. They should be having the opportunity to participate in political bodies. Murala Venkateswara Rao said “since 1993 reservations to SCs, STs, BCs and women have helped to increase the number of representatives in the elected bodies. Earlier there used to be one or two members from women, SC and STs”. There OCs point out that there is no need for reservation to SCs since OC population is more than SCs in the village. If the seats reserved for SCs, OCs will not get chance”.

b. Participation of Scheduled Castes Representatives

It is not enough that the SCs are getting elected on the basis of reservations provided by the 73rd amendment Act, but it is also pertinent to know how they are participating in democratic decentralized bodies. Therefore the study investigated into the participation aspect. The following are the responses of the general public of the study area on the subject proper. The villagers have been asked to express their views on the Scheduled Castes representatives’ participation in village development and in village panchayats.

Table 4.27
Opinion on Participation of SCs

Opinion on Participation of SCs	No of Voters	Percent
Active Participation	31	31.0
Partial Participation	42	42.0
No Participation	27	27.0
Total	100	100.0

It can be seen from the table 4.27 that a majority of the villagers reported either active participation or partial participation by the SC representatives. Inactive participation is reported only by a small margin of (27%) of the villagers. It is an indication that the SC representatives are utilizing the opportunity provided meaningfully. The opinions of some villagers are worth mentioning here. Referring to SCs' Participation V.Nandikesava Rao, several SCs are participating in the matters related to panchayat activities and development programmes. Their participation is also just participation. Vemula Vekateswara Rao said "I can definitely say that the SC representatives are going regularly to panchayat meetings. You can enquire from them what problems do they face. They will tell you every thing". Dasari Venkateswara Rao said the SC representatives attend less number of meetings. Members of Sarpanch's panel attend more and others attend less. Penumala Jamayamma opined "the participation of SCs is more than the past". There was no chance for them to participate but now they got an opportunity and they are showing interest in the development of their community. G. Prasad said "In no way the SCs are inferior to OCs in respect of participation. In view of changing dynamics, it is good they should participate on par with others". G.Sundar Rao noted "by now the SCs have achieved empowerment to larger extent. It is significant that they are contesting in elections". According to P.Nagarjuna "it may be stated that the awareness of SCs has improved and their participation rate also increased".

c. Exercise of Political Power by SCs Elected Members

It is necessary that assumption of political power positions should be coupled with exercising power. It is noticed that, according to the villagers' perceptions a majority of

SCs are exercising power. They feel that 33% of SCs elected representatives not exercise power.

Table 4.28
Exercise of Power by SCs

Exercise of Power by SCs	No. of Voters	Percent
Yes	63	63.0
No	33	33.0
No idea	4	4.0
Total	100	100.0

Responding to the question regarding exercise of power by SC representative, Veeranki Sagar said “in any category whether SCs, STs, BCs, OCs, it is the Sarpanch who is powerful. It is difficult for members to expect that they would exercise powers. By virtue of position Sarpanch exercise power”. Manda Baby Sarojini expressed “It is O.K, it is not bad that the SCs are exercising power”. K. Tapaniah pointed out that the SC members should exercise powers to the extent that they should not give opportunity to OCs to maintain their dominance. B.Koteswaramma said “the SCs are not able to exercise powers”. K.Daiva Kumar pointed out as “the SCs are not really enjoying power”. Kali Kishore referring to the control of the rich over the exercise of powers points out that the SCs can exercise powers. But the rich people do not allow them to do so. N. Nagaraju noted “the SCs get chance to exercise power. They do so when they get opportunity. Now the BCs have the opportunity and they are exercising power”. What he meant is that much depends on to which caste the Sarpanch belongs”. Vasantha Rao an educated and young respondent said “when SCs were elected they exercised powers. In fact there are no powers for members”. He also has the feeling that the position of Sarpanch is very important. Kasetti VenkateswaraRao said that any power position whether it is panchayat or any other higher level bodies rich can get in easily and exercise powers smoothly; even in the case of SCs also it is applicable. Ajra Venkata Rao pointed out that “educated youth in the village have become politically enlightened. Political consciousness and political enlightenment are more among the SCs compared other castes but the SCs are not able to go ahead in politics because of absence of economic empowerment”.

d. Caste Politics

The villagers' responses to the question regarding the presence caste politics in village panchayat are detailed in table no 4.29.

Table 4.29

Nature of Caste Politics

Nature of Caste Politics	No. of Voters	Percent
Exists	49	49.0
It Varies	27	27.0
Does not Exist	9	9.0
No Idea	6	6.0
One Caste Domination	9	9.0
Total	100	100.0

It is observed from the table that nearly 50% of the villagers expressed that the caste politics are present in the village. They give preference to caste. 27% of the villagers' hesitate, fear have led them to keep silent. A few of the respondents (9%) denied the presence of caste politics. Yalla Jakaraiah, while agreeing that caste politics are present in the village said "caste politics are not significant to the level worth mentioning. Chekka Gnanamma said "caste politics are present more at the time of elections". Yalla Paramanandam said, "caste politics are internal affair during elections". Yalla Ratna Raju pointed out that it is the moneyed people that have upper hand and it is the higher castes that dominate politics. Battu Krupadanam points out, "economically strong peoples' domination is visible during the elections. It is a fact that caste politics are present in the village and its presence, and its presence is more felt during elections. Arja Babu Rao said "caste politics are seen in the village since the inception of the panchayat and its influence is heavily seen on the panchayat". In the opinion of Pandu "caste based politics are very common at the village level". In the opinion of Pothuraju "caste based issues are very sensitive. They work effectively at the time of elections." Manemma pointed out it is caste that determines several things in the village. It is the domination of Goudas that is controlling village politics". Narender said "at present struggle for power between SCs and BCs is seen". He further states "caste is important in politics". Dasu Penumala said "caste considerations are more in general but the youth now are resisting and in turn they face the challenges". Koduri Sudhakar said

why not the caste politics are present? Caste politics are very much there. Arja Dayakar present MPTC from BC-C said “it is on caste basis the vice-president of Mandal Parishad is elected and an upper caste member. In fact, Dayakar was to be elected as vice-president”. Our village is not an exception to caste politics. Penumala Pydeeswara Rao said “caste and party mobilization are present during the elections. It is only on the plank of caste the elections take place”. K.Shymala referring to the control of rich over SC members said, “a few SC members are in the clutches of the rich. They act according to their dictates. Of course some members do not listen to rich”. This is an indication of conveying the change in rural scenario but it is on a slow space.

e. Influence of Upper Castes and Rich

Influence of upper caste and rich is the commonly accepted phenomenon in politics. When asked to express their views on the influence of upper castes and rich classes on village politics, a majority of them denied their presence. But those who felt their presence constitute a significant percentage among the respondents. It may be noted from table 4.30.

Table 4.30
Control of Upper Caste and Rich

Control of Upper Castes and Rich	No. of Voters	Percent
Upper Caste Peoples' Control	13	13.0
Rich Peoples' Control	20	20.0
Both	6	6.0
None	61	61.0
Total	100	100.0

The opinions of some villagers are worth mentioning here. Battu Joseph Thambi “yes influence of rich people in the village operates internally but not externally”. In some hamlets SCs are educated. They do not allow them to be controlled. BCs check them to certain extent. In the opinion of Birudugadda Varadanam “in the present circumstances there is not much scope for the control of upper castes and rich over SC members. Earlier, that is, in the last few decades the SCs were controlled by rich and upper castes”. Mendem Venkataramana feels that under some circumstances there is scope for control of rich over SCs. It is at the time of nominations, the rich people spend

money on the elections of SC members. Hence they control some SCs. Kovvada Ramakrishna said, “the rich would like to control the SC members but such opportunities are not evident because the SCs are not allowing such thing to happen now”.

f. Contribution of SC Elected Members to their Wards and Community

The contribution of SC representative to their respective wards is appreciated by a majority of the villagers in Peda Thummididi village. It can be seen from table 4.31.

Table 4.31

Contribution of SC Representatives

Contribution of SC Representatives	No. of Voters	Percent
Highly Contribution	55	55.0
Low Contribution	34	34.0
No Contribution	11	11.0
Total	100	100.0

It is significant to note that among Dalits and non-Dalit villagers, a majority appreciated the services of the Dalits. Absence of their contribution to the village is quoted only by a negligible percentage of the villagers. This is a positive sign in respect of the contribution of SC representatives to the village. Pointing out on the possibility of SC members contributing to their caste, Manda Baby Sarojini said “definitely the SC members will work for the promotion of the interests of their community”. Kotaru Tapanach opined “definitely the SC members would work for the benefit of their caste members. They involve them in the programmes that help their relatives and caste members”. Battu Samuel replying to the question said “the SC members solve individual problems of the community and take issues of their community to mandal office. K.Subba Rao said that the individual needs of SCs are represented by SC members at mandal level offices. Bolla Koteswaramma said, “SC members would work for the benefit of their relatives”. Chekka Ashirvadam points out of the problems of SC members and said they will work but the president occupies a dominant position. It makes a difference. Mendem Rajani suggested, “if the SC members are united, they will be able to make positive contribution to the community. Arja Raj Kumar feels “if SC members are economically strong, they will participate effectively on par with others”. Battu Gracilla emphasised on the need for unity among these members for effective

participation”. Similar is the opinion of Battu Manikyam. Misunderstanding and difference of opinions are hindering the effective participation of SC members. P. Marthanda Rao said “it is necessary to elect educated SCs so that they will effectively participate”. Jayaraju stresses on the need for service orientated and committed SCs for effective participation. Penumala Venkateswara Rao expressed similar opinion. Battu Jayamma focussed on the need for unity among SCs because they have been the exploited lot. Kagita Nagababu said, “what is expected could be achieved by electing SCs as members. Same is the opinion of Ch. Narasaiah.

g. Good and Bad Experience of the Villagers

Opposition to former SC Sarpanch is expressed by SC villagers because the Sarpanch, though elected to a reserved position, had to work under the control of very rich Gouda caste land lords popularly known as Bolla Brothers.

Table 4.32

Good and Bad Experiences

Good and Bad Experiences	No. of Voters	Percent
Good	1	1.0
Neutral	33	33.0
Bad	47	47.0
Worse	19	19.0
Total	100	100.0

There is a strong opposition (66%) towards the sitting Sarpanch and their experience is worse whereas the bad is 47%. The neutrals constitute one third of the respondents (33%). It is only one person, M.Nagarjuna husband of sitting Sarpanch feels the experience is good. It is understood from field investigation that the sitting Sarpanch is very rich and it is often her husband who controls the affairs of the panchayat. They own huge tanks of aquaculture. The houses of the nearby poor people (some of them SCs) are affected. One respondent said, “if we want anything to be done to our ward it is better we meet the Sarpanch’s husband and place our request. He may or may not consider the request. If we raise any issue in the panchayat meeting, it will have negative effect. It is observed that the Dalit members of panchayat have become assertive. But

functional problems encounter them. Some of them said, “it is better not to attend Gram Panchayat meetings and instead private requests might yield favourable results”.

A study of Peda Thummidi village made clear that the representation of females is slightly more than the reserved percentage. The induction of young in the membership and chair positions is encouraging. There is B.Cs domination numerically as well as in economically. However the SCs occupy one third of the membership. Illiterates are present among the members and more importantly among SCs. A majority of the Gram Panchayat members are engaged in agricultural occupation. And a majority of them are new entrants in politics. As regards party affiliation, they are mainly for Congress Party and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and castes have been the main helping factors for contest. Fielding of SCs as candidates by OCs and rich in the election is seen. They believe that the process of empowerment of SCs has started. Assertiveness and confidence are seen in a reasonably good percentage of the respondents belonging to SCs. Suggestions for effective functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions have come from them.

Section-V

Caste-Wise: Dalits and Non-Dalits Reflections on Various Issues

In order to understand the opinions of the villagers, a caste wise analysis is also made. This helps to identify the differences of opinions based on caste. The details are given in the following description.

a. Need for Reservations

The Dalit respondents have expressed positive views of reservation and said that reservations for Dalits must continue. The difference in the percentage of Dalit and non-Dalit respondents opined negatively on the issue of reservation and the percentage of such opinion is 17.2% 11% respectively neutral opinions on this area is only 6.3%. The following table no. 4.33 gives the details picture of the said statement.

Table 4.33
Need for Reservations

	Need for Reservations		
	Dalits	Non Dalits	Total
Positive	36	53	89
	100%	83%	89%
Negative	0	7	7
	0%	11%	7%
Neutral	0	4	4
	0%	6%	4%
Total	36	64	100
	100%	100%	100%

Lankapalli Purushottam (SC) stated that reservations meant for the upliftment of the backward sections. Reservation policy must be observed and continued in panchayats. Batraju Vasantha Rao (OC) opined “nobody opposes the reservation system to them but what generally people expect after elections, the efficient performance and the development of the village during their tenure of office”.

b. Participation of SCs in Panchayat

The participation of SCs in panchayat is considered to be active by a majority of the Dalits but a small percent of non-Dalits agree to the former statement. A greater percent of non-Dalits feel that the participation of Dalits in panchayat is partial. Absence

of participation is felt by a far higher percentage of non-Dalits compared to that of the Dalits. Table no. 3.34 makes this clear

Table 4.34

Opinion on Participation of SCs

	Opinion on Participation of SCs		
	Dalits	Non Dalits	Total
Active Participation	20	11	31
	56%	17%	31%
Partial Participation	13	29	42
	36%	45%	42%
No Participation	3	24	27
	8%	38%	27%
Total	36	64	100
	100%	100%	100%

Pijige Nagarjuna (SC) felt that comparatively the participation rate has increased in the panchayat while there was a Sarpanch from Dalit community where as in previous terms participation of SCs was very negligible because non-Dalit Sarpanches showed hardly any interest to solve their problems. Pirimkayala Venkateswaramma (BC) opined “every time whenever there is a meeting at Grama Sabha, the voters, especially wage-labourers like us cannot spare time, we cannot take active participation that is why elected members go and participate and represent our problems”.

c. Exercise of Powers by Scheduled Castes

The villagers have been asked whether the Dalits are exercising their powers. In Peda Thummidu it is noticed that a high percentage of non-Dalits said that Dalits exercised powers. The difference in the percentage of Dalit and non-Dalits regarding the views on the exercising the power is significant. Equally significant is the difference in the percentage of Dalits and non-Dalits who said that the Dalit representatives are not really exercising power. There is not even a single Dalit villager who said that there is no idea about it. This is clear from table no. 4.35.

Table 4.35
Exercise of Power by Dalits

	Exercise of Power By Dalits		
	Dalits	Non Dalits	Total
Yes	17	46	63
	47%	72%	63%
No	19	14	33
	53%	22%	33%
No Idea	0	4	4
	0%	6%	4%
Total	36	64	100
	100%	100%	100%

Gajidesi Neelamma (SC) opined “SCs are not exercising the power due to interference of Non-Dalits. At present SCs do not have any say because the present sarpanch belongs to BCs”. Balla Venkataswamy (BC) said that if SC community got a chance to get elected to panchayat, they can also exercise powers. During the last term it was proved by Chalamaiah that even Dalits can also discharge functions in a satisfactory manner.

d. Caste Politics

The presence of caste politics is identified by a majority of Dalits and the opinion of non-Dalits in this regard, constitutes a minority but not an insignificant minority. The exercise of caste politics varies. The variation depends on particular situation. The percentage of non-Dalits who felt that the caste politics exist is far higher among non-Dalits compared to that of Dalits. The percentage of Dalits who identified single caste domination is far higher among Dalits than among non-Dalits. Table 4.36 gives a clear idea of this.

Table 4.36
Nature of Caste Politics

	Nature of Caste Politics		
	Dalits	Non Dalits	Total
Exists	22	27	49
	61%	42%	49%
It Varies	7	20	27
	19%	31%	27%
Does not Exist	1	8	9
	3%	13%	9%
No Idea	1	5	6
	3%	8%	6%
One Caste Domination	5	4	9
	14%	6%	9%
Total	36	64	100
	100%	100%	100%

Pathapogu Chinababu (SC) stated “caste politics surface at the time of elections. But after elections are over normal situation prevails in the village. It is obvious that every community tries to show ‘its’ strength but the economically well-off communities exert more influence over the lower castes”. Vemulavada Ranga Rao (OC) said that all villagers are not indulging in caste politics but a very few got involved and play filthy politics in order to attain positions. For that matter all caste including Dalits play caste politics to get elected to the positions in panchayat.

e. Influence of Upper Castes and Rich

The villagers in Peda Thummidi have been asked whether the Upper Castes and rich have influence over village politics. It is observed that a majority of Dalits as well as non-Dalits answered in negative. However, the percentage of non-Dalits is more than that of the Dalits. The control of rich felt by a far higher percentage of Dalits compared to that of the non-Dalits. The influence of Upper Castes is less felt by the Dalits. Among the non-Dalits equal percentage of villagers have felt the influence of Upper Caste and rich people. Details could be noted from table no. 4.37.

Table 4.37

Upper Caste and Rich Control

	Upper Caste and Rich Control		
	Dalits	Non Dalits	Total
Upper Caste People Control	4	9	13
	11%	14%	13%
Rich People Control	11	9	20
	31%	14%	20%
Both	1	5	6
	3%	8%	6%
None	20	41	61
	56%	64%	61%
Total	36	64	100
	100%	100%	100%

Ravinuthala Balaiah (SC) opined “representatives, who have close association with the elected sarpanch and other powerful members, may control a very few SCs, but other people from SCs resist the former from controlling them”. Nallagonda Pandu (BC) stated that earlier dominant castes had control over all lower castes but now they have almost lost control due to growing awareness among the Dalits. Since SCs are provided some protections they are safer than the other castes.

f. Contribution of Scheduled Castes’ Elected Representatives to their own community

The contribution of Scheduled Castes representatives to their own community is on higher side among the villagers. The percentage of Dalits in this context is more than that of non-Dalits. Low level of contribution is felt by a non-Dalits. Similar is the position regarding the absence of contribution. The following table explains the phenomenon.

Table 4.38
Contribution of SC Elected Representatives

	Contribution of SC Elected Representatives		
	Dalits	Non Dalits	Total
Highly Contribution	2	2	4
	4%	4%	4%
Low Contribution	12	11	23
	24%	22%	23%
No Contribution	7	3	10
	14%	6%	10%
Total	50	50	100
	100%	100%	100%

Ravinuthala Mariamma (SC) said “members propose for several development activities in SC residential areas but ultimate decision rests with the sarpanch whether to sanction or not to sanction, though this kind of situation exists, elected representative have done their best which is considerably negligible”. Atluri Krishna Rao (OC) opined “Earlier some of the Dalit elected representatives are able to do something for their community with the support of Sarpanch of their own caste, but during the present term it is not possible with this Sarpanch because she does not care for the welfare of any body except her group”.

g. Good and Bad Experiences

It is noted that among the villagers in Peda Thummidi half of the non-Dalits and less than 50% Dalits expressed that their experience with sitting panchayat Sarpanch and members has been bad. Slightly less than 20% that it is worst. Only 3% of the Dalits have opined that their experience has been good. The tendency maintaining neutrality seen among Dalits. None of the Dalits said that their experience has been good. The details are given in table no. 4.39.

Table 4.39
Good and Bad Experiences of Respondents

	Good and Bad Experiences of Voters		
	Dalits	Non Dalits	Total
Very Good	1	0	1
	3%	0%	1%
Good	13	20	33
	36%	31%	33%
Bad	15	32	47
	42%	50%	47%
Worse	7	12	19
	19%	19%	19%
Total	36	64	100
	100%	100%	100%

Koorma Terejamma (SC) opined, “panchayat representatives in the present term are not taking into cognisance the peoples’ problems but earlier the situation was different and at least we had a person from our community who has shown some interest for the community needs. Vadladi Anjaneyulu (BC) stated “during the last term at least SC sarpanch did a little work but the present sarpanch’s main goal was only earning money”.

Section-VI

Perceptions of Educated and Uneducated Voters

The perceptions of educated and uneducated voters have been elicited to get feel of difference if any. Educated in the present context are those who can read and write. In other words illiterates are excluded from the category of educated.

a. Need for Reservations

In Peda Thummidi more percentage of the educated have responded positively on the need for reservation. Whether educated or uneducated a very high percentage of villagers said that reservation is essential. Persons opposed to reservations are less than 10% and they are more among uneducated. The neutrals are absent among the educated and present among uneducated. Table no.4.40 gives details.

Table 4.40

Need for Reservation

	Need for Reservation		
	Educated	Un Educated	Total
Positive	44	45	89
	96%	83%	89%
Negative	2	5	7
	4%	9%	7%
Neutral	0	4	4
	0%	7%	4%
Total	46	54	100
	100%	100%	100%

Putla Narendra a graduate opined “people, especially poor SCs cannot contest compared to other castes who are wealthy and powerful but reservations to SCs provides an opportunity to contest”. Pilakala Vajram an illiterate states, “if reservation is provided to SCs, they also develop in all the fields including in education, politics. It is necessary that there should be reservations for SCs in panchayats and then only they will have a chance to become representatives of village panchayat”.

b. Participation of Dalits in Panchayat and village development

The study has revealed that in the village under study those who are identified as active participants constitute a minority. The percentage of educated in this context is far more than that of uneducated. Partial participation is identified by less than 45% of the villagers and the percentage of uneducated is more than the educated. Absence of participation is identified by less than 30% of the villagers and the uneducated. The percentage of this category is more than the educated. Details could be seen in table no.4.41.

Table 4.41

Opinion on Participation of SCs

	Opinions on Participation of SCs		
	Educated	Un Educated	Total
Active Participation	19	12	31
	41%	22%	31%
Partial Participation	18	24	42
	39%	44%	42%
No Participation	9	18	27
	20%	33%	27%
Total	46	54	100
	100%	100%	100%

Maddala Mahesh opined “SCs are participating in panchayat actively but their suggestions are not taken positively and that is the reason why people are not showing much interest to voice their interests”. Mendem Venkataramana an illiterate states “all SCs cannot participate in Grama Sabha meeting of panchayat because they are all wage-labourers, every time they want to participate, they have to loose their livelihood for the particular day, but a few people who are elected by people as their representatives must participate on behalf of the SCs and other castes and raise and solve problems”.

c. Exercising power by SC representatives

When asked whether the SC representatives are really exercising their powers, a majority of educated and uneducated have responded positively in Peda Thummidu. The percentage of uneducated is higher than the educated in this context. Absence of exercise of power by SCs representatives is felt by a high percentage of the educated. Those

villagers who do not have any idea about exercising powers are nil among uneducated. Table 4.42 give details.

Table 4.42
Exercise of Power by SCs

	Exercise of Power by SCs		
	Educated	Un Educated	Total
Yes	27	36	63
	59%	67%	63%
No	19	14	33
	41%	26%	33%
No Idea	0	4	4
	0%	7%	4%
Total	46	54	100
	100%	100%	100%

Mendem Rajini educated up to 8th standard stated that SC elected representatives though could exercise their powers but illiteracy, economic backwardness hinder their performance. Govvada SunderRao an illiterate opines “reservation is essential for achieving equality in panchayats and reservations should be continued as long as inequality continues among various caste groups”.

d. Nature of Caste Politics

The influence of caste is predominantly more among the educated in the village. However, the uneducated constitute a very significant minority in thinking about the influence of caste. Among the uneducated those who feel that it varies from 1/3rd and less than 20% of educated have this view. Absence of caste on politics is felt by less than 10% educated and uneducated. The respondents who have no view in this context are more in percentage among the uneducated. The percentage of educated who felt the presence of one caste domination is more among the educated. Table 4.43 makes this clear.

Table 4.43
Nature of Caste Politics

	Nature of Caste Politics		
	Educated	Un Educated	Total
Exists	26	23	49
	57%	43%	49%
It Varies	9	18	27
	20%	33%	27%
Does Not Exist	4	5	9
	9%	9%	9%
No Idea	2	4	6
	4%	7%	6%
One Caste Domination	5	4	9
	11%	7%	9%
Total	46	54	100
	100%	100%	100%

Avula Kiranmayi educated up to tenth class opined “we are not worried about these sort of politics, we are common people, we do not have leisure time to discuss all these at the time of elections. We just vote for good people”. Parasa Venkateswara Rao an illiterate opined that caste politics might be there, each caste group had its own party affiliations with either one party or other. Caste based divisions are very common where there are many parties and several caste groups.

e. Control of Upper Castes and Rich

It is seen that the control of Upper Castes over village politics is felt by a small percentage of villagers which is equal among educated and uneducated in Pedda Thummi. The control of rich felt by a high percentage of educated and same is the position regarding the influence of both. Absence of control whether rich or upper castes is felt by 50 percentage of the educated and a high percentage among the uneducated. The difference between educated and uneducated is significant. Table 4.44 gives clear picture of this.

Table 4.44
Upper Caste and Rich Control

	Upper Caste and Rich Control		
	Educated	Un Educated	Total
Upper Caste People Control	6	7	13
	13%	13%	13%
Rich People Control	12	8	20
	26%	15%	20%
Both	5	1	6
	11%	2%	6%
None	23	38	61
	50%	70%	61%
Total	46	54	100
	100%	100%	100%

Dusanapudi Venkatakrishna Rao stated that as long as the people depend on other castes for money or any other help they tried to control even though controlling one caste group over other group was not that easy since people are aware of the consequences. Atluri Chaitanya a graduate opined “as a matter of fact the upper castes almost lost their control over the lower castes, the people from lower castes who are also educated developing and striving to come up in their lives”.

f. Contribution of the Scheduled Castes Elected Representatives for development of the village and their community

High level of contribution is felt by a majority percentage of educated as well as uneducated in Peda Thummid. As regards low level contribution high percentage of educated felt its absence of contribution and it is felt by a high percentage of uneducated. The difference in percentage is significant in respect of low level contribution and absence of contribution. Table no 4.45 gives details.

Table 4.45
Contribution of SC Elected Representatives

	Contribution of SC Elected Representatives		
	Educated	Un Educated	Total
Highly Contribution	24	31	55
	52%	57%	55%
Low Contribution	19	15	34
	41%	28%	34%
No Contribution	3	8	11
	7%	15%	11%
Total	46	54	100
	100%	100%	100%

Bethu Muralikrishna educated up to intermediate opined “elected representatives from any caste group are not reaching to the expected levels of people in this village, because Sarpanch has more powers than the members”. Daliparthi Venkaiah stated “In fact whoever the representative is and whichever caste one belongs, the stock answer they get is that there are no funds to carry out development work and it is a major panchayat and it has many hamlets under its jurisdiction, where many works are yet to be taken up”.

g. Good and Bad Experiences of Villagers

The experience of villagers from the sitting members and Sarpanch in Peda Thummididi shows that only 2.2% of the educated spoke of good experiences. None of the uneducated said they had good experience. The neutral constitute a minority and the percentage of uneducated is more than educated. Bad experience is reported by half of the uneducated (50%) and slightly less than 45% of educated. The educated and uneducated villagers who spoke of bad or worse experience together constitute a majority. Table 4.46 gives clear picture of this.

Table 4.46
Good and Bad Experiences of Respondents

	Good & Bad Experiences of Voters		
	Educated	Un Educated	Total
Very Good	1	0	1
	2%	0%	1%
Good	13	20	33
	28%	37%	33%
Bad	20	27	47
	44%	50%	47%
Worse	12	7	19
	26%	13%	19%
Total	46	54	100
	100%	100%	100%

Bethu Lakshmi an illiterate opined “at the time of elections the candidates promise many things and once they are elected, our experience with these representatives is, not good. There is no development as expected by people especially the present term”. Dalitparthi Edukondalu studied ninth standard felt, “it is true that the present Sarpanch is corrupted that the development funds granted to panchayat are simply swallowed. NO one knows how much funds are given to the panchayat and where that money goes and for what these funds are being spent”.

Section-VII

Gender based Perceptions- Male and Female Voters

a. Need for Reservations

A gender based analysis of the views of the villagers regarding the need for reservations in Peda Thummidu village revealed that the percentage of male and females is slightly varies. A larger percent of respondents expressed that reservation to Dalits is very much essential. The percentage of males opposing reservation is more than that of the females. The neutrals are more among the females. The lone woman who opposed reservation in this village is Atluri Maheswari. She said “reservations provide chance to SC, ST, BCs but not OCs”. The male respondents who opposed include Sambasiva Rao, Koteswara Rao, Maheswara Rao, Sreedhar etc., Arguments for and against of the males and females are as follows. The female and male respondents favouring reservations for Scheduled Caste are 29 (88%) and males 60 (90%) respectively. The respondents opposing the provision of reservation among females and males are only one (3%) and males 6 (9%) respectively. 3 persons did not favour either and they are termed as neutrals and they constitute (2%) of the total respondents which is quite insignificant. The statistical representation described above shows that the majority of respondents favoured the provisions of reservations to the Scheduled Castes. In a way they are of the opinion that the reservation to SCs should continue. Table no. 4.47 gives clear picture of this.

Table 4.47

Need for Reservations

	Need for Reservations		
	Female	Male	Total
Positive	29	60	89
	88%	90%	89%
Negative	1	6	7
	3%	9%	7%
Neutral	3	1	4
	9%	2%	4%
Total	33	67	100
	100%	100%	100%

Thummidi Saraswathi opined “reservation for any caste group or women is good, none is against but we have to see their performance and development work shall be taken up effectively in panchayats, for this purpose we need to elect active and development oriented people as representatives”. Thummidi Pydiah stated, “we are not educated people and rich in knowledge, with out reservation how people like us can contest with rich people, so reservation must be there”.

b. Participation of Scheduled Castes’ representatives in Panchayat Activities

In an attempt to identify the gender based perception on the participation of Scheduled Castes in panchayats. It is noticed that the male respondents in the village is high in percentage compared to the female respondents in admitting that they participate actively. The percentage of females identifying the participation of Scheduled Castes is partial and is higher than the males. 1/3rd of female i.e less than 25% of the male respondents expressed unhappiness over the participation of Scheduled Castes representatives. The following table no. 4.48 enlightens the above statements

Table 4.48

Opinion on Participation of SC Representatives

	Opinion on Participation of SC Representatives		
	Female	Male	Total
Active Participation	7	24	31
	21%	36%	31%
Partial Participation	15	27	42
	46%	40%	42%
No Participation	11	16	27
	33%	24%	27%
Total	33	67	100
	100%	100%	100%

Kagitha Venkanna stated “SCs are participating in the panchayat gram sabha meetings and other activities, there is no restriction for any caste groups, some people attend and some other do not go and it purely depends on their leisure time and necessity to attend to raise their problems. Kagitha Ramalakshmi said “some of them participate and assert their demands in their area of living and its problems. But it is the members who participate regularly than any other community”.

c. Exercise of Powers by SC Representatives

Acquisition of power should be followed by exercise of power and without which holding the positions become meaningless. It is noticed that in Peda Thummidi village larger percentage of female respondents felt, “that the Scheduled Castes representatives are exercising power”. It implies that the percentage of male respondents will be higher than female respondents. Neutral among the females are double than male neutrals. Table no. 4.49 makes it clear.

Table 4.49
Exercise of Power by Dalits

	Exercise of Power		
	Female	Male	Total
Yes	22	41	63
	67%	61%	63%
No	9	24	33
	27%	36%	33%
No Idea	2	2	4
	6%	3%	4%
Total	33	67	100
	100%	100%	100%

Netru Nagamani opined that most of us, especially women do not know much about exercising the powers or not in the panchayat, if we have some work to be done through panchayat just we request sarpanch and secretary they help us if they can. Battu Jayaraju said “They are doing their best to exercise their powers in their respective office, it is worthy to mention that due to this they are facing several problems from their counterparts. When they try to exercise powers in panchayats definitely they face either no-confidence motion or any sort of atrocity”.

d. Caste Politics

A gender-wise assessment of presence of caste politics in the village under study has indicated that in the village the influence of caste politics is felt by a high percentage of female respondents of the village public. Nearly the same percentage of male respondents stated that it varies. Similar is the position regarding those who felt that there is no caste influence in politics. The percentage of males who did not have any idea

of caste politics is far higher than females. As regards one caste domination and higher percentage of female have felt its presence. Table.no 4.50 gives clear picture of this.

Table 4.50

Nature of Caste Politics

	Nature of Caste Politics		
	Female	Male	Total
Exists	13	36	49
	39%	54%	49%
It Varies	10	17	27
	30%	25%	27%
Does Not Exist	3	6	9
	9%	9%	9%
No Idea	4	2	6
	12%	3%	6%
One Caste Domination	3	6	9
	9%	9%	9%
Total	33	67	100
	100%	100%	100%

Pasim Padma stated, “we cannot ignore simply saying there are no caste politics but caste background and financial position definitely influence people at the time of elections. Bathula Subba Rao said “it is not the affair of not only present day politics, we have been observing for the last 30 years each caste group strives for its dominance over other in politics, it depends on their numeric strength of a particular caste group”.

e. Influence of Upper Caste and Rich

It is observed that “there is significant variation in the opinions of males and female over the upper caste influence in village politics in Peda Thummididi village because the percentage of males who felt their influence is far higher than the females. It is significant to point out that there is hesitation of respondents to this question. This hesitation is far more among the females than males. This can be seen from the following table.no. 4.51

Table 4.51

Upper Caste and Rich Control

	Upper Caste and Rich Control		
	Female	Male	Total
Upper Caste People Control	2	11	13
	6%	16%	13%
Rich People Control	3	17	20
	9%	25%	20%
Both	1	5	6
	3%	8%	6%
None	27	34	61
	82%	51%	61%
Total	33	67	100
	100%	100%	100%

Velivela Vijaya Lakshmi opined that it is not so easy to control people unless they have any close relationship. A few families control some people but can't control the whole community because they resist. Balla Subba Rao said "in this village SCs are located in five wards, and they are found they are assertive in two wards. They can face even the so called upper castes in all aspects and in two other wards they are so weak in terms of land, resources and awareness and they are controlled easily". Muppaneni Sundaramaiah opined "since SCs are wage labourers and dependent on other caste for several works it is easy for powerful castes to control them".

f. Contribution of Scheduled Castes Elected Representatives to the Village and their community

The contribution of Scheduled Castes representatives to the village and their community is greater in the village. The Scheduled Castes of the village are predominantly of Mala sub caste and only two families of Madiga present in Peda Thummidu. A considerable amount of solidarity has grown among the Scheduled Castes of the village in recent times. In this context the role of Scheduled Castes leaders is significant. A high percent of females have viewed the contribution of Scheduled Caste representatives was very low. A high percentage of males have opined that there is no contribution at all by the Scheduled Castes. The details are given in below in a tabular form.

Table 4.52
Contribution of SC Elected Representatives

	Contribution of SC Elected Representatives		
	Female	Male	Total
High Contribution	18	37	55
	54.50%	55.20%	55.00%
Low Contribution	12	22	34
	36.40%	32.80%	34.00%
No Contribution	3	8	11
	9.10%	11.90%	11.00%
Total	33	67	100
	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Golla Suryakantham said “along with others' support they (SC elected representatives) can do something for their community’s betterment but mostly it depends on Sarpanch, if Sarpanch belongs to SC then it possible to do something for his/her community”. Bethu Rajulu stated “Sarpanch position is more powerful than an ordinary member of the panchayat, if Sarpanch is from SCs, he/she can do something to the community one belongs.

g. Good and Bad Experiences

The views of males and females among the villagers over their experiences pertaining to the performance of the sitting elected representatives. In an attempt to assess the views of the villagers, it is noted that in Peda Thummidi village a high percentage of females have the feeling that their experience about the performance of members and Sarpanch is bad. In fact some of them said their experience is worse. The experience is felt to be normal by slightly 1/3rd of the female and male respondents together. None of the females said the experience is good where a single women respondent by name Matta Dhanalakshmi (BC) said, “it is good”. The details could be seen from table no. 3.53.

Table 4.53
Good and Bad Experiences of Respondents

	Good and Bad Experiences of Voters		
	Female	Male	Total
Very Good	0	1	1
	0%	2%	1%
Good	10	23	33
	30%	34%	33%
Bad	19	28	47
	58%	42%	47%
Worst	4	15	19
	12%	22%	19%
Total	33	67	100
	100%	100%	100%

T.Lakshmi stated “when people elect these representatives with several hopes, they should work for village development but there is no development at all in the village. It is the present Sarpanch is not at all inclined towards peoples’ problems that is the reason why our experience is too worst. T.Agasthyeswara Rao said “sarpanch gives preference to her own panel members that is why members in other panel do not show interest to ask for minimum development of the village. The present Sarpanch is not that much efficient comparatively with the former sarpanch”.

Summary

A study of the background, participation and perceptions of the members of Peda Thummidi Gram Panchayat revealed that gender-wise, the percentage of female elected to representative roles is higher than that of stipulated percentage. Young and middle aged occupy a very high percentage. The BCs occupy the first place numerically followed by SCs and others. Those with secondary, intermediate and graduation educational qualifications constitute a majority. It is unfortunate that approximately 30% are illiterates. A majority of representatives are employed in agriculture. As regards land owning position those possessing land between 1-2 acres constitute 15% and 1/3 rd representatives are landless and they are mostly SCs. The need for increasing acquaintance with politics with exceptions is found imperative. Some SC members are very well acquainted with political events and this is an encouraging trend. Respondents with 9 years political background constitute 50% and those with 4 years experience

formed 43%. The respondents were mostly party workers and community leaders. Self interest, encouragement by friends and family members and caste leaders have been main factors for entry into politics. Among SC representatives, it is noted that the entry among SCs is due to initiation of politically, economically influential persons of the village. A variety of factors have contributed to inspiration for contest. Among the factors caste, party and encouragement from the rich and political influenced have been dominant. Elections have been expensive.

A majority of the respondents have clear idea about democracy. As regards democratic decentralization less than 40% of them have clear idea. Vague perceptions regarding empowerment noted in a majority of the respondents. As regards the participation, attendance at meetings encouraging. Holding of Gram Sabhas either absent or irregularly absent. Agenda preparation has been essentially prerogative of Sarpanch. Study noted that there is need for increased participation of the representatives including Dalit representatives. Inadequate funds and powers; the need for promoting effective leadership; reduction of caste politics and the need for promotion of unity and solidarity between representatives, people and officials are felt by the respondents.

A strong feeling in favour of reservations to SCs in positions is present among the respondents. Change in environment is both felt and visible. A trend which reveals desire to do good to society is evident. To the SC representatives, the upliftment of the Dalits to realize the goal of social justice to be given priority. Despite the presence of hesitation and fear, the respondents come out with a view that the Dalit representatives face threats and domination of rich and upper castes' people. A high majority of respondents have expressed performance of satisfaction. Interaction with a cross section of village is revealed certain points. The need for reservations is felt by a very high percentage of villagers. A majority of villagers responded full and partial participation of SC representatives. The exercise of political power is felt by a majority of the villagers. The presence of caste politics, influence of upper caste and domination of rich is also felt. The contribution of SC elected members to their wards and community is rated high by the villagers.

Section-VIII

The Changing Scenario in Peda Thummidi

Peda Thummidi was a part of former Thummidi Firka, which is an administrative division below the taluq level. Peda Thummidi village has a long history. The Gram Panchayat of this village was established in the year 1925. It was in this year that the firka was divided into two villages called Peda Thummidia and China Thummidi. The Sarpanchship of Peda Thummidi was held by the Upper Castes for a very long time. The first Sarpanch was a Brahmin. This followed the sway of Kapus and Kammas in holding the position of Sarpanch. For some time after the sway of Kapus and Kammas the position went to Gollas¹² (BCs) and Goudas (BCs). During 1981-'88, when the office of Sarpanch was allotted to SCs, Koduri Ramayya (SC) became the Sarpanch. The next Sarpanch was from Gouda caste (BC). During 1996-2001, the office was reserved for BC women. During 2001-2006, the office was reserved for SCs. Presently it is allotted to BC women.

