6. Politicians at the Grass Roots Level and the Ganapati festival

Member of the Pune Municipal Corporation (popularly known as a corporator) is the most important politician at the grass roots level. The people in concerned municipal ward directly elect this member. He or she has to highlight the civic problems in the ward and get it solved by the Municipal Corporation. The member has to deal with the problems which people have to face in their daily life. His activities are directly related to concerns of people and he has to deal with problems at the grassroots level. As the municipal wards are much smaller than the constituencies of assembly or the parliament, people in the ward find it easier to approach their representative in the Municipal Corporation and ask him or her about the civic and other social problems in the area. Thus, the member of the Municipal Corporation has to be directly answerable to the people.

As, the member of the Municipal Corporation is at the lowest level in the urban democratic hierarchy, he is also the link between the activists of a political party and the party bosses as well as between the citizens and the political party and also between the citizens and the state apparatus. Considering these points the members of the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) were interviewed. The political advancement of these, the most important politicians at the grass roots level was studied as well as their views about the political mobilization at the grass roots level and its relationship to the Ganapati Festival were elicited. The interviews of these politicians were conducted in the year 2000. Very few interviews were conducted in the year 2001. Each member of the Municipal Corporation or corporator has his or her own way of political advancement, but during the study, the relationship between the corporator and the public Ganapati festival was focussed upon. As the main purpose of the study is to locate importance of Ganapati festival in political mobilization at the grass roots level and its appropriation by the politicians, the information regarding this aspect and the other ways of political mobilization was given importance.

A standard set of questions was used to elicit the information from these politicians. The questions are follows-
1) How many Ganapati mandals are there in your (municipal) ward? To how many mandals out of these, are you related? Which is your mandal?

2) When did you start working for a Ganapati mandal? For how many years have you been working for the mandal?

3) Did you continuously work for the same mandal? When did you change the mandal (if ever you changed it)? At what stage?

4) What experience about social work did you have while working in a Ganapati mandal? Do you take part in the activities of the mandal except the Ganapati festival? Do you find Ganapati mandal useful for your social work? Does the mandal help you in your social work?

5) Did the mandal help you in getting candidature of the political party? Do the activists of the mandal help at the times of election? What help do they provide?

6) Has your mandal or any other mandal helped your opponent in the election? Were any hurdles created in your way in the mandal because of your political career? How do your political opponents in the mandal treat you?

7) What would you have done (to gather support and to develop social base) had there been no public Ganapati mandals?

8) In what other social or cultural activities are you engaged except Ganapati mandal?

9) To what extent the Ganapati mandal is useful to mobilize people in the neighborhood, to develop some promising activist and to do constructive work?

10) Do any ill will is created in collecting contribution, erecting pandal or using loudspeaker (for Ganapati festival)? How do you solve this problem?

11) Do your supporters/activist/colleagues work for Ganesh mandals? For which mandals do they work? Do all supporters/activist/colleagues work for the same mandal?

12) Describe your development as political activist (from entry in public life to getting elected as member of Municipal Corporation)

The questions were asked to know the participation of the corporators in the Ganapati festival, whether the Ganapati mandals are useful as a social power base, whether the mandals have served the purpose of mobilization at the grass-roots level, what is the relationship between the corporator and the mandals in his or her municipal ward, what is the importance of Ganapati mandals in view of the corporator in comparison to other political and social initiatives.
In the PMC for the period of 1997-2002 there were 124 members elected by people while five members were co-opted.

In case of total 124 elected members, the distribution of the members according to political parties was as- Indian National Congress 67 (123), Bhartiya Janata Party 20 (67), Shiv Sena 15 (56), Bhartiya Republican Party 07(56), Janata Dal 01(48) and Independents 14 (901). The figures in the bracket indicate the total number of seats on which the party fielded its candidate. In case of the independents, the figure in the bracket shows total number of independent candidates, who contested in the election. The share of votes according to political parties was as- Indian National Congress 31.81%, BJP 13.64%, Shiv Sena 11.54%, Bhartiya Republican Party 5.01%, Janata Dal 1.69% and Independents 33.39%. In this election total votes casted were 7,12,515. These candidates got elected from 124 single member municipal wards. The reservation of these wards was as Scheduled Castes 18 (out of which 6 wards were reserved for women belonging to Scheduled Castes), Scheduled Tribes 01, Other Backward Castes 33 (out of which 11 reserved for women belonging to other backward castes), Women 24 and Open wards 48. (Agrawal, 1997, 2, 13, 31)

As per information available about the castes of the members of the PMC, the division is as- Brahmin 05, Maratha 44, Muslim 06, Marwari 04, Christian 01, Telegu 01, Punjabi 01, Other Backward Castes 38 (the sub division is Mali11, Kashi Kapadi 05, Bhoi 01, Lonar 01, Kachi 01, Kumbhar 03, Padmeshali 02, Tel 01, Sonar 01, Dhobi 02, Shimpi 01, Wadar 05, Caste not known 04), Scheduled Castes 23 (sub division is Neobuddha 10, Matang 07, Chambhar 01, caste not known 05) and Scheduled Tribe 01. Here the total number of the members belonging to other backward castes elected, is more than the total number of the seats reserved for them, because some of them got elected from the open seats. Where it has been written caste not known, it means that the exact caste of these members was not known but they certainly belong to the respective groups of OBC or SC members.

Other than these 124 elected members, five members were co-opted. The distribution of these members according to their parties is Congress 4 and BJP 1. The distribution of these co-opted members is Brahmin 2, Maratha 2 and Gujarathi 1.

Thus there are 129 members and out of these 86 members (66%) could be interviewed. The attempt was to interview most of the members. But due to inability to contact or due to lack of response or due to the busy schedule of the members, 66% members could be interviewed. Out of these 86 members the distribution of the
members according to the political parties to which they belong is- Congress: 39, Nationalist Congress Party: 09, Bhartiya Janata Party: 17, Shivsena: 09, Republican Party of India: 04 and Independents: 08. The distribution of these members of PMC, according to their castes is- Maratha: 30, Brahmin: 05, Other backward castes: 31, Scheduled Castes: 12, Muslim: 03, Scheduled Tribe: 01 and Non-Maharashtrians: 04.

The distribution of the wards (whose representatives were interviewed) according to the reservation is – open: 31, open women: 16, other backward castes: 17, other backward castes women: 09, scheduled castes: 07, scheduled castes women: 03, scheduled tribes: 01.

Some practical difficulties had to be faced while conducting the interviews of these local representatives of people. It was perhaps for the first time they were answering such a lengthy academic questionnaire and elaborating their political rise. Hence, sometime the discussion could not be carried strictly along the questionnaire or sometimes some of these members did not answer all the questions. As these members consider themselves to be important politicians (and in the city they deserve to be considered) they were not ready to answer each and every question but chose to answer only those according to their will. This has affected the study to some extent. Some members clearly answered the question and those are considered for the study as well as the clear indication of their choices and thoughts has also been considered. But, where there is neither clear answer nor clear indication about it, I preferred to ignore such ambiguous answers. One more caveat has to be filed before elaborating the data that in case of majority of women members of the Municipal Corporation, they are proxy candidates of their husbands or brothers or in a rare case of their fathers. In such cases the association of husbands of these women members to the Ganapati festival and their social activities was considered as those of women members.

It would have been a boon for me had these honorable politicians answered every question clearly (like the activists of Ganapati mandals), but since there was no any alternative to interviews of these members as per their convenience, I decided to make do with whatever information and the insight they provided for the study. Hence, the statistical data thus gathered through the interviews is not precise, but can be considered as a very good approximation.
Findings of the survey

In the wards of 86 corporators, I interviewed, there are total 2740 Ganapati mandals (as per the information regarding the number of mandals, they have provided) The average mandals per ward are 33. The maximum number of mandals in a single ward is 200 while the minimum number is 5. In case of 3 corporators the information about the mandals was not available while one corporator did not answer this question. These corporators are having some relationship with total 1705 mandals. The average of the mandals in a ward with which the member of Municipal Corporation maintains relationship is 20. The maximum number of such mandals in a ward is 110 while the minimum number of such mandals in ward is 0, i.e. there are instances where a corporators does not maintain any relationship with any mandal. The percentage of mandals in ward with which the corporator maintains relationship is 62%. Thus, the corporators prefer to maintain good relationship with majority of mandals in his or her municipal ward.

When it was asked to the corporators, since when they have been working for a Ganapati mandal, those who are have been working, told either the age at which they entered the Ganapati mandal or the year in which they entered Ganapati mandal. In all 27 corporators told the age and majority of them joined the Ganapati mandal at the age between 12 to 15. The average age of joining the Ganapati mandal in the locality in case of these corporators is 13. In case of those who told the year in which they joined the Ganapati mandal in the area, the average year is 1977. The latest year of joining Ganapati mandal is 1989 while the earliest is 1962. Considering the fact that the survey was conducted in 2000, the average period for which these corporators worked for Ganapati mandal, is 22 years. The maximum period is 38 years while the minimum is 11 years. Hiraman Shinde (senior activist of Congress, who is a former deputy mayor and got elected to the Municipal Corporation as an independent in the last election) told that he stopped working for Ganapati mandal as an activist when he crossed 40. Significant observation with respect to this question is that 28 members (32%) told that they didn't actively participate in the activities of the Ganapati mandal.

When it was asked whether the members changed the mandal they had joined in their teen age, 34 members made it clear that they didn't change the mandal while 10 members started working for one or more mandals along with their original madal. Thus, total 44 members (51%) continued their association with the mandal they had
joined initially. Only 12 members told that they changed the mandal while for about 30 members this question was irrelevant.

The question, why the mandal was changed was found to be relevant for even fewer members. In case of those who explained the reasons for changing the mandal or working for any other mandal along with the old one, seven members changed to other mandal, after consolidating the position in the old mandal while six members changed mandal because they grew up. (There are some mandals in the city, which are exclusively handled by the boys). In case of nine members the reason for turning to other mandal was political. Only one member changed the mandal, because he migrated to other part of the city. One member left the old mandal because he started his own mandal.

Working for a Ganapati mandal may sometimes leads to bitterness among the neighbors due to coercive methods of gathering contribution or use of loudspeakers or transgressive behavior of the members of the mandals. Hence, I asked the corporators whether they had to face the problem of bitterness while working for a mandal. Only nine members answered in affirmative but made it clear that this problem is not significant and they solve it by persuasion. Only one member of PMC told that he doesn't care for the problem. For majority of corporators i.e. for 77 corporators (89%) either the answer is in negative or they did not take the question.

It is believed in Pune city that the Ganapati Mandals are sort of training centers for social and political workers as working for a Ganapati Mandal provides the activist an opportunity to interact with people in the locality, collect public money and utilize it for public purpose (Ganapati festival), build a network of activists, lead the team to get the work done, interact with government agencies and the elite class in the area etc. Hence, it was asked to the members of PMC that what they learned while working for their Ganapati mandals. While computing the data about the responses to this question, those who declared that they did not work for a mandal as an activist or those who declared that they do not keep any relationship with the mandals are not excluded. This has been done in order to get the complete picture. The corporators were asked whether they learned to solve people's problems while working in a Ganapati mandal, only 30 corporators (34%) told that they learned to solve people's problems while working for a mandal. For 55 corporators (64%) the question did not arise i.e. they did not learn to solve people’s problems while working in a Ganapati mandal. One corporator did not answer this question.
which commands participation of most of the citizens from all walks of life? The answers to these questions will be found to some extent in the following data.

A political activist, once elected as member of PMC, becomes a VIP in the area and is invited by the mandals in the area to participate in their activities. It was asked to the corporators, whether, they participate in the activities of the mandal except the celebration of Ganapati festival. Majority of the corporators, i.e. 52 corporators (60%) told that they participate in the activities while for 34 corporators (40%) either they didn’t participate in the activities or the question was not applicable to them. It was asked to the corporators whether the mandal is useful to them in their social work. Out of the 86 corporators interviewed, 49 corporators (57%) told that the mandals are very much useful (or helpful) for their social work while four corporators told that the mandals are partially helpful in their social work. Thus total 53 corporators (61%) find mandals to be useful for their social work.

Thus, although the politicians can not be considered as the die-hard activists of Ganapati mandals, they do use this social platform for their own social activities (aimed at increasing political power) as well as to communicate with the society. These politicians also use the set of activists developed through the mandals for their activities of mobilization (and they have to pay the cost in terms of donation or patronage).

