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-option 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

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

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-option 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, Kamalamma 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 possible\textsuperscript{111}. 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

\textsuperscript{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 safeguard 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.