The politics of the village are mostly controlled by the BCs especially Goudas. This is due to several factors. They constitute numerically powerful section in the village. Secondly since 1983 when the Telugu Desam Party came to power, the influence of BCs increased because the party gave preference to include BCs in political positions at different levels, from the village to the state. The higher level leadership also encouraged the BCs in politics. Therefore the BC leadership could establish its hold on the village politics of this village. For over 40 years, the BCs have been exercising political power in the village. The BCs and SCs did work together. But latter conflicts arose between Malas (SCs) and Goudas (BCs). Efforts by one to dominate the other and to influence politics began. The shift in the efforts of Kapus and Kammas domination got transferred into those of Malas (SCs) and Goudas (BCs). The Malas began to work for Congress and the Goudas to Telugu Desam Party. The differences between the Malas and Goudas were clear in respect of identification with parties. In a way the parties contributed to intensify the conflicts.

As regards the dalits, their awareness levels are high. Some of them are well educated and one dalit by name Dande Kantilal became an IAS officer. Some are

¹² Gollas are also referred as Yadavs

professors, lecturers, teachers and employed into other professions. They made use of reservations in shaping their careers. But a majority of them still are agricultural labourers and daily wage workers. The landless and uneducated among them are heavily dependent on the rich land owners for survival. Some educated but unemployed have to necessarily depend on the rich land owners. Migration in search of employment during non-seasonal days of cultivation has been a visible factor among them. The situation has led to exploitation of the SCs by the upper caste rich people of the Gouda caste.

A good number of SCs of Peda Thummidi got converted to Christianity and came to be treated as BCs (B.C-C). When the position of Sarpanch was reserved to BC women, two BC (C) women by name Birudugadda Kalpalatha and Mrs Mohanthi came forward to contest against Gouda woman. M. Vijayalakshmi but lost in elections. It is learnt that the successful woman candidate had spent huge amount during the elections. It is reported during interviews that she bribed some Malas to work for her and also to divide the community. The means adopted, here, do not justify the ends. The dominance of the Goudas, especially, the rich among them is very vivid in this village.

The 73rd Constitution Amendment is definitely contributed to Dalit empowerment as well as the empowerment of women. After the introduction of the reservation, three SC men and two BC women became Sarpanches. The change in the attitudes of the people is visible. It is interesting that during 2001-2006 a movement against caste based discrimination took place.

Bolla Brothers

The Bolla Brothers of BC caste were bent upon to grow richer. They unauthorizedly occupied a vacant land in the area where Malas reside and had dug a tank to develop aquaculture. They began to acquire huge profits while they were happy with profits, the plight of the surrounding residents was sad because their houses were badly affected by the water of the huge tanks. There was water around but no water to drink because of the pollution. Another problem is about the children. Some children fell into the tanks while playing. One incident has to be mentioned here in this context. On 15th August, 2004, a 5 years old child Birudugadda Suresh fell into the tank and died. When the parents of the child and some others went to Bolla Brothers and informed of the incidents, they replied that they may do anything they want. The reply was careless.

They also tried to beat those who questioned. Then followed a big protest movement with the support of Kula Nirmoolana Samithi (An Organization working for eradication of caste based oppression). The organization president John Wesley, the president of another organization (Dandora) Manda Krishna Madiga, CPI district secretary Pullayya, CPM president of Krishna District, Posina Mohana Rao CPM Bantumilli Mandal President were prominent among those who led the protest movement. The interference of the police officers DSP¹³ and CI¹⁴ became necessary.

It was brought to light that in the Bantumilli Mandal, 2256 acres of land was unauthorisedly occupied by the vested interests. Even loans were raised from banks with bogus documents. The then Joint Collector, Sampatkumar has ordered for inquiry. The media gave extensive coverage to these events. The government was forced to constitute an inquiry committee with T.K.Diwan¹⁵ as the Chairperson. This was followed by the intervention of SC/ST Commission and a political leader Koneru Ranga Rao. Water tanks stretching to 70 acres were handed over to the SCs with ownership. The domination of rich land owners was reduced. The support of the CPM, the involvement of Dalits and dalit associations in the movement brought about changes in the lives of Dalits. The change is conducive to process of empowerment. Awareness has increased. The SCs supported candidates were elected from reserved seats but contributed a little to the welfare of their community. This may be shown as evidence towards dalit empowerment. This does not mean that there is complete change in the village. Attacks on SCs, threats, injustices continue to prevail. To give an example, a dalit Sarpanch Dasari Ramesh Babu committed suicide because of the unending domination of rich

Dasari Ramesh Babu (2001-2004)

Dasari Ramesh Babu was born in a middle class Dalit family. With income from his 12 acres of land, Ramesh Babu's father maintained the family and gave him education upto graduation. Originally disinterested Ramesh Babu decided to assume political role with the inspiration of friends and relatives. He hoped to have good political future. He served as member of Peda Thummididi Gram Panchayat during 1996-2001 when Bolla

¹³ Deputy Superintendent of Police.

¹⁴ Circle Inspector.

¹⁵ A senior IAS Officer and was the Chief Commissioner of Land Administration, Government of Andhra Pradesh.

Sampoorna wife of Venkata Kanaka Durga Swami, was the Sarpanch. Functionally it was the husband who served as Sarpanch for the full term of five years. Ramesh Babu had good relations with Bolla Ravindranath, brother of 'Sarpanch Pathi' Bolla Kanaka Durga Swami. When the office of Sarpanch was reserved for SCs for 2001-2006 term, Ramesh Babu was fielded by the Bolla Brothers as Sarpanch candidate. They also extended him financial support. Nearly 6 lakhs rupees were spent by Bolla Brothers for Ramesh Babu's Election. He went to seek the blessings of the mother of Bolla Brothers. She is reported to have told him "see Ramesh Babu this is not your victory. It is the victory of my family. My sons would help you in your functioning as Sarpanch". Facing serious criticism from his own caste people then he joined hands with bolla brothers and being distanced by other partners, Ramesh Babu served as Sarpanch for 3 1/3 of years. There were two shades of opinion- about the Bolla brothers and the people, especially SCs. Bolla Brothers felt that Ramesh Babu should simply follow their instructions because it were they who fielded him in election and got him elected. On the other hand, the people felt that because they elected him, Ramesh Babu should work for their welfare and not that of the vested interests. In a situation of conflicting interests, Ramesh Babu did work for the benefits of the villagers. He was instrumental in laying down roads, constructing houses for the needy and supply of drinking water. Despite his sincere efforts, he could not get benefits to all, especially in providing drinking water to all the locations. He was subjected to serious criticism and hence had to face opposition.

It is important to mention some details in this context. Originally low economic profile of Bolla brothers, Durga Swami, Ravindranath and Radhakrishna accumulated huge amount of aquaculture based tanks through all means. "the credit of accumulating huge property with in a short span of time goes to Bolla Brothers", the villagers critically point out. They established acquaintances with political leaders at all levels. Among the acquired lands include those of the SCs, small farmers, and unassigned government lands. Apart from cultivation and aquaculture, they carried a business in native liquor, Brandi, manures (pesticides and fertilizers), fodder/feed for animals and money lending. Villagers and people of surrounding villages should buy products from these brothers only and sell to them only. If this is not done, they would use force. If any one dared to report to the higher officials, they would be more seriously dealt with. The Bolla

brothers were bent upon using Ramesh Babu for promoting their interests. They adopted all means for this. For instance amount sanctioned for food for work programme diverted to digging their tanks. All the funds relating to Janmabhoomi programme were used to lay approach roads to their tanks. People began to question Ramesh Babu. These people were taken to task by Bolla brothers through violence.

Ramesh Babu tried to come out of the control of the above mentioned brothers which sparked of troubles. Well educated and service oriented Ramesh Babu began to set aside their dictates in public interests. The three brothers dragged him into a trap. For providing drinking water connection huge amounts ranging from 5000 to 7000 were collected from each house owner. The receipt bore Rs.1015 only. The margin money was appropriated by them. They began to demand some more money. Ramesh Babu sold off his 12 acres land and aquaculture tanks and paid Rs. 5 lakhs as final settlement payment. This was not acceptable to the brothers. They demanded interest on what they invested for his election. When the excess money collection came for discussion in the panchayat meeting, Ramesh Babu openly told that it was with the Bolla brothers. He was beaten up and was later threatened and warned that unless he accepts himself responsibility for excess collection, he would be killed. Ramesh Babu was unable to digest the event and committed suicide. The case is still in pending in the court of law.

Sarpanch Ramesh Babu not only lost his property but also his prestige and ultimately lost his life. But the incident created arrangement among Dalits of Peda Thummidi and the nearby villages. They are now ready to protest against the domination of the rich over the deprived. They are awaiting for reservation of Sarpanch position of their village to dalits. They are strongly inclined to empower themselves.

Arja Chalamaiah (2005-2006)

For the first time the position of Sarpanch was reserved for SCs in the year 1981. And from then on to 2001 there was not reservations proved to SCs. In the year 2004 Sarpanch position had gone to SCs. Since D.Ramesh Babu committed suicide, the remaining term of one year i.e. (2005-2006) was filled in by Arja Chalamaiah. As stated earlier, the Sarpanch position was held either by a Kapus or Kammas or Gouda castes. The economically powerful and influential persons fielded Koduri Ramayya (SC) as their

candidate and the expectation was that he would work as their 'yes' person. He listened to the dictates of BCs.

The desire to contest for Sarpanch position grew intense in Chalamaiah. His long experience in politics added strength to his desire. He contested again in 2001 against Dasari Ramesh Babu to the reserved position of Sarpanch to SCs but lost again. In the changed scenario of the village where the domination of the Kapu and Kamma castes got transferred to the Goudas, it is only Arja Chalamaiah who owned 17 acres of land and could contest from SCs. He said "It is only politically experienced and economically well to do that could often contest" and "the Bolla Ramulu's dominance was present for 20 to 25 years. My opponents were determined to often tough fight and defeated me thrice. But the fourth time, some of them extended full support and I won with 1003 majority votes. In 1981, my opponent Koduri Ramayya won with a small majority of 53 votes. In 1988 when I contested for a general seat, my opponent won with majority of 175 votes".

"I became Sarpanch on June 28th 2005 after a by-election. I did my best to work for the development of the village and welfare of the people during my short tenure of one year and six months". In my view "it is not the time but the amount of work that should determine what we have done. I got very good opportunity to serve. My opponent Paladugula Veera Venkateswara Rao was educated. But I was in a better position due to my political experience and people's support". According to him Peda Thummidi Gram Panchayat, one of the four major panchayats occupies first place in respect of development. But due to negative influence of politics, the village could not get junior college in 1980, hospital and head post office.

Matta Vijayalakshmi (2006-2011)

Matta Vijayalakshmi is the second woman Sarpanch of Peda Thummidi Gram Panchayat. One important aspect has to be noted here. Some women Sarpanches function as nominal heads of Gram Panchayats. It is the husband who performs the role of woman Sarpanch. Nearness to higher level political leaders, active role in the party concerned enable the husband to exercise power on behalf of his wife. The husband becomes functionally the Sarpanch. It is reliably learnt that Vijayalakshmi's husband Matta Nagarjuna Rao (Nagababu) used to personally conduct the proceedings of the

Gram Panchayat. But opposition from some members led to his sitting in an adjacent room while the proceedings take place. It is reported that he would go to the meeting hall in case of serious discussions.

It is found that some development activities related to sanitation facilities, streetlights, National Rural Employment Guarantee Schemes are being undertaken. Yet the village still lacks minimum facilities for all the villagers. The drinking water supply scheme initiated by Nandi Foundation with the support of two Non Resident Indians from Dalit community is not benefiting all. The woman Sarpanch said “big tanks extending to 7 acres is allotted to this scheme. The non-resident Indian contributed Rs 5 lakhs and another 5 lakhs grant is used for the purpose”. Further “electric materials worth 4 lakhs rupees are purchased. We are purifying the water with bleaching powder. We are not getting SGRY funds. Grants from State Finance Corporation are stopped. Only Black Tar and GSB roads are laid in SC colony” sitting Sarpanch said.

It has to be pointed out that not even a single road in the village is laid with cement. 95% of the villagers do not have a positive view of the Sarpanch. The Sarpanch is reported to have told the villagers that they do not have right to question her because they voted by taking money.

Chapter-V

Empowerment of Dalits in Pedda Amberpet Panchayat

Section-I

Profile of District, Mandal and Village

The Second village chosen for study, Pedda Amberpet, is in the Hayatnagar Mandal of Ranga Reddy District of Andhra Pradesh. The geo-political features of this village are different from the village Peda Thummidu about which the preceding chapter deals with. As Pedda Amberpet is close to Hyderabad, just a few kilometres away from the capital city of the state of Andhra Pradesh, the conditions in this village regarding the background, elections, perceptions, participation and the development experience of the elected representatives as well as the people are different since the village has the urban influence. With this also in view and modelled on the previous chapter, it is intended to discuss and examine the aspects stated above with special emphasis on SC members.

Rangareddy District Profile

Rangareddy District has an area of 7,493 Sq. Ms. The Density of population per Sq Km is 477. The District has 33 Mandal Parishads. There are 923 villages in the district. Of the 923 villages in the district 860 are inhabited and 63 villages are uninhabited. The district has 17 towns¹.

Demographic Profile

According to 2001 Census, the total population of Rangareddy District is 3,575,064 of which 1,839,227 are males and 1,735,837 are females. The urban population out number rural population. The Scheduled Castes' population of the district is 5,20,045 and that of Scheduled Tribes, 1,46,057. The percent of Scheduled Castes population to the total population is 14.55%. The percentage of Scheduled Tribes population to the total population is 4.09%. The sex ratio is 1000 males: 944 females. The population mainly belongs to three religions Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. The

¹Census 2001 Andhra Pradesh : A Profile of the District Rangareddy , Joint Registrar General & Director of Census Operations, Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, 2004.

Hindu population is 3, 063,118; 4, 08, 281 Muslims, the Christians in the district are 89,893. The numerically largest castes among the Scheduled Castes are Madigas and Malas. The district has 3,33,075 Madigas. The Malas are 1,52,645 in number and other Scheduled Castes constitute 10,322. The Scheduled Tribes of the district are Sugalis, Erukalas and Koyas. There are 1,23,753 Sugalis, 11,340 Erukalas and 4,394 Koyas.

Literacy and Educational Levels

The literacy rate of the district is 66.16%. The literacy rate of males is 75.26% and that of the females is 56.49%. Significant variation between male and female literacy rate is present. The literacy rate in the district is higher than the state and lower to national levels. The national and state level literacy rates are 64% and 61% respectively. The reasons for higher literacy rate is on account of educational facilities are within the reach of the population and urban influence on this village.

Work Participation

The percentage of main workers to the total workers in the district is 87.95. The percentage of main male workers is 92.06 and that of the female workers is 79.12. The percentage of marginal workers to total population is 12.05. The percentage of male marginal workers is 7.94 and that of female marginal workers 20.88. The workers in the district could broadly be divided into cultivators (19.64%) agricultural labourers (20.84%), household industrial workers (2.87%) and others. who include- masons, carpenters, milk vendors etc constitute 56.65%. Among the cultivators, agricultural and house hold industry females outnumber males. In the category of other workers males outnumber females.

All the 860 villages have safe drinking water facility. Except for two villages there is electricity supply. There are 839 primary schools, 405 middle schools 238 secondary or senior secondary schools and 12 colleges. Medical facility is available for 422 villages and there are 30 primary health centres 225 primary health sub-centres. Post and Telegraph, Telephone facilities are available to 638 villages. State bus services are present to 713 villages.² The district has three revenue divisions i.e. East Division, Chevella Division, Vikarabad Division. The number of Mandals in East, Chevella and

² Census 2001 Andhra Pradesh: A Profile of the District Rangareddy , Joint Registrar General & Director of Census Operations, Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, 2004.

Vikarabad divisions are 13, 13 and 11 respectively. The district has 705 Grama Panchayats. The number of Gram Panchayats in the East Division is 230. Chevella division has 239 and Vikarabad division consists of 236 Grama Panchayats. The total number of members of the Panchayats in East division is 2274 of which the Scheduled Castes members are 480; 126 are from Scheduled Tribes, 942 members are BCs and the membership from Un Reserved seats is 720, Women members of all categories number 753.

In the Chevella division, the total number of Grama Panchayat members is 2,236. Representatives of SCs are 477 in number the Scheduled Tribes membership is 170. The BC membership is 936. There are 653 members elected from unreserved seats. Women members of all categories number 744.

Grama Panchayats in Vikarabad division have 2,146 members. Of these, the Scheduled Castes representatives form 533, the Scheduled Tribes members are 164 in number. The representation of BCs is 895. Members elected from Un Reserved seats are 554 in number. Women of all categories in this division constitute 701.

The total number of members in the Gram Panchayats in the district is 6,656 of which 1,490 are from Scheduled Castes; 460 are from Scheduled Tribes; 2773 are from Backward Classes and 1,933 are those elected from Un-Reserved seats. Women of all categories constitute 2,198. It is clear that in the allotment of seats, representation according to the constitutional guidelines is maintained. The details could be seen from Annexure-VII.

Hayatnagar Mandal

Pedda Amberpet village, selected from Rangareddy district falls in the Hayatnagar Mandal of the East Division. The following is an account of the Hayatnagar Mandal. Hayatnagar Mandal has an area of 271 Sq Kms. The population of the mandal is 8,1, 070 of which 4,2,557 are males and 3,8,513 are females. The mandal has 25 villages of which 22 are inhabited and 3 are mostly un-inhabited³. In addition there are 9 hamlets. The SC population of the mandal is 14,566 i.e. 18.93% of the total

³ The three villages under question are inhabited by Lambadas (STs) and their dwellings are called as “Thandas”. There is mostly seasonal migration and they return to their villages for a short period.

population and the ST population is 688 i.e. 0.8%. The literacy rate in the mandal is 53.22%.

Pedda Amberpet

Pedda Amberpet village is in Hayatnagar Mandal of Rangareddy District of Andhra Pradesh. This village is very close to State capital and hence it is an exterior village. It is situated 23 kms away from Secunderabad on the National Highway No. 9. The village is at a distance from 3 kms from Hayatnagar Mandal head quarters, which is on the route adjacent to the national highway towards Vijayawada town.

As per the census of 2001 the total population of Pedda Amberpet is 6,424 of which 3,320 are males and 3,104 females. There are 1,377 households in the panchayat area. The Scheduled Castes population is 2,520 and the Scheduled Tribes population is 34. The average household size of the village is 4.7. The number of literates in the village is 3,586 and that of the illiterates is 2,208. Pedda Amberpet is a multi caste village. As regards the caste composition, the Scheduled Castes (Mala and Madiga) constitute 2522 (39.25%). Open categories include Brahmins, Reddys and Vyshyas-Komati (a regional name) all together they constitute 902 (14.04%), Backward Classes include Gouda, Yadava, Mudiraj, Kummari, Kurumas, Chakali, Mangali, Dasari together constitute 2980 (46.38%), There is only one caste named Mondollu⁴ of Scheduled Tribes is 20 (0.31%). The Backward Classes and Scheduled Castes occupy first and second places respectively and Open Categories stand in the third place in the matter of population-wise particulars.⁵

As regards the occupational status, except a few, whose number is less than 10 are either wage labourers or private employees. The employed are with the Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad as sub staff (3); Road Transport Corporation as conductors (2) and driver (1) rest two are in public sector companies/undertakings (PSUs).

Pedda Amberpet village has an area of 4,120 acres. Part of the land is government and other part is private land. There is the main village and five other

⁴ It is one of the tribes who go on begging from house to house and they leave the door only after they receive some alms. This attitude is nothing but obstinacy and in Telugu it is termed as “Mondollu”.

⁵ The particulars are collected from Secretary, Grama Panchayat Office, Pedda Amberpet, Rangareddy District in 2005-06.

colonies/hamlets- Shantinagar, Bank Colony, Abhyudaya Colony, Laskhama Reddy Nagar and Tarapuri Colony.

There are 450 Scheduled Caste households, of which 300 are of Madiga and 150 are Malas. The village has 68 groups Self Help Groups (SHGs). There are three primary schools one is located in Dalit (SC- Mala) residential area, another is located in Dalit (SC-Madiga) residential area and yet another is in the main village. In addition, there is one Zilla Parishad High School located in the main village. The village has four Anganwadi Centres. Of these two are located in SCs habitations and one in Backward Classes area and other one in Other Castes residential area. In addition, there are three schools which are run by privately, one is located to adjacent to the main road and other two are in the out skirts of the village.

The total number of voters in the village are 5,275, out of which 2,761 are males and 2517 are females. The Scheduled Castes voters number is 1956 of whom 998 are males and 960 are females. The Scheduled Caste habitations are still called as Harijan Basthi and Mala Basthi.

In the post independence period, four persons held the position as Sarpanch of Gram Panchayat. Chelluri Narasimha Reddy served for thirty years from 1959 to 1989. The next person to hold this office was Siddenki Raji Reddy, who served from 1989 to 1996 for three consecutive terms. Pandi Pentaiah is the third person to hold office of Sarpanch and he served from 2001 to 2006. The present Sarpanch is Sabitha Srinivas Goud occupying the position from 2006 onwards. The details of the successive Sarpanches of Pedda Amberpet Gram Panchayat are as given below.

Sl.No.	Name of the Sarpanch	Caste	Term/Period From - To
1	Chelluri Narasimha Reddy (Alias Yadagiri Reddy)	OC-Reddy	1959- 1989
2	Siddenki Raji Reddy	OC-Reddy	1989-2001
3	Pandi Pentaiah	SC-Madiga	2001-2006
4	Podisetti Sabitha Srinivas Goud	BC-Gouda	2006-2011

Source: Panchayat Records, Gram Panchayat Office, Pedda Amberpet

Section-II

Socio-Economic and Political Background of Elected Representatives

A study of the socio-economic background of people's representatives is important for several reasons. Political power is open for all sections of the society including the exploited and excluded sections. Socio-economic and political profile helps to assess the nature and extent of influence of the factors, behavioural aspects and roles. This chapter deals with the socio-economic and political background of the elected representatives the panchayat under study. During 2001-2006, the position of Sarpanch of Pedda Amberpet village panchayat was reserved for SCs. In 2006 it was reserved for BC woman for the period of 2006-2011. The data for the period ranging from 2001-2006 and 2006-2011 is clubbed and analyzed. Further the data, wherever it is required, is disaggregated and analyzed. Age, gender, castes, religion, educational, occupational background, economic status and political experiences are the main indicators on the basis of which socio-economic and political background has been studied.

5.1 Gender

Absence of gender based analysis would prevent objective assessment of situation. In Pedda Amberpet men out number women and the difference in percentage is 28. The percentage of women members elected to gram panchayat is more than one third. As is the case in Peda Thummididi, the number of women elected is more than one third. This is because women got elected also to seats not reserved for them. But among the SCs the quota i.e 33% is maintained. The details could be seen from Table 5.1.

Gender-Wise Distribution of Elected Representatives

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Gender	Male	9	9	18
		69.2%	60.0%	64.3%
	Female	4	6	10
		30.8%	40.0%	35.7%
Total		13	15	28
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

5.2. Age

Age, as a factor of analysis is significant in studying social and political behaviour. Several studies have noted that a new young leadership has emerging in

Panchayat Raj Institutions. The position in Pedda Amberpet Gram Panchayat regarding age of the respondents could be noted from the Graph 4: 2. It is observed that the young and those upto 50 years of age together constitute a majority. The inclusion of youngsters is a positive trend. Among the SCs, the young constitute 50% and others are above 50 years. The table 5.2 gives the details in percentage.

Table 5.2
Age-Wise Distribution of Elected Representatives

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Age	24 - 29	0	3	3
		0.0%	20.0%	10.7%
	30 - 35	0	4	4
		0.0%	26.7%	14.3%
	36 - 40	2	3	5
		15.4%	20.0%	17.9%
	41 - 45	1	1	2
		7.7%	6.7%	7.1%
	46 - 50	2	1	3
		15.4%	6.7%	10.7%
51 & above	8	3	11	
	61.5%	20.0%	39.3%	
Total		13	15	28
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

5.3 Caste

Caste is a determining factor for assumption of political positions. According to Mahipal, caste has become a stumbling block for Dalits to exert power effectively as members and chair persons in decentralized governance.⁶ But he hopes that the menace of caste discrimination would be diluted slowly.⁷ It is possible, as Rajesh Tandon pointed, “our caste based considerations might come in the way of social, education, economic, political and cultural interests of the SCs. Any type of discrimination including that of caste would come in the way of equal partnership. Table No.5.3 gives details of the caste-wise distribution of respondents in Pedda Amberpet.

Table 5.3

⁶ Mahipal, Decentralized Governance and Dalits, <http://www.nacdor.org>, National Conference of Dalit Organizations, P.15.

⁷ Ibid

Caste-Wise Composition of Elected Representatives

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Caste	BC	5	7	12
		38.5%	46.7%	42.9%
	OC	4	5	9
		30.8%	33.3%	32.1%
	SC	4	3	7
		30.8%	20.0%	25.0%
Total		13	15	28
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

It is observed that in Pedda Amberpet village the Backward Classes' representatives constitute the first largest group followed by OCs and SCs. In this village, at present, the Sarpanch post is reserved for BC women.

5.3.a Sub-Caste

As noted in the previous chapter, sub-caste considerations also have their play in choosing candidates in determining the type of roles.

Table 5.4

Sub-Caste-Wise Distribution of Elected Representatives

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Sub-Caste	Are-kshathriya	0	1	1
		0.0%	6.7%	3.6%
	Gouda	1	5	6
		7.7%	33.3%	21.4%
	Kummari	2	0	2
		15.4%	0.0%	7.1%
	Madiga	2	2	4
		15.4%	13.3%	14.3%
	Mala	2	1	3
		15.4%	6.7%	10.7%
	Mudiraj	1	1	2
		7.7%	6.7%	7.1%
	Reddy	4	5	9
		30.8%	33.3%	32.1%
Yadav	1	0	1	
	7.7%	0.0%	3.6%	
Total		13	15	28
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The BCs in Pedda Amberpet village belong to Are-Kshatriya, Gouda, Mudiraj and Yadav sub-castes. Of these, the Goudas constitute the first largest group. This caste representatives constitute a significant group in the Panchayat. Among OCs, only one caste i.e Reddy, represented in Panchayat. The two sub-castes i.e Madiga and Malas of SCs can be seen in the Panchayat. The numerical strength of the Madigas is slightly more than that of the Malas.

5.4 Educational Qualifications

Education is a vehicle for development. Peoples' representatives should be able to read a number of documents on the basis of which they deliberate and take decisions. Certain minimum education is required for effective role performance. The respondents in the sample are divided into five categories: (a) Illiterates; (b) Primary Education; (c) Secondary; (d) Intermediate; (e) Graduation. Table No. 5.5 gives details in this regard.

Table No.5.5

Educational Qualifications of Elected Representatives

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Educational Qualification	Literates	3	3	6
		23.1%	20.0%	21.4%
	Primary	5	1	6
		38.5%	6.7%	21.4%
	Secondary	1	5	6
		7.7%	33.3%	21.4%
	Inter	2	4	6
		15.4%	26.7%	21.4%
	Graduation	2	2	4
		15.4%	13.3%	14.3%
Total		13	15	28
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

It is noted that those with primary, secondary, intermediate and graduation educational qualification are equal in percentage. The percentages of illiterates, though low is not insignificant. Among the SCs 33% are primary and 33% illiterates and the remaining intermediate certificate holders. Among the intermediate education holders, one has qualification in technical education also

5.5 Occupation/Employment

In Pedda Amberpet self cultivators and Agricultural Labourers together constitute a majority. A good number of respondents are real estate dealers. Table 5:8 makes this clear.

Table 5.6
Occupational Background of Elected Representatives

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Employment	Self Cultivation	4	5	9
		30.8%	33.3%	32.1%
	Agricultural Labourer	2	1	3
		15.4%	6.7%	10.7%
	Self Employee	3	5	8
		23.1%	33.3%	28.6%
	Petty Business	1	0	1
		7.7%	0.0%	3.6%
	Private	1	3	4
		7.7%	20.0%	14.3%
	Others	2	1	3
		15.4%	6.7%	10.7%
Total		13	15	28
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

5.6 Land Ownership

Land ownership is an important indicator of economic status. Ownership of land is a source of income. The relationship in between income and participation is more of indirect nature than direct. Stable economic position is closely related to social recognition/social position in the community. Better economic position facilitates self confidence and security, which might help them for active participation. The influence of economic position on participation is found by Archana Kamble, Sarje Rao Salunke and others.⁸ It could be seen from Table No.5.9

Table No. 5.7
Land Ownership and Absence of Land Ownership of Elected Representatives

⁸ Bishnu C.Barik and Umesh C. Sahoo, Panchayati Raj Institutions and Rural Development, Rawat Publications, Jaipur and New Delhi, 2008, P.74.

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Land	Nil	4	6	10
		30.8%	40.0%	35.7%
	1 - 2	3	3	6
		23.1%	20.0%	21.4%
	3 - 4	2	2	4
		15.4%	13.3%	14.3%
	5 - 6	2	2	4
		15.4%	13.3%	14.3%
	6 - 7	0	1	1
		0.0%	6.7%	3.6%
	7 - 8	1	1	2
		7.7%	6.7%	7.1%
	11 above	1	0	1
		7.7%	0.0%	3.6%
Total		13	15	28
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

It can be noted that the landless in Pedda Amberpet village constitutes the first largest group. Those whose land falls between 1 acre and 6 acres constitute a majority. The landless though a minority constitute a significant numerical minority. Respondents with 11 acres are very small in percentage. The details of land ownership of SCs are as follows. 50% of the SCs do not possess land. The maximum number of acres that a single SC representative holds is 5, each of them has either two or less than two acres of land.

5.7 Residence

Residential status deserves to be studied to assess their economic status of individuals. The respondents have been divided into two categories i.e those living in own and those living in rented house. In Pedda Amberpet the respondents with a single exception live in their own houses. Each of the representatives in Pedda Amberpet has a Pucca house. i.e with a concrete slab. The houses of a majority of SCs Members (60%) own and the Pucca houses.

5.8 General Awareness

An attempt is made in this study to note whether the representatives are interested in seeking information if so the type of source. The main sources of information are News Papers and Television. More than 90% of representatives watch T.V. Next are the New Papers which are read by 75% of representatives in Pedda Amberpet and 63% in Pedathummi. The Upa-Sarpanch of Pedda Amberpet village Ch.Muralidhar Reddy gets 3 News Papers –Eenadu, Andhra Jyothi and Vartha in the regional language. He is a real estate dealer by occupation. He said “I read all types of news and I watch different channels of T.V. But the political items interest me most. I would like to know developments in politics regular”. One B.C woman representative by name Erukula Sujatha who did not have any formal education said “my source of information is T.V. I am interested in watching different channels. I am interested in knowing about the politics”.

As regards the SC members, those who are educated read news paper and watch TV. The illiterates’ source of information is the electronic media i.e. TV. 83% of SC members buy news papers. In some cases more than two papers are purchased.

5.9 Political Background: Entry into Politics

The respondents entering into politics in 2006 constitute the first largest group followed by those in 2001, 2000 and 1995. It indicates that the members with 8 and 3 years political experience together constitute a majority. Respondents with longest experience in politics are: Pandi Pentaiah, Siddenki Raji Reddy former Sarpanches and number of members with eight years experience include Polepalli Ramulu, Maryala Jayamma, Erukula Sujatha Pandugula Buggaiah and Laskar Yadamma. Persons with 3 years experience include Pasula Rajender Mudiraj, Siddenki Sekhar Reddy, Vaddepalli Dayakara Reddy, Dindu Santhosh Goud, Pandugula Venkatesh, Meerabhai, and Doppa Srinivas. A majority of the SCs representatives have entered into politics in the post 73rd amendment period and more importantly in the period following 2001.

Table 5.8

Entry into Politics of Elected Representatives

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Year of Political Entry	1995	4	0	4
		30.8%	0.0%	14.3%
	2000	0	1	1
		0.0%	6.7%	3.6%
	2001	9	1	10
		69.2%	6.7%	35.7%
	2006	0	13	13
		0.0%	86.7%	46.4%
Total		13	15	28
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

5.10. Political Experience

Richard Rose⁹ points out that every boy or girl is born with some qualities. By this he means that political culture is closely linked to generation impact. Representative with political background may enable him to understand their new roles. This facilitates to some extent him/her to perform roles effectively. The following table no. 5:11 gives details of political experience.

Table 5.9

Political Experience of Elected Representatives

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Political Experience	Yes	9	10	19
		69.2%	66.7%	67.9%
	No	4	5	9
		30.8%	33.3%	32.1%
Total		13	15	28
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

A 68% of the respondents gained experience before they got elected to the present positions and those who did not have it constitute 32%. As regards the experience of SC respondents, a former Sarpanch, Pandi Pentaiah has the largest experience and he entered politics in 1995. Polepalli Ramulu entered into politics in the capacity of party worker in 2001. A woman SC representative Cherukuri Mysamma has been inducted into politics

⁹ Richard Rose, Politics in England: Persistence and Change, Faber and Faber, London, Boston, 1965, Pp 127-58.

by a former Sarpanch of OC caste, in 2006. Pandugula Venkatesh joined politics as a party worker in 2006. Similar is the case of Doppa Srinivas.

5.11 Positions in Political Organizations/Associations

The experience gained by holding positions in political organizations will certainly go a long way in discharging functions in public organizations. The members of Grama Panchayat, under study, are divided as party worker, office bearer, community leader, ward members and others. The details are given in Table 5.10

Table 5.10
Positions held by Elected Representatives

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Capacity	Party worker	5	7	12
		38.5%	46.7%	42.9%
	Office bearer	0	1	1
		0.0%	6.7%	3.6%
	Community leader	2	0	2
		15.4%	0.0%	7.1%
	Ward member	2	1	3
		15.4%	6.7%	10.7%
	Vice President	1	0	1
		7.7%	0.0%	3.6%
	Others	3	5	8
		23.1%	33.3%	28.6%
	Party leader	0	1	1
		0.0%	6.7%	3.6%
Total		13	15	28
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In Pedda Amberpet village, the first largest group represents party workers constituting 43%. Members of different organizations form the next largest group followed by members of wards, community leaders and others. The position of SCs in political organizations may be noted here. Pandi Pentaiah, before entry into the position of Sarpanch, served as the President and Vice-President of Ambedkar Association of the village. He contested against a OC candidate Raj Reddy in 1995 and lost. When the seat was reserved to SCs, he contested and won. Other SC members have been either party workers or mere supporters, and such supporters are more among SC women.

5.12 Inspiration for Political Entry

As stated earlier, entry into politics would be inspired by several factor agents. Family members or party or caste members could be sources of inspiration. It could also be due to personal interest with service as the motive. It could also be result of combination of factors. The views of some respondents are worth mentioning here.

5.13 Political Party Affiliation

In Pedda Amberpet village the first largest group of respondents are of Telugu Desam Party followed by Congress Party, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and others. Others include respondents from Telanagana Rasthra Samithi (TRS) and independents. The lone respondent in others category is member of TRS, a regional party headed by K.Chandra Sekhara Rao. A majority of the SC representative have affiliation to congress. Next in numerical strength are those from TDP. One SC member is from BJP.

5.14 Inspiration for Contest

An attempt is made to understand the factors that inspired the contestants. The have been asked to respond to the influence of family, party, caste, service motive or any other factor that inspired them. It is noted that in high percentage of respondents more than one factor has been a source of inspiration. The details are as stated in Table 5.11 given below:

Table 5.11
Factors for Inspiration

Factors for Inspiration	No. of Respondents	Percent
Party	5	17.9
Caste	1	3.6
Service Motive	1	3.6
Others	3	10.7
Family, Party	3	10.7
Family, Caste	1	3.6
Family, Service Motive	2	7.1
Party, Caste	2	7.1
Party, Others	2	7.1
Family, Party, Caste	2	7.1
Family, Caste, Others	1	3.6
Party, Caste, Others	1	3.6
Family, Party, Caste, Service Motive	3	10.7
Family, Party, Caste, Others	1	3.6
Total	28	100

In Pedda Amberpet village the influence of party, caste and service motive factors have inspired. Other factors in the present context refer to friends' inspiration, inspiration from SHGs, DWACRA and inspiration by citizens of wards. In the case of respondents who are inspired by family also constitute 50%. It is observed that caste is a factor of considerable importance in the case of 42.85% of respondents. Service motive as a factor is identified only by six respondents (21.42%). Party as a factor of inspiration is identified by 67.85% of respondents. The inspiring factors for SC members mainly include caste, party, and youth. In the case of Doppa Srinivas, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that has been the source of inspiration. For Pandugula Mysamma caste has been the factor. Well educated P.Venkatesh identified family, caste and youth as factors of influence. Ramulu identified Telugu Desam Party (TDP) as the source of inspiration. He has been an active party worker. In the case of Pentaiah service motive coupled with the support of family and party as well as caste have been the inspiring factors. The case of Pandugula Venkatesh deserves special mention here. He was not ordinarily interested in contesting. But the prospective candidates, his aunty and her son are illiterates. He suggested to the community that a 'good person' should be fielded as the candidate. The youth among his community in turn encouraged and persuaded him to contest. D.Srinivas said that he blindly (with out any pre-plan) filed nomination thinking that he may or may not win. But he won.

5. 15 Campaign

Campaign occupies an important place in electioneering. As a result of electronic revolution the nature of campaigns has dramatically changed. But in the village set up the campaigns are usually door to door. In additions, occasional meetings at street corners also take place. In this connection it is important to note the opinions of some respondents. One respondent, Doppa Srinivas (SC), who is a sitting member of Pedda Amberpet Gram Panchayat said "I have conducted door to door campaign every day in the evening because voters will be coming back from their work place. I feel evening time is convenient for campaigning". Cherukuri Mysamma (SC) a sitting member said "most of the times my husband and myself conduct campaign". Dindu Santhosh Goud mentioned, "during his campaign more than hundred supporters accompanied him". Yerukula Sujatha held campaign along with her youngest son. Pasula Rajender Mudiraj

of Pedda Amberpet village has been accompanied by youth of Ambedkar Welfare Society. In brief campaign has been essentially door to door personally and some times supporters following the contestants.

Members of Welfare Associations have participated in campaign especially in the case of Dalits. Meetings with castes leaders have also formed part of the campaign. All members have held formal campaigns because they have been elected with close fight against their respective contestants. In the case of women contestants, the presence of family members during campaign, in variably is seen.

A woman panchayat member, Podiseti Rangamma, aged 62 years, said “I never campaign for my election but my sons and husband have done it”. Line Santhosh Goud said “I have held door to door campaign, Women from upper castes, especially Reddys follow me”. One woman representative of Pedda Amberpet village narrating her campaign experiences said “voters expect favours from candidates. Some voters tell me that Biryani is offered by some contesting candidate and “Mushrooms” are provided by some other candidates. In fact one woman demands for these, I have offered cool drinks”.

5.16 Elections

In Pedda Amberpet village the highest percentage of respondents identified youth support as a major factor. In some cases the help of a single individual is evident. For instance in Pedda Amberpet a person, belongs to OCs, has been responsible for the election of one SC representative. The support essentially has been financially because contesting candidate and the one who helped are close friends. In the case of SCs, dalits’ associations have been helpful. Choice of persons by elections is inseparable from representative democracy. As is well known, elections decide on who should be the representative. Elections provide the feed back between the representatives and voters. They are means of recruiting leaders. Elections could be on party or non-party basis. In this village, 92.9% of the respondents said, “No violence has taken place, but 7.1% of representatives stated that some violence is found”. The type of violence and the factors leading to violence deserve consideration at present. The nature of violence included pushing each other and tussling one group with other group near polling booths.

Violence is also due to consumption of liquor during the pre-election day, on the day of elections and after the declaration of results as well.

5.17 Role of Money

It is generally found that money plays crucial role in politics. The respondents in Pedda Amberpet, without exception, have emphatically expressed “the influence of money is present”. The cost of election increased enormously in the contemporary times. Castes and more importantly the capacity to spend have considerable role in elections. There is considerable difference between actual expenditure incurred during the elections and the expenditure mentioned by the representatives. They have been very hesitant to tell the details of the amount they have spent. Maryala Jayamma said “money is a must in elections as it plays an important role. Economically well off people are only in a position to contest the elections”. Entering politics is impossible without money. Another respondent pointed out “it is not efficiency or honesty that matters during elections. It is not electing right candidate but only those who can spend that can get elected do matter”. The views expressed by the candidates point out that money plays a dominant role in panchayat elections.