The Ganapati mandals do play some role in elections and act as political groups. Hence, the corporators were asked, whether the mandal has helped them to get the candidature of a political party. Only 18 corporators (21%) answered in affirmative to this question. The boys of the mandal are taken along for a show of strength while the candidate seeks party ticket or in rare case the mandal pressurizes the party bosses to give ticket to someone from their mandal. This is how a mandal helps in getting the ticket of a party in the election.

Although the mandals do not play any significant role in distribution of party tickets, they play a vital role in case of campaigning for elections. The mandals are local groups with participation of local youths who are having good rapport with people in surrounding homes. Hence, the mandals become local social power centers and their help is sought by the political candidates for their campaigning. I asked the corporators whether the activists of the mandals help them in the election. Majority of the corporators i.e. 57 corporators (66%) agreed that they take help of the activists of the mandals for their campaigning. Only one corporator specifically answered in
negative while 28 corporators did not take this question or indirectly answered in negative. The activists of Ganapati mandals help the candidates on two counts i.e. door-to-door campaigning and displaying posters etc.

Thus, it appears that instead of becoming the powerhouses for political parties the Ganapati mandals have emerged as the political service providers at some cost. The concerned politician has to negotiate with the mandals for their support but he or she avoids to be linked directly to some particular mandal and the mandals in turn prefer to keep some distance from the politicians.

As the mandals have realized their political potential there are many instances when the mandals oppose certain candidate in the election or demand some donation in return of support. It is told by the political activists that some times the opposition of the mandals and their demands sound like political blackmailing. The corporators were asked whether they had to face opposition from their own mandal or any other mandal in the area at the time of election. Only six corporators (7%) specifically said yes, while 21 corporators (24%) told that they had to face this problem partially i.e. some group of a mandal opposes in the election or the opposition of some mandal is not that strong. But for majority of corporators i.e. for 59 corporators (69%) the problem of facing the opposition of mandals was not there. As working in mandal is good avenue of developing one's political support base there is also some competition and politics in the mandal about appropriating power. I asked the corporators whether they had to suffer from the opposition in their own mandal while they were developing politically. Only ten corporators (11%) answered in affirmative to this question. The question, how do the political opponents in the mandal treat you, turned out to be irrelevant as nobody took this question.

The Ganapati festival in Pune City is commonly described as 'kindergarten of politics' which means the political activists get their initial political training in the Ganapati mandals. Hence, I tried to know the opinions of the corporators about the political utility of the mandals. I asked them, to what extent the Ganapati mandal is useful to mobilize people in the neighborhood, to develop some promising activist and to do constructive work? Significant number of corporator i.e. 41 corporators (47%) said that the Ganapati festival is very good for political mobilization or for developing political base. Eight corporators (9%) told the mandals are good for the purpose i.e. they have some utility while 11 corporators (12%) told that the mandals are useful provided the concerned political activist should make proper use of it. Only
17 corporators (19%) said that the mandals are of no use as far as politics is concerned. For seven corporators this question was not relevant or they did not take this question. It means there are some corporators so much independent of the process of Ganapati festival that they don't bother about it.

The politicians are well aware of the potential of the Ganapati mandals and they also know the utility of these mandals. As majority of corporators keep themselves close to the Ganapati festival and the mandals in their area, it was asked whether their supporters or colleagues are working for Ganapati mandals. Significant majority of the corporators interviewed i.e. 64 corporators (74%) answered in affirmative to this question while only 22 corporators (26%) either answered in negative or didn't take the question. Out of the 64 corporators whose supporters are working in mandals, only four corporators have all their supporters in only one mandal while the supporters of 60 corporators are from different mandals. Thus, the corporators prefer to depend upon the activists in different areas i.e. supporters from different localities and different social groups.

There was one important question in the questionnaire by which the corporators were asked what they would have done (for mobilization) had the Ganapati Festival and the Ganapati Mandals not been there. But while carrying out the survey, I found that most of the corporators found it difficult to answer this question and majority of them didn't answer it. Hence, the question was modified and it was asked to them to name the ways of popular mobilization except Ganapati festival. The answers I got to this question were varied ones. Total 44 corporators (51%) did not answer this one particular question. In case of remaining corporators, 14 corporators (16%) suggested that the religious festivals are the effective ways of popular mobilization. There were eight corporators each who told that it is difficult to mobilize people by other means except Ganapati festival and people can be mobilized by social work respectively. In view of four corporators cultural festivals and events are useful for popular mobilization. In view of two corporators communication with people is the way of mobilization. There is one corporator each who made suggestion that the mobilization can be done by raising a civic issue, cultural and social events, raising social issues, sports events, marriage ceremony and organizing mahila mandals (groups of women).
This data makes clear that the politicians do utilize the support gained by their supporters in different mandals and indirectly benefit from the political and social mobilization done through Ganapati mandals.

I had asked the corporators about their other activities like running a social institute. I got varied responses from them. I have handled this part in the next section of this chapter where I have noted the highlights of survey and some notable points, which were not covered in the tabulation and analysis of the responses.

To understand the responses of the corporators in a better way, I grouped them according to their party affiliations and then tabulated and analyzed the responses. The analysis of the responses of the corporators was done to get the comparative understanding of the approaches of various corporators influenced by their respective political parties. This will also lead to understanding the approaches of various political parties towards the mass event of Ganapati festival. At the time of elections to the Pune Municipal Corporation in 1997, the Congress party was unified. Later, one faction of the party split from the parent party and formed Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) under the leadership of Sharad Pawar at the national level. Those members of PMC who belonged to Congress and joined NCP are considered as NCP corporators while analyzing the responses. But the independents who later joined hands with Congress or any other party are treated as independent. The findings of the analysis are as follows-

It was asked how many mandals are in the ward. The responses of the corporators are as follows-

Table no. 6.1 - Ganapati mandals in the respective wards of political parties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Total mandals</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>1286</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>0370</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>0475</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>045</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shivsena</td>
<td>0203</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>035</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPI</td>
<td>0073</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>030</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ind.</td>
<td>0333</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Max. - Maximum mandals in a ward, Min.- Minimum mandals in ward, NA- not applicable, BJP- Bharatiya Janata Party, RPI- Republican Party of India,
The average of the mandals in a ward in above table indicates the density of the mandals. The average of the mandals in the wards where the independents have been elected is 37 and this number is significant, as it is equally a bigger number like that of Congress and Nationalist Congress Party. While these two Congress parties are known for their omnibus like structure where there is space for everybody, they have got good response from the areas where the density of Ganapati mandals is more and the mandals are having more influence. The independents have won from the wards where the density of the mandals is more. As the Ganapati mandals are more in numbers in these wards, it becomes easier to develop an alternative socio-political power to the political parties. As it will become evident from following tables the political support base of the independents has turned out to be Ganapati mandals! On the other hand the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), Shivsena (SS) and Republican Party of India (RPI) are having narrow approach towards support base and it is noteworthy that the candidates of these parties have won from the wards with comparatively less density of mandals.

It was asked to the corporators, to how many mandals they maintain good rapport. The responses are-

Table no. 6.2 – Relationship between corporators and mandals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Total mandals</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>075</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>035</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shivsena</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>030</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPI</td>
<td>031</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>013</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ind.</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>040</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As I have commented earlier about the density of Ganapati mandals in a ward and the political affiliation of the candidates elected from those wards, the same comments are also relevant in case of the table above regarding the number of mandals with which the corporators maintains good relationship. Here again the average of mandals of Congress, NCP and Independents is on higher side while that of BJP, SS and RPI it is on the lower side. The least average is of RPI. The RPI is
perceived as a party of Mahar- Neobuddhist community. The Neobuddha community has always denied Hinduism and insisted on Buddhist identity. This has reflected in the poor relationship between the Ganapati mandals and RPI. But, this characteristic has also made the party to suffer loss of political power. This aspect will become clear in succeeding observations and discussion. Although BJP and SS are staunch supporters of Hinduism and many times accused to be communal, their approach is not as accommodative as the Congress party and this aspect has affected the relationship between these Hinduist parties and the Ganapati Festival. Because, although Ganapati Festival is a festival Hindu community, ones monopolized by the Chitpawan Brahmins, it has evolved in to an accommodative, liberal and flexible festival. This characteristic of Ganapati festival is not compatible to the approach of the Hinduist parties. In the succeeding tables this observation will become clearer.

I asked the corporators what did they learn about mobilization and social work while working in the mandal. This question was put to know the contribution of Ganapati festival and the institution of Ganapati mandals in the process of political training.

The responses of the corporators are-

Table no. 6.3 - Advantage of Ganapati mandals for political training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SOP</th>
<th>CAMP</th>
<th>MOB</th>
<th>CDG</th>
<th>IMAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cong.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPI</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IND</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOP- solving people's problems, CAMP- campaigning, MOB- mobilization, CDG- communication with different groups, IMAGE- image projection

SS- Shivsena. NA- no or not applicable.

The numbers in the table are the numbers of corporators, with concerned response. Here, it is evident that the politicians have not learned much about the activities like solving problems, campaigning, mobilization, communication and
image projection which are useful for politics through Ganapati festival. This point has been noted earlier. But, whatever, such advantage the politicians had from this mass event of Ganapati festival, it was by the politicians belonging to the Congress party or NCP. The politicians belonging to BJP and SS have not learned much from the mass event, as their ways of doing politics are different.

The corporators were asked whether they participate in the activities of the mandals (other than celebrating Ganapati festival). Also, I asked the members of PMC whom I interviewed, to what extent the mandals are useful in their social activities.

The responses of the corporators are as follows-

Table no. 6.4 – Participation of the corporators and the utility of the mandals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Utility of Ganapati mandals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cong.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shivsena</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPI</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it has been made clear at the earlier stage, majority of the politicians say they did not learn political craftsmanship through Ganapati mandal and this is true for all parties. The table above makes clear one significant trend in this respect. It is the independents who fought the election on their own without support of any political party told that they have learned political craftsmanship through Ganapati mandals. Same is the case about participation of the corporators in the activities of the mandals. Not all corporators participate in the activities of the mandals. In case of Congress, BJP and Shivsena the number of corporators who participate in the activities is more than those who do not. The numbers are the same in case of NCP. In case of RPI the number of those who participate is much less than those who don’t participate. In case of Independents it is the total participation. In case of perceived utility of the Ganapati mandals for political and other mobilization, the responses are similar. The independents have developed their political support base through Ganapati
mandals, it appears. Then is it the case that the Ganapati mandals who always insist on their autonomy are rivaling the established political parties in developing support base? One more point has to be noted that in case of learning ways of politics through Ganapati festival there is not much positive response from the politicians, but in case of participation in the activities of the Ganapati mandals and their perceived utility, there is comparatively more response by the politicians. Hence, the Ganapati festival is of not much use for a promising activist for his personal political development, but the mass event is very much useful as a medium of reaching to people and as a service provider. This, point has become evident earlier, in other aspect.

As far as the political role of the mandals is considered, it was asked to the corporators, whether the Ganapati mandals helped them to get the party ticket in the election, whether the members of Ganapati mandals helped them in the election (campaigning etc.) and whether any mandal opposed them in the election.

The responses of the corporators were as follows-

Table no.6.5 – Utility of Ganapati mandals in the elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Getting Ticket</th>
<th>Helping in Election</th>
<th>Opposition in Election</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cong.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shivsena</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPI</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ind.</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The readings noted above about the relationship between corporators and the mandals are supported in case of this question regarding electioneering also. Except for the RPI, majority of the politicians of all other parties have utilized the services of Ganapati mandals and their activists for electioneering. In case of independents it is the total utilization. Two independents have noted that they were assisted by mandals to get the ticket of political party. It means that prior to the election, when they tried to get the candidature of the party, they were helped by the mandals (but subsequently they had to fight as an independent).
In order to know the relation between the support base of the corporators and Ganapati mandals, I asked them whether their political supporters and activists work in Ganapati mandals and whether the Ganapati mandals for which they work are different. The responses I got for this question are as follows-

Table no. 6.6 – Supporters and the Ganapati mandals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Supporters in Mandal</th>
<th>Whether in the same Mandal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cong.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shivsena</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPI</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses of the corporators to the question, to what extent the Ganapati mandals are useful in political mobilization, developing a promising activists etc., are as follows-

Table no. 6.7 – Utility of Ganapati mandals for mobilization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>VG</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>CG</th>
<th>B/N</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cong.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPI</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VG: very good, G: good, CG: conditional good, B/N: bad or no use, NA: not applicable

Again in case of dependence upon or utility of the activists of Ganapati mandals, the trend continues. Congress, BJP and Shivsena are on the forefront in utilization of social base of activists of Ganapati mandals. In case of independents, it is the total dependence. But, RPI is not much dependent on the
members of Ganapati mandals. This is also reflected in the table regarding the perceived utility of Ganapati mandals.

