

**Democratic Decentralisation and Participatory Natural
Resources Management: A Study of Amangal Mandal in
Mahabubnagar District of Andhra Pradesh**

A dissertation submitted to the University of Hyderabad
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Sociology

By

S SRINIVAS



Department of Sociology
School of Social Sciences
University of Hyderabad
Hyderabad 500 046.
December 2009

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “**Democratic Decentralisation and Participatory Natural Resources Management: A Study of Amangal Mandal in Mahabubnagar District of Andhra Pradesh**” has been carried out by me under the supervision of Professor Vinod K Jairath, Department of Sociology, University of Hyderabad. The dissertation has not been submitted previously either in part or full for any other degree or diploma at this or any other university.

(S. Srinivas)

Hyderabad

Date:

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**Democratic Decentralisation and Participatory Natural Resources Management: A Study of Amangal Mandal in Mahabubnagar District of Andhra Pradesh**” submitted by S. Srinivas in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology is original and the work has been carried out under our supervision and guidance. The dissertation or a part thereof has not been submitted for any other degree or diploma at this or any other university.

(Prof. Vinod K Jairath)
Professor,
Department of Sociology
University of Hyderabad
Hyderabad.

Place:

Date:

Prof. Sasheej Hegde,
Head, Department of Sociology
University of Hyderabad

Prof. G.Nancharaiah,
Dean, School of Social Sciences
University of Hyderabad.



To

Amma

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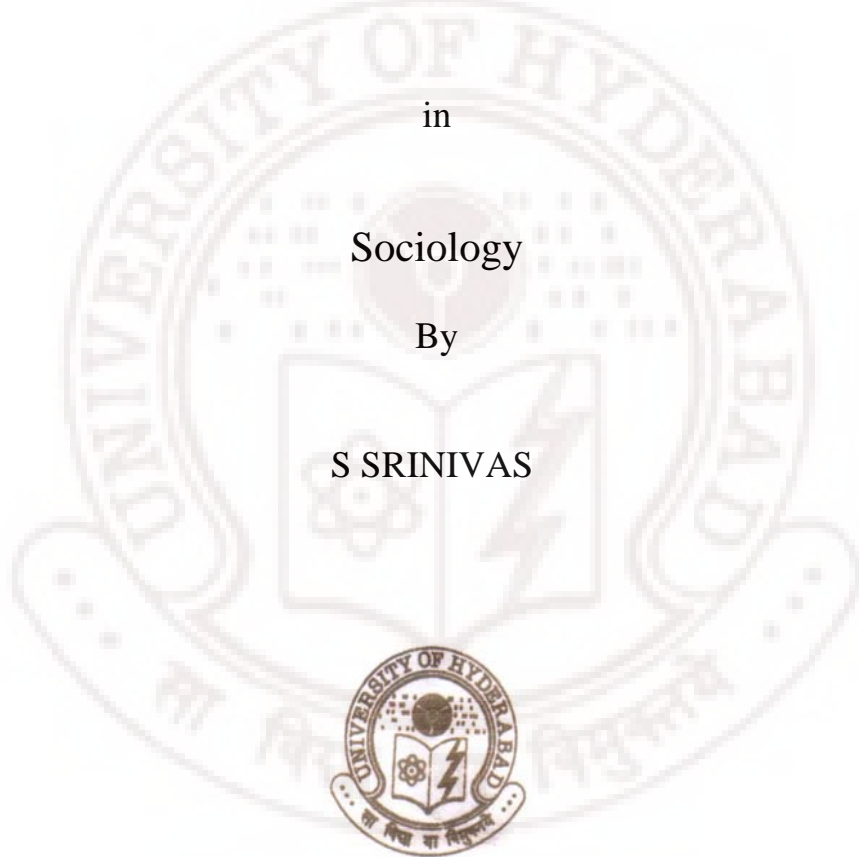
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One of the most popular state reforms that have opened 'spaces' for a wider and deeper participation of citizens at the local level has been the decentralisation process. Democratic Decentralisation is the transfer of resources and power to lower level authorities which are largely or wholly independent of higher levels of government and which are democratic. In India, certain cases of Democratic decentralisation have achieved both greater participation of marginal groups and social justice like in the left ruled states of West Bengal and Kerala. In both cases, decentralisation has been credited with ensuring the participation of subordinate groups – such as women, landless groups, sharecroppers and small peasants – and being directly linked to the pursuit of redistributive policies that have had pro-poor outcomes.

Decentralised natural resources management has assumed importance as a development strategy, because of the claims that it can contribute towards sustainable livelihoods. Almost all the developing countries have initiated the process of decentralisation and India is one such country that was involved in this process for a long time. The introduction of development programmes with people's participation as the core theme is an indication of the progress of this process. Particularly, in the programmes like Watershed Management, Water Users Associations, and Joint Forest Management this becomes evident.

Generally, the discussions on local self-governance or democratic decentralization and participatory natural resource management do not intersect and take place in somewhat independent domains. Baumann (1998; 2000) had also emphasized the need to bring the two domains together. It is argued that it is essential to discuss democratic decentralization and participatory natural resource management together because one cannot be understood or

achieved without the understanding or achievement of the other. At the grass-root level, these issues can be translated into the functioning of various ‘participatory’ development programmes such as watershed development, water users associations, and joint forest management. These institutions assume a certain ‘capacity’ or ‘capability’ of people, especially those belonging to the “underprivileged” categories such as women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Statement of the problem

Both Democratic Decentralisation and Participatory Natural Resource Management imply empowerment of people to make their own decisions. The focus of the study would be to look into the implications of Democratic Decentralisation and Participatory Management in the implementation of various development programmes at the grass root level, viz., Watershed management, joint forest management, and water users associations.

Objectives

- What is the impact of decentralisation on participation in the context of local governance and natural resources management?
- What are the changes brought about in the governance scenario at the village level due to the emergence of new leaders in place of the traditional elite?
- Whether decentralised natural resources management bodies and social capital are promoting sustainability?
- What is the affect of changing power relations on the social fabric of the village – how far is it leading to the empowerment of marginal sections?

Methodology:

Amangal mandal of Mahabubnagar district has been chosen as the study area. There are 18 villages in the mandal spread over a radius of 55 Kms. Three villages were selected for intensive study but, otherwise, all the villages in the mandal were covered in the study. The study villages were selected after brief visits to all the villages in the mandal. Three specific criteria were followed for selection of the villages-

1. The presence of decentralised NRM bodies like Vana Samrakshana Samiti, Watershed Committee and Water Users Association.
2. The nature of dominance and control over the positions of power in the village.
3. The caste composition and associated land distribution of population.

Importance was given to the presence of the households of Reddy caste which is the dominant one in the study area. Other Backward Castes (OBCs) form the majority at the mandal level comprising forty six percent of the population. Reddypalle, Pahadipur and Edigapalle were the villages selected (names changed) for study.

Data Collection

Fieldwork was carried out by using participant observation method by staying in the villages. Basic information was gathered through a structured questionnaire (for household survey) followed by informal in depth interviews, and group discussions during a period of fourteen months stretched over three years during 2001 to 2004. Brief trips were made to the field again during 2006. After spending an initial time of four months in the field, specific trips were made to attend meetings of the gram panchayat and general body meetings of the NRM bodies.

Scheme of Chapters

This thesis consists of eight chapters including the introduction and conclusion. The **first** chapter provides a brief introduction to the process of decentralisation followed by methodology. **Second** chapter provides a discussion on the conceptual framework of Democratic Decentralisation. An attempt has been made to explore the applicability of the concept of political capital. The **third** chapter provides a background to the study as reform process in the regimes of Chandrababu Naidu and YS Rajasekhara Reddy (YSR) was discussed. This section is followed by the institutional structure of the Panchayat Raj and the NRM bodies where in the manner of election to Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) and the formation of committees in Joint Forest Management (JFM), Watershed and Water Users Associations (WUAs) has been outlined. The **fourth** chapter describes the field setting. The **fifth** chapter focuses on the explanation of the interplay of power relations between the existing elite and the newly emergent political class belonging to backward communities. The **sixth** chapter looked into the functioning of various NRM bodies like JFM, WS and WUAs. This chapter looks into the actual functioning of the new leaders within the constraints imposed by the existing elite. The **seventh** is a mini chapter in which we looked at the concept of power as the elected representatives of local bodies both old and new cling on to some position of power once they got elected. The eighth chapter concludes the thesis, where an outline of the socio-political development was given followed by a general analysis of findings.

Conceptual Framework

We have made an attempt to look into the functioning of Democratic Decentralisation and DNRM bodies using the concepts of participation, Social Capital and Political Capital. We had also used the 'spaces for participation' theme echoed by John Gaventa and developed by Andrea Cornwall .

Gaventa suggested different entry points for understanding power in new political spaces. These involve how spaces are created, the levels of engagement and the degree of visibility of power within them. There are 'invited spaces' into which people are invited to participate by various kinds of authorities. Another set is the 'claimed spaces' which are claimed by struggles for legitimacy and resistance, co-optation and transformation. Cornwall argued that efforts to engage participation can be

thought of as creating spaces where there was previously none, about enlarging spaces where previously there were very limited opportunities for public involvement, and about allowing people to occupy spaces that were previously denied to them. She had also made a distinction between 'popular spaces' and 'invited spaces'. We tried to look at the processes of negotiation, contestation and accommodation by using the concept of political capital.

Analysis and Conclusion

The traditional social structure in the study area had altered a great deal during the decades of 1980's, 1990's and in the present decade. Basically it was a system of land based power and control where the Reddys held supreme authority by virtue of their land ownership, contacts and political power. The other dominant caste of Telangana, Velamas were not there in the mandal except in one village. They were greatly aided by the 'Patel-Patwari' system which dates back to the Nizam period (18th to 20th centuries) where members belonging to the dominant castes (Reddy, Velama and in some cases Brahmins) held positions. During the Nizam period they were the link between people and government. Consequently they had developed immense hold over the day to day affairs of the village. This had continued after Independence and even after introduction of Panchayat Raj institutions in 1959 they held their sway in the village affairs. Villages were completely under the hold of Reddys, Velamas, and sometimes Muslims. Zamindari/Inamdari abolition in the 1960s brought about a few changes in the social structure and landholding pattern in the study villages. Some of the big landlords started leaving the village thereby resulting in transfer of power to new leaders although, these new leaders still belong to the dominant caste Reddys.

The most significant impact on the social fabric had been the abolition of 'Patel-Patwari' system in 1985. It had a profound impact on the socio-political conditions through out Telangana region, where the occasion was celebrated as a big festival by several villagers. One OBC leader from the study villages had said that they got their true Independence in 1985. One can understand the impact and control of the system on village affairs by this statement alone. The emergence of TDP in the 1980s

had provided the OBCs a new political space to contest the dominant caste Reddy elite who predominantly belonged to Congress party.

Simultaneously changes in economy/education provided them new opportunities for economic growth. Especially the Gouds and Edigas of the study villages started becoming more innovative in selling toddy by transporting it to nearby towns and by the end of 1980s they had gained a foothold in the political scene by successfully contesting against the dominant castes. Among the study villages we had seen this happening in Edigapalle. During the 1990s some of the other changes that took place like outmigration of upper caste landowners resulting in sale/lease of land also resulted in significant economic changes. Special events that took place around this time like 'prohibition of liquor' also provided an economic opportunity for Gouds, Edigas and Lambadas. Generally the lands from the upper castes were bought by OBCs - especially Gouds and Edigas from money made through various economic opportunities.

Another important event which took place around this time was the introduction of bore well irrigation. Although bore wells were there in the mandal earlier also, they started increasing from the 1990s. Availability of water through bore wells had enabled the farmers to grow paddy and cotton which helped in greater income from agriculture. At the same time, bore well irrigation also brought about problems like failure of bore wells which in turn resulted rising debt trap and declining water table in some of the study villages. But in the early years of bore well irrigation it brought great profits for the farmers.

Thus by mid 1990s, in several cases, Reddy domination continued aided by the structural factors and especially in the villages where outmigration had not dwindled their numbers too drastically. In some cases, OBC groups were able to successfully challenge the traditional domination of the Reddys. This was possible due to the improved economic status through various opportunities including the increase in land holding and numerical advantage. We had seen that in all the study villages they were a majority in terms of population.

It is in this environment that the institutional changes were made in Panchayats that led to reservations and the idea of Decentralised Natural Resources Management (DNRM) took shape resulting in the formation of various 'participatory' organisations like VSS, WC, and WUAs etc. The coming of these bodies had created 'spaces for participation' for the marginal sections. This had a profound impact on the traditional power structure which faced a threat from the new leaders. As a result of these changes, unopposed traditional power and control is over.

In response to the new changes the traditional power groups had to adapt new strategies for retaining their control. The structural political capital of the traditionally dominant communities was a huge asset in their hands. The process of adaptation could be clearly seen in Reddypalle village where the unopposed traditional leader SNR had lost his Sarpanch position to reservations and he was made to accept 'new' leaders into the position. His earlier efforts in not allowing any factions to grow as opposing spectres of influence helped him in the changed scenario. Thus by following a process of adaptation he had tried to balance the power structure in his village. Here the 'spaces' that were created are 'invited spaces'. As against this in the other study villages we could see the struggle for ascendancy between the traditionally dominant groups and the newly emergent leaders with an OBC core. This could be viewed as a conflict between the new structural political capital of the OBCs against the old structural political capital of the dominant groups. The 'spaces' that emerge here would 'claimed spaces' as they were a direct result struggles, co-option and transformation.

The efforts of these groups had been met with both success and failure as we could see the unfolding of these processes in Pahadipur and Edigapalle. While in one case, we have a situation where new alliances were being forged to safeguard the traditional dominance in the other case alliances were being broken to disrupt the successful coalition of the OBCs by the dominant caste Reddys to regain their ascendancy over them. Negotiation and struggle for power is a continuing process between the traditionally dominant groups and the OBCs. But the OBCs stand to benefit a lot due to reservation policy in panchayats, although rotation in reservations means they would not be able to consolidate their power which gives scope for the traditionally dominant leaders to assert their supremacy by making and breaking factions. Either way, the OBC factions are beginning to get a share of the power

whether opposed or aligned to the Reddys. This had happened in Pahadipur and could happen again in Edigapalle.

The role of DNRM bodies in this negotiation/struggle for power between the opposing groups is that of a catalyst for more change. Except the watersheds the traditional leaders were not that much interested in VSS and WUA activities leaving the door open for the new leaders to occupy these positions and emerge as challengers to the dominant sections. This phenomenon is yet to happen in the study villages, but it took place in two other villages in the mandal. During the field work we noticed that most of the DNRM bodies were being used by the traditionally dominant groups to accommodate new leaders and strengthen their positions in their respective villages. This was a common theme in all the study villages. Except in Reddypalle, where an opposing faction was never allowed to form in Pahadipur and Edigapalle the traditionally dominant Reddy leaders were dependent on the support of OBCs without whom, they would not be able to maintain their domination. So the members of these factions were to be accommodated in positions of power continuously. Thus in Pahadipur which happened to have several DNRM bodies we saw the same people occupying positions in different bodies from time to time.

The strategies followed by the dominant groups in the study villages varied from negotiation, adaptation, accommodation to co-option. Distinct examples for these processes had been adaptation in Reddypalle where the dominant leader changed his style from absolute control to patronage of certain sections in the village into the power structure; in Pahadipur, the OBCs and SCs had to be co-opted into the power structure in order to maintain his dominance. In Edigapalle, the traditionally dominant group which lost its position to the dynamic coalition of OBCs in the late 1980s regained it by breaking the coalition and accommodating them into the power structure.

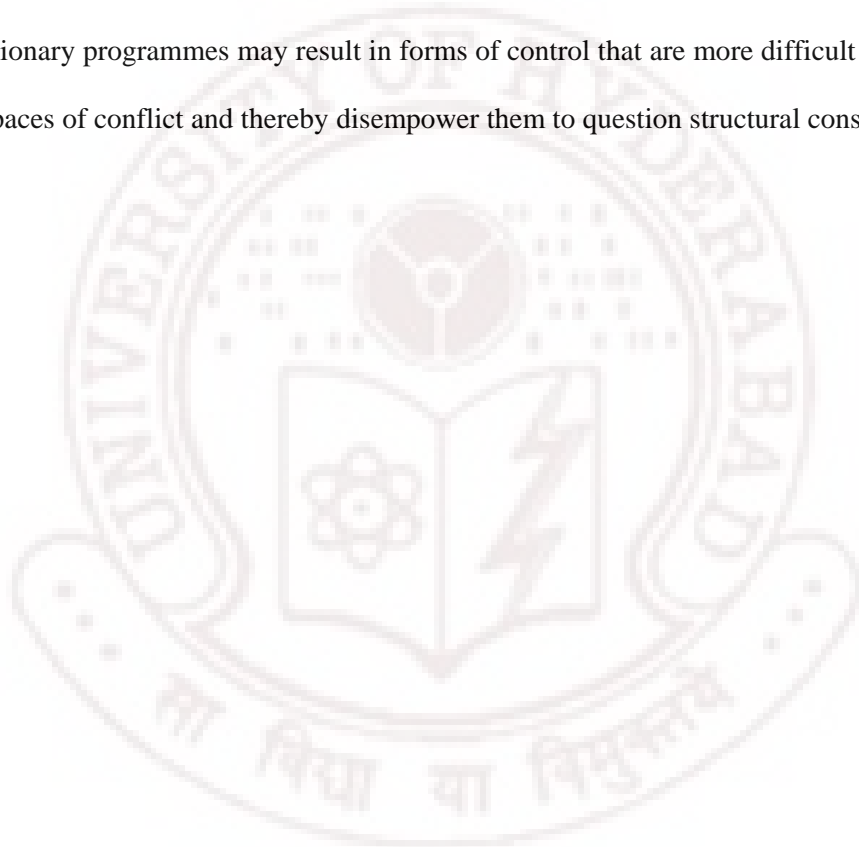
Another important category of people who had been ever present in the village political system had been the pyaraveekars/political fixers. They can belong to any caste/class but mostly they were OBCs, SCs and STs. These political fixers are generally more aware, better educated, and show entrepreneurial spirit. Their regular activity was to help the people of their respective caste/faction in

the village level and mandal level works. During the election time their help was sought by politicians and leaders for getting votes and provide them with money and resources to help their cause. In return, political fixers accumulate and build up instrumental political capital which they use in getting their works done or getting an odd contract. There were instances where some of them went on to occupy higher positions of power at the state level by clever use of their instrumental political capital. In the study villages, reservations and DNRM bodies provided them an opportunity to step into positions of power, as they were the biggest beneficiaries of these institutional changes.

Finally coming to the issue of how domination was maintained and the challenges faced by the existing elite, there were three processes at work. An integrated total control of the village power structure which brooks no dissidence and no opposing groups as is the case with Reddypalle. In contrast to this, we have the model of an integrated challenge posed by the undivided OBCs in Pahadipur before 1995 which got divided into two different factions over a period of time in their negotiation for power. The third process was the presence of two opposing factions in the same village with members of several different castes as part of a larger coalition against one another. This was evident in Pahadipur and Edigapalle with a difference in their operational procedure.

In Pahadipur the quest for power broke the OBC alliance and a break-away faction allied itself with the traditionally dominant group headed by a Reddy. This was necessitated by the desire of both the groups to have representation in the power structure. If the existing OBC leadership allowed the break-away faction to what it had asked for, within a very short period of time they would have completely overthrown the dominance of the Reddy leader as they OBCs would have become a very strong integrated challenge. But it remained an unfulfilled scenario. In Edigapalle, an integrated challenge resulted in replacing the traditionally dominant group which got further weakened with the outmigration of Reddys to Hyderabad. In this context they broke the OBCs by co-opting the break-away faction into the power structure. The fragile nature of leadership among the Reddys – main leader passed away and replaced by a novice in politics enabled the new leadership from OBC have a stronger presence in the power structure.

Despite some of the changes that took place in the social structure like the economic and political growth of OBCs and STs, political growth of SCs through means of reservations the marginal castes(SCs) were still dependent on traditional power holders. They were dependent for labour, loans etc, although winds of change are sweeping through with the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NAREGA) which ensures a minimum 100 days of labour. The lower castes tend to negotiate more with the traditional power holders rather than associate themselves with the newly emergent OBCs in the study villages. They were either completely subservient as in Edigapalle or grow with dependence/assistance of the dominant leaders as in Reddypalle and Pahadipur. As Cohen (1985) had argued, inclusionary programmes may result in forms of control that are more difficult to challenge as they reduce spaces of conflict and thereby disempower them to question structural constraint.



Acknowledgement

I am deeply indebted to my research supervisor Prof. Vinod K. Jairath for his invaluable guidance and motivation during the course of my thesis work. I thank him for giving me the privilege and luxury of working under conditions of freedom without any constraints what so ever. By being liberal, he trained me to carry out independent work. This apart, he was readily available to me without bothering the odd timing and his pressing preoccupations. More than a supervisor he had been a father figure to me and I knew that I never reached up to his expectations, but hopefully, sir, I shall.

I sincerely thank my doctoral committee members - Prof. Arun Patnaik and Dr. Purendra Prasad who gave me valuable suggestions during the course of my work and I can never forget their support and encouragement. Especially, Purender sir for his useful advice, constructive criticism and genuine concern- he always reminded me of my submission.

My teachers in the Department of Sociology, right from my M.A days – Prof. Haribabu, Prof. Bhat, Dr. Lakshminarayana, Prof.Jodhka, Dr. Aparna filled me with passion for the subject and been very supportive. I thank them all. Special mention must be made of Dr.Janardhan who pulled me up several times from the depths with his inspiring talks. Thank you dear Sir, I will miss you a lot. I also thank Prof.Sasheej Hegde, Head of the Department whose insistence on student seminars helped me with my submission process.

This thesis wouldn't have been possible without the help of the respondents from study villages. Interactions with them have been extremely gratifying. Meetings and informal sessions, I had with them during my field visits, have been very lively. I feel indebted to them for confiding in me and allowing me to look into their personal and social lives. Thanks to Venkatesh for being really concerned about me and for the care he took of me during my initial days of fieldwork.

I must mention the support and warmth I received from office staff Madhu, Thiru Bhai, and Bhavani. They were more like friends and we all had a nice time during the evenings. Thank you dear all for your friendship.

My friends in the department during my long stay – Dr. Ramesh Bairy, Gangesh, Muthuraman, Dr. Gurram Srinivas, Madhukar, Dr. Sadananda Sahoo, Sridhar, Dr. TLS, Dr.Kamesh, Dr. Praful Gorada – all of them stalwarts, theories used to fly like sixers and fours during the long walks and discussions with them. Thank you dear all for the support and concern. Dr.

Adam Stephan and Hema, over the years has been very encouraging too. My other friends from the department, Dr. Nagaraju (Tiger), who did my last minute editing work – thanks a lot dear friend, you are a rock; Haribabs-my dear buddy from M.Phil days, I can never forget those nights in C Hostel and D-110- spent with our other friends-thanks for all that. Vijay Kumar, my class mate from MA days was very supportive and always had a good word for me. My juniors, who were with me for the last few years, – John, Saravana, Sambit, Prasanth, Sharmila, Dileep, and Sudha – I thank them for their willingness to help me whenever I asked them.

Among my other friends from campus I must make a special mention of Arun, my wing mate, neighbour, room-mate and guardian, he is very concerned about me and my work and without whom this Ph.D. would not have been completed. Thanks will not be sufficient for the things he did for me. I will always cherish the days I spent with Haribabs and Arun and the trips we made with Prasad (Bakki), Vasana, Praveen, Chenna Reddy were all memorable affairs. Another person who helped me during my dark days and also played a crucial role in my Ph.D work had been my 'guruvugaru', Dr. Ananth. I always looked to him for guidance and he never disappointed me. Two people who always shored up my confidence levels whenever I spoke with them were Raghubabs and Steven Raj. I can never forget their warmth and their admiration of me sometimes make me feel shy and uncomfortable. Eswarappa, Mega, Chiya, Kishore (Konda), Kishore (Bujji), Sravan, Srikanth, Basid, Pamu and all hostel mates whom I forgot to mention...my stay was pleasant because of you. Thanks a lot.

I gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance provided by ICSSR during 2002-2004 and to ISRO for the Senior Research Fellowship availed as part of the project during 2004-2005.

I thank the family with whom I stayed with during my field work days who treated me more like a son than a stranger. I can never forget their affection and help in finishing my field work successfully.

Thanks to Dr. NCK Reddy, Aunty and my friend, Aparna. I would like to thank them for their quite concern, constant support and words of inspiration.

My family has been a great source of inspiration to me. I owe much to Rajina Mamayya without whom I am not here today, I knew that delaying submission of my thesis caused him lot of pain and thanks are due for *Amma* who sacrificed a lot so that I could be like this today. To *Ammadu* and her sons I hope they will forgive me for not visiting them often. There aren't any words to express my gratitude to all of them.

Srinivas Saja.



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Abbreviations

APFMISA	Andhra Pradesh Farmers Management of Irrigation Systems Act
AYG	Adarana Yojana Groups
BPL	Below Poverty Line
CADA	Command Area Development Authority
CBO	Community based organisations
CFM	Community Forest Management
CMEY	Chief Minister's Empowerment of Youth
DDP	Desert Development Programme
DFO	Divisional Forest Officer
DNRM	Decentralised Natural Resources Management
DPAP	Drought Prone Areas Programme
DWCRA	Development of women and children in rural areas
EAS	Employment Assurance Scheme
EPA	Entry point activity
GO	Government order
GS	Gram Sabha
GT	Gutta Tanda
HC	Habitation Committees
IWDP	Integrated Watershed Development Programme
JB	Janmabhoomi
JFM	Joint Forest Management
MC	Managing Committee
MC	Mothers' Committee
MDT	Multi Disciplinary Team
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MoRD	Ministry of Rural Development
MP	Member of Parliament
MPP	Mandala Praja Parishad
MPTC	Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituency
NGO	Non-Governmental organization

NR	Natural Resources
NRM	Natural Resources Management
NTFP	Non Timber Forest Products
O&M	Organisation and Management
OBC	Other Backward Caste
OC	Other Castes (upper castes)
PD	Project Director
PEC	Panchayat Education Committee
PRED	Panchayat Raj Engineering Department
PRI	Panchayat Raj Institutions
PT	Palle Tanda
RD	Rural Development
RFD	Rock filled dams
RIDF	Rural Infrastructure Development Fund
SC	Scheduled Caste
SEC	School Education Committee
SHGs	Self Help Groups
ST	Scheduled Tribe
SWPIRC	State Watershed Programme Implementation and Review Committee
TDP	Telugu Desam Party
TRS	Telangana Rashtra Samithi
VEC	Village Education Committee
VSS	Vana Samrakshana Samiti
WC	Watershed Committee
WDT	Watershed Development Team
WUA	Water Users' Associations
ZPAS	Zilla Pranalika Abhivrudhi Sameeksha
ZPASM	Zilla Pranalika Abhivrudhi Sameeksha Mandali
ZPP	Zilla Praja Parishad
ZPTC	Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituency

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Chapter I

Introduction

One of the most popular state reforms that have opened ‘spaces’ for a wider and deeper participation of citizens at the local level has been the decentralisation process. Democratic decentralisation is a key aspect of the participatory governance agenda, and is associated with the institutionalisation of participation through regular elections, council hearings and, more recently, participatory budgeting (Blair, 2000). Most of the developing countries with more than five million inhabitants have implemented decentralisation, with varying degrees of financial and political power during the 1990s (World Bank 1995). Parallel to these developments, enabling legal frameworks and institutional channels for citizen participation at the local level have been developed in many of these countries. Although decentralisation had always been an important part of the democratic process in India after it gained Independence it had limited impact on the participation of people at the grass root level development programmes. Thus during the 1990s in tune with the global phenomenon important changes were made to increase the role of people in the development process by creating decentralised development bodies at the grass root level.

Democratisation and empowerment of local administration bodies is seen as leading to increasing participation of local communities, particularly the poor people in these bodies. This is particularly true of groups that have been traditionally marginalised by local political and social processes (Blair, 2000;

Crook and Sverrisson, 2001; Crook and Manor, 1998). Studies from Africa, Asia and Latin America have shown that the introduction of elections, systems of transparency and rights of expression and association can empower poor people, enhancing their ability to participate in local decision-making and encouraging them to hold public officials to account (Blair, 2000; Crook and Manor, 1998; Crook and Sverrisson, 2001; Dreze and Sen, 2002; Manor, 1999; Rondinelli et al., 1989).

Democratic Decentralisation is the transfer of resources and power to lower level authorities which are largely or wholly independent of higher levels of government and which are democratic. It may be promoted for a number of reasons - administrative, fiscal, and political or others. However, among the reasons often given is to bring government closer to people and enhance their participation and interaction with local government officers in the affairs of the locality. It entails a new form of relationship between civil society and the local government. For instance, as Blair (1998:16) argues, the signal promise of decentralising government authority is enhancing democratic participation by encouraging more people to get involved in the politics that affect them, and making government more accountable by introducing citizen oversight and control through elections. If democracy lies in rule by the people, the promise of democratic decentralisation is to make that rule more immediate, direct, and productive. While the promise is great, a number of studies point to the gap that exists between the legal and institutional mechanisms for enhancing participation, and what actually occurs on the ground.

In India, certain cases of Democratic decentralisation have achieved both greater participation of marginal groups and social justice like in the left ruled states of West Bengal and Kerala. In both cases, decentralisation has been credited with ensuring the participation of subordinate groups – such as women, landless groups, sharecroppers and small peasants – and being directly linked to the pursuit of redistributive policies that have had pro-poor outcomes (Hariss, 2000: 15; Heller, 2001: 142).

Decentralised natural resources management has assumed importance as a development strategy, because of the claims that it can contribute towards sustainable livelihoods. Almost all the developing countries have initiated the process of decentralisation and India is one such country that was involved in this process for a long time. The introduction of development programmes with people's participation as the core theme is an indication of the progress of this process. Particularly, in the programmes like Watershed Management, Water Users Associations, and Joint Forest Management this becomes evident.

Generally, the discussions on local self-governance or democratic decentralization and participatory natural resource management do not intersect and take place in somewhat independent domains. Baumann (1998; 2000) had also emphasized the need to bring the two domains together. It is argued that it is essential to discuss democratic decentralization and participatory natural resource management together because one cannot be understood or achieved without the understanding or achievement of the other. At the grass-root level, these issues can be translated into the functioning of various 'participatory' development programmes such as

watershed development, water users associations, and joint forest management. These institutions assume a certain ‘capacity’ or ‘capability’ of people, especially those belonging to the “underprivileged” categories such as women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

It becomes interesting to see what these programmes are doing to conservation of natural resources at the local level and the difference it would make compared to the management of these resources by the bureaucracy. Andhra Pradesh is one of the first states in India to introduce these participatory programmes on a massive scale through out the state. It also had been in the forefront in the implementation of credit and thrift groups, and 73rd constitutional amendment. While all this appears to be good on paper, one has to look deeply at the empirical level to see how these are functioning and performing in diverse socio-economic and political situations.

1.1. Statement of the problem

Our study looks into the processes of Contestation, Negotiation, and Accommodation in the context of programmes for democratic decentralisation and natural resources management while examining the barriers to participation in these bodies. An attempt is made to understand how the changing power relations affect the social fabric of the village communities and its impact on the participation of various communities in the development sector at the local level. We looked at the whole process using the twin concepts of political capital and participation in understanding the dynamics of the decentralisation policy.

Both Democratic Decentralisation and Participatory Natural Resource Management imply empowerment of people to make their own decisions. The focus of the study would be to look into the implications of Democratic Decentralisation and Participatory Management in the implementation of various development programmes at the grass root level, viz., Watershed management, joint forest management, and water users associations.

From our study, it becomes evident that, one 'cause' does not produce the same effect everywhere. Different regions and villages have their own peculiarities and respond differently. Similarly, the position of different stakeholders varies. Thus we felt that it is not adequate to do the study in one village. For this reason we selected three villages whose caste composition varies significantly. This would allow one to see variations and diversity in terms of participation, awareness and the manner of contestation, negotiation, and accommodation of the existing power structure.

1.2. Objectives

- What is the impact of decentralisation on participation in the context of local governance and natural resources management?
- What are the changes brought about in the governance scenario at the village level due to the emergence of new leaders in place of the traditional elite?
- Whether decentralised natural resources management bodies and social capital are promoting sustainability?
- What is the affect of changing power relations on the social fabric of the village – how far is it leading to the empowerment of marginal sections?

1.3. Methodology:

Amangal mandal of Mahabubnagar district has been chosen as the study area.

There are 18 villages in the mandal spread over a radius of 55 Kms. Three villages¹ were selected for intensive study but, otherwise, all the villages in the mandal were covered in the study. The study villages were selected after brief visits to all the villages in the mandal. Three specific criteria were followed for selection of the villages-

1. The presence of decentralised NRM bodies like Vana Samrakshana Samiti, Watershed Committee and Water Users Association.
2. The nature of dominance and control over the positions of power in the village.
3. The caste composition and associated land distribution of population².

Importance was given to the presence of the households of Reddy caste which is the dominant one in the study area. Migration of rich peasants and members of educated upper caste households resulted in small number of Reddy households in the mandal. Other Backward Castes (OBCs³) form the majority at the mandal level comprising 46% of the population. In the three study villages they form the majority of the population.

1.3.1. Reddypalle⁴:

Reddypalle was selected as it had a substantial Reddy population and the village was under the control of one Reddy family for a very long period. The caste

¹ See Map in Appendix III

² Initially the 2001 census figures were used to satisfy this criterion in the selection of study villages. Later on a household survey was carried out in each of the study villages.

³ These are generally referred to as BCs in Andhra Pradesh.

⁴ For a detailed list of households see Appendix 2.

composition of the village was OC⁵ (24.3%), OBC (49.7%), SC (22%), ST (2%), Muslim (2%).

1.3.2. Pahadipur:

Pahadipur was selected as the village was controlled by various categories, starting from the *inamdari*⁶ Muslims followed by the money lending Vysyas and Reddys. Presently, the power base is slowly shifting towards the OBCs. This is unique as no other village had such diverse elements of dominance. Pahadipur comprises OC (7%), OBC (52.40%) ST (24%), SC (15%), Muslim (1.60%).

1.3.3. Edigapalle:

Edigapalle was a new panchayat as it got the status in 1988 and from the beginning the OBCs controlled the panchayat affairs. This is also a unique case in the mandal. Edigapalle comprises of OC (11%), OBC (71%), SC (11%), ST (5%), Muslim (2%).

The idea was to look at the process of contestation and negotiation between various communities with regard to power and the consequent developments which had their impact on participation and development.

1.3.4. Preliminary Study:

Preliminary study was carried out for two months during May-June 2001. Janmabhoomi⁷ programme was being carried out at that point of time so it was

⁵ Other Castes (OC); OBC was used here although in AP they were referred to as BCs as it means SCs and STs also. Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) were the other categories of population in the study villages.

⁶ Pahadipur was an *inamdari* village, which means it was given as an *inam* (gift for offering a service) to maintain a shelter and provide for the Nizam and his entourage during his hunting trips. Most of the Muslim families started migrating to Hyderabad after police action, culminating in late 1980s. Now very few families remain.

⁷ Janmabhoomi was a campaign based program of TDP government that took place during 1997-2004.

much easier to interact with various leaders, officials and people as gramsabhas were being conducted as part of the programme in each and every village. During this period, I gathered information about villages in the mandal. Finally we selected the three villages, keeping various requirements of the study in view.

1.3.5. Data Collection:

Fieldwork was carried out by using participant observation method by staying in the villages. Basic information was gathered through a structured questionnaire (for household survey) followed by informal in depth interviews, and group discussions during a period of fourteen months stretched over three years during 2001 to 2004. Brief trips were made to the field again during 2006. After spending an initial time of four months in the field, specific trips were made to attend meetings of the gram panchayat and general body meetings of the NRM bodies. I did not try to collect data from day one of my field work. Instead I tried to cultivate relationships with people from various communities, leaders, and bureaucrats which proved immensely helpful when I started my data collection.

1.3.6. Specific Research Questions

Although I had already set some preliminary questions to start the dialogue, I need a set of questions, which would be more ‘topical’ or ‘specific’ so as to enable generation of information at the field level (Stake, 1995). I would then link them to the main research questions in the form of ‘theoretical abstraction’ while interpreting and evaluating the findings against theories I set in the conceptual framework. With the paradigmatic position of this inquiry, it was not possible to develop such specific research questions outside the social setting because I needed

to be context-specific. The paradigmatic understanding only gave me a picture of whatever the data might be, in order to develop some strategic questions (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

1.3.7. Framework of specific research questions

Methodologically, I concentrated on understanding people's perception about participation and I applied similar questions to the traditionally dominant groups. This enabled me to compare the perceptions of both the people and the dominant sections regarding their idea on participation and the negotiation processes involved. It was based on these specific questions that the relevant research methods were selected and used to generate data.

1.3.8. Interviewing:

We cannot rely on what people say without exploring what they are not directly saying, but which we know exists in their framework of understanding. We have to actively seek for both sides of the contrast during our conversation with them so as to get to their understanding, as it exists in their minds. We will otherwise jump to conclusions of what we think people mean, especially where something sounds familiar to us. It is this active seeking for meanings as they exist in people's mental framework without impeding the flow of the conversations that makes this kind of interviewing different from the other types of open-ended interviews.

1.3.9. Focus group interviews:

The first step was to interview some selected people individually. Upon analysis of the data, a number of perceptual issues were noted as common to most of the new

leaders in the village. These were mostly those that had to come to power after the introduction of DNRM bodies and reservations in panchayats. In this case, I gained more clarity on their perceptions in focus group discussions, as people were asking questions to each other and also encouraging one another.

1.3.10. Observations:

There were several ways of doing this. For instance, I observed the interactions during meetings which was a more direct type of observation, the ‘participant as observer’ approach (Alder and Alder, 1994). Another way of observing was during interviews, where I observed the interviewees conduct in both individual and focus groups discussion aspect, for conceptualizing the perceptions of both people and leaders about participation and sustainability because as Collins rightly argues. Interviews are social interactions in which meaning is necessarily negotiated between a numbers of selves (and in which power may be more or less shared) (*Collins, 1998, section 1.6*).