5.18 Use of Reservations

When asked about the purpose of reservation 75% of the respondents favoured reservations. Only 11% did not favour them. The neutrals in this regard constitute a small 14.3 %. Chelluri Muralidhar Reddy, Muttadi Muthyam Reddy (OCs) did not favour them. Details could be seen from Table 5.12

Table 5.12
Use of Reservation

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Use of Reservation	Positive	11	10	21
		84.6%	66.7%	75.0%
	Negative	1	2	3
		7.7%	13.3%	10.7%
	Neutral	1	3	4
		7.7%	20.0%	14.3%
Total		13	15	28
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

A former Sarpanch Pentaiah (SC) referring to the benefit of reservations said “I feel that reservation certainly have benefits. In fact, there should be more reservations. They give scope for further development”. Pandugula Venkatesh (SC), a well acquainted with politics respondent said “if reservations are not there, the dalits would not be allowed to occupy positions. We can not contest in an open competition”. Mysamma (SC), though an illiterate, but with a reasonably good view of society, said “reservations are very important. They help to bring the equality”.

Opposing reservations Muralidhar Reddy (OC) opined “the loss is more than gain when reservations are provided. For instance, a BC woman is elected and her role is performed by the husband. This is not fair” According to Muthyam Reddy “when a seat is reserved for SCs, STs, BCs or Women, others lose the chance to contest to that seat”.

The reservations to deprived classes provide an opportunity for them to contest and get elected, otherwise it is difficult, by all means, for them to contest the elections.

5.19 Role of Caste

The caste has a very powerful influence in Indian politics and more importantly in village life and politics. The practice of untouchability still persists. Dalit heads of panchayats are reported to have not been respected and in many villages, the traditional leaders conduct proceedings even when the Sarpanch is heading the panchayats¹⁰. The respondents have expressed their views on caste as an influencing factor in village politics. 36% of them said, “Caste plays a crucial role. It is only 15.5% of them said, “it has no impact”. The details are as follows in the Table No. 5.13

Table 5.13

Role of Caste

¹⁰Palanithurai, G., Empowerment Process: Experiences of the Elected Women Representatives in Grass Roots Institutions in Tamil Nadu, Dynamics of New Panchayati Raj System in India, (ed) Palanithurai, G., Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2004, P.305.

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Role of Caste	Influencing factor	4	6	10
		30.8%	40.0%	35.7%
	Key factor	4	4	8
		30.8%	26.7%	28.6%
	Determining factor	1	2	3
		7.7%	13.3%	10.7%
	No impact	4	3	7
		30.8%	20.0%	25.0%
Total		13	15	28
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The opinions of respondents regarding the influence of caste are very interesting and deserve mention. One SC respondent said “caste always works”. It is also observed that the lower caste people are tamed by upper castes for their electoral gains. According to Polepalli Ramulu, a middle aged Dalit representative, “caste politics are, definitely, present in the village”. P. Buggaiah, another Dalit representative, feels that caste plays an important role in the village politics. Pandugula Venkatesh a young Dalit representative said “the role of caste will be like water under mat. The upper caste people would use lower castes for their needs. Though they do not speak out about it they use it from behind”. Ch. Mysamma (SC) a young woman representative pointed out “votes are cast on the basis of caste, money, party and group”. A young and promising member Doppa Srinivas said “caste influences elections especially the voting behaviour and money also is essential”. Pandi Pentaiah (SC), a former Sarpanch, giving a detailed account of the influence of caste in elections said “upper castes who are also moneyed would buy the lower castes people and their votes. I contested from a general seat in 1995. Five hundred SCs cast their votes for me but I was defeated. In 2001 the Sarpanch post reserved for SCs. I got elected with 660 votes majority. There were efforts by the upper castes leaders to set me aside and exercised power by themselves. I fought against those who tried to prevent me from functioning as Sarpanch. I did my best to the villagers”.

Dindu Santhosh Goud feels that it is a common feature that the lower castes are suppressed by the upper castes. Pasula Ramesh Babu, a representative from B.C

community said “caste influence would be there but personally I will not support caste considerations”. P. Sankar Yadav of B.C community said that “the influence of caste is very much present in elections”. According to Maryala Raju (B.C), “sometimes it is the individual and not the caste that will be a deciding factor in elections and village politics”. P. Rejender Mudiraj, a B.C. representative, pointed out “caste is very crucial during elections. In my case the voters of my ward have considered me as an individual and not as a B.C candidate”. A young woman representative from B.C community said “I do not see the influence of caste. My ward is a hamlet which is a rehabilitation for leprosy affected people. It is a party politics not caste politics that work in our ward”. The Sarpanch of the village Sabitha Srinivas Goud said that the voters exercised their votes on the basis of the individual contestant’s caste and religion. The interference and influence of the upper caste would definitely influence the village life. Laskar Yadamma (OC), a woman representative, confirmed “caste feelings are present in the village”. Muthyam Reddy (OC) opposed the influence of caste in election and politics. Another O.C representative Siddenki Bhoopal Reddy said “the influence of caste not seen that much”. This implies that he admitted the influence of caste. In the opinion of Tangidipalli Premalatha (OC) the role of caste is very less. G.Narasimha Reddy (OC) said, “caste has no influence”. Ch. Muralidhar Reddy, Upa Sarpanch and an O.C representative said, “when there are several castes, their influence would be less but the presence of influence can not be denied. The general feeling is that caste definitely influences politics. Directly or indirectly, the respondents agreed, with a few exceptions, that the influence of caste is present. The Dalit representatives are more vocal on this point.

5.20 Number of Votes Obtained

In a democracy the number of votes a candidate gets is counted. The candidate is declared elected when he obtains a simple majority. Further politics is about political power and the majority obtained, influenced by several factors is a sign of candidates’ popularity. When a candidate gets elected, automatically, the majority with which the candidates succeeded is counted. In a study conducted on the Empowerment of Elected SC members through Panchayati Raj Institutions in Bihar, efforts of candidates in solving

peoples' problems before elections, participation in public efforts and extending monetary help to the need have helped the candidates to get voters' support¹¹.

In Pedda Amberpet, those who obtained 50 and less than 50 and those who obtained 101 and 250 are equally divided. Together they constitute a majority. Those 51-100 votes majority and those above 250 majority occupy second and third places respectively. None of the respondents got elected unanimously. This development suggests that the spirit of competition is more in Pedda Amberpet.

In this village keen contest is seen in the election of Bathina Gopal Goud, Tangidipalli Premalatha, Cherukuri Mysamma (SC), a middle aged woman, won with only 4 votes majority, Doppa Srinivas (SC) won with 30 votes majority. Tangidipally Premalatha got elected only by 12 votes majority. Podisetty Sabita Srinivas Goud in her direct election for Sarpanch position won with 700 votes majority. The respondents who were elected with more than 250 votes include Dindu Santhosh Goud and Sabita Srinivas. The details of votes obtained is indicated below table. No.5.14

Table 5.14
Number of Votes Obtained by the Elected Representatives.

		Term		Total
		2001-06	2006-11	
Majority	Less than 50	1	3	4
		7.7%	20.0%	14.3%
	51 - 100	5	2	7
		38.5%	13.3%	25.0%
	101 - 250	3	2	5
		23.1%	13.3%	17.9%
	Above 250	4	8	12
		30.8%	53.3%	42.9%
Total		13	15	28
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

¹¹ Sacchidananda, Empowerment of Elected SC Members through Panchayati Raj Institutions in Bihar, Planning Commission Report, New Delhi, P-32-33 (Unpublished)

Section-III

Participation and Perceptions of Elected Representatives

Perceptions

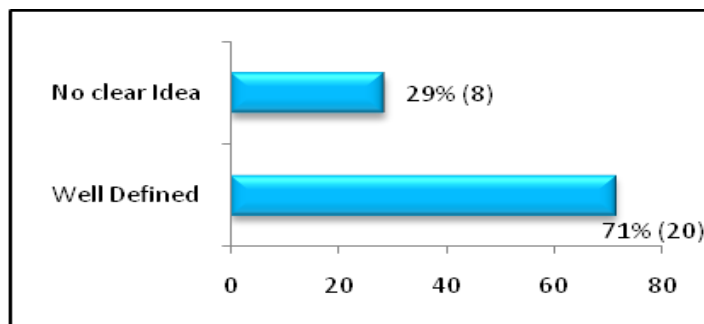
The perceptions that people develop towards society and politics are the result of several factors. They include socialization process, exposure to society and politics, peer group influence and personal experiences. The following are the details of the perceptions of the respondents in Pedda Amberpet village.

5.21 Democracy

Pandi Pentaiah a former Sarpanch of Pedda Amberpet village, in an extended interview, spoke about the qualities required of representatives. P. Pentaiah said “In democracy people govern. It is essential that peoples’ representatives should be made to work to strengthen democracy. The weakness in the system, has to be checked. The persons inclined to work should not be prevented from working towards the welfare of people”. Pentaiah has conveyed that “there have been hurdles during his tenure of office”, and he further stated, “A representative should be, by nature, work oriented. He/she should make others work. Democracy requires a lot of adjustments. The influence of caste is an unhealthy symptom. The co-operation of officials, which is not always forth coming, is also essential”.

Chart (Horizontal bar chart) 5.1

Opinion on Democracy



M.Mutyam Reddy, an experienced member of Pedda Amberpet panchayat, who is serving the Gram Panchayat for the second term has given a simple definition to democracy. According to him “a democrat is one who does good to people and who

works for the welfare of people”. P. Buggaiah, an SC representative of panchayat has some view of democracy. He said “democratic government is a good form of government. In this people elected their leaders who are expected to work for the people”. Polepalli Ramulu (SC) said “people’s representatives identify people’s problems. They should get to know of peoples’ problems and try to solve. He does not seem to have a clear idea about democracy”. When asked about democracy Pandugula Venkatesh elected from ward reserved for SCs said “democracy is peoples’ government. It works according to constitution. We can not do any thing against constitution. He is referring to constitutional democracy”. Cherukuri Mysamma an SC representative has no views about democracy. “Responsibility of the elected representative to the people is the essential feature of democracy”, Doppa Srinivas a SC representative opined.

5.22 Democratic Decentralization

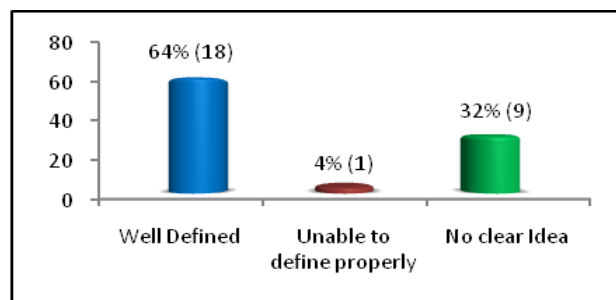
Referring to democratic decentralization Cherukuri Mysamma (SC) said “this system is good”. “It provides powers to panchayat and people. Decentralization facilitates easy process to solve local problems quickly” according to Chelluri Muralidhar Reddy (OC), the Upa Sarpanch of the Gram Panchayat, “Decentralization is one the important principle/feature of democracy. It facilitates greater people’s participation and upward influence on policy. It also provides participation of larger number of people in the process of governance. In this context the opinions of some representatives deserve mention”. Maryala Jayamma, a B.C woman representative, does not have any idea about democratic decentralization. Podichetti Sabitha Srinivas, Sarpanch of panchayat, Meerabhai, Gopal Goud, Podichetti Rangamma, Sankar Yadav, Laskar Yadamma do not have any clear idea about democratic decentralization. Dindu Santhosh Goud, a BC representative, feels that democratic decentralization is good because powers are kept at various levels. Similar is the opinion of Line Santhosh Goud. P.Ramesh Babu another B.C representative said that a three tier system is good to delivery of goods. Maryala Raju (BC) feels that “democratic decentralization is useful for village development”. Erukala Sujatha aged 63 years (BC) representative, though an illiterate, some idea about democracy, she continued “power should be located at different levels. It is necessary all levels should have powers”. , “Democratic decentralization encourages people to take active role in village development”. According to Rejender Mudiraj a young B.C

representative and S. Sekhar Reddy (OC) stated “decentralization enables to take administration to the door steps of people”.

M. Muthyam Reddy (OC) has clear idea of the three tier system. But he feels that the Sarpanch will have a greater say. Polepalli Ramulu (SC) feels that democratic decentralization is the correct method because it locates power at different levels. Pandugula Venkatesh (SC) expressed view “democratic decentralization locates powers at different levels and helps to achieve quick development”. Similar is the opinion of Ch. Mysamma a SC woman representative.

A young representative, Doppa Srinivas (SC), has an idea of democratic decentralization. He said, “it helps to meet local needs by local people”. Pandi Pentaiah, former Dalit Sarpanch positively conveyed that “economic power, non-co-operating attitude of officials and domination of upper castes are some factors coming in the way of implementation of democratic decentralization process.

Chart (Cylinder bar chart) 5.2



Opinion on
Democratic
Decentralization

5.23 Empowerment

Empowerment is a concept that is frequently debated. A variety of interpretations are given by researchers, academicians and others. Empowerment is differently understood by the respondents. According to Mutyam Reddy “women, SCs, STs, BCs and others are being empowered”. He continued “empowerment process is providing opportunity to the powerless sections like women, SCs, STs and BCs”. In the words of Doppa Srinivas, a Scheduled Castes representative, “empowerment should take place then only all people develop. Earlier people were not so assertive as they are now”. Cherukuri Mysamma, woman representative, said “empowerment facilitates the growth of women’s leadership. Today women folk is coming out and performing different roles

successfully in political arena”. Pandi Pentaiah, a former sarpanch of Pedda Amberpet village said, “the process of empowerment started very recently. So far only 20% of the people enjoy the power. This is because of the domination of upper caste. It is necessary that in the process SCs, STs, BCs and women should also be able to exercise power”. The respondent representing Dalit community explains how the dalits are denied of the power by non-Dalits. Pasula Rajender Mudiraj elected from a seat reserved for BCs points out “empowerment exists only when we make weak people equals to others by giving chance through legislation etc”. He referred the Act passed by Andhra Pradesh government facilitating reservations to SCs, STs, BCs and women in accordance with 73rd Constitution Amendment Act.

Doppa Srinivas, a young Dalit representative, educated upto intermediate, explaining about empowerment said “it is necessary to have empowerment. Earlier the Dalit members used to sign on the papers wherever they are asked to. Now awareness among Dalits increased. Dalits are asserting for their rights. Even the illiterates are questioning higher caste representatives for the facilities in their locations. They are asking about why they should sign? If they are not convinced of the need”. Dindu Santhosh Goud, a young BC representative, who did graduation and technical courses said “empowerment is a process which enables the unprivileged sections of the society to enter into economic and political areas. The weaker sections include SCs, STs, BCs and women”. Now the trend is that Dalits and non-Dalits are mixing as friends and we even called each other as ‘Anna’ (elder brother) ‘Thammudu’ (younger brother) and ‘Mama’ (Uncle) etc., we invite non-Dalits to attend our marriages in our family and vice versa”. He said, “societal constraints come in the way of making people empowered. Line Santhosh Goud said politics is not the domain of few castes, Dalits also should get into political positions. Extending full support for reservations to Dalits, Pandi Pentaiah argued in favour of increasing the percentage of reservation to them.

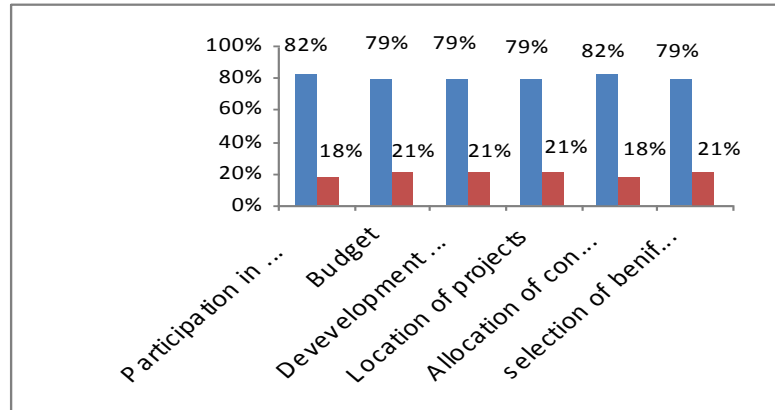
5.24 Participation in Decision-Making Processes

As stated in the previous chapter, the panchayat representatives’ participation, subjects of interest, introduction of resolution, attendance in gram panchayat, participation in decision-making processes are chosen for assessing the nature and extent of participation. In Pedda Amberpet village a high percentage of respondents reported

that they have always participated in decision-making, budget, implementation, identifying development projects, selection of contract, in the selection of beneficiaries. Participation in decision-making processes, identifying contracts is reported by a higher percentage of representatives. Details could be noted from Chart. No.5.3

Chart 5.3

Participation of Elected Representatives in Decision-Making Processes

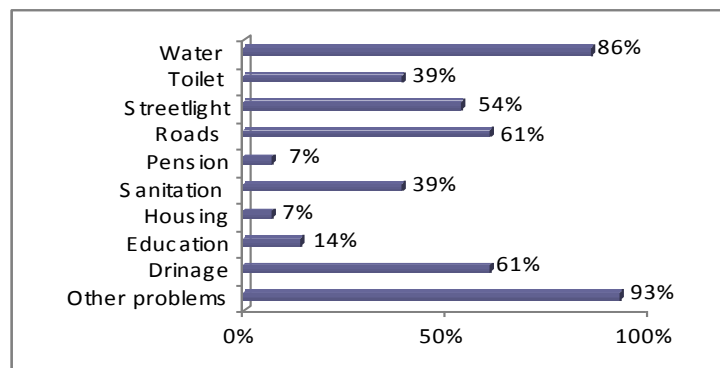


5.25 Subjects of Interest

When asked to spell out the subjects of interest in panchayat meetings, the respondents identified the following as their subjects of interest in Pedda Amberpet. The following graph 5.4 indicates them:

Graph (Horizontal bar chart) 5.4

Subjects of Interests of Elected Representatives



It observed that water problem followed by the roads and drainage problems, street lights problems and others are the major problems identified by the respondents. It is unfortunate that even after a long time since the formation of the Gram Panchayat in

this village some basic problems have not been attended. Pandi Pentaiah, former Sarpanch, said “his subjects of interest are drinking water, drainage, street lights; cement concrete roads, metal roads, especially drinking water to schools. He said “he use to visit to every school ad supervise the development works”. A woman representative by name Laskar Yadamma said, “women’s problems are of special interests to her and other subjects include setting up of hospital, self help groups, promotion of education, drainage, drinking water and sanitation”. She continued “Her case is an example to reassume that women’s needs would be represented by women. An articulating woman named Tangidipalli Premalatha said all problems relating to village especially those relating to women are of her interests. It is very clear that women representatives are showing concern towards women specific problems. This is exactly the purpose of reservation to women”.

5.26 Introduction of Resolution

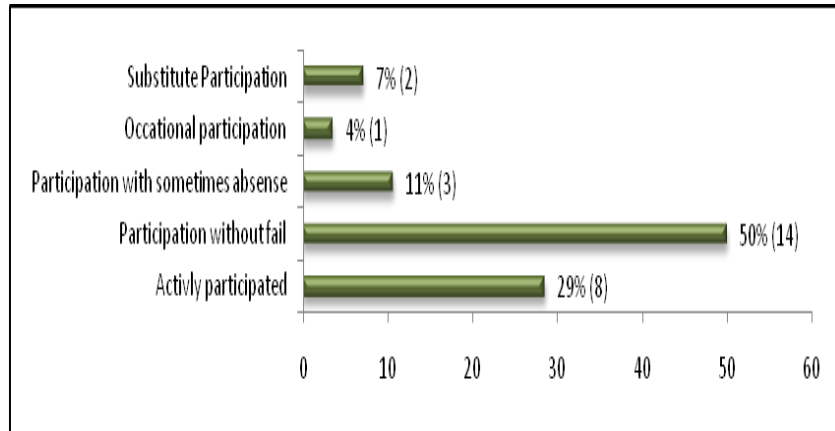
For any decision to make, it is important that a resolution should be introduced in the concerned body. This would be followed by debate and final decisions. It is possible for the members to express their views when debates take place. It is noted that only a few representatives introduced resolutions. It is mostly by contacting officials and the Sarpanch, the members get benefits to their wards. Some details are here under. Very few SC members have introduced resolutions. Of these the names of Pentaiah and D.Srinivas deserve mention. Erukala Sujatha, aged 63 years, only knows to sign but according to what she said and reports from others she actively introduced resolutions. She said “I am not educated. Does it mean that I cannot talk?. Several times I raised problems of own ward and one of my achievements I got cement road to my ward”. Dindu Santhosh Goud, young representative has been active in introducing proposal for resolutions. Chelluri Muralidhar Reddy Upa Sarpanch, another young representative has been very much concerned about the needs of the ward and worked for the development of his ward. Pilli Sankaraiah Yadav said “I introduced resolutions based on the demands made by ward members”.

5.27 Participation in Panchayat Meetings

The following graph gives a picture of active, inactive and occasional participation, substitute participation. Whether substitute participation is present or not is also given. It is the husband who attends on behalf of the woman representative. Occasional absentees are very few. Who participated without fail constitute 50%.

Chart (Horizontal bar chart) 5.5

Participation of Elected Representatives in Panchayat Meetings



Dindu Santhosh Goud, a B.Com graduate aged 29 years, said “I would go around my ward to know the needs of the people and raising the problems of our ward in gram panchayats meetings”, “I could succeed in getting electrical metres fixed for the ward members. My demands have always been need based. I focussed on toilets, sanitation, and drinking water facilities etc”. Pandugula Venkatesh a young Dalit representative who studied upto X class is well acquainted with the procedures. Polepalli Ramulu, who occasionally attended meetings explained the reason for not attending to the problems that he encountered said, “there are clashes between me and the sarpanch. He also stated that he is used by a higher caste and moneyed villagers against the sarpanch who is also belong to Dalit community. Cherukuri Mysamma, a Dalit woman representative who could only sign would regularly attends meetings of panchayats. She said “I have proposed that public amenities should be provided to my ward, she continued it is only when we ask the sarpanch for favours then only he will do something”. Pandi Pentaiah former sarpanch of Pedda Amberpet village has been active. He successfully conducted meetings. The details would be given in chapter relating to case studies.

5.28 Attendance at Gram Sabhas

It is found that Grama Sabha meetings are not generally held. Even if they are held citizens rarely attend. But the respondents are hesitant to admit the facts and gave false information. A 75% of respondents opined that gram sabhas are held in panchayat, according the opinions of the respondents. A number of earlier studies also pointed this aspect.

Table 5. 15
Attendance at Gram Sabhas

Attendance in Grama Sabhas	No of Elected Representatives	%
Actively Participated	3	10.7
Participation without fail	21	75.0
Participation with sometimes absence	1	3.6
Occasional Participation	2	7.1
Substitute Participation	1	3.6
Total	28	100.0

5. 29 Agenda Preparation

Agenda preparation is a key activity before holding panchayat meetings. The agenda points proposed to be discussed must be circulated among the members of the panchayat. A high majority of the respondents (96%) said it is Sarpanch who decides the agenda of the meetings. Another 4% of the respondents said that it is the Sarpanch and Secretary together prepare agenda of the meetings. Then the copies of agenda will be circulated among the members of the panchayat in advance.

5.30 Community Service

The representatives involved and not involved in community service are equal i.e 50%. The details of community related service rendered by respondents are given below:

Muralidhar Reddy, Upa sarpanch of Pedda Amberpet, is running an old age home. He is planning to form a trust to provide financial help to poor children for the promotion of education.

Pasula Ramesh Babu (BC) is concerned about providing amenities to people below poverty line. He also started a youth club which did not work well to serve the

purpose. Dindu Santhosh Goud (BC) of the same village said our panchayat identifies development activities and work for the disadvantaged sections. I participate in such activities. P. Rajender Mudiraj has worked to mobilize the youth. Tangidipalli Premalatha (OC) said that she collected donations for financial help to the family of a person who died in an accident. She personally helped a family in money and material for their daughter's marriage. She takes up several issues and also help the society. When a woman affected with AIDs she has been instrumental in providing assistance. As regards the services of SCs, it is noted that Pandugula Mysamma worked for the distribution of house sites to deserving people, irrespective of caste. D. Srinivas concentrated on drainage facility and roads. P. Pentaiah has been instrumental in the construction of a building in memory of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar. He also worked in favour of 'food for work' programme and sanitation facilities, especially for ladies.

5.31 Community Share

An attempt is made to elicit information concerning the share of different communities like Dalits, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes and women in the development programmes. According to the respondents, it is eligibility criteria that has a major importance but not the community or caste which decides the share in development activities and schemes. Eligibility criteria is identified by 71.4% (20) in Pedda Amberpet. Next to eligibility criteria, SCs, STs, BCs and women constitutes largest group 25% which taking more share in development programmes and schemes.

5.32 Working of Panchayat Raj

The study has taken care to ascertain the views of the respondents on the general functioning of the Panchayat Raj in India. This has been necessitated to understand their general awareness about Panchayat Raj. The representatives are provided several opportunities by the respective state governments and also Government of India to participate in several programmes and such occasions are utilized, generally, by the respondents to know the working of their Panchayat Raj Institutions. The following views of the respondents on Panchayat Raj Institutions are given. The following are the details. Pandugula Buggaiah said "our panchayat is not performing certain functions relating to development". There is huge amount of exploitation and corruption. Rajender Mudiraj (BC) pointed out that the panchayats are doing what they are expected to do.

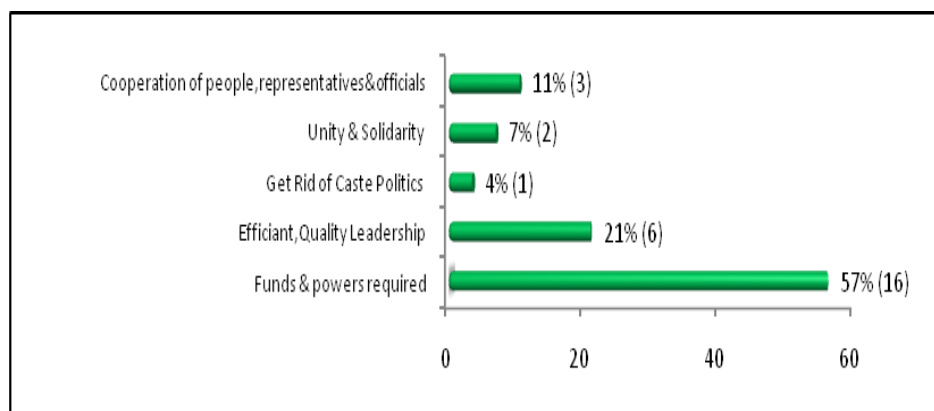
Referring to the problems of effective working of Panchayati Raj Pandi Pentaiah (SC), former Sarpanch of Pedda Amberpet, said “in general the panchayats are working well but as more powers are given to secretary the elected representatives are sometimes ignored”.

Siddenki Sekhar Reddy (OC), a middle aged representative, said “various schemes are being implemented by panchayat and within their limits they are doing well”. Maryala Jayamma pointed out “during her tenure, the panchayat worked well but at present efficiency declined”. One respondent referring to the schemes that have been introduced such as Rajiv Gruhakalpa; Indira Houses are being implemented by her panchayat. It is also pointed by this respondent that the government land has been acquired by some influential persons. The poor people have been promised that those lands will be distributed to them but the sarpanch has not been taking any necessary action. Sarpanch is concerned about his security”. This is an indication to convey that the influence of the economically powerful sections is continuing and the deserving people not getting the benefits. Polepalli Ramulu (SC) lamented on the lack of funds which preventing the effective functioning of the panchayat. P.Pentaiah (SC) said, “the panchayats are working well, but the elected representatives are by passed by the officials. The officials are not co-operating. Here caste plays a very crucial role”. According to D. Srinivas, the panchayats, are working very well. The general trend observed is that though the elected representatives want the panchayats to work well, the problems like corruption, absence of commitment, lethargy of the officials are prime obstacles.

5.33 Suggestions for Effective Functioning of Panchayati Raj

The members have been asked to propose suggest measures/steps for the effective functioning of Panchayati Raj. The following Chart no 5.6 gives a clear picture of this.

Chart (Horizontal bar chart) 5.6
Suggestions for Effective Functioning of Panchayati Raj



“Party and caste bias hamper the progress” according to Siddenki Sekhar Reddy (OC). “It is clear that differences constraining progress are based mainly on caste, party and groups. Cordiality between representatives as well as officials is absent” emphasised by Polepalli Ramulu (SC) and Mayara Ramana (BC).

“Support of the people to good works initiated by elected representatives, encouragement of people to the members of Panchayati Raj Institutions and peoples’ support in paying taxes and co-operation to representatives are necessary” according to Gosukonda Narasimha Reddy (OC) and Laskar Yadamma (OC). “Service orientation, prioritizing of issues are much essential” according to Sabitha Srinivas Goud Sarpanch of Pedda Amberpet. An overwhelming majority of the respondents have felt that the absence of adequate funds is a major problem. Pasula Rejender Mudiraj (BC) emphatically said “the panchayats do not have the required powers. Doppa Srinivas (SC) opined “we should identify urgent works and strive to get them done. Without funds, we will not be able to do anything. It is enough if peoples’ problems are solved without delay”.

Explaining the need to organize training camps Siddenki Sekhar Reddy said, “there should be training programmes for representatives and the duration should be at least three months”. “More funds and more powers would definitely strengthen panchayats to work effectively” said. Pasula Rejender Mudiraj (BC). According to Pandi Pentaiah (SC), “apart from anything else, it is necessary to strictly implementing 73rd Constitution Amendment. The officials especially the District Collectors should take care of the implementation of the Act and then only the Dalit representatives would be

able to face the upper caste representatives and work on par with them”. The study points out that ineffective implementation of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment is to a large extent, found.

5.34 Empowerment of Dalits in Post 73rd Constitution Amendment Era

M.Muthyam Reddy of O.C “extending full support to reservations and definitely there should be reservations because they provide an opportunity to Dalit to contest the elections. Only thing is reservations should be properly implemented. A confident woman representative of Dalit community Chekuri Mysamma said ‘reservations are a must. The deprived should agitate with increased strength obtained through reservations’. When asked about the need for reservations for Dalits, a trend of strong support is noticed among the Dalits and said “O.K there can be negative feelings against reservations to Dalits among non-Dalits”. A feeling that the power of the upper castes would get reduced, is found in built among the non-Dalits. The economically and politically dominant castes do not seem to be happy over reservations to Dalits. Obtaining benefits through political participation and initiating development proposals for Dalits would be greater if effective Dalit leadership emerges. T.Premalatha representative of O.C said, “the Act enables many disadvantaged groups to get elected. They are performing their functions with lots of courage and efficiency. Now it is difficult to say any thing against the Dalits. If any thing unwanted is said against them, they would lodge a case. Dindu Santhosh Goud, a BC representative, said “the Dalits are politically empowered. They have achieved good results. They have come forward and have to continue to come forward. Now they are assertive and good leadership is emerging among them”. Maryala Jayamma, a BC representative said “the Dalits are not only politically empowered but they are also socially and economically empowered”. S.Bhoopal Reddy said “the Dalits are definitely empowered. Most of the Dalit leaders proved their matter. Laskar Yadamma a representative from O.C said “They are also doing good work”.

5.35 Exercising power by Elected Dalit Representatives

The Sarpanch of Pedda Amberpet gram panchayat Sabitha Srinivas Goud said “the Dalits are exercising powers excellently. Our former Sarpanch Pandi Pentaiah has worked without fear and hesitation. He stood against those who tried to control and exercise power on his behalf”. Erukula Sujatha Goud said ‘it is their power only that is

very much present'. She commented with a question "should they not act with courage? Is it not good if they act like that?". Narasimha Reddy said opportunities are more for them only. They are exercising power. Dalit Sarpanch Pentaiah used to come and solve problems on receiving even phone calls. Doppa Srinivas, a Dalit representative said with confidence, "definitely the Dalits are empowered politically and they are exercising power. "The work done by Pentaiah could not be done by any body else." he said.

5.36 Contribution to the Welfare of Society and Dalits

The respondents have been asked to express their views on the contribution to the welfare of the society and welfare of Dalits. Gopal Goud (BC) emphasized on selfless service. Dayakar Reddy (OC) pointed out that public question about what we have done. He expressed, "he is not able to do what he wants to do to the full extent. The Upa-Sarpanch of Pedda Amberpet is already extending financially support to poor students and he is interested to have a home for aged. Maryala Raju (BC) said "the SCs are backward I work to improve their status. It is possible to do it through education". Gopal Goud (BC) expresses similar opinion. G.Narasimha Reddy (OC) pointed out, "the Dalits should be provided more opportunities for development. We should work towards that end. It is necessary to work for their educational development and to provide employment opportunities. Muralidhar Reddy (OC) feels "there is ample scope for development of SCs and STs because government has provided them many opportunities." The Chairperson of Pedda Amberpet Gram Panchayat Sabita Srinivas Goud said "the panchayat identifies deserving people and we are working for their development. We are implementing the welfare schemes for the promotion of Dalits' welfare".

The working facilities should be provided including health and employment opportunities. Rangamma (BC) emphasized on house sites to SCs and lands to landless. Tangidipalli Premalatha (OC) shows concern for women' development. She said "DWACRA women should be supported and their activities should be promoted. They are looked down. (Cheetakaram/irritation) They are not even allowed to stand near by the OCs and moneyed people. When DWACRA women go to the Manager he scolds them and abuse the groups as waste groups and poverty ridden groups. Buggaiah (SC), though an illiterate, said, "we would work to end illiteracy, ignorance and ill health".

Venkatesh (SC) feels that along with implementing government schemes donation should be collected for the uplift of Dalits. A lone representative said all the Dalits are well. What more is there to do?. The above discussion suggests that illiteracy, unemployment, ill health and insecurity are the main problems that the Dalits are facing, and that there is an immediate need to promote their welfare. Polepalli Ramulu is always engaged in solving problems arising out of conflicts between the communities and groups.

5.37 Problems of the Representatives

Satisfactory role performance is a healthy sign of democratic governance. The respondents expressed some problems associated with their functioning. Muralidhar Reddy (OC) Upa-Sarpanch of Pedda Amberpet panchayat said, his satisfaction in performing roles is 70%. He further said no representative can perform to his hundred percentage satisfaction.

Sabitha Srinivas Goud (BC), Sarpanch said “the dominating trend among the big landlords/owners and among upper castes especially Reddies is a big problem. She also said that the Reddies have been controlling lives and politics of the village since a long time. They are not able to give up the tendency of controlling”. The SC representatives land up in problems who has faced conflicts with Sarpanch. One Dalit representative Ramulu pointed out he has a big conflict with Sarpanch”.

5.38 Performance Satisfaction

Performance depends on several factors. Support structures, pensions, adequate avenues like money material and personal, officials and personal ability are the factors for better performance. 92.9 percent of the respondents said “they are satisfied with their performance in Pedda Amberpet. The negligible percentage of the representatives (7.1%) in Pedda Amberpet are not happy with their performance. The responses identified by them are as follows. P. Shanker Yadav (BC) said “people have faith in him. I will do what they want. I performed my role with satisfaction. Doppa Srinivas (SC) said, “to me there is satisfaction and the people are also happy with my performance. Maryala Raju (BC) said I did do some works and did not take up some other. I have not done much to poor; I have given drainage facility, roads, street lights, water facilities and other facilities etc. During my tenure two memorial buildings (community halls) are constructed in SCs location and one Anganwadi Bhavan is constructed. Referring to his satisfaction,

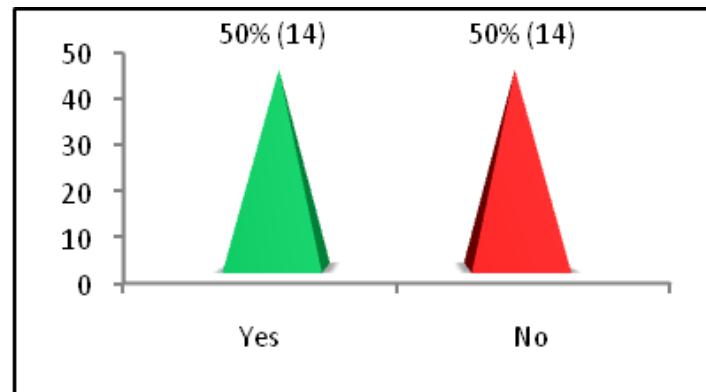
Dayakar Reddy (OC) felt “we have done much to the village. We have discussed among ourselves and got support from others”.

5.39 Problems from Upper Castes

In an attempt to study the problems arising from upper caste it is noted that the respondents are divided equally in responding positively and negatively.

Chart (Pyramid bar chart) 5.7

Problems from Upper Castes



A Dalit representative said, “he doesn’t have any problem from upper castes. Luckily at present our gram panchayat has young and educated representatives. Most of them are my class mates. Problems used to be there, now there are no problems”. Another Dalit representative Chekuri Mysamma said, “I did not face any problems from Upper Castes and in fact with the support of Siddenki Raji Reddy, an OC person I contested and won the elections. Our party cadre is also powerful. The Reddies are inviting us for marriages and in other functions. But the Brahmins are not inviting us. Similar is the opinion of other Dalit representatives such as P. Venkatesh. P.Buggaiah said “the caste problem is very much evident at the time of Ravanaasura Dhanakanda¹². This is an event that takes place on a specific day every year”. Ramulu a Dalit representative said “my problems are not from Upper Castes. I differ with Sarpanch several times. I talk to every body in the panchayat except the one who supported Sarpanch”. He is inducted into his roles with the support of Upper Castes. P. Shankar

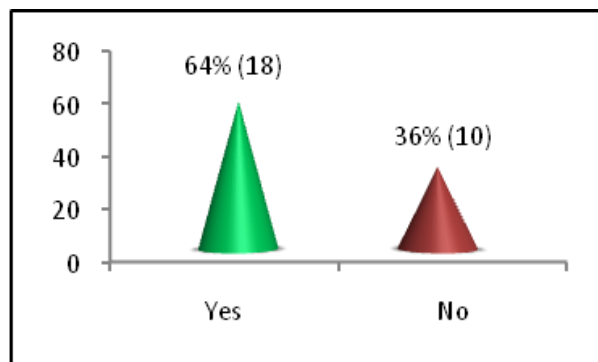
¹² Ravana, the king of Lanka, took away Sita, the wife of Sri Rama, the king of Ayodhya. It was an evil deed. Rama killed him and liberated Sita. The event is celebrated as Dusshera festival and on this day the effigy of Ravana is burnt. It is called Ravana Dahanakanda.