The data regarding the relationship between the politicians at the grass roots level and the Ganapati mandals makes it clear that the politicians are not as closely related to the mandals, as it is widely perceived. The relationship between the politicians and the Ganapati mandals seems to more of user and used. The politicians seem to prefer to maintain certain distance from the Ganapati mandals and hire services of the activists of Ganapati mandals (for social and political base) in return of some donation to the mandals or some kind of patronage while the mandals provide services to the politicians but maintain their autonomy and do not like the politicians directly interfering in the mandal. The distance between the politicians and the concerned Ganapati mandals in the area depends upon the social composition of the constituency, the party infrastructure (if it is there) and the image as well as direct communication of the politician (if it is there). When the politicians could do electioneering on their own, they do not keep any relationship with the mandals while they do not have a support base provided by the party or of their own, they turn to mandals. The reason behind the distance being maintained by the politicians from the mandals is that the mandals have narrow approach towards the society. They are concerned only about the locality. Thus although the mandals and their activists are having direct and strong relationship with the people in the area, their scope is limited and for a politician who has to get elected from a municipal ward of about ten thousand voters, it is not prudent to be perceived as too dependent on some mandal which is related to average 150 homes. In order to get elected he has to garner support from as many sections as possible and at the same time take care that there is not any organized opposition from any quarter.

A news item regarding this phenomenon is noteworthy. This news was published when the campaigning for the assembly and the general election was on. It says- 'The candidates have suffered due to the Ganapati festival which is taking place while the campaigning is on. The Ganapati mandals in Pune City are nagging these candidates for economic assistance and the candidates have to struggle hard to keep away such mandals. The candidates have to face the demands from installing the pandals for the festival to donating music systems, loudspeaker sets, permanent structure for the temple, instruments for exercises and silver ornaments for the Ganapati idol of the mandals. Some leader of the mandal in the lane sends a word to
the (political) boss for discussions. He comes to the office of the politician along with a posse of activists. He completes the first round of negotiations by saying that the activists in the area have come and they wish to work (campaign) for you. ‘I do not want anything but the activists will have to be satisfied.’ Then the candidate verifies whether the leader of the mandal and his activists have made same offer to other politicians. Once, the politician is reported about whether the mandals has made offer to other candidates, the negotiation between the representatives of the politician and the mandal take place and the donation is offered when the candidate (or the politician himself who is the candidate) visits the mandal. But if the candidate refuses to give the donation, the group of activists of the mandals withdraws and moves to another candidate with renewed enthusiasm for the ‘settlement’. Now the supporters of the candidates have to handle a new responsibility of keeping a watch on the mandals who have moved to rival candidates.’ (Loksatta, Pune edition, in Pune Vruttant section, 5th September 1999.)

The news item throws more light on the negotiations between the politicians and the Ganapati mandals. Of course all the negotiations do not take place at the time of the election but many wise politicians continue to keep good rapport with the mandals well in advance.

As it has been earlier stated that there is variable distance between the politician and the Ganapati mandals in the area and the distance depends upon the social composition of the constituency, the party infrastructure (if it is there) and the image as well as direct communication of the politician (if it is there) with the masses. The point will become clearer by studying those who declared that they are not related to the Ganapati mandals. They are as follows-

Table No. 6.8 - Corporators not closely linked to the Ganapati festival

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>Reservation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chandrakanta Sonkambale</td>
<td>RPI</td>
<td>Veer Bhagatsingh Vidyalaya</td>
<td>SC Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bhganbai Jadhav</td>
<td>RPI</td>
<td>Fulenagar Yerwada</td>
<td>SC Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Navnath Kamble</td>
<td>RPI</td>
<td>Magarpatta</td>
<td>Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Satish Dhotre</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>Govt. Polytechnic</td>
<td>OBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sumantai Mathavad</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>Kothrud Gaothan</td>
<td>Open Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Vilas Vadekar</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>Sarsbagh</td>
<td>OBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Party</td>
<td>Ward</td>
<td>Reservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kamal Vyavhare</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>Panchhoud Mission</td>
<td>Open Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Dipti Choudhari</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>Jangali Mahraj Mandir</td>
<td>OBC Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Vandana Chavan</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>SP College</td>
<td>Open Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Padmaja Gole</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>BMCC</td>
<td>Open Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Vastala Andekar</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>Someshwar Mandir</td>
<td>OBC Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Usman Hiroli</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>DAD Colony Kondhava</td>
<td>OBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Devaki Shetty</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>Sasoon Hospital</td>
<td>Open Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Rashid Shaikh</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>General Vaidya Stadium</td>
<td>OBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Shashikala Kumbhar</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>Katraj Udyan</td>
<td>OBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Sarita Wadiyar</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>Hingane Gaothan</td>
<td>OBC Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Meenakshi Makhamale</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>Kasturba Smarak</td>
<td>OBC Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Pratibha Gandham</td>
<td>Shiva Sena</td>
<td>KEM Hospital</td>
<td>OBC Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Vikas Mathakari</td>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>Dyanprabodhinee</td>
<td>Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Sham Satpute</td>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>SNDT College, Erandavana</td>
<td>Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Jyotsna Sardeshpande</td>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>Shanivar Wada</td>
<td>Open Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Ujwala Ganjiwale</td>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>Mahatma Fule Mandae</td>
<td>OBC Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Surekha Pashanker</td>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>Bharat Natyamadir</td>
<td>OBC Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Uday Joshi</td>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>Vishrambaugwada</td>
<td>Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Rajlaxmi Bhosale</td>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>Hadapsar GAO</td>
<td>Open Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Kailas Kodre</td>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>Mundhawa</td>
<td>OBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Ankush Kakade</td>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>Rajendranagar</td>
<td>Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Kamal Dhole-Patil</td>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>Koregaon Park</td>
<td>Open Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Alaka Patil</td>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>Housing Board, Yerwada</td>
<td>Open Women</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table makes it clear that out of these 29 corporators who are not related to the Ganapati mandals and who have not worked in mandals like other activists, 19 are women and two are Muslims. Considering the tradition, there is nothing surprising that they are not linked to Ganapati mandals.

In case of remaining eight corporators, three (Vikas Mathakari, Uday Joshi and Sham Satpute) belong to Rashtrreeya Swayamsevak Sangh, which has its own agenda of Hinduism and its own program of grooming the activists hence they have backing of a powerful organization and don’t have to depend upon the Ganapati mandals. Also,
these three corporators with background of RSS have won from the ward where there are RSS workers in significant numbers. One member belongs to RPI and he has been elected from a ward where the number of Neobuddhist voters is decisive and hence he can afford to remain away from Ganapati festival. Remaining four corporators belong to Congress family and are expected to be linked to Ganapati festival. But out of these, Satish Dhotre (Congress) has been elected from ward consisting of mainly people from upper class. We have earlier seen that the upper class is averse to the mass event of Ganapati festival where there is no scope for exclusivity. Vilas Vadekar (Congress) has been closely linked to the movement of peasants and other leftist activities for a long time and thus has acquired an organizational support. Besides, he has been elected from a ward where there is significant presence of upper class voters who are not appreciative about Ganapati festival. There is a major locality of Joshi Samaj (a nomadic tribe) which supports Vadekar, en mass and hence, he does not require to be linked to Ganapati mandals. Kailas Kodre (NCP) belongs to an established family in Mundhawa and he has a good political background and thus does not require any launching pad like Ganapati mandal to start public life. He is also office bearer of a bank and through the activities of bank he has been able to help people and develop his support base. Ankush Kakade (NCP) is a former mayor and very famous personality. He has a good image and can fight the election on the basis of his image. Important point about him to be noted is that he is a staunch supporter of the senior leader of Maharashtra, Sharad Pawar. It is a common knowledge that Mr. Pawar has groomed Ankush Kakade right form the beginning of his political career. Mr. Pawar has supported Kakade wholeheartedly and thus he has benefited from the supporters of Pawar at the grass-roots level.

There are some important highlights of this interview based survey which will be helpful in understanding the relationship between the politicians at the grass roots level and the Ganapati festival as well as Ganapati mandals. These highlights are as follows-

Shailaja Khedekar (Congress, ward- 7.CME & Bopodi) got elected due to social and political activities of her husband. Husband Manikrao is an active member of Congress for more than last ten years. He said he was member of almost every mandal in the ward and president of four mandals in last 15 years. There is a slum in the area where he lives and the activists of the mandal used to clean the slum area. His wife is
his proxy candidate and it is him who is enjoying all the power as a member of PMC and also carrying out all the responsibilities.

Chandrakanta Sonkamble (RPI, ward-5, Veer Bhagatsingh Vidyalaya) belongs to neobuddhist community and obviously not linked to Ganpati mandals. She informed in an interview that she has an understanding with about six mandals. After she got elected (she had been elected in by-election before the 1997 election) some mandals on their own named her as their advisor. She actively helps the mandals and participates in their activities. Many of her supporters-activists work in Ganpati mandals, which include Muslim activists also. She participates in the procession and goes for aarti of Ganapati idol. In Republican Party most of the members belong to Buddhist religion. She is instrumental in arranging Dhammavandana (prayer according to Buddha religion) each week in the locality (with majority of Buddhas) and an elaborate Vandana on each full moon night, in which majority of men and women in the area participate. Sahebrao Sasane of Matanga caste recites Vandana. The Ambedkar Jayanti (birth anniversary) is celebrated with grandeur. She takes lead in collecting the contribution for it and the public celebrations including a procession continue for two days. Except the Ambedkar Jayanti she takes initiative in celebrating Mahatma Phule Jayanti, Savitribai Phule Jayanti, Annabhau Sathe Jayanti (Sathe was a leader belonging to Matang community) and Shivjayanti. She said that there are about 25 wards in Pune City where the supporters-sympathizers of the party are in significant numbers (but party could never win even half of those seats). The work for Ganesh Mandals and Shivjayanti is useful to communicate with other voters. Ganapatmandals are a medium for communicating with people and for carrying out social work. 'Others' have this advantage, according to her. In her ward there are about 5500 voters out of which 2500 are Buddhists and among remaining voters there are Muslim, OBCs, Matang and Christians.

Ashok Kamble (RPI, ward-9. Husensha Babanagar) started working for the party in 1984. He started a kindergarten in the locality with the help of Department of Social Welfare in 1985. Since, 1986 he got involved in efforts of solving civic problems. He got started a city bus from his area to the downtown area of Pune city. He displayed the timetable of city buses at the bus stop. He actively participated in the agitational programs of the party. He led a major agitation about the problems of distribution of food and kerosene and had to face a police case. The agitation was successful. At the same time he developed rapport with the local police. Hence,
people started to come to him to get the disputes solved. Thus he became a local leader and contested for the election to the PMC in 1992 but lost after getting 1700 votes (he was on the second position) He continued his agitations and led about 1500 people in a march to the office of the PMC regarding the scarcity of water. He won the 1997 election and became the member of the PMC. [So much details about his political rise have been given because it gives the indication of how an activist gets powerful and wins the election. In the subsequent information these details will become more relevant as a background.] Ashok Kamble started Samrat Ashok Mitramandal (a Ganapati mandal in the name of the legendary Buddha emperor) eight years ago (around 1992, the election year). He is also involved in Siddharth sports club, which used to run a gymnasium in Buddha-vihar and arrange cricket tournaments and body building shows. A mob of about 500 activists of the mandal accompanied him while he went to get the candidature. All these members of the mandal worked for him in the election. He said he works on the basis of the mandal. He keeps good understanding with four-five mandals. But he noted that the mandals are not that powerful in the slums. In his area Ambedkar’s movement is influential and Ambedkar Jayanti, Buddha Jayanti and Dhammachakra Parivaran Din (the day on which Babasaheb Ambedkar left Hinduism and embraced Buddha religion.) are celebrated with fervor. [In spite of developing politically by way of agitations and social work as well as living in an area where the Ambedkarites are influential, Ashok Kamble instituted his own mandal and depends upon Ganapati mandals for his political base.]

