5. Mandals, the Carriers of the Tradition

The mandals are the basis of the public Ganapati festival in Pune City. It is the mandals who collect contribution from people, purchase the Ganapati idol and other items for decoration and install the idol in the pandal raised by them and worship it. It is the mandals who organize the processions for installation and immersion of Ganapati idol. It is the mandals who organize the cultural and entertainment events for people. Thus the mandals are backbone of the festival. Without the mandals the festival would not have been celebrated publicly or the tradition would not have been carried forward. In this chapter, findings of the survey of Ganapati mandals have been stated. There are about 2500 Ganapati mandals in the city and 145 of them were surveyed. Information about these mandals was elicited by using a standard questionnaire regarding organizational aspect, political aspect, economic aspect, social aspect and religious aspect of the mandals in the city. Some important highlights of the survey, which point towards political, social, religious or cultural trends and undercurrents among mandals, have been noted in this chapter. A complete list of the mandals surveyed has been appended at the end of the chapter.

A mandal is a group of local people who are primarily local residents who come together to celebrate Ganapati festival at some public place in the vicinity. There are no restrictions on the membership of the mandal except that one should have acquaintance with other members and there is general consensus about one's entry into the mandal. Every mandal has its office bearers and members. The office bearers are elected informally from among the members (activists) of the mandal during a meeting prior to the festival. In some mandals the president or the office bearers remain in office for years. Normally the office bearers consist of a president, one or two vice presidents, a general secretary and a treasurer. Sometimes the positions like working president are added to the list of office bearers to accommodate some deserving member. Some times the mandals are registered at the office of charity commissioner and they do get their accounts audited. Although there are many legal provisions to control and streamline the activities of the mandals the government does not have the will and resources to rigorously follow the provisions. The mandals are in the number of thousands. It is not possible for the government to control them totally. In fact the government has a very little control over the Ganapati mandals. The mandals on their part show a scant respect for the state and use every trick to
circumvent the law. Although the mandals are not so much respectful towards the
government or the establishment, they consider themselves to be answerable to
people. The mandals publish annual report every year and the copies of the report are
distributed in the surrounding area, especially to those from whom the contribution is
collected. The report carries a balance sheet of the festival in the preceding year.
Many times this balance sheet is audited and certified by the chartered accountant. Of
course, the balance sheet does not give the complete picture of the income and
expenses of the mandal. In many cases the mandal has patronage from local wealthy
person or a local leader with not so respectable background. The money received from
these sources is not accounted neither are the expenses done out of such income are
included in the balance sheet. It is very common that the person or the group of
persons who are leading and controlling the mandals spend money from their pockets
and this money is not accounted. The relationship between the office bearers and the
members is not of government and the citizens. It is more like a tribal group where
formal positions carry little weight and the leadership depends on acceptance, respect
and support among the members. For a person to be the leader of the mandal (he may
be the president or not) it is necessary to be persuasive for members and ruthless for
others. The relationship among the members is more on the basis of emotional
bonding. When love is lost (may be due to some material reasons like appropriation of
money) among the members, it leads to quarrels and the defeated person or the group
of persons have to leave the mandal. Those who are thrown out either form their
mandal or join some other mandal (it is rare phenomenon) or simply retire from the
activities. Normally there are no cold wars as in political parties or in corporate world.
There have been repeated attempts of mergers and unification of mandals, but these
attempts are neither order of the day nor have they been remarkably successful. The
members of the mandals are proud of their mandal and envious about other mandals
especially the mandals in the neighborhood. There is a competition among the
mandals for getting more attention from the crowds and hence more importance from
the establishment. The mandals are spread all over the city. The density of the
mandals varies with localities and the density is dependent on socio-religious
composition of the locality and the population.

We have seen in earlier chapter that the major attempt by the Dagadusheth
Halwai Ganapati Trust, to organize the mandals through Ganeshtotsava Mahamandal
failed miserably. The attempts of other forces have also failed. Hence, there is no
official and formal entity, which has a centralized control over the mandals. It leads to the problem of lack of centralized data about the mandals in the city with any public institution. The police department has its own data about the mandals, but it is kept as classified and is not available to public. Thus it becomes necessary to depend on the newspaper coverage about the festival and information with those who have been organically linked with the festival. Hence to study the mandals they were selected randomly on the basis of the information provided by the knowledgeable people. Normally the mandals, which are noticed by the crowds, are talked about more. The mandals which are not at prime locations or which do not have much financial power or which are not simply famous (for any reason) get ignored. But while selecting the mandals for survey care was taken that only those who are big and famous are not selected. While selecting the mandals the emphasis was on getting the real picture at the grass roots level. Hence, the small mandals or those neglected ones were also selected. While selecting the mandals, due care was taken that the mandals in all part of the city are considered. Of course the mandals with some specialty (as far as the membership is considered) and the socially important and with significant financial resources were also considered for the study. The mandals were studied by surveying them. I visited the mandals personally and the information about them was elicited on the basis of a standard questionnaire. I conducted the survey during the Ganapati festivals of 1999 and 2000. The mandals are more visible during the festival and it becomes possible to locate them (especially those which are not so famous). Hence, the mandals were surveyed during the festival. During the remaining part of the year the mandals have their existence in the form of a hoarding proclaiming their name and displayed at some place in the locality. The members and the office bearers of the mandal are present in full strength during the festival near the pandal of their mandal. But, during the remaining part of the year it becomes difficult to locate them. Hence, the survey was conducted during the festival.

The questionnaire used for the survey is as follows-

1) Name and address of the mandal.
2) How many activists are working for the mandal?
3) How many days before the Ganesh Chaturthi, the work for festival begins?
4) How many meetings of the activists are held for the festival?
5) How many activists participate in following activities-?
   a) Collecting contribution
B) Installation and immersion procession
C) Concept of decoration
D) Developing decoration
E) Erecting pandal
F) Performing Aarti
G) Other religious initiatives

6) What are the social activities undertaken by the mandal?
7) How many activists of the mandal take part in these social activities?
8) What is the age group of these activists?
9) What is the educational background of these activists?
10) What are their professions?
11) Where do they live?
12) Do activists of the mandal take part in election campaigning? How many?
13) Do all activists work for the same political party? Which party?
14) Do activists work for different political parties? Which are they?
15) Does the mandal support certain candidate or party in the election? Does the person supported by the mandal is a member of the Mandal? Who takes the decision about support?
16) Where members or office bearers of the mandal contest in the municipal corporation election?
17) How many members of the mandal have got elected in Municipal Corporation election until now? Give names.
18) Does mandal has its notice board? Who writes notices on it?
19) Are any meetings of the mandal held except for the Ganapati festival throughout the year?
20) How many activists participate in these meetings?
21) What are the financial sources of the mandal? How much contribution was collected last year? How many homes and shops are contacted for the contribution? Are there any patrons of the mandal?
22) Who are the important activists of the mandal? What are their professions? Are they related to any political party?
23) In which municipal ward is the mandal located? Who is the member of the municipal corporation from the concerned ward? Is he or she related to the mandal?
As it has been explained in the introduction, the main purpose of the study is to find out the potential of the mandals regarding the political mobilization at the grass roots level. The focus of the survey was on knowing the structure and composition of the mandals, the process of decision making in the mandal, the relationship of the mandal with the political system and social as well as economic aspects of the mandals.

The survey was done by visiting the mandals at their sites during the Ganapati festivals of 1999 and 2000. A total 145 mandals were visited. The detailed information was available about 140 mandals. Although care was taken to know the answers of all the questions in the questionnaire, the satisfactory answer of every question about every mandal could not be elicited, due to practical difficulties. Hence, there is scope for little error. The information about the mandal was gathered from some activists of the mandal who knows about it well and not necessarily the president or other office bearers. Since the questions do not appear to be probing and the members of the mandals don’t have anything to hide fairly reliable information could be gathered.

The findings of the survey are as follows

The organizational aspect of the mandals

The mandals surveyed (which will be called mandals henceforth) have total 16,447 activists. The average number of activists per mandal is 118. Maximum number of activists in a mandal is 850 and minimum number of activists in a mandal is 11. Mandals having more than 118 activists (average) are 30% (i.e. 42). Mandals with less than 100 activists are 56% (i.e. 79). The number of mandals with more than 250 activists is 7% (11). Thus in majority of mandals the number of activists are about 100.