Yadav BC representative politely said “generally Dalits face problems from upper castes. They are threatened by the dominant castes. They will be controlled by the dominant castes”. The statements made by the respondents convey that still the dominance of upper caste over Dalits continues in spite of several legislations enacted to empower the Dalits

5.40 Problems from the Rich

As stated earlier, money power and political power are closely related. P. Pentaiah a former Dalit Sarpanch said with firm convictions “problems are faced mainly from the rich. When the rich came the way of my functioning I ignored them aside and worked for progress”. Rich people sometimes create problems but we should work for getting out of the problems. Interestingly one respondent said the rich are claiming for benefits meant for the poor. Polepalli Ramulu a Dalit representative said, “the Secretary is afraid of the rich people. I dared to question the rich people when they create problems”. The distribution of the respondents regarding the problems from the rich can be seen from chart no. 5.18

Chart (Cone bar chart) 5.8
Problems from the Rich



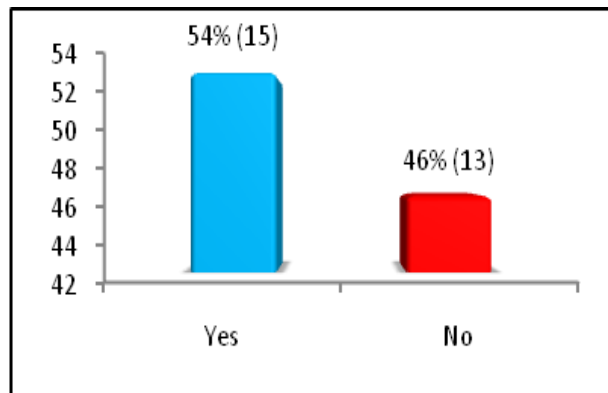
5.41 Problems from Officials

“Problems from officials arise when they succumb to the dictates of the rich people according to a Dalit representative of Pedda Amberpet village. The co-operation of official is less, they take bribes; they do not immediately respond, they do not work unless they are offered money and unless they take commissions”. “We faced problems from engineers” are the expressions of the Dalit representatives of Pedda Amberpet. ‘Few

members have problems with officials'; our secretary was a lady so we did not have any problems with her. The officials co-operate with us are some other statements of the non-Dalit respondents. Chart No.5.19 gives a picture of the respondents views on the problems from the rich.

Chart (Vertical bar chart) 5.9

Problems from Officials



“Some times the officials insist on procedural formalities and try to avoid doing work” according to some respondents. Much dependence on what the Sarpanch wants to do but not the officials’ in the opinion of R.Ramesh of a B.C representative.

Section-IV

Voters' Perceptions on Empowerment Related Issues

While the previous discussion gave the details as to how the elected representatives-OCs, BCs and Dalits feel about the working of panchayat. But it is also incumbent on the part of the study to get the picture of working of panchayat from the general public. The entire exercise helps to understand a balanced view about the working of panchayat.

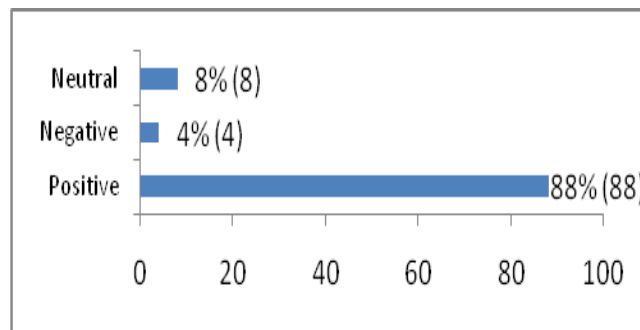
a. Need for Reservations

The respondents have been asked to express their views on the need for reservations. It is noted that the principle of reservations is supported by 88% in Pedda Amberpet village and 4% villagers opposed it. Those who opposed include Muttadi Anthi Reddy, M.Mahender Reddy, Gosukonda Geetha and Meheswari. The reasons identified by them are as follows:

They opined that if reservations are provided other castes losing opportunities to contest elections. The reservations have become hurdles to contest elections and enter into the power positions. These can be observed from Chart. No.5.10.

Chart (Horizontal bar chart) 5.10

Need for Reservations



8% of respondents remained neutral without giving any view on the issues of reservations. This may be due to absence of awareness or hesitation to respond. The opinions of some respondents are given hereunder. “In view of the changing scenario it is necessary to provide reservations” according to Battina Goud. According to P. Rajaiah and Krishana reservations would not be useful because of absence of unity among SCs.

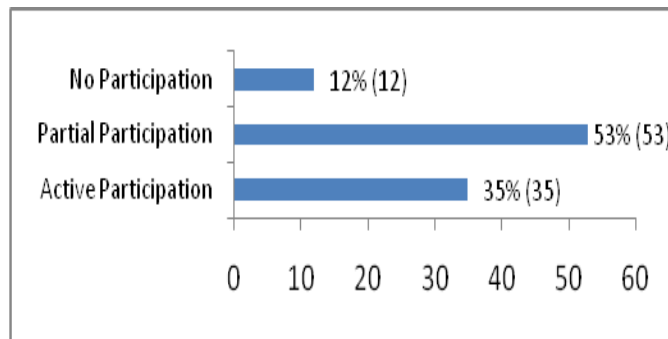
Meesala Vijay Kumar felt that ‘by implementing reservations empowerment can be achieved’. According to G.Raju if equality has to be attained, in view of changing socio-economic and political conditions, implementing reservation is absolutely essential.

b. Participation of Scheduled Castes’ Representatives

The active involvement of SCs in village development and village panchayat proceedings is considered to be present by less than 40 % of villagers.

Chart (Horizontal bar chart) 5. 11

Participation of Scheduled Castes’ Representatives



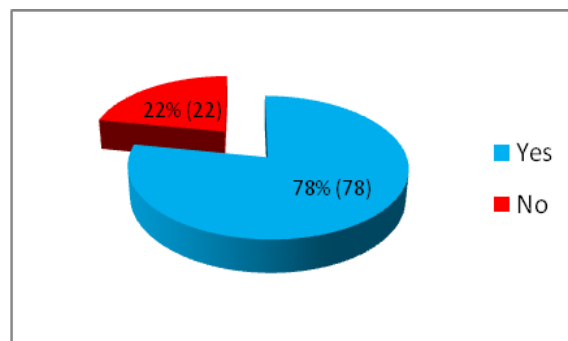
A majority of the villagers interviewed in Pedda Amberpet felt, “the participation in various process of panchayat of SCs members is not much. The opinions of some villagers are worth mentioning here. M. Sudhakar Reddy said “the SC members participation in attending meetings is good”. Siddenki Kalpana opined, ‘every SC member with awareness definitely participates in panchayat and Grama Sabhas’. Dindu Jyothi said “there is only occasional attendance of SC members in Panchayat meetings. There is increasing awareness among SCs they are changing according to changing circumstances”. According to Chelluri Srinivas Reddy, though SCs are getting aware but their political participation is less. Manda Mallamma said, “as Pedda Amberpet is close to the city of Hyderabad awareness among SCs increased and they are attending the panchayat meetings. Cherukuri Yadamma said, “in our caste most of the people are united. Any problem that arises is solved in panchayats through our representatives”. Pilli Madhavi said “because of our village is close to capital city awareness level of the villagers including SCs has increased. The SCs are going ahead and attending meetings.”

Vaddepalli Geeta said, the participation of SCs is good. They have opportunity and receive benefits.

c. Exercise of Political Power by SCs Elected Members

Assumption of position of power should be followed by the exercise of power. Otherwise it loses its significance. It has to be mentioned, here, that a high percentage of villagers in Pedda Amberpet said, “SC representatives, are exercising political power. This may be seen from the following chart 5.12.

Chart (Exploded pie chart) 5.12
Exercise of Political Power by SCs Elected Members

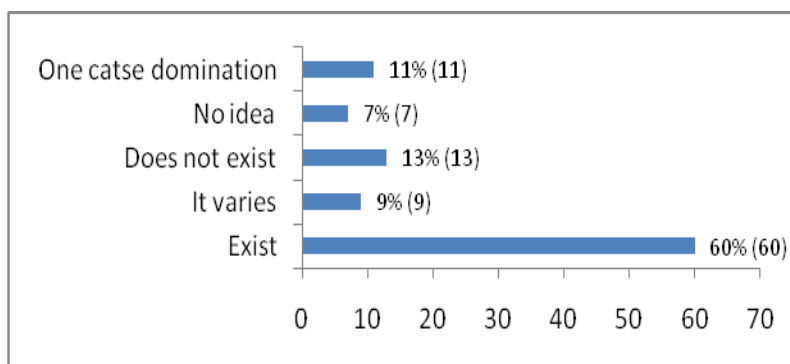


Bayamma president of women’s organization said, “the exercise of powers and the participation are not as desired”. Korivi Tamma said, “exercise of power will not be directed. Korivi Narasimha opined “the exercise of power by SCs is not that much”. Cherukuri Pedda Mysamma expressed the view, “the SCs panchayat members are not given expected opportunities though conditions are changing”. Konjara Muthyalu felt, “SCs members are not at all exercising their powers. Korivi Pentamma said, “they are not able to exercise their powers.

d. Caste Politics

Politics and caste are intertwined in Indian political scenario and more importantly in village politics. A majority of the villagers express that caste politics exist in the village. Chart 5.13 makes this clear.

Chart (Horizontal bar chart) 5.13
Caste Politics

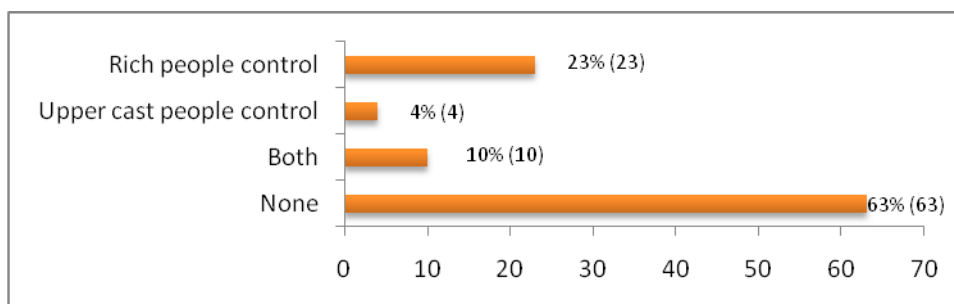


According to Doppa Anasuya, “because elections are fought for power, caste politics are imperative”. Polepalli Narasimha pointed out, “during elections caste politics operate though not directly. They exist internally”. Pandugula Anand said, “both caste politics and control of rich are present.

e. Influence of Upper Castes and Rich

The presence of caste domination is felt by a small percentage of the villagers. Those who stated that it does not exist are the OCs. It has become very difficult to elicit the views of the villagers about the influence of upper and rich people in the village politics. The researcher is compelled to come to the conclusion that the figures should not mislead in arriving at conclusions. The villagers were very hesitant to respond to the question. They were not prepared to speak about the realities. On the whole the influence of caste may not be ruled out in the village politics since caste discrimination still persists in Indian villages in general and Andhra Pradesh in particular. Chart 5.14 makes clear.

Chart (Horizontal bar chart) 5.14
Influence of Upper Castes and Rich



In the opinion of Pandugula Anand, the control of rich over the SC members may be said to have come down because of changing circumstances. Similar is the opinion of

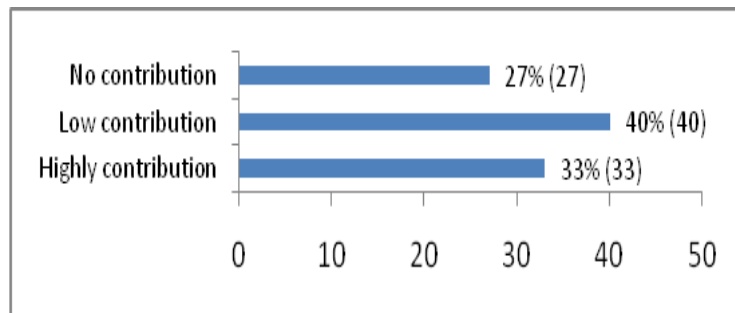
Yalla Satyamma. Gadam Giribabu feels that the domination of Upper Caste over SCs not visible but exists. Pandugula Mysaiah also expresses similar views. The control of rich over SC members is denied by P.Satyam. Ingirigalla Sayamma, Gadam Raju, Pandugula Mallesh, feel that the control of rich is present but it is not visible. According to Borram Mallaiah “now a days as far as possible control is not allowed to be exercised”.

f. SC Representatives’ Contribution to their Wards and Community

The purpose of reservation is, among several, that the elected representatives for different communities shall voice the demands of those they are representing and should contribute their services to the community in particular, while not ignoring the general interests. It may be observed that one third of villagers (33%) endorsed the opinion that the contribution of the SC members is more. It is only a small minority of the villagers said that the contribution by SC representative is nil. Those who felt that there is high contribution and low contribution together constitute a majority.

Chart (Horizontal bar chart) 5.15

Contribution of SC Elected Members to their Wards and Community



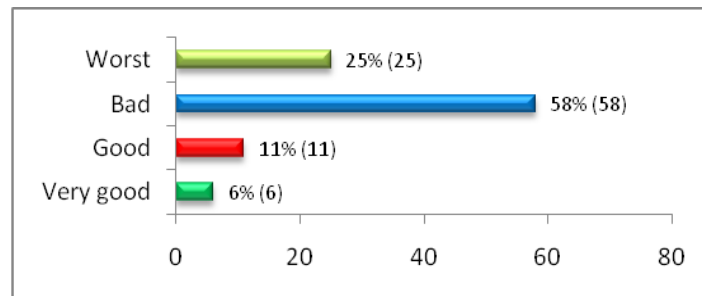
Cherukuri Jagan expressed the view that the SC members would help the people of their community in getting health cards (Arogya Sri Cards), getting assistance for constructing houses and getting sanction of pensions. Siddenki Sai Kiran Reddy has not expressed any idea of contribution of SCs to their own community. According to S. Gowri Reddy “it depends on the members”. Laskar Mahender Reddy “if opportunity is given, who forgets his/her own community”. Dindu Lakshamma said, ‘the social system and caste are interlinked so nobody would prefer to avoid contributing to his/her community as far as possible. They would certainly extend help to their community’. Ashok Setty conveys that it is behind the screen politics that influence contribution of SC

members to their community. So they will not be straight away able to help they want to extend to their community. Dilli Narsimha posed a question by saying “if power is given who will avoid the opportunity of assisting their own caste people. Help could be given indirectly also”. K. Raju opined that indirectly the SC representative would contribute to the welfare of their community. G.Raju pointed out “who will leave her/his caste without help”.

g. Good and Bad Experience of the Villagers

It is found that 25% of the villagers have had either worst or bad experiences with the sitting Sarpanch. Those who have good and very good experience are either close associates of the Sarpanch or those who wanted not to say any thing against the Sarpanch because they belong to the same Gouda community. People opposed to him include non-Gouda BCs and Reddys (OCs). As regards the development experience the villagers with out caste considerations expressed dissatisfaction at the functioning of the Sarpanch. A strong dividing line is observed between the Gouda Sarpanch and Reddys. Graph Showing the Opinions of the Villagers on their views towards the Sitting Sarpanch.

Chart (Horizontal bar chart) 5.16
Good and Bad Experience of the Voters



Section-V

Caste-Wise: Dalits and Non-Dalits Reflections on Various Issues

In order to understand the opinions of the villagers on various issues a caste-wise analysis is also made. This helps to identify the differences in opinions based on caste. The details are given in the following paragraphs.

a. Need for Reservations

In Pedda Amberpet, 96% percent of Dalits and 80% percent of non-Dalits have given their opinion in favour of reservations. The Dalits' percentage remaining higher than non-Dalits in this regard. Only one Dalit has expressed negative view. The percentage of non-Dalits having opposition to reservations is three times more than that of non-Dalits. This can be noted from table no.5.16

Table 5.16

Need for Reservations

	Need for Reservations		
	Dalits	Non Dalits	Total
Positive	48	40	88
	96%	80%	88%
Negative	1	3	4
	2%	6%	4%
Neutral	1	7	8
	2%	14%	8%
Total	50	50	100
	100%	100%	100%

Pandugula Bhaskar (SC) stated, “reservation policy helps the SCs, BCs and Women to develop. With the help of reservations they can contest, if there are no reservations, very few show interest to contest elections because elections are so expensive. L.Madhava Reddy (OC) said “implementing reservations are compulsory for these people and same must be continued for them in PRIs. They will also be empowered politically and strengthen themselves to contest elections, once elected they also perform their roles as public representatives in panchayats”.

b. Participation of SCs in Panchayat Activities

In Pedda Amberpet, active participation of Dalits is felt by a majority (52%) of Dalits and less than 20% of non-Dalits and the difference on this respect in percentage between Dalits and non-Dalits is glaring. Nearly 70% of non-Dalits considered the participation of Dalits as minimum and less than 40% of the Dalits have same opinion. Here again the difference between (30%) is significant. Absence of participation of Dalits is felt by a higher percentage of non-Dalits. The Dalits also, though a small percentage said “the participation of Dalits is nil”. This can be observed from table 5.17

Table.5.17
Participation of SCs in Panchayat Activities

	Opinion on Participation of SCs		
	Dalits	Non-Dalits	Total
Active Participation	26	9	35
	52%	18%	35%
Partial Participation	19	34	53
	38%	68%	53%
No Participation	5	7	12
	10%	14%	12%
Total	50	50	100
	100%	100%	100%

Pandugula Ramu (SC) said “All SCs don’t go and participate in all meetings of panchayat but their elected representatives attend meetings and represent the issues of the common people”. Gosukonda Jagadish Reddy (OC) opined “SCs are participating more than any other communities, their members are more in number than other caste groups, they are also more active in politics. They have started questioning traditional leadership and challenging their dominance”.

c. Exercise of Powers by Scheduled Castes

It is found that the exercise of power is reported as to be present by a high majority of the Dalits as well as the non-Dalits. The Dalit and non-Dalit representatives differed in their opinions. The percentage of Dalits responded positively is more than that of non-Dalits and the percentage is significant. It may be noted from the field experience that the desire to exercise of power is present while the degree of exercise of powers depended on experience, awareness, interest, exposure to politics. The details can be seen from the table 5.18.

Table 5.18
Exercise of Power by Scheduled Castes

	Exercise of Power by Dalits		
	Dalits	Non- Dalits	Total
Yes	42	36	78
	84%	72%	78%
No	8	14	22
	16%	28%	22%
Total	50	50	100
	100%	100%	100%

Pandugula Devender (SC) said “to the maximum extent SCs are exercising their power if they are elected as peoples’ representatives”. Tangidipalli Sudhakar Reddy (OC) opined, “SCs exercise powers if they are elected to representative roles. There are many people within SCs who are well educated and with enough awareness about their roles in panchayats.

d. Caste Politics

In Pedda Amberpet a majority of Dalit and non-Dalits have felt that caste politics exists and the percentage of non-Dalits in this regard is more and more than that of Dalits. Variation depending on situation is felt by a higher percentage of Dalits. Absence of caste politics is felt by a higher percent of non-Dalits. One caste domination is the feeling of 16% of Dalits compared to that of the non-Dalits. The details could be observed from table no. 5.19

Table 5.19
Nature of Caste Politics

	Nature of Caste Politics		
	Dalits	Non- Dalits	Total
Exists	29	31	60
	58%	62%	60%
It Varies	8	1	9
	16%	2%	9%
Does not Exist	3	10	13
	6%	20%	13%
No Idea	2	5	7
	4%	10%	7%
One Caste Domination	8	3	11
	16%	6%	11%
Total	50	50	100
	100%	100%	100%

Merugu Lakshamaiah (SC) stated, “as and when there are any differences among various caste groups, all sub-groups within SCs maintain unity to face others at the time of tough situations. At the time of elections each caste groups support their party and try to get more votes. We can not deny the influence of caste politics in panchayat politics”. Laskar RangaReddy (OC) said “we are not at all worried about the caste politics, we are common people, at the time of elections we vote for good people with so many aspirations, once they get elected as people representative, it is must not keep any caste politics in mind and work for all”.

e. Influence of Upper Castes and Rich

In Pedda Amberpet a majority of the Dalits as well as non-Dalits have said, “the village politics is not influenced by rich and upper castes. The percentage of non-Dalits is higher than that of Dalits in this regard. The influence of rich considered as more than that of the upper castes. It is felt by a higher percentage of Dalits. The details could be seen from table no.5.20.

Table 5.20

Upper Castes and Rich Control

	Upper Caste and Rich Control		
	Dalits	Non-Dalits	Total
Upper Caste People Control	2	2	4
	4%	4%	4%
Rich People Control	12	11	23
	24%	22%	23%
Both	7	3	10
	14%	6%	10%
None	29	34	63
	58%	68%	63%
Total	50	50	100
	100%	100%	100%

Manda Ramesh (SC) said “SCs are devided on party lines and groups that is why rich people are able to control them. It is very easy to control SCs because they have no support of economic and political from bottom to top level. All lower castes depend on landlords for their subsistence and some other favours”. S.Srikiran Reddy (OC) opined “this village is dominated numerically by two caste groups namely BCs and SCs, where as other castes are economically and politically powerful. At the time of elections all strive to capture the power. It is very common that the money plays important role during the elections. The rich spend money and get elected”.

f. Contribution of Scheduled Castes’ Elected Representatives to their own community

In Pedda Amberpet a majority of Dalits have felt that the contribution of Scheduled Castes representatives is 54%. Only 12% of the non-Dalits have this opinion. Low level of contribution is felt by a majority (52%) of non-Dalits the difference of contribution in percentage between Dalits and non-Dalits is quite low is very marked. The percentage of non-Dalits who felt that the Scheduled Castes have not contributed to their community is double than that of the non-Dalits. Table no. 5.21 gives a clear picture of this.

Table 5. 21

Contribution of SC Elected Representatives

	Contribution of SC Elected Representatives		
	Dalits	Non Dalits	Total
Highly Contribution	27	6	33
	54%	12%	33%
Low Contribution	14	26	40
	28%	52%	40%
No Contribution	9	18	27
	18%	36%	27%
Total	50	50	100
	100%	100%	100%

Polepalli Yadaiah (SC) said “each elected member proposes for so many development related projects but sarpanch always says there are no funds to carry works”. Maryala Vijaykumar (BC) opined, “some of them are able to do something for their community with the support of Sarpanch in the last term but in the present term that is not possible with this Sarpanch because she always says ‘no funds’ for development activities.

Good and Bad Experience

In Pedda Amberpet majority of villagers have felt that their experience has been bad. This view is expressed by 60% percent of the non-Dalits. The percentage of Dalits identifying the worst experience expressed by non-Dalits is 26%. Equal percentage of villagers have viewed their experience has been very good and these include Podichetti Lakshmaiah, P. Raghu, M.Kavitha, Sailakshmi. The details are given in table no.5.22

Table 5.22

Good and Bad Experience of Voters

	Good & Bad Experience of Voters		
	Dalits	Non Dalits	Total
Very good	3	3	6
	6%	6%	6%
Good	6	5	11
	12%	10%	11%
Bad	28	30	58
	56%	60%	58%
Worst	13	12	25
	26%	24%	25%
Total	50	50	100
	100%	100%	100%

Polepalli Malkanna (SC) stated, “panchayat politics and its benefits are limited to Sarpanch and her followers. Many are not taking any keen interest to voice the needs of the people, if some body points out also there are no development programmes due to paucity of funds. Pasula Madhu Mudiraj (BC) said, “actually the panchayat revenue resources have fallen drastically due to sudden fall of real estate business in and around this village; there are no massive development projects taken up in the present term. Comparatively development experience is not satisfactory in this village”.

Section-VI

Perceptions of Educated and Uneducated Voters

a. Need for Reservations

The perceptions of educated and uneducated citizen of the village have been elicited to get a feel of difference. Educated in the present context are those who could read and write. In other words and to be specific, illiterates are not part of the category of educated.

In Pedda Amberpet also 86 percent of the educated and 92% uneducated responded positively towards reservations. Opposition to reservations is very insignificant. The neutrals are more among the educated. Whether educated or uneducated i.e 5% and 3% respectively among the two categories of respondents chose for the study. The neutral constitute less than 9% and 6%. The details are given in table no. 5.23.

Table 5.23
Need for Reservations

	Need for Reservation		
	Educated	Un Educated	Total
Positive	55	33	88
	86%	92%	88%
Negative	3	1	4
	5%	3%	4%
Neutral	6	2	8
	9%	6%	8%
Total	64	36	100
	100%	100%	100%

Gadam Giribabu educated up to Intermediate opined, “only because of reservations in panchayats the weaker sections have been given opportunity to be elected as people representatives so reservations should be continued. Pandugula Mysaiah said “By providing reservations to SCs and other weaker sections surely it gives chance to contest in elections and a chance to serve as public representatives in the village”.

b. Participation of Dalits in Panchayat and village development

In Pedda Amberpet active participation is identified by 44% percent of the uneducated. Minimum participation is identified by a far higher percentage of the educated. Those who identified partial participation of Dalits constitute a majority. Absence of participation identified by slightly higher percentage among the educated than uneducated. The Details are given in table no. 5.24

Table 5.24

Opinion on Participation of SCs

	Opinion on Participation of SCs		
	Educated	Un Educated	Total
Active Participation	19	16	35
	30%	44%	35%
Partial Participation	37	16	53
	58%	44%	53%
No Participation	8	4	12
	13%	11%	12%
Total	64	36	100
	100%	100%	100%

Kongara Muthyalu an illiterate said “Members participate in panchayat meetings and other activities. Panchayat members are also educated and service oriented”. Manda Ramulamma primary school educated woman, stated, “growing awareness, emerging trends encouraging SCs to participate in elections and hold positions once the elected by people they are participating in the activities of panchayat more actively. These kinds of changes are not there 20 years back, now youth and middle aged are asserting for their share in the development works”.

c. Exercising power by SC representatives

In Pedda Amberpet 77% of the villagers have felt that the SCs are exercising powers. In this category of the villagers the percentage of educated is more. A 81 percent of uneducated said, “the SCs are not exercising their power”. None of the villagers in Pedda Amberpet said “they do not have any idea about exercising the power”. Table no. 5.25 gives details of this.

Table 5.25

Exercise of Power by SC Elected Representatives

	Exercise of Power Elected Representatives		
	Educated	Un Educated	Total
Yes	49	29	78
	77%	81%	78%
No	15	7	22
	23%	19%	22%
Total	64	36	100
	100%	100%	100%

Chelluri Shasidhar Reddy educated up to intermediate opined, “SCs exercise powers if they are given a chance. They are also well educated. They are provided reservations and they are more active and energetic to exercise powers”. Pasula Bhagyamma said “most of the SC elected representatives are exercising their powers. If they do not know, the panchayat secretary helps them”.

d. Nature of Caste Politics

In Pedda Amberpet 59% of educated and 61% uneducated admitted the influence of caste in village politics. The percentage of uneducated is slightly more than the educated. Among those who have the view that it varies the percentage of uneducated is more than double than that of the educated. Absence of influence of caste is felt by a higher percentage of the educated. The persons having no ideas are more in percentage of educated (8%) than uneducated (6%). On caste domination is felt by almost an equal percentage of educated and uneducated. Details can be observed from Table no. 5.26.

Table 5.26

Nature of Caste Politics

	Nature of Caste Politics		
	Educated	Un Educated	Total
Exists	38	22	60
	59%	61%	60%
It Varies	4	5	9
	6%	14%	9%
Does Not Exist	10	3	13
	16%	8%	13%
No Idea	5	2	7
	8%	6%	7%
One Caste Domination	7	4	11
	11%	11%	11%
Total	64	36	100
	100%	100%	100%

Arvind Goud, a graduate stated “any way the so called upper castes are not showing much interest in panchayat politics and concentrating on some other areas. At present only BCs and SCs are so active in politics from 2001. Since then the panchayat is reserved for SCs and BCs they played key role”. Pilli Ananthaiah an illiterate said “caste politics is always exist at any level of politics, despite of that panchayats should be free from all these caste and party bias, then only development of people and village is possible”

e. Control of Upper Castes and Rich

It appears that the said percentage is contradictory to the universal belief in India that the upper castes and rich persons control over other caste is present. Perhaps the voters hesitation to reveal the fact is governed by ignorance or concealing the truth. A percentage of uneducated is far more than that of the educated in this context. Among the educated a higher percentage of villagers opined that the rich people’s influence is present. The influence of upper castes and rich is felt by a 25% and 19% respectively. The respondents further stated, 61% (Neither) among educated and un-educated respectively that there is no control by upper castes and rich over the Dalits. Table 5.27 gives details.

Table 5.27
Upper Caste and Rich Control

	Upper Caste and Rich Control		
	Educated	Un Educated	Total
Upper Caste People Control	1	3	4
	2%	8%	4%
Rich People Control	16	7	23
	25%	19%	23%
Both	8	2	10
	13%	6%	10%
None	39	24	63
	61%	67%	63%
Total	64	36	100
	100%	100%	100%

P.Ravi Goud studied up to SSC opined “many rich people who don’t have interest in politics they do not interfere but very few people wait for the chance and try to control the weaker sections and dominate the politics and in other village affairs. Cherukuri Yadamma said “last few decades SCs were controlled by rich and upper castes now there is no chance to control over SCs, now people realized what is what. Now people are approaching government departments if there is any exploitation, ill-treatment and domination”

f. Contribution of Scheduled Castes Elected Representatives for the Development of Village and their Community

High level contribution of Scheduled Castes’ representatives is felt by a higher percent of uneducated in Pedda Amberpet compared to that of the educated. The difference in percentage of educated and uneducated is significant. A higher percentage of educated compared to uneducated has felt that the contribution of Scheduled Castes is at low level. Absence of contribution is felt by a higher percentage of educated. Following Table No.5.28 gives an idea of the fact.

Table 5.28

Contribution of SC Elected Representatives

	Contribution of SC Elected Representatives		
	Educated	Un Educated	Total
Highly Contribution	18	15	33
	28.10%	41.70%	33.00%
Low Contribution	27	13	40
	42.20%	36.10%	40.00%
No Contribution	19	8	27
	29.70%	22.20%	27.00%
Total	64	36	100
	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

P.Ravi Goud studied up to SSC opined “many rich people who don’t have interest in politics they do not interfere but very few people wait for the chance and try to control the weaker sections and dominate the politics and in other village affairs. Cherukuri Yadamma said “last few decades SCs were controlled by rich and upper castes now there is no chance to control over SCs, now people realized what is what. Now people are

approaching government departments if there is any exploitation, ill-treatment and domination”

g. Good and Bad Experience of Voters

A few, among the educated and uneducated villagers maintained, “they have good experience with sitting sarpanch and the members of panchayat. Good experience is reported all most equal educated and uneducated both equally felt good i.e 11% respondents. A majority of educated and uneducated said “their experience has been bad. The percentage i.e 25%, in this context of worst experience is reported by a higher percentage of educated than that of the uneducated. A very high percentage (58%) of the educated and uneducated reported bad experience. The details are given here under table 5.29.

Table 5.29
Good and Bad Experience

	Good and Bad Experience of Voters		
	Educated	Un Educated	Total
Very Good	3	3	6
	5%	8%	6%
Good	7	4	11
	11%	11%	11%
Bad	36	22	58
	56%	61%	58%
Worst	18	7	25
	28%	19%	25%
Total	64	36	100
	100%	100%	100%

Maryala Nagamma said “in this term we have woman sarpanch from BC community, she has not taken any development project in our village, sarpanch will not respond quickly for the peoples’ needs, even if she responds says that panchayat does not have funds to solve all the problems. Our experience with the present is sarpanch is not at all good”.

Section-VII

Gender based Perceptions-Male and Female Voters

a. Need for Reservations

While among all the categories discussed so far women and men respondents opinions are included but the study took care to ensure to ascertain the opinions of females and males on the issue under discussion separately. In Peda Thummidi village a 88 percentage of the males as well as females responded positively towards reservation. In this village also the difference of supporters of reservation among females and males is marginal. The 4% of females opposed reservations. The percentage of neutrals 9% and 7% respectively, among females is more than that of the males. The arguments of the supporters of reservations are as follows. It is observed from field study that certain amount of hesitation and fear in some cases and ignorance was seen. Table No. 5.30 gives details.

Table 5.30
Need for Reservations

	Need for Reservations		
	Female	Male	Total
Positive	39	49	88
	87%	89%	88%
Negative	2	2	4
	4%	4%	4%
Neutral	4	4	8
	9%	7%	8%
Total	45	55	100
	100%	100%	100%

Doppa Veeraiah said “people like us can not contest the elections with powerful groups in the village that is why reservations are crucial to bring social change in our society”. Bathina Rajamma opined, “reservations are necessary for SCs and BCs because most of them are poor and backward in the absence of reservations they cannot contest against rich and powerful people.

b. Participation of Scheduled Castes' representatives in Panchayat Activities

In Pedda Amberpet village the percentage of females identify the participation of Scheduled Castes' members as active is more than that of the males. The percentage of males feeling that the participation is far higher than that of females. The percentage of females that expressed unhappiness is far higher than that of males. Table no. 5.31 gives details.

Table 5.31
Opinion on Participation of SCs

	Opinion on Participation of SCs		
	Female	Male	Total
Active Participation	17	18	35
	38%	33%	35%
Partial Participation	20	33	53
	44%	60%	53%
No Participation	8	4	12
	18%	7%	12%
Total	45	55	100
	100%	100%	100%

Chelluri Srinivas Reddy said “I am not in favour of any particular community, what I feel that panchayat belongs to all the villagers, so all must participate including these poor people. I am not to argue that whether reservations are good or bad, but who ever is elected, they must do something good for the villagers otherwise it is of no to have elections”. D.Jyothi said “Not only SCs but persons from other castes also must contest elections. Most of the people are averse to contest elections since they are engaged in other activities”.

c. Exercise of Powers by SC Representatives

In Pedda Amberpet village the findings are slightly different. Slightly 78% percentage of male respondents have felt, power is exercised by the SCs representatives and slightly 22 percentage of female respondents felt powers are not exercised. This can be noted from the following table No. 5.32.

Table 5.32

Exercise of Powers by SC Representatives

	Exercise of Power		
	Female	Male	Total
Yes	35	43	78
	78%	78%	78%
No	10	12	22
	22%	22%	22%
Total	45	55	100
	100%	100%	100%

Buyya Mohan Goud stated, “some of the elected representatives only exercise all powers especially if we talk about the SCs since many of them are without having any political and economic backup, they hesitate to exercise the powers. They do not exercise powers fully but either secretary or powerful people of the village direct them to take this decision and that decision”. Siluveru Lakshamma said “SCs are not exercising the powers independently. Somebody directing them to act or guided by secretary. We need to elect the bold and hardworking people for the community development otherwise the SCs do not get any benefit”.

d. Caste Politics

In Pedda Amberpet village the presence of caste politics is felt by 58 percentage of males. The difference between the percentage of males and females in this context is significant. A higher percent of females compared that of males said that it varied. Nearly the same percentage of males and females felt, “it does not exist”. The percentage of females who said, “they do not have any idea is far higher than that of the males”. Nearly the same percent of males and females respondents positively conveyed that there is one caste domination. The details could be noted from the table 5.33

Table 5.33

Nature of Caste Politics

	Nature of Caste Politics		
	Female	Male	Total
Exists	28	32	60
	62%	58%	60%
It Varies	4	5	9
	9%	9%	9%
Does Not Exist	6	7	13
	13%	13%	13%
No Idea	1	6	7
	2%	11%	7%
One Caste Domination	6	5	11
	13%	9%	11%
Total	45	55	100
	100%	100%	100%

P.Satyamma opined “at the time of elections many factors like money, caste, influence etc, work and after the elections caste politics, party feelings continue to get any benefits from panchayat. D.Mahipal Reddy said “caste politics are evidenced more in this village and also within our hamlet. There are two groups within the same caste, and indulge in many politics for power and ultimately voters become fools once they are elected”.

e. Influence of Upper Caste and Rich

In Pedda Amberpet village also the hesitation to speak of the presence of influence of upper caste and rich is present. A higher percentage of females had shown hesitance compared to that of the males. The influence is expressed by less than 5%. However the percentage of females is more than that of the males. The influence of rich is felt by 29% percent of the males. The details are as follows:

Table 5.34

Upper Caste and Rich Control

	Upper Caste and Rich Control		
	Female	Male	Total
Upper caste people control	2	2	4
	4%	4%	4%
Rich people control	7	16	23
	16%	29%	23%
Both	6	4	10
	13%	7%	10%
None	30	33	63
	67%	60%	63%
Total	45	55	100
	100%	100%	100%

G.Prabhakar Reddy said “it is not very simple thing, how it is possible to control a particular caste by another caste, people from all castes are ready to face dominance of others, if any one tries to dominate they question the unofficial authority and dominance”. Merugu Pushpamma stated that controlling any caste by other is not possible right now because left parties and NGOs are effectively working in this area. Now there is no scope to force any person to follow this or that. Everybody has independent thinking”.

f. Contribution of Scheduled Castes Elected Representatives to the Village and their Community

In Pedda Amberpet village 36 percentage of females have considered the contribution of Scheduled Castes representatives as high. A 42% percentage of male felt that the contribution is low. Similar is the position regarding absence of the contribution (27%). The following table gives the details about this aspect in table no.5.35.

Table 5.35

Contribution of SC Elected Representatives

	Contribution of SC Elected Representatives		
	Female	Male	Total
Highly Contribution	16	17	33
	36%	31%	33%
Low Contribution	17	23	40
	38%	42%	40%
No Contribution	12	15	27
	27%	27%	27%
Total	45	55	100
	100%	100%	100%

Bathina Devender opined, Sarpanch is crucial to contribute to the development of panchayat. The elected representatives' duty is Sarpanch's notice and same will be kept in board meeting, if sarpanch belongs to SCs they take more interest and work for the development of the community". Nukala Nagamma said "Elected members of panchayat shall have to work for the people. If they do not do any thing for the community, people will teach a lesson in the next elections and that is why they contribute something".

g. Good and Bad Experiences with Regard to Performance

In Pedda Amberpet village a few members said, "their experience has been very good". Equal number of females and males have had same opinions. 15% percentage of male respondents expressed that their experience has been good. As regards bad experience female respondents percentage is higher than that of the male respondents. Similar is the position regarding the worst experience. The details may be noted from table 5.36.

Table 5.36

Good and Bad Experiences of Voters

	Good & Bad Experience of Voters		
	Female	Male	Total
Very good	3	3	6
	7%	6%	6%
Good	3	8	11
	7%	15%	11%
Bad	27	31	58
	60%	56%	58%
Worst	12	13	25
	27%	24%	25%
Total	45	55	100
	100%	100%	100%

P.Narasimha said “previous sarpanch has taken up a lot of development work in the village but the present sarpanch has not done any work in the village due to lack of funds. The development experience is not so good”. P.Yattamma opined “the present Sarpanch is not in a position to provide basic amenities to the village. There is no considerable development at all in this village in the last five years. Our experience with the present Sarpanch is not so good.

Summary

A study at Pedda Amberpet village revealed that, gender- wise, the percentage of women members elected to Gram Panchayat is more than one-third i.e 35%. In this village also young and middle aged together constitutes a majority. Backward Classes representatives constitute first largest percentage followed by OCs and SCs. Sub-Caste considerations also have their play in choosing candidates. The percentage of illiterates though constituting a minority is significant and one-third of SC representatives are illiterates. Those with primary, secondary, intermediate and graduation educational qualifications are almost share equal in percentage. For less than 50% of the representatives agriculture is the main occupation. Considerable percentage of the representatives are real estate dealers. The landless constitute the first largest group. The economic position of the representatives is higher in this village than that of the representatives in Peda Thummid¹³. As regards general awareness of the representatives, it is noted that a large percentage of them are aware of political events. A majority of the SC representatives are well acquainted with political events. Those with four years experience and nine years political experience constitute a high majority. First largest group represents party workers followed by ward members and others. Party, Caste, SHGs, family and service motive have been the inspiring factors for entry into political arena and contest. The role of political parties is found significant. Campaigns have been expensive and money is mentioned as a factor in the elections. A majority of respondents have been found favourably inclined towards reservations for SCs, STs and women. A majority of respondents admitted the influence of caste.

¹³ This is partly on account of fall out of real estate related boom.

The impact of caste in politics is admitted by a majority of the respondents. Suppression of lower castes by upper caste is reported. A majority of the representatives have the idea of democracy. They expressed the view that the Dalits are asserting themselves and the process of empowerment is on. Provision of drinking water, drainage, sanitation, roads and lights are among the common subjects of interest. It is found that half of the respondents are involved in the community service and the areas of interests differed from one to another. Exploitation, corruption, lack of adequate powers, control of the influential over development activities are identified as common problems. A majority of them focussed on inadequate powers of panchayats. The need for efficient and quality leadership is also emphasized. Co-operation between people's representatives and officials is also an issue to be addressed. Prioritization of works, training and purposeful implementation of the 73rd Constitution Amendment is essential, they pointed out. Positive contribution of Dalits to the community is reported. Problems from the upper castes, rich and official are felt by a small percentage of the villagers. Support to reservations is found among the villagers. In general, the villagers perceived that their experience with the sitting Sarpanch is not happy.