Bhaganbai Jadhav (RPI, ward-10, Fulenagar, Yerwada) does not have any relationship with Ganapati mandals. She lives in Ambedkar society, which is solely occupied by Neobuddha community. There are about 1200 voters in this housing society. Also, in the surrounding housing societies named Ahilya, Karuna and Parnakuti there are about 650 voters and most of these voters are supporters of RPI. There are total 7636 voters in this municipal ward and hence the cluster of about 1850 voters in which Bhaganbai Jadhav lives is decisive enough to elect their own candidate (Bhaganbai Jadhav was elected by getting 1382 votes.) Thus, Ambedkar society is the housing society, which is capable of successfully fielding its own candidate in the election to the municipal corporation with the support of like-minded voters in the neighborhood. It is not a coincidence that there is no Ganapati mandal in the society or the corporator does not have any understanding with the Ganapati
mandals in the area, as the society with its followers of Ambedkar, insists on Buddha religion and rejects Hindu practices. Getting elected in this ward depends primarily on the support of the Ambedkar housing society and the neighboring societies. Mr. Vijay Gaikwad from this area got elected two times earlier on the RPI ticket with the support of the housing society. This time in 1997 election the ward was reserved for a woman in scheduled caste. Hence, the leaders of the housing society appealed to members to file nominations to them for the candidature in the election. Three women filed their applications and voting was held in these four housing societies in which Bhaganbai Jadhav got maximum votes and thus she became the candidate of the housing societies. All those who tried to get the nomination from the housing society campaigned for Bhaganbai Jadhav and she won the election to the Pune Municipal Corporation. Ambedkar housing society consists of small bungalows and the people living in these houses belong to the middle and upper middle class. They have a good community hall in the housing society. All the religious, cultural and social activities of Ambedkarite movement and Buddha religion are held in the hall. [This is a noteworthy phenomenon. The neobuddhas living in the area are in sufficient numbers to get their candidate elected in the election to the Municipal Corporation and also they are having enough money as well as the space to assert their identity. There is no space for Ganapati Festival here.]

Bapurao Karne-Guruji (Independent, ward-11, Don Bosco School, Yerwada) was deeply involved in the activities of the organization of slum-dwellers led by the leftists, when he moved to the slum area where he resides. He was an active and aggressive member of the leftist movement. But, after moving to this slum he started a Ganapati Mandal although he continued with the leftist movement. He said that the Ganapati mandal became a platform for the activists to get together and to communicate. He made one successful attempt of amalgamation of few mandals in the area and formed a big mandal. Then he started work for Datta Temple in 1983. He continued to work for the Ganapati mandal until 1994 and concentrated on the activities of Datta temple. Now, the festival of the Datta temple is a major event in the area. A big procession is organized and lunch is arranged for people in the festival. [Although Bapurao Karne stopped working for Ganapati mandal he is working for another Hindu religious event which has turned out to be more useful as far as gaining publicity and social mobilization is concerned.]
Chandrakant Kate (Congress, ward-12, Dapodi) was practicing in the district court as a lawyer when in 1985 the local Kates were looking for a candidate to fight Macchindra Kalbhor, who was member of the PMC from the area for 17 years. Chandrakant Kate contested in the election as an independent with the support of the locals and won. Then he joined Congress (I) party and also got involved in the Ganapati mandals. In his area (i.e. Dapodi) although Ganapati mandals are there and they celebrate Ganapati festival, the locality (long ago it was an independent village) has its own festival called Urus celebrated on Mahavir Jayanti. It is the festival of goddess Firangai and people from all castes and religions participate in this festival. He is deeply involved in the Urus and took initiative in establishing a group of Dhol-Lezim players. [The points to be noted are that Kate was elected due to local political equations and it did not matter that prior to the election he was not involved in any public activities of significance. It is the festival of goddess Firangai, which is the platform of social mobilization in Dapodi and not the Ganapati festival.]

Meenakshi Makhamale (Congress, ward-15, Kasturba Memorial) is elected from an area on the outskirts of the city and the important part of her ward is the village of Ramwadi. According to her husband, Meenakshi got the candidature of the party thanks to political influence of her brother. The village of Ramwadi did not approve her candidature in general and the most important mandal in the village; Hind Tarun Mandal fielded its own candidate in the election to the PMC in 1997. Ironically Meenakshi lives behind the mandal but had to face the opposition of the mandal. But, other two mandals in the village supported Meenakshi as well as she got votes from areas of the ward other than the village and got elected. The social distance between the Hind Tarun Mandal and Meenadshi Makhamale has not reduced even after three years after the election. [No single mandal, whatever may be its size of the membership or otherwise importance, can single-handedly dominate the elections. When it comes to elections it is the combination of the mandals, which is important.]

Ulhas Dhole-Patil (Congress, ward-70, Wadia College) is one of the most senior members of the PMC. He was elected to the PMC in 1974 for the first time and since then has continued to be the member. He was elected or nominated to almost every office in the corporation. He is a former mayor. He has influence over surrounding municipal wards to the extent that he can get some candidates of his choice elected. His wife is elected in the neighboring ward of Koregaon Park (a posh locality where most of the residents belong to rich class) thanks to his influence. His grandfather was
president of the sub-urban board and uncle was a member of the PMC. His family had been rich and established family in the area. In spite of such a good political, social and economic background Ulhas Dhole-Patil has been involved in the activities of the Ganapati Mandals since 1952. He started with Tarun Vikas Mandal. He says that the Ganapati mandals have a lion’s share in political mobilization and developing a promising political worker. He rues that the Ganapati festival has strayed away from the original aims. Ulhas Dhole-Patil also leads Loksewa Mandal (Tadiwala road) and got built a Buddha temple by the mandal.

Anil Jadhav (Independent, ward-38, Laxminagar) feels that at the local level politics and Ganapati mandal are the same.

Shankar Pawar (Independent, ward- 41, Dandekar Bridge, Panmala) also feels that social work means working for mandal. (He organizes many public interest activities through his Navjawan Mitra Mandal, including helping for somebody's funeral)

Ananta Bhoj (Independent, ward-49, Hingane Stree Shikshan Sanstha) is a swayamsevak of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh since childhood. He has been working for Patit Pawan Sanghatana (part of RSS family) since 1973. But, when he moved his residence to this ward in 1983, he founded a Ganapati mandal. He feels that a Ganapati mandals is more useful in mobilizing common people than the RSS or Patit Pawan Sanghatana.

Sham Satpute (BJP, ward- 44, SNDT College, Erandawane) is associated with the activities of RSS, since 1969. He had to suffer imprisonment during the Emergency. He was working for Janata Party during 1977 to 1980 and then started working for Bhartiya Janata Party since 1980. He has held various important positions in the party for long period. He says that the activists of Ganapati mandals have become more commercial and do negotiate with the candidates (about providing support). The incidences of such negotiations have increased in last ten years. Those candidates who do not have support base or contact in the ward have to succumb to the mandals. [Satpute is not involved in activities of any mandal. He has a strong support of RSS-BJP network and hence does not need any mandal for support.]

Deepak Gawade (Shiv Sena, ward- 39, Janata Wasahat (Parwati)) is the only politician who has won the election by getting more than 5,000 votes. He is neither involved in any mandal nor has he an organization of his own. Practically, it is his one-man army by which he has been consistently returned from the constituency.
There are total 14,073 voters in his ward and the valid votes cast in the last election (1997) were 7,288. Gawade got elected by getting 5319 votes (73% of the valid votes) leaving far behind his rivals. Gawade’s case of political rise is a special one and throws light on the reliable alternative ways of mobilization and support except Ganapati mandals. He lives in the slum of *Janata Wasahat*. The municipal corporation had planned to relocate this slum at Bibawewadi. Gawade narrated the history of his fight and told that when the scheme for relocation was declared some of the slum dwellers went to the new site and found that it was not so easy to migrate and the opposition to the scheme started increasing and unknowingly Gawade was dragged in the movement against the migration. He fought the election to the PMC in 1985 and lost it by getting only 200 votes. But, this defeat was also helpful to him as thanks to it, popular perception about him changed and people started taking him seriously as a politician. Balasaheb Raut of Congress got elected in that election and subsequently became mayor of Pune. But Raut could not keep his election promises and couldn’t oppose the policy of migration. Hence, the slum dwellers approached Gawade. He put a condition that there should be at least ten-twelve people with him (in the fight against migration) and they should not leave company until the end of the fight. All of these comrades went to the statue of Swatyantrveer V. D. Sawarkar and took oath before it to fight against the migration. Gawade and others filed a writ petition in the High Court against the migration scheme. Meera Bapat of Communist party helped these people in their fight. Ultimately the petition was dismissed but the corporation made it clear that the scheme of relocation would be voluntary and not compulsory. (It was a victory for Gawade and his comrades) Meanwhile some people had migrated from the Janata Wasahat to the Bibawewadi and the space vacated due to their migration was occupied by new people. One day an officer of the PMC came to the Janata Wasahat to raze the hutments alongwith his staff members. The angry mob beat him up and thus a background for large-scale agitation was developed. There were no civic amenities like water supply and public toilets in the slum. People were not getting ration cards. Hence, Gawade and his comrades formed *Zopadpatti Vikas Kruti Samitee* (Slum development action committee). He entered Shiv Sena in 1987 and started a branch of the party in the area. In the meantime he had contact with the communists but realized the communists do not have the power to protect him and his comrades. Shiv Sena had successfully opposed razing of the hutments way back in 1971. (Incidentally it were the communists who had helped him in his pursuit of the
writ petition by which in 1987, the PMC had to retract and declare the scheme as a voluntary one. Steadily the razing of the hutments stopped. The problem of getting ration cards was still there for new slum dwellers. Gawade led a march of five thousand people for ration cards in 1989. Then the distribution of ration cards started. Thus the political base was developed for Gawade. He won elections in 1992 and 1997. He says the Ganapati mandals are not of much use for political purpose. It is the personal efforts that count.

Balasaheb Mokate (BJP, ward- 48, Navsahyadri Society) is associated with RSS since, childhood. He has worked as a vistarak (propagator) of the RSS. He lives in Kothrud and was working for the RSS when there were very few workers of the RSS in the area. He has held offices of BJP since 1980 (when the party was founded) and has fought elections to the PMC thrice on the party ticket. He got elected in the election in 1997. In spite of such a strong background of the RSS and its affiliates, Mokate has been working for the Samasta Gaokari Mandal, Kothrud. He has worked for the mandal on all positions in the mandal and was the president of the mandal when its golden jubilee was celebrated in 1995. He feels that the Ganapati mandal has good utility for politics. The local leadership is developed through the mandal. The feeling of working collectively is inculcated in mandals. [Mokate is closely linked to RSS and BJP and yet unlike his colleagues in the party he was deeply involved in the activities of a Ganapati mandal. This may be because the municipal ward (in the area of Kothrud) where he has been trying to develop his support base had not been unilaterally dominated by the supporters and well wishers of the RSS. In case of those members of BJP, with the background of RSS, like Sham Satpute and Vijay Kale, who reject the political importance of Ganapati mandals, the wards in which they have been elected are unilaterally dominated by brahminical voters who support the RSS. In such wards getting elected to the PMC depends upon getting the candidature of the BJP. Once, you get the ticket of BJP and do not make any blunder you are bound to win in those wards. There is no need for extensive campaigning and developing support.]

Sarita Wadiyar (Congress, ward- 50, Hingane Gaonthan) is a classic example of how somebody without any political background or support base of significance can get elected to the PMC, thanks to the policy of reservation. The ward from where she got elected was reserved for women of the Other Backward Castes. Thus the candidate had to be from other backward caste as well as a woman. It resulted in a
limited scope for competition among candidates. Sarita Wadiyar had an advantage as her husband who is a government employee working in the excise department had an acquaintance with the top most politician in the city, Suresh Kalamadi. Thus, she got the candidature of the party and the rest was not that difficult. Yet, she also insists that some Ganapati mandals in the area worked for her in the election.

**Damodar Kumbare** (Congress, ward- 52, Gandhi Bhawan, Kothrud) was one of the important lieutenants of Shashikant Sutar (former minister of agriculture and the important Shiv Sena leader in the city who once enjoyed total control in the sub-urban area of Kothrud). Later he fell out with Sutar and joined Congress. He won the election to the PMC in 1997. He says that he had been working for a Ganapati mandal called Amar Tarun Mandal since his school days and had been the president of the mandal for twenty years. He says he started his public life with working in Ganapati mandal. He informed that in those days (when he was an active member of the Ganapati mandal) the mandals were respected because ‘they’ used to take interest in the problems people had to face. The activists of the mandals were loyal; who have turned commercial now. Now, the activists take money (for campaigning). The activists started getting money in the elections to the parliament and state legislature. Such incidences (of campaigning for money) increased since the election to the PMC in 1992. Although the mandals still have utility for political purposes, the people are having strong political opinions and they don’t listen to mandals. (As the mandals take money for campaigning). For continued contact with people and communication with them, it is necessary to attend the ‘satyanarayan pooja’, marriages and funerals. If somebody is having good contact with people, then people vote for such a person ignoring the party affiliations, he said.