The Ganapati festival starts on fourth of Bhadrapada i.e. on Ganesh Chaturthi (in the months of August-September). The mandals start preparations for the festival much before the Ganesh Chaturthi. It was asked how many days the mandals do the preparations for the festival. The important aim behind this question was to find out for how many days this group of young men called activists work together, communicate with each other and develop bonds of friendship among themselves? On an average the mandals prepare for 39 days. The mandals who prepare for more than 39 days (average) is 28% (i.e. 40). The mandals who take less than 30 days for
preparation are 35% (50) and who take days between 30-39 are 35% (50). Thus majority of mandals work for less than 39 days to prepare for the festival. There are some mandals who claim to be working for whole year for the festival. The minimum number of days taken by a mandal for the preparation is 2 days! But the mandals, which take less than 15 days for preparation, are only 15% (21). Generally, the mandals take about one month for preparation.

Important platform of communication among the activists and of projecting the emerging leadership in the mandal is the meeting of the activists or members of the mandal. Normally the notice of the meeting is displayed on the notice board of the mandal (located at the nearby public place). Conveying the message of the meeting verbally is also a practice, since the members live in the neighborhood. Total 688 meetings of the surveyed mandals take place, regarding the festival. The average of the meetings per mandal is 5. The number of mandals, which hold five or less meetings for the festival, is 119, i.e. 85%. The mandals, which hold, more than five meetings are 19, i.e. 13%. The maximum number of meetings held by a mandal is 45, i.e. the members meet almost everyday to discuss the preparations. But this is a rare phenomenon. Minimum number of meetings held by a mandal is one. In these meetings the balance sheet of last years' festival are presented and new office bearers are elected. Also, the scene of decoration to be presented is discussed and other responsibilities are divided.

The important aspect of the celebrations is collecting donations and contributions from the public in the neighborhood. The magnitude of the celebration depends solely on the money collected through contribution and donations. The houses and shops and firms in the neighborhood are approached by the members to collect the contribution. Normally the important members of the mandal are deputed for this most important task. Collecting contribution requires persuasion and the 'able' members or activists of the mandal are deputed for this job. Many times there are allegations and complaints of coercion by the mandals for 'extortion of contribution.' Many times the juniors are sent to collect the contribution from households, where a small amount is given (as per the tradition) and the important members venture out only for big jobs. The process of collecting contribution is the best opportunity for a promising activist to develop communication in the neighborhood and project his image as a deserving person (or a candidate in the election to the Municipal Corporation in the future?) Out of the surveyed mandals, 12 mandals (8%) informed that they don't collect
contribution from the public and celebrate the festival on the basis of the contribution from the members only. It was asked that how many activists or members go to collect contribution. Some mandals gave the figures of those activists who go to collect contribution and the total number of such activists is 1508. The average number of the activists who collect contribution is 12.9. Only seven mandals told that all of their members go to collect contribution. In some cases the mandals are not dependent on the public contribution. There is some patron or a group of patrons who make all the major expenses for the mandal. It is like purchasing the social status and human capital of the mandal for some money, as these patrons ultimately control the mandal. Normally these patrons are resident of the neighborhood and in no case unknown aliens. According to information one cannot acquire the patronship of the mandal without the consensual agreement among the members of the mandal. It is also known that the occurrences of this phenomenon are on the rise although not common. The problem about this phenomenon is that since it is considered as not noble to have a patron, the members or the activists do not publicly acknowledge about it. Thus it becomes impossible to get official and formal data on record regarding this. As the patrons are investing their black money to acquire the acceptance and social status and to some extent political leverage by donating money to a mandal, activists are not enthusiastic to talk about it. In many cases the person or a group of persons who control and lead the mandal do spend some money out of their pockets in order to retain their importance. But, this money is also never accounted for. As per the reliable information available some mandals collect money by getting commission for facilitating gambling. This is a rare phenomenon. Gambling attracts action by police and one can not always use the insurance of a religious festival against the action.

The processions for installation and immersion of idol of Ganapati are two most important demonstrative aspects of the festival. Leading the procession or just participating in it awards the person social exposure and acceptance. The procession for immersion is common and it is more important. The processions for installation of the idol are taken out by the mandals individually. Although the processions are carried out on the road and there are no formal boundaries to mark the group, there do exist invisible separation of the group of the members of the mandal and the crowd on the street. The onlookers or those not related to the mandals are not permitted to participate in the group moving forward in the procession. The activists are very
possessive about the public space they have acquired. Those who live in the neighborhood of the mandals and are known to the members of the mandal are permitted to participate in the procession. It was asked, how many activists of the mandal participate in the procession. Out of the surveyed mandals, 77 mandals, i.e. 55% of them told that all members participate. In case of 60 mandals, i.e. 42.8% mandals, all members and the people in the neighborhood participate in the procession.

The crowd pulled by the mandal towards it directly depends on the scene presented by it in its decoration. It is always a good opportunity for any promising activists to become famous by moving around in the crowd as some office bearer of the mandal. Thus, the decision about the decoration on that year is one of the most important decisions in the process, because the gathering of crowd at the pandal of the mandal depends on the decoration. It was asked, who take the decision regarding the decoration by the mandal. It was told that, 60.7% of mandals (i.e. 85 mandals) decide the decoration in the meeting of the members of the mandal. In 28.5% mandals (40 mandals) the decision is taken by important members. Only 7 mandals told that they don't present any decoration and 4 mandals permanently present electrical lighting as decoration. Although 60% mandals told that the decision is taken in a meeting of the members, this process will appear as highly democratic but in many cases the decision is taken by the ruling group in the mandal and it is validated by the members in the meeting.

The scene of the decoration is developed by either members of the mandal or by contractor or the artist who is hired by the mandal. When the members do this job they have to work together for long time. It also provides an opportunity to the local artists and the members to display their talent in their locality. In earlier times, it was all done by the members themselves. But, as the members became busier in modern times and the mandals have become wealthy enough to get the work of decoration by some external agency, the involvement of the activists in the development of the decoration has lessened. Working together to develop decoration strengthens the bond of friendship among the activists and also trains the juniors for social activity. It has been rued in the local media and in the informal discussion that the festival has been handed over to the contractors and hired artists and it has no more remained a training ground for the young generation. During the survey, it was asked, who develops the decoration? The percentage of the mandals where it is the contractor and where the
members do this themselves is the same i.e. 38.5%. In 20 mandals, i.e. 14.2% mandals, the members develop the decoration with the assistance of the contractor or the hired artist. Thus, the majority of mandals develop the decoration by their members.

Erecting pandals is the most tedious job in the festival. During the festival the pandal is the existence of the mandal. The mandal occupies and utilizes the public space by erecting pandal. Out of the surveyed mandals 67% mandals (i.e. 94) get the pandal erected by the contractor. In case of 23.5% mandals the members themselves erect pandal. Only 9% mandals have a permanent structure and do not have to erect a pandal.

Performing aarti (religious ritual where the gods are called and praised) is an important part of the worship of the idol installed in the mandal (i.e. pandal). The aarti is performed twice a day and almost all members of the mandal and some people in the neighborhood gather for it. Thus the person who performs aarti get good exposure among the local people. It was asked, who performs aarti? In 52% mandals (i.e. 73 mandals) the aarti is performed by the guests. The guests are invited by the office bearers or by the ruling group of the mandal and they include the member of Municipal Corporation from the area, police officer of the area or some prominent person in the locality. Senior politicians, government officers, famous artists in the fields of cinema and theatre are also invited. Inviting the guests for aarti is a good opportunity for the members of the mandal to develop contacts among the members of the establishment. In case of 22% mandals it is the guests as well as members of the mandal who perform aarti. Only 25% mandals perform aarti by the members only.

Besides aarti some other religious rituals are also performed before the idol of Ganapati. The most popular in these rituals is the Satyanarayan Pooja. It is performed by the couple according to the instructions of the priest. Normally the newly wed member of the mandal is awarded the honor of performing the pooja. If there is not any newlywed member, then some young couple in the neighborhood performs this pooja. Rarely a guest is invited to perform the pooja. The survey supported these observations. Of all the mandals surveyed, 95% mandals get the pooja done by the members. Only 2.8% mandals invite guest for it.

The mandals are not existent only for the Ganapati festival. Their existence is felt by their other activities through the year. In 92% mandals the members of the mandal participate in the activities of the mandal other than Ganapati festival.
Significant number of mandals out of these, i.e. 70.7% of all mandals have all the members participating in other activities. Thus, by and large the mandal remains an important part of the social activities in the neighborhood through the year.

The members or the activists of the mandals are always a young lot. The Ganapati festival and other activities of the mandal provide the youth a platform to utilize their youthful energy and get social exposure. In 33% mandals (i.e. 47 mandals) the minimum age of the members is 15 years. The average of the minimum age of the activists of the mandals is 17 years. In 42% mandals the minimum age of the activists is between 15 to 17. In 47% mandals the minimum age of the members is more than 17. The mandals where the minimum age of the members is less than 15 are 10.7%. Thus the mandals where the minimum age of the members is 15 or up to 17 years are 75% of all mandals. Hence, the members join the activities of the mandal when he enters teenage. Of course, there is a younger lot of 10% members who are trainees.