Section-VIII

The Changing Scenario in Pedda Amberpet

The following are some details obtained through interactions with the villagers, officials and community leaders of Dalits and non-Dalits. Since the inception of the Gram Panchayat it is only the OCs that had dominated the politics of the village. Neither the BCs nor the SCs had any importance. They did not also have awareness about the need to involve themselves in active politics. Only two persons belonging to Reddy caste (OC) served as Sarpanches for several decades. The reasons are obvious. They were (OCs) economically powerful and hence socially well known. Citizens from BCs and SCs were not economically strong and enlightened. Before the 73rd Constitutional Amendment the deprived sections were selected members through co-option which implied the selection of “yes” persons favouring the politically strong. Women were rarely selected as representatives. Dalits were neither aware the need nor the opportunity to demand for allotment of benefits to the deprived. But the process of Dalit empowerment began after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment.

During 2001-2006, the position of Sarpanch was reserved for SCs. In 2006 it was reserved for BC women. The change is definitely due to the said constitutional amendment. The newly elected Sarpanches from SC and BC communities have been committed to serve their communities. At the same time, village development has also been their concern. But the changed scenario is not palatable to the hitherto politically dominant caste. The result is the continued opposition and resistance from the upper castes, financially strong to the new leadership. The changed leadership is trying to create a new and congenial environment and is inclined to utilize the special provisions enshrined in the 73rd Constitution Amendment. The name of Pandi Pentaiah (SC), who served as Sarpanch during 2001-2006 figures prominently in this context.

Pedda Amberpet village is very close to the state capital-Hyderabad. But the situation in the village has not changed much. It is caste ridden and faction oriented and controlled by economically and socially dominant persons. Political decisions are not transparent. Nothing is made known to the villagers about the funds granted to the village, the amount spent, the purpose for which they are spent. The villagers are still not courageous enough to question the dominant leadership. The silence is also due to the

fact that they may be threatened and framed with fraud cases. The favours, if any used to be obtained through submissive and repeated requests, while ensuring loyalty to the dominant leadership may or may not help them. The economically powerful and higher caste leaders are called 'Patel' and 'Dora' and people have to plead for favours. If any one tried to go to the Panchayat Office, it is considered to be really a daring act. In the 50 years of the history of Pedda Amberpet, only four persons occupied the office of Sarpanch. Ch. Narisimha Reddy (OC) served for 30 years, S. Raji Reddy (OC) was Sarpanch for 15 years and P. Pentaiah (SC) served as Sarpanch for 5 years. The sitting Sarpanch since 2006 is Podiseti Sabitha Srinivas (BC)

The development activities which are carried out during the Sarpanchship of Pentaiah in a period of five years, has been enormous. He has been instrumental in the constructing of Pucca houses to the deserving. His administration is hailed which is beyond caste considerations. Other development activities during his period of office are: Old age pensions, pensions to widows, benefits to the physically handicapped and pensions to weavers. Pentaiah has convened Grama Sabha meetings and the villagers have felt free to place their demands before the meeting. The meetings have been held with transparency, openness, and details. Several schemes which include Food for Work, Janmabhoomi, Poverty Alleviation, Prime Minister Gram Sadak Yojana have been successfully implemented. The villagers are hoping that Pedda Amberpet would get 'Nirmal Puraskar' for its achievements.

He focused his efforts on roads, lighting, sanitation and other amenities. He has contested unsuccessfully for the open position in 1996. During his tenure as Sarpanch, he has faced serious opposition; has bitter experiences but never has lost his confidence and courage.

Pandi Pentaiah (2001-2006)

Pandi Pentaiah hails from a small farmers' family. He rose from humble beginning to the position of Sarpanch. He worked as daily wage labourer. With the encouragement given by his uncle, he had learnt driving and worked as lorry driver in 1979. In 1982 he got a state government job in the Road Transport Corporation as driver and associated mainly with the Secunderabad, Dilshuknagar and Hayatnagar depots of the city of Hyderabad.

Right from his childhood, Pentaiah developed interest in politics. He took active part in Ambedkar Association for a long time. He was regular in attending the meetings of the said associations. Pentaiah remembers the development of his village stage by stage. He said that in the preceding 50 years of his assumption of the office of Sarpanch in 2001, village politics and development activities are completely under the control of a few persons belonging to Reddy Caste. Those from other castes, mainly BCs and SCs were hither to rarely participating in these activities. Whenever benefit oriented programmes were initiated, the BCs and SCs, used to go and request the Reddy caste leaders for such benefits. If those leaders desired, they used to grant the requests of the former. Obtaining benefits is not a certainty, though the requests were worth deserving.

The situation prevalent in the village which is controlled by a few upper caste rich persons led Pandi Pentaiah to think seriously. He determined to fight against the domination and decided to contest in panchayat elections of 1996. The office of Sarpanch was not reserved. He contested against Siddenki Raji Reddy and faced naturally serious opposition.

The experiences of Pentaiah during the election are interesting. He began to mobilize the Dalits in his favour, while explaining the type of exploitation they were subjected to. According to him the opponent tried his best to influence votes in his favour through money and liquor. Out of 740 SC votes, he could secure 540. He could persuade a majority of SC voters to vote for him. He said at the time of interview, that he was able to generate awareness among the SCs about the need to mobilize themselves as a group, though he had to taste defeat.

The experience during 1996 elections served as a source of inspiration to Pentaiah. His desire and determination to contest again intensified. Fortunately for him, the Sarpanch position of Pedda Amberpet panchayat was reserved to SCs in 2001. The upper castes as well as the BC leaders united to field a common SC candidate who would work according to their dictates. Pentaiah said “I belong to Madiga sub-caste of the SCs. They have tried to field a person from my own sub-caste but no one from my sub-caste has come forward to contest. They have tried and succeeded in fielding a Mala sub-caste candidate named Paladugu Narsimha and gave financial support to him”. In addition to Paladugu Narasimha, four more SC persons wanted to contest. But Pentaiah persuaded

them to withdraw to avoid split of the SC voters. In all there have been four candidates including Pentaiah. He was supported by congress party. Paladugu Narasimha has been supported by the Telugu Desam Party. Bharatiya Janatha Party supported Borram Mallaiah and the Telangana Rastra Samithi supported Polepalli Ramulu. Though panchayat elections should not be on party based, functionally parties figure prominently.

The election symbol allotted for Pentaiah is 'Auto'. Personal appeals, door to door campaign, rallies with autos formed part of electioneering. Pentaiah said, "during campaign, I have gone to each and every house and requested the voters to give me a chance to work for the development of the village. I have promised to provide cement concrete roads, drainage facilities, drinking water pipes (public taps), toilets and others. The opposing candidates used to campaign that the auto would tilt and fall down, indirectly commenting that I would get defeated". But I got elected. My service mindedness and support of the voters have contributed to my successes". It is beyond doubt that the support of his community has gone a long way in bringing victory to him, despite the negative forces working against him.

The contribution of Pandi Pentaiah to village development is worth mentioning. After assuming office as Sarpanch, he has devoted 15 days to study the functions of Gram Panchayat, its records and the environment. The Panchayat has a surplus of 11 lakhs rupees when he has become Sarpanch. Due to boom of real estate, the panchayat has been getting 6 to 8 lakhs rupees from treasury deposits. Laying of concrete cement roads, public taps, construction of sumps to store water and lighting facilities have been the main development activities during his tenure. Krishna river waters had been brought to the village with an expenditure of 13 lakhs rupees. The development activities were undertaken in a phased manner. He said "I was inclined to work with development orientation without giving preference to caste and party based considerations. But he has to taste bitter experiences". The following are some experiences that he has given:

During a meeting held in a school a student has slapped Pentaiah using objectionable words 'Madiganakodaka' implying that he is a low caste person. This insult has been unbearable. The officials and teachers have advised him to file a case against the student. But the upper caste leaders said, "they protected him saying that he is mentally unstable".

There had been another incident when the panchayat *Karobar*¹⁴ Malla Reddy has beaten him. The Upa Sarpanch, belonging to an upper caste has also beaten him on one occasion. Pentaiah had filed cases against the two persons involving Prevention of Atrocities against SCs and STs Act. This had led to increasing prejudice among the upper caste leaders against Pentaiah. They have waited for an opportunity to take grudge which has come during dusserah. It is a convention in the village to celebrate 'Narakasura Dahana Khanda' during dusserah. This implies destruction of evil and survival of good. Some money from the panchayat funds would be used for the purpose. Some upper castes leaders insisted that more funds than what have had usually given shall be provided. The amount proposed by Pentaiah (around 8,000) was considered as less by them and they have categorically stated that they will not perform the event. Pentaiah decided to entrust the work to young dalits. They happily agreed to take up the work because never before such an opportunity came to them and assured that they would perform the event in a grand manner. A large effigy of 52 feet Ravanaasura had been prepared and it had to be burnt. My opponents got united and have been waiting for an opportunity to create problems to me. We have asked one young Dalit Bhaskar play the role of Anjaneya. The office staff was present there. Bhaskar has gone to Anjaneya temple before he has proceeded to Narakasura dahana place, but to his surprise, he has found it closed. He has been addressed as "Malavadu (implying low caste untouchable persons) and have threatened that he would also be burnt along with the effigy if he has dared to perform Narakasura dahana kanda. My opponents said, "it is a bad omen to the village to entrust dahana to a Dalit" Pentaiah said.

The Dalits have decided to perform dahana kanda under any circumstances and they have challenged the opponents to do whether they have wanted. A group of opponents have began to throw petrol and it fire to the effigy. My requests to avoid conflict have not been heeded. Bhaskar, Pentaiah and some others have been beaten up. Pentaiah has informed the police who had come late. A case has been filed in the nearby police station. Reddies have pleaded for compromise. He has not agreed to it and has stood unmoved. But his own caste people been been bribed to give evidence against him resulting in his losing the case. This had given a big blow to his political career. His

¹⁴ An employee of Gram Panchayat who collects taxes and carries out other sundry jobs of Panchayat

righteousness and uncompromising nature, awareness have not to the liking of the then political leaders. He has been denied the ticket to contest for Legislative Assembly elections. His wife could not become Mandal Praja Parishad President though she was eligible and aspiring.

During his tenure as Sarpanch, the upper castes raised allegations of misappropriation against him. The cheque power has been withdrawn. But he has got it restored after convincing the officials of his honesty. He has increased the development activities. He said, “the upper castes have continued to raise allegations”. The SCs, BCs as well as the OCs have questioned on several counts. But my work has been selfless and development oriented without any room for caste and class considerations. There has been no nepotism. “I can say one thing with confidence, if Dalits are given an opportunity, they will definitely make good use of it. There is no doubt about it. But purposeful creation of hurdles; using the weakness of people for personal benefits; using violence spoiled the cause and development. These activities give bad reputation to genuine people. Economically weak Dalits are made to succumb to the whims and fancies of the dominant people. Since I am “economically strong and endowed with awareness, I could withstand”.

Pentaiah concluded by saying, “hitherto neglected areas shall have to be attended and developed. Real problems will have to be solved. New schemes meant for promoting the welfare of Dalits and BCs have to be taken up.

Sabitha Srinivas Goud (2006-2011)

Sabitha Srinivas Goud, the sitting¹⁵ Sarpanch is elected to a reserved position for BC women. She categorically states “the encouragement of her husband and family members has made her to contest. She contested against two women, Pilli Yettamma and Dayyala Jyothi has won with more than 50% of the votes polled.

According to Sabitha Srinivas’ village is like a family and the Sarpanch as its father or head. Village development depends on how efficiently the Sarpanch works. Generally, people contest for power by spending lakhs of rupees and will strive for making money. She laments “contemporary leadership is lacking service motive and that same is the case with people’s representatives as well as people.

¹⁵ Sabitha Srinivas Goud, was Sarpanch of the village at the time of field study.

Srinivas, the husband of the Sarpanch is reported to be helping her in all respects. The Panchayat gets huge money through share in registrations relating to real estate. “Though the real estate boom has come down a little, development activities have not declined”, according to her.

Sarpanch Sabitha Said, “she is not facing any role conflict and is successfully managing the house hold affairs as well as the role of Sarpanch. The very fact that a Dalit and a BC women could occupy the position of Sarpanch is an indication of empowerment” according to her. She also pointed out “the Sarpanches from deprived sections are paying special attention to their development and are paving the way for their empowerment. The woman Sarpanch has given some details of elections and the role of money is enormous and selfish ends are figuring prominently. Referring to the attitude of the OCs towards the BCs and SCs occupying power positions, she said “the OCs are not able to accept the changed situation. Hence she and her family members are facing some problems. Housing facility for SCs, BCs and the poor, allotment of buffalos to the deserving under ‘Pasu Kranthi Pathakam, old age pensions, pensions to widows, and other needy persons are among the activities she has worked for. She said “it is her duty to solve the problems of the village and villagers”.

The Sarpanch explains, “how the villagers are getting confidence to speak about their requirements. ‘They used to fear previously. But now they are asking and receiving benefits. I am doing what best I can”, She said’ and continued ‘I feel that empowerment to the SCs, BCs and women are definitely the boon from the 73rd Constitution Amendment. She said that as a woman Sarpanch, she will contribute to women’s development. She feels that women shall be provided with toilets, and educational opportunities be improved, and loans with low interest should be provided to women and she is working in this direction. According to her, “women are in no way inferior to men and women are proving it. They are also to come out of problems arising out from family members. Opportunities for BCs, SCs and women have been less before. But when once they are provided, they should be used to achieve empowerment. “Despite the presence of competition between the haves and have nots, every effort is being made to empower the so far unempowered”, she said.

Chapter-VI

Comparative Analysis of Two Villages: Panchayat-Wise and Caste-Wise

Section-I

As stated earlier, the two villages i.e Peda Thummidi situated in Krishna district, in Andhra Regions, and Pedda Amberpet lying in Ranga Reddy district in Telangana regions, chosen for study project a diverse picture in almost all the spheres. Peda Thummidi village lies in comparatively developed regions and Pedda Amberpet lies in backward region. Though this village is closer to Hyderabad, the capital city of Andhra Pradesh, with all the urban influence on this village, it is still backward compared to Pedda Amberpet in all the spheres discussed in this study. This necessitates the research study to compare various aspects discussed and found connotations as well as differences and the reasons thereof. Thus the study in totality leads to suggest an approach towards meaningful development of the rural sector in the state of Andhra Pradesh and those especially the Dalits who still remain backward and need a helping hand from all the sectors. The comparative study of these two villages throws the light on various aspects discussed and leads to suggest to improve the prevailing situation in the political arena. The discussion that follows describes various aspects of differences found in these villages on the issues discussed in the previous chapters IV and V.

6. 1 Age and Educational Qualifications

The difference between the two villages is that the percentage of the representatives with 51 years or above is far higher in Pedda Amberpet village compared to Peda Thummidi village and several of them are between 25 to 40 years of age.

In Pedda Amberpet village the illiterates, primary and secondary education holders and those with intermediate education are equal in percentage. The graduates constitute 14% in Pedda Amberpet. In Peda Thummidi the illiterates, those with primary education are equally divided and the percentage of each is 27. Next to them are the secondary education holders. The percentage of secondary and intermediate education have equal representation (13%). It may be observed that a majority of the respondents in Pedda Amberpet village are those with secondary level education and below. In Pedathummidi village those with secondary level education and below constitute a high

majority. The percentage of illiterates is higher in Peda Thummidi than in Pedda Amberpet. Similar is the position of the representatives with primary educational qualifications. There is significant difference between the two villages in respect of the representatives with intermediate level education. The percentage of the representatives with intermediate education is higher in Pedda Amberpet compared to Peda Thummidi.

Fixing educational qualifications for contestants is unconstitutional but in reality the representatives should possess minimum educational qualifications. A responsible representative will have to do a lot of homework which helps him/her to discuss in the representative bodies i.e Panchayats in the present context. The members of panchayat have to go through official papers to enable themselves for participation and also take decisions.

6.2 Occupation/Employment

The primary occupation of villagers in India centres around agriculture. Most of the landless people work as agricultural labourers. Persons with small land holdings also work as agricultural labourers in others' farms since income derived from their land is not enough. The percentage of respondents working as agricultural labourers is far higher in Peda Thummidi village compared to Pedda Amberpet. In Pedda Amberpet self-employed group is far higher than Peda Thummidi. This is because Pedda Amberpet geographically is close to head quarters of the state of Andhra Pradesh i. e. Hyderabad. The economic status of Pedda Amberpet, as a whole, is higher than Peda Thummidi.

6.3 Party Affiliation

It observed that in Pedda Amberpet the respondents do not favour the communist parties. In Peda Thummidi none of the respondents belong to Bharatiya Janata Party. It is also found that independents do not form part of Pedda Amberpet Grama Panchayat where as two members of Peda Thummidi are independents. It may also be pointed out that the panchayat elections should not be based on party factor but the respondents openly used the plank of their party affiliations.

6.4 Help in Elections

The support of political parties to their candidates is found in Pedda Amberpet compared to Peda Thummidi. The group of respondents who identified women's support as an important factor is far higher in Pedda Amberpet than in Peda Thummidi.

6.5 Campaign

Campaigns included door to door, personal and through the media during the elections in Pedda Amberpet but not in Peda Thummidi village. A former Sarpanch of Pedda Amberpet village Pandi Pentaiah has engaged an auto and sent around with recorded songs and a mike which the study has not found in Peda Thummidi.

6.6 Elections and Violence

Enquires from villages have helped to note that presence of violence is more in Peda Thummidi than in Pedda Amberpet.

6.7 Role of Money

The role of money may not be denied in Indian electioneering by all the political parties and the elections to the Panchayat Raj bodies may not be an exception to this phenomenon. A large per cent of respondents stated that the money played an important role in the elections in Pedda Amberpet but whereas a difference of opinion is found, as regards to the role of money in Peda Thummidi (PT) village. Some respondents agreed that there is role of money but very small number said that the money has no role at all. The money plays a big role in Indian elections. The voters treat the period of electioneering as a feast time. But there have been instances where money is accepted from party and vote the other and vice-versa. The two villages under the study are no exception to this phenomenon.

Table 6.1
Role of Money in Elections

	Role of Money		
	Peda Thummidi	Pedda Amberpet	Total
Strongly agree	28	28	56
	93%	100%	97%
Agree	1	0	1
	3%	0%	2%
Can't Say	1	0	1
	3%	0%	2%
Total	30	28	58
	100%	100%	100%

In Pedda Amberpet the Sarpanch position is reserved for BC woman to the elections that took place in 2006. The husband of the then sitting Sarpanch, working in Public Sector Bank, has taken voluntary retirement and had spent 50 lakhs to get his wife elected as Sarpanch. It is pointed out by some respondents that the Sarpanch, Upa Sarpanch and Members are given a fixed percentage of money by the contractors and individuals in view of getting their lay out sanctions.

6.8 Role of Caste

The percentage of SCs in Peda Thummididi village is higher than in Pedda Amberpet village by 8 per cent. On the basis of the responses given by the Gram Panchayat members, in the two villages under study they are divided into four groups i.e those who considered role of caste an influencing factor, those who felt that it is key factor, those who viewed as a determining factor and those who felt that it has no impact. The details can be seen from table.

Table 6.2
Role of caste

	Role of Money		
	Peda Thummididi	Pedda Amberpet	Total
Influencing Factor	16	10	26
	53%	36%	45%
Key Factor	4	8	12
	13%	29%	21%
Determining Factor	8	3	11
	27%	11%	19%
No Impact	2	7	9
	7%	25%	16%
Total	30	28	58
	100%	100%	100%

It is observed from the table that in Peda Thummididi, those who considered caste as influencing factor constitute to be a majority and the first largest group in Pedda Amberpet. In Peda Thummididi those who considered caste as influencing factor and key factor together form a majority. Respondents for whom money has no impact are significantly higher in Pedda Amberpet village compared to those in Peda Thummididi

village. It is a known fact that reservations have facilitated entry of deprived castes and classes into political institutions.

6.9 Use of Reservation

It is observed that high majority of respondents have a positive out look about reservations. More than 80% respondents in Peda Thummidi village more than 70% in Pedda Amberpet have felt reservations have positive given results. However less than 11% of respondents in Pedda Amberpet village and less than 5% in Peda Thummidi village have negative perceptions regarding reservations. Those who did not express any view form nearly the same percentage in both the villages. This can be seen from table.

Table 6.3
Use of Reservation

	Use of reservation		
	Peda Thummidi	Pedda Amberpet	Total
Positive	25	21	46
	83%	75%	79%
Negative	1	3	4
	3%	11%	7%
Neutral	4	4	8
	13%	14%	14%
Total	30	28	58
	100%	100%	100%

Some details of the perceptions of the respondent deserve mentions here. In the opinion of Arja Chalamaiiah a Scheduled Castes Sarpanch of Peda Thummidi village with out reservations “common people cannot get into power positions at various levels”. Paladugula Veeravenkateswara Rao elected as member reserved for Scheduled Castes of Peda Thummidi village said “reservations break the so far held monopoly of dominant castes. Lower castes are getting opportunities to occupy positions”.

Boina Radha Krishna, Upa Sarpanch of Peda Thummidi (BC) said “because of reservations, lower caste people are getting a chance. They have also aspirations to occupy positions”. Mayara Veeraraghavamma a woman representative of Peda Thummidi village said “reservations have paved the way to disadvantaged groups especially women, who would not otherwise have been able to contest, now have got the

opportunity to contest”. Kunapareddy Venkateswara Rao elected from general ward said men are already into politics, now women get entry into politics as a result of reservations.

Pandi Pentaiah of Pedda Amberpet opined “reservations provide scope for development and to achieve better positions”. Maryala Raju of Pedda Amberpet felt that reservations help in reducing caste differences and lead to achieve equality. Socially, economically and politically disadvantaged will get an opportunity for development. Pasula Remesh Babu (BC) strongly felt that unless reservations are provided the status of weaker sections will remain status quo and no change will take place.

A member of Pedda Amberpet Gram Panchayat said, “the loss to the village is more if reservations are present. There should not be any reservations. Even if reservations are provided, there should not be reservations for Sarpanch position. He is also against any increase in the percentage of reservations in panchayat”. Meerabai a member of Pedda Amberpet Gram Panchayat said, “because of reservations women are able to enter into politics. The seat which I am elected is reserved for women. That is why I have got the chance. In the absence of reservations I would not have become a member of panchayat”, She continued.

6. 10 Exercise of Power

Naturally the percentage of villagers who felt that power is not exercised will be more in Peda Thummidi village. Since there is a perception developed among the villagers as well as elected representatives towards the elected Sarpanch she is not exercising power but her husband exercising power. It is also observed that the husband of the present Sarpanch is headstrong and dominating person in the village.

Section-I I

Participation and Perceptions of Elected Representatives

6.11 Democracy

The percentage of respondents who clearly defined democracy more in Pedda Amberpet than in Peda Thummidi village. The percentage of “no clear idea” of respondents in Pedda Thummidi village is relatively higher. Education, exposure to society and nearness to the capital could be regarded as the factors contributing to higher percentage of respondents have made them clear about democracy.

6.12 Democratic Decentralization

It is observed that awareness about democratic decentralization is higher in Pedda Amberpet (64.3%) and less in 40% in Peda Thummidi village. Those who do not have any idea of democratic decentralization constitute 36.2%. The percentage is higher in Peda Thummidi compared to Pedda Amberpet. Similar is the position regarding inability to properly define democratic decentralization. The following table explains the different opinions on this aspect.

Table 6.4
Opinion on Democratic Decentralization

	Opinion on Democratic Decentralization		
	Peda Thummidi	Pedda Amberpet	Total
Well Defined	11	18	29
	37%	64%	50%
Unable to define properly	7	1	8
	23%	4%	14%
No Idea	12	9	21
	40%	32%	36%
Total	30	28	58
	100%	100%	100%

It may be pertinent to give details of the opinions of respondents regarding democratic decentralization. Pandi Pentaiah a former Sarpanch of Pedda Amberpet who studied upto only third class said “where there is democratic decentralization, powers are distributed among various levels- district, mandal and village. It is good that India opted

for democratic decentralization”. His case makes clear that low level education does not prevent members from getting awareness. Pasula Ramesh Babu of Pedda Amberpet village said, “in a systems based on the principle of democratic decentralization, the scope to solve local problems at the local level itself and within a short time is possible”.

6.13 Participation in Panchayat Meetings

35 percent of all the respondents are active in panchayat meetings. The percentage of active participants is higher in Peda Thummidi than in Pedda Amberpet village. The percentage of occasional participants is little more than 10% on an average and the percentage of occasional participants is far more in Pedda Amberpet village compared to Peda Thummidi village. Slightly more than 5 percent of the respondents have substitute participation. The percentage of this group of respondents is more in Pedda Amberpet village. The following table gives an idea about the nature of participation

Table 6.5
Participation in Panchayat Meetings

	Participation in Panchayat Meetings		
	Peda Thummidi	Pedda Amberpet	Total
Actively Participated	12	8	20
	40%	29%	35%
Participation Without Fail	15	14	29
	50%	50%	50%
Participation with Sometimes Absence	2	3	5
	7%	11%	9%
Occasional Participation	0	1	1
	0%	4%	2%
Substitute Participation	1	2	3
	3%	7%	5%
Total	30	28	58
	100%	100%	100%

A probe into realities of the situation has revealed that the respondents in general exaggerated the extent of the nature of participation. It is generally the Sarpanch and a cotary of few people that actively participate in the meetings. In the case of woman sarpanch, it is the husband who is active and not the woman sarpanch herself. There is

plenty of evidence regarding this aspect from a crosscheck with the villagers and the elite of the village.

6.14 Issues and Decisions/ Subjects of Interest

The issues to be debated in panchayat meetings are related to laying of roads, electricity supply, drinking water facility, selection of beneficiaries to various programmes and planning and budgeting. In prioritization of issues the sarpanch plays a key role. In the case of women sarpanches husband usually plays an important role. Influential members also have a say in prioritizing the issues. Influence in the present context meant influence of personality, economic and political status. The Sarpanch has a key role in decision-making relating to development projects. The member belonging to the majority group and members who can argue will also have considerable role.

In the matter of selection of beneficiaries the respondents said, “the sarpanch, upa sarpanch, members, officials- all have some role to play but in reality it is mostly the M.L.A, who is ex officio/permanent visitor of gram panchayat and Z.P Chairman, Mandal Chairman who decide. The role of sarpanch is crucial in the implementation of policies and also budget related matters. The secretary assists the panchayat. The respondents have been asked to identify their role in the final decision-making process. The respondents have been asked whether they would always participate or sometimes participate in decision-making process including budget, development work, project identification, offering contracts and selection of beneficiaries. Though a majority of the respondents said, “they always participate. It is found that less than 15 members i.e, 42% have been vocal in the meetings in Pedda Amberpet”. In Peda Thummidi village nearly 90% (27) of the respondents said, “they always participate”. It is found that those who always participate are 46%.

6.15 Community share in Development Schemes and Programmes

An attempt is made to elicit information relating to the share of different communities like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes and women in the development programmes and schemes. It is an eligibility criterion that has major importance and not the different communities criteria that matters according to a number of respondents. Eligibility criteria is identified by 43.34 (13) in Peda Thummidi village and 71.4% (20) in Pedda Amberpet village. In Peda Thummidi village the communities

i.e SCs, STs, BCs and Women together constitute the next largest group 23.3% followed by others. Same is the position in Pedda Amberpet village. The following table gives details in this regard:

Table 6.6
Community Share in Development Programmes and Schemes

	Community Share in Development Programmes and Schemes		
	Peda Thummidi	Pedda Amberpet	Total
SC,ST and Women	4	7	11
	13%	25%	19%
BC	3	0	3
	10%	0%	5%
OC	1	0	1
	3%	0%	2%
Eligibility Criteria	13	20	33
	43%	71%	57%
More to main village, less to Hamlets	2	0	2
	7%	0%	3%
No response	7	1	8
	23%	4%	14%
Total	30	28	58
	100%	100%	100%

6.16 Suggestions for Effective Functioning of Panchayat Raj

The percentage of respondents that pointed for providing adequate powers and funds constitute first largest and their percentages constitute more in Pedda Amberpet than in Peda Thummidi. Similar is the case regarding the suggestion on efficient leadership. The percentage of respondents who have felt that caste politics should not be there is far more in Peda Thummidi compared to that of Pedda Amberpet. The percentage of respondents whose stress unity and solidarity is slightly more in Pedda Amberpet than Peda Thummidi. Equal percentage of respondents emphasized on co-operation in both the villages. Other suggestions include giving up party politics, personality rivalries and free from petty issues. The details are as follows in tabular form:

Table 6.7
Suggestions for Panchayat Raj Better Functioning

	Suggestions for Panchayati Raj Effectiveness		
	Peda Thummidi	Pedda Amberpet	Total
Funds & Powers Required	10	16	26
	33%	57%	45%
Efficient Leadership	3	6	9
	10%	21%	16%
Get Rid of Caste Politics	2	1	3
	7%	4%	5%
Unity and Solidarity	2	2	4
	7%	7%	7%
Cooperation of People, Representatives and Officials	5	3	8
	17%	11%	14%
Others	8	0	8
	27%	0%	14%
Total	30	28	58
	100%	100%	100%

6.17 Empowerment of Dalits

It is found that in Peda Thummidi village, 100% support is given to reservation of seats to Dalits, where as in Pedda Amberpet village, the percentage of supporters is 92.9% as only two respondents opposed. The argument against reservation is that the selection of persons for the positions should be based on capacity and not caste. Opposition to reservation to women especially to the chair position is expressed by one respondent who said, “women will not be in a position to do justice to the office of sarpanch. It is the husband of woman sarpanch that functions as sarpanch. Therefore Sarpanch position shall not be allotted to women”.

A young Dalit representative said “definitely the provision of reservation to Dalits in political institutions/bodies is useful. But if every time the upper caste persons are elected what would be the fate of the deprived. The Dalits’ participation should not be confined to carrying flags and to participate in procession. How long they should be under the control of higher caste and following their dictates. It is absolutely necessary to provide reservation to Dalits”.

6.18 Problems from Upper Castes

The caste factor, at the risk of repetition, still is very much predominantly present in the Indian society and more especially in the rural society. It influences all walks of life and panchayat raj bodies not exception to this aspect. Rich class is always privileged one and enjoys all the benefits with out much effort. Caste considerations are usually present in villages. An attempt is made to identify whether the upper castes' domination is present in the village and panchayat bodies. In the present study the number of Dalits is 17 and that of non-Dalits 41. Out of a total 58 respondents nearly 52% of the respondents said, "the problems are there from upper castes". It is interesting to note that nearly 60 percent entertained this opinion.

Table 6.8
Problems from Upper Castes

	Problems from Upper Castes		
	Peda Thummidi	Pedda Amberpet	Total
Yes	16	14	30
	53%	50%	52%
No	14	14	28
	47%	50%	48%
Total	30	28	58
	100%	100%	100%

6.19 Problems from Rich

Political and economic power are closely related. Whether in positions are not the rich will have more privileges than the vulnerable poor. It is found from the study that the influence of the economically powerful is there over panchayat activities. 57% of respondents opined positively to the influence of rich and remaining said the economic rich don't influence any activities and functioning. Those who have not pointed any influence are evidently economically powerful. A high percentage of Dalit representatives have felt the influence of economically powerful is considerable. Among non-Dalits, less than 50% have this opinion. A few such opinions are stated below in tabular form.

Table 6.9
Problems from Rich

	Problems from Rich		
	Peda Thummidi	Pedda Amberpet	Total
Yes	15	18	33
	50%	64%	57%
No	15	10	25
	50%	36%	43%
Total	30	28	58
	100%	100%	100%

6.20 Problems from Officials

When asked about problems from officials, a majority of respondents said, “they do not have any problems from officials. The percentage of non-Dalits who felt that the problems from officials are there and is slightly more than that of Dalits and vice versa.

Table 6.10
Problems from Officials

	Problems from Officials		
	Peda Thummidi	Pedda Amberpet	Total
Yes	3	15	18
	10%	54%	31%
No	27	13	40
	90%	46%	69%
Total	30	28	58
	100%	100%	100%

6.21 Desire to contest

The interest of respondents in contesting again is identified in the study. 64.3% respondents in Pedda Amberpet and 40% respondent in Peda Thummidi are interested in contesting again. The remaining are not interested. In Pedda Amberpet village those who want to contest constitute a majority. Those who do not want to contest constitute a majority in Peda Thummidi. Admittedly the chance of earning of money is more in Pedda Amberpet village than Pedda Thummidi village on account of real estate boom. Perhaps this aspect, among other, is an encouraging factor for the desire to contest again.

A Dalit representative of Pedda Amberpet gram panchayat said “I am not interested in contesting again”. “Voters are expecting money” said by Pandugula Venkatesh of Pedda Amberpet village. I will contest only when some supporters come forward voluntarily to help me to contest the elections. “Even though a candidate is good it is difficult to contest because money is very important” said another Dalit representative. Dissatisfaction during my tenure made me to withdraw from the contest, according to one representative. The desire to contest again, it may be inferred that, more than any thing else, depends on the capacity to spend.

Section-III

Caste-Wise Comparative Analysis of Dalit and Non-Dalit Elected Representatives

Comparisons occupy an important place in studies of social-political behaviour. A comparative study of Dalit and Non-Dalit representatives helps to identify similarities and differences in their background, perceptions and participation. The position of Dalits in the process of empowerment may also be assessed. The following are the details in that regard.

6.22 Age

It is found that the percentage of non-Dalits in the age group of 24-29 and 30-35 is more than the Dalits. There is not even a single dalit representative in the age group of 24-29. Interestingly, the percentage of dalit representatives in the age groups of 36-40 is far more than the non-Dalits. Preference to vote for middle aged is noted in respect of Dalits.

Table No.6.11

Age-wise Difference- Dalits and Non-Dalits

		Caste Category		Total
		Dalits	Non-Dalits	
Age	24 - 29	0	4	4
		0.0%	9.8%	6.9%
	30 - 35	2	8	10
		11.8%	19.5%	17.2%
	36 - 40	6	8	14
		35.3%	19.5%	24.1%
	41 - 45	2	7	9
		11.8%	17.1%	15.5%
	46 - 50	2	5	7
		11.8%	12.2%	12.1%
	51 & above	5	9	14
		29.4%	22.0%	24.1%
Total		17	41	58
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

6.23 Educational Qualifications

As regards educational background of Dalits and non-Dalit representatives the percentage of illiterates is far higher among Dalits compared to non-Dalits. The Dalits with illiteracy and primary education qualification together constitute a high majority where as the non-Dalits of their group constitute a minority. The percentage of secondary education holders and intermediate education is higher among the non-Dalits. None of the dalit representative is a graduate where as slightly less than 20% of the non-Dalit representatives are graduates.

Table 6.12

Educational Qualifications of Dalits and Non-Dalits

		Caste Category		Total
		Dalits	Non-Dalits	
EQ	Illiterate	6	8	14
		35.3%	19.5%	24.1%
	Primary	7	7	14
		41.2%	17.1%	24.1%
	Secondary	2	10	12
		11.8%	24.4%	20.7%
	Intermediate	2	8	10
		11.8%	19.5%	17.2%
Graduate	0	8	8	
	0.0%	19.5%	13.8%	
Total		17	41	58
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

6.24 Occupation/Employment

A comparative study of the employment position reveals that there is significant difference in the percentage of Dalits and non-Dalit representatives who are engaged in self cultivation. The self cultivators among non-Dalits is far higher than that of the Dalits. The percentage of agricultural labourers is more than 50 in case of Dalits and it is very less among non-Dalits. None of the Dalits are artisans. It is clear that the position of the non-Dalits in respect of employment is safe compared to Dalits.

Table 6.13

Occupation/Employment of Dalits and Non-Dalits

		Caste Category		Total
		Dalits	Non-Dalits	
Employment	Self Cultivation	2	16	18
		11.8%	39.0%	31.0%
	Agricultural Labour	10	5	15
		58.8%	12.2%	25.9%
	Casual Wage Labour	0	2	2
		0.0%	4.9%	3.4%
	Self Employment	3	8	11
		17.6%	19.5%	19.0%
	Private	2	4	6
		11.8%	9.8%	10.3%
	Artisan	0	1	1
		0.0%	2.4%	1.7%
	Others	0	5	5
		0.0%	12.2%	8.6%
Total		17	41	58
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

6.25. Land Holdings

It is observed that a majority of the dalit representatives are landless. Those possessing land between 1 and 2 acres constitute 35.3 percent. Only few dalit representatives possess land between 5 and 6 acres. In the case of non-Dalits, the land less are far less in percentage compared to Dalits. The non-Dalits holding land between 5 and 10 acres and above constitute nearly one fourth of them.

Table 6.14
Landholding Status of Dalits and Non-Dalits

		Caste Category		Total
		Dalits	Non-Dalits	
Land	Nill	9	11	20
		52.9%	26.8%	34.5%
	1 - 2	6	15	21
		35.3%	36.6%	36.2%
	3 - 4	0	5	5
		0.0%	12.2%	8.6%
	5 - 6	2	3	5
		11.8%	7.3%	8.6%
	6 - 7	0	2	2
		0.0%	4.9%	3.4%
	7 - 8	0	2	2
		0.0%	4.9%	3.4%
	9 - 10	0	1	1
		0.0%	2.4%	1.7%
	11 & Above	0	2	2
		0.0%	4.9%	3.4%
Total		17	41	58
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

There is no marked difference regarding ownership of residence. But the quality of residence of non-dalit representatives is definitely better than the dalit representatives. The information channels, as noted are maintaining TV and news papers. A high majority of Dalits and non-Dalits possess television.

6.26 Political Entry

It is observed that the representative who has the largest record of political involvement is a dalit and he is Arja Chalamaiiah who also served as Sarpanch. Those who have political entry in the year 2000 and before are more in percentage among Dalits than among non-Dalits. The percentage of dalit representatives who entered politics in 2001 and after is slightly less than that of the non-dalit representatives.

Table 6.15
Year of Political Entry of Dalits and Non-Dalits

		Caste Category		Total
		Dalits	Non-Dalits	
Year of Political Entry	1981	1	0	1
		5.9%	0.0%	1.7%
	1995	1	3	4
		5.9%	7.3%	6.9%
	2000	0	1	1
		0.0%	2.4%	1.7%
	2001	8	17	25
		47.1%	41.5%	43.1%
	2005	0	1	1
		0.0%	2.4%	1.7%
	2006	7	19	26
		41.2%	46.3%	44.8%
Total		17	41	58
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In the context of political position held it is found that slightly more than one third of the dalit and non-dalit representatives have been party workers before they assumed representative roles. The percentage of community leader which implies caste leaders is significantly more among dalit representatives compared to non-dalit representatives. As regards membership and leadership positions, it is noted that the percentage of dalit representatives is nil and low in the case of non-Dalits in others water user associations, mother committees is almost the same. NGO activists are there among dalit and absent among non-Dalits.

6.27 Political Party Affiliation

As regards party affiliation a majority of representatives are from Congress Party. The first largest to Congress Party is followed by Telugu Desam Party (TDP), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) etc. None of the Dalit representatives have contested as independent candidates where as slightly less than 10% of the non-Dalits are independent candidates. The percentage of non-Dalits from BJP is far higher than the Dalits. The details could be noted from Table.

Table 6.16
Party Affiliation of Dalits and Non-Dalits

		Caste Category		Total
		Dalits	Non-Dalits	
Party Affiliation	Congress	10	11	21
		58.8%	26.8%	36.2%
	TDP	5	19	24
		29.4%	46.3%	41.4%
	BJP	1	6	7
		5.9%	14.6%	12.1%
	Communist Parties	1	2	3
		5.9%	4.9%	5.2%
	Others	0	3	3
		0.0%	7.3%	5.2%
Total		17	41	58
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

As pointed out earlier party, caste, service motive, and family support have been the main factor that inspired the candidates to contest elections.