**Subhash Jagatap** was an influential member of the PMC for the period 1992-1997 and his wife, Usha (Independent, ward- 35, V. S. Khandekar Vidyalaya, Sahakarnagar) was elected as his proxy candidate. Subhash Jagatap is staunch supporter of Sharad Pawar and associated to the Congress for a long period. He says he started his social activities through the Ganapati mandal named, Mahatma Gandhi Tarun Mandal. He informed that he withdrew from the activities of the mandal in 1990 and made some other activist the president of the mandal. He says that he keeps some distance from the mandals because there are about 20-25 mandals. If he gets involved with some mandal then other mandals get disappointed. But, according to Subhash Jagatap, the Ganapati mandal does help some promising political activist as
once he becomes the president of the mandal, he gets about one hundred to two hundred workers at his disposal who help in the election also the votes of their family members are casted for the president of the mandal. The Ganapati mandals are not useful in mobilizing people but they are certainly useful to mobilize activists.

**Subrao Kadam** (Congress, ward- 55, Gurujan Society, Kothrud) is younger brother of the senior minister of the state, Patangrao Kadam. Subrao Kadam has rural background. He hails from village Sonsal in Sangali District. He came to Pune in 1975 for education and got involved in the activities of the Congress party. He has been elected thrice for the PMC. He informed that the candidates have to maintain good understanding with the mandals in the city as there are no village panchayat or large and effective group of relatives as it is in the villages. [In the course of interview he also commented that the mandals, which have been helped by a politician for five years, might also take antagonistic stand in the elections hence, the politician has to be careful]

**Anita Bhamare** (Shiv Sena, ward- 88, Mitramandal) is wife of Balasaheb Bhamare. He was elected from this ward in a bye-election. His wife is his proxy candidate and it was he who answered questions. He lives in a congested locality of Parwati Darshan. He has established Ganapati mandal. His case is a classic example of how a mandal can be utilized for some exclusionist purpose, which ultimately helped him in developing political support. He emphasized that he started his public life with participation in Ganapati mandal. In locality where he lives there is significant proportion of Muslim population. There is some open space and an attempt was being made to build a mosque there. Bhamare and his friends erected a pandal of their mandal- Manmodya Mhasoba Mitra Mandal, on the land and occupied it. [Thus, an attempt of building a mosque was defeated] He felt that he should join hands with some Hinduist force, hence he joined Patit Pawan Sanghatana and started its branch in the area. He continued his social work like organizing blood donation camp through Ganapati mandal and he had been celebrating the Ganapati festival with great fervor. This, (according to him) put Muslims at bay. Yet, the scuffles with Muslim group continued with a frequency of one in a fortnight. He continued to work for Patit Pawan Sanghatana (PPS) and later switched to Shiv Sena as he had some problems in PPS and wanted to continue his work in some Hinduist force. He started a branch of Shivsena in the area. The piece of land where mandal used to erect a pandal was remaining vacant for the rest of year except Ganapati festival. Bhamare and his
friends occupied the space and decided to build a gymnasium there. Bhamare did not
contest in the election to the PMC in 1985 but supported the candidate of Congress,
Prakash Pawar (with a tacit understanding that Pawar will help in building a
gymnasium and a compound wall) With Bhamare's support Pawar got elected and
built two halls for a gymnasium as well as a compound wall for the entire piece of
land (And thus any chances of building a mosque on the disputed land ended.) With it
the understanding between Bhamare and Pawar ended and also Bhamare got the
confidence that he can get somebody elected. He decided to contest in the election to
the PMC in 1992 on the ticket of Shivsena. He lost the election to Prakash Pawar with
300 votes. But he became the member of the PMC in the by-election in the same ward
after the demise of Prakash Pawar. In 1997 election the ward was reserved for
women. Balasaheb Bhamare could not contest this time hence his wife was given the
candidature of the party and she won thanks to his growing influence and social
activities. [The Ganapati mandal came in handy for Bhamare to fight the Muslim
group in his area as well as to develop his support base. But this does not mean that he
has antagonistic relationship with entire Muslim community in the locality. When I
was interviewing Bhamare, an old Muslim lady had come to his home along with her
daughter. Her son-in-law was not treating her daughter well and she wanted Bhamare
to intervene in this domestic problem.]

Vikas Mathakari (BJP, ward- 118, Dyanprbodhini) is a typical example of how
an activist can develop politically through the system of RSS and its affiliates. The
tradition of working for RSS has been there in his family since his grandfather. He
was living in Amalner (North Maharashtra) before migrating to Pune for higher
education. He was deeply involved in the activities of Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi
Parishad (ABVP, a student wing in RSS family) After coming to Pune he completed
his post graduate education, joined the service at the same time in 1989 he joined BJP
to enter politics. He was given the responsibility of organizational work in the Parvati
assembly constituency. Then he was nominated as the general secretary of the youth
wing of the party in the city and he led many agitations. He was then appointed to the
post of secretary of the city unit of BJP. Meanwhile he got the party ticket for the
election to the PMC from Dnyanprabodhini ward. He got elected with a slender
margin in a keenly contested election. Thus, he became politically established in the
city thanks to the channels of RSS and at no point of his political career he was
involved with any Ganapati mandal. But, he says that Ganapati mandals are useful for
social work as through a mandal an organized group of young men is available also the funds are available. Mandals have popular recognition and they are a very good platform for getting exposure at the local level. But the inherent tendency of the mandals is against the politicization, he says.

Arun Zagade (Shiv Sena, ward- 89, Parvati Gaonthan) said that he had the experience of social work thanks to Ganapati mandal. His interest in social work developed due to Ganapati mandal. If somebody is to enter public life he has to have one or two Ganapati mandals under his control. When somebody works for Ganapati mandal, he goes from door to door for collecting contribution thus he gets known to people in the area. Thus Ganapati mandals are useful for public relations.

Sanjay Balgude (Congress, ward- 90, Swarget Police Line) is the president of one important Ganapati mandal, Khadakmal Ali Ganapati mandal, and has inherited the presidency of the mandal from his father. Yet, he strongly believes that the Ganapati mandals do not have any utility in the elections. (He also believes that it is a myth that the mandals have political potential.) According to him the success in the elections depends upon the contacts of the candidate, the campaigning by the activists and the political environment at the time of the election. One can only get activists through Ganapati mandals. In Ganapati mandals there are only 10 to 12 activists who are really involved in the activities of the mandal. The family members of the activists of the mandal do not listen to them while voting. If somebody has to do some social work then there is no need for Ganapati mandals. One can carry out social activities through a trust or organization, he said.

Vilas Wadekar (Congress, ward- 91, Sarsbaug) thinks that there is no relationship between Ganapati mandals and the politics in the city. When an activist works in a Ganapati mandal, his public relations develop. When he becomes the president of the mandal, his identity as a public figure is established. But the mandals have limited reach. The mandal works in the same pocket. Also there are activists belonging to different political parties in the mandal and hence, the political power gets divided. Thus working in the Ganapati festival through Ganapati mandals do not lead to success in politics. The activist of a mandal has limited perspective. One who helps people in getting ration cards or solves the problems regarding drainage and water supply develops his different identity.

Ramdas Pawar (Congress, ward- 99, Model Colony) has won the election to the PMC for five times and rose to the position of deputy mayor of the city. He is an
important leader of wadar community. He feels that the Ganapati festival is the basis of politics. Social workers and members of PMC have developed through Ganapati festival. Other festivals are celebrated for one or two days while Ganapati festival is celebrated for ten days. Due to Ganapati festival the social activist maintains relations with people.

**Mukari Algude** (Independent, ward- 98, Wadarwadi) is a member of Congress who won the election as an independent defeating a well established senior leader of Congress, Shreekant Shirole. He is well involved in the activities of Ganapati mandal. He informed that there is a *panchayat* of wadar community. (He lives in Wadarwadi, a locality where majority of the residents belong to wadar community.) The problems of community members are solved by the panchayat. The community celebrates its annual festivals on Nagpanchami and Holi as well as the next day of Holi. But in Ganapati festival people belonging to other communities join. [The mobilization and communication of wadar community is done through the festivals of the community but Mukari finds the Ganapati festival and Ganpati mandal useful to communicate with people of other communities as everybody joins Ganapati festival]

**Uday Joshi** (BJP, ward- 116, Vishrambaugwada) has won in a municipal ward where supporters of RSS and BJP are dominant and getting elected from this ward depends upon getting the candidature of the BJP. But the fact that Uday Joshi won by getting 71% of the valid votes cast indicates that he could get votes of those who are not traditional voters of BJP. He has been instrumental in establishing three groups - *Nishachar*, *Ninad* and *Janabharati*, which are engaged in the cultural and social activities. The first of these is *Nishachar* and it led to the start of other two groups. The *Nishachar* in Marathi means one who wanders in the night. The group was started from among those who gather to chitchat in the night after dinner at some public place in the locality. Usually such groups of people sit on the doorsteps of shops (which are closed by then). Such places where people gather to chitchat are called *Kattas*. About 25 political activists gather on the *Katta* where Uday Joshi frequents. Most of these political activists are supporters of BJP. Many citizens who need political assistance come to this *Katta* for communication. Uday Joshi told that people do not gather at *Katta* for political purpose but the reason is their interest in cultural developments. [But the fact is that the *Katta* has become a consistent and cheaper platform of political communication as it is attended regularly by people in the area and they talk in informal way and it develops more understanding. In Uday
Joshi's case this informal platform of political communication has turned out to be helpful. But his is not the only case. There are many kattas in the city, especially in the downtown areas where political communication among the activists goes on in an informal manner. The groups developed on the kattas form a Ganapati mandal or those who are working together in the Ganapati mandals in the locality have their own katta. Thus the culture of katta is helpful in continuing the communication in the rest of the year apart from Ganapati festival. Uday Joshi, although not a deeply involved activist of Ganapati mandal, remarked that an activist develops through Ganapati mandal and he develops liking for social work.

Kamal Vyavhare (Congress, ward- 111, Panchhoud Mission) got married to her husband Dyanraj in 1975. He has been interested in politics and Kamal Vyavhare used to accompany him to the political meetings. Thus, she became active in politics by 1977. She became the president of the women's wing of city unit of Congress(S) in 1978. She got the candidature of the party for election to the PMC in 1985 but lost in the election. Then she migrated to the downtown area in 1986 and started preparations for election to the PMC. In 1992, the neighboring ward was reserved for women and she got the candidature from there and won the election. She became mayor in 1996-97 and went to the election in 1997 as mayor. She won the election in 1997 with significant margin. Meanwhile, she became director of state board for labor welfare in 1988, general secretary of women's wing of the state unit of the Congress party and general secretary of the state unit of the Congress party. She became the office bearer of the influential education institute- Shivaji Maratha, after 1985, which helped her to solve problem of admissions to schools of the people in the area. Neither she nor her husband was ever actively involved in the activities of any Ganapati mandal. In spite of such illustrious political career and no involvement in Ganapati mandal, she says, the Ganapati mandals are extremely useful politically as the activists of the mandal support the politician. Many social initiatives are undertaken by the mandal like distributing notebooks to poor students, arranging health camps and helping people in need. The Ganapati mandals help the activist for public relations and developing an image.

Dipti Choudhari (Congress, ward- 100, Jangali Maharaj Mandir) is neither associated with any Ganapati mandal nor has she been conventional congress worker. She had been working in Jaycee's group around 1989 and had also been the president of the group. She had arranged a children's meet in the Nehru Stadium for four days in
1996 which was visited by fifty thousand children. She, along with her husband Ravi is member of organizing committees of Pune Marathon and Pune Festival. She had also participated in the organizational work of National Games. All these events are led by Suresh Kalamadi. Thus, the Choudharis have been close to Kalamadi. In 1997, when the election to the PMC was held the couple had been living in the sub-urban area of Kothrud. The ward was reserved for OBC women and Congress did not have good candidate in the ward. The most of the residents of the ward belong to upper class and the BJP had been traditionally successful in the area. Congress did not have good chance of winning the election in this ward. Ravi Choudhari, under the guidance of Kalamadi planned and executed the strategy of campaigning. Dipti Choudhari contacted every home in the ward thrice as part of the campaigning. She is a beauty therapist by profession and has a pleasant personality. Thus, she won the election in this upmarket ward thanks to the well planned campaigning and her personality. [A candidate without any involvement in the Ganapati mandals or without being a conventional political worker could win in the election because the choice of the voters was limited due to reservation and the constituency is of upmarket people- who are not so much interested in the mass events like Ganapati festival] Dipti Choudhari says that she doesn't feel that the Ganapati mandals are a medium for political and social activities. For politics the personal communication with the people is of the most importance. Ganapati mandals are useful for novices to enter politics.