In case of upper age limit, the average age of the senior members of the mandals is 40.6. In 101 mandals i.e. 72% of mandals, the upper age limit is 50 years. The number of mandals with upper age limit of 45 are 67.8% and those with limit of 40 years are 53%. Thus, in majority mandals the members retire from the activities of the mandals by the age of 40-45. It clearly states that the mandals are the groups of young people.

The young activists of the mandals with their trangressive cultural and religious activities are not considered to be educated or the ‘decent’ lot, by the white collared-conservative people. Hence, it was tried to know the educational status of the activists of the mandals. In majority of mandals i.e. in 77.8% mandals, the educational qualification of the activists ranges from high school to graduation. In 20% mandals, it is high school only. In only 2% mandals the range varies from illiterate to the graduates. In less than 1% mandals, the range is illiterate to high school. The number of members with the educational background of high school is noteworthy due to presence of younger people. But, by and large the members of the mandals are well educated.

Contrary to the belief of the white collared conservative people the activists of the mandals were not found to be ‘a lot of rowdies who are neither educated nor employed.’ It was enquired about the professions of the activists of the mandals and found that in 51% mandals (i.e. 72 mandals) the members are either employed in the service or are having their business. Only in one mandal the members who are in
service sector or having a business of their own are working with the unemployed persons. One mandal is of small traders and the mandals with only businessman are 10%. The mandals with members in service sector only are 8.5%. The mandals, which comprise students only, are 2%. The mandals with only laborers are 6.4%. The mandals with a combination of people from service sector and students are 8.5%. One mandal has a combination of businessmen and laborers. Laborers and those in service sector work together in 3 mandals. Laborers and student celebrate together in 2 mandals. In 2 mandals businessman, those in service sector and laborers work together. The mandals where people from service sector, businessmen and students are the members are 5.7% (i.e. 8 mandals).

It was enquired about the residence of the activists. In case of 84% mandals (i.e. 118 mandals) the members live nearby the mandal in the same locality. In some mandals there are members who live far away from the mandal (i.e. panda), but these members were found to be earlier living in the locality of the mandal and have migrated to the other parts of the city due to increasing members of family and lack of space or due to purchase of a new home in other locality. The mandals, which comprise of local residents as well as ‘locals who have migrated to other parts and return for festival’ are 10%. In only 5% mandals, the members are residents of different parts of the city. [such mandals are normally of the traders who establish a mandal at the common place of their business but live at different places] Only one mandal comprises of the members who are local residents as well as people from other places. [it is Dagadusheth, but it is effectively controlled and run by the locals. The outsiders are not assigned major jobs] This data makes it clear without doubt that a mandal is a set of local residents irrespective of profession and education. The necessary condition of entry to a mandal is of being the resident of the neighborhood and having acquaintance with other activists.

As the mandals continue their activities through year, the communication among the activists also continues. (But the enthusiasm during the Ganapati festival is not matched by that during other activities. Most importantly the contribution is normally collected during Ganapati festival only and the part of money thus accumulated is utilized for other activities.) To know about the continuation of communication during the remaining part of the year, respondents were asked whether the meetings of activists are held during the year except for Ganapati festival. Only 16% mandals (i.e. 23 mandals) do not hold any meetings except Ganapati festival. It was known that
5% mandals hold such meetings if needed. Almost all other mandals hold meetings regularly during the year and the median of number of such meetings is 5. In case of some mandals the boys meet daily for chitchatting and they call it informal meeting. Thus the maximum number of meetings held except for Ganapati festival is 365! But, by and large at least one meeting is held after the Ganapati festival to take stock of the celebrations and present tentative balance sheet.

It was also necessary to know to what extent the activists of the mandal attach importance to the other activities of the mandal. Hence, I asked how many members participate in the meetings held except for the Ganapati festival? Out of the surveyed mandals 30% mandals told that all members attend such meetings. In case of other mandals the median of the numbers of activists who attend the meetings is 25. Thus, not all members are interested in these other activities and related meetings. For them the Ganapati festival is the only important event for which the are ready to take extra efforts and even spend money.

**The political aspect of the mandals**

The Ganapati mandals with their set of young, enthusiastic, socially active members with strong linkage with locality are bound to be powerhouses for local politics. Their might and influence is visible especially during the elections to the municipal corporation where the local issues are the most important. It was asked whether the members of the mandal participate in political campaigning during the elections? Out of the mandals surveyed 87% mandals (i.e.123 mandals) said yes and only 12% mandals said no. It was also asked how many activists or members of the mandal take part in campaigning? It was found that total 8492 activists from the mandals surveyed, participate in the campaigning. The average number of activists per mandal is 61. The median of the number of activists who take part in the campaigning is 25. The number of mandals who have more than average (61) activists who participate in the campaigning is 38, i.e. 27%. The number of mandals from which less than 50 activists participate in the campaigning is 86 i. e. 61%. Only 5 mandals have more than 200 activists who are interested in political campaigning. It is noteworthy that number of mandals from which less than 25 activists participate in the political campaigning is 67-i. e. 47.8%. The number of small groups who are interested in political activities is significant. This means, the members who are very enthusiastic about the religious-cultural festival of the locality which is celebrated along with others in the city and which provides a common platform for local people
to interact as well as to transgress the cultural and religious norms and also to sanskritise, are not equally interested in its politicization. On the contrary, as it will become clear from the following writing, majority of people wants the festival to be a festival and oppose any move to utilize the social power generated through it for any political or other purpose. The political system does appropriate this social power but this utilization is in indirect manner and thus the great 'leakage of power' while converting it from social to political is explained.

It was asked whether the mandal as a group supports a candidate in the election [Like a political party or an organization] and who takes the decision of whom to support. Significant majority of mandals i.e. 59% mandals (83 mandals) made it clear that as a mandal they don't support any candidate. [But the members are free to support anybody and campaign in the election on their own, it was told] The refusal of mandals to take any political position openly has many reasons. The most important reason for this phenomenon is that the mandal comprises of local people from all walks of life and with all political opinions. Taking a particular political position may jeopardize the harmony and understanding among the members of the mandal, which is of supreme importance as far as the interests of the mandal are considered. Hence, using the platform of the mandal for one's political purposes is not allowed but one does benefit from the social contacts and support base one develops while working in the mandal. [And utilizing this support base indirectly, without openly using the banner of the mandal is not prohibited.] Only 1.4% mandals i.e.2 mandals made it clear that they don't support any candidate, neither allow their members to work for political parties on their own. The mandals who claimed that they support the candidate on the basis of the mandal have variety among them. Twelve mandals i.e.8.5% mandals support a candidate and the decision is taken by the important members of the mandal. There are 7.8% (i.e. 11) mandals who support a candidate if he is a member of the mandal. A significant 12.8% (i.e. 18) mandals explained that they support a candidate on the basis of negotiations with him or her. One mandal prefers to interview the candidates to provide support in the election. Members of one mandal made it clear that the mandal supports the candidate according to the decision taken by (a prominent member of Congress party, who belong to a Dalit caste, Matang) Ramesh Bagave. There are also few other examples in the city where the patrons of the mandals are in total control of the mandal and decide its political position. Some mandals are committed to particular political party. Out of the
mandals surveyed 7 mandals (5%) support Congress candidate in the election as the policy of the mandal. Bhartiya Janata Party has such committed support of 3 mandals (i.e. 2% mandals) One mandal made it clear that they support the candidate of Shiv Sena as policy of the mandal. Congress is well ahead of BJP and Shiv Sena as far as the committed support from mandals is considered. The sample is small but it explains the trend. As it will become evident subsequently the Congress party has more supporters in the mandals where the members of the mandal include supporters of various parties. Congress has been the dominant party in the city and the support it gets from the activists of the mandals explains the power of Congress at the grassroots level.

Some mandals reported that their activists participate in the election campaign, so the next question was do these activists work for the same parties and which are they? In case of the mandals, whose activists participate in the election campaigning, 39% said that they work for the same party. The classification of such mandals regarding political parties is Congress-19% (27 mandals), Nationalist Congress Party-5.7% (8 mandals), Bhartiya Janata Party-4% (6 mandals), and Shiv Sena-2.5% (5 mandals). There is a sub group among these mandals where the members of the mandal work for the same party, but party or candidate for whom they work is decided due to some other factors. The classification of such mandals is: on the basis of caste-1 mandal (0.7%), decision by important members-2 mandals (1.4%), if the candidate is member of the mandal -4 mandals (2.8%), on the basis of negotiations -2 mandals (1.4%). This data again explains why the Congress party is so powerful in the city and is ruling the Municipal Corporation for years.