Ethical issues arise when the researcher deliberately conceals his or her position while living among people who are being studied, in order to get into their personal lives without their consent (Bulmer, 1982). Although I did not deceive them about the purpose of my study I also did not tell them what exactly I was studying because study of power relations is a complex topic which requires a lot of patience from the researcher.

Central Government Ministerial Reports, Andhra Pradesh Government Orders, Statistical Reports of the government of Andhra Pradesh, Census of India Reports and also information from various books, periodicals, journals, unpublished

doctoral theses, daily newspapers and pamphlets were used to collect secondary data.

1.4. Scheme of Chapters:

This thesis consists of eight chapters including the introduction and conclusion. The first chapter provides a brief introduction to the process of decentralisation followed by methodology.

Second chapter provides a discussion on the conceptual framework of Democratic Decentralisation. In this chapter important concepts like various forms of decentralisation was traced out which was followed by the important concept of participation and its importance in the decentralised governance. An attempt has been made to explore the applicability of the concept of social capital which was followed by the concept of political capital.

The third chapter provides a background to the study as the formation of the state of Andhra Pradesh is discussed followed by a small section on Telangana movement and political developments in the state and the reform process in the regimes of Chandrababu Naidu and YS Rajasekhar Reddy (YSR). A brief history of Panchayat Raj in Andhra Pradesh is given followed by a glance at the Janmabhoomi programme of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) government and a list of welfare schemes introduced by YSR. This section is followed by the institutional structure of the Panchayat Raj and the NRM bodies where in the manner of election to Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) and the formation of

committees in Joint Forest Management (JFM), Watershed and Water Users Associations (WUAs) has been outlined.

The fourth chapter describes the field setting. A profile of the district, mandal and the study villages is given in this chapter including an introduction to various coalitions and power groups in the study villages. The following three chapters deal with analysis of field data.

The fifth chapter focuses on the explanation of the interplay of power relations between the existing elite and the newly emergent political class belonging to backward communities. Applying the concept of 'spaces for participation' of Cornwall and effort had been made to look into the effect of this on the participation of newly elected members in the Panchayats and the pressure and control exerted by existing elite.

The sixth chapter looked into the functioning of various NRM bodies like JFM, WS and WUAs. This chapter looks into the actual functioning of the new leaders within the constraints imposed by the existing elite. We tried to see what was happening to the chief objective of these programmes – that of participatory development and sustainability and how various stakeholders perceived it.

The seventh is a mini chapter in which we looked at the concept of power as the elected representatives of local bodies both old and new cling on to some position of power once they got elected. We tried to explain this phenomenon by using the concepts of Patronage, Co-option and Accommodation.

The eighth chapter concludes the thesis. In this chapter a brief summary of the findings of the study was given followed by the observations and suggestions for future study.



Chapter II

Democratic Decentralisation and Natural Resources Management: An Overview of Literature

Twenty first century has been seen as the era of democracy. Starting from the post World War II period several countries which gained independence embraced democracy and the experiments with it have continued ever since. During the 1980's, many influential people in African, Asian and Latin American governments, in international development agencies, and in academic domain became enthusiastic about decentralisation in less developed countries. It was in some ways surprising that decentralisation should arouse such interest, since an earlier wave of experiments with it in Africa and Asia had largely floundered a generation earlier. Beginning in the 1950s in South Asia and in the 1960s in Africa, various attempts had been made to 'bring government closer to the people' and to tap the creativity and resources of local communities by giving them the chance to participate in development. (Crook and Manor, 1998:1) Perhaps because of the collapse of Communism, the potential contributions of decentralisation to the enhancement of participation, good governance and democratisation have received most emphasis, pushing the more long-standing concern with its role in economic development into second place.

2.1. Decentralisation:

The essence of decentralisation is democratisation of power. Democratisation means participation of the people in decision making process of newly created organisations, institutions and agencies. Thus, it can be said that dispersal of

control over power is the main concern of decentralisation. ‘Decentralisation’ has been engaged with by different scholars (Maddick, 1963; Rondinelli, 1981; Conyers, 1981; Parker, 1995; Manor, 1999). It can be understood as a political process whereby administrative authority, public resources and responsibilities are transferred from Central Government agencies to lower-level of organs of Government or to non-Governmental bodies, such as community based organisations (CBO), third party non-Governmental organizations (NGOs), or private sector actors (Crook and Manor, 1998).

In specific terms, decentralisation may focus on different aspects. Thus it implies primarily, the following three trajectories:

- Deconcentration or administrative decentralisation
- Delegation or Fiscal Decentralisation
- Devolution or Democratic Decentralisation

Deconcentration refers to the dispersal of agents of higher levels of government into lower level arenas. Parker (1995) describes it as “administrative decentralisation”. This would mean representatives of government from higher level move into lower levels. But in this, the central government is not giving up any authority. It is simply relocating its officers at local level. And in practice this may lead to more centralization rather than decentralisation. Manor (1999) argues that while deconcentration produces, in effect, the opposite of decentralisation it can sometimes give people at lower levels some voice in the decisions made within state institutions, and in those cases it can produce a degree of genuine decentralisation.

Delegation is the transfer of certain responsibilities to lower level authorities. This is also equated with fiscal decentralisation, where decisions on budget are given to lower levels. Again, the authorities are accountable to superior bodies at higher levels. According to Manor (1999) fiscal decentralisation unattended by any steps towards democratisation rarely increases the influence of organized interests at lower levels. However, when such fiscal transfers are linked to mechanisms which give people at lower levels some voice, no one would describe it as anything other than decentralisation.

Devolution is the transfer of resources and power to lower level authorities which are largely or wholly independent of higher levels of government and which are democratic. This form of decentralisation is called Democratic Decentralisation which cannot be complete without active participation from the local communities. This changed and changing situation could be explained by the fact that in most cases the decentralisation experiments have been introduced by the government at the top and not as a result of the demand from below, i.e., local communities. ‘Sustainable development of capacity at the local level is possible only when there is effective demand by local administrations and communities’ (World Bank Report 1995:viii cited in Manor 1999:7). Manor (1999) contends that Devolution or Democratic Decentralisation is likely to fail if the lower level authorities lack powers and resources – meaning both financial resources and the administrative resources to implement development projects. Shah (1997) opines that, unless some form of democratisation took place along the lines of administrative/fiscal decentralisation it would be difficult for such a demand for

decentralisation to come from the lower levels. Manor (1999) has shown that decentralisation can improve government effectiveness and accountability when elected bodies at local levels have adequate funds, and subsequently they enjoy substantive autonomy from higher-level bodies, and lines of accountability exist between elected representatives and citizens, and between non-elected bureaucrats and elected representatives.

Decentralisation is a double-edged sword. It is seen as essential for sustainable development, on the one hand, and a source of reinforcing existing inequalities, on the other. Johnson (2001) states that studies of decentralisation have shown that devolution can enhance rural livelihoods in a number of ways. Collaboration between public agencies and local resource users can produce synergistic outcomes in which communities and bureaucracy co-operate to provide outcomes that would be unobtainable were they acting alone. Classic examples of this would include JFM (IFAD, 2001) and participatory watershed management (Farrington et al., 2000). There is also the problem of local elite capture. As numerous studies (eg. Blair, 2000; Crook and Manor, 1998; Crook and Sverrisson, 2001; Dreze and Sen, 1996; Manor, 1999) have pointed out, one of the dangers of decentralisation is that it may simply empower local elites and, worse, perpetuate existing poverty and inequality.

Looking first at the local-level factor (the configuration of local societies), it has long been argued that decentralisation, particularly devolution of decision-making power to elected representative councils, even at the lowest level (village scale) tends to empower local elites insofar as they are best placed (and most likely) to

capture such institutions. For Smith (1985: 193), this implies that decentralisation is an inherently conservative strategy, on the assumption that local elites would be predominantly hostile to reform and to the empowerment of locally subordinate groups, precisely because of the proximity and intensity of their relationships and the dependency of the mass of the poor. Leonard and Marshall (1982), however, suggest a more differentiated model, based on an analysis of the *extent* to which there is an antagonistic relationship between local power holders and dominated groups. The strategies of decentralisation would differ in consonance with the type of local class relationships, with external support more required where relations are antagonistic or where there are strong ‘vertical’ (ethnic/religious) divides. Therefore, a study of decentralisation should incorporate a comparative analysis which takes into account variation of local relations of dominance.

Crook and Sverrisson (1999:1-3) mentioned that the main contribution of Leonard and Marshall was, therefore, to problematise two essential questions about the likely impact of devolved decentralisation:

- whether elite capture of democratised local governments is inevitable, and
- how the complexities of local class structures and power relations will affect who captures the new structures and with what effect.

2.2. Natural Resources Management

Land, Water, and Forests are the most prominent natural resources in the world today. Particularly industrialisation and the resultant pressure on natural resources have led to a debate on sustainable practices of managing natural resources. Over

the years, modern state has taken over management of the natural resources from local communities and managed it while denying any ownership rights to the people, which assume greater significance in the case of forests. This particular phenomenon continued even after gaining independence as the state continued its control over natural resources. With the realisation of the importance of stakeholders' participation in Natural Resources Management (NRM) there is a paradigm shift since the 1980s when management of the Natural Resources (NR) was being turned over to the local communities the world over.

The limited effectiveness of the state in managing natural resources, especially at the local level was another important reason for the state in going for transfer of powers to the stakeholders. The state may formulate rules governing the use of resources, but if it cannot percolate them to the bottom, the rules tend to lose meaning. Colonial regime and subsequently the post-colonial state have increasingly undermined the involvement of local institutions in managing these resources. But it is common knowledge that, local users will have an advantage over government agents for several reasons. First, local users have intimate knowledge of the resource. This is especially important where the resource is highly variable over space and time. By living and working in the area, users may also have a comparative advantage over government agents in monitoring resource use and rule compliance. Furthermore, because their livelihoods depend on the resource, local users are often assumed to have the greatest incentives to maintain the resource base over time. With growing pressures to use resources more efficiently, equitably, and sustainably, the optimism that communities or user groups may be able to manage the resources more effectively than

government agencies has formed the basis for many programmes that attempt to create or recreate local common property management regimes (Meinzen-Dick and Knox: 43).

Interest in devolution of decision-making power to user groups has coincided with greater emphasis on public participation and democratization, which seek the involvement of citizens affected by programs, for social goals of empowering local people as well as goals of improving program performance. Devolution policies are consistent with these trends because they transfer decision-making from government "outsiders" to users who are directly affected.

Local collective action can be instrumental in finding rules and allocation of the resources between different users in a way that is seen as equitable by the users themselves. There are therefore *equity* as well as *productivity* arguments for collective action in NRM. A critical question, then, for devolution programs, is: under what conditions will collective action emerge and be strong enough to manage natural resources? While there are no universal, definitive answers, a number of factors can be identified as increasing the likelihood of collective resource management. These include characteristics of the resource or the group of users, such as:

- returns to the resource and importance of the resource for local people's livelihoods
- users have a long time horizon and relatively low discount rate for future benefits;
- size of the management units is large enough that they cannot be captured

by individuals, but not so large that they cannot be monitored by the group;

- a history of cooperation and networks among group members (often referred to as "social capital");
- local social structure in which divisions are not too serious or disruptive of cooperation (Vermillion 1996; Baland and Platteau 1998);
- local leadership with the confidence of the members, and that takes an interest in natural resources. (Meinzen-Dick and Knox, 2002: 46)

2.3. Participation:

From local 'co-governance' and 'co-management' institutions promoted by supra-national agencies and institutionalized by national governments (Ackerman 2004, Manor 2004), to the explosion in the use of participatory and deliberative mechanisms, from Citizens Juries to Participatory Poverty Assessments (Fischer 2000, Chambers 2000), the last decade has been one in which the 'voices' of the public, and especially of 'the poor', have increasingly been sought. A confluence of development and democratization agendas has brought citizen engagement in governance to centre stage. Decentralisation policies promoted in the 1990s claimed to bring government closer to 'the people' (Blair 2000; UNDP 2003). Governance and sector reforms, instigated and promoted by lending agencies and bilateral donors, created a profusion of sites in which citizens came to be enlisted in enhancing accountability and state responsiveness (Crook and Sverisson 2003; Manor 2004; Goetz and Jenkins 2004).

Over the past three decades participation has become one of the most important concepts in contemporary development theory and practice, often directly linked to claims of ‘empowerment’ and ‘transformation’. Of late, there is a counter argument about the use of the concept as it is being felt that participatory approaches have often failed to achieve meaningful social change, largely due to a failure to engage with issues of power and politics. (Hickey and Mohan, 2005: 237). An important criticism of participation had been that many of the participatory approaches had been the policies imposed from above with the stakeholders having no real control over the programmes that they are being part of. Rahnema (1997) argues that participants are forced to do something which is actually being direct by outside intervention. He states that participation is reduced to the act of taking part in the objectives of the economy and the societal arrangements related to it. That’s why he calls participation a politically attractive slogan and a good fund raising device. Though there were arguments against the imposition of participation in the development debates (see Cooke and Kothari 2001) it continued to have its admirers. They argued that participatory approaches failed to achieve the desired goal of social change in a meaningful manner as proper attention was not paid to the issues of power and politics.

As more and more emphasis began to be laid on the aspect of governance in the 1990s attention was shifted to participation and the other important factor – inclusion. While talking about democracy and development. But the process of

inclusion was viewed as a tool to exercise control and it does not always benefit the marginalised. (See Cohen, 1985; Isin and Wood, 1999; Kothari, 2001)⁸.

Democratic Decentralisation in developing countries has come under increasing criticism (Crook and Sverrisson, 2001) due to the failure of decentralisation to overcome socio-economic disparities within local authority regions and the likelihood of elite capture; the tendency for the forms of participation introduced by decentralisation to be subsumed either within more informal modes of patronage in ways that nullify its transformative potential (Francis and James, 2003), or to be negated by over-riding socio-cultural norms, as with the quota representation for minority groups (Kapoor, 2000; Tripp, 2000).

Cornwall and Coelho (2006) argue that, simply putting structures of participation in place is not enough to create viable political institutions. Much comes to depend on the motivations of those who enter them, and what 'participation' means to them. Institutionalists have argued that the key to enhancing participation is to be found in better institutional designs - in rules and decision making processes that encourage actors to participate (Fung 2003). Social movement theorists have argued that the key lies in social mobilization that pushes for fairer distribution of available resources (Tarrow 1994; Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar 1998). Arguing about the motives for participation Cornwall and Coelho point out that expanding democratic engagement calls for more than invitations to participate (ibid.). For people to be able to exercise their political

⁸ Kothari claims the very act of inclusion symbolizes an exercise of power and control over individual. Isin and Wood suggest that the process of inclusion does not always benefit the marginalized. Cohen argues inclusionary programmes may result in forms of control that are more difficult to challenge as they reduce spaces of conflict and thereby disempower them to question structural constraint.

agency, they need first to recognize themselves as citizens rather than see themselves as beneficiaries or clients.

2.3.1. Spaces:

Reforms in governance have generated a profusion of new spaces for citizen engagement as constitutional and governance reforms have given rise to entirely new structures. These hybrid ‘new democratic spaces’ (Cornwall and Coelho 2004) are intermediate, situated as they are at the interface between the state and society; they are also, in many respects, conduits for negotiation, information and exchange. They may be provided for by the state, backed in some settings by legal or constitutional guarantees and regarded by state actors as *their* space into which citizens and their representatives are invited. Yet they may also be seen as spaces conquered by civil society demands for inclusion. Some are fleeting, one-off consultative events; others are regularized institutions with a more durable presence on the governance landscape.

Gaventa (2004) suggests different entry points for understanding power in new political spaces. These involve how spaces are created, the levels of engagement and the degree of visibility of power within them. There are ‘invited spaces’ into which people are invited to participate by various kinds of authorities. Another set is the ‘claimed spaces’ which are claimed by struggles for legitimacy and resistance, co-option and transformation. Elaborating further, Cornwall argued that “...efforts to engage participation can be thought of as creating spaces where there was previously none, about enlarging spaces where previously there were

very limited opportunities for public involvement, and about allowing people to occupy spaces that were previously denied to them” (2004:77)

Cornwall (2004) makes a more specific analysis of dynamics of power within ‘invited spaces’ concerning the challenge of inclusive participation. She distinguishes between ‘popular spaces’ and ‘invited spaces’. In popular spaces a homogeneous set of people join together in collective action, the latter brings together a heterogeneous set of actors. Heterogeneity is in terms of significant differences in status. Cornwall argues that invited spaces are never natural. Embedded with existing relations of power, interaction within citizens who are ‘invited’ may reproduce rather than challenge existing hierarchies and inequalities.

However both Gaventa and Cornwall are wary of the success of the participatory governance. While Gaventa talks of the impact of power relations. Cornwall points out the importance of contextual arrangements and their impact on participation. So we are back to the central emphasis of our thesis – the importance of contextual factors especially the socio-political conditions. Without bringing about a change in these conditions it is difficult to envision the success of participatory programmes as the existing elite will always use the conditions of power to their advantage in reinforcing their authority. Much depends on *who* enters these spaces, on *whose* terms and with *what* ‘epistemic authority’ (Chandoke 2003 cited in Cornwall and Coelho 2006:4)

Unless participatory processes take into account the relative bargaining power of so-called stakeholders they are in danger of merely providing opportunities for the more powerful (Hildyard et.al. 2001). As argued by Uma Kothari (2001) the ritual practices of PRA actually serve to subvert it, by producing front stage performances that conceal both the ‘real’ reality of the back stage and come to be taken for that reality.

But unlike Uma Kohtari (2001) Cornwall is optimistic about the strategic reversibility of power relations. Referring to Scott’s (1985) ‘Weapons of the Weak’ she argues that everyday forms of resistance which are voiced in ‘hidden transcripts’, i.e., back stage commentaries through which speakers define countervailing realities in their own terms may bring transformation.

2.4 Collective Action - Social Capital - Political Capital:

The Oxford Dictionary of Sociology defines collective action as “action taken by a group (either directly or on its behalf through an organization) in pursuit of members’ perceived shared interests” (Marshall 1998). It implies collective participation of people in the decision-making processes that have a bearing on their perceived shared interests.

The past decade and a half has been dominated by efforts to promote a more participatory approach to various development programmes. However, it was in the 1950s, and particularly in the 1960s, that these initiatives, via the actions of processes of community development, sought to involve local people in efforts to

improve their communities. Community development at this time also sought to build community-based organisations (CBOs) to serve as vehicles through which local people could get actively involved.

Of late, efforts are being made to involve stakeholders in the management process by 'giving them' (another example of top down approach) responsibility of managing the resources, particularly those that fall under the common property resources – water, forests, grazing lands. People's participation certainly is the mainstay of Common Property Management. Once it is received as a Common property, people have to construct mechanisms to maintain it and a good understanding is essential for doing this. This may be termed as 'cooperation' for common property management. But there is no reason to believe that occurrence of cooperative management is without troubles. Every individual user may expect other to undertake the work of maintenance. Each individual may try to exploit more than the other, leading to a situation of crisis.

2.4.1. Social Capital

Theories of collective action propounded by Hardin, Olson, Ostrom have expressed their doubts on the ability of people to manage the common property resources like land, water and forests. They argue that people on their own cannot manage a common resource and the control of an external agency should be there for its proper maintenance without which it would lead to a tragedy. But studies of Sengupta (1991) and Wade (1989) demonstrated the fallacy of these theories. Ostrom (1990) has indicated that it is the situation specific factors that play a major role in this kind of situations. The common argument of all these theories is that rational individuals when left with the responsibility of management of

Common Property will not be able to do so in the proper way resulting in the tragedy of commons (Srinivas, 2000:8-9).

Theories of collective action are considered to be the precursors for the development of the idea of social capital in the 90's. 'Mancur Olson, Jr. was widely considered as one of the main architects of the conceptual framework that gave rise to the concept of social capital. In "The Logic of Collective Action", he helped identify the mechanisms of social interaction by individuals or groups which affect the provision of public goods' (Grootaert, 1998:ii). The main driving force was to understand why countries with similar endowments of natural, physical, and human capital have achieved very different levels of economic performance. So have regions or cities within countries, and even communities within regions or cities. The answer lies in the amount of social capital that they have or developed. Although there are distinct traces of the concept in earlier writings, the analysis of social capital at the micro level is usually associated with Robert Putnam (1993)⁹. After Putnam's seminal work on the civic institutions in Italy and his coining of the term 'social capital' to describe why certain communities develop much more than others, it became an immediate 'mantra' for development. Grootaert (1997) has described it as the 'missing link' in the development paradigm.

A reciprocal relationship exists between social capital and democracy. An increase in the membership of individuals in a number of organizations,

⁹ The word *social capital* was used with a different meaning by Alfred Marshall in 1890. Woolcock (1998) identifies Lydia Judson Hanifan (1920) and Jane Jacobs (1961) as the first proponents of the modern concept of social capital.

associations, clubs and groups increases the level of participation and engagement of individuals with their communities in collective action. The concept of social capital received increasing attention in the dominant or mainstream development discourse during the last decade. The World Bank and other development funding bodies contributed substantially to popularisation of this concept.¹⁰ Social capital has also been projected as a useful concept for the study of common property and community-based natural resource management (See Ostrom 1994, Grootaert 1998, Baumann 2000).

2.4.2. Defining Social Capital:

Putnam introduced the concept of social capital in the final chapter of his 'Making Democracy Work' (1993). After discussing the dilemmas of collective action in their different versions, he pointed out that the features of social organisations, such as trust, norms, and networks, could considerably improve a society's efficiency in overcoming dilemmas of collective action. He used the term 'social capital' to refer to these features. Putnam argued that networks of civic engagement, which represented horizontal networks, essentially promoted trust, reciprocity and co-operation within society. In contrast, vertical networks such as patron-client relationships cannot sustain social trust and co-operation and tend to undermine solidarity among clients. (Putnam 1993). Social capital refers to trust, networks and norms shared by a group of actors that enable them to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives. It is a resource a capital that consists of relations you have with other people. Social Capital is a product of collective thinking and activities. Collective thinking and activities depend on socialization

¹⁰ See the social capital homepage at www.worldbank.org/poverty/scapital/index.htm

and internalization of values and norms for compliance with common community goals, collective participation and action of the members of the community (Coleman 1988; Anirudh Krishna, 2003 & Norman Uphoff, 1999).

“Some academicians have questioned the use of the word ‘capital’ to capture the essence of social interactions and attitudes. Indeed, social capital exhibits a number of characteristics that distinguish it from other forms of capital. First unlike physical capital, but like human capital, social capital can accumulate as a result of its use. Put differently, social capital is both an input into and an output of collective action.” Grootaert & Bastelaer 2001:7). Kanchan Chopra (2002) interprets social capital as the network between sets of agents located in different conventional sectors, which is critical to the success of such development interventions. Innovative interactions between these agents help solve problems of the community and motivate appropriate use of resources. The very forces and variables that bring a sense of collectivity and integration can become reasons for conflict when there is lack of integration with more formal institutions.

By just aggregating trust and associations, it is not possible to analyse the relation between social capital and collective action. It is not just the *number* of associations but their *quality* that help coordinate effort in society. It is the quality of social ties that determine the type of associational life and also influence popular mobilization for collective action (Hans Blomkvist & Ashok Swain, 2001).

The concept of social capital has been used to understand collective functioning based upon trust within a society. Development has come to be perceived more

recently as a product of partnership between the state and civil society with increasing emphasis on people's participation at the grass roots. D'Silva & Pai's (2003) study of three villages in Adilabad district of Andhra Pradesh identifies the conditions under which social capital can be formed and sustained at the village level to enable collective action. The significance of social capital in the process of development can be seen from the many projects that have failed- not because of lack of funds or technical insufficiency, but because local people did not have a sense of ownership and participation.

The study of Behroonguda and Powerguda by Emmanuel D'Silva and Sudha Pai shows that the development projects were successful primarily because of the social capital: "the absence of 'natural hierarchies' combined with little or no differences in land ownership, education, income or life style, has helped in collective action based on trust between the villagers which underlies the successful execution of the JFM and WD programmes." Another village Krishtapur mentioned in the same study was not able to reap the benefits of development projects due to the prevalence of factionalism within the village community. Hence the social structure of the Krishtapur village was not conducive for formation of social capital or collective action as in Behroonguda and Powerguda (Ibid:1409).

Fukuyama (2001) has emphasized on the importance of education as a means for building social capital in a society as it provides socialization and creates common values and ideas and is said to effect the formation of social capital. But the findings from the study of Behroonguda and Powerguda D'Silva and Pai (2003)

state that traditional and cultural norms rather than education remain the main source of social capital. Education has not generated social change within these villages where as in another village Kistapur, higher rate of literacy has contributed to greater differentiation of income, lifestyle and values among individuals and between different generations in the village. A strong leadership, trust in the leadership by other members of the village/community and support of the people within the community as well as outside the community of influential persons along with a favourable social environment helps in building social capital and ensuring collective action.

Coleman (1988:98) says that, “like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible”. He also cautions that, “A given form of social capital that is valuable in facilitating certain actions may be useless or even harmful for others” (Ibid). The importance of existing factors and a suitable situation is very important for building up of social capital. “All social relations and social structures facilitate some forms of social capital and actors establish relations purposefully and continue them when they continue to provide benefits. Certain kinds of social structure, however, are especially important in facilitating some forms of social capital.” (Ibid: 105)

Where do these criticisms of the idea of social capital...leave us? Short of dismissing the term altogether, one possible resolution of these concerns may be that there are different types, levels, or dimensions of social capital, different performance outcomes associated with different combinations of these

dimensions, and different sets of conditions that support or weaken favourable combinations. Unravelling and resolving these issues requires a more dynamic than static understanding of social capital; it invites a more detailed examination of the intellectual history of social capital, and the search for lessons from empirical research that embrace a range of many such dimensions, levels, or conditions. (Woolcock as quoted in Fine, 1999)

In recent literature on social capital, these varied relationships between trust and particular types of social and political outcomes have been differentiated in terms of the categories of bonding, bridging and linking social capital. Bonding social capital is that which binds members of communities strongly to each other, and therefore makes it more difficult for them to transcend their group or community identity to unite for common purposes with members of other communities and groups. Bridging social capital is that which enables individuals to forge links with others in society regardless of ascriptive affiliations. And Linking social capital describes the ties between poor people, on the one hand, and a variety of influential people in government agencies, banks and schools on the other (Hariss 2001:87).

It is interesting to note that the World Bank and other donor agencies view that social capital is the missing link in development and it is evident in the agenda for Decentralised Natural Resources Management, since many projects take the construction of social capital through associational activity as their main focus. However, it should also be considered whether all such associations promote democratic participation and equity, especially in a deeply hierarchical society

such as India' (Putzel, 1997; Rudolph, 2000). A growing body of scholarship has shown that social capital has a 'dark side' and that associations can be exclusive and used to further narrow interests. Social capital also has an important "downside" (Portes and Landholt 1996); communities, groups or networks which are isolated, parochial or working at cross purposes to society's collective interests (e.g. drugs cartels, corruption rackets) can actually hinder economic and social development.

Bourdieu's approach represents a more critical view of society. Bourdieu defines social capital as the totality of all actual and potential resources associated with the possession of a lasting network of more or less institutionalised relations of knowing or respecting each other. His concept of social capital encompasses the resources derived from one's belonging to a group which could be nobility, party, clan, club, family and so forth. He used the concept to explain why persons holding similar economic and cultural capital differ in their achievements. Consequently, Bourdieu's concept of social capital has been used widely in the study of social inequality and hierarchical social structures. Social capital as a means to exclude others from access to resources has been a major focus of those influenced by Bourdieu. (Birner & Wittmer 2000: 2-3).

Krishna presents three contending positions with respect to the role of social capital in explaining economic development, community peace, and democratic participation. 'These are, first, the social capital thesis (claiming substantial cause on behalf of social capital); the structuralist or institutionalist position (asserting causal priority for structures, and claiming social capital to be a

residual effect of structures); and the intermediate position, implying contingent causal value' (2003:15).

The first, the social capital thesis, is associated with Robert Putnam's formulation in his Italian study. It implies that 'Social capital is ...both necessary and sufficient for explaining social outcomes' (Krishna, 2003: 16). The second, the structuralist, position assigns no causal value to social capital and treats it as an effect or residue. For example, Sidney Tarrow states that 'civic capacity [is] a byproduct of politics, state building, and social structure' (Tarrow, 1996:396). It is interesting to note here that Krishna does not mention Bourdieu in this context and, in fact, throughout the book. Summing up the first two positions, Krishna notes that 'While the first view considers social capital as exogenous, an independent and explanatory variable for the analysis, the competing view casts it as endogenous and dependent' (2003:20).

Anirudh Krishna rejects both these positions, citing lack of empirical support from his study of 1898 respondents in 69 villages in the Indian states of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. The third position, to which Krishna belongs, assigns only partial causal value to social capital. 'Social capital matters contextually and in part....' (2003:27). Treating villages as the basic unit of analysis, Krishna sums up conclusions from his study thus:

Villages high in social capital do not always perform well with respect to economic development, community peace, or democratic participation; and villages that have relatively lower levels of social capital often perform better. In addition to high levels of social capital, the analysis shows, there also needs to be an appropriate *mediating agency*, which activates the stock of social capital and makes it more productive. High levels of social capital do not automatically translate into better outcomes within any of the three domains – unless there are agents present in the village who are capable and effective (2003:8-9).

Now, who are these agents ‘who are capable and effective’? According to Krishna, ‘Agents who have regular contact with state officials and market operators and *who are familiar with their procedures and practices* can help villagers organise themselves in ways that are more likely to succeed’ (2003:9; emphasis added). *Thus improvement in economic development and democratic participation is reduced merely to the matter of better understanding of bureaucratic procedures and practices.* The new activators of latent social capital in rural India are the better educated, better informed, unemployed young leaders. And, according to Krishna, social structure, caste hierarchy, land ownership, power and control are of no consequence for the emergence of these new leaders. Yet another ‘missing link’ is simply education, and awareness that comes from exposure to mass media. ‘This new set of younger leaders is neither usually high-caste nor from the richest households of the village. But they are the agents whose services villagers find useful for wresting state funding for development projects and for petitioning state agents on behalf of villagers’ needs’ (2003:29). This is where the distinction between narrowly defined instrumental political capital of new emergent elite from the middle and peasant castes and structural political capital which registers power and control is critical.

2.4.3. Political Capital

Putnam’s approach has been readily accepted in the dominant development discourse. However, more in line with Bourdieu’s view, some critics like Pari Baumann (2000) have felt the need to have an additional concept of ‘political capital’ as a simple use of the concept of ‘social capital’ brushes aside the issues of power, control and structural contradictions. In a strongly argued paper, Baumann (2000:6) states that political capital ‘is one of the key capital assets on

which people draw to build their livelihoods'. To a large extent, political capital is proposed as a means of overcoming some of the problems of using 'social capital' as a catch-all concept for explaining the importance of non-material factors in poverty.

Booth and Richard (1998) have used the concept of 'political capital' to define associational activism which influences political regimes. They used four measures of political capital: democratic norms, voting, campaign activism and contacting public officials. They conclude that political capital rather than social capital links formal group activism to democracy in Central America. One of the most extensive elaborations of political capital, as an operational concept, comes from Regina Birner and Heidi Wittmer (2000:6), who propose a distinction between 'instrumental' and 'structural' political capital.

Birner and Wittmer foregrounded the distinction between instrumental resources and infra-resources, in political resource theory, as the distinction between private perspective and the public perspective and used it as the basis for their definitions of instrumental and structural political capital. They argued that, 'in the private perspective, political capital consists of the resources which an actor, i.e. an individual or a group, can dispose of and use to influence policy formation processes and realise outcomes which are in the actor's perceived interest. This definition of political capital corresponds to the instrumental resources in political resource theory' (2000:6). They, therefore, proposed the term 'instrumental political capital' to denote the perspective of the private frontier.

In the public perspective, political capital refers to the structural variables of the political system and corresponds to the concept of infra-resources in political resource theory.

Structural political capital "refers to the structural variables of the political system which influence the possibilities of diverse actors to accumulate instrumental political capital and condition the effectiveness of different types of political capital". This includes not only democratic political institutions, political openness, devolution, and civil rights, but also 'perverse political capital' such as institutions of repression (which can catalyse activism and demand-making). (Birner and Wittmer 2000:6).

The distinction between instrumental and structural political capital is extremely important to understand how the 'political' is brought in to not see the 'perverse' political capital (which is an aspect of structural political capital) but present it as something contributing to deepening of democracy. We find that criticisms of the concept of social capital, especially in terms of the invisibility of the relations of power and control, has led to attempts to incorporate the political, in a sanitised form, in a modified account of social capital. This can be seen in Anirudh Krishna's 'Active Social Capital' (2003). Here we will briefly examine his formulation of the role of social capital and the necessity of its 'activation' by agents called 'political entrepreneurs' in explaining economic development and democratic participation.

2.4.4. Political fixers: Exercising Instrumental Political Capital:

The nature of such 'new leaders' in India is discussed in two excellent papers (Reddy and Haragopal 1985; Manor 2000). Reddy and Haragopal present the institution of *pyraveekar*; these are 'fixers' who fill a gap between the state and the people wherever effective intermediate institutions do not exist.

The *pyraveekar* is a middleman possessing professional skills in exerting pressure on the administrative system through what is known as *pyravee* – that is, the art of approaching officials for favours and making the wheels

of administration move in support of such favours. The word pyraveekar is derived from the Persian word *pyrov*, which means follower or one who pursues, and *kar*, which refers to work. Pyraveekar, therefore, means one who follows up work. This traditional institution in the rural sector has not only survived the vicissitudes of political regimes but has also stepped in to fill the institutional vacuum in the government's development strategy, which in fact has provided a fertile ground for the pyraveekar to exploit and thrive on (1985: 1149).

These are the new leaders that Anirudh Krishna discusses and views as neutral power holders who are interested in the affairs of the 'fellow villagers' and the 'village community'. But as Reddy and Haragopal explain, 'the institution of pyraveekar has its own well-established political linkages to both the local power structure in the villages and the outside political framework' (1985: 1155). This clearly suggests the independent existence of 'local power structure', linkages to which the 'new leaders' exploit. They charge a 'commission' or brokerage for whatever they 'arrange' for individual villagers and are motivated 'more by self-interest than by commitment to the poor' (Reddy and Haragopal 1985:1161).

The study by Reddy and Haragopal was confined to the state of Andhra Pradesh. James Manor (2000) has taken a step forward and compared the existence or absence of 'small time political fixers' in several states of India. He also views them as middlemen 'who serve as crucial political intermediaries between the locals and powerful figures (bureaucrats and, especially, politicians) at higher levels' (2000: 817). Unlike Anirudh Krishna who considers increasing levels of education among all the socio-economic categories as sufficient conditions for neutral and altruistic 'new leaders' to emerge and activate the latent social capital of villages, Manor shows that the 'fixers face different circumstances in the various states and these circumstances influence the supply of fixers, their activities, and their contribution to the politics of representation, accommodation,

and coalition building' (2000:823). Some of the 'circumstances' discussed by Manor, in evaluating the role of fixers in different states, are economic development in the state, the nature of political parties, the type of leadership, extent of corruption and criminalisation, and the strength of the institutions of democratic decentralisation. An important exclusion in his list of 'circumstances' is the local economic and political structure, including land distribution, caste composition and control of means of violence. But what his analysis points out is that the political fixers or entrepreneurs accumulate what we have called here as instrumental political capital and that they cannot use it at will; they are governed by other structural elements, including the structural political capital of elites at different levels, in a variety of ways.

In this chapter we tried to look at the concept of Democratic Decentralisation and how important it is in promoting participatory governance following which a brief review of decentralised natural resources management was made in which the necessity of introduction of decentralisation in the NRM bodies was looked into. In the following sections, we looked at the concepts of participation, social capital and political capital which are the central arguments of the thesis. While discussing political capital we also looked at 'political fixers' which is an important category of people in the village level and made a critique of Anirudh Krishna's presentation of this category of people as catalysts in bringing about social change in India's villages.

The next chapter gives a background to the study as the political developments were discussed which was followed by the institutional structure of the PRIs and NRM bodies.



Chapter III

Andhra Pradesh: Background

3.1 Introduction

The State of Andhra Pradesh was the first to be formed on a linguistic basis on 1st November 1956. It is the fifth largest state in India, both in area and population. Andhra Pradesh, comprising the three regions of coastal Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telangana, displays vast regional variations in socio-economic and cultural terms. 'Differences in historical backgrounds – Telangana was part of the princely Hyderabad State and coastal Andhra of the British Presidency – partly account for this' (Srinivasulu, 2002:1). They used to be administered in different ways – particularly the land revenue system. In coastal Andhra there was Zamindari system, in Rayalaseema there was Ryotwari system and in Telangana there was Jagirdari system. The three regions also differ agro-climatically. While a large tract of land in coastal Andhra is under irrigation projects, Telangana and Rayalaseema are comparatively dry regions with a very small part under irrigation projects. Over a period of time this disparity had caused lot of problem especially in the Telangana region, which had ultimately resulted in movements for separate Telangana state.

3.2. The Telangana struggle of 1969

After the integration of the three regions into the state of Andhra Pradesh, the influx of people from coastal region into the city of Hyderabad created many social tensions. Slowly the discontent spread among the Telangana officials and the unemployed youth who felt that they were exploited by the people of the

Andhra region. The discontent manifested itself when a student of Khammam went on a hunger-strike in January 1969 demanding the implementation of the safeguards for Telangana provided in the Gentlemen's Agreement. Slowly the agitation spread to Hyderabad and other parts of Telangana. In the beginning, the movement demanded the implementation of the safeguards agreed upon earlier, but later it wanted the separation of Telangana from Andhra Pradesh.