6.28 Use of Reservation

Reservations to Dalits is supported by all the Dalit representatives (100%) and 95% of non-Dalit representatives. It may be observed from the following table:

Table 6.17

Use of Reservation in Election-Dalits and Non-Dalits

		Caste Category		Total
		Dalits	Non-Dalits	
Role of Reservation	Yes	17	39	56
		100.0%	95.1%	96.6%
	No	0	2	2
		0.0%	4.9%	3.4%
Total		17	41	58
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The percentage of the Dalit representatives in explaining the use of reservations is more when compared to non-Dalits. It is seen from the following table.

6.29 Role of Money

The money plays a vital role in Indian elections. The voters treat the period of electioneering is a feast time. But there have been instances where money is accepted from party and vote the other and vice-versa. The two villages under the study are no exception to this phenomenon as already mentioned earlier. The percentage of non-Dalit who felt that the role of money in election is vital and inevitable is more among the non-Dalits. It is more that that of the Dalits.

Table 6.18

Role of Money in Elections- Dalits and Non-Dalits

		Caste Category		Total
		Dalits	Non-Dalits	
	Strongly agree	15	41	56
		88.2%	100.0%	96.6%
	Agree	1	0	1
		5.9%	0.0%	1.7%
	Cant Say	1	0	1
		5.9%	0.0%	1.7%
Total		17	41	58
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

6.30 Role of Caste

The percentage of non-Dalits who felt that the role of money in elections is strong is more among than that of the Dalits. Both the Dalit and non-Dalit representatives consider caste is an important factor. But the percentage of non-Dalits who expressed the view that caste has no impact on election is far than that of the Dalits. It is noted from the following table.

Table 6.19

Role of Caste in Elections- Dalits and Non-Dalits

		Caste Category		Total
		Dalits	Non-Dalits	
	Influencing Factor	7	19	26
		41.2%	46.3%	44.8%
	Key Factor	4	8	12
		23.5%	19.5%	20.7%
	Determining Factor	5	6	11
		29.4%	14.6%	19.0%
	No Impact	1	8	9
		5.9%	19.5%	15.5%
Total		17	41	58
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

6.31 Participation in Panchayat Meetings

An attempt is made to find out the difference between the Dalit and non-Dalits in respect of participation. According to what the respondents convey the percentage of active participants among non-Dalits is more than that of the Dalits. Those who participated without fail is more among Dalits when compared to non-Dalits. Occasional absentees are more among Dalits compared to non-Dalits. Respondents with substitute for participation are also more among the Dalits. The following table makes this clear.

Table No.6.20

Dalits- Non-Dalits' Participation in Panchayat Meetings

	Dalits- Non-Dalits' Participation		
	Dalits	Non Dalits	Total
Actively Participated	4	16	20
	24%	39%	35%
Participation Without Fail	10	19	29
	59%	46%	50%
Participation with Sometimes Absence	1	4	5
	6%	10%	9%
Occasional Participation	1	0	1
	6%	0%	2%
Substitute Participation	1	2	3
	6%	5%	5%
Total	17	41	58
	100%	100%	100%

It is to be pointed out that the Dalits are becoming active in respect of participation. Though the active Dalit participants are less than the non-Dalits participants, the Dalit active participants do not constitute any significant minority. The Dalit representatives are becoming assertive and active. The percentage of Dalit participants who attended the meetings without fail, are far more than the non-Dalit participants in this regard. The percentage of occasional participation among Dalits is more than non-Dalit participants. Of course the difference is not considerable. The participants who attended the meetings of panchayat without fail constitute half of the respondents of both the villages.

An assessment of participation of non-Dalits also is necessary to facilitate comparison. A woman representative, aged 56 years, and studied upto 4th class gave her interview while her son sits besides her. The son has been very hesitant and feared to allow the mother to respond. In fact he has asked the researcher to show the schedule completed after the interview with the Upa Sarpanch. The family members of this respondent are supporters of Telugu Desam Party since its inception i.e 1983. She has not introduced any resolutions in panchayat meetings but has been invariably present in meetings. This is the case of nominal participation. Same is the case with 40 years old Y.Papayamma, a BC representative. A 29 years old Rajendra Mudiraj educated upto intermediate went on explaining the procedural aspects of the meetings. He said, “he attends the meetings by sacrificing his personal work”. A 40 years old Tangidipalli Premalatha elected to a seat reserved for woman, has awareness about village politics and said, “I will not leave any opportunity for participation”. She said, “usually women members maintain silence in the meetings”. She emphatically said, “why I will keep silent”. When we will speak in the meetings especially male members say, “you want to speak as a leader then, go a head”. Definitely the response of the members is good but will not get things done that quickly. This woman member immediately had agreed for interview when researcher had requested her.

Commenting on the roles of woman sarpanch, she said, “our sarpanch will not talk any thing as she has got power position she should talk. Everything is done by the sarpanch’s husband. Referring to the problems of women as representative she said, “in fact women have more work than men; but as a responsible citizen I will go to meetings

to contribute and to gain knowledge. The sarpanch signs on papers when only permitted by her husband.

A 39 years old, a non-Dalit member of Pedda Amberpet and a science graduate (B.SC)¹ and who is studying post-graduation through distance education said, “his participation certain in all the meetings”. He focussed on the needs of his ward and village. A forty years old Maryala Raju of Pedda Amberpet village is educated upto intermediate and his responses seemed to be very party oriented. He said our sarpanch (P. Pentaiah a Dalit Sarpanch) had done many things even before the enquiry. (Referring to P.Pentaiah) In fact the other villages have taken him as a model. Siddenki Bhoopal Reddy studied upto graduation and obtained technical education, though he was Upa Sarpanch he focussed on the needs of his ward only.

Bethu Seetaiah aged 49 years studied upto 8th class said, “it is understood that the sarpanch and sarpanches’ followers are concerned about problems of their wards. A probe has found out that he had not participated actively. A gender based analysis of participation conveys that the active participation among male members has been more than female and difference is nearly 10%. Participants who attended meetings with out fail are also more among males than female. The difference is not significant. Those under category of occasional participation are slightly more among the men than among the women. Participation through substitute among male respondents is there and slightly 15% among females. A word about participation the citizen other than representatives is worth mentioning. Substitute participation is not only illegal but also immoral. Politics has been considered as a male domain even after the 73rd constitutional amendment. All kinds of manipulations take place to keep women out of politics. This is known widely and it is a trend of perpetuation of manipulation. It is unfortunate that knowledge, commitment, service orientation are considered to select a candidate to contest. It is not that women possessing knowledge, education and commitment are not available. Such women are neither inducted into representative roles. Some women representatives openly said, they would attend meetings occasionally but their husbands generally attend the meetings. The only qualification in selection of these persons to contest is nearness to dominant leaders of parties and groups have been resulting in the

¹ Bachelor of Science (B.SC)

selections of women who would fulfill the purpose of nominal roles. Despite this, some women have become assertive and doing justice to their roles as people representatives but it is under the influence of a negative environment. In both the villages the husband of woman sarpanch invariably goes to higher level meetings on behalf of the woman Sarpanch.

Decision-making is an important process in any organization and more especially in politico-administrative organizations. It is found that the Dalits have been the participants in the decision-making processes along with non-Dalits. The percentage of Dalits participating in allotment of funds to development programmes is more compared to the non-Dalits. Similar is the position regarding the participation in development works, location of projects and selection of beneficiaries.

The percentage of non-Dalits (70.7%) is more than that of Dalits (58.8%) as regards having an idea about democracy. Similar is the case with understanding democratic decentralization.

When asked about suggestions for effective functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions, the need for adequate funds and power opined by the Dalits and non-Dalit representatives. The need for promoting efficient and quality leadership is felt by 17.6% higher percentage of Dalits representatives compared to non-Dalit representatives. Unity and solidarity (11.8%) is more than that of non-Dalits (4.9%). The need for continuation of reservation is felt by a high percentage of representatives (100%) that the non-Dalits (97%). A feeling that the Dalit leaders are not able to exercised power seen among them. But every Dalit representative is very much satisfied for being elected to panchayat.

Problem from Upper Castes and Rich

A comparative study of the problems from Upper Castes and Rich reveals that there are problems from upper castes and rich and it is felt more by Dalits compared to non-Dalits.

Section- IV

Voters' views on various Issues

Sections-IV (A)

Caste-Wise and Dalit and Non-Dalit Voters' Views

In order to understand the opinions of the villagers, a caste-wise analysis is also made. This helps the study to identify the differences of opinion based on caste. The details are here under:

a. Need for Reservations

The study is concerned to know the opinion of the voters on the issue of reservation to various sections of the society pertaining to panchayat positions. Support for reservation is stronger in Pedda Thummidi village among Dalits. This is not to argue that Dalits' support to reservation is absent in Pedda Amberpet. The percentage of those who have held positive view of reservation slightly more in Peda Thummidi than in Pedda Amberpet. The percentage of neutrals is far less in Peda Thummidi than in Pedda Amberpet village.

b. Participation of SCs in Panchayat

Comparative study of the view of the voters regarding the participation of Dalits in panchayat in both the villagers reveals that active participation is identified by higher percentage of Dalits in Pedda Thummidi and partial participation identified by non-Dalits. The percentage of non-Dalits who conveyed that there is no participation of Dalits whose participation is higher compared.

c. Exercise of Powers by Scheduled Castes

A very high percentage of Dalits in Peda Amberpet and less than 50% of those in Pedda Thummidi responded positively regarding Dalits representatives participation. Equal percentage of non-Dalits in both the villagers said, "the Dalits are exercising power". The percentage of Dalits having the feeling that the Dalits are not exercising power is far more in Peda Thummidi compared to Pedda Amberpet. The domination of other castes on Dalits is more in Peda Thummidi and it is relatively less in Pedda Amberpet. In Pedda Thummidi the dominant community among the BCs both numerically and economically is the Gouda community. The conflict is mainly between

the Goudas and SCs especially Malas. In Pedda Amberpet the conflict is essentially between/among three communities Reddies (OCs) BCs and SCs. The Reddies are economically dominant, the BCs are economically and politically dominant now and the SCs are striving to come up as a group in the process of exercising political power.

d. Caste Politics

In an attempt to compare the views regarding the existence or otherwise of caste politics in both the villages, it is noted that a majority of the Dalits in Peda Thummidi and a majority of Dalits and non-Dalits of Pedda Amberpet responded positively on the presence of caste politics. Variation depending on situation is felt by a higher percentage of non-Dalits in Peda Thummidi. Absence of caste politics is the feeling of higher percentage of non-Dalits in Pedda Amberpet.

e. Influence of Upper Castes and Rich

A comparative study of the position existing in two villages reveal that the percentage of villagers who have felt the rich and upper castes do not influence the village politics is higher in Peda Thummidi. Regarding the influence of the rich the percentage of Dalits who positively responded is higher in Peda Thummidi. The influence of upper castes also is more in Peda Thummidi.

f. Contribution of Scheduled Castes' Elected Representatives to their own community

A comparative assessment of the position existing in two villages shows that majority of Dalits feel that the contribution of SCs to their community is high. The percentage of Dalits who have this opinion is higher in Peda Thummidi. As regard this aspect the opinion of non-Dalits the percentage in Peda Thummidi is far higher than in Pedda Amberpet. Low level contribution is felt by a majority of non-Dalits in Pedda Amberpet. The percentage is higher in Peda Thummidi. Absence of contribution is opinion of high majority of Dalits and non-Dalits in Peda Amberpet. Where as it is less than 6% among Dalits and 14% among non-Dalits.

g. Good and Bad Experience with the sitting sarpanch and members

A comparative understanding of the opinions of villages about their experience with sitting panchayat members and sarpanch reveals that some of the villagers have marked their experience as very good. This is not the same case with Peda Thummidi.

None of the villagers in Pedda Amberpet maintained neutrality. Bad experience is felt by a higher percentage of villagers among Dalits regarding those who said their experience has been worst.

Section-IV (B)

Perceptions of Educated and Uneducated Voters on Various Issues

The perceptions of educated and uneducated voters have been elicited to get a feel of difference if any. Educated in the present context those who could write and read. In other words illiterates are excluded from the category of educated.

a. Need for Reservations

An attempt to compare the views of educated and uneducated voters of both the villages has revealed that support to reservation is seen at a higher percentage of educated in Peda Thummidi and that of the uneducated in Pedda Amberpet. Opposition is slightly more in Peda Thummidi the percentage of neutral is more in Pedda Amberpet and also more among the educated.

b. Participation of Dalits in Panchayat and village development

In an attempt to see the difference between the opinions of voters regarding the participation of Scheduled Castes in panchayat and development in both the villages. It is found that in Peda Thummidi a high percentage of educated and in Pedda Amberpet a higher percentage of uneducated responded positively towards the active participation of the SC members. The voters who viewed the partial participation of SCs representatives is present is far more in educated in Pedda Amberpet. Absence of participation is identified by a higher percentage of voters in Peda Thummidi than Pedda Amberpet.

c. Exercising power by SC representatives

The difference regarding the opinions of educated and uneducated in connection with exercise of powers by SCs shows that the percentage of the voters position is far higher in Pedda Amberpet than in Peda Thummidi. Absence of exercise of power is identified by a higher percentage of villagers in the educated and uneducated voters in Peda Thummidi.

d. Caste Politics

A comparative study of position in two villages under the study regarding the influence of caste makes it clear that a majority of educated as well as uneducated voters

have had the feeling that the caste has its influence. But there is a high variation among the uneducated. The difference in percentage is slightly more than 19%. Among the voters who felt that it varies depending on circumstance the percentage of educated and uneducated as well is far more in Pedda Thummidu than that in Pedda Amberpet. Absence of influence is felt by a higher percentage of educated felt by educated in Pedda Amberpet than that in Pedda Thummidu. The percentage of voters with the opinion 'no idea' is more among the educated in Pedda Amberpet. The percentage is more than Pedda Amberpet compare with the voters among educated in Pedda Thummidu. The percentage of educated who said that one caste domination exists equal among the educated in both the villages. Among the uneducated voters the percentage of caste domination is more in Pedda Amberpet than Pedda Thummidu.

e. Control of Upper Castes and Rich

A comparative assessment on the influence of upper castes in both the villages shows that the percentage of voters who felt that the influence exists far more in Pedda Thummidu than that in Pedda Amberpet. The influence of rich is felt by a higher percentage of the voters both educated and uneducated. Regarding the influence of both the percentage of educated is more in Pedda Amberpet than that in Pedda Thummidu. Similar is the position in respect of the uneducated. Absence of influence is felt by a higher percentage of educated as well as uneducated in Pedda Amberpet.

f. Contribution of the Scheduled Castes Elected Representatives for development of village and community

A comparative assessment of views of the voters regarding contribution of Scheduled Castes' elected representatives. High level contribution is reported by a majority of educated and uneducated voters. Those who reported high level contribution constitute a majority in Pedda Thummidu among educated and uneducated. Those who expressed the opinion about the absence of contribution and the percentage of same opinion is more in Pedda Amberpet. The percentage of voters who felt that the contribution is absent is more in Pedda Amberpet. The difference in percentage between two villages is glaring.

g. Good and Bad Experience of Villagers with sitting Sarpanch and Members

It is observed that none of the educated and uneducated of the voters in Peda Thummidi said their experience has been very good. Few among the educated and uneducated voters in Pedda Amberpet expressed that their experience has been very good. The percentage of the educated who said that their experience is very good in Pedda Amberpet is far higher than that in Peda Thummidi. As noted none of the uneducated in Peda Thummidi said the experience is good. There are no neutrals in Pedda Amberpet. Whereas a significant percentage of the educated and uneducated in Peda Thummidi has been neutral. Bad experience is reported high percent in Pedda Amberpet. Similar is the position regarding the worst experience.

Section- IV (C)

Gender-wise Voters' Perceptions

a. Need for Reservations

A comparative study of a gender based study of in villages under study made certain points clear. The percentage of the respondents supporting reservations is slightly less in Pedda Amberpet village compare to that in Peda Thummidi village. But the percentage of females supporting reservations is more in this village. The percentage of opponents of reservations of the males is more than that of females in Peda Thummidi village. But in Pedda Amberpet village the percentage of the female respondents opposing reservations is slightly more in Pedda Amberpet village. The difference in percentage of neutral is glaring in the Peda Thummidi village because the percentage of female is far higher than that of males in Pedda Amberpet village. The trend of support to reservations is far higher in Peda Thummidi compare to that in Pedda Amberpet village but the spirit of opposition is stronger in Pedda Amberpet village.

b. Participation of Scheduled Castes' representatives

A comparative study of two villages selected revealed that in Peda Thummidi village a far higher percentage of males than the females expressed that the participation of Scheduled Castes has been there. The participation of Scheduled Castes' representatives participated in the proceedings of panchayat but whereas in Pedda Amberpet village it is the percentage of females that is higher than the. As regards partial

participation in Peda Thummidi village, the percentage of females is higher than the males but in Pedda Amberpet village the percentage of males expressing the views that the participation of Scheduled Castes is partial and far higher than the females. With regard to Peda Thummidi village the female respondents nil participation is higher than the male respondents. Same is the position in Pedda Amberpet village.

c. Exercise of Powers by SC Representatives

In the sample selected, 66.7% of female respondents and 61.2% male respondents in Peda Thummidi village; 35% of female respondents and 43% of male respondents in Pedda Amberpet village expressed that powers are exercised by Dalits. These respondents opined that Dalits of Pedda Amberpet exercised more powers than the Dalits of Peda Thummidi. In other words, the Dalits of Pedda Amberpet are more ignorant of the rights that they could exercise when compared to the Dalits of Peda Thummidi village. There was no response to 'no idea' about this aspect in Peda Thummidi where as 4% of male and female together opined that they don't have idea in Pedda Amberpet. The percentage of villagers who said "no idea" about exercising powers is nil in Pedda Amberpet.

d. Caste Politics

In an attempt to compare the views of villagers regarding the nature of caste politics that exist in both the villages, it is observed that the percentage of the respondents in Pedda Amberpet (60%) is more than that of Peda Thummidi (49%). The percentage of caste politics varies from village to village nevertheless, the percentage of the respondents, with regard to caste politics, is more in Peda Thummidi (27%) than that of Pedda Amberpet (9%). The percentage of opinion for 'does not exist' is more in Pedda Amberpet (13%) when it is compared with Peda Thummidi (9%).

e. Influence of Upper Caste and Rich

A comparative study of the position existing between two villages has revealed that there is hesitance to express the views is more in Peda Thummidi than Pedda Amberpet. The percentage of males as well as females that expressed the presence of influence of rich and higher caste is more in Peda Thummidi village.

f. Contribution of Scheduled Castes Elected Representatives

A comparative study of the opinions relating to contribution revealed that a majority of female as well male respondents in Peda Thummidi have considered the

contribution in the arena of village development in general and SC community in particular as high. In Pedda Amberpet village such considerations constitute only one third (1/3). The percentage of respondents who have considered the contribution is low is far more in Pedda Amberpet village and is far more distinct among the males. More number of respondents stated that there has been nil contribution in this sphere at Pedda Amberpet.

g. Good and Bad Experiences with Sitting Sarpanch and Members

A comparative assessment of the experience of the villagers with regard to performance of elected representatives has shown that none of them in Peda Thummidi said, “the relationship between people and elected representatives very good. Whereas in Pedda Amberpet village a few respondents pointed out that their experience with leaders and members of panchayat has been good are more in percentage in Pedda Amberpet village and the percentage of male respondents in this context is far higher than female respondents. Regarding bad experience, a higher percent of female respondents in Pedda Amberpet and as well as in Peda Thummidi are found. Worst experience is identified by a higher percentage of respondents in Pedda Amberpet. A higher percentage of female respondents in Pedda Amberpet seen as regards to worst experience.

It has to be pointed out here, that the opinions of respondents among the villagers are directed towards sitting Sarpanch and members. Their opinion mostly concerned about the role of the Sarpanches of panchayats and members in development activities.

Summery

A comparative study of the background, perceptions and participation of the respondents in the selected two villages i.e. Pedda Amberpet and Peda Thummidi helped to assess the position existing in the selected villages and to suggest measures for the effective performance of the elected representatives at the grass roots level institutions i.e. Gram Panchayats. A comparative analysis of the Dalit and non-Dalit representatives’ performance, perceptions and related aspects contributed some insights which are useful to identify the differences and to give suggestions for better performance of the Dalit representatives.

Chapter-VII

Conclusion: Findings and Suggestions

Back Drop

The history of local self-government in India is replete with several instances of ups and downs. It is in a way goes with the changes of regimes in India. It may not be out of place to understand the institution of local self-government from ancient period to till date. The village constituted a primary and an important unit of the state during Vedic as well as Hindu period. The corporate and co-operative life of the citizen during this period was exemplary. They led a peaceful and prosperous life. Panchayat comprising five citizen respected by the people were the members of the village panchayat. Their word was final in all matters which included law and order and welfare. Only the difficult and intricate problems were referred to King for the decision. It was the village which came to the rescue of the King by contributing men and material in times of crisis or fight against invaders. They contributed, generally, one tenth of their produce to the government as a tax to run the affairs of the government. Each village had young men and women well trained in the weaponry and fighting skills and they were voluntarily a part of Kings Army.

The country witnessed far reaching changes not only in the way of life but also in the administration on account of foreign invasions. The invaders, generally as is the case, brought their own culture, traditions and governance and implanted them on their subjects. They understood that the strength of India lied in the village. Therefore every invader tried their best to destroy the corporate and co-operative life of the village and its governance. The village became weak by loosing the self-sufficiency and started depending on the government. The foreign rulers were successful in achieving the goal of destroying the unique and powerful strength of the village. Afgans, Turks, Lodies, Moghuls all of them tried their best to ensure the villages not going strong. The Britishers were no different from earlier rulers. They brought their own culture, tradition, system of governance and implanted their own local government system. Thereby villagers always looked to the provincial and central government for help. Though Lord

Rippon and Lord Mayo tried to improve the situation but failed to realize the objectives, since the Governors of the provinces put the reforms into the cold storage. The Government of India Act, 1935 provided a sort of solace to the local government institutions in India by adding 'Local List' in the Act where in the finances, powers and functions were divided between the provinces and village panchayat/local government institutions. The follow up of the provisions made to help the local bodies in the Government of India Act 1935 also met, to a large extent, with failure on account of cool attitude of the provincial administration. But the tendency to depend heavily on the government by the rural citizen increased and look to provinces for everything. The expectations of Indians including the rural population were high since the dawn of the independence as they formed their own governments. The Government of India introduced Community Development Programmes and National Extension Services for the rural development. The Committee constituted by the Government comprised a few popular village leaders, assisted by Block Development Officer (B.D.O) and his technical staff. This system also could not deliver the goods. A committee headed by Balwantrai Mehta was constituted to suggest the measures including organizational structures, powers and functions of Panchayati Raj Institutions. The committee recommended three-tier structure of Panchayati Raj System with certain provisions of representation of weaker sections. The democratic decentralization, a cardinal principle of rural local democracy, though implemented could not bring the desired results since the upper castes and economically strong and muscle men usurped the benefits extended to the disadvantaged/ deserving sections of the society. During the Janata Party rule, not satisfied with the then rural scenario constituted a committee headed by Ashok Mehta, which suggested two tier structure of Panchayat Raj, party based elections to Panchayati Raj Institutions. This change also did not bring desired results on account of making elections and also certain provisions of reservations to disadvantaged sections making Panchayati Raj Institutions weak financially and not holding elections regularly. There have been numerous instances where in elected representatives of Panchayati Raj bodies agitated for providing powers and functions including finances for better rural development and administration. In fact state governments adopted a principle "hate and love relationship" policy towards Panchayati Raj Institutions. They love them since they

would help them to come to power at the time of general elections and hate them because they are future contenders for power. All this could happen, and several meaningful studies pointed out rightly, on account of not making all the aspects of Panchayati Raj obligatory with the constitutional amendment. It may not be out of place to mention, here, that the aspect of Panchayati Raj was mentioned in Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 40) which was not constitutionally obligatory.

The restlessness among the rural population and agitations by representatives for more powers, functions and finances, indifference attitude of state governments to share the powers, functions and finances with the Panchayati Raj Institutions, loopholes in implementation of various development programmes, indifferent, corrupt rural bureaucracy made the situation still worst. Under these circumstances the Government of India headed by the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi introduced an amendment in the Parliament for undoing all the said maladies and bring certain the aspects like holding regular elections, sharing the powers, functions and finances constitutionally obligatory. A major component of 73rd amendment Act giving mandatory scope for Dalits, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes and women, representation on the elected bodies of Panchayati Raj Institutions. The present study dealt with the details of empowerment of the Dalits and various facets of their participation in rural democratic bodies.

Impact of 73rd Constitution Amendment

The present study examined as to how the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act helped the Dalits to represent themselves on the Panchayati Raj Bodies. Various studies pointed out that a constructive and meaningful impact was witnessed in Panchayati Raj Institutions with the participation of Dalits. While this is a major and striding development in extending helping hand to the Dalits, it also encouraged the community under study to gain confidence and strength to participate in Panchayati Raj Institutions by putting efforts to improve the lot of Dalits.

In this study an attempt has been made to probe into the empowerment processes of Dalits through reservation policy in political institutions in two villages namely Peda Thummidi of Krishna District and Pedda Amberpet of Rangareddy District of Andhra Pradesh. After discussing the detailed socio-economic and political profiles, the role and performance of the Dalit and non-Dalit elected representatives in running the panchayats

has also been examined. This study identifies certain pertinent issues and attempts to make some important observations about the selected villages.

The preceding chapters of the thesis deal with concepts that include democratic decentralization, Panchayati Raj and empowerment of Dalits; a review of literature relating to democratic decentralization and empowerment of Dalits and the socio-economic and political background, participation and perceptions of the members of the panchayats under study as well as the perceptions of a cross section of the citizen in the two villages. An attempt is also made to compare the position of the Dalits existing in both the villages i.e Peda Thummidi and Pedda Amberpet. As mentioned earlier, the focus of the study is to examine to what extent the empowerment of Dalits in Panchayati Raj Institutions is achieved. The Study started with specific idea of democratic decentralization which implies political and administrative autonomy to local bodies i.e village panchayats in the present context. It is also assumed that the involvement of weaker sections i.e Dalits, tribals and women in decision-making is very much essential to bring the expected results, especially in the period following the enactment of 73rd Constitutional Amendment 1992. Successful decentralization which is a process of sharing power depends on institutional specific design as well as purposeful participation.

The socio-economic and political background of the elected representatives of the panchayats is examined to find the relationship between socio-economic and political background and their role performance. The study points out that the traditional dominance of rich and upper castes has been altered and the younger representatives are showing interest to shoulder the responsibility at the panchayat level. But the specters of the dominant trends are not completely disappeared. Thus dominance of upper caste and rich is still persisting in rural areas and it leads to disempowerment of the under privileged sections like Dalits.

A careful study of the available literature (Chapter-III) on the empowerment of Dalits in India's democratic decentralization process has made certain points to understand. The delivery of effective benefits to SCs when a Scheduled Caste's Sarpanch is present on Panchayat Raj body was found by researcher like Craig Johnson. As regards participation of SCs, studies of experts like Sachidananda, Venkata Ravi, Sharma and Kumar noted that the SC representatives have not been silent spectators; the

non-Dalits in some places are positively designed to Dalits' active participation; there has been a break from the traditional system and a leadership which is neither traditional nor modern has emerged. The emergence of young and middle aged development oriented Dalit leadership; inclusion of poor SC people in Panchayati Raj Institutions are some significant results. SC women are on the journey towards empowerment through Panchayati Raj. However, caste based clashes in the process of empowerment of SCs, the domination of rich, the control of the influential on the SCs; communication disabilities are some important problems which deserve consideration to search for solutions. The studies have noted that limited fiscal and political decentralization; impact of caste on defining social and political identity; use of violence; casteism, feudalism and poverty. But it is evident that the 73rd Constitution Amendment has contributed to create democratic values and the process of social and political transformation. The need for training for capacity building, promotion of participation is often emphasized by academic experts and activists. It also identified that in these two villages most of the representatives lack of awareness. It is necessary to organize training programmes to develop leadership skills among the rural youth.

A study of the background, participation and perceptions of the members of Peda Thummidu Gram Panchayat (Chapter-IV) revealed that gender-wise, the percentage of young and middle aged female elected representative roles is higher than that of stipulated percentage. The Backward Classes occupy the first place numerically followed by Scheduled Castes and others. Those with secondary, intermediate and graduation educational qualifications constitute a majority. It is unfortunate that approximately 30% of the Dalit representatives are illiterate. A majority of the representatives are employed in agriculture. As regards land owning position those possessing land between 1-2 acres constitute 15% and one-third representatives are landless and they are mostly Scheduled Castes. The need for increasing acquaintance with politics with exceptions is found imperative. Some Scheduled Castes members are very well acquainted with political events and this is an encouraging trend. Respondents with 9 years political background constitute 50% and those with 4 years experience formed 43%. The respondents were mostly party workers and community leaders. Self interest, encouragement by friends and family members and caste leaders have been main factors for entry into politics.

Among Scheduled Castes representatives, it is noted that the entry Scheduled Castes is due to encouragement by politically, economically influential persons of the village. A variety of factors have contributed to inspiration for contest the elections. Among the factors caste, party and encouragement from the rich and political influential are prominent. Elections to the Panchayati Raj Institutions have been expensive.

A majority of the respondents have almost clear idea of democracy. As regards to democratic decentralization less than 40% of them have clear understanding. Vague perceptions regarding empowerment noted in a majority of the respondents. As regards the participation, attendance at meetings are encouraging. Gram Sabhas are either absent or irregularly held. Agenda preparation has been essentially prerogative of the Sarpanch. Study noted that there is need for increased participation of the representatives including Dalits. Inadequate funds and powers; the need for promoting effective leadership; reduction of caste politics and need for promotion of unity and solidarity between representatives, people are felt by the respondents.

A strong feeling infavour of reservations to SCs to Panchayati Raj bodies is present among the respondents. Change in socio-economic environment is both felt and visible. A trend which reveals desire to do good to society is evident. The upliftment of the Dalits to realize the goal of social justice to be the priority for Scheduled Castes representatives. Despite the presence of hesitation and fear, the respondents come out with a view that the Dalit representatives face threats and domination from rich and upper castes. A high majority of respondents have expressed performance of satisfaction. Interaction with a cross sections of village is revealed certain points. The need for reservations is felt by a very high percentage of villagers. A majority of villagers responded full and partial participation of SC representatives. The exercise of political power is felt by a majority of the villagers. The presence of caste politics, influence of upper caste and domination of rich is also felt by the common people of village. The contribution of SC elected members to their wards and community is rated high by the villagers.

A study of the position existing in Pedda Amberpet village (Chapter-V) revealed that, gender- wise, the percentage of women members elected to Gram Panchayat is more than $\frac{1}{3}^{\text{rd}}$ i.e 35%. In this village also young and middle aged representatives together

constitutes a majority. Backward Classes representatives constitute first largest percentage followed by OCs and SCs. Sub-Caste considerations also have their play in choosing candidates. The percentage of illiterates though constituting a minority is significant and 1/3rd of SC representatives are illiterates. Those with primary, secondary, intermediate and graduation educational qualifications are almost share equal in percentage. For less than 50% of the representatives agriculture is the main occupation. Considerable percentage of the representatives are real estate dealers. The landless constitute the first largest group. The economic position of the representatives is higher in this village than that of the representatives in Peda Thummidi. As regards general awareness of the representatives, it is noted that a large percentage of them are aware of political events. A majority of the SC representatives are well acquainted with political events. Those with four years experience and nine years political experience constitute a high majority. First largest group represents party workers followed by ward members and others. Party, Caste, SHGs, family and service motive have been the inspiring factors for entry into political arena and contest. The role of political parties is found significant. Campaigns have been expensive and money is mentioned as a factor in the elections. A majority of respondents have been found favourably inclined towards reservations for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women. A majority of respondents admitted the influence of caste.

The impact of caste in politics is admitted by a majority of the respondents. Suppression of lower castes by upper caste is reported. A majority of the representatives have some idea of democracy. They expressed the view that the Dalits are asserting themselves and the process of empowerment is on. Provision of drinking water, drainage, sanitation, roads and lights are among the common subjects of interest. It is found that half of the respondents are involved in the community service and the areas of interests differed from one another. Exploitation, corruption, lack of adequate powers, control of the influential over development activities are identified as common problems. A majority of them focussed on inadequate powers of panchayats. The need for efficient and quality leadership is also emphasized. Co-operation between people's representatives and officials is also an issue to be addressed. Prioritization of works, training and purposeful implementation of the 73rd Constitution Amendment is essential,

they pointed out. Positive contribution of Dalit representatives to the community is reported. Problems from the upper castes, rich and official are felt by a small percentage of the villagers. Support to reservations is found among all the villagers. In general, the villagers expressed that their experience with the sitting non-Dalit Sarpanch is not happy.

A comparative study of the background, perceptions and participation of the respondents in the selected two villages i.e. Pedda Amberpet and Peda Thummidu (Chapter-VII) helped to assess the situation existing in the selected villages and to suggest measures for the effective performance of the representatives at the grass roots level institutions i.e. Gram Panchayats. A comparative analysis of the Dalit and non-Dalit representatives' performance, perceptions and related aspects contributed some insights which are useful to identify the differences and to give suggestions for better performance of the Dalit representatives.

It is important to understand how far the 73rd Constitution Amendment helped Dalits to perform leadership roles in a micro setting. The 73rd Constitution Amendment Act to a large extent, contributed for the upliftment of Dalits. Dalits and other disadvantaged sections of society obtained legal empowerments which were already available like reservations in educational institutions, jobs in public sector and reservation in State Legislatures and Lok Sabha empowered the Dalits to some extent. However, the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act extended reservations to Panchayat Raj bodies in India. Of course, there were several provisions even before this Act came into force to ensure the representation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes but they were not mandatory in nature. During 1983 Panchayat Raj elections in Andhra Pradesh, reservation was implemented to the position of Sarpanch but the elected Sarpanches are not allowed to work independently in most of the cases. For instance in Peda Thummidu panchayat a Dalit named Koduri Ramaiah was elected as Sarpanch but he had to work under the control of Backward Classes' leaders. He could not even take a small decision without the prior approval of the dominant caste leaders. The Peda Thummidu Panchayat was formed 125 years back. Though it has a long history, only two terms the Sarpanchship went to Dalits. Since Koduri Ramaiah a titular Sarpanch continued as a Sarpanch whereas Dasari Ramesh did not fall in line with the dominant caste, he had to face many troubles functioning as Sarpanch. For his assertion and steadfastness he had to

commit suicide in order to escape from the clutches of the powerful sections. In the case of Arja Chalamaiiah, though he is having long experience and economic support he was defeated several times intentionally. If he becomes Sarpanch of the village definitely he will change the pace of the development but the traditional leadership does not want any change in the village. The traditional leadership does not like to lose their strong hold in the panchayat. In the case of Pedda Amberpet, though the panchayat was established in 1950s, even one term was not given to either Scheduled Castes or Backward Castes. It shows that the traditional society does not lose their strong hold in the panchayat. It is remarkable thing that happened in this village after the 73rd Constitution Amendment. There are two people from Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes communities elected as Sarpanches. Thus Act certainly changed the traditional leadership and brought to surface a neo leadership. Institutional specific design is made possible through the amendment. However purposeful participation depends on several aspects which are discussed at relevant places in the thesis.

Participation of Dalits must be there to voice their felt needs. Elected representatives have to work with commitment and dedication and serve the purpose for which they are elected. They must sacrifice their self-interests for the collective goals. Holding Grama Sabha meetings at least twice a year is a mandatory one but they are not held in true sense they are proposed. Even if they are held also the people are not taking part with genuine interest of the village. The individuals who take part in Grama Sabha meetings always seek self interest or benefits which confine to their family. It is necessary to make the citizen of village recognize and realize the importance of the Grama Sabha and its proceedings for their advancement. Empowerment, which is a multidimensional process, in the present context is understood as an agent which enables individuals and groups to realize their identity and power; which makes one's voice heard and enables one to contribute towards development and focuses on the need for redistribution of power. Empowerment implies the ability to mobilize, capacity to influence and to negotiate.

In the present study, the term Dalit is used encompassing only the Scheduled Castes (SCs). The varying degrees of alienation, oppression and denial of dignity have been dealt with at appropriate context. Keeping their disadvantageous position in view

the state, on its part, has provided constitutional protections like provision of reservations in educational institutions, jobs in public sectors and reservations in Parliament and State Legislatures. It is felt that introduction of reservations in Panchayati Raj Institutions intended to bring social change/social transformation with equity and justice. The purpose of reservation and the result of it have also been discussed. It is found that reservations for Scheduled Castes is very much essential to ensure social justice. Access of Dalits to educational institutions, decline in the percentage of SCs living below poverty line; access to jobs in public sector; increase in SCs representation in Central Government Services; qualitatively increased their presence in political institutions and qualitative improvements too in their living. Wherever, whenever if Dalits get any opportunity either in jobs or politics they are doing their best but there are some societal barriers that are coming in the way and hampering them not to go ahead. There are some important gains through reservations. Reservation of seats and chair positions to SCs in panchayats is an important feature in the post amendment period. As pointed out earlier, the amendment facilitated structural and adjustment to include the excluded members in larger numbers than before.

There are several reasons which are contributing for not utilizing the opportunities extended by law. It must be rightly point out that there many reasons contributing for not utilizing the opportunities extended by the 73rd Constitution Amendment and Andhra Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act 1994. These Acts provide representation to hitherto marginalized and excluded groups. Reservation on a rotational basis for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their population. Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct elections in every panchayat shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a panchayat. But there are several constraints which have become hurdles to them to avail these provisions in an effective manner. Illiteracy, even to day is a barrier among the Dalits. Education helps to know the provisions that are available to them and to utilize them for their socio-economic and political development. Due to illiteracy most of the representatives as well as citizen among the SCs suffer from lack of awareness. If they remain unaware of the provisions and rules and regulations

how will they perform their role effectively? For this reason, Dalits must choose the educated and well aware persons to contest elections. Once elected they must be extended moral support to work effectively and contribute to the community and village.

Attitudinal Changes

Attitudinal changes have to take place among the various caste groups towards each other in the village, for the development of the village. The caste based and party based bias towards the disadvantaged sections must be eliminated. Dalits also must realize that they are also citizen like others they have entitlements on par with other caste groups in the society. No longer, the Dalits shall keep in their mind the inertia, inferiority complex and their socio-economic and political backwardness. They must be ready to overcome the age old practices with the help of the legal/constitutional protections provided by the Constitution of India. Non-Dalits also must realize the Dalits are their fellow citizen and they have also entitlements to perform roles in political institutions. Conducive environment must be created to enable them to perform the roles by Scheduled Castes elected representatives at various levels.

In Peda Thummidi village panchayat there is a rich scope for the development in each and every aspect. But unfortunately the division based on caste, party within the village ruined development scenario. There is scope for empowerment of Dalits also due to their population strength, educational attainments, and awareness levels. But non-unity among the Dalits has ruined their development. Dalits did not aid the process of development due to lack of unity, differences within the community on party based and sub-caste based polarization. As and when they get chance to elect a person from their community, they must maintain collectivity and strive to win the elections with the support of non-Dalits but if they keep on differing each other there will be no progress or development. There are several instances of dividing the Dalits and moulding those weaknesses for others' successes is seen at the time of election.

Holding the Sarpanch position itself is an empowerment of Dalits in Pedda Amberpet, specially in an environment where the economically, socially and politically powerful groups play predominant role in the power structure of village panchayat. Since there was no conducive environment to hold power positions the Dalits and even other castes like BCs also remained silent for decades i.e pre 73rd Constitution Amendment

period. Once the reservation provisions have been provided to them and with help of increased awareness levels as well as financial status, they started to come forward to be part of the power structure of the village panchayats. Even though the Sarpanch position is reserved for SCs, BCs or women due to ongoing tendency-in contemporary politics-money plays a predominant role in the election processes. On account of this many people do not show much interest in contesting elections, only a few people that too rich within the Dalits or BCs are coming forward to contest and perform representative roles. It may be noted that money plays a vital role in the election process.