The data of mandals where the members work for different political parties was analyzed. As the members from the same mandal support different political parties, the number of mandals from which the parties are supported would be more than total mandals. The classification of the supports provided by different mandals is: Congress-40% (57 mandals), Bharatiya Janata Party-37% (52 mandals), Shiv Sena-29% (41 mandals), Nationalist Congress Party-23% (32 mandals), Republican Party of India-3.5% (5 mandals), Socialists-0.7% (1 mandal) and Maharashtra Military Foundation-0.7% (1 mandal). This classification is indicative of the political power of various parties in the city. The Congress is having support by the highest number of mandals. Congress party has been winning various elections and its support among the mandals, reflects its political influence. In case of other parties also, the support
among mandals is directly proportional to their electoral strength as well as political influence.

The important point to know was whether the members of the mandals themselves contest the elections. It was found that in 67 mandals i.e. 47% mandals one or two (or may be more) members of contest the elections, while in case of 72 mandals i.e. 51% mandals no members contest the elections. There is an opinion in Pune City that the mandals are groomed by politically ambitious persons and hence, the most of the mandals are politicized and are having their candidates in the elections. But, the data clearly indicates that majority of mandals are not interested in their members contesting the elections. Of course, the margin of mandals who are not interested in contesting elections over those with members contesting elections is quite slender. Of those mandals whose members contest elections, only important members contest the elections. In one case mother of the president of the mandal (who is a Muslim) contested in last election to Municipal Corporation.

The institution of mandal is a very important and useful platform for communication at local level. Working for a mandal provides one an opportunity to communicate with the young people in the neighborhood, citizens in the area and also the businessmen. It is very useful in developing social contacts and projecting one's image as a deserving activist. There is one more important medium of communication at local level; it is the notice board of the mandal. The notice board of the mandal is put up at some public place in the locality and the messages written on it are normally about local matters (like death, success in examinations by a localite etc.) Some clever activists use the board to propagate their political ideas and messages. Many times noble thoughts are written on these boards. The messages regarding the mandal are invariably written on the board. As the board is placed along the road it is noticed by almost everybody in the locality as well as passersby. During the survey it was found that only 18.5% mandals (i.e. 26 mandals) do not have a notice board. Among those who are having the notice boards, 98 mandals (70% of the total) made it clear that they don't allow any political message to be written on the board. Only 15 mandals (10.7% of the total) utilize the board for political communication.

When it was asked to the members of the mandals, who the member of Municipal Corporation from the concerned area is, almost all members (who gave information about mandals) told correctly the name of the corporator. It is quite obvious that the activists of Ganapati mandals are aware about the member of Municipal corporation
from the area, as almost all candidates turn to mandals for help in the election campaigning or at least see to it that the activists of Ganapati mandals in the area do not get antagonized. Then it was asked whether the corporator (member of Municipal Corporation) is in any way related to the mandal? Out of the surveyed mandals, 16.7% mandals (i.e. 23 mandals) said that the corporator is the member of the mandal. The significant revelation was that, 44.5% mandals (i.e. 61 mandals) said that the corporator is in no way related to the mandal. 34.3% mandals (i.e. 47 mandals) told that the corporator is the well-wisher of the mandal. Only 3 mandals i.e. 2% mandals told that the corporator is the patron of the mandal. There were only two mandals, which said that the corporator was related to the mandal. When the mandals claim that a particular corporator is the well-wisher of the mandal then, it means normally the concerned corporator (member of the Municipal Corporation) donates a significant amount to the mandal or helps it in getting permissions from Municipal Corporation, police and other government agencies and thus becomes the well-wisher. The mandals in return publish the name of the corporator as the advisor of the mandal in their annual report. But, the well-wisher corporators are not truly involved in the activities of the mandal and they can not claim the concerned mandal as their power base. The help provided by the corporator to the mandal makes it easier to negotiate in the times of crisis or need. The total number of mandals where the concerned member of the Municipal Corporation is not related to it or is a ‘well-wisher’ is 108 i.e. 77% of the total mandals. Thus a great majority of mandals consider themselves to be away from the members of Municipal Corporation. Member of the Municipal Corporation represents on an average a ward of about ten thousand voters. He or she directly deals with people and is considered to be responsible for the civic problems in the area. Member of the Municipal Corporation is the most important link between the political party and the voters as well as the party workers at the grass-roots level (if any). Thus the corporator is the most important politician at the grass roots level. On the other hand mandal is the most organized, homogenous and effective social entity at the grass roots level. The above figures make it clear that the mandals on their part are not much bothered about the corporator and thus about the political system. The mandals have their own dynamics independent of the political system. As it will become evident from the following discussion, the political system submits itself to the Ganapati festival and the mandals and ultimately benefit from the social support base developed through the mandals.
The economic aspect of the mandals

As it has been stated earlier, the celebration and other activities of the mandal depend upon the money, which the mandal has at its disposal. Major part of the money the mandal gets is through public donation and by collecting contribution. Few mandals have other sources of income like public telephone booth; rent of the building owned by the mandal or the institution which promotes the mandal etc. The total income of the mandals in the given year surveyed is Rs. 3,68,18,097. This income includes the income of Dagadusheth Halwai Ganapati Trust, whose income is Rs. 28,42,6286. If we exclude the Dagadusheth, then the total income of the mandals surveyed is Rs. 83,91,811. It must be noted that the figures as told by the activists of the mandals have been considered. The members know much about their mandals and the figures told by them are approximate although quite reliable. The average income of all the surveyed mandals is Rs. 3,09,395 and without Dagadusheth it is Rs. 71,117. Maximum income of a mandal is Rs.2, 84,26,286, excluding Dagadusheth the income is Rs.17, 00,000. Minimum income of a mandal is Rs.700. The median of incomes of the mandals is Rs. 24,000 and without Dagadusheth it is Rs. 22,500. These figures make it clear that a significant amount of money is collected through the Ganapati festival and the person who participates in it and leads any mandal in the locality gets a control over this money collected from public.

It was also asked how many shops of houses are approached to collect the contribution? There are small number of mandals who do not collect contribution. But in case of other majority of mandals surveyed, the total houses or shops contacted are 99,124. The average number of shops and homes contacted by the mandals is 847. The maximum number of shops and houses contacted by a mandal is 25,000 while the minimum number of shops and homes contacted by a mandal is 17. The median of numbers of shops and homes contacted by the mandals is 250. By and large a normal mandal approaches 200 to 250 shops and homes in the locality. If we multiply the average number of the shops and homes contacted by the mandals by the total number of mandals in the city then we might get a huge number indicating the population of Pune City much more than what it is. But, while calculating the total number of the shops and homes contacted, it has to be noted that the same home or shop is contacted by more than one mandal in the area. Yet, it is a fact that during Ganapati festival almost every home and shop in the city is approached by at least one mandal for collecting contribution.
Other social and religious activities of the mandals

Except for celebrating the Ganapati festival, the mandals continue to celebrate other activities through the year. The activities to be undertaken by a mandal depend upon the caste-class-religious composition of the mandal. It also depends upon the leadership of the mandal as well as the resources of the mandal. It was found during the survey that the mandals surveyed celebrate total 82 such 'other activities.' There is no activity except celebrating Ganapati festival, which is undertaken by all mandals. Any activity other than Ganapati festival is undertaken by few mandals. The average response to an activity is of 6.7 mandals. It means, about 6 to 7 mandals are likely to undertake same activity other than Ganapati festival. The maximum response to an activity is 78 mandals i.e. 55.7% of total mandals surveyed. The minimum response to an activity is one mandal i.e. 0.7%. The median of the numbers of mandals celebrating certain activity is 2 i.e. 1.4%. There are 38 activities, which are celebrated by single mandals i.e. only one mandal celebrates or undertakes the activity. The number of activities celebrated by 2 mandals is 17. Those activities, which command response of 3 mandals, are 10 in number. There are 5 activities, which command the response of five mandals. The number of activities, which command response from more than 20 mandals is 9 and more than 30 mandals is 5. Only 3 activities command response from more than 70 mandals. The diversity of the other activities is clear by this data. Thus, the celebration of Ganapati festival is the only commonality among these mandals and they prefer to explore the opportunities of acquiring public space, attracting attention and declaring their existence according to their convenience. As it has been discussed well in the earlier chapter that the mandals celebrate Ganapati festival in their own ways and there is no any universal pattern of celebration. The attempts of unification of mandals and homogenizing the festival have failed miserably. Thus, the individualistic nature of the mandals and their undeclared insistence on exploring the public space in their own way is evident from the data about other activities of the mandals.