The agitation took a new turn when the Congress legislators from Telangana supported the movement. Dr.Chenna Reddy entered the fray and formed the Telangana Praja Samiti to lead the movement. But by November 1969, there was a split in the Praja Samiti when dissident Congress legislators realised that the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was not in favour of separate Telangana. The movement slowly petered out. In September 1971, Brahmananda Reddy, the then Chief Minister, resigned his position to make room for a leader from Telangana to become the Chief Minister. On the 30th of September, 1971, P.V.Narsimha Rao became the Chief Minister. The Telangana Praja Samiti was dissolved and its members rejoined the Congress. Although the economic imbalance among the Andhra and Telangana regions was the cause espoused in the agitation, the conflict arose mainly because of a factional fight within the Congress. Many others joined it as they had real and perceived grievances. (Ram Reddy 1989). Thus the movement which was started by students, hijacked by politicians to serve their agenda was sacrificed by the politicians after their demands were met by the central leadership. But the aspirations of the people of Telangana especially that of the educated remained unfulfilled.

Demand for a separate Telangana state continued after 1969 also although it remained in a dormant state. Scholars and activists continued to raise the issue in various forums. In 2001 a new party ‘Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) was started by K Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) a dissident¹¹ TDP legislator with the main aim being formation of a separate Telangana state. Within a very short period of time the party gained prominence in the Telangana districts and proved a catalyst in the defeat of Telugu Desam Party in the 2004 election by aligning with Congress party. Following the failure of Congress party to keep to its election promise, TRS withdrew support to the government headed by Congress party. The Telangana movement received fresh impetus once again towards the end of 2009, when KCR made a fast unto death resulting in the union cabinet acceding to his demands. The Union Home Minister, Mr. P Chidambaram made a statement in this regard on 9th December 2009. ‘The process of forming the state of Telangana will be initiated. An appropriate resolution will be moved in the state assembly’.

3.3 Political Developments in the state:

The Reddys and Kammas, comprising 6.5%¹² and 4.8% of the State’s population respectively, are the two dominant castes in the state. Although the Reddys are distributed throughout the state, they are dominant in the Telangana and Rayalaseema regions. The Kammas, on the other hand, are traditionally dominant in the coastal districts of Krishna, West Godavari, Guntur and Prakasam; their presence in other regions is marginal. It is the control of these castes over agrarian

¹¹ Failing in his wish to become a cabinet minister in the TDP government, KCR came out of TDP and started TRS in 2001.

¹² Caste-wise population record is not available for the present period. This is from Census, 1921.

resources such as land and water that has been the most important source of their economic and political power. As the major land-owning communities and occupants of important positions in villages, they have traditionally controlled village political life. In the post-Independence period, and especially following the Green Revolution due to the wealth it generated, they expanded their activities into other spheres of the economy, i.e. business, transport, contracts and industry (see Upadhyaya, 1988 and 1997; Srinivasulu, 2002). They are excellent examples of those castes which M.N. Srinivas has called dominant castes in Indian Society; they are “numerically strongest in the village or local area, and economically and politically exercise a preponderating influence.” (Elliott 1970:133). The most important source of their power is control over land. This base of power is boosted by the appointment of these dominant caste people to positions of power in the village for revenue collection. In Telangana, the village headmen are called Patel and Patwari; in coastal Andhra – Munsab and Karanam. These officials are responsible for maintaining land records, collection of taxes and maintaining law and order in the village.

According to Parthasarathy (1997:42) “Reddi, Kamma, Kapu, Velama and Raju are all agricultural castes. In the middle ages they were soldiers employed by various kings and local chieftains in the Andhra and Deccan areas of south India. They all belong to the sudra category. In modern times however they are considered to be forward castes.” The introduction of irrigation systems in the Krishna and Godavari deltas in 1850’s and improvements in the systems over a period of a hundred years, have mostly benefited these peasant castes and particularly the Kammas and Kapus”.

An important political institution has been ‘factions’, mostly led by members of the dominant castes but including members of other castes, communities and social strata. The concepts of vertical and horizontal political mobilization have played an important part in analyses of the role of caste in state politics. “Elliott (1970:134) views caste solidarity on the horizontal dimension and factional alliance on the vertical. She contrasts the horizontal mobilization of the middle peasant castes in Andhra Pradesh (including the Reddys) with the vertical mobilization of ‘notable’ Reddy and Kammas landlords”.

“Reddi dominance of state politics is the result of local and regional dominance based on vertical mobilization by Reddi notables, not horizontal solidarity, mobilization, or formal organization. The more enterprising and able among them have concerted with others to form factional alliances capable of capturing power at the district and state levels. (Rudolph and Rudolph 1967:83-4)”

The rise to political power of the dominant agricultural castes is striking in Andhra Pradesh much like in states such as Punjab (Jat domination), Maharashtra (Marathas) and Karnataka (Lingayats and Vokkaligas). The political ascendancy of the agriculturally dominant castes of Andhra Pradesh - the Reddys, Kammas and the Velamas, can be traced to the land reforms in the early fifties, particularly the abolition of the ‘Jagirs’ in the erstwhile Hyderabad state and the Zamindari system in coastal Andhra.

This broke the power of the traditional elite, especially the Muslim feudal aristocracy associated with the rule of Nizam. The prestige of the predominantly Brahmin urban elite, was simultaneously undermined by strong anti-Brahmin sentiments. Starting from the 1960’s there was a decline in Brahmin legislators in the state assembly as it dwindled to less than 2% by 1980’s. Reddy’s have maintained their position from the first general election (25%) till 1980’s (22%), whereas a steady growth could be seen in Kammas legislators – 11.3% to 16.3%.

The urban middle class started playing a smaller role in the political arena while the introduction of democratic politics opened up opportunities for the rural upper middle class of medium landowners who realised the importance of political office for the maintenance of their prestige and economic interests.

Widely spread out throughout the state, and wielding adequate economic power, the Reddys entered the Congress Party during the initial decades and strengthened their hold within the organisation. The Kammas, traditional rivals of the Reddys - built their economic power through commercial expansion, and by the 1970s, were looking for political opportunities to match their economic strength. The strategy of the Congress Party national leadership, in the 1970s, to shift the Party's support base, from the dominant social castes to the Scheduled Castes, led to caste realignments in regional politics. The Party's preferential policies to Harijans alienated the backward classes, and in the midst of political instability, the Kammas discovered an opportunity to fill the power vacuum. This eventually led to the rise of Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and a Kamma Chief Minister, in 1983.

The Reddy and Kammas trace their origins to a class of feudal chiefs under various kings. "There are several legends which trace the origin of the three major peasant castes in Andhra to an undivided group of Kapus living under the Kakatiya king Pratap Rudra who ruled in the thirteenth century" (Elliot 1970:138). The claims of common ancestry are also supported by the borrowing of names among the castes, many Kammas have surnames containing 'Reddy', while one sub caste of Reddy calls itself Chaudhury, a surname often associated with the

Kammas. “Reddys and Kammas are the largest high status castes in their respective areas of dominance, each forming about 10 percent of the population. The next single largest castes are the Malas¹³ and the Madigas who form 10 and 5 percent of the state population respectively” (ibid:149). The rural elite in any one area belongs to the same caste.

The proportion of Reddys, Kammas and Velamas in the total population is difficult to estimate since the Census does not report on caste. It is estimated variously at between 15 to 17 percent of the state population to up to 25 percent. This depends on whether the Kapus, smaller peasants, are included in the classification since many of them started calling themselves Reddy after they attained some affluence. Given this, the proportion of these castes in the Panchayat Raj system in the 1960s and 70s is a good reflection of their dominance in the electoral politics of the state. In 1970, among the Panchayat Samiti¹⁴ presidents, 80 percent belonged to these three castes and the forward castes of Brahmins and Vaishyas. At the Legislative assembly, a peak was reached in 1962 when 43 percent of the constituencies were represented by members from the Reddy, Kamma and the Velama castes while another 13 percent came from the Brahmin and Vaishya communities (Bernstorff & Gray, 1998).

In 1971, the Congress party made a concerted effort to restructure the leadership of Andhra Pradesh in two respects, to give a greater say to politicians from the Telangana region, which was hitherto dominated by politicians from Andhra, and to reduce the power of the dominant landowning castes and break the factions

¹³ These are scheduled castes (Malas and Madigas). While Malas are predominantly to be found in the Coastal Andhra districts Madigas form a majority of the SC population in Telanaga districts.

¹⁴ Panchayat Samiti is the intermediary body between District and Village in the Panchayat Raj system. It consists of all the Sarpanchs of the Village panchayats in its designated area and the chairperson is elected from among the members. Before the advent of mandal parishad system, some of the Panchayat Samiti Chairpersons enjoyed more clout than the MLAs in Andhra Pradesh.

which had played a crucial role in the recent political history of the state. Among other measures the candidates for the assembly elections were selected so as to give the 'weaker sections' more representation. While this had a strong psychological impact among the Backward Castes, minorities and Harijans, it also led to a heightening of caste antagonism with factional leaders from the dominant castes combining efforts to resist the challenges from below (ibid.).

3.3.1. The emergence of TDP:

The emergence of TDP brought a radical change in the politics of Andhra Pradesh. Unlike the other regional parties in Punjab, Kashmir and Tamilnadu, TDP did not emerge out of any movement or struggle. There was a political vacuum in the state of Andhra Pradesh due to absence of a viable alternative to Congress party and NTR encashed this opportunity through his charisma and cleverly spelt out policies aimed at appeasing the agrarian class and the poorer sections of the society. He was also critical of the Congress culture of changing chief ministers frequently and questioned the imposition from above, thereby using the slogan of 'restoration of Telugu self-respect'. The first victory of the TDP in 1983 under N.T. Rama Rao was therefore based on a platform of Telugu nationalist pride¹⁵ and anti-Congressism that sought to unite all sections of people in the state. A number of populist slogans were used, and later implemented - the Rs. 2/kg rice scheme for the poor being a prime example.

The first TDP government in the state carried out a path breaking measure of decentralisation. It abolished the 330 Panchayat Samitis in the state and replaced

¹⁵ Pamphlets, cassettes, posters and films were all used to propagate Telugu pride. Songs of the patriot Gurajada Appa Rao and plays and other works of Kandukuri Veerasalingam and Alluri Sitarama Raju were used to tell the people that the party is committed to social reform of Telugu society. These reformers of Andhra Pradesh had advocated equal rights to women, abolition of dowry and equality of all humans.

them by 1104 Mandal Praja Parishads, i.e. roughly three to four mandal parishads for every erstwhile panchayat samiti. This was done with the avowed aim of taking the administration to the grassroots. At the same time, the State Government also placed tight administrative control over decentralisation by institutionalising the controversial Zilla Pranalika Abhivrudhi Sameeksha Mandali (ZPASM), with the express function of reviewing the development activities undertaken by the Zilla Praja Parishad (ZPP). A minister nominated by the Chief Minister chairs this body, and its members were the ZPP chairperson, the District Collector (who is also Member Secretary), all the legislators from the district and some expert members nominated by the State Government.

Despite public protest against the foisting of such a non-elected body over an elected one, pressure from the legislators and ministers of the TDP ensured that the powers of the ZPASM were not diluted. This body was a precursor to the District Development and Review Committee that continues to exist in the post-1994 Panchayat Raj institutional frame. This combination of measures of decentralisation and administrative control has been the *leitmotif* of TDP. Of late, there is a ray of hope with the civil society's continuous pressure. The state government has agreed to remove this and constitute a District Planning Committee with due representation to the local body members and with more powers.

The TDP had also took some bold measures aimed at altering the administrative set up at the village level by replacing the hereditary Patel-Patwari system and replacing them with Village Administrative Officers. The motive behind this

move was two pronged. One to streamline the administrative set up at the village level and two, to strengthen its base in the rural areas. It gained both its objectives as the abolition of the system led to the development of a strong base in the rural areas through the support it gained from OBCs and other weaker sections in the grass root level. The TDP was able to sustain itself as a major political force in Andhra Pradesh politics due to the support it gained from diverse communities although the core support had been the OBCs and the upper caste Kammas. Over the years, it had developed a very strong cadre in all parts of the state and to maintain its strength and keep its cadre happy, TDP had been in the forefront in introducing campaign based development policies both during the time of NTR and Chandrababu Naidu who followed him. There were also accusations that, the various development programmes which were initiated during the regime of Chandrababu Naidu were mainly created to accommodate the followers of TDP.

The 73rd amendment act which came into existence in 1994, had resulted in the introduction of reservations in panchayats at all three levels resulting in drastic changes in the village leadership. The following section gives an institutional framework of the panchayats and the natural resources management programmes – watersheds, Joint/Community Forest Management and Water Users Associations, all of which came into existence around the same time in the 1990s.

3.4. Panchayat Raj:

The word panchayat is a traditional one, referring to five elders (*panch*) in a village who mediated in conflicts and spoke on behalf of all the residents of a

village in pre-modern times. This term has been retained for use by all rural local governments. The village panchayat has a long history in India. The role of these panchayats was mainly to settle disputes in rural India. The earliest form of panchayats with strong resemblance to today's elected system were the village councils (*Sabha* and *Ur*¹⁶) of Cholas who ruled in the South India in two phases during fourth to twelfth centuries.

The need for decentralisation was recognised quite early in India, though the logic and the schemes of decentralisation that followed depended upon the ideologies and requirements of the prevailing regimes. The colonial requirements had institutionalised district administration and District Collector as the effective unit of decentralised administration in the last quarter of the 18th century. By the time the rule of the Crown was formalised in the middle of the 19th century, the need for more effective forms of local administration was emphasised by Ripon's Resolution of 1882 and more comprehensively by the Royal Commission on Decentralisation in 1909. It needs to be emphasised that these schemes of decentralisation were clearly administrative, governed by the requirements of the centralised colonial state. (Jha and Mathur 1999:15-16)

The principle of Panchayat raj with a reference to Mahatma Gandhi and the exalted tradition formed the basis for decentralisation and democratisation of power at the village level in India after Independence. Article 40 of the Indian Constitution, in accordance with the Gandhian heritage, advised the government to take steps to organise village panchayats and to endow them with such powers

¹⁶ *Sabha* and *Ur* were the village assemblies. While *Sabha* is to be found in the Brahmin Agraharas, *Ur* is to be found in the non-Brahmin villages.

and authority which would enable them 'to function as units of self-government'. But the reality in the Indian countryside is very different and there indeed were some scholars who argued against the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) in the constituent assembly itself the prominent among them being Dr. Ambedkar who drafted the Indian constitution in 1948. He cast doubts upon the whole role to be played by the village -

I hold that these village republics have been the ruination of India. I am, therefore, surprised that those who condemn provincialism and communalism should come forward as champions of village. What is the village but a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness, and communalism? (Constituent Assembly Vol.VII:39).

When Ambedkar made this statement against village self-government while introducing the draft constitution in the constituent assembly it roused the ire and anger of many members of the first parliament who regarded his disdain towards the local bodies as blasphemy of the 'soul of India'. But he also had some supporters and a member from Bengal, Manmohan Das illustrates the argument, "I think the local influential classes will absorb to themselves all the power and privilege that will be given to the Panchayat system and they will utilise it for their selfish motives. The system will enable the village zamindars, the taluqdars, the mahajans and the money-lending class to rob, to exploit the less cultured, the less educated, poorer classes of the village" (AVARD 1962:35 in Lieten and Srivastava, 1999:19)

These words proved to be prophetic as the rich and dominant classes had made gram panchayats their new fiefdoms/jagirs and in most cases it was a single family/person which/who ruled with complete control over the village affairs. As pointed out by Rajni Kothari pointed out that, "village councils are nothing but

catchy slogans and false promises: they have enabled the rulers to contain the forces of revolt and resistance and prevent public discontent and turmoil from getting organised” (1989:15). Over the years, the Panchayat raj system had seen several changes, with each state enacting its own system. All through the years, till the 73rd Amendment was made, they remained bastions of rural elite and a means in perpetuating their control over the rural landscape. In the next section we trace the evolution of Panchayat raj system in Andhra Pradesh.

3.4. 1. Panchayat raj in Andhra Pradesh

The development of Panchayat Raj in the post-independence period in the state saw two parallel processes. The entire state was brought under unified legislation in stages and Panchayat Raj Institutions were created. At the same time, there was also a process of strengthening of administration at the district level with supervisory powers over Panchayat institutions. Sporadic outbursts of popular discontent with the political-bureaucratic system, like the Naxalite and Telangana movements, led to the appointment of Commissions to strengthen the process of decentralisation. While these Commissions strongly recommended steps to weaken the administrative stranglehold over Panchayat institutions, it has been repeatedly seen that the recommendations were either not acted upon, or nullified in later periods by newer orders.

Following the recommendations of various commissions, Andhra Pradesh has witnessed a series of modifications to the structure and process of Panchayat Raj

through the years with significant changes in 1964¹⁷, 1976¹⁸, 1986 and 1994. In each of these administrative reform situations, there has been interplay of forces affecting the balance of power and control, between the bureaucracy, local government and the state political elite. In the history of Panchayat Raj legislation in the state, the 1986 Act provided for greater decentralisation by creating a larger number of smaller mandals (sub-district administrative units). The Andhra Pradesh Mandala Praja Parishads (MPP), Zilla Praja Parishads (ZPP) and Zilla Pranalika Abhivrudhi Sameeksha Act, 1986 abolished 330 panchayat samitis and created 1104 mandal praja parishads in their place. The Mandal Praja Parishad was created for a group of villages with a population of thirty-five to fifty thousand. Along with the creation of MPPs the state government had also undertaken a series of measures like establishing Primary Health Centre, Junior College and Police station in each of the mandal head quarters. The next change in the Panchayat Raj was in 1994 after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in 1993.

3.4.2. The 1994 Act

Following the enactment of 73rd Constitution Amendment each state government had enacted Panchayat Raj legislation as Panchayats fall under the state list. Accordingly government of Andhra Pradesh introduced a Panchayat Raj Act in 1994. The Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 provided for reservations in all the three tiers of the panchayat (village, mandal, district). Posts of chairpersons and Members of all the three tiers are reserved for Scheduled Castes and

¹⁷ One seat was reserved for women if the total strength of panchayat members was 7 or less, and two seats if the total was eight or more. One seat was reserved either for the SCs or the STs. (Haragopal and Sudarshanam, 2000:48)

¹⁸ The 1976 Amendment provided for direct election of Sarpanch by all the voters of the Panchayat. It also included reduction in the voting age from 21 to 18 years.

Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their population, for Other Backward Classes (34 percent) and for women (one third of the total seats).

The Act has provided for the constitution of a Gram Sabha comprising all registered voters of villages in the Gram Panchayat. Elections are to be held every five years for all the three tiers. Members of the Gram Panchayat are directly elected from Gram Panchayat territorial constituencies (ward), each of population of around 360 and the Sarpanch of the Gram Panchayat is also directly elected. Gram Panchayats consist of 15 to 21 members depending on population of the panchayat. Gram Panchayat elections are supposed to be on non-party basis and party symbols are not allotted. The term of office of the Gram Panchayat is five years. The Gram Panchayat members elect an Upa (Deputy) Sarpanch from among themselves. A very important provision of the Act which resulted in several court cases was the two child norm. The Act provided for disqualification of persons who had more than two children from standing for election to any Panchayat position.

In the case of Mandal Praja Parishad (MPP) members are directly elected from Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituencies (MPTC) comprising a population of 3000-4000, and the Mandal Parishad President is elected indirectly from among the directly elected members of MPTCs based on the reservation for the post (if any). Members of Zilla Praja Parishads (ZPP) are also directly elected from Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituencies (ZPTC), one from each revenue mandal. The ZP President was also indirectly elected from among the ZPTC members. The district collector was a member of all the standing committees of the Zilla

Parishad and substituted the chairperson in his absence. (S)he was empowered to write to the Government to suspend any of the resolutions of the ZPP. The government retained the power to suspend or remove any member of the PRIs including the president of the MPP and the chairperson of the ZPP.

The 1994 Panchayat Raj Act has been managed such that the system of “checks and balances” ensured that the powers stayed with the bureaucracy with avenues for potential political influence in the middle and higher levels (down to the district), but power were never transferred to PRIs in the real sense. Control over budgets and financial flows is retained at the state capital and any planning initiative at the district requires the local political representative (MLA, MP) and the District Collector for final approval. The maximum leeway provided to PRIs is a cursory consultative role. There has been a mutation of the concept of ‘local self-government’ whenever legislations or central guidelines have been operationalised. For instance, of the 29 subjects in the Eleventh Schedule, only three items – education, social and farm forestry, fuel and fodder plantations – have been transferred fully with budget powers to the local government. Another 8 subjects have been partially addressed with no transfer of budgetary powers and mostly review, survey, monitoring or beneficiary selection powers being transferred.

The Act lists the functions of all three tiers and taxation powers of Gram Panchayats. It provided for the establishment of a State Finance Commission to work out suitable formulae for devolution of resources to PRIs from State revenues, and for the establishment of a State Election Commission for the

conduct of elections to PRIs. The tendency towards bureaucratic domination is also visible in the 1994 legislation and its working. The Act vests considerable powers in the State Government to supersede Panchayat resolutions and even to unilaterally dissolve Panchayat bodies. Elections to Panchayat bodies have been allowed to fall overdue and have been postponed by the Government under various pretexts. The State Government has only partially accepted the State Finance Commission's recommendations to devolve financial resources to Panchayat institutions and has been a slow mover in the devolution of powers to the PRI institutions that was mandated by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment.

Though Gram Panchayats have been given taxation powers in principle, the State Government is yet to evolve rules and guidelines for operation. Gram Panchayats on their part do not utilise their taxation powers effectively. The result is that the bulk of the working financial resources with these institutions are in the form of tied grants from the State and Central Governments. Own resources form an even smaller proportion of the resources of Mandal and Zilla Parishads. In the day-to-day administration and execution of development programmes, the staff of line departments continues to report to administrative officials like the District Collector at district level. In turn, they report to the Commissioners of Rural development in the State capital. Barring the notified panchayats, Gram Panchayats have limited staff to aid in administration and development. The planning process is yet to be decentralised fully.

While the formation of committees under the Gram Panchayat as provided for in the 1994 Act has not occurred due to lack of facilitating guidelines, a number of

other institutions have been formed at the initiative of the state government. These include Self Help Groups (SHGs), Village Education Committees, School Education Committees, Panchayat Education Committees, Mothers' Committees, Chief Minister's Empowerment of Youth (CMEY) Groups, Vana Samrakshana Samitis, Water Users' Associations, Watershed Committees, Adarana Yojana Groups and Habitation Committees. These groups are provided with funds directly from the programmes through the executive hierarchy – Mandal Development Officer. It has been argued that the involvement of PRIs and funding to them remains undiminished since PRI members and office-bearers are part of these committees. On the contrary it has also been argued that these were deliberate measures to weaken PRIs and strengthen the political base of the Chief Minister.

3.4.3. Campaign based programmes of TDP and Congress

A controversial measure undertaken by the TDP government of Chandrababu Naidu was the Janmabhoomi (JB) programme which was launched in the year 1997. The programme follows the footsteps of an earlier program 'Prajala Vadakku Palana' (taking the administration to the doorstep) initiated by N.T. Rama Rao. The programme involved holding Gram Sabha meetings every quarter with all the important mandal-level functionaries in attendance and identifying the needs of people and taking care of them through Gram Sabhas. Every round of Janmabhoomi Gramsabha began with a personal letter from Chief Minister, Chandrababu Naidu to the people of Andhra Pradesh being read aloud.

The Janmabhoomi programme guidelines spoke of rejuvenation of PRIs through the programme. However, opinions differed about this objective of the programme. Critics pointed out that the programme utilised funds that could have been devolved to PRIs, the other view was that the constitution of numerous Committees or stakeholder groups built up social capital, which would eventually be transformed into political capital in the PRIs. There has been little systematic examination of the Committees to test the truth of this latter assertion.

However the Janmabhoomi programme brought the administration to the villager every quarter (and also ensured the conduct of the Gram Sabha four times a year), provided space for discussion, gave an avenue for venting people's grievances and provided the opportunity to highlight bottlenecks (technical or financial). But it also succeeded in preventing any federation of villages to the next higher level of government on planning initiatives. The building of political support using development programmes was in fact an old political strategy.

YS Rajasekhara Reddy (YSR) who was leader of the opposition Congress party during the TDP rule was in the forefront while criticising the various welfare programs initiated by TDP. Following the reverses suffered in the assembly and parliamentary elections, he tread the path of late NTR in making populist promises like free power to agriculture, restoration of Rs.2/- a Kg. rice scheme during the 2004 elections. After coming to power in 2004, he scrapped most of the schemes of TDP regime and introduced his own welfare schemes. Gone were the accusations of undermining the powers and funds of Gram Panchayats. While he was extremely critical of the Janmabhoomi program of TDP, he introduced a

similar program, Rajeev Pallebata in rural areas and Rajiv Nagarabata in urban areas.

Some of the prominent welfare schemes of YSR regime are – Free power to farmers, Rs.2/- Kg. rice scheme, Pavala (twenty five paise) vaddi (interest) scheme for DWCRA groups, Indiramma housing scheme, Land re-distribution to the landless, Pasukranthi scheme (distribution of milch animals) and the crowning glory among all – ‘Rajiv Arogyasree’ scheme which provides medical support to the tune of Rs. 2 lakh to all the white (BPL) card holders in the state which was extended to eighty per cent of the state population from August 2008. Although there were several accusations regarding the scheme, it had clearly caught the imagination of people through out the state. While Janmabhoomi program despite its critics was the most successful of the TDP schemes in terms of impact factor, ‘Rajeev Arogyasree’ had greater impact during the 2004-09 Congress regime of YSR.

While many of the promises made by the Congress party led by YSR in the election manifesto were implemented, they could only partially implement the distribution of powers to Panchayat raj institutions. Transfer of power happened in only nine branches out of a total of twenty nine items listed in the Eleventh schedule of the constitution. They are as follows-

- Agriculture, Agricultural expansion
- Animal Husbandry, Dairy, Poultry
- Fisheries
- Rural Development

- Safe drinking water supply and Sanitation
- Primary education, School education
- Health, Primary Health Centres and Family welfare
- Social welfare
- Backward classes welfare

This is a better situation for panchayats in the state compared to the earlier regime.

3.5. Natural Resources Management in Andhra Pradesh:

As mentioned earlier we will be looking at forest management, watershed management and irrigation management (tank management) in the present study when we say Natural Resources Management (NRM). Inscriptional sources found on temple walls dating back to the eleventh to fourteenth centuries (starting from the Chalukya-Cholas and Kakatiyas) clearly indicate the involvement of temples in agriculture, irrigation, taxation and land reclamation that followed the expansion of cultivation. The mostly caste-dominated and mentored village assemblies continued undisturbed even in the period of the highly centralised Vijayanagar Empire (1336-1565). Krishna Deva Raya, king of the Vijayanagara Empire, wrote in the sixteenth century literary classic '*Amuktamalyada*' of the necessity for a well-defined policy towards agricultural and forest regions and its relevance for political stability.

Construction of tanks was initiated mostly by kings or philanthropic individuals. Resources were raised both locally and from state grants for their maintenance and repair. The village assembly organised actual repair or maintenance work by engaging labourers for desilting, organising labour contributions from farmers and allotting watch-and-ward duties to fishermen (Vani, 1991). Natural resource

management existed at local levels in pre-colonial Andhra and Nizam's Hyderabad, but was governed by social rules (mostly caste) and the benevolence of richer households, chieftains, and overlords.

A series of legislations had been passed which affected the forest and water resources after the incorporation of Nizam's Hyderabad state into Independent India in 1948, and subsequent reorganisation of the state into Andhra Pradesh in 1956, but for the present study we shall take a look at the NRM policy in India from the late 1980s onwards. In parallel with attempts at reform in the PRI systems, a similar initiative can be seen in the case of NRM bodies where the process of decentralisation preceded the PRIs by a couple of years. JFM was the first of these initiatives which was followed by watershed management and water users associations.

3.5.1. The JFM:

The first national policy breakthrough occurred when the National Forest Policy was passed in 1988. It proclaimed that forests are not to be commercially exploited for industrial policies, but they are to conserve soil and the environment, and meet the subsistence requirements of the local people. The policy gave a higher priority to environmental stability than to earning revenue. To translate the new policy objectives into practice, the Ministry of Environment and Forests issued a National Joint Forest Management (JFM) resolution in June 1990, supporting the rights and responsibilities of forest communities in the management of public forests. Over the next six years, virtually all of India's states passed similar guidelines. JFM allows governments to collaborate with communities in managing forestland; mainly degraded government forestland.

The joint or collaborative element may vary, with communities having more or less decision making authority relative to government and other interests (Sarin 1999).

3.5.2. Joint Forest Management in Andhra Pradesh

In Andhra Pradesh, the first government order on JFM was issued in 1992 and the Forest Department began implementation in the same year. However, there was little implementation until the initiation of the World Bank aided AP forestry programme. The initial order was modified in 1993, giving more decision making power to the people and reducing the unilateral powers of the forest officers. It also provides for formation of Vana Samrakshana Samithi (VSS) by taking a cluster of villages, a village, or village hamlet, situated on the fringes of a forest. JFM involves the State delegating responsibility over some tasks to NGOs and voluntary associations and to locally created Joint Forest Management Committees.

VSS should have at least 50 percent of the landless households as members, two members representing each household, one of them being a woman. This is to ensure that women, who are the greatest users of forests and suffer most as a result of forest degradation, are not excluded. Every VSS has a Managing Committee (MC) whose are elected by the VSS general body and comprise the president of the Gram *Panchayat* and six to ten elected representatives from the VSS, of which at least one third must be women. Membership to schedule caste and schedule tribe households is compulsory so that no users are excluded (in principle) from the benefits derived from forests.

3.5.3. Process of VSS Formation

The Government Order on JFM (G.O.MS. No. 173 of December 1996) requires a general body meeting to be held in the hamlet/village /village cluster selected, to be attended by all the adults with a minimum quorum of 50 percent. The meeting is to be addressed by an officer not below the rank of Range Officer, who is to explain the concept of JFM. A VSS is to be formed through this process with every member of household being represented by a man and a woman. The GO provides for all SC/ST adults in the hamlet/village/cluster to automatically become members of the VSS. The GO mandates the formation of a Management Committee with a two-year term. The Committee is to have as its members, 10 to 15 elected representatives (all tribals in ITDA areas, reservation of 1/3 seats for SC/ST in other areas), of which at least 30 percent should be women. The Forest Section Officer will act as Member-Secretary of the VSS. Importantly the GO stipulates that after two years, efforts will be made to identify a literate person from the VSS who is able to maintain minutes, to discharge the functions of the Member-Secretary.

Elections are to be held under the supervision of the Range Officer. The Committee has to elect a Chairperson whose term is that of the Management Committee. The process actually followed is explained below: The Range Officer and his assistants meet with the villagers, discuss the procedures and benefits of the programme, and request the Sarpanch and the Panchayat to organise a Gram Sabha. The Gram Sabha organised is utilised by the Forest Department officers to explain the salient features of the programme, the rules for programme implementation and for the formation of the Van Samrakshana Samiti. The members of the VSS are selected from each household in the village that is

dependent on the forest for livelihood. After this, the process is to arrive at a consensus during this village meeting on persons to be elected to the VSS Management Committee members and the Chairperson of the VSS. The officers make it clear that the preference would be for a woman, SC or ST member as Chairperson and, if possible, literate. Also, a third of the management committee has to be from the same category (women, SC and ST).

In the year 2002 Government of Andhra Pradesh came out with another government order (GO) converting the JFM into Community Forest Management (CFM). The GO stipulated that there will be 15 members in the VSS of which 7 are men and 8 of them will be women. Another important change in CFM is that either the Chairman or Vice Chairman must be a woman. In order to have more transparency cheque power is extended to Vice Chairman also in CFM. Thus while there used to be lot of interference of the bureaucracy in JFM, it was reduced and the role of community was increased in CFM.

A micro plan will be prepared by the VSS in mutual consultation between the Forest Department and VSS. This document will contain the current status of forest and the treatment it needs to regenerate degraded forest and all issues connected with forest management. The plan will be approved by the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) having jurisdiction over the VSS area. The VSS is entitled to get all income from harvested produce obtained from the forest as per the approved microplan. The VSS is entitled to 50% of fines collected and 50% of net revenue from beedi leaf apart from the Non Timber Forest Products (NTFP) in the VSS area. Initially, during 1994 and 1995, there was much mutual mistrust, but

gradually there appears to be more acceptance of JFM/CFM programme, which may be due to benefit flows as the degraded forests in many places are getting regenerated and employment is being provided locally. Some of the special features of the AP government's JFM orders worth mentioning are the 100% rights given to people over the forest produce unlike in many other states, 50% compulsory enrolment of women in the general body, involvement of NGOs in strengthening the VSS and transparency in VSS operation by channelling the funds through Joint Account System.

3.5.4. Watershed management:

In order to combat the frequent recurrence of drought in the State, Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP) was introduced during the year 1975, as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) with matching state share of 50:50. Integrated Wasteland Development Programme (IWDP) was introduced during 1991 with 100 percent central assistance. The Department of Panchayat Raj and Rural Development implemented both programmes.

The 1995 Guidelines of Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) following the Hanumantha Rao Committee Report's recommendations have prescribed an approach integrating pre-existing sectoral programmes. The state Government undertook watershed development on a massive scale since 1997 on the basis of these Guidelines with ambitious targets. A massive programme for development of all the degraded lands in Andhra Pradesh in 10 years was launched during 1997. The 10 Year Action Plan for development included wastelands, degraded lands and degraded reserve forests. It was envisaged to develop 10 million

hectares of degraded lands and wastelands, with an outlay of about Rs. 40000 million from 1997 to 2007 at the rate of 1 million hectares every year. Andhra Pradesh accounted for over 24 percent of the 10,000 DPAP watershed development projects launched in the country during 1995-2001.

The Department of Panchayat Raj and Rural Development is the nodal department at the state level implementing watershed development through the Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP), Desert Development Programme (DDP), Integrated Watershed Development Programme (IWDP) and Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS). The department has two divisions namely; Panchayat Raj and Rural Development- each headed by an independent Commissioner. Watershed Development is a subject under the direct supervision of the Commissioner, Rural Development (RD). A State Watershed Programme Implementation and Review Committee (SWPIRC), to ensure coordination among various government departments like agriculture, horticulture etc., university and research institutes, voluntary agencies and training institutes has been constituted. This is the principal coordinating body at the supra-departmental level. A provision has been made for a regular organisational set-up in the office of the Commissioner RD, to effectively supervise, coordinate and monitor the implementation of the DPAP/DDP in the districts. It comprises representatives from the Departments of Soil Conservation, Forests, Minor Irrigation and Remote Sensing.

A special post for watershed development has been created at the district level, in the name of the Project Director (PD), DPAP or DDP, depending on the district concerned. This is a special institutional innovation peculiar to Andhra Pradesh,

and exists in the 12 DPAP/DDP districts in the state. At the district-level, funds are routed through the office of PDs who in turn are assisted by Multi Disciplinary Teams (MDTs) drawn from line departments. There can be one or more MDTs in the DRDA depending upon the number of watershed projects being taken up in the district. The Zila Parishad and Mandal Parishads have not been provided any position at these levels, not even in the state- and district-level advisory committees. At the sub-district level, there are the Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) that are entrusted with the task of planning, coordinating, supervising, and formulating watershed projects in selected villages. The PIAs can be drawn from line departments such as Agriculture, Forestry etc., voluntary organisations and NGOs, as well as agricultural universities and research and training institutes. Finally at the district level, there is the District Watershed Development Advisory Committee that is under the chairmanship of the Project Director. This comprises the PD-DPAP, 3-4 members from the Multi Disciplinary Teams (MDTs) of the DRDA, 5-6 representatives of PIAs and voluntary organisations implementing watershed projects and 1-2 members from research and training institutes in the district.

3.5.4.1. Guidelines:

The Hanumantha Rao Committee suggested ways to refocus DPAP and DDP, and recommended a participatory approach. The guidelines drafted subsequently (MoRD 1994) laid great emphasis on local participation suggesting that restoration of ecological balance in the village would be maintained through ‘sustained community action for maintenance of assets created and further development of the natural resources in the watershed’. Local participation was also to be ensured through the use of ‘simple, easy, and affordable’ technological

solutions and user groups and panchayats in a position to willingly take over the operation and maintenance of assets at the end of projects. They should then make suitable administrative and financial provisions for their maintenance and further development. Participation can be operationalised through self-help groups and Watershed Committees - WCs (with adequate representation of SCs, STs and women). Funds are to be channelled directly to the village, with villagers working hand-in-hand with an independent PIA that could either be a government agency, non-government organisation or even a corporate sector entity. A strong effort is suggested to move away from a physical target focus that characterises most government programmes (MoRAE, GoI, 1994).

The DPAP had carried out an evaluation of prospective watersheds for selection, and prioritisation of watersheds for development was done in the initial stages to avoid conflicts over selection. The parameters adopted for selection of villages for the watershed programme in the State, are:

- Priority ranking given by the State Remote Sensing Applications Centre, taking into account rainfall, evapo-transpiration and sedimentation rate
- SC and ST population
- Percentage of literates
- Percentage of agricultural labourers to total workers
- Drinking water scarcity
- Quality of drinking water
- Availability of active DWCRA/Self Help Groups
- Status of groundwater.
- Availability of active NGOs

- Contiguity with existing watersheds
- Livestock population
- Community mobilisation

Weightages for these criteria are to be worked out; but community mobilisation is to have at least 30 percent weightage. The last three criteria in the list provide enough leeway to select a watershed for development and not be tied down by technical considerations. There are reportedly disputes over selection and the District Watershed Advisory Committee (or the DPAP Governing Body as it is referred to by officers) has a dominant role in actual selection of watersheds. This body is chaired by the District Collector, and has as its members, the PD DPAP, all MLAs, and MPs of the district, and 3 ZPTC members. In forest fringe villages, watershed development has been undertaken with the Van Samrakshana Samitis (VSS). Watershed Development in forest fringe areas is undertaken with either DPAP or JFM funds. With the popularisation of watershed development and the funds allotted, the demand for watershed projects has increased especially after the first two years. This was the main cause of disputes regarding allocation of watersheds as political influence played a crucial role in the allocation of watersheds which is evident in the study area too where some of the villages got multiple watersheds despite lack of coordination in forming a committee on many a time and resulting in the cancellation of the allocated watershed.