**Vandana Chavan** (Congress, ward- 93, S. P. College) is a lawyer and had been practicing in the court since 1985. She says that she had been interested in social work but not in politics. She had worked for Pune Marathon and the Youth Meet as a volunteer. She had acquaintance with many politicians who are advocates. (Her father is a reputed lawyer and has very good contacts in political circles, especially of Congress). In the elections to the PMC held in 1992, the reservation for women was introduced for the first time and the municipal ward where she lives was reserved for women. Ankush Kakade (former mayor and senior leader of Nationalist Congress Party) used to represent this ward. Kakade offered Vandana Chavan the nomination by Congress party in this ward. She filed her nomination papers for the election. Kakade and his supporters campaigned for her and she got elected. After three years, she became member of PMC, she was given party ticket in the Shivajinagar constituency of the legislative assembly, by Sharad Pawar. She contested unsuccessfully. But she continued to work in the constituency and was again given the
ticket by Congress in the Shivajinagar constituency of the state legislature. Again, she lost the election due to the division of votes due to split in the Congress party. Meanwhile, Vandana Chavan got elected to the PMC again in 1997 and became the mayor of Pune City. She was nominated as general secretary of the state unit of the Congress party and was also nominated as the chief of the human rights cell of party. Thus, she has an illustrious political career like Kamal Vyavhare. But Vandana Chavan’s opinions about political importance of Ganapati mandals differ from those of Kamal Vyavhare. Vandana Chavan says that since she does not give the mandals donations as per their expectations, they are never happy with her, in fact they oppose her to some extent. She is not dependent on the activists of the mandals for campaigning in the elections. She says that although the mandals are a ‘fantastic media’ nowadays, the mandals are having unreasonable expectations (from the politicians) and they have forgotten the original aim of the festival!

Vivek Shinde (BJP, ward- 101, Engineering College) has a good political background as his father was elected thrice as a member of PMC (in 1950s) and he had been the leader of Kumbhar community. Vivek Shinde was involved in political activities since 1978 when he campaigned for the candidate of Janata Party. He had been attending the shakha of RSS in the childhood and had campaigned for the candidates of BJP-SS combine in the elections in 1980, 1985 and 1992 as well as the elections to the legislative assembly and the parliament. He had been involved in the activities of the nearby Zashi Rani Chowk mandal before switching to the Azad Vyayam Mandal, an important mandal in his municipal ward. He is president of the Azad Vyayam Mandal. He has held the post of president in the Zashi Rani Chowk Mandal also for three years. He says that the activities undertaken through the Ganapati mandal are useful for political purpose. But, if you concentrate on one mandal others get disappointed. [In spite of his long relationship with the RSS and the BJP he has also been involved in the Ganapati mandal. Thus, although the politicians developed through the channels of RSS and BJP are quite averse to the mass event of Ganapati festival, this can not be a rule and Vivek Shinde is an exception to the BJP pattern. Of course, he has not moved up in the ranks of BJP and can not be considered as the typical member of BJP.]

Bapu Kamble (BJP, ward- 81, Timber Market) was deeply involved in the activities of RSS and then switched over to BJP and won the election to the PMC, with the help of Ganapati mandals, in a ward where socialists have been traditionally
influential. He was working for the Ekbote colony branch of the RSS where he carried out various organizational responsibilities. He participated in the agitations for the Ram temple at Ayodhya in 1988, 1989 and 1992. Then he was asked to work for BJP and given the responsibility in Parvati assembly constituency as the president of the youth wing of the party in the constituency. He developed contacts in the slums and thus developed his group of activists. In 1995 he was nominated as the vice-president of the front for slums of the city unit of the party. In 1997 he was given party ticket for the elections to the PMC. The municipal ward from where he has won the election is not favorable for BJP but it has been traditionally the stronghold of the socialists. He says he got elected due to the contacts he had with people in the area. He informed that there are 40 Ganapati mandals in his ward and out of them 11 mandals have accepted his leadership. In his opinion the Ganapati mandals are very much useful in politics. One gets an opportunity to do social work through the mandals. One can develop one’s set of workers in Ganapati mandal. People have affinity for those working in mandals and they give more respect to the mandals than to the political parties. People take their local problems to the mandals. In the municipal ward which he represents there are 1500 hutments and 45% population is of Muslims. The next populous group other than the Muslims is of Dalits. [In the course of interview he informed that if in a locality of Hindu people, there are five or six homes of the Muslims, then at least one person from every Muslim family joins Ganapati mandal. But if a locality is dominated by the Muslims then they don’t join the Ganapati festival or Ganapati mandal and the handful of Hindus living there form their mandal.]

Ashok Patole (Independent, ward- 109, Samata Bhumi) had established Dalit Swayamsevak Sangh in 1977 by holding function before Shaniwarwada. The organization was established to raise voice against the injustice done against the Dalits in the rural parts of Maharashtra. The organization worked all over Maharashtra to solve the problems of people and to spread the thoughts of Mahatma Phule and Babasaheb Ambedkar in the villages. The activists of the organization went to the localities of the Dalits in the villages and tried to remove the superstitions. In some places the activists of the organization under the leadership of Patole had to face stiff (and sometimes violent) resistance. People challenged them asking how can they advocate to forget God. The activities of these young activists were supported by the socialists and they got publicity all over the state. These young men continued their
movement against the superstitions for fifteen years. Patole and his friends also tried to ‘discipline’ the Ganapati festival from 1982 to 1987. They succeeded in stopping the spraying of Gulal and the transgressional behavior of the activists. This ‘transformation’ was successful in about 30 mandals. In the elections to the PMC in 1985 and 1992 Patole helped two candidates to win election in his ward. He had campaigned in about five elections. He had acquired power as he had support of both, Dalit Swayamsevak Sangh and the Ganapati mandals in the area. In his municipal ward about 70% people belong to Dalit castes and among the remaining people the most are Muslims. Among the Dalits majority are Matang and Chambhar and the Neobuddhas are very few (No wonder the Ganapati mandals are influential.). Askok Patole says, working for Ganapati mandals is the beginning of the public life of an activist. He gets training over there. An activist working for a Ganapati mandal goes to people to collect the contribution and people go to him in case of any difficulty. The activist develops good contacts with police department. His image as a social worker develops through Ganapati mandals. He develops public relations and his set of workers through Ganapati mandal.

Sunil Kamble (BJP, ward- 28, Market Yard) has been working in the RSS since childhood. He was office bearer of the RSS for some years. He participated in the Ram Jannabhoomi agitation in 1989 and 1992. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad also had given him some responsibility. Then he was asked to work for the Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad. He worked for ABVP in the period 1992-1995 in Mumbai as a full-time worker. He came to Pune in 1995. In 1995 his brother, Dilip got elected to the legislative assembly from the Parvati constituency on the ticket of the BJP. Dilip Kamble subsequently became minister in the state cabinet. It was decided that some activists of the ABVP should work for BJP hence, he switched over to the BJP. In 1997 he won the election to the PMC as a BJP candidate. He has been working for Ganapati mandal since childhood. He says in a Ganapati mandal a set of activists is available (for the person who takes initiative). The work in Ganapati mandal helps to develop image and contacts with people.

Rashid Sheikh (Congress, ward- 80, General Arunkumar Vaidya Stadium) is not a member of any Ganapati mandal. He says that it is a misunderstanding of people that the mandals make difference in the elections. The mandals are dominated by people of different opinions and one can not be sure about them in the elections. He had participated in the campaigning in 1985 and 1992 elections and contested for the
first time in 1997 and won the election as a congress candidate. He does not have any institution under his control. He is busy with his business and won with the support of the party. In his municipal ward there are about 3200 Muslim voters and he won by getting total 2367 votes.

Rajlaxmi Bhosale (Congress, ward- 21, Hadapsar Gaon) belongs to a rich and influential family. She had participated in the agitations of Shetkari Sanghatana in 1981. She had participated in the campaigning since 1975. She got the party ticket for the election to the PMC in 1997 and won with significant majority. Her husband was involved in the activities of Congress party for long time. She says she had very good assistance of the activists of Ganapati mandals for campaigning in the election to the PMC. Her observation about Ganapati mandals is that Ganapati mandals are very useful for work in politics. The medium of mandals is useful for men and not for women.

Anil Shirole (BJP, ward- 95, Deccan Gymkhana) was involved in the activities of Patit Pawan Sanghatana in 1970 to 1972 when he had also become the president of the Sanghatana. Then he participated in the activities of the RSS since, 1973. In 1976, he had to suffer imprisonment during emergency for one year. In 1992 he got the ticket of the BJP for the election to the PMC and he won the election. Again in 1997 he was given candidature of the party and he won again. He unsuccessfully fought the election to the legislative assembly in Bopodi constituency in 1999. In 2000, he became president of the city unit of the BJP. Thus for most of the time of his political career he had been working for RSS and BJP. He did not find Ganapati mandals useful for himself but feels that in general the Ganapati mandals are very useful for politics.

Shankar Patil (BJP, ward- 29, Bibawewadi Gaothan) participated in various activities of RSS since, childhood. In 1975, during the emergency, he took part in the campaign against the emergency. He had been involved in the campaigning for the candidates of BJP in almost every election. In 1997, he was given party ticket and he won the election to the PMC from his ward. He says the Ganapati mandals are not useful for politics. The mandals expect money for campaigning and there is not consistency in the support provided by the mandals. It is important to maintain direct communication with people. He also informed that he has been helping the mandals and had given the donations of about Rs. 5,00,00 but it has not resulted in any
political utility. In his opinion except the Dagadusheth Halwai Ganapati Mandal the
other mandals don’t seem to be involved in developing public awareness.

Shashikala Kumbhar (Congress, ward- 31, Katraj Udyon) has been member of
Sevadal (a voluntary organization of Congress). She had been living in the Janata
Vasahat and was rehabilitated with others in this area. When she came here in the area
of Indiranagar (near Bibawewadi) there were no civic amenities like water supply,
electric supply etc. She named the area where she lived as Super Indiranagar and led
the marches for civic amenities since 1987. Thanks to the agitations, water was
supplied by tankers. She established Priyadarshani Mahila Mandal in 1987 in which
all the residents of Super Indiranagar participated. Then Shashikala Kumbhar and her
women colleagues in the Priyadarshani Mahila Mandal formed a Ganapati mandal as
Akhil Super Rahivasi Seva Sangh (and handed it over to young men) and participated
in the activities of the mandal till 1992. She got some problems about civic amenities
solved before contesting in the election to the PMC in 1992 as a Congress candidate.
After the election as the member of the PMC, she started a school by Priyadarshini
Mahila Mandal. She contested in the election to the PMC again in 1997 and got
elected. In 1992 she had won the election from a ward of about 27,000 voters. She
says that the Ganapati mandals are useful for a young man to enter politics and
develop his image, but he has to do social work through Ganapati mandals. [In spite
of her significant social work and support base, Shashikala Kumbhar was instrumental
in establishing a Ganapati mandal.]

Batul Ayyaj Kazi (Congress, ward- 62, Government Milk Dairy) is a proxy
candidate of her husband, Ayyaj Kazi. Although a Muslim, Ayyaj Kazi has formed a
Ganapati mandal named 26th January Ganapati Mandal. He is also the founder of
Navjiwan Samajseva Mandal and got built the Mariaai Temple. He is involved in
many social activities, like helping accident victims. He says the Ganapati mandals
have helped him in his political activities. He helps about 22 Ganapati mandals. He
has fought in four elections to the PMC and says the campaigning had been done by
the activists of the Ganapati mandals. He has also built a temple of God Shiva. He
celebrates (through his mandals) Ambedkar Jayanti, Annabhau Sathe Jayanti, Ramzan
Id and Christmas on a large scale.

Deepak Mankar (Congress, Co-opted) started his public life with involvement in
Ganapati mandal, Navjeet Tarun Mandal. He had contact with former Member of
Parliament from the city, Vitthalrao Gadgil due to the activities of his mandal. He
campaigned for him with his colleagues in the mandal. Thus, he started political life in 1978. Then he was appointed as the vice-president of the Pune unit of Youth Congress. He continued to work for various political leaders and also got important positions in the party. Now, he claims that he has a group of about six thousand young activists at his command. He concentrated on the sub-urban area of Karvenagar and developed his support base there by undertaking some developmental works. But due to the reservation in the wards where he had developed his support base, he could not contest in the election to the PMC in 1997. He was co-opted as the member of the PMC. [Mankar is considered as one of the most important upcoming congress politicians in the city.] He says that the Ganapati mandals are useful (politically) only in the initial stage in order to develop one’s image and get the exposure in the public. But as the area of operation of the Ganapati mandal is limited, he doesn’t think that any activist gets influential due to Ganapati mandal.