The response of the mandals to various 'other activities' has been noted with respect to the activities. Now, with respect to the mandals the situation is not quite different. The average number of activities of a mandal (out of those surveyed) is 4.3. The maximum number of activities undertaken by a mandal is 12. The minimum number is 0 i.e. there are mandals, which do not celebrate anything except Ganapati festival. The median of number of activities celebrated by the mandals is 4. The
mandals, which undertake only one ‘other activity’, are 13, in case of two activities the number of mandals is 7, in case of 3 activities the number of activities is 25. The number of mandals, which undertake 4 other activities, is 29 and in case of five activities the number of mandals is 19. In case of 6 activities the number is 12 and in case of 7 activities it is 11. There is only one mandal, which undertakes more than ten activities. The responses of the mandals indicate how individualistic and choosy they are, while they are undertaking the other activities.

The activities that get response from more than five mandals are as follows-

Table No. 5.1 – Other activities and the response of the mandals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the activity</th>
<th>Number of mandals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shivjayanti</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic Day (26th January)</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence Day (15th August)</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notebook Distribution</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahi Handi</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambedkar Jayanti</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception to the Palakhi</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood Donation</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganesh Jayanti</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanuman Jayanti</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navratri</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna Bhau Sathe Jayanti</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping Students</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urus</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food or Fruit distribution</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The classification of activities is as follows- Table No. 5.2 – Classification of other activities-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationalist</th>
<th>Social + cultural</th>
<th>Community based, Religious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Shivjayanti</td>
<td>5. arranging sports tournament</td>
<td>5. Datta Jayanti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Rana Pratap Jayanti</td>
<td>15. taking up civic issues</td>
<td>15. Veer Gogadeo Utsav</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The activities which are undertaken by five mandals are: Rangpanchami, Ramazan Id, Holi, Mahatma Gandhi Jayanti and Buddha Pournima.

The activities, which are undertaken by four mandals, are: arranging sports tournament, Nagpachami, Datta Jayanti and Helping Blind.
The activities, which are undertaken by three mandals, are- Tilak Jayanti, Sankranti, Parayan, Maharashtra Day (1st May), Kojagiri, Gymnasium, Gokul Ashthami, Cleaning the neighborhood, Christmas and Kinder Garden.

The activities, which are undertaken by two mandals, are- Uniform Distribution, Satyanarayan in the month of Shravan, Saibaba Festival, Ramnavami, Orchestra, Mahashivratri, Lecture Series, Lahuji Wastad Jayanti, Guru Pournima, Get-together, Fule Jayanti, Donations for noble causes, 31st December, Shivratri, taking up civic issues and Ambulance Service.

The activities, which are undertaken by one mandal are- Vivekanand Jayanti, Veer Gogadeo Utsav, Varkari Bhojan, Telugu Festival, Netaji Subhash Jayanti, Sawarkar Jayanti, Akhand Bharat Din, RSS activities, Rana Pratap Jayanti, Rajeev Gandhi Jayanti, Rickshaw Drivers’ Get-together, Rath Saptami, Paigambar Jayanti, Rehabilitating the Children of Prostitutes, Nehru Jayanti, Night College, Markandeey Muni Utsav, Mahaveer Jayanti, Propagation of Literacy, Lingayat Community Festival, Indira Gandhi Jayanti, Housing, Hindu Empire Day, Dasara, Diwali, Credit Society, Competition for Mandals, Centenary Celebrations, Co-operative Bank, Bakri Id, Bhajan, Bhadhai Community Festival, Babu Genu Jayanti, Akalkot Swami Utsav and Helping Accident Victims.

The responses of the mandals to various ‘other activities’ are varied. The above table mentions those activities, which command ‘fairly good response’. But the majority of mandals undertake five or less than five activities. The lack of any universal activity except the Ganapati festival and numerous combinations of five or less activities by the mandals indicates that the mandals are highly individualistic and reject homogeneous pattern and once the basic platform of Ganapati festival is accepted they like to explore the public space in their own way.

The mandals celebrate Muslim festivals of Ramazan Id, Paigambar Jayanti (Jayanti means birth anniversary) and Bakri Id. They also celebrate Christian festival of Christmas. Mandals celebrate the festival of Buddhas i.e. Buddha Pournima. The mandals celebrate Urus and Saibaba Jayanti, which command enthusiastic participation from both Hindu and Muslim communities. There is a space in the system of Ganapati festival to celebrate the Lingayat Community Festival. Lingayat is a sect in Hinduism, which has rejected Brahminism. Considering the participation of people from various religions as well as castes among Hindu religion, there is no scope to consider Ganapati festival as a solely brahminical Hindu festival. The
Ganapati festival may have evolved through the brahminical tradition in Maharashtra, but the contemporary celebration of Ganapati Festival by various mandals, is not limited to the brahminical ways and it has become as accommodative, liberal and flexible festival of a Hindu God where anybody can interpret it in his own way and find space in the festival and yet the festival retains its minimal identity.

There are some important highlights of the survey, which are noteworthy. These points as follows-

- **Navatarun Mitra Mandal** (946, Kasaba Peth) is not known to people in the area. Lot of inquiries had to be made to locate this mandal. The pandal of the mandal was not bigger than the size of 5 feet by 5 feet. When I reached the spot there was no presence of enthusiastic members. Only kids were roaming around. They told that earlier the mandal was not located in a narrow alley but the Ganapati of the mandal was installed in the nearby main square. The festival was celebrated with grandeur. Then the division among the activists of the mandal took place. Due to the division the important members decided to stay away and do not participate now. A small group continues the mandal. (People believe that once the celebration of Ganapati festival is started it should not be stopped at all. It does not matter if the festival is celebrated in a simple way.) This is an example of how the mandal gets doomed.

- During the survey, Mr. Milind Pore gave some information at the Balvikas Mandal (120, Kasaba Peth). He told that he has been member of the mandal since his childhood. (Now, he is in his forties). According to him some years ago the mandal had become famous due to its presentation of the scene of the historic event of man landing on the Moon. He said that all his colleagues now stay away from the activities of the mandal, thanks to getting busy due to marriage and business. He led the mandal for 20 years. Now the mandal has been handed over to the next generation. He rued that running a mandal is not easy as it was in earlier times due to increased works like getting permission from the police department etc. (Although Mr. Pore could have answered my questions in the questionnaire, he didn't. He called a young man to answer my questions, as the new member should get trained about dealing with people. The transfer of the control and leadership of this mandal is the typical example of such transfer. In most of the mandals, when the members get busy with their responsibilities with
their families or their businesses, the retire from the activities of the mandal and the control of the mandal is handed over to the new generation.)

- Nilesh Thakar of *Shivshakti Mitra Mandal* (62, Budhawar Peth) told that the president of his mandal is permanently elected and only the working committee with its office bearers is elected.

- *Hindu Tarun Mandal* (85, Ravivar Peth) claims itself to be the mandal of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The mandal is located in a building on a busy street. On the first floor of the building, the daily meetings and discourses of the RSS are conducted. The mandal is the old one. Sanjay Kakade (member) while giving information said that his mandal has the credit of starting the common procession of the Shivjayanti. As a policy, members of the mandal campaign for the candidates of Bhartiya Janata Party or its alliance member. Rajan Kachi is related to the mandal for a long period of time. But when he contested as a rebel candidate in the elections to the Municipal Corporation against the official candidate of the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance, the members of the mandal did not campaign for him, the activists of the mandal claimed. They said that they work only for those who are supported by the RSS. When asked the members about their professions, they said that many of them were unemployed.

- A member of *Jayashree Tarun Mandal* (223, Guruwar Peth) told that it is the Navaratra Festival and not the Ganapati festival, they celebrate on a larger scale. In front of the mandal, the *panje* of Mohurrum are installed. Mohurrum and Ganapati Festival occur simultaneously once in four years. At that time they change their pattern of celebration with an understanding with their Muslim counterparts. Hence the contribution for the mandal is collected at the time of the Navaratri and not at the time of Ganapati festival. (Ganapati Festival is celebrated with a low profile to make way for the Mohurrum!)

- *Suryavikas Mitra Mandal* (463, Ganj Peth) arranges feast for people in the neighborhood, which is attended, by about five thousand people. This feast is arranged on account of Mahashivratri, according to Kashinath Shankar Nadeppalli, secretary.