3.5.4.2. Watershed Formation:

The village representatives are informed of the need to organise a Gram Sabha (GS) for initiating the programme in the village. The Gram Sabha organised is utilised by the MDT, PIA and Watershed Development Team (WDT) members to explain the salient features of the programme, the rules for programme implementation and for the formation of the Watershed Committee. Initially a watershed association comprising of all the stakeholders will be formed in the Gram Sabha which elects the President of the Watershed Association. This will be followed by another meeting wherein the watershed association was divided into User Groups and Self-help Groups. Then the Watershed association would elect the Chairman and Secretary of the Watershed Committee. The other Committee members are then elected. The guidelines stipulate the unanimous election of the office bearers and the watershed committee.

The MDT/PIA/WDT members along with the villagers then visit the watershed area to discuss possible activities and the work entailed. The WDT/PIA members prepare the action plans for the watershed, which is indicated to the Committee and submitted to the MDT. The Watershed Committee members are then provided training on management aspects of the programme, accounts, measurement books and payments. Women's groups are formed usually in to the second or third month of the programme. The role of the community rapidly diminishes after the formation of the Watershed Committee. The Watershed Development Plan is prepared almost entirely by the WDT and the PIA, with little participation of the community. Since the process of institution-building is short-circuited, both in terms of time required, and the institutional stages to be gone through (User Groups and SHGs first, followed by Watershed Association and Committee), the

Watershed Committees have not become institutions that articulate local demands to line departments.

There are no linkages envisaged by the programme managers between the watershed institutions (limited to WCs in actuality) and the PRI institutions. The WC is expected to function under the supervision and advice of the PIA/WDT, expected to report progress to the WDT/PIA and involve all members of the Watershed Association. The WC is expected to meet regularly for planning works and for reviewing outcomes. In practice, while meetings are recorded in minute books, an important question is whether these actually take place. While the Panchayat plays a role in the formation of the watershed institutions by providing the forum (for its formation), there is no institutional linkage¹⁹ envisaged or expected in the process. In actual terms, since the formation of the committee is driven by the Sarpanch or the dominant members of the Gram Sabha, an overlap exists between the two in terms of dominant elites or political groupings.

3.5.5. Tank Irrigation in Andhra Pradesh:

Water harvesting systems have traditionally been built in many areas of Andhra Pradesh, to store runoff and some of these structures date back to several centuries. The most common water harvesting system is that of tanks and these were common in all regions except in the Eastern Tribal region. At present, more than 70,000 tanks of various sizes are reported in the state, and these irrigate about 602,780 hectares (ha) (GoAP, 2000). More than half of these tanks are reported to be in need of repairs.

¹⁹ There is a change in the guidelines in 2003 with the introduction of 'Hariyali' watershed scheme. Watersheds implemented after that year are functioning under the control of gram panchayat.

Tank irrigation in Andhra Pradesh dates back about a millennium and kings, landlords and merchants, whoever wanted a share of the produce, would build tanks. Large-scale tank irrigation in the Telangana area is reported during the second half of the Twelfth Century even though large tanks existed in neighbouring Karnataka for a long time prior to that. Temples were given a share of the lands irrigated by tanks in many cases (Talbot, 2001). The person, who invested on tanks, was given concessions in terms of land or compensated by the beneficiaries by other means. Management of these tanks seems to have been restricted to water distribution and repairs. The necessity for de-silting would not have arisen since catchment areas were not intensively used.

At present, tanks and ponds have lost their earlier importance as irrigation sources due to siltation, breaches, encroachments on catchments and tank bed areas. Most parts of the catchment area of the upper watershed tanks were either forests or grazing lands. In the case of chain tanks downstream, the upper tanks prevented silt from flowing down. Cultivation of the catchments without land development seems to have contributed towards increasing siltation. In the past, maintenance was limited to maintenance of bunds and use of silt for various activities like brick and pottery, as manure for the fields etc. Since cyclonic storms and related intense rainfall phenomena affect most parts of the state, consequent damages to tanks are common. If such events occur during the late monsoon period, the damages to tanks can be significant. Repair of damage can often take beyond a year due to financial and logistical constraints.

Decay of tank irrigation is indicated by reduction in tank-irrigated area from a maximum of 1.258 million hectares (mha) in 1967-68 to about 0.7 mha during the mid 1990s. During the same period, the area irrigated by wells increased from 0.45 mha to about 1.6 mha. While the government had taken over the management of surface irrigation works, farmers' involvement in repair was non-existent. During the pre-Independence period, large landowners and Jagirdars had some stakes in maintaining the tanks in their areas due to additional taxes they could get from irrigated lands. With fragmentation of land holdings, the individual stakes in managing tanks have reduced significantly. Abolition of Jagirdari system led to discontinuation of stakes for the Jagirdars in managing the tanks while individual farmers in the command areas could not afford to maintain the tanks due to the high costs involved.

With government taking over tanks, the responsibility of managing the tanks shifted away from the farmers totally. After Independence, tank irrigation was brought under the state government's purview. The state government took up minor and major irrigation works and later small tanks with command area of less than 100 acres were brought under Panchayat Raj Engineering Department (PRED). Tanks with command areas larger than 100 acre are maintained by the Minor Irrigation Division under Irrigation and Command Area Development rechristened as Command Area Development Authority (CADA). While these two departments are in charge of tank irrigation, Village Panchayats are excluded from managing water resources of even smaller tanks. The investments required for either building or maintaining the tanks are large and Panchayats' incomes are insufficient to take up these activities. At the same time with limited resources

available, the PRED and CADA is unable to take up effective preventive maintenance as indicated by nearly two third of the tanks in need of repair. In interior parts of the state with low rainfall, the tank irrigation potential has already been utilised fully and any more additional storage capacity building is likely to be at the cost of earlier/ downstream tank users. This is especially true in the case of low rainfall zones of Rayalaseema and parts of Southern Telangana region. It is reported that many of the new water harvesting structures fail to fill during the years of less than normal rainfall.

The Andhra Pradesh government has not devolved minor irrigation to Panchayats even though minor irrigation, water management and watershed development fall under Panchayats as per the 11th Schedule. This further curtails the possibility of decentralised management. The Andhra Pradesh Farmers Management of Irrigation Systems Act (APFMISA), 1997 has transferred tanks with command areas larger than 100 acre to the minor irrigation division. Smaller tanks, which are amenable to village level management, are still under the Panchayat Raj Engineering Department (PRED).

The 1997 Act provided for the formation of Water Users' Associations (WUA) in tanks having a command area of 100 acres and above and in canal distributaries. The Act stipulates that all water users who are landholders in the water users area will be members. While this act includes most of the direct stakeholders in case of large-scale canal systems, other users like fishermen are excluded from the membership of WUAs. The Act contains provisions relating to different types of irrigation schemes, tiers of farmers' organisations, elections, functions of farmers

organisations, resources, and penalty for offences. This act also allows part of the water tax to be transferred back to the local organisations so that these groups take up the Organisation and Management (O&M). About 50 percent of the water tax is the share of the WUAs, Distributary Committee, Project Committee, and the Gram Panchayat. The history of irrigation in the State after independence indicates over-emphasis on creating new potential with little or no attention to Organisation and Management of existing systems, especially the smaller ones.

3.5.6. WUA Formation:

The structure of the WUAs depends on the size of the irrigation system. In case of minor irrigation system (less than 2000 hectares) it is a single-tier organisation. Thus, in a minor irrigation project there is only a WUA, and the distributary committee and project committee are absent which are to be found in larger irrigation systems. The number of Territorial Constituency members varies from place to place depending upon the size of the ayacut. The area of each WUA is split into four to ten territorial constituencies, depending on the extent of command area under a WUA to ensure fair representation of all upstream and downstream farmers in the Managing Committee of the WUA. Membership in the WUAs is for all the farmers coming under its jurisdiction. It will have a general body, which would be meeting before every crop season and at the end of it to review the availability of water and its distribution. There are two kinds of members – members with voting rights and those without. All those farmers, who own land, those who cultivate the land, which is falling under ayacut, are taken as members with voting rights.

Elections will be held once every five years. The first body was elected in June 1997 when elections were held all over the state to elect representatives to WUAs. During the first elections an incentive of Rs.50,000/- was declared for the WUAs where the body was elected unanimously. This had resulted in several bodies getting elected without opposition. The second elections were supposed to be held in the year 2002 but were not held till 2004 and an amendment was made to the Act with regard to the constitution of the WUA. It was decided by the government to have a permanent body where members will be elected every two years in a revolving manner for a period of six years. At the time of introduction of this plan in 2004, it was decided that the first and second batch of retirees are to be decided by lottery after two and four years respectively. One of the most significant features of the APFMIS Act is the provision of 'recall' of elected representatives. This is a unique feature of the WUA act as it provides the members the right to remove an elected member. A notice signed by 1/3 members is required for the issue to be taken up for discussion in the general body. A general body meeting would be convened within seven days to approve recall motion by a simple majority and a notification would be issued recalling the elected member.

For undertaking various works and managing the affairs of the WUAs several committees are formed. Each committee is headed by a T.C member and consists of 4-6 farmers with voting rights. Apart from this there is the Management Committee which consists of the President and the T.C members. It looks after the activities of the WUA from the top and supervises the work done by various committees. In the case of WUAs of tanks there are four sub-committees. They are -

1. Works Sub-Committee
2. Finance and Resources Sub-Committee
3. Water Management Sub-Committee
4. Monitoring, Evaluation and Training Sub-Committee.

The most important change to take place after the implementation of the 1997 act was that the management of irrigation systems was transferred to the farmers and the role of irrigation department changed from that of a 'doer' to that of a 'facilitator'. Some of the other changes brought about by the Act were – distribution of water, maintenance works, power to resolve disputes, ability to decide on crops and cropping patterns depending on the availability of water and most importantly social audit of the activities undertaken by WUAs.

3.6. Conclusion:

Starting from the early 1990s the last decade and half has been largely dominated by efforts to promote people's participation in development. Although there had been several programmes promoted by governments since Independence starting with the Community development programme in 1952, the basic aim of these programmes had gone unrealised due to the non-partisan attitude showed by the people. One of the major reasons had been the lack of awareness. Efforts by government to promote democratic decentralisation by including the locals in development planning and implementation of programmes through Panchayat raj system proved to be futile due to several reasons. Elite capture of these bodies and the lack of political will on the part of the government made them totally redundant from the perceived nature of their formation. In effect, they became

tools in the hands of the rural elite in carrying out their political objectives and perpetuating their control over the village affairs (Robinson 1988).

Starting with the JFM policy in 1992 and followed by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, Watershed Guidelines, and Water Users Associations, a new opportunity was created for the people to overcome the decades old domination of the bureaucracy and the elite in controlling the Gram Panchayats and the NRM bodies. The role of donor agencies is significant in this paradigm shift. This was particularly true in the case of Andhra Pradesh as the World Bank was instrumental in pushing through the APFMIS Act in 1997 and also rejuvenating the JFM programme by giving its backing to it in 1993. Andhra Pradesh stood at the forefront in the reform process by becoming the one of the first states to implement these programmes as it received adequate support from the donor agencies and the full backing of the Chief Minister of the time, Chandrababu Naidu. But there remained certain problems. Some of the pitfalls of the reforms had been the lack of proper community organisation and awareness programmes which if undertaken properly would have resulted in greater participation of people in the programmes. The age old problem of elite control of positions of power at the village level is another tricky issue. An important change had been the introduction of reservations for SCs, STs, OBCs, and Women in panchayat bodies and the legislations which made women and SCs part of the NRM bodies.

In the next chapter details of the area of study were dealt in detail and it also gives a background of the field area.

Chapter IV

Field Setting

The present chapter provides a profile of the district, mandal and the villages selected for the study. The study was conducted in Mahabubnagar District which is part of the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh. Of the three regions in the state, Telangana is more backward and among the ten districts in Telangana region, Mahabubnagar District is the most backward and drought prone. The present study was carried out in three villages of Amangal Mandal in Mahabubnagar District.

4.1. District Profile:

The district derived its name from Mahabubnagar, its headquarters which was named after Mir Mahbub Ali Khan, the sixth Nizam of Hyderabad. The district is divided into five Revenue divisions, sixty four mandals comprising 1550 revenue villages including seventy three uninhabited villages and 1351 gram panchayats (Directorate of Economics and Statistics, 2005). Mahabubnagar district has an area of 18,432 sq. km. and a population of 3.56 lakh in 2001. The district is predominantly rural with villages housing a population of 3.1 million. It is the second largest district in the state. Literacy rate is very low at 44.61 percent as against the state average of 60.5 percent (Census 2001). In the Human development Index of 2001, Mahabubnagar district occupies the lowest position among the 23 districts because of its lowest position in income as well as education. (Subramanyam 2001:10)

Mahabubnagar is more of a traditional type of caste society with the dominant Reddy caste controlling the land and the villages through Gram Panchayat and the traditional village administrative system called Patel-Patwari system. From the 1980s onwards, the conditions started changing with increasing opportunities for education and employment outside the village. In most of Telangana region, OBCs have emerged as an economic and political force due to these opportunities and the reservations enjoyed by them in the local bodies. With the enactment of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in 1993 it gave further scope for members from marginalized communities to enter the citadels of power and expand their political class. Now the OBCs have considerable percentage of reservations and manage to get elected even in open seats. Naxalite activity exists in Mahabubnagar district but it is limited to very few mandals particularly those that border the Nallamala forest range. Three of the interior villages in Amangal mandal were considered to have Naxalite presence.

Economy of the district is backward and primarily agricultural. Out of a total geographical area of 18.47 lakh hectares, 14.13 lakh hectares is cultivable land and 2.68 lakh hectares is forest land. It has an irrigated area of only 1.47 lakh ha. and this accounts for only eight percent of the total land and ten percent of the cultivable area. Sorghum, Castor, Rice, Groundnut, and Cotton are the main crops²⁰ accounting for seventy five percent of the total cultivated area of 8.4 lakh hectares of land. As mentioned earlier, the district is severely drought prone and its agriculture is mainly rain fed. But the region is close to Hyderabad and

²⁰ Sorghum – 169537; Castor – 141835; Rice – 135312; Groundnut – 122391 and Cotton – 62086 hectares.

migration takes place on a large scale not only to Hyderabad but also to other parts of the country. Migrants are mostly employed in construction labour in large scale projects like dams and highways (Sainath 2003, Olsen & Murthy 1995).

Till the coming of Telugu Desam Party (TDP) as an alternative to Congress party in 1982, there was no significant opposition to Congress in the District. Since then the district has always supported TDP and is considered one of its strongholds in the state. This is mainly because of the presence of OBCs in large number in the district and their strong support to TDP over the years. Of late, however, the hold has weakened and in the 2004 assembly elections TDP lost most of its seats which had been earlier won by it regularly. There were a good number of OBC and SC leaders from the district who occupied positions of importance in both TDP and Congress over the years. At the time of field work, the Zilla Parishad Chairperson²¹ was a woman from TDP.

4.2. Amangal Mandal:

Amangal is one of the 64 mandals in Mahabubnagar District. OBCs form nearly half the mandal population (46%); SCs are about 15 % whereas STs constitute 26% of the mandal population. In the general category Reddys²², Vysyas²³ and Muslims are the major presence while Reddys are the dominant caste in the mandal although they are very few in number compared to other castes. Among the OBCs Edigas, Gouds, Telugus, Vodderas and Padmasalis (Weavers) are to be

²¹ Both the Zilla Parishad Chairperson and Opposition leader of the Zilla Parishad were women elected from reserved constituencies (general category). They contested and got elected as MLAs in the 2009 assembly elections.

²² A list of castes who are to be found in the study area along with their traditional occupation can be seen in Appendix I

²³ In the Telangana region they were called as *Shaukaris*.

found in large numbers. Among SCs Madigas constitute 90% of the population with Malas being very few; Lambadas are the majority among STs and in some of the villages there are a few Yerukula households.

Agriculture is the main occupation of people in the mandal. Chief crops are Castor, Sorghum, Rice, Cotton, and Maize. 82% of the cultivated area is rain fed and the irrigated area is slightly better than the district average at 18%. The following table gives details of the total cultivated area and the crops cultivated during Kharif and Rabi²⁴.

Table 4.1 - Irrigation and Crops in Amangal mandal (in hectares)

Crop	Kharif		Rabi (Irrigated)	Total		Grand Total
	Irri.	Rain		Irri.	Rain	
Paddy	1047	-	485	1532	-	1532
Sorghum	-	2680	30	30	2680	2710
Maize	-	955	188	188	955	1143
Bajra	-	225	-	-	225	225
Red gram	-	259	-	-	259	259
Green gram	-	15	4	4	15	19
Castor	-	5112	-	-	5112	5112
Groundnut	-	32	350	350	32	382
Cotton	-	886	-	-	886	886
Chilly	-	-	80	80	-	80
Yellow gram	-	-	34	34	-	34
Total	1047	10164	1171	2218	10164	12382

Source: Mandal Agriculture Office.

Only those farmers with irrigation facility are able to cultivate during Rabi season while others leave the land fallow as the rain in the winter season is not sufficient for cultivation of crops in this area. This is evident from the above table as only 9.5% of the cultivable land is cultivated during Rabi season.

²⁴ Kharif is the first crop and is generally cultivated during June – October. While Rabi is the second crop which is cultivated during November – March. In the dry regions like Telangana and Rayalaseema these months would vary slightly with the Kharif season ending in November and Rabi season in April.

Table 4.2 - Sources of Irrigation

Source	Numbers	Area in hectares
Tanks	2	216
Wells	1327	18
Bore wells	3549	1984
Total Irrigated Area		2218

Source: Data collected from Agriculture Office, Amangal

There are only two tanks²⁵ in the mandal with substantial ayacut and they were also in poor shape due to lack of maintenance for more than a decade. Almost all the villages have small tanks but they provide irrigation facility only during the Kharif season. It has become a common practice to go for a bore well as it gives assured supply of water. But the success rate is very low as there are more failures and on an average every successful bore well has three to four failed ones before the success. Thus majority of the farmers are without work and it also affects the landless as they will not find any work. As a result, during Rabi season, a large number of people particularly the marginal farmers and landless labourers migrate in search of work. Most of them go to Hyderabad and some of them to neighbouring districts like Ranga reddy and Kurnool.

Migration is maximum among the Lambadas, Vodderas and Telugus. While the Lambadas work as rickshaw pullers and auto drivers Vodderas and Telugus are employed in construction activities. The coming of Decentralised Natural Resources Management (DNRM) bodies has definitely reduced the migration numbers as wage labourers were able to find work within the village and it has an impact on the nature of migration too as the families stopped migrating.²⁶ The

²⁵ Sura Samudram and Pedda cheruvu located in the mandal head quarters and Pahadipur respectively. There are many small tanks scattered throughout the mandal.

²⁶ Earlier the whole family used to migrate but after the DNRM bodies came, particularly from late 1990s only the male members are migrating as the females get work through the watershed and forest committees.

other caste which has maximum landlessness, the Gouds had their traditional occupation of toddy tapping which provides them with an income source and therefore there are very few migrants from this caste. In the study villages, especially in Pahadipur and 3 toddy-tapping has to some extent prevented the Gouds from migrating.

Majority of the land holders are dependent on credit facility for carrying out their agricultural operations. Credit facility is mainly provided by the shaukaris in the village and the seed shops in Amangal. The interest rate ranges from 3% to 5% per month and the unwritten agreement is that the farmers have to sell their produce to them. Government credit agencies are approached mainly to take loans which are never repaid. As a result, they are not eligible for future loans until they repay their old loans.

In Amangal mandal the single most important factor in terms of political affiliations had been the politician Jaipal Reddy. He hails from the neighbouring Madugula mandal. Even though several people condemn him for not doing anything to the constituency despite his influence at both the state and central governments, they do not hesitate to support him at the time of elections. Many of the leaders who are now in Congress and TDP parties were his one time followers. As a result he is able to garner the support of leaders of both parties. Particularly, the Reddys vote en masse for the candidate supported by him.

The present study was carried out in three villages of Amangal mandal. These villages were selected based on two criterion, one the presence of NRM bodies

and two the caste composition of the village. Thus, Reddypalle which has the dominant caste Reddys as the majority; Pahadipur which has STs, OBCs and SCs in good numbers and Edigapalle which has the Ediga caste as the majority and OBCs constitute more than 60% of village population. The idea was to look at how ‘participation’ got affected in these varying social structural circumstances.

4.3. Reddypalle

Reddypalle is more accessible compared to the other study villages as it has got good road facility. It is on the way to a neighbouring mandal and has got transportation facility as there is good frequency of both private and public transport. It is about nine kms. from the mandal headquarters (Amangal town) and is considered as one of the more developed villages in the mandal. It has a High School²⁷, Primary Health Centre, Cooperative Bank and Veterinary hospital. Numerically large castes in the village are Reddy, Madiga, Goud, Telugu and Voddera. The following table gives details about the castes and landownership in the village.

While Madigas are the largest group in terms of population size, Reddys are the largest group in terms of households. The population of the village is 2102. From the above table it becomes evident that landlessness is highest among the SCs and OBCs. Reddys are the largest caste group in the village followed by Madigas and Gouds; landless and the marginal farmers constitute more than fifty percent of the total households. Land has not changed hands till the recent real estate boom and was largely owned by the Reddys. Due to the rising prices, many of the Reddys

²⁷ In the earlier days existence of high school, hospital and bank were considered prestigious and generally found in big villages whose leaders were influential enough to get these public institutions to the village.

who had migrated out are selling off their lands and most of these lands are being bought by outsiders²⁸. There is good demand for the land because the lands in Reddypalle are good and due to the availability of water through bore wells some of the farmers were able to cultivate crops during both Kharif and Rabi.

Table 4.3: Caste-wise Households and Land ownership(in acres)-Reddypalle

CASTE	HHs	LL ²⁹	0 - 2	2 - 5	5 - 10	10 - 20	20+
Reddy	88	8	5	14	37	21	3
Madiga	84	30	45	7	2	0	0
Goud	56	13	18	14	11	0	0
Voddera	30	6	4	10	10	0	0
Telugu	29	10	8	8	3	0	0
Chakali	22	3	11	7	1	0	0
Golla	20	5	4	11	0	0	0
Padmasali	16	10	2	2	1	1	0
Vysya	14	10	0	3	1	0	0
Muslim	12	10	1	0	1	0	0
Kammari	11	5	1	3	2	0	0
Mala	10	4	1	5	0	0	0
Kummari	9	3	4	2	0	0	0
Medara	7	0	3	4	0	0	0
Yerukula	7	4	1	2	0	0	0
Mangali	6	3	2	0	1	0	0
Katika	4	1	3	0	0	0	0
Christian	2	1	0	0	0	1	0
TOTAL	427	126	113	92	70	23	3

Source: Census conducted during the field work.

Agriculture here is mostly rain fed. There is no irrigation facility in the villages as there are no canals in the area and also there is no tank in the village unlike the other two study villages. The village is surrounded by hills on the western side and eastern side and a drain passes through the eastern side of the village. Consequently lands on these sides are having better water facility due to the regeneration of ground water and not surprisingly, most of the Reddys have their lands in these parts of the village. Paddy, Castor, Cotton, and Tomato are the main

²⁸ The buyers are from various places ranging from Kadthal to Hyderabad. People from Kadthal and other villages in the main road are selling off their lands and buying in the interior villages with transportation facility like Reddypalle.

²⁹ LL-Landless, 0-2 marginal farmer, 2-5 small farmer, 5-10 large farmer, 10+ extra large farmer.

crops. Those who can afford to put in motors (bore wells)³⁰ cultivate paddy and many of the Reddy farmers have been doing this for a long time. Probably because of this the ground water levels in Reddypalle is one of the lowest in the mandal and several bore wells have stopped functioning because of this. In spite of this clear danger, people are still installing new bore wells which seems to indicate that the Watershed doesn't have much effect on the thinking of the farmers in the village. Most of the Reddys have migrated to Hyderabad in search of jobs and of late people from other castes are also following them. Thus one finds many two member families³¹ in this village with the elders staying back and the children settling down in Hyderabad.

Because of the presence of large number of Reddy families and their control over land they have been very powerful in this village. Ninety per cent of the Reddys belong to S family. This family had continued its domination over the village to the present day and the Sarpanch position had remained within the family till the coming of 73rd Amendment which provided reservations in gram panchayats. In the 1988 gram Panchayat elections, SNR became Sarpanch by defeating his cousin who was Sarpanch for the previous twenty four years. From then onwards, SNR became the main leader of the village and in the 2001 elections he got elected as Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituency (ZPTC) member from the mandal. Because of complete control of the S family, there were no other factions in the village and during the elections also their hold was paramount not only in this village but also in the villages which were once part of Reddypalle. But things

³⁰ This is one of the first villages in the mandal to cultivate paddy, so many of the field have big open wells which are not supporting the crop. So most farmers have installed motors and drilled bores into the open wells.

³¹ There are forty such households in the village (9% of the total households) of which 23 are Reddy households.

are changing slowly now as the Reddy population is decreasing due to migration and the rise of leaders from the OBCs although, SCs particularly Madigas continue to be under the control of the S family.

Reddypalle was one of the first recipients of Watershed in the mandal. After losing his Sarpanch position due to reservations, SNR became the watershed president. It functioned during 1997-2002. There is no VSS in the village. But the village was allotted another watershed in the year 2004.

4.4. Pahadipur

This is a remote village³² and farthest from the headquarters. It is about 24 Kms. from Amangal and the road is not good. Among the study villages, Pahadipur only has water users association. The village is surrounded by hills on all four sides and the tank is situated in a valley between three hills on the western side of the village. It has thick forest cover on the western side and northern side. The two hamlets of the village Gutta Tanda³³ (GT) and Palle Tanda (PT) are situated in these forest areas and each hamlet is situated at a distance of four kms. from the main village. They are exclusively inhabited by Lambada tribals. Muslims used to be a large group in the village and they were also the big landlords. They started migrating to Hyderabad from the 1950s and by the late 1980s majority of them migrated to various places in search of jobs and business. Pahadipur was one of the designated rest areas of the Nizam of Hyderabad during his hunting jaunts. The Muslims of the village were to provide shelter and food to Nizam and his

³² It does not have telephone facility because of the Naxalite threat to any such facility that could be installed. They blasted a telephone exchange in 1997.

³³ Place where Lambadas formed a habitation was called Tanda (hamlet).

officers whenever they visited this area and in return they were given large estates of land (enam lands). But today there are very few Muslim families in the village (1.6% only). The presence of Muslims in large numbers during the earlier days explains the relatively small number of dominant caste Reddy households in this village. The village is a mix of various castes and from the following table it becomes evident that Gouds, Lambadas and Madigas dominate if we go by numbers but the real dominant sections in the village had been Vysya and Reddy with the support of Gouds, Madigas and Lambadas.

Table 4.4 Caste-wise Households and Land Ownership- Pahadipur

CASTE	HHs	LANDLESS	0 - 2	2 - 5	5 - 10	10 – 20	20 plus
Goud	190	73	52	44	18	1	2
Lambada	166	26	82	42	15	1	0
Madiga	101	41	49	8	3	0	0
Kummari	54	7	24	7	12	4	0
Telugu	39	26	7	3	0	3	0
Chakali	36	11	16	4	4	1	0
Reddy	35	6	9	10	6	2	2
Golla	21	9	7	3	2	0	0
Kammari	15	6	7	1	1	0	0
Vysya	14	9	2	1	2	0	0
Muslim	11	9	1	0	1	0	0
Katika	8	7	0	0	1	0	0
Brahmin	5	0	0	3	0	1	1
Mala	5	1	2	0	2	0	0
Yerukula	3	2	1	0	0	0	0
Mangali	2	0	2	0	0	0	0
Total	705	233	261	126	67	13	5

Source: Census conducted during the field work.

Agriculture here is mostly rain fed, although there is Pedda Cheruvu (big tank) which provides irrigation to 350 acres of land. People also depend on bore wells for cultivation as it is the most dependable source. Main crops are Paddy³⁴ (800 acres³⁵), Castor (1000 acres), Sorghum (1000 acres). Due to the selling of lands by Muslims and Vysyas there are many people with small land holdings. Wherever

³⁴ Castor and Sorghum are rain fed crops while Paddy requires irrigation facility.

³⁵ Data collected from Panchayat Secretary.

there is availability of irrigation, they cultivate paddy through water derived from tank and bore wells but land here is not fertile compared to the other study villages due to rocky terrain. With about thirty-three per cent of the population being landless, they are heavily dependent on the support of the landed in provision of work. With 1/3 of them being Gouds, they do have the alternate source of employment – toddy tapping. This to some extent is a better situation compared to the other villages in the mandal. This could explain the limited number of migrants from the village. While in the Tandas, migration was high before the advent of NRM bodies like VSS and Watershed. The Lambadas from GT had mastered the art of construction of rock structures in Watershed and they were employed by the neighbouring villages where watershed works were carried out. While those in PT mainly depended on agriculture, their alternate occupation is preparation of local liquor called arrack³⁶. The economy of the village is no different from other villages in terms of credit facility with majority of the farmers depending on money lending from private individuals for agricultural operations. Unlike the other villages, the money lenders in Pahadipur also include Gouds as they replaced the migrating Vysyas as *Shaukaris*. Money lending is an important instrument for the elite to control the villagers.

Presently, the village is mostly divided on party affiliation rather than on caste/group. While the Reddys had always aligned with Congress/Janatha party in other parts of the mandal, in Pahadipur they are with Janatha/TDP. They had

³⁶ Preparation of arrack was banned by the government long ago but in PT it was made in a very organised manner as it is a household industry in the Tanda. Arrack was prepared by four groups in the village and each of them have an understanding about the amount of arrack to be produced. These four groups comprise of all the households in the Tanda and each group prepares it in a single place. The income is shared among the households of the group after selling it in the surrounding villages.

strong support from the Madigas and a group of Gouds. Again in a reversal with other parts of the mandal the Gouds in Pahadipur had been strong supporters of Congress party and they were well supported by the Lambadas. This could be due to the contextual factors in the village, as the groups in question were formed in opposition to one another.

Table 4.5 Committees in Pahadipur

Committee	Chairman	Caste/Party
Pahadipur VSS	Venkat Reddy	Reddy/TDP
GT VSS	Janu Nayak	Lambada/TDP
PT VSS	KD Nayak	Lambada/TDP
WUA	Dargaiah	Madiga/TDP
Watershed	Yadamma/Ramu Goud ³⁷	Goud/TDP/Cong.

Source: Data collected during the field work.

Unlike other villages in the mandal with VSS, Pahadipur and its hamlets have good forest cover. This was not due to any conservation measure adopted by the village but due to the inaccessibility as the forest in this village is in a remote area. Apart from the Gram Panchayat there are a total of five committees including VSS, Watershed, and WUA. In all these committees one could find a predominant presence of people belonging to TDP supporting the impression that these parallel bodies were created for accommodation of party men in positions of power at the village level. Except Ramu Goud all the others were TDP people who were supporters of the TDP leader of the village, Ramana Reddy. The dominance of TDP in the village politics had receded slowly after the 2004 assembly elections as it lost power to Congress party. Importantly, the local MLA also happened to be from Congress party. As a result the power equation in the village started showing signs of change with the TDP people being replaced by Congress workers belonging to Ramu Goud's group. Ramu Goud became the leader of

³⁷ While Yadamma was President of the Watershed, Ramu Goud was Secretary.

Gouds after his father and they had always been opposed to the Reddy/Vysya combine in the earlier days. As he seemed to be gaining upper hand in the village politics, the Reddys have co-opted a powerful Goud into their group to control the political growth of Ramu Goud in the village. That's why Ramu Goud who was successful in getting his wife elected as an MPTC member during the 1995 elections could not succeed again till the 2006 elections.

4.5. Edigapalle

Edigapalle is an interior village lying about 14 Kms. from the mandal headquarter. The northern part of the village is bordered by hills and forest while on the eastern side there is a tank. Unlike other villages in the mandal, Edigapalle is completely dominated by OBCs even though there were some powerful Reddy families in the village. There is a specific reason for the domination of OBCs in the village politics. Edigapalle had been the hamlet of a neighbouring gram panchayat till 1981. Due to the fertile nature of the lands of this hamlet most of the Reddys came to own lands here and some of them came and settled too over a period of time. But they are very few in number. At the same time Edigapalle is second only to Pahadipur in terms of the number of toddy trees. So most of the Edigas came and settled here to be nearer to toddy trees as main village was five Kms. away at that point of time. As their profession required them to visit the toddy trees twice every day they opted for the convenience of staying near the trees and that's how Edigapalle slowly became big enough to become a gram panchayat.

Main castes in the village are Ediga, Madiga, Reddy, Goud, and Golla. Among these Edigas constitute about forty percent of the households and about forty

seven percent of them are landless. Landlessness is one of the highest in the mandal as more than 45% of the households were landless. Not surprisingly it was later found that in what used to be the main village earlier, also has similar figures of landlessness which has a common explanation. Most of the land (importantly fertile land) was in the hands of the Reddys. Although at the time of household survey this fact did not come out due to the fragmentation that takes place with the transfer of land several villagers opined that the land was in the hands of the Reddys. Almost all the big land owner left the village in the 1980s and the children of those that remained also left in search of jobs in the 1990s after getting educated.

Table 4.6: Caste-wise Households and Land particulars- Edigapalle

Caste	HHs	Landless	0 - 2	2 - 5	5 - 10	10 - 20	20+
Muttarasi	31	21	2	7	1	0	0
Chakali	11	5	4	2	0	0	0
Ediga	173	82	37	41	12	1	0
Madiga	43	23	15	4	0	1	0
Mala	3	1	2	0	0	0	0
Mangali	2	1	1	0	0	0	0
Muslim	9	3	3	3	0	0	0
Reddy	35	5	9	6	8	2	5
Kammari	18	9	1	5	3	0	0
Vysya	10	2	0	5	1	1	1
Yerukula	2	1	1	0	0	0	0
Goud	24	7	4	10	2	1	0
Katika	3	1	0	1	0	1	0
Kummari	10	3	3	4	0	0	0
Lambada	20	15	1	2	1	1	0
Jangam	4	2	1	1	0	0	0
Chenchu	9	8	1	0	0	0	0
Golla	30	10	3	11	6	0	0
Total	437	199	88	102	34	8	6

Source: Census conducted during the field work.

The village has two water tanks called Nalla Cheruvu and Kotta Cheruvu with each having an ayacut of 95 acres and 45 acres respectively. Also two drains pass

through this village on the eastern side one of which feeds Nalla Cheruvu. Edigapalle has the most fertile lands in the mandal and as mentioned earlier it became a village due to its fertility as several farmers from the neighbouring villages came and settled here. Main crops are Paddy, Sorghum, and Castor. Lands on all the three sides of the village are fertile but the dominant caste Reddys have their lands on the eastern side of the village as those lands are irrigated by Nalla Cheruvu and there is abundant ground water due to the passage of drains from that part of the village. Most of the Reddys who migrated to Hyderabad have sold their lands which were bought by OBCs, particularly Gouds. Main source of water is borewells and two crops of paddy are cultivated in the lands where irrigation facility is available. Despite the landlessness, migration is not high in this village and very few people leave the village in search of work. This was mainly due to two reasons. One the availability of Toddy trees for the Edigas and also agricultural labour as two crops of paddy are cultivated here.

The other source of income apart from agriculture is Toddy. Every day two Lorries full of toddy are transported from this village to be sold in neighbouring mandals. Liquor (Arrack) is also another source for a small number of families. But it was made and sold within the village. We do not see the organised way of production of PT in Pahadipur here.

The unique aspect of this village is that initially both the factions in the village belonged to Congress party and the Reddys have slowly moved towards the TDP via Janatha party as the OBCs headed by Bala Goud were taking all positions in the power structure. Bala Goud worked as Sarpanch of the village during 1988-95

and he became Mandal Parishad President in the 1995 elections as the position was reserved for OBCs. But after the 2001 elections he lost most of his power in the village politics as his faction was defeated by the Reddys in alliance with the numerically dominant Ediga community after defeating him in the MPTC elections. He also lost his control over the committees in the village as the Reddy group which won the Panchayat elections tried to enforce its will in the DNRM bodies of the village, VSS and Watershed committee. Initially the VSS was headed by a person belonging to the Ediga community and later after the introduction of CFM in 2002 a person belonging to the Reddy group became the chairman. And in the case of the watershed committee, the dispute regarding works was resolved after a protracted struggle of two years to the advantage of the Reddy group as an agreement was brokered by the WDT officials. The agreement was that works were to be done in a 60:40 ratio in favour of the Reddy group.

Unlike the situation in Pahadipur Bala Goud could not retrieve his position in the power structure with the help of MLA because SNR, his contemporary and the main leader of Reddypalle considered him a threat to his position as one can recollect the fast growth of Bala Goud as he became a Mandal level leader immediately after working as Sarpanch. As mentioned earlier, all the predominant leaders of the three study villages had started their political careers in 1988 by becoming Sarpanch of their respective village Panchayats. While the growth of Bala Goud had been meteoric his fall also had been equally quick. But despite his lower position in the mandal politics, SNR fears him most as an opponent. So he prevented the MLA from helping Bala Goud in the politics of his village.

There were significant differences between the study villages both in terms of composition of population and the pattern of domination and control exercised by the traditionally dominant sections. In Reddypalle we find the Reddys as the largest caste group, although the OBCs form the largest number of households when all the castes were put together. The absence of a rival group or not allowing anybody to grow as a rival by co-opting all opposition SNR is maintaining a strong hold in the village affairs. In Pahadipur, all the OBCs put together, comprise more than sixty percent of the village households with the traditionally dominant caste Reddys being a small minority. The presence of Lambadas in good numbers is another variation from the other two villages. This situation had necessitated a complex process of accommodation and co-option for the dominant group headed by Ramana Reddy to continue its hold over the village. Finally, in Edigapalle, the OBCs comprise seventy percent of the population where the dominant caste Reddys through an alliance with Edigas, an OBC caste retook power base by overcoming Bala Goud.

The following chapters take a look into the functioning of Gram Panchayats and Decentralised NRM bodies and how the existing elite coped with the changes in policy with strategies for maintaining their hold over their power base.