Shantilal Suratwala (Nationalist Congress Party, Co-opted) is known as the man of Ganapati mandals. He lives in the downtown area and is famous for his innovative ways of getting publicity and solving problems. He told that he had become the president of the Dagadusheth Halawai Ganapati mandal at the age of 18 for one year and then formed his own mandal, Babu Genu Tarun Mandal, in the nearby area at the age of 19. He had been associated with this mandal for long period. For last five years he had been associated with Chakravarti Ashok Mandal. He has won the election to the PMC in 1979, 1985 and 1992 and co-opted as a member in 1997. Thus he has been member of the PMC for a long period. He became mayor of the city in 1992 and president of the city unit of the Nationalist Congress Party in 1999. He says when he won elections to the PMC thrice it were the activists of Ganapati mandals who campaigned for him. He got significant publicity as the important activist of Ganapati mandal due to his innovative initiatives like providing coins when there was shortage of coins (these coins were gathered thanks to the devotees who came for darshan of Ganapati and put some coins before the idol) or providing some part of the contribution collected for Ganapati festival for repairing old houses or temples. He has started a blood bank and provided blood to many needy persons. In spite of the fact that he got all the publicity through Ganapati mandals and the activists of the mandals campaigned for him, he says that the there is no political utility of Ganapati mandals and the political support of the voters depends upon the personal contact the activist is having with people. [He says he developed close contact with people due to
attending the marriages and funerals as well as helping people when somebody is hospitalized. [In course of interviewed he rued that the hooliganism crept into Ganapati festival around 1985 and it increased to a significant level after 1990. Now this phenomenon has reached its extreme level. Now the activists of Ganapati mandals do not go door to door for collecting contribution as they used to be and only approach the merchants for contribution. Nowadays the activists collect the contribution from the shopkeepers by arm twisting and do not consider whether the shopkeeper could afford to give that much money. Earlier in every mandal groups of about fifty activists used to work overnight to develop the decoration of the mandal. They used to work continuously by eating only snacks. Now, the activists of the mandal do not work themselves but give contract for everything. Now the only work remained for the activists is of collecting the contribution. Yet, if some activist is to develop politically, he has to work in Ganapati mandal, he says.]

Ramesh Bagave (Congress, ward- 84, Gurunanaknagar) is a powerful leader of Matang (a Dalit caste) community. He has established the Matang Ekata Andolan in 1982 to mobilize the matang community and to solve the problems of his people. He worked all over state for his organization and developed his set of supporters and well wishers all over the state. He contested in the election to the legislative assembly unsuccessfully in 1984. He won the elections to the PMC in 1985, 1992 and 1997. He had been chairman of the standing committee of the PMC. He has also been nominated on the working committee of the state unit of the party. He says that his organization is his power base. He observed that the Ganapati mandals are more in numbers in the slums. The number of Ganapati mandals is directly proportional to the number of political parties. Earlier the Ganapati mandals were according to the lanes and they were useful for mobilization. Now, the Ganapati mandals are not useful for mobilization. Now, there are more incidences of gambling done in the vicinity of the pandal. This trend has been more significant in last seven-eight years, he observed.

Ankush Kakade (Congress, ward- 94, Rajendranagar) is one of the most influential politicians in the city. He became the president of the city unit of the Youth Congress in 1979. He was promoted as the general secretary of the city unit of the Congress in 1982 for three years. He became director of the Maharashtra State Cooperative Housing Finance Corporation in 1982 and became its president in 1991-1992. He became member of the PMC in 1985 from the ward, which consists of Navi Peth and was again elected to the PMC in 1992 and in 1997. He became mayor of the
city in 1988-89. He was also nominated on various important political positions and has also been office bearer of various organizations and institutions. He unsuccessfully fought the election to the legislative assembly from the Shivajinagar constituency as the candidate of the Nationalist Congress Party. Now, he is the leader of the group of corporators of the NCP in PMC. He says he worked for Ganapati mandal way back in 1970 to 1975 and then left the mandal. He says in the election he himself does his campaigning with the help of selected supporters. He simply rejects the thesis that the Ganapati mandals are useful for politics. He says Ganapati mandals are dependent on the person who is leading the mandal. He says that the political support depends upon the programs one arranges. [It is well known that Ankush Kakade is close to senior leader Sharad Pawar. All his political success and power is attributed to the dominance of Sharad Pawar in the politics of Maharashtra. Ankush Kakade has got impressive personality and very good communication skill. Unlike Congress leaders he is media savvy and urbane.]

Padma Gole (Congress, ward- 97, BMCC college) came to Pune after her marriage in 1978. She was working in a private company for 12 years and had won an award for meritorious worker. She said that she continued the social work when she was in service. She participated in the campaigning for the senior Congress leader, Vitthalrao Gadgil. She was also engaged in literary movement of the labor class. She became an office bearer of the party in 1995. In 1996 she founded a credit cooperative society which has 550 members. Her brother-in-law has been active in politics and thus she got the candidature of the party in the election to the PMC in 1997. She says that she does not depend much on the Ganapati mandals for campaigning and political activities. She has personal contacts with women voters. She has helped about 1500 residents to get the water connection in their houses. She informed that her brother-in-law has established a Ganapati mandal called Shivpratap Mitra Mandal in (adjoining) Gokhalenagar. In her opinion the Ganapati mandals do not have much political utility. At the most the mandals are useful to create the ambience for the campaigning. But, it is the personal image and the service of the politician that counts. Although if one is not close to mandals, the mandals help such a person for some returns. The Ganapati mandals are in every lane and their area of operation is limited, is her opinion.

Ramesh Bodake (Shiv Sena, ward- 105, Gaokos Maruti) got a job in Mumbai at the age of 18 and used to travel to Mumbai for the job everyday. He saw the activities
of Shiv Sena in Mumbai and was impressed by it and he participated in the activities of Shiv Sena in Pune. After he lost the job in Mumbai, he got totally involved in the activities of Shiv Sena in Pune. He actively participated in all the agitations of the party in Pune and was appointed as a chief of a branch in 1974. He continued to work for Shiv Sena and became the chief of the city unit in 1987. He was the chief of the city unit for five years. When he was the chief of the city unit of Shiv Sena, he led many agitations and was in the limelight. (He says it was a golden period in his life.)

The Shiv Sena held a state level meeting of its workers and office bearers in 1991 in Pune city. It was a landmark meeting for the party. Bodake along with Shashikant Sutar had an important role in the arrangement of the meeting. Although he got political importance during 1987-1992 he could not get elected to the PMC in two elections held in 1980 and 1985. He got elected for the first time in 1992 as a candidate of Shiv Sena. He again got elected to the PMC in 1997 and became chairman of the standing committee of the PMC in 1998-99. He is the leader of the group of Shiv Sena in the PMC. He says that in all four elections to the PMC, which he fought, the activists of Ganapati mandals campaigned for him. In his opinion, any political activist or member of the PMC develops (politically) through Ganapati mandal. Although a political activists develops through Ganapati mandals, the political utility of Ganapati mandals is a mater of disagreement as there are political opponents in the mandal as well as there are people belonging to different political groups in the mandal and these activists oppose in the election, he says.

Jayant Bhokare was the member of the PMC in 1992 to 1997 as an independent although he supports Congress. In the election to the PMC in 1997, the ward from where he had been elected in 1992, was reserved for women, hence his wife was given ticket by the Congress and she got elected and thus the membership of the PMC from this ward was retained by Jayant Bhokare as his wife Vidya Jayant Bhokare (Congress, ward- 103, Kasaba Pumping Station) is his proxy candidate. Jayant Bhokare is well known as leader of the Rashtriya Satatoti Ganapati mandal. He entered politics in 1968 as a member of Shiv Sena. He worked in Shiv Sena till 1984. He participated in all the agitations of the party and left the party when he had differences with the local leadership. In his municipal ward majority of the voters belong to Bhoi (an OBC caste) and other OBC castes as well as Muslims. He had been president of the Rashtriya Satatoti Ganpati Mandal for the period 1985 to 1996 and then he became the president of the trust formed out of the Mandal. He has
arranged various social activities like blood donation camps by his mandal. (In fact his mandal has become his powerhouse. About 70% of his supporters are in the Rashtriya Satatat Ganpati Mandal.) He says that he worked through the medium of the mandal. In his opinion the Ganpati mandals are useful for political as well as social work. The activists of the mandal help people at local level.

Ashok Yenpure (BJP, ward- 115, Raja Kelkar Museum) is associated with the RSS and BJP for long time. He entered the activities of Ganapati mandal at the age of 22 and continued to work for 15 years. He won the election to the PMC in 1997 as the candidate of the BJP. He was the president of the unit of the party for Kasaba Peth constituency of the legislative assembly. He says he undertook many social initiatives when he was working for the Ganapati mandal. Ganapati mandal is useful for getting the limelight at the local level. But, in his opinion, one should not continue to work for Ganapati mandal forever and should get away from the mandal after working for a certain period. Every year, his wife, mother and sister-in-law arrange the programme of Haladi-Kunku for women in the area on Sankranti. (It is a conventional get-together.) About 1500 women attend this get-together. [This get-together has become an effective medium for him for communication and image building among his voters.]

Vijay Kale (BJP, ward- 117, Kesariwada) has been associated with the RSS and its affiliates for a long period. He was involved in the agitation against the imposition of the emergency in 1975-77. He had contested as an independent in 1979 in the election to the PMC from Pashan area. In 1985 he contested for the first time as a candidate of the BJP from the Shaniwarwada ward and won the election. In 1992, his ward was reserved for women hence, he shifted to the Shivaji Mandir ward in the Sadashiv Peth and won. In 1997, he won from the Kesariwada ward and won. Thus he has won the election to the PMC for three times as a BJP candidate. He was the general secretary of the youth wing of the party in Shivajinagar constituency. Then he became the president of the state unit of the youth wing of the party after some years and continued in the position till 1995. In 1995, he was nominated as the president of the Housing Board in Pune region. He was also appointed as an office bearer of the city unit of the party as secretary and general secretary. He is not dependent on the activists of Ganapati mandals for campaigning. He has won in the elections to the PMC due to the committed voters in his wards and the party machinery. He says the Ganapati mandals do not have much political utility. The mandals have local
attachment. People vote as per their opinions (and do not get influenced by the Ganapati mandal in their area.) Earlier there was only one mandal in the lane and people used to think according to the affiliation of the mandal. In those days the Ganapati mandals were involved in social activities and the activists used to develop through mandals as well as the mandals had social utility. Now, there is no much social utility of the mandals. Earlier the lanes had identity and the mandals used to communicate in their respective lanes. In those days there were social and cultural events for ten days of celebration, now there are only decorations. The attachment and communication which used to be among the residents of Wada (a mansion with numbers of tenements in which people used to live as tenants). Now there are apartments in the place of wadas and the residents do not have the attachment as they used to have. This trend became significant after 1985. In spite of these developments, the Ganapati mandal is a very good means of social mobilization.

Narayan Chavan (Congress, ward- 112, Shivaji Maratha Highschool) has been active in politics for last 25 years. His father is also an influential congress worker. His father has got elected various politicians as the members of the PMC and he was the president of the Shitaladevi Chowk Sarvajanik Ganapati Mandal for 20 years. Narayan Chavan became the president of the mandal in 1993 after he got elected to the PMC in 1992. He says Ganapati mandals have very much utility for social and political work as the mandals each have about 50 young activists. The mandal does attract people in the neighborhood and it helps to carry out any social work. He arranges the get-together for women on Sankranti in a Wada. About three thousand women attend this get-together. He said that this get-together was earlier arranged by the mandal, now he arranges it himself. (And has thus appropriated an effective way of social mobilization and image building.) There is Prabhak Mitra Mandal of the Bajarang Dal and Parakhewada, which is occupied by the sympathizers of the RSS. These two pockets are of committed voters of the BJP, but most of them vote for Chavan in the election to the PMC, thanks to his personal relations. Most of the supporters and political workers of Chavan belong to Shitaladevi Chowk Mandal.

Manohar Nande (Congress, ward- 119, Balgandharva Rangmandir) was the candidate supported by the Shivajinagar Ganeshotsava Mandal in the downtown Shivajinagar. He says his campaigning was carried out by the activists of the Ganapati mandal and their support was very important. The whole machinery of the campaigning was handled by the boys of Ganapati mandals. Yet, he says that the
Ganapati mandals do not have much utility in the politics. The most important part is approaching the voters and having direct communication with them. It does not matter much if some developmental work is not carried out but the personal communication with the voters is of utmost importance. For maintaining communication with people in his ward, he attends marriages, engagement ceremonies and the funerals as much as possible.