However, overtime, the participation by the disadvantaged sections of the society in the Panchayati Raj bodies has dramatically improved more so after the implementation of the reservation provisions in the panchayats. Today there is qualitative and quantitative improvement in the panchayats due to the reservation provisions. Participation level has increased together with the representatives of each caste group as per their population size being involved. Not only Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes or Backward Classes even Open Categories are also showing more interest in the participation. Empowerment process is on in Pedda Amberpet village since 1996. Persons belonging to the disadvantaged sections feel that they are empowered today.

Decision-making process has been democratized to the maximum extent under the leadership of Dalits. Since the non-Dalits insist on the representatives from Dalit community to show each and every detail and question these representatives to get their works done, there is an increase in transparency and effective functioning of the panchayats. The elected Scheduled Castes representatives have participated as members of the village panchayat, proposed issues, participated in decision-making and have been able to influence the decisions to a possible extent in favour of their community.

Development experience of the people of the two villages shows that the performance of Dalit representatives are far better than the sitting and former non-Dalit Sarpanches of the villages. Villagers of the two panchayats feel that the sitting non-Dalit Sarpanches are not taking up expected development activities. Dalits or Non-Dalits representatives are not exception to take development initiatives of the panchayat, as representative of people they have to bring more and more development schemes and grants from higher level bodies. But it is found that in villages under study Dalit

representatives have taken more interests to provide drinking water, roads, sanitation and houses for needy people since they knew the problems in their locations. Arja Chalamaiah has put maximum efforts to bring as many as possible benefits to the village. He strived a lot for the development of the village. Where as non-Dalit Sarpanch has not taken that much keen interest for the development of the village. Even the drinking water is not provided during summer. Irrespective of caste or party criticize the sitting non-Dalit Sarpanch for not providing the basic needs to the villagers.

They opined that the development experience with the sitting elected representatives in the matters of development of villages is not so satisfactory and less effective during the tenure of office (2006-2011). However it is to be noted that a Dalit Sarpanch of Pedda Amberpet, Pandi Pentaiah during his term (2001-2006) as Sarpanch did remarkable development work in the village. The development work will sustain for another two decades even if the sitting Sarpanches do not carry out any development work. In Pedda Amberpet, the development scenario is not that much satisfactory. The reason put forward by the sitting non-Dalit Sarpanch is that due to drastic fall of real estate business the annual revenue through tax deposits from treasury department has fallen drastically. Where as during Pentaiah's term there were sufficient financial sources from all sides. Therefore, he could undertake much development works. Whatever the reasons might be or whatever factors may be there but development scenario was far better under the leadership of Dalits.

The focus of the present study is on empowerment of Dalits through 73rd Constitution Amendment in the era of decentralization of political, fiscal and administrative aspects in the context of two villages. This Act obviously increased the participation of Dalits in decision-making at the panchayats. Once the participation is taken in decision-making bodies they insisted for the effective implementation of several programmes granted to these panchayats thus concentrated to alleviate poverty and percolate the benefits to the community under the leadership of Dalits. The quantum jump of the Dalits in panchayats is a remarkable change that happened with the dawn of the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act. Young and educated leadership among the Dalits including women among social groups is emerging with the political empowerment of the Dalits at grass roots level. It is a great achievement from the side of the community as

well as state for taking such a bold step to introduce reservations in panchayats. In the pre-73rd Constitution Amendment period, in all the previous elections held in Pedda Amberpet there was no scope for Dalits to contest elections due to their given socio-economic and political background. However, Dalits had no scope to raise any voice of the community interests in the given social structure due to lack of awareness and conducive environment. Though, there are a few members nominated from Scheduled Castes they are for namesake and just nod their heads to the dictates of traditional powerful leaders of the villages. Now as a result of increased awareness and literacy with the help of the Act the traditional practices are being replaced. Thus Dalit leaders and voters are taking part in the political processes and act independently.

An examination of the socio-economic profiles of the Dalits shows that there has been no marked improvements in their social conditions even after six decades of implementation of reservation policy. In the case of Dalits' representation in panchayat is no different in pre 73rd Constitution Amendment. It becomes obvious from the above provision in the Constitution Amendment Act that the representation of the Dalits in panchayats for enabling them to involve in the democratic processes and in decision-making for development activities has been adequately ensured.

Among various strategies to ensure social justice through reservation of seats, both in the union, state legislatures and panchayats become meaningful when these elected representatives work effectively. Thus until the constitutional compulsion was not made in 1992, the process of co-option of women, Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes, Back ward Class' members involved accommodation of a particular group of caste or party who supported the Sarpanch during the elections. The people from these weaker sections co-opted by leaders were in a majority. Mostly proxy representatives were preferred in co-option. Such co-opted members were not from well-off families; they were mostly illiterate, handicapped to gain knowledge of politics and economic development. Now whole scenario is almost altered in panchayats.

The experience at the field indicates that the reservation has enabled the marginalized sections of the society in general and Dalits in particular. Reservation of seats in panchayats to Dalits has been provided with the hope that the elected representatives will not only empower themselves but the processes will empower their

own community. The Act had made way for enlarging the scope for effective participation of these sections in the panchayats. The participation in turn gave them an opportunity to raise voice for the felt needs of their community. Thus several opportunities have been opened up to the Dalit elected representatives through these institutions. These representatives from Dalit community despite their socio-economic and political backwardness have now a greater say in the panchayats since reservations are mandatory. It is also found that the elected members of Dalit community put efforts for their political advancement and are contributing for the improvement of the community or society at large. Pentaiah availed the given opportunity and gained social status as well as social mobility. At present he is in a position to provide quality education to his children. He sent two of his children to abroad for higher education. He built a community hall to organize any social functions in the village. He provided cement roads and drainage in Dalit localities on par with others. Dasari Ramesh did a great contribution to his village before he committed suicide. He could grant individual water connections to all localities including Dalit habitation which are far from the main village. It may not be out place to mention that a word about Arja Chalamaiah though he gained name and fame as well as status, he lost ancestral property around 12 acres of land for the sake of politics.

Further the field experience has revealed several interesting incidents. In both the villages, the Dalit representatives are attacked by non-Dalits by showing sundry reasons. Pentaiah and Chalamaiah had to face the no-confidence motion in their panchayats. When they approached the higher authorities of panchayats by proving their innocence in misappropriations they were given clean chits. Those allegations made were baseless and purely based on personal grudge against these assertive leaders. They had to face many challenges. Pentaiah, Chalamaiah, Rameshbabu have faced several challenges and met several serious problems with their counterparts in the panchayat but Pentaiah and Chalamaiah stood courageously and faced them boldly.

Thus, although, there has been significant progress at the front of Dalit empowerment and women empowerment, there are several hurdles in the way of elected representatives including the traditional practices like upper caste domination, male domination leading to inter-caste conflicts and the cases of proxy roles played by

dominant castes and male members in the case of Dalit and female representatives of the panchayats.

The major obstacle to empowerment of Dalits is their poverty in the villages since most of them remained as landless labourers and daily wage earners. People's participation is an essential pre-requisite of the empowerment process. The committed and forward looking leadership is essential factor to promote the level of consciousness among the weaker sections.

Decentralization is widely expected to empower the local people. Empowerment implies increased equity, at least in terms of decision-making authority. Democratic Decentralization process has changed things dramatically for the Dalits and other marginalized groups. It has enabled many elected representatives enter into the power structure of the panchayats. The reservation policy is expected to alter the distribution of public goods in favour of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women. Reservation of seats significantly increased the access of Dalits to political decision-making. Most of these elected representatives have been able to perform their role successfully to a great extent. Despite the economic backwardness and absence of conducive and feasible environment in the villages these elected representatives proved their talents and have been successful in most of their endeavors.

As a result of the reservation of seats provided to the Dalits, the socio-economic and political transformation process has started but conflict situation between Dalits and non-Dalits is emerging as is witnessed in Pedda Thummidi and Pedda Amberpet. Any change is resisted by the traditional forces. They can not endure the power being shared by the Dalits who were earlier kept away from active participation in politics. This tendency has to be contested in a democratic manner by the leaders of all communities. In the two panchayats under study the kind of situation explained earlier prevails. However the elected representatives are also facing the problems with courage and overcoming them to enjoy the given opportunities endowed by the Constitution of India.

Findings

The following are important findings of the study: Disowning their own community by the elected representatives is observed in the villages under study. As a consequence of reservation policy in panchayats many Dalits elected as representatives

and got a chance to take part in panchayats. They have to work for common interests but not in a parochial manner. In that process due to alignments, political affiliation or any other factors like self-interests and alignments some times the elected leaders disowned their own community.

The representatives are being used as tools by upper castes and rich people. There are a few dominant castes and traditional leaders who do not wish to lose their hold on the panchayats, and desire to continue their previous position and status and to hold control they adopted several means and ways. They are extending financial support to contestants at the time of elections and after winning elections they try to exercise control over these elected representatives otherwise they face consequences if their dictates are not paid heed. It happened in the case of Dasari Rameshababu, former Sarpanch of Peda Thummidi.

Lack of unity among the villagers is hampering the village development in general and lack of unity among the Dalits is harming the progress of their community and localities. When there are any incidents of clash of interest among the Dalits and non-Dalits leading to conflicts and sometimes one group quarrelling with other creates huge gap and ultimately loose their stakes for the development. In the case of Pedda Amberpet it is seen that they have differences among themselves and they are being used as tools and provoking people against same castes and ultimately they lost the case. One Dalit representative was backed and instigated by upper castes revolted against Dalit sarpanch and created several problems.

As mentioned earlier, the representatives once elected they have to work for the common interests of the village but the elected representatives from Dalit communities may not work towards their community's upliftment. These representatives also have some self interests like any other representatives in political institutions. Once they are elected as representatives they show interest to further their political future and aspiring the higher positions. More over with the help of their present position sometimes they get benefits from the panchayats like loans, houses and house sites etc.

The role of money in elections has increased many folds. No representative is an exception to this trend including the Dalit representatives. As observed in the study in the villages there are huge differences in election expenditure incurred by Dalit and non-

Dalits. Dalits need to spend at least Rs. 5 to 6 lakh and non-Dalit need to spend Rs. 15 to 50 lakh for Sarpanch position. As money plays vital role in the elections only a few people from the deprived communities show interest and others remain as just voters. It is a common phenomenon in any level of political bodies but the ultimate effect of this trend is hampering the development of the village.

Suggestions

- Awareness Generation is a must to representatives as well the general public of the villages. Different strategies must be evolved aimed at empowering the marginalized sections to work effectively in panchayats. There is a need to create awareness about income generation of panchayats, availing programmes and schemes specially meant for Dalits and participation in panchayats and its advantages.
- State and Non-Governmental Organizations should play a proactive role in promoting the capacity building of representatives through organizing training programmes towards this objective. Doles given by government appropriately be utilized by the poor. Make sure that the benefits reach the deserving citizen irrespective of their caste and party back ground.
- Elected representatives in general and especially members of the panchayat with Dalit background in particular feel that serving on panchayat as representatives is free service, and sometimes they need to spend money from their own pockets. It is necessary to provide honorarium to them to serve panchayats more effectively.
- The Dalits must come out from the shell of inferiority complex and stop play into others' hands. For this community organizations must strengthen themselves and stand solidly behind their elected representatives in peace and odd times.
- The empowerment of Dalits, as a socio and political phenomenon is a combination of efforts from below and as well as above. However State, People in general and Dalits in particular strive to empower Dalits in all spheres including Political sphere.

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Annexure-I

THE CONSTITUTION (SEVENTY-THIRD AMENDMENT) ACT, 1992

THE CONSTITUTION (SEVENTY-THIRD AMENDMENT) ACT, 1992

An Act further to amend the Constitution of India
Be it enacted by Parliament in the Forty-Third year of the Republic of India as follows:

1. Short Title and Commencement—(1) This Act may be called the Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1992.

(2) It shall come into force on such date as the Central Government may, by notification in the official Gazette, appoint.

2. Insertion of New Part IX—After Part VIII of the Constitution, the following Part shall be inserted, namely:

'PART IX THE PANCHAYATS'

Definition (243)—In this Part, Unless the Context, Otherwise Requires:

- (a) "District" means a district in a State;
- (b) "Grama Sabha" means a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised within the area of a Panchayat at the village level;
- (c) "intermediate level" means a level between the village and district levels specified by the Governor of a State by public notification to be the intermediate level for the purpose of this Part;
- (d) "Panchayat" means an institution (by whatever name called) of self-government constituted under Article 243B, for the rural areas;
- (e) "Panchayat area" means the territorial area of a Panchayat;
- (f) "Population" means the population as ascertained at the last preceding census of which the relevant figures have been published;
- (g) "Village" means a village specified by the Governor by public notification to be a village for the purposes of this Part and includes a group of villages so specified.

Grama Sabha (243A)—A Grama Sabha may exercise such powers and perform such functions at the village level as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide.

Constitution of Panchayats (243B)—(1) There shall be constituted in every State, Panchayats at the Village, intermediate and district levels in accordance with the provision of this Part.

(2) Notwithstanding anything in clause (1), Panchayats at the intermediate level may not be constituted in a State having a population not exceeding twenty lakhs.

Composition of Panchayats (243C)—(1) Subject to the provisions of this Part, the Legislature of a State may, by law, make provisions with respect to the composition of Panchayats:

Provided that the ratio between the population of the territorial area of a Panchayat at any level and the number of seats in such Panchayat to be filled by election shall, so far as practicable, be the same throughout the State.

(2) All the seats in a Panchayat shall be filled by persons chosen by direct election from territorial constituencies in the Panchayat area and, for this purpose, each Panchayat area shall be divided into territorial constituencies in such manner that the ratio between the population of each constituency and the number of seats allotted to it shall, so far as practicable, be the same throughout the Panchayat area.

(3) The Legislature of a State may, by law, provide for the representation:

- (a) Of the Chairpersons of the Panchayats at the village level, in the Panchayats at the intermediate level or, in the case of a State not having Panchayats at the intermediate level, in the Panchayats at the district level;
- (b) Of the Chairpersons of the Panchayats at the intermediate level, in the Panchayats at the district level;
- (c) Of the members of the House of the People and the members of the Legislative Assembly of the State representing constituencies which

comprise wholly or partly a Panchayat area at a level other than the village level, in such Panchayat;

(d) Of the members of the Council of States and the members of the Legislative Council of the State, where they are registered as electors within:

(i) A Panchayat area at the intermediate level, in Panchayat at the intermediate level;

(ii) A Panchayat area at the district level, in Panchayat at the district level.

(4) The Chairperson of a Panchayat and other members of a Panchayat whether or not chosen by direct election from territorial constituencies in the Panchayat area shall have the right to vote in the meetings of the Panchayats.

(5) The Chairperson of—(a) a Panchayat at the village level shall be elected in such manner as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide, and

(b) a Panchayat at the intermediate level or district level shall be elected by, and from amongst, the elected members thereof.

Reservation of Seats (243 D)—(1) Seats shall be reserved for:

(a) the Scheduled Castes; and

(b) the Scheduled Tribes, in every Panchayat and the number of seats so reserved shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in that Panchayat as the population of the Scheduled Castes in that Panchayat areas or of the Scheduled Tribes in that Panchayat area bears to the total population of that area and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.

(2) Not less one-third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (1) shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes or, as the case may be, the Scheduled Tribes.

(3) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.

(4) The offices of the Chairpersons in the Panchayats at the village or any other level shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled

Tribes and women in such manner as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide:

Provided that the number of offices of Chairpersons reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the Panchayats at each level in any State shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of such offices in the Panchayats at each level, as the population of the Scheduled Castes in the State or of the Scheduled Tribes in the State bears to the total population of the State:

Provided further that not less than one-third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women:

Provided also that the number of offices reserved under this clause shall be allotted by rotation to different Panchayats at each level.

(5) The reservation of seats under clauses (1) and (2) and the reservation of offices of Chairpersons (other than the reservation for women) under clause (4) shall cease to have effect on the expiration of the period specified in Article 334.

(6) Nothing in this Part shall prevent the Legislature of a State from making any provision for reservation of seats in any Panchayat or offices of Chairperson in the Panchayats at any level in favour of backward class of citizens.

Duration of Panchayats etc. (243 E)—(1) Every Panchayat, unless sooner dissolved under any law for the time being in force, shall continue for five years from the date appointed for its first meeting and no longer.

(2) No amendment of any law for the time being in force shall have the effect of causing dissolution of a Panchayat at any level, which is functioning immediately before such amendment, till the expiration of its duration specified in clause (1).

(3) An election to constitute a Panchayat shall be completed:

(a) before the expiry of its duration specified in clause (1);

(b) before the expiration of a period of six months from the date of its dissolution:

Provided that where the remainder of the period for which the dissolved Panchayat would have continued is less than six months, it shall not be necessary to hold any election under this clause for constituting the Panchayat for such period.

(4) A Panchayat constituted upon the dissolution of a Panchayat before the expiration of its duration

shall continue only for the remainder of the period for which the dissolved Panchayat would have continued under clause (1) had it not been so dissolved.

Disqualification for Membership (243 F)—(1) A person shall be disqualified for being chosen as, and for being, a member of a Panchayat:

- (a) if he is so disqualified by or under any law for the time being in force for the purposes of elections to the Legislature of the State concerned:

Provided that no person shall be disqualified on the ground that he is less than twenty five years of age, if he has attained the age of twenty-one years.

- (b) if he is so disqualified by or under any law made by the Legislature of the State.

(2) If any question arises as to whether a member of a Panchayat has become subject to any of the disqualifications mentioned in clause (1), the question shall be referred for the decision of such authority and in such manner as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide.

Powers, Authority and Responsibilities of Panchayats (243 G)—Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the Legislature of a State may, by law, endow the Panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government and such law may contain provisions for the devolution of powers and responsibilities upon Panchayats at the appropriate level, subject to such conditions as may be specified therein, with respect to:

- (a) the preparation of plans for economic development and social justice,
- (b) the implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them including those in relation to the matters listed in the Eleventh Schedule.

Power to Impose Taxes by, and Funds of, the Panchayats (243 H)—The Legislature of a State may, by law:

- (a) authorize a Panchayat to levy, collect and appropriate such taxes, duties, tolls and fees in accordance with such procedure and subject to such limits;
- (b) assign to a Panchayat such taxes, duties, tolls and fees levied and collected by the State Government for such purposes and subject to such conditions and limits;
- (c) provide for making such grants-in-aid to the

Panchayats from the Consolidated Fund of the State; and

- (d) provide for constitution of such Funds for crediting all moneys received respectively, by or on behalf of the Panchayats and also for the withdrawal of such moneys therefrom, as may be specified in the law.

Constitution of Finance Commission to Review Financial Position (243 I)—(1) The Governor of a State shall, as soon as may be within one year from the commencement of the Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1992, and thereafter at the expiration of every fifth year, constitute a Finance Commission to review the financial position of the Panchayats and to make recommendations to the Governor as to—

- (a) The principles which should govern—
 - (i) the distribution between the State and the Panchayats of the net proceeds of the taxes, duties, tolls and fees leviable by the State, which may be divided between them under this Part and the allocation between the Panchayats at all levels of their respective shares of such proceeds;
 - (ii) the determination of the taxes, duties, tolls and fees which may be assigned to, or appropriated by the Panchayats;
 - (iii) the grants-in-aid to the Panchayats from the Consolidated Fund of the State;
- (b) the measures needed to improve the financial position of the Panchayats;
- (c) any other matter referred to the Finance Commission by the Governor in the interests of sound finance of the Panchayats.

(2) The Legislature of a State may, by law, provide for the composition of the Commission, the qualifications which shall be requisite for appointment as members thereof and the manner in which they shall be selected.

(3) The Commission shall determine the procedure and shall have such powers in the performance of their functions as the Legislature of the State may, by law, confer on them.

(4) The Governor shall cause every recommendation made by the Commission under this article together with an explanatory memorandum as to the action taken thereon to be laid before the legislature of the State.

Audit of Accounts of Panchayats (243 J)—The Legislature of a State may, by law, make provisions

with respect to the maintenance of accounts by the Panchayats and the auditing of such accounts.

Elections to the Panchayats (243 K)—(1) The superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls for, and the conduct of, all elections to the Panchayats shall be vested in a State Election Commission consisting of a State Election Commissioner to be appointed by the Governor.

(2) Subject to the provisions of any law made by the Legislature of a State, the conditions of service and tenure of office of the State Election Commissioner shall be such as the Governor may by rule determine:

Provided that the State Election Commissioner shall not be removed from his office except in like manner and on the like grounds as a Judge of a High Court and the conditions of service of the State Election Commissioner shall not be varied to his disadvantage after his appointment.

(3) The Governor of a State shall, when so requested by the State Election Commission, make available to the State Election Commission such staff as may be necessary for the discharge of the functions conferred on the State Election Commission by clause (1).

(4) Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the Legislature of a State may, by law, make provisions with respect to all matters relating to or in connection with, elections to the Panchayats.

Application to Union Territories (243 L)—The provision of this Part shall apply to the Union Territories and shall, in their application to a Union Territory, have effect as if the references to the Governor of a State were references to the Administrator of the Union Territory, appointed under Article 239 and references to the Legislature or the Legislative Assembly of a State were references, in relation to a Union Territory having a Legislative Assembly, to that Legislative Assembly:

Provided that the President may, by public notification, direct that the provisions of this Part shall apply to any Union Territory or part thereof subject to such exceptions and modifications as he may specify in the notification.

Part not to Apply to Certain Areas (243 M)—(1) Nothing in this Part shall apply to the Scheduled Areas referred to in clause (1), and the Tribal areas referred to in clause (2), of Article 244.

(2) Nothing in this Part shall apply to—

- (a) the State of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram;

- (b) the hill areas in the State of Manipur for which District Councils exist under any law for the time being in force.

(3) Nothing in this Part—

- (a) relating to Panchayats at the district level shall apply to the hill areas of the District of Darjeeling in the State of West Bengal for which Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council exists under any law for the time being in force;

- (b) shall be construed to affect the functions and powers of the Darjeeling Hill Council constituted under such law.

(4) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution—

- (a) the legislature of a State referred to in sub-clause (a) of clause (2) may, by law, extend this Part to that State, except the areas, if any, referred to in clause (1) if the Legislative Assembly of that State passes a resolution to that effect by a majority of the total membership of that House and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of that House present and voting;

- (b) Parliament may, by law, extend the provisions of this Part to the Scheduled Areas and the Tribal areas referred to in clause (1) subject to such exceptions and modifications as may be specified in such law and no such law shall be deemed to be an amendment of this Constitution for the purposes of Article 368.

Continuance of Existing Laws and Panchayats (243 N)—Notwithstanding anything in this Part, any provision of any law relating to Panchayats in force in a State immediately before the commencement of the Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1992, which is inconsistent with the provisions of this Part, shall continue to be in force until amended or repealed by a competent legislature or other competent authority or until the expiration of one year from such commencement, whichever is earlier:

Provided that all the Panchayats existing immediately before such commencement shall continue till the expiration of their duration, unless sooner dissolved by a resolution passed to that effect by the Legislative Assembly of that State or, in the case of a State having a Legislative Council, by each House of the Legislature of that State.

Bar to Interference by Courts in Electoral Matters (243 O)—Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution—

- (a) the validity of any law relating to the delimitation of constituencies or the allotment of seats to such constituencies made or purporting to be made under Article 243K, shall not be called in question in any court;
- (b) no election to any Panchayat shall be called in question except by an election petition presented to such authority and in such manner as is provided for by or under any law made by the Legislature of a State.

3. Amendment of Article (280)—In clause (3) of Article 280 of the Constitution, after sub-clause (b), the following sub-clause shall be inserted, namely:

“(bb) the measures needed to augment the Consolidated Fund of a State to supplement the resources of the Panchayats in the State on the basis of the recommendations made by the Finance Commission of the State”.

4. Addition of Eleventh Schedule—After the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution, the following Schedule shall be added, namely:

ELEVENTH SCHEDULE (Article 243 G)

- (a) Agriculture, including agricultural extension.
- (b) Land improvement, implementation of land reforms, land consolidation and soil conservation.
- (c) Minor irrigation, water management and watershed development.
- (d) Animal husbandry, dairying and poultry.
- (e) Fisheries.
- (f) Social forestry and farm forestry.
- (g) Minor forest produce.
- (h) Small scale industries, including food processing industries.
- (i) Khadi, village and cottage industries.
- (j) Rural housing.
- (k) Drinking water.
- (l) Fuel and fodder.
- (m) Roads, culverts, bridges, ferries, water ways and others means of communication.
- (n) Rural electrification, including distribution of electricity.
- (o) Non-conventional energy sources.
- (p) Poverty alleviation programme.
- (q) Education including primary and secondary schools.

- (r) Technical training and vocational education.
- (s) Adult and non-formal education.
- (t) Libraries.
- (u) Cultural activities.
- (v) Markets and fairs.
- (w) Health and sanitation, including hospitals, primary health centres and dispensaries.
- (x) Family welfare.
- (y) Women and child development.
- (z) Social welfare, including welfare of the handicapped and mentally retarded.
- (aa) Welfare of the weaker sections, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- (bb) Public distribution system.
- (cc) Maintenance of community assets.”

- (ii) the extent and type of available resources whether financial or otherwise;
- (b) consult such institutions and organizations as the Governor may, by order, specify.
- (4) The Chairperson of every District Planning Committee shall forward the development plan, as recommended by such Committee, to the Government of the State.

1.3 DISTRICT PLANNING COMMITTEE— SECTION 241 OF TAMIL NADU PANCHAYATS ACT, 1994

(1) The Government shall constitute in every district a District Planning Committee (hereinafter in this section referred to as the Committee) to consolidate the plans prepared by the district Panchayats, Panchayat union councils, village Panchayats, ²[Town Panchayat] Municipal councils and municipal corporations in the district and to prepare a draft development plan for the district as a whole.

³“(2) (a) The Committee shall consists of,—

- (i) The Chairman of the district Panchayat;
- (ii) the Mayor of the City Municipal Corporation in the district;
- (iii) the Collector of the district;
- (iv) such number of persons, not less than four-fifth of the total number of members of the Committee as may be specified by the Government, elected in the prescribed manner from amongst the members of the district Panchayats, town Panchayats and councillors of the municipal corporations and the municipal councils in the district, in proportion to the ratio between the population of the rural areas and of the urban areas in the district.
- (b) The following persons shall be permanent special invitees of the Committee—
 - (i) Members of the House of the people who represent the whole or part of the district;
 - (ii) Members of the Council of States who are registered as electors in the district;
 - (iii) Members of the Tamil Nadu State Legislative Assembly whose constituencies lie within the district;
 - (iv) All the Chairmen of the Panchayat union councils in the district;
 - (v) All the Chairmen of the municipal councils in the district;

(vi) All the Chairmen of the town panchayats in the district.

(c) The permanent special invitees referred to in clause (b) shall be entitled to take part in the proceedings in the meetings of the Committee.

(3) The Secretary of the District Panchayat shall be the Secretary to the Committee.

⁴“(4) The Chairman of the District Panchayat shall be the Chairperson of the Committee and the Collector of the District shall be the Vice-Chairman of the Committee.]

(5) The Committee shall meet at such place, at such interval and at such time and observe such rules of procedure in regard to transaction of business at its meetings (including the quorum at its meetings) as may be prescribed.

(6) The Committee shall consolidate the plans prepared by the district panchayat, panchayat union councils, village panchayats, town panchayats, municipal councils and the municipal corporation in the district and prepare a draft development plan for the district as a whole.

(7) Every Committee shall, in preparing the draft development plan:

(a) have regard to:

- (i) the matters of common interest between the district panchayats, panchayat union councils, village panchayats, town panchayats, municipal corporations and municipal councils in the district including spatial planning, sharing of water and other physical and natural resources, the integrated development of infrastructures and environmental conservation;
- (ii) The extent and type of available resources whether financial or otherwise.
- (b) consult such institutions and organisations as the Governor may, by order, specify.

(8) The Chairperson of every committee shall forward the development plan, as recommended by such Committee to the Government.

(9) The committee shall allocate funds to various schemes to the panchayats unions and shall monitor the implementations of the schemes.

Explanation. For the purposes of this section “town panchayat” and “municipal council”, shall mean the town panchayat and the municipal council constituted under the Tamil Nadu District Municipalities Act, 1920, and “municipal corporation” means the corporations constituted under the Madurai City Municipal

Annexure-II

TABLE 1: NO. OF PANCHAYATS AND ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES IN THE THREE TIERS OF PANCHAYATS IN STATES/UTs AS on 31.03.2008

Table 1A – Village Panchayats

Sl. No.	States/UT	No. of Panchayats	Village Panchayats: No of Elected Representatives								
			General (Non-SC/ST) Categories	SC		ST		OBC	Total	Women	
	States :			No.	%	No.	%	No.		No.	%
1	Andhra Pradesh	21825	160386	31243	15.00	16662	8.0		208291	68736	33.0
2	Arunachal Pradesh	1639	0	0	0.00	6485	100.0		6485	2561	39.5
3	Assam	2223	20862	1254	5.48	782	3.4		22898	8977	39.2
4	Bihar	8471	99672	16941	14.43	784	0.7		117397	64152	54.6
5	Chhattisgarh	9820	74498	17200	10.94	65552	41.7		157250	53045	33.7
6	Goa	189	1328	0	0.00	181	12.0		1509	514	34.1
7	Gujarat	13819	80349	7615	6.97	21245	19.5		109209	36400	33.3
8	Haryana	6187	52268	14320	21.51	0	0.0		66588	24406	36.7
9	Himachal Pradesh	3243	15383	6095	26.90	1176	5.2		22654	8864	39.1
10	Jharkhand	3746	0	0		0			0	0	
11	Karnataka	5628	64525	16997	18.60	9880	10.8		91402	39318	43.0
12	Kerala	999	14181	1750	10.84	208	1.3		16139	5705	35.3
13	Madhya Pradesh	23051	226873	57752	14.85	104204	26.8		388829	133508	34.3
14	Maharashtra	27893	172370	24624	11.00	26863	12.0		223857	74620	33.3
15	Manipur	165	1599	37	2.21	39	2.3		1675	730	43.6
16	Orissa	6234	48396	14805	17.34	22166	26.0		85367	31121	36.5
17	Punjab	12443	60692	27440	31.14	0	0.0		88132	30875	35.0
18	Rajasthan	9188	21403	24140	21.23	20248	17.8	47846	113713	40044	35.2
19	Sikkim	163	440	52	5.84	399	44.8		891	356	40.0
20	Tamil Nadu	12618	86325	22156	20.27	827	0.8		109308	36824	33.7
21	Tripura	513	3653	1408	26.31	291	5.4		5352	1852	34.6
22	Uttar Pradesh	52000	527779	174842	24.86	673	0.1		703294	273229	38.8
23	Uttarakhand	7227	41717	10413	19.29	1858	3.4		53988	20319	37.6
24	West Bengal	3354	31425	14492	29.25	3628	7.3		49545	18150	36.6
	Union Territories										
25	A & N Islands	67	759	0	0.00	0	0.0	0	759	261	34.4
26	Chandigarh	17	135	27	16.67	0	0.0		162	53	32.7
27	D & N Haveli	11	6	3	2.63	105	92.1		114	45	39.5
28	Daman & Diu	14	64	1	1.30	12	15.6		77	30	39.0
29	Lakshadweep	10	3	-		82	96.5		85	32	37.6
30	Puducherry	98	695	218	23.88	0	0.0		913	330	36.1
	TOTAL	232855	1807786	485825	18.36	304350	11.5028		2645883	975057	36.85

Source: Compiled from data provided by the States and Union Territories.

Note: General (Non-SC/ST) categories, Males & Females;

SC: Scheduled Caste Males & Females

ST: Scheduled Tribe Males & Females;

Women: Combined SC, ST and General categories.

Annexure II- A

TABLE 1: NO. OF PANCHAYATS AND ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES IN THE THREE TIERS OF PANCHAYATS IN STATES/UTs As on 31.03.2008

Table 1B – Intermediate Panchayats

Sl. No.	States/UT	No. of Panchayats	Intermediate Panchayats: No of Elected Representatives								
			General (Non-SC/ST) Categories	SC		ST		OBC	Total	Women	
	States :			No.	%	No.	%	No.		No.	%
1	Andhra Pradesh	1098	10938	2586	17.69	1093	7.48		14617	4919	33.65
2	Arunachal Pradesh	136	0	0	0	1639	100		1639	577	35.20
3	Assam	188	1982	80	3.724	86	4		2148	791	36.82
4	Bihar	531	9139	2307	20	91	0.79		11537	5671	49.15
5	Chhattisgarh	146	1404	316	10.61	1257	42.2		2977	1005	33.76
6	Goa	0	0	0		0	0		0		
7	Gujarat	224	3049	297	7.138	815	19.6		4161	1394	33.50
8	Haryana	119	2216	617	21.78	0	0		2833	962	33.96
9	Himachal Pradesh	75	1155	416	24.82	105	6.26		1676	596	35.56
10	Jharkhand	211	0	0		0			0	0	
11	Karnataka	176	2658	678	18.41	347	9.42		3683	1519	41.24
12	Kerala	152	1775	212	10.58	17	0.85		2004	694	34.63
13	Madhya Pradesh	313	3833	1105	16.13	1913	27.9		6851	2378	34.71
14	Maharashtra	351	3022	430	10.96	470	12		3922	1307	33.32
15	Manipur	0	0	0		0			0	0	
16	Orissa	314	3449	1056	16.94	1728	27.7		6233	2208	35.42
17	Punjab	141	1782	840	32.04	0			2622	866	33.03
18	Rajasthan	237	1253	1098	19.99	1025	18.7	2118	5494	2108	38.37
19	Sikkim	0	0	0		0			0	0	
20	Tamil Nadu	385	5119	1358	20.82	47	0.72		6524	2313	35.45
21	Tripura	23	206	78	26.09	15	5.02		299	106	35.45
22	Uttar Pradesh	820	49164	16453	25.05	52	0.08		65669	24674	37.57
23	Uttarakhand	95	2451	596	18.91	105	3.33		3152	1079	34.23
24	West Bengal	341	5540	2422	28.28	601	7.02		8563	2953	34.49
	Union Territories										
25	A & N Islands	7	67	0	0	0	0		67	25	37.31
26	Chandigarh	1	11	4	26.67	0	0		15	6	40.00
27	D & N Haveli	0	0	0		0			0		
28	Daman & Diu	0	0	0		0			0		
29	Lakshadweep	0	0	0		0			0		
30	Puducherry	10	89	19	17.59	0	0		108	40	37.04
	TOTAL	6094	110213	32968	21.03	11406	7.27	2023	156794	58191	37.11

Source: Compiled from data provided by the States and Union Territories.

Note: General (Non-SC/ST) categories, Males & Females;

SC: Scheduled Caste Males & Females

ST: Scheduled Tribe Males & Females;

Women: Combined SC, ST and General categories.

Annexure-III

TABLE 1: NO. OF PANCHAYATS AND ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES IN THE THREE TIERS OF PANCHAYATS IN STATES/UTs AS PER THE LATEST AVAILABLE INFORMATION.

Table 1D – Panchayat at all levels.

As on 31.3.2008

Sl. No.	States/UT	No. of Panchayats	Panchayats at all levels: No of Elected Representatives								
			General (Non-SC/ST) Categories	SC		ST		OBC	Total	Women	
	States :			No.	%	No.	%	No.		No.	%
1	Andhra Pradesh	22945	172136	34025	15.19	17842	7.97		224003	74019	33.04
2	Arunachal Pradesh	1789	0	0	0	8260	100.00		8260	3183	38.54
3	Assam	2431	23206	1344	5.284	886	3.48		25436	9903	38.93
4	Bihar	9040	109767	19440	14.94	884	0.68		130091	70400	54.12
5	Chhattisgarh	9982	76062	17553	10.93	66933	41.69		160548	54159	33.73
6	Goa	191	1378	0	0	181	11.61		1559	534	34.25
7	Gujarat	14068	83982	7970	6.98	22235	19.47		114187	38068	33.34
8	Haryana	6325	54786	15019	21.52	0	0.00		69805	25503	36.53
9	Himachal Pradesh	3330	16706	6575	26.75	1300	5.29		24581	9552	38.86
10	Jharkhand	3979	0	0		0			0	0	
11	Karnataka	5833	67920	17859	18.59	10311	10.73		96090	41210	42.89
12	Kerala	1165	16256	1997	10.81	229	1.24		18482	6518	35.27
13	Madhya Pradesh	23412	231246	59106	14.91	106350	26.82		396516	136196	34.35
14	Maharashtra	28277	176874	25269	11	27597	12.01		229740	76581	33.33
15	Manipur	169	1656	39	2.247	41	2.36		1736	758	43.66
16	Orissa	6578	52333	16007	17.31	24114	26.08		92454	33630	36.37
17	Punjab	12604	62614	28349	31.17	0	0.00		90963	31809	34.97
18	Rajasthan	9457	22296	25432	21.15	21466	17.85	50357	120247	42543	35.38
19	Sikkim	258	483	57	5.781	446	45.23		986	394	39.96
20	Tamil Nadu	13031	91958	23653	20.31	877	0.75		116488	39364	33.79
21	Tripura	540	3914	1509	26.32	310	5.41		5733	1986	34.64
22	Uttar Pradesh	52890	578984	191950	24.87	727	0.09		771661	299025	38.75
23	Uttarakhand	7335	44450	11077	19.26	1973	3.43		57500	21517	37.42
24	West Bengal	3713	37434	17112	29.09	4282	7.28		58828	21351	36.29
	Union Territories										
25	A & N Islands	75	856	0	0	0	0.00		856	296	34.58
26	Chandigarh	19	153	34	18.18	0	0.00		187	62	33.16
27	D & N Haveli	12	7	3	2.4	115	92.00		125	49	39.2
28	Daman & Diu	15	81	2	2.062	14	14.43		97	37	38.14
29	Lakshadweep	11	4	0	0	106	96.36		110	41	37.27
30	Puducherry	108	784	237	23.21	0	0.00		1021	370	36.24
	TOTAL	239582	1928326	521618	18.51	317479	11.26	50357	2818290	1039058	36.87

Source: Compiled from data provided by the States and Union Territories.

Note: General (Non-SC/ST) categories, Males & Females;

SC: Scheduled Caste Males & Females

ST: Scheduled Tribe Males & Females;

Women: Combined SC, ST and General categories.

Annexure II- B

TABLE 1: NO. OF PANCHAYATS AND ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES IN THE THREE TIERS OF PANCHAYATS IN STATES/UTs AS on 31.03.2008
Table 1C – District Panchayats

Sl. No.	States/UT	No. of Panchayats	District Panchayats: No of Elected Representatives								
			General (Non-SC/ST) Categories	SC		ST		OBC	Total	Women	
				No.	%	No.	%			No.	No.
	States :			No.	%	No.	%	No.		No.	%
1	Andhra Pradesh	22	812	196	17.9	87	7.95		1095	364	33.24
2	Arunachal Pradesh	14	0	0	0	136	100.00		136	45	33.09
3	Assam	20	362	10	2.56	18	4.62		390	135	34.62
4	Bihar	38	956	192	16.6	9	0.78		1157	577	49.87
5	Chhattisgarh	16	160	37	11.5	124	38.63		321	109	33.96
6	Goa	2	50	0	0	0	0.00		50	20	40
7	Gujarat	25	584	58	7.1	175	21.42		817	274	33.54
8	Haryana	19	302	82	21.4	0	0.00		384	135	35.16
9	Himachal Pradesh	12	168	64	25.5	19	7.57		251	92	36.65
10	Jharkhand	22	0	0	0	0			0	0	
11	Karnataka	29	737	184	18.3	84	8.36		1005	373	37.11
12	Kerala	14	300	35	10.3	4	1.18		339	119	35.1
13	Madhya Pradesh	48	450	153	18.3	233	27.87		836	310	37.08
14	Maharashtra	33	1482	215	11	264	13.46		1961	654	33.35
15	Manipur	4	57	2	3.28	2	3.28		61	28	45.9
16	Orissa	30	488	146	17.1	220	25.76		854	301	35.25
17	Punjab	20	140	69	33	-			209	68	32.54
18	Rajasthan	32	260	194	18.7	193	18.56	393	1040	391	37.6
19	Sikkim	95	43	5	5.26	47	49.47		95	38	40
20	Tamil Nadu	28	514	139	21.2	3			656	227	34.6
21	Tripura	4	55	23	28	4	4.88		82	28	34.15
22	Uttar Pradesh	70	2041	655	24.3	2	0.07		2698	1122	41.59
23	Uttarakhand	13	282	68	18.9	10			360	119	33.06
24	West Bengal	18	469	198	27.5	53	7.36		720	248	34.44
	Union Territories										
25	A & N Islands	1	30	0	0	0	0.00		30	10	33.33
26	Chandigarh	1	7	3	30	0	0.00		10	3	30
27	D & N Haveli	1	1	0	0	10	90.91		11	4	36.36
28	Daman & Diu	1	17	1	5	2	10.00		20	7	35
29	Lakshadweep	1	1	-		24	96.00		25	9	36
30	Puducherry										
	TOTAL	633	10768	2729	17.5	1723	11.04	393	15613	5810	37.21

Source: Compiled from data provided by the States and Union Territories.