CHAPTER V

Panchayat Raj

The strategy of rural development pursued in post-Independence India has recognised right from the beginning that local communities should form both the basis and object of rural development. In some form or other decentralisation has received varying degrees of attention ranging from being mentioned in the Directive Principles of the Constitution to full fledged constitutional status through the 73rd and 74th amendments in 1993-94. The constitutional amendment envisaged a very ambitious role for the Panchayat Raj system where in, the villagers would plan, decide, and execute work that falls under their jurisdiction including direct control over finances. As against this, the various state governments in their subsequent 'state level Acts' undermined the spirit of Panchayat Raj by clipping most of the powers proposed for them by the amendment. This chapter looks into the functioning of gram panchayats at the village level and the processes that describe the tussle between various groups for gaining control of sources of power at the village level.

5.1. Pre 1993 situation:

Prior to reservations for various categories under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act there was almost no opposition to the dominant role played by the Reddys in almost all the villages, including the study villages, in the mandal. The Patel-Patwari system, a predominant structural feature of the Telangana

region till 1985, gave ample scope for the dominant caste communities to continue their hegemony.

Under the Nizam, villages in Telangana were administered by the government through three main officials: Patwari, Mali Patel and Police Patel. The three officials were in charge of maintenance of revenue registers, collection of revenue and maintenance of law and order in the village. The three positions in due course of time came to be hereditary, and were generally held by members of the large landholders. Despite a very small amount of remuneration, the positions were coveted in view of the status and prestige attached to them. This system (generally known as the 'Patel system') continued even after 1948. It was not tampered with by any of the governments which came to power after that as most of these people were traditional supporters of Congress party and there was no opposition to that party till 1983. In the year 1985, on the demands of the larger public and the political will of the new government formed under the leadership of NTR, the hereditary Patel-Patwari system was abolished and, in its place, Village Administrative Officers (VAOs) were appointed by the state government. This was considered as a landmark policy as it removed a major component of the traditional power structure at the village level.

The decision to abolish the Patel-Patwari system brought great cheer among the people of the state, and particularly in Telangana; people recollect that the day was celebrated as a festival. The decision was made not only keeping in mind the wishes of people who had long been suppressed by the hereditary system, but also the long term interest of the new political party, TDP which came to power in 1983, wanted to break the strong hold enjoyed by Congress party at the grass root levels of the political system – villages. It had far reaching implications at the village level, particularly in the traditional power structure. In the villages studied, this encouraged a shift of power from traditional power groups to new groups like in most other villages.

The changes in the power structure started happening during this period as the hereditary system at the village level was replaced by a government appointed Village Administrative Officer. Now there was scope for the development programmes to reach the people as desired by the Sarpanch. Earlier he was not able to do these things as the hereditary official happened to be more powerful

than him. TDP also replaced the earlier system of block panchayats (Panchayat Samitis) with Mandal Parishads in 1988, creating further scope for strengthening of its party cadre at the grass roots level. However, overall dominance of the Reddys in panchayat affairs continued in the study area although there are some cases of contestation in Pahadipur and Edigapalle where some of the OBCs have contested and lost to Reddy candidates. The dominance continued in Reddypalle even after the 1990's due to two important factors. It still had a substantial Reddy population and there is no real opposition to the dominant caste Reddys from within and outside the caste in the village enabling the *S* family³⁸ to continue its dominance in the village power structure.

In Pahadipur, the Gouds were on the rebellious path and had been contesting against the Reddys in the local body elections since 1988, although they could not win any election despite their numerical advantage. This was mainly due to lack of unity within the caste. But in Edigapalle the Gouds successfully contested against Reddys during the Gram Panchayat elections using their numerical advantage and the political awareness created by their leader Bala Goud, whose knowledge is a result of working for an NGO in the mandal during 1980s. Thus we can see that people started opposing the elite sections in two of the study villages during the gram panchayat elections. At the same time, the OBCs have also gained economically as the Reddys started migrating to Hyderabad for jobs/business. This resulted in selling of agricultural land which is the main source of power in villages. By the early 1990s, except in Reddypalle³⁹, the other two

³⁸ The *S* family is the largest among Reddy households in three of the villages in Amangal mandal including Edigapalle. Two of these villages are adjacent to Reddypalle.

³⁹ In Reddypalle land selling was very limited till the late 1990s and even then it was mainly sold to Reddys within the village with a few exceptions.

study villages saw land changing hands wherein large farmers were replaced by medium and small farmers belonging to OBCs and SCs. During the early 1990's the Gouds in Pahadipur and Edigapalle improved their economic condition by illegally selling arrack⁴⁰ in large quantities. Another important factor which made it easier for the growth of OBCs is the emergence of TDP in 1982 along with the removal of Patel-Patwari system. All these factors contributed to the economic improvement of OBCs and SCs. However, they were not able to succeed in gaining entry into the power structure. At this juncture the 73rd Amendment came into existence in 1993.

There was not much scope for people belonging to the backward communities or women to gain position of authority in the Panchayat Raj structure before the reforms in 1993. If ever there was representation for these sections as ward members in the Gram Panchayat, it was due to the process of accommodation and to suit the needs of the dominant sections in the village. This was reflected by the fact that there were several instances of members belonging to different communities representing various wards in the village panchayat. As discussed in Chapter IV, Pahadipur and Edigapalle were part of a larger Gram Panchayat till the 1980's while Reddypalle had been a major gram panchayat right from the beginning of Panchayat system. Pahadipur⁴¹ and Edigapalle gained the status of independent Gram Panchayats in 1981. The predominance of dominant caste

⁴⁰ There was a liquor ban in AP during 1994-1998 following a mass movement anchored by DWCRAs women groups. Prohibition followed a promise to the women made by NTR during election campaign. It encouraged illegal brewing of local liquor in the villages. Arrack and Gudumba, local varieties of liquor were made in huge quantities by the Gouds and Lambadas respectively. This activity was very high in the mandals near Hyderabad city.

⁴¹ Pahadipur and Edigapalle were part of Siripuram Gram Panchayat and were carved out as independent panchayats in 1981. Some of the Reddys of Siripuram were the biggest and richest landlords in the Taluk and they had controlled the village unopposed as all the positions of power in the village like Patel, Patwari and Sarpanch were occupied by members of the same family.

hegemony was very much part of the power structure in these villages. They were able to exercise their control by a series of measures, the most important being the patron-client relationship. As part of this, the needs of the subservient sections in the village were taken care of by providing jobs, credit facilities and, whenever there was a felt need, members of the subservient group were absorbed into different not-so-significant positions in the power structure like membership in gram panchayat and these days in various committees (after the introduction of DNRM bodies).

Another factor of control exercised by the dominant sections was indebtedness of the poor. As most of the transactions were carried out in kind, people depended on credit facility more so in the case of lower classes⁴² that had to rush to the *shaukari* or the *Patel* (usually a Reddy landlord) whenever they were in need of money. This credit facility was provided by the *shaukari* (money lender) and wherever there was a denial due to an outstanding debt it was provided on the recommendation of a *Patel*. The Reddys in Reddypalle and Edigapalle were strong and rich enough to fund their credit requirements⁴³. Compared to these two villages the Reddys in Pahadipur were not financially well off. Consequently, one could see the *shaukaris* contesting elections and also having representation among the '*peddamanushulu*'⁴⁴ group in Pahadipur. This is largely because of the

⁴² OBCs, SCs and STs.

⁴³ In Reddypalle and Edigapalle the Reddys are large landowners while in Pahadipur it used to be Muslims at one point of time and later the Vysyas were large landowners. As a result the Reddys of Pahadipur have to depend on Shaukaris for their economic needs.

⁴⁴ '*Peddamanushulu*' was the traditional elder's assembly which was to be found in most of the villages in India and it was these people who used to resolve disputes and problems of the villagers much before the establishment of formal legal institutions. Generally this group includes the prominent persons/elder of the major caste groups in the village. Elder doesn't mean the oldest person but generally he is the leader of a particular caste. This system was actively functioning till the late 1970s and it was not considered proper to go to courts or police whenever there is any problem. But after the spread of education and changes in leadership in the villages when new

absence of large Reddy landlords and also numerically the Reddys were not large compared to the other two villages as they constitute only 5% of the total households in the village. An interesting aspect in Pahadipur is that, unlike the other two villages, the opposition to the official candidate was from the OBCs (in this case Gouds). Thus, during the Panchayat elections held in 1981, a Vysya who was part of the '*peddamanushulu*' group and the richest in the village and Ramu Goud's father who was the leader of Gouds contested for the position of village Sarpanch and the Vysya candidate had won.

Gradually during the 1990s the Gouds improved their financial position and started providing credit facility to the villagers. In the absence of the traditional *shaukaris* most of whom left the village⁴⁵ starting from the late 1980s, the Gouds became the new *shaukaris*. This phenomenon is very much evident in Pahadipur and Edigapalle.

Toddy tapping is the traditional occupation of the Gouds, a dominant caste among the OBCs. Their social status grew along with their economic status over a period of time. Presently they are contesting for positions of power in most of the Telangana districts including in the study villages. The main factor which contributed to their growth had been Toddy. Starting from the early 1980s some of the entrepreneurial Gouds had started marketing it by sending it to nearby towns

leaders emerged in opposition to the traditionally dominant elite this system started losing its significance. But this does hold some significance when it comes to dispute resolutions among the BCs⁴⁴. In the modern context the Sarpanch is also part of the '*Peddamanushulu*' group.

⁴⁵ The decade of 1980s had seen most of the rich and powerful families of the mandal migrating to Hyderabad in search of better opportunities be it jobs or business. This had been evident in the migration of Reddys from Reddypalle, Edigapalle and Siripuram, Muslims and Vysyas from Pahadipur.

which helped in their economic growth. In the study villages this initiative had been taken by Ramu Goud's father after he became the President of '*Mastadar Sangham*'⁴⁶. He started collecting toddy from all the tappers in the village and sent it to far off places like Gadwal a major town in Mahabubnagar district. After developing their contact base they started sending it to Siddipet another major town of a neighbouring district and later on to Hyderabad in 1984 which increased their profits a great deal.

Reddypalle is different from the other two villages both in terms of population and land. An important difference is the presence of large number of Reddy families in the village⁴⁷. This is one of the prosperous villages in the mandal as it has good ground water facility and was one of the earliest paddy cultivating villages. Despite the effect of migration⁴⁸ they are still influential enough to dominate the village. The *shaukaris* of Reddypalle were one of the richest groups in the mandal and were the first people to start a rice mill in the 1960s in the mandal. But over a period of time, most of them migrated to Hyderabad in search of better business opportunities. Migration was very high among the Reddys also as a good number of families got relocated to Hyderabad. The mobility of Reddys was mainly because of education and the preference for city jobs. In almost all the study villages this phenomenon is visible. The village has been under the control of S

⁴⁶ '*Mastadar Sangham*' is a traditional body in which all the toddy tappers are members and the '*sangham*' allots trees to the Gouds based on their seniority and availability. It sees to it that all the toddy tappers get the trees for toddy and also collects the tax to be paid to government. However, it does not play any role in the political affairs of the village. This body is there in all the villages in the mandal where toddy tapping is done on a large scale.

⁴⁷ The dominant caste Reddys has 21% households in Reddypalle as against 5% in Pahadipur and 8% in Edigapalle. For reference see Chapter IV tables 3, 4 and 5.

⁴⁸ While in the other villages the effect migration led to decrease in population and consequently erosion of power, it did not happen in Reddypalle.

family of Reddy caste for a long time and the panchayat was under its control from 1959-2001 as successive members of the family reigned over it as Sarpanch.

5.1 Sarpanch's from the same family

Uncle of SNR	Sarpanch	1959-64
Cousin of SNR	Sarpanch	1964-88
SNR	Sarpanch	1988-1995
SNR's wife	Sarpanch	1995-2001

Source: Census conducted during the field work.

It is largely the upper caste Reddys who used their manipulative strategies like intimidation, adoption, and accommodation to retain their hegemony by controlling the panchayats. In the first elections after gaining panchayat status in 1981, a Reddy got elected unanimously after the brother of Bala Goud was made to withdraw his nomination by Jaipal Reddy, then MLA of Kalvakurthy constituency by luring him with the offer of a job. According to Bala Goud, this was the phenomenon through out the taluk⁴⁹ during those days as Jaipal Reddy tried to protect the Reddy hegemony in the Panchayats by intervening on behalf of the Reddys of their respective villages. From the second election, the OBCs successfully contested against the Reddys in the Gram Panchayat. Thus Bala Goud, leader of the OBC group in the village, won against a Reddy in 1988 and his brother won against another Reddy candidate in 1995. He became the President of Amangal Mandal Parishad. After the debacle in 1981 Bala Goud who was already working in an NGO started becoming proactive in the village politics by organising the OBCs into a strong electoral group. He overcame the differences within OBCs by giving importance to the elders of respective castes and also creating job opportunities for some of them in the NGO. Allied to this, the numerical majority of the OBCs and prosperity by selling toddy enabled him

⁴⁹ District was divided into taluks for administrative purpose during the British period which was retained after independence. Presently, they are renamed as revenue divisions.

to successfully challenge the Reddys. The impact of migration is huge on the power structure as most of the rich Reddys migrated from the village along with their children who got jobs outside the mandal. Several of these migrants sold their lands while a few still own and come once in a while to take care of them. Edigapalle has good ground water and it also has a tank (Nalla Cheruvu) which irrigates about 105 acres. Apart from the Reddys and the educated people from the other castes (there were about 7 graduates in all) there is very little out migration from the village in search of work.

Each of the study villages has a different power structure with the dominant caste(s) trying to hold on to power in three different situations ranging from consolidation of power in Reddypalle to accommodation of new groups to hold on to power in Pahadipur and finally coming back to power through co-option in Edigapalle. We could clearly see this especially in the aftermath of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. Prior to the act it had always been the dominant caste(s) holding on to power despite the numerical disadvantage which became very important after the amendment. Although there were political contests against the existing elites they were not successful in displacing them. Thus when the constitutional amendment was enacted there was huge scope for the excluded communities to become included in the power structure in the villages as it provided reservations to the OBCs as well as women, in addition to reservations for the SCs and STs.

5.2. 73rd Amendment - Consequences:

Before implementation of the 73rd Amendment, many of the sarpanchs in the mandal were from the traditionally dominant communities. The exceptions were

only those villages where Lambadas (STs) or OBCs formed the majority, e.g., two villages which had exclusive Lambada population, and Edigapalle (OBC). While in one of the villages adjacent to Reddypalle and in Pahadipur the OBCs have put up a strong fight they could sustain it only in Pahadipur due to financial reasons. In other villages, it had been the dominant Reddys, e.g., Reddypalle – where the position of sarpanch was controlled by *S* family from 1958 till 2001.

More specifically, if we look at the representation of various castes, reservation has enabled the OBCs to become part of the political process. People from the marginal sections were provided with an opportunity to contest and win elections in the local bodies. While there were reservations earlier⁵⁰ also, seats are very few and those seats were filled with close followers of the ruling elite. Due to the increased number of seats in the study villages this created scope for members belonging to the Other Backward Castes to get elected to these bodies for the first time.

Within the reservations⁵¹ there are several categories as women were also provided with reservation in the Panchayats. Thus in each of the categories – General, OBC, SC and ST, there is reservation for women of that category too. Thus the reservation possibilities can be as follows –

General Category (open to all), General Category (women-open to all women), OBC (general – Open to both men and women), OBC (women), SC (General-open to SC men and women), ST (general-open to ST men and women), ST (women).

⁵⁰ There were 15% seats for SCs and 6% for STs from 1976 in the Gram Panchayats.

⁵¹ See Chapter III, first para of p.51 for details of reservations.

Three elections were conducted till date after the introduction of 73rd Amendment.

The following table provides the list of candidates who contested the elections.

Table 5.2: Sarpanch Elections - 1995, 2001, 2006

Village	Year	Reservation	Winning Faction	Party	Losing Faction	Party
Reddypalle	1995	General (W)	SNR	Cong.	J. Reddy	Cong.
Pahadipur	1995	OBC (W)	Ramana Reddy	TDP	Ramu Goud	Cong.
Edigapalle	1995	OBC (G)	Bala Goud	Cong.	Reddy	TDP.
Reddypalle	2001	S.C (G)	SNR	Cong	Independents (17)	-
Pahadipur	2001	S.T (G)	Ramana Reddy	TDP	Ramu Goud	Cong.
Edigapalle	2001	General (W)	G. Reddy	TDP	Bala Goud	Cong.
Reddypalle	2006	Men (OBC)	SNR	Cong.	Independents (4)	-
Pahadipur	2006	SC (W)	Ramu Goud	Cong.	Ramana Reddy	TDP
Edigapalle	2006	SC (G)	G. Reddy	TDP	Bala Goud	Cong.

Source: Data conducted during the field work.

As reservations provided an opportunity for new groups to become part of the power structure the initial beneficiaries of 73rd Amendment belonged to two specific categories. The first category were those who were part of the informal committees like '*peddamanushulu*' and the second category were pyraveekars/political fixers whose main contribution to the power structure earlier was to deliver votes during elections. However they were never part of the formal power structure like occupying the position of Sarpanch although some of them had the opportunity to become ward members. This process could be clearly seen in Reddypalle⁵² and Pahadipur where the Sarpanch position had gone to women as they replaced the dominant caste occupants. The only exception was the case of Edigapalle, where the brother of Bala Goud was elected as Sarpanch since the position was reserved for OBCs. This was possible because the OBC vote was

⁵² Although the person occupying the post has changed the position remained within the family as SNR's wife became Sarpanch. This was because the position was general category woman.

consolidated under the leadership of Bala Goud who won as Sarpanch defeating a Reddy candidate in 1988. Although there are other villages in the mandal where OBCs got elected as Sarpanchs it was generally in the absence of dominant caste Reddys thus making the case of Edigapalle unique.

In Pahadipur, majority of Gouds were unified under the leadership of Ramu Goud and his father. Differences regarding leadership led to division among themselves and Anjaiah Goud, the richest among the Gouds became leader of a new group which started supporting the existing elite. The differences surfaced once it became apparent that the Sarpanch position in 1995 elections was reserved for OBC women. Consequently, Rajamma, Anjaiah Goud's wife contested as Sarpanch on behalf of the existing elite and defeated the mother-in-law of Ramu Goud, whose husband was one of the '*peddamanushulu*'. In the MPTC elections of 1995 Ramu Goud's wife won in a triangular contest against two Reddy women. This was possible as there was a split in the votes of the Reddys. Thus one could see a change in the nature of leadership in the study villages with the introduction of reservations. One has to see how these new leaders are going to function in the 'new spaces' created for them by the government and how the local factors will influence their day-to-day functioning.

5.3. New Spaces:

In a discussion about participation in development, Cornwall (2005) analyses the opportunities created by successive waves of local institution-building and the way they are designed to enable public engagement. She describes these as 'invited spaces' which could offer transformative participation. She has

distinguished between the popular spaces and invited spaces. According to her 'popular spaces' are those arenas in which people join together, often with others like them while 'invited spaces' bring together a very heterogeneous set of actors among whom there might be expected to be significant differences in status (ibid: 76). The 73rd constitutional amendment may be considered to have introduced new invited space as this is an external intervention i.e., it comes from the government and not from within the community.

5.3.1. Reddypalle:

In Reddypalle, the 73rd amendment brought about a change in the leadership as a woman became Sarpanch of the gram panchayat for the first time in 1995. While the woman who became Sarpanch was SNR's wife, change in leadership wouldn't have been facilitated without the reservation policy. She contested against the daughter-in-law of another previous Sarpanch. Thus on the one hand, there was change in the power structure in the form of a woman becoming Sarpanch on the other hand there is continued domination of one household in the power structure. One has to note that both the women are cousins and hail from the same *S* family which is the dominant family of Reddypalle. This is one good example of how the ruling family/dominant group in the village continued its hold over the power structure despite the introduction of reservations. The reservation specified only general category woman which makes all the castes eligible to contest. But this would generally mean that it is reserved for the dominant caste as it allows continuation of their hegemony. However, because of rotation it changes from election to election and might pass on to other caste groups.

In the 2001 elections⁵³ held for the gram panchayat, the sarpanch post was reserved for Scheduled Caste (general) thus paving the way for election of a person who did not belong to the S family for the first time. Among the SCs in Reddypalle, Madigas form the majority with 84 households⁵⁴ as against 10 households of Malas. Among the Madigas, most of them belong to one extended family. After the final date of nominations, there were as many as 17 candidates in the fray for sarpanch position. Almost all of them claimed to be close followers of SNR. He stayed away from the village as the election date drew closer to avoid the candidates and finalised 'official' candidate for the post on the night before election. He had selected the son of Ramulu, one of his close followers and sent in a word that he will be the main candidate. Ramulu's son was chosen because he was a young inexperienced boy and would be easier to control than somebody who was experienced in the political affairs. From this case we can see how the dominant caste Reddys was adopting a strategy of cooption despite reservation to continue their hold over the village affairs. For a few days after the election, some of the disgruntled candidates were contemplating drastic action like beating up the former sarpanch. But none of these claims translated into any action as they were all pacified by SNR. Just before these elections, SNR was elected as ZPTC member⁵⁵ for Amangal mandal in July.

⁵³ In 2001 two rounds of elections were held with the first one for Mandal Parishad and Zilla Parishad being held in July and the second one for GPs in September.

⁵⁴ There are 427 households in the village and Madiga community has 19.7% of the total and Malas constitute 2.34% of the total.

⁵⁵ Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituency. There are 64 mandals in Mahabubnagar District. Each mandal elects and sends one ZPTC member to Zilla Parishad.

5.3.2. Pahadipur

The political situation in Pahadipur is more complex than in Reddypalle. As noted earlier, in Pahadipur there were two factions one headed by a Reddy and the other by a Goud. There is a vertical split in the village as almost all the castes in the village are supporting these two factions. Thus one finds substantial conflict between and among communities for power. Actually, the schism among the castes had been due to introduction of reservations in Panchayat Raj system as more and more positions were available in gram panchayat and parallel bodies, competition for these positions led to divisions within the caste not only in Pahadipur but also in other villages of the mandal as well. The only group which had no divisions and was unified in its support was the Lambadas (STs). During the late 1990's even they were divided with the lure of positions by the TDP group which was more dominant than the congress group in the village at that point of time. The TDP group is being led by Ramana Reddy and the Congress group by Ramu Goud since the late 80's.

During the 2001 election in Pahadipur both the MPTC position and Sarpanch position were reserved for ST candidates. In the MPTC elections the candidates were from the two hamlets of Pahadipur⁵⁶. The Congress party candidate was from Gutta Tanda (GT) and the TDP candidate was from Palle Tanda (PT). Due to the numerical strength and the confidence they gained by getting the support of a

⁵⁶ There are two hamlets for Pahadipur - GT and PT which are exclusively inhabited by Lambadas. BT is the smaller of the two with 42 households while PT has 124 households.

faction of Lambadas TDP was confident of victory. But Congress party won the MPTC position defeating the more fancied TDP candidate. This was made possible due to three important factors. The first one was the TDP candidate was a money lender among the Lambadas in PT and they were resentful of his earlier activities and two, all the Lambadas from GT⁵⁷ voted for the Congress candidate as he belonged to their hamlet while the most important aspect is the third factor – growth of BJP especially among the Lambadas of PT. All these factors combined and led to the defeat of the TDP candidate. The complacency of the leaders was also another reason as they were not aware of the switch of loyalties in GT which had always supported the TDP.

The victory in the MPTC election had heightened the expectations on the Congress party side and the TDP group also was alerted to the prevailing situation. So in order to combat the rejuvenated Congress party it had acted in a strategic manner by putting up a BJP candidate for Sarpanch position. During the election both sides spent more than a lakh of rupees with the BJP candidate spending about 1.2 lakh and the Congress candidate about 1.6 lakh. The candidate brought in by the TDP group won a narrow victory and the gamble of putting up a BJP person for Sarpanch post by the ruling group had succeeded and helped them in retaining their authority over the village affairs. In the process it did pave the way for the emergence of new leaders from the Lambada tribals in the ‘invited’ space created by the 73rd amendment.

⁵⁷ Unlike the other castes Lambadas still follow their leader and vote enmasse in elections as there are no vertical splits on party lines especially in GT.

5.3.3. Edigapalle:

The situation is completely different from what we had seen in Reddypalle and Pahadipur, where the existing groups had tried to consolidate their positions despite the emergence of new leaders at the gram Panchayat level. In Edigapalle the Gouds who belong to OBC category had made their move at garnering power much earlier than the other two villages and displaced the Reddys from the power structure. The coming of 73rd Amendment allowed them to consolidate their position vis-à-vis the dominant caste Reddys whereas in Reddypalle and Pahadipur the dominant caste Reddys accommodated 'new' leaders to consolidate their position in the power structure. In the 1995 election, the younger brother of Bala Goud won in the elections held for the Sarpanch position. The opposing group being led by Reddys had put up a candidate belonging to the numerically dominant Ediga community which constitutes about 40% of the total households in the village. But their strategy failed as most of the Edigas supported Bala Goud's brother. According to him, his role in getting loans for the Edigas during his spell in AWARE⁵⁸ and as Sarpanch had helped in overcoming the caste divide and earned victory for his brother. Although Bala Goud won a resounding victory these elections had resulted in the formation of a new alliance with a numerically dominant OBC group (Edigas) again getting divided for political position and aligning itself with the dominant caste Reddys as was the case in Pahadipur.

In the same elections, Bala Goud got elected as MPTC member and went on to become Mandal Parishad President as the post was reserved for OBCs. He was later replaced by another Congress candidate from Amangal in 1998 due to the

⁵⁸ This NGO was very active in Amangal and its surrounding mandals from 1982 to 1995 and most of the people who worked for it went on to become village level politicians particularly in the aftermath of 73rd Amendment.

power struggle at the mandal level and he shifted from Congress to TDP. As Bala Goud was not able to get the chance to contest for MPTC position in the 2001 elections from TDP he returned to Congress again in 2000 on the eve of elections.

Due to the switch of parties Bala Goud lost most of his power in the party at mandal level. During the 2001 election the Congress party did not give him the seat initially for MPTC position from Edigapalle citing his shifting of parties in between as the reason. In the village also his position was weakened as there was a split among the OBCs regarding leadership between Gouds and Edigas. This was engineered by the Reddys. In the MPTC election, a new OBC leader, Veeraiah belonging to the numerically dominant Ediga caste emerged as he won against the Congress candidate supported by Bala Goud. G Reddy's wife, Indiramma defeated Bala Goud's wife for Sarpanch post in the subsequently held Gram Panchayat elections. Thus by the 2001 elections Bala Goud was marginalised both at the mandal level and in the village as the Reddy faction was able to use its structural political capital to the maximum effect in diluting the instrumental political capital of Bala Goud. In the process it has opened up 'invited spaces' for new leaders to come although it was mainly to re-establish the dominant caste hegemony over the village.

While on the one hand, the 73rd Amendment divided the people into opposing groups for the sake of power it enabled new leaders to come into the political framework giving strength to the theory of Cornwall who talks about creation of new spaces for participation. As mentioned earlier, these spaces are 'invited' as they are created by the constitutional reform of the government. So we have new

leaders in place of the old ones and despite the reservations they had their own strategies in coming to power. These changes in the power structure were not only due to the invited spaces and the strategies of the new leaders but also due to the greater structural changes which took place in the 1980's.

The emergence of TDP in 1982 had provided a very good platform for the OBCs to express their political will as against the dominant caste Reddys as for the first time there was a strong political alternative to Congress party at the state level. At around the same time other factors like removal of Patel-Patwari system in 1985, increased education and employment opportunities, creation of new gram panchayats by dividing the larger panchayats into smaller ones⁵⁹, improved economic position of the OBCs due to changes in land owning pattern⁶⁰ and creation of mandal parishads in place of the panchayat samitis had greatly aided in the rise of new leaders at the village level.

5.4. Strategies for gaining power:

Sarpanch is the supreme 'formal' authority in gram panchayats. Thus, from the beginning (1959), the Sarpanch position was highly coveted in gram panchayats and it had always been the dominant communities which held the Sarpanch position. Till 1985, they were aided and abetted by the Patel-Patwari system in

⁵⁹ This is a very important aspect as it gave scope to emergence of new leaders at the village level. A very good example is Edigapalle.

⁶⁰ There is an overall change in the land owning pattern in the 1980s as more number of dominant communities had migrated to cities in search of business and jobs by selling their lands. Most of these land were bought by the OBCs who had for a long time been cultivating these lands as tenants. This phenomenon had increased greatly in the 1990s.

their activities⁶¹. By the 1988 elections, in most of the villages a second generation of leaders had emerged from the dominant communities. We could see this in all the study villages as new leaders from the dominant communities replaced the older ones, the only exception being Edigapalle. With the 73rd amendment these new leaders from the dominant communities felt their positions were under threat and realised that they had to protect their positions as reservations were introduced for all posts. At the same time the opportunity of entering the power structure had alerted small leaders of various castes to the possibility of becoming Sarpanch through reservations. In this whole process, both sides (dominant community and aspiring leaders from other castes) had their own strategies for fulfilling their ambitions of holding on to power and attaining foothold into the power structure. This process of contestation, negotiation, and accommodation could be seen to a greater extent in Pahadipur and Edigapalle while in Reddypalle the existing ruling group was not disturbed due to the absence of a rival group.

5.4.1. Reddypalle:

In Reddypalle, there was no real threat to the domination by the S family as there was a clear absence of a rival group. As only one family dominated the village, it controlled the gram panchayat since its inception in 1959. The Sarpanch was always unanimously elected. However, elections were never unanimous after 1988 when SNR came into the political scenario defeating his cousin, J Reddy who had been a Sarpanch for more than twenty five years. One or the other family member of J Reddy continued to contest against SNR. They come to the village

⁶¹ As the Patel-Patwari system was a hereditary one it was always the dominant family of the village which occupied the positions. So in most of the villages in the study area, Sarpanch, Patwari and the Patels were related and generally belonged to the same family.

only during elections as this particular branch of *S* family (J Reddy's children) had settled down in Hyderabad in the early 1980s. As a result, there was not much opposition to SNR in the panchayat affairs. Another important reason being, the *S* family's attachment to Jaipal Reddy and consequently both the branches remained with Congress party. After the demise of J Reddy in 2002 there was no clear opposition to SNR and with the absence of any young leaders from the Reddys his position is safe. He has several followers hailing from different castes. During elections they see to it that people from their caste vote for SNR. In return he grants them small favours like getting them minor contract works, getting their works done at the mandal level and so on. Most of these people had served or serving as members of gram panchayat for a long time. This indicates the 'space' given to various communities (castes) in the power structure although these positions do not carry much power. These same people could be co-opted over a period of time depending upon their position vis-à-vis the power structure in the village. With the patronage they receive from the power group, they ensure the support of their particular community to the dominant group.

In the 1995 elections, the Sarpanch position was reserved for Women and SNR's wife contested the elections. She won against the wife of J Reddy's brother in a closely contested election. SNR's wife prevailed mainly because of patronage dispensed under a programme to develop watershed headed by him. During the 2001 elections to the local body, the post of Sarpanch was reserved for SCs in Reddypalle and an opportunity came for somebody other than *S* family to become Sarpanch for the first time. When the time for withdrawal of nominations was over there were as many as 18 candidates in the fray. In Reddypalle, Madigas are

the dominant community among SCs and constitute about 89% of the total SC population in the village. Each and every candidate was confident that the ZPTC will support him only, but he avoided all the candidates. Of those in fray, Krishnaiah, Buddiah and Masaiah were seen as favourites to win the elections as they were considered close followers of SNR. But in a secret meeting SNR decided to support Prakash, son of another close follower Ramulu for Sarpanch position as he is young and inexperienced which would make it easier in dealing with him. Secrecy, manipulation, and cunningness are strategies when allied with dependence on the rich and powerful for credit facility, work in watersheds, allow the dominance to be retained in village power structure.

5.4.2. Pahadipur:

In Pahadipur, there was a void in the dominant group as most of its elders passed away by the end of 1980's. This had created scope for Ramana Reddy to gain access to the power structure and by the late 1980's became undisputed leader of TDP group and assumed complete control of the village affairs. His growth was very swift both economically and politically and is considered as an upstart and of aggressive character by most of the villagers. He started his political career as a ward member and after becoming Sarpanch in 1988 bought (usurped) the land (18 acres) of a Vysya family who migrated to Hyderabad in the 1980s by paying a quarter of its actual price. The opposite group headed by Ramu Goud of Congress became strong by the early nineties as he was able to strengthen his alliance with the lambadas. The alliance of Gouds and Lambadas is quite strong and together they constitute 50% of the households. The Sarpanch position was reserved for OBC women in the 1995 elections and the Congress group was very confident of

victory. Ramu Goud's Congress group had decided to field his mother-in-law as the Sarpanch candidate.

This decision did not go down well with some members of the Goud community as already Ramu Goud's wife got elected as MPTC member defeating Ramana Reddy's wife. Reservations raised the expectations of the villagers as it would provide them an opportunity to become part of the power structure. Anjaiah Goud, the richest among the Gouds in Pahadipur expected that his wife would get a chance to contest. On knowing about the dissidence among Gouds, Ramana Reddy asked Anjaiah Goud to come to their side and assured him that his wife, Rajamma could contest the election from TDP side. Thus, the Gouds were divided and even though majority of them still supported Ramu Goud's group, Rajamma won the election quite easily. Thus the actions of Ramu Goud inadvertently led to the break down of unity among the Gouds, while the existing elite co-opted a Goud into the power 'space'.

During the 2001 election, MPTC member and Sarpanch posts were reserved for STs and the TDP group was extremely confident of the victory of their candidates in both elections. As mentioned earlier, the TDP candidate lost and this alarmed the TDP group which realised that they were the weaker side and decided to put up a BJP⁶² candidate against Congress as there was an alliance between these two

⁶² Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was formed out of the old Jan Sangh in 1984 and had a dramatic rise in the Indian political sphere. By the middle of 1990s it became the main opposition party to Congress at the national level. Its growth was aided by the lack of a suitable alternative to Congress party in the national level politics. Although it was branded as a communal party at the national level due to its championing the 'Ram Temple' issue, at the state level, particularly in Andhra Pradesh it was able to become an alliance partner of TDP in the 1980s for some time and again in the late 1990s. The growth of BJP cannot be attributed to communal ideology alone. It had successfully appealed to the hitherto neglected groups in the Indian political sphere like the OBCs and STs and gave them important positions in the party and later in the government when

parties at the state level at that point of time. The BJP candidate was not living in the village for the last eight years as he had migrated to Maal, neighbouring mandal which is a big market centre. He spent a lot of money even before the nominations and attracted the attention of both the groups. In the election, one important factor was the youth association in PT. It was set up in 1994 with the monetary help of Achary⁶³, Mandal President of BJP in Amangal. He had set up youth associations in most of the tribal hamlets of the mandal and provided them with monetary support from time to time. So in PT also there was good number of BJP supporters due to this. The BJP candidate was part of the youth association before migrating to Maal to do vegetable business was able to get the nod of the BJP leaders at the mandal level to contest on behalf of BJP in the Sarpanch election.

Ramana Reddy thought that this could work and supported the BJP candidate. Thus an 'outsider' was supported by the Reddy headed TDP to oppose Congress faction in the village. He also thought that the BJP candidate could be easily controlled as he did not have any strong group of his own and was a relative new comer to the village politics. So the BJP candidate contested the election on behalf of the leading group, and along with the Congress candidate, spent huge amounts

they came to power in the late 1990s. Also, BJP had concentrated on the youth and liberally funded several youth associations as it is a cash rich party. The educated youth belonging to OBC and ST category had joined BJP as the TDP and Congress already had established leaders in their ranks. Thus at Amangal mandal the BJP came to be headed by Achary, a young business man with lot of money at his disposal. In pursuance of the party policy he had actively supported the formation of youth associations and gave them good funding. As a result, by late 1990s the BJP had a very strong political base among the youth of the mandal.

⁶³ Achary belongs to weaver's community and was part of ABVP, the student's wing of BJP before becoming a full time politician. With the help of his contacts in Hyderabad he became owner of oil mills and is a good source of monetary support to various youth associations in the mandal. He shifted his base to Hyderabad from Amangal after two failed attempts on his life by the naxalites (called Maoists now).

of money⁶⁴. The youth association played a crucial role in dividing the votes of the Lambadas in PT but the BJP candidate won by the narrowest⁶⁵ of margins. Thus, the strategy of the ruling group and BJP succeeded in these elections. This time the ruling group was able to successfully divide the votes of the Lambadas by putting up a BJP candidate and the hitherto unutilised BJP vote played an important role in the victory of ruling group over Ramu Goud led Congress group.

Thus one could see how the existing elite played out moves to safe-guard their hold over the power structure. We can clearly see two types of phenomenon here; co-option in the case of Gouds and accommodation in the case of Lambadas. By successfully using these methods, the existing elite retained their control over village power structure in Pahadipur. On their part, the OBCs led by Ramu Goud did not foresee the long term effect of their actions when they did not cede into the claim of Anjaiah Goud for a part of the cake in the power structure. This had permanently divided the Gouds in the village, which otherwise would have thrown up many interesting possibilities.

5.4.3. Edigapalle:

The unusually large presence of toddy tapping communities in Edigapalle (Gouds & Edigas) enabled Bala Goud to forge a successful alliance of OBCs against the domination of Reddys in the village since it became a gram Panchayat in 1981. His job background of working in an NGO also helped him develop contacts through out the mandal which made his task easier. By the 1988 election Bala Goud was in a very strong position and he contested for the post of Sarpanch

⁶⁴The BJP and Congress candidates had revealed that they had spent Rs.1.2 Lakhs and Rs.1.6 lakhs respectively.