Jyotsna Sardeshpande (BJP, ward- 120, Shaniwarwada) had an acquaintance with the RSS as her uncle was a pracharak (propagator) of the RSS and her father was also deeply involved in the activities of the RSS. She used to go to the Motibag (regional headquarters of the RSS) with her uncle when she was a kid. Her mother also used to work for women's front of the RSS. She had become the vice-president of the ward unit of the BJP and had participated in the campaigning in all the elections. In 1992, the municipal ward, where she lives was reserved for women and she got the candidature of the party in that election to the PMC. With majority of the voters committed to the BJP and good image, she got elected from the ward with good margin. She got elected to the PMC again in 1997 with the same ease as in the earlier election. She informed that she visits all the homes for Gouri. (Sister of Ganapati, who is worshipped by women domestically during the Ganapati festival) In her opinion, the Ganapati mandals are useful for social and political work. An organized power is developed due to Ganapati mandals but the mandals have to be tackled well. For mobilizing women, the get together on Sankranti is very useful.

Balaji Telkar (Congress, ward- 122, Sonyamaruti Mandir) has been working under the leadership of Shantilal Suratwala for Congress for a long time. In the elections to the PMC in 1985 and 1992, Suratwala was elected from this ward and Balaji Telkar had campaigned for him. In 1997, the ward was reserved for the OBCs and thus Balaji Telkar got an opportunity to contest in the election to the PMC. He lives in a big building called Vishnupura. There are about 200 families living in Vishnupura with about one thousand voters. Balaji had complete support from the residents of Vishnupura. His father and brother used to work for the association of the residents of Vishnupura. Balaji Telkar is an active member (and office bearer) of the Narendra Mandal, a Ganapati mandal of the area. He belongs to the shimpi community and members of the community from all over city thronged the ward to campaign for Balaji as they had made it a prestige issue. Balaji Telkar says that he depends more on personal communication with voters rather than on Ganapati
mandals. But in the beginning he could reach people due to the Ganapati mandal. Ganapati mandal is an effective medium of social mobilization. Ideal activist develops through Ganapati mandal. An activist comes in contact with people through Ganapati mandal, he says.

Ujjwala Ganjiwale (BJP, ward- 124, Mahatma Fule Mandai) is familiar with RSS since her childhood, as her father was an active member of Jansangh (the earlier version of BJP). Her father-in-law Babanrao Ganjiwale was a member of PMC and was an activist of RSS. Her husband is an active member of BJP. With such a background, it was not difficult for Ujjwala Ganjiwale to get the candidature of the BJP in the election to the PMC in 1997. She got elected thanks to the campaigning done by the activists of the party and she made it clear that the members of Ganapati mandals did not campaign for her. She made an observation about Ganapati mandals that those who come forward in politics develop through Ganapati mandals. While working in mandal one learns how to deal with people. But it is unfair to do politics by using mandals. The Ganapati mandals are not effective in elections. The mandals can not affect the voting pattern as mandal is a pack of about fifteen young men and even those in their homes don’t listen to them. Her opponent in the election had distributed money to the mandals and donated silver to some mandals but it did not make any difference. On the other hand the mandals approached her and directly demanded money to the tune of fifty thousand or one hundred thousand rupees but she did not give money to any of the mandals and yet won the election. Her case is a special one. There are about eight of the most important mandals city in her ward and all of them are influenced by the leaders of Congress as well as consist of workers of Congress and yet the candidate of BJP (Ujjwala Ganjiwale) has won from the ward. These important mandals include Dagadusheth Halawai, Guruji Talim, Tambadi Jogeshwari, Bhau Rangari, Akhil Mandai, Tulshibag and Babu Genu mandal. [My reading of this unique situation where there are so many Ganapati mandals supportive of Congress and yet the ward returns the candidate of the BJP, is that there is an immense competition among these mandals for superiority and hence they would like to get their candidate elected to the PMC but otherwise will not allow the candidate of any other mandal get elected. Thus all these mandals covertly oppose each other and nullify their impact. There is another aspect to it that these mandals have become social power centers and institutions of their own and are more interested in being so, hence no wonder they are less keen about politics. This observation is another
expression of the reading that the Ganapati mandals lose their political utility when they grow beyond certain limit.

Suhas Kulkarni (BJP, ward-121, Kasaba Ganapati) was the trustee of the Kasaba Ganapati Mandal (a mandal centered at historic Kasaba Ganapati Temple) for the period 1990 to 1999. He was vice president of the mandal in 1992, president in 1995 and working president in 1997. He has been member of the mandal since 1985. He has been director of the local co-operative bank named Samapada Co-operative Bank for the period 1984 to 1999 and was vice-president for three years. There are about eleven thousand members of the bank and out of them twelve hundred reside in the ward. He said he had initial training of social work in the RSS when he was active in the RSS during 1970 to 1985. He informed that about 90% of the members of the Kasaba Ganapati Mandal are sympathizers of BJP and they campaigned for him in the election to the PMC. (He has been elected twice to the PMC.) Former president of the Kasaba Ganapati Mandal, Raju Kadethankar had entered the fray as an independent candidate (in fact a rebel BJP candidate) but he got only 91 votes. [The support of the Kasaba Ganapati Mandal is only for official BJP candidate.] Suhas Kulkarni made observations about Ganapati mandals as getting votes in the election depends more upon personal communication with the voters and getting votes is less dependent on party. Ganapati mandals are effective in developing the atmosphere for elections but the mandals can not affect the pattern of voting. The person, who wants to start his political career, should work in a Ganapati mandal right from beginning. The activist gets training of communication with people and social work. [These are the observations of an activist of RSS.]

Ramesh Khanna (Congress, ward-85, Meera Society) started his public life with Ganapati mandal, Akhil Mandai Ganapati Mandal. He participated in politics with Vasant Thorat, a senior leader of Congress and one who controls the Akhil Mandai Ganapati Mandal. He participated in the campaigning for parliamentary election in 1971 and thus had an experience of active politics. He continued to work for Congress and became the first president of the city unit of the youth Congress in 1978. He led some agitations of the youth congress and contested in the election to the PMC in 1979 for the first time unsuccessfully. In 1985 he got the candidature of the party from the far away ward of Dais Plot and won the election to the PMC. (This ward was a favorable ward for any Congress worker.) He fought election again in 1992 from the same area and won. He became the deputy mayor of the city in 1996. He again
contested in the election to the PMC in 1997 and won the election. He said he came forward in politics as an activist of Ganapati mandal. But when I asked him about the utility of the mandals, he said that the mandals are not of much political utility especially in small localities. (As far as the voting in the elections is considered) Even the family members of the activists of the mandal not listen to them. The Ganapati mandals are obsessed with their own interests only, he says.

**Gopal Chintal** is a long time activist of the RSS. He has been participating in the activities of the RSS since childhood. He took part in the campaigning for the candidate of the BJP in 1984 and thus got actively involved in the activities of the party. He was nominated as the president of the ward unit of the party. He continued to be nominated on the important positions in the party and in 2000 he became the general secretary of the city unit of the party. Since, the municipal ward where he lives was reserved for women in 1997, his wife, **Sunita Gopal Chintal** (BJP, ward-77, Rajewadi) was given the candidature of the party and she won the election. Gopal Chintal was also given the ticket in the election by the party in 1992 but he lost the election. In his opinion, an activist gets a team of workers and supporters in the Ganapati mandal. As the activists of Ganapati mandal work together for about one month, an emotional relationship develops among them. Such supporters and activists who are bonded by emotional relations do not part the company. But when the politicians grow to be important leaders, they forget Ganapati mandals, he rues.

**Ramakant Andekar** (Independent, ward-108, Burud Bridge) has been active in the labor union of the Bajaj Tempo, for more than one decade. He became president of the union in 1992. He also became the president of the unit of the Bhartiya Kamgar Sena, which is a front of the Shivsena. But Ramakant Andekar has been associated with the Congress party for a long time and still considers himself to be close to the Congress. He informed that in last seven years he made jobs available to thousands of boys. (Thanks to the position he was holding in the labor union.) He became the president of the important Ganapati mandal in the downtown area, called Doke Talim in 1992. He contested in the election to the PMC in 1992 as an independent and lost the election. In 1997, he was given candidature of the party but later the decision was changed and the candidature given to him was withdrawn and given to some other candidate. But with the support of his activists, he decided to contest as an independent candidate and he won the election. He was the president of the mandal for six years and now his brother is the president of the mandal. The Andekars are in
total control of the mandal. He says that an activist develops through Ganapati mandal. The fact that how much work he does in the mandal and what initiatives he takes in the mandal contributes to the developing his image as a good social worker.

Nilesh Nikam (Congress, ward-96, Patrakarnagar) had an advantage of the political career of his father. His father had been member of the PMC twice from the same area where they live. The social contacts and the goodwill, his father developed during that period became useful for Nilesh Nikam. He contested in the election to the PMC in 1992 as an independent and won the election. (He was denied the candidature by the party.) He got the candidature of the party in the election to the PMC in 1997 and again won the election. He has been active in Ganapati mandal in the locality. But he clarified that in case of campaigning in the election he was not dependent on the activists of the Ganapati mandal. In his opinion, Ganapati mandals are not of much utility in the elections or politics. The activist has to develop his image through the social work he does and he gets political recognition due to the candidature of the party.

Vatsala Andekar (Congress, ward-107, Someshwar Mandir) has been elected to the PMC in 1992 and in 1997. She became the mayor of the city. She belongs to Kashikapadi community (an OBC community) and is actively involved in the committee of the community. In her opinion, the Ganapati mandals do make a difference in politics. They have a lion’s share in the elections. The activists of Ganapati mandal come together for campaigning as in the Ganapati festival and they work for the candidate with total involvement. The situation about Ganapati mandals changed drastically after 1997. The activists of Mandal work for the one who helps them financially, she complained.

Ganesh Andekar (Congress, ward-113, Jain Mandir) has won the election to the PMC twice in 1992 and 1997. He has been active in the Ganapati mandal since he was 15 years old. The activists of Ganapati mandals did all the campaigning for him in the elections. About Ganapati mandals he said that the mandals make a great difference to politics. One gets activists and supporters for work in Ganapati mandal. The mandals are also useful in developing the image at the local level.

Usman Hiroli (Congress, ward-27, D.A.D. Colony, Kondhawa) has a rich political background. His grandfather was active in the Khilafat Movement and his father has been active in Congress party for a long time. Usman Hiroli was the organizer of the Pune Cantonment unit of Youth Congress in 1969. He has been
associated with Congress for a long time. In his ward, majority of the residents are retired defense personnel and they do not have any attachment towards Ganapati mandal. In two slums the Dalits live and there are Ganapati mandals which have just symbolic existence. In his opinion, Ganapati mandals are very influential for an individual as far as promoting himself at local level is considered. But, the Ganapati mandals and the Ganapati festival is not a cause for social mobilization, it is just a celebration.

Conclusion

Members of Municipal Corporation, directly elected by people, are the most important politicians at the grass roots level. These politicians are considered to be closely linked to the Ganapati festival. But, the study made it clear that the members of Pune Municipal Corporation are not as closely linked to the Ganapati festival as is believed. About 32% members made it clear that they are not related to Ganapati festival or the Ganapati mandals. Although, the proportion of those not related to the Ganapati festival is much less than those who are related, their number is significant. In case of others who are related to the Ganapati festival, their relationship is not of a die-hard activist of Ganapati mandal. But, these politicians are very well aware of the potential and the utility of Ganapati mandals regarding communication and mobilization at the grass roots level. The members of Municipal Corporation participate in the activities of Ganapati mandals and utilize this social platform for their own social activities. They also use the set of activists developed through the mandals for their activities of mobilization. The Ganapati mandals do play a significant role in political campaigning. As it has been noted in the earlier chapter, most of the mandals do not support any candidate on the basis of a mandal, but the members are free to take part in political activities. By and large the Ganapati mandals have become service providers for the politicians. The concerned politician has to negotiate with the mandals for their support. But, the politicians avoid to be too close to any particular mandal for the fear of opposition from other mandals. The politicians are dependent on the mandals for provision of activists and communication channels with local people. The relationship of these politicians varies from political party to party. In case of Bhartiya Janata Party and Republican Party of India, who have their committed voters and die hard supporters and activists, the dependence on the Ganapati mandals is the least. But, the independent members of the Municipal
Corporation do not have support of any party structure and they are comparatively the most linked to the mandals. The relationship of members of Congress party with the Ganapati mandals varies depending upon their patronage in the party, nature of their constituencies and their support bases.