Note: General (Non-SC/ST) categories, Males & Females;

SC: Scheduled Caste Males & Females

ST: Scheduled Tribe Males & Females;

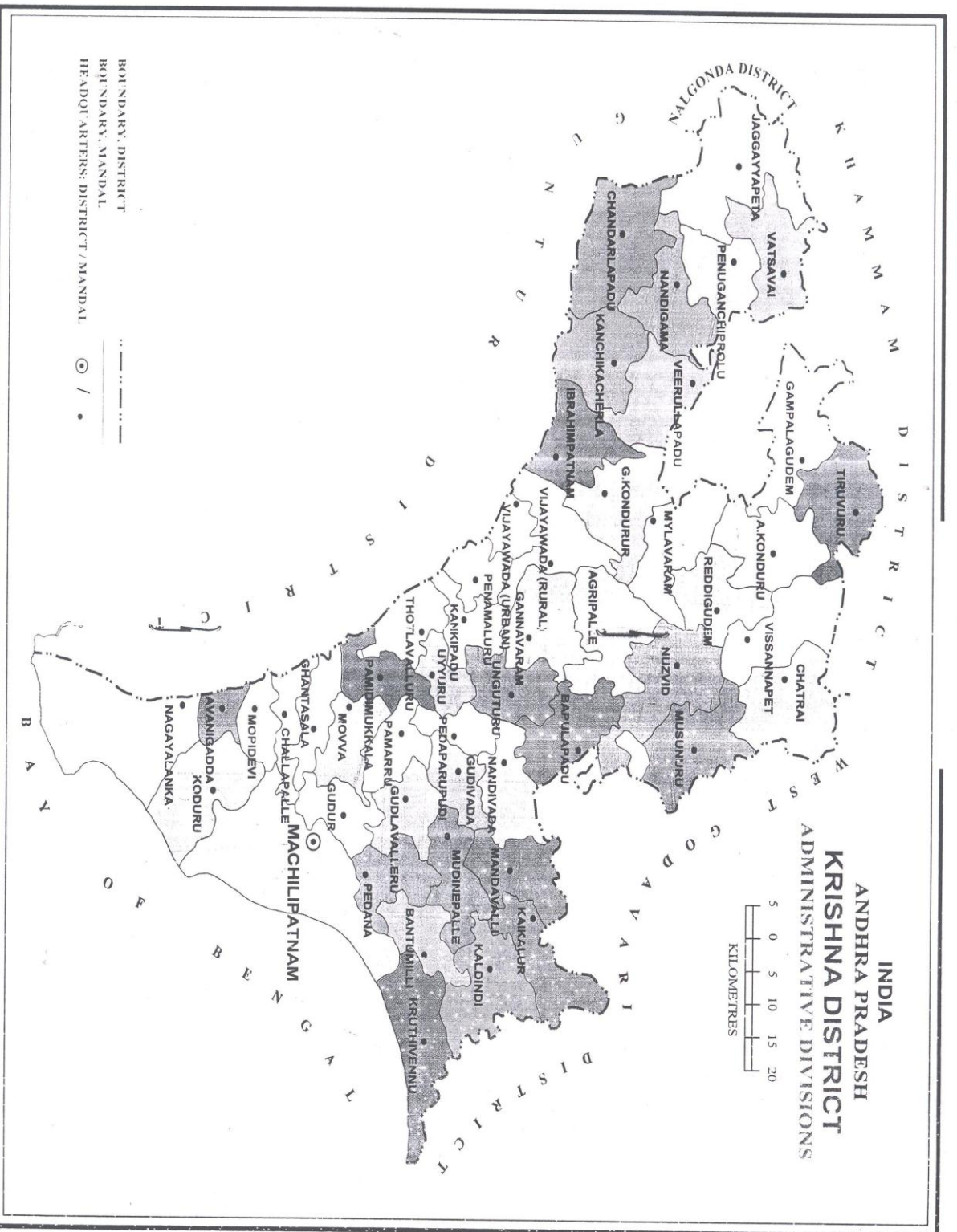
Women: Combined SC, ST and General categories.

Annexure-IV

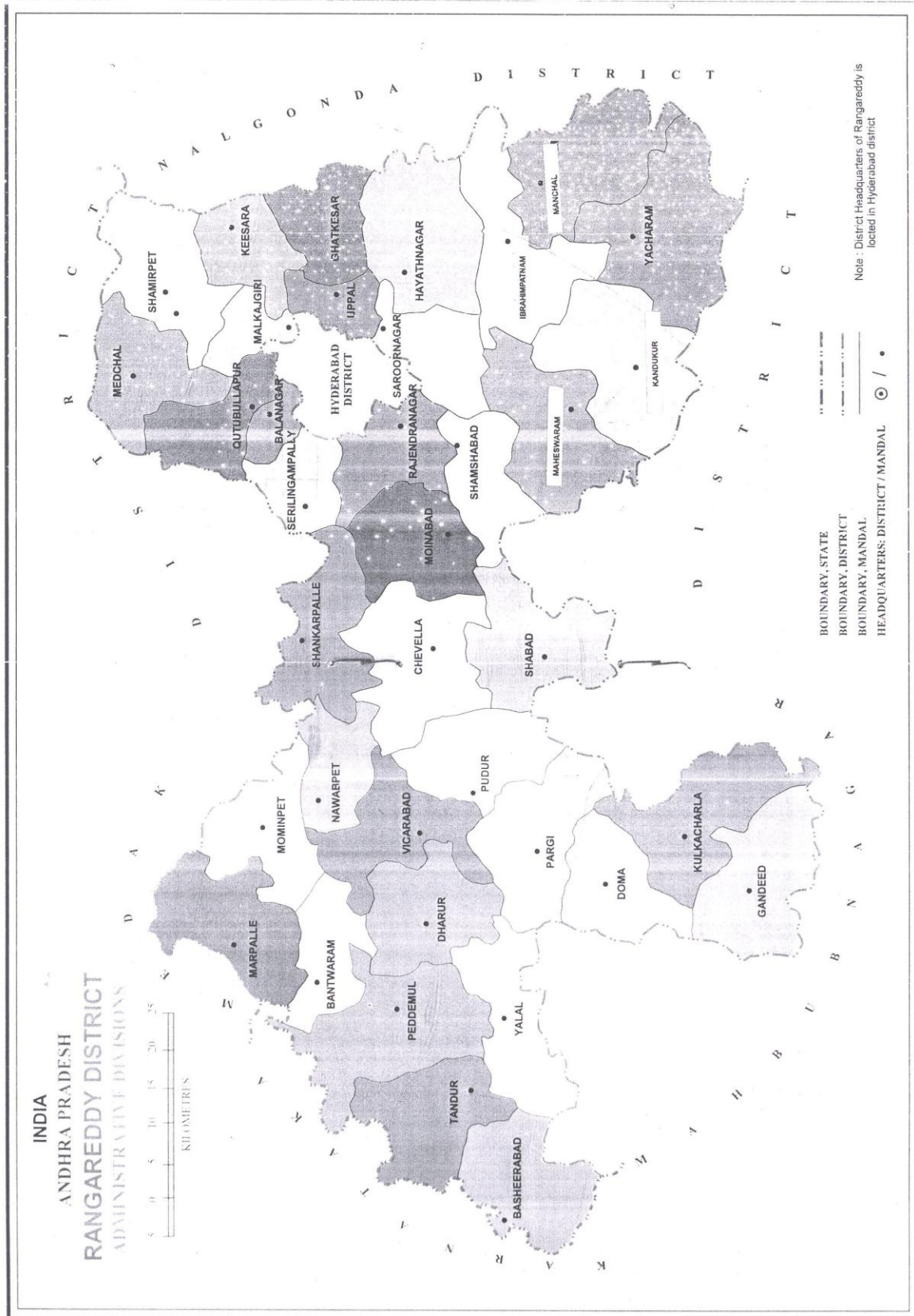
DISTRICT-WISE NUMBER OF REVENUE VILLAGES, GRAM PANCHAYATS AND GRAM PANCHAYATS RESERVED FOR SCHEDULED CASTES , SCHEDULED TRIBES AND WOMEN IN ANDHRA PRADESH FOR THE YEAR 2002-03

Sl. No.	Name of the District	No of Revenue Villages	No. Gram Panchayats	No of Gram Panchayats Reserved for			Membership Reserved for		
				S.Cs	S.Ts	Women	S.Cs	S.Ts	Women
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Srikakulam	1860	1107	106	71	57	967	703	408
2	Vizianagaram	1551	931	58	90	39	91	757	342
3	Vishakapatnam	3009	976	66	261	328	599	2331	3018
4	East Godavari	1404	1011	191	126	339	2211	951	3657
5	West Godavari	901	887	166	49	298	1939	344	3224
6	Krishna	1005	973	201	18	317	2161	195	9746
7	Guntur	729	1024	111	49	60	1203	394	667
8	Prakasam	1093	1041	205	27	330	1812	195	3500
9	Nellore	1197	967	240	90	321	2362	799	2997
10	Chittoor	1540	1399	304	48	459	2909	428	4365
11	Kadapa	965	831	90	9	277	905	114	2679
12	Anantapur	964	1005	155	35	334	1530	377	3285
13	Kurnool	918	899	168	16	291	1765	150	3013
14	Mahabubnagar	1525	1348	81	49	148	2438	1130	4309
15	Ranga Reddy	1055	705	155	47	230	1490	459	2198
16	Medak	1265	1061	206	48	354	1952	455	3279
17	Nizamabad	922	719	115	47	230	1225	497	2242
18	Adilabad	1748	866	93	211	144	1048	1532	1261
19	Karimnagar	1103	1195	162	24	88	1510	241	452
20	Warangal	1098	1014	179	197	338	1774	1736	3241
21	Khammam	1242	773	86	416	251	1207	2828	2476
22	Nalgonda	1155	1178	220	113	109	2161	1245	1178
State		28249	21910	3358	2041	5342	35259	17861	61537

Annexure-V



Annexure-VI



Annexure-VII

STATEMENT SHOWING THE MANDAL WISE MPTC MEMBERS, SARPANCHES AND WARD MEMBERS				
Sl. No.	Mandal	MPTC Members	Sarpanches	Ward Members
1	2	3	4	5
	EAST DIVISION			
1.	Ibrahimpattam	17	22	220
2.	Yacharam	12	20	194
3.	Manchal	11	18	170
4.	Hayathnagar	17	27	266
5.	Saroornagar	12	13	138
6.	Uppal	-	-	-
7.	Ghatkesar	16	21	214
8.	Maheshwaram	13	23	218
9.	Kandukur	13	23	220
10.	Medchal	13	18	180
11.	Shamirpet	16	22	226
12.	Keesara	8	12	116
13.	Quthbullapur	8	11	112
	SUB-TOTAL:	156	230	2274
	CHEVELLA DIVISION:			
14.	Rajendernagar	9	14	140
15.	Serilingampally	-	-	-
16.	Shamshabad	17	24	236
17.	Balanagar	-	-	-
18.	Malkajgiri	-	-	-
19.	Chevela	14	30	272
20.	Shahabad	12	29	256
21.	Shankarpally	14	25	238
22.	Moinabad	13	21	204
23.	Pargi	13	22	208
24.	Doma	10	21	190
25.	Kulkacherla	13	28	260
26.	Gandeed	14	24	232
	SUB-TOTAL	129	239	2236
	VIKARABAD DIVISION:			
27.	Vikarabad	8	21	184
28.	Nawabpet	10	21	194
29.	Poodur	11	22	202
30.	Dharur	10	25	222
31.	Marpally	12	19	184
32.	Mominpet	11	20	190
33.	Bantaram	8	18	166
34.	Tandur	11	25	218
35.	Peddemul	12	25	222
36.	Basheerabad	10	16	152
37.	Yalal	10	24	212
	SUB-TOTAL:	113	236	2146
	DIST.TOTAL:	398	705	6656

Source : District Panchyat Officer.

Annexure-IX

Fieldwork Photos of Pedda Amberpet







Annexure-X

This is an interview –schedule for collection of data for Ph.D program on the topic:

Democratic Decentralization and Empowerment of Dalits: A Diachronic Study of Two Village Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh

Information provided will be used only for research purpose.
Strict confidentiality will be maintained.

Akumarthi NageswaraRao, Research Scholar,
University of Hyderabad

QUESTIONNAIRE-I

(For Scheduled Castes' Members and Sarpanches)

I. Social Background

1.		3.	4.	5.	6.	7
Name	Age	Religion	Caste	Gender	Marital Status	Ward No
		H M C	MI Md R O	M F	Unmarried Married	

II. Educational Qualifications

Please give the details pertaining to your education:

Standard	Name of the Institution	Place Rural/Urban	Medium of Instruction	Division
Primary				
Secondary				
10+2				
Degree				
PG				
Any other (specify)				

III. Socio-economic and political profile of respondent and family

	Family members	Edu-Qual	Occupation	Public /private sector	Monthly income (Thousands)	Social service/ Political Background
1	Self					
2	Father					
3	Mother					
4	Elder brother					
5	Elder sister					
6	Paternal uncle					
7	Maternal uncle					
8	Grand father					
9	Grand mother					
10	Others					

III-A- Nature of Employment

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Self Cultivation	Agricultural Labourer	Indu-Wage Lab	Wage Labourer Casual	Self Employed	Petty Business	Govt Service	Pvt	Artisan	other

III –B-Land owned by family (in acres)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	2	3	4	5	>5- <10	>10- <20	

III –C- Nature of Residence

Residence		Type of the house:		Electrified	
own	rented	Kuccha	Pukka	Yes	No

IV. Source of Information/Awareness

Do you buy a news paper		Do you read it		Do you have a TV	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

V. Political Background/Experience

5. What factors inspired you to enter politics?

6. In which year you have entered politics?

7. Did you have any political experience before getting elected to the present position in the Panchayat or any other bodies? Yes-1 No-2

If yes in what capacity you have worked								
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 10
Party Worker	office bearer of PP	Community Leader	Ward Member	Sarpanch	VP	MPTC	ZPTC	other

8. Are you a member of any Political Party/ with which party you have affiliation?								
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Congress	TDP	PRP	BJP	TRS	LokSatta	BSP	Communist party	others

9. Election and Selection

Inspiring factors for contesting				
1	2	3	4	5
Family	Party	Caste	Service motive	others

10. Do you agree with the view that provision of reservation has facilitated you in contesting in election?	
Yes	No

11. In your opinion, what is the major advantage of the policy of reservation?

Which group supports you in the village								
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Congress	TDP	BJP	TRS	Communist party	BSP	Own caste	Other castes	Others

12. Who extended help to you in election campaign?				
1	2	3	4	5
Caste	Party workers	Youth	Women	others

13. Nature of campaign/ details of campaign

14. Details of Election Expenditure

1	2	3	4
Self	Party	Caste	Others sources

15. How much did you spend?

16. What is your opinion on the role of money in elections?

17. What is your opinion on the role of caste in elections?

18. Number of contestants in your election

1	2	3	4	5
Unanimous /Direct	Duo	Triangular	Quadruple	More than 4

19. Who gave you the closest contest?

20. Majority Obtained

21. Was there any violence at the time of elections? In between whom? And why?

22. How did other groups behave?

V. Participation

23. How did you participate in Grama Sabha meetings?
- a. by raising a points of common concern
 - b. by asking questions on several problems
 - c. by discussing certain issues with other members
 - d. by identifying and prioritizing schemes, programmes and plans
 - e. responding to the questions of general public
 - f. any other specify
24. What are the subjects of your interests in Grama Sabha and other meetings of the Panchayat?
25. Did you introduce any resolution in the Panchayat?
26. How did you participate in Panchayat Meetings?
27. Did you attend the Grama Sabha meetings regularly?
28. Who decides to convene the Grama Sabha or not
- i. Sarpanch
 - ii. Secretary
 - iii. Collective decision of the elected members
 - iv. Upper Castes Leaders
 - v. Others (Specify)

29. Participation in Decision-Making Process

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Planning			
Budgeting			
Development work			
Location of Projects			
Award of contracts			
Selection of Beneficiaries			
Any other			

30. Who plays a crucial role in the following processes?

	Sarpanch	Upa-Sarpanch	Members	Officials	Others
Deciding the agenda of the meeting					
Prioritization of issues					
Decision relating to development projects					
Selection of beneficiaries					
Whether to hold Grama Sabha or not					
Planning & Budgeting					

31. In development programmes/Schemes which community gets more?

32. Have you initiated any Community related Service? **If 'yes'** please give details

If 'no' what are the reasons/constraints?

VI. Perceptions/Views of members and Sarpanches

33. What is your opinion about democracy?

34) What is your opinion about democratic decentralization?

35) Do you think that Panchayati Raj is working well in India? Yes/No

If 'yes' please give details

If 'no' please give details

36) What are the steps/measures would you suggest for successful working of Panchayati Raj?

37. Do you think that there should be reservation to Dalits in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Legislature and Parliament? **If 'yes' why?**

If 'no' why?

38. What is your opinion about empowerment?

39. Do you think that Dalits are being empowered politically after the 73rd Constitution Amendment?

40. Do you think that Dalits are really exercising power today? **If 'yes' how?**

If 'no' why?

41. Did you face any problems in performing your role as Sarpanch/Upa Sarpanch/Member? **Yes / No ,**

If 'yes' what are the problems?

If 'no' Why?

42. What do you like to do for the welfare of the society?

43. What do you like to do for the welfare of the Dalits?

44. Please give your suggestions for effective performance of Scheduled Castes leaders in Villages Politics in Particular and Politics in general

45. Are you satisfied with your performance as sarpanch/member? Please give details

46. Did you face any problems from upper castes? Please give details

47. Did you face any problems from rich people?

48. Did you face any Problems from officials?

49. Would you like to contest again? If 'yes'

Why? If 'no' why?

50. Any other information you would like to tell?

Address for communication:

Tel: _____

Pin Cod _____

Thank you for kind cooperation

Annexure-X A

This is an interview –schedule for collection of data for Ph.D program on the topic:

Democratic Decentralization and Empowerment of Dalits: A Diachronic Study of Two Village Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh

Information provided will be used only for research purpose.
Strict confidentiality will be maintained.

Akumarthi NageswaraRao, Research Scholar,
University of Hyderabad

QUESTIONNAIRE-II

(For Non-Scheduled Castes' Members and Sarpanches)

I. Social Background

1	2	3.	4.	5.	6.	7
Name	Age	Religion	Caste	Gender	Marital Status	Ward No
		H M C	OC BC Other	M F	Unmarried Married	

II. Educational Qualifications

Please give the details pertaining to your education:

Standard	Name of the Institution	Place Rural/Urban	Medium of Instruction	Division
Primary				
Secondary				
10+2				
Degree				
PG				
Any other (specify)				

III. Socio-economic and political profile of respondent and family

	Family members	Edu-Qual	Occupation	Public /private sector	Monthly income (Thousands)	Social service/ Political Background
1	Self					
2	Father					
3	Mother					
4	Elder brother					
5	Elder sister					
6	Paternal uncle					
7	Maternal uncle					
8	Grand father					
9	Grand mother					
10	Others					

III-A- Nature of Employment

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Self Cultivation	Agricultural Labourer	Indu-Wage Lab	Wage Labourer Casual	Self Employed	Petty Business	Govt Service	Pvt	Artisan	other

III –B-Land owned by family (in acres)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	2	3	4	5	>5- <10	>10- <20	

III –C- Nature of Residence

Residence		Type of the house:		Electrified	
own	rented	Kuccha	Pukka	Yes	No

IV. Source of Information/Awareness

Do you buy a news paper		Do you read it		Do you have a TV	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

V. Political Background/Experience

5. What factors inspired you to enter politics?

6. In which year you have entered politics?

7. Did you have any political experience before getting elected to the present position in the Panchayat or any other bodies? Yes-1 No-2

If yes in what capacity you have worked								
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 10
Party Worker	office bearer of PP	Community Leader	Ward Member	Sarpanch	VP	MPTC	ZPTC	other

8. Are you a member of any Political Party/ with which party you have affiliation?								
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Congress	TDP	PRP	BJP	TRS	LokSatta	BSP	Communist party	others

9. Election and Selection

Inspiring factors for contesting				
1	2	3	4	5
Family	Party	Caste	Service motive	others

10. Do you agree with the view that provision of reservation has facilitated you in contesting in election?	
Yes	No

11. In your opinion, what is the major advantage of the policy of reservation?

Which group supports you in the village								
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Congress	TDP	BJP	TRS	Communist party	BSP	Own caste	Other castes	Others

12. Who extended help to you in election campaign?				
1	2	3	4	5
Caste	Party workers	Youth	Women	others

13. Nature of campaign/ details of campaign

14. Details of Election Expenditure

1	2	3	4
Self	Party	Caste	Others sources

15. How much did you spend?

16. What is your opinion on the role of money in elections?

17. What is your opinion on the role of caste in elections?

18. Number of contestants in your election

1	2	3	4	5
Unanimous /Direct	Duo	Triangular	Quadruple	More than 4

19. Who gave you the closest contest?

20. Majority Obtained

21. Was there any violence at the time of elections? In between whom? And why?

22. How did other groups behave?

V. Participation

23. How did you participate in Grama Sabha meetings?
- a. by raising a points of common concern
 - b. by asking questions on several problems
 - c. by discussing certain issues with other members
 - d. by identifying and prioritizing schemes, programmes and plans
 - e. responding to the questions of general public
 - f. any other specify
24. What are the subjects of your interests in Grama Sabha and other meetings of the Panchayat?
25. Did you introduce any resolution in the Panchayat?
26. How did you participate in Panchayat Meetings?
27. Did you attend the Grama Sabha meetings regularly?
28. Who decides to convene the Grama Sabha or not
- i. Sarpanch
 - ii. Secretary
 - iii. Collective decision of the elected members
 - iv. Upper Castes Leaders
 - v. Others (Specify)

29. Participation in Decision-Making Process

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Planning			
Budgeting			
Development work			
Location of Projects			
Award of contracts			
Selection of Beneficiaries			
Any other			

30. Who plays a crucial role in the following processes?

	Sarpanch	Upa-Sarpanch	Members	Officials	Others
Deciding the agenda of the meeting					
Prioritization of issues					
Decision relating to development projects					
Selection of beneficiaries					
Whether to hold Grama Sabha or not					
Planning & Budgeting					

31. In development programmes/Schemes which community gets more?

32. Have you initiated any Community related Service? **If 'yes'** please give details

If 'no' what are the reasons/constraints?

VI. Perceptions/Views of members and Sarpanches

33. What is your opinion about democracy?

34) What is your opinion about democratic decentralization?

35) Do you think that Panchayati Raj is working well in India? Yes/No

If 'yes' please give details

If 'no' please give details

36) What are the steps/measures would you suggest for successful working of Panchayati Raj?

37. Do you think that there should be reservation to Dalits in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Legislature and Parliament? **If 'yes' why?**

If 'no' why?

38. What is your opinion about empowerment?

39. Do you think that Dalits are being empowered politically after the 73rd Constitution Amendment?

40. Do you think that Dalits are really exercising power today? **If 'yes' how?**

If 'no' why?

41. Did you face any problems in performing your role as Sarpanch/Upa Sarpanch/Member? **Yes / No ,** **If 'yes' what** are the problems?

If 'no' Why?

42. What do you like to do for the welfare of the society?

43. What do you like to do for the welfare of the Dalits?

44. Please give your suggestions for effective performance of Scheduled Castes leaders in Villages Politics in Particular and Politics in general

45. Are you satisfied with your performance as sarpanch/member? Please give details

46. Did you face any problems from upper castes? Please give details

47. Did you face any problems from rich people?

48. Did you face any Problems from officials?

49. Would you like to contest again? If 'yes'

Why? If 'no' why?

50. Any other information you would like to tell?
Address for communication:

Tel: _____

Pin Code: _____

Thank you for kind cooperation

Annexure- VIII

Fieldwork Photos of Peda Thummidi







పెదమన్నటి గ్రామ వార్డుల పట్టిక			
సంఖ్య	వార్డు పేరు	విస్తీర్ణం (చ. మీ.)	జనాభా
1.	అన్నారావుల వార్డు	9-7-1955	14-5-1956
2.	అన్నారావుల వార్డు	2-9-1956	15-11-1956
3.	అన్నారావుల వార్డు	12-1-1956	23-6-1956
4.	అన్నారావుల వార్డు	4-7-1954	25-6-1957
5.	అన్నారావుల వార్డు	30-6-1970	11-6-1981
6.	అన్నారావుల వార్డు	12-6-1981	30-3-1988
7.	అన్నారావుల వార్డు	21-5-1988	20-9-1988
8.	అన్నారావుల వార్డు	21-10-1988	22-8-2000
9.	అన్నారావుల వార్డు	25-8-2000	34-10-2004
10.	అన్నారావుల వార్డు	28-6-2000	22-8-2006
11.	అన్నారావుల వార్డు	25-8-2006	



Annexure-X B

This is an interview –schedule for collection of data for Ph.D program on the topic:

Democratic Decentralization and Empowerment of Dalits: A Diachronic Study of Two Village Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh

Information provided will be used only for research purpose.

Strict confidentiality will be maintained.

Akumarthi NageswaraRao, Research Scholar,
University of Hyderabad

QUESTIONNAIRE-III-(SCHEDULED CASTES VILLAGERS)

1.	2	3.		4.	
Name:	Age	Gender		Marital Status	
		M	F	M	UM

5. Do you think that there should be reservation for Scheduled Castes in Panchayats?

If yes why?

If No why?

6. What is your opinion regarding the participation of Scheduled in Panchayats?

7. Do you think that the SC members of Panchayats are exercising power really?

8. What is the nature of caste politics in the village?

9. Do you think that the rich people in the village exercise control over Scheduled Castes members?

10. Do you feel that the Scheduled Castes members are contributed by their castes?
If Yes how?

If No why?

11. What are suggestions for the effective participation of Scheduled Castes members in Panchayats?

12. Any other information you would like to tell?

Address for communication:

Tel: _____

Pin Code: _____

Thank you for kind cooperation

Annexure-X C

This is an interview-schedule for collection of data for Ph.D program on the topic:

Democratic Decentralization and Empowerment of Dalits: A Diachronic Study of Two Village Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh

Information provided will be used only for research purpose.

Strict confidentiality will be maintained.

Akumarthi NageswaraRao, Research Scholar,
University of Hyderabad

QUESTIONNAIRE-IV

(FOR NON-SCHEDULED CASTES VILLAGERS)

1.	2	3.		4.	
Name:	Age	Gender		Marital Status	
		M	F	M	UM

5. Do you think that there should be reservation for Scheduled Castes in Panchayats?

If yes why?

If No why?

6. What is your opinion regarding the participation of Scheduled in Panchayats?

7. Do you think that the SC members of Panchayats are exercising power really?

8. What is the nature of caste politics in the village?

9. Do you think that the rich people in the village exercise control over Scheduled Castes members?

10. Do you feel that the Scheduled Castes members are contributed by their castes?

If Yes how?

If No why?

11. What are suggestions for the effective participation of Scheduled Castes members in Panchayats?

12. Any other information you would like to tell?

Address for communication:

Tel: _____

Pin Code: _____

Thank you for kind cooperation

SYNOPSIS

DEMOCRATIC DECENTRALIZATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF DALITS: A DIACHRONIC STUDY OF TWO VILLAGE PANCHAYATS IN ANDHRA PRADESH

A Synopsis submitted to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the award of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

POLITICAL SCIENCE

BY

NAGESWARARAO A



**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD
HYDERABAD 500046
March 2011**

DEMOCRATIC DECENTRALIZATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF DALITS: A DIACHRONIC STUDY OF TWO VILLAGE PANCHAYATS IN ANDHRA PRADESH

The system of Panchayati Raj, based on the principles of democratic decentralization, peoples' initiative and participation, was introduced in India early in the sixties. More than 72 % Indians live in rural areas and the participation of people in Panchayati Raj Institutions in the rural areas could be regarded as an important indicator to assess the participation of the Indian citizen in the political process. The village panchayats of India have had a long history and it is a unique feature of Indian political system. These village panchayats are basic units of administration at village in the third stratum of local government.

Soon after independence the framers of the Indian Constitution decided to give them importance and directed the states to organize village panchayats as units of local self-government. Mahatma Gandhi believed in panchayats' immense potential for democratic decentralization and for devolving power to the people. He had a vision to make all the villages as village republics, with this idea wanted to create village swaraj in the country side.

B.R. Ambedkar argued against panchayats and he was apprehensive about the continuation of caste Hindus hegemony. Further he opined that villages in India were caste-ridden and had little prospects of success as institutions of self-government. George Mathew puts it aptly 'his (B.R. Ambedkar) stand should not be interpreted as the one against democratic decentralization or the concept of giving power to the people'. He was only speaking from his experience of what a caste-ridden village society in India had meant to him and to millions like him. Undoubtedly, his perception was as realistic as that of others. The remedy lay in creating an egalitarian and truly democratic panchayat raj system in the country. He also fought for providing reservation in panchayats to involve all depressed classes in the rural governance.

Andhra Pradesh, one of the first to accept the recommendations of the Balwantrai Mehta Committee (1957) decided to establish one Panchayat Samithi in each district on an adhoc basis, learnt from its working and then brought legislation thereafter to create a three-tier system. With the success of the experiment with adhoc Samithies, the Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Samithies and Zilla Parishads Act, 1959 was enacted. According to this Act, a representative of Scheduled Castes and another representative of Scheduled Tribes (ST) if their population was not less than five per cent in the Block or another representative the SCs (if there were no STs) at Panchayat Samithi level.

M.T.Raju Committee (1967) Vengal Rao Committee (1968) did not focus on representation of SCs or STs in its recommendations. The Narasimham Committee (1971) had recommended for limited reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Women. Two to four seats were reserved for women depending upon the total number of seats in the Gram Panchayat. Three functional committees- agriculture, public health and sanitation, communications- were to be constituted with a minimum of three members, the Sarpanch being the chairman and at least one member from the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes being co-opted into each committee. The Andhra Pradesh Gram Panchayat Act of 1964 was a remarkable step taken by State Government to provide reservations for weaker sections of the society.

1. Statement of Problem

After nearly two decades of the 73rd Constitution Amendment came into operation, which is intended, as stated earlier, to strengthen democratic decentralization, people's participation, participation of the weaker sections including women, the situation is hoped better than before. Both in the areas of administrative, political and fiscal decentralization, several issues and concerns emerged and the domination of economically and socially higher sections of society challenged. Any objective analyst would agree that politics should be the realm of all people and that it is important to examine the outcome of the participation of Dalits and women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

It is also essential to examine their new roles in local governance in relation to family, community and state as enabling or inhibiting factors in the performance of these marginalized groups. Available literature suggests that change is evident in the attitudes and behavioural pattern of the dominant as well as deprived sections in the arena of Panchayat Raj. Joshi and Narwani “examined the emerging trends across Indian states in relation to Panchayati Raj. They point out that despite their social, educational and economic backwardness, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes representatives have now a greater say in rural local governance. These communities have also noticed improvements in their lives.

A new grass roots leadership of the weaker sections among Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes is emerging and conventional barriers of the caste system are breaking. The pressure of dispossessed people in the local bodies is felt, though with prejudice by higher castes and land lords who have been relatively disempowered. Power shift is visible. However, conflict is inevitable. It could be due to caste, economic, religious and other factors. Available research suggests that the demand for the exercise of rights is seen in some cases. The peoples’ representatives in panchayats, especially assertion of identity by the Dalits/SCs is evident”. In the above background it is proposed to study the role of Scheduled Castes’ Members and Sarpanches.

The studies conducted so far indicate that the participation of Dalits in Panchayat Raj Institutions is evidenced, to some extent, as a result of 73rd Constitution Amendment to the Constitution of India. The Indian society specially in rural sector is still dominated by upper castes, economically powerful sections including muscle men. It may be stated, here that these sections of the society may not give up easily and shut the dominance over the weaker sections of the society. It may be simple and easy to talk about the constitutional amendments, legislative acts, rules and regulations which would bring the change, but in reality the said forces may not easily give up their power and create several hurdles and barricades in the process of implementation of the provisions of 73rd Amendment.

Though some change could be witnessed with regard to discrimination against disadvantaged sections of the society, yet there is a lot of evidence to show that there exist the discrimination, domination and exclusion of the downtrodden sections, and Dalits are not an exception to this phenomenon in rural areas and more especially in the Panchayat Raj administration. For the study proper two districts i.e Krishna, Ranga Reddy are chosen from the two regions-Andhra and Telangana respectively. Krishna comparatively is more advanced than Ranga Reddy district. Ranga Reddy is backward though it is nearer to capital city.

The present study covers two villages in the districts of Krishna and Ranga Reddy in Andhra Pradesh. The representation of Kamma community in Krishna District is higher than other community. A large percentage of Kamma community is involved in lucrative agriculture business and industry. They are spread over mostly in a greater number, in rural as well as urban areas. They are most advanced politically, economically, socially and culturally. The lobby of this community is greater at the union and state level governments. There were several incidents and instances to show the arrogance of Kammas towards the disadvantaged sections of the society the famous case of Karamchedu is in point as an example. It is beyond once imagination to see that their power is passed on to Dalits in these areas by Kamma community. Strongly enough socio-economic, political power, not in totto but in some extent passed onto, gradually, to Kapus a forward community and Goudas one of the backward communities.

The change occurred on account of the awareness created by various political parties in the rural scenario as regards to Panchayat Raj. Ranga Reddy district, as stated earlier is nearer to twin cities of Secunderabad and Hyderabad. Yet the district is quiet backward socially, economically, culturally for various historical backgrounds. One of the chief reasons for its backwardness is the step motherly attitude of the respective successive state government. It is very strange to note that though Ranga Reddy district closer to twin cities their impact over the district is hardly seen in some pockets. There are two communities for the purpose of the study, Reddys and Goudas are dominant in all the sectors of life. The influence of these communities is greatly seen in all walks of life.

The large percentage of people living in poverty gave scope for these two communities to become influential and dominant in all the sectors more especially in the arena of Panchayati Raj. There is representation of Dalits in various politico-administrative bodies of Panchayat Raj but in actual operation there is lot of socio-political exclusion whereby Dalits can not exercise under circumstance explained supra the real power in the administration of Panchayat Raj. The narration given above compels one to think that the real power has not reached though laws have given the opportunity. It appears that there is a great vacuum between perceptions and practices. The situation might improve when several instruments of state, NGOs and caste based organizations create more awareness and an element of agitation among the Dalits to seize the opportunity. The study therefore examines the entire scenario and comes forth with theory to help improve the prevailing situation.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the present research are

1. to study the socio-economic, political background of respondents;
2. to study their perceptions in relation to community at large and the Scheduled Castes in particular and to examine the factors leading to the assumption of leadership positions;
3. to assess the nature of performance;
4. to analyse the influence of caste politics, sub-caste dimension, economic status groups and political leaders;
5. to examine the position of leaders in village politics in pre and post 73rd Constitutional Amendment era and to identify the changes if any; and
6. to suggest measures for improving the quality of and for empowering Dalit/SC leaders.

3. Hypotheses

It is generally held that the 73rd Constitution Amendment has facilitated increased scope to Dalits to participate in decision-making and implementation process. It is also

felt that the Dalits of rural India are gradually, strengthening their place in leadership roles and transfer of power is also taking place, facilitating their empowerment. The present study proposes to examine the validity of stated assumptions with the help of research in a micro setting.

4. Universe of Study and Rationale for the Selection of Villages

For the present study two villages have been selected after carrying out a pilot study in Andhra Pradesh. They are *Pedda Thummidi* village in *Bantumilli Mandal* of *Krishna District* of Coastal region and *Pedda Amberpet* village in *Hayatnagar Mandal* of *Rangareddy District* from Telangana region. *Pedda Amberpet* is an exterior village and is very close to Hyderabad, the state capital and the latter i.e, *Peda Thummidi* is an interior village and is 35 kilometres from Machilipatnam, the head quarters of Krishna District and 450 Kms from Hyderabad. It is proposed to select a village where the panchayat was formed during the pre-independence period and another in the post-independence times. Caste politics, sub-caste dynamics, economic status of the Dalits, geographical location and history of the villages have also been considered in selecting the villages.

5. Methodology

A sample of 262 respondents which consists of 58 peoples' representatives (Dalits and non-Dalits), 200 primary respondents (Dalits and non-Dalits) and 4 panchayat officials are covered for the study. The methods chosen for the study are essentially comparative and empirical. Both spatial and diachronic comparisons pertaining to the period of 2001-2006 and 2006-2011 respectively are made. A detailed schedule consisting of closed and open ended questions is prepared and administered in person to the Dalit representatives as well as non-Dalit representatives. Informal discussions (ID), focussed group discussions (FGD) with village elders, officials, group members both Scheduled Castes and non-SCs and youth associations have been held. A field diary is maintained to note personal observations.

The data are analysed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Science Research (SPSS). Available research forms the secondary source material. Data are also drawn from government reports, periodicals and news papers. The purpose of interviewing the non-Dalit representatives also is to identify the differences in socio-economic and political background, perceptions and performance. But the focus is essentially on Scheduled Castes' representatives. Each interview lasted for 2 to 3 hours. A number of visits have been undertaken to the research area to get detailed information. The respondents include the elected representatives, contestants, officials, villagers. Each category has been represented in collecting their opinions separately.

6. Scheme of the Thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters including the introduction and conclusion. The *first chapter* deals with introduction, statement of problem, objectives, hypotheses, Universe of study and Rationale for the selection of villages, methodology, problems during field investigation and limitations. The *second chapter* gives details of the concepts of democratic decentralization, Panchayati Raj System and empowerment of Dalits. The *third chapter* is devoted to a survey of contemporary literature relating the role of Scheduled Castes/Dalits in Panchayati Raj Institutions. The *fourth chapter* gives detailed account of the background, participation and perceptions of the members of Pedda Thummidu village panchayat. In order to assess the role of Scheduled Castes representatives the non-Scheduled Castes representatives' background, participation and perceptions have also been detailed. An analysis of the perceptions of a cross sections of the villages would also form part of this chapter.

The *fifth chapter* is designed in a manner similar to chapter four. In this chapter the background, perceptions and participation of Scheduled Castes and non-Scheduled Castes representatives of Pedda Amberpet village are analysed. The perceptions of a cross sections of villagers are also included in this chapter. The *sixth chapter* makes a comparative assessment of the respondents' background, perceptions and performance in the villages selected for study. The concluding chapter (*chapter-seventh*) presents a summary of findings and it also contains suggestions for a better and effective

performance of Scheduled Castes representatives in particular and for more effective implementation of 73rd Constitution Amendment Act in general. In all stages, care is taken to identify and to assess the position before and after the 73rd Constitution Amendment in respect of the role of Scheduled Castes in the process of empowerment.

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