⁶⁵ The BJP candidate won the election by sixteen votes.

against a Reddy strong man of the village. He was asked to withdraw his nomination by the Reddys and during the election campaign nobody dared to go with Bala Goud due to fear of the Reddys in the village. The fear was mainly borne out of the uncertainty of victory in the elections. After the victory in election, he consolidated his position and got elected as MPTC member in the 1995 election to Mandal Parishad. In the gram panchayat election the Sarpanch post was reserved for OBCs and Bala Goud's brother defeated a candidate belonging to the numerically dominant Ediga caste which was supported by the Reddy faction. As was the case with other villages, the onset of reservations had created interest among the OBCs and the Ediga candidate being the richest in his community aspired for the post. The Reddys in Edigapalle thought that, numerical dominance of Edigas coupled with the fact that majority of Ediga households were branches of one particular family to which the Ediga candidate belonged to would make him a winner against Bala Goud's brother. Even the Ediga candidate expected that he could win the elections because of his family background.

But the Edigas voted for Bala Goud's brother despite the presence of an Ediga candidate due to two reasons. One, Bala Goud was very helpful to most of the Edigas both during his job with the NGO and during his tenure as Sarpanch. And secondly, most of them did not forget the domination and humiliation they faced in the hands of Reddys. Thus the strategy of Reddys to use an Ediga against a Goud failed at that time. However, Reddys did not give up easily. They supported factional leaders within the OBCs and tried to split their votes. As mentioned earlier, Bala Goud's position became weak both in the village and the mandal by the elections of 2001 due to his changing of parties. But as long as the alliance of

OBCs is intact he is still strong enough in the village. In the 2001 elections the Sarpanch position was reserved for Women and the MPTC position was reserved for OBCs. Bala Goud expected that he will be renominated for the MPTC position.

Immediately after knowing that the MPTC position was reserved for OBCs the Reddys once again tried to divide the Gouds and Edigas and they were successful in persuading Veeraiah, one of the main leaders of Edigas to cross over to their side. Veeraiah also felt that it was time for him to come out of the shadow of Bala Goud and become a leader. Due to his weak position, Bala Goud could not counter the split in the village. Thus in the MPTC elections Veeraiah won against a candidate supported by Bala Goud. In the subsequently held Sarpanch elections, Veeraiah supported Kamamma, wife of Govardhan Reddy. Thus the Reddys despite being outnumbered by the OBCs were able to wrest control of the gram panchayat from the numerically dominant OBCs in their third attempt. In the process they used all the tricks prescribed by the historical figure from ancient India, Kautilya⁶⁶ like dividing groups, making them friends and bribing some of them with positions of power. Ultimately, the structural political capital of the Reddys proved to be decisive in re-establishing their control over the village by overcoming the instrumental political capital of the Bala Goud as they countered him both at the village level and mandal level using their contacts with perfection.

Thus we could clearly see a gradual rise and entry of OBCs into the power structure with the onset of reservations as it enabled them access to positions of

⁶⁶ Kautilya wrote a treatise on court craft called 'Arthashastra' in the third century B.C. It was a precursor to Machiavelli's Prince which also had a similar theme He talks about breaking an enemy by using *sama* – friendship, *dana* – gift, *bheda* – divide, and *danda* – punishment.

power in the gram Panchayats. But one notable scenario in Pahadipur and Edigapalle where OBCs form more than seventy percent of the population had been the lack of unity among them. This factor was very cleverly exploited by the existing elite in serving their ends. Both in Pahadipur and Edigapally, the main reason for the defeat of OBCs had been the split engineered in their ranks by the existing elite. This was also made possible by the refusal to share the power by the OBC leaders with members of their group. We have the examples of Anjaiah Goud in Pahadipur and Veeraiah in Edigapalle whose claims to power were ignored in both the villages by their respective OBC leaders. This is an indication of the lack of political consciousness and the possibilities of acting as a unified group/caste bloc/class both by the leaders and the dissidents. This is like playing into the hands of the elite, who utilised the opportunities to successfully divide the OBCs and the co-option of the dissident OBC leaders allowed them to retain their hold over the power structure despite not being in any official position themselves.

5.5. Actual Functioning of 'New' leaders:

While on the one hand we are talking about the possibilities of participation of people in democratic governance, on the other hand we are looking at the influence of 'local' factors in impeding or aiding participation of excluded communities in local governance. The coming of 73rd amendment had definitely enabled inclusion of more communities into the power structure by breaking down the hold of the existing elite in some villages of Amangal mandal. Among the study villages too, new groups came to the fore like the SCs in Reddypalle, the Lambadas in Pahadipur and Edigas in Edigapalle. But mere election to the position of power is not sufficient to break the hegemony of the elite. It is through

the functioning of these ‘new’ leaders that one should see whether they are able to break the existing barriers of power enjoyed by the local elite for decades.

During the first phase, i.e., immediately after the 73rd amendment, the Sarpanchs were guided by the existing power group in all the three study villages. All the three villages had seen the election of new people from new communities to sarpanch post. As they were ‘backed’ and therefore controlled by the traditional elite they had to depend on their predecessors, particularly in conducting the gram Panchayat and getting the works done at the mandal level. One important category which played a key role in the village affairs after the introduction of 73rd amendment was that of **political retainers** who happened to be close followers of the elite and took care of various works of the villagers. They were called as ‘*Pyraveekars*’ by Ram Reddy and Haragopal (1985) and ‘*Political fixers*’ by James Manor (2000) while Anirudh Krishna (2003) calls them as ‘*Political entrepreneurs*’. It was these pyraveekars who were the major beneficiaries of reservations in the panchayats. However, the relatively new leaders did face several problems and had to depend on these pyraveekars and the existing elite for overcoming these problems. If we look at the responses of the villagers we get a fair idea of the functioning of these new leaders in the panchayats.

5.5.1. Reddypalle:

For well over three years SNR’s wife was merely following the instructions of her husband regarding the day to day functioning of the Gram panchayat. But towards the end of her term, she said, she was able to understand the problems of the village and was more independent in her decision-making although she was guided by the Upa Sarpanch, a close follower of her husband, in all panchayat

matters. While this represents the views of the woman Sarpanch, several of the villagers said that, it was very difficult to approach her except at the time of Gram panchayat meetings as she was an upper caste woman and rarely ventured outside her home. A farmer belonging to Ediga caste said that he always approached her husband whenever he had some work in the Panchayat. When probed about the reasons he said that it was not possible for him to approach her as she was a woman and when the real power centre was easily available there was no need to go to the Sarpanch. Another villager said that it was very well understood that when a woman became Sarpanch it was her husband who actually did the duties and these positions were merely for the fulfilment of rules. Thus no real power was perceived to have been transferred to a woman Sarpanch.

When an SC (belonging to Madiga caste) became Sarpanch in 2001 he was almost on his own as SNR had left the village and settled down in Hyderabad. It was an ideal situation for him to create his own group and emerge as a new leader in the village. But because of his lack of experience Prakash, the new Sarpanch had depended on his father⁶⁷ Balram and Narasimha⁶⁸ in conducting the panchayat affairs. People also started approaching Balram and Narasimha, instead of the Sarpanch, and it was they who got things done for them both at the panchayat level and mandal level. Prakash also lacked the stature of a Sarpanch in the sense that, he was considered too young by many villagers and his laid back attitude also did not help much in creating a proper image for him. It was only towards the end of his tenure that he was able to take independent decisions as SNR got busy

⁶⁷ These three were the closest followers of SNR in the village and take care of all his activities at the village level.

⁶⁸ Narasimha became Sarpanch of Reddypalle in the 2006 Panchayat election as the position was reserved for OBC (General).

with money making through his various business activities and contracts. But even then, Prakash was consulting his previous ‘advisors’ before taking the decisions.

During the panchayat meetings, several members were not aware of the agenda and the meetings were conducted by Parvatha Reddy⁶⁹ with the help of village secretary. After observing more than seven meetings we found that only five or six members regularly attended the meetings but in the attendance register one could see the signatures of all the members. The register was sent to the absentee members’ homes after the meeting was conducted. During one of the meetings we saw the husband of Upa Sarpanch attending the meeting instead of her. So when we see the unfolding of various situations it becomes evident that new groups are getting opportunities to enter the ‘political spaces’ in place of the dominant communities but the actual control is still being retained by dominant groups. Though in Reddypalle, the situation is slightly different in the sense that domination and control were being exerted through a fixed number of people who were part of power structure and not directly by the leader (SNR) of the dominant group. This started happening during the tenure of SNR’s wife and became more pronounced during Prakash’s term. We could see that towards the end of his Sarpanch term, Prakash was allowed to act independently. This could also be a ploy by the elite to retain long term control over their followers as we could see that the Sarpanch still came to the dominant group for advice.

⁶⁹ Parvatha Reddy was a senior ward member of the panchayat and a cousin of SNR. He had served as a panchayat ward member thrice before this term (1981, 1988, and 1995).

5.5.2. Pahadipur:

Unlike the other two study villages, where there was a continuation of power structure, directly or indirectly, after the introduction of 73rd amendment, in Pahadipur an OBC woman became Sarpanch in 1995. Rajamma is wife of Anjaiah Goud, one of the richest Gouds in the village. After becoming Sarpanch, she said that she was merely following the village elders' directions. But after about two years she started acting more independently in the panchayat affairs. If there was any important matter she used to take the advice of Ramana Reddy, previous Sarpanch. It is mandatory for the Sarpanch to be a part of dispute resolution⁷⁰ in the villages as several conflicts were resolved without going to police station. Most of these conflicts are between neighbours, between family members regarding property and husband-wife conflicts. Rajamma said that she conducted the gram panchayat meetings regularly and saw to it that all the members attended it. To some extent, the villagers were happy with Rajamma as she was easily accessible and there was no problem in meeting her at her home which was not possible in the case of SNR's wife in Reddypalle. This was mainly because of the caste background as her caste made her more accessible along with her greater participation and ability to go to meetings. But if any work was required to be done, she took the help of her husband who used to take care of it with the advice of Ramana Reddy. Compared to the other study villages we found that Rajamma was more active as she took initiative in the formation of fifteen DWCRA groups. There were no groups before she became Sarpanch.

⁷⁰ We got to observe three such meetings during field work. One was during the time of Rajamma and the other two were during the time of the ST candidate, Nayak.

Nayak, the ST candidate who followed Rajamma as Sarpanch in 2001 did not have contacts at the mandal level or the village as he was a relative newcomer to the political scene in the village after being away for a long time. So he was completely dependent on Dargayya, Upa Sarpanch of the village for any kind of activity. Dargayya was a close follower of former Sarpanch, Ramana Reddy and was rewarded for his loyalty with the position of Upa Sarpanch after finishing his tenure as Water Users Association (WUA) President. During one of the dispute resolution meetings, Ramana Reddy corrected the Sarpanch many times as he was repeatedly making mistakes. Nayak, the new Sarpanch was also seen to be extremely corrupt by most of the villagers. A Goud toddy tapper said that it was what one should expect when so much money was spent in elections. He said that for every work done there was a fixed rate. Depending on the importance of the signature, he collected money. We found that he collected Rs.500/- each from twenty people who were applying for houses under the first batch of Indiramma scheme⁷¹ of state government for his signature.

Unlike Reddypalle, the major difference in Pahadipur had been the emergence of new leaders into the 'spaces' created by reservations, who were not directly related to the existing elite. Although they were dependent for making decisions on Panchayat affairs, we could see some sort of participation both during the tenures of Rajamma and Nayak. Even the corruption issue brings out the fact that Nayakk was able to act more independently compared to Prakash because if people can get their work done by going to Ramana Reddy the issue of corruption would not arise at all.

⁷¹ A welfare scheme introduced by the government of Andhra Pradesh in 2004, it was meant to provide basic infrastructure. During the first phase houses were sanctioned to families with no house of their own.

5.5.3. Edigapalle:

In Edigapalle the Gouds continued their hold over the Gram Panchayat as Bala Goud was followed by his younger brother as Sarpanch in 1995. As he moved with Bala Goud for some time he knew most of the officials so he could get the works done for villagers. As his brother was Mandal Parishad President, his task became much easier. When queried about the participation of panchayat members, he said that very few members regularly attended the meetings. But due to his availability, the ward members regularly visited him whenever there was any problem. He was the only Sarpanch⁷² who mentioned about Gram Sabha during our discussions. He agreed that it was not being conducted in the proper manner. He said that he tried to conduct gram sabha twice but had to cancel due to lack of sufficient number of people and since a gram sabha was conducted, as part of Janmabhoomi⁷³, it was showed in the records that gram Panchayat review was also done during that time. He blamed the Janmabhoomi programmes for the apathy of people towards gram sabha. These were regularly conducted, starting with once in 3 months to once in six months towards the end and ‘beneficiaries’

⁷² During the discussions with Sarpanchs about the functioning of the Panchayat, nobody spoke about the gram sabha and when specifically asked about it, we found that they do not know the importance of gram sabha and its functions.

⁷³ Janmabhoomi literally means birthplace/motherland. This programme had its origin in the ‘*Prajala Vaddaku Palana*’ programme of NT Rama Rao, the former chief minister of Andhra Pradesh which literally means Administration to the door steps of people. This was enhanced with greater funding and renamed Janmabhoomi by Chandrababu Naidu who followed NT Rama Rao as chief minister. As part of this programme infrastructure facilities were to be provided to the people when they came forward with proposals and thirty percent contribution from their side which was then taken up by the government by funding the other seventy percent. These works were decided and finalised in the Gram Sabha meetings which were to be attended by all the mandal level officials. Along with these all the complaints and works of the villagers were to be taken care of by the officials in these meetings at the villages itself. In the initial period Janmabhoomi was being held every three months and people responded very enthusiastically to the programme. Over a period of time the it was held twice a year and the participation of people also got reduced due to several factors the chief among them being the allegations of corruption and apathy of the administration.

were identified in the gram sabha. As this was a very taxing process very few people attended the actual gram sabha meetings meant to discuss the budget and developmental activities of the village. But this did not mean that prior to Janmabhoomi programme, gram sabhas were efficiently conducted. It was simply a political complaint against the TDP by the Congress party people.

Bala Goud's brother was followed by Kamamma as Sarpanch in 2001. According to the villagers, after the coming of Kamamma as Sarpanch, they faced several problems as she was never accessible and attended panchayat meetings for the purpose of signature only. All the matters are dealt by a cousin of her husband. A farmer belonging to Muttarasi caste said that if her husband was active there would not have been any problem for the villagers because he was more accessible and less autocratic unlike the earlier Reddy landlords. He was stuck down by paralysis immediately after the elections and Veeraiah, the Ediga leader who upstaged Bala Goud with the support of Reddy faction and became MPTC member also depended on the Sarpanch's cousin for any important works. Thus we could see that the Sarpanchs in Edigapalle were filling in for their family members and the feedback from the villagers was not any good regarding their functioning. Rather than going to the Sarpanch, villagers had to approach Bala Goud or G Reddy for any panchayat related work.

Therefore, when it comes to actual functioning, the 'new' leaders were dependent on the existing elite and when we compare the working of the panchayats in the study villages it becomes evident that the influence of the existing elite had not diminished in village affairs. People, for all practical purposes, continue to bank

on the 'Patels'⁷⁴ for their works. In this process the structural political capital of the dominant groups is helping them maintaining their control. It is because of the contacts that the dominant sections have with the official machinery at the mandal level that they are able to control the new occupants of positions of power. Thus, whenever there is some work for the villagers at the mandal level or with bureaucracy they approach it through the dominant group. They were in most cases controlled by the ruling group in the village. Except during the time of Bala Goud (between 1988-2001), the hegemony of the Reddys has continued and Democratic Decentralisation's goal of participatory development was still at a very nascent stage as both the representatives and the people are ignorant of the possibilities. There is also the issue of 'dependence' which is equally important as although some of the 'new' leaders wanted to break free from the restrictions, they cannot do as they please due to their dependence on the elite both politically and economically.

On the other hand, certain positive changes could be observed in all the study villages as some of the 'new' leaders who got the opportunity to enter the 'invited spaces' in the power structure gradually began to make independent decisions as we found in Reddypalle and Pahadipur. At the same time we also got to see the re-establishment of dominant caste hegemony in Edigapalle by successfully dividing the OBCs through the process of accommodation. But on the whole the struggle for greater role in the power structure is on.

⁷⁴ Reddys were generally referred to as Patel.

5.6. Conclusion:

Gram Panchayats were considered as primary units of development at the village level since 1959. But in reality, the government did not provide them with sufficient powers to enable them to perform this function. Successive generations of dominant communities used the sarpanch position to continue to dominate and control the villagers. The *Patel-Patwari* system until it was abolished provided legitimacy for the continued dominance of particular social groups. After the abolition of this system in 1985, the fear of upper caste domination slowly diminished from minds of the people. Subsequently, the 73rd Amendment which came into implementation in 1995 provided reservations on a rotational basis. Although the constitutional amendment at the centre provided for financial independence, the various state Acts did not give this aspect sufficient importance and made their own interpretation of the 73rd Amendment. So the Panchayat Raj system still depends on grants from above.

In this scenario, the state government sometimes found means to denigrate gram panchayats by introducing campaign based programmes like *Janmabhoomi* by TDP, *Pallebaata* by Congress among others. During the TDP regime's *Janmabhoomi* programme, funds meant to be spent on Panchayat Raj were diverted to the programme and same is the case with Congress party which followed TDP in diverting funds to programmes like *Pallebaata*. At the district level, District Development Review Committee (DDRC) was set up to look into the developmental activities of the district thereby cutting into the functioning of Zilla Parishad. At the village level, the administration was thrown into confusion by changing the structure completely. Panchayat Offices were renamed as Village

Secretariats and were to be headed by Panchayat Secretary, who had to look after both the revenue and development functions of the village. It is in this sort of confusion, that the newly elected representatives of the gram panchayat are functioning.

As reservations were implemented on a rotational basis, those elected as members of the gram panchayat had to invariably depend on the existing power structure within the village in conducting the panchayat affairs. While the Indian government claims to have implemented democratic decentralisation much ahead of many countries which started experimenting with it in the 1980s and 1990s in reality it is helping the rich and powerful to continue their dominance over the villages. It has to be noted that the 73rd Amendment brought about substantial changes in terms of the composition of the power structure at the village level by introducing new set of leaders in the panchayats by means of reservations. It is also true that without reservations this change in leadership and opportunities for the marginal sections in the power structure would have been impossible.

Several people in the study villages felt that it was a good move by the government to provide these reservations as it would definitely help break the existing power centres. But most of the villagers especially the men folk felt that providing reservations for women was unnecessary. A villager from Pahadipur said that, Reservation policy may be useful in the long term in terms of transparency. But reservation for women was bad. They did not do any work or rather our social norms do not allow them to. They needed the assistance of husbands who were the real power centres. Instead of creating a de-facto power

centre, it was better to have direct representation. Some of the women respondents also opined that reservations to women was not good at the Sarpanch level as it would involve lot of travelling to attend meetings of various sorts. However, they said that reservations for ward membership would enable the empowerment process and made them experienced in political affairs. Even among the marginal sections, who were the major beneficiaries of reservation policy, there was resentment about women reservation. This shows the persistence of patriarchal attitude. But despite all this criticism, we have the Pahadipur example where the Sarpanch did some good work and then even in Reddypalle SNR's wife admitted to being much more empowered after getting elected as a Sarpanch as it provided her an opportunity to know several things which would have been impossible for her without it.

Another important change is the rotation system of reservations. In each village the posts of Sarpanch and ward members go to a different person each time. This constrains the opportunities for the weaker sections of the society as a person who gets elected as Sarpanch once will not necessarily get a chance for another 15-20 years. Often this would lead to discontinuation of the work started by an outgoing Sarpanch. Another important consequence to note here is that if an SC/ST/OBC person gets elected as a Sarpanch, he/she is aware of the fact of having to return to their earlier work as a labourer or small farmer. Therefore, they may not be able to take decisions independent of the local elite as their occupation makes them vulnerable, once they complete their term. This is a major problem in the successful working of the reservations.

Participation of different social groups in the panchayat activities had always been very low from the beginning. The main reason for this was the control exerted by the dominant communities over the gram panchayat. In the study villages, people seem to have accepted passive development, where they don't see any role for themselves. Hence, they are more interested in getting their works done than in participating in the meetings. The attitude of the villagers is that 'what do we get out of it'... this is a common question in all the three villages irrespective of the situation. People are very much aware of corruption in gram panchayat. Several villagers observed that due to the high expenditure by the candidates during the course of election, it was obvious that elected candidates would resort to corruption to get back that money.

Among the villages studied, the 73rd amendment had an impact with regard to change of guard in the power structure. To cite an example, in Reddypalle, the Sarpanch position was reserved for Women, SC and OBC in the last three elections (1995, 2001, 2006) that were held after the enactment of the amendment. None of these groups would have got an opportunity without reservations. This situation might have continued in Pahadipur also for some time to come. The only exception being Edigapalle where OBCs gained power before the 73rd amendment and lost it after that to the systematically hatched plans of the Reddys as they followed Kautilya's principles in dividing the existing alliance and then accommodating it into the power structure. However, there was no case where a new set of leaders who got elected because of reservations were able to challenge the overall control of local elites in the power structure. Thus, in the power structure, the substantive dimension of democracy continues to be weak although

many new political 'spaces' have been opened up for the hitherto excluded communities.

The entry of new groups into the power structure is facilitated by the 73rd Amendment. On closer observation it appears that existing power groups are in the process of consolidating their positions of power at the village level by accommodating the new leaders into the power set up wherever possible, which is definitely a change from the previous scenario. In all the villages studied, position of the leading and opposing groups has remained intact in the power structure. Among the new entrants, some of them got absorbed and most of them left the scene altogether. In Reddypalle, SNR is still the main power centre as he was re-elected as MPTC member in the 2006 elections. He became the Vice President of Mandal Parishad. It may be pointed out that the two previous sarpanchs did not figure in the present day power structure of the village.

In Pahadipur, in the past it was Ramu Goud vs. Ramana Reddy groups since the 1980s and continues till date. Rajamma's husband, Anjaiah Goud became an important part of Ramana Reddy's group which is still the dominant group in the village. Nayak went back to Maal after the completion of his tenure as Sarpanch. Ramu Goud's wife had worked as MPTC member (1995-2001) and she got elected as ZPTC member of Amangal in the 2006 election. Ramana Reddy's group still controls the village as the Sarpanch belongs to their group. In Edigapalle, there are still the same two groups of Bala Goud and the Reddys. The accommodation of Edigas into the power structure was the only perceptible

change in this village. The co-opted groups were accommodated in subservient position vis-à-vis the existing power structure in the area of study.



Chapter VI

Participation in NRM

6.1. Introduction:

The decade of 1990's can be termed as the decade of decentralisation the world over as it was believed that decentralisation of power to local units of government was one of the best ways of empowering people and promoting their participation in governance and development. This argument of people's participation in a decentralized set up was strengthened when there was pressure from the international donors to scale down implementation of development programmes to local level. It is now recognised by all in India that natural resources like land, water, and forest have been plundered for decades since Independence, continuing with the policies of the colonial government.

The last decade has seen an increasing concern with the degraded condition of these natural resources and, consequently, the emergence of community-based or group-based approach towards sustainable management of these resources. Decentralisation of responsibilities for management of natural resources to the community level took place on a large scale during this period. This had coincided with the introduction of 73rd Constitutional Amendment which provided for 'reservations' and consequently equitable distribution of power in the panchayat bodies. Chronologically, Joint Forest Management (JFM) was the first of the decentralised bodies to come into existence in 1992 followed by the Watershed Programme (WS) in 1994, 73rd Amendment in 1993. Around the same time, Andhra Pradesh made a legislation to decentralise irrigation sector which resulted

in formation of Water Users Associations (WUAs) in 1997 becoming the first state in India to implement this process.

Baumann and Farrington have argued that current policies for decentralisation are not a response to grassroots pressure and Natural Resources (NR) access was neither a priority nor a politically contested issue. The elites appreciated that the NR programmes would bring benefits to *their* land and work on common land was not worth their effort.

“This aspect of Decentralised Natural Resources Management (DNRM) was basically considered to be an employment programme for the rural poor, whom the elite could dispense as patronage, sometimes in pursuit of totally unrelated political goals. The rural poor also saw partnership programmes as basically a source of wage employment, since any substantive investment would take place either on private land or land owned by the forest department. To rural poor these short-term benefits were far more important than the potential worth of the NR themselves”. (2003:2)

Thus they did not expect the DNRM to either benefit or empower the poor and who, therefore, had little stakes in the programme.

The basic objective of these NRM programmes is to promote development through participation of stakeholders in the resource management. But in all the three programmes (Joint Forest Management, Watersheds & Water Users Associations) the bureaucracy plays a crucial role in the implementation process. The Vana Samrakshana Samithi (VSS)⁷⁵, Watershed Committee (WC), and WUAs are aimed at consolidating and safeguarding natural resources like forest, water, and land. As a result, the incentive for participation also differs among the committees due to the nature of their constitution. This chapter looks into the participatory aspect of these decentralised NRM bodies and the working of social

⁷⁵ In JFM, the committee formed to look after the forest is called VSS.

capital in this process as the missing link (or the actual missing of it) and how various actors at the village level like the *peddamanushulu*/dominant group utilise their political capital in controlling the day to day functioning of NRM bodies and strategies of the poor to serve their own ends in the study area.

6.2. JFM/CFM:

In Mahabubnagar District, Amangal is one of three mandals to have the maximum number of VSS bodies – 19 (nineteen) - the other two being Hanwada and Koilkunda with 21 and 19 VSSs respectively. Almost all the villages in the mandal have at least one VSS. Among the study villages, Pahadipur has three VSSs and Edigapalle has one VSS, Reddypalle being the only village in the mandal without any forest area. Forest, in the truest sense, could be seen only in Pahadipur and to some extent in Edigapalle. There used to be thick forest cover till the late 1960's in the area. Most of the hillocks in the mandal used to be covered with dense forest cover but since then they were denuded of their forest cover due to frequent cutting down of trees. Over a period of time, people cut down trees whenever there was drought. They used to carry the wood in bullock carts to Hyderabad and sell it as firewood. They had to pay a marginal amount to the forest guard and he would allow them to cut down the trees. But it is the outsiders who were mainly responsible for the sudden disappearance of forest during the 1980s as they used to take away wood in Lorries with the help of local administration. According to some of the villagers, forest cover remained in Edigapalle and Pahadipur due to relative inaccessibility as the forest is in a remote

and non-motatable area. Villagers were entirely dependent on the forest for their daily needs like firewood, construction of houses and *pandals*⁷⁶.

A member of one of the VSSs in Pahadipur said that before the introduction of VSS the villagers were not aware of the importance of forest cover, particularly in relation to rainfall. So, there was nothing wrong with the dependence of villagers on forest as it was an age old phenomenon and the real danger to forest was not from local consumption but the outsiders who used to cut down trees in large quantities. The only time the villagers had damaged the forest was during drought. But at that point of time, they did it for their survival as there was no work available due to the failure of crops⁷⁷. Now the situation is different as there is increased awareness among the villagers and the existence of VSS helped in greater surveillance, resulting in improved protection of forest area. The forest area in Amangal is rich in medicinal plants, fruits and also wood.

Actually, whenever we refer to forest area, it has to be noted that thick forest cover is to be found only in the study villages and to a very small extent in four other VSSs in the entire mandal. Some of the important income generating trees/plants available in the study area are as follows – *Vusiri* (Amla – available in Edigapalle), *Jeedi mamidi* (Fruit tree – available in Edigapalle), *Ippa* (flowers used for medicinal purpose and also making liquor – available in Edigapalle), *Sitaphal* (fruit tree – available in Pahadipur and the hamlets), *Teak* (rich source of wood - available in Pahadipur and its hamlets), *Kumkudu* (Rita – available in all

⁷⁶ Platforms on which social functions take place, usually erected at the time of festivals and marriages.

⁷⁷ Till the late 1970s, migration to cities was very minimal with only the highly educated going in search of jobs. It became widespread only in the latter part of 1980's when the migration of unskilled workers became the major part of migrants.

the study villages), *Chinta* (Tamarind – sparsely available in all the study villages but Pahadipur has very good area) and *Palakodisa* (wood – used for making toys and also a medicinal plant - available in Pahadipur and its hamlets).

Traditional practices of managing the forest were found in only two villages of the mandal and both of them are not part of the study area. This could be one of the main reasons for the deforestation in this area. Every year auctions were held in Mahabubnagar for Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) like *chinta* (tamarind), *seetaphal* (custard apple), *vusiri* (amla) and beedie leaves. The Muttarasis of all the villages used to form as a group and take part in the auction. After that, they used to divide the forest area among themselves and they were the main protectors of the forest area during the NTFP season. But after the late 1980s usufruct rights over NTFP were completely transferred to tribals and the Muttarasis were no more part of the auction nor the protectors of forest.

JFM was introduced in the study villages in 1996 and it was extended to their hamlets in the year 1998. While the VSSs in Pahadipur and its hamlet Gutta Tanda (GT) had the same chairpersons from the beginning of VSS in their respective areas in Edigapalle and Palle Tanda (PT), another hamlet of Pahadipur the chairmanship changed hands according to the power equations in panchayat politics⁷⁸. As mentioned earlier, the managing committee of the VSS was elected by the Gramsabha through direct voting and initially the term was for about two years. But no election was held for the first four years of JFM and this was attributed to the lack of awareness among villagers and also the inactiveness of the

⁷⁸ This is discussed in detail in the following chapter.

forest department which preferred to have the existing chairpersons for easy dealing of affairs. Except in two villages⁷⁹ in the mandal, election was not held again till the coming of CFM in 2002. As a result there was continuity of tenure and also corruption in the committees.

After the introduction of CFM in February, 2002, the tenure was increased to three years for the chairman. Also to have greater transparency and equitable representation it was stipulated that either chairman or vice-chairman must be a woman and among the members too, eight of the fifteen must be women. Along with this, cheque power was extended to vice chairman with the view that there would be greater awareness regarding the financial activities of the VSS. JFM was converted to CFM by increasing the role of community and reducing the bureaucratic control which had caused problems in JFM.

6.2.1. Election/Selection:

The first elections under JFM were held in 1996 after its inception and there was no competition for membership in the VSS and its chairmanship. Almost all the members were selected by the Sarpanch⁸⁰ in the study villages. Initially, JFM was introduced in Pahadipur and Edigapalle in August 1996. It was extended to the hamlets in May 1998 and PT which was a hamlet of Pahadipur got it then. Actually, VSS was not allocated to GT and its forest area was divided between

⁷⁹ While in one village the chairperson had been removed for misuse of funds, in the other village the VSS committee went for a reelection with the support of the NGO working in the area.

⁸⁰ Even though the reservations were already in place, in both the JFM study villages the Sarpanch belonged to the dominant group, so it is being mentioned as Sarpanch instead of village strong man.

Pahadipur VSS and the newly created PT VSS. The lambadas of GT petitioned⁸¹ the Forest officials to allocate them a separate VSS and went on a strike in front of the Forest office in Amangal. With intervention of the MLA the issue was resolved immediately and they got a VSS five months later in October 1998. They made use of their contacts with the MLA in gaining the VSS as they found that the forest officials were not responding despite their strike at the Forest range office in Amangal. The working of the instrumental political capital is very much evident in this whole process.

Giving strength to the argument of Baumann and Farrington, that decentralised development bodies were viewed as programmes of employment generation, Humla Nayak⁸² who was at the forefront of the struggle explained that, VSS would help his Tanda people a great deal because, along with afforestation, it would also provide work for the people. Their Tanda is in a remote place among the hillocks and the land quality is not good enough to support their families resulting in large scale male migration to Hyderabad. The VSS would help in providing work and migration will come down a great deal as he had seen lot of works being done as part of the VSS in Pahadipur. He got his brother elected as chairperson of the GT VSS.

⁸¹ Humla Nayak the ward member from GT wanted a VSS for his hamlet. In this connection he consulted the Sarpanch and even went to the MLA. But PT was allocated the VSS as it had larger population.

⁸² He worked for AWARE from the late 1980s till 1992 during which he was able to develop contacts with the bureaucracy along with the mandal level politicians. He being the only educated person (studied up to twelfth standard) at that time, he became the go to man in his Tanda and he was taking care of their problems and getting works done at the village/mandal level with the help of Sarpanch. In return for this, he was delivering the votes of his Tanda to the Sarpanch of Pahadipur.

Venkat Reddy, who was a part of the dominant group in Pahadipur was made Chairperson in the VSS. While Janu Nayak, who had been instrumental in garnering support for the TDP in the predominantly Congress supporting PT, got the reward of chairmanship in PT VSS. In Edigapalle, Pochaiah, who belongs to the numerically dominant Ediga group in the village, was made chairman for his continued support to the ruling group.

However, the situation underwent a complete change over by the time of CFM elections which were held in 2002. By that time villagers were aware of the importance of holding on to some sort of position in committees as they had witnessed most of the members and particularly chairpersons earning lot of money and prestige in the village. In the second elections held in 2002, there was fierce competition for the posts of chairpersons except in Pahadipur where Venkat Reddy got re elected without any opposition. While in Pahadipur the ruling group remained unchanged even after the panchayat elections, there was a change in Edigapalle where the traditionally dominant Reddys were able to come back to power displacing the Goud family. The VSS election had to be postponed thrice due to lack of unanimity and finally it was agreed that both the factions would share the chairman and vice chairman posts. Thus Ramulu,⁸³ became the chairman of Edigapalle VSS. In PT, a new chairperson was elected in place of the earlier one. But he got the position with the blessings of the ruling group in Pahadipur. In GT, Humla Nayak was re elected without any opposition.

⁸³ Ramulu is an SC belonging to Madiga caste and one of the elders in that caste. He was part of the alliance forged by the Reddys against Bala Goud in Edigapalle – his task being delivering SC votes.

As we see the formation of committees it becomes clear to us that it was more of a selection rather than an election. Except in the case of Pahadipur VSS, where a person belonging to the dominant faction became chairperson, the other three VSS chairpersons were selected by the dominant faction of the village. It was obviously politics of patronage and also lack of awareness as these selections were not contested by the opposing faction in the gram sabhas. In the second term, there was a small difference in the selection process as a fight had ensued between the opposing factions to get the positions for themselves resulting in compromise and sharing of positions as was the case in Edigapalle and Pahadipur. In Pahadipur, compromise was made possible because the ruling faction agreed to accommodate Deepla⁸⁴ as the chairperson of PT VSS. However, we could also see an improvement in the awareness levels of people regarding VSS resulting in the race for positions but the dominant factions in both the villages continued their policy of patronage and accommodation there by making these 'invited spaces'.

6.2.2. Functioning of VSS:

In the initial days the VSS committees faced several problems as most of the members were illiterate and were not aware of the provisions of JFM. This situation was exploited by forest officials who had controlled the functioning of VSS as advisors and enforcers. Particularly, in the preparation of Micro plan their intervention was very high. This had continued till the coming of an NGO as a partner to VSS institutions in the mandal. Most of the time, it was found that VSS chairman had put his thumb impression and the amount given for works done as

⁸⁴ KD Nayak spent more than one lakh rupees in the Sarpanch elections as he was confident of victory. He had borrowed huge sums of money and was in a difficult position to repay the loans. He approached Ramana Reddy and reached a compromise regarding a conflict between the youth of PT and Pahadipur where cases were filed against people belonging to Pahadipur and PT. He agreed to withdraw the case and Ramana Reddy decided to compromise in view of future elections where he might need the support of PT.

part of the VSS activities was not the complete amount. For a long period of time, bank pass books were not given to VSSs by the forest officials. While this was happening in some VSS bodies it was not the same everywhere. Chairpersons who were educated and those who were powerful did not allow forest officials to dictate terms to them. But altogether there was very little transparency in the first generation set of VSS institutions which functioned during 1996/98 - 2002. About six to seven lakhs rupees were spent on the works carried out in each of the four VSSs but it was found that almost all the members of the VSS were unaware of the actual amounts sanctioned and spent. This indicates a slight tension between the VSS and the department which could be understood as a fight between bureaucratic control and democratic participation.

The entry of an NGO as a partner organisation in 2000 brought about a gradual change in villagers' attitude towards the VSS activities. The first act of the NGO was the demand for retaining their bank passbooks followed by regular monthly meetings of the VSS where in, the activities of the VSS were discussed leading to an understanding of the situation by VSS members. From being suspicious about the motives of the NGO the villagers started realising importance of the activities being undertaken by NGO to create awareness among them. This definitely helped in the Tandas which took to the NGO in an enthusiastic manner. Thus by the time of introduction of CFM in 2002, the NGO became quite active in the VSS activities. With the membership of women becoming mandatory in CFM, the NGO was able to influence the election of educated women as members in the VSS. This had resulted in two important things – first the VSS members started having a greater say in preparing their micro plan and second, with the chairman/vice-chairman post for women they started going to the forest office and

thereby reducing the opportunity of the male chairman misusing the money meant for VSS activities. This misuse of funds used to be a common thing earlier on and sometimes the chairman was not even aware of the actual amount paid to him by the forest department officials.

The major criticism of the programme was absence of proper incentives for the VSS members. Because except in the study villages where sufficient forest cover was there for members to have access to some of the forest produce, all the other villages in the mandal had very little forest and as a result very little benefit from the forest. Their only source of incentive from the VSS activities had been the works that were available for VSS members which they could plan and initiate through the micro plan. Even this could not be done properly in some of the VSSs due to groupism and the resultant fights regarding sharing of works between factions in the village. This was very much evident in Edigapalle where works were not done during the two years 2002 – 2004 due to the fight between the Gouds' faction and dominant faction regarding sharing of work.

6.2.3. Participation - Social Capital:

VSS in Pahadipur is headed by Venkat Reddy who is one of the village elders⁸⁵. Unlike the image generally associated with a dominant Reddy landlord – which is that of being oppressive - he is considered as most approachable of the elite in the village. As a result he is respected by the opposing faction of the village and his continued existence as the chairperson of the VSS since its inception could be

⁸⁵ Each village and their hamlets have a group of elders who along with Sarpanch adjudicate during conflicts. While the concept of caste panchayats had receded the system of village elders still exist and this group generally comprises of leaders/elders of the various caste groups in the village. Generally these people also happen to be the vote delivery men during election for their respective factions

attributed to this. Because of his stature as a village elder he never faced any problem with the forest officials regarding allocation and implementation of works. Another positive factor had been the beat officer⁸⁶ who was not of the extraction type⁸⁷. According to the villagers, he was happy with the amount given by the VSS people and never asked for money on his own. These factors made the VSS dispute free and good working model in the whole mandal. But there was no transparency or participation. When it came to these indicators it was again on par with other VSSs. The only difference was that they were free from interference of the forest department in VSS activities. Meetings were not held regularly and the day to day functioning of the VSS was taken care of by Venkat Reddy and *Muttarasi* Ramulu his close follower.