- Yogesh Shivtare, an activist of *Vishwas Sanskritik Mitra Mandal* (1157, Sadashiv Peth) told that people in the area are reluctant to increase the contribution to be given for the festival. Hence, next year they would stop
collection of contribution after 30 years. It has been decided to increase the contribution from the members and celebrate the festival. In the year of survey (1999) half of the contribution collected would be donated to the Kargil Fund. The area where the mandal is located is not an area of poor people. In this area most of the families are well-to-do families. This area is dominated by the Brahmins. It has been noted that the Brahmins are opposed to the extravagance in the celebration of the festival and hence are reluctant to give significant contribution. One more point to be noted, most of the important members of the mandal are non-brahmins.)

- Dhananjay Dalawi of Ganesh Mitra Mandal (959, Sadashiv Peth, near Nagnathpar) informed that an attempt was made earlier to amalgamate three mandals in the area viz. Ganesh, Vishal and Mayuresh. But, the amalgamation existed only for one year and the mandals separated again. (It has been earlier noted that there are continued efforts to merge or amalgamate the mandals for various reasons but these efforts never had remarkable success. The reason for the failure is the mandals are individualistic in nature and possessive about the social and geographical space they are occupying.)

- Akhil Manapa Vasahat No.9 Mitra Mandal (Ghorpade Peth) [a mandal of residents of colony no.9 of Municipal Corporation] has installed a box and the written complaints are dropped in the box. Everyday the box is opened and the complaints about civic issues are followed.

- Dyaneshwar Sopan Mane, president of the Kaikadi Samaj Tarun Mandal (79, Ghorpade Peth) informed that since the beginning the mandal comprised of members belonging to Kaikadi Community only. (Who reside in the vicinity of the mandal). In earlier years, members from other community including some Muslim have joined and then the mandal was made a public one. (Kaikadi Community is a nomadic tribe.)

- The president of the Suryakiran Mitra Mandal (54,A.P. Lohiyanagar) is Abdul Rahaman Vazuruddin Sheikh and the secretary is Baba Sheikh. Both Sheikh are Muslims and they work for different political parties. The president was earlier working for Congress party and now he has turned to Nationalist Congress Party. The secretary of the mandal (Baba Sheikh) is president of the minorities’ front of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Parvati assembly constituency. (The mandal is located
deep inside a slum. There is no road wide enough for a two wheeler vehicle to reach the mandal. The slum is very much congested.

- Banakar Talim Mandal was a big and important mandal. But, as groups of members broke away from it twelve mandals were created. The Adarsh Bal Mandal (836, Bhawani Peth) is one of them.

- Nehru Tarun Mandal (115, Nana Peth) celebrates Rathasaptami in a big way. Some activists from other places also join the members of the mandal for Rathasaptami celebrations. Feast is arranged for about four thousand persons. The mandal has temple of Balaji of Tirupati (in the state of Andhra Pradesh). Festival of this temple is also arranged like Tirupati. Members get their heads tonsured like that in Tirupati. Krishna Madamchetti (a Telugu) leads the mandal and the members take political position as per his instructions. Madamchetti is supporter of Shiv Sena.

- For Samadhan Chowk Mandal (269, Nana Peth) the Ganapati Festival has secondary importance and the Navaratri Festival is of prime importance. The Ganapati Festival is celebrated in a nominal way without grandeur, but for the Navaratri Festival a big pandal is erected and the cultural or other entertainment events are held for all nine days (nights to be precise, the Navaratri Festival is celebrated for nine nights) The mandal spends about Rs. 8,000 to 10,000 for Ganapati festival and about Rs. 70,000 for Navaratri festival. Rambhau Parekh is the president of the mandal for last 18 years. He is a member of Shiv Sena.

- Makarand Mitra Mandal (166, Shaniwar Peth) is located in the Brahmin majority area of Shaniwar Peth. Sanjay Kandekar is the important member of the mandal. He told that the mandal has only 33 member and the Ganapati festival is celebrated almost on the basis of the contribution by the members. He rued that the mandal does not get significant contribution or donation (from the people living around) and it has the problem of finance. (As it has been noted earlier the Brahmins are not much enthusiastic about contributing to the Ganapati festival. Brahmins are not opposed to the Ganapati Festival per se but they don't appreciate the transgressionary and extravagant way of celebrating public Ganapati festival.)

- Shiralsheth Chowk Tarun Mitra Mandal (161, Rasta Peth) celebrates Shiralsheth festival on a much larger scale than the Ganapati Festival. When the Shiralsheth Festival is celebrated, lot of decoration is done and a fair is arranged.
Ekata Mitra Mandal, in Gokhalenagar, was selected for the survey. It was found, after visiting the area that the mandal didn't exist. The mandal was dissolved and all the members of the mandal work in Saptarshi Mitra Mandal, Ekatanagar, near Veer Bajiprabhu Vidyalaya, Gokhalenagar.

Harish Swami of Shree Gajanan Tarun Mandal (Vitthalnagar, Pashan, Pune) confessed that his mandal takes the political position as per the instructions of Jaibhawani Mandal in Pashan. He informed that some of the members of his mandal work in the Jaibhawani Mandal. (A rare example of multiple loyalty and conceding to the superiority of other mandal.)

Shree Shivajinagar Rokadoba Mandir Ganapatī mandal (558, Shivajinagar, Pune-5) is one of the oldest and highly respected mandals in Pune. The mandal is located in Rokadoba Mandir in central part of Shivajinagar, with its own identity. The Rokadoba Temple is the main temple in Shivajinagar. The Shiroles have been a rich Maratha family with landed interests and highly respected. The family had been associated with the mandal for a long period and was given due importance in the mandal. Shreekant Shirole, the scion of the Shirole family and former chairman of the standing committee of the Municipal Corporation, was member of the mandal. He had a dispute with the members and office bearers of the mandal and hence he left the Mandal in 1992, at the time of elections to the Municipal Corporation. (according to Gulab Laxman Bhopate, an old member of the mandal)

After leaving the mandal, Shreekant Shirole started his own mandal with the name, Shree Shivajinagar Sarvajaniṅ Ganeshotsava Mandal (160, Gaothan, Shivajinagar) in the same area with the young boys of the area. The new mandal is totally devoted to Shreekant Shirole, which supports the candidate in the elections according to the instructions of the president (i.e. Shreekant Shirole) and also arranges blood donation camp and notebooks distribution ceremony for the poor students on the birthday of the president. Eventually, the old mandal fielded its candidate on the ticket of Congress party in 1997 election to the Municipal Corporation, who ultimately got elected. The new mandal although in the same area, does not keep any relationship with the member of the Municipal Corporation. Mr. Bhopate remarked that ‘we’ wouldn’t work for those who break the Congress party! (Point to be noted is that although the Shiroles are a highly respected and rich family with impressive political background, Shreekant
couldn’t have his way in the mandal and had to leave the mandal when he got alienated from other members.)

- When I reached Old Tophakhana area in Shivajinagar, to locate Jawahar Mitra Mandal, I came across an example of grand merger. Activists told that the people in the area who contributed for the festival were of the view that activists should form one mandal in the area and collect contribution only once. (Multiple mandals lead to multiple calls by their members for contribution.) The Azad Vyayam Mandal (Old Tophakhana, Shivajinagar) was the biggest of the mandals (the size of the mandal depends on the membership and the economic power) other small five to six mandals were merged in the Azad Vyayam Mandal. This merger was made in 1993. Jawahar Mitra Mandal was merged six years ago and its 75 members work for Azad mandal.

- Vinayak Navyug Mitra Mandal Trust (Bhandarkar Road) is under influence of the RSS and important members of the mandal are supporters of the BJP. The Mandal celebrates Hindu Empire Day in July and celebrates Ambedkar Jayanti and Shivjayanti together, informed Sunil Namdeorao Pande, secretary of the Mandal.

- The president of Darshak Tarun Mandal (Survey No.2, Mother Teresa Nagar, Gadital, Yerwada) is John Paul, a catholic Christian. John Paul is the member of the Municipal Corporation from the area. The mandal is located near a slum where people belonging to almost all religions reside. There are about two thousand hutments in the locality. John Paul always leads the mandal. He does not insist on the contribution from the slum. He raises money with the help of his donor friends. The mandal holds one or two meetings each month in the area to solve the civic and social problems. (The mandal supports John Paul in the election to the Municipal Corporation. It appears that the mandal is an important political platform and a support base for Paul.) The mandal celebrates Shivjayanti, Ambedkar Jayanti, Id and Christmas.

