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 $S$ family\(^{38}\) 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 Reddypalle\(^{39}\), 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 arrack\textsuperscript{40} 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 73\textsuperscript{rd} 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. Pahadipur\textsuperscript{41} and Edigapalle gained the status of independent Gram Panchayats in 1981. The predominance of dominant caste

\textsuperscript{40} There was a liquor ban in AP during 1994-1998 following a mass movement anchored by DWCRA 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.

\textsuperscript{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 classes 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 requirements. 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’ group in Pahadipur. This is largely because of the

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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 village 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 BCs. 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 village\(^{47}\). 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 migration\(^{48}\) 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 let 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uncle of SNR</th>
<th>Sarpanch</th>
<th>1959-64</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cousin of SNR</td>
<td>Sarpanch</td>
<td>1964-88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNR</td>
<td>Sarpanch</td>
<td>1988-1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNR’s wife</td>
<td>Sarpanch</td>
<td>1995-2001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 throughout the taluk 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 earlier 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 reservations 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 Panchayts.
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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Reservation</th>
<th>Winning Faction</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Losing Faction</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edigapalle</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>OBC (G)</td>
<td>Bala Goud</td>
<td>Cong. Reddy</td>
<td>TDP.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reddypalle</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>S.C (G)</td>
<td>SNR</td>
<td>Cong. Independents (17)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pahadipur</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>S.T (G)</td>
<td>Ramana Reddy</td>
<td>TDP</td>
<td>Ramu Goud</td>
<td>Cong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reddypalle</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Men (OBC)</td>
<td>SNR</td>
<td>Cong. Independents (4)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pahadipur</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>SC (W)</td>
<td>Ramu Goud</td>
<td>Cong. Ramana Reddy</td>
<td>TDP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edigapalle</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>SC (G)</td>
<td>G. Reddy</td>
<td>TDP</td>
<td>Bala Goud</td>
<td>Cong.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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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 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 elections 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 households 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 member 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

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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 GT\textsuperscript{57} 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 73\textsuperscript{rd} amendment.

\textsuperscript{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 AWARE\(^\text{58}\) 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

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\(^{58}\) 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 activities\textsuperscript{61}. 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 73\textsuperscript{rd} 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

\textsuperscript{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 BJP\textsuperscript{62} candidate against Congress as there was an alliance between these two

\textsuperscript{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 Achary, 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
of money\textsuperscript{64}. The youth association played a crucial role in dividing the votes of the Lambadas in PT but the BJP candidate won by the narrowest\textsuperscript{65} 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 throughout 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

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

\textsuperscript{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 Kamalamma, 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, Kautilya\(^66\) 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

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\(^66\) Kautilya wrote a treatise on court craft called *Arthasastra* 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 father Balram and Narasimha 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

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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 Reddy\textsuperscript{69} 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.

\textsuperscript{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 resolution 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 scheme\textsuperscript{71} 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.

\textsuperscript{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 Sarpanch 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 Janmabhoomi, 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’

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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 Kamalamma as Sarpanch in 2001. According to the villagers, after the coming of Kamalamma 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’\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{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.