PT, which is a hamlet of Pahadipur, consists of Lambadas and most of them belong to G-L⁸⁸ faction but the VSS was headed by Janu Nayak, who belonged to the R-G-Sc faction. He got this position by virtue of being part of ruling faction in the village and also being one of the more educated in the hamlet. Due to assistance of the beat officer, who also happened to be a Lambada, the functioning of VSS was smooth after 1999. But in the initial days, there was no cooperation from the forest department officials and the previous beat officer used to demand huge amounts⁸⁹ during and after the work.

⁸⁶ A beat officer has jurisdiction over four to five VSSs and the beat area is named after the prominent village of the area.

⁸⁷ Rent seeking by government officials is quite common in the study area. They are given a specific percentage of the money allocated for works.

⁸⁸ For an easier understanding of the factions in Pahadipur, I am using these initials from here. G-L is the Goud-Lambada group headed by Ramu Goud and R-G-Sc is the Reddy-Goud-SC group headed by Ramana Reddy.

⁸⁹ Janu Nayak said that he used to demand ten percent of the total cost of the work which was much more than what was being paid in other villages. But he was forced to pay because of the fear of not getting works.

The VSS chairpersons of PT and GT had earlier worked for an NGO which was very active in the Kalwakurthy⁹⁰ revenue division (taluk) till the early 1990s. Both of them made it clear that they would not pay any extra money to the officials. Because of this, these two VSS faced problems regarding clearing of bills for works undertaken by them. After some time, the forest department people retained the cheque books and kept them under their control. As a result, none of the VSS members had any idea about the expenditure and grants. In fact the story was similar for several VSSs in the mandal and some of them were much worse where the chairperson was illiterate. As most of the VSS were located in tribal hamlets which were economically poor they used to 'manage' the chairpersons very easily by offering them liquor and a small amount of money. Wherever, there were literate people like in the case of PT and GT who refused to give too much money⁹¹ there was lot of trouble in the grants and payments. That was why the VSS in Pahadipur was unique as it did not face any of these problems which was mainly due to the structural political capital enjoyed by Venkat Reddy.

The case of the VSS in Edigapalle was the worst of the lot. During interaction with some of the VSS chairpersons at a mandal level network meeting we found that there were several VSSs like that of Edigapalle. In Edigapalle, Pochaiah being an illiterate was cheated several times by the forest department people regarding payments. He himself admitted to taking fifteen hundred rupees once and putting his thumb impression on several bills. But according to two of the members he had put his thumb impression like that several times, for small amounts like five hundred, six hundred, and whenever they enquired the beat officer, he used to say

⁹⁰ Amangal mandal is part of Kalwakurthy revenue division.

⁹¹ Actually these people too are willing to give a little bit, but they said that the beat officer wanted ten percent and those in the office another ten percent which is way too high.

that they had already paid the money to Pochaiah. General body meetings were not held regularly and the members were not aware of the happenings in the VSS. They took up work whenever they got something.

All this has changed with the coming of the partner NGO to look after the implementation of the VSS programme in the mandal. At around the same time, several new beat officers took charge replacing the older ones who were transferred out of this mandal. Luckily for the study villages, a good beat officer⁹² came and he helped both the VSS and the NGO in several ways. As mentioned earlier, after the entry of the NGO, VSS meetings were held on a regular basis and more importantly, the attendance increased as they made it a point to announce about the works in the meeting. While all the members were not actually aware of the exact amount granted and spent, they knew exactly what kinds of works were being done in their VSS. As a result of increased transparency – it was made compulsory to explain the allocation and spending process in the general body meetings of the VSS.

After the introduction of CFM as women became part of the VSS committees, the NGO encouraged them to know about the various activities of the VSS. Women who were members of DWCRA⁹³ groups were given preference in the committee

⁹² Him being a Lambada and a retired army personnel made him take his job more passionately and it also helped in easier interaction with the chairpersons as most of them were also Lambadas.

⁹³ In 1982 Government of India (GoI) launched the Development of women and children in rural areas (DWCRA) program which focused entirely on the development of women and children. At the village level self help groups (SHGs) popularly known as DWCRA groups were formed with 15-20 members. The focus of the groups was on saving money with a motto, 'one rupee per day'. Although this program and groups existed since 1980s, they gained prominence with the anti-liquor campaign in the early 1990s and TDP which came to power in 1994 actively supported the formation of groups with large scale incentives resulting in a great increase in the number of groups and savings. The DWCRA groups were given prominence in all the development activities

so that they would be more active participants in the VSS. In the case of Pahadipur vice chairperson post was given to the wife of *Muttarasi* Ramulu who was a follower of Venkat Reddy for a long time. She is also leader of a DWCRA group in the village. We asked her about the VSS activities and the involvement of women members in the decision making process. She said, 'I don't know exactly how much money was being spent, but *patel* has always been good to us in getting work. The idea of questioning him never occurred to us because he had been very open with all of us and also got us work when other VSSs were not having any funds for additional works'. She said that they had been very active in the implementation of the tree plantation programme. They had planted new trees in twenty five acres and they were also being taken care of by watering them regularly. But while the watering part had to be done voluntarily by the VSS, nobody was willing to do that, hence they hired a person for this work by paying him @ forty rupees per day. This person happened to be *Muttarasi* Ramulu. He said that, unlike the VSS in PT where they did lot of scam in the construction of check dams, we did not resort to any such thing. We spent the maximum amount available for construction of six check dams and the decision to construct the check dams was taken by the VSS committee as it would provide surplus water and also it would enable more work for the VSS members. It was because of the construction of these check dams that they were able to plan a new plantation. The present plot of twenty five acres of new plantation was made possible by the check dams as there was sufficient water in the upper reaches for wetting of these plants.

of the state government by giving membership as they are known to be transparent and participatory in their functioning.

In PT, the chairperson post was garnered by KD Nayak, who made a deal with the ruling faction in Pahadipur and thus became chairman despite being part of the opposite G-L faction on whose behalf he contested as Sarpanch in the Panchayat elections held in 2001⁹⁴. He had filled the committee with 'his' people and there were no instances of his ever being questioned of anything that he did as chairperson. Although some of the members admitted that they are not happy with his activities they never raised it in the meetings. Even the NGO could not do much here as there was no response from the people. This was mainly because, KD Nayak ensured maximum work opportunities for the VSS and got lot of work for the members. As this was the drought period (2002-04) the tribals were happy with his efforts despite the cut he was taking from the works. Janu Nayak, the previous chairman said that he was happy with the efforts of KD Nayak because he was ensuring work for them otherwise most of them would have to migrate in search of work. During his time, he was not able to do much due to the conflict he had with the forest department regarding the percentages. During 2002-04 (drought period) they had constructed four check dams and twenty seven gully controls in the PT forests.

⁹⁴ In the 2001 panchayat elections both the important posts – MPTC and Sarpanch posts were reserved for STs. During the MPTC elections, a congress candidate belonging to G-L group surprisingly defeated the TDP-BJP candidate belonging to R-G-Sc. As a result, in the subsequently held gram panchayat elections, expecting victory KD Nayak of G-L group spent more than two and a half lakh rupees but lost the elections. When the R-G-Sc group's victory rally came to PT hamlet it was attacked by a group of people belonging to KD Nayak. The R-G-Sc group retaliated and repelling the attack they destroyed several households of the tribals as some of them sustained serious injuries in the stone throwing incident. After this, they also filed police cases against the people of the hamlet resulting in police harassment. Thus KD Nayak instead of being blamed for the attack got sympathy of the hamlet and the predominantly congress supporting hamlet became very antagonistic towards the R-G-Sc. In this background, the R-G-Sc gave away the VSS chairperson post to KD Nayak to get back at least the partial support of the hamlet it enjoyed earlier.

In GT, Humla Nayak got another term and this time, there was no conflict with the forest department as there was a change of personnel. Lachmi bai became vice chairman as she was leader of the DWCRA group in the hamlet. She was an active participant in the VSS affairs. They undertook construction of gully controls as the main activity and only two check dams were constructed during 2002-04. But they had got additional work days as they were the 'local' experts⁹⁵ in the construction of gully controls and rock filled dams (RFDs). They were providing the expertise in all the study villages including Pahadipur, Edigapalle and PT.

The situation in Edigapalle had worsened after the introduction of CFM. As mentioned earlier, there was a conflict in the formation of VSS for more than a year resulting in delay in implementation of the micro plan. The conflicts continued even after the formation of the committee particularly regarding the sharing of works. Even though this was denying work to the villagers both groups remained unperturbed. Somaiah, a small land holder who mainly depended on agricultural labour and other works said that in the one up man ship struggle it was people like him who suffer the most. However, he is hopeful of getting greater number of work days as part of the sharing agreement and felt that the situation was much better than in the earlier committee and he did get his wish after the resolution of dispute regarding sharing the works.

As we had seen, the levels of participation improved a lot after the introduction of CFM in 2002. But the other important aspect, transparency did not increase to the desired levels despite the best efforts of a civil society organisation in the mandal.

⁹⁵ Initially workers from Kadapa used to be employed for construction of rock structures as the locals were not aware of the building procedure of these structures. During this period, the lambadas from GT picked up the technology and from 1999 onwards stopped hiring people from Kadapa. Later on other VSS also started hiring them for construction of their structures. By 2002 they became the local experts and were consulted by eight VSS in the vicinity.

It made difference with regard to creating awareness about the programme and the regular mandal level meetings were a huge success as they helped the members to have greater knowledge of VSS activities. Ability to get works allocated was being considered as more important than transparency. This was evident from the responses of VSS members from Pahadipur and PT. In this, the structural political capital of Venkata Reddy was important as his ability to get works sanctioned had ensured no opposition and even the NGO could not do anything about his lack of transparency. The only case, where we can see the successful utilisation of social capital was in GT where the VSS members learnt the construction of rock structures from the specialist workers who came to do the works. Humla Nayak, the VSS chairperson played a crucial role in this process. This kind of innovative and long term thinking was absent in all the other VSSs. The case of Edigapalle became worse after the introduction of CFM, although it had more to do with the conflict situation in the village, where opposing factions were more worried about their dominance and control. This had a huge impact on the allocation of works and also participation as people started looking at VSS as an employment opportunity.

6.3. Watershed:

Due to its topography Amangal Mandal was one of the most favoured mandals in the district for allocation of watersheds and most of the villages in the mandal have watershed programmes. All the three study villages got watershed programmes with Pahadipur being recipient of multiple watersheds. The water situation was comparatively better than other parts of the district and except in two villages during summer; drinking water problem was also not there in the

mandal. Digging of bore wells was started in late 1980s and till that point most of the ground water irrigation was done through open wells. However, in some of the villages bore wells were dug as early as 1978 but they were few in number till late 1980s. Ground water was available at around 40-80 feet till the early part of 1990s. Cultivation of paddy increased from late 1980s resulting in proliferation of bore wells in the mandal and subsequent depletion of ground water resources. Among the study villages bore wells were found mostly in Village1, where paddy was extensively cultivated. The following tables give an indication of the number of bore wells and their impact on the ground water situation in the study area during 2001 - 2005.

Table 6.1: No. of Bore wells in the study villages⁹⁶

Year	Reddypalle	Pahadipur	Edigapalle
2000-01	161	141	102
2001-02	197	179	127
2002-03	155	147	91
2004-05	205	166	109

Source: Agriculture office, Amangal.

Table 6.2: Average depth of bore wells in feet

Year	Reddypalle	Pahadipur	Edigapalle
2000-01	230 – 240	195 – 210	190 – 200
2001-02	240 – 265	210 – 230	200 – 215
2002-03	260 – 290	220 – 240	210 – 230
2004-05	280 – 310	240 – 275	230 – 275

Source: Agriculture office, Amangal.

During late 1980s, cotton was introduced in the mandal and some of the villages started cultivating it actively. Due to unpredictability of rains, several farmers dug bore wells for cultivating cotton as it was a cash intensive crop. At the same time, cultivation of paddy also increased throughout the mandal. However, in most of the villages it was found that there were several unsuccessful bore wells with

⁹⁶ Data not available for the year 2003-04.

some of the farmers admitting that they dug four to five times for one successful bore well. While the above tables indicate the number of bore wells and their impact on the alarming situation of ground water, the actual figures might still be different and the expenditure incurred by farmers must be multiplied when we take into consideration the number of unsuccessful bore wells which in turn pushed the farmers into debt trap. There were several instances within the study villages where the farmers had debt mainly due to failure of bore wells.

It is interesting to note that the number of bore wells increased after the watersheds were completed in the study villages. This was so in the cases of Reddypalle and Edigapalle. The first batch of watersheds in the mandal was allotted in 1997-98 to Reddypalle and another village in the mandal⁹⁷. Pahadipur got the watershed in 2000-01 and Edigapalle got it in 2001-02. The funding body for Reddypalle was EAS⁹⁸ while Pahadipur was funded by DPAP⁹⁹ and in Edigapalle it was RIDF¹⁰⁰. Before the election to form a committee, watershed association which consisted of all the voters in the village in the watershed jurisdiction was formed and after that the watershed committee was elected by Gramsabha in a direct election.

⁹⁷ Watershed cancelled due to dispute in the election of watershed committee.

⁹⁸ Watersheds were funded by various line departments of the government like DRDA, DPAP, soil conservation department and so on. Consequently, they were implemented as part of a scheme of these departments like Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) given by DRDA.

⁹⁹ Most of the watersheds allocated from the second batch onwards were funded by Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP).

¹⁰⁰ The RIDF watersheds were to be jointly implemented by village panchayat and watershed committee. The allocated fund was also minimal compared to the watersheds being implemented through other departments and the duration of the body was only three years instead of five years.

6.3.1. Election/selection:

While election of committees to JFM and WUAs was incident free at least during their first term, election of watershed committees was fiercely contested by all groups in the village. The process of election in the watershed management was similar to that of VSS and the management committee was elected by Watershed Association. But due to huge amounts involved in the implementation of watershed programme there was always a tough and bitter fight between various factions within the village and there were instances in the mandal where due to tough stance of groups within the village, committees could not be elected in time and watershed programme in those villages got cancelled.

Election to the watershed committee in Reddypalle was unanimous in keeping to the trend of not opposing dominant *S* family in the village. Watershed was sanctioned in 1997 and it provided the strongman of the village an opportunity to be in the thick of things as he had been displaced from Sarpanch position which he held for more than a decade. Lazar, one of the close followers of SNR was made President of Watershed Association. In the subsequent committee formation, SNR became chairman of watershed committee and the all important secretary position went to Sivaiah, another close follower. Both Lazar and Sivaiah were long time supporters of *S* family and were rewarded with these posts for their loyalty. Other members in the committee were also selected from among his close followers. The whole exercise reiterate the point made by Baumann and Farrington (2003)¹⁰¹ about the role of elites in pushing through the DNRM policy

¹⁰¹ See Baumann, Pari and John Farrington. (2003) Decentralising Natural Resources Management: Lessons from local government reform from India. Natural Resources Perspective, No.86. June 2003.

for getting out of political unemployment which was a result of reservation in panchayat bodies at the village level.

But the situation was very different in Pahadipur and Edigapalle where committees were formed only after receiving the threat of cancellation of watershed. In Pahadipur the dominant R-G-Sc wanted to take away all the posts in watershed committee which was opposed by G-L faction. Watershed Development Team (WDT) tried in several ways to make the watershed operational. They conducted about five meetings in the gram panchayat from April 2000 to November 2001 but situation remained in a deadlock with both of them refusing to allow election of the other group member to the committee. Some villagers feared that watershed will get cancelled but leaders of both groups were unrelenting. After more than a year and half of fighting, they arrived at a compromise finally in November 2001 with the all powerful secretary post being given to the G-L faction and the chairman post went to the R-G-Sc. The membership in the committee was shared (five+seven) in favour of the Reddy-Goud-Sc faction. Also, as part of the agreement works will be carried out in and around the fields of both the factions equally.

The case of Edigapalle was different in the sense that committee was elected on time but works were not taken up as there was a change in leadership in panchayat elections and the new faction wanted the watershed committee to be reformulated¹⁰² and till then suspended all the works. It must be noted that, when committee was elected after convening a gram sabha meeting it was attended by

¹⁰² Actually, the problem came due to the dichotomy of control between the gram panchayat and watershed committee. But as per the provisions an elected watershed body cannot be replaced in any circumstances resulting in a stand off between both the groups in the village.

the Reddy-Ediga faction who at that point of time was not powerful enough to oppose its formation. As the committee was formed in April 2001 it was full of Bala Goud followers. The main reason for their (Reddy faction) non-cooperation was that watershed programme was supported by Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) which was under the control of gram panchayat unlike the other watershed programmes and the cheque for works carried out will be approved only if there was signature of Sarpanch. Since the new faction took control of the gram panchayat in September 2001 election, they wanted to have a lion's share of the fund for themselves. The same WDT who resolved the dispute in Pahadipur tried their best here also and were able to scratch out a formula for compromise after more than three meetings. The impasse continued for about two years and finally a compromise was reached in March 2003 where the amount of money allocated for the watershed, five lakh thirty four thousand will be shared in the ratio of (sixty+forty) by the Reddy faction and Bala Goud faction. Thus, sixty percent of works would be done in and around the fields of people belonging to their party while the remaining forty percent in the fields of Bala Goud group. According to the agreement committee will first carry out the forty percent works of Bala Goud group and then works of the Reddy faction.

6.3.2. Participation - Social Capital:

Watershed management was embraced with lot of interest by villagers as it would provide employment and improves ground water condition in the villages. But the dominant sections in the villages clashed over the formation of committees and tried their best to exclude the opposite group from watershed committee as each group was scared of the impact of the programme on their domination of villagers.

This was because, watershed programme had lot of fund, and it would provide work on a large scale over a period of five years. Each group in the village saw the watershed programme as an opportunity in consolidation of their hold over vote banks through their control of watershed committee. While this was the situation with regard to leadership in villages towards watershed programme, the general population were more interested in getting works from the programme. Among the three DNRM bodies, watershed programme involved the community much more than the other two starting from preparation of micro plan to execution and maintenance of works.

The watershed in Reddypalle started its work with the construction of a bus shelter as entry point activity (EPA) in 1997 and they gave lot of importance to water harvesting structures, gully controls, and bunding for which they had spent about 12,20,000 rupees out of the total outlay of 16,16,000 rupees released for the watershed. According to Sivaiah they laid major emphasis on these structures to conserve more water and at the same time prevent desilting and flooding in fields. When queried about watershed activities, several villagers feigned ignorance regarding implementation process but they were happy that some of the watershed works yielded good results like prevention of flooding on the eastern side of the village where some of the fields were submerged in the drain that flows adjacent to the village. Due to the construction of a check dam and then strengthening of the bund¹⁰³ they were able to overcome the threat of flooding. One of the farmers said that due to the check dam water regeneration was good and he was able to dig a bore well and cultivate paddy in his land which earlier was not possible despite

¹⁰³ This bund was very important to the eastern side of the village as it provided safety for more than 360 acres of land out of which majority belong to the OBCs and SCs. This was strengthened again later in the food for work programme of 2002.

being adjacent to the drain. The other two check dams were also built in important locations which maximised the availability of water and several bore wells became successful which were dug in the vicinity of the check dams. But these two check dams were built near the land of the Reddys.

The watershed committee members became the contractors and executed the works as per the micro plan. According to one WDT member, they (committee) were not very particular in payments and were paying very little to them as they have the advantage of having SNR. Meetings were not held regularly but most of the activities were run by Lazar and Sivaiah. One of the committee members, said that attendance register was sent to her home for signature and she attended only a handful of meetings in the whole five year period. Although, participation and transparency were very minimal in this watershed the villagers were appreciative of works carried out as part of the watershed programme. Sivaiah earned lot of money through the watershed programme and from being a dependent on SNR, the village strongman for his every need he was able to buy eight acres of land in the village and another five acres near the mandal head quarter in 2002 to develop these lands for real estate. He had bought these lands along with a partner but he came up with two lakh rupees¹⁰⁴ on his own. Later on he sold the land in village as there were no takers for the plots. He bought the land in village @ sixty thousand rupees per acre and sold it off @ five lakh rupees per acre making a huge profit out of the deal.

¹⁰⁴ This was what he disclosed to us in an informal interview. However, the villagers felt that he must have invested more money in buying these lands as his partner is also a small employee and his other source of income was what he earns as a commission agent in rice business.

Apart from the watershed committee members none of the villagers knew exactly what were the activities taken up as part of the watershed programme. But activities like construction of check dams, percolation tanks, and strengthening of bund were difficult to miss. As per the new rules introduced in 2001, it was made mandatory to display the activities undertaken as part of the watershed programme and it was displayed on the wall of the panchayat office in 2002. This painting has displayed all the structures, amounts, and numbers. However, participation was very limited in the whole programme and one could find very little in terms of social capital as there was very little associational activity. But for the villagers what was important was that work done was good for them both in the short term for the labourers as it provided them work and in the long term as the water harvesting structures enabled several bore wells to be successful. The fall out was that more people went for digging bore wells which could be seen¹⁰⁵ in the increasing numbers during the years 2000-2002.

The situation in Pahadipur and Edigapalle was completely different from Reddypalle as there were two very strong opposite factions in each of these villages who were highly vigilant. As a result, there was always a fight for DNRM committees. As mentioned earlier, the committees in these villages were formed after a lengthy delay with the threat of cancellation making the compromise possible. In Pahadipur out of a total outlay of 14,80,000 rupees they spent 11,20,000 on water harvesting structures and no bunding activity was carried out. They had built about ten check dams at various places in the village and they were actually constructed in and around the fields of the two factions with each faction

¹⁰⁵ See table 1 in page 150

getting five check dams. The members of watershed committee themselves acted as contractors for executing the works of watershed programme.

One of the villagers said that, they knew that both the leading groups were going to make money out of watershed programme but they were happy with the work done as part of the programme. According to Sridhar Reddy, who was the President of watershed association, they wanted to build check dams as it would be easier to share the money and also they would also contribute towards groundwater recharge enabling more bore wells. He had got a contract for one check dam out of which he made about twenty one thousand rupees. He said other people like Rajamma, the former Sarpanch who was Chairman of watershed committee, and Ramu Goud who was Secretary of the committee made more money out of the programme as they got more contracts for works. After a great deal of persuasion over a period of six months Sridhar Reddy revealed to us the percentages that were paid to various people in the watershed programme which amounted to twelve percent of the total outlay. He told that, both the chairman and secretary received five percent money of whatever work that was carried out in the watershed programme. The WDT members received seven percent which was shared by the three of them and some of it was also paid to the higher ups. The engineer, who was part of the three members WDT, received maximum money and he also got something out of each work from the individual contractors.

Meetings of the watershed committee were held regularly and the attendance was good with all the members attending due to nature of rivalry between the two groups in the village. We happened to attend three such meetings but none of the

members ever raised any voice against the corrupt practices. The villagers were aware of the activities taken up under watershed programme due to display of particulars on the village panchayat wall. However, several of villagers were not happy about the fact that, so much money was spent on check dams as they would benefit very few and particularly the close followers of both groups. But they never voiced these objections in the gramsabha meetings that were held twice a year to review various works under progress and plan for future activities. We were able to attend one such meeting where the attendance was low and it was concluded very quickly. The villagers who attended the gramsabha were there mainly to find about the availability of works and nobody had raised any questions or objections regarding the functioning of the watershed committee.

The watershed in Edigapalle was funded by RIDF and it got a small amount of five 5,34,000 rupees which was about one third of the fund generally received by watersheds granted under DPAP. Main emphasis was laid on water harvesting structures and they were located in the fields of the respective followers. While the check dams and percolation tanks were located as per the topography and advice of WDT in Reddypalle and Pahadipur, in Edigapalle they were done to accommodate the interests of the two groups in the village thereby reducing the capability of structures. Two check dams were built and one of them was placed near the fields of Bala Goud followers which was not a desirable place but had to be constructed as per the agreement between the two groups. The people of the village were vexed with the conflicts that became a regular feature between these two groups but one finds very few neutrals in the village with most of them belonging to one side or the other. Nobody was willing to cop the blame for

holding up of works or the inadequate execution without any consideration for desirability of structures in particular places.

The officials from the WDT lamented on the fact that, most of the funds were wasted as they had to accept proposals made by the committee even though they were not really useful. But there was a visible impact of watershed structures just as in Reddypalle and Pahadipur as it helped in ground water regeneration and proliferation of bore wells although it was much lesser compared to the other two study villages. This can be explained by the fact that there were two small tanks in the village which irrigate about 180 acres of land and also water availability was good in the village compared to all the other villages in the mandal. This should explain the fact that most of the fertile lands in the village were owned by the Reddy landlords of the neighbouring village. The group rivalry in the village had taken care of the sustainability aspect in the sense that nobody was interested while participation was so good that they did not allow the functioning of the watershed committee. What was apparent here was that there was awareness but it was not being channelled properly with more emphasis on power struggle rather than on development.

6.4. WUAs:

At the time of introduction of water users associations in 1997, maintenance works were not carried out in Peddacheruvu tank for more than a decade due to lack of funding from the government. As a result the tail end farmers were not receiving water for more than six years. Out of the total Kharif ayacut of 327 acres only 165 acres was getting water and out of total Rabi ayacut of 534 acres only

281¹⁰⁶ acres was receiving water. Along with this problem there were complaints of over use and the land dispute between two gollas due to which 35 acres of land was not receiving water. This particular dispute went on even after the introduction of WUA and was resolved only in 2001 when both the dominant groups in the village came together and resolved it. In the study area, tank management was carried out by the minor irrigation department. In the field, it was the Work Inspector also known as ‘*maistry*’ and ‘*lashkar*’¹⁰⁷, who was responsible for the distribution of water. Apart from this the farmers generally appoint a person to take care of the water supply and in Pahadipur this role was assigned to the ‘*kavalikar*’¹⁰⁸, who was paid a small amount for this effort.

‘*Peddacheruvu*’ had a history of more than four hundred years and it was dug much before the *Nizam period* and during the pre-Independence period it was maintained by the ‘*enam*’¹⁰⁹ landholders. The Nizam on his hunting visits used to rest near this village in the adjacent hills. There were some inscriptions and water facility on the hill adjacent to the tank which indicate the frequency of visits by the royal entourage. After the independence the tank maintenance passed into the hands of minor irrigation department. WUAs were introduced in 1997 with support from World Bank to address the alarming situation of decreasing rate of irrigation potential. The idea behind transfer of power to the WUAs was to involve the stakeholders in the management process. In Pahadipur, during the decade long period after the inception of WUAs, three WUA presidents and two

¹⁰⁶ Figures are for the year 1996-97 and provided by minor irrigation department, Kalwakurthy.

¹⁰⁷ Lowest rank in the irrigation bureaucracy. He is responsible for ensuring water supply by making small repairs and also regulation of water supply.

¹⁰⁸ Village watchman.

¹⁰⁹ Village servants like *Karanam, Patwari, Patel, Washerman, Carpenter* etc. were provided with land to the services rendered by them and these lands are called ‘*enam lands*’.

committees were elected but on all the occasions the members of the WUA were handpicked from the supporters of the leading groups in the village.

6.4.1. Election/Selection:

The election process for the WUAs was completely different from the VSS and WS. Election was held by secret ballot if there was a contest and all the farmers with pass book of their cultivating lands were eligible to vote. During the first elections held in 1997 government announced a cash reward of Rs. 50,000/- for committees elected unanimously. But in Pahadipur there was a contest and the efforts of the minor irrigation officials to have an unanimous body proved futile in this regard. The person supported by the dominant faction of the time¹¹⁰ - Dargaiah became president of WUA defeating the G-L faction's Krishnaiah Goud. Dargaiah had been an associate of Ramana Reddy, leader of R-G-Sc and saw to it that he was well supported by his '*madiga*' community during elections. Thus as a reward to the services rendered, Dargaiah was made WUA President.

The first body remained in office for a period of seven years till 2004 and during the elections held it was decided to have a permanent WUA body, where members will be elected every two years in a revolving manner for a total period of six years and with the first and second batch of retirees to be decided by lottery after two and four years respectively. By the time of these elections there is a power shift in the village politics due to the change in power at the state level. Thus the G-L faction was able to take control of the WUA and a cousin of the group's

¹¹⁰ Dominance in village affairs and particularly committees is linked with the group controlling the gram panchayat and the party in power at the state level. After the 2004 elections, the power equation in the village got reversed. At the time of the first WUA formation in 1997 the Reddy-Goud (R-G) group was in the ascendance against the Goud-Lambada (G-L) group.

leader, Laxmaiah became WUA President. He was replaced as President by Jangaiah, a nephew of leader of G-L faction in 2006.

6.4.2. Participation - Social Capital:

Meetings were to be conducted every month to take stock of the water situation and the distribution of water. When queried about what goes on in the meetings, three of the five members said that, they were not having regular monthly meetings and they actually met two to three times in a year and that too all of them never attended WUA meeting at one time. One of the members said that, meetings were held initially every month but they found that there was nothing to discuss during these meetings so slowly, the frequency came down and now they meet only before the beginning of crop season when the minor irrigation officials also attend these meetings. It was mandatory for them in July and December to come and measure the amount of water available in the tank. On these occasions general body meetings were held to inform the farmers about the amount of water available for their crops during Kharif and Rabi.

An important aspect to gauge the awareness and participation levels especially in WUAs was finances. There were lot of complaints through out the state that lots of funds were being appropriated in WUAs in the name of repairs and renovation works. In Pahadipur two tanks were granted funds by the minor irrigation department out of which one did not have a WUA. *Pedda Cheruvu* was granted 19,00,000 rupees during 1997 – 2005 under various heads. Money was granted based on the ayacut of the tank. While in the year of inception it was granted @ Rs. 2000/- per acre in 2005 the annual grant was given @ Rs. 200 per acre. Many

of the members had varying knowledge regarding the finances of WUA. While some of them were aware of all types of funding a few of them were not aware of amounts released under certain heads. The following table gives details of grants received by WUA under various heads during 1997 – 2005.

Table 6.3: Finances: Amounts granted to WUA during 1997 - 2005

Year	Type of grant	Amount in Rupees
1997	Desilting, Bunding and canal repairs	7 lakhs
1998	Annual grant	1.75 lakhs
1999	Flood repairs	2 lakhs
2001	Annual grant	0.70 lakhs
2002	Canal repairs and bunding	5.80 lakhs
2003	Annual grant	0.70 lakhs
2004	Annual grant	0.35 lakhs
2005	Annual grant	0.70 lakhs

Data collected from Minor Irrigation office, Kalwakurthy.

One WUA member said that the money granted under various heads was not sufficient for desilting work which was a major work that needs immediate attention but except the first time, they did not get money for this activity. They were not able to do the desilting work completely in 1997-98 as the money was not sufficient. According to him desilting had to be carried out in the tank immediately so that all the farmers in the ayacut can receive water. Despite making several resolutions to this effect and sending them to Kalwakurthy they did not receive the money to carry out this work. They were granted 5,80,000 rupees for strengthening the bund and repairing canals in 2002 but it was not adequate to carry out this work. He was not aware of the 2,00,000 rupees granted in 1999 for carrying out flood damage repairs. When queried about it he said that he knew about the proposal sent for this particular work but was not aware about the actual amount released for this purpose. But two other members said that they knew about the amount released for flood damage repairs and canal repairs. While

all the members belong to the same faction, some of them were not even aware of the amounts released for carrying out repairs. The accounts submitted to minor irrigation department office in Kalwakurthy indicate that they had spent about 1,93,000 rupees out of the 2,00,000 rupees granted and 5,57,000 rupees out of 5,80,000 rupees granted.

Krishnaiah Goud belongs to the opposite G-L faction and lost in the first WUA election to Dargaiah. He became WUA member in 2004. He said that, they were not aware of the amount released under flood repairs scheme but knew about the 5,80,000 rupees released for repairing canals and strengthening tank bund. He said that most of the villagers knew that the amount released went into the pockets of Dargaiah and Ramana Reddy. After assuming power in 2004 the G-L faction complained to the minor irrigation department about misuse of funds by Dargaiah. The minor irrigation department officials carried out a social audit in the village in 2004 regarding the complaint and found that money was not spent properly and ordered for recovery of 53,000 rupees. According to the complainant, it was public knowledge that, Dargaiah had appropriated more than 3,00,000 rupees but the officials could only find a very small amount. Dargaiah, said that, he could not pay that much money and paid back only 20,000 rupees and the opposite faction did not press for further charges and left him with that. Another member of the 2004 WUA said that they took pity on him as he was a poor man and also didn't own any land so they have to send him to jail for not being able to pay the remaining amount and they were not willing to resort to that extreme step.

During a group discussion with the farmers of the tail end part, it became apparent that they were not receiving water sufficiently for more than a decade and the resolution of conflict between the gollas also did not improve the situation due to insufficient rains. Particularly, during 2001-03 they could cultivate only dry crops due to lack of water. Although, overuse of irrigation was not an issue the main problem with supply had been the lack of water. Thus, although there was 350 acres ayacut, in reality assured water was available for only 190 acres. According to them if desilting was done it would take care of major problem. They seem to be aware of the annual grants but not about the interim allocations. Corruption according to them was part and parcel of government works but what was most important for them was whether the work was executed or not. They were also happy that, WUA works were providing labour during the summer season which had resulted in reduced migration.

Despite our sincere efforts we were not able to elicit any information from Dargaiah regarding the amounts he made while being WUA President. He said that, he was not of the extraction type unlike what the villagers were saying but tried his best to do an efficient job of implementing the various works. When asked about the recovery of money and the amount paid by him to minor irrigation department he said that all people were eating money but nobody complains against these other people. On being a proxy for Ramana Reddy he defended the strongman's role saying that there was nothing wrong in being advised and directed by people like Ramana Reddy who had great deal of experience in governance due to his prolonged presence in the political field..

6.5. Conclusion:

The presence of an NGO as a partner organisation in the JFM/CFM programme has helped the villagers a great deal as it was able to create awareness among them leading to greater activism and participation. Particularly on the empowerment front, it helped a great deal as a civil society organisation was able to interact with the existing power structures and negotiate a better deal for the excluded communities in providing them opportunities in the committees. This is a major difference that one can find among the NRM bodies. The presence of an external agency greatly helped in increasing levels of participation both qualitatively and quantitatively in VSSs. One thing is certain with regard to transparency. People were very much aware of the various works being granted to them and there was very little scope for chairpersons or vice chairpersons to grab a 'percentage' from the sanctioned works. But they do have to pay to the forest department people their cut of five percent. One could see greater transparency and greater attendance in the meetings of VSSs compared to the other two – WM and WUAs.

Greater associational activity leads to greater social capital – according to Putnam. But here, despite the presence of an active civil society organisation and the awareness levels of the villagers along with the social capital – they were not able to combat the evil of corruption. They came to accept it as a part of their life. However, they do talk about it and try to combat it like in the case of the no-confidence motion against WUA president Dargaiah but it had the ulterior motive of scoring a point against the opposite faction rather than punishing the corrupt individual. Because of the acceptance of this aspect by the people, there was such

a scramble for official positions among the villagers, especially when there was reservation as it gave the people an opportunity to become part of the power structure which was hitherto dominated by the traditionally powerful sections of the village..

One common thread that is interwoven through all the NRM bodies is the fear of rival groups within the village about the impact of the works generated as part of these programmes. Due to higher budgets, which sometimes is ten times that of the village panchayat, there is frequent use of labour for various works in the NRM bodies which has a subsequent impact on the economic and social relations in the village. People at the helm in NRM bodies are able to provide more work than the Sarpanch, and by virtue of this, are becoming more popular than the established leaders. During the first phase of elections, these bodies were filled up by close followers of the traditional leaders. But by the second term, there was intense competition for various posts in these committees.

As mentioned earlier about the importance of allocation of budget and works to these bodies, the opposing groups in the village were more intent in gaining some scraps of the spoils when they were weak and the maximum when they were strong, and this resulted in stalemate in the formation of NRM bodies – this is particularly frequent in the case of Watersheds in Pahadipur and Edigapalle where the committees started functioning only in the third year. This is evident in the case of VSS and RIDF watershed in Edigapalle and in the case of Watershed and WUA in Pahadipur. Reddypalle is immune to all these petty struggles as there was no opposing group strong enough to counter the influence of SNR. Each group is wary of the amount of influence that the opposing group will generate by taking

control of an NRM body. As a result they had been trying their utmost to control these bodies completely or when they are not powerful enough to control – to hold on the formation of committees so that they can get a share of the works. We witnessed this again in Pahadipur and Edigapalle particularly in the case of formation of watershed committees.

Coming to the aspect of participation we have seen that almost all the villages had a different perspective on this aspect irrespective of their caste composition. It is mainly the aspect of power which interests them more than the process of participatory development which these bodies are meant for. One has also to take a serious look into the motivation for participation in these development bodies. While the WUA should stand apart in this aspect as it involves direct benefits for the stakeholders, the issue of VSS and WS is completely different. The major drawback in the VSS is that the committees were formed in degraded forest lands and the benefits to accrue from these resources which they have to safeguard are very limited which could explain the lack of interest from the community members regarding participation. What we had seen in GT which was supposed to be a vibrant VSS was also the interest of Humla Nayak in being able to provide work for the tribals in his hamlet which could prevent migration but not the aspect of sustainability. As mentioned earlier, their forest areas of Pahadipur and PT are inaccessible due to which they have thick forest cover and receives an income of thirty to seventy thousand annually which again is not much but it is better than the other VSS. Also the issue of stakeholders and their interests are important in determining participation.

In terms of direct benefits, the tasks envisaged in WM projects are by their very nature biased in favour of those with access to land and water. The landless tend to be marginalised since the major thrust of programmes is on land. Although the landless get work and income during the implementation phase, this is not necessarily sustained. The evidence of WM as a strategy that can develop a more 'participatory community' in local village planning is slim. There is some evidence of increased associational activity, however in general the 'beneficiaries' have a very limited understanding of the project and little involvement in project implementation. Village-level institutions themselves often flounder after the project cycle mainly due to internal conflicts over transparent management of finances.