- Satyashodhak Samaj was founded by Mahatma Phule in 19th century. The Samaj was an important and strong attempt of rejecting Brahminism. The Samaj established its own way of rituals to counter the influence of Brahmin priests. This history was quickly recollected when I got information about Satyashodhak Mitra Mandal (Jaijawannagar, Yerwada, Pune) The mandal faithfully celebrates
Ganapati Festival and arranges the Satyanarayan Pooja (which was rejected by Satyashodhak Samaj). The ‘other activities’ of the mandal include celebrating the birth anniversary of Mahatama Phule. (It is the only mandal in the sample, to celebrate Mahatma Phule Jayanti.) The mandal elects its president by secret ballot system.

- Suresh Yadav, president of **Jai Jawan Jai Kisan Tarun Mandal** (survey no. 27, Aadarshnagar, Yerwada) unsuccessfully contested the election to the Municipal Corporation from the area on the ticket of Bahujan Samaj Party, according to Ghisulal Bhagwanji Dangi, an important member of the mandal. Important point is that the Bahujan Samaj Party has been consistently rejecting the brahminical ways and yet its candidate is closely related to a Ganapati Mandal.

- **The Panchsheel Seva Mandal** (Ramtekadi, Hadapsar) has significant number of members from Dalit castes. The mandal celebrates Ambedkar Jayanti, Annabhau Sathe Jayanti, Buddha Jayanti, Shiv Jayanti, Hanuman Jayanti and Ramazan Id. Deepak Kisan Tandale, a member of the mandal informed that Mosque and Church located near the mandal. The mandal has provided some financial assistance to build the both, Mosque and Church. Mohan Kamble (a Dalit, member of the Municipal Corporation) got built the social center and the Hanuman temple for the mandal.

- Sheikh Fahim Mehboob, a Muslim supporter of the Congress party, is the president of **Shambho Mitra Mandal** (580, Anandnagar, Market Yard) The mandal celebrates Paigambar Jayanti. Every year the mandal does electrical decoration and its contract is given to Sheikh Vazim of Paradise Electricals. In last election to the Municipal Corporation, Khurshid Bhabhi, mother of Sheikh Fahim Mehboob contested as a candidate. The mandal is under the influence of Congress party and does not have any relationship with the representative of the people from the area who belongs to Shivsena-BJP alliance.

- The committee of Bhoi (fisherman) community owns a building and a hostel in Bhoi Aali of Kasaba Peth. **Bhoiraj Mitra Mandal** is the Ganapati mandal of the community and it has the effective control of the hostel. (There are few more examples where the mandal enjoys the ownership or the control of real estate. The rent earned from these estates is a source of income for these mandals.)
- The Shreekrishna Mitra Mandal (101, Kasaba Peth) uses the notice board of Janardan Pawale Sangh (a nearby big and important mandal). The age group of the members of The Shreekrishna Mitra Mandal is 10 to 18 years. It was gathered from the discussion with Rahul Borlikar, member of the mandal that, the Shreekrishna Mitra Mandal is the junior of the Janardan Pawale Sangh and the boys graduate from the Shreekrishna Mitra Mandal to the Janardan Pawale Sangh.

- The immersion procession of Twashta Kasar Samaj Ganeshotsava (Kasaba Peth) is part of the common procession, but it has its identity. Suhas Wadake, trustee of the mandal told that the procession of the mandal is disciplined one, it has significant participation of women, the procession is handled by women and gulal is not sprayed in the air.

- Vaibhav Mitra Mandal (314, Budhawar Peth) is an extreme case of rejection of concepts of purity and pollution. The mandal is located at the heart of red light area. The mandal has about 60 activists but is supported by about 400 women who are sex workers residing around the mandal. Mr. Rambhau Takawale is leading the mandal for a long period. He is working for the mandal for last 35 years. This mandal has the credit of participation of women in the immersion procession for the first time. All the women members of the mandal participate in the procession wearing a white saree and the mandal is known for the disciplined and decent behavior of the members participating in the procession. The women members of the mandal started participating in the procession in 1993. (Informed Mr. Takawale) The mandal has won prizes for last ten years in the competition held by Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Mandal. It has also won the shield by the Police Commissioner for disciplined procession. The mandal has built a common temple of goddess Yallamma and lord Ganapati. After Ganapati festival is over the mandal installs the Ghat of the goddess. The festival of Yallamma is celebrated for nine days. On the first day Homhavan, Chandika Yaag and Pooja-Path are done. The priest who performs these religious rituals is Mr. Sahstrabuddhe. On the second day a feast called Bhandara is arranged. The cooking continues for the whole day and about one thousand people enjoy the feast. At the time of Ganesh Janma (Ganesh Janma is birth anniversary of the lord Ganesh. This auspicious day is different from the Ganesh Chaturthi, the day on which the Ganapati festival starts.) the mandal arranges yagna. The mandal took the initiative in establishing a
credit society called Renuka Vaibhav Deodasi Patsanstha in 1984. (The sex workers or the prostitutes do not have credit in the market and hence do not get advantage of the conventional banking. They have to turn to moneylenders who exploit them. In this context the importance of the co-operative credit society owned by sex workers themselves becomes important.) The mandal owns a gymnasium where a kindergarten is run. About forty kids benefit from the kindergarten. The mandal gives lunch to about five hundred Varkaris. (Varkaris travel to Pandharpur every year for a pilgrimage and they pass through the city of Pune.)

- Natuwada Mitra Mandal Ganeshotsava Trust (near Appa Balawant square) every year presents the decoration and related scene about some scientific issue. The mandal started this tradition in 1978, when the American satellite, Skylab collapsed on the earth and made headlines.

- Swargate Police Colony Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava is the mandal of the residents of the colony of the police officers and constables. All the members of the mandal are the family members of the police personnel.

- A Muslim activists named, Sadik Sheikh, is the president of the Jai Malhar Mitra Mandal (Navi Khadaki, Yerwada), for last ten years. He is proud to be a member of Shivsena. He declared his intention to contest in the next election to the Municipal Corporation. The present representative of the people in the municipal ward is Avinash Salave, a prominent member of Republican Party of India. (It seems that Salave, a dalit leader is dominant in the area and to defeat him in the election, it is necessary to join some political party, which is very much opposed to the RPI. In his attempts to get along with the Hindu Nationalistic party like Shivsena and to establish the communication with the Hindu majority living around, Sadik Sheikh appears to be using the accommodative platform of Ganapati festival.)

- Navbuddha Tarun Mandal (Samyukta Annabhau Sathe Samata Manch) (226, Mangalwar Peth) was established in 1979. It is a registered Mandal. According to Santosh Gaikar, the president of the Mandal, there are about 17 activists of the mandal. The names of the members of the mandal are Sanjay Kamble, Sajid Sheikh, Vishal Wadavrao, Usuf Sheikh, Mukesh Dhende, Amit Sheikh, Johnny Sakat etc. Out of these active members of the mandal, Sajid, Usuf and Amit are
Muslims while Johnny is a Christian. All these members of the Mandal live in the same slum adjoining the Mandal. The boys collect contribution for the celebration from the 60 shops in the area. The contribution is collected twice in the year. It is collected for Ganapati festival and Ambedkar Jayanti festival. Besides celebrating Ganapati festival the mandal celebrates Ambedkar Jayanti (birth anniversary), Shivjayanti, Anna Bhau Sathe Jayanti, Buddha Pournima and Id. Although the Mandal is named as Navbuddha Tarun Mandal, i.e. Neobuddhist Young Group, it is not exclusively composed of members from Neobuddhist community. The members belong to various communities like Muslim, Christian, Neobuddhist, Maratha, Matang etc. according to Gaikar. These boys are not much educated. They have not even completed the High school education. The president of the Mandal, Santosh works in a petrol pump as an attendant. Sajid earns living by shining shoes and Mukesh works as a helper to the mason. Almost all others are unemployed. Santosh has inherited the presidency of the mandal. His father was the president of the Mandal until last year. Now, Santosh has been made the president of the mandal. The fathers of other boys were also involved in the activities of the Mandal. Santosh’s father along with other seven-eight seniors was instrumental in establishing the mandal. This is in fact a third generation of members of the mandal who are now running the mandal. This was an important mandal in the area in earlier days. But now, there are other mandals also in the neighborhood and the Navbuddha Tarun Mandal does not get enough money to celebrate with fanfare.