When we look at the overall functioning of the DNRM bodies in the study villages, it becomes clear that, lack of an opposing faction in Reddypalle had reduced the possibility of conflict resulting in smooth functioning of the committees. Along with that the necessity to safeguard his position has made SNR to take care of the needs of the villagers and also to implement the watershed programme well. This might be the reason for going by the suggestions of the WDT team in the implementation of the watershed programme. He did show favouritism towards his followers by allocating the contracts to them and did not do anything about the corrupt practices of Sivaiah, Watershed Secretary. He is more interested in the implementation aspect but not about how it is implemented. Through out his dealings with the villagers he used his structural political capital to the maximum extent in seeing to it that they get what they are looking for. In

the process he gained support of the villagers and the malpractices committed by his followers were not minded by them.

The case of Pahadipur comes out as a surprise because if the major groups in the village merge together on caste lines nobody can beat the OBCs as they form the majority of the population. But party loyalties divided the village and the division is to be found in all the castes on party lines. Except for Reddys who are all on one side, all the other caste groups are affected by the divided party loyalties. This is true in the case of OBCs, SCs, STs and even among the Vaisyas. As a result, the Reddys by clever use of their structural political capital were able to control the DNRM bodies and through them the village power structure. It was only after the elections of 2004 that the G-L faction became stronger as their instrumental political capital was able to challenge the structural political capital of the R-G-Sc due to the change of power at the state level. It had always been the one up-man ship of one group over the other rather than, participation or sustainability. One can simply forget about transparency altogether.

Be it the Reddy controlled VSS in Pahadipur which along with the VSS in GT was considered a good working model in the watershed committee which was shared between both the groups or the WUA which was controlled by R-G-Sc faction during the first term and the B-G faction subsequently, we don't find any semblance of participation or transparency or for that matter sustainability aspect. Two things that stand out in this whole exercise are the display of watershed works done on the panchayat wall and most important of them all – the case of recovery of money from WUA president. The second case assumes significance

from the point of view of vigilance on the part of people against corruption. However, there is a compromise between the groups and they could come up with very little against him in the social audit conducted by the minor irrigation people.

Edigapalle is the worse affected of all the study villages due to conflicts between rival groups in the implementation of DNRM programmes. Despite being blessed with good water and forest resources when compared to most other villages in the mandal, the benefits of DNRM programme did not reach the people here because of the continuous conflict between the rival groups in the village. The watershed programme is a prime example of not only the conflict between the rival groups within the village, but also an example for looking at how things can go wrong when there is conflict. It is only the VSS which is somewhat better where an agreement could be reached after three meetings regarding sharing of posts. While during the first term of VSS, the illiteracy of VSS chairman was exploited by the forest officials, things changed for the better after the entry of NGO and as mentioned earlier it brought about a change in the attitudes of the stakeholders over a period of time.

Chapter VII

Cross Linkages – In pursuit of Power

During the course of fieldwork, we noticed that certain individuals in each of the study villages are continuously in positions of power. When these leaders are displaced due to the reservations in panchayats they move on to the DNRM bodies or other positions at the mandal level like Cooperative bank. All the leading persons in the study villages had started their political career as Sarpanchs of their respective villages in 1988 and lost the position due to the enactment of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act which introduced reservations in the Gram Panchayat (GP). Their subsequent career reflects the importance of structural political capital – how they have used it to stay in power. As we had seen in the earlier chapters, it was a one horse race in Reddypalle and the situation is more complicated in Pahadipur and Edigapalle with respect to positions of power. The situation in Reddypalle hasn't changed much even after the introduction of reservations in GP bodies as the new leaders continued to be under the patronage of SNR. Especially in Pahadipur the availability of multiple forms of positions of power in DNRM bodies had enabled more number of people to enjoy power in various positions at various points of time. This is because of the numerical disadvantage of dominant caste Reddys with respect to other communities – particularly the OBCs, STs and SCs. Thus we can see the process of Co-optation in a large scale in Pahadipur. While in Edigapalle in order to combat the OBCs who were being lead by Bala Goud, the Reddys have accommodated a section of OBCs into the power structure and thereby toppled Bala Goud who had controlled the

village for more than fifteen years. The strategies adopted by the dominant sections to strengthen their position led to factionalisation in both these villages.

One important category which plays a crucial role both at the time of elections and after that had been the political retainers. Their main job is to help the villagers with administrative affairs, grants and getting them recommendations and the like. They have actually been called by different names at various times by the researchers. They could be called as *political retainers* in the present context, whereas Ram Reddy and Haragopal (1985) used the term 'middleman', 'fixer'-the Pyraveekar. On the other hand, James Manor (2000) called them as small time political fixers while Anirudh Krishna (2003) calls them as political entrepreneurs. These are the followers of the political leaders whose main occupation is to wait on their leaders at the Mandal Office or in the party office. They do an odd contract now and then for financial needs. These are important people in the villages because of their proximity to the political leaders. Often most of the works related to the village were carried out by them. Even the Sarpanch also takes their help in the present day with the coming of reservations as they are new to the post and don't have suitable contacts to get their works done at the mandal level.

Almost each and every village have these people, and they play a crucial role in the selection of leaders to development bodies. As the chums of the leaders, they retain sufficient control over the affairs of the party in the villages and in most cases they were rewarded with minor posts like membership in committees/gram panchayat. They were given sufficient importance by the leaders because along

with the Sarpanch they deliver the votes for the party at the time of elections. These people generally belong to either the OBCs or the SCs.

As they do not belong to the elite section in the village, it was not possible for them to aspire for the positions of power at the village level so they remain as leaders of their particular caste groups. They eke out a living with the contacts they develop while being part of the political system through small contract works and helping people from their community in getting works done at the mandal level. In return, they manage to control the voting pattern of their community to a substantial extent. While some of these can also be referred to as political retainers who does outside the village works also, some remain and operate at the village level.

But from the 1990's these political retainers were the major beneficiaries of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act and the other development bodies at the village level as their stock rose with the advent of reservations in village panchayats. For the first time they got direct access to village panchayat affairs and things started changing with the coming of decentralised development bodies like JFM, WM, and WUAs. In most situations they were able to get themselves elected to various posts in the development bodies in various capacities according to the available positions and the political understandings of the situations in villages. Since most of them belong to the weaker sections, whenever there is a reserved post, because of their proximity to the political factions they are able to get nomination and contest the elections. Thus one could see a systematic grabbing of positions of power not only by the elite but also the retainers. Put in

another way this could even be seen as the process of accommodation of the new leaders into the power system by the previous group in order to continue having their hold over the power structure in the village. We could see this in the previous two chapters how candidates for gram panchayat and NRM bodies were handpicked by the existing elite in all the study villages.

7.1. Reddypalle - Patronage:

Reddypalle had always been under the control of *S* family much before the panchayat system came into existence. The present strongman of the village SNR began his career as Sarpanch of Reddypalle in 1988. In the first elections held after the introduction of reservations in local bodies in 1995 the Sarpanch position was reserved for women and he got his wife elected as Sarpanch. Immediately after that he contested to become Cooperative bank chairman and lost to his contemporary from Pahadipur - Ramana Reddy. Subsequently he became chairman of the watershed committee in his village. Thus he was able to get into a position and he continued his hold over the Gram Panchayat (GP) as his wife was the Sarpanch. Through out his political career SNR has a close set of followers hailing from different castes in the village who ensured that he had a trouble free reign as the leader of Reddypalle. Some of them are the political retainers of Reddypalle who are approached by people from various communities for solving their issues. These supporters/retainers from the village were taken care of by SNR by giving them access to the mandal level administration where their works will be taken care of. Some of these people were provided with minor contracts in the village and when SNR became powerful later on they got works at the mandal level also.

When the watershed committee was formed two such followers were accommodated into the important positions following which they made sufficient money to do real estate business at a later date. Another such follower was accommodated by selecting his son for Sarpanch position in the 2001 election. Another close follower was made Sarpanch in the gram panchayat election of 2006. Thus SNR was following a process accommodation of his followers into the power structure but careful enough to see to it that they were not given a position again. So we cannot wholly say that the power is retained through accommodation but it is more in the lines of patronage. This is the change that we could see from 1980s to the present. In the 1980s and 1990s he did not allow anybody to grow strong enough to oppose him and saw to it that there will not be a second faction within the village. During the present decade he had to accept the growth of new leaders into the 'invited spaces' in panchayat and NRM bodies.

7.2. Pahadipur - Co-option:

While the numerical advantage of Reddy community and strategy of patronage allowed SNR to have his way in the village affairs without any opposition to his leadership, the situation in Pahadipur is so much more different. OBCs form the majority of the population followed by STs and SCs. The dominant caste Reddys are a minority here with just five percent of the total households and Ramana Reddy has to balance things in order to stay in power and control the village. As a result, unlike in Reddypalle he had to resort to the policy of co-option by providing his supporters continuous opportunities in the power structure. Another major problem for Ramana Reddy is that there is a very strong opposite group

consisting of Gouds and Lambadas (G-L faction) who oppose his each and every move in the village power structure. The G-L faction was not always successful in its attempts to dislodge Ramana Reddy's Group which has Reddys, Gouds, and SCs (R-G-Sc) as its main constituents but sometimes emerged successful too. However, despite maintaining a stronghold over the village, things changed in favour of the G-L faction after Congress came to power at the state level in 2004.

Except the watersheds, none of the other DNRM bodies were considered suitable by the displaced elite as they were not really aware of the financial strength of these bodies. As there is no watershed in Pahadipur Ramana Reddy looked for other opportunities and found the cooperative bank elections as a good opportunity. In the elections held in 1996 Ramana Reddy outwitted SNR and got himself elected as Chairman of Cooperative bank. His close follower, Dargaiah also got elected as a director in the same elections. From here onwards Dargaiah also starts enjoying the benefits of DNRM and reservations in GP. Dargaiah, later became WUA president in 1997 and in the 2001 elections he got elected as a ward member and then became Upa Sarpanch.

Another person to benefit from the reservations had been Anjaiah Goud who is another key follower of Ramana Reddy. He belongs to the numerically dominant Goud community and also the richest in his community. As the Sarpanch position was reserved for OBC women in the first elections after the 73rd amendment, Anjaiah's wife, Rajamma was made Sarpanch. She also like Dargaiah went on to occupy position after position once her term as Sarpanch was over. She became President of the Watershed Association in 2002 and also got elected as DWCRA

Mahila Samakhya president at the mandal level in 2004. In the GP elections held in 2006 she contested for the post of ZPTC which was reserved for OBC woman and lost the election to the wife of Ramu Goud.

Ramu Goud had been contesting against Ramana Reddy in every election since 1988 but was never successful till 2004. Despite being the leader of the numerically dominant Gouds who constitute about twenty seven per cent of the total households he could not become successful against the structural political capital of Ramana Reddy. It was only after 2004 based on structural change, which was a result of Congress party's victory at the state level and the support of local MLA, that Ramu Goud and his group was able to overturn the eighteen year old dominance of Ramana Reddy in the village politics. Subsequently, they got major gains in the elections of 2006 in which they won MPTC, and his wife who earlier worked as MPTC during 1995-2001 contested for ZPTC position as it was reserved for OBC woman defeating Rajamma, the former Sarpanch and wife of Anjaiah Goud. The only blemish being, they narrowly lost the Sarpanch position to R-G-Sc faction in the 2006 election..

When we see the profile of leaders in the village there were four people who had been in positions of power and importance more than once. Of these three belong to R-G-Sc group and one belongs to G-L group. Ramana Reddy had continuously provided opportunities to positions of power to important people in his faction as his power base would be safe only through their continuous loyalty. Thus Dargaiah, Rajamma and Venkat Reddy were always in some position or the other while Ramu Goud's family had been the major beneficiary of various positions.

The case of Ramu Goud and his family was an interesting affair as it was his insistence in trying to bring in his family members that had resulted in the split of OBCs as Gouds got divided between him and Anjaiah Goud, who aspired for a position following his economic growth. It is also more a case of economic growth looking for political opportunity. He had his wish fulfilled by joining the faction of Ramana Reddy thereby weakening the OBC alliance of Ramu Goud.

Table 7.1 - Positions of Power during 1995 - 2006 in Pahadipur

Village	Individual	Position	Tenure
Pahadipur	Venkat Reddy	VSS Chairman	2001
Pahadipur	Venkat Reddy	VSS Chairman	2002-05
Pahadipur	Venkat Reddy	VSS Chairman	2006-
Pahadipur	Rajamma	Sarpanch	1995-2001
Pahadipur	Rajamma	President, Watershed Association	2002-07
Pahadipur	Rajamma	Lost, ZPTC	2006
Pahadipur	Dargayya	Director, Cooperative Bank	1996-99
Pahadipur	Dargayya	President, WUA	1997-2002
Pahadipur	Dargayya	Upa Sarpanch	2001-06
Pahadipur	Dargayya	Ward member, Gram Panchayat	2006-
Pahadipur	Ramu Goud	Lost, Sarpanch	1988
Pahadipur	RG's MIL	Lost, Sarpanch	1995
Pahadipur	RG's wife	MPTC	1995-2001
Pahadipur	RG	Chairman, Watershed Committee	2002-07
Pahadipur	RG's wife	ZPTC	2006-

There were also others who had been in power at least twice during this whole period like KD Nayak who had been a member of gram panchayat, unsuccessfully contested for Sarpanch position in 2001 election and became VSS chairperson in 2002. While Humla Nayak of BT continuing as VSS chairperson (in his third term now) just like Venkat Reddy. Although when we look at the table it appears that only two families are at it, it explains the changes brought about by the introduction of DNRM bodies. One notable absence from the above table is Ramana Reddy who still is the main leader of R-G-Sc faction. It simply explains

how he was able to maintain his control through the process of co-optation of newly emergent classes into the power structure.

7.3. Edigapalle - Accommodation:

The case of Edigapalle was unique in the sense that, while almost all the OBCs in the mandal were strong supporters of TDP, here they were with Congress party and another variation was Reddys who were traditional supporters of Congress were with TDP in this village. Bala Goud, strong man of the village started his political career as Sarpanch in 1988 along with his contemporaries from the other study villages SNR and Ramana Reddy. Despite belonging to the OBC category his rise through the power structure was swift as he became the Mandal Parishad President in 1995 as the post was reserved for OBCs. He was removed in 1998 due to his functioning style and from then onwards he was eclipsed by his contemporaries and especially SNR played a crucial role in subverting the influence of Bala Goud as they belong to the same political party and SNR viewed him as an opponent. At the village level too, during the 2001 elections there was a split in the OBC vote and the Reddys led by Govardhan Reddy were able to come back to power as his wife, Kamamma defeated Bala Goud's wife for Sarpanch position which was reserved for woman. In the MPTC elections, Bala Goud was defeated by Veeraiah, a new leader supported by the Reddys. But Bala Goud was having good relationship with the TDP MLA who happened to belong to OBC category and thus was able to take care of his followers.

Thus the decade and half control of Bala Goud over GP was wrested back by the Reddys through an alliance with another OBC group by accommodating them into the power structure.

After the assembly elections, when Congress party came back to power Bala Goud was accommodated as a party functionary at the district level in the Congress party. By this time, he became a secondary leader to SNR in Amangal mandal as Bala Goud accepted his leadership. He told to us that, he had in a very short period reached the top position at mandal level, but after that due to the lack of a proper position for him resulted in stagnation. As a result he had to become secondary to SNR at mandal level and emphasised the importance of staying in power for a hold over the political scenario. Also he felt that SNR had the advantage of dominant caste background which enabled him to gradually become a very strong leader.

The opposite group in Edigapalle was led by Govardhan Reddy who lost to Bala Goud in the Sarpanch elections in 1988. After the 73rd amendment the Sarpanch position was reserved for OBCs in 1995 and the candidate put up by him was easily defeated by Bala Goud's brother and in the 2001 elections Govardhan Reddy made a pact with the Ediga community who were part of OBCs and had a strong presence in the village. Veeraiah, one time follower of Bala Goud was put up as the MPTC candidate and he defeated Bala Goud in the elections. In the subsequently held GP elections Govardhan Reddy's wife became Sarpanch. She defeated Bala Goud's wife as the position was reserved for general category woman. The OBC group was able to negotiate successfully in gaining the support of Reddys who had no choice but to accept them. This situation, in the future could ultimately result in complete domination of Reddy group by the newly emergent Edigas. Already there are some indications that power is shifting from the Reddys after the death of Govardhan Reddy in 2006 as Veeraiah became the

main leader of the group though he still takes advice from the Reddys it may not be long before he asserts his power. Structural changes that are taking place also favour such a transfer of power as the migration of Reddys to Hyderabad is gradually increasing.

7.4. Scramble for power

Among all the study villages there is scramble for positions of power among the leaders but especially we found that, once a person gets/enjoys power he tends to try for retaining it at whatever level possible¹¹¹. While these positions enable them to enjoy power and connections with the higher ups, the other reason for this scramble is the opportunity to make money. Almost all the people who got elected to GP and DNRM bodies made money and bought land and houses causing others to strive for these positions. This is particularly true of Sarpanchs, WS, VSS and WUA leaders. While for the political retainers being in power would enable them easier access to bureaucracy and other top level leaders.

Top level leaders belonging to the traditionally dominant castes when they come to occupy positions of power also earn big due to their connections at the higher levels of government. During his tenure as ZPTC member SNR had done three road contracts worth two crore fifty seven lakhs in various parts of the district in association with the help of another top official from Panchayat Raj Engineering Department. The other benefit of being close to the people at the top is access to information. Like for example, he started doing real estate business towards the

¹¹¹ This may not be true in the case of each and every individual as factors like wealth, numerical strength of caste in the village and proximity to the leading faction play an important role in getting a position for the second/third time.

end of 2003 and he got to know that a large chip making unit was coming up in a neighbouring mandal. He got to know this information at least four months in advance and bought up ten acres of land @ sixty thousand rupees per acre. Later on he sold that land @ twenty five lakh rupees per acre making a huge profit. Similar deals in other parts of the district have made him amass lot of money by the end of his ZPTC tenure in 2006. He might have made more money but this is what he had revealed to us when we spoke to him. Other leaders in the study villages, especially the top notch aren't far behind in earnings with each of them earning sufficient money to buy houses in Hyderabad. While some of the followers of these leaders bought houses in Amangal. They were also looking for contracts at the mandal and village level which would enable them a livelihood apart from their activity as political retainers.

7.5. Conclusion:

It becomes evident that connection to bureaucracy, political leaders, and money lenders is very important to continue having control over the village. This is apparent in all the study villages when we see how a particular group/leader is controlling the village and how it was contested and replaced by a different group in the village. Material benefits and incentive of structural mobility in the society were two main reasons for some of these leaders belonging to OBC category aspiring for positions and wherever possible they are managing to get themselves elected/selected into the system.

The enactment of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act and the simultaneous entry of DNRM bodies at the village level created scope for more number of people to

have access to positions of power. As we had seen, it was always the chosen few who were getting elected to these positions. While in Reddypalle it is a patronage system where leaders come and go as per the reservation in Pahadipur and Edigapalle they have been co-opted and accommodated in the power structure by the leaders at the helm to safe guard their position in the changed scenario. SNR was always promoting his followers to various positions and none of them were re-elected or was given a second chance at power as it had been his policy not to allow anybody to grow politically. This strategy had enabled him to maintain his status as the strong man of the village. Although he had been successfully doing this, all this was possible to due to the lack of an alternate faction in the village. This had something to do with the migration as most of the rich Reddy landlords migrated to Hyderabad by the middle of 1990s. as a result he was able to maintain his position without much opposition and SNR himself shifted his base to Hyderabad in 2002 following the threats made by Naxalites.

In Pahadipur the leader of the dominant group does not belong to the largest caste group as Reddys constitute less than five percent households. Thus Ramana Reddy had to depend on the support of people from various communities and he had to co-opt them into the power structure so as to be able to control the village. This explains the presence of same people in several positions – one after another as we had seen in that table (page 181). At the same time this scramble for power was leading division within the castes as an existing power centre would not like lose its control over the power structure. Also when some individuals manage to do well economically their next step was to also succeed politically. A prime example for this had been the case of Anjaiah Goud who wanted to gain political

power and when his efforts were repelled by the existing leader of the OBCs, he didn't hesitate to break away and join an opposing group thereby weakening the unity of OBCs. He did manage to get what he was after, but by allowing him to have a slice of the cake, Ramu Goud would have created a very strong OBC led faction which would have become the strongest power bloc. But temporary benefits overruled long term objectives in Pahadipur.

In the case of Edigapalle there should be no opposition to OBC's as they constitute seventy percent of the population but due to the clever manoeuvres of the Reddys they were able to divide the OBCs and took control of the village through the process of accommodation. In a situation very similar to Pahadipur, Bala Goud did not promote any body other than his family members resulting in friction between Gouds and Edigas. The Reddy group led by Govardhan Reddy made use of this opportunity and gave its support to the leader of Ediga group and was successful in defeating Bala Goud which they could not do for a very long period of time. Their structural political capital also enabled them to get the Vice-Chairmanship of mandal parishad for the Ediga leader. The difference between Pahadipur and Edigapalle is very minute in terms of structures of dominance with both the Reddy leaders in these villages dependent on OBCs for their control over the village. It lies in the way they operate their power as the Edigas led by Veeraiah were not assertive as the Gouds of Pahadipur. This could also be due to the difference in levels of instrumental political capital of Edigas and Gouds.

Chapter VIII

Conclusion

The traditional social structure in the study area had altered a great deal during the decades of 1980's, 1990's and in the present decade. Basically it was a system of land based power and control where the Reddys held supreme authority by virtue of their land ownership, contacts and political power. The other dominant caste of Telangana, Velamas were not there in the mandal except in one village. They were greatly aided by the 'Patel-Patwari' system which dates back to the Nizam period (18th to 20th centuries) where members belonging to the dominant castes (Reddy, Velama and in some cases Brahmins) held positions. During the Nizam period they were the link between people and government. Consequently they had developed immense hold over the day to day affairs of the village. This had continued after Independence and even after introduction of Panchayat Raj institutions in 1959 they held their sway in the village affairs. Villages were completely under the hold of Reddys, Velamas, and sometimes Muslims. Zamindari/Inamdari abolition in the 1960s brought about a few changes in the social structure and landholding pattern in the study villages. Some of the big landlords started leaving the village thereby resulting in transfer of power to new leaders although, these new leaders still belong to the dominant caste Reddys.

The most significant impact on the social fabric had been the abolition of 'Patel-Patwari' system in 1985. It had a profound impact on the socio-political conditions through out Telangana region, where the occasion was celebrated as a big festival by several villagers. One OBC leader from the study villages had said

that they got their true Independence in 1985. One can understand the impact and control of the system on village affairs by this statement alone. The emergence of TDP in the 1980s had provided the OBCs a new political space to contest the dominant caste Reddy elite who predominantly belonged to Congress party.

Simultaneously changes in economy/education provided them new opportunities for economic growth. Especially the Gouds and Edigas of the study villages started becoming more innovative in selling toddy by transporting it to nearby towns and by the end of 1980s they had gained a foothold in the political scene by successfully contesting against the dominant castes. Among the study villages we had seen this happening in Edigapalle. During the 1990s some of the other changes that took place like outmigration of upper caste landowners resulting in sale/lease of land also resulted in significant economic changes. Special events that took place around this time like 'prohibition of liquor' also provided an economic opportunity for Gouds, Edigas and Lambadas. Generally the lands from the upper castes were bought by OBCs - especially Gouds and Edigas from money made through various economic opportunities.

Another important event which took place around this time was the introduction of bore well irrigation. Although bore wells were there in the mandal earlier also, they started increasing from the 1990s. Availability of water through bore wells had enabled the farmers to grow paddy and cotton which helped in greater income from agriculture. At the same time, bore well irrigation also brought about problems like failure of bore wells which in turn resulted rising debt trap and

declining water table in some of the study villages. But in the early years of bore well irrigation it brought great profits for the farmers.

Thus by mid 1990s, in several cases, Reddy domination continued aided by the structural factors and especially in the villages where outmigration had not dwindled their numbers too drastically. In some cases, OBC groups were able to successfully challenge the traditional domination of the Reddys. This was possible due to the improved economic status through various opportunities including the increase in land holding and numerical advantage. We had seen that in all the study villages they were a majority in terms of population.

It is in this environment that the institutional changes were made in Panchayats that led to reservations and the idea of Decentralised Natural Resources Management (DNRM) took shape resulting in the formation of various 'participatory' organisations like VSS, WC, and WUAs etc. The coming of these bodies had created 'spaces for participation' for the marginal sections. This had a profound impact on the traditional power structure which faced a threat from the new leaders. As a result of these changes, unopposed traditional power and control is over.

In response to the new changes the traditional power groups had to adapt new strategies for retaining their control. The structural political capital of the traditionally dominant communities was a huge asset in their hands. The process of adaptation could be clearly seen in Reddypalle village where the unopposed traditional leader SNR had lost his Sarpanch position to reservations and he was

made to accept 'new' leaders into the position. His earlier efforts in not allowing any factions to grow as opposing spectres of influence helped him in the changed scenario. Thus by following a process of adaptation he had tried to balance the power structure in his village. Here the 'spaces' that were created are 'invited spaces'. As against this in the other study villages we could see the struggle for ascendancy between the traditionally dominant groups and the newly emergent leaders with an OBC core. This could be viewed as a conflict between the new structural political capital of the OBCs¹¹² against the old structural political capital of the dominant groups. The 'spaces' that emerge here would 'claimed spaces' as they were a direct result struggles, co-option and transformation.

The efforts of these groups had been met with both success and failure as we could see the unfolding of these processes in Pahadipur and Edigapalle. While in one case, we have a situation where new alliances were being forged to safeguard the traditional dominance in the other case alliances were being broken to disrupt the successful coalition of the OBCs by the dominant caste Reddys to regain their ascendancy over them. Negotiation and struggle for power is a continuing process between the traditionally dominant groups and the OBCs. But the OBCs stand to benefit a lot due to reservation policy in panchayats, although rotation in reservations means they would not be able to consolidate their power which gives scope for the traditionally dominant leaders to assert their supremacy by making and breaking factions. Either way, the OBC factions are beginning to get a share of the power whether opposed or aligned to the Reddys. This had happened in Pahadipur and could happen again in Edigapalle.

¹¹² OBCs in the present context should be viewed as a whole including SCs and STs. But since the leadership had come from the OBCs, this term was being used.

The role of DNRM bodies in this negotiation/struggle for power between the opposing groups is that of a catalyst for more change. Except the watersheds the traditional leaders were not that much interested in VSS and WUA activities leaving the door open for the new leaders to occupy these positions and emerge as challengers to the dominant sections. This phenomenon is yet to happen in the study villages, but it took place in two other villages in the mandal. During the field work we noticed that most of the DNRM bodies were being used by the traditionally dominant groups to accommodate new leaders and strengthen their positions in their respective villages. This was a common theme in all the study villages. Except in Reddypalle, where an opposing faction was never allowed to form in Pahadipur and Edigapalle the traditionally dominant Reddy leaders were dependent on the support of OBCs without whom, they would not be able to maintain their domination. So the members of these factions were to be accommodated in positions of power continuously. Thus in Pahadipur which happened to have several DNRM bodies we saw the same people occupying positions in different bodies from time to time.

The strategies followed by the dominant groups in the study villages varied from negotiation, adaptation, accommodation to co-option. Distinct examples for these processes had been adaptation in Reddypalle where the dominant leader changed his style from absolute control to patronage of certain sections in the village into the power structure; in Pahadipur, the OBCs and SCs had to be co-opted into the power structure in order to maintain his dominance. In Edigapalle, the traditionally dominant group which lost its position to the dynamic coalition of

OBCs in the late 1980s regained it by breaking the coalition and accommodating them into the power structure.

Another important category of people who had been ever present in the village political system had been the pyaraveekars/political fixers. They can belong to any caste/class but mostly they were OBCs, SCs and STs. These political fixers are generally more aware, better educated, and show entrepreneurial spirit. Their regular activity was to help the people of their respective caste/faction in the village level and mandal level works. During the election time their help was sought by politicians and leaders for getting votes and provide them with money and resources to help their cause. In return, political fixers accumulate and build up instrumental political capital which they use in getting their works done or getting an odd contract. There were instances where some of them went on to occupy higher positions of power at the state level by clever use of their instrumental political capital. In the study villages, reservations and DNRM bodies provided them an opportunity to step into positions of power, as they were the biggest beneficiaries of these institutional changes.

Finally coming to the issue of how domination was maintained and the challenges faced by the existing elite, there were three processes at work. An integrated total control of the village power structure which brooks no dissidence and no opposing groups as is the case with Reddypalle. In contrast to this, we have the model of an integrated challenge posed by the undivided OBCs in Pahadipur before 1995 which got divided into two different factions over a period of time in their negotiation for power. The third process was the presence of two opposing

factions in the same village with members of several different castes as part of a larger coalition against one another. This was evident in Pahadipur and Edigapalle with a difference in their operational procedure.

In Pahadipur the quest for power broke the OBC alliance and a break-away faction allied itself with the traditionally dominant group headed by a Reddy. This was necessitated by the desire of both the groups to have representation in the power structure. If the existing OBC leadership allowed the break-away faction to what it had asked for, within a very short period of time they would have completely overthrown the dominance of the Reddy leader as they OBCs would have become a very strong integrated challenge. But it remained an unfulfilled scenario. In Edigapalle, an integrated challenge resulted in replacing the traditionally dominant group which got further weakened with the outmigration of Reddys to Hyderabad. In this context they broke the OBCs by co-opting the break-away faction into the power structure. The fragile nature of leadership among the Reddys – main leader passed away and replaced by a novice in politics enabled the new leadership from OBC have a stronger presence in the power structure.

Despite some of the changes that took place in the social structure like the economic and political growth of OBCs and STs, political growth of SCs through means of reservations the marginal castes(SCs) were still dependent on traditional power holders. They were dependent for labour, loans etc, although winds of change are sweeping through with the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NAREGA) which ensures a minimum 100 days of labour. The lower castes tend

to negotiate more with the traditional power holders rather than associate themselves with the newly emergent OBCs in the study villages. They were either completely subservient as in Edigapalle or grow with dependence/assistance of the dominant leaders as in Reddypalle and Pahadipur. As Cohen (1985) had argued, inclusionary programmes may result in forms of control that are more difficult to challenge as they reduce spaces of conflict and thereby disempower them to question structural constraint.



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Annexure I

List of Castes and Hierarchy

Approximate Rank of Caste	Traditional Occupation
Velama	Landlords
Reddy	Landlords/Agriculture
Vaishya	Business/buying and selling of crops/Kirana
Munnuru Kapu	Writers with Patwari
Goud	Toddy/Agriculture
Golla	Buffaloes, sheep, goat
Padmasali	Weaver
Kamsali	Goldsmith
Kummari	Craftsman – wood work and makes ploughs for farmers
Kammari	Potter
Muttarasi	Village guards
Baliya	Priests for lower castes
Muslims	Mechanics/ small business men
Telugu	Makes nets and traps, sells fruits from forests and gardens by going to cities and villages.
Telugu Ediga	Toddy tappers
Voddera	Rock workers
Chakali	Washerman
Mangali	Barber
Lambada	Wood cutters /Agriculture
Madiga	Leather/Agriculture Labour
Mala	Agriculture Labor
Erukula	Swineherds
Chenchu	Food Gathering from forest

Annexure II

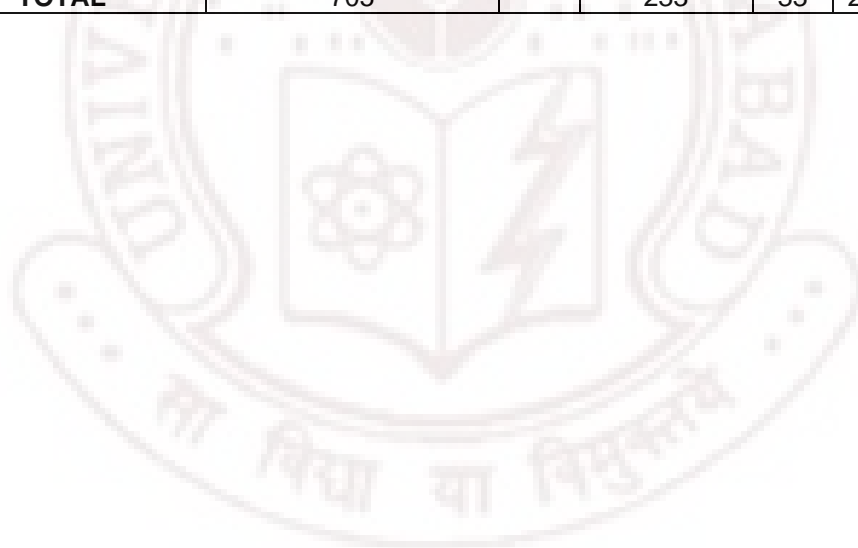
List of villages with total households and Land holding pattern

Reddypalle

1	HHs	%	LL	%	0-2	%	2 to 5	%	5 to 10	%	10 to 20	%	20 plus	%	PoP	%
Komati	14	3.28	10	71.4	0	0	3	21.43	1	7.14	0	0	0	0	82	3.8
Katika	4	0.94	1	25	3	75	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	22	1.0
Chakali	22	5.15	3	13.6	11	50	7	31.82	1	4.55	0	0	0	0	116	5.4
Mangali	6	1.41	3	50	2	33.3	0	0	1	16.7	0	0	0	0	34	1.5
Golla	20	4.68	5	25	4	20	11	55	0	0	0	0	0	0	92	4.3
Kammari	11	2.58	5	45.5	1	9.09	3	27.27	2	18.2	0	0	0	0	63	2.9
Kummari	9	2.11	3	33.3	4	44.4	2	22.22	0	0	0	0	0	0	41	1.9
Medara	7	1.64	0	0	3	42.9	4	57.14	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	1.5
Padmasali	16	3.75	10	62.5	2	12.5	2	12.5	1	6.25	1	6.25	0	0	77	3.6
Telugu	29	6.79	10	34.5	8	27.6	8	27.59	3	10.3	0	0	0	0	129	6.0
Goud	56	13.1	13	23.2	18	32.1	14	25	11	19.6	0	0	0	0	331	15.1
Voddera	30	7.03	6	20	4	13.3	10	33.33	10	33.3	0	0	0	0	139	6.5
Christian	2	0.47	1	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	50	0	0	11	0.5
Reddy	88	20.6	8	9.09	5	5.68	14	15.91	37	42	21	23.9	3	3.41	381	17.5
Muslim	12	2.81	10	83.3	1	8.33	0	0	1	8.33	0	0	0	0	70	3.2
Yerukula	7	1.64	4	57.1	1	14.3	2	28.57	0	0	0	0	0	0	31	1.4
Mala	10	2.34	4	40	1	10	5	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	43	2.0
Madiga	84	19.7	30	35.7	45	53.6	7	8.333	2	2.38	0	0	0	0	432	20.0
		100													2126	
Total	427		126	29.5	113	26.5	92	21.55	70	16.4	23	5.39	3	0.7		

Pahadipur

NAME OF THE CASTE	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	%	LANDLESS	%	0-2	%	2 to 5	%	5 to 10
Kummari	59	8.37	7	11.9	24	40.7	10	16.9	12
Chakali	36	5.11	11	30.6	16	44.4	4	11.1	4
Goud	190	27	73	38.4	52	27.4	44	23.2	18
Golla	21	2.97	9	42.9	7	33.3	3	14.3	2
Reddy	35	4.96	6	17.1	9	25.7	10	28.6	6
Kammari	15	2.13	6	40	7	46.7	1	6.67	1
Muslim	11	1.56	9	81.8	1	9.09	0	0	1
Telugu	39	5.53	26	66.7	7	17.9	3	7.69	0
Madiga	101	14.3	41	40.6	49	48.5	8	7.92	3
Lambada	166	23.5	26	15.7	82	49.4	42	25.3	15
Mala	5	0.71	1	20	2	40	0	0	2
Yerukula	3	0.43	2	66.7	1	33.3	0	0	0
Mangali	2	0.28	0	0	2	100	0	0	0
Komati	14	1.99	9	64.3	2	14.3	1	7.14	2
Katika	8	1.13	7	87.5	0	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	705		233	33	261	37	126	17.9	67



Edigapalle

	Caste	HHs	%	Landless	%	0+ - 2	%	2+ - 5	%	5+ - 10	%	10+ - 20	%
1	Muttarasi	31	7.09	21	67.7	2	6.45	7	22.6	1	3.23	0	0
2	Chakali	11	2.52	5	45.5	4	36.4	2	18.2	0	0	0	0
3	Ediga	173	39.6	82	47.4	37	21.4	41	23.7	12	6.94	1	0.58
4	Madiga	43	9.84	23	53.5	15	34.9	4	9.3	0	0	1	2.33
5	Mala	3	0.69	1	33.3	2	66.7	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	Mangali	2	0.46	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	Muslim	9	2.06	3	33.3	3	33.3	3	33.3	0	0	0	0
8	Reddy	35	8.01	5	14.3	9	25.7	6	17.1	8	22.9	2	5.71
9	Kammari	18	4.12	9	50	1	5.56	5	27.8	3	16.7	0	0
10	Komati	10	2.29	2	20	0	0	5	50	1	10	1	10
11	Yerukula	2	0.46	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	Goud	24	5.49	7	29.2	4	16.7	10	41.7	2	8.33	1	4.17
13	Katika	3	0.69	1	33.3	0	0	1	33.3	0	0	1	33.3
14	Kummari	10	2.29	3	30	3	30	4	40	0	0	0	0
15	Lambada	20	4.58	15	75	1	5	2	10	1	5	1	5
16	Jangam	4	0.92	2	50	1	25	1	25	0	0	0	0
17	Chenchu	9	2.06	8	88.9	1	11.1	0	0	0	0	0	0
18	Golla	30	6.86	10	33.3	3	10	11	36.7	6	20	0	0
	Total	437	100	199	45.5	88	20.1	102	23.3	34	7.78	8	1.83



Annexure III

Amangal mandal map showing study villages