- **Ram-Rahim Mandal** (165, Ghorpade Peth) is mandal of its own kind. The mandal consists of Hindu (40%) and Muslim (60%) members. The mandal was established 25 years ago. Advocate Mohan Wadekar, who is the president of the city unit of the Republican Party of India, had taken the lead in establishing the mandal. According to Dilip Ruikar, who lives at the back of the Ganapati idol of the mandal, the mandal was started by him and his friends like Ad. Wadekar, Harun Mujawar, Jayant Deshpande and Shamim Sheikh. There are about 125 homes on the same address of 165, Ghorpade Peth. Earlier, the proportion of the Hindus and Muslims living in the area was equal and people belonging to both the communities were participating in the Ganapati festival (celebrated by the Mandal). A pandal used to be raised on the street and a good decoration was done
in it. Later Ruikar and his friends became elders and got busy with families and businesses. Now, they cannot wholeheartedly participate in the activities of the mandal. There is a small (or a miniature?) permanent temple of Ganapati at the place of the mandal. Mandal has been registered and the documents are with Ad. Wadekar. Wadekar now has a good practice and has shifted to some other place. After Ruikar and his friends became senior the new generation should have taken over from them, like other mandals. But, the new generation is not so enthusiastic about the festival. Now the Ganapati festival is not celebrated with enthusiasm. (when reached the mandal in 2000, found that a small pandal was raised near the temple of the mandal and nominal lighting decoration was done. It was told that the simplicity in the celebration was due to death of one of the members of the mandal.) Now, somebody occasionally takes the lead and there is enthusiasm in the celebration for that year only, informed Ruikar. After Ruikar and friends started the mandal, significant development took place in last 30 years. Many of the Hindus who were living in the locality migrated to other areas. Those who got some money purchased flats and hence, moved to other areas. Those, who became poorer took hutments in the slums and moved. Hence, the proportion of the Hindus in the locality reduced. Now, there are only 25% Hindus. Out of which only five percent are in economically good condition and others have become drunkards and are living in misery, it was told. Now, the Hindus who have become the minority community, do not take initiative. They prefer to remain low profile. The Hindus in the area do not have enmity but they are alienated from the Muslims. On the other hand the Muslims have got aggressive, after their proportion has increased. One community hall was built in the locality. It was used by all. Slowly, the Muslims took over the control of the hall. Now, there is mosque (in the place of the hall) and a loud speaker is set on the Mosque. The Ganapati mandal now helps for Ramazan Id, but the festival is not celebrated unitedly!

- Philips Chawl, Tamil Tarun Mandal (Ghorpadi Gaon) is a unique mandal established and run by the Tamils. It was told that every month a function is held on account of Sankashti Chaturthi, in the temple of the mandal. (built in 1973) Pongal is celebrated with grandeur on the Sankranti in January. When they (the south Indians) built this temple, it was an only Ganapati Temple in Ghorpadi and
people from all parts of Ghorpadi used to visit this temple. Major events were
arranged on account of Angarki Chaturthi and Ganesh Jayanti. Kirtan and other
religious functions were arranged. In the locality of the Ganapati temple, about 60
to 70% population is of south Indians. It is their third generation living in this
area. (The ancestors moved to Ghorpadi from Madras with the British Cavalry.) In
Philips Chawl, all residents are Tamils. Tamilar Kazagham Eduaction Society has
started a school (near the temple). Majority of the people of this community is
supporters of Congress and people from new generation are attracted towards
Bhartiya Janata Party and Shivasena. Some of the old people were supporters of
Socialists. One of the community contested in the election, but the community
didn't support him. Most of the members of the community work in ammunition
factory, high explosives factory and other central government offices. In the
earlier times, there were two groups viz. Aastik Gat and Nastik Gat i.e. group of
believers and non-believers respectively. The group of believers formed Sarswati
Panchayat and the group of non-believers belonged to Tamilar Kazagam, who
later built Ram temple! (This mandal, although not a conventional mandal, is
important because it is an example of how a group of aliens with its strong
religious beliefs, used the platform of Ganapati festival and the temple of lord
Ganapati, to gain the acceptance from the local people and assert their identity.)

Table No. 5.3- The mandals, which are formed by a caste group or linguistic
group or a regional group. -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name and Address of the Mandal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kaikadi Samaj Tarun Mandal, 79, Ghorapade Peth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Twashta Kasar Samaj Sansth, Kasaba Peth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Veershaiva (Kakkaiyya) Lingayat Tarun Mandal, Netajinagar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Savata Mali Tarun Mandal, Bhairobanala, Hadapsar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kanjarbhat Samaj Mandal, Yerwada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Banjara Tarun Mandal, Pandu Laman Vasti, Yerwada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kamgar Putala Dalit Tarun Mandal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Somvanshiya Kshatriya Kasar Ganesh Mandal, 552, Budhawar Peth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Badhai Samaj Mandal, 590, Ravivar Peth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bhoiraj Mitra Mandal, 1129, Kasaba Peth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Navabouddha Tarun Mandal, 226, Mangalwar Peth</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Saraf Suvarnkar Ganesh Mandal, 417, Ravivar Peth</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Maharashtara Joshi Samaj Tarun Mandal, 1077, Shukrawar Peth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Padmashali Bhavana Mandal, 113, Nana Peth, Eagle Mitra Mandal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Bairagi Samaj Mitra Mandal, 483, Ganj Peth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

The Ganapati mandals are the groups of local people. The members of the mandal necessarily live in the same area adjoining the mandal. In some cases the members of the mandal do not live in the locality but they live at far away places and come to the locality for the celebration. But, in such cases, these members used to live in the locality of the mandal and have migrated to other part of the city for various reasons. This local bonding is the most important factor in case of the members of the mandal. On an average a Mandal has 118 members or activists. Thus the mandal is directly connected to about hundred families in the area. The members of the mandal do preparation for the celebration of the Ganapati festival for average 39 days. The duration of the preparation for the festival varies from Mandal to Mandal. But, it is clear that the boys work together and communicate with each other for about a month, thanks to the Ganapati festival. The communication among these members of the mandals is formal as well as informal. There are average five meetings held for the Ganapati festival. These meetings are a good platform for formal communication among the members of the mandal. The young boys do learn about organizational matters due these meetings. The members of a Ganapati mandal is a group of young boys. According to the survey of the Ganapati mandals, the average of the minimum age of the members of the mandal is 17 years and that of the maximum age is 40 years. Of course there are enthusiastic members of Ganapati mandals who are much younger or older than these averages. But, by and large the activists of Ganapati mandal are in the age group of 15 to 40. The activists of Ganapati mandals are well educated and employed and not ‘rowdies’ as they are considered to be by the white collared conservative class. In 77% mandals the educational qualification of the members is from High school to University graduation. There are very less number of illiterate activists of Ganapati mandals. It was found that 51% of the activists are well employed, either in service or having a business of their own. In case of others majority are students. Few activists are unemployed. The Ganapati mandal continue their activities besides celebrating Ganapati festival, through the year.
As the Ganapati mandals are the groups of young, enthusiastic local people, they do take part in the political process, especially campaigning during the elections. But not all of the members take part in political activities. It was found during the survey that average of the number of activists taking part in political activities, especially election campaigning is 61. The average of total number of activists in the Mandals is 118. Considering these figures it is clear that 51% of the total activists or members of Ganapati mandals participate in political campaigning. Thus, the number of activists of Ganapati mandals who remain away from political activists is 49%. Out of the surveyed mandals, members of 87% mandals participate in political campaigning and only 12% mandals made it clear that their members do not take part in political campaigning. Hence, the members of majority of mandals take part in political activities but the proportion of the members who participate in political activities and who do not is almost the same. Significant majority of mandals i.e. 59% mandals made it clear that they do not support any political candidate on the basis of the mandal. Thus, most of the mandals do not take any political position and leave it to the members to act as per their will. The support of the members of mandals to political parties is also varied. The proportion of the mandals in which the members support different political parties is about 61%. Thus, although Ganapati mandals are groups of young, enthusiastic local people with very good communication at the local level, the mandals can not be used as political support bases as whole group. There are significant number of members who prefer to stay away from political activities and in case of those who take part in political activities especially campaigning during elections, there is great variation in their choices.

The Ganapati festival is celebrated with the money collected from people. According to the survey, the average income of the mandals is Rs. 3,09,395. This figure has been computed considering the income of Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati Trust, whose income is about Rs. 30 million. Excluding Dagadusheth, the average income of the mandals is Rs. 71,117 and the median of income is Rs. 22,500. Thus, the mandals get significant amount of public money at their disposal due to Ganapati festival. Most of the money collected is spent during the festival and thus the process gives boost to local economy. The members of the mandals also get access to significant amount of public money due to the festival.
The Ganapati mandals continue their activities through the year. The total number of such activities except Ganapati mandals is 85. There is great variation in the other activities, these mandals undertake. Thus, the members of Ganapati mandals get an opportunity to explore social space according